

ITERUM THEOPHANES CONTINUATUS 'VI'

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Πολλὰ τὰ ἔτη εἰς πολλά, φιλεπιστημονότατε Παῦλε!

As posited in previous articles, we believe that the composite text commonly known as *Theophanes Continuatus* as it has come down to us in *Vat. gr.* 167 (11th c.) was completed in the reign of Nicephorus II Phokas (963-969). To the first two texts of this compilation, Books I-IV (reigns of Leo V, Michael II, Theophilus and Michael III) and 'Book V' (the *Vita Basilii*), commissioned by Constantine VII, was added 'Book VI', divided by the reigns of the emperors from Leo VI to Romanus II, with reference there to the 'Conqueror, emperor Nicephorus' (Phokas), suggesting that he was still reigning when this third text was composed. Further, we have conjectured that the final compilation of *Theophanes Continuatus* was commissioned by the chamberlain (*parakoimomenos*) Basil the Nothos, the natural son of Romanus I Lecapenus, who had helped Phokas take power and was rewarded by him with a new office, president (*proedros*) of the Senate.¹

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Abbreviations

De Cer. – Constantinus Porphyrogenitus imperator, *De ceremoniis aulae byzantinae*, ed. J. J. Reiske (& B.G. Niebuhr), Bonn 1829-1830.

Leo Diaconus – Leo Diaconus Caloënsis, *Historiae libri decem*, ed. K.B. Hase, Bonn 1828.

Logothete Chronicle - Symeonis Magistri et Logothetae Chrinicon, ed. S. Wahlgren, Berlin 2006 (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae. Series Berolinensis 44).

Skylitzes – Ioannes Scylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. I. Thurn, Berlin 1973 (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae. Series Berolinensis, 5).

Theoph. Cont. – *Theophanes Continuatus, Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon Magister, Georgius Monachus*, ed. I. Bekker, Bonn 1838.

Theoph. Cont. I-IV - *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur Libri I-IV recensuerunt anglice verterunt indicibus instruxerunt M. Featherstone et J. Signes-Codoner nuper repertis schedis Caroli de Boor adiuvantibus*, Berlin 2015. (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae. Series Berolinensis XLII/1).

Vita Basilii – *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine fertur Liber quo Vita Basilii Imperatoris amplectitur*, ed. I. Ševcenko, Berlin 2011 (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae. Series Berolinensis, 42/2).

¹ Most recently M Featherstone, Basil the Nothos as Compiler: the *De Cerimoniis* and *Theophanes Continuatus*, in: I. Perez-Martin—J. Signes-Codoner (ed.), *The Transmission of Byzantine Texts between Textual Criticism and Quellenforschung* [LECTIO 2], Turnhout 2014, 353-372 (henceforth: Basil the Nothos), 355-363; cf.

Unnumbered in *Vat. gr.* 167, but labelled 'Book VI' in the Bonn edition, the third text of *Theophanes Continuatus* is related to an extended version (beyond A.D. 948), commonly called 'Version B', of the so-called *Logothete Chronicle* attributed to Symeon the Logothete, of which a first critical edition is presently being prepared by Staffan Wahlgren, editor of Version A in the CFHB.² On the dating of Version B of the *Logothete Chronicle*, and thus also *Theophanes Continuatus*, there is no firm consensus. To name but two scholars, Athanasios Markopoulos has argued that Version B as it stands in *Vat. gr.* 163, a text very close to Book VI of *Theophanes Continuatus*, dates from the reign of Phokas, whereas Warren Treadgold, in a recent survey of the Middle Byzantine historians, attributing Version B of the Chronicle to Symeon the Logothete himself, argues that he reworked his earlier text, drawing again on his original source, identified by Treadgold as Manuel the protospatharios, during the reign of Basil II.³

We should like to take up this point. The relation of the extant texts belonging to Version B is very complex, and we await the conclusions of Wahlgren in his edition. However, in our work on Book VI of *Theophanes Continuatus* we have found further indications that this variation --if we may so call it-- on Version B was composed during the reign of Phokas, and we shall present these briefly here.

Book VI breaks off in *Vat. gr.* 167 (at the end of the 21st quire) with events of 961, two years before the death of Romanus II.⁴ Our dating of Book VI to the time of Phokas is based in part on evidence found in the twelfth-century annotations in *Vat. gr.* 167 suggesting that no more than a bifolium has

Theoph. Cont. I-IV, 14*- 19*.

² For a list of the MSS of Version B, see Wahlgren's Prolegomena: *Logothete Chronicle*, 117*.

³ A. Markopoulos, *Le témoignage du Vaticanus gr. 163 pour la période entre 945-963*, *Σύμμεικτα* 3, 1979, 83-119 (henceforth: *Le témoignage*), 88-90; W. Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians*, Basingstoke 2013, 211-217.

⁴ At *Theoph. Cont.*, 481, 12, after the capture of Chandax on Crete.

been lost at the end of the manuscript.⁵ Roughly comparable to the partially lost corresponding part of *Vat. gr.* 163, this would suffice to have brought the narrative down to Phokas's accession in 963.⁶ The epithet 'Conqueror', used three times for Phokas in Book VI, is not given to anyone else. Surely it would not have been used if another emperor was on the throne at the time the text was written.⁷ This epithet also occurs in Version B in *Vat. gr.* 163: the populace of Constantinople acclaims Phokas as Conqueror as he enters the city in triumph. Interestingly, the word *νικητής* is not to be found in the contemporary historian Leo the Deacon nor in the corresponding account in Skylitzes.⁸ Indeed, we might well be puzzled by the use of this rather antiquarian word. Tellingly, it is recorded as having been chanted by the circus factions before the Golden Gate upon Phokas's entrance into the city as emperor on the 16 August 963: Καλῶς ἦλθες, ἀνδρειότατε νικητὰ ἀεισέβαστε! These chants and

⁵ Cf. Theoph. Cont. I-IV, 5*-9*.

⁶ The end of the text is lost in *Vat. gr.* 163 as well (Markopoulos, *Le témoignage* [as in n. 3], 100, 25), breaking off in the middle of the account of Phokas's acclamation by his officers at the camp in Caesarea.

⁷ Νικηφόρου βασιλέως τοῦ νικητοῦ, Theoph. Cont., 378, 17; Νικηφόρου τοῦ νικητοῦ βασιλέως τοῦ λεγομένου Φωκᾶ, *ibid.* 428, 19; τὸν νικητὴν Νικηφόρον, *ibid.* 460, 5.

⁸ *Vat. gr.* 163: Markopoulos, *Le témoignage* (as in n. 3), 100, 9; cf. Leo Diaconus, 48, 1-6; Skylitzes, Basil II & Constantine VII, 7.38-40 (καλλίνικον). The word *νικητής* occurs only once in Skylitzes, referring ironically to Michael II after his murder of Leo V: ὥσπερ τις ἀθλοφόρος καὶ νικητής (Skylitzes, Michael II, 2.25-26). It is remarkable that this word does not occur in the corresponding passage of *Theophanes Continuatus* (at least not in *Var. gr.* 167), Skylitzes's source for this part of his history: there we find: ὥσπερ τις ἀπὸ νίκης ἀθλοφόρος, Theoph. Cont, 41, 23; Theoph. Cont. I-IV, II.2.2. About the dating of Book VI, see also Theoph. Cont. I-IV, 18*-19*. Cyril Mango, in his preface to the *Vita Basilii*, notes that in Book VI (Theoph. Cont., 458, 6-7) Constantine VII is reported predicting that Romanus II would have a long reign if he behaved properly. Mango questions whether Book VI extended to the end of Romanus's reign; but he suggests that this may have been intended ironically: Romanus was profligate and thus had a short reign, *Vita Basilii* 3*, n.1.

ceremonies for Phokas are modeled on those for Leo I, recorded in excerpts from Peter the Patrician concerning the acclamations of emperors from Leo to Justinian. These latter, divided into chapters, precede the account of Phokas's acclamation in the penultimate chapter of Book I of the *De Cerimoniis*, another work emanating from the circle of Constantine VII whose final redaction was, we believe, also commissioned by Basil the Nothos.⁹ We shall return to Basil and the *De Cerimoniis*.

A further indication for the dating of Book VI of *Theophanes Continuatus* is the mention of John Tzimiskes merely as the future domestikos of the Schools under Phokas, with no reference to him ever being emperor.¹⁰ Indeed, the long praises of Tzimiskes's great uncle, John Kourkouas, and his brother Theophilus, Tzimiskes's grandfather, and their many relations, presented in more detail in Book VI than in any other version of the *Logothete Chronicle*,¹¹ are not intended to redound to the glory of Tzimiskes, but of Phokas. Tzimiskes was Phokas's nephew, and he and Romanus, the son of John Kourkouas, were amongst those who rushed to Phokas's tent in the camp at Caesarea to to proclaim him emperor before his return to the capital.¹² Thus has the author of Book VI painted Phokas not only as the brilliant general descended from military stock of his own name, but also the relation of another great military

⁹ Acclamations from Leo I to Justinian: *De Cer.* I 91-95, 410,5 - 433,9; acclamation of Phokas: *ibid.*, I 96, 438,17-18; acclamation of Leo: Καίσαρ Λέων νικητῆς ἀεὶ σεβαστός! *ibid.*, 411, 23. Cf. Featherstone, Basil the Nothos (as in n. 1), 257-258.

¹⁰ See *infra* n. 12.

¹¹ E.g. *Theoph. Cont.*, 426,15 - 430,21 (cap. 41-44); NB the reference in 427,20 - 428,2 to the work in eight books by Manuel the protospatharios on the good deeds and writings of Kourkouas.

¹² Tzimiskes and Kourkouas acclaim Phokas in *Vat. gr.* 163: Markopoulos, Le témoignage (as in n. 3), 100, 22-25. There was apparently a passage corresponding to this in the missing text at the end of *Vat. gr.* 167, as announced earlier in Book VI (*Theoph. Cont.*, 428,20 - 429,2), where the deeds of Tzimisces 'who later became magistros and domestikos of the Schools under the Conqueror, emperor Nicephorus, called Phokas ... will be related in their proper time and order'; likewise concerning Romanus, son of Kourkouas.

family, the Kourkouas, which -- let us not forget -- was in turn closely related with another family of Armenian origin, the Lecapeni. All this would certainly have given pleasure to Basil, who was, after all, the son of Romanus I Lecapenus and had been snubbed by Constantine VII in the appointment of his hated rival Joseph Bringas as regent for Constantine's son Romanus II, who had then replaced Basil with Bringas as *parakoimomenos*.¹³

To repeat, we believe that Basil commissioned the compilation of *Theophanes Continuatus* as we have it in *Vat. gr.* 167, but we do not think that he himself composed Book VI. The sources from which this text derives were manifold and tendentious, and the author --or rather, redactor-- did not eliminate one or the other bias: the criticism of the Macedonians down to the end of the reign of Romanus I Lecapenus and the favourable treatment of Constantine VII as sole ruler stand in contrast; likewise, there is exaggerated praise of Basil's rival, Bringas, in the reigns of Constantine VII and Romanus II.¹⁴ This might appear as grounds to dismiss any connexion with Basil. However, as in the final compilation of the *De Cerimoniis*, the directive must have been to produce a text as quickly as possible from whatever material was available, in order to bring court historiography and ceremonial down to the reign of Phokas; hence the final chapters (96 and 97) of Book I of the *De Cerimoniis* and Book VI of *Theophanes Continuatus*.¹⁵ Here again, a document had found its way into Book II of the *De Cerimoniis* (now broken off at the end) in which there is mention of a *praipositos* Joseph --Bringas?-- in a positive light.¹⁶ But perhaps Basil, even if he had commissioned these compilations,

¹³ Theoph. Cont., 466, 11-15; 469, 18-20.

¹⁴ E.g. καὶ γὰρ τοιοῦτος ἦν ὁ ἀνὴρ, πυκνὸς καὶ ὀρθὸς καὶ πιστὸς καὶ πρὸς τὰ πολιτικὰ διοικήματα ἀετοῦ ταχύτερος, εἰς δὲ τὸ ἀπροσωπόληπτον καὶ εὐσεβῆς καὶ δίκαιος, ὡς τοιοῦτον ἕτερον μὴ γνωρίζεσθαι, Theoph. Cont., 466, 15-18; ὁ χρηστὸς καὶ ὀρθὸς καὶ ἄυπνος νοῦς, *ibid.*, 475, 1-3; the author indulges in similar rhetoric concerning Romanus II: ὁ ἀναξ ὁ χρηστὸς, ὁ ἡδύς, ὁ προσηνής, καὶ ὅσοις ὀνόμασι χρῆ καλεῖσθαι καλοῖς καὶ τὸν ἄνδρα ὀνομάζειν, *ibid.* 473, 19-20; and, in more moderate wise, for Phokas: ὁ δὲ ἀνδρεῖος καὶ συνετὸς ἡγεμὼν Νικηφόρος, *ibid.* 478, 5-6.

¹⁵ Featherstone, Basil the Nothos (as in n. 1), 362-363.

¹⁶ De Cer. II 56, 807, 11-14.

was not bothered. Any untoward details taken over from earlier sources would have been overshadowed by the record of Basil's final victory over Bringas upon the accession of Phokas and his re-instatement of Basil as *parakoimomenos*.¹⁷

A good illustration of the palimpsest nature of Book VI --and another clue to Basil's involvement-- is the account of Constantine VII's end. Here we are told how Constantine, on his deathbed, left Joseph Bringas as guardian of his son Romanus, adjuring him to preserve him with his skill and concentration (έντρεχέϊα καὶ πυκνώσει), 'for such a man was he (*viz.* Bringas), firm and upright and faithful and swifter than an eagle at all administrative tasks of state, pious and just, beyond any partiality of persons as no one else ever known.'¹⁸

Although there is similar praise of Bringas's mental powers in *Vat. gr.* 163 (here έντρεχέϊα καὶ συνέσει), there are no eagles.¹⁹ These, as well as similar excesses in praise of Romanus II,²⁰ are unique to Book VI and were presumably taken over --intentionally or not-- from the text of Version B used by the author of Book VI. However, equally unique to Book VI is the following account concerning the funeral of Constantine VII, which brings us again to Basil the Nothos and the *De Cerimoniis* (note underlined passages):

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Whether or not intended to offset the preceding praises of Bringas, could this elaborate episode have been added to Book VI to mark Basil's loyalty to Constantine VII to the end? Is it simply coincidence that here again, as in the case of the epithet 'Conqueror', we are reminded of the *De*

¹⁷ Account of Phokas's victorious return to the capital in *De Cer.* I 96, 437, 8-22: *exit* Joseph the *parakoimomenos*, then a few lines later, *introit* Basil the *parakoimomenos*. Basil's triumph is further in evidence, if only anonymously, in the following chapter, I 97, (*ibid.* 440,13 - 443,22) containing ceremonies -- presumably of Basil's own making-- for his newly created office of president of the Senate, cf. Leo Diaconus, 94, 3-6: Βασίλειος ὁ νόθος, 'Ρωμανοῦ τοῦ πάλαι αὐτοκράτορος ἐκ Σκυθίδος υἱός, τῷ τοῦ προέδρου ἐκδιαπρέπων ἀξιώματι. Νικηφόρος δέ, μόνος τῶν λοιπῶν σεβαστῶν, ἐς γέρας τῷ ἀνδρὶ ταύτην ἐκαινοτόμησε τὴν τιμὴν. Phokas's return to the capital in Book VI is lost in *Vat. gr.* 167; but in Skylitzes's account (Basil II and Constantine VIII, 7.41-45), again in just four lines of text, Joseph the *parakoimomenos* is reduced to a suppliant, and the men of Basil the *parakoimomenos* cross over to Chrysopolis and bring back Phokas in triumph.

¹⁸ Theoph. Cont., 466, 11-18; cf. *supra* n. 14.

¹⁹ *Vat. gr.* 163: Markopoulos, Le témoignage (as in n. 3), 100, 16-17.

²⁰ *Supra* n. 14.

Cerimoniis? Could this latter and *Theophanes Continuatus* not have been commissioned by Basil to celebrate his and Phokas's victory? --And perhaps also, discreetly, as a memorial to Constantine, the initiator of both texts?