

Chapter 1 : Procopius - Wikipedia

Procopius was the author of a history in eight books of the wars fought by Justinian I, a panegyric on Justinian's public works throughout the empire, and a book known as the Secret History that claims to report the scandals that Procopius could not include in his published history.

What I shall write now follows a different plan, supplementing the previous formal chronicle with a disclosure of what really happened throughout the Roman Empire. You see, it was not possible, during the life of certain persons, to write the truth of what they did, as a historian should. If I had, their hordes of spies would have found out about it, and they would have put me to a most horrible death. I could not even trust my nearest relatives. That is why I was compelled to hide the real explanation of many matters glossed over in my previous books. These secrets it is now my duty to tell and reveal the remaining hidden matters and motives. Yet when I approach this different task, I find it hard indeed to have to stammer and retract what I have written before about the lives of Justinian and Theodora. Worse yet, it occurs to me that what I am now about to tell will seem neither probable nor plausible to future generations, especially as time flows on and my story becomes ancient history. I fear they may think me a writer of fiction, and even put me among the poets. However, I have this much to cheer me, that my account will not be unendorsed by other testimony: For the men of today, who know best the truth of these matters, will be trustworthy witnesses to posterity of the accuracy of my evidence. Still another thing for a long time deferred my passion to relieve myself of this untold tale. For I wondered if it might be prejudicial to future generations, and the wickedness of these deeds had not best remain unknown to later times: It is deplorably natural that most monarchs mimic the sins of their predecessors and are most readily disposed to turn to the evils of the past. But, finally, I was again constrained to proceed with this history, for the reason that future tyrants may see also that those who thus err cannot avoid retribution in the end, since the persons of whom I write suffered that judgment. Furthermore, the disclosure of these actions and tempers will be published for all time, and in consequence others will perhaps feel less urge to transgress. For who now would know of the unchastened life of Semiramis or the madness of Sardanapalus or Nero, if the record had not thus been written by men of their own times? For the miserable find comfort in the philosophy that not on them alone has evil fallen. Accordingly, I begin the tale. First I shall reveal the folly of Belisarius, and then the depravity of Justinian and Theodora. Her mother was one of the wenches of the theater; and she herself from the first led an utterly wanton life. Acquainted with magic drugs used by her parents before her, she learned how to use those of compelling qualities and became the wedded wife of Belisarius, after having already borne many children. Now she was unfaithful as a wife from the start, but was careful to conceal her indiscretions by the usual precautions; not from any awe of her spouse for she never felt any shame at anything and fooled him easily with her deceptions, but because she feared the punishment of the Empress. For Theodora hated her, and had already shown her teeth. But when that Queen became involved in difficulties, she won her friendship by helping her, first to destroy Silverius, as shall be related presently, and later to ruin John of Cappadocia, as I have told elsewhere. After that, she became more and more fearless, and casting all concealment aside, abandoned herself to the winds of desire. There was a youth from Thrace in the house of Belisarius: Theodosius by name, and of the Eunomian heresy by descent. On the eve of his expedition to Libya, Belisarius baptized this boy in holy water and received him in his arms as a member henceforth of the family, welcoming him with his wife as their son, according to the Christian rite of adoption. And Antonina not only embraced Theodosius with reasonable fondness as her son by holy word, and thus cared for him, but soon, while her husband was away on his campaign, became wildly in love with him; and, out of her senses with this malady, shook off all fear and shame of God and man. She began by enjoying him surreptitiously, and ended by dallying with him in the presence of the men servants and waiting maids. For she was now possessed by passion and, openly overwhelmed with love, could see no hindrance to its consummation. Once, in Carthage, Belisarius caught her in the very act, but allowed himself to be deceived by his wife. Finding the two in an underground room, he was very angry; but she said, showing no fear or attempt to keep anything hidden, "I came here with the boy to bury the most precious part of our plunder,

where the Emperor will not discover it. For so bound by love for the woman was he, that he preferred to distrust the evidence of his own eyes. As her folly progressed to an indescribable extent, those who saw what was going on kept silent, except one slave, Macedonia by name. When Belisarius was in Syracuse as the conqueror of Sicily, she made her master swear solemnly never to betray her to her mistress, and then told him the whole story, presenting s witnesses two slave boys attending the bed-chamber. When he heard this, Belisarius ordered one of his guards to put Theodosius away; but the latter learned of this in time to flee to Ephesus. How malicious was her spite against him shall be shown; for she was a scorpion who could hide her sting. But not long after this, by the enchantment either of philtres or of her caresses, she persuaded her husband that the charges against her were untrue. Without more ado he sent word to Theodosius to return, and promised to turn Macedonia and the two slave boys over to his wife. She first cruelly cut out their tongues, it is said, and then cut their bodies into little bits which were put into sacks and thrown into the sea. One of her slaves, Eugenius, who had already wrought the outrage on Silverius, helped her in this crime. And it was not long after this that Belisarius was persuaded by his wife to kill Constantine. What happened at that time concerning Presidius and the daggers I have narrated in my previous books. For while Belisarius would have preferred to let Constantine alone, Antonina gave him no peace until his remark, which I have just repeated, was avenged. And as a result of this murder, much enmity was aroused against Belisarius in the hearts of the Emperor and all the most important of the Romans. But Theodosius said he was unable to return to Italy, where Belisarius and Antonina were now staying, unless Photius were put out of the way. For this Photius was the sort who would bite if anyone got the better of him in anything, and he had reason to be choked with indignation at Theodosius. Though he was the rightful son, he was utterly disregarded while the other grew in power and riches: Then Theodosius came to Italy and her. There they stayed in the satisfaction of their love, unhindered by the complaisant husband; and later she took them both to Constantinople. He saw it would be impossible to fool everybody, as the woman was no longer able to conceal her passion and indulge it secretly, but thought nothing of being in fact and in reputation an avowed adulteress. Therefore he went back to Ephesus, and having his head shaved after the religious custom, became a monk. Whereupon Antonina, insane over her loss, exhibited her grief by donning mourning; and went around the house shrieking and wailing, lamenting even in the presence of her husband what a good friend she had lost, how faithful, how tender, how loving, how energetic! In the end, even her spouse was won over to join in her sorrow. And so the poor wretch wept too, calling for his beloved Theodosius. Later he even went to the Emperor and implored both him and the Empress, till they consented to summon Theodosius to return, as one who was and would always be a necessity in the house of Belisarius. But Theodosius refused to leave his monastery, saying he was completely resolved to give himself forever to the cloistered life. This noble pronouncement, however, was not entirely sincere, for he was aware that as soon as Belisarius left Constantinople, it would be possible for him to come secretly to Antonina. Which, indeed, he did. She had always preferred to voyage wherever her husband went, lest he, being alone, come to his senses and, forgetting her enchantments, think of her for once as she deserved. But now, so that Theodosius might have free access to her, she planned once more how to rid herself permanently of Photius. Nor have you even benefited from his estate, since he was not overblessed with wealth. But brought up by me, though I was only your stepfather, you have arrived at an age where it becomes you to avenge my wrongs. I, who have raised you to consular rank, and given you the opportunity of acquiring such riches, might call myself your father and mother and entire kindred, and I would be right, my son. For it is not by their kinship of blood, but by their friendly deeds that men are wont to measure their bonds to one another. And consider too, that the sins of women injure not only their husbands, but touch even more bitterly their children, whose reputation suffers the greater from this reason, that they are expected to inherit the disposition of those who bore them. But while Theodosius is present, I cannot condone this charge against her. And among other unhappy possibilities, he remembered with distaste what had happened to Macedonia. So he had Belisarius exchange with him all the oaths that are held most sacred and binding among Christians, and each swore never to betray the other, even in the most mortal peril. Now for the present they decided the time had not yet come to take action. But as soon as Antonina should arrive from Constantinople and Theodosius return to Ephesus, Photius was to go to Ephesus and dispose without difficulty of Theodosius and his property.

It was at this time that they had invaded the Persian country with the entire army, and there occurred to John of Cappadocia what is reported in my previous works. There I had to hush up one matter out of prudence, namely, that it was not without malice aforethought that Antonina deceived John and his daughter, but by many oaths, than which none is more revered by the Christians, she induced them to trust her as one who would never use them ill. After she had done this, feeling more confident than before of the friendship of the Empress, she sent Theodosius to Ephesus, and herself, with no suspicion of opposition, set out for the East. Belisarius had just taken the fort of Sisauranum when the news of her coming was brought to him; and he, setting everything else as nothing in comparison, ordered the army to retire. It so happened, as I have shown elsewhere, that other things had occurred to the expedition which fitted in with his order to withdraw, however, as I said in the foreword to this book, it was not safe for me at that time to tell all the underlying motives of these events. Accusation was consequently made against Belisarius by all the Romans that he had put the most urgent affairs of state below the lesser interests of his personal household. For the fact was that, possessed with jealous passion for his wife, he was unwilling to go far away from Roman territory, so that as soon as he should learn his wife was coming from Constantinople, he could immediately seize her and avenge himself on Theodosius. For this reason he ordered the forces under Arethas to cross the Tigris River; and they returned home, having accomplished nothing worthy of mention. Yet if he had been willing in the beginning to cross the Tigris with his entire army, I believe he could have taken all the plunder in the land of Assyria, and marched as far as the city of Ctesiphon, with none to hinder him. And he could have rescued the captured Antiochans and whatever other Romans misfortune had brought there, and restored them to their native lands. How this happened I shall now reveal. For Lazica, as I have explained, is almost roadless and very mountainous. Also pestilence, falling upon them, had destroyed most of the army, and many had died from lack of necessary food and treatment. It was at this time that messengers came from Persia with news that Belisarius, having conquered Nabedes in battle before the city of Nisibis, was approaching; that he had taken the fort of Sisauranum by siege, captured at the point of the spear Bleschames and eight hundred Persian cavalry; and that he had sent a second army of Romans under Arethas, ruler of the Saracens, to cross the Tigris and ravage all the land there that heretofore had not known fear. It happened also that the army of Huns which Chosroes had sent into Roman Armenia, to create a diversion there so that the Romans would not notice his expedition into Lazica, had fallen into the hands of Valerian and his Romans, as other messengers now reported; and that these barbarians had been badly beaten in battle, and most of them killed. When the Persians heard this, already in low spirits over their ill fortune among the Lazi, they now feared if they should meet a hostile army in their present difficulties, among precipices and wilderness, they would all perish in disorder. And they feared, too, for their children and their wives and their country; indeed, the noblest men in the army of the Medes reviled Chosroes, calling him one who had broken his plighted word and the common law of man, by invading in time of peace the land of the Romans. He had wronged, they cried, the oldest and greatest of all nations, which he could not possibly surpass in war. A mutiny was imminent. Aroused at this, Chosroes found the following remedy for the trouble. He read them a letter which the Empress had recently written to Zaberganes. This was the letter: Would you not be acting suitably to this high opinion which I have for you, if you could persuade King Chosroes to choose peace with our government? If you do this, I can promise you will be rewarded by my husband, who does nothing without my advice. Thus he calmed their nervousness. And when none of the enemy appeared to bar his retreat, with great relief he marched back to his native land.

Procopius, who also wrote a mainstream military history and a toadying description of the monuments which Justinian built, had to keep his most acute writing for posthumous publication. This text flays Justinian and Theodora as corrupt, immoral, and just plain evil. Even though the account sounds.

Filed under Justinian the Great 2 comments One of the most interesting characters of the Age of Justinian was the historian Procopius. We owe him a great debt for recording the events that happened during his time. The first of his writings is the Wars of Justinian and the second is the Buildings of Justinian. But this is not the entire legacy that Procopius left us. He is also famous for his Secret History which portrays the characters of the age in a vastly different and negative light. Who exactly is this man whose words we depend on to shed light on his era? Read on to find out. Procopius of Caesarea was a learned scholar from Palestine. Trained in law, he served as the legal advisor of the great general Belisarius from onwards. This meant that Procopius was on hand to witness the major campaigns that took place during the reign of Justinian. He also witnessed the Nika Riots and the plague. In the early s, he settled down in Constantinople and did not return with Belisarius to Italy in It is unclear when Procopius died or whether he was the same urban prefect of Constantinople who tried Belisarius in But due to his status in the court and the social circles he belonged to, his writings is a vital source of information for the Age of Justinian. Procopius had access to and knew things that other historians could not. The first seven books covered the campaigns of Belisarius on the Persian front, in North Africa and in Italy. His last book finished the conquest of Italy under the eunuch Narses. The books also provided many details of the war that would have been lost to us otherwise. But that was not all. Procopius also gave an account of the events that happened such as the Nika Riots and the plague. His other work was on the Buildings of Justinian. Written to glorify his master, Procopius did just that. He even wrote about how his master gave his architects pointers to overcome the problems they faced. Published during the lifetime of Justinian, these works cannot have contained the true feelings of Procopius. After all, he knew what he needed to write to please his master. He also knew the consequences if he chose to do otherwise. Thus for the sake of his life and career, he did what he had to do. The Secret History of Procopius Due to its shocking content, the Secret History or Anecdota, found greater and more lasting fame than either of the earlier two books. It portrayed the private lives of the imperial court in a very bad light. For example, Antonina, the wife of Belisarius, cuckolded him regularly with their godson. The Empress Theodora was a wanton whore during her younger days. And Justinian was a demon whose head could disappear. The Secret History never saw the light of day during the lifetime of Justinian. Such a book would have gotten Procopius tortured and killed, for clearly he had an axe to grind. Given its shocking claims, it is hard to believe what he says. Still, we cannot dismiss the Secret History entirely. Even if it is not the whole truth, there must have been elements of truth involved. What is clear is the bitterness and hatred Procopius had for the court and its main actors. Assessing Procopius From the way Procopius wrote, we can easily discern a few things. Firstly, he was a man who knew how to bend with the times. Knowing the power of his patrons, he could easily write and say what they wanted to hear. This shows that he was a flexible man who knew how to survive. Secondly, he was clearly petty minded and a hypocrite. Justinian and the rest may have disappointed him somehow. But to get back at them through such a means clearly shows that he was not straightforward. Lastly, he was mean-spirited. As a historian, Procopius knew that future generations would rely on what he said to understand the events of his time. He obviously had this in mind when he wrote the Secret History. If he could not get his revenge on Justinian during their lifetime, he would do so for the rest of eternity. Reflections of the Vizier Despite the dubious character of Procopius, his works are still worth reading. The Wars and Buildings of Justinian provide us with a detailed account of the era witnessed firsthand by Procopius himself. It is true that he exaggerates and makes things up in the Secret History. But if you take it with a pinch of salt, it still makes for an enjoyable read. He may have been many things, but Procopius cannot be accused of being boring. Portrait in a Byzantine Landscape. Academy Chicago Publishers, Addison Wesley Longman Limited, If you enjoyed this post, make sure you subscribe to my RSS feed!

Chapter 3 : Procopius of Caesarea: The Secret History

*The Secret History (Penguin Classics) [Procopius, Peter Sarris, G. A. Williamson] on www.nxgvision.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. A trusted member of the Byzantine establishment, Procopius was the Empire's official chronicler, and his History of the Wars of Justinian proclaimed the strength and wisdom of the Emperor's reign.*

He was a native of Caesarea in the province of Palaestina Prima. Procopius recorded a few of the extreme weather events of the 6th century, although these were presented as a backdrop to Byzantine military activities, such as a mutiny in and around Carthage. Both the Wars [14] and the Secret History suggest that his relationship with Belisarius cooled thereafter. As magister militum, Belisarius was an "illustrious man" Latin: He thus belonged to the mid-ranking group of the senatorial order ordo senatorius. However, the Suda, which is usually well informed in such matters, also describes Procopius himself as one of the illustres. It is not certain when Procopius died. Many historians—including Howard-Johnson, Cameron, and Greatrex—date his death to 562, but there was an urban prefect of Constantinople praefectus urbi Constantinopolitanae called Procopius in 562. In that year, Belisarius was implicated in a conspiracy and was brought before this urban prefect. De Bellis, "On the Wars" is his most important work, although less well known than the Secret History. The first seven books seem to have been largely completed by 562 and may have been published as a unit. They were, however, updated to mid-century before publication, with the latest mentioned event occurring in early 562. The eighth and final book brings the history to 562. The first two books—often known as The Persian War Latin: It includes accounts of the 1st and 2nd sieges of Naples and the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd sieges of Rome. The Wars was influential on later Byzantine historiography. Secret History[edit] Belisarius may be this bearded figure on the right of Emperor Justinian I in the mosaic in the Church of San Vitale, Ravenna, which celebrates the reconquest of Italy by the Roman army under the skillful leadership of Belisarius. The Secret History covers roughly the same years as the first seven books of The History of the Wars and appears to have been written after they were published. Current consensus generally dates it to 562 or 563, although others set it as late as 564. In the eyes of many scholars, the Secret History reveals an author who had become deeply disillusioned with Emperor Justinian, his wife Theodora, the general Belisarius, and his wife Antonina. The work claims to expose the secret springs of their public actions, as well as the private lives of the emperor and his entourage. Justinian is portrayed as cruel, venal, prodigal, and incompetent. In one passage, it is even claimed that he was possessed by demonic spirits or was himself a demon: And some of those who have been with Justinian at the palace late at night, men who were pure of spirit, have thought they saw a strange demoniac form taking his place. But presently he perceived the vanished head filling out and joining the body again as strangely as it had left it. Often, even in the theatre, in the sight of all the people, she removed her costume and stood nude in their midst, except for a girdle about the groin: Covered thus with a ribbon, she would sink down to the stage floor and recline on her back. Slaves to whom the duty was entrusted would then scatter grains of barley from above into the calyx of this passion flower, whence geese, trained for the purpose, would next pick the grains one by one with their bills and eat. The unpublished manuscript would then have been a kind of insurance, which could be offered to the new ruler as a way to avoid execution or exile after the coup. If this hypothesis were correct, the Secret History would not be proof that Procopius hated Justinian or Theodora. It tells us nothing further about Belisarius, and it takes a sharply different attitude towards Justinian. He is presented as an idealised Christian emperor who built churches for the glory of God and defenses for the safety of his subjects. He is depicted showing particular concern for the water supply, building new aqueducts and restoring those that had fallen into disuse. Such works include renovation of the walls of Edessa after its flood and consecration of several churches in the region. Similarly, Procopius falsely credits Justinian for the extensive refortification of the cities of Tomis and Histria in Scythia Minor. This had actually been carried out under Anastasius I, who reigned before Justin. They wrote in Attic Greek; their models were Herodotus, Polybius and—particularly—Thucydides; and their subject matter was secular history. They avoided vocabulary unknown to Attic Greek and inserted an explanation when they had to use contemporary words. As far as known, however, such an ecclesiastical history was never written. Count Belisarius was written by poet and

novelist Robert Graves in Haury; revised by G. Harvard University Press and London, Hutchinson, " Greek text and English translation. Procopius, *The Secret History*, translated by G. A readable and accessible English translation of the *Anecdota*. Recently re-issued by Penguin with an updated and livelier translation by Peter Sarris, who has also provided a new commentary and notes. This edition includes related texts, an introductory essay, notes, maps, a timeline, a guide to the main sources from the period and a guide to scholarship in English. The translator uses blunt and precise English prose in order to adhere to the style of the original text. *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, London: Twayne Publishers, , p. Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart.

Chapter 4 : The Secret History of Procopius Index

The Secret History is his story of how things really were in the dark heart of the Byzantine Empire, meant to be published only after his death Procopius wrote a book. Once the official court historian of the emperor and an important member of the Byzantine Imperial court, Procopius wrote the History of the Wars of Justinian and worked on his.

Get Full Essay Get access to this section to get all help you need with your essay and educational issues. From his works we are able to visit back into the Byzantine Empire, when Emperor Justinian reigned. Through the three books he created: Procopius had a great dislike for the Emperor Justinian and the Empress Theodora, and wanted his audience, which would have been the people of the Byzantine Empire, to know their true character. Procopius is a well-educated man, a well-travelled man. He held the position of assessor military legal secretary to General Belisarius, and accompanied him on his military campaigns. Procopius explains to his audience that for fear of his life he was unable to tell the truth about events that have happened in his previous writings. Procopius starts his assassination of character right in the first chapter. He portrays Belisarius not as a great General, but as a weak man who is blinded by his love for his wife Antonina. Antonina is portrayed as an unfaithful wife, who indulges in a disgraceful relationship with Theodosius, whom was adopted by Belisarius and his wife, Antonina. Procopius paints a picture for his audience of women and men who are far from what the social expectations of what an elite person of their time would resemble. In Antonina and Empress Theodora we see women who are controlling, vengeful, deceptive, and cruel. We see nothing of the properly feminine woman who would be expected to be an elite. In the great General Belisarius, we see a weak man, allowing a woman to control their relationship, very unlike the expectations of the strong muscular men of their day. Procopius continues his story with the assault on Justinian. Procopius wanted his audience to know that Justinian was a corrupt tyrant. Procopius must have had a terrible disdain for the Empress Theodora as he describes her character as that of a woman with no virtue. Procopius wanted his audience to see these people with the same disdain and contempt that he saw them with. Far from the great Emperor who had a vision to recreate the Roman Empire, who rebuilt Constantinople, who built many beautiful churches and buildings, and whom Procopius would have served. More essays like this:

Chapter 5 : Procopius | The Online Books Page

p. 1. INTRODUCTION. LIKE most notables of the Roman Empire in Byzantine times, the historian Procopius was not a Latin. He was born in Caesarea in Palestine about A. D., and apparently was one of those Samaritans whom he mentions in the 'Secret History' as adopting Christianity for formal protection and not at all for spiritual reasons.

Procopius Excerpt from Secret History Published in Secret History, "To me, and many others of us, these two seemed not to be human beings, but veritable demons, and what the poets call vampires: Yet these works, respectable as they are, are not nearly as entertainingâ€”nor do they receive as much attention todayâ€”as a gossipy, scandalous book called Secret History, which Procopius never intended to publish. Justinian, often considered the greatest Byzantine emperor, set out to reconquer lands that had once belonged to the Western Roman Empire, and in this undertaking he relied on his brilliant general Belisarius. Their portrayal in Secret History, however, was quite different. During this time, the Byzantines waged war with the Persians in what is now Iran; with the Goths in Italy; and with the Vandalsâ€”who, like the Goths, were a barbarian tribe that had helped bring down the Western Roman Empireâ€”in North Africa. Out of this experience came History in Eight Books, a highly acclaimed book. He also wrote On Buildings, a six-volume work concerning buildings erected under the reign of Justinianâ€”and again, the book was full of nothing but kind words for the man whom historians consider the greatest of Byzantine emperors. These grudges found expression in Secret History, which, as its name implies, was something Procopius wrote without the intention of ever publishing it. Chapter titles from Secret History say it all: The specific political differences between the two groups hardly matter in the context of the Secret History: As emperor, Justinian had to appear to be above the Blue-Green conflict, but it is easy to guess that his sympathies lay with his wife. When he became governor of a Byzantine province, Procopius reported in another chapter of the Secret History, Theodora followed him there, but later Hecebolus left her with no money. Excerpt from Secret History â€” [T]o me, and many others of us, these two [Justinian and Theodora] seemed not to be human beings, but veritable demons, and what the poets call vampires: And one could find evidence of this in many things, but especially in the superhuman power with which they worked their will. For when one examines closely, there is a clear difference between what is human and what is supernatural. There have been many enough men, during the whole course of history, who by chance or by nature have inspired great fear, ruining cities or countries or whatever else fell into their power; but to destroy all men and bring calamity on the whole inhabited earth remained for these two to accomplish, whom Fate aided in their schemes of corrupting all mankind. For by earthquakes, pestilences, and floods of river waters at this time came further ruin, as I shall presently show. Thus not by human, but by some other kind of power they accomplished their dreadful designs. And they say his mother said to some of her intimates once that not of Sabbatius her husband, nor of any man was Justinian a son. For when she was about to conceive, there visited a demon, invisible but giving evidence of his presence perceptibly where man consorts with woman, after which he vanished utterly as in a dream.

Procopius: The Anecdota of Secret History, translated by H.B. Dewing, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,), Vol VI of the seven volume Loeb translation, which includes the Buildings and the Wars in parallel Greek and English texts. Greek text based on Haury.

Secret History, extracts Procopius [c. He wrote a number of official histories, including the Buildings and On the Wars. He also left a "Secret History" [Anecdota] which was a massive attack on the character of Justinian and his wife Theodora. Parts are so vitriolic, not to say pornographic, that for some time translations from Greek were only available into Latin ["the decent obscurity of an ancient tongue"]. Now in physique he was neither tall nor short, but of average height; not thin, but moderately plump; his face was round, and not bad looking, for he had good color, even when he fasted for two days. Now such was Justinian in appearance; but his character was something I could not fully describe. For he was at once villainous and amenable; as people say colloquially, a moron. He was never truthful with anyone, but always guileful in what he said and did, yet easily hoodwinked by any who wanted to deceive him. His nature was an unnatural mixture of folly and wickedness. What in olden times a peripatetic philosopher said was also true of him, that opposite qualities combine in a man as in the mixing of colors. I will try to portray him, however, insofar as I can fathom his complexity. This Emperor, then, was deceitful, devious, false, hypocritical, two-faced, cruel, skilled in dissembling his thought, never moved to tears by either joy or pain, though he could summon them artfully at will when the occasion demanded, a liar always, not only offhand, but in writing, and when he swore sacred oaths to his subjects in their very hearing. Then he would immediately break his agreements and pledges, like the vilest of slaves, whom indeed only the fear of torture drives to confess their perjury. A faithless friend, he was a treacherous enemy, insane for murder and plunder, quarrelsome and revolutionary, easily led to anything, but never willing to listen to good counsel, quick to plan mischief and carry it out, but finding even the hearing of anything good distasteful to his ears. These and many even worse vices were disclosed in him as in no other mortal: And besides this, he was too prone to listen to accusations; and too quick to punish. Without hesitation he wrote decrees for the plundering of countries, sacking of cities, and slavery of whole nations, for no cause whatever. So that if one wished to take all the calamities which had befallen the Romans before this time and weigh them against his crimes, I think it would be found that more men had been murdered by this single man than in all previous history. And when it was his, he was more than ready to squander it in insane display, or give it as an unnecessary bribe to the barbarians. In short, he neither held on to any money himself nor let anyone else keep any: Driving all wealth from the country of the Romans in this manner, he became the cause of universal poverty. Now this was the character of Justinian, so far as I can portray it. Whatever had before been forbidden by law he now introduced into the government, while he revoked all established customs: Existing offices he abolished, and invented new ones for the management of public affairs. He did the same thing to the laws and to the regulations of the army; and his reason was not any improvement of justice or any advantage, but simply that everything might be new and named after himself. And whatever was beyond his power to abolish, he renamed after himself anyway. Of the plundering of property or the murder of men, no weariness ever overtook him. As soon as he had looted all the houses of the wealthy, he looked around for others; meanwhile throwing away the spoils of his previous robberies in subsidies to barbarians or senseless building extravagances. And when he had ruined perhaps myriads in this mad looting, he immediately sat down to plan how he could do likewise to others in even greater number. As the Romans were now at peace with all the world and he had no other means of satisfying his lust for slaughter, he set the barbarians all to fighting each other. And for no reason at all he sent for the Hun chieftains, and with idiotic magnanimity gave them large sums of money, alleging he did this to secure their friendship. These Huns, as soon as they had got this money, sent it together with their soldiers to others of their chieftains, with the word to make inroads into the land of the Emperor: Thus the Huns enslaved the Roman Empire, and were paid by the Em to keep on doing it. This encouraged still others of them to rob the poor Romans; and after their pillaging, they too were further rewarded by the gracious Emperor. In this way

all the Huns, for when it was not one tribe of them it was another, continuously overran and laid waste the Empire. Consequently no place, mountain or cave, or any other spot in Roman territory, during this time remained uninjured; and many regions were pillaged more than five times. These misfortunes, and those that were caused by the Medes, Saracens, Slavs, Antes and the rest of the barbarians, I described in my previous works. But, as I said in the preface to this narrative, the real cause of these calamities remained to be told here. Moreover, while he was encouraging civil strife and frontier warfare to confound the Romans, with only one thought in his mind, that the earth should run red with human blood and he might acquire more and more booty, he invented a new means of murdering his subjects. Now among the Christians in the entire Roman Empire, there are many with dissenting trines, which are called heresies by the established church: All of these beliefs he ordered to be abolished, and their place taken by the orthodox dogma: Now the churches of these so-called heretics, especially those belonging to the Arian dissenters, were almost incredibly wealthy. Neither all the Senate put together nor the greatest unit of the Roman Empire, had anything in property comparable to that of these churches. For their gold and silver treasures, and stores of precious stones, were beyond telling or number ing: As none of the previous Emperors had molested these churches, many men, even those of the orthodox faith, got their livelihood by working on their estates. But the Emperor Justinian, in confiscating these properties, at the same time took away what for many people had been their only means of earning a living. Agents were sent everywhere to force whomever they chanced upon to renounce the faith of their fathers. This, which seemed impious to rustic people, caused them to rebel against those who gave them such an order. Thus many perished at the hands of the persecuting faction, and others did away with themselves, foolishly thinking this the holier course of two evils; but most of them by far quitted the land of their fathers, and fled the country. The Montanists, who dwelt in Phrygia, shut themselves up in their churches, set them on fire, and ascended to glory in the flames. And thenceforth the whole Roman Empire was a scene of massacre and flight. A similar law was then passed against the Samaritans, which threw Palestine into an indescribable turmoil. Those, indeed, who lived in my own Caesarea and in the other cities, deciding it silly to suffer harsh treatment over a ridiculous trifle of dogma, took the name of Christians in exchange for the one they had borne before, by which precaution they were able to avoid the perils of the new law. The most reputable and better class of these citizens, once they had adopted this religion, decided to remain faithful to it; the majority, however, as if in spite for having not voluntarily, but by the compulsion of law, abandoned the belief of their fathers, soon slipped away into the Manichean sect and what is known as polytheism. The country people, however, banded together and determined to take arms against the Emperor: And for a time they held their own against the imperial troops; but finally, defeated in battle, were cut down, together with their leader. Ten myriads of men are said to have perished in this engagement, and the most fertile country on earth thus became destitute of farmers. To the Christian owners of these lands, the affair brought great hardship: Next he turned his attention to those called Gentiles, torturing their persons and plundering their lands. Of this group, those who decided to become nominal Christians saved themselves for the time being; but it was not long before these, too, were caught performing libations and sacrifices and other unholy rites. And how he treated the Christians shall be told hereafter. After this he passed a law prohibiting pederasty: The conduct of the prosecution was utterly illegal. Sentence was passed when there was no accuser: Those who were convicted were castrated and then exhibited in a public parade. At the start, this persecution was directed only at those who were of the Green party, were reputed to be especially wealthy, or had otherwise aroused jealousy. Accordingly, magistrates appointed to punish thieves also abused the astrologers, for no other reason than that they belonged to this profession: Consequently there was a constant stream of emigration not only to the land of the barbarians but to places farthest remote from the Romans; and in every country and city one could see crowds of foreigners. For in order to escape persecution, each would lightly exchange his native land for another, as if his own country had been taken by an enemy. Covicii Friedal, , reprinted by University of Michigan Press, , with indication that copyright was expired. This text is part of the Internet Medieval Source Book. The Sourcebook is a collection of public domain and copy-permitted texts related to medieval and Byzantine history. Unless otherwise indicated the specific electronic form of the document is copyright. Permission is granted for electronic copying, distribution in print form for educational purposes and personal

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Chapter 7 : The Anecdota or Secret History " Procopius | Harvard University Press

PROCOPIUS: THE SECRET HISTORY. by Procopius; G.A. Williamson. Published by Folio Society. Nearly fine condition. Mosaic patterned boards.

He was born in Caesarea in Palestine about A. Certainly his frequent allusions to the religion of his period, if they do not, in the words of Edward Gibbon, "betray occasional conformity, with a secret attachment to Paganism and Philosophy," at least show the detached mind of a critic to whom the hierarchy is not exactly infallible. If our historian shows at times a Grecian simplicity and an unorthodox distaste for the killing of heretics, it must be remembered that before he became a Roman he had been a Rhetorician, which profession p. And one who once dallies with the language of Aeschylus and Sappho is only too likely thereafter to disdain any country other than Arcady. If the young Procopius, journeying to Constantinople in his middle twenties, anticipated himself a second Lysias in another Athens, he was likely to be disappointed. Here, washed by the waters across which Leander had plunged to Hero, and in sight of the Crashing Rocks between which the Argonauts had once venturously sailed, was a colorful but mad city of pomp and confusion, intrigue and cruelty. For a while, of course, the excitement of living in the kaleidoscopic capital of the world, after the rustic quiet of Samaria and the imagined tranquillity of Theocritus, would stimulate the young stranger to seek a worldly success. In this new role too he seems to have distinguished himself, and we hear of his being entrusted with various special and important commissions. He continued to serve under Belisarius in the Vandal campaign in , and against the Ostrogoths in Italy in . By filling this work with almost slavish flattery, the desired object was attained. The Emperor was delighted, and Procopius was made a Senator. He determined, for once, to write the whole truth about this fickle autocrat, his inhuman Empress, and their degenerate court. Justinian ruled for 38 years . Three years later Justinian died. Whether Procopius outlived him is unknown. If he writes what people wish to believe, he must frequently violate his conscience; if he writes the full truth, a storm of indignation may overwhelm him. Few chroniclers have solved the difficulty as Procopius did, by describing both sides of a question in different volumes. Few indeed are the moderns to whom Procopius is recognizable as a proper name; and how many of even these could guess whether a Procopius was a tumor or a tuber? He is not read in university Greek classrooms, because he is a late Roman writer; Latin seminars leave him unstudied, because he wrote in Greek. There is not a schoolbook p. Where is the Plutarch to write the parallel lives of these two historians? We may only for the moment speculate upon the gallant picture of General Washington, thoughtfully pacing the shows of Valley Forge while he considers the problem of avoiding foreign entanglements, p. Gibbon, consuming the pages of Procopius with one hand and a sixth glass of Madeira with the other, meditates on the clear, if uncontemporary, figure of the Empress Theodora, "whose strange elevation cannot be applauded as the triumph of female virtue;" or, after his ninth glass, plans a nice sentence on the late ladies of the Byzantine period and their novel habit of wearing silken dresses, which present to the imaginative historian a vision of "naked draperies and transparent matrons. Mentioned by the lexicographer Suidas circa , the loss of this valuable work to modern readers was lamented by Baronius in , though the manuscript was then in his custody in the Vatican. Not till , however, if we may believe its title page, was a "literal and complete" English translation made: English may be made as subtle a tongue as French or Greek, but it slips only too easily into brutality. Lest the occasional reader be slightly puzzled that a Latin historian should have written in Greek, it may be worth recalling that the capital of the Roman Empire had been removed, since the time of Constantine, from Italy to Byzantium; which city, already Hellenic for centuries, continued to preserve its Grecian character under the new name of Constantinople. That the conquered Greeks had the habit of insidiously enslaving their Roman masters is a familiar statement; the Greco-Roman Empire of the East soon became more Greek than Roman. By the time Justinian came to power, Rome itself, with all the rest of Italy was in the hands of the Goths; who, when they spoke of the Byzantine Romans, alluded to them as Greeks: Justinian, indeed, or rather his brilliant general Belisarius, regained the lost mother country and the Libyan provinces, and for p. But it was the last flare of a dying candle. A Fonteius had once prophesied that the Roman Empire would fall when it abandoned the Roman language. Still, if only

for a time, Justinian had once more made the Mediterranean "Mare Nostrum," encircled by a Roman Empire superficially equal to that the first and greatest Augustus had left, five centuries before; and governed by the principle of "one state, one church, one law. Its definitions were law in Bavaria, for example, as late as How vigorously, even cruelly, this unity p. Only one physical memorial built by Justinian still stands, the Church of St. From its minarets in Constantinople the faithful are yet called to prayer. Only, to make the irony complete, it is the Allah of Mohammed whom the faithful have worshipped in this church of Rome, since the year of Christ But decadence is notably colorful, and the autumn sunset of Rome was no exception to the rule. Here are the nimble Greeks of old Byzantium; sailors from the Pillars of Hercules jostling elbows with Christianized Jews; visiting Persian ambassadors or spies; Vandal, Visigoth, Ostrogoth, and all the barbarian tribal emissaries, staring about contemptuously at the sights of an effete metropolis; here marches a company of the ever-present Pretorian Guard, while the also ever-present crowds of gaily dressed courtesans giggle and whisper as the soldiers march past. Here are the partisans of the Hippodrome teams, wearing their rival Blue or Green colors, and a sharp dagger too, for Blues and Greens seldom meet without p. Here waddle obese eunuchs, with fat noses held high in curious pride: Here is the Forum, where you may buy anything from love to a Senate decision. A girl who can play the harp or the flute is somewhat expensive, though less so, of course, than one of the ladies of the court of Theodora. There had been another Procopius who had dared, not only to criticize an Emperor, but to seize the very throne of Constantinople p. And presently that other Procopius was beheaded. So a second Procopius, who has had enough of wars and Emperors, neither gossips of Theodora in the presence of his family nor claims any kinship to a well-punished usurper, let alone to a Julian who acknowledged the fashionable Galilean only with his dying, and that ironic, breath. If Justinian is an ass, the fact is inscribed carefully in a well-guarded notebook; and other dangerous anecdotes, as they occur to the critic, are similarly jotted down now and then, as Procopius is able to steal an p. When he has written the whole story, he hides the manuscript somewhere against the day when Justinian dies. Only it seems that Justinian did not, like the cancerous Theodora, die quite soon enough. True, fury is less generally desirable than cool impartiality in a historian, p. But one should remember that devils were very much believed in at this Christian time; and if earlier Emperors of Rome had claimed due worship as gods, certainly even the most honest of historians might conceivably give his sovereigns full spiritual credit, so long as they did not hear about it. Thus, as you will find, full credit is what he gave them, and if the appreciative word of a till now unoffending translator be permitted Procopiously. In the following text, the chapter divisions are those of the manuscript; the chapter titles, however, are an added whim of the romantic editor, as are the occasional notes in the helpful glossary. And with no more to-do than this slight overture p. Here is a narrative with the fascination of the elder Dumas; but it is more than a collection of anecdotes of intrigue: For the modern reader, though he will find here many things that are, indeed, all too familiar in present society, may still sigh with relief that such thorough and unmitigated tyrants as the affable Justinian and the prankish Theodora are no longer permitted to pillage their subjects with an utterly unchecked hand. And so the curtain rises.

Chapter 8 : The Secret History of Procopius: Introduction

Secret History Having dutifully written the official war history of Justinian's reign, Procopius turned round and revealed in *The Secret History* the other faces of the leading men and women of Byzantium in the sixth century.

From to Procopius was a counsel the great general of the time, Belisarius []. He was in Italy on the Gothic campaign until , after which he lived in Constantinople, since he describes the great plague of in the capital. His life after that is largely unknown, although he was given the title illustis in and in may have been prefect of Constantinople in He wrote a number of official histories, including *On the Wars* in eight books [Polemon or *De bellis*], published , with an addition in , and *On the Buildings* in six books [*Peri Ktismaton* or *De aedificiis*], published He also left a "Secret History" [*Anecdota*, i. Parts are so vitriolic, not to say pornographic [esp. Chapter 9], that for some time translations from Greek were only available into Latin [Gibbon - in Ch. Since both before and afterward, Procopius wrote approvingly of the emperor, it was suggested in the past that he was not the author of the work, but it is now generally accepted that Procopius wrote it. Analysis of text, which show no contradictions in point of fact between the *Secret History* and the other works, as well a linguistic and grammatical analysis makes this a conclusive opinion. Now the standard edition. The *Anecdota* of *Secret History*, translated by H. Greek text based on Haury. Covicii, , reprinted, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, , - the version available here. *Secret History*, translated by G. Penguin, - this is the most easily available print version. Piper, c Evans, James A. University of California Press, c - probably the best place to start. *Theodora* Browning, Robert, *Justinian and Theodora*, 2nd ed. Alfred A, Knopf, Grimbert, E. *Die Tanzerin auf dem Kaiserthron*, Munich: The Circus Empress, New York: *Empresses of Constantinople*, London: Dixon, Pierson, Sir, *The glittering horn: Literary Guild*, ; London: Cassell, Graves narrates the life of perhaps the most glamorous Byzantine general. Most readers though seem to find the novel pedestrian and, frankly, boring. Hubbard, Elbert, and Alice Hubbard, *Justinian and Theodora*, a drama; being a chapter of history and the one gleam of light during the dark ages, East Aurora, N. Olivier Orban, c Sardou, Victorien, , *Theodora. Drama in funf aufzugen und acht bildern*, Deutsch von Hermann von Lohner What I shall write now follows a different plan, supplementing the previous formal chronicle with a disclosure of what really happened throughout the Roman Empire. You see, it was not possible, during the life of certain persons, to write the truth of what they did, as a historian should. If I had, their hordes of spies would have found out about it, and they would have put me to a most horrible death. I could not even trust my nearest relatives. That is why I was compelled to hide the real explanation of many matters glossed over in my previous books. These secrets it is now my duty to tell and reveal the remaining hidden matters and motives. Yet when I approach this different task, I find it hard indeed to have to stammer and retract what I have written before about the lives of Justinian and Theodora. Worse yet, it occurs to me that what I am now about to tell will seem neither probable nor plausible to future generations, especially as time flows on and my story becomes ancient history. I fear they may think me a writer of fiction, and even put me among the poets. However, I have this much to cheer me, that my account will not be unendorsed by other testimony: For the men of today, who know best the truth of these matters, will be trustworthy witnesses to posterity of the accuracy of my evidence. Still another thing for a long time deferred my passion to relieve myself of this untold tale. For I wondered if it might be prejudicial to future generations, and the wickedness of these deeds had not best remain unknown to later times: It is deplorably natural that most monarchs mimic the sins of their predecessors and are most readily disposed to turn to the evils of the past. But, finally, I was again constrained to proceed with this history, for the reason that future tyrants may see also that those who thus err cannot avoid retribution in the end, since the persons of whom I write suffered that judgment. Furthermore, the disclosure of these actions and tempers will be published for all time, and in consequence others will perhaps feel less urge to transgress. For who now would know of the unchastened life of Semiramis or the madness of Sardanapalus or Nero, if the record had not thus been written by men of their own times? For the miserable find comfort in the philosophy that not on them alone has evil fallen. Accordingly, I begin the tale. First I shall reveal the folly of Belisarius, and then the depravity of Justinian and Theodora.

Chapter 9 : The Secret History by Procopius

Owing to the ferocity of the attacks upon Justinian, the authenticity of the Secret History was questioned, but Procopius' authorship is now generally recognized. In point of style, the Secret History is inferior to the Wars and has the air of being unfinished, or at least unrevised.

However, as respected a historian as Procopius was, the Secret History still remains a stunning and vicious attack upon Justinian and Theodora, amongst others, highly critical of his reign and replete with invective and bile. How accurate a reflection of the reign of Justinian and Theodora it actually is will be examined by comparing the known facts from other sources, including two other works by Procopius, History of the Wars and Buildings. His change in attitude and the reasons behind it, from his earlier works to the Secret History will be analysed and if possible, a reason for this change determined. Realistic, or a sustained unsupported attack upon his Emperor, the Secret History still remains a valuable source written by an eyewitness to the reign of Justinian and Theodora and therefore must be treated with all due respect. Buildings is a history of the building and expansion program undertaken by Justinian and the Secret History is his final work, an unedited version of these events and the people who participated in them. Procopius therefore, was well placed to comment on his subjects. To begin however, it is his attacks on the Empress Theodora that must be first examined, as the Secret History is without doubt an assault upon her character and her actions. In the Secret History, Procopius vilifies Theodora for her background, as the daughter of an actress and a bear-trainer who herself became an actress but this is the least of her sins. Williamson, London, 9 , p. Averil Cameron argues that Theodora, in her time as Empress acted just as an Empress should, so that the only way for Procopius to attack her was to attack what he knew, or had heard, regarding her private life. She was vain and frivolous, spending hours upon her appearance to the detriment of the Empire. To ascertain just how accurate his portrayals of Theodora, and by extension Justinian, are, however, it is necessary to examine how he portrayed them in his earlier works and also how Cameron, Procopius and the Sixth Century, p. Generally, both Justinian and Theodora come off favourably in both circumstances. Yet other sources also praise the Emperor. Scott continues to state that Procopius wrote the Secret History to criticise what he saw as a challenge to the authority of the Byzantine ruling establishment. S Evans supports this argument, stating that Procopius was speaking with the voice of the Establishment. The differing portrayals of Justinian and Theodora in the Secret History are glaringly obvious when one examines Procopius earlier works. The most obvious discrepancy is in his treatment of Theodora. In the History of the Wars, Procopius has her make a speech during the Nika riots. Fisher agrees, arguing that by slandering one he can blacken the name of both. In the Secret History, Procopius damns Justinian for the very measures he has spent time praising in Buildings. So which work is the most accurate? Much has been debated about the timing of the Secret History and when it was written, as the tone of that work differs so vastly from his earlier works, on the whole. Garland argues that Procopius would not have written the Secret History unless there was in existence a faction hostile to Theodora, and by extension Justinian. But it may be that in secret, Procopius was disillusioned and possibly disgusted by the actions of his Emperor and Empress. Where this theory collapses however, is ultimately in his treatment of Theodora. But it is the tone and language he uses that damage his work, as they are Gregory, A History of Byzantium, p. While many parts of the Secret History appear to be based in historical fact, and can be balanced and legitimised through his earlier works and those of others, his depiction of Theodora is so savage and full of vitriol that it is hard to accept it as anything but a vastly exaggerated version of Theodora. His portrait of her was designed for an audience of his peers, who would be as disgusted as he was by her behaviour. That it was not published until after her death speaks volumes – there was no way for her to refute his claims, even if she had cared to. The Secret History, in conclusion, has much to say about the reign of Justinian and Theodora and doubtless therein lays much truth and fact. That Justinian divided his critics is unquestioned; whether or not he was successful or not as an Emperor is highly debated. What cannot be denied is that Theodora was obviously an intelligent woman who rose to the rank of Empress despite her questionable past, and whom must have been accepted by much of Byzantine society. Procopius character

assassination in the Secret History does much to weaken his argument, but unfortunately, it is this image of her, as an immoral whore who used her wiles to seduce and ultimately rule through Justinian, that has 44 John the Lydian, in HIST Documents, Topic 5, Armidale, , Doc. In that at least, Procopius has succeeded in his aims. To some extent, the Secret History is a realistic account of events and, if nothing else, provides an alternative view of the events presented in the History of the Wars and Buildings. Viewed alongside those works, the Secret History does provide a unique balance into two fascinating individuals, but as always, must be read in the context of the circumstances of the man who wrote it. The Secret History, trans. Williamson, Penguin, London, Secondary Sources Allen, P. The World of Late Antiquity: London, Thames and Hudson, Justinian and Theodora, London, Praeger Publishers, Procopius and the Sixth Century, London, Duckworth, A History of Byzantium, Oxford, Blackwell,