Raimondo Tocci (ed.): A Companion to Byzantine Chronicles. Leiden/Boston: Brill 2025 (Brill's Companions to the Byzantine World 14). XII, 575 S., 3 ill. € 284.62/$ 289.00. ISBN: 978-90-04-43234-5.

Editing such multi-authored volumes is always a challenge – the positive vibes of having all contributors identified and contracted fades as the specified deadline passes and only a small proportion of contributions have been submitted by some efficient and responsible authors; an extended deadline that a prudent editor will have programmed in advance will secure a few more, but there is always a residue of laggards or refuseniks who are immune to increasingly desperate exhortations and pleas, while they know that threats are empty unless there is a competent replacement with the capacity to rustle up the required piece at breakneck speed; by the eventual date of publication patience has run out, tempers are frayed, friendships perhaps irretrievably lost, while editor and efficient contributors vow 'Never again'. I speak from editorial experience – more than once as temptation overcame caution. This volume on Byzantine chronicles edited by Raimondo Tocci seems to have been a particularly difficult case: the first contributions arrived a dozen years before the date of publication, hence a decade before the last ones trickled in, one contributor pulled out to publish their chapter elsewhere,[1] and the volume apparently was brought to fruition by the editor only under the threat of further withdrawals.

As ever the volume is a mixed bag, with many excellent contributions and a few which may have kept their place only because finding a replacement was by then impossible. Raimondo Tocci's introduction (pp. 1–11) briefly presents the aims of this Companion, namely to present a digest of recent research on the diverse range of Byzantine chronicles, defending its focus on these texts as opposed to all forms of historiography on the basis of the rapid progress of recent research on chronicles, especially their literary character and structure as opposed to the traditional focus on their usefulness as historical sources. Tocci also summarises the contents of the volume's tripartite structure.

1 I. Nilsson: The Literary Voice of a Chronicler: The *Synopsis Chronike* of Constantine Manasses. In: Scandinavian Journal of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies 7, 2021, pp. 9–40.

Part 1 contains three chapters devoted to the topic of "Genre" (pp. 13–108), of which the first by Athanasios Markopoulos ("Byzantine Chronography Revisited", pp. 15–39) surveys the coverage and content of the typical chronicle that ranged from the beginning of the world to the present day. The creation narrative, biblical history, and the life of Christ are the key elements for the founding fathers of this approach, namely Julius Africanus and Eusebius of Caesarea, the impact of whose works helped to ensure that they did not survive as later users treated them as 'open-ended' texts and repurposed them in the light of their own contemporary interests and needs. The texts demonstrated the superiority of Christianity over the periods of classical Greek and Roman Republican history favoured by traditional education, though the Roman empire was important both as the precursor of the Christian empire and the last in Daniel's eschatological sequence of four kingdoms.

Chapter 2 by Richard W. Burgess ("Chronicles and Their Place in the Development of Byzantine Universal Historiography", pp. 40–76) had probably been commissioned before the full extent of his revisionist approach to eastern chronicles had become clear in his 2013 book with Michael Kulikowski.[2] Although Burgess recognises the diversity of Byzantine historiography, which means that "one cannot be unduly prescriptive" (p. 43), this is precisely what the chapter does as it adopts a 'Humpty-Dumpty' approach to defining what can be counted as a chronicle: a chronicle has to have the features that I prescribe and a text that lacks these features must not be called a chronicle but allocated instead to a different category that I define, namely consularia, canones, chronographs (simple and analytical), synopses, breviaria (Byzantine Universal and Hellenistic Universal). Under this approach, for Burgess only the *Chronicon Paschale* and Theophanes earn the *appellation contrôlée* of chronicle, with all other texts traditionally regarded as chronicles, and hence treated in this volume, being given a different label. A particular target for Burgess is the work of John Malalas, given its position as the extant start of the Byzantine tradition and widespread influence.

2 R. W. Burgess/M. Kulikowski: Mosaics of Time. The Latin Chronicle Traditions from the First Century BC to the Sixth Century AD. Vol. 1: A Historical Introduction to the Chronicle Genre from its Origins to the High Middle Ages. Turnhout 2013 (Studies in the Early Middle Ages 33); at greater length in R. W. Burgess: The Origin and Evolution of Early Christian and Byzantine Universal Historiography. In: Millennium 18, 2021, pp. 53–154.

Tocci might have had second thoughts about Burgess' contribution since he accepted the offer of a rebuttal from Roger Scott that constitutes the next chapter ("The Byzantines Wrote Chronicles: A Reply to Richard Burgess", pp. 77–108). Here Scott politely but conclusively unties the straitjacket that Burgess had applied to eastern chronicles and points to the unhelpful nature of the new labels that he proposes. For Scott these texts are a continuum, which picks up Markopoulos' characterisation of them as 'open-ended', in which later texts exploited and responded to earlier ones, while the analogous terms of 'chronicle' and 'chronograph' are the appropriate name, especially as this is how they are referred to by the tenth-century Christian Arabic historian, Agapius of Membij (pp. 78–79). Granted Burgess' focus on Malalas as well as his own expertise in this text, Scott naturally defends that work as a chronicle and points to its place in the chronographic tradition that stretches back to Julius Africanus and remained vibrant through the fourth and fifth centuries ("Africanus and the Unified World History of Chronographs", pp. 92–96). What has to be appreciated is that the Byzantine tradition was alive and continued to evolve until the end of the empire and beyond, so that writers in this tradition created individual works that certainly from the eleventh century might come close to traditional works of history: appreciating both the individuality and the tradition are presented as crucial elements in further work on these chronicles ("Future Study of Byzantine Chronicles", pp. 103–104). Scott efficiently reorients the focus of the volume to ensure that it is not blown off-course by the prescription of Burgess.

Part 2 (pp. 109–231) comprises four chapters devoted to "Topics and Issues", with the first by Martin Hinterberger addressing "The Language of Byzantine Chronicles" (chapter 4, pp. 111–146). The chapter's opening sentence makes the important point that it is "almost impossible to make useful general assertions concerning the language of the chronicle as a genre" (p. 111): this is in part because of the diversity of the genre, which extends to linguistic choices, and in part because texts depended to a considerable extent upon the language of sources. That said, chronicles do not affect the atticising language of classicising historians, with the result that they have been held to be close to the spoken language. Hinterberger rejects this belief (pp. 116–117) and points to a tendency to elevate the linguistic level of texts from the tenth century onwards, a trajectory that is paralleled in hagiography, whereas earlier authors might profess a lack of education and espouse simplicity. The greater part of the chapter is devoted to discussion of the lan-

guage of individual chronicles from Malalas in the sixth century to the verse of Ephrem of Aenus in the thirteenth ("Remarks on the Language of Individual Chronicles", pp. 123–139); Hinterberger admits that the level of attention depends on the extent of scholarly study of the various texts, so that John Malalas (pp. 123–126), Theophanes (pp. 127–130), and Theodore Scutariotes (pp. 137–139) receive the most space whereas others are accorded just a few lines. Theophanes is particularly interesting since it is possible to examine how he reworked source texts such as Malalas, Procopius, and Theophylact Simocatta to avoid some of the idiosyncracies of the first and the classicisms of the last two. Hinterberger closes with a useful blueprint for future linguistic work ("Outlook", p. 140).

In chapter 5 ("On the Value of Byzantine Chronicles as Historical Sources", pp. 147–177) Ralph-Johannes Lilie addresses the issue for which chronicles have most often been studied until the recent past, namely their usefulness as repositories of historical evidence. Lilie, however, chooses not to confine his remarks to chronicles but defends the need to embrace all Byzantine historiography (pp. 149–152), though his list omits church histories and short chronicles. After reviewing the balance between clergy and lay as authors, he makes the unsurprising points that writers had very limited capacity to verify their sources and that a combination of personal interests and literary influences, for example with regard to the presence of speeches or rhetorical characterisations of individuals, had greater impact on their works. Histories were expected to entertain as well as inform. The conclusion that Byzantine histories were different from modern works and so cannot be judged objectively by our more rigorous standards is quite correct but, again, predictable. I found the chapter disappointing. Perhaps as a result of lumping all Byzantine historical texts together, Lilie misses the opportunity to probe what information chronicles provide modern readers that is not available elsewhere: for example, what would we know about the circus factions if we did not have Malalas and his successors? Comparison between the accounts of Justinian's first Persian war in Procopius and Malalas is instructive, with the latter preserving diplomatic documents relevant to the preliminaries as well as a different, though not necessarily preferable, version of the battle of Callinicum; on the Nika Riot, Procopius is much less detailed and adopts a more hostile standpoint than the chronicles. With regard to the Kutrigur invasion of 559, Malalas permits us, to an extent, to see through the anti-Justinianic thrust of Agathias' narrative, while on the early seventh century

the *Chronicon Paschale* offers unique official information. Chronicles are not neutral texts: Theophanes' religious preferences need to be factored into analysis of his treatment of iconoclast emperors, just as Zonaras' hostility to Alexius Comnenus is as important in shaping his narrative as Anna Comnena's adulation of her father. Such examples might have offered a richer and more varied assessment of the value of chronicles as sources.

After the disappointment, it is a relief to turn to William Adler's discussion of "Byzantine Chronicles and Antiquity" (chapter 6, pp. 178–215). Adler opens with Julius Africanus and Eusebius as authors whose treatment of world chronology and the integration of biblical and other dating systems provided a starting point for their successors even while they departed from aspects of their calculations, George Syncellus in particular. Important elements are the Creation and Life of Christ, whereas non-imperial phases of secular history mattered much less; idolatry and the origins of other religious errors merited investigation, and the euhemerist transformation of pagan myths offered explanations for cultural advances, intellectual discoveries, and the development of political institutions. Individual authors, however, emphasised their own choices within this general framework, so that future research must attend to individual texts within the broader parameters of the genre.

In the short chapter 7 ("Monuments and Buildings in Byzantine Chronicles", pp. 216–231) Albrecht Berger presents miscellaneous thoughts about Malalas, Theophanes, and Cedrenus in particular, with a focus on the actions of Justin II in Theophanes and of Theodosius II in Cedrenus, before assessing the two-way flow of information between patriographic texts and chronicles; the latter are, unsurprisingly, more precise in their dating than the former, while the latter might decorate their sources with additional material of uncertain reliability.

Part 3, "Chronicles and Chroniclers" (pp. 233–545) presents a sequence of studies of individual authors or texts that opens with Fabian Schulz and Mischa Meier's study of "The *Chronographia* of John Malalas" (chapter 8, pp. 235–264). The chapter opens with a survey of the secular and religious challenges that faced the empire in the first half of the sixth century, as well as of the scholarly approaches to these that have evolved from an 'Age of Justinian' mentality, in which the authority of Procopius is supreme, to a more nuanced approach where works such as that of Malalas deserve equal consideration ("The Setting: History and Historiography in the 6th Cen-

tury", pp. 235–243). Attention then turns to Malalas himself and his Antiochene background (pp. 242–246); then the *Chronographia* itself, its eighteen books with a tripartite structure in which the first third covers the Old Testament and contemporary events such as the Trojan War, the middle third the history of pre-Christian Rome, and the final six books the Christian empire organised around imperial reigns; and what little can be said about its sources of information as well as the vagaries of the utilisation and transmission of the text ("The *Chronicle*", pp. 246–250). The greater part of the chronicle is characterised by an interest in Antioch and its vicinity, with the wealth of information reflecting Malalas' access to local sources, while his chronological discussions demonstrate his concern to defuse the eschatological speculation that predicted the end of the world in *circa* AD 500 by arguing that Christ had in fact been born in the year 6000 ("Characteristics of the *Chronicle*", pp. 250–254). This is an admirably intelligible and comprehensive survey of an author and work whose importance has been revealed by a range of recent research. I do remain unconvinced that the extended version or continuation of Malalas after 532/533 can be by the same author as the bulk of the text, but a 'New Philology' approach[3] to the work would argue that its current state is as important as its possible elements. The latter are presented with exemplary clarity by Schulz and Meier.

The following chapter by Christian Gastgeber is a marked contrast (chapter 9, "The So-Called *Chronicon Paschale*, the Vatican Chronological Compilation with Computus", pp. 265–324). The first thing to note is the sheer length of this contribution, something 'surprising' on which Tocci felt obliged to remark (p. 6). The editor might have reflected on whether a minor work completed under Heraclius in *circa* 630, which had very limited influence on the subsequent tradition, should have been permitted so much space, undoubtedly well in excess of the stipulated length, and especially as the resulting text is likely to deter all but the most determined or invested of readers. That said, the chapter presents the current thoughts of the person responsible for the long-awaited re-edition of the *Chronicon Paschale* and merits serious consideration. The first of the chapter's twelve sections deals with "Transmission and Extant Version" (pp. 265–269): sections of the Vatican manuscript are missing including the start with its title and the end,[4] some

3 For this approach, see Tocci's chapter, especially pp. 493–494, 517, 539.

4 It might be noted that the bifolium missing at the end of the work cuts off the diplomatic exchange between Emperor Heraclius and the new king of Persia, Shiroe,

of which were filled at a later date with a variety of material; the scribe is said to have shifted between three distinct scripts, which it would have been helpful to have had illustrated.[5] *Chronicon Paschale* has been the accepted name for the text since the late seventeenth century, but Gastgeber argues that "Vatican Chronological Compilation with Computus" would represent its contents more accurately; fortunately, he does not insist on using this mouthful. The next section deals with "Content" (pp. 269–273): Gastgeber views the bulk of the chronicle as a development of Eusebius' *Chronological Canons* with a Preface whose agenda is not delivered in the subsequent text; for this reason it is proposed that the Preface was composed for a different work and only attached to the chronicle part when the work was being assembled. Tocci as editor might have pointed out that discrepancies between a programmatic preface and actual delivery in the main text can be paralleled in other chronicles. The third section ("Text 'Category' and Thematic Focus", pp. 273–276) points out that the main text combines short chronicle-style notices with much longer extracts derived from different sources that include Malalas, a work shared with Cosmas Indicopleustes on biblical prophecies of the Messiah and martyrs who testified to him, and various theological tracts of which by far the longest is Justinian's edict on the Three Chapters. At the same time, chronological computation was one of the author's interests, even if he was not responsible for every calculation that the text now contains. Section 4 ("Structure of the Entries and Time Adjustment", pp. 276–279) assesses in detail shifts in the introduction of individual entries; although the reason for the changes is unclear, the fact that the formula used by the seventh-century author appears in entries from the 520s through to the end of the chronicle is, to my mind, of significance for the unity of the work.

as well as creates a lacuna within the report of the 626 siege of Constantinople (events of Monday 4th to Thursday 7th August).

5 This would have permitted an assessment of whether the addition about the opening of the Nika Riot (fol. 242v; pp. 620.3–14) was a subsequent insertion by the main scribe, as I once argued (Chronicon Paschale, 284–628 AD. Translated with Introduction and Notes by Mi. Whitby and Ma. Whitby. Liverpool 1989 [Translated Texts for Historians 7], pp. 112–113) and still find plausible, or was added up to a century later when extracts from the Great Chronograph(er) were added in a different hand. It should be observed that p. 265, n. 4 relates to the Preface, not the Nika Riot, which is its cue in the main text.

The following section ("Aim of the Work and Target Audience", pp. 279–281) asserts that the diversity of the text, with its range from brief chronicle, whose main focus was the establishment of annual chronology from Creation to present day, and more discursive reports, points to the work being an 'Open Text' that attracted contributions and insertions from different individuals with diverse interests. It is certainly true that the work as created by the Heraclian author was an Open Text with the Vatican manuscript attracting additions in subsequent centuries, both in the margins and in gaps in the main text, while its exemplar may also have experienced the same, but the author who formalised the text in 630 may not have operated like this. As a result, I am not convinced that the main chronicle text 'must be' distinguished from the original chronological computation. Section 6 ("Preface and Focus of Computus", pp. 281–291) is a complex analysis of the computational approach set out in the Preface when compared with the Year of the World used in various calculations in the text, mainly relating to the life of Jesus Christ. In most cases the alignment is 'out' by a single year. For Gastgeber this points to different authors, though to my mind it is not possible to exclude that this is another case of theory not quite meshing with application.[6] The distinctiveness of the Preface is the subject of the next section ("Question of the Preface", pp. 291–300), where Gastgeber argues that it was written for a different work and then applied to the *Chronicon Paschale* by the author or the person responsible for the calculations in the work, since we are now invited to consider the possibility of three main contributions (Preface, first computation, second computation). Section 8 ("Layers in the Vatican Chronological Compilation", pp. 300–310) pursues this hypothesis of different computational strands as well as the idea that the text originally ended with the conclusion of the first 532-year Easter cycle in 562 and the death of Justinian in 565 before being picked up by the Heraclian continuator. Granted our ignorance about the author and his aims, such a hypothesis is impossible to disprove, though I find it too complicated. The complete absence of secular events between the ending in 533 of the version of Malalas being used as the main source and the start of Maurice's reign in 582 is a problem that Gastgeber does not address. It seems to me most unlikely that an author working in the 560s, who had just created a text with very exten-

6 In his contribution Lilie rightly argued against a tendency to apply modern methodological standards, which can be extended to issues of relevance and coherence: pp. 157–159, 169.

sive coverage of secular events up to 532/533, would not have added anything about subsequent events based on his personal experience in the capital, as the Heraclian author did in the late 620s. I find it more plausible that this patchy coverage was the result of the Heraclian author not being able to find any text to extend his Malalas-based reporting through to the end of Justinian's reign and beyond, so that secular affairs only start to re-emerge with the accession of Maurice, an event within living memory. The author was perhaps not particularly bothered by the gap, since the conclusion of the 532-year Easter cycle and demonstration of Justinian's contribution to current orthodoxy were important to him. The similarity of the dating formula between notices in the 520s and the seventh century, which Gastgeber does note, is an indication that a single person was responsible for both sides of the apparent hiatus. The text's selection of material from Malalas' account of the 520s and early 530s also points to the interests of an author in the 620s: diplomacy relating to Transcaucasia and steppe peoples is presented in full whereas military action in Upper Mesopotamia is omitted.

The ninth section turns to the important issue of "Sources and Their Use" (pp. 310–314). The Bible and Eusebius (both *Canons* and *Ecclesiastical History*) are important alongside Malalas and a text shared with Cosmas, as already noted, and a Constantinopolitan consular list whose connections with Marcellinus *comes* merit attention; there is no mention of the so-called Lost Arian History that contributed information on the mid-fourth century to the *Chronicon Paschale* among others.[7] Historical sources are not usually named, with entries from Malalas, for example, having no introduction other than the occasional 'He says ...'. What stands out is the closeness of the text's preservation of the wording of its sources, where that can be verified. Section 10 is a brief assessment of the "Language of the *Chronicon Paschale*" (pp. 312–313), where the main issue is the difficulty of distinguishing the language of the work itself from that of its sources, since the latter is consistently reproduced. In this context Gastgeber does note that the language of two of the Heraclian elements, the report of the 626 siege and Heracilus' dispatch about the end of the Persian war, display elements of vernacular grammar and syntax that are not in evidence elsewhere (p. 313). This differ-

7 On this work see the comprehensive study by J. J. Reidy: The 'Lost Arian History' in Late Antique and Medieval Historiography. Cham/Switzerland 2024; reviewed by Mi. Whitby in: Plekos 27, 2025, pp. 739–746 (URL: https://www.plekos.uni-muenchen.de/2025/r-reidy.pdf).

ence reinforces the identification by James Howard-Johnston[8] of these elements as official documents, which Gastgeber had rejected on shaky grounds (p. 308, n. 134); the fact that imperial laws and the doctrinal Ecthesis are composed in a higher linguistic register is irrelevant, since the report on the 626 siege was a rapid compilation, probably commissioned by Patriarch Sergius for immediate dispatch to the emperor in Anatolia, while the victory message from the army camp at Ganzak was created by whatever scribes were to hand, not by the assembled resources of the imperial chancery. Section 11 ("Text Reception", pp. 314–316) reviews the computational work in the late 630s of a monk named George, which shows no awareness of the *Chronicon Paschale*, but then notes that Cedrenus in the eleventh century knew the text and quite possibly had the Vatican manuscript in his possession at one point. More might have been said about this interesting development. The final section returns to the issue of chronology ("Research Problems with Time Equation", pp. 316–320), noting its importance to modern researchers into the events of the early seventh century,[9] before switching to the intricacies of the Byzantine *annus mundi* and its relationship with regnal years and modern AD dating.

This section of the review is, like Gastgeber's chapter, long, but I justify that on the grounds of the complexity but also the importance of the primary research which underpins its arguments; unlike the other chronicles treated in this volume, there has been no serious study of the *Chronicon Paschale* this century, apart from Gastgeber's own work. I have tried to present the key elements as clearly as possible. Although I do not agree with some of Gastgeber's main conclusions, this does not reduce my appreciation for the originality and perceptiveness of his arguments, which are based on an unparalleled knowledge of the physical text. In line with the requirements of these Brill volumes, Gastgeber has presented his arguments in English, for which Anglophone readers will be heartily grateful, and the following comment is not directed at him in any way at all. It is a great pity, since it does sometimes complicate comprehension of argumentation that may be dense, that Gastgeber has been poorly served by the production of this volume: the editor

8 J. Howard-Johnston: Witnesses to a World Crisis. Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century. Oxford/New York 2010, pp. 47–48.

9 It is a pity that my article (Mi. Whitby: The Year 629 and the *Chronicon paschale*. In: P. Booth/Ma. Whitby [eds.]: Mélanges James Howard-Johnston. Paris 2022 [Travaux et Mémoires 26], pp. 545–564) is misattributed (p. 316).

and certainly the publisher's copy editor should have intervened to seek clarification at several points.

From the *Chronicon Paschale* the volume advances to Theophanes, whose work is treated in two parts. In the first (chapter 10.1, "The *Chronicle* of Theophanes", pp. 325–346) Marek Jankowiak and Federico Montinaro present a clear digest of the main issues and current research on this key source for the history of the so-called Dark Age of Byzantium. They open with the question of the author, noting that few now accept the argument of Cyril A. Mango[10] that George Syncellus deserved most credit for its presentation, before they turn to the arrangement of material by years that are presented under the year of different kings and patriarchs, though this attempt at comprehensive dating did not prevent the occurrence of numerous errors. Sources are the next theme, which Theophanes could present quite precisely, if he chose, though he might also adapt them in line with his interests both in doctrine and in the connection between imperial orthodoxy and military success. A case in point, that is not mentioned, is the reshaping of Theophylact Simocatta's account of Avar captives through combination of the story preserved in the Great Chronographer of Maurice's refusal to ransom captured soldiers and their subsequent massacre by the khagan, a terrible sin for which Maurice and his whole family pay with their lives.[11] For the 'Dark Age' the question of Theophilus of Edessa, or whoever was Theophanes' major eastern source is of crucial importance, though certainty about it is not possible, while for his contemporary narrative of the events of the early ninth century Theophanes' own views matter. Jankowiak and Montinaro cite the recent reconstruction of his attitudes by Jesse W. Torgerson, though without being in a position to take account of critical reviews.[12] The chapter ends with a review of the manuscript tradition, the considerable impact of the text on later chroniclers, and its translation into Latin. The chapter may not break

10 C. A. Mango: Who Wrote the Chronicle of Theophanes? In: Zborknik Radova Vizantinoškog Instituta 18, 1978, pp. 9–17.

11 Mi. Whitby: The Great Chronographer and Theophanes. In: Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies 8, 1982/1983, pp. 1–20.

12 J. W. Torgerson: The *Chronographia* of George Syncellus and Theophanes. The Ends of Time in Ninth-Century Constantinople. Leiden/Boston 2022 (Brill's Series on the Early Middle Ages 28); reviews by P. Varona in: MA 130, 2024, pp. 591–594; R. Scott in: Plekos 27, 2025, pp. 197–209 (URL: https://www.plekos.uni-muenchen.de/2025/r-torgerson.pdf).

new ground, but serves the Companion well as a safe summary of the state of scholarship.

The companion piece by Réka Forrai (chapter 10.2, "Anastasius Bibliothecarius and the *Chronographia tripertita*", pp. 347–366) introduces the ninth-century author of the famous Latin translation of Theophanes, a man whose erudition and closeness to successive popes might have led him to the pontificate itself but instead resulted in brief exile. Anastasius translated a number of hagiographies as well as conciliar documents; his version of George Syncellus and Theophanes was presented as the raw material for a major ecclesiastical history by his friend, John the Deacon, though this project covering the whole period of the Christian empire never materialised. Anastasius' translation is sufficiently literal to be of use in establishing, at some places, the Greek text of Theophanes, though at the same time it is selective, being roughly half the length of the Greek original (though this is more comprehensive than his brief treatment of Syncellus) – what he selected for translation, especially ecclesiastical and civic matters, but not information on buildings, he translated very accurately, though with the occasional explanation or periphrasis for an unfamiliar Greek term.

In chapter 11 Staffan Wahlgren offers a survey "From Theophanes to Psellos: The Middle Byzantine Period" (pp. 367–389), a period whose historical production was dismissed with considerable contempt by John Scylitzes in the preface to his *Synopsis of Histories*. After surveying the difference between chronicles and histories, with the latter aspiring to a literary level but not necessarily differing much in terms of content, most of the chapter is occupied by brief descriptions of the selected texts with attention to their contents and influence; first shorter works (*Chronicle of 811*. *Scriptor incertus de Leone Armenio*; Peter of Alexandria; the *Chronicle of Cambridge*), and then major texts (George the Monk; Genesius; Symeon the Logothete; Version B of Symeon the Logothete; Pseudo-Julius Pollux; Theophanes Continuatus, Pseudo-Symeon; and Leo the Deacon). Wahlgren next surveys the impact of these texts, with George the Monk and Symeon the Logothete being more influential than the others both through reuse by later authors and translations into Slavonic and Georgian. The most interesting part of the chapter surveys changes in the chronicle genre, with a more noticeable tendency in at least some chronicles for authors to express opinions, organise their material more coherently, and use classical language to a greater extent. That

said, differences remain in a tradition where diversity is as important as its coherence.

Chapter 12 by Diether Roderich Reinsch presents as succinct account of "The *Historia syntomos* of Michael Psellos – Fifty Years after Its Rediscovery" (pp. 390–408). The first part of the chapter presents the story of the identification of the text and subsequent debate about authorship, with attention to textual similarities between it and other works by Psellus. The focus then shifts to the question of whether Psellus can be credited with creating the 79 pithy moral statements that most often contain comments on emperors between Claudius II and Philip Bardanes; Reinsch's carefully argued conclusion is negative, accepting the thesis that they were derived from an earlier collection. Finally, Reinsch turns to the issue of why the *Historia syntomos* merits discussion in a book devoted to chronicles: similarities in terms of coverage of numerous emperors are offset by its higher literary level, though deliberately lower than other works by Psellus, and its focus on the Roman imperial past rather than Christian history from Creation. Reinsch's reasonably concludes that the work is *sui generis* and defies classification.

Next up is the chronicle of Cedrenus (John Burke/Roger Scott/Paul Tuffin: "Originality via Plagiarism in the Chronicle of George Kedrenos", pp. 409–437). Discussion opens with general remarks about attitudes to plagiarism that are followed by a demonstration of how both Malalas and Theophanes created an individual account through minor adjustments to their sources. This creates the context for assessment of Cedrenus, an author who is usually dismissed as a mere copyist, whose sole virtue is the preservation of material that would otherwise have been lost, and a presentation of his treatment of Scylitzes: this demonstrates that what he takes over is copied accurately, but he also aims to improve his source by avoiding verbal repetitions and redundancies. This is followed by a case study of the reign of Justin II (pp. 416–421), where Cedrenus has reorganised the material derived from his sources to create his own image of the reign. Similar creativity is evident in his treatment of Constantius II and the usurper Basiliscus. One recurrent theme is hostility to Judaism, which is contrasted with the importance of correct belief, for example in the presentation of Constantine I. His treatment of biblical history highlights the nexus of temptation, transgression, and divine punishment that is offset by divine favour for obedience and correct behaviour. Overall, while originality was a sin (p. 417), the recycling of

earlier material did not preclude originality in terms of deciding what to include and how to present that. The chapter makes an important advance in the study of Cedrenus and we can look forward to further research by these scholars.

In chapter 14 Thomas M. Banchich discusses the historical work of John Zonaras ("Zonaras' ΑΠΟΚΥΗΜΑ: the *Epitome of Histories*", pp. 438–462). The chapter opens with an analysis of an enthusiastic review of the work by a reader, probably in the fourteenth century, which stands in marked contrast to most modern assessments that regard Zonaras positively only for his preservation of otherwise lost sources, for example much of Cassius Dio's account of the Roman Republic. Banchich then considers how Zonaras' own career and withdrawal from public life informed both his negative assessment of Comnenian emperors and the esteem for the senatorial republic of early Rome. This is followed by a section on the editing, analysis, and translation of the text and consideration of the question whether it is greater or less than the sum of its parts. In opposition to earlier views that privileged the 'parts', namely the individual sources, Banchich urges that its positive qualities are seen as an example of the possibility of creating a distinctive approach to historiography in the twelfth century.

The penultimate chapter is devoted to the popular historical text of Michael Glycas (chapter 13, Varvara Zharkaya: "Michael Glykas as a Chronicle Writer", pp. 463–486). Analysis of the work's structure highlights the importance of the Creation narrative in contrast to other chroniclers and Glycas' distinctive approach continues with his treatment of biblical history and the Gospel story, with exegesis being as important as narrative. Following identification of his sources, of which George the Monk, Manasses, and Zonaras are the most important, Zharkaya analyses how Glycas adapted them to bring to the fore entertaining aspects of the material. With regard to historical events, internal affairs seem to have held greater interest than foreign wars and astrology along with other forms of insight into the future captured his attention. The chapter finally turns to the issue of genre (pp. 480–482), with Glycas' work being difficult to categorise since it combines plain presentation of factual information with entertaining admonitions. Zharkaya concludes that Glycas should be seen as a popularising encyclopaedist rather than a chronicler, though, whatever label he is given, the fact remains that his text was widely copied, testimony to the success of his enterprise.

In the final chapter the editor Raimondo Tocci surveys the last period of Byzantine historiography (chapter 16, "Reading and Writing Byzantine Chronicles in the Palaeologan Period", pp. 487–545); it is a long chapter, though this can be excused to an extent by the number of texts that have to be covered. The chapter opens with a somewhat forced connection being drawn between the composition of novels and chronicles, with the ancient novel petering out as Malalas was creating the first Byzantine chronicle and the converse happening in the twelfth century when the novel was revived; the discussion ignores the fact that Malalas drew on a range of lost predecessors including fifth century chroniclers. After reviewing approaches to chronicles in general, Tocci devotes most of the chapter ("Which Chronicles Are Treated Here?", pp. 497–531) to presenting the main works from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, admitting that few can compare with the substantial chronicles of the middle Byzantine age: the imperial decline of Byzantium from a major regional player to a minor client is one element in the change of perspective from universal to local. The authors and texts covered are Theodore Scutariotes' *Synopsis chronike*, Clement, Theodore Scutariotes' *Chronica*. Constantine Acropoiites, and an anonymous short chronicle. Tocci himself has been responsible for the best modern work on most of these texts, and his results are presented in full, along with his ambitious plans for digital editions. The last part of the chapter is of more general interest with a discussion of "The Byzantine Chronicle as an Open Genre" (pp. 531–538) in which readers and copyists added marginal notes to present parallels, corrections, or explanations, which might in due course find their way into the main text.

The volume contains much good work, both the summation of current research as the basis for future work and, in a few cases, especially on language, the *Chronicon Paschale*, and Cedrenus, original research. It does, however, remain less than the sum of its parts and for that failing the editor must take responsibility. It would have been possible, for example, to have collected discussions of the older dismissive approaches to chronicles of Karl Krumbacher and Herbert Hunger[13] and reviewed how subsequent scholars

13 K. Krumbacher: Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur. Von Justinian bis zum Ende des oströmischen Reiches (527–1453). 2nd edition. Munich 1897 (Handbuch der klassischen Altertums-Wissenschaft 9.1), p. 319; H. Hunger: Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner. Vol. 1: Philosophie, Rhetorik, Epistolographie, Geschichtsschreibung, Geographie. Munich 1978 (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 12.5.1 = Byzantinisches Handbuch 5.1) pp. 476–477.

have focused attention on positive aspects of these texts. An active editor might also have pointed out links between different chapters once most contributions had been gathered in and so enriched individual discussions. It must also be said that a combination of weak editing and, more importantly, lax copy-editing has resulted in a number of short-comings. Tocci adopts the German usage "Belisar" (pp. 532–533) in place of 'Belisarius' as used elsewhere, while Zharkaya uses "Joseph Flavius" or even just "Flavius" (p. 467) for the customary Josephus – elsewhere in the volume the standard names are used and the discrepancy should have been picked up. In the index (pp. 559–575) most authors are listed under their first name, so John Malalas, George Cedrenus, and John Zonaras, though Flavius is treated as if it were Josephus' surname. Granted that most discussions in the volume employ the common usage (Malalas, Cedrenus, Zonaras etc.), the index might have been better arranged accordingly, or at least cross-references supplied as in the recent "Routledge Handbook of Rewriting in Byzantium".[14] A final issue is the quality of the English. Anglophone readers such as myself are unlikely to oppose Brill's policy of presenting the entirety of these volumes in English, even though it does encourage laziness, but as publisher of a work that is certainly not cheap one might expect Brill to have employed a copy editor with a faultless grasp of the language, especially when the editor is not Anglophone.[15] Expression is often a bit wayward, though usually comprehensible, though what is meant by the "ribands of two bulls" (p. 475) is beyond me, unless it refers to the reins of a yoked pair. Perhaps Brill might take this issue on board for future volumes.

14 J. Signes Codoñer/M. Hinterberger/I. Pérez Martín (eds.): The Routledge Handbook of Rewriting in Byzantium. Abingdon/New York 2026 (The Routledge History Handbooks).

15 This criticism also applies to "The Routledge Handbook of Rewriting in Byzantium" [see n. 14], where a publisher based in the UK has even less excuse than Brill for not improving this aspect.

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Empfohlene Zitierweise

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