

Silly Bus 3

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 27 Apr 1998

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Alice Turner — 27 Apr 1998, 09:16

I'm thinking that A SHORT HISTORY OF BYZANTIUM might be too difficult a read, and I propose to substitute EVERYDAY LIFE IN BYZANTIUM (meanwhile those of you with a few minutes on your hands might be amused by going over to Amazon and typing in "Everyday Life" in the keywords space--quite astonishing!).

Here is a review of the book:

star110w at cdc.gov from New Orleans, Louisiana , 10/20/97, rating=8:

A fine social history of ancient Rome's Byzantine heirs.

When we think about the social life and customs of the "ancient Romans", we will likely visualize the Latin-speaking, toga-clad pagans who lived in or near Rome at the height of the empire. Yet, those keen in history recognize that Roman government and society survived in a Hellenic Christian character following the collapse of the Western empire. Thanks to author Tamara Talbot Rice, the characteristics of both government and society during the Roman Empire's Byzantine period are well described in "Everyday Life in Byzantium". The author makes her admiration for Byzantine civilization very clear, and for good reasons. Once scorned by historians as politically and culturally irrelevant, Byzantium (whose citizens proudly called themselves "Romans" until the very end) actually possessed a rich cosmopolitan culture which was modeled along Greek lines but was influenced significantly by other peoples in the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond. Still based on Roman law, its strong central government was headed by a powerful emperor who, paradoxically, held court like an Eastern potentate rather than an heir to the Caesars. Guiding the Byzantines in their spiritual life was an equally powerful Orthodox Church whose close relationship with the state had never been seen before in earlier Roman history. Against this backdrop, Rice gives a fine portrayal of a people who managed to leave an impressive legacy in law, literature, art, and spiritual thought despite 1000 years of constant political and military struggles. It is regrettable that this book is out of print, but I hope it will be republished in the near future.