

BYZANTINE AND TURKISH HIERAPOLIS (PAMUKKALE): AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL GUIDE

BY PAUL ARTHUR. PP. 192, B&W FIGS. 18, COLOR FIGS. 87. EGE YAYINLARI, ISTANBUL 2006. 20 YTL. ISBN 975-807-134-3 (CLOTH).

This book has two titles and attempts to be two books: a guide to an archaeological site meant for the general reader, and a basic historical narrative for the region of the Lykos Valley. Hierapolis has already been the subject of another guide by Francesco d'Andria. Unlike d'Andria's, this book aims for the approachable and unintimidating rather than for analytical breadth and depth. In the author's own words, this guide is "quite ambitious in trying to tell a story, as well as being a preliminary report of work in progress" (8).

The book begins with a "historical framework," in which Arthur traces the history of the city and its hinterland from Hellenistic to Ottoman times. In the early seventh century, Hierapolis was devastated by Persian armies and an equally destructive earthquake. At a time when Byzantium, according to Arthur, was becoming "evermore Greek and Oriental" (19), the town experienced a slow recovery: new buildings and imports of ceramics and coins. By the late 11th century, Hierapolis faced another threat, the quick expansion of the Seljuk sultanate of Konya, which, according to Arthur, was "what we recognize as Turkey" (21). Crusaders under Frederick Barbarossa visited the town to pay respect to the memory of St. Philip. Less than three decades later, Hierapolis was abandoned. A Seljuk fort was built at Hierapolis in the 1220s, perhaps under Manuel Maurozomenes, the father-in-law of Gıyaseddin Keyhüsrev I and his ally against Emperor Theodore I Laskaris. Occupation of the fort ended in the late 1300s, when the site was eventually abandoned for good.

The second section of the book consists of 11 "archaeological themes," ranging from natural environment to fortifications, water supplies, houses, burials, pottery, and coins. Specialized concepts are defined, and methods used for the classification of artifacts (esp. pottery) are discussed. The explanations are accurate, concise, and free of professional jargon. Lavishly illustrated, this section is clearly intended for the general reader, as it points especially to aspects that may attract the interest of tourists. For example, the author points to a number of fossilized leaves and plant remains from the travertine water channels crisscrossing the ruins of the town (39, fig. 10).

But Arthur's goal is also to educate the tourist in basic archaeology, as is evident from his illustration of a section through the infill of the agora. Its caption reads, "Note the darker layer representing an ancient land surface, about half way up" (41). At times, Arthur's interpretation of the archaeological evidence may seem contradictory. While in the first section of the book, the fort at Hierapolis is said to have been built in the 1220s (27), in the subsection dedicated to fortifications in the second part of the book, Arthur finds it difficult to "imagine the Byzantine population of Hierapolis devoid of defences during the twelfth century" (45) and even hints at a possible Comnenian foundation.

By far the most interesting subsection is that dedicated to the road system, particularly the description of the alteration of the so-called Frontinus Street. Following the seventh-century earthquake, the surface of that street was

gradually raised and narrowed until it became a winding track and eventually ceased to function as a street (46–8, fig. 12).

The Italian excavations in Hierapolis also produced a number of interesting Byzantine-age houses, including an 11th-century courtyard house, which seems to have had at least one room with a second floor. By contrast, the Seljuk-era buildings in Hierapolis known so far consist of footings for domed tents (which Arthur calls “yurts,” despite the fact that the word initially meant “territory” or “camp-site”) and stone- or tile-lined pit hearths. A Late Ottoman farmhouse was built on the site after its abandonment; its architecture is compared with mudbrick buildings in modern Pamukkale.

Conspicuously absent for the later phases of occupation is the evidence of burials. A Byzantine farm complex facing the agora and a hoard of agricultural tools (including a plowshare) found in the 11th-century courtyard house imply that by then the site had already lost its urban character.

The subsection on pottery consists of an elaborate discussion of the abundant ceramic remains. Ceramics is one of Arthur’s specialties, and his remarks on the local Micaceous ware with applied finger-impressed decoration, and the sgraffito and regional Zeuxippus wares, may be viewed as an important contribution to the fast-growing body of literature on Byzantine pottery.

The remaining section of the book—slightly less than half—is an itinerary describing site by site the main area of excavation and explaining the physical remains visible (or now invisible). At various points, the visitor is invited to enter the fortified town through the “proto-Byzantine”

(129) gate or to cross through the undergrowth from the Pier Church in the direction of the theater to visit the “Three-aisled Church” (148). This suggests that the itinerary is meant primarily for visitors, a conclusion substantiated by the inclusion of information about neighboring sites reachable by car, such as Laodicea, Ak Han, Hisarköy, and Honaz. The final section of the book includes a glossary and a select bibliography.

If the intention of the press Ege Yayınları is to broaden the appeal of their titles, then this book is a good reason to congratulate them for presenting such titles in the style of academic textbooks. Photographs and drawings are of excellent quality and equally interesting to the archaeologist and the tourist. I have few criticisms. While a firmer editorial hand may have eliminated a few misspellings or typographical errors, the mention of “barbarian hordes from the Russian steppes” (42) migrating toward the Mediterranean region during the fourth century will surely raise a few eyebrows. Nonetheless, *Byzantine and Turkish Hierapolis* is a fine book: rich in detail yet readable, combining written and archaeological sources yet firm in its commitment to bring forward the material remains. It is masterfully clear where the subject is most complex yet written elegantly for an audience of both professionals and nonprofessionals.

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