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Notes on Procopius' *Secret History*

I.

Procopius' *Secret History* (its Greek title is Ἀνέκδοτα, while it is called *Historia arcana* in Latin) has posed several questions to the scholars almost since it was found.¹

In the beginning, the reconstruction of the *textus* proved to be problematic. Nicolaus Alemannus, the editor of the *editio princeps* did not know the codex *Parisinus suppl. graec. 1185* now regarded as the most authoritative manuscript, thus, his edition – in spite of all its merits – is to be accepted with severe reservations.² Furthermore, the scholarly editor also intended to pay attention to the moral education of his readers and attempted to prepare a text that corresponds to the contemporary morals at least to some extent – if it is possible at all in the case of the *Secret History*.³ Improvement can be detected first in the *Anecdota* published among Procopius' collected works by Maltretus 40 years later. Here, the number of the manuscripts consulted

¹ This study has been prepared with the support of the research project OTKA PD 104876 and the Bolyai Scholarship.

Its first manuscript was found relatively late, in 1623 in the Vatican Library. This is the reason why the editions of Procopius' collected works published before 1623 do not contain the *Secret History*.

² *Procopii Caesariensis' Ανέκδοτα primus edidit, Latine reddidit, notis illustravit* NICOLAUS ALEMANNUS. Lugduni 1623. It was later published again without changes (Coloniae 1669), then with Ioannes Eichelius' additions (Helmstadi 1654). In the establishment of the text Alemannus used two Vatican manuscripts (he described their relationship wrongly) and a collection of excerpts. Apart from the Paris manuscript, he did not see the *codex Ambrosianus A 182* either, which is the only manuscript containing the beginning of the text almost completely.

³ Due to their content, the passages 57,19–58,2 and 58,18–58,60 in the manuscript (page and line numbers are indicated) were left out. This corresponds to the passages about Theodora's private life in Chapter 9 in Haury's edition. As Alemannus says (p. VI): "*quae pars infamissimam Theodoraе educationem, vitam moresque continet, quam ut nos vertere sine rubore, sine stomacho non potuimus, ita neque lecturos alios putamus.*"

increased, and thus the text was augmented with the introduction missing earlier.⁴ Compared to this, neither the edition of the otherwise accurate Dindorf,⁵ nor Isambert's edition⁶ complemented with the French translation brought any change. The problems, discrepancies and inaccuracies of textual criticism present in the earlier editions⁷ were eliminated by Jakob Haury, who – beside publishing several important studies⁸ – prepared his own Procopius, which is regarded as the authoritative textual edition also nowadays.⁹ Although his opinion is questioned in some issues now, his work has not been exceeded so far from the viewpoint of textual criticism, even if his emendations are strongly debated.¹⁰

⁴ *Procopii Caesariensis Arcana historia: qui est liber nonus historiarum, recognovit, varias lectiones adjecit, et lacunas fere omnes implevit* CLAUDIUS MALTRETUS SJ PRESB. Parisiis 1663. Later published again: Venetiis 1729. This edition does not contain the passages omitted by Alemannus, either. It was Orelli's – otherwise problematic – edition (*Procopii Caesariensis Anecdota sive Historia arcana Graece*. Lipsiae 1827) that presented the text in its entirety first.

⁵ *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae. Procopius Vol. III. Ex recensione G. DINDORF*. Bonnæ 1833-1838. In his preface, Dindorf himself admits that he could not work as accurately as he usually did due to the close deadline and the pressings of the publisher.

⁶ Ἀνέκδοτα ou Histoire secrète de Justinien, traduite de Procope avec notice sur l'auteur et notes philologiques et historiques. Géographie de VI^e siècle et révision de la numismatique d'après la livre Justinien avec figures, cartes et cinq tables par M. ISAMBERT. Lutetiae Parisiorum 1856. Despite the numerous merits of the edition, it was severely criticized due to the inaccuracies in the French translation. Cf. DAHN, F.: *Prokopius von Cäsarea*. Berlin 1865. 494.

⁷ From the viewpoint of philology, out of the more recent textual editions the works of Krasheninnikov and Comparetti are worth mentioning. *Procopii Caesariensis Anecdota quae dicuntur edidit* M. KRASHENINNIKOV. Iurievi 1899; *Le Inedite. Libro nono delle Istorie di Procopio di Cesarea. Testo greco emendato sui manoscritti con traduzione italiana, a cura di* D. COMPARETTI. Roma 1928. Cf. HAURY, J.: Zu Comparettis Ausgabe der Geheimgeschichte Prokops. *BZ* 35 (1935) 288-298.

⁸ Some more important studies from the rich material are as follows: HAURY, J.: *Procopiana*. Augsburg 1891; HAURY, J.: *Procopiana II*. München 1893; HAURY, J.: *Über Prokophandschriften*. SBAW. München 1896. 129-176; HAURY, J.: Zu Prokops Geheimgeschichte. *BZ* 34 (1934) 10-14.

⁹ *Procopii Caesariensis Opera omnia I-IV. Recognovit* J. HAURY. Lipsiae 1905-1913. *Addenda et corrigenda adiecit* G. WIRTH. Lipsiae 1962-1964. The Secret History is the third volume (III/1) of the HAURY – WIRTH. Henceforth I quote the Greek text from this edition and its English translation from KALDELLIS, A. (ed.): *Prokopios. The Secret History with Related Texts*. Indianapolis – Cambridge 2010.

¹⁰ From the rich literature, due to the valuable and interesting remarks it is worth highlighting the following works: RÜHL, F.: Die Interpolationen in Prokops Anekdoten. *RhM* 69 (1914) 284-298. and SYKOUTRES, J.: Zu Prokops Anekdoten. *Textkritisches. BZ* 27 (1927) 22-28. Cf. GUNDLACH, J. J. G.: *Quaestiones Procopianae*. Marburg 1861; VAN HERWERDEN, H.: *Ad Procopium. Mnemosyne* 35 (1907) 325-334; BUECHELER, F.: *Procopiana. RhM* 63 (1908) 152-155; KALLENBERG, H.: *Procopiana. RhM* 71 (1916) 246-269; 507-526 and *RhM* 74 (1925) 155-163.

However, the smaller or larger problems with the constitution of the text seem to be insignificant compared to the debate about the author of the text. The majority of the scholars could not accept for a long time that the monumental work, the *Wars of Justinian* (Περὶ τῶν πολέμων), the panegyric commemorating the large renewal of the empire, the *Buildings of Justinian* (Περὶ κτισμάτων) and the violent and at times even unprintable attacks of the *Secret History* were all written by the same person.¹¹ Behind this problem of seemingly philological and literary nature, more severe questions can be found in reality. Procopius is undoubtedly one of our most important sources about the history of the 6th century and about Justinian's reign. His authority had been unquestionable till the *Secret History* was found. All that he wrote about the personality and the reign of Justinian in his works known earlier contributed to a positive judgement of the emperor and confirmed in general the data from other sources mainly connected to the court. The picture of Justinian, the image of the Christian ruler, active in codification and eager to reconstruct the former grandeur of the Roman Empire was enriched with darker shades due to the *Secret History*. The main question was not whether Procopius was the author of the *Secret History*: it was more important how we judge the activity of the most significant ruler of the late Antique and early Byzantine age. Which one is the real Justinian? The triumphant warlord, the educated theologian, the jurist, the outstanding statesman? Or the "Lord of Demons" (ἄρχων τῶν δαιμόνων),¹² who as a toy of his sensuous wife ruled the empire submitting himself to his greedy and bloodthirsty instincts? At the end of the long debate, even those scholars who fought against Procopius' authorship most intensively capitulated¹³ accepting the stylistic parallels in the works, the cross-references and other arguments,¹⁴

¹¹ A summary of the older literature can be found here: TEUFFEL, W. S.: *Studien und Charakteristiken zur griechischen und römischen Litteraturgeschichte*. Leipzig 1889. 267-279.

¹² In other words: ὁ ἐν σώματι γενομένος δαίμων. Cf. RUBIN, B.: Der Fürst der Dämonen. *BZ* 44 (1951) 469-481.

¹³ A good example is presented by J. B. BURY, who in the first edition of his monumental work (*A History of the Later Roman Empire*. London 1889. II. 359ff.) rejects Procopius' authorship, but he accepts it in its second edition (London 1923. II. 424).

¹⁴ A short summary of the debate can be found in RUBIN, B.: *PWRE* XXIII (1957) 528-533. s. v. Prokopios von Kaisareia. The following significant works are to be mentioned separately, as well: HAURY, J.: *Zur Beurteilung des Geschichtsschreibers Procopius von Cäsarea*. München 1896. 37-46; KUMANIECKI, K.: Zu Prokops Anekdoten. Das rhythmische Klauselgesetz in den Anekdoten und die Echtheitsfrage. *BZ* 27 (1927) 19-21; HAURY, J.: Prokop verweist auf seine Anekdoten. *BZ* 36 (1936) 1-4.

but Procopius himself proved to be the greatest loser. They accepted his authorship willy-nilly – there is no debate in this question today, but his victory proved to be a Pyrrhic one: the devastating cost he had to pay was his authority.¹⁵ No acceptable explanation has been found for the writing of the free-spoken disclosure until recently, moreover, the preparation of the work has been attributed to the mental breakdown of the author or even to his moral degeneration.¹⁶ Nowadays we have a more elaborate picture of Procopius' œuvre. It seems more important to emphasize the unity of his works rather than highlight the supposed contradictions, since all three works tell *the same* story – from different viewpoints and written in different styles.¹⁷ However, all this does not mean that the research on the *Secret History* has finished: just the opposite is true.¹⁸ In what follows we intend to review some debated questions related to the work with a special emphasis on the dating of the *Secret History* and the circumstances of its genesis.

II.

Due to the lack of the necessary data, the whole Procopius chronology is dubious: we cannot even establish the date of his birth or death with certainty. Accordingly, in dating the pieces of his œuvre¹⁹ – a tough job! – our only aim could be to establish the relative chronology of his works, i.e. to find out which work was written before or after the others. We can also

¹⁵ Cf. the frequently quoted words of GIBBON, E.: *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. London 1816. VII. 63: "Such base inconsistency must doubtless sully the reputation, and detract from the credit, of Procopius."

¹⁶ BURY (n. 13) 355 stated that a "brainstorm" was responsible for the birth of the work, and the judgement of JONES, A. H. M.: *The Late Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Survey*. Oxford 1964. I. 266 is also negative. The judgements of J. Irmscher ("Opportunist") and Z. V. Udalcova ("nüchternen Karrierist") are even more condemning: both are quoted by HUNGER, H.: *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*. München 1978. I. 295.

¹⁷ The change of attitude can mostly be attributed to the publication of CAMERON, AV.: *Procopius and the Sixth Century*. London – New York 1996². Cf. TOUGHER, S.: *Cameron and Beyond*. *Histos* 1 (1997) 205-210.

¹⁸ The remark of G. GREATREX is very apt in the Recent Work on Procopius and the Composition of Wars VIII. *BMGS* 27 (2003) 67: "A new phase in Procopian studies has opened up. Almost everything about Procopius is in doubt."

¹⁹ Recently GREATREX, G.: *The Dates of Procopius' Works*. *BMGS* 18 (1994) 101-114. and EVANS, J. A. S.: *The Dates of Procopius' Works: A Recapitulation of the Evidence*. *GRBS* 37 (1996) 301-313. reviewed this question systematically, but since then new arguments worthy of reconsideration have emerged.

attempt to date to a broader period, but it is chancier. Any other attempt would be mere guesswork.

The establishment of broader periods and the relative chronology can be based on the dated historical events described in the single works and on the textual references found in them. The relatively high number and subtlety of the cross-references at the same time mean that we cannot examine the date of composition in the case of a *single* work. On every account we need to be mindful of the other works as well, since not only the dating to a broader period, but sometimes also the relative chronology depends on how we interpret a specific cross-reference.

Our starting point might be the date of composition of the first seven books constituting a unity in the *Wars of Justinian* (= *B*), because in this question the scholars more or less agree. It is sure that these books presenting the history of the wars against the Persians (*B I-II*), the Vandals (*B III-IV*) and the Goths (*B V-VII*) according to the scenes and in chronological order to the 16th year of the Gothic war (550) were published together – around 550/551 in the common opinion accepted by the majority of scholars.²⁰ Procopius, who also took part in the majority of the military campaigns as Belisarius' secretary, is supposed to have roughly finished his work during a longer stay in Constantinople, between 542 and 545, but *B I-VII* was finally published only in 550 together with the rest of the work composed in the meantime.²¹ It is a fact that *B I-VII* was Procopius' first published work, which established his position and fame as a historiographer.

The continuation and at the same time the end of the work, Book VIII, which has a different structure and approach compared to the earlier books, was published much later, perhaps already in 554 or only after 557 according to the scholars arguing for a later dating.²² While the former dating can be supported with the fact that the last historical event described in the work, Narses' victory over the Goths at Mons Lactarius took place in the spring of 554, the argument for the latter dating is not convincing. What we can

²⁰ There is no dating accepted by all of the researchers in this case. According to KISLINGER, E.: Ein Angriff zu viel. *BZ* 91 (1998) 49-58 some of the barbaric invasions described in *B II,4,4-11* could only have taken place in 558. Cf. the counter-arguments of GREATREX (n. 18) 45-57.

²¹ Haurly collected and analysed the references (e.g. *B I,25,43; II,22,9; V,24,32; VI,5,26*) to the date of composition of the work (n. 8) 1891 7ff; (n. 8) 1893 4ff.).

²² 553 is suggested by BURY (n. 13) 422; 554 is indicated by STEIN, E.: *Histoire du Bas-Empire*. Amsterdam 1949. II. 717. and CAMERON (n. 17) 8. According to EVANS, J. A. S.: *Procopius*. New York 1972. 43. the work was published after 557.

learn about the results of the negotiations between Justinian and Chosroes I, Sassanid ruler in 545, about the Roman tax paid for more than 11 years²³ can easily be regarded as a calculation for the future despite the wording.²⁴ As for the relative chronology, *B VIII* was composed presumably earlier than the *Buildings of Justinian* (= *Aed*). This can be justified by the facts that while *B VIII,7,8* has no information about the further direction of the course of the river crossing the city of Daras (Dara), *Aed II,2,15-16* has this information,²⁵ and – this is decisive – *Aed VI,1,8* in mentioning the geographical peculiarities of the Black Sea obviously refers to the lengthy description in *B VIII,6*.²⁶

According to the majority of the scholars, it is highly possible that the *Buildings of Justinian* composed at the invitation (request?) of the emperor²⁷ and comprising six books is Procopius' last work.²⁸ The *Aed* must have been published only after the publication of *B VIII*, between 554 and 560 on the basis of what was written above.²⁹ Usually three arguments are quoted for

²³ *B VIII,15,17*: τάξας γὰρ ὁ Χοσρόης Ῥωμαίοις κεντηναρίων ἐπέτειον τεσσάρων δασμῶν, οὐπερ γλιχόμενος τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς διαφανῆς ἦν, ἐς ἕνδεκα ἔτη τανῦν καὶ μῆνας ἕξ εὐπρεπεῖ λόγῳ, ἕξ καὶ τεσσαράκοντα κεντηνάρια τῆ τῆς ἐκεχειρίας κεκόμισται σκῆψει, ὄνομα τῷ δασμῷ τὰς σπονδὰς θέμενος, καίπερ ἐπὶ Λαζικῆς μεταξὺ βιαζόμενός τε καὶ πολεμῶν, ἦπερ ἔρρηθη. In English (henceforth I quote the translation by H. B. DEWING): "For Chosroes by imposing upon the Romans an annual tribute of four centenaria, the very thing he had clearly been bent upon having from the first, has up to the present time in a space of eleven years and six months speciously gathered in forty-six centenaria on the pretext of the armistice, giving to the tribute the name of treaty, although in the meantime he has, as stated, been carrying on a campaign of violence and war in Lazica." Evans then calculates the date (557) by adding the eleven-and-half-year long interval of tax payment to the year of the negotiations (545).

²⁴ Similar examples for the preliminary calculation of various future figures can also be found: *B I,17,40*. For details see GREATREX (n. 19) 106–107.

²⁵ *B VIII,7,8*: ἐς χάος ἐμπεσὼν ἀφανίζεται, καὶ ὅπη ποτὲ τὸ ἐνθένδε ἐκδίδωσιν οὐδενὶ γέγονε φανερόν ἐς τόδε τοῦ χρόνου. In English: "It (i. e. the river) falls into a chasm, and where it emerges from there has become known to no man up to this time." Then *Aed II,2,16*: ἡμέραις δὲ οὐ πολλαῖς ὕστερον ἄγγιστά πη τῶν Θεοδοσιουπόλεως ὀρίων ἐκδούς. In English: "Not many days later it emerged near the confines of Theodosiopolis."

²⁶ *Aed VI,1,8*: ἦπερ ἐν λόγοις μοι τοῖς ὑπὲρ τῶν πολέμων δεδήλωται περιηγουμένῳ τὸν Εὐξεινον καλούμενον πόντον. In English: "As has been made clear in the books on the wars in the course of my description of the sea called Euxine." Apart from the lengthy passage in *B VIII,6*, the description of the geographical characteristics of the Black Sea cannot be found in the oeuvre.

²⁷ Cf. *Aed I,3,1*.

²⁸ We even think that it is questionable whether we can regard the work as a unit. It is highly conceivable that the single books were not published together. As far as we know, it is only HAURY *Procopiana* 27–34, who states that the whole work was published in 560, while the first book was published slightly earlier.

²⁹ Arguments for the early dating in STEIN (n. 22) 722 and 837; CAMERON (n. 17) 9–11. Arguments

the early dating: in the description of the Hagia Sophia, the *Aed* does not mention the collapse of the first dome (on 7 May 558), i.e. the work was composed earlier; according to *Aed* III,6,6 the Romans ended the raids of the *tzanoi*, a barbaric ethnic group, thus, the author did not know that the tribe rose in revolt in 557; the positive remark of the *Aed* V,7,16 about the Samaritans could not have been written after the Samaritan revolt in July 555.

In the long run, all three arguments are *argumenta ex silentio*: the description of the catastrophe generated by the collapse of the dome would not have fitted the propagandistic aims of the *Aed* comprising exalted descriptions of the large-scale building operations – it must have been more sensible to remain silent about the case. The other two topics – the pacification of the *tzanoi* and the pious behaviour of the Samaritans – are mentioned only sketchily, without the detailed and exact discussion of the question, thus, such minor inaccuracies are forgivable in these cases.³⁰ The main argument of those in favour of the later dating lies in the text of *Aed* V,3,8-11. This passage describes the building operations of the bridge over the river Sagaris (Sangarios, today Sakarya) *in progress*.³¹ Theophanes in his *Chronography* dates the beginning of this building operation to 559/560.³² Although Theophanes' work is usually regarded as a compilation of questionable credibility,³³ this

for the later dating in BURY (n. 13) 428; DOWNEY, G.: The Composition of Procopius *de aedificiis*. *TAPhA* 78 (1947) 171-183; EVANS (n. 22) 43-44; EVANS, J. A. S.: The Dates of the *Anecdota* and the *de Aedificiis* of PROCOPIUS. *CP* 64 (1969) 29-30; WHITBY, MICHAEL: Justinian's Bridge over the Sangarius and the Date of Procopius' *de Aedificiis*. *JHS* 105 (1985) 129-148. Nowadays it is the questions and problems about the *Aed* that keep the scholars' minds occupied. Cf. the collected papers in *De Aedificiis: Le texte de Procope et les réalités*. *Antiquité tardive* 8 (2001), where several different viewpoints about the dating are presented, which is very characteristic of the present situation. According to HOWARD-JOHNSTON, J.: *The Education and Expertise of Procopius* (19-30) the work was published in 553 at the latest, while according to JEFFREYS, E.: *Malalas, Procopius and Justinians Buildings* (73-79) the work was published after 560 at the earliest.

³⁰ Cf. WHITBY (n. 29) 142-143; GREATREX (n. 19) 108.

³¹ *Aed*. V,3,10: βασιλεὺς δὲ Ἰουστινιανὸς γέφυραν αὐτῷ ἐγκεχειρήκεν ἐποικοδομῆσθαι τανῦν. ἀρξάμενός τε τοῦ ἔργου ἤδη πολλὴν ἐς αὐτὸ διατριβὴν ἔχει. In English: "But the emperor Justinian has now undertaken the project of building a bridge over the river. Having already begun the task, he is now much occupied with it."

³² *Theophanis Chronographia*. Ed.: C. DE BOOR. Leipzig 1883. I. 234: λ. γ'. λ. ε'. δ'. η'. ι. ε'. ι. α'. α'. τοῦτ' ἂν ἔπει ἤρξατο κτιζεῖν ὁ βασιλεὺς τὴν γέφυραν τοῦ Σαγάρωρος ποταμοῦ. In English (translated by C. MANGO and R. SCOTT): "AM 6052 (AD 559/560). In this year the emperor began to build the bridge over the river Sangarios."

³³ Cf. *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern History AD 284-813*. Transl., intr., comm. by MANGO, C. – SCOTT, R. Oxford 1997. lii-lxiii and particularly 344 (ad loc.): "The absence of other material for this year must cause some suspicion about the accuracy of Theophanes' dating."

time it is probable that the data about the building of the bridge are taken from the more creditable Malalas.³⁴ It is conceivable, but far from sure! In the last three books of Malalas no reference can be found to the *beginning* of any building operation.³⁵ Furthermore, the accuracy of the data is questionable independently of its source. In his famous *ekphrasis*, Paulus Silentiarius already mentions the *finished* bridge as an architectural masterpiece,³⁶ and so does one of his friends, Agathias Scholasticus in a poem.³⁷ Since both poems were written at the beginning of 562,³⁸ consequently – if we accept Theophanes’ data – the approximately 430 metres long bridge was completed in almost three years. Considering the difficulties of the task and the contemporary technological standard, we can regard it as a bold assumption. Moreover, in the period in question (559–562), numerous unfortunate incidents would have delayed the building operations, which further questions the credibility of this far too spectacular engineering and architectural achievement. Two years earlier, in December 557 there was an earthquake in Constantinople due to which a considerable part of the city was severely damaged. The reconstruction of the capital city would have been given prominence in contrast to the building of the bridge over the Sagaris, a less urgent task in a barbaric area. In this short period we should also count with a local natural disaster (earthquake) and with the invasion of the Kutrigurs

³⁴ This is the suggestion of WHITBY (n. 29) 136–141. Concerning the reigns of Justin and Justinian also MANGO – SCOTT (n. 33) xcii–xciii regard Malalas as one of the main sources used by Theophanes.

³⁵ Whitby’s arguments are refuted in details by GREATREX (n. 19) 109–113.

³⁶ *Descriptio Sanctae Sophiae* 930–933: τὸν πρὶν ἀνικήτητοισιν ἀγνηροέοντα ῥέεθροις / Μυγδόνα Σαγγαρίον τις ἰδὼν Βιθυνίδι γαίῃ, / ὠῶτα λιθοδομήτοισι διαζωσθέντα γεφύραις, / κρήνυον ἡμετέρων ἐπέων οὐ ῥυθμὸν ἐλέγξει. In English (translated by P. N. BELL): “Whoever has seen Mygdonian Sangarius in the land of Bithynia, once exultant in his untamed streams, with his surface now spanned by a bridge of dressed stone, will not reproach the true rhythm of my verses.” The adverb πρὶν emphasizes that the building of the bridge had already been finished by the time of the composition of the poem.

³⁷ *Anthologia Graeca* IX. 641: καὶ σὺ μεθ’ Ἑσπερίην ὑψαύχενα καὶ μετὰ Μήδων / ἔθνεα καὶ πᾶσαν βαρβαρικὴν ἀγέλην, / Σαγγάριε, κρατερῆσι ῥοῶς ἀψίσι πεδηθεὶς / οὕτω ἐδουλώθης κοιρανικῆ παλάμη / ὁ πρὶν δὲ σκαφέεσσιν ἀνέμβατος, ὁ πρὶν ἀτειρής, / κείσαι λαϊνῆ σφικτὸς ἀλυκτοπέδη. In English (translated by W. R. PATON): “Thou too, Sangarius, after proud Italy and the peoples of the Medes, and all the barbarian host, art thus enslaved by the hand of our prince, thy stream fettered by strong arches. Thou who wast formerly impassable to boats and indomitable, liest gripped in bonds of stone.” CAMERON, AL. – CAMERON, AV.: The Cycle of Agathias. *JHS* 86 (1966) 9. argues that Agathias’s poem was written earlier. Again, from the viewpoint of the building of the bridge, the use of the adverb πρὶν is decisive.

³⁸ Cf. WHITBY, MARY: The Occasion of Paul the Silentiary’s Ekphrasis. *CQ* 35 (1985) 215–228.

(spring 559).³⁹ To sum up, neither the arguments for the early dating nor those for the later dating are decisive. Let us see the relative order.

In the description of the destruction caused by Justinian, the *Secret History* in a passage attributes numerous natural disasters to the demonic power of the emperor (18,37-45). In the first place, among floods, earthquakes, epidemics, the following is listed (18,38): Ἔδεσαν μὲν γὰρ Σκιρτὸς ἐπικλύσας ὁ ποταμὸς μυρίων δημιουργὸς τοῖς ἐκεῖνη ἀνθρώποις συμφορῶν γέγονεν, ὡς μοι ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν λόγοις γεγράψεται. At this point, the text is corrupted and needs emendation, because the adverb ἔμπροσθεν (“earlier”) transmitted in the manuscripts, this time in attributive word order and the predicate of the sentence, γεγράψεται in *futurum perfectum* (appr. “it will be written”) together result in a senseless sentence (appr. “I will write it in my earlier work”).⁴⁰ Thus, the emendation can take place in two directions: we have to change the form of either the predicate or the adverb.⁴¹ In his edition, Dindorf emended the verb γεγράψεται to the form γέγραπται in *praesens perfectum* (appr. “it is written”), while Haury chose the reading ὄπισθεν (“later”) instead of ἔμπροσθεν in his text.⁴² The emendation was not based on palaeography in either of the cases, but it was carried out in accordance with the editor’s preliminary opinion. Dindorf assumed that the *An* is Procopius’ last work and he changed the predicate accordingly, while Haury decided the other way assuming the opposite. To decide which one of them was right, we should look at the other passage where Procopius describes the flood of the river Skirtos in Edessa. Neither *B I-VII*, nor *B VIII* deals with the flood,⁴³ thus, the passage in question is with high probability *Aed. II,7,2-16*. As for the relative chronology, if Dindorf’s emendation is correct, the *Aed* was written earlier than the *An*, while according to Haury’s emendation the order is just the opposite, i.e. the *An* is the earlier out of the two works.

³⁹ Cf. Agathias: *Historiae* V,21-23.

⁴⁰ The structure of transposed adjective (appr. “in the earlier/later part of my work”) is excluded by the fact that the flood of the Skirtos is not mentioned elsewhere in the *An*. Thus, it is apparent that it must refer to another work.

⁴¹ Procopius’ oeuvre contains numerous examples for references forward and backward in time. On this basis, thus, the question cannot be decided.

⁴² Cf. HAURY (n. 8) 1896 172; HAURY (n. 8) 1934 10-14. Accordingly, the English translation of the sentence is the following: “For the Skirtos river flooded Edessa, creating a myriad of calamities for its inhabitants, as I will recount in a later book.”

⁴³ In the passage about Edessa in *B II,12,29* there is a lacuna of approximately 9 lines. Theoretically, the lost text could have also dealt with the flood of the Skirtos, but it cannot be proven.

Now we can deal with the dating of the *An*. The text itself offers the greatest help for that. Among the numerous external references a recurrent expression – in a slightly modified form at times – is striking even at first reading. In *An* 1,11 Procopius states first about Antonina that she had already been mentioned in his earlier work (ἦς δὴ ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν λόγοις ἐμνήσθη), then he makes a similar statement in *An* 1,28 about Praesidius' dagger (ἄπερ μοι ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν λόγοις δεδήλωται), then in *An* 2,15 he uses the same expression in connection with the fall of John the Cappadocian (ἄπερ μοι ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν λόγοις δεδήλωται), and in *An* 2,19 he uses again the expression in relation to Belisarius' unexpected retreat (ἦπέρ μοι τὰ πρότερα δεδιήγηται). We could continue this list for a long time:⁴⁴ the appearance of the references seems to be scheduled; if the author mentions the same event several times, then he also tends to use the expression in all cases.⁴⁵ The work mentioned in the recurrent formula cannot be anything else other than *B I-VII*, thus, the *An* – not surprisingly – was written after *B I-VII*.

There is another group of references in the work with the help of which – at least at first sight – the date of the composition of the *An* can be determined almost exactly. In the description of the internal wars of the circus factions empoisoning the public life Procopius first refers to the fact that he wrote those lines in the 32nd year of Justinian's reign, then later he refers to the same dating in further three passages.⁴⁶ Traditionally, the reign of Justinian

⁴⁴ KALDELLIS, A.: The Date and Structure of Prokopios' Secret History and His Projected Work on Church History. *GRBS* 49 (2009) 585-616 (particularly 601-603) registered 47 external and internal references in the text.

⁴⁵ E.g. about the epidemic *An* 4,1 (οὐπερ ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν λόγοις ἐμνήσθη) and *An* 6,22 (ὅσπερ μοι ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν λόγοις ἐρρήθη) he uses almost the same reference to the earlier work.

⁴⁶ 18,33: ἐς δύο καὶ τριάκοντα ἐνιαυτοὺς οὐδένα ἀνιέντες καιρὸν αὐτοῖ τε εἰργάζοντο ἀλλήλους ἀνῆκεσθα ἔργα (“For thirty-two years they [i. e. the blues and the greens] never relented for a single moment from doing horrible things to each other”); 23,1: οὗτος ἐς δύο καὶ τριάκοντα ἐτῶν χρόνον οὐδὲν τοιοῦτο ἐς τοὺς κατηκόους εἰργάσατο (“for thirty-two years this emperor did no such thing [i. e. remit to subjects the arrears of what they owed in taxes to the public treasury] for his subjects”); 24,29: ἐξ ὅτου δὲ ἀνὴρ ὄδε διφκήσατο τὴν πολιτείαν, τοιοῦτο οὐδὲν οὔτε διεπράξατο οὔτε ἐμέλλησε, καίπερ χρόνου δύο καὶ τριάκοντα ἐνιαυτῶν τριβέντος ἦδη (“but from the moment that this man began to govern the state, he has neither done this [i. e. donation to each soldier] nor given any sign of intending to do it, even though thirty-two years have already passed”); 24,33: καὶ ἦν τις τὴν ξυμπεπωκυῖαν αὐτοῖς ἐνθένδε ζημίαν ἐς ἔτη δύο καὶ τριάκοντα διαριθμοῖτο, εὐρήσει τὸ μέτρον ὄνπερ αὐτοὺς ἀποστερεῖσθαι ξυνέπεσε (“and if someone were to add up the damage done to them [i. e. the magistrates] by this [i. e. deprivation of benefits] over the course of thirty-two years, he would know the exact measures of their loss”).

is counted from 527: from 1 April 527, if his appointment to the position of co-emperor is regarded as starting point, and from 1 September 527, if the chronology of indictions is considered.⁴⁷ On this basis, we have to assume that the *An* was composed 32 years later, i.e. in 558–559.⁴⁸ However, there is a serious argument against this calculation: the *An* never deals with an event *provably* after 550, which cannot be explained if the work was really written in 558. The problem, however, can be eliminated, if we count Justinian's reign not from his own accession to the throne, but from the beginning of the reign of his uncle and predecessor, Justin, from 518, thus, the 32 years mentioned end exactly in 550, which would precisely fit the chronological frame of the historical events discussed in the *An*.⁴⁹ But do we have any valid basis for doing so? Starting out from the text of the *An*, yes, we do.

In the work, Justin I (518–527), the uneducated Illyrian peasant who became emperor is an insignificant minor character.⁵⁰ Whenever he is mentioned – it does not occur often – Procopius always emphasizes his illiteracy and his inaptitude for being the emperor. In long passages he jests about how his councillors craftily acquired the signature of the illiterate emperor for issuing decrees (*An* 6,12–16). As he summarizes: “Justin neither benefited his subjects nor did them harm. He was good-natured in a simpleminded way, entirely inarticulate and boorish in the extreme.”⁵¹ Justin's inaptitude, however, does not mean necessarily that it was not he who ruled. Procopius gives the answer *expressis verbis* to our question above: “his nephew Justinian, who began to govern the entire state while he was still young.”⁵² In another passage, Procopius differentiates between Justinian's unofficial and official reigns, which similarly shows that he regards Justin's reign as a part of Justinian's rule: “That was the extent of the destruction of human life that occurred first while Justinian was

⁴⁷ Justinian himself regarded the former date as the starting point of his reign. Cf. the text of the 47th novella published in 537: *nunc quidem annum undecimum nostri scribunt imperii, incohante vero Aprile mense et prima die, in qua nos deus Romanorum superposuit rebus.*

⁴⁸ This viewpoint is represented in the older literature by DAHN (n. 6) 485; EVANS (n. 19) 29–30; EVANS, J. A. S.: *The Secret History and the Art of Procopius. Prudentia* 7 (1975) 105–109.

⁴⁹ The idea was first proposed by HAURY (n. 8) 1891 9–27.

⁵⁰ The history of his rise and his strongly caricatured characterization can be found in *An* 6,1–16.

⁵¹ *An* 6,18: Ἰουστινῖνος μὲν οὐδὲν οὔτε τι πονηρὸν τοὺς ὑπακόους ἐργάζεσθαι οὔτε ἀγαθὸν ἴσχυεν. εὐηθεία γὰρ πολλὴ εἶχετο, ἀγλωττός τε παντάπασιν ὧν καὶ ἀγροικιζόμενος μάλιστα.

⁵² *An* 6,19: ἀδελφιδοῦς δὲ αὐτῷ Ἰουστινιανὸς νέος ὧν ἔτι διακεῖτο τὴν ἀρχὴν ζῦμπασαν.

*governing the state and later when he held sole imperial authority.*⁵³ Moreover, in the catalogue of Justinian's sins such events that happened without doubt in Justin's time are listed in a prominent place. For instance, in several passages (in details in *An* 7,1-42) Procopius obviously blames Justinian for the fact that the factions at the circus could terrorize the empire without any punishment. However, the climax of the conflict between the blue and the green factions and the particular events mentioned are rather to be dated to Justin's time,⁵⁴ thus, it would be his responsibility – at least to the same extent as it was his nephew's. The evolution of the relationship between Theodora and Justinian and the consolidation of Theodora's increasing influence is similarly emphasized in the work – both processes started in Justin's time (e.g. *An* 9,47-54). It was again in Justin's time that the Monophysite court eunuch, Amantius was killed (518)⁵⁵ and Bitelianus, the former counter-emperor was murdered (520): Procopius attributes both murders to Justinian (*An* 6,26-28). And so on.⁵⁶ All in all, we are inclined to accept that according to the specific dramaturgy of the *An*, the author counts the 32 years mentioned, i.e. the beginning of Justinian's power from Justin's first year.⁵⁷

In this question there are still two issues to clarify. First of all, we state that we do not intend to doubt Justin's merits or judge his activity as emperor. This time, for us, it is not the historical facts that are interesting.

⁵³ *An* 18,45: τοσούτων μὲν ἀνθρώπων ἐγένετο φθόρος, Ἰουστινιανοῦ πρότερον Ῥωμαίους διοικουμένου τὴν πολιτείαν καὶ ὕστερον τὴν αὐτοκράτορα ἀρχὴν ἔχοντος.

⁵⁴ CROKE, B.: Procopius' Secret History: Rethinking the Date. *GRBS* 45 (2005) 405-431, who argues for the late dating, mentions that the conflicts of the circus factions characterized Justinian's real reign. This is undoubtedly true – it is enough to think of the Nika revolt –, but *An* 8,2 indirectly dates the events described to Justin's time: βασιλεῖ [τι. Ἰουστίνω] δὲ τῶν πρασσομένων ἥκιστα ἔμελεν. In English: "the emperor was unaware of what was going on around him."

⁵⁵ The wording is self-evident: οὐπω γοῦν δεκαταῖος εἰς τὴν δύναμιν γεγονώς, i.e. "he had not held power for ten days" – says Procopius about Justinian in 518!

⁵⁶ We feel Haury's emendation of *An* 12,29 unnecessary not only because of the high number of examples. About the dancer Macedonia, a friend of Theodora's we can read the following in all of the manuscripts: γράμματα Ἰουστινιανῷ γράφουσα ἔτι Ἰουστίνου διοικουμένου τὴν βασιλείαν. Haury changed the participle διοικουμένου referring to Justin to the form διοικουμένῳ referring to Justinian. His intention is straightforward (emphasizing the role of Justinian under the reign of Justin), but the otherwise groundless emendation is a serious editorial mistake. The translation of the note by CROKE (n. 54) 414. 28 containing the reading of the manuscript ("Justinian is sending letters to Theodora while Justin was still emperor") is senseless to us.

⁵⁷ Similar standpoint is represented by BURY (n. 13) 422; STEIN (n. 22) 720-721; RUBIN (n. 14) 355; CAMERON (n. 17) 8-9; GREATREX (n. 19) 102.

From the viewpoint of the dating, it is not important who had the main power between 518 and 527, what the author tells us about this issue is interesting. Procopius in the *An* undoubtedly states that instead of Justin, the ruler *de iure, de facto* Justinian ruled the empire in the period in question.⁵⁸ Perhaps this statement lacks any kind of real basis, perhaps Procopius really thought this way, perhaps he only intended to emphasize the demonic role of his hero with this and it cannot be excluded that he formed Justin's figure miserable deliberately to provide contrast to Justinian – all these do not change the fact that according to the author the main character of the present literary work, i.e. the Justinian of the *An* was the leader of the empire starting from 518.⁵⁹

Secondly, we have to discuss the use of the words in the Greek text in connection with ruling. In the passages quoted above – and in other passages, as well – Procopius uses the same recurrent expressions for ruling, governing the empire and taking power. For instance τὴν πολιτείαν διοικεῖσθαι (24,29) = appr. “to govern the state”, τὴν βασιλείαν παραλαβεῖν (24,18) = appr. “to receive the kingdom”, τὴν ἀντοκράτορα ἀρχὴν ἔχειν (19,8) = appr. “to possess the absolute power” and so on. The wording, however, is accidental, no consistency can be detected in the use of single expressions, thus, we cannot draw extensive conclusions from this analysis.⁶⁰

On the basis of what was written above, nowadays the early dating of the *An* is roughly accepted (around 550). This situation could only be changed if one could point out in the text at least one event that happened after 550 beyond all doubt. The earlier attempts to find such events have proved to be unsuccessful.⁶¹ In spite of the originality of the idea it cannot be proved

⁵⁸ CROKE (n. 54) 412-413. *B I-VII* és *B VIII* attempts to prove with passages (pl. B I,22,17; B VIII,15,12) that elsewhere Procopius counts Justinian's rule from 527. It would be unnecessary to doubt that Procopius knew exactly when Justinian officially acquired the power; this time this is not the question. We have doubts regarding Croke's interpretation of the expression κατ' ἐξουσίαν (B III,9,5) referring to Justinian's influence before 527 (“according to his position”). We would prefer the translation “according to his disposition”.

⁵⁹ Thus the undoubtedly interesting statements of CROKE, B.: Justinian under Justin: Reconfiguring a Reign. *BZ* 100 (2007) 13-56 cannot prove anything regarding the calculation of the 32 years in question.

⁶⁰ Cf. KALDELLIS (n. 44) 590-591.

⁶¹ Only SCOTT, R.: Justinian's Coinage and the Easter Reforms, and the Date of Secret History. *BMGs* 11 (1987) 215-221 offers original suggestions (cf. the argument about the inflation and the date of Easter). CROKE (n. 54) 417-420. only lists either events (military operations) that occurred several times – thus also after 550 – or events (stages of administrative career)

that the debasement of coinage mentioned in *An 25,12*⁶² and the inflation described by Malalas (553) are the same,⁶³ moreover, it is almost certain that we have to count with two different cases.⁶⁴ The same is true for the debates about the date of Easter and Pesach. According to *An 28,16-19*, Justinian did not allow the Jewish people to celebrate Pesach before Easter – with all probability because the consumption of the sacrificed lamb of the Jewish people would have violated the rules of the Lent.⁶⁵ But the emperor's intention of establishing the order of the two holidays has nothing to do with the council assembled to decide about the exact date of Easter probably in 553.⁶⁶ All in all, the standpoint of the early dating of the *An* has not weakened in the past few years.

the dating of which is completely uncertain. For a detailed criticism see KALDELLIS (n. 44) 594-598.

⁶² *An 25,12*: τῶν γὰρ ἀργυραμοιβῶν πρότερον δέκα καὶ διακοσίους ὀβολοὺς, οὓς φόλλεις καλοῦσιν, ὑπὲρ ἑνὸς στατήρος χρυσοῦ προΐεσθαι τοῖς ξυμβάλλουσιν εἰωθότων, αὐτοὶ ἐπιτεχνώμενοι κέρδη οἰκεία ὀγδοήκοντα καὶ ἑκατὸν μόνους ὑπὲρ τοῦ στατήρος δίδοσθαι τοὺς ὀβολοὺς διετάξαντο. ταῦτη δὲ νομίματος ἐκάστου χρυσοῦ εβδόμη ἀπέτεμον μοῖραν πάντων ἀνθρώπων. In English: “The money changers were formerly prepared to exchange, on behalf of their clients, two hundred and ten obols (which they called folles) for one gold coin. But they devised a way to make a profit for themselves, by decreeing that only one hundred and eighty obols was now the proper exchange rate for a gold coin. In this way they shaved one seventh off the value of each gold coin of all men.”

⁶³ Malalas: *Chronographia* L,18,C (Dindorf 486,19): μηνὶ μαρτίῳ ἰνδικτιῶνος ἀ' ἐγένετο διαστροφή τοῦ κέρματος· καὶ ἐκ τῶν πτωχῶν στάσεως γενομένης καὶ θορύβου ἀννήχθη τῷ αὐτῷ βασιλεῖ· καὶ ἐκέλευσε τὴν κατάστασιν τοῦ κέρματος κρατήσαι κατὰ τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἔτος. In English (translated by E. JEFFREYS, M. JEFFREYS and R. SCOTT): “In the month of March of the first indiction [i. e. 553] there occurred a debasement of the coinage. There was a riot and uproar among the poor and it was reported to the emperor [i. e. Justinian]. He ordered that the standard of the coinage should continue according to the old practice.” Cf. SCOTT, R.: Malalas, the Secret History and Justinian's Propaganda. *DOP* 39 (1985) 99-109.

⁶⁴ GRIERSON, P.: The Tablettes Albertini and the Value of the Solidus in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries. *JRS* 49 (1959) 73-81 dates the money changing trick in *An 25,12* between 538 and 543. Cf. GREATREX (n. 19) 103-104.

⁶⁵ *An 28,16-17*: ἀλλὰ καὶ οὓς [i. e. νόμους] Ἑβραῖοι τιμῶσι καταλύειν ὄδε βασιλεὺς ἐν σπουδῇ εἶχεν. ἦν γὰρ ποτε αὐτοῖς ἑπανιών ὁ χρόνος τὴν Πασχαλίαν ἑορτὴν πρὸ τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἀγαγὼν τύχοι, οὐκ εἶα ταύτην τοὺς Ἰουδαίους καιροῖς τοῖς καθήκουσιν ἀγειν, οὐδέ τι ἐν ταύτῃ ἐξοσιοῦσθαι τῷ θεῷ ἢ ἐπιτελεῖν τῶν ἐν σφίσι αὐτοῖς νομίμων. In English: “but he exerted himself to abolish the laws that the Hebrews honor as well. Whenever the cycle of the calendar happened to bring their Paschal feast before that of the Christians, he would not permit the Jews to celebrate it at the proper time, not even to consecrate anything to God at it or to practice any of their customs.”

⁶⁶ The latter is described in an Armenian source which is presented in English translation by CONYBEARE, F. C.: Ananias of Shirak (AD 600-650). *BZ* 6 (1897) 572-584.

To sum up what has been discussed so far, we accept the following about the dating of the works in Procopius' œuvre:

- (1) Procopius' first work is *B I-VII*, it was written around 550;
- (2) the *An* was undoubtedly written after *B I-VII*, but before *B VIII* and the *Aed*, also around 550;
- (3) *B VIII* was completed around 554;
- (4) the composition of the *Aed* is again to be dated to this period, around 554.

These statements are – at least partly – more or less in agreement with the present data of the research on Procopius. However, in the case of the *Secret History*, we have to make further remarks due to the specific character of the work.

III.

First of all – even if it might seem strange –, we have to define what we mean by dating, since the time of the genesis of a literary work can mean different things. The date of the genesis can be equivalent with time of the writing process, the shorter or longer period when the given literary work is born, but the date of the publication of the finished work can also be regarded as the time of the genesis of the work. The latter one in the case of the *An* cannot be determined and defined in the frames above. Naturally, also the *An* was published sometime – otherwise we could not read it now – but the publication with all probability took place after Procopius' death – perhaps a good deal after it – due to the content of the work.⁶⁷ It is important to recall that already the *Suda* uses the title *Anecdota* (appr. *unpublished writing*) for this work, which in this context can only mean that it was unpublished in Procopius' lifetime.⁶⁸ Consequently, the year 550 indicated above cannot be

⁶⁷ This would explain why the work is not mentioned almost in the whole tradition of the Byzantine history. Out of the later authors only Nicephorus Callistus from the 12th century (!) mentions the *An* – without the title. *Hist. Eccl. XVII,10*: τὸ δὲ τέταρτον ἀντίρρησις ἐστίν, ὦν πρὸς Ἰουστινιανὸν εἶρηκε δι' ἐπαίνου ποιῶν, καὶ ὡς ἂν τις καλινοφδία τῶν αὐτῶ μὴ καλῶς εἰρημένον.

⁶⁸ *Suda* s. v. Προκόπιος: ἔγραψε καὶ ἕτερον βιβλίον, τὰ καλούμενα Ἀνέκδοτα. Later in the same passage: τὸ βιβλίον Προκοπίου τὸ καλούμενον Ἀνέκδοτα ψόγους καὶ κωμωδίαν Ἰουστινιανοῦ βασιλέως περιέχει καὶ τῆς αὐτοῦ γυναικὸς Θεοδόρας, ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ αὐτοῦ Βελισαρίου καὶ τῆς γαμετῆς αὐτοῦ. In English: "He also wrote another book, the so-called *Anecdota*... The book of Procopius called *Anecdota* contains abuse and mockery of the emperor Justinian and his wife Theodora, and indeed of Belisarius himself as well, and his wife." Consequently,

the year of the real publication. We can only assume that Procopius wrote the work in 550 – but this statement is only true, if the data on which the deduction of the year was based are valid for the whole of the work. Our cautiousness can be justified by the fact that the structure of the *An* – if such structure exists at all – cannot be regarded as unified. Since the references to the 32nd year of Justinian's reign can all be found in the second part of the work (18,33; 23,1; 24,29; 24,33), it is possible that Procopius did not write the whole work in 550, only the second part of it. Thus, in what follows, we have to examine whether in the *An* a higher organizing principle exists that would provide the work with coherence and cohesion and would thus justify the dating to 550.

The *An* as a literary work is special due to its subject, its indeterminable genre, its loose episodes, frequent repetitions and internal contradictions. Its peculiarity is also manifest considering the fact that it is extremely difficult to state something that is valid not only for a part of the *An*, but for the whole of the work. There are some further phenomena that also confirm the complete lack of unity.

Let us see the first sentence of the proemium and the whole work at the same time. At first reading, the text seems to be the usual introduction following the traditional formal principles, but if we analyse the sentence thoroughly, we can make interesting remarks: "Ὅσα μὲν οὖν Ῥωμαίων τῷ γένει ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις ἄχρι δεῦρο ξυνηέχθη γενέσθαι, τῆδέ μοι δεδιήγηται, ἥπερ δυνατὸν ἐγγένοι τῶν πράξεων τὰς δηλώσεις ἀπάσας ἐπὶ καιρῶν τε καὶ χωρίων τῶν ἐπιτηδείων ἄρμοσαμένω· τὰ δὲ ἐνθὲνδε οὐκέτι μοι τρόπῳ τῷ εἰρημένῳ συγκεῖσεται, ἐπεὶ ἐνταῦθα γεγράφεται πάντα, ὅποσα δὴ τετύχηκε γενέσθαι πανταχόθι τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῆς."⁶⁹ The discussion of the historical events according to scenes and chronology is apparently a reference to *B I-VII*. On the basis of this, we would expect that the *An* – as a second part – would continue the history of events started in *B I-VII*, but following other editorial principles. However, it is not the *An* that continues *B I-VII*, but rather *B VIII* – in fact, *B VIII* really abandons the former editorial

GREATREX, G.: Procopius the Outsider? In: SMYTHE, D. C. (ed.): *Strangers to Themselves: The Byzantine Outsider*. London 2000. 215-228 is mistaken when he states that (215. n. 1): "the title *Anekdotia* is a modern one." Cicero uses the expression ἀνέκδοτα in the same meaning (*Epist. ad Att. II,6*).

⁶⁹ *An 1,1*: "When I recounted all that befell the Roman nation in its foreign wars up to the present, I made an effort to arrange my narrative according to the particular time and place in which each event occurred. But from this point onward I will no longer follow this plan of composition because I intend to tell all that has happened in every part of the empire of the Romans."

principles in accordance with what was written above. Now let us have a look at the proemium of *B VIII* as well: “Ὅσα μὲν ἄχρι τοῦδέ μοι δεδιήγηται, τῆδε ξυγγέγραπται ἥπερ δυνατὰ ἐγεγόνει ἐπὶ χωρίων ἐφ’ ὧν δὴ ἔργα τὰ πολέμια ξυνηνέχθη γενέσθαι διελόντι τε καὶ ἀρμοσαμένῳ τοὺς λόγους, οἵπερ ἤδη ἐξενεχθέντες πανταχόθι δεδήλωνται τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῆς. τὸ δὲ ἐνθένδε οὐκέτι μοι τρόπῳ τῷ εἰρημένῳ ξυγκείσεται.”⁷⁰ The number of word-by-word agreements is very high (half sentences, structures, expressions are repeated), and regarding the content both are almost the same.⁷¹ The only major difference is that the promise in the introduction will be realized not by the *An*, but by *B VIII*. Our suspicion increases if we quote the direct continuation of the *An*: “*The reason for this decision is that I could not at that time give a candid report concerning certain events so long as the people who were responsible for them were still alive.*”⁷² Let us forget about the fact that out of the four characters in question, Antonina, Belisarius and Justinian survived Procopius, i.e. during the writing of the work only Theodora was dead (she died in 548), the sentence is still difficult to interpret. The announced change in the structure can hardly be explained (ἀίτιον δέ!) with the alleged death of the characters: there is no causal relation between the two statements. If we recall that in the textual tradition the introductory parts of the *An* are otherwise problematic,⁷³ perhaps we might assume that at the beginning of the *An* the proemium of *B VIII* was inserted – with some minor changes – thus superseding the sentence that from the viewpoint of content introduces the later subject of the *An* and is in causal relation with the second sentence.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ *B VIII,1,1*: “*The narrative which I have written up to this point has been composed, as far as possible, on the principle of separating the material into parts which relate severally to the countries in which the different wars took place, and these parts have already been published and have appeared in every corner of the Roman empire. But from this point onward I shall no longer follow this principle of arrangement.*”

⁷¹ The question is also discussed in the study of SIGNES CODOÑER, J.: *Prokops Anecdota und Justinians Nachfolge*. *JÖB* 53 (2003) 47-82, which from all respects is outstanding in the recent literature.

⁷² *An 1,2*: ἀίτιον δέ, ὅτι δὴ οὐχ οἶόν τε ἦν περιόντων ἔτι τῶν αὐτὰ εἰργασμένων ὅτω δεῖ ἀναγράφεσθαι τρόπῳ.

⁷³ See n. 2.

⁷⁴ We think that a first sentence similar to the following in content would be adequate: “*In what follows I relate how the Roman state had been destroyed by its own rulers. So far I had to remain silent about the enormous villainies that were committed by Justinian and Belisarius and their wives. The reason for this is ...*” Although this introduction cannot explain either why the author states that his characters who were still alive were dead that time, it can reflect the real content of the *An* and establish cohesion between the sentences.

If we attempt to make observations about the structure of the *An*, it is useful to start from the usually mentioned three-parted division. Accordingly, the first major unit (*An* 1-5) describes Antonina and Belisarius's malfeasance, the second part (*An* 6-17) deals with the origin, character and villainies of Theodora and Justinian, while the third unit (*An* 18-30) relates in a highly critical voice the negative effects of Justinian's political, administrative and economic activity on all layers of the society.⁷⁵

We do not accept this structural pattern with the three-parted division, since we think that the unity of the single parts is questionable in the case of all three units.⁷⁶ For instance, the main motif in *An* 1-5 is undoubtedly Antonina's adultery with Theodosius. The description of their romantic relationship is suitable to the presentation of Antonina's negative character, immorality and magical power, but the relation of the frequently interrupted and then restarted story cannot establish cohesion between the single chapters. The narrative is interrupted several times with long digressions (e.g. *An* 2,26-37: the retreat of Chosroes from the area of Colchis; *An* 5,28-38: Sergius in Africa), but these digressions are not inserted so that they could present the background necessary for the story or delay the climax with a consciously used stylistic technique: these are only loose associations independent of the events. The husband, Belisarius never comes to the foreground. He is not a main character, but only a tragic minor character, a deceivable and resourceless puppet, who can only compete with his wife regarding greediness and whose problems with his private life have a negative effect on the military achievements of the empire. Already in this part we can learn several additions about Theodora's revengeful nature inconsistent with the Christian morals the description of which we would only expect later, in the second part according to the three-parted division. The fact that in the short chapters of 1-5 approximately 30 (!) characters are presented by name

⁷⁵ The detailed structural analysis of SIGNES CODOÑER (n. 71) 81-82. follows this threefold division with minor changes. Here we intend to remark that Haury's division to chapters is not always consequent and in the majority of the cases we think that the division to subchapters is completely mistaken.

⁷⁶ Accordingly, we do not accept the particularly bold conception of ADSHEAD, K.: The Secret History of Procopius and Its Genesis. *Byzantion* 63 (1993) 5-28, according to which the three parts were written in three different literary genres (Miletian novella, aetiology, political pamphlet) and the units were later unified by an unknown author. For the detailed criticism see: KALDELLIS, A.: *Procopius of Caesarea*. Philadelphia 2004. 142-159. However, we do not think that Kaldellis's suggestion for the title of the first part (260-261: *Gynecocracy*) could be accepted.

– the majority of them wantonly, only through loose association – cannot be considered as an element promoting the unity.

Similar problems can also be found in the second part regarded as a unit. Furthermore, the unnecessarily high number of repetitions (Theodora's revengeful nature or Justinian's greediness are recurrent motifs) suggests that it lacks the conscious organization, the *ultima manus* and that it is uncompleted. The same is valid for the internal contradictions. On the basis of the second sentence already quoted we would think that all of the four main characters had already died, but their death – even that of Theodora! – is not mentioned *expressis verbis*, moreover, the last sentence means *in concreto* that Justinian was still alive.⁷⁷

In contrast to the loose associations characterizing the first two parts – just like when a cook is stirring the soup: always other ingredients emerge to the surface in a random order –, the structure of the third part is strict and logical to the same extent.⁷⁸ Here the coherence is really justified. The author consequently relates the results of the despotic rule: first he lists the natural disasters caused by the demonic ruler (18), then he describes the economic abuse of the increased administrative apparatus (19-22), then he lists the crimes against single social groups (23: landowners; 24: soldiery; 25: merchants and craftsmen; 26: urban educated *élite*), and finally the summary is completed with the description (30) of how Justinian neglected some minor fields (postal service, intelligence, the keeping of camels).

Considering what is written above, we can modify our observations about the *Secret History* as follows:

(1) The *An* is a literary work of indeterminable genre,⁷⁹ which lacks unity and consists of two distinctive parts.

(2) The first part (1-17) is not completed: a loose fabric of anecdotes illustrating the characters and the deeds of the four main figures and of commentaries to the historical events in *B I-VII*.

⁷⁷ *An* 30,34: ὁπηνίκα ὁ Ἰουστινιανὸς ἀπέλθῃ τοῦ βίου..., ὅσοι τῆνικάδε περιόντες τύχῳσι. In English: "whoever will be lucky enough to have survived whenever Justinian departs from this life."

⁷⁸ KALDELLIS (n. 44) 598-606. also emphasizes the unity of the third part, but he assumes that the passage was a later addition. According to his standpoint, the *An* was completed by Procopius.

⁷⁹ The uncertainty is not of modern origin. Cf. the definitions of the *Suda* (ψόγος, κωμωδία) and Nicephorus Callistus (ἀντιρρήσις, παλινοφδία).

(3) On the basis of the high number of references to *B I-VII*, the first part was perhaps written at the same time as the previous work and it is basically constructed from the elements left out from *B I-VII* out of necessity.

(4) The fact that the proemium is a later insertion suggests the incompleteness of the first part and its close connection with *B I-VII*: the proemium is partly taken over from the proemium of *B VIII* and it is partly an addition composed after the death of the characters.

(5) The second part is a coherent, well-structured political pamphlet criticizing Justinian's policy in details (18-30).

(6) The second part was written in 550 due to the references to the 32 years of Justinian's reign.

(7) The work was not published before Procopius' death.

We did not deal with the frequently debated question what motivated Procopius to write the *Secret History*.⁸⁰ We do not consider it as an inextricable problem. With all probability, he was motivated by the desire to record the truth – a desire that must have motivated him during the writing of *B I-VII* earlier, or *B VIII* and the *Aed* later and that motivates all accurate authors.

⁸⁰ SIGNES CODOÑER (n. 71) 58-68 suggests that Procopius was motivated by the fact that Theodora's death and Justinian's illness brought up the hope of change in the near future. The possible heir to the throne would have been Germanus, Justinian's cousin, but due to his unexpected death (and Justinian's recovery) everything remained the same. All this recalls the faith of Germanicus in Tacitus's *Annals* – not only because of the similarity of the name.