



## The Byzantine Dark Ages (Debates in Archaeology)

By Michael J. Decker

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**The Byzantine Dark Ages (Debates in Archaeology)** By Michael J. Decker

*The Byzantine Dark Ages* explores current debates about the sudden transformation of the Byzantine Empire in the wake of environmental, social and political changes. Those studying the Byzantine Empire, the successor to the Roman Empire in the eastern Mediterranean, have long recognized that the mid-7th century CE ushered in sweeping variations in the way of life of many inhabitants of the Mediterranean world, with evidence of the decline of the size and economic prosperity of cities, a sharp fall in expressions of literary culture, the collapse in trade networks, and economic and political instability.

Michael J. Decker looks at the material evidence for the 7th to 9th centuries, lays out the current academic discourse about its interpretation, and suggests new ways of thinking about this crucial era. Important to readers interested in understanding how and why complex societies and imperial systems undergo and adapt to stresses, this clearly written, accessible work will also challenge students of archaeology and history to think in new ways when comprehending the construction of the past.



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### Editorial Review

#### Review

This is the first comprehensive archaeological evaluation of the early medieval period spanning the 6th through 9th centuries, one of the less explored periods of the history of Byzantium, traditionally labelled the Dark Ages. Michael Decker provides an updated picture and unparalleled assessment of archaeological excavations and surveys conducted in a vast geographical region, from Anatolia in the east to Greece, the Balkans and Italy in the west, with reference to adjacent regions as well. He takes the reader from major cities to the countryside, addressing core issues such as the significance of pottery assemblages and the limitations of archaeological surveys. Decker presents a thoughtful and provocative approach, which combines the political history of the region with a meticulous evaluation of the material remains, providing an outstanding contribution to re-shaping our understanding of the society and settlement processes in the post Roman period. This groundbreaking book will serve scholars, students and interested readers who seek a comprehensive view of early medieval Byzantium. -- Gideon Avni, Professor of Archaeology, Archaeology Division, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem Michael Decker's Byzantine Dark Ages is a pioneering study of a time and place usually avoided by scholars. His careful study of the seventh through ninth centuries uses history, archaeology, and geography to draw a new picture of the Byzantine empire. This is a work that can be consulted with profit by both the student and the specialist. -- Benjamin Hudson, Professor of History and Medieval Studies, Pennsylvania State University, Pennsylvania, US Herein, then, is a brief but clear summary of knowledge to date, where the disputes lie, and what we need to do to raise the profile of Dark Age studies, with extensive bibliography and index. Classics for All In trying to prove that George Ostrogorsky was wrong for not using the term in his seminal work (p. 29), Decker (Byzantine history and orthodox religion, Univ. of South Florida) presents an in-depth analysis of archaeological and literary evidence for the condition of the cities at various times and places in the Byzantine Empire up to the 10th century. These more focused studies add good information to the work. CHOICE

#### About the Author

**Michael J. Decker** is Maroulis Professor of Byzantine History and Orthodox Religion, University of South Florida, USA. He is co-author of *Life and Society in Byzantine Cappadocia* (2012) and author of *Tilling the Hateful Earth: Agricultural Production and Trade in the Late Antique East* (2009).

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