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**A Rural Economy in Transition: Asia Minor from Late Antiquity into the Early Middle Ages by Adam Izdebski (review)**

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uments shaped the historical narratives. Was the Emperor Augustus' palace austere, as some accounts hint? This question prompts an interesting debate about the primacy of archaeological sources. Hall describes the archaeological footprint as "ethereal," an apt characterization of the virtually nonexistent archaeological evidence for St. Peter. In his discussion of the controversies about the bones of St. Peter under his church in Rome, Hall skillfully navigates a morass of conflicting archaeological and historical data. He points out that the identification of Peter's remains and the location of the tomb are separate, unresolved issues fraught with ideological and political baggage.

*Artifact and Artifice* makes clear that textual evidence and archaeological evidence must be situated within a broader literary and material context. No research field, regardless of its cumulative perceptions, is one-dimensional; nothing is as simple as it appears. Textual and the material sources inhabit entirely different discourses. Hall argues that a neutral discourse of analysis should focus closely on methodological issues. What questions should historians ask of archaeological evidence, and vice versa? His book demonstrates that, notwithstanding the divisions of the traditional academic structure, promising avenues for a fruitful dialogue between disciplines are certainly in the offing.

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*A Rural Economy in Transition: Asia Minor from Late Antiquity into the Early Middle Ages.* By Adam Izdebski (Warsaw, University of Warsaw Press, 2013) 261 pp. 75

One of the great puzzles for Byzantine scholars is how to date the end of antiquity and the transition into the Middle Ages in Asia Minor. Textual sources are rare for the period between the fifth and the ninth centuries C.E., and the scant archaeological materials are difficult to date with any precision. Focusing on the rural economy, Izdebski's study adds both nuance and solid evidence to the ongoing discussion by bringing the results of palaeoenvironmental research into it.

Critical to Izdebski's analysis is the end of the so-called Beyşehir Occupation Phase. This period of intensive agricultural activity in antiquity lasted for centuries, ending at different times in different areas, usually followed by an abandonment of the landscape and often by reforestation. Although radiocarbon and pollen-based studies have been undertaken since the 1960s, only recently have there been concerted efforts to integrate them with historical evidence, notably by Haldon, whose information comes from a single site. The pollen data from Lake Nar in Cappadocia indicate a period of landscape abandonment c. 670 to 950 C.E., which Haldon connects to the disruptions caused by Arab in-

cursions.<sup>1</sup> Izdebski expands the parameters of the discussion, usefully pulling together information from multiple sites across Asia Minor.

Izdebski's study is divided into two parts, beginning with a useful summary of current knowledge about the transformation of rural settlements at the end of antiquity from textual and archaeological investigations. Next comes a detailed presentation of the palynological and radio-carbon data as evidence for changing patterns of climate and vegetation. The book's conclusion offers a tentative synthesis of the two parts. The socioeconomic homogeneity of late antiquity gave way to the diversity of the Middle Ages as remarkably different patterns of settlement, cultivation, and economy emerged across Asia Minor.

But the picture remains incomplete; many regions are still lacking in archaeological and palynological data. The transformation of the Central Plateau remains impossible to reconstruct, and the well-excavated urban sites on the Aegean coast have all-but-unexplored hinterlands. Nevertheless, the study both confirms and improves upon the system of zones proposed by Lilie, which was based on levels of security within Asia Minor during the Arab incursions.<sup>2</sup> Borderland areas like Cappadocia and the southeast Central Plateau collapsed and did not recover; endangered areas like the Marmara and Mediterranean coast turned to herding and cereal production. Only safe areas like northern Bithynia, Paphlagonia, or the southwest maintained extensive cultivation. Yet questions remain. The evidence from Late Nar, for example, indicates seventy years of instability in the agricultural record prior to the collapse of the 670s. Do we attribute this condition to difficulties in adjusting to a wetter climate or to such other factors as population reduction as a result of the Bubonic plague pandemic?

*A Rural Economy in Transition* ultimately raises more questions than it answers because of the incomplete nature of the data set. Nevertheless, it effectively charts a new direction for historical investigations of the Byzantine heartland.

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*Religious Diaspora in Early Modern Europe: Strategies of Exile*. Edited by Timothy G. Fehler, Greta Grace Kroeker, Charles H. Parker, and Jonathan Ray (London, Pickering & Chatto, 2014) 257 pp. \$99.00

The four co-editors of this collection of papers from a 2012 conference at Toronto do not include its "guiding spirit" (ix), Nicholas Terpstra,

1 See, for example, John Haldon, "'Cappadocia Will Be Given over to Ruin and Become a Desert': Environmental Evidence for Historically-Attested Events in the 7th–10th Centuries," in Klaus Belke et al. (eds.), *Byzantina Mediterranea: Festschrift für Johannes Koder zum 65. Geburtstag* (Vienna, 2007), 215–230.

2 Ralf-Johannes Lilie, *Die byzantinische Reaktion auf die Ausbreitung der Araber: Studien zur Strukturwandlung des byzantinischen Staates im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1976), 339–360.