

Reviews

Robert C. Ousterhout, *Visualizing Community: Art, Material Culture, and Settlement in Byzantine Cappadocia*, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 46, Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2017. Pp. xxv, 532.
DOI:[10.1017/byz.2018.29](https://doi.org/10.1017/byz.2018.29)

The title under consideration here is fashionably broad and vague, and in the best tradition of material culture studies promises to employ material in order to visualize a cultural phenomenon. One may be reminded of Sharon Gerstel's recent *Rural Lives and Landscapes in Late Byzantium: Art, Archaeology, and Ethnography* (2015), which deals with Greece and a variety of different source materials¹. Such book titles help to make the point that the constantly growing corpus of material evidence is of broad historical interest, beyond the academic discipline(s) of archaeology and history of art. They also address the challenge of dealing with, and satisfying the requirements of, both material as well as cultural studies. In the case of Ousterhout's title, the former appears to be underrepresented at first, as no particular material is mentioned, before the table of contents seems to redress the balance with two chapters on architecture (1) and painting (2) and two on community (3) and landscapes (4).

However, once the reader has the actual book in hand and starts leafing through the pages, all the chapters as well as the volume as a whole turn out to be concerned mainly with architecture. Whilst this might come as a disappointment to some, it has the advantage of a clear and straightforward agenda and methodology: Chapter 1 is dedicated to church buildings and arranged in chronological as well as typological order, starting with the early Christian period, which is subdivided into masonry and rock-cut architecture, the latter further sub-divided into single-aisled, double-aisled, three-aisled, and domed cruciform churches. The transitional and middle Byzantine periods are likewise sub-divided; a further section deals with thirteenth-century churches, and a concluding section gives space also to the consideration of liturgical arrangements. Chapter 2 deals with the various ways in which rock-cut churches were decorated with sculpture² and painting, again in roughly chronological order. Folkloric painting, nonfigural ornament, isolated figural imagery, the Choir of Saints, apse programs, continuous narration, and inscriptions, among others, are each considered in separate sections. The relationship to architecture and in particular how

1 Cf. the review by R. Ousterhout, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 41 (2017) 176–78.

2 Cf. more recently A. L. McMichael, *Rising above the Faithful: Monumental Ceiling Crosses in Byzantine Cappadocia* (Diss City University of New York 2018): https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/2553.

the rock-cut settings informed the application of the decorative schemes are given special attention.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of mainly secular architecture, with particular attention to courtyard complexes, their decoration, and their internal structures. Chapter 4 addresses burials and their relation to monasticism, including a long and detailed discussion of ‘the Problem of Göreme’, all of which reinforces and elaborates the earlier point³ that numerous alleged monasteries and refectories were in fact used for secular housing and commemorative meals, respectively. The many and often impractically small chapels at Göreme are understood not as monastery or parish churches but as venues for occasional commemorative services on behalf of the dead. This can also explain the miniature scale of some rock-cut liturgical furniture that may have served to symbolize rather than to enact the liturgy. It brings to mind the dollhouse-sized chapels on Modern Greek roadsides that commemorate Orthodox Christians who died in traffic accidents.

Whilst the presentation is necessarily selective and reflects Ousterhout’s personal research interests, it strives to, and succeeds in, giving a general overview of Cappadocia’s Byzantine architecture. The descriptions both in words and through photographs and line drawings are outstanding. Illustrated in colour throughout, about half of the large-sized volume consists of more than 500 beautiful figures, the majority new or re-drawn. Thus, the book greatly improves the documentation and accessibility of Byzantine Cappadocia and forms a new basis for the region’s integration into the history of Byzantine architecture. Ousterhout himself frequently refers to outside influences, in particular from Constantinople, but wisely restricts such excursions to a bare minimum, thereby preserving the descriptive nature of his text with few footnotes and a focused bibliography, as the already monumental publication would otherwise have become unwieldy. This leaves others, and, it is to be hoped, also Ousterhout himself, with many an opportunity for future research and publications on Cappadocia and its relation to Byzantium as a whole.

Philipp Niewöhner
Goethe-Universität Frankfurt

3 R. Warland, ‘Die byzantinische Höhlensiedlung von Gökce/Momoasson in Kappadokien: Gehöfte, Grabkapellen mit Wandmalerei und ein vermöglicher Salböhändler’, *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 58 (2008) 347–69; V. Kalas, ‘Challenging the Sacred Landscape of Byzantine Cappadocia’, in A. Luyster & A. Walker (eds), *Negotiating Secular and Sacred in Medieval Art: Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism* (Aldershot 2009) 147–73; C. Jolivet-Lévy, ‘The Bahattın Samanlığı Kilisesi at Belisırma Revisited’, in C. Hourihane (ed.), *Byzantine Art: Recent Studies* (Princeton 2009) 81–110; R. Ousterhout, ‘Remembering the Dead in Byzantine Cappadocia: the Architectural Settings for Commemoration’, in O. Ioannisian & D. Jolshin (eds), *Architecture of Byzantium and Kievan Rus from the 9th to 12th Centuries*, Transactions of the State Hermitage Museum 53 (St Petersburg 2010) 89–100.