

The Hellenic territories under Venetian Rule: partners or colonies?

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Abstract

For about 800 years Venice, which remained a city-state throughout its even longer long history, ruled over a widely scattered agglomeration of territories, first in regions outside Italy and later also in the Italian mainland. Was there a basic difference between these two main components of lands ruled by the city-Republic? If so, what were the principal characteristics of the overseas territories? Can we understand the relationship between the ruling city and its overseas territories by merely using the terminology used in Venetian sources? To what extent can our own contemporary terminology provide categories of analysis of this complex and long-lasting relationship?

Based on a comprehensive research of Venice's rule of its "maritime state" during the early modern period (15th to 18th centuries), this lecture, which focuses on the territories of Hellenic culture, attempts to confront recent debates with regard to the consideration of the Venetian experience as an early phase of modern colonial experience.

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Benjamin Arbel is Emeritus Professor of Modern History at the University of Tel Aviv. He obtained his doctorate from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1982, with a thesis on Cypriot society under Venetian rule. His research involves various aspects of the history of the Mediterranean world, including the Venetian overseas empire (with particular attention to Cyprus), maritime trade and mercantile culture of Venice, and inter-cultural contacts between Venice and the Islamic Levant. He is also interested in phenomena of secularization in the Renaissance and in Renaissance attitudes to animals. His seven books include, inter alia, one (in English) on Jewish and Venetian merchants in the eastern Mediterranean in the sixteenth century, a collection of essays (in English, French and Italian) on the Venetian rule in Cyprus, and a book (in Hebrew) on the development of secular culture in the Italian Renaissance. He is also the author of about a hundred articles and monographic chapters. The latter include a chapter on the Venetian overseas possessions during the Renaissance (in the *Storia di Venezia* published by Treccani); another one, following the same argument all along the early modern period (in Brill's *Companion to Venetian History*); and still another one on Cyprus under Venetian rule (in the *Ιστορία της Κύπρου*, published by the Makarios Foundation in Nicosia). Until last year he was co-editor of the *Mediterranean Historical Review*, and a member of the editorial board of *The Medieval Mediterranean* series (Brill, Leiden). He is currently studying the history of attitudes to animals in Western culture.

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