

## **PROCOPIUS IN GREEK SCHOLARSHIP**

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**P**rocopius' works have been the subject of renewed and growing philological and historical interest in the last decades. Over the last twenty years, a considerable number of books and articles, written in various languages, have been devoted to the sixth-century historian and the reign under which he composed his writings. This chapter aims to put forward what has been written on Procopius' persona and works in (modern) Greek. Additionally, the following is an attempt to find common strands and themes in recent Greek scholarship on Procopius. It will become evident that despite Procopius' prominence as a historian throughout the Byzantine millennium, Greek Byzantinists are not much concerned with his writings. Only a small number of Greek philologists and historians have been engaged in recent debates about the dates of Procopius' texts as well as the political and religious thought of the historian.

To begin with, all three works by Procopius have been translated into Modern Greek: *The History of the Wars* was first translated by A. Katharios in 1937. A new translation of the Byzantine text was offered by P. Rodakis in 1996. The *Buildings* appeared in Modern Greek in 1996 as well. The translator of the text was S. Kokkinu-Manta. A translation of the *Anekdotia* or Secret History was published in 1988 by A. Sideri. These editions are those still in use by students in Greek universities.

Procopius' life and works have not so far been the subject of a monograph in Modern Greek. Information on his per-

sona and on his literary activities is mainly to be sought in Greek histories of the Byzantine Empire and histories of Byzantine literature as well as in surveys of early Byzantine historiography. K. I. Amantos (1953) and D. Zakynthinos' (1972) studies on the history of Byzantium as well as four studies by I. Karagiannopoulos (1978, 1987, 1993, 1996) discuss in passing literary and political aspects of Procopius' works. The same holds true for the history of Byzantium written by Aik. Christofilopoulou (1996). It is worth mentioning that Christofilopoulou shares Hunger's proposition that the *Anecdota* must have circulated only among Procopius loyal friends. Karpozilos (1997), by contrast, provides a more detailed analysis of Procopius' literary activities. In the first of his four volumes on Byzantine historians and chronographers, Karpozilos explores a series of issues current in Procopian scholarship. Karpozilos dates Book 8 of the *History of the Wars* prior to the year 555. In Karpozilos' view the *Anecdota* was written when Justinian was still alive. This view runs counter to Fatouros' (1980) proposition that the text was written after the death of Justinian, that is, around the year 565. Th. Detorakis was concerned with the dating of Procopius' works too. Th. Detorakis (2003) embarks upon a close analysis of Byzantine written culture from Justinian up to the death of the Patriarch Photius. Detorakis dates the first seven books of the *History of the Wars* to between the years 545 and 550. Moreover, he argues that these books circulated in 554. He appears to agree with M. Cesa, that Procopius deliberately organised his narrative of events geographically. As far as the *Anecdota* is concerned, Detorakis accepts Haury's dating of the work, that is, about the year 550. Yet Detorakis dates the *Buildings* between the years 558–559. Finally, A. Savvidis in his history of Byzantium (2001b) endeavours to reconstruct the reign of Justinian by resorting to Procopius' works.

A small number of Greek scholars have examined Procopius' views on empire and religion. In particular, A. Savvidis (2001a) attempted to shed light on Procopius' works in the political, social and cultural context in which he lived

and wrote. Procopius' views on empire and religion are sketchily outlined in Karpozilos (1997). Karpozilos appears to be inclined to see latent criticism of Justinian in the use of the word *tyche* by Procopius. E. Saranti (2000) is concerned with the description of monuments in the *History of the Wars*. In her view, statues and monuments in Procopian historiography signify the role of Constantinople—as the New Rome—in the world, and serve to justify the imperialistic plans of Justinian. Justinian's political ideology has been studied at length by T. Lounghes. Specifically, Justinian's reign is the subject matter of Lounghes (2005). The author reflects on sixth-century society as well as on Justinian's imperialistic foreign policies by drawing on early Byzantine historiography, such as, Procopius' *History of the Wars*. The so-called *reconquista* is the core of Lounghes (1983) and Vlysidou–Lampakis–Leontsini–Lounghis (2008). Both studies survey the political circumstances under which Justinian's expansionist plans were implemented. Lounghes explores Procopius' references to Justinian and concludes that Procopius was critical of Justinian's external policies. A. D. Panagiotou (2013) consists of a selection of texts from the fourth to the thirteenth centuries. The collection includes passages taken from Procopius' works. Panagiotou's aim is to show that Byzantine texts testify to the roots of Modern Greek culture and that they can shed light on contemporary social and political issues.

Procopius is often associated with the so-called Nika revolt, about which Procopius' works supply us with significant information. Lounghes (1985) aims to explain the causes that led to the Nika revolt during Justinian's reign. Lounghes sees the Nika revolt as being an act of rebellion on the part of the lower strata against the oppressive power.

Procopius' views of barbarians are explored by A. M. Revanoglou (2005). Revanoglou undertakes a close analysis of the use of geographical and ethnographical terms in Procopius' works. Since Procopius' works abound in geographical and ethnographical references, they have been used in passing in a number of studies dealing with Greek

cities in the early and middle Byzantine period: Kordosis (1988); Kordosis (2002); Misiou (2002); and Tsirpanlis (2004).

The persona of the empress Theodora, as portrayed in the *Anecdota*, was the subject in N. Tomadakis (1954), P. Mantellos (1988) and K. Giakoumi (2012). Tomadakis is convinced that the *Anecdota* was not circulated while Procopius was alive. Tomadakis argues that all the information about the years that Theodora worked as a prostitute at the Hippodrome must have been circulated in the city by the brothel-keepers; they sought to get revenge on hostile imperial policies towards the houses of prostitution at Constantinople. Brothel-keepers saw Theodora as the figure who persuaded Justinian to order the closure of numerous houses of prostitution in the capital. The women who used to work there were ordered to move to the monastery of Theotokos of Metanoia founded by Theodora herself. Consequently, brothel-keepers were financially ruined. Procopius refers to the closure of the houses of prostitutes in both the *Buildings* and the *Anecdota*. According to Tomadakis, Procopius reports what he had heard from brothel-keepers. Mantellos (1988) and Giakoumi (2012) deal with the life of Theodora in the palace and her role in policy-making by Justinian as presented in the *Anecdota*.

The content and narrative structure of the *Anecdota* have been treated in a series of articles by K. Paidas. Paidas (2005a) and (2005b) show how Procopius employed imperial propaganda, presented in rhetorical speeches (encomia, panegyrics), in order to criticise Justinian's internal and external policies. Paidas (2006) considers how Procopius interprets the role of Theodora in the process of historical events in the sixth century. Finally, Paidas (2007) examines the extent to which narrative techniques employed by the *Anecdota* highlight Procopius' negative attitude towards Justinian.

To conclude, Procopius' life and literary production are covered in histories of the Byzantine Empire and of Byzantine historiography. Specialised articles have been written about the most important events of Justinian's reign as recorded by Procopius, namely, the *reconquista* and the Nika

revolt. Procopius' portrayal of Theodora is surveyed in a number of specialised articles as well. Procopius' attitude towards other people is only partially examined and in studies which refer to Procopius only in passing. The snippets of geography and ethnography in Procopius have been studied only from a philological point of view.

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