

Catherine T. Keane: *More than a Church. Late Antique Ecclesiastical Complexes in Cyprus*. Leiden/Boston: Brill 2024 (Late Antique Archaeology. Supplementary Series 8). XV, 338 pp., 175 ill., 6 tables, 9 maps. € 199.02/\$ 223.00. ISBN: 978-90-04-69787-4.

The book reviewed here is based on the recent doctoral dissertation by Catherine T. Keane, undertaken under the guidance of Franz Alto Bauer and Albrecht Berger at the University of Munich. As the title implies, it investigates the role of ecclesiastical complexes on Cyprus beyond their primary function as places of worship. Most aptly, it is published in the series of supplements to the “Late Antique Archaeology” volumes edited over the last twenty years by Luke Lavan and published by Brill.<sup>1</sup> Lavan’s long-term enterprise has revolutionized the study of late antique archaeology through its focus on various aspects of society, of the economy and of daily life, as well as of their physical context (urban and rural settlements, public and domestic structures, religious and funerary buildings), beyond what was until recently the most intensively studied aspect of this period’s archaeology, namely ecclesiastical structures. Keane’s volume, however, breaks the mould and for good reason, for hers is not yet another study of early Christian basilicas and their architecture and decoration. Its originality stems from the approach the author adopts and the questions she asks of the archaeological evidence, earning it a place in this prestigious series. Within the latter it is also the first to focus on a specific geographical area, and a fairly small one at that. At the same time it follows the steady stream over the last decade of publications in which aspects of the history, culture and archaeology of Cyprus in the centuries from the late Roman to the early medieval period are investigated.<sup>2</sup> These, just like the volume reviewed here, provide a wealth of new interpretations and insights.

1 <http://www.brill.com/LAA> and <http://www.brill.com/LAAX>.

2 Among the most important: P. Panayides/I. Jacobs (eds.): *Cyprus in the Long Late Antiquity. History and Archaeology between the Sixth and the Eighth Centuries*. Oxford/Philadelphia, PA 2023. G. Deligiannakis: *A Cultural History of Late Roman Cyprus*. Nicosia 2022 (Texts and Studies in the History of Cyprus 90). L. Nasrallah/Ch. Bakirtzis/A. Luijendijk (eds.): *From Roman to Early Christian Cyprus. Studies in Religion and Archaeology*. Tübingen 2020 (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 437). M. Horster/D. Nicolaou/S. Rogge (eds.): *Church Building in Cyprus (Fourth to Seventh Centuries). A Mirror of Intercultural Contacts in the Eastern Mediterranean*. Münster/New York 2018 (Schriften des Instituts

The handsome volume comprises nine chapters in three sections. Three short chapters set the scene, followed by four substantial chapters that constitute the bulk of the discussion. Two short concluding chapters precede an extensive bibliography (pp. 255–281), a gazetteer and useful indices of places (pp. 332–334), people (p. 335) and themes (pp. 336–338). Keane’s stated aim is to map through the archaeological record the economic activities linked to ecclesiastical buildings and institutions from the fourth to the ninth/tenth century. Cyprus with its numerous excavated sites that yield relevant material offers an excellent testing ground for such an investigation. The aforementioned gazetteer at the end of the volume illustrates well the abundance of evidence and forms the notional backbone for the discussion in the four principal chapters. All this is clearly set out in the introduction (pp. 1–14), where the limitations of the evidence are also discussed. They include the usual focus of excavators on the monumental structure of the church itself and its original building phase at the expense of later developments and adjacent buildings on each site, the unavoidable problems of dating and interpretation, and the incomplete publication of several key sites. The two short chapters that follow the introduction provide the historical and institutional background respectively (“The Byzantine Empire and Cyprus in Late Antiquity”, pp. 15–19; “New Roles of the Church in Late Antiquity”, pp. 20–25), noting that although the wealth, properties and economic activities of the Church are documented in written sources, they are much less visible in the archaeological record, the very problem that this study resolves to tackle.

The discussion begins in earnest with chapter 4 and the first case of economic activity, namely the production of olive oil (“Olive Oil Presses: Beyond Local Sustenance”, pp. 26–87). Three basilica sites (none fully published) are investigated in detail while other examples are brought into the discussion where necessary. The three case studies were selected because they deviate from the norm in that their production was apparently not destined only for local consumption. At the small and relatively isolated but rather opulent town of Agios Georgios near Pegeia on the west coast of

für Interdisziplinäre Zypern-Studien 12). L. Zavagno: *Cyprus Between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (ca. 600–800). An Island in Transition*. London/New York 2017 (Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Studies). In this context one should also mention R. Maguire’s doctoral dissertation: *Late Antique Basilicas on Cyprus. Sources, Contexts, Histories*. 3 vols. Diss. University of East Anglia (Norwich) 2012.

Cyprus (ancient name unknown) an olive press was laid out in the sixth century within the northern annex (that included shops) of Basilica C at the same time as its construction. At the much better connected, larger and important city of Amathous on the south coast the olive press within the eastern necropolis seems to predate the small adjacent basilica and was in use from the sixth century (?) until the site changed function after the mid-seventh century (water storage, bread oven), although the ceramic evidence suggests occupation into the tenth century. The operation of a monastery on the grounds, assumed since its excavation in the 1970s, is discussed and questioned. The site of the Panagia Chrysopolitissa at Nea Paphos illustrates yet another scenario, with the press installed in the atrium of the vast episcopal basilica after the latter had been damaged during the mid-seventh century Arab attack and occupation of the city. Through these case studies Keane demonstrates the close association between churches and olive presses that may imply the direct engagement of ecclesiastical authorities in agricultural production, although the latter's scale and therefore the wider implications remain difficult to gauge.

Chapter 5 turns to flour and bread, mainly through the evidence for threshing floors, storage facilities, flour mills and ovens from a variety of sites across the island ("The Flour and Bread Industry: Post-Destruction Activity?", pp. 88–128). The bulk of the material discussed, however, is provided by the sixth-century episcopal basilica of Amathous. Lying along the shoreline, what surviving remains were not lost to the waves over the centuries were excavated in the 1990s but not fully published. Following a trajectory not dissimilar to that of the Paphos episcopal compound, the church shows signs of damage in the mid-seventh century (burnt chancel screens); an oven was installed in its atrium with industrial facilities along its north flank. Their use is dated to the seventh and eighth century through ceramic and numismatic evidence, when the basilica itself perhaps continued operating as a place of worship at least for a while, despite the earlier damage. Special note should be made here of the revealing table that Keane provides, listing in great detail the coin finds with their precise findspots around the compound (p. 105). The author concludes that this site illustrates the drive towards closer supervision by the episcopate of economic activity, especially food processing, at a time when prelates were the most prominent figures in cities. She also stresses the case for continuity after the mid-seventh century and a certain degree of vitality, evidenced also through other sites within Ama-

thous that confirm recent assessments pointing in the same direction and against earlier views of total destruction and abandonment in the coastal areas and lowlands of Cyprus.

Ceramic production is the focus of chapter 6, also centred on one particular site (“Ceramic Kilns: Reinterpreting a Lime Kiln at a Coastal Basilica”; pp. 129–178). Kourion lies on high ground overlooking the homonymous bay west of Amathous, on the way to Paphos. At the foot of the cliff on which the city stands and by the presumed location of its port a fairly small basilica was excavated near the seashore. It dates to the late fifth/sixth century but mosaic fragments suggest that it was erected over an earlier, late fourth or early fifth-century building. A distinctive structure attached to the north of its atrium was initially identified as a lime kiln but Keane proves convincingly that it must have functioned rather as a ceramic kiln, at least in its early phase. She also demonstrates that this kiln probably predates the basilica and its atrium but remained in use after their construction, functioning simultaneously until the destruction of the complex in the eighth century. Here too there is some evidence of damage in the mid-seventh century but also of repairs, alterations (subdivision of western portico, second kiln – for lime – installed in the atrium’s north portico, changes in the upper floor of the south annex) and continued occupation. The chapter concludes with an account of the city and wider region of Kourion and its resources, and an overview of ceramic production in this period and in particular of the evidence for LR1 amphorae manufacture across Cyprus.

Chapter 7 delves into the commodity for which Cyprus was best known in antiquity, namely copper, and for which the evidence from the post-classical centuries is far less forthcoming (“The Troodos and Copper: Christianising the Landscape”, pp. 179–240). Unlike the previous chapters, in this case the material considered is of a different nature: not excavated late antique church sites with clear evidence of metallurgical activity within their precinct (although evidence of those is also cited) but rather large areas where copper extraction is attested primarily through slag heaps (the outcome of the smelting process) with mostly later church buildings in their vicinity. Several examples are investigated along the foothills around the Troodos Mountains, making excellent use of the results of well published archaeological surveys,

most notably TAESP and SCSP.<sup>3</sup> At Skouriotissa, one of the largest if not the largest site of copper extraction on the island since antiquity, a late medieval church incorporating spolia that may originate from a late antique structure on the site is noted. Similarly, at Mitsero the ruinous twelfth-century Lambadiotissa church is also linked to mining in the wider area, and other examples are brought into the discussion (including Mathiatis and Kalavastos). For the larger mining sites such as Skouriotissa the author sensibly assumes state control, as was the case in earlier centuries, while for smaller sites she proposes private initiative and perhaps control from some distance, further away from the mining area. Among all aspects of economic activity examined in the book, this is the most difficult to connect clearly and unambiguously to ecclesiastical authority and buildings. Keane wisely refrains from pushing the argument too far, merely noting that the clergy may have assumed a supervisory role in some instances and that mining as part of the wider economy aided the construction of some of the most ostentatious urban basilicas. In the absence of textual corroboration this is certainly as far as one can go. As in the case of the previous chapter, a useful overview of metalworking evidence from the island helps to contextualize mining activity even if it includes objects whose place of manufacture cannot be ascertained yet.

The four main chapters of the book summarized above examine some of the key ingredients of the island's economy and diet that can be traced in the archaeological record in relation to ecclesiastical buildings (olive oil, bread, ceramics, copper). As the author explains, the obvious addition to these, namely wine, does not feature in the discussion, since the evidence for viticulture remains paltry. It could certainly become the focus of a future investigation. The short chapter that follows concentrates on an issue that pervades all previous chapters and sites investigated, and indeed one that has been brought to the fore by much recent scholarship: the impact of the mid-seventh century Arab raids and their aftermath ("The Church and Economy beyond Late Antiquity", pp. 241–247). As already noted above, Keane's re-

3 M. Given/A. B. Knapp/J. Noller/L. Sollars/V. Kassianidou (eds.): *Landscape and Interaction. The Troodos Archaeological and Environmental Survey Project, Cyprus*. 2 vols. Oxford/Oakville, CT 2013 (Levant Supplementary Series 14–15). M. Given/A. B. Knapp (eds.): *The Sydney Cyprus Survey Project. Social Approaches to Regional Archaeological Survey*. Los Angeles 2003 (Monumenta Archaeologica 21).

search corroborates the prevailing current opinion that favours continuity and slow adaptation instead of rupture and collapse. She notes particularly the vitality of coastal sites, assumed in older scholarship to have been abandoned in favour of better protected inland locations, and the continuity of ceramic production. The brief conclusion (pp. 248–253) to the entire volume sums up the evidence from each site and the main points of the investigation.

Before commenting further on the merits of this book it is worth noting that, as in any wide ranging endeavour of this nature, there are bound to be omissions and oversights. Among the former, a small number will be highlighted here. The most regrettable concerns the fifty-page long gazetteer (pp. 282–331) added in an appendix that does not do justice to the rich material it contains. It presents 45 sites with archaeological evidence for church buildings associated with economic activity, accompanied by full bibliographical references, plans and photographs (many appearing for the second time, having been included already within the text). The purpose and content of the gazetteer are nowhere explained. The entries are not numbered but arranged in an inconsistent alphabetical order of place names, making it difficult to locate individual sites.<sup>4</sup> More surprisingly, the gazetteer entries are not referred to anywhere in the main text, suggesting that this appendix was an afterthought and that time constraints presumably prevented cross-referencing in the discussion. A lesser omission concerns the chronological limits of the investigation, which are not clearly delineated, especially as far as the cut-off date is concerned. At times the ninth century is mentioned, but elsewhere it seems to be the tenth century that marks the end of coverage in what is clearly a much extended Late Antiquity, even though most of the material discussed does not stretch beyond the eighth century. The later cut-off point (tenth century) would of course make sense since it was in 965 that Cyprus was brought back into the fold of the empire (as Keane notes on pp. 8 and 18), that year providing a convenient if all too artificial end point.

Oversights include the frequent omission of page numbers for specific passages in footnote references, the omission from the bibliography of publications cited in the footnotes (e.g. Perdikis and Xydas 2013 on p. 212, n. 210 and n. 213; Deligiannakis 2023 on p. 117, n. 166) and the inconsistency in

4 For example, the four sites within Nea Paphos are listed under Fabrika Hill, Panagia Chrysopolitissa, Panagia Limeniotissa and Saranda Kolones. Those in Amathous appear under Acropolis Basilica, Agia Varvara, Amathous Southwest Basilica and Episcopal Basilica.

references (e.g. Pralong 2013 instead of Pralong 2013a or 2013b, or Lewitt 2020 instead of 2020a or 2020b). Some excerpts in Greek contain numerous typos (e.g. p. 175, n. 214) and the transliteration of Greek names is inconsistent (Athanasius, Demetrius, Sergius and Nicephorus but Epifanios and Arcadios), while a small number of toponyms and technical terms are misspelt (“Vravona” for Vravrona on p. 175; “Asvetoton” for Asvestoton on pp. 47, 109, 127, 145; “Panagia tis Kyris” for Kyras on p. 316; “Hieron” for Hiereon on pp. 239, 251; “boulleteria” for boulloteria on pp. 224, 243; “palatini” for palatinus on p. 197). At times the use of vocabulary is rather idiosyncratic, possibly the result of automated find/replace processes that were not diligently checked during the proof reading stage. For example “numismatics” is used when coins are clearly meant (e.g. pp. 86, 105, 120, 158, 230, n. 314), “melting” for marble turned to lime (e.g. pp. 115, 136, 144, 166), or “militaristic” for military (p. 243) and “petroglyphic” for petrographic (pp. 171, 245, n. 50).

All of the above are of course trivial minor slips whose impact is confined to the presentation of what is in all other respects a very carefully crafted book. It is also an exceptionally well illustrated book, with no fewer than 180 figures excluding those of the gazetteer. They include good quality photographs (the vast majority in colour), excellent colour maps, eminently legible plans (not always the case in many publications) and helpful tables. In terms of visual documentation this monograph sets the bar very high for all such endeavours.

Listing all its merits, some of which have been already highlighted, would be tedious. I will concentrate on those I consider most significant and novel and offer some additional comment. At the level of the evidence, Keane brings together and considers recent material that has not been fully published yet, including that from ongoing excavations such as the grand ecclesiastical complex at Katalymmata ton Plakoton in the Akrotiri peninsula near Kourion (ancient name unknown). For important older excavations that remain inadequately documented in brief reports and may never be fully published (e.g. Chrysopolitissa at Paphos, port basilica at Kourion, Agia Varvara and episcopal basilica at Amathous) she clearly left no stone unturned in her effort to put together as full a picture as possible, contacting excavators whenever possible and consulting archives and reports. The result is nothing short of admirable, providing a reliable guide, assessment and interpretation of key sites that will prove invaluable to the scholarly community. At the

same time all this brings to the fore the issue of excavation techniques and intentions, including what was removed while uncovering the primary construction phase of structures, what was left behind that represents subsequent uses and alterations, or even moved around by the archaeologists. Keane shows an acute awareness of these complications and deals with them as best as the evidence she has gathered allows. Her meticulous discussion of the problematic evidence for dating (including sieving through ceramic finds in museum stores), for construction phases and for successive uses in order to disentangle the relationship between church buildings and their adjacent structures, commonly neglected and insufficiently studied, is equally commendable. Since the premise of the entire investigation is that the proximity of these church buildings to food processing and manufacture installations as well as mining sites must indicate control by or at least some involvement of ecclesiastical authorities in their operation (and therefore according a significant role to the Church in economic life), the reader would nevertheless expect some comment on the social and economic landscape that prompted or facilitated this, even if corroborating textual evidence for the specific sites examined is lacking. There are scattered relevant references throughout the text but a more comprehensive discussion, including comparative material from elsewhere, would have been most welcome. Finally, the focus on the fate of sites after the mid-seventh century, often treated summarily in excavation reports or interpreted hastily therein, is among the most obvious merits of the book, as noted above. Here the author provides tangible evidence of some degree of continuity. This could have been contextualized further with reference to the known evidence for contacts with the outside world and by making better use of Luca Zavagno's study<sup>5</sup> and his comparative if at times overly optimistic approach, as well as Georgios Deligiannakis' recent article (perhaps published too late to be taken into account) that touches upon the same issues but outlines a far less positive picture.<sup>6</sup>

There is no doubt that Keane's monograph covers a lot of ground, treading new paths and providing much food for thought. Her meticulous engage-

5 Zavagno (note 2).

6 G. Deligiannakis: Contextualising the Tax Tribute Paid by Cypriots during the Treaty Centuries. In: Panayides/Jacobs (note 2), pp. 47–54 (Keane refers to this publication briefly on p. 117). For some thoughts on Zavagno's monograph and approach, see my review in EHR 133, 2018, pp. 1573–1575.



ment with difficult archaeological evidence combined with her indefatigable efforts to delve into the slightest detail that might shed some light on the issues she is concerned with, constitute a lesson worth learning. This book is also a stepping stone for further research regarding social and economic changes on Cyprus itself but also in other regions of the Mediterranean. Any new excavation of a site that includes a place of worship and evidence of economic activity cannot afford to ignore its conclusions. Similarly, anyone engaged with the ongoing reassessment of the post-seventh century period on Cyprus but also the impact of the Arab expansion in the eastern Mediterranean must take notice.

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