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Alexios G.C. Savvides, *Υστεροβυζαντινή και πρώιμη οθωμανική Θεσσαλία*. Athens: Herodotos 2022. 312 pp. + 5 maps – ISBN 978-960-485-478-3

The present monograph by Alexios G.C. Savvides, based on a significant number of Byzantine sources, is a comprehensive review of the history of Thessaly during the late Byzantine and early Ottoman periods, filling an important gap in the relevant literature. It is true that the Thessalian region has been the subject of earlier studies by the author, which are now collected in this useful volume.

It begins with a foreword note (pp. XIII-XV) by Vasiliki Nerantzi-Varmazi, Professor Emerita at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, followed by an extended introduction by the author (pp. 3-14).

In Chapter I (pp. 17-72) the author deals mainly with the question of the naming of the rulers of Epirus and Thessaly after 1259, and the use of the names Angelos and Doukas, with an extensive bibliography; this is a subject which he also deals with in the Introduction of the book (pp. 11-12). In Chapter II (pp. 73-89), Prof. Savvides deals with late Byzantine prosopography, historical geography, and topography, based on the results of recent research. The chapter includes a table of both the most important aristocratic and less prominent families of central Hellas during the period between the 11th and 15th centuries. The following Chapter III (pp. 91-126) examines the historical development of the “Thessalian state” from the autonomy of John I Angelos Doukas Komnenos (1267/68) to the beginning of the 14th century. The focus here is on the view that the members of the family bore the name Angelos, not Doukas. This issue is also discussed by the author in the introduction of the book (pp. 11-12).

Chapter IV (pp. 127-200) discusses the raids by the Catalans, Albanians and Serbs, as well as to the period of Palaeologan rule and the flourishing of monasticism in Meteora. However, in our opinion, the discussion regarding the establishment of the Varlaam monastery in around 1350 (p. 194) would perhaps needs to be re-evaluated, since in contemporary sources such as the *Vita* of Hosios Athanasios, the mention is made to an ascetic named Varlaam, rather than to the foundation

of the Varlaam monastery. In the book the reader also finds references to privileges granted by emperor Andronikos III Palaiologos to the monastery of St Stephen (p. 194 n. 99), as well as to foundation of the Varlaam monastery by Hosios Athanasios Meteorites (p. 194 n. 99) and activities of Makarios of Ancyra in the Skete of Stagoi (p. 198). These references definitely need to be further elaborated and documented in more detail. For instance, the origin of Makarios from the edges of Thessaly (*ἐκ τῶν τῆς Θεσσαλίας ἐσχάτων*) does not necessarily correlate with present-day Thessaly, but with Macedonia, which was known by that name during the Byzantine era. A Thessalian origin (*ἐκ Θεσσαλίας*) is also attributed to the later Patriarch Gennadios II Scholarios which is quite doubtful (pp. 239-240). Finally, further clarification and discussion would have been useful regarding the re-establishment of the Great Meteoron in 1388 by John-Joasaph Uroš Palaiologos (pp. 199, 105).

Chapter V (pp. 201-222) deals with the Ottoman invasion and conquest. The author is mainly concerned with the chronology and conditions of the Ottoman conquest of Thessaly. After the publication of A.G.C. Savvides' book, Prof. F. Kotzageorgis quite recently brought to light a document (*biti*) of July 1394 from the Ottoman archives of the Great Meteoron monastery, which confirms the old rights of the Meteora monks and now needs to be accounted for as an important contribution to the topic.¹ In Chapter VI (pp. 223-240), Prof. Savvides pays particular attention to the activities of Turakhan Begh and his sons, as well as the nature of the transition from late Byzantine to Ottoman occupied Thessaly. The volume is completed by an extensive, though not exhaustive, bibliography (pp. 244-269), an English summary (pp. 273-282) and a detailed index of names, places, terms, concepts, and titles/offices (pp. 285-313). Finally, the five maps at the end are very useful and allow the readers to accurately orient themselves.

The book departs from the practice of linear historical narrative. Instead, the author focuses on individual themes, such as terms, places,

¹ F.P. Kotzageorgis, *Επανεκτιμώντας την πρόιμη οθωμανική παλαιογραφία και διπλωματική. Εννέα έγγραφα από το αρχείο της Ιεράς Μονής Μεγάλου Μετεώρου (1394-1434)* [Επιστημονικά Δημοσιεύματα 2], Holy and Imperial Monastery of the Holy and Great Meteoron 2022, p. 35 sq.

persons, titles, and issues related to population migration (Albanians, Serbs and Turks), as well as the role of influential Byzantine aristocratic households, such as those of the Melissenos, Gabrielopoulos and Philanthropenos. It also addresses the issue of social tensions in the region. In each chapter, the author includes excerpts from recent historiographical literature. The afore-mentioned approach, along with extensive historiographical overviews is often helpful, but can sometimes divert the reader's focus and interrupt the flow of the text.

The book provides a comprehensive bibliographical review of Late Byzantine Thessaly thus putting in second place the historical synthesis and treatment of individual issues. Furthermore, while the discussion is intriguing, the author's personal viewpoint is not always apparent. Several suggestions by other scholars are frequently cited, with the author occasionally expressing either agreement or concern. However, he often refrains from stating his own position.

In our view, certain issues are still in need of further elaboration or clarification to enhance the broader debate on Late Byzantine Thessaly. In particular:

- i) The author discusses feudal (or quasi-feudal) phenomena and cases of serfdom in Thessaly during the period. These terms may be controversial, and the reader could benefit from a more extensive discussion of the topic, based on 13th and 14th century written sources for the region. The author shares his views on the subject in a recently published book of his.²
- ii) On page 78, note 30: Goulenos is a place name of Slavic origin,³ not a personal name, and it occurs on the plains west of Trikala.
- iii) The author, when referring to the Albanians of Phanari in Western Thessaly (pp. 134-137), does not appear to make use of the most recent edition of the *horkomotikon* of Gabrielopoulos by D.Z. Sofianos. As highlighted in this edition, Gabrielopoulos

² A.G.C. Savvides, *Βυζαντινή Φεουδαρχία. Μια βιβλιογραφική επισκόπηση για το ζήτημα και για τον θεσμό της Πρόνοιας*, Athens 2023.

³ A. Delikari, Σλαβικές επιδράσεις στην περιοχή Τρικάλων. Η περίπτωση των τοπωνυμίων, *Trikalina* 42 (2022), 14-15.

promises to give no more grants of land (*pronoiai*) to the Albanians settled there (*οὐ μὴ προνοιάσω ἄλβανίτας*), which differs significantly from the earlier edition used by the author, which states that he will not allow others to settle in the area (*οὐ μὴ προσοικίσω*).⁴ The book's bibliographical appendix (p. 267) does include the more recent edition by Sofianos, but it does not seem to have been taken into account in this specific case.

iv) On page 158, Δαμάσι should be written instead of Δάμαση.

To summarize, the present book, which is the fruit of the author's long and meticulous study of Byzantine Thessaly and his considerable knowledge of the subject, is a valuable handbook for all those interested in the history of this specific region. Written in an accessible and simple style, the text maintains a balance between a thorough presentation of the existing literature up to 2022, along with a restrained analysis based on historiographical approaches. The issues addressed by the author are extensive and any minor omissions and/or oversights do not detract from the overall value of this work, which is engaging to read and provides a useful addition to the bibliography of the period and the region.

Demetrios Agoritsas, PhD

⁴ D.Z. Sofianos, Το «ορκωμοτικό γράμμα» (Ιούν. 1342) του Μιχαήλ Γαβριηλόπουλου προς τους Φαναριώτες της Καρδίτσας. Οι εκ των παραναγνώσεων και παραδιορθώσεων παρανοήσεις ενός ιστορικού ντοκουμέντου», in *Πρακτικά Α' Συνεδρίου για την Καρδίτσα και την περιοχή της (Καρδίτσα, 15-17 Απρ. 1994)*, έκδοση Λαϊκής Βιβλιοθήκης Καρδίτσας «Η Αθηνά», Karditsa 1996, pp. 33, 40.3.