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# The Insular Worlds of Byzantium between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (c.a. 550–c.a. 850)



VORTRAG – hybrid (SE 12 / ZOOM)

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Di, 6. Juni 2023, 18 Uhr s. t.

The growing interest in Mediterranean history has predictably increased attention to islands and their role as hubs of economic and cultural exchanges and interconnections. In particular, and since the publication of Pirenne's *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, the arrival of the Arabs in the Mediterranean has been regarded as the primary catalyst for the end of a unified and peaceful Great Sea under the Roman *thalassocracy*. In the light of the interpretation above, it comes as no surprise that, when dealing with the large Mediterranean islands of the Byzantine Empire, scholars have often simply lingered on their importance as strategic and military bulwarks against the Arab invasions or raids (Crete, Cyprus and, partially, Sardinia) or as neglected outposts soon to be engulfed in the whirlwind of western Medieval European politics (Malta, and the Balearics). Sicily was the only exception due to its exceptional importance as grain supplier for the Byzantine empire after the loss of Egypt in the 640s.

In light of this, the aim of this talk is to use material culture (in particular ceramics and seals) as well as archaeology to explore the importance of large Mediterranean islands like Cyprus, Malta, and Sardinia as hubs of connectivity in Long Late Antiquity. In particular, it will be examined how these insular sites turned from strategic hubs across the *annona civica* shipping routes unifying the Mediterranean in the Late Antique period to “thresholds” in the face of the Arab conquest of the southern basin of the Mediterranean. This will allow me to show how the above-mentioned islands experienced enduring economic prosperity well into the eighth century, as particularly visible in Cyprus, where a resilient coastal settlement pattern went hand in hand with extensive building activity, as well as Sicily. Although they were caught in the crossfire of the Arab naval raids throughout the seventh and eighth centuries, the abovementioned islands continued to act as active economic spaces than the so-called Byzantine continental heartland.



Der Vortrag ist hybrid geplant – er findet vor Ort in **1190 Wien, Franz Klein-Gasse 1, 1. Stock, Seminarraum 12**, statt und wird auch per **ZOOM** übertragen.

Informationen zu den Vorträgen und zur Teilnahme finden Sie unter:  
<https://klass-archaeologie.univie.ac.at>

