Castles of North-west Greece: From the Early Byzantine Period to the Eve of the First World War, by Allan Brooks. Aetos Press, 2013. 332pp., 198 b/w illus., 43 maps and plans. Pb. £19.95. ISBN-13: 9780957584600.

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The book is divided into four parts which correspond to the four regional units of north-west Greece: Aetolia and Akarnania (pp. 16–87), Preveza and Lefkas (pp. 88–142), the Gulf of Ambrosia (pp. 143–190) and Epiros (pp. 191–276). The book includes an historical introduction to the region (pp. 1–15) plus a chronological table at the end (pp. 281–291). The texts and descriptions of each site are extremely informative but they need to be reorganised into separate chapters and paragraphs to enhance comprehension and readability.

The Greek and Byzantine fortifications are not the main corpus of this monograph; it includes of course sites such as Nikopolis (pp. 127–140). However, most of the pages are devoted to the medieval and modern Turkish and Venetian monuments. The coast of north-west Greece was covered by fortresses built by the Venetians mainly in the 18th century. Then a second phase of fortification building started in the early 19th century. Ali Pasha of Jannina, like his Egyptian counterpart, Mohamed Ali, employed many European engineers to build his fortresses. It was a new golden age for military architecture in the Eastern Mediterranean (Pradines, *Mohamed Ali's fortifications*, forthcoming).

The book is very well illustrated with an abundant and clear iconography. The maps are very good and easy to read. The photographs are also very good and deserve to be printed in colour on high quality paper. All the plans of the fortifications have been done by the author and are very good. It is a really great achievement.

The bibliography and notes are informative and serious, but they remain within the local context and there is no real attempt to compare these Greek fortifications with their Italian or Turkish counterparts. The book is extremely thick and of great value and this was a concerted decision by the author as he already possessed a huge amount of data. It was only in the summary chapter at the end (pp. 277–228) that an attempt to include Greece in the general history of fortification was made.

According to the author, the publication covers a selection of castles and forts in a relatively unknown/less touristic area of Greece. Each site is described in detail and placed in its topographical and historical context before being attributed a full architectural description of its military architecture. It is a complicated book to read even for the specialist and it is certainly not a travel guide. Despite the very useful and practical information for itineraries and for visiting these Greek monuments, it is not a book that is just to be used when going on a trip. Maybe a supplementary short edition could solve this problem. This self-edited book deserves a second and good edition with colour plates for the specialist and fortification aficionados.

Keywords: Greece, fortress, Byzantine defense

It is not a travel guide at all, but an essential book for castelologists and experts in Late Greek fortifications. In fact, this book is a small bible for modern Venetian and Ottoman fortifications. This book will be a good book to read in conjunction with the book by Robert Elgood entitled *The Arms of Greece and Her Balkan Neighbors in the Ottoman Period*, 2009, to gain a full understanding of Ottoman and modern warfare in the Balkans. This is the reason why this publication is important for specialists in Muslim military architecture.