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*The Last Centuries of Byzantium, 1261-1453*

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The district of Epiros in north-western Greece became an independent province following the Fourth Crusade and the dismemberment of the Byzantine Empire by the Latins in 1204. It retained its independence despite the recovery of Constantinople by the Greeks in 1261. Each of its rulers acquired the Byzantine titles of Despot, from which the term Despotate was coined to describe their territory. They preserved their autonomy partly by seeking support from their foreign neighbours in Italy. The fortunes of Epiros were thus affected by the expansionist plans of the Angevin kings of Naples and the commercial interests of Venice. Until 1318 it was governed by direct descendants of its Byzantine founder. Thereafter it was taken over first by the Italian family of Orsini, then conquered by the Serbians, infiltrated by the Albanians, and appropriated by an Italian adventurer, Carlo Tocco. Like the rest of Byzantium and eastern Europe it was ultimately absorbed into the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth century. The Despotate of Epiros illuminates part of Byzantine history and of the history of Greece in the Middle Ages.

These essays by medievalists touch upon many aspects of intercultural links in the medieval Mediterranean, covering not only strictly cultural and religious contacts, but also political, military, ethnic, social institutional, scientific and technological relationships.

The Principality of Epirus was a medieval Greek state established in the western part of the Balkans after the fall of Constantinople to the forces of the Fourth Crusade in 1204. The Epirote rulers from the Komnenos Doukas family claimed to be legitimate successors to the Byzantine imperial throne and, with the support of the high clergy and the aristocracy within their domain, carefully maintained their Byzantine identity under the conditions of exile. This book explores a corpus of Epirote architecture, frescoes, sculpture, and inscriptions from the early thirteenth to the early fourteenth century within a

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comparative and interdisciplinary framework, focusing on the nexus of art, patronage, and political ideology. Through an examination of a vast array of visual and textual sources, many of them understudied or hitherto unpublished, the book uncovers how the Epirote elite mobilised art and material culture to address the issues of succession and legitimacy, construct memory, reclaim Constantinople, and mediate encounters and exchanges with the Latin West. In doing so, this study offers a new perspective on Byzantine political and cultural history in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade.

Examining a wide body of sources this book offers a comprehensive analysis of late Byzantine attitudes to warfare and places late Byzantine military ethos, thought and practice in the wider geographical, cultural and historical context.

What kind of lives did women in the Byzantine empire lead? Just how subservient were they in so male-dominated a society? In this collection of biographies Donald M. Nicol uncovers the unexpected fact that in the later years of the empire, at least, some aristocratic women enjoyed influence and exercised initiative. The ten ladies whose lives are described here did not complain of male oppression: instead, despite the conventions of caste and court, they found an outlet for their talents in religion, patronage, friendship and scholarship. They left a lasting influence on the society in which they lived. The story of their achievements offers new perspectives on the Byzantine empire, and a fascinating insight into the lives of women in past times.

The Byzantine empire was one of the most powerful forces in the Mediterranean and Near East for over a thousand years. Strong military organization, in particular widespread fortifications, was essential for its defense. Yet this aspect of its history is often neglected, and no detailed overview has been published for over thirty years. That is why Nikos Kontogiannis's ambitious account of Byzantine fortifications - their construction and development and their role in times of war - is such a valuable and timely publication. His ambitious study combines the results of decades of wide-ranging archaeological work with an account of the armies, weapons, tactics and defensive strategies of the empire throughout its long history. Fortifications built in every region of the empire are covered, from those in Mesopotamia, Syria and Africa, to those in Asia Minor, the Aegean and the Balkan peninsula. This all-round survey is essential reading and reference for anyone with a special interest in the Byzantine empire and in the wider history of fortification.

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