

Spanische Geschichtsschreibung des sechsten Jahrhunderts. Ediert, übersetzt und kommentiert von Bruno Bleckmann und Barbara Court. Paderborn: Brill Schöningh 2025 (Kleine und fragmentarische Historiker der Spätantike G 24–26). XXXII, 314 p. € 114.00. ISBN: 978-3-506-79759-9.

The project entitled “Kleine und fragmentarische Historiker der Spätantike” (KFHist) was initiated in 2012, under the direction of Professors Bruno Bleckmann and Markus Stein, both from research institutes in the Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, and is backed by three million Euros of funding from the Nordrhein-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften und Künste and the Union der deutschen Akademien der Wissenschaften. Its intention is to produce new editions of the texts, accompanied by German translations together with philological and historical commentaries of the works of the “Minor and Fragmentary Historians of Late Antiquity”, of which nearly ninety have been identified and selected for inclusion. The expected publications are being categorised and assigned to nine different modules or subsections, each identified by a capital letter from A to I. These are divided between works in Greek and in Latin, authors classed as either ‘profane’ or ecclesiastical, and by period between the third and sixth centuries, with one or two special categories that do not fit this pattern, such as “Imperial Histories and Biographies of the Fourth and Early Fifth Centuries” (module B) or “Panegyric History of the Fourth and Early Fifth Century” (module C).

The volume under review here has been assigned to module G, entitled “Chronicles and Chronicle Continuations of the Fifth and Sixth Centuries”. Within the module it is numbered 24–26, because it contains three works or at least two actual texts and the evidence for the existence of a third, now lost. Of the other intended components of module G only two have been so far published, numbers 9 and 10, in a single volume devoted to the *Chronicle* of Hydatius and to a very brief Hispanic continuation of it. The precise number of constituents of each module is not easily to be discovered, and at time of writing only thirteen volumes in total have been published at a rate of one or two per year, with another, devoted to the work of Eunapius, being due in March 2026. As the project was envisaged as extending over a fifteen year period, it may be in danger of not achieving ‘escape velocity’, i. e. most

of its publications issued or nearly so, before that deadline is reached. Over the years this has been the fate of several excellent multi-volume editorial projects that ultimately failed to reach completion.

The overall intention of the project, as described in its own official manifesto, is to produce an equivalent for the surviving historical works of Late Antiquity, however fragmentary and elusive, of the corpus “established by Felix Jacoby for the Greek fragmentary historians of classical antiquity”.<sup>1</sup> This is deemed necessary because otherwise “one is thus forced to revert to rather inadequate and incomplete old compilations”. The ambition is a worthy one, though in the case of module G at least, for the two volumes so far published, including the one reviewed here, the texts chosen can already be found in modern critical editions of high quality and which are easy of access. In the case of the Hydatius edition in this series, a very lengthy detailed and sympathetic review by Professor Rodrigo Furtado was published in volume 22 of *Plekos* in 2020, which also, however, questioned several of the editorial decisions and underlying principles upon which it was based.<sup>2</sup> That review is cited in the bibliography (pp. XI–XXXII, at p. XXVII) to this volume, and its advice has clearly been heeded, at least in some important respects.

A justifiable criticism made in that review that older less reliable editions were being referred to in preference to better and newer ones is not applicable to this volume, in which all editions of key texts are included in the bibliography. It is its two editors' misfortune that the best and most complete critical edition of the hagiographical texts of the Visigothic period was published in the “*Corpus Christianorum*” series (CC) just a few months after their own book appeared, leaving them, for example, to have to cite Braulio

- 1 Statement on the project website: <https://www.geschichte.hhu.de/en/chairs/ancient-history/research/minor-and-fragmentary-historians-of-late-antiquity>. Felix Jacoby (1876–1959) published fifteen volumes of his series “*Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*” between 1923 and 1959, but this only represented three of six planned parts of the whole project.
- 2 R. Furtado: Review of: J.-M. Kötter/C. Scardino (eds.): *Chronik des Hydatius. Fortführung der spanischen Epitome. Ediert, übersetzt und kommentiert*. Paderborn 2019 (Kleine und fragmentarische Historiker der Spätantike G 9–10). In: *Plekos* 22, 2020, pp. 123–139 (URL: [https://www.plekos.uni-muenchen.de/2020/r-koetter\\_scardino.pdf](https://www.plekos.uni-muenchen.de/2020/r-koetter_scardino.pdf)).

of Zaragoza's *Vita Sancti Aemiliani* in the rather rare 1943 version by Luís Vázquez de Parga.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast, notice has not been taken of the regret at the lack of indices of scriptural references and of *Auctores* evinced in Furtado's review of the KFHist edition of Hydatius, as both are similarly absent here. This of course will have been the result of a decision taken about the uniformity of the organisation of contents across the entire proposed series. Another such decision affects the presentation of the bibliography itself. The listing of secondary authors is, as is usually the case, by alphabetic order of surname. Normally this would then be followed by the author's Christian or fore name. Here though that latter useful component is not only unnecessarily omitted and replaced by a capitalised initial, these capital letters precede the surnames, which is not only disconcerting but slows down the reader's search.

Another decision taken in the initial design of the project was the inclusion of a German translation on the facing page of all the Greek and Latin texts to be published in it. While undisputably beneficial for German readers, this is a slightly odd decision to have taken for a series of publications intended to be authoritative beyond the realm of German academe. This is all the more so when, as in this case, the text is the work of one editor and the translation is undertaken by the other. There is thus no application of the principle that the translation serves as a way of gauging the text editor's understanding of their creation, a view long taken for example by the "Oxford Medieval Texts" series. It might have been more sensible to produce two parallel series, one of stand-alone edited texts and the other of their translations, perhaps with the historical commentaries accompanying the latter and the philological ones being included with the texts.

Such a scheme would have been particularly beneficial in the case of this book, as it would have solved a major problem in the decision taken about the contents for inclusion. The primary component here is the *Chronicle* composed by John of Biclarum (pp. 48–77), a Gothic monastic founder who

3 Hagiographica Wisigothica. Iusti ep. Vrgellensis Sermo de sancto Vincentio, Sisebuti regis Toletani Vita uel passio sancti Desiderii ep. Viennensis, Braulionis ep. Caesaraugustani Vita sancti Aemiliani eiusdem Hymnus de sancto Aemiliano, Vitae II sancti Fructuosi. Edd. J. C. Martín-Iglesias/S. Iranzo Abellán. Turnhout 2025 (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 172); Sancti Braulionis Caesaraugustani episcopi Vita S. Emiliani. Edición crítica por L. Vázquez de Parga. Madrid 1943.

between 589 and 592 became bishop of Girona (Gerunda) in modern Catalunya. He had spent an unknown number of years in Constantinople before returning to Spain around 575/576. He was sent into internal exile by king Leovigild (569–586), probably soon after the outbreak of the revolt of Hermenegild in 579. His account is the nearest there is to a contemporary Hispanic narrative, albeit a very partisan one, of the reign of Leovigild and of the events leading up to the formal conversion of the Visigothic kingdom from Arianism to Catholicism, a process culminating in the holding of the Third Council of Toledo in 589 in the reign of Leovigild's son Reccared (586–601). It is with that event that the *Chronicle* ends, though its composition may have been completed a dozen or more years later. John's narrative became a major source for the two versions of the *Chronicle* (c. 615 and c. 625) written by Isidore of Seville, who in turn serves as our main informant for the few details known of John's life.

However, John's significance is not purely Hispanic, as he brought back with him from Constantinople some books he had acquired there. These included a manuscript copy of the *Chronicle* written by the African bishop Victor of Tunnuna, a work that only survives in conjunction with and embedded in the manuscript tradition of John's *Chronicle*, which itself was composed by its author as a chronological extension of Victor's. As an additional complicating factor, at an unknown location and at a later stage that cannot be determined precisely but may be a century or two after the Arab conquest of Spain in 711, some unidentifiable person copied at least some of the historical notes contained almost certainly in a consular chronology as marginalia into a manuscript of the combined *Chronicles* of John and Victor, with those two works together receiving thirty one of them in all. The original source of those notes, which is generally known today as the *Consularia Caesarangustana* from its presumed origin in Zaragoza, is otherwise lost, as is the manuscript into which the extracts from it were copied. And indeed yet further copies of that manuscript have similarly perished. Not until the sixteenth century when careful copies of them were made in Toledo, were examples of them created that have survived, in various forms, to the present. Modern editions of both the *Chronicles* and of the small set of marginal notes begin, unsurprisingly, with that contributed by Theodor Mommsen to the "Auctores Antiquissimi" series of the "Monumenta Germaniae Historica" (MGH), and the first real critical edition was published by Carmen Cardelle

de Hartmann in the “Corpus Christianorum” series (CC) in 2001.<sup>4</sup> In both of these, decisions had to be taken as to the best way to incorporate the marginal notes from the lost consular chronology, which if few in number virtually all contain valuable information not elsewhere to be found. In both cases the choice taken was to insert the notes into the edited texts of the *Chronicles* of Victor and of John at the points in which it was deduced they had been placed by the scribe who had first added them as marginalia. However, for convenience, they are placed immediately after the *Chronicle* entry in question and with their status indicated by use of italic font and a special numeration.

A different approach has been taken here, in that the notes are published separately as constituting a work in their own right, G 26 in the classification used by the series, and under the title of *Chronica Caesarangustana* (pp. 250–261), which is what Mommsen had called it. This is in defiance of Cardelle de Hartmann’s reclassification of it, mentioned above. While this extraction of the marginal notes from their original settings accompanying items in both Victor and John’s *Chronicles* is a legitimate approach that has the benefit of making this material easily accessible by displaying all the notes together, rather than their needing to be hunted down individually in the edited texts, it also creates a problem. The marginal notes were added to both *Chronicles*, but only that of John is to be found in this volume. An edition of Victor is included in the plans for the series but has yet to appear, and when (if?) it is published, the reader will require both books, at some cost, to be able to make proper use of this small but significant source.

The other component of this volume, classified as G 25 (pp. 244–245), is in practice non-existent but has left a footprint in the form of an entry in Isidore of Seville’s collection of brief literary biographies, known as the *De Viris Illustribus*, which is also the location of his information on the life and other works, albeit unknown, of John of Bicularum. The author in question is bishop Maximus of Zaragoza, brother and predecessor of the better known bishop Braulio, whom Isidore describes as having written among other things a *Historiola* or very short history of the events of “the times of the Goths in the Spanish provinces”. As with the other unnamed works of John

4 Victoris Tunnunensis Chronicon cum reliquiis ex Consularibus Caesarangustanis et Iohannis Biclarenis Chronicon. Ed. C. Cardelle de Hartmann. Turnhout 2001 (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 173A).

to which he alludes, Isidore indicates he knew that other writings of Maximus existed but confesses he had neither seen nor read them. To this extract from the *De Viris Illustribus*, edited here with full panoply of manuscript references, are added the only two known conciliar subscriptions of Maximus, to the Second Council of Barcelona of 599 and to the Council of Egara of 614, both taken from the edition of José Vives of 1963.<sup>5</sup> As for Maximus's *Historiola*, that is entirely lost, despite a highly speculative attempt by this reviewer to suggest it may have been a possible source for the marginalia to the *Chronicles* of John and Victor described above.<sup>6</sup>

In both the CC and KFHist editions, John's *Chronicle* and the marginalia to it and Victor's work are discussed in useful historical and philological commentaries, in English and German respectively. Those in the KFHist volume also include helpful background information and are generally more wide ranging. These commentaries will obviously be of greatest assistance to readers familiar enough with their language, but together they provide a wide range of information, including references to sources and further reading where useful. The historical ones in the KFHist edition draw on a wide though far from comprehensive bibliography and tend perhaps to overly rely, where a choice has to be made, on German historiography, some of which is now less than state of the art, as for example Dietrich Claude's "Adel, Kirche und Königtum im Westgotenreich" of 1971.<sup>7</sup> However, few significant names, events and issues are left untreated in the commentary on John's *Chronicle* in particular, which extends to 107 pages of the book, and in breadth of coverage is unmatched elsewhere.

At the heart of this book and indeed its very *raison d'être* must be the text editions. In practice this means that of John's *Chronicle*, as the work of Maximus is non-existent and the thirty-one marginal notes of the *Consularia* or *Chronica CaesarAugustana* take up only five pages. Interestingly, the editors decided to include the variant versions of some of them that are found in the

5 Concilios visigóticos e hispano-romanos. Ed. J. Vives. Barcelona 1963 (España cristiana 1).

6 R. Collins: Isidore, Maximus and the *Historia Gothorum*. In: A. Schärer/G. Scheibelreiter (eds.): *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*. Vienna/Munich 1994 (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 32), pp. 345–358.

7 D. Claude: *Adel, Kirche und Königtum im Westgotenreich*. Sigmaringen 1971 (Vorträge und Forschungen 8).

historical work of Johannes Vasaëus (1511–1561), as if they were of equal weight with those contained in the extant manuscripts. Vasaëus made use of a manuscript from the Portuguese monastery of Alcobaça, which has since been lost, which contained texts of the *Chronicles* of Victor and John and these marginalia. But what evidential weight should be given to them and whether his quotations are merely inexact cannot be determined with certainty. In the CC edition these extracts are confined to the critical apparatus.

In the authorial original of John's *Chronicle* the contents were structured by regnal years, starting with the first year of the reign of the emperor Justin II (565–578). This is in contrast to the *Chronicle* of Victor, which used consular years. In John's system, from the fourth year of Justin II onwards the imperial year is also accompanied by a second dating indicator in the form of the years of the royal rule of the Visigothic king Leovigild (569–586). The system of combining both imperial and Visigothic regnal years continues throughout the work, which suffers from several demonstrable chronological errors, partly caused by lack of synchronism between the two sets of regnal years. Other such difficulties with his dating were probably created accidentally in the course of the now largely hidden processes of the early stages of the manuscript tradition of the *Chronicle*. It is also quite difficult to equate John's regnal system with AD or CE dates.

The textual content of each individual year-entry, which include episodes of Byzantine history though giving way to an almost total concentration on matters Hispanic, was probably not subdivided by numerical or other indicators, and these have had to be provided artificially in modern editions to produce easy ways of referring to specific pieces of information in the text. Thus Mommsen in his edition for the MGH numbered the different stories or episodes described in each imperial and royal year, with seven separate items being the largest number found in any one of them. A different approach was adopted in the CC edition of 2001, with every separate story or freestanding statement in the text receiving its own sequential number (with the *Consularia* marginalia being given the same number as the chronicle item it accompanied but with "A" added to the number). This also involves treating the chronological opening statement for each year, i. e. the declaration of which imperial and which Visigothic royal year it was, as part of the first item of content it contains. The overall result is a total of ninety-three distinct constituents in the text.

In the KFHist edition under review a decision was taken to combine the two systems. Thus, for example, the second year of the reign of the emperor Maurice which is also the sixteenth of that of king Leovigild (equated to AD 583), is here given the number 18 and is divided into five separate stories or entries. In Mommsen's edition it is also given five separate components (while being equated to AD 584), but the year itself is not numbered. In the CC edition this material is presented as items number 66 to 70. Doubtless with the best of intentions, the KFHist editors also include the CC numbers in brackets and italics, along with the system they inherited and adapted from Mommsen. So, a reference to the fifth item of contents in this same year is given by them as **18 (5) (70)**. The result may be thought to be excessively comprehensive. An edition needs to stand on its own two feet and not try to keep all its predecessors happy.

When it comes to the text itself, the description of the manuscripts, which for both Victor and John is complicated by the loss of all but one of the medieval codices that contained them, is unsurprisingly both dependant on and confirmatory of that provided by Cardelle de Hartmann in the CC edition. It was she who solved most of the problems deriving not least from later references to lost codices and from the four manuscript versions of the compilation of historiographical texts made for Juan Bautista Pérez, canon of Toledo cathedral and later bishop of Segorbe (1591–1597), upon whose collections so much of the reconstruction depends.

The KFHist edition provides a classic apparatus for its edition of the text, with most manuscript variants clearly indicated. This refers to the text by line number, adding to the quantity of reference numerals on each page. It is regrettable, though, to discover that the text itself has been, if only in part, subjected to a classicising of its orthography, the sort of thing that was customary in Mommsen's day but should be avoided now. This includes names of both persons and places, even when there is no manuscript justification for doing so. For example, in CC 11 the phrase *magister militum provincie Affricane* becomes *magister militum provinciae Africanae* in KFHist **2 (4) (11)**, a spelling which is not to be found in any manuscript. While such a practice may make the contents more immediately comprehensible, especially for casual readers, it is also a suppression of significant evidence.

As a final component, presented as an appendix (pp. 284–314), this book includes a list of the names and, where available, the regnal lengths of the succession of rulers of the Visigoths and of the Visigothic kingdom from

Athanasius (died 378) to Reccared II (died c. 620/621), extracted mainly from two works. The first of these is the *Historia Gothorum* (pp. 284–288) or *De Origine Gothorum* (in two versions), of Isidore of Seville, and the second is one version of the anonymous text now known as the *Laterculus Regum Visigothorum* (pp. 288–305), which exists in variant forms and degrees of chronological coverage, and which originated in the later seventh century. Neither of these texts is sixth century in date and may be half a century or more apart between themselves. Other excerpts are also included from the marginalia to Victor and John for the period between the mid-fifth century and the accession of Leovigild. As a compendium of texts on Visigothic regnal succession this has its uses, though it may not be the best entry into that question, as any serious enquiry would require more than excerpts.

Overall, a verdict on this volume might be that it tries to do too many potentially contradictory things and to please too many separate interests. It combines a fidelity to Mommsen and the nineteenth century MGH tradition with an attempt to provide the kind of austere valuable academic text series represented not least by Jacoby's corpus. It also adopts the French approach, as demonstrated in "Sources Chrétiennes" and "Les Belles Lettres" editions, to the publication of works of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages with multi-volume editions of texts, not always fully critical, with facing translations. Philological and Historical commentaries are also included, following the lead of the Brepols publications, notably CC, though there is overall a sense that the intention is more to aim at the interests of a largely German readership of a not too academically rarefied a nature, rather than to produce something with a more universal but specialist level of utility, such as Jacoby's "Fragmente", which this series seeks to emulate.

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Empfohlene Zitierweise

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