Chapter 1.
Introduction to Cyprus Between the Sixth and Eighth Centuries

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There is a lot to say about Cyprus in the Long Late Antiquity. Whereas the geographical extent of this volume is clear, it is useful to clarify the definition of time in the title. Scholarship on Cyprus and elsewhere has traditionally been divided between the fourth to seventh centuries, 'Late Antiquity', and the seventh century onwards, the 'Byzantine period'. More specifically, for the later seventh to mid-ninth centuries, the term 'Byzantine Dark Ages' has long been common. As the amount of sufficiently good historical and archaeological data has increased, the term 'Dark Ages' has come under attack, including in this volume, but a viable alternative has not yet been proposed.[1]

No matter what terminology is preferred, in this traditional chronological scheme the seventh century is considered a boundary. Yet this scheme is based predominantly on historical sources, in this case sources describing the take-over by the Arabs of large parts of the eastern Mediterranean and North Africa. The appearance of the Arabs undeniably brought about significant changes to the organisation of commerce, communication, and administration. However, the impact of their arrival, attacks, and/or take-over would have been felt by different communities in different ways and to diverse degrees and levels. By increasing the chronological focus of the volume to encompass the sixth and eighth centuries, we have chosen to place the seventh century at the centre of inquiries and, therefore, to pay equal attention to elements of continuity as well as of interruption. For the same reason, we have opted to use the term Long Late Antiquity.[2] This term stresses the endurance of what came before but at the same time indicates that many ways of life and lines of production rooted in previous centuries ultimately did come to an end, at various moments in the seventh

[1] Proposals like 'Transitional period' (Ousterhout 1999, 3) or 'Invasion period' (Niewöhner (2017, 6) have their own problems. There is something to be said for reclaiming the neutral 'early Byzantine', currently more commonly applied to the fourth through sixth centuries than to indicate the seventh to mid-ninth, with the Middle Byzantine period starting in the mid-ninth.

[2] For a brief sketch of the history of this term, see Caraher and Scott Moore this volume.

or eighth century or thereafter, slowly and in a piecemeal manner giving way to a society that was 'Byzantine' rather than 'antique'.

Although late antique scholarship on Cyprus still perpetuates a long-standing emphasis on ecclesiastical architecture, décor, and typologies, a groundswell of publications over the last decade have begun to remedy this imbalance.[3] Even if interest in the seventh to ninth centuries has developed more slowly and initially was again somewhat selective,[4] the time is now right to introduce the reader to the wealth of research currently being conducted on the island and its material culture. We trust that this volume will be considered a useful contribution to the field by scholars working on the island itself, but we also want to emphasise that Cypriot archaeology has much to offer for the broader eastern Mediterranean, with which it remained tightly connected throughout the period under research. In this introduction, we place the papers in a more general framework and draw attention to points of interaction between the individual contributions. We then indicate some remaining gaps in knowledge and highlight potential directions of further exploration, before ending with a brief overview of the content of each chapter.

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A very brief overview of Cyprus from the sixth to the eight centuries

[3] See comments in Gordon and Caraher 2009. Since Theodoros Papadopoullos's (2005) and Michael Metcalf's (2009) volumes on Byzantine Cyprus, there has been an increasing stream of publications that focus on several issues of Late Antiquity, including domestic architecture (Costello 2014), churches (Papacostas 2015; Horster et al 2018), the fate of monumental architecture and classical sculpture (Panayides forthcoming), ecclesiastical history and hagiographies (Kim 2015; Jacobs 2016; Arfuch 2020; Efthymiadis 2020), as well as the fate of the island between Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages (Zavagno 2017). A major exhibition at the Louvre and its catalogue presented historical overviews and a rich array of objects from various collections pertaining to between the fourth and sixteenth centuries in Cyprus (Durand, Giovannoni, and Mastoraki 2012). Various aspects were also treated in publications of conferences that approached Late Antiquity either as a period of its own (Michaelides and Parani 2013) or as a transitional period: *From Roman to Early Christian Cyprus* (Bakirtzis, Luijendijk, and Nasrallah 2020) and *From Justinian I to the Coeur de Lion* (Stewart, Davis, and Carr 2014).

[4] The focus has been predominantly on ecclesiastical architecture and décor (Papacostas 1995; Papacostas 1999; Stewart 2008; Foulias 2011), lead seals, and coins (Metcalf 2009; Zavagno 2017). In terms of its coverage, Andreas I. Dikigoropoulos's thesis (1961) remains seminal though outdated.

There is a growing consensus that most of Anatolia and Syria-Palestine, as indeed Cyprus, remained prosperous in the sixth century, with especially the first half of the sixth century signifying a peak in construction and connectivity.[5] The prosperity of Cyprus was confirmed when it, together with the Asian province of Caria and the Aegean islands, was made part of the new administrative district of the *quaestura exercitus* in 536. In this peculiar arrangement, which is one of the few occasions on which Cyprus makes an appearance in wider overviews of the period,[6] highly interconnected provinces at the heartland of the empire were engaged to supply the troops at the Thracian frontier with provisions (Just. *Nov.* 41). There can be little doubt that this decision was highly beneficial for the island. It is likely to have provided an impetus for further growth and development, felt in both the urban centres as well as the countryside in the mid-sixth and seventh centuries (**Caraher and Scott Moore**, **Kassianidou**, **Panayides**, **Vionis**, **Zavagno**). The booming demand for large quantities of cereals, olive oil, wine, and other commodities fuelled agricultural production and artisanal activities, which had always formed the basis of the Cypriot economy. Numerous settlements in coastal areas and the hinterlands expanded or appeared anew and reached their apogee during this period (**Vionis**). By developing links with the urban centres on the coastline, these settlements were efficiently embedded within the trade routes of the Mediterranean, suggested inter alia by the distribution of Cypriot products, including ceramics and metal vessels, but also sigillographic and textual material (**Karagiorgou**, **Vionis**, **Zachariou-Kaila**, **Zavagno**). The Cypriot contribution likely included the renowned copper and minerals of the island (**Kassianidou**). Besides assuring access to new markets, this new configuration probably also stimulated social and pilgrimage traffic that increased the strategic importance of the island but also its economic dependence on Constantinople.[7]

As opposed to some of the more eastern regions, Cyprus was apparently spared from any kind of hostile attack throughout the sixth and far into the seventh century.[8] After hostilities in the eastern border regions in the first decades of the sixth century, the Persians invaded Syria in 540, famously sacking Antioch-ad-Orontes and Beroea, deporting their populations, and exacting large sums of money from other cities in Syria and Mesopotamia. Invasions continued throughout the following decades and took a heavy toll on the border

[5] Jacobs forthcoming.

[6] For instance, Roueché 2000.

[7] Rautman 2014, 51.

[8] For a possible Persian attack in 619 see Papacostas 2001, 108.

regions and north Syria especially, eventually leading to the Persian occupation of large parts of Syria-Palestine, Egypt, part of Asia Minor, and some islands in the Aegean Sea. Ironically, Cyprus seems to have benefited from the misfortune that befell its neighbours overseas. It received renowned war refugees, including St John the Almsgiver, bishop of Alexandria, who was likely responsible for the magnificent early seventh-century ecclesiastical complex at Akrotiri-*Katalymata ton Plakoton*.[9] But, more importantly, due to its strategic position, it was chosen for all Roman attempts at reconquest.[10] The future Emperor Heraclius (r. 610–41) had already launched his revolt against Phocas via the island in 609/10 and also struck coins here in the first years of his reign (**Zavagno**).[11] Because of its strategic importance, Cyprus in the early seventh century finally emerges into the spotlight of history.[12]

Heraclius's investment in Cyprus may be the reason why early seventh-century investments in large-scale construction appear to be more numerous, and indeed overall vibrancy more noticeable on Cyprus than in Asia Minor for instance (**Panayides**). The spectacular hoards found near Lambousa (**Zachariou-Kaila**), or at least the so-called David plates, have also been connected to the increased strategic importance of Cyprus as an imperial base in the Persian campaigns of Heraclius.[13] These plates, a seventh-century set of nine silver plates with scenes from the life of David, are probably the most illustrated late antique find from Cyprus (**Rautman**), remarkable because of their very high quality, the fact that they were made in Constantinople, probably in the palace workshops, their production date in the reign of Heraclius, and their regal iconography.

Whereas its position just behind the Byzantine-Persian frontier seems to have done Cyprus no harm and the island was never seriously threatened, this changed suddenly with two Arab raids in 649 and 650.[14] These raids have become the byword of a cataclysmic terminus which, on the one hand, left the island in a deplorable state and, on the other, marked the demise of classical urbanism and the abrupt end of Cypriot Antiquity.[15] Besides literary sources, the most important document related to the raids is an inscription once on

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[9] Procopiou 2018.

[10] Bowersock 2000, 20–21; Rapp 2004.

[11] Chrysos 1984; Metcalf 2009, 375–78.

[12] Papacostas 2001, 108.

[13] Leader 2000 presents an overview of scholarship, placing the plates within the context of early Byzantine artistic tradition; see also Merrillees 2009; Kalavrezou 2020.

[14] Christides 2006, 19–21.

[15] Cf. Papageorghiou 1975; Megaw 1986, 516; Papageorghiou 1993, 49; Metcalf 2009, 299–300.

display at the episcopal complex at Soloi, dated to 654/55 (**Chrysos**, **Deligiannakis**). This text, which provides the date of both Arab raids in 649 and 650 respectively, as well as numbers of casualties and fatalities, has often been treated as a first-hand historical account. Yet, not unlike chronographical sources, which served their agendas and, thus, often offered lively but fictitious information (**Chrysos**), this inscription also probably served specific goals—liturgical, rhetorical, political. We should, therefore, maintain a cautious awareness of the multivalent purposes of these sources before drawing on them for historical information.

As the Arabs have been consistently blamed for widespread damage to the cities and the countryside, the burning of basilicas, and the collapse of the economy, evidence of prosperity is conventionally dated before the mid-seventh century, whereas what comes after is characterised as gloomy and decadent. This artificial boundary has long been—and sometimes continues to be—counterproductive in identifying the material culture of the seventh and eighth centuries, as well as in understanding developments that had already been set in motion before the raids and which extended into the second half of the seventh and the eighth century (**Panayides**). In other ways as well, there has been over-interpretation of archaeological evidence. The discovery of Arabic inscriptions in basilicas is the most telling case. These have been used as evidence that the Arabs desecrated the shrines, although they bear funerary texts or prayers that may point instead to the shared use of the churches by both Christians and Arabs (**Panayides**).

Yet there are various indications in all our sources that disruption, if felt, was short-lived. Even the Soloi inscription not only associates the raids with destructions, but also praises the bishop for restoring the episcopal complex soon after the turmoil. In 655, the bishop of Nea Paphos read his newly-composed *Life* of St Spyridon on the saint's feast in Tremithus, where he was joined by the archbishops of Cyprus and Crete and the bishops of Tremithus, Kition, and Lapithos.[16] Evidently, not only the pilgrimage shrine survived but Christian feasts and gatherings also went on. Moreover, the *Life* attests to the maintenance of the road network, which linked the coastline with the hinterland, as well as to a well-organised network of ecclesiastical correspondence across the island less than five years after the raids.[17] The latter is also confirmed by sigillographic finds (**Karagiorgou**). Similarly, Anastasios Sinaita celebrated Easter in Amathus shortly after the raids, where he also

[16] van den Ven 1953, 89–90.

[17] Papacostas 2017.

attended the baptism of a Jew that was presided over by the bishop.[18] According to Anastasios, the basilica, baptistery, and bishop's palace were functioning as usual with several members of the clergy taking part in the celebrations. Anastasios also mentions an *ekatontarchos* (*centenarius*) residing in the city, a term used for sub-officers of military regiments, suggesting that members of the military machinery of the empire remained in Cyprus after the raids. Material culture, including numerous buckles from stratified contexts, also hints at forms of continuity in civic institutions beyond the mid-seventh century (**Zachariou-Kaila**).

Archaeology especially is instrumental in contradicting the narrative of univocal destruction and collapse. New excavations and surveys but also a re-examination of older results are swiftly augmenting evidence for ongoing renovations, smaller repairs, and/or slow abandonment (**Armstrong and Sanders**, **Caraher and Scott Moore**, **Maguire**, **Panayides**, **Vionis**), and in some cases significant new building (**Maguire**, **Panayides**, **Vionis**). More recent archaeological work confirms that older projects relied too heavily on historical sources and the epigraphic testimony mentioned. A combination and juxtaposition of all sources, as attempted in this volume, is, therefore, needed to come to a considered understanding of the nature and degree of change and adaptation to new situations.

Current and future research

A critical factor that hampers our understanding of various issues of Cypriot archaeology is the unfortunate and lingering political situation of the last fifty years (**Rautman**). As a result, fieldwork and surveys have been concentrated in the southern parts of the island, which has contributed to a kind of archaeological bias.[19] The contributions to this volume are based on data that derive from both old and new excavations and surveys. They all demonstrate that one way to rectify the imbalance in archaeological research between the island's north and south is by delving into archives and museum storerooms. Certainly, there is still much knowledge to be gleaned from unpublished material as well as by revisiting old finds and theories.

[18] Nau 1903, 71–75.

[19] Knapp et al 1994, 433–34; Knapp and Antoniadou 1998, 31–32; Pilides and Mina 2017.

Dating remains of the Long Late Antiquity remains difficult and often it is only possible to suggest a date in a very tentative manner. Unsurprisingly, the issue of dating comes up in many papers in this volume (**Caraher and Scott Moore**, **Karagiorgou**, **Maguire**, **Nicolaou**, **Nowakowski**, **Panayides**, **Vionis**). The most widespread method by which both architecture and artefacts have been dated is through coin association (e.g., for silverware as described in **Zachariou-Kaila**). But coins of the later seventh and eighth centuries are rare.[20] Moreover, as pointed out by **Armstrong and Sanders** in this volume, dates derived from associated coins are proving to be a lot less reliable than previously thought; the minting date of coins only provides the broadest of termini post quem.[21] This means that a revisiting of older assessments of dates is highly desirable, all the more so since archaeological remains are likely to have been provided with dates in the sixth or early seventh century because it was inconceivable that there was much activity in the seventh and eighth centuries.

Significant progress has already been made in revising the chronology of ceramics, with the life-span of certain types of wares extended into the eighth and even ninth centuries.[22] Coarse wares from the theatre at Nea Paphos, for instance, continued into the eight century, while late variants of Late Roman amphorae were excavated in layers of the late seventh and eighth centuries in Amathus, Soloi, Kourion, and Nea Paphos, suggesting that trade with the Levant continued past the raids (**Panayides**).[23] Four different products with wide distribution continued without any doubt into the eighth century and potentially beyond: Dhiorios cooking pots were manufactured in a factory-like setting on the eponymous site into the eighth century. They probably found their way into Turkey, Palestine, and as far away as the Adriatic.[24] Archaeologists have only recently been able to identify handmade cooking pots, which date between the second quarter of the seventh century and the middle of the eighth century, in various Cypriot sites, including Kourion, Kalavasos-*Kopetra*, Maroni-*Petrera*, Nea Paphos, Kofinou-*Panagia*, Choirokoitia-*Panagia tou kampou*, Akrotiri-*Katalymata ton plakoton*, and Polis tis Chrysochou (**Armstrong and Sanders**, **Caraher and**

[20] Rautman 1998, 84; Metcalf 2009, 44.

[21] Similarly, at Ephesus several contexts have been documented in which coins of Heraclius occur alongside ceramic forms attributed to the later seventh century, indicating that they remained in use for several generations (Ladstätter 2019, 29).

[22] Armstrong 2009; Gabrieli 2020, 449.

[23] Gabrieli et al, 2007, 796–7; Randall 2013, 279.

[24] Vionis et al 2009, 195–96; Randall 2013, 280.

Scott Moore, **Vionis**).[25] A 'derivative' of Late Roman 1 amphorae was produced in Cyprus (and elsewhere) into the eighth century as well, whereas the so-called dimple-bottomed jugs are apparently an eighth-century product only.[26] Late Roman D table wares ('Cypriot Red Slip wares') were produced on the coasts of Turkey opposite Cyprus and imported into the eighth century if not later.[27] Consequently, already in 2009, Pamela Armstrong pointed to the necessity to disregard the Arab invasions as a decisive factor in the development of material culture.[28]

Intertwined with issues of dating is that of recognisability of ceramics but also that of all other material culture of the second half of the seventh and even more so of the post-seventh centuries. Hand- and slow-wheel-made cooking vessels of the later seventh and eighth centuries have, for instance, until recently been mistaken for prehistoric material.[29] In new excavations, greater attention to the characteristics of material culture in stratigraphic layers in between those of the more recognisable sixth and first half of the seventh centuries, on the one hand, and those of the again recognisable second half of the ninth century, on the other, would offer a way forward, even in the absence of associated datable coins or pottery.

Research on cities, so central to the archaeology of Late Antiquity, for the Long Late Antiquity is very much ongoing. There are few published remains that have been dated explicitly to the period under research. However, as is made clear by **Panayides** in this volume, the archaeological record and archaeological publications can be reinterpreted if one keeps in mind that this period still saw significant occupation and investment. We can only reiterate that a comprehensive examination and at least partial revision of older dates in the light of new advances in ceramic studies, as noted in various papers in this volume (**Armstrong and Sanders**, **Caraher and Scott Moore**, **Vionis**), is required. This will alter for instance also our appreciation of industrial installations within cities. Glass and metal workshops in church precincts or other public buildings in the past have been dismissed because they were associated with abandonment phases, but, in fact, bear testimony to the ongoing commercial role of cities. Although most of these workshops were dismantled during excavation (**Panayides**), the gap can still be redressed through the multidisciplinary

[25] Rautman 1998; Vionis 2020, 302–3.

[26] Vionis 2020, 299.

[27] Armstrong 2009, 158–67.

[28] Armstrong 2009, 178.

[29] Rautman 1998, 90; Randall 2013, 280.

study of their products, their manufacturing techniques, chemical composition, typologies, and distribution (**Zachariou-Kaila**).

The enhanced importance of the church in civic building projects as well as the production of raw commodities, and the manufacturing and re-distribution of agricultural and industrial products, is discussed in many contributions (**Karagiorgou**, **Panayides**, **Vionis**, **Zachariou-Kaila**, **Zavagno**). Moreover, an ever-increasing research interest in churches has added significantly to our knowledge on the evolution of ecclesiastical architecture. The erection of new churches and several innovations, including the replacement of marble columns with piers and the introduction of vaults and domes (**Maguire**), are now considered developments that originate in the later seventh and eighth centuries, thus, disproving the earlier stance that the period did not see any new constructions.[30] **Maguire**'s observations are all the more useful as, despite a long-standing scholarly interest in early Christian basilicas, only a few studies of them have reached final publication. A more systematic study of the remains and the compilation of a corpus that will also consider wider aspects, such as architectural planning and innovations, social and political aspirations, or economic functions, remains much needed.[31] Such a corpus could also offer contextual data indispensable for studying cultural interactions in the later seventh and eighth centuries, and the multifaceted role of the church, as well as the fate of the cities and the countryside during the period.

Finally, it is worth nothing that in scholarship on Cyprus, natural events take a back seat to human actions. Historical sources are silent about earthquakes during the period, although their effect has sometimes been visible in the archaeological record (**Armstrong and Sanders**, **Maguire**, **Panayides**). **Kassianidou** and **Vionis** consider the effect of climatic and environmental conditions on agricultural patterns and copper extraction respectively. Yet, according to **Vionis**, the evidence of climatic fluctuations attested elsewhere and known as the 'Dark Ages Cold Period', is not backed up by recent scientific data from Cyprus.[32] The historical sources do not explicitly mention Cyprus in relation to the Justinianic Plague either, which is often cited as a factor contributing to population decline in other regions of the

[30] Papacostas 1999; Stewart 2008; Stewart 2014.

[31] Horster et al 2018, 10–11.

[32] Haldon et al. 2014, 126.

empire.[33] Given the trade links of the island with regions that were hit by the pandemic, however, it is unreasonable to expect that Cyprus remained unaffected. **Kassianidou** suggests that the low standards of living in the mining regions of the island may have favoured the spread of infections among workers and, eventually, affected the mining industry of Cyprus. Mass burials, which were excavated in Nea Paphos, Amathus, and Kalavasos-*Sirmata* and were initially connected with the Arab raids on the basis of seventh-century ceramics, may also have been testimonies to the frequent recurrences of the plague.[34] This is all the more plausible since recent osteological analysis of skeletal remains from Amathus casts doubt over the impact of a catastrophic event on the mortality of the individuals.[35]

Multidisciplinary projects on Cyprus are increasing in number and variety. In addition to the bioarchaeological research such as at Amathus, a more systematic sampling of stratified charcoal from slag heaps is providing independent results to assess whether copper extraction ended in the eight century or continued on a smaller scale thereafter (**Kassianidou**). Similarly, petrographic analyses and geological research can complete our knowledge on the logistics of itinerant stone workshops that were active in the seventh and eighth centuries (**Nicolaou**). Such projects, therefore, promise to be a reliable counterbalance to historical explanations in interpreting the archaeological record.

Overview of the papers in this volume

An overview of the increase of interest in Late Antiquity and the special role played by archaeology is provided by **Marcus Rautman**. Rautman summarises the development of research aims and methods from the earliest collections of individual objects and the first excavations of late antique churches and tombs in the second half of the nineteenth century until the varied multidisciplinary research projects of today. This contribution provides a concise overview of the state of archaeological research into late antique Cyprus, pointing out well-explored areas versus remaining gaps in the scholarship. Some of latter are dealt with in

[33] Stathakopoulos 2004 for an overview of epidemics, including plague in the late Roman and early Byzantine period, and their consequences for social life. Little 2007; Benovitz 2014; McCormick 2015.

[34] Amathus: Procopiou 1995; Procopiou 1996; Nea Paphos: *BCH* 112 (1988), 849–55; Kalavasos-*Sirmata*: Fox et al 2012: 68–69.

[35] Karligkioti 2021.

subsequent articles in the volume, including the later history of urban monuments (**Panayides**), the need to revisit pottery chronologies (**Armstrong and Sanders**), and copper extraction (**Kassianidou**).

After this setting of the scene and an overview of scholarship, the first section in the book focuses on the non-archaeological sources for the fate of Cyprus in the Long Late Antiquity. The first three articles deal with real or perceived moments of catastrophic disruption in the seventh century. **Young Richard Kim** turns to hagiography, a literary tradition that flourished on the island from the fifth through the seventh centuries, but the remains of which are few and disproportionate. Kim explores and juxtaposes the lives of two of the most famous Cypriot bishop-saints, the fourth-century Epiphanius and the early seventh-century John the Almsgiver, each representing a 'bookend' of a conventional periodisation of Late Antiquity. The *vita* of Epiphanius confirms our understanding of Cyprus as an essential hub in the wider Mediterranean, where travel and correspondence was easy and frequent, and could even be conducted over the Roman-Persian border. The *vita* of John the Almsgiver tells of the persistence of maritime interconnectedness into the early seventh century, but the Persians were clearly advancing and the eventual expulsion of John from Alexandria to his native Cyprus is constructed as a catastrophic collapse and the end of Antiquity. Of course, saints' lives describe imagined worlds, inspired by the real but refashioned by their authors to set the stage for their subjects to demonstrate holiness and miraculous power. In particular, as John's arrival on Cyprus has been associated with the construction of the extensive and highly decorated ecclesiastical complex at Akrotiri-*Katalymata ton Plakoton*, it is difficult to consider the fall of Egypt to the Persians as detrimental for the island.

By contrast, there is no doubt that the Arab raids of the mid-seventh century were highly impactful, even though there is remaining disagreement about the extent and longevity of the consequences. **Evangelos Chrysos** revisits the Greek and oriental historical sources for these events and argues for a much more critical reading of assertations made in the Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor and other Christian chronological narratives on the arrival and first decades of Arab presence. Likewise, Chrysos concludes that the ninth-century Arab sources that claim to describe seventh-century events and arrangements need to be treated very cautiously. In his opinion, the historical value of the inscription of the basilica at Soloi is far greater and this document should, therefore, be given priority in all discussions of Cyprus in the mid-seventh century. Consequently, Chrysos argues for the accuracy of this document both when it comes to situating the second invasion in the year 650 rather than in

653, as given in literary sources, and the high numbers of casualties and captives. He concludes by specifying that the events of the mid-seventh century did not lead to any kind of established Arab authority on the island.

Georgios Deligiannakis places the events of the mid-seventh century in their wider historical context, offering a brief overview of the island's prosperity starting in the mid-fourth century and at least in part connected to the island's position on international trade and exchange routes. Deligiannakis supports Chrysos's view of a drastic disruption to the island in the mid-seventh century, however, and considers the change to Cyprus's fortune to have been fast and long-lasting. Even when taking differences between regions and sites into account, the new monetary demands placed on the island, in the form of taxes to the Roman Empire and tributes to the caliphate, likely put a heavy strain on the economic vitality of the Cypriot population. Moreover, he suggests that the Arab settlers in the south took over the maritime trade from the Cypriots, depriving them of this source of income that had served them so well in the past.

Olga Karagiorgou's analysis of episcopal seals makes it possible to comment on some of the happenings after the first Arab raids, for which other historical sources are very rare. Based on a re-examination of the corpus of seals gathered by David M. Metcalf in 2004 and 2014, in combination with more recent finds, Karagiorgou reconstructs the reasons for the transfer of archbishop Ioannes and his flock from Salamis/Constantia to Cyzicus at the end of the seventh century, as well as the circumstances of their return only seven years later. She furthermore is able to comment on the direction and to a certain extent also the intensity of local and international correspondence conducted by the archbishops of Cyprus between 600 and 800, and to propose an updated chronological sequence of the archbishops of the island in the Long Late Antiquity.

The analysis of the seals of this period already underlines that Cyprus was in no way cut off from the wider world, a line of thought that is explored in more detail in **Luca Zavagno**'s paper. Zavagno reviews archaeological and sigillographic evidence from Cyprus, Sardinia, Sicily and Crete and sees continued—albeit diminished—connectivity and associated vitality, with islands and harbours remaining essential for the Byzantine navy as well as for supply routes and commercial enterprises and interactions. Byzantine and Umayyad presence on these islands translated into diverse military installations and administrative arrangements adapted to local circumstances, but certainly did not halt trade or communication. As in his 2017 monograph, Zavango takes a much more optimistic view on

Cyprus after the mid-seventh century and argues for slow transition and continuity rather than the radical break suggested in the previous papers.

The survival of urban centres on Mediterranean islands already mentioned by Zavagno is explored in the first of the papers in the second part of the volume, which gathers evidence pertaining to activities and settlement organisation in urban and rural contexts between the sixth and the eighth centuries. **Panayiotis Panayides** examines in detail the archaeological evidence for the built environment of four cities, Salamis/Constantia, Nea Paphos, Amathus, and Kourion. As he considers not just new construction but also renovations and repairs, often executed with more humble materials than past construction phases, as well as the evidence provided by assemblages of artefacts and ecofacts, a much more detailed picture of the consequences of the Arab raids and a much fuller picture of occupation in the seventh and eighth centuries emerges. Even if specific buildings burned in the middle of the seventh century, subsequent comprehensive communal building activities, continued artisanal and commercial activities, and large-scale food preparation and consumption underline the continued importance of urban centres. Ecclesiastic authorities probably were the main power based in these larger centres, overseeing public works but also deeply involved in the production of goods and processing of agricultural produce. Panayides also points out the lack of evidence for the once presumed Arab deconsecration of basilicas. Church compounds in particular show resumed or continued activity throughout the period, a theme that is picked up again in the papers by **Richard Maguire** and also by **Doria Nicolaou** later on in the volume.

The contribution by **Pamela Armstrong and Guy Sanders** revisits the published table wares from the excavations of the episcopal complex at Kourion, the associated coins, and their contexts. Starting from a rigorous examination of the coin evidence from contexts at sites such as the Athenian Agora, Emporio on Chios, and Antioch, upon which current understanding of the chronologies of late Roman ceramics are largely based, they reassess the table ware chronology. Methodologically, their contribution emphasises the importance of use-wear analysis in the circulation of coins and their dating. The Kourion case-study provides an excellent paradigm to demonstrate the effects of a revised chronology on historical and cultural interpretation, as the end date of site occupation can be raised by at least two generations. The potential of this research is enormous, as a similar revision of current chronologies at other sites, with a concomitant reassignment of the full range of associated material culture, will contribute to a fuller understanding of the Long Late

Antiquity in the wider eastern Mediterranean and be essential in deconstructing the myth of a 'dark' age.

Richard Maguire's contribution focusses on the architectural changes within churches on Cyprus in the Long Late Antiquity, notably the replacement of columns with piers, and timber roofs with vaults and eventually with a file of three domes. Despite the availability of columns from abandoned buildings as well as the possibility of making columns from rubble and gypsum plaster, architects generally resisted both. That piers were a conscious choice is suggested by evidence that the first pier basilicas carried the same timber roofs formerly carried by columns. Therefore, whether they carried timber, vaults, or a file of three axially aligned domes, piers were more than simply the adjunct of what they supported, but a new and creative choice on the part of the architects—with the additional advantage of offering new opportunities for mural painting. As in most other articles in this volume dealing with material evidence, Maguire also seeks to loosen connections made between these architectural changes and the historical events of the sixth and seventh centuries.

The paper by **William Caraher** and **R. Scott Moore** offers an equally detailed analysis for the areas of EF2 and EF1 at the site of Polis (ancient Arsinoe). Here as well, chronological schemes based on historical events are of little relevance when studying archaeological levels. Changes in the area of EF2 occur in the century after a possible second-century earthquake and, therefore, predate the traditional beginning of Late Antiquity. At the same time, the comparison of the ceramic assemblage from the small suburban site of EF1 to that associated with the second phase of the South Basilica at Polis suggests that the reconstruction, expansion, and elaboration of the church may well date to the eighth century. These results suggest that patterns of urbanism established sometime after the second century continued for over five centuries along the northern edge of the city of Arsinoe, thus expanding the length of Late Antiquity.

In the final article in this section the focus is broadened to incorporate the countryside of Cyprus in the Long Late Antiquity. After an enormously prosperous sixth century, archaeological research in the countryside seems to point towards the transformation of the rural settlement network from a nucleated to dispersed model, the network scattering into a cluster of small sites in the open country. **Athanasios K. Vionis** attempts to understand the transition from Antiquity to the Byzantine world in the Xeros River valley on the southern coast of Cyprus through a landscape approach. Based on the results of the *Settled and Sacred Landscapes of Cyprus* archaeological project, his paper examines evidence for settlement transformation through the expansion of settlements from coastal valleys to inland plains and

hills already during Late Antiquity, a transformation suggestive of an 'internal colonialism' plan. He furthermore highlights the crystallisation of this settlement pattern into the Byzantine early Middle Ages, when settlements in the island's interior became dominant and controlled agricultural lands and scattered sites in the half-empty coastal lowlands. Finally, Vionis also stresses the continuous presence of the church and its possible role in settlement formation and land supervision throughout the early Middle Ages, replacing previous local central places.

The third major section gathers production and artefactual perspectives on the Long Late Antiquity. We first return to ecclesiastical architecture with **Doria Nicolaou**'s paper on a workshop of stone carvers producing limestone furniture, mainly chancel screens, for at least thirteen sites on the island, mostly located in the Mesaoria plain. Although some of these objects have been published as fifth- or sixth-century artefacts, based on an iconographic and stylistic analysis and comparisons with other regions, she proposes to re-date this group to the seventh or maybe even eighth century. This would go well with the continued interventions to church architecture already discussed in the contributions by Panayides, Maguire, Caraher, and Scott Moore.

Pawel Nowakowski discusses an entirely different category of Christian material culture: small objects inscribed with texts illustrating the fears, hopes, and expectations of ordinary people. His paper discusses how such objects, apparently made to order for specific people, showing signs of Christianised ritual practices, imitated the shape and material, the textual structure, the purpose, and the modus operandi of non-Christian or mixed-religion personalised amulets from Cyprus and beyond. He offers, amongst other things, a new edition of a Christian protective charm from a limestone shard found at the locality of Agios Nikolaos, near Lythrodontas (Nicosia). This shard points to the importance of Cypro-Alexandrian hagiographical traditions, but is also a rich source for passages from liturgical texts and short prayers, and can contribute to our general knowledge of Cypriot liturgy of its time.

Vasiliki Kassianidou then provides the first comprehensive overview of copper production in Cyprus between the fourth and the eighth centuries. She argues that the extensive exploitation of the rich copper ore deposits of the Troodos foothills, which reached an industrial scale, greatly contributed to the flourishing of Cyprus in the late antique period. She points out that this increased exploitation was a result of the split of the Roman Empire and the demise of mining regions in western Mediterranean. As the eastern Roman Empire could no longer rely on the copper mines of Iberia or Austria, there was a need to boost

production within its realm. Making use of the archaeological evidence gathered during two major survey projects, the *Sydney Cyprus Survey Project* and the *Troodos Archaeological and Environmental Survey Project*, Kassianidou then considers the effect this production had on the landscape and environment, and contemplates possible reasons for its complete halt at the end of this period. She also discusses formerly unknown evidence, which confirms that copper extraction survived the Arab raids and even continued into the eighth century in northwest Cyprus. The results were obtained by radiocarbon dating, the deployment of which also serves as a counterweight to historical explanations.

Some of the end products of the Cypriot copper industry are discussed in the following paper by **Eftychia Zachariou-Kaila**, who offers a most comprehensive view of metal everyday objects, namely table wares, lightning devices, weighing equipment and weights, items of personal adornment, ritual utensils, and church implements, used in the Long Late Antiquity in Cyprus and currently held in the collections of the Department of Antiquities.

Finally, **Jody Michael Gordon** brings the very diverse strands of research presented in this volume together again in a concluding chapter.

Even though we brought together a wide-ranging number of topics and articles in this volume and have covered significant ground, there is of course always more that can be done. In addition to the papers gathered here, the conference that lay at the foundation of this volume also included papers by Ruth Smadar Gabrieli on handmade pottery and the transition to the eighth century,[36] by Vivien Prigent on coinage and monetary circulation on Byzantine Cyprus, and by Philip Booth on the 'lost' *Life* of Spyridon, another work written by Leontios of Neapolis, while Eleni Procopiou provided an overview of ecclesiastical architecture that may be associated with St John the Almsgiver, both in the centre of Amathus and at Akrotiri.[37] Work on the progression from Antiquity and Byzantium has only just begun, but this is what makes this research so exciting.

Acknowledgements

[36] Gabrieli 2020.

[37] Procopiou 2021.

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Note to the reader

The spellings of Cypriot geographical names generally follow the publication by M. N. Christodoulou and K. Konstantinidis, *A Complete Gazetteer of Cyprus*, Vol. 1. Nicosia: The Cyprus Permanent Committee for the Standardization of Geographical Names, 1987. Moreover, in keeping with the conventions of Cypriot archaeological literature, archaeological sites are referred to using two elements, e.g., Akrotiri-*Katalymata ton plakoton*. The former, non-italicised, place name (Akrotiri) refers to the nearest modern town or village in the territory of which the site is located, according to cadastral maps. The latter, italicised, name (*Katalymata ton plakoton*) corresponds to the toponym of the locality that is nearest to the site (or the site itself).

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