

## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

BRODKA (D.) **Prokop von Caesarea** (Studienbücher Antike 19). Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2022. Pp. 199. €22. 9783487162706.  
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Dariusz Brodka was undoubtedly one of the most perceptive modern scholars of Procopius and late antique historiography more generally, whose untimely death in January 2024 is a significant blow to the field. This last monograph represents a valuable encapsulation of the state of scholarship on this author, about whom so much has been published just in the last ten years or so, a veritable ‘explosion’, as Brodka notes (8, 181). But it is more than a bald summary of recent scholarship: it also offers, as he explains, a helpful synthesis of his own numerous publications on the historian, gathering together material he has published over the years in various journals (8). It is thus not only the best introduction to Procopian studies for readers of German but also to the detailed and nuanced scholarship of one of the leading scholars on the subject.

Brodka’s book is very clearly organized. Following a brief examination of the little we know of the historian’s life and career (ch. 1), he offers substantial chapters on his three works, the *Wars*, the *Anecdota* and the *Buildings*. These three chapters comprise half the book and are similarly structured, covering (for instance) the works’ dating (still under discussion) and transmission, genre, contents and other more specific aspects. Chapter 5 considers Procopius as a historian and how his works should be viewed in relation to one another. Chapter 6 investigates Procopius’ historical thought, for instance his relation to Christianity (Brodka rightly is in no doubt that he was a Christian, despite the reservations of one modern scholar) and the role of *tuchē* in his works. The final three chapters, shorter in length, discuss his attitude towards Justinian’s reconquista (ch. 7), his style and language (ch. 8), and his impact on later works, both within the Byzantine Empire and over subsequent centuries (ch. 9). The book concludes with a useful bibliography, marred unfortunately by a fair number of typographical errors, and an index.

Brodka’s Procopius is a serious historian, interested in causation and the historical process (39–40, *cf.* ch. 6); he is not a mere reporter, as has sometimes been suggested. He is an interested party, not a dispassionate commentator, as the *Anecdota* makes very clear. Indeed, Brodka takes up the view that the work may be an attempt on the author’s part to distance himself from a regime about which the *Wars* could be viewed as rather too positive: around 550 the prospects of a change of regime, with Germanus taking over from Justinian, may have appeared quite promising (74–75). Whether or not this interpretation of the genesis of the *Anecdota* is accepted, Brodka is right to underline that Procopius’ vitriol cannot be taken at face value (81): he has his own, rather conservative, political perspective and deliberately tries in the work to paint as negative a portrait as he can of the emperor and his entourage. Not all the criticisms need be sincere (84, 109–11). Brodka rejects views put forward by Anthony Kaldellis (notably in his *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, Philosophy and History at the End of Antiquity* (Philadelphia 2004)) and others that detect veiled criticism of the emperor, for example, in the preface to the *Wars* (35) or in apparent praise in the *Buildings* (97).

The book contains useful assessments of Procopius’ treatment of individuals, not only of Justinian and Belisarius, but also of the Persian king Khusro, the general Narses and the Gothic king Totila. All struggle as best they can to cope with the vagaries of fate; some are more competent than others. As Brodka explains in Chapter 6, although God does

