

REVIEW–DISCUSSION

GREEK SECULAR HISTORIANS IN LATE ANTIQUITY

B. Bleckmann and T. Stickler, edd., *Griechische Profanhistoriker des fünften nachchristlichen Jahrhunderts*. Historia Einzelschriften 228. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2014. Pp. 228. Hardcover, €56.00. ISBN 978-3-515-10641-2.

The study of late ancient historiography is flourishing, particularly in continental Europe, and the present volume gathers some of the finest scholars currently working on the topic.¹ It collects papers presented at a conference in Düsseldorf in 2010, which was one of the events leading up to the project *Kleine und fragmentarische Historiker der Spätantike*, directed by Bruno Bleckmann and Markus Stein. Planning to produce a series of commented editions of lesser and fragmentary historians from Late Antiquity, it promises to be one of the most important projects on ancient historiography of the coming years, and thus provides an additional reason for graduate students and scholars in late-ancient studies to brush up on their German. The quality of the present volume bodes well for the rest of the project.

As the title indicates, the main scope of the volume is Greek secular historians preserved in fragmentary state. This is a fairly traditional focus, as Greek secular historiography is still the paradigmatic genre of late-ancient historiography, together with Ammianus Marcellinus for the Latin side (at least from a classicist's perspective). Moreover, the fragmentary authors concerned have all been properly edited.² As such, there is a good basis for the studies gathered in this volume. At the same time, most specialists know that Blockley's edition is based on some disputable methodological choices, in particular that of taking too expansive a view of what counts as a fragment. Indeed, the study of late-ancient historiography has encountered scepticism in some quarters, and this is partially due to a perceived lack of methodological rigour. For example, in his introduction (7–18, at 9) Bruno Bleckmann warns against methodological 'purism' consisting in taking into

¹ The research underpinning the present discussion has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP/2007–2013) / ERC Grant Agreement no. 313153.

² R. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire* (Liverpool, 1983).

account only fragments that are explicitly ascribed to a lost work. He points to the fact that many later epitomes by and large summarise a single work. In this, he consciously deviates from the rules laid down by F. Jacoby for classical Greek historiography. I would argue that even if there is a high likelihood that a later text relies largely on the lost historian, such evidence can never have the same status as named fragments. Leaving aside the fact that the identification of a single unnamed source of an epitome must remain hypothetical (even if it can be very likely), the epitomiser may have intervened more or less extensively in the text. The clash between these two approaches can, in fact, be witnessed in the first two chapters of the volume, both concerned with Eunapius.

Eunapius (end of fourth–beginning of fifth century) is known through a series of excerpts and a summary by Photius. It is further known, again from Photius, that Zosimus (early sixth century) relied heavily on Eunapius in his own history. The first chapter is a *pas-de-deux* by F. Paschoud and A. Baldini (19–49), who can be credited with having formulated the dominant view on the nature and extent of Eunapius' history. The original feature of the chapter is that both scholars set out their agreements and differences, allowing the reader quick access to their interpretations and hypotheses. The foundation of their position is the total dependency of Zosimus on his sources: in their view, Zosimus is unable to have thoughts of his own. As elegantly put by Baldini: 'le caratteristiche strutturali della mente di Zosimo impediscono di credere che egli abbia raccolto da Eunapio i nudi fatti e li abbia conditi, come dire, con considerazioni di stampo provvidenzialistico pagano ispirate da altri autori' (25). This is the paradigm of the 'stupid' Zosimus (as formulated in a famous riposte to this thesis by P. Speck).³ They also argue that Eunapius relied on a pagan Western source, onto which Paschoud likes to put the name of Nicomachus Flavianus. Disagreement concerns the nature of the two editions of Eunapius that are mentioned by Photius and the role played by the battle of Adrianopolis in his interpretation of recent history.

Having their positions set out with such admirable clarity, the reader more easily spots the weaker points. First, methodologically Paschoud puts the carriage before the horse. His chapter starts out by recognising that the extant excerpts reveal differences with the narrative of Zosimus. This is also highlighted by U. Hartmann in the second chapter, where it is noted that there are no providentialist remarks in the extant fragments of Eunapius. In response, Paschoud argues that this is because they are fragments and therefore offer a distorted image of Eunapius (19, 36). Even without lapsing into the form of purism criticised by Bleckmann, it is questionable to base the interpretation of a lost work primarily on a dependent text and not primarily on the named fragments: the degree of certainty of the Eunapian origin of

³ P. Speck, 'Wie dumm darf Zosimus sein?', *Byzantinoslavica* 52 (1991): 1–14.

the fragments is indisputably higher than that of any given passage of Zosimus. The second axiom is the ‘stupidity’ of Zosimus, whereas, in fact, Paschoud’s own reconstruction points to a greater degree of independence on Zosimus’ part. For example: Paschoud notices that the same anti-Christian tendency is present throughout Zosimus’ narrative, even where he is dependent on Olympiodorus. Clinging to the supposition that Zosimus does not do anything other than copy Eunapius and Olympiodorus, he is forced to argue (31) that Eunapius and Olympiodorus both used a lost *Historia adversus Christianos*. Is it not more likely that this is an interpretation introduced into his material by Zosimus himself? Similarly, the reference to Polybius and his account of Roman expansion in Zosimus’ opening pages is attributed to Eunapius on rather weak grounds: ‘Ce motif tiré de la littérature grecque ne peut guère être issu d’une source occidentale, ni être attribué à l’invention de Zosime. Il s’agit donc d’ajouts appartenant en propre à Eunape’ (33). Is it really unthinkable that an educated Byzantine official, intent on writing a history, would have read Polybius or known about him? Moreover, Paschoud is willing to accept that Zosimus relied on more than Eunapius and Olympiodorus, as he proposes a different source for the years 270–355 (22).

These brief remarks suggest, in my view, that the Paschoud/Baldini interpretation of Eunapius is up for total revision: the way forward lies, in fact, in tearing down the whole edifice and constructing a new one, in which Zosimus is seen as an independent historian. This does not mean we have to abandon the idea that Zosimus relies on Eunapius or that Zosimus suddenly sheds all his failures; his narrative is not, however, a mere epitome that faithfully reflects Eunapius (minus the misinterpretations due to Zosimus’ lack of intelligence). And even if it were an epitome, we know that epitomators also projected their own views on the material assembled.

A first step in this direction is taken by Udo Hartmann, whose chapter focuses on Eunapius’ *Lives of the Philosophers* (51–84). He clearly distinguishes Zosimus’ view of history, based on the idea of decline, from that of Eunapius, who considered current emperors to be bad, but did not see this fact as a sign of inexorable decline (see in particular 52 n. 5). He points out that Zosimus’ straightforward vision of decline is only articulated in digressions, for which he in all likelihood was not dependent on Eunapius. In the extant fragments, Eunapius himself, by contrast, emphasises the moral utility of history and the continuous presence of divine providence for the Empire. Hartmann also finds the same ideas in the *Lives of the Philosophers*, thus pointing out the consistency of Eunapius’ thought. Hartmann also reverts to more straightforward ideas about the two editions of the *Histories* of Eunapius, in contrast to the complex hypotheses developed by Baldini and Paschoud. Hartmann proposes that the first published edition ran from Claudius Gothicus to the death of Theodosius I in 395 and was then continued until 404 (this still im-

plies rejecting some of Photius' statements (Cod. 77), in particular that the two editions covered the same period). Hartmann's contribution is, in my view, more successful than Paschoud and Baldini's, for it takes the methodological precaution of starting from extant fragments, instead of amalgamating Zosimus and Eunapius from the outset.

Eunapius' successor, Olympiodorus of Thebes, is the subject of T. Stickler's chapter (85–102), which focuses in particular on the way Photius has summarised his work. Indeed, in contrast with Eunapius, we do not possess excerpts of Olympiodorus, and his work is thus only indirectly accessible through the summary in Photius and his use by Sozomen, Zosimus, and Philostorgius (B. Bleckmann has, however, recently challenged the dependency of Philostorgius on Olympiodorus).⁴ In other summaries, Photius is known to have focused on the particular and exceptional; he did not wish to offer a balanced summary of the work. Applied to Olympiodorus, this allows Stickler to underline the fact that the summary is a collection of disconnected impressions. Hence the invitation to entertain the possibility that Olympiodorus did not write exclusively on Western events.⁵

Dariusz Brodka offers a close analysis of Priscus' account of the campaign of Basiliscus against Geiseric in 468 (103–20). For this we possess two fragments: quotations by Theophanes (*AM* 5961) and Evagrius (*HE* 2.16). This is a less advantageous situation than for many other fragments, which are excerpts and thus report (by and large) the exact words of the passage. Brodka substantiates the traditional assumption that Procopius, *Bella* 3.6 also derives from Priscus. This allows him to reconstruct the outline of Priscus' account, which focused on the treachery of Basiliscus and the intrigues at court. I am less persuaded by Brodka's effort to distinguish between various traditions which are then to be explained by the use of different sources, and would object in particular against the repeatedly-introduced hypothesis of intermediary epitomes to explain slightly different versions. First, traditions can be distinguished, but belonging to the same tradition is not a proof of dependency (the same or similar information can come from many quarters). Second, invoking intermediate sources on the basis of slight deviations underestimates the degree to which late-ancient authors were capable (as any ancient historian) of reworking and adapting their material. Some minor comments: we do not know if Theodorus Anagnostes published his work around 530 (110); we cannot reach a firm conclusion about the absence of the

⁴ B. Bleckmann, E. des Places, D. Meyer, and J. M. Prieur, *Philostorge. Histoire ecclésiastique*. Sources chrétiennes, 564 (Paris, 2013) 60.

⁵ This argument is developed further in T. Stickler, 'Olympiodor und Constantius III', in (forthcoming) P. Blaudeau and P. Van Nuffelen, edd., *Historiographie tardo-antique et transmission des savoirs* (Berlin, 2015).

event in the narrative of Theodore Lector based on its absence in the epitome of that work, as the epitomator made clear choices (118 n. 53).

Malchus, who has come to us as the historian of the turbulent years 473–80, is the subject of H. U. Wiemer's contribution (121–59). He focuses on the question of how much Malchus said about the Vandals. The extant fragments mention two embassies between Constantinople and the Vandal kingdom. Wiemer concludes that the Vandal episodes were not relegated to a digression and that Malchus, although a Christian, completely elided the ecclesiastical component of the negotiations. He also discusses the famous fragment 10 Müller (= 14 Blockley), in which a senatorial embassy hands back the imperial insignia to Zeno after the deposition of Romulus Augustulus in 476 and requests for Odoacer the title of *patricius*. Wiemer shows that the text says that Odoacer had already been recognised as a *patricius* by the deposed emperor Julius Nepos and that Zeno responded that he should be content with this. The hoped-for appointment as *magister militum* was not obtained: in this way Zeno succeeded in keeping up his support for Nepos without completely alienating Odoacer, who obtained implicit recognition as a *patricius*. Wiemer concludes with a number of methodological remarks, insisting, and rightly so, that the reconstruction of a lost history should not be mixed up with the reconstruction of the events.

Two chapters discuss the minor historian (at least in terms of the number of preserved fragments) Candidus. H. Brandt offers a synthetic assessment (161–70), critically discussing the attribution and historical features of fragments other than the two presently preserved. Brandt is rightly sceptical regarding the attempt by U. Roberto in his 2005 edition of John of Antioch to attribute complete excerpts of John of Antioch to Candidus (fr. 302–7 Roberto = 233–8 Mariev). Whereas John probably did use Candidus, Roberto's hypothesis relies on the (still common) assumption that late ancient historians copy a single source. Nevertheless, as Brandt persuasively argues, there is no reason to assume that in the excerpts concerned John could not have also had access to other histories. Brandt stresses that Candidus stands out among 'classicising' historians of Late Antiquity in recording both ecclesiastical and secular events. He thus transcends what often seems to be a rigid separation of genres. He sees Candidus as trying to offer a narrative that integrates the Isaurians into the empire, but does not do so from an Isaurian point of view.

In a more specific analysis, M. Meier (171–93) argues for a different interpretation. According to him, Candidus does write from an Isaurian perspective and favours an equilibrium among the various Isaurian leaders. The burden of Meier's interpretation is carried by Candidus' derivation of the name of the Isaurians from the biblical Esau. Meier understands this not just as an attempt to tie the Isaurians into Biblical history, but also as a typological reading of the Isaurian present: Esau is the son who comes second after Jacob, but is later reconciled to him. For Meier this could be interpreted in

fifth-century Constantinople as suggesting that Romans and Isaurians could be reconciled too. Meier emphasises that we do not find in Candidus the classical and classicising identification of the Isaurians with, for example, the ancient Solymes and sees this as a conscious choice. For, in contemporary perception and writings, the Isaurians were identified with traditional enemies of Rome through such classicising identifications. According to Meier, this negative stereotype provided the impetus for Candidus to write his more positive history and it may, more generally, have led to the development of an awareness of an Isaurian identity among the Isaurians themselves (in the way that, according to Sartre, the Jew is defined by the other's perception of him). I would follow Meier regarding the importance of a hostile discourse in strengthening an Isaurian identity (even if it cannot be the sole factor in the creation of an identity: one should not forget that in Late Antiquity we still have strong local and provincial identities). The weight put on the Esau-typology is potentially a weak point in his argument. In fact, a new fragment published a while ago by A. Laniado—ignored by both Brandt and Meier—implies that Candidus also derived the name of Isaurians from the Latin *aurum*.⁶ He thus developed at least a dual etymology and origin of the name, which could lead one to surmise that the Biblical etymology was not the single focus of the work. There is also a passage in the Suda (10.333), according to which Numa took the chlamys from the Isaurians. Attribution to Candidus is mere speculation, but the passage still shows that a variety of ways of linking the Isaurians into Roman history circulated.

The last two contributions fall outside the scope set by the title of the volume. H. Börm discusses the Latin Chronicle by Hydatius (195–214), and P. Blaudeau focuses on fragmentary Greek Church historians, in particular Hesychius of Jerusalem (215–28). In this way, these papers raise a more fundamental question: does it make sense to study Greek secular historiography in isolation from other genres and languages? Hennig Börm addresses this question explicitly, suggesting that the provincial perspective he offers complements the focus on the imperial centre of the other papers. The question was also implicitly addressed in the two papers on Candidus, as this historian, without identifying as a church historian, mingled secular and ecclesiastical events. Explicitly and implicitly, these suggestions indicate the way forward. For example, it would not make much sense to study Procopius in isolation from the various histories being composed at the same time in Constantinople in various languages (Latin: Jordanes; Syriac: John of Ephesus) and various forms (chronicles: Marcellinus Comes; narrative of more distant Roman history: Peter the Patrician; compilations of ecclesiastical history: Cassiodorus; panegyric). Even if the primary literary reference may be to

⁶ A. Laniado, 'Un fragment méconnu de Candide de l'Isaurien?', *Athenaeum* 93 (2005): 143–8.

works of the same genre and in the same language, the wider context shows that the choice for a particular genre and language is far from self-evident. It would indeed have been worthwhile to situate Malchus, Candidus, and the others not in the context of Greek secular historiography, but in that of contemporary historiography. Obviously, that would have been a different volume, one that does not focus on a particular genre, but a particular social and cultural context.

The last chapter is a characteristically dense paper by P. Blaudeau. Its first part situates the church historian Hesychius of Jerusalem within the context of the affirmation of the patriarchal status of Jerusalem in the years 448–9. His history quickly lost its relevance, having been superseded by the events leading to and following the council of Chalcedon, but resurfaced in the sixth century via the Origenist milieu in Palestine. The second part sets out a brief history of late-ancient ecclesiastical historiography. In the fifth and early sixth centuries, ecclesiastical history was an instrument in the defence of what Blaudeau calls geo-ecclesiological positions: the desire to strengthen patriarchal sees by representing them as loci of orthodoxy in competition with other sees and theologies. Justinian, however, establishes the pentarchic system, whereby the five traditional sees are recognised and assigned fixed places within an overall equilibrium. Ecclesiastical history thus lost its polemical function in contemporary debates and the genre declined. As a consequence, contemporaries started to value these histories as repositories of knowledge about the past and even heretical histories started to be quoted as evidence for certain past events at Church councils in the sixth and seventh centuries. The histories that were still written, such as that of Evagrius Scholasticus, tended to use heretical histories as sources for the past and integrated them into a single supersessionist narrative.

This review has strayed beyond the limited bounds of ordinary book reviews. This is a tribute to the volume, which deserves a wide readership—also in the Anglo-Saxon world, where the interest in late-ancient historiography has not yet reached the level of attention the genre enjoys in Europe. I have mainly focused on methodological issues, as these are paramount in the study of fragmentary authors. Unavoidably, there will always be disagreement about the interpretation and reconstruction of fragmentary works. But methodological rigour can help to identify more clearly where agreement and disagreement should start. All the papers in this volume address these methodological issues explicitly and as such they are not only substantial contributions to our knowledge of specific historians, but also raise awareness of the methodological problems that lie at the heart of the study of fragmentary historians.