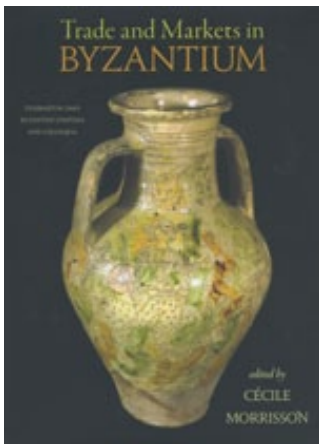


Exchange in the Byzantine World

TRADE AND MARKETS IN BYZANTIUM (DUMBARTON OAKS BYZANTINE SYMPOSIA AND COLLOQUIA)

by **Cécile Morrisson, ed.**

(Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2012), 472 pages,
49 maps, 140 illustrations, \$85.00, ISBN 978-0884023777



Trade and Markets in Byzantium, the publication of 13 papers presented at the 2008 Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Spring Symposium (along with two additional chapters deemed relevant to the volume), is elegantly designed and features a large number of high-

quality illustrations, maps, and tables—the latter two are a significant aid to understanding the complexities of commercial exchange.

The primary focus of the book, as described by editor Cécile Morrisson, is interregional, regional, and local trade, as well as the mechanisms of the marketplace. This represents a departure from the majority of existing scholarly literature, which deals with the Byzantine economy and long-distance trade. The refreshingly interdisciplinary approach of the volume is a product of the synthesis of textual, archaeological, and numismatic data.

The chapters are arranged into four chronological and thematic sections. The first two sections, “Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages” and “The Middle and Late Byzantine Periods,” chronologically address the transformation of trade networks within the empire and the shift in commodities traded from the Roman to the medieval period. New archaeological insights, especially

those derived from shipwrecks and ceramic analyses, feature prominently in these chapters.

The thematic section, “West and East: Local Exchanges in Neighboring Worlds,” presents case studies of commercial interactions in a variety of Mediterranean locales and time periods, ranging from 6th century CE Syria-Palestine to 13th century Armenian Cilicia. These chapters expand the discussion to the areas on the edge of the Byzantine Empire.

The final chapters, under the heading of “Markets and the Marketplace,” treat the physical space of the markets and shops where local transactions took place. The authors of these chapters evaluate the historical regulations and archaeological remains of shop architecture, the equipment used in transactions (such as weights and forms of payment), and contemporary visual and textual representations of shops and markets. The conclusion, penned by economist Peter Temin, neatly ties together the massive quantity of data and delineates the devices used to document trade.

The most significant contribution of this volume to existing scholarship is its dispelling of the long-held assumption that the 8th century, known as the “dark age” of Byzantium, saw the total collapse of trade in the Mediterranean. While the authors collectively acknowledge the drastic decline in long-distance trade during this period, their work demonstrates that exchange on a regional scale continued, albeit with different commodities and networks from those of Late Antiquity.

Overall, this volume is a successful interdisciplinary endeavor in developing the understanding of ground-level intricacies throughout the Byzantine economy, particularly in its recognition of areas for further exploration and research, such as local trade in the Late Byzantine period. It will appeal to those interested in the archaeology and economic history of both the ancient and medieval Mediterranean. ●

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