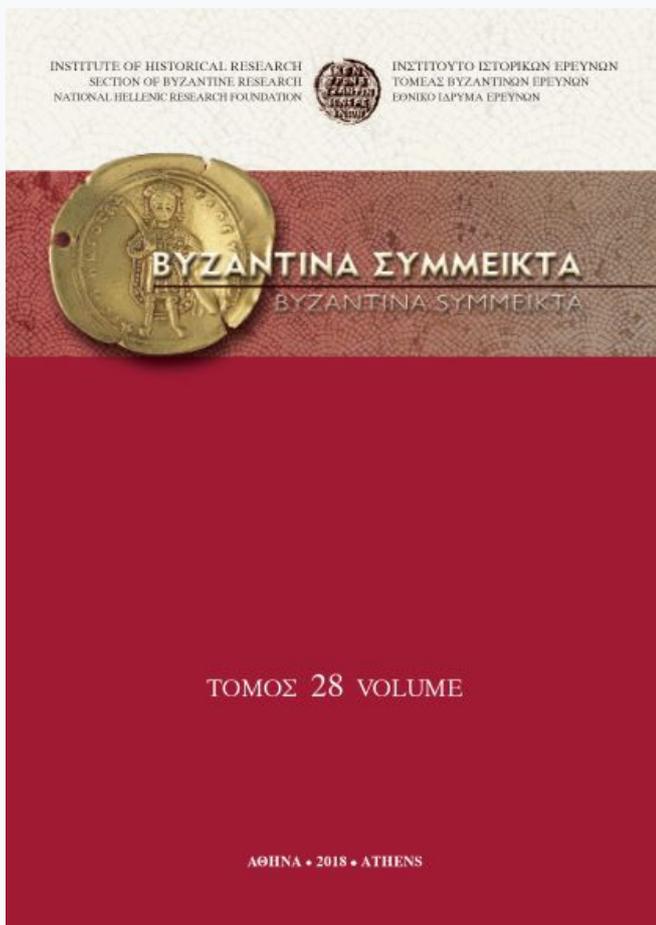


## Byzantina Symmeikta

Vol 28 (2018)

BYZANTINA SYMMEIKTA 28



**Book Review: Jean-Marie MARTIN - Vivien PRIGENT - Annick PETERS-CUSTOT (eds.), L'héritage byzantin en Italie (VIIIe–XIIe siècle). IV. Habitat et structure agraire (Collection de l'École française de Rome 531), École française de Rome, Rome 2017.**

*Maria LEONTSINI*

doi: [10.12681/byzsym.19047](https://doi.org/10.12681/byzsym.19047)

Copyright © 2018, Maria LEONTSINI



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

### To cite this article:

LEONTSINI, M. (2018). Book Review: Jean-Marie MARTIN - Vivien PRIGENT - Annick PETERS-CUSTOT (eds.), L'héritage byzantin en Italie (VIIIe–XIIe siècle). IV. Habitat et structure agraire (Collection de l'École française de Rome 531), École française de Rome, Rome 2017. *Byzantina Symmeikta*, 28, 437–440.  
<https://doi.org/10.12681/byzsym.19047>

Jean-Marie MARTIN – Vivien PRIGENT – Annick PETERS-CUSTOT (eds.), *L'héritage byzantin en Italie (VIIIe-XIIe siècle). IV. Habitat et structure agraire* (Collection de l'École française de Rome 531), École française de Rome, Rome 2017, pp. 432. ISBN 978-2-7283-1224-5

The fourth volume of the series “L'héritage byzantin en Italie (VIIIe-XIIe siècle)” encompasses thirteenth papers which focus on the land management and the production, processing and commercialization strategies applied in agriculture. The region under study extends in the rural areas and residential centers in the Italian Peninsula and the two major Mediterranean islands of Sicily and Sardinia. Social organization, settlement strategies and exchange networks interconnecting larger centers and the medium-sized residential locations are among the issues discussed in the volume. The settlement dynamics in rural or urban areas, is discussed in the introduction (Jean-Marie Martin, Vivien Prigent and Annick Peters-Custot, pp. 1-3 in French). The spatial features of the areas under examination and the historical limitations of the debate are further issues put forward in the preface. Particularly useful are also the prefatory comments about the multifaceted aspects presented by the local social and political conditions that shaped the creation and management of settlements; attention is also turned to southern Calabria, where the control of Constantinople emerged quite intense in 9th century. Legal or administrative forms that survived from the late antique period appeared also in later patterns of the large estates' management. These features are moreover evident in the control processes applied to the lands belonging to the ancient episcopal sees (Rome, Ravenna, Reggio). It is also called attention to social and economic relations, depicted in agricultural contracts that were certainly subjected to more complex systems formed by local customary practices or hereditary norms. This is moreover reflected to the restructuring of the Byzantine settlement in Sicily when part

of the island was found under Arab control (10th c.) and the growth of land property in Sardinia formed by the influence of family ties.

The volume is divided into two main thematic parts. The first part with two sub-sections: “Réalités apparentes” and “Aspects institutionnels; la grande propriété”, comprises papers which examine institutional aspects of land occupation and settlement distribution. The study by Sauro Gelichi brings into picture certain examples of settlements’ indicated by pottery and sculpture findings along the northern Adriatic coast from Aquileia to Ravenna; mobility gave impetus to the development of Comacchio, while Venice was pushed into growth during the Frankish expansion in Italy (pp. 7-45, 14 figs., in Italian). Alessandra Molinari discusses the settlements and the economy of Lazio, in the 8th-10th century, through the search of the globular amphora and building techniques that shaped the deployment of rural resources in the context of the *incastellamento* (pp. 47-71, 3 figs., in Italian). Population, land use and social relations in the Tyrrhenian duchies is the subject of the contribution of Jean-Marie Martin (pp. 73-89, in French), who identifies variations in the evolution of the rural property types in the territories of Naples, Amalfi and Gaeta.

The next paper by Giovanni Stranieri follows the traces of the stone boundaries that exhibit the space organization established in the agrarian landscapes of southern Apulia, in the region of the town of Oria (between Taranto and Brindisi), found under Lombard and Byzantine control and finally under the dominion of the Normans (pp. 91-115, 6 figs., in French). Nicola Mancassola presents the records of the control over large land properties in the territory of the former Exarchate of Ravenna, administered then by the archbishopric of the city, and controlled also by the monastery of S. Maria in Celeseo and members of the secular aristocracy (pp. 119-144, 5 figs., in Italian). The next study by Alessandro Soddu surveys documents of land holding in Sardinia that reveal the strategies applied by local families so as to ensure their possession rights on large estates in the countryside even after the decline of the regional authorities during eleventh-twelfth century. Information is indexed into comprehensive plates; prosopography lists; and a documentation catalogue (pp. 145-206, 4 tables, 4 figs., in Italian). The great landholding in Sicily during late antique times is the subject of the study by Vivien Prigent (pp. 207-236, in French). It is suggested that the mode of operation of the patrimonies of the church of Rome could be also valid for the supervision and control of the estates belonging to the aristocratic and public domains; the paper also discloses tax practices and state

control of private property applied by government officials and administrative mechanisms. Lucia Arcifa examines the dynamics of settlement and the great property in Byzantine Sicily (pp. 237-267, in Italian); of importance were the changes in the habitation systems, generated by the development of the sites in the area following the implementation of defense policies intending to protect Syracuse between the 6th and the 9th century.

The second part of the volume entitled: “Rapports de production” is subdivided into two sections. The first bearing the subtitle “Contrats agraires et *platee*”, is dedicated to the relations of production as these were recorded in land contracts and other documents. It begins with the study of Annliese Nef on the directories and registers compiled in Greek, Arabic and Latin (11th-12th c.), which reveal the Byzantine imprints left in the taxation systems and state apparatus in Sicily (pp. 271-292, in French). The next paper by Annick Peters-Custot, on the *plateae* (agricultural inventories) and *anthropoi* (*villani/paroikoi*), surveys the structural continuities in Southern Calabria’s agrarian relations from the Byzantine to the Norman period (pp. 293-318, 2 tables, in French). Jean-Marie Martin’s study on the agrarian contracts in the duchies of the Tyrrhenian coast (pp. 319-340, in French) reveals the existence of various types of investment on vineyards, also in cereal crops and often in chestnut groves and gardens. In the second section under the subtitle “La production et ses debouches”, the paper by Salvatore Cosentino examines the changes occurred in the commercial traffic centered on Ravenna between Late Antiquity and the Ottonian period (pp. 343-362, in Italian). The intense commercial interchange in the port of Classe responded to the consumer needs of the *publicum*, the church and the middle class enhanced, thus, Ravenna’s role as major redistribution point that outlasted, albeit in lower rates, into the 9th century. The study of Amedeo Feniello puts forward a different image of trade transactions implied by the coin finds on the Tyrrhenian coastline that were modified when the Mediterranean trade passed from the Byzantines to the Muslims (10th-11th c.) (pp. 363-382, 4 tables, in Italian). Chris Wickham in the concluding chapter places particular emphasis on the benefits accruing from the archaeological material study alongside the exploration of written evidence so as to single out the specific weight of the geographical and historical contexts that shaped the nature of landownership and land tenure in Italy from the late antique times to the middle Byzantine period (pp. 383-395, in Italian). The volume is completed with the English summaries of each paper (pp. 397-407) and the index of proper names.

Each contribution is complemented by specific bibliography that serves the subject's integrated approach. The exploitation of archaeological data, written sources and archival documentation turns out an unequivocal medium for the clarification of the contexts that have been influenced or directly affected by the Byzantine institutional and spatial planning in Italy.

MARIA LEONTSINI  
Institute of Historical Research/NHRF  
Section of Byzantine Research