

perhaps have benefited from more maps, Woodward and Hunter's volume will nonetheless both enable and engender a wealth of upcoming cross-Channel comparison studies, especially with the easy access (CD) of the data from the appendices. Chalcolithic and Bronze Age scholars will thrill to the new paper tool in their analytical repertoire. My copy is on order!

SAMANTHA REITER

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*Essays on the Archaeology and Ancient History of the Maltese Islands: Bronze Age to Byzantine.* By MARIO BUHAGIAR. 240mm. Pp xxiii + 498, ills (some col), maps, plans. Midsea Books, Sta Venera Malta, 2014. ISBN 9789993274827. €55 (hbk).

There is a tradition in some quarters that encourages the publication of a scholar's past work in its unedited and original form. A collection of past essays allows one the opportunity of tracing the earlier work of a notable authority on their subject, seeing how the work of their mature years has developed and perhaps judging its impact. These collected essays by Mario Buhagiar are such an example; material gathered over the last thirty-five years or more into a book comprising nineteen essays on various historical and archaeological themes about the Maltese islands between later prehistory and the Byzantine period. The author is a noted art historian first and foremost, and his approach is largely within those traditions of scholarship.

The book is handsomely produced, on good paper in hard covers and it is a well-edited and generally accurate volume, continuing an impressive tradition of academic publications from Malta on historical themes. It contains copious footnotes, an extensive bibliography and a selection of illustrations. The chapters range across the subjects that have absorbed much of the author's career: Roman–Byzantine Malta, early Christianity in Malta as expressed through necropolises and catacombs, iconography, traditions around St Paul, and occasional other themes such as the Bronze Age fortifications of Malta. Published/written or presented between 1983 and the last decade, and mostly in Malta for a largely Maltese audience, the essays are of a particular and local tradition that has a quite

antiquarian feel, and rather little sense of international critical discussion. The papers intend to reflect the wide-ranging interests of the writer, and this they certainly achieve. However, there seem to have been almost no bibliographic updates for most of the essays, which without even a postscript or short review are caught in the aspic of time rather than providing a new commentary as a base for current work.

This lack of revision (a four-and-a-half-page preface suffices) makes the book less satisfactory than it might have been had the goal been to assess how the earlier scholarship is reflected in current thinking. Even a short postscript or paragraph of explanation could have been added to each paper to the great benefit of the publication. Given that much has happened in some of the volume's thematic areas, both within and outside Malta, commentary on the last decades of work is an omission, especially when the debates have been developed by Buhagiar's students and colleagues. For this reviewer, the unrevised reprint of old material without a critical appraisal is probably a mistake, given that publication of the present and topical is normally demanded by publishers and universities alike. This interesting book has considerable merit, but is the poorer for its lack of criticality of past or present scholarship, making the collection of essays a historical artefact rather than an ongoing discussion. Buhagiar is in a position to discuss where the scholarship is and should be going, but that chance is missed.

In editorial terms, while the text is well written and proofed, not all the chapters are useful or justified for inclusion without a postscript that corrects the interpretations and facts. In particular, the first chapter on the Bronze Age fortifications is a commentary on much earlier scholarship, and written entirely from a descriptive historical perspective. Many issues relating to the Bronze Age are under critical debate today following survey, excavation and dating, but the sweeping statements, without comment or comprehension of the immense timespan implied, do not merit re-publication when the references are no more recent than *c* 1980.

The subsequent chapters on Roman Malta are more satisfactory, but even here they are a commentary drawing on Classical texts and history implied by Ptolemy, Cicero, the New Testament, epigraphy, odd Roman coin finds, general surveys of sites and so on. This rather uncritical scholarship draws on obscure records and catalogues of museum reports, finds, notes in reports and objects, and is exhaustive and admirable, but fails to propose what remedy

should or could be applied to extract more meaningful information in the modern context. For instance, there is potentially a useful and interesting section in the chapter devoted to Roman Malta (from the author's 1980s PhD) that discusses the agricultural production of Roman Malta. Recent archaeological work across Malta has examined olive presses and cultivation evidence in the light of environmental sampling and economic reconstruction, but the unrevised essay makes no reference to this significant work.

The studies of Christian Malta are on safer ground, given Buhagiar's specialist knowledge. The cult of St Paul – a major saint in Malta – forms an intriguing discussion, and the essay sets out to reveal the controversies of claim made by different places in the central Mediterranean. This is the scholarship where the writer is most comfortable, and where contentious archaeological evidence is incidental to the story. The value of Buhagiar's work is properly reflected in the chapters on catacombs, Christian art, the various burial cults and the often little-known sites that occur across Malta. The art-historical approach is at its best here, focused on iconography and style, the form and layout of the catacombs, the paintings, symbolism, religion and ritual, and the historically recorded events and trends that are reflected in the remains. The background studies of research on many sites, including the sustained research at Tas Silġ by the Italian Mission, are usefully described and often critically discussed. Many obscure but interesting points of information are presented that make the latter chapters a sourcebook for ongoing inquiry.

In conclusion, I read this book with interest and have gathered useful descriptive details and a sense of the traditional debates around the Romanisation and Christianisation of Malta, together with the various monuments and forms of evidence. The style is deferential, descriptive and informative rather than critical, and perhaps rather typical of the traditions of island scholarship. This isolationism is especially reflected in the bibliography, where most sources relate to work published in Malta rather than wider European scholarship. For this reviewer, the lack of revision in both the writing and the illustrations (line, colour and black-and-white photographs) that accompany the essays is a disappointing aspect of an otherwise rather well-written volume. The collection would have been better with investment in redrawn figures, so they were unified to a form and type, and also had they been interspersed throughout the book rather than in a

section at the end. Understandably, such revisions would have been onerous, but would have presented a more obviously unified collection.

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*The Oxford Handbook of Roman Sculpture*. Edited by ELISE A FRIEDLAND and MELANIE GRUNOW SOBOCINSKI and ELAINE K GAZDA. 253 mm. Pp xiv + 713, 154 ills (10 in col). Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015. ISBN 9780199921829. £115 (hbk).

This recent entry in the *Oxford Handbooks* series lives up to the claim on the dust jacket that 'each volume offers an authoritative and state-of-the-art survey of current thinking and research in a particular subject area'. In the case of Roman sculpture there are forty-one essays grouped in six thematic categories. Part I (an odd prioritisation) deals with 'collecting, conservation and display' and includes papers on restoration, collecting in early America, current trends in museum display and three-dimensional scanning and modelling. Part II concentrates on 'production and distribution', with papers on marble quarries, carving techniques, bronzes, terracottas, polychromy and transport. Part III looks at 'styles and genres', with chapters on Etruscan and Greek connections, portraiture, monumental reliefs, archaism and eclecticism, Egyptianising monuments and late Antique sculpture. Part IV tackles 'spatial and social contexts', with chapters on architectural settings, religious dedications, domestic displays, funerary monuments, epigraphy and patronage, and gender. Part V turns from the centre of the empire to 'regions and provinces' – specifically northern Gaul, Germany and Britain, Spain and Narbonensis, North Africa, Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt and the Near East (the Balkan and Danube provinces are omitted). Part VI, finally, is on 'viewing and reception', with interesting articles on aesthetics and Latin literary reception (by Michael Squire, one of the highlights of the volume), reception theory, ancient analogues of museums, images of statues in other media, human interactions with statues and iconoclasm.

Different papers adopt different policies. Some try to be comprehensive and generalising, others focus on selected examples. Some are matter of fact surveys; others tend to be theoretical analyses. What all have in common is a tightness