The Historian John Zonaras: Some Observations on His Sources and Methods[1*]

Christopher T. Mallan

Introduction

At some point following the death of the emperor Alexius I Comnenus in 1118, the distinguished court official John Zonaras retired to the monastery of St Glyceria[2]. The circumstances of his retirement are obscure, but the possibility that his decision was driven by political expediency cannot be excluded. As was the case with other monastic exiles, the cenobitic life seems to have been congenial to the fulfilment of Zonaras' intellectual and scholastic pursuits; for it was in the confines of his community that Zonaras began his task of writing an immense historical work, embracing the period from Creation to the death of Alexius. Not a man given to false modesty, Zonaras was fully conscious of his abilities – his preface makes clear his ostensible concern for substance as well as style. Zonaras' persona is that of the reluctant historian. He claims that it was only at the exhortation of his friends that he undertook his great project[3]. Yet Zonaras' reluctance, real or feigned, in no way retarded the quality of his work. Indeed, the result of his labours is perhaps the most sophisticated Byzantine *Weltchronik* we have.

The reception of Zonaras' work in the Byzantine world was positive and influential. Younger contemporaries such as the historian Michael Glycas and the poet Constantine Manasses, both writing around the year 1150, used Zonaras as a source for their own historical endeavours[4]. Translations of the *Epitome* were made into the vernacular and the work survives in numerous manuscripts[5]. By the mid-sixteenth century, copies of Zonaras' *Epitome of Histories* had made their way to Northern Europe and into the hands of the scholar

1 * The text of Zonaras cited is that of L. Dindorf (1868-1875). All references to Zonaras follow the standard eighteen book division of the work, with volume and page number(s) from Dindorf's edition following in square brackets.

2 For the problem of dating Zonaras' career and reasons for his exile, see the sensible and detailed treatment of Treadgold 2013, 388-393; cf. Banchich & Lane 2009, 2-7; Magdalino 1993, 392; Ziegler 1972, col. 720-722.

3 Zonaras' comments here may have been influenced by Josephus' similar claims at the beginning of the *Jewish Antiquities* (*AJ*, 1.8-9). For the convention, see Marincola 1997, 52-57. For the role of Zonaras' "friends", see Grigoriadis 1998, 340-342.

4 Manasses: Treadgold 2013, 390; Glycas: Treadgold 2013, 406.

5 *E.g.* Büttner-Wobst 1892, 233-244 records and describes forty-two manuscripts containing either the entire *Epitome of Histories* or substantial excerpts from the work.

Hieronymus Wolf, who produced the first edition and translation of Zonaras, published in 1557[6]. By 1560 there were French and Italian translations[7]. For the sixteenth century humanists like Wolf, Zonaras' narrative (particularly that from Constantine to Alexius) was the cornerstone in the broader project of constructing a continuous narrative history of Byzantium from its beginnings to the fall of the city to the Ottomans[8].

Since the nineteenth century, Zonaras' primary, if not sole use for historians of Rome (as opposed to Byzantinists) is as a means for gleaning traces of now-lost historical sources such as the early books of Cassius Dio (covering the period from Aeneas to the fall of Corinth and Carthage in 146 B.C.) and Zonaras' surprisingly detailed authorities for the third and fourth centuries A.D. As a consequence, scant attention has been devoted to those significant portions of Zonaras' history which summarise works that are extant. Indeed, the great endeavours of nineteenth century *Quellenforschung* by W. A. Schmidt, T. Büttner-Wobst, U. P. Boissevain, and more controversially, E. Patzig, have not been entirely superseded, and nor are they likely to be[9]. Their legacy is patent in every subsequent study of Zonaras.

A systematic study of Zonaras' work is still to be written, and may prove rewarding. But such a task lies outside the bounds of this chapter. Here my aims are more modest. My intention is to outline some of the ways in which Zonaras engages with his sources and what this reveals about his approach to writing history. For the purposes of this essay, I shall concentrate on those parts of Zonaras' work which are derived from known sources, and thus where we can compare his work with his source texts, in particular Josephus and Cassius Dio. In line with recent works on epitomes[10], I shall consider what Zonaras' selection and presentation of material tells us about his own authorial agenda and patterns of thought. As we shall see, to regard Zonaras simply as an epitomator is misleading, not least because it blinds us to the quality of the mind which produced the *Epitome of Histories*.

Structure

Zonaras' work appears to have been conceived as two books. The first book was subdivided into two parts: the first part (the *Hebraica*) covered the period from the Creation to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and the second part the history of the Rome from Aeneas to the fall of Corinth and Carthage. The second book dealt with the history of Rome under the emperors[11]. The division of modern editions into the now-standard eighteen

6 For Hieronymus Wolf, "the founder of modern Byzantine scholarship" (Pfeiffer), and his work, see Reinsch 2015, 43-53, esp. 46-50; also, Pfeiffer 1976, 139-140.

7 For the translations, see Krumbacher 1897, 374.

8 Reinsch 2015, 50-51.

9 Schmidt 1874; Büttner-Wobst 1890; Boissevain 1891; Patzig 1895; 1896.

10 For classicists, the standard work is still Brunt 1980; however, note now the collection of studies in Horster & Reitz 2010, and Levene 2015, on the *Periochae* of Livy.

11 *cod. Paris. reg. 1715* includes a division between the two books with the following *titulus*: βίβλος δευτέρα Ἰωάννου τοῦ Ζωναρᾶ. ἐπιτομὴ ἱστοριῶν συλλεγεῖσα καὶ συγγραφεῖσα παρὰ Ἰωάννου μοναρχοῦ τοῦ ζωναρᾶ. ἡ μὲν προτέρα βίβλος περιέχει τὰ ἑβραϊκὰ καὶ τὰ τῆς ῥώμης καὶ τὰ τῶν ὑπατειῶν, αὕτη δὲ τὰς περὶ τῶν αὐτοκρατόρων ἱστορίας.

books is the work of the great seventeenth century philologist Charles Du Cange[12]. While the eighteen book division has an undeniable utility and is, on the whole, sympathetically done, it adds layers of structure which mask Zonaras' original design. Indeed, this original two-book form tells us something about Zonaras' conception of the past. The first book functions as an *archaeologia* – an account of the origins of God's chosen people, in his case both the Hebrews (Du Cange's books 1-6) and the Romans (7-9). The second half, the imperial history, is the history of the Roman *politeia* from Pompey and Caesar through to Alexius (10-18)[13]. Past and present are thus linked by these various strands of, what we may term, Zonaras' historiographical genealogies.

That there are strong Christianizing elements throughout the work is patent, not just in the *Hebraica* and Zonaras' decision to begin the work with the Creation. These elements play an important role in Zonaras' organisation of material, especially in the imperial narrative. From Augustus onwards imperial history is augmented with church history, derived in the main, from Eusebius for the period up to Constantine the Great. The incarnation and crucifixion of Christ are inserted into the narrative, and form key set-pieces[14], likewise the stories of persecution and (rarer) acts of toleration from the era of the primitive church. A typical narrative unit in the imperial history comprises an abbreviated account of the particular emperor's reign, followed by key episodes from contemporaneous Church history. The decision to do this was no doubt prompted by several factors, not least the influence of the Christian chronographic tradition which had always blended the sacred with the secular. Furthermore, we may take it as indicative of Zonaras' implicit understanding of imperial history as being a union of State and Church, in the form of the "Caesaropapism" (for want of a better term) of his own Byzantine *politeia*[15]. Yet the decision to do so was not inevitable. Zonaras' older coeval, Xiphilinus only included Christian material sporadically into his summary of Cassius Dio, and omitted any reference to the nativity and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Certain parts of the *Hebraica* give us some hints as to the suppleness of Zonaras' mind. Taking as his lead the dream of Nebuchadnezzar from the *Book of Daniel*, Zonaras begins a discussion of the four empires – the Babylonians/Assyrians, the Persians, Alexander and his successors, and the Romans[16]. This material for this digression is supplied from

12 See further, Pinder 1841, I, XVI-XV; Hunger 1978, 416. Some early editions, quite reasonably enough, divided the work into three books.

13 The lacunose state of Zonaras' copy of Dio's history was almost certainly the reason for Zonaras choosing this point to begin the second half of his work. However, we may note that Plutarch's *Pompey* and *Caesar* are Zonaras' main sources initially at this point of his narrative. That Zonaras chose to begin this phase of his narrative with the career of Pompeius Magnus, rather than Caesar, might have been influenced by Xiphilinus' decision to do the same in his *Epitome*.

14 Baptism, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ: Zon. 11.3 [3.11-12 D]; cf. Eus., *HE*, 1.10.1; 2.2.1-6. Nativity of Christ: Zon. 10.39 [2.456-7 D].

15 For discussion of this term, see Dagron 2003, 282-312.

16 Fishman-Duker 1977, 129-130, 153. The interpretation of the four kingdoms from the *Book of Daniel* was a constant in Western European as well as Byzantine chronography, right up to the early eighteenth century. But note Magdalino (1993, 404) and Magdalino & Macrides (1992, 128, *passim*) for the importance of this part of the narrative for Zonaras' own conception of the inevitable decay of the Roman *politeia*.

an impressive range of sources, including Herodotus, Xenophon (*Cyropaedia*), Plutarch (*Artaxerxes*, *Alexander*), Theodoret (*Commentary on the Book of Daniel*), and others[17]. The results of Zonaras' labours are by any estimation a significant work of historiographical synthesis. More generally, the breadth of Zonaras' interests meant that he was willing, and perhaps especially motivated, to introduce material from a selection of classical and post-classical authors.

In sum, we may say that the overall structure of the work was doubtless influenced, at least in part, by the established tradition of the *Weltchronik*, which was in itself a genre of Christian writing[18]. But the looseness of form which is so much characteristic of the likes of Syncellus, George the Monk, and perhaps especially, George Cedrenus, is (mercifully, for the modern reader) reined in by Zonaras. Moreover, there is a sense of clarity and scholarly attention to detail in Zonaras which is often absent from the work of his historiographical precursors.

Within the *Epitome* there are distinct structural elements which appear as recurring motifs. Cities, and especially their rise and fall, seem to have provided Zonaras with appropriate narrative signposts. Understandably, Jerusalem features heavily in the early books. Even Zonaras' largely digressive treatment of Alexander the Great is justified in part by virtue of Alexander's supposed visit to Jerusalem following the defeat of Darius at Issus (Zon. 4.7-8 [1.283-284 D]; cf. *Praef*., 3 [1.7 D]). The fall of Jerusalem to Titus, and the re-naming of the city by Hadrian, rounds off the *Hebraica*-phase of the narrative (Zon. 6.19 [2.84 D]). Similarly, the second phase of his history began with foundation of Rome and continues down to the destruction of Corinth and Carthage in 146 B.C. (where Zonaras' copy of Dio broke off). The reign of Constantine, which heralded for Zonaras another turning point of history, also saw the foundation of New Rome on the site of Byzantium (Zon., *Praef*., 4 [1.10 D]; cf. Zon. 13.3 [3.180-182 D]). But most important of all are kings and emperors. The reigns of individual emperors form the basic structuring unit in the second book, and the items of Christian history are arranged and subordinated to this basic structuring principle.

How a historian deals with time reveals much about his conception of the past. Zonaras was not able (or willing) to apply a standard system of dating to his work, as did Syncellus. In fact, across his work he applies a series of chronological formulae[19]. Nevertheless, there are strong indications of the care with which Zonaras approached the question of dating[20]. Zonaras seems to have compiled the elaborate chronological tables which are annexed to the work. Moreover, there is internal evidence that Zonaras cross-checked his authorities when it came to supplying the durations of reigns. For example, Zonaras in the *Hebraica*-narrative emends the length of Tiberius' reign as recorded by Josephus with the figure presented by Cassius Dio[21]. Elsewhere, Zonaras notes the discrepancies between the dating of Solomon's

17 Büttner-Wobst 1890; Schmidt 1875, VI-LX. For a summary of Zonaras' main sources see Krumbacher 1897, 372-373.

18 Note Jeffreys 2010; Külzer 2000; Fishman-Duker 1977.

19 Fishman-Duker 1977, 140, for the methods of "synchronization" or "separation" Byzantine chroniclers adopted for the presentation of time in their works.

20 Something he has in common with the Byzantine chronographical tradition: Fishman-Duker 1977, 128-129.

21 Zon. 4.8 [2.25 D]; cf. Jos, *AJ*, 18.224 and C.D. 58.28.5. Zonaras (11.3 [3.11 D]) will repeat this dating at the corresponding section of his imperial narrative.

reign, as noted in Josephus and in the Biblical *Book of Kings*[22]. The dating by regnal years of individual kings is applied throughout the *Hebraica* and the imperial history. But in the first half of the work, Zonaras is remarkable in so far as he preserves something of Cassius Dio's annalistic structure for broad swathes of Dio's early and middle Republican narratives, even retaining (in many cases) the names of the *consules ordinarii*[23]. Upon the commencement of the imperial narrative, from the late Republic onwards, the annalistic mode is dropped almost entirely, and Zonaras reverts to regnal dating for the Roman emperors[24]. The choice was perhaps as ideological as it was practical. The retention of Dio's annalistic structure provides that section of the narrative with a distinctly Republican feel – which is entirely appropriate to Zonaras' stated aims of writing the history of Rome under the consuls and under their "democratic" constitution (*scil.* δημοκρατία). At any rate, it was a deliberate choice. When Zonaras turns to writing imperial history, the annalistic structure, which Dio maintained, is obliterated almost entirely by Zonaras.

Sources and substance

In his preface, Zonaras makes clear his intention to write an abridged history (ἱστορία σύντομος), with a didactic aim of "teach[ing] in a succinct manner those who come across it the most important achievements, or else what happened to those people about whom the composition discusses" (Zon., *Praef.*, 1 [1.4 D]: συνοπτικῶς διδάσκουσαν τοὺς ἐπιόντας [...] τὰ καιριώτερα τῶν πεπραγμένων ἢ καὶ ἄλλως συμβεβηκότων τοῖς περὶ ὧν ἡ συγγραφὴ διαλέγεται)[25]. Periodically Zonaras reminds the reader of the abridged nature of his work. At one point, Zonaras defends the brevity of his own account of Cyrus the Great, taken from Xenophon, reminding the reader that he is writing a selection of events, preserving only "the more credible details" (τὰ πιθανώτερα), and that his readers should seek out the first book of Herodotus for further details about Cyrus (Zon. 3.26 [1.261 D]; cf. Hdt. 1.214)[26]. In the prologue, Zonaras engages in an indirect critique of certain styles of historical writing, criticising those authors who (amongst certain other things) inserted detailed battle descriptions, geographical *ekphraseis*, and speeches into their histories (Zon., *Praef.*, 1 [1.2 D])[27].

22 Zonar. 2.10 [1.126 D]; cf. Jos., *AJ*, 8.211; *1 Kings*, 11.4.

23 Occasionally Zonaras will elide several years in the annalistic sequence, usually signaled by a formulaic statement to the effect that the intervening consuls "did nothing worthy of record" (οὐδὲν δὲ ἱστορίας ἔπραξαν ἄξιον). For this feature of Zonaras' work, note the recent treatment by Rich 2016; cf. Moscovich 1983, 138. Of historians of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, only Psellus in the *Concise History*, would attempt to preserve any sort of annalistic (*i.e.* consular) dating for the Republic, and even this is abandoned after a few entries.

24 Even though we know that Dio maintained an annalistic structure right through his Julio-Claudian narrative, and presumably down to the accession of Alexander Severus.

25 For the preface, note the discussion of Grigoriadis 1998, esp. 340-343; Fromentin 2013; cf. Buckler 1929, 225-229.

26 *Pace* Moscovich 1983, 138 fn. 8: "Zonaras nowhere in his epitome inserts editorial opinions of his own".

27 Such criticisms were conventional, and had been so since Antiquity. Note Diodorus' criticism of speeches in works of history: Diod. 20.1.1-2.2.

On the whole, Zonaras eschews many of these standard historiographical motifs, although not totally[28]. Zonaras will periodically include a highly abbreviated form of a speech, or note when a speech was delivered. But on the whole, Zonaras much preferred pithy one-liners, *apophthegmata*, over lengthy set-piece speeches, and we find numerous examples of the former scattered throughout his work. Many of these are the sayings of kings or are about the practice of kingship[29]. Zonaras, like Xiphilinus before him[30], was keen to retain quotations from the established canon of Athenian playwrights, as well as from the ubiquitous Homer. At times we can see our historian make considerable concessions in his presentation of material in order to retain a poetic tag from his source text (Zon. 4.10 [1.292 D]; cf. Plut., *Alex*., 28). Whatever his literary pretentions, it is instructive to note that when operating without a source text, as in his narrative of Alexius, Zonaras (unlike his contemporary, Anna Comnena) refrains from adding to his narrative quotes from the Greek poets[31].

Zonaras outlines his approach to his sources in the preface. In a statement which superficially recalls that of Arrian at the outset of his *Anabasis* (Zon., *Praef*., 2 [1.5 D]; cf. Arr., *Anab*., 1.1), Zonaras says something about his method of following authorities and dealing with contradictions between his sources: he would not comment on the discrepancy unless it 'concerned matters of importance' (περὶ τὰ καίρια). These sensible aims are not always adhered to. For example, while discussing Persian history (summarising Herodorus 3.30), Zonaras notes a discrepancy between Herodotus and Xenophon when naming the brother of Cambyses (Zon. 4.1 [1.263 D]). After noting the difference, he proceeds with condensing Herodotus' narrative. Zonaras' aside seems to fulfil little historical function except to demonstrate his erudition.

For the first part of Zonaras' history, his main sources are Josephus and Cassius Dio, although with substantial use of Herodotus, Plutarch, Xenophon (*Cyropaedia*), the Bible, and biblical commentators[32]. Occasionally subsidiary sources appear, sometimes acknowledged other times not. The second half of the history (up to the reign of Severus Alexander) makes use of Dionian tradition for the bulk of the secular-political narrative, but also, Plutarch (*Pompey*, *Caesar*, *Brutus*), Philostratus (*Lives of the Sophists* and possibly the *Life of Apollonius*) and sundry minor sources. Eusebius (*History of the Church*) is Zonaras' main witness to Church history for this period.

Zonaras' choice of sources, especially his main narrative sources may provide us with a glimpse of the authors which were popular among the twelfth century literati. The revival of

28 For patterns of omission and compression, see (in brief) Fishman-Duker 1977, 152; Moscovich 1983; Simons 2009, 32.

29 *E.g.* Zon. 4.9 [1.287-8 D] (Alexander the Great and Diogenes); 11.1 [3.3 D] (Tiberius' rebuke to a rapacious prefect); 11.23 [3.72 D] (Hadrian and the elderly petitioner).

30 Mallan 2013, 622.

31 For Anna Comnena's familiarity with the classical poetic corpus, see Buckler 1929, 197-202.

32 It has been argued that Zonaras' familiarity with Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* was via the eleventh (?) century epitome of that work: Niese 1887, XXIII-XXVII; Büttner-Wobst 1890, 126-127, *passim*; Krumbacher 1897, 372; Schreckenberg 1972, 141-142. For the text of the epitome of Josephus, see the edition of Niese 1896. Manfredini 1993 has suggested that Zonaras' engagement with Plutarch was via a now-lost *Epitome uitarum* on account of the close concordances between Zonaras' citations of Plutarch and the excerpts from Plutarch's *Lives* found in *cod. Paris. supp. gr. 134*. The putative relationship between Zonaras, the *Epitome* of Josephus, and the Plutarchan *excerpta* is a topic for further exploration.

interest in the Roman Republic, which stretches back to the tenth century and the *Excerpta Constantiniana*, is a topic that has received much attention of late and so Zonaras' use of an author like Cassius Dio is unremarkable[33]. Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and Herodotus' *Histories* appear to have been widely read in the twelfth century, to the extent that an author like John Cinnamus could make an allusion to those authors' works and expect his readers to know to whom he was referring (Cinnamus 3 [Bonn]). Nevertheless, Zonaras is alone in taking the trouble to abridge considerable portions of these writer's works and to incorporate them into his own history.

Zonaras' attitude towards citation of his authorities is at best inconsistent. As we have already seen Zonaras will, on occasion, draw his readers' attention to his main sources. In the Regal-Republican narrative, neither of Zonaras' main sources – Dio and Plutarch – are explicitly invoked as sources for his narrative. For the imperial narrative, where again Zonaras follows the Dionian tradition down to the elimination of Elagabalus, Zonaras' method changes, but only slightly. There are occasional nods towards his sources of information, and Dio is named, even though it is likely that, at least from Nerva down to Elagabalus, Zonaras relied on Xiphilinus' *Epitome* rather than Dio directly[34]. Xiphilinus, by contrast, is never acknowledged as a source: Zonaras will continue to identify his source as Dio[35]. At other times, Zonaras will acknowledge the fact that he quoted an author from an intermediary source. At one point Zonaras professes to quote from a work of Josephus (*Against the Hellenes*) via St John Damascene's *Parallela Sacra*[36]. At other time we may suspect an intermediary source. Zonaras' reference to a letter by Tertullian is unlikely to have been first hand (Zon. 11.3 [3.12 D]; cf. Cedr. 1.336 [Bonn]).

Minor or supplementary sources are, however, more frequently invoked by name. Zonaras draws his reader's attention to the provenance of an anecdote concerning the father of Herodes Atticus, which he uses to augment his meagre sources on the reign of Nerva (Zon. 11.20 [3.63 D] = Philostr. *VS* 2.1 [547-548]). Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* is also adduced for an anecdote concerning the death of Domitian (Zon. 11.19 [3.61 D] = Philostr. *VA* 8.26)[37]. Twice there are tantalizing references to now lost books of Appian's *Roman History* (Zon. 11.16 [3.50 D] = App. F 17; Zon. 11.21 [3.65 D] = App. F 18). In one of these instances, Zonaras' contradicts a statement made by both Appian and Josephus. In the other it is to draw the reader's attention to a totally redundant point of orthography. These references to Appian are curious, and they may represent nothing more than attempt by Zonaras to display his breadth of reading; at any rate, they do not reveal anything beyond a limited recall of specific

33 For twelfth-century tastes in Roman history, see Neville 2012, 35-38, 41-45, and more generally, Kaldellis 2012. For Zonaras' preservation of much of Dio's discussion on Republican magistracies, see Simons 2009, 33-119. For other aspects of Zonaras' constitutional antiquarianism, see Lange 2016.

34 For Zonaras' use of Xiphilinus from the reign of Nerva, see Boissevain 1891.

35 *E.g.* Zon. 11.24 [3.75 D] = C.D. 69.15.1 (Xiph.); Zon. 12.9 [3.103] = C.D. 76[75].13.3-5 (Xiph.).

36 Zon. 6.4 [2.12-13 D]. *PG* 96 col. 484. The passage is a problematic one, as it is attributed to Melito of Antioch in the surviving version of the *Parallela*. But like Zonaras, Photius (*Bib. cod.*, 48) attributes what is possibly the same work to Josephus, although he notes that the authorship is disputed. It is likely that the work is in fact that of St Hippolytus.

37 *Pace* Treadgold 2013, 394; cf. Schmidt 1875, XLVI, I do not see that this citation is derived from Cassius Dio. Dio rarely cites his sources, and that he would cite his contemporary Philostratus explicitly seems most improbable. The same applies for the references to Appian.

details from these works[38]. This may be too harsh, and perhaps we should read these latter references as helpful remarks intended to direct an interested reader to some related reading material, or even just points of detail, remembered from his wide-reading which came to mind as he was writing.

Methods of composition

It is clear that Zonaras had read most if not all of his main sources prior to embarking on writing. We can divide Zonaras' sources into two categories. The first being his "primary source texts", that is those main narrative sources which form the bulk of Zonaras' narrative, and the second being his "secondary source texts", those sources which he uses to augment or emend the primary narrative texts. In the case of the latter group, we may assume that Zonaras had taken extensive notes from them, or was aided by an excellent memory of what he had read.

The frequent glosses Zonaras adds to his material suggest that he annotated the primary source texts from which he worked. Indeed, the way Zonaras interacts with his source texts seems to have been different from that employed by his immediate historiographical precursors John Xiphilinus and George Cedrenus. Given that Xiphilinus and Cedrenus follow their source texts so closely as to produce near-verbatim copies, it seems clear that they operated with their source-texts open in front of them. For these historians, it is likely that composition was a two-stage process. The first phase was to read their source(s), perhaps noting passages to copy, then the second (and final) phase was to copy their source material, sporadically making additions or authorial asides.

This cannot be how Zonaras operated. The complexity of Zonaras' interaction with his sources and the fact that his language is closer to a paraphrase than a verbatim copy indicates that Zonaras' method was considerably more sophisticated. It is Zonaras' habit to summarise rather than to quote verbatim from his source texts, although occasionally he makes exceptions to this general practice. For example, Zonaras quotes verbatim the controversial *testimonium Flauianum* from Josephus[39]. As though to draw attention to this part of the text, Zonaras goes further and signals the provenance of the quotation, citing the correct book number from the *Jewish Antiquities*[40]. On one level this is unnecessary as Zonaras had been following Josephus for most of his narrative up to that point. But Zonaras' clear signalling of the fact he is quoting from Josephus may have a rhetorical function, as an exercise in authority. If I am right in suggesting that Zonaras took extensive notes before he commenced writing, we may infer that these notes were a combination of direct excerpts and perhaps looser summaries of his source texts.

38 Thus we should not overestimate the degree to which Zonaras "used" Appian as a source: *pace* Millar 1964, 3.

39 The *testimonium* is a brief summary of the life of Jesus found in the MSS of the *Jewish Antiquities*, but has long been thought to be a Christian interpolation. The passage is quoted in full in the *Epitome* of the *Jewish Antiquities* as well: *Epit. AJ*, 18.63-64. Note also Fishman-Duker 1977, 136-137; Külzer 2000, 150.

40 Zon. 6.4 [2.12 D]: κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν καιρὸν καὶ ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν καὶ θεὸς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐν Ἰουδαίᾳ ἐφάνη, περὶ οὗ ταῦτα κατὰ λέξιν φησὶν ὁ Ἰώσηπος ἐν τῷ ὀκτωκαιδεκάτῳ λόγῳ τῆς Ἀρχαιολογίας. Cf. Jos., *AJ*, 18.63-64.

Evidence of forward planning can be seen throughout the work, which may indicate a drafting phase. Following his summary of Josephus' account of the sack of Jerusalem by Titus (excerpted from *BJ*, 7.8-11), Zonaras adds a coda, with material seemingly derived from Cassius Dio (possibly via Xiphilinus) describing Hadrian's destruction and renaming of Jerusalem (Zon. 6.29 [2.84 D]). This would not be possible had not Zonaras first read both Josephus and Cassius Dio and taken appropriate notes before assembling his narrative. This coda to the *Hebraica* shows also how Zonaras was keen to close this phase of his narrative in a way not entirely circumscribed by his sources; that is to say he does not stop just because his source stops[41].

Further evidence of Zonaras' technique can be observed in the manner with which he employs cross-references. Septimius Severus' siege of Byzantium during his war against Pescennius Niger is referred to twice in the text. The first instance is in the context of the narrative of Severus' reign (Zon. 12.8 [3.100-1 D]), the second, during Zonaras' account of Constantine's re-founding of Constantinople (Zon. 13.3 [3.181-182 D]). Although Zonaras draws upon the same source (Dio/Xiphilinus) in both instances, he is careful to avoid repetition and takes care to remind the reader that he had already treated the siege earlier in his narrative. Moreover, this sort of sophisticated interaction with his sources seems to be a further example of Zonaras "earmarking" passages of his sources during the reading and drafting phases, and noting when and how they were to be employed before setting out to write the final draft of his work. Of course, it would be wrong to overplay these examples; Zonaras can commit interpretative blunders of varying degrees of seriousness. Nevertheless, there is much to support the notion that Zonaras performed his duties with an attentiveness unusual among Byzantine chroniclers.

While Zonaras tended to follow a single primary source at a time, he was more than willing to insert material from a subsidiary authority. An example of this can be found in his treatment of the emperor Elagabalus. One of the more piquant episodes related in the Dionian tradition is the story of Elagabalus' desire for a sex-change operation. The story is omitted by Xiphilinus, but appears in Cedrenus who ascribes it to Dio[42]. There are two possible ways to account for this story in these two twelfth century authors. It is possible that Zonaras excerpted this story from Cedrenus (or a common source, such as pseudo-Symeon). But I think it would seem rash to preclude the possibility that Zonaras took the story from Dio directly. Indeed, although Xiphilinus seems to have been the source for the post-Nervan narrative which Zonaras had open in front of him, we cannot assume that Zonaras did not read Dio's imperial narrative (or at least parts thereof) more extensively during the reading-phase of composition[43]. Memorable anecdotes, such as the story of Elagabalus' yearning for a vagina, are just the sort of brief anecdote which sticks in the mind long after reading it[44].

Zonaras' authorial asides and additions add to the texture of his main narrative. Some are silent additions, little more than trivial glosses, but which nevertheless reveal Zonaras'

41 *i.e.* Zonaras did not close his account of the destruction of Jerusalem with Josephus' account.

42 Cedr. 1.449-450: ὡς δε φησι Δίων, ὅτι Ἀβῖτος τὸν ἰατρὸν ἠντιβόλει διφυῆ αὐτὸν δι' ἐντομῆς ἐμπροσθίας τῇ τέχνῃ ποιῆσαι.

43 Thus, Treadgold 2013, 394.

44 The same might apply if Zonaras read the story in Cedrenus.

impressive control of his material[45]. Other insertions are more substantial and alter the flow of the narrative. In his account of the reign of Tarquinius Superbus, Zonaras notes the similarity between the story of Sextus Tarquinius learning the secret of the "tall-poppies" and that told about Cypselus by Herodotus, which he then proceeds to narrate (Zon. 7.10 [3.114 D]; cf. Hdt. 5.92.6).

However, Zonaras does on occasion engage with more detailed critiques of his sources. Zonaras' treatment of the famous "Rain Miracle" during the reign of Marcus Aurelius is a case in point. For this material, Zonaras is ostensibly dependent on Xiphilinus' *Epitome*, although it is Dio not Xiphilinus who is named as his source. By the twelfth century, the rain miracle had become a conventional topic in the Byzantine historical tradition[46]. Like Xiphilinus, Zonaras' launches into a mini-polemic against Dio for his description of the rain miracle during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, discounting Dio's version (and that of other anonymous "Hellenes", which is to say non-Christians) in favour of the testimony of Eusebius (Zon. 12.2 [3.83-84 D]).[47] As we would expect, Zonaras' account is slightly shorter than that of Xiphilinus, and there are various omissions: not least the name of the Egyptian magus (Anuphis), who initiated the miracle in the pagan version, is omitted, while redundancies such as Xiphilinus' gloss on the word τάγμα is wisely excised[48]. But there are also additions. A soldier, who is identified by Xiphilinus as the "prefect" (ἔπαρχος), Zonaras expands to read "prefect of the bodyguard" (ἔπαρχος τοῦ δορυφορικοῦ) (C.D. 72[71].9.3 (Xiph); cf. Zon. 12.2 [3.83 D]). Yet more intriguingly, whereas Xiphilinus too takes his material from Eusebius, he does not explicitly name him, unlike Zonaras, who does[49]. If nothing else, the episode reveals Zonaras' attempt to show his working, and demonstrates that he rarely if ever mindlessly copied his source.

A similar example of Zonaras' interaction with his sources may be seen in his treatment of the anecdote concerning Apollonius of Tyana and the death of Domitian. Zonaras would have found an almost identical version of the story in Dio, but instead Zonaras chose to cite Philostratus for his anecdote. At best, Zonaras' version is an amalgam of the two, but it is closer in tone and wording to Dio's version (as preserved by Xiphilinus) than it is to Philostratus'. Zonaras styles Apollonius a Pythagorean, as well as a "total charlatan" (γόης δὲ μάλιστα), the latter something gleaned from another source, perhaps Dio[50], but at any

45 *E.g.* Zon. 11.1 [3.2 D], where he identifies Drusus as Tiberius' child 'from Agrippina his former wife'. It is possible that Zonaras has conflated Tiberius' first wife Vipsania Agrippina with Agrippina the daughter of Julia and Agrippa, but this does not seem likely. In the surviving text of the *Roman History*, Cassius Dio only refers to Tiberius' first wife as "the daughter of Agrippa" (54.31.2) – something Zonaras does as well at the corresponding stage of his narrative: Zon. 10.34 [2.444 D]. Other times, Zonaras is fallible: Zonaras describes M. Vipsanius Agrippa's fiancée in 28 B.C. as Augustus' sister, whereas it was actually his niece, Claudia Marcella (Zon. 10.32 [2.436 D]; cf. C.D. 53.1.2). Yet here Zonaras is probably following a corrupted text, as the same error is found in Xiphilinus and the fifteenth century *cod. Vat. gr. 144*, but not in the tenth century *cod. Marc. gr. 395*. Zonaras does however supply the correct name of Augustus' sister, Octavia.

46 As has been admirably summarised by Kovács 2009, 95-105.

47 For Xiphilinus on the "Rain Miracle" see Mallan 2013, 640-642; Kovács 2009, 100-102.

48 Anuphis: C.D. 72[71].8.3-4 (Xiph.). Xiphilinus' gloss on τάγμα: C.D. 72[71].9.3 (Xiph.) with Mallan 2013, 641.

49 Boissevain 1891, 450.

50 Cf. C.D. 78[77].18.4 (Xiph.), who describes Apollonius as a "complete charlatan and magician" (γόης καὶ μάγος ἀκριβής).

rate certainly not Philostratus. But Apollonius' brief speech, as presented by Zonaras, should also make us question the extent to which Zonaras' material is dependent on Philostratus at all. Zonaras writes, "Well done, Stephanus! Strike the sinner: you hit him, you maimed him, you killed him!" (εὖγε, Στέφανε, παῖε τὸν ἁλιτήρον· ἔπληξας, ἔτρωσας, ἀπέκτεινας). Dio/Xiphilinus' version is almost identical: "Nobly done, Stephanus, well done Stephanus! Strike the bloodthirsty one: you hit him, you maimed him, you killed him!" (καλῶς Στέφανε, εὖγε Στέφανε, παῖε τὸν μιαιφόνον· ἔπληξας, ἔτρωσας, ἀπέκτεινας), whereas Philostratus' version is considerably more simple: "Strike the tyrant, strike!" (παῖε τὸν τύραννον, παῖε). The only significant change to Dio's vocabulary is the substitution of "bloodthirsty one" (μιαιφόνος) for "sinner" (ἁλιτήρος). At any rate, this example may reveal more about the importance of memory in Zonaras' composition. Although Zonaras was working with Dio's version, he might have remembered that Philostratus in his *Life of Apollonius* included a version that was strikingly similar to Dio's. It may be that Zonaras' constant efforts to display his wide reading caused him to offer a "name-check" for the source of his story, just as he had done with the Eusebian version of the rain miracle.

So far we have considered some of the pertinent features or characteristics of Zonaras' narrative and his method of composition. What remains to be seen is the degree to which the *Epitome* reveals a consistency of thought or theme. This final section will address the theme of kingship in Zonaras' work.

Kingship and *Kaiserkritik*

From the beginning Rome was ruled by kings. This Zonaras knew well. As we might expect from a man who had held office in the imperial administration and whose reading was populated with kings and emperors, Zonaras had firm ideas about the rule and duties of a king. Therefore, one area where we may see how Zonaras' selection and adaptation of his source texts reflected something of his own views is in his presentation of kings and the ideal of kingship.

History provided Zonaras with numerous *exempla* of kingship. Zonaras' selection of material from his sources provides us with a generally consistent picture of what he expected in a good ruler. Much is conventional. In one of the rare speeches to appear in the *Epitome*, Zonaras provides a highly abridged version of Hadrian's speech adopting Antoninus Pius, taken from Xiphilinus. In Zonaras' version, we get only the following description of the regal qualities which Hadrian ascribes to Antoninus (Zon. 11.24 [3.76 D]):

> τὸν Λούκιον τὸ δαιμόνιον ἀφείλετο ἡμῶν, εὗρον δὲ αὐτοκράτορα ὑμῖν εὐγενῆ, πρᾷον, εὔεικτον, φρόνιμον, μήθ' ὑπὸ νεότητος προπετὲς μήθ' ὑπὸ γήρως ἀμελές τι ποιήσοντα, τὸν Ἀντωνῖνον Αὐρήλιον.

The virtues are instructive. All of them are "soft-qualities" – nobility of birth, mildness, tractability, and intelligence. But we may note that these are generally consonant with the qualities that Zonaras outlines in his appraisal of Alexius I, where he singles out the qualities of "mildness" (ἐπιείκεια), "slowness to anger" (τὸ πρὸς θυμὸν οὐκ εὐκίνητον), and a "self-controlled manner of life" (τὸ σῶφρον τὸ πρὸς τὴν δίαιταν).

Although conventional and anodyne, these sorts of personal virtues appear to be emphasised throughout the work. On the whole, Zonaras is seemingly less impressed with the military hard-men, or at least one gets the impression that personal bravery was less important to his conception of ideal kingship than it was to other twelfth century historians and encomiasts[51]. It is true that Zonaras styles the exemplary Cyrus as "the most brave" (ἀνδρειότατος), but he is also the "most chaste" (σωφρονέστατος), and the "most just" (δικαιότατος) (Zon. 3.15 [1.224 D]; cf. Xen., *Cyr*., 1.2). Even a figure like Alexander the Great is treated more with respect to his peaceful achievements than his military conquests. Whereas emphasis on such qualities is hardly unique to Zonaras, this should not blind us to the fact that Zonaras' selection of material shows a bias towards retaining passages which fed into this general conception of good kingship, based on civil qualities rather than martial ones[52].

For a man who was at one time close to the font of imperial power, how an emperor behaved mattered. Zonaras' assessment of Alexius Comnenus provides a glimpse into the mind of the historian on this theme. As noted in the seminal study by P. Magdalino, Zonaras' views on kingship were conservative and somewhat out of step with many of his contemporaries[53]. For Zonaras, personal virtues mattered, but what was even more important was the way in which the emperor behaved in relation to the Roman *politeia*. Zonaras' most direct criticism of Alexius' reign lies in the fact that the emperor failed to act in accordance with the "traditional" expectations of an emperor[54]. For all his personal qualities, Alexius was rapacious and did not refrain from using the money of others for his own ends. History had shown the correct way to act, and Zonaras seems to have gone out of his way to provide examples[55].

The achievements of the ephemeral Nerva were hardly worth the devotion of too much attention for the author of a concise history. As Xiphilinus recognised, the central episode of importance regarding Nerva's reign was the adoption of Trajan. Zonaras evidently disagreed, and he augmented his narrative with material from Philostratus's *Lives of the Sophists*. The anecdote concerns an exchange between the emperor and the father of the sophist Herodes, who had discovered a treasure-trove in his house. Zonaras writes,

> καὶ φοβηθεὶς ἔγραψε τῷ Νερούᾳ ὡς 'θησαυρὸς ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκίας εὑρέθη μοι· τί οὖν κελεύεις περὶ αὐτοῦ;' καὶ ὅς ἀντέγραψεν 'χρῶ τῷ εὑρήματι'. ὁ δ' ἔτι εὐλαβηθεὶς ἔγραψεν αὖθις 'ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ ἐμὲ τυγχάνει τὸ εὑρεθέν.' καὶ ὁ αὐτοκράτωρ πρὸς τοῦτο 'καὶ καταχρῶ' ἀντιεπέστειλε.

In both Zonaras' and Philostratus' versions, the story functions to highlight the emperor's exemplary conduct with respect to the property of others. Yet the subtle differences between the two accounts are tantalising. Zonaras emphasises the anxiety (*scil*. φοβηθείς) Atticus felt

51 For discussion of the emphasis on martial virtues in twelfth century historiography, see Kazhdan 1984, 46-52. Note also Neville 2012, 89-103, for the depiction of military virtues in Nicephorus Bryennius' *Materials for History*.

52 On the importance of "mildness" (ἐπιείκεια): *e.g*. Zon. 4.13 [1.298 D]; Zon. 10.36 [2.449-450 D].

53 Magdalino 1983; cf. Kaldellis 2015, 47-48.

54 Magdalino 1983, 329-330.

55 *E.g*. the story Zonaras inserts into his narrative of Antoninus Pius' reign (although probably concerning Marcus Aurelius) about the emperor's sale of his property to fund his wars: Zon. 12.1 [3.79 D]. The story is not in Xiphilinus.

when he discovered the money, the fear that the acquisition of sudden wealth might arouse in a tyrant, a point which Philostratus leaves less explicit (Cf. Philostr., *VS*, 2.1 [547-548]). Happily for Atticus, he has nothing to fear from Nerva, who maintains that Atticus is the rightful owner of the treasure.

Zonaras could make more significant alterations to his source texts. Consider Zonaras' treatment of Josephus' comment on the elevation of Saul to the kingship over the Hebrews. Josephus writes (*AJ*, 6.83-85):

> καὶ πάλιν ὁρῶντος τοῦ πλήθους ὁ προφήτης χρίει τὸν Σαοῦλον τῷ ἁγίῳ ἐλαίῳ καὶ δεύτερον ἀναγορεύει βασιλέα. καὶ οὕτως ἡ τῶν Ἑβραίων πολιτεία εἰς βασιλείαν μετέπεσεν. (84) ἐπὶ γὰρ Μωυσέος καὶ τοῦ μαθητοῦ αὐτοῦ [Ἰησοῦ], ὃς ἦν στρατηγὸς, ἀριστοκρατούμενοι διετέλουν· μετὰ δὲ τὴν ἐκείνου τελευτὴν ἔτεσι τοῖς πᾶσι δέκα καὶ πρὸς τούτοις ὀκτὼ τὸ πλῆθος αὐτῶν ἀναρχία κατέσχε. (85) μετὰ ταῦτα δ' εἰς τὴν προτέραν ἐπανῆλθον πολιτείαν τῷ κατὰ πόλεμον ἀρίστῳ δόξαντι γεγενῆσθαι καὶ κατ' ἀνδρείαν περὶ τῶν ὅλων δικάζειν ἐπιτρέποντες· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τὸν χρόνον τοῦτον τῆς πολιτείας κριτῶν ἐκάλεσαν.

Despite minor variations in diction, Zonaras' version differs in certain key respects from Josephus, and the version in the Byzantine epitome of the *Jewish Antiquities*[56]. Zonaras writes (1.27 [1.85 D]):

> συναγαγὼν δὲ αὖθις ὁ Σαμουὴλ τὸν λαὸν δὶς ἀναγορεύει τὸν Σαοὺλ βασιλέα, χρίσας τῷ ἐλαίῳ καὶ πάλιν αὐτόν. μετέπεσεν οὖν ἡ τῶν Ἑβραίων πολιτεία εἰς βασιλείαν ἐξ ἀριστοκρατίας· ἐπὶ γὰρ Μωυσέως καὶ Ἰησοῦ ἀριστοκρατούμενοι ἦσαν, εἶτα ἐπ' ἔτη δέκα καὶ ὀκτὼ ἄναρχοι διετέλεσαν, εἰσέπειτα δ' ἤρχθησαν ὑπὸ τῶν καλουμένων κριτῶν, τῷ ἀρίστῳ περὶ τῶν ὅλων δικάζειν καὶ οἰκονομεῖν ἐπιτρέποντες.

The first difference we may note is Zonaras' greater emphasis on the change of the Hebrew *politeia* from an aristocracy to a monarchy (μετέπεσεν οὖν ἡ τῶν Ἑβραίων πολιτεία εἰς βασιλείαν ἐξ ἀριστοκρατίας). Zonaras' comment amplifies Josephus' statement concerning constitutional change, and reveals a deeper thematic concern of the work, that of the transition between forms of government, which Zonaras flags as one of his aims in his preface[57]. But the second change is even more significant. Zonaras removes Josephus' reference to the selection of kings due to their martial prowess in war, and adds "stewardship" (*scil.* οἰκονομεῖν) to his list of imperial attributes. This latter quality strikes a resonant chord, and projects us forward to Zonaras' critique of Alexius who is criticized for having acted not as a "steward" (οἰκονόμος) but rather as a "master" (δεσπότης) towards his people (Zon. 18.29 [4.259 D].

As Zonaras' sketch of Alexius makes clear, personal virtue, or even personal piety, was not enough to guarantee a good emperor. Zonaras expected an emperor to behave in a manner which respected the commonwealth, which for all intents and purposes meant

56 Cf. *Epit. AJ*, 6.83-85: καὶ πάλιν χρίει τὸν Σαοῦλον τῷ ἁγίῳ ἐλαίῳ ὁρῶντος τοῦ πλήθους καὶ δεύτερον ἀναγορεύει βασιλέα. καὶ οὕτως ἡ τῶν Ἑβραίων πολιτεία εἰς βασιλείαν μετέπεσεν. (84) ἐπὶ γὰρ Μωυσέος καὶ τοῦ μαθητοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἀριστοκρατούμενοι διετέλουν, μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα ἔτεσι δέκα καὶ ὀκτὼ τὸ πλῆθος αὐτῶν ἀναρχία κατέσχεν, (85) εἶτ' αὖθις εἰς τὴν προτέραν ἐπανῆλθε πολιτείαν τῷ κατὰ πόλεμον ἀρίστῳ δόξαντι γεγενῆσθαι περὶ τῶν ὅλων δικάζειν ἐπιτρέποντες.

57 Here, it may be noted, Zonaras' comments are confined to Roman history: Zon., *Praef.*, 4 [1.8-9 D]. Cf. Fromentin 2013.

respect for the traditional political elite[58]. Although the term "master" had long been a term of address for an emperor or king[59], for some – and especially those who knew their history like Zonaras – it remained an ideologically loaded term, more appropriate for a tyrant such as Domitian, than it was for a δημοτικὸς αὐτοκράτωρ.

Conclusion

Zonaras' *magnum opus* will always be overshadowed by that other manifestation of Comnenian historiographical eloquence – Anna Comnena's *Alexiad*. Yet in terms of the scale of its historical synthesis and considerable learning Zonaras' work is an impressive proposition. In terms of skill, application, and level of erudition, Zonaras is not inferior to some of his classical predecessors, and should be thought more as a serious historian rather than an epitomator.

Despite his many and diverse sources, the *Epitome of Histories* is not a historical ποικιλία. Zonaras was able to impose structure on his sources and modify them accordingly if it served some purpose. Common themes permeate the work and form distinct structural elements in themselves. When considering Zonaras' treatment of kingship, we have seen that he was capable and willing to adapt his sources so as to better conform with his own political views. These views were those of a political traditionalist[60]. Zonaras' models of kingship were adapted from the writers of classical Greece and Rome, among whom the consular historian, Cassius Dio, perhaps stands preeminent[61]. Whether these ideals are representative of broader twelfth century Byzantine attitudes towards kingship, or are simply the result of a well-read antiquarian's championing of a political doctrine that was as obsolete in the age of Comneni as it was in the age of the Severi, is a question for further debate[62].

58 Note the forceful and provocative thesis of Kaldellis 2015, (esp.) 43-53.

59 Dickey 1996, 95-98; cf. 2002, 94-99.

60 Magdalino 1993, 405-406: "Zonaras' Roman constitutionalism, like the rhetoric of Hellenism, harked back to a pre-imperial, pre-Christian era of natural goodness".

61 As suggested by Magdalino 1993, 343.

62 I would like to thank John Rich, Chris Pelling and Caillan Davenport for their helpful comments on this paper, and Theofili Kampianaki for sending me a copy of her forthcoming article on Zonaras. Finally, I am grateful to Olivier Devillers for the invitation to contribute a chapter to this volume.