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# INSULAR URBANISM IN BYZANTIUM

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### **Introduction: The insular Worlds of Byzantium**

Traditionally, islands have not attracted a good deal of attention on the part of Byzantine historiography. <sup>1</sup> In truth, if one leaves aside the pulverized constellation of islets dotting the Aegean basin, which was regarded as part and parcel of the Byzantine heartland in the seventh to ninth century and the real economic pillar of the empire from the tenth century till 1204, the islands of Byzantine Mediterranean have been regarded as mere distant outposts and peripheral worlds.<sup>2</sup> The bigger ones, like Crete, Cyprus, and Sicily, have attracted a good deal of attention, although the latter has often been regarded as a sort of black hole in Byzantine archaeology till a few decades ago; the smallest like Malta or those perceived as too distant from the Constantinopolitan center, like Sardinia or the Balearics, have often been neglected. One must, however, admit that in the past few decades, scholars have slowly moved away from this traditional historiographical approach regarding islands simply as marginal to the political, social, and economic changes the Byzantine heartland was experiencing, from the seventh century until they were recaptured by the gravity of an expanding Empire in the tenth century (Crete and Cyprus) or were lost forever (Sicily, together with Sardinia Malta and the Balearics).<sup>3</sup> Better and better-published archaeology, as well as a refined analysis of the material culture, the ability to pinpoint the chronological markers, and, finally, an attempt to frame islands within a Mediterranean comparative approach, has led to propose a new interpretative models for the economic, political, administrative, and cultural history of the abovementioned Byzantine islands.

Although an all-encompassing alternative to the only existing systematic account on the history of the Byzantine insular world has yet to be produced, scholars like Salvatore Cosentino, Enrico Zanini, and Myrto Veikou have recently tried to re-assess the role of islands in the Byzantine Medieval Mediterranean.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, a preliminary caveat must be made at the onset of this contribution, for the historiographical re-discovery of large Byzantine islands has not entirely hinged on urban archaeology, for often (and with the exception of Kastro Apalirou in Naxos, Gortyn in Crete, and Salamis-Constantia in Cyprus, which however remains inaccessible to archaeologists due to the current political situation on the island) the most important insular cities are still occupied and had sketchy excavations.

Intensive and extensive surveys across the countryside of different islands, as well as a focus on rural villas and ecclesiastical buildings (from the large early Byzantine basilicas on Cyprus and the Balearics to small Medieval rural churches in Sardinia),<sup>5</sup> have helped to assess “settlement transformation in island systems of the Eastern Mediterranean [and] to describe different aspects of its inhabitants’ flexibility to ‘adjust’ to constant changes of power, trade networks, and cultural interactions-usually provoked by the central administration.”<sup>6</sup> This, in turn, has allowed redefining the very concept of islands and promotes the alternative notion of “islandness” as describing the political changes, social constructions, and cultural perceptions that characterised insular spaces.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, it is important to stress the location of insular urban sites along the so-called maritime continuation of the “frontiers” of the Byzantine Empire (and, in particular, the eastern one with the Caliphate).<sup>8</sup> In fact, urban archaeology, rural surveys, and a more punctual and comparative analysis of pottery and coins have led to conclude that islands possibly acted as a third political and economic pole between the Anatolian plateau and the Aegean Sea in the Byzantine Mediterranean, rather than as a marginal area at the border of two conflicting polities (the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic Caliphate).<sup>9</sup> However, more recently, the identification of a wide array of material chronological indicators, like the Sicilian “ceramica a stuoia,” as well as globular and ovoidal amphorae, has led scholars like Paul Arthur, Joanita Vroom, and Jonathan Shepard to cut a wide swath as islands reveal as part and parcel of a wide Byzantine maritime *koine*.<sup>10</sup> The latter encompassed liminal coastal spaces as well as insular communities promoting social contact and cultural interchange.<sup>11</sup> As Paolo Delogu concludes, “this area seems to coincide with the territories and the seas on which the Byzantine Empire retained a political and naval rulership.”<sup>12</sup> Moreover, it suggested a certain common cultural unity; in fact, the peculiar political-administrative infrastructures (as documented in most of the abovementioned islands and gateway communities like Amalfi and Comacchio) de facto pointed to an other-than-imperial Greco-Roman identity.<sup>13</sup>

In light of the abovementioned details, the present chapter will present the reader with a short overview of some insular urban sites from a comparative perspective: Gortyn, Eleutherna, and Heraklion in Crete, Salamis-Constantia, Kerynia, and Nicosia in Cyprus, Syracuse, and Enna in Sicily, and Cagliari in Sardinia. There are two main reasons for this. First, this selection has a lot to do with expediency as the abovementioned sites are the best excavated and published ones for their respective islands (and in the case of Gortyn for the whole Dark Ages).<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, urban archaeology is still in its infancies in some islands like the Balearics (where however we have well excavated early Christian basilicas and Roman/Late Antique sites like Pollentia), Corsica (which was nevertheless lost to Byzantium in the seventh century), and Malta (which seems to have boasted a set of small gateway communities).<sup>15</sup> So these islands will not be included in the present chapter.

In fact, and returning to the abovementioned urban sites, in most cases, they also acted as the main political, military, religious, and socio-economic foci of the insular areas they were located in. Nevertheless, in particular for Cyprus, one can document a peculiar transformation to the local urban settlement pattern: this foisted upon a rather fluid response to the variable shear political-military stress endured by the island due to its position at the edge of two empires, as Cyprus capitalized on the lack of a unique and permanent urban catalyst for the main political, military, and religious functions.<sup>16</sup>

As I will return to this in a few moments, I would like to move to the second rationale for my choice of insular sites. Indeed, in my opinion, their historical trajectories testify to the importance of islands (even those located on the western fringes of the empire like the

Balearics and Sardinia) to the political, administrative, and military imperial structures. As partially mentioned, it would be only too easy to dismiss insular spaces as marginal political and administrative spaces, simply fulfilling the role of distant “guardians to the imperial galaxy.” This is shown by the repeated imperial efforts to keep and reassert Constantinopolitan rule over insular spaces, although using different and expedient political tactics for only Sicily was elevated to the rank of theme, whereas Sardinia, Cyprus, Crete, and the Balearics were ruled by dukes or *archontes*.<sup>17</sup> As Byzantium left the trouble waters of its Dark Ages, the targets of its expansive territorial policy and military expeditions in the tenth and eleventh centuries were indeed Crete (turned into an Emirate after the invasion of Andalusian Muslim pirates in 820s) and Cyprus, as – after the fall of Syracuse in 878 – it also staged counterattacks from its last outposts in eastern Sicily.<sup>18</sup> The two large eastern Mediterranean islands returned in Byzantine hands in 965 and 969, whereas Sicily was completely lost to the Fatimids with the conquest of Taormina (962), Rametta (965), and Messina (976).<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, a great expedition to reconquer Sicily was staged by Michael IV, who dispatched the brilliant general George Maniaces to the islands in the early 1040s only to have him accused of high treason and arrested after he successfully took Syracuse back.<sup>20</sup>

Third, one should also look beyond the simple strategic and military value large islands had to Constantinople; indeed, the repeated military expeditions targeting Crete and Sicily resonate with the economic importance not only for the Byzantine fiscal system but also as outposts along the Mediterranean (fragmented) shipping and exchange routes. On the one hand, as Cosentino concludes, in “the seventh and eighth century islands seem to remain an economic space relatively more developed than northern and central Italy, the Balkans or Asia Minor.”<sup>21</sup> Indeed, as Wickham recently assessed, islands like Cyprus and Malta seem to have linked the Islamic and Byzantine networks of exchange as enhanced by the pattern of distribution of Byzantine globular amphorae and ceramics as dated to 700–900. In other words, a reassessment of the resilient insular economy bridges the gap between two prosperous “trade cycles” (the Late Antique and the tenth- to eleventh-century ones) that help to propose a model of central and eastern Mediterranean regional, sub-regional, and inter-regional connectivity in the aftermath of the Arab invasion.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, it seems now clear that if the empire would not die, that also owed to the fact that “the fact that it remained in possession of a strip of islands that connected it from the Cypriot Levant to the Balearics [for] this corridor of islands allowed the Byzantine Empire to continue to operate large-scale movements of men, foodstuffs, and artifacts between Constantinople and its insular ports until the reign of Michael II.”<sup>23</sup>

So, large islands boasted a rather sustained economic vitality and socio-cultural resilience as paired with peculiar administrative and governmental structures as well as political expediency on the part of the local elites, which often remained urban-oriented. First, one should resist the temptation of labeling urban life as veering away from the coasts and retrenching in small, fortified outposts, in particular, vis-à-vis the Arab naval raids dated to the seventh and eighth centuries. By using archaeology and material culture, we should follow insular urban trajectories on a rather broad connectivity spectrum swaying like a pendulum between relative isolation from hegemonic political and economic systems to integration into such systems. In this light, and this is the second point I would like to drive home, the following section will indeed also try to use the “limited” territorial scope insular spaces possessed in order to draw a picture of changing urban settlement pattern hierarchy and new urban forms which coexisted next to old, but transforming, urban fabric, landscape,

and structures. The key studies I will be presenting here, indeed, could help to better address differences, categories, and problems as they emerge in the archaeological record.

This is not to assert a sort of uniqueness of insular urban culture, stemming from isolation or resulting from specific cultural identity possessed only by islands; or to flaunt the idea that the intensification and abatement or better, the success and failures, functional transformation, structural alteration and demographic changes experienced by of urban entities owed not only to the needs and priorities of central administration and/or to the natural resources of the regions they were located in.<sup>24</sup> Rather by examining the centrality of communications and connectivity in molding the trajectories (sometimes successful, sometimes less) of urbanism in regions often simply demurred as the peripheries of the empire.

### “Cities of Islands”

In this section, and as already mentioned, I will be encasing the trajectories of urbanism across different Byzantine islands within the chronological limits of Byzantine and rulership, which in the central Mediterranean (Sicily and Sardinia) came to an end in the tenth century and in the Eastern continued to the late eleventh century (for Cyprus) and the Fourth Crusade (for Crete).<sup>25</sup> I will occasionally refer to “other” examples of Byzantine urban insularity like Naxos in the Aegean as these show similarities not only in terms of urban forms, planning, and functional characteristics but also in their diachronic developments across the Byzantine millennium.

I will start this journey from Crete for its capital – Gortyn – has been the focus of extensive archaeological campaigns which started at the beginning of the nineteenth century and culminated in the past decades (and still ongoing).<sup>26</sup> Although they did not shed light on a minimal part of the Classical and Byzantine urban landscape, they allow concluding that Gortyn remained the main political and religious focus of Byzantine Crete until the late eighth century.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, it preserved a complex social and demographic structure, a vital economic life, and political and religious importance in the seventh and early eighth centuries.<sup>28</sup> This mirrored in an urban landscape, which maintained its coherence in terms of fabric and morphology, although revealing the first traces of a changing type of urbanism (the so-called city of islands model).<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the topography of most of the cities presented in the chapter developed along with multiple foci of settlement and socio-economic activity revolving around built centers of political, military, or religious power. A diversified constellation of centers of population, activities, and functions was therefore not always limited to or contained within imposing walled enceintes.

In the case of Gortyn, “Classic” monumentality (for instance, the orthogonal road-network), indeed, coexisted with artisanal workshops and commercial activities (as documented in the so-called Byzantine Houses) encroaching onto the public space and pointing to the considerable social and economic vitality of the ecclesiastical and administrative elites.<sup>30</sup> The analysis of pottery further enhances the picture I have just outlined: in particular, both locally produced highly decorated painted wares and imported Glazed White Wares (a type of pottery produced in Constantinople from the mid-seventh century onward), together with amphorae of a type found exclusively in the capital in late seventh- and eighth-century contexts, point to the role of the city within the local and medium-distance exchange patterns as well as the consistency of shipping links with the capital.<sup>31</sup> Although a portion of the city (the acropolis) was enclosed by a new set of walls dated to the mid-to-late seventh century, Gortyn preserved a multifunctional image with different foci of settlement

(both inside and outside the wall). In fact, a comparison with another well excavated – but smaller in size – Cretan site (Eleutherna) allows Tsigonaki to conclude that “fortification does not signal the shrinking of the city and subsequent decline of the urban space, but rather the demarcation of controlled areas within the city.”<sup>32</sup> Indeed, for Eleutherna, located on the northern slope of the Ida mountains, one can document a reorganization and relocation of the administrative and religious functions as pairing with an upgrade of the defensive structures which singled the central plateau out, although the city retained a clear urban character as enhanced by numismatic and sigillographic evidence.<sup>33</sup>

In other words, both in Gortyn and Eleutherna, poorly built, architecturally demonomentalised and demographically diminished, “islands” or “foci” of settlement (made of commercial shops and artisanal workshops with residential housing) seem to have boasted persistent urban economic activity as sitting next to areas where there were concentrations of religious buildings and others where possibly military-administrative state-driven institutions resided. In this light, it is worth mentioning that the lead seals belonging to *kommerkiarioi*, *archontes*, *spatharioi*, and *stratelates*, as well as to a *Vestitor* and *Protonotarios* of the Imperial Treasury yielded both in Gortyn and Knossos (on the northern coast of the island) and dated to the eighth century.<sup>34</sup> They show that the island was integral to both the Byzantine administrative system and its military machinery.<sup>35</sup> The same could be stated for the importance of Gortyn as an ecclesiastical and pilgrimage center. Indeed, one could mention here the Cretan Archbishop Andreas, whose hagiography was compiled in the second half of the eighth century.<sup>36</sup> Once appointed as Metropolitan of Crete (an office he held from 711 to his death in 740), Andreas actively sponsored the promotion of the memorial cult of Saint Titus (the first bishop of the island as ordained by Saint Paul) as well as for the large building activities in Gortyn. This led to the creation of a new iconography appearing on the archbishopric’s lead seals as well as the erection of the ecclesiastical complex of Blachernitissa (tod. Hagios Titos) as the area around it seemed to have been in use well into the ninth century.<sup>37</sup> As the image and functions of the Gortynian cityscape were rearranged, it is also worth mentioning the transformation of the water-supply system. This reveals in a set of cisterns dotting the urban landscape and partially replacing the sixth-century aqueduct. Water was collected, stored, and redistributed within single parceled properties, providing us once again with an image of a city of islands where urban communities relied less on the Roman and Byzantine monumental structures or infrastructural networks as water availability was more localised and/or privatised.<sup>38</sup>

The abovementioned evidence seems to hint at a “longer” urban life for Gortyn than previously thought.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, on the one hand, the transformations in the appearance and structures of [Cretan cities] seem to have been part of a top-down process. In fact, they demur the widely accepted assumption that Cretan cities were abandoned before the Andalusian pirates’ invasion in the 820s.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, as Cosentino concludes, “the new political framework of the seventh and eighth centuries, which entailed a concentration of military operations in the Balkans and Asia Minor, resulted in an emphasis of the geo-strategic importance of the northern coast of Crete.”<sup>41</sup> This, in turn, led to a real redefinition of Cretan urbanism and settlement pattern hierarchy from the mid-eighth century on with the emergence of the coastal harbor of Heraklion as the urban reference point for the whole island.<sup>42</sup> The arrival of the Andalusian pirates only strengthened up the ongoing trend. Eventually, with the return of the island in Byzantine hands in the late tenth century the economic, political, administrative, and religious importance of the northern coast was finalized. Crete became the southern border of the Aegean exchange system, which played

a central role in the growth of trade, demographic upturn, increased rural production and intensification of urban activities experienced by Byzantium between the late tenth and the twelfth centuries.<sup>43</sup>

As partially referred to already, rather similar trajectories in terms of urban settlement pattern and hierarchy, as well as changes to urban fabric and landscape, could be surmised for Cyprus, where Salamis-Constantia, located on the eastern coast of the islands, acted as the ecclesiastical and political capital of the island of Cyprus until the mid-ninth century. Although excavations in Salamis-Constantia stopped due to tragic events of 1974, a reassessment of urban archaeology produced till then as well as a poignant comparison with other sites in the Republic of Cyprus where investigations continued and were constantly published (like in Amathus, Paphos, and Polis-Arsinoe) has allowed proposing a multi-functional image with different foci of settlement dated to seventh to ninth century.<sup>44</sup> The city did not simply shrink in size during the passage from late antiquity to the early Middle Ages, and – as seen for Gortyn and Eleutherna – the construction of a new, well-built fortified enceinte in the second half of the seventh century reflected a degree of planning on the part of the local and imperial elites, as well as the availability of resources.<sup>45</sup> The impact of militarization was indeed limited on both insular social fabric and settlement patterns until the mid-eighth century, for in Salamis-Constantia, the construction of the city walls appears to be contemporary to rebuilding works at the basilica of Saint Epiphanius.<sup>46</sup> The basilica continued to function both as a pilgrimage center and as the seat of the Cypriot Autocephalic Archbishopric, thus underlining the continuity of key institutions of the cultural life of the city. Pilgrimage continued to Saint Epiphanius as well as to the Campanopetra church; both were refurbished in the eighth century and indicatively visited by Anastasius Sinaita and Willibald in the early eighth century and by Epiphanius the Monk in the ninth century.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, evidence of a late seventh/early eighth century artisanal/workshop phase of occupation of a former Roman urban villa located not far away from the city's harbor provides evidence of economic activity and continuity as a comparison can be made with the abovementioned structures excavated in Gortyn as well as with area of the city of Polis-Arsinoe (on the northern coast of the islands) which revealed as composed of workshops, roads, and burials dating in the late seventh/early eighth century.<sup>48</sup> Contemporary evidence also comes from Amathus, where workshops and residential buildings were erected around the basilica on the acropolis. Moreover, in Paphos, a number of small houses and simple workshops (frequented during the period 680–780) were also uncovered in the area of the former Roman agora around the Chrysopolitissa church complex (refurbished in the eighth century with a new apse on the axis of the original basilica).<sup>49</sup>

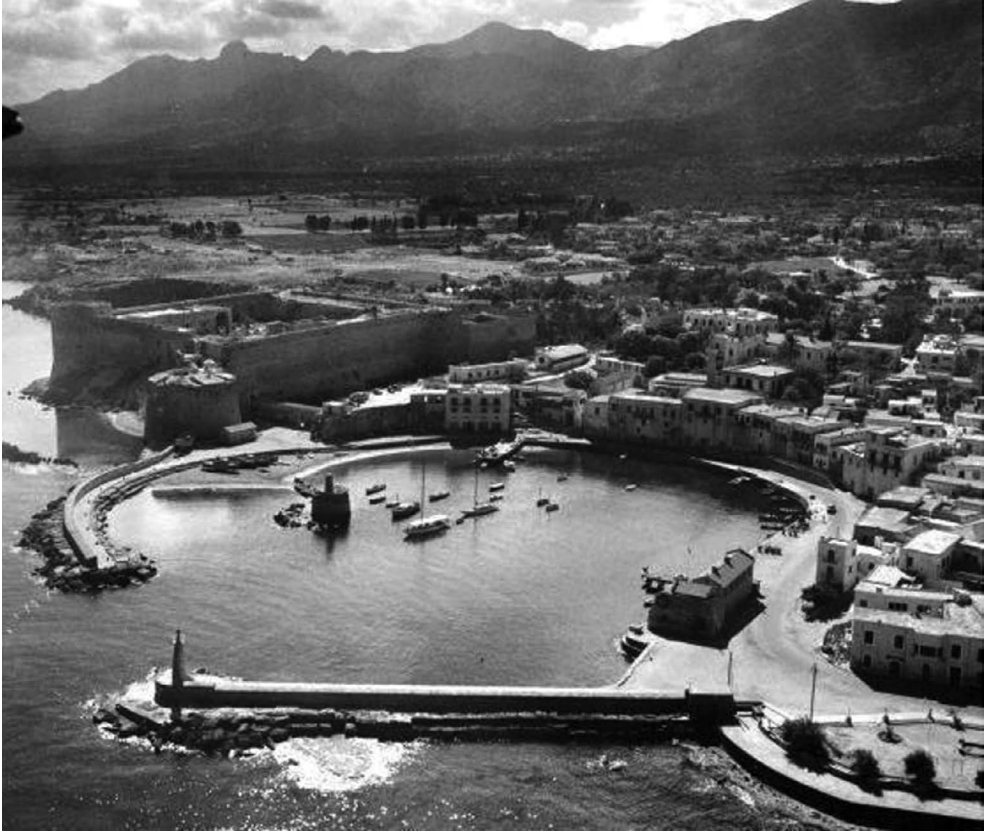
All in all, it is possible to conclude that Salamis-Constantia did not disappear after the Arab raids but managed to adapt to the new political and economic realities in the island and the broader region (Figure 8.1). An appraisal of both numismatic evidence and the distributive pattern of the so-called globular amphorae as manufactured in Cyprus (together with locally made kitchen wares) has revealed that the island was at the epicenter of regional interlocking economies with strong contacts with both Palestine and Umayyad (and later Abbasid and Fatimid) Egypt.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, Cypriot cities other than Salamis-Constantia also provided signs of economic resilience, yet political developments (as exemplified by the famous treaty of 686–686 between the Umayyads and the Byzantines, and the forced transfer of local population to Nea Justinianoupolis in the early eighth century) affected the island and its role in the context of a Byzantine Empire whose control over its southern territories was fading fast.<sup>51</sup>



Figure 8.1 Salamis-Constantia [Cyprus], Basilica of Campanopetra

As a result, although Salamis-Constantia remained the main religious and pilgrimage center of the island and its harbor seemed to have been frequented well into the eleventh century, both literary and archaeological evidence shows that the northern coast of the island, including sites, like Kerynia and Lapithos-Lambousa, started functioning as a Byzantine military and administrative hub from the ninth century onward.<sup>52</sup> As the Pentadaktylos mountain range acted as a de-facto borderline separating the northern coastline from the fertile Mesaoria plain, the northern harbor of Kerynia (Figure 8.2), which had been fortified most probably in the eighth and ninth centuries, slowly turned into the most important Byzantine city of the island and the *de facto* capital of Cyprus.<sup>53</sup> Its location on the coast was conveniently oriented in relation to their respective centers of Byzantine state authority along the southern coast of Anatolia (in particular Attaleia), as proved by its role in the *reconquista* of the island in 965 and even later.<sup>54</sup> Eventually, and although Pentadaktylos continued to play a key role in the strategic organization of Cyprus as strengthened by a system of fortifications organised around the existence of three key castles, the city of Nicosia emerged in the second half of the eleventh century as the new insular capital. This reflected the increased economic importance of the Mesaoria plain and the transfer of the metropolitan of Cyprus from Salamis-Constantia in the early twelfth century.<sup>55</sup>

So, for both Cyprus and Crete, one can hint at the development of local insular urban centers (and in particular, the capitals) which did not see urbanism disappearing from the coasts; more important ceramics (as well as sigillographic and numismatic evidence) points to complex strategies aiming at reorganizing and adapting local urban settlement patterns



*Figure 8.2* Kyrenia [Cyprus]

to the new socio-political, cultural, and military dynamics of an early Medieval “maritime frontier.” In fact, the latter should be defined as a contact zone, where insular actors shaped an ever-changing cultural and economic balance at the interface between Mediterranean polities in the early medieval period while at the same time remaining part and parcel of a Byzantine Mediterranean coastal system. This is reflected by the resilience of economic activities as often mirrored by the transformations experienced by the urban landscape, fabric, and planning with fortifications paired with foci of artisanal and commercial activities. Things obviously changed with the return of the two islands in Byzantine hands in the second half of the tenth century, when Crete was part and parcel of the Aegean exchange system and Cyprus, which remained central to the Byzantine efforts to remain relevant in relation to the developments brought by the foundation of Latin States in the Levant and the establishment of the Seljuks in Asia Minor.<sup>56</sup>

Since both Cyprus and Crete boasted frequented urban areas characterised by a fragmented but highly functional landscape and fabric as de facto predicated upon the economic resilience, political and fiscal importance, and ecclesiastical centrality of the so-called Byzantine insular system, it is important to see how urbanism developed on other Byzantine islands, and, in particular, Sicily and Sardinia.

Contrary to Cyprus, Crete, and (as it will be seen) Sardinia, and, as mentioned already, Sicily became a thematic capital and remained central to the Byzantine state mainly because of its importance in supplying Constantinople with grain after the disruption of the Egyptian tax-spine in the 640s.<sup>57</sup> It is also important to note that a drastic improvement in the study and availability of Sicilian material culture (in particular seals, coins, and ceramics), as well as stratigraphically excavated urban sites, has only happened in the past 20 years. This has nonetheless led scholars to produce an all-encompassing picture of the changes in Sicilian urban settlement patterns as well as developments of the local economy (in terms of production, distribution, and consumption). In this light, I will present the reader with two examples of Sicilian urbanism: Syracuse and Enna. The former acted as the religious and political capital of the island until its fall by the hands of the Aghlabids in 878 (and so can be ideally paired with Gortyn and Salamis-Constantia); the latter represents a good example of the changes in the urban settlement pattern as the Byzantine authorities actively sponsored and encouraged the adoption of a new form of urban planning and structure with a defensive penchant vis-à-vis the Arab slow advance toward the eastern coast of the island.<sup>58</sup>

Syracuse acted as the main administrative, political, and military center of the island as well as the seat of the Sicilian Archbishopric from the eighth or ninth century. Although the city reduced in size and was mainly focused on the island of Ortygia, protected by a fortified isthmus, archaeology shows that the main road connecting the two most important quarters of the Roman city (Akradina and Neapolis) were majestically repaved in the second quarter of the seventh century.<sup>59</sup> One can indeed conclude that in Syracuse, although the city shrank, the ancient street grid was (at least partially maintained) until the late ninth century (an occurrence also documented in Gortyn and Salamis-Constantia). Moreover, the Syracuse harbor, as protected by a double-walled enceinte (generically dated to the seventh to eighth century), also continued to be frequented by pilgrims, traders, diplomats, and officials for Syracuse remained a regular hub for travelers from both Constantinople and the Adriatic. One can think here of the famous journey of Willibald, who visited Catania and Syracuse before embarking for Constantinople in the early eighth century, or Gregory Decapolite in the early ninth century.<sup>60</sup>

In Syracuse, churches were actively restored or built from scratch, as shown by the conversion of the Temple of Athena into the city Cathedral sometime in the late seventh century (Figure 8.3). It became the seat of the newly appointed local Archbishop with full jurisdiction over the rest of the Sicilian bishoprics.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, the sigillographic evidence points to both the provenance of the local *stratēgoi* (mostly eunuchs directly dispatched from the imperial Palace) and the presence in the city of *kommerkiaroi* (in charge of providing Constantinople and the army with grain and other supplies) and *topoireitai* (officers leading elite military corps).<sup>62</sup> This allows us to conclude that Syracuse, with its two main “islands of settlements” (Akradina and Ortygia), had extraordinary importance within the military (and political) Byzantine networks of power which lasted until the city was conquered by the Arabs in 878.

Ease of communication between Constantinople and the island should come as no surprise, for Sicily acted as an economic interface at the intersection of the eastern and western Mediterranean. Indeed, the island lay astride the trunk-route linking the Tyrrhenian with the Aegean and southern Anatolia.<sup>63</sup> Coins and coinage confirm the exceptional economic vitality of Sicily: the mint of Syracuse was the only one issuing gold and bronze coins together with Constantinople in the period under scrutiny, as its output found its way across the Mediterranean and the Balkans as well as central European and Scandinavian trade



*Figure 8.3* Syracuse [Sicily], Cathedral

routes. Moreover, the analysis of Sicilian oval lamps, table-wares, and globular amphorae bespeak a double-fold network of connectivity as the eastern coast (centered on the capital Syracuse) slanted toward the southern Adriatic and the Peloponnese, whereas the north-western coast was oriented toward the Tyrrhenian and its main harbors/cities (mainly Rome but also Cagliari and Naples) as well as Muslim north Africa.<sup>64</sup>

Indeed, as Maurici remarks: “Sicily remained a land of cities during the entire Byzantine period” for other examples of resilient Sicilian urbanism can indeed be offered by Palermo (whose harbor remained active and frequented well into the eighth century and beyond as documented by both material and literary evidence) and Catania (whose impressive set of walls accommodated two religious and pilgrimage foci).<sup>65</sup> The latter was also connected to Syracuse (to the south) and Taormina (perching on a rock-spur at the north-easternmost corner of the islands) by the coastal Via Pompeia.<sup>66</sup> Although the Sicilian cities shrank in terms of size and population, the coherence of urban landscape and the reorganization of their urban planning and fabric stemmed less from impending Arab naval threats than from the ability of local elites to navigate the changing political, administrative, and military Tyrrhenian flux.<sup>67</sup>

Nevertheless, one should also be reminded that old Classical cities like Agrigento could experience a striking downturn as it turned into a conglomeration of “agro-towns” centered on the fortified acropolis of Girgenti.<sup>68</sup> More important, and in a similar vein with the Cypriot and Cretan example, a territorial reorganization was imposed by the advance of the Aghlabids, leading to a calculated effort on the part of the thematic/imperial government

to create a strategic line of defense. This wriggled away from the coast, for it shielded the south-eastern coastal cities. It was centered on inland fortresses and urban-like *kastra*, all dated to the decades that followed the institution of the Sicilian theme. A good example of the former type of settlement is offered by the *kassar* of Castronovo strategically located at the intersection of the main north-south and east-west inland axis crisscrossing the island<sup>69</sup>; on the contrary, newly founded fortified centers like Butera, Ragusa, and Enna offer a good complement with sites like Kerynia in Cyprus, Oxa in Crete (which is not included in the present chapter), and Kastro Apalirou in Naxos. These added up to a new model of urbanism, developed from the seventh century onward across the Byzantine Mediterranean, where pride of place is given to security, fortifications, and strategic control of the hinterland, as reflecting new adaptive strategies in settlement patterns (as seen in the case of Cyprus).

In particular, Kastro Apalirou, located on the small Aegean islet of Naxos, as established in the early Middle Ages, reveals as not simply a walled safe haven built in response to the Arab raids in the Aegean, but rather as an expression of a different kind of functional needs for, as Magdalino remarks: “trade, shipping and human resources of the Aegean world as central to the existence of the empire in the eighth century.”<sup>70</sup> Kastro Apalirou is exemplary of a new type of hilltop, fortified, seventh- to eighth-century urbanism, bespeaking scale, complexity, and imperial sponsorship: large walled settlements with a dense urban fabric made up of houses, cisterns but (surprisingly) few religious buildings.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, we are confronted with a new model of urban settlement and landscape that was clearly cutting all ties with the Late Antique urban environment and fabric. Such settlements provided locations where local elites could reside and retain a degree of control over the nearby plains and their landholdings, as indeed can be shown in the case of the Enna, a strategically located and heavily fortified center at the heart of Sicily.<sup>72</sup> Recent archaeological investigations have indeed shed light on Enna’s articulated fortified settlement pattern, which included two sets of walls: one protecting the lower town and the other encasing the upper fortress (Castello di Lombardia). Indeed, in Enna, the military function had pride of place, for no bishopric is documented. A great effort was put by the Byzantine authorities into strengthening the local defense vis-à-vis the Aghlabid invasions in the early ninth century.<sup>73</sup> It is, however, worth mentioning that the ceramic evidence yielded in the city all date to the period between the eighth and the tenth centuries and point to a settlement that remained well connected with the insular coastal centers while also assuming a preeminent and strategic role in the military confrontation with the Aghlabids.<sup>74</sup> Enna was nevertheless conquered by the Arabs in 858, and as a consequence, the last remnants of Byzantine territory were put under a huge demographic and strategic pressure with a new “fortification season” buoyed by the creation of defensive *kastra* and *kastellia* along those military roads crisscrossing the Val Demone and gravitating around the “new capital” Taormina (the latter sieged already in 902).<sup>75</sup> Little is known of these as we have scanty archaeological remains even for Taormina itself, and one has to rely mainly on Arab literary sources and toponymic evidence.<sup>76</sup> As Arcifa concludes, the Byzantine presence in the last season of the Arab-Byzantine confrontation was strong enough to delay the fall of the island and “justified the two long sieges of Taormina and Rometta in 962/963 on behalf of the Fatimid army and demonstrated that the defense was entrusted to a well-equipped army as well as the relative ease with which Manuel Phokas, after the landing in 964, conquered Termini and Syracuse.”<sup>77</sup>

With the Sicilian diverse cases of urban transformations and settlement pattern change in mind, we can now move to Sardinia, which from the mid-seventh century onward acquired

increased importance as bases for a local detachment of the Byzantine Tyrrhenian fleet and following upon the fall of Carthage in 698, the seat of the former African Exarch's fiscal, administrative, and military machinery as well as its mint.<sup>78</sup> Unfortunately, we possess good urban archaeology for only a limited number of Sardinian cities. The scanty evidence has, however, allowed scholars like Galoppini to tentatively conclude that "coastal Sardinian cities maintained a noteworthy vitality well into the eighth century, thanks to their strong [inter-Tyrrhenian] commercial and cultural ties with the Italian peninsula as well as the coastal regions of Africa."<sup>79</sup>

Recent excavations at Cagliari – on the southern coast of the island – have confirmed that the administrative reorganization introduced by Justinian confirmed the city as the religious and political capital of the island as also enhanced by literary evidence.<sup>80</sup> Recently, a sort of duplication of the urban fabric and landscape of Cagliari has been proposed by Martorelli, with the harbor separating two conurbations (eastern and western) in a way that reminds us of Ephesos.<sup>81</sup> The eastern one centered on the well-excavated sanctuary of Saint Saturno, an important pilgrimage church built around the martyrdom of the saint. The harbor of Cagliari was central in promoting commercial and artisanal activities as well as intercultural (and interreligious) contacts as heightened by the presence of Greek monastic institutions in the city as well as the Sardinian Archbishops.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, an underwater survey at the harbor has yielded a large number of eighth- to ninth-century globular amphorae as ceramics (like forum and painted wares) also attest to the economic vitality of at least some other areas of the city.<sup>83</sup> Notwithstanding the little urban archaeology available, it seems that the multifunctional role in religious, military, and economic terms played by Cagliari and the importance of its harbor for the Constantinopolitan elites may have translated into an urban landscape characterised by multiple foci of settlements. Although some parts of the city were deserted, others remained frequented as the administrative and episcopal urban cores moved to the west of the Classical city.<sup>84</sup>

So, and as already seen in the case of Sicily, Cyprus, and Crete, the story of Cagliari's resilience points once again to a rather different model of insular urban settlement pattern than a simple and hasty run to the hills and away from a coast threatened by the Muslim advance (in a way that also reminds us of other insular spaces like Cyprus). Of course, not all coastal Sardinian cities survived as centers like Nora or Tharros (although its harbor nevertheless yielded four Islamic seals dated to the mid-eighth century and possible evidence of an Arab incursion) and possibly fell prey to the political and military insecurity brought about by the Arab raids which culminated with the subjugation of Cagliari which was forced to pay the *jizya* in 752.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, on the one hand, the continuous Constantinopolitan interest in the fate of the island is exemplified by the famous mid-eighth-century inscription from Turris Libisonis (on the western coast of the island) "celebrating a great victory by the consul and duke Constantinos over the Lombards and other barbarians" as well as the role of Cagliari as the seat of the Byzantine Sardinian governor (whose title however changed from duke to *archon* sometime in the tenth century).<sup>86</sup> On the other hand, recent excavations at the city harbor of Olbia (on the eastern coast of the island) have yielded evidence of continuous commercial activities well into the ninth century (although with a low point in the seventh century), which runs counter to the traditional narrative of an abandonment of the city after a Vandal incursion in the sixth century.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, one should mention Aristànìs on the south-western coast of Sardinia. This city was recorded for the first time by the seventh-century Byzantine geographer George of Cyprus, as it boasted a church dedicated to the Virgin (restored in the ninth century); however, some officials

bearing Byzantine titles have been documented by sigillographic evidence as stationed in the city already in the sixth century.<sup>88</sup> In conclusion, urban life in Sardinia seems to show previously unsuspected resilience on both the eastern (Olbia) and western coast (Turris Libisonis and Arsthanis), for Cagliari remained the center of political, religious, and administrative life as predicated upon a (loose) but continuous socio-political, fiscal, and military dependence on Byzantium. Indeed, local elites looked to Constantinople as a source of political legitimacy and status while at the same time they were able to perform creative acts of political expediency, betraying their capacity to bend to the military and political pressure of the moment as shown, for instance, by a treaty the local authorities signed with the Arabs in 752/3 or by the abovementioned delegation from Cagliari who visited the Frankish kingdom in 815.<sup>89</sup> Sardinia nevertheless remained at the heart of imperial interest for a Byzantine naval squadron used Sardinia as an operational base. In this light, and notwithstanding the political transition from a duchy to an archontate, it is interesting to notice that Arab sources recognise the fact that Sardinia remained under Byzantine rule and not to have fallen to Islam until the attack from the Taifa of Denia, which took place in 1015.<sup>90</sup>

### Conclusions: Urbanism in a Byzantine Mediterranean

This chapter has tried to shed light on the developments of urbanism and the historical trajectories of cities across some of the major islands of the Byzantine Empire. By proposing a comparative survey of some of the most important insular urban sites, it has also tried to overcome three major obstacles which have beleaguered past interpretative approaches to insular urban history. The first one was historiographical as I hope I showed that major islands (and their cities) were not secondary characters on the imperial political, military, and religious stage. Constantinople genuinely continued to pay attention to eastern and western Mediterranean islands and their cities. Obviously, this attentiveness was modulated by the ebbs and flows of Mediterranean politics across the period between the seventh and the eleventh centuries. Indeed, the geopolitical balance was constantly in flux, switching from one sector of the Great Sea to another for Byzantium never had enough resources to focus on more than one front. This notwithstanding, Byzantium managed to keep a close eye on the affairs of Sicily, Sardinia, and Crete (at least until the first half of the ninth century) as it also accepted that Cyprus (mainly owing to its proximity to the Caliphate) became a sort of political and more important economic middle ground between the Byzantine *koine* (as exemplified by the distribution and circulation of globular amphorae in most of the abovementioned cities) and the Islamic system of exchange. As a result, I have debunked the traditional interpretation of insular urbanism as hastily retreating from the coasts of both eastern and western Mediterranean on the eve of the Arab raids, only to resurge with the return of Byzantine power in the eastern basin of the Great Sea from the tenth century on or upon the arrival of the new political actors (the Papacy, Amalfi and Naples, and, above all, the Aghlabids and later the Fatimids) in the central and western half of it.

In this light, it is important to reassess another possible objection to the interpretation I have proposed here, which centered on the survival of insular cities as foisted entirely upon administrative, fiscal, military, and religious lines. In other words, the only “real” city of islands would have been those playing the role of regional (thematic or not) capitals. We are catching two birds with one stone here for countermending the latter objection allows us to tackle the second of the obstacles I mentioned before: the methodological one. Indeed, very often, the idea of thematic capitals as fading ghosts of Classical urbanism and *de facto* the

only insular (quasi)-urban centers has been built upon the scanty literary and documentary sources of the period as well as the interpretative premise of islands as simply peripheral to the political and military imperial core. The drastic improvement of urban archaeology and a refined assessment of material culture (in particular ceramics) has, in fact, allowed us to interpret islands and their cities as *plaque tournantes* along the more fragmented intra and inter-regional Medieval Mediterranean shipping routes.<sup>91</sup> The changes experienced by the urban landscape and settlement patterns reflected the ability on the part of imperial and local secular and ecclesiastical elites to tap into the economic vitality of islands and benefit from their position at the interface of regional systems of exchange.

This was particularly clear in Sicily, divided between two distinct networks of distribution, circulation, and consumption of goods as gravitating toward Constantinople (the eastern one) and the Tyrrhenian Sea (the north-western one). In turn, and upon the Aghlabid invasion, this buoyed the development of a rather complex response with the adoption of a new model of urbanism (in terms of fabric and planning) predicated upon defensive needs for urban sites like Enna and fortresses like Castronovo were meant to protect the access to the eastern coast and the Byzantine cities located along it like Syracuse (until 878), Catania, and Taormina. Nevertheless, and until their fall to the Arabs (but even later), at least some Sicilian cities other than the capital retained urban coherence (in terms of form and planning) and economic resilience, as cursorily seen in the case of Palermo. In this sense, a more rarified density of urban settlement pattern than the one experienced in Sicily, like the one we can document for Sardinia, nevertheless presented us with a similar trajectory.

Although much poorer than the Sicilian counterpart in terms of urban archaeology and material culture, the picture that can be sketched for Sardinia comparably includes both a political and religious center (Cagliari) as well as a gateway communities centered upon frequented (for military or commercial purposes) harbors like Olbia (as well as Aristianis and, possibly, Turrì Libisonis). At the other end of the Mediterranean, Crete and Cyprus also experienced a re-orientation of the urban settlement pattern, which saw the northern coast emerging as the gravitational point of the urban life on both islands. Indeed, in Cyprus, the de-structuring of urban functions was rather more pronounced than in Crete, most probably reflecting the contemporary presence of Byzantine and Arab fiscal, military, and political authorities. However, this did not mean that the former Classical urban centers (like Salamis-Constantia or Gortyn) disappeared, but rather that urban fabric, landscape, and infrastructures responded to new functional needs (as enhanced by the presence of fortifications) as well as economically fragmented and contested Mediterranean (as mirrored by the urban developments in centers like Eleutherna or Polis-Arsinoe).

The latter point is important to introduce the third and final obstacle. This has to do with the traditional chronological partition and the importance of embracing a “diachronic” and fully Mediterranean perspective when examining insular urbanism<sup>92</sup>; this is because islands (and their urban centers) not only boasted a previously unsuspected economic resilience which pierced the barrier of the so-called long eighth century but were also able to navigate (although in regionally nuanced ways) the interstices of a shared Mediterranean.<sup>93</sup> In this light, old periodizations are not useful to fully grasp the complexities of the insular socio-political game and its reflections on the changes experienced by its urban landscapes. In this light, therefore, cities of islands seem to be a good standpoint to fully come to grasp with the idea of a Byzantine “Mediterranean” urbanism which predicated upon the fluidity of the rules of Medieval Mediterranean political game, and on a Byzantine Empire as characterised by a low maintenance variable geometry across the whole early Medieval period;

an empire composed of open cities, gateway communities, and urban centers (as dotting the islands and the coasts of a so-called Byzantine maritime *koine*) in which Byzantium had state, economic, or occasionally ideological interest.<sup>94</sup> They allowed to project political and religious influence and affirmed the geopolitical preeminence of Byzantium across the Mediterranean shipping routes even when a full-fledged political or military control ceased to be possible (like in the case of Sardinia from the tenth century on). For Byzantium understood only too well that the “multiplication of contacts, peaceful and otherwise, demanded the invention of new rules that all the actors in the Mediterranean could accept and share, and that largely survived in the modern period.”<sup>95</sup>

### Notes

- 1 See L. Zavagno, “‘Islands in the Stream’: For a New History of the Large Islands of the Byzantine Mediterranean”, *Mediterranean Historical Review* 33:2 (2018), 149–177.
- 2 E. Malamut, *Les îles de l’Empire byzantin. VIIIe-XIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1988); C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages. Europe and the Mediterranean (400–800)* (Cambridge, 2005), 29–32.
- 3 For Crete see E. Zanini, “Macro-Economy, Micro-Ecology, and the Fate of Urbanized Landscape in Late Antique and Early Byzantine Crete”, in M. Cau Ontiveros & C. Mas Florit (eds), *Change and Resilience. The Occupation of Mediterranean Islands in Late Antiquity* (Providence, 2019), 139–161; E. Zanini, “Creta in età Protobizantina: un quadro di sintesi regionale”, in E. Zanini, P. Pergola & D. Michaelidis (eds), *The Insular System of Byzantine Mediterranean. Archaeology and History* (Oxford, 2013), 173–190; D. Tsougarakis, *Byzantine Crete. From the 5th Century to the Venetian Conquest* (Athens, 1988); for Cyprus see D. Metcalf, *Byzantine Cyprus 491–1191 A.D.* (Nicosia, 2009) and L. Zavagno, *Cyprus between Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. An Island in Transition* (London – New York, 2017); for Sicily see A. Nef & V. Prigent, “Per una nuova storia dell’alto medioevo Siciliano”, *Storica* (2006), 9–63; S. Valpreda Miceli, *Sikelia 2. La Sicilia dei Bizantini, i Bizantini di Sicilia* (Padova, 2020), and L. Arcifa, “Byzantine Sicily”, in S. Cosentino (ed), *A Companion to Byzantine Italy* (Leiden, 2021), 472–494; for Malta see B. Bruno & N. Cutajar, “Byzantine Malta”, in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, 522–539; for Sardinia see S. Cosentino, “Byzantine Sardinia between West and East. Features of a Regional Culture”, *Millennium* 1 (2004), 328–367; P. G. Spanu, “Byzantine Sardinia”, in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, 496–520; and A. Metcalfe, H. Fernández-Aceves & M. Muresu, *The Making of Medieval Sardinia* (Leiden, 2021); for the Balearics see J. Signes Codoñer, “Bizancio y las islas Baleares en los siglos VIII y IX”, in R. Durán Tapia (ed.), *Mallorca y Bizancio* (Palma de Mallorca, 2005), 45–107.
- 4 Zanini, Pergola, & Michelides, *The Insular System of Byzantine Mediterranean*; M. Veikou, “One Island, three Capitals. Insularity and the Successive Relocations of the Capital of Cyprus from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages”, in S. Rogge & M. Grünbart (eds), *Medieval Cyprus. A place of Cultural Encounters* (Munster, 2015), 353–363; S. Cosentino, “Insularity, Economy and Social Landscape in the Early Byzantine Period”, *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e NeoEllenici* 55 (2018), 89–104.
- 5 See for instance T. Papacostas, “The Economy of Late Antique Cyprus”, in M. Decker & S. Kingsley (eds), *Economy and exchange in the East Mediterranean during Late Antiquity: Proceedings of a Conference at Somerville College, Oxford, 29 May 1999* (Oxford, 2001), 107–128; G. Papantoniou & A. Vionis, “Landscape Archaeology and Sacred Space in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Glimpse from Cyprus”, *Land* 6 (2017), 1–18; R. Martorelli & R. Coroneo, “Chiese e culti di matrice Bizantina in Sardegna”, in *The Insular System of Byzantine Mediterranean*, 47–63; A. Castrorao Barba, “Sicily before the Muslims. The Transformation of the Roman Villas between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, Fourth to Eighth Centuries CE”, *Journal of Transcultural Medieval Studies* 3:1–2 (2016), 145–189; M. Hoerster, D. Nicolaou, & S. Rogge (eds), *Church Building in Cyprus (Fourth to Seventh Century). A Mirror of intercultural contacts in the Eastern Mediterranean* (Münster – New York, 2018); M. Decker, “The current status of Byzantine archaeology”, *History Compass* 16(9): 5.
- 6 Veikou, “One Island, three Capitals”, 357.
- 7 ead., 359; see also G. Varinoğlu, “‘Imagine There Is No (Is)land’: Conceptualizing Byzantine Islands in Southern Asia Minor”, in K. Durak & I. Jevtić (eds), *Identity and the Other in Byzantium*.

- Papers from the Fifth International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium, Istanbul 2019* (Istanbul, 2019), 93–113.
- 8 T. Lounghis, *Byzantium in the Eastern Mediterranean. Safeguarding East Roman Identity (407–1204)*, (Nicosia, 2010).
  - 9 S. Cosentino, “Mentality, Technology and Commerce: Shipping amongst Mediterranean Islands in Late Antiquity and Beyond”, in *The Insular System of Byzantine Mediterranean*, 65–76.
  - 10 P. Arthur, “From Italy to the Aegean and Back Again. Notes on the Archaeology of Byzantine Maritime Trade”, in S. Gelichi & R. Hodges (eds), *Da un mare all’altro. Luoghi di scambio nell’Alto Medioevo europeo e mediterraneo Atti del Seminario Internazionale Comacchio, 27–29 Marzo 2009* (Turnhout, 2012), 337–352; J. Vroom, “The Byzantine Web. Pottery and Connectivity between the Southern Adriatic and the Eastern Mediterranean”, in S. Gelichi & C. Negrelli (eds), *Adriatico altomedievale (VI–XI secolo). Scambi, porti, produzioni* (Rome, 2017), 285–313. J. Shepard, “Bunkers, Open Cities and Boats in Byzantine Diplomacy”, in D. Dzino & K. Perry (eds), *Byzantium, Its Neighbours and Its Cultures* (Leiden, 2017), 1–33.
  - 11 M. Veikou, “Mediterranean Byzantine Ports and Harbors in the Complex Interplay between Environment and Society. Spatial, Socio-Economic and Cultural Considerations Based on Archaeological Evidence from Greece, Cyprus and Asia Minor”, in J. Preiser Kapeller & F. Daim (eds), *Harbours and Maritime Networks as Complex Adaptive Systems* (Mainz, 2015), 51.
  - 12 P. Delogu, “Questioni di Mare e Costa”, in *Da un mare all’altro*, 463.
  - 13 Zavagno, “Islands in the Stream”, 159–160, 165.
  - 14 Although curiously, Gortyn does not appear in Decker’s compelling overview of Byzantine urban archaeology for the sixth- to tenth-century period (see M. Decker, *The Byzantine Dark Ages* [London, 2016], 81–122).
  - 15 M. Cau Ontiveros & C. Mas Florit, “The Early Byzantine Period in the Balearic Islands”, in *The Insular System of Byzantine Mediterranean*, 31–46; M. Riera Rullan, M. Orfila & M. Cau, “Els últims segles de Pollentia”, *Bulletí de la Societat Arqueològica Lulliana* 55 (1999), 335–346; M. Orfila, M. E. Chávez & M. A. Cau, “Pollentia and the cities of the Balearic Islands”, in L. Abad Casal, S. Keay & S. Ranallo Asensio (eds), *Early Roman Towns in Hispania Tarraconensis. JRA Supplementary Series* (Portsmouth, 2006), 133–145. P. Pergola & D. Istria, “La Corse byzantine (VI–VIIe) siècles”, in *The Insular System of Byzantine Mediterranean*, 77–86; B. Bruno, *Roman and Byzantine Malta. Trade and economy* (La Valletta, 2009).
  - 16 N. Bakirtzis & L. Zavagno, “Beyond Capitals: Urbanism in Cyprus between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages (ca.600–ca.1100 CE.)”, in S. Esders et al. (eds), *The 8th Century: Patterns of Transition in Economy and Trade throughout the Late Antique, Early Medieval and Islamicate Mediterranean in Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (forthcoming, 2024).
  - 17 Zavagno, “Islands in the Stream”, 161–162.
  - 18 As Kaldellis (A. Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood. The Rise and Fall of Byzantium, 955 A.D. to the First Crusade* [Oxford, 2017], 34–42) points out the emperors had repeatedly tried to retake Crete from 843 till the catastrophic failure of the 911 and 949 campaign Constantine Porphyrogenetos ‘*Book of Ceremonies*’ reports on. “Crete [represented] a gap in the imperial defenses that the emperors had to close [especially because it was from there] that the Arabs (sic.) had brought other Aegean islands under their authority.” (Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold*, 35). For the Byzantine-Arab warfare in Sicily see A. Nef, “Byzantium and Islam in Southern Italy (7th–11th century)”, in *A Companion to Byzantine Italy*, 200–224.
  - 19 Nef, “Byzantium”, 215.
  - 20 W. Treadgold, *A History of Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford, 1997), 587–588.
  - 21 Cosentino, “Mentality”, 73.
  - 22 C. Wickham, “The Mediterranean around 800: On the Brink of the Second Trade Cycle”, *DOP* 58 (2004), 161–174. P. Horden & N. Purcell, “The Mediterranean and the European Economy in the Early Middle Ages”, in P. Horden & N. Purcell (eds), *The Boundless Sea. Writing Mediterranean History* (Abingdon – New York, 2020), 136–156.
  - 23 Cosentino, “Insularity”, 104.
  - 24 P. Arthur, “Alcune considerazioni sulla natura delle città byzantine”, in A. Augenti (ed), *Le Città italiane fra la Tarda Antichità e l’Alto Medioevo. Atti del Convegno (Ravenna, 26–28 Febbraio 2004)* (Firenze, 2006), 27–36.

- 25 This section is based on two recent contributions of mine as centered on the problems and perspective of insular urbanism: L. Zavagno, “Salamis-Constantia and the Cypriot early Middle Ages”, in L. Summerer & H. Kaba (eds), *The Northern Face of Cyprus* (Istanbul, 2016), 159–177 and L. Zavagno, “Brief Notes on the Byzantine Insular Urbanism in the Eastern Mediterranean between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (ca. 650 to ca. 800 CE)”, *JCS* 21 (2020), 63–76.
- 26 A. Di Vita, *Gortyn in Crete: Archaeology and History of an Ancient City* (Rome, 2000); J. F. & G. W. M. Harrison, “Gortyn: First City of Roman Crete”, *AJA* 107(3) (July 2003), 487–492.
- 27 I. Baldini et al., “Gortina, Mitropolis e il suo Episcopato nel VII e nell’VIII secolo. Ricerche Preliminari”, *SAIA XC*, Serie III, 12 (2012), 280–290.
- 28 S. Cosentino, “From Gortyn to Heraklion? A Note on Cretan Urbanism during the 8th Century”, *Byzantina Symmeikta* 29 (2019), 73–89.
- 29 My starting points in devising the “city of islands” model came from G. P. Brogiolo, “A proposito dell’organizzazione urbana nell’alto medioevo”, *AM. Cultura materiale, insediamenti, territorio* XXXVI (2009), 27–45; see also Wickham, *Framing*, 676–678; J. Crow, “Archaeology”, in L. James (ed), *A Companion to Byzantium* (Oxford, 2010), 297–298; and S. Loseby, “Mediterranean City”, in P. Rousseau (ed), *A Companion to Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2009), 152.
- 30 F. Curta, “Postcards from Maurilia or the Historiography of the Dark-Age Cities of Byzantium”, *EJPCA* 6 (2016), 96–98; Zanini, “Macro-Economy”, 156–158.
- 31 J. Vroom, ‘Limyra in Lycia: Byzantine/Umayyad Pottery Finds from Excavations in the Eastern Part of the City’, in *Céramiques antiques en Lycie (VIIe S. a.C. – VIIIe S. p.C). Les produits et les marchés (Études 16)* (Bordeaux, 2007): 252–253; 67; E. C. Portale, “The Sunset of Gortyn: Amphorae in the 7th–8th Centuries CE.”, in *Late Roman Coarse Wares, Cooking Wares and Amphorae in the Mediterranean* 4 (Oxford, 2014), 477–490; N. Poulou-Papadimitriou, “The Aegean during the ‘Transitional’ period of Byzantium: The Archaeological Evidence”, in J. Crow & D. Hill (eds), *Naxos and the Byzantine Aegean: Insular Responses to Regional Change* (Athens, 2018), 38–45.
- 32 C. Tsigonaki, “Crete. A Border at the Sea. Defensive Works and Landscape-Mindscape Changes, Seventh-Eighth Centuries A.D”, in *Change and Resilience*, 180.
- 33 C. Tsigonaki, “Les Villes Crétoises aux VIIe et VIIIe siècles: l’apport des recherches archéologiques à Eleutherna”, *SAIA, LXXXV*, Serie III, 7 (2007), 296–297.
- 34 D. Tzougarakis, *Byzantine Crete: From the 5th Century to the Venetian Conquest* (Athens, 1988), 176–177; Baldini et al., “Gortina”, 246.
- 35 Cosentino, “From Gortyn to Heraklion?”, 86.
- 36 A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Vita Andreae Hierosolimitanis. Ανάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυματικῆς σταχυολογίας* V, (BHG 113) (St Petersburg, 1899), 169–179.
- 37 Baldini et al., “Gortina”, 256–276.
- 38 E. Giorgi, *Archeologia dell’acqua a Gortina in età proto-bizantina* (Oxford, 2017), 90–91.
- 39 According to Di Vita, life in Gortyn came to an end after a series of destructive earthquakes in the late sixth century (Di Vita, *Gortyn in Crete*, 134–137).
- 40 Tsigonaki, “Crete”, 179–185.
- 41 Cosentino, “From Gortyn to Heraklion?”, 86.
- 42 M. Randazzo, “Knossos and Heraklion in the Byzantine-Islamic Transition (Late 7th–Mid-10th Century). An Archaeological Perspective into Shifting Patterns of Settlement Ruralisation and Urbanization on Medieval Crete”, *JGA* 5 (2020), 460–467.
- 43 A. Laiou & C. Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy* (Cambridge, 2007), 90–165.
- 44 Zavagno, “Salamis-Constantia”, 165.
- 45 S. Öztaner, “Salamis-Constantia Kent Planlamasi Üzerine Yani Arastirmalar: Cardo ve Decumanus”, *Anadolu-Anatolia* 36 (2010), 208–210.
- 46 C. Stewart, *Domes of Heaven: The Domed Basilicas of Cyprus*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Indiana University, Bloomington (2008), 73.
- 47 See on this M. McCormick, *Origins of European Economy. Communication and Commerce AD. 300–900* (Cambridge, 2001), 132–133, 894–895.
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