



The Lost World of Byzantium

By Jonathan Harris

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The Lost World of Byzantium By Jonathan Harris

A fresh, concise, and accessible history of one of the medieval world's greatest empires

For more than a millennium, the Byzantine Empire presided over the juncture between East and West, as well as the transition from the classical to the modern world. Jonathan Harris, a leading scholar of Byzantium, eschews the usual run-through of emperors and battles and instead recounts the empire's extraordinary history by focusing each chronological chapter on an archetypal figure, family, place, or event.

Harris's action-packed introduction presents a civilization rich in contrasts, combining orthodox Christianity with paganism, and classical Greek learning with Roman power. Frequently assailed by numerous armies—including those of Islam—Byzantium nonetheless survived and even flourished by dint of its somewhat unorthodox foreign policy and its sumptuous art and architecture, which helped to embed a deep sense of Byzantine identity in its people.

Enormously engaging and utilizing a wealth of sources to cover all major aspects of the empire's social, political, military, religious, cultural, and artistic history, Harris's study illuminates the very heart of Byzantine civilization and explores its remarkable and lasting influence on its neighbors and on the modern world.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Harris has succeeded triumphantly in producing a fresh and highly readable account of this extraordinary institution...An acute eye for detail is sustained throughout the book: Harris never fails to find the best story to focus readers’ attention on each chapter’s central subject. More fundamentally the book is beautifully constructed on the back of highly intelligent narrative choices... he triumphantly overcomes the limits of his brief to take the reader to the heart of what it meant to be Byzantine.”—Peter Heather, *BBC History* (Peter Heather *BBC History Magazine* 2015-10-01)

“Harris presents his case not only with lightness of hand but also surety of foot... The writing is elegant, the facts are carefully controlled and the narrative enlightened by revealing anecdotes and suggestive extracts from the primary sources”—Peter Sarris, *Literary Review* (Peter Sarris *Literary Review* 2015-10-01)

“Harris’ aim is to present a more nuanced account of Byzantine history, which emphasises the vibrancy of the empire’s culture, the extent of its influence, and, above all, the empire’s remarkable adaptability... [the book] strikes a good balance between succinct exposition and elucidation of broader themes in political, military, social, religious and cultural history, thereby providing an excellent and engaging introduction to Byzantine history.”—Doug Lee, *History Today* (Doug Lee *History Today* 2015-12-01)

“Harris is an efficient writer with an eye for entertaining detail, and as a result, the volume can be read with pleasure by general readers and younger students.”—*Choice* (*Choice*)

“Drawing on a diverse array of sources from numerous disciplines, Harris presents an accessible introduction to the major personalities, important disputes, and defining events of the Byzantine polity. . . . Casual readers as well as specialists will appreciate Harris's insightful and well-informed paean to an intriguing and resilient culture.”—*Publishers Weekly* (*Publishers Weekly*)

“What about the remarkable society in which this distinctive imaginative world, based on the tension between matter and spirit, had been built up over so many centuries? Those who want to know can turn with confidence to Jonathan Harris’s *The Lost World of Byzantium*.”—Peter Brown, *New York Review of Books* (Peter Brown *New York Review of Books*)

“Harris canters through the 11 centuries that followed the refoundation of the city of Byzantium by Constantine in the fourth century until its fall in 1453. He keeps up a swift pace as the fortunes of the empire ebb and flow... a welcome addition to an increasingly crowded field.”—Peter Frankopan, *Daily Telegraph* (Peter Frankopan *Daily Telegraph* 2016-09-03)

About the Author

Jonathan Harris is professor of the history of Byzantium at Royal Holloway, University of London. He lives in London.

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