

Chronology and History in Byzantium

Patricia Varona

CHRONOLOGY is not only the technique of measuring time, but also a traditional form of historical writing with a particularly venerable lineage. It was intensively cultivated in Antiquity and the Middle Ages until the emergence of modern historiography in the eighteenth century, when it definitively declined. It is also at the core and very origin of historiography, which provides chronological specifications to all types of stories using various sources as a basis for further developments. Although chronology is very ancient as a historical form, it developed greatly with the emergence of Christianity. It became an important vehicle of religious polemics, imposed and developed the chronological framework of the Bible with apologetic and polemic goals, and reached the very top of most cultivated historical forms. However, we are so permeated with the historiographical thought produced by nineteenth-century positivism that we have difficulties in recognising chronology as an important pre-modern form of historical writing using techniques, methods, and assumptions that can be seen as fundamental for the study of historiography.¹ Yet our mentality is not the sole difficulty posed by the study of ancient and medieval historical chronology.

Compared with historiography, chronological writing develops against a wider background than human affairs, and it focuses on the order of events and the time intervals between them, rather than on their internal development, their meaning,

¹ See for this J. W. Johnson, "Chronological Writing: Its Concepts and Development," *History and Theory* 2 (1962) 124–145; P. Daffina, "Senso del tempo e senso della storia: computi cronologici e storicizzazione del tempo," *RSO* 61 (1987) 1–71.

or their causes. It is bound, therefore, to conceptions of historiographical practice that radically differ from ours. It is well known that modern scientific historiography relegated chronology to the field of antiquarism—if not to cosmogony and theogony—and made from what had been a living genre a dead object of study. The duration of events or periods and their succession do not require a continuous narrative to be properly presented, so chronology adopts formats radically different from those of history, such as tables and synoptic charts. Numbers are, of course, at the core of chronological writing, but they are particularly susceptible to textual corruption. Mathematical astronomy is closely related to chronology, but it is outside of the formal definition of the historiographical genre. Chronology has been considered as the main historiographical technique of the Western middle ages; but what about the Greek-speaking world?

To my knowledge, the only survey on Byzantine historical writing which pays attention to these texts is that of Karpozilos, including an interesting chapter on “short chronicles, their sources and prototypes.”² Apart from this valuable contribution, Russian scholars have been the most concerned with these texts. The work of Samodurova is the best evidence I know for their importance and their extensive presence in the Byzantine manuscript heritage.³ However, an important problem posed by their study is the lack of modern or reliable editions and quite often the lack of any edition at all. Within the field of Byzantine studies, the study of historical writing has focused on narrative genres and forms since the seminal work of Krumbacher. He rightly described several chronological forms as non-literary texts, but this assessment had a quite negative impact on the study of Byzantine chronological writing. In a brief chapter,

² “Σύντομα χρονικά, οἱ πηγές καὶ τὰ πρωτότυπα τους,” in A. Karpozilos, *Βυζαντινοὶ ἱστορικοὶ καὶ χρονογράφοι* II (Athens 2002) 529–611.

³ Z. G. Samodurova, “Малые византийские хроники и их источники,” *IV* 27 (1967) 153–161; “Краткая византийская хроника VI в. и её версии. К вопросу о протооригинале малых древних хроник,” in *Вспомогательные исторические дисциплины* 21 (1990) 238–247.

Krumbacher included many different works which in his opinion shared a non-literary nature and a relative value because of their connection with major historical works, but he did not analyse or classify them.⁴ As these are non-literary works, Hunger excluded them from his handbook, and so did the few monographs on Byzantine historiography that came after it.⁵ As a consequence, there are no specific studies on Byzantine chronological writing after that of Gelzer—mostly outdated and focused not on Byzantine chronological writing but on reconstructing Africanus' chronography from Byzantine evidence—although its use as a source by relevant chroniclers such as Theophanes Confessor has been often highlighted.⁶

Chronological writing adopts different forms provided with their own specific characteristics. From the viewpoint of historical genres they can be considered as chronicle subgenres, because chronology is the structuring element of the chronicle genre, contrary to the predominantly narrative structures of historiography.⁷ Many medieval chroniclers, both Greek and Latin, worked in this mode, logically considering chronology to

⁴ “Chronikenauszüge, geschichtliche Tabellen und Verwandtes,” in K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur*² (Munich 1897) 395–399.

⁵ H. Hunger, *Der hochsprachliche Profanliteratur der Byzantiner* (Munich 1978). A. P. Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (650–850)* (Athens 1999) 206, explicitly states that the work of George Syncellus “is not a literary work in the proper sense of the word. Rather, it belongs to what we may call scientific prose.” W. Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians* (Basingstoke 2013), devotes a chapter to Syncellus without any particular treatment of chronological writing.

⁶ H. Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus und die byzantinische Chronographie* II.1 (Leipzig 1885). A “succinct chronological compendium of rulers and the bishops of the five patriarchal sees” is the first source mentioned in the survey of Theophanes' sources delineated by C. Mango and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor* (Oxford 1997) lxxiv–lxxv.

⁷ For the definition of the chronicle genre and its subgenres, I adopt the classification by R. W. Burgess and M. Kulikowski, *Mosaics of Time I The Latin Chronicle Traditions from the First Century BC to the Sixth Century AD* (Turnhout 2013) 8–62. A chronicle is an annalistic account of history, typically brief.

be an essential aspect of historical writing.⁸ In this article I propose a review of the classification of these texts and an overview of the chronographical subgenre, focusing particularly on its functional aspects and on its historical contextualization. The extremely difficult problems posed by its tradition and transmission should be matter for future research.

1. *Antecedents and sources of Byzantine chronological writing: background and genres*

Chronographies are chronological compendia including mostly chronological summaries (*supputationes*), genealogies, or regnal lists.⁹ They are often confusedly called “short chronicles” or “succinct chronologies.” The form of pinax, catalogue, or list—which surely made up the most ancient form of the chronicle genre—was cultivated continuously since Antiquity and received a definitive impulse at the hands of the Hellenistic scholars, with a marked emphasis on its comparative element, which was taken up by Jewish and Christian chroniclers, and very especially by Eusebius of Caesarea.¹⁰ These lists present problems of definition and transmission which make it impossible to reconstruct a supposed original or genuine prototype, but they are essential as chronological sources and also reveal particular conceptions of history.¹¹

⁸ Among many others, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Castor of Rhodes, Eusebius of Caesarea, the Venerable Bede, and James of Edessa.

⁹ See Burgess and Kulikowski, *Mosaics of Time* I 8–62. See also A. A. Mosshammer, *The Chronicle of Eusebius and Greek Chronographic Tradition* (Lewisburg 1979) 85, where he distinguishes between a wider sense of “chronography” (record of historical events precisely dated in terms of absolute chronology) and a stricter sense (process by which the absolute dates of the events are established).

¹⁰ It is what J. Howard-Johnston, “The Chronicle and Other Forms of Historical Writing in Byzantium,” in I. Afanasyev et al. (eds.), *The Medieval Chronicle X* (Leiden 2016) 1–22, at 2, calls “the list,” recognizing that it is truly the nucleus of the chronicle in its original form, as issued by Africanus and Eusebius, although in fact it is much earlier and even transcends historiography.

¹¹ As recently observed by J. Dillery, *Clio’s Other Sons: Berossus and Manetho*

In his famous *Περὶ χρονογραφιῶν*, which was in fact a chronicle, Eratosthenes of Cyrene (ca. 285–194 B.C.) collected these lists, notably those of Olympic victors and Spartan kings, and combined them with a single abstract time line provided by the Olympiads, linearly numbered and subdivided into four-year periods. For that reason Eratosthenes, a polymath with a mathematical and astronomical background, is justly recognized as the father of chronology, having attached for the first time Greek history to an absolute temporal grid from the fall of Troy to Alexander's death. The chronological tools he used were mainly two, both with a long tradition in Greek historiography, the interval (*διάστημα*) between major events and the synchronism, both essential in bridging the gap between different chronological systems.¹² After him, the advantages of a unified chronological system were increasingly evident, so his chronology was improved and expanded backwards and forwards. Apollodorus of Athens and then Castor of Rhodes developed its expansion down to 61 B.C., when Castor finished his chronicle for the reigns of Assyria, Media, Lydia, Persia, Macedonia, Athens, and Sicyon, as of the reigns of Ninus and Aegialeus.¹³

The lists included in the chronicles of Eratosthenes, Apollodorus, and Castor preceded the most influential of these lists, the

(Ann Arbor 2015) 56–58, particularly that of royal continuity and succession.

¹² For the concept of interval in Greek chronography see S. Mazzarino, *Il pensiero storico classico* III (Rome/Bari 1966) 436–438. Although the notion of synchronism is relevant already in Greek classical historiography, its systematization and diffusion are most often attributed to Timaeus: see D. Asheri, “The Art of Synchronization in Greek Historiography: The Case of Timaeus of Tauromenium,” *SCI* 11 (1991/2) 52–89.

¹³ For the influence of the chronologies of Eratosthenes and Castor on later chronographers see E. Schwartz, “Die Königslisten des Eratosthenes und Kastor mit Excursen über die Interpretationen bei Africanus und Eusebius,” *AbhGött* 40 (1894/5) 1–96. For the relevance of Assyria in the establishment of the chronological framework of Graeco-Roman history, see R. Drews, “Assyria in Classical Universal Histories,” *Historia* 14 (1965) 129–142. This explains why Eusebius and Jerome placed Assyria in their first *filum*, while the later Armenian translation of Eusebius placed there instead Hebrew history.

so-called Royal Canon attributed to Claudius Ptolemy (ca. 100–ca. 170)—also called “astronomical,” “mathematical,” or “Ptolemaic”—and developed by Alexandrian astronomers following an ancient Babylonian practice.¹⁴ However, the Royal Canon is a regnal list not found in a historiographical work, but in a mathematical one. Mathematical tables contained in the *Μαθηματικὴ σύνταξις* (*Almagest*) of Ptolemy were additionally included in a separate work provided with a handbook, the *Πρόχειροι κανόνες* (*Handy Tables*), which in turn usually included the Royal Canon (τὸ προκανόνιον τῆς τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐποχῆς βασιλείων χρονογραφίας) among other tables of different kinds.¹⁵ Originally compiled as a canon of Babylonian kings, it has been suggested to have been adapted and translated into Greek by the Greek-speaking Babylonian historian Berossos.¹⁶ The Royal Canon was conceived for astronomical purposes, as it was used by astronomers to date singular astronomical phe-

¹⁴ See O. Neugebauer, “‘Years’ in Royal Canons,” in *A Locust’s Leg. Studies in honour of S. H. Taqizadeh* (London 1962) 209–212; L. Depuydt, “‘More Valuable than All Gold’: Ptolemy’s Royal Canon and Babylonian Chronology,” *JCS* 47 (1995) 97–117; M. Roueché, “Stephanus the Alexandrian Philosopher, the Kanon and a Seventh-Century Millennium,” *JWarb* 74 (2011) 1–30; A. A. Mosshammer, *The Easter Computus and the Origins of the Christian Era* (Oxford 2008) 17–18, 174–178; R. Mercier, *Ptolemaïou Procheiroi Kanones. Ptolemy’s Handy Tables* 1b (Leuven 2011) 64–72.

¹⁵ The extant *Handy Tables*, apart from the handbook of Ptolemy itself, included many tables incorporated into this tradition at different stages of transmission. In her edition, *Ptolemaïou Procheiroi Kanones. Ptolemy’s Handy Tables* 1a (Leuven 2011), A. Tihon distinguishes between astronomical tables (original to Ptolemy), tables of the Byzantine age (which she attributes to Stephen of Alexandria), chronological tables (the Royal Canon, mentioned by Ptolemy, often accompanied by other chronological tools such as lists of consuls and hemerologies), geographical tables (lists of illustrious towns, mentioned by Ptolemy), and supplementary ones (varied material added over the centuries).

¹⁶ For Claudius Ptolemy and his influence see A. Tihon, “L’astronomie byzantine,” *Byzantion* 51 (1981) 603–624. For Berossos as the likely intermediary between the Babylonian tradition and the Greek one see Mercier, *Ptolemaïou Procheiroi Kanones* 69.

nomena, but it became an essential chronological tool because it provided absolute dates on an astronomical basis. It was particularly useful for converting regnal years to absolute dates, because it contained the names of the kings (1st column) with the length of each reign (2nd column). It also included the basics for synchronic chronologies, incorporating the kings of Babylonia, Persia, “Macedonia” (i.e. the Alexandrian Ptolemies), and Rome, not in parallel columns, but listed in succession—as well as the totals from the beginning of counting (years according to the era) (3rd column). The counting of years starts again from the reign of Philip Arrhidaeus, so the canon can be used both with the mathematical tables of the *Almagest* (based on the era of Nabonassar) and the *Handy Tables* (based on the era of Philip).¹⁷ In sum, by using the Royal Canon anyone could calculate the number of years (in the era of Philip) for any date, adding the regnal year of the ruler under whose reign the event occurred to the running total of his predecessor.¹⁸

Thus, the Royal Canon was an important reference tool for history which remained useful regardless of debates about the era, a sequence of years reckoned from a definite point of time (ἐποχή) that provided the series in which the consular or regnal years must be grouped in order to obtain a time-line covering the whole of history until the present day, since the years of the era of Philip could be easily converted to years of any other era, most commonly to years of the era of the world, counting from Creation. The debate over the origins of humanity had been initiated by the Hellenistic chronographers of Alexandria and extended by the Jews, with the support of biblical traditions, giving rise to the establishment of an *annus Adami*.¹⁹ The Christian chronographers, for their part, undertook the task of under-

¹⁷ Theon of Alexandria incorporated into this chronological scheme the era of Diocletian.

¹⁸ See Roueché, *JWarb* 74 (2011) 12–13.

¹⁹ See B. Z. Wacholder, “Biblical Chronology in the Hellenistic World Chronicles,” *HThR* 61 (1968) 451–481.

pinning a unified chronology of the history of humanity *ab origine mundi* and resolving some chronological doubts essential from their point of view, leading to the creation of the chronological system of the world eras, based on the calculation of the total length of history and of the Paschal date.²⁰ Essential contributions to this debate were provided by Clement of Alexandria (192)—with the precedents of Tatian (post 177) and Theophilus of Antioch (ca. 180)—and also by Julius Africanus (ca. 170–240), Hippolytus (ca. 170–236), and Eusebius (ca. 260–339).²¹ From an eschatological point of view, Eusebius significantly opposed the approaches of his two most celebrated predecessors, Africanus and Hippolytus, who had incorporated millenarianism into the Greek chronicle tradition and according to whom Christ had been born in A.M. 5500 and the world would exist for six thousand years.²²

In his *Chronography*, Eusebius collected and revised the work of Eratosthenes, Apollodorus, and Castor—as Julius Africanus had

²⁰ On the relationship between world era and Paschal computus see V. Grumel, *La chronologie* (Paris 1958); Mosshammer, *Easter Computus*; C. Philipp and E. Nothaf, *Dating the Passion. The Life of Jesus and the Emergence of Scientific Chronology (200–1600)* (Leiden 2011).

²¹ H. Inglebert, *Interpretatio Christiana. Les mutations des savoirs (cosmographie, géographie, ethnographie, histoire) dans l'Antiquité* (Turnhout 2001) 302–342; R. W. Burgess, *Studies in Eusebian and Post-Eusebian Chronography* (Stuttgart 1999) 79–84; M. Wallraff, “The Beginnings of Christian Universal History from Tatian to Julius Africanus,” *ZAC* 14 (2010) 540–555.

²² Eusebius could invoke Scriptural arguments: “It’s not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority” (Acts 1:7). Historiographical treatment of millenarianism seems to have been inaugurated by Hippolytus in his *Commentary on Daniel* (ca. 204) and was popularized by Africanus. For more on this see R. Landes, “Lest the Millennium Be Fulfilled: Apocalyptic Expectations and the Pattern of Western Chronography 100–800 CE,” in W. Verbeke et al. (eds.), *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages* (Leuven 1988) 137–211, at 144–149. See also W. Adler, “Eusebius’ Critique of Africanus,” in M. Wallraff (ed.), *Julius Africanus und die christliche Weltchronistik* (Berlin 2006) 147–157, esp. 154–155; O. Andrei, “Dalla *Chronographiai* di Giulio Africano alla *Synagoge* di ‘Ippolito’. Un dibattito sulla scrittura cristiana del tempo,” 113–146 in the same volume.

done before him and probably using Africanus as the main source for their works²³—summarizing the results in his *Chronici canones* by presenting them in parallel columns and using three chronological systems: the world era (from Abraham), the Olympiads, and the regnal years.²⁴ Drawing on his Jewish and Christian predecessors, Eusebius' work covered the whole of history from Abraham until A.D. 325.²⁵ Contrary to their Western counterparts, Greek chronographers and chroniclers received the legacy of both *syntaxeis* of his work, but, as we shall see, they used them mainly as a compendium of regnal lists which preserved their chronological and practical value despite the controversy arising from Eusebius' figures and his chronological theses.²⁶

In the *Chronographia*, which Jerome (ca. 347–419) did not translate into Latin, Eusebius analysed the different chronological systems and included summarized regnal lists (*series regum*) organized into five groups: Chaldeans, Hebrews, Egyptians,

²³ See M. Wallraff, *Iulius Africanus Chronographiae. The Extant Fragments* (Berlin 2007) xxxi n.73.

²⁴ Castor is also credited with writing a chronography, a *Kanon* summarizing his chronological data, which is mentioned by Eusebius. See P. Christesen, *Olympic Victor Lists and Ancient Greek History* (Cambridge 2007) 311–322. As is well known, the only remains of the chronicle of Eusebius are Jerome's Latin translation (of its second book, the *Chronici canones*), an Armenian translation, various Syriac epitomes, and a series of indirect testimonies in Greek, the importance and authenticity of which have been much discussed.

²⁵ For these precedents see in particular Wacholder, *HThR* 61 (1968) 451–481, and L. Grabbe, "Chronography in Hellenistic Jewish Historiography," *Society of Biblical Literature: Seminar Papers* 2 (1979) 43–68. For an introduction to Christian chronology and the different proposals see J. Finnegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*² (Peabody 1998).

²⁶ See D. J. Wilcox, *The Measure of Times Past. Pre-Newtonian Chronologies and the Rhetoric of Relative Time* (Chicago 1987) 107. See P. Varona, "Chronographical Polemics in Ninth-century Constantinople. George Synkellos, Iconoclasm and the Greek Chronicle Tradition," *Eranos* 108 (2018) 117–136, for the polemics concerning Eusebius' chronological theses.

Greeks, and Romans, following Africanus' model. On the other hand, the *Chronici canones* were tables containing the complete chronology of some 2400 years of history of the main peoples of Antiquity, displayed on double pages in the initial part of the account, in columns arranged by the sequence of years (*fila regnorum*) and with brief historical notes between them, a sort of summary of the *Chronographia* in visual format.²⁷

In the first part, the *fila regnorum* would be only four—Hebrew, Assyria, Sicyon, and Egypt; as of 1204 *ab Abrahamo* they would have been extended to nine—Media, Judah, Israel, Athens, Rome, Sparta, Macedonia, Corinth, and Egypt;²⁸ but in the last part of the work, with the disappearance of the Hellenistic monarchies, the columns were reduced to a single one, that of Rome. The left column presents the succession of monarchies in a way that resembles Ptolemy's Royal Canon—Assyria, Media, Persia, Macedonia, Rome, according to the theory of the *translatio imperii*, already very popular in Greek historiography.²⁹ The synoptic format of the *Canones* became meaningless once the chronicle genre lost its apologetic function, since its main purpose was to compare the historical development of civilizations.

From the fourth to eighth century a series of chronographers and computists continued Eusebius' work and questioned his chronological arguments,³⁰ carefully studied by the leading

²⁷ For a reconstruction of this format see Mosshammer, *The Chronicle of Eusebius* 27. See also A. Grafton and M. Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius and the Library of Caesarea* (Cambridge [Mass.] 2006).

²⁸ In fact, Eusebius collected the history of nineteen reigns of Antiquity—Assyrians, Hebrews, Sicyonians, Egyptians, Argives, Athenians, Mycenaeans, Latins, Lacedemonians, Corinthians, Medes, Macedonians, Lydians, Roman kings, Persians, Ptolemies, Antigonids, Seleucids, Roman emperors—synchronously coinciding up to a maximum of nine. See Burgess, *Studies in Eusebian and Post-Eusebian Chronography* 21.

²⁹ See U. Roberto, *Le Chronographiae di Sesto Giulio Africano* (Rome 2011) 114–120, for the likely influence of Africanus in disseminating this idea.

³⁰ It is possible that in the fourth century some of them epitomized and combined the works of Africanus and Eusebius. See W. Adler, "The Origins

scholars of the work of Eusebius and its transmission, such as Diodorus of Tarsus (†390), Panodorus (fl. 395–408), Annianus (fl. 388–412), Andronicus (fl. 527–565), or James of Edessa (†708).³¹ Evagrius Scholasticus attributed a computation included in his account of the rise of Anastasius (491) to Eustathius of Epiphaneia, author of a chronicle epitome up to 503. In this computation he refuted Annianus' calculations, perhaps in order to ward off the chiliastic effects of Alexandrian chronology, which situated the start of the sixth millennium under the reign of Anastasius by dating Creation at 5492 B.C., in line with Malalas.³² The computations included in a fragment analysed

of the Proto-Heresies: Fragments from a Chronicle in the First Book of Epiphanius' *Panarion*," *JThS* 41 (1990) 472–501.

³¹ For Diodorus of Tarsus, briefly mentioned by Elias of Nisibis and James of Edessa, see M. Debié, *L'écriture de l'histoire en syriaque* (Leuven 2015) 224–225; *Suda* s.v. Διόδωρος. For Africanus and the Alexandrian chroniclers see Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus* 190–297; W. Adler, *Time Immemorial. Archaic History and its Sources in Christian Chronography from Julius Africanus to George Syncellus* (Washington 1989) 72–105; and Mosshammer, *The Easter Computus*. For general critiques of Eusebius see Adler, "Eusebius' Chronicle and Its Legacy," in H. W. Attridge and G. Hata (eds.), *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism* (Detroit 1992) 467–491, at 484–486; and W. Witakowski, "The Chronicle of Eusebius: Its Type and Continuation in Syriac Historiography," *Aram* 11–12 (1999–2000) 419–437, at 433–437. For the mysterious Andronicus, see Debié 324–326 and 516–520, who considered him a possible candidate for the translation of Eusebius into Syriac; and D. Serruys, "Les canons d'Eusèbe, d'Annianos, et d'Andronicus d'après Élie de Nisibe," *BZ* 22 (1913) 1–36, at 28–35. According to Elias of Nisibis, Andronicus used Annianus for his Paschal tables but disagreed with the exact dates in Annianus and Eusebius for the biblical patriarchs. See K. Van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes. From Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science* (Oxford 2009) 140 and n.76, for this and for why it is more likely that he wrote in Greek than in Syriac, *pace* Witakowski 435–436. James of Edessa accepted the Paschal tables of Annianus and Andronicus and joined them in their criticism of Eusebius (Van Bladel).

³² Evagrius *HE* 3.29. For Eustathius in general see P. Allen, "An Early Epitomator of Josephus: Eustathius of Epiphaneia," *BZ* 81 (1988) 1–11; B. Croke, "Byzantine Chronicle Writing," in E. Jeffreys, B. Croke, and R. D. Scott (eds.), *Studies in John Malalas* (Sydney 1990) 27–54, at 35–36; R. Blockley, "The Development of Greek Historiography: Priscus, Malchus,

by Pauline Allen, an epitome of Flavius Josephus preserved in the *Paris.gr.* 1555A and attributed to Εὐσταθίου ἐπιφανέως συρίας, seem to confirm the chronological reputation of Eustathius, in accordance with Malalas' description, ὁ σοφώτατος χρονογράφος, but he says this also of Diodorus, Pausanias, Clement of Alexandria, Tatian, Africanus, Eusebius, and the unknown Domnius and Nestorius, among others.³³ Although there is minimal evidence regarding this, we should consider the possibility that Eustathius created a strictly chronographic work from which subsequent chroniclers would remove its most technical parts, adapting them as a source of historical breviaries.

It is essential to link the regnal lists with the consular fasti in order to fully identify the chronological sources of Byzantine historiography and to trace their development. Eusebius' *Chronici canones* were not only translated into Latin by Jerome, as is well known, but were adapted and continued by him between 326 and 378 with the help of other materials, including consularia.³⁴ Part of the material from the Latin chronicles that followed his work also originated from consularia, one of the most important historical sources for the fourth and fifth centuries.³⁵ The consularia have been defined as a chronicle sub-

Candidus," in G. Marasco (ed.), *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity* (Leiden 2003) 289–316, at 289–290; W. Treadgold, "The Byzantine World Histories of John Malalas and Eustathius of Epiphania," *The International History Review* 29 (2007) 709–745, at 725–745, and *The Early Byzantine Historians* (New York 2007) 114–120; D. Brodka, "Eustathios von Epiphaneia und das Ende des Weströmischen Reiches," *JÖB* 56 (2006) 59–78.

³³ *Paris.gr.* 1555A ff. 5–7; Malalas 16.9.15; Allen, *BZ* 81 (1988) 1–11. See recently P. Van Nuffelen, "Malalas and the Chronographic Tradition," in L. Carrara et al. (eds.), *Die Weltchronik des Johannes Malalas: Quellenfragen* (Stuttgart 2017) 261–272, for a reinterpretation of the preface of Malalas as real evidence of the Greek chronography of the fourth-fifth centuries.

³⁴ For Jerome's chronicle see R. W. Burgess, "Jerome Explained: An Introduction to his *Chronicle* and a Guide to its Use," *AHB* 16 (2002) 1–32. For Eusebius see Mosshammer, *The Chronicle of Eusebius*; Burgess, *Studies in Eusebian and Post-Eusebian Chronography*.

³⁵ See S. Muhlberger, *The Fifth-Century Chroniclers* (Leeds 1990) 23–47, for

genre of a sub-literary kind and of Latin origin, characterized by the extremely concise presentation of the historical events, following the *fasti* pattern, in the style of expanded *fasti* structured by consular dates. They were, in sum, chronicles using consulships as the only system of dating.³⁶ They converged with the emergence of the Latin chronicle that was inaugurated by Jerome, and over the fourth century they were, in parallel with Jerome, the most important expression of the Latin chronicle tradition. As we shall see, they were also one of the main chronological sources for both the Greek and Latin chronicles, sources which we know mostly indirectly via the chronicles.³⁷

The popularity of these consularia in Constantinople, which received them from Rome on the occasion of the Constantinian refoundation, has been sufficiently demonstrated. They were continuously copied and updated since approximately 370, and also translated into Greek, updated and continued into the early sixth century. As attested by the *Paschal Chronicle*,³⁸ the last historical work having its chronology based on consular dates, at

an introduction, and the forthcoming work by Burgess and Kulikowski, *Mosaics of Time II The Earliest Chronicles and the Consularia Traditions*.

³⁶ See R. W. Burgess, *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana* (Oxford 1993), esp. 175–207, and Burgess and Kulikowski, *Mosaics of Time I* 60, 173–187; R. S. Bagnall et al., *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire* (Atlanta 1987) 47–57; J. Rüpke, “Geschichtsschreibung in Listenform: Beamtenlisten unter römischen Kalendern,” *Philologus* 141 (1997) 65–85. More briefly, see R. W. Burgess, “Consularia and Fasti,” *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle I* (Leiden 2010) 486.

³⁷ The *Descriptio consulum* is a list of consuls from 509 B.C. to A.D. 468, including numerous historical annotations. It survives in the ninth-century manuscript containing the chronicle of Hydatius. See Burgess, *The Chronicle of Hydatius* 175–186. Its first recension is considered the most ancient evidence for the existence of consularia in the manuscript transmission. Its Constantinopolitan recension has been traced back to at least the beginning of the decade of 350, given that as of 356 entries related to events in Constantinople were included in the text.

³⁸ The title is misleading, because this work is not a “paschal chronicle” in itself, that is, a chronicle structured as a paschal table.

least until the seventh century Greek chronicles relied in part on consularia, as this type of source provided them with essential chronological data. However, the relevance of these sources and their definition itself in the context of the Greek chronicle tradition have been masked by their interpretation as “city chronicles.”³⁹ Scholars have pointed out that the *Paschal Chronicle*, the *Fasti Hydatiani*, and the chronicle by Marcellinus share serious mistakes not expectable in official registers, mistakes also shared by the so-called *Fasti Heracliani*, which is the largest consular list coming from an Alexandrian source.⁴⁰

The *Fasti Hydatiani* owe this title to their misattribution to Hydatius, due to being transmitted after the chronicle by Hydatius in its codex unicus, to the parallels between the two texts, and to their Hispanic component.⁴¹ They are, in fact, what Mommsen called *Consularia Constantinopolitana* and Burgess has preferred to call *Descriptio consulum* because of their manuscript title, and they should be recognized not exactly as a parallel text of the *Paschal Chronicle*, but as one of its most important sources, a chronological one. It is evident that the version of the *Descriptio*

³⁹ The existence of these “city chronicles” has been defended by E. Jeffreys, “Malalas’ Sources,” in *Studies in John Malalas* 213; B. Croke, “The City Chronicles in Late Antiquity,” in G. Clarke et al. (eds.), *Reading the Past in Late Antiquity* (Canberra 1989) 165–204, and *Count Marcellinus and his Chronicle* (Oxford 2001) 177–186. See also M. Whitby and M. Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale 248–628 AD* (Liverpool 1989) xxi–xxii. Against this view see Burgess, *The Chronicle of Hydatius* 183–186, on the 19th-century origin of this unnecessary hypothesis, and Burgess and Kulikowski, *Mosaics of Time* I 223 n.83, 360–361, on the identification of these supposed urban chronicles with consularia.

⁴⁰ *MGH AA XIII.3* 386–391. See n.36 above and Bagnall et al., *Consuls of the LRE* 57; A. Cameron, “The Consuls of A.D. 411–412 Again,” *BASP* 18 (1981) 69–72, at 69; Whitby and Whitby, *Chronicon Paschale* xiv. It was shown long ago that the extant manuscript of the *Fasti Hydatiani* derives from a private copy and not from officially maintained public records: O. Seeck, “Studien zur Geschichte Diocletians und Constantins. II. Idacius und die Chronik von Constantinopel,” *Jahrbücher für classische Philologie* 35 (1889) 601–635.

⁴¹ See Burgess, *The Chronicle of Hydatius* 199–202.

used as a source by the author of the *Paschal Chronicle* was a later recension of it, even though we are not able to identify or reconstruct it on the basis of a sole manuscript from the ninth century.⁴² Its relevance as a source for the *Paschal Chronicle* was recognized by Hunger, echoing Mommsen and Gelzer, but is far less noticeable in recent scholarship.⁴³ Thus, from the point of view of its main chronological source, the *Paschal Chronicle* can be considered as an expanded version of the *Descriptio consulum*.

As we have seen, regnal lists were the main chronological material for centuries, but as a consequence of Diocletian's reforms, which introduced consular dating in official documents in Egypt, astronomers felt the need to supplement the Royal Canon with consular lists.⁴⁴ The first list combining regnal and consular years is attributed to Theon of Alexandria (ca. 335–ca. 405) and conventionally known as *Fasti Theonis Alexandrini*, covering the years 138 to 372.⁴⁵ Late antique Greek chronographies

⁴² See Burgess, *The Chronicle of Hydatius* 179. Mommsen already identified the parallels with the *Paschal Chronicle* and attributed them to a common source: *MGH AA IX.1* 205–247, with the two texts printed in parallel columns. It is impossible to know whether the author of the *Chronicon Paschale* and Marcellinus used the same recension of the *Descriptio* or two distinct ones (Burgess and Kulikowski, *Mosaics of Time I* 179–180).

⁴³ Gelzer, *Sextus Julius* 156–170; Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur I* 329: “Als Quellen des Chronicon Paschale kommen neben Sextus Julius Africanus insbesondere Eusebios von Kaisareia, die *Fasti consulares*, alexandrinische und antiochenische Ostertafeln sowie Märtyrerakten und auch Epiphanius von Kypros ... in Betracht.” On the other hand, J. Howard Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis. Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford 2010) 39–40, considers that the *Paschal Chronicle* has two main sources, a “city annals” and Malalas. In addition to the Bible, the Church Fathers, Eusebius, or Malalas, Treadgold, confusingly, claims that the *Paschal Chronicle* “also had two sources of at least partly official character,” a list of Roman consuls and a lost chronicle “sometimes called the ‘City chronicle of Constantinople,’” also used by Marcellinus (*The Early Byzantine Historians* 345).

⁴⁴ See for this Mosshammer, *The Easter Computus* 174–178.

⁴⁵ Ed. H. Usener in *MGH AA XIII.3* 359–381. It is a list without historical entries. Theon incorporated into the chronological scheme received and

of Egyptian origin, often called “Alexandrian chronicles,” in fact appear to be largely consularia, as is the case of the fol. vi of the Golenischev papyrus, the so-called “Berlin chronicle,” or the third and last part of the *Excerpta Latina Barbari*, all recently edited or analysed.⁴⁶ The latter work—known since Scaliger as *Excerpta Latina Barbari*—is in fact a chronography, a compendium of chronological lists—and not a “world chronicle” or a “universal chronicle”—except for its third and last part, identifiable as consularia.⁴⁷ It has been clearly established that it is a copy of a Latin translation made in the eighth century from an illustrated Greek original compiled in Alexandria in the late fifth or early sixth century. This Greek original consisted of three parts, as reflected in the Latin translation: a partial version of the original of the so-called *Liber generationis* (entitled *Συναγωγή χρόνων καὶ ἐτῶν ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου ἕως τῆς ἐνεστῶσης ἡμέρας*), several lists of kings coming probably from the work of Julius Africanus,

reworked by Claudius Ptolemy the era of Diocletian, conceived to preserve the practical use of the Egyptian calendar, based on regnal years.

⁴⁶ This heading can cover (see Bagnall et al., *Consuls of the LRE* 52–57) the *Excerpta Latina Barbari* (see below), the *Fasti Theonis*, the *Fasti Hydatiani*, the *Fasti Heracliani*, the *Chronicle* of Marcellinus, the *Paschal Chronicle*, the *Fasti Golenischevenses* (edited by Bauer and Strzygowski), and the *Fasti Berolinenses* (edited by Lietzmann). See Burgess and Dijkstra, “The ‘Alexandrian World Chronicle’, its Consularia and the Date of the Destruction of the Serapeum,” *Millennium* 10 (2013) 39–114, and “The Berlin ‘Chronicle’ (*P. Berol.* inv. 13296): A New Edition of the Earliest Extant Late Antique *Consularia*,” *ArchPF* 58 (2012) 273–301. See also Burgess, “The Date, Purpose, and Historical Context of the Original Greek and the Latin Translation of the So-called *Excerpta Latina Barbari*,” *Traditio* 68 (2013) 1–56. Croke, *Count Marcellinus* 151, claims that the *Fasti Golenischevenses* and the *Fasti Berolinenses* could be related to any of the Alexandrian redactors of Eusebius (i.e. Panodorus and Anianus), but that claim seems to be a suggestion of 19th-century philology, as shown in the introduction to A. Bauer and J. Strzygowski, *Eine alexandrinische Weltchronik* (Vienna 1905) 82–92. See against this view D. Serruys, *BZ* 22 (1913) 1–36.

⁴⁷ *Eusebii Chronicorum* I 177–239, in C. Frick, *Chronica minora* I (Leipzig 1892) 184–371. See the recent translation by B. Garstad, *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius. An Alexandrian World Chronicle* (Cambridge [Mass.] 2012) 142–395.

and a Greek translation of a recension of the *Consularia Vindobonensia posteriora*.⁴⁸ The *Συναγωγή χρόνων* included in the *Matritensis* BN 4701 (ff. 51^r–82^v) is another version of the Alexandrian original of the first of the three parts making up this compendium,⁴⁹ whose Latin recension—the *Excerpta Latina Barbari*—has been incorrectly identified with the chronography that concludes the “Tübingen Theosophy.”⁵⁰ This chronography, mentioned by Mango, is not in fact preserved, but we are informed of its existence by the prologue of the epitome of the theosophy contained in Tübingen’s celebrated manuscript.⁵¹

The longest of these lists combining regnal and consular years are the *Fasti Heracliani*, attributed to Stephen of Alexandria, covering the years 222 to 630.⁵² In 541 the last consul held the

⁴⁸ See Burgess, *Traditio* 68 (2013) 1–56.

⁴⁹ Burgess, *Traditio* 68 (2013) 8 n.13, and n.46 above. The *Matritensis* BN 4701 (olim 121) contains: (1) the so-called *Anonymus Matritensis* (ff. 1–29^v), dated between 848 and 886; (2) a Byzantine *series regum* extended to 1453 by Constantine Laskaris (ff. 29^v–31^v); (3) a version of the chronography attributed to patriarch Nicephorus (32^r–50^v); (4) the *Συναγωγή χρόνων* (ff. 51^r–82^v), often incorrectly identified (following its editor, Adolf Bauer) with the original of the lost chronicle of Hippolytus of Rome (see 418 below). The *Anonymus Matritensis* was also edited by A. Bauer, *Anonymi chronographia syntomos e codice Matritensi N° 121* (Leipzig 1909). For a recent description of the manuscript see I. Pérez Martín, “Geography and Chronography in Tenth-Century Constantinople: The Manuscript of the Stadiasmos (Madrid, BN, Mss/4701),” *GeogrAnt* 25 (2016) 79–97.

⁵⁰ See Burgess, *Traditio* 68 (2013) 5 n.10 and 39–41, against P. F. Beatrice, *Anonymi Monophysitae Theosophia: An Attempt at Reconstruction* (Leiden 2001), who reproduces the text of Schoene for that part of his edition (75–134).

⁵¹ *Anonymi Monophysitae Theosophia* 2.18: Χρονικὸν συντομώτατον τέθεικεν ἀπὸ Ἀδὰμ ἕως τῶν Ζήνωνος χρόνων, ἐν ᾧ καὶ διυσχυρίζεται μετὰ τὴν συμπλήρωσιν τοῦ ἑξακισχιλιαστοῦ ἔτους γενήσεσθαι τὴν συντέλειαν. Mango and Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes* lxvii and n.62, affirmed that this type of list is not recorded in Greek before the ninth century, except for a chronology of Adam to Justinian copied in *Marc.gr.* 1 (s. IX) (ff. 162^v–163) and “a short chronology from Adam to Zeno also formed part of the so-called Tübingen Theosophy, whose original was composed in c. AD 500.”

⁵² The attribution dates back to the editor, H. Usener, *MGH AA XIII.3*

office before it was assumed by the emperors.⁵³ This institutional development of consulship can easily explain why both consular dating and consularia as chronological sources fell into disuse in Byzantium. Later Byzantine chronography will be based on the regnal lists transmitted essentially by the most venerated late antique chronographers—Africanus and Eusebius—combined with the era of the world, which provides the starting point of the historical timeline. Regarding the end of history, there will be a recurrent appearance of the millenarian scheme.

2. *Development of Byzantine chronological writing:
the chronographical genre*

Ptolemy's legacy was best resumed in Constantinople precisely by Stephen of Alexandria, considered the first Byzantine astronomer and professor of mathematics under Heraclius (610–641). He apparently wrote the first Byzantine handbook of astronomy, a commentary to the *Handy Tables* inspired by the celebrated *Small Commentary* on Ptolemy's *Handy Tables* by Theon of Alexandria.⁵⁴ Stephen also developed the chronological implications of his mathematical-astronomical work, including in his commentary additional chapters on chronology and computistic that sometimes have been attributed to Heraclius himself.⁵⁵ His work

388–410. The *Fasti Heracliani* are preserved in *Leidensis* BPG 78, 55^v–63^v, following the Royal Canon.

⁵³ Although the last recorded consul seems to be Constans II in 632, E. Stein, "Post-consulat and αὐτοκρατορία," *AIPhO* 2 (1933/4) 869–912, suggested that the office existed until the ninth century, when Leo VI abolished the institution before 899 (*Nov.* 94). Peter of Alexandria seems to be the only source for the emperor's consulships between 630 and 886.

⁵⁴ The attribution, which dates back to Usener (*De Stephano Alexandrino* [Bonn 1880]), remains problematic. See the recent edition by J. Lempire, *Le commentaire astronomique aux Tables faciles de Ptolémée attribué à Stéphane d'Alexandrie* (Leuven 2016).

⁵⁵ On Stephen see Tihon, *Byzantion* 51 (1981) 607–608; W. Wolska-Conus, "Stéphanos d'Athènes et Stéphane d'Alexandrie. Essai d'identification et de biographie," *REB* 47 (1989) 5–89; Tihon, "Le calcul de la date de Pâques dans Stéphane-Héraclius," in B. Janssens et al. (eds.), *Philomathestatos. Studies in Greek Patristic and Byzantine Texts presented to Jacques Noret* (Leuven 2004) 625–

on computistic should be analysed in the context on an important debate raised in seventh-century Constantinople, involving also the author of the *Paschal Chronicle*, George the Monk and Presbyter, and Maximus the Confessor, with significant implications for historical chronology concerning the era of the world.⁵⁶ In 638/9 George wrote a treatise that would be essential in the formation of the so-called Byzantine era (5509/8 B.C.).⁵⁷ About two years later, Maximus (580–662) wrote a treatise in defense of the Alexandrian calculations, considered to be the Byzantine standard at the time and the referent of the “ecclesiastical tradition” (ἐκκλησιαστική παράδοσις).⁵⁸ The historical context of this controversy and its chronographical dimension remains to be studied.⁵⁹ This chronological debate had its parallel in the

646. This work was an adaptation to the Christian world of Theon’s commentary on the *Handy Tables* by Ptolemy, entitled Στεφάνου, μεγάλου φιλοσόφου καὶ Ἀλεξανδρέως διασάφησις ἐξ οἰκείων ὑποδειγμάτων τῆς τῶν προχείρων κανόνων ἐφόδου τοῦ Θεῶνος (*Vat.Urb.gr.* 80).

⁵⁶ Computistic is the science and mathematical-astronomical technique of the creation of calendars applied to theological and liturgical problems, especially the calculation of Easter, and thereby converted into a discipline characteristic of Medieval learning. See F. Wallis, “Number Mystique in Early Medieval Computus Texts,” in T. Koetsier and L. Bergmans (eds.), *Mathematics and the Divine: A Historical Study* (Amsterdam 2005) 183–184. For computistic chronology see in particular Philipp and Nothaf, *Dating the Passion*. For Byzantine chronology in general Grumel, *La chronologie*, remains unsurpassed.

⁵⁷ Ed. F. Diekamp, “Der Mönch und Presbyter Georgios, ein unbekannter Schriftsteller des 7. Jahrhunderts,” *BZ* 9 (1900) 14–51, 24–33.

⁵⁸ *PG* 19.1217–1280. Maximus’ treatise can be interpreted as a response to the innovations proposed by George in terms of arithmetic convenience. See J. Lempire, “Le calcul de la date de Pâques dans les traités de S. Maxime le Confesseur et de Georges, moine et prêtre,” *Byzantion* 77 (2007) 267–304, and Mosshammer, *The Easter Computus* 245 and 281–282. Although George and Maximus propose distinct world eras, both were based on Alexandrian chronology (see Lempire 299–300).

⁵⁹ According to Lempire, *Byzantion* 77 (2007) 303–304. To my knowledge, only N. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium* (London 1983) 59–60, has given credit to the preface of Theophylact Simocatta, which appears to imply that the

West, where it would become the subject of discussion in the Synod of Whitby (664), culminating in *The Reckoning of Time* (725) by Bede,⁶⁰ his defense of the Alexandrian computation of Dionysius Exiguus.

Stephen is also credited with the oldest extant version of the Royal Canon—from the Babylonian Nabonassar (747 B.C.) to the Byzantine Phocas (602–610)—the updating of which made full sense after Justinian, who had issued a decree on compulsory dating by regnal years, consulships, and indictions (*Nov.* 47, of 31 August 537).⁶¹ After Stephen, the Royal Canon continued to be regularly updated. It was not the preservation of any original work what mattered, but its usefulness as a chronological (and astronomical) tool. However, in addressing the development of Greek chronography after Stephen's time we face the problem of the lack of manuscripts dated to this period and of chronological works composed between the *Paschal Chronicle* and George Syncellus. To overcome this problem, we can turn to manuscript notes that can be dated to this period and to the chronological sources used by Syncellus at the beginning of the ninth century.

In her studies on the transmission of the *Handy Tables*, Anne Tihon has identified many uncial manuscripts from the ninth century, which in one case include notes from the eighth century (*Leidensis* BPG 78, copied under Leo V, 813–820). Tihon argues

patriarch Sergius (610–638) founded a chair of history and another of philosophy which would be taken over by Stephen. See the clear explanation of the mathematical-astronomical aspects of the controversy by Tihon, in *Philomathestatos* 625–646, and the attempt to clarify the historical context by J. Beaucamp et al., “Temps et histoire, I: Le prologue de la Chronique paschale,” *Trav.Mém* 7 (1979) 223–301.

⁶⁰ Considered the first textbook on computistic, having a place for both the didactic as well as the polemic. See the introduction by F. Wallis to her translation: *Bede. The Reckoning of Time* (Liverpool 1999). I adopt the main thesis of Mosshammer, *The Easter Computus*, regarding the contribution of the renowned Dionysius Exiguus.

⁶¹ Three versions of the Royal Canon were edited by Usener, *MGH AA* XIII.3 447–455, but not that contained in *Vat.gr.* 1291 (16^v–17^r).

that these notes do not prove that the *Tables* were actually read and used for astronomical purposes during this period, since they are attached only to the chronological tables, such as the Royal Canon. Therefore, the notes are a clear evidence for the use of the Royal Canon as a chronological tool in the eighth century. It has been suggested that the oldest version of the *Handy Tables* including the Royal Canon was updated in the eighth century, which has been associated with a revival of Byzantine astronomical activity but not with chronicle writing.⁶² In *Laur.gr.* 28/48, from the fourteenth century, the Royal Canon concludes with Leo III (716–740), suggesting that it was updated short after this reign.⁶³ It is widely assumed that astronomy was cultivated in the Byzantine Empire even during the so-called Dark Ages, but its implications for chronology and history have not been explored. Paul Magdalino significantly relates seventh-century astronomy to the official concern with the paschal calendar and the chronology of world history, but although he clearly

⁶² *Vat.gr.* 1291 has been dated to 753/4 by D. H. Wright, “The Date of the Vatican Illuminated Handy Tables of Ptolemy and Its Early Additions,” *BZ* 78 (1985) 355–363; to shortly after 802–811 by T. Janz, “The Scribes and the Date of the Vat. gr. 1291,” *Miscellanea Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae* 10 (2003) 159–180; to 813–820 by P. de Nolhac, *La Bibliothèque de Fulvio Orsini* (Paris 1887) 168–169; and to 829–842 by I. Spatharakis, “Some Observations on the Ptolemy Ms. Vat.Gr.1291: Its Date and the Two Initial Miniatures,” *BZ* 71 (1978) 41–49. In her edition (34), Tihon accepts the manuscript date proposed by Janz, based precisely on the royal list. For his part, Roueché, *JWarb* 74 (2011) 1–30, accepts the proposal of Wright, arguing for a revival of astronomy in the Iconoclast period. See I. Ševčenko, “The Search for the Past in Byzantium around the Year 800,” *DOP* 46 (1992) 279–293, at 279 n. 2, where he opts for 741–775 (he claims that Wright developed his own hypothesis). He also affirms that this manuscript contains the only correct list of emperors between Heraclius and Justinian II (among what he calls “early catalogues,” 287).

⁶³ A. Tihon, “L’astronomie byzantine à l’époque iconoclaste (VIII^e–IX^e siècles),” in P. L. Butzer and D. Lohrmann (eds.), *Science in Western and Eastern Civilization in Carolingian Times* (Basel 1993) 181–203, at 192–193 and “Les *Tables Faciles* de Ptolémée dans les manuscrits en onciale (IX^e–X^e siècles),” *RevHistTextes* 22 (1992) 47–87.

sees the paschal calendar as an instrument of religious harmony, he surprisingly affirms not to understand the reasons for studying chronology insofar as it deals only with the past.⁶⁴

Its Constantinopolitan transmission during the eighth century can explain how the Royal Canon came to George Syncellus at the beginning of the ninth century. He is the first chronographer who is known for sure to have used the Royal Canon after its updating by Stephen, although it is possible that it was used also by the author of the *Paschal Chronicle* (συνάδει δὲ ταῦτα καὶ τὰ προταπτόμενα παρὰ τῶν ἀξιολόγων ἀνδρῶν ἐν τῇ τῶν φωστήρων ψηφοφορία, “this is consistent with the prior determinations of reputable men in the calculation of the heavenly bodies”)⁶⁵ and it has left its imprint in computations such as that of the ninth-century Χρονογραφεῖον σύντομον preserved in *Vat.gr.* 2210, which could be based on earlier prototypes and sources.⁶⁶ Syncellus refers to the Canon as a widely-known chronological tool already handled by the Alexandrian critics of Eusebius, Panodorus and Annianus, on whose work the chronography of Syncellus himself is in turn our best source of information.⁶⁷ Adler and Tuffin concluded that Panodorus’ excessive dependence on “pagan scholars,” in a reference to the Royal Canon, was the reason why he failed to calculate the most important historical

⁶⁴ P. Magadalino, *L’orthodoxie des astrologues. La science entre le dogme et la divination à Byzance* (Paris 2006) 37.

⁶⁵ *Chronicon Paschale* 711.3–4 Dindorf; transl. M. and M. Whitby.

⁶⁶ See Roueché, *JWarb* 74 (2011) 11, 15. For the chronological compilation included in this manuscript see 416–418 below.

⁶⁷ It is widely believed that Panodorus must be credited with having incorporated the Royal Canon into the Christian chronographical tradition, but we really have no evidence that he was the first Christian chronographer to use it, because in fact Syncellus attests only his own lack of confidence in pre-Christian chronography. Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus* 226, claimed that Panodorus was the first to use the Royal Canon to fix the dates of Cyrus and Alexander. A slightly later likely candidate might be the compiler of the Greek original of the *Excerpta Latina Barbari*, who reveals the use of the Royal Canon in its second part, concerning the list of Alexandrian Ptolemies (see Burgess, *Traditio* 68 [2013] 3, 11, and nn.22, 45, 49).

date from a Christian perspective, that of the Incarnation, which Panodorus situates in A.M. 5493 and Syncellus in A.M. 5500.⁶⁸

Syncellus also mentions an “ecclesiastical computation” (ἐκκλησιαστικὴ στοιχείωσις) which he uses as a source in combination with the “astronomical canon.”⁶⁹ Adler and Tuffin believe that this “ecclesiastical computation” would be a list that, while overlapping the “astronomical canon,” i.e. the Royal Canon, extended the absolute chronology of the Christian era and that of the history of the church and reconciled it with the Christian chronographical tradition, “a work unknown either to Africanus or to Eusebius.”⁷⁰ If they are right, this computation would be part of a chronological work unknown to us, but obviously earlier than Syncellus. Nevertheless, the “ecclesiastical computation” might not have been an expanded list of kings and patriarchs, but a mere calculation according to the Alexandrian era of Incarnation, an indispensable chronological complement to the Ptolemaic lists or to any others from a Christian point of view. By “ecclesiastical” Syncellus refers to a computation—a time reckoning—of impeccable Christian orthodox credentials. That excludes Eusebius, whose calculations were based on *anni Abrahami*, not *Adami*, and who was suspect of heterodoxy.⁷¹ In contrast, Syncellus relied heavily on the Alexandrians, and the computation of Annianus was considered in his age as a chronographical standard and as an exponent of the “ecclesiastical tradition,” as we have seen.⁷² Although Syncellus follows the “ecclesiastical computation,” he does not ignore the Royal

⁶⁸ W. Adler and P. Tuffin, *The Chronography of George Synkellos* (Oxford 2002) lxiii, and Sync. 35.31–36, 376.26–378.18, 396.12–397.7–10 (ed. A. A. Mosshammer, *Georgii Syncelli Ecloga chronographica* [Leipzig 1984]).

⁶⁹ For example Sync. 246.19–247.29.

⁷⁰ Adler and Tuffin, *The Chronography of George Synkellos* xlv–xlvi.

⁷¹ See n.26 above.

⁷² As his authorities, Syncellus mentions Hippolytus, Annianus, and Maximus Confessor (381.23–382.4). See Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus* 226–229 and 247–249. He identifies the “ecclesiastical computation” with Annianus’ computation, but Serruys, *BZ* 22 (1913) 1–36, showed that they were clearly different.

Canon as a reference tool, discussing it and comparing it with his own chronology. This could be explained because the Royal Canon, as mentioned above, maintained its usefulness regardless of the era that was used, to which the years of Nabonassar or Philip could be easily converted, which in turn explains why it was updated and handed down for centuries until reaching Syn-cellus.

As we have seen, regnal lists and calculations of the world era—mostly on a computistic basis—were the foundations of Byzantine historical chronology, but it is necessary to distinguish between actual contributions to chronography understood as a field of study and the mere transmission or copying of texts. In order to properly distinguish between them, we need to define different chronological parameters.⁷³ The most significant chronological parameters are ἐποχάί, intervals, time frames, and synchronisms, all important and preserving their comparative value regardless of the debates on the era, which extended over centuries. Further studies could focus on secondary chronological parameters and also on precise names and dates connecting the lists. In addition, the many examples of Byzantine chronological writing that have come down to us differ in content and structure, elements pertinent to the definition of genre.⁷⁴ On the basis of their chronological parameters and their

⁷³ To delve into these issues a detailed study of these texts should be carried out, with due attention to the problem of their transmission, but this falls far beyond the scope of this article.

⁷⁴ Emphasis has been placed recently on the need to distinguish between actual chronicles and other chronicle sub-genres with which they are often confused, citing some of the distinct variants: “Old Testament genealogies, regnal lists ... and/or episcopal lists ...; the many similar but much later Byzantine compendia of multiple regnal and patriarchal lists; and chronological calculations (*computationes* and *supputationes*)” (Burgess and Kulikowski, *Mosaics of Time* I 29–30). R. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It. A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton 1997) 434–437, devotes a brief section to the so-called “short chronologies,” designating the first with the conventional title of “Short Chronology ad annum 818.”

genre, we will discuss here some relevant examples of Byzantine chronological writing from the ninth and tenth centuries.⁷⁵

A *Χρονογραφικὸν σύντομον* has been attributed to patriarch Nicephorus (806–815), although this attribution might be based on his prestige as champion of orthodoxy and his reputation as author of a historical breviary.⁷⁶ It was edited by De Boor, but his edition was based on *Vat.gr.* 977 (tenth century) and without attention to four older manuscripts, as highlighted by Mango.⁷⁷ In the *Vat.gr.* version—as well as in that of Oxford, Christ Church, *Wake* 5 (late ninth century)—it consists of the following *series regum*: chronology of the Old Testament from Adam to the Babylonian captivity; kings of Persia; Ptolemies; Roman emperors to Michael II (820–829); Roman empresses; kings from

⁷⁵ It would be interesting to probe further into their categorization as based on the Greek examples, and the history of the lists and their transmission in Greek in connection both with the Latin tradition and with other fields of literature and knowledge such as astronomy.

⁷⁶ Ed. C. de Boor, *Nicephori patriarchi Constantinopolitani opuscula historica* (Leipzig 1880) 79–135. The so-called *Anonymous Matritensis* likely bears the title of *χρονογραφία σύντομος* because it is based on Nicephorus' work. Drawing on this source, the anonymous author includes many synchronisms between sacred and secular history, aiming to locate, in the frame provided by Nicephorus' chronological data, the ancient kings of Egypt, Assyria, or Greece, the euhemeristically interpreted gods and heroes of Greek mythology, the foundation of some important cities, and the major poets and philosophers of the ancient Greek world. The compiler of this text, working under Basil I (867–886), slavishly followed Nicephorus' supposedly original computations. His aim was not to provide a new chronology but to complete an existing chronology with synchronisms, mostly deriving from Eusebius' *Canones*. Therefore, it is not a genuine chronological work.

⁷⁷ C. Mango, *Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople. Short History* (Washington 1990) 2–4, and for the manuscript transmission and text editions G. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica* (Berlin 1958) 456–457; M. E. Colonna, *Gli storici bizantini dal IV al XV secolo* (Naples 1956) 87–89. Together with the works of Syncellus and Theophanes, the *Χρονογραφικὸν σύντομον* was translated into Latin by Anastasius Bibliothecarius and its success in the Slavic world was even greater. For the text of Anastasius' Latin translation see the edition of Theophanes by De Boor, *Theophanis chronographia* II (Leipzig 1885) 36–59.

the ten tribes of Israel in Samaria; high priests of the Jews; Constantinopolitan patriarchs to Theodotus (815–821); popes of Rome; patriarchs of Jerusalem; patriarchs of Alexandria; patriarchs of Antioch; the canon of the Bible. Other versions such as that of the London *BM Add* 19390 (early tenth century)—as well as in that of the Moscow *Hist. Mus.* 231 (A.D. 932) and Jerusalem *Patr.* (tenth century)—include only five lists: Biblical, Persian, Ptolemaic, Roman, and Constantinopolitan patriarchs. Since this text has not received any particular attention apart from the editors of Nicephorus’ works, De Boor and Mango, it is impossible to know which came first, the expanded or the abbreviated version. In any case, the work is a chronograph—a compendium of regnal lists—that, as edited by De Boor, includes at least two different computations, one supposedly original and a later *supputatio* based on different chronological parameters.⁷⁸ This *supputatio* diverges from the most frequent sequence of time frames of pre-exilic biblical history (Adam-Flood, Flood-Abraham, Abraham-Exodus, Exodus-First Temple, First Temple-Captivity) and uses the building of the Tower of Babel as a chronological milestone (Flood-Tower, Tower-Abraham). These time frames have no parallel in any other *supputatio* except the one found at the end of De Boor’s edition of George the Monk, which includes practically identical time frames and intervals.⁷⁹ On the other hand, this *supputatio* mentions an event in the life of Abraham that is not usually taken as a chronological landmark because the Bible does not give any indication of when it occurred, the so-called second covenant.⁸⁰ Both *supputationes* give the interval 950 for the time frame “Flood-Abraham,” which is not found in any other chronography under consideration here, although it is nearer to Africanus (940) and Eusebius

⁷⁸ Ed. de Boor 84–85 and 102, respectively. There is no *supputatio* in London *BM Add* 19390.

⁷⁹ Ed. C. de Boor, *Georgii Monachi chronicon* (Leipzig 1904) 804.

⁸⁰ Ἀβραὰμ τῶν διχοτομημάτων: Gen 15:1–21.

(942) that to the Septuagint (1072) and later chronographers.⁸¹ On the other hand, the supposedly original computation of Nicephorus, as edited by De Boor, gives the interval Flood-Exodus of the Septuagint as 3689, a Eusebian figure, even though the total must be 3819.⁸² Was this kind of irresponsible use of Eusebian dates—and amending of the Septuagint chronology—what infuriated Syncellus?⁸³ This brief review of Nicephorus’ supposed chronography according to the chronological parameters described above allows us to suppose that the extant versions of this work seem to be the incoherent product of a compiler not particularly versed in chronological matters and that De Boor’s edition cannot be taken as the reconstruction of any original product of chronological learning.

In sharp contrast, Syncellus’ is the learned work of a true chronographer. Apart from a few inconsistencies of detail—attributable to its likely unfinished state, its considerable length and complexity, as well as to its transmission—his chronography as a whole is conceived as a polemic against Eusebius and also can be seen as an effort to distinguish Africanus’ chronographical tradition from Eusebius’, traditions which Syncellus had good reason to regard as undesirably intertwined. He had also the clear will to distinguish between these two traditions from the point of view of doctrinal orthodoxy, which he associated

⁸¹ The mistake 950 instead of 940 is attributable to confusion of letters.

⁸² This was corrected by a later copyist, edited in parallel by De Boor, but he too was wrong in writing, in an exactly opposite sense, that ἀπὸ δὲ Ἀδὰμ κατὰ τοὺς ο΄ ἔτη ,γγπθ΄, κατὰ δὲ ἄλλους ,γωκθ΄, “from Adam according to the Septuagint, 3689 years; according to others, 3829 years.” For its part, London *Add MS* 19390, preserving a supposedly older version of the chronography, gives slightly different figures equally wrong: ἀπὸ δὲ Ἀδὰμ ἔτη ,γχοθ΄ (3679) κατὰ τοὺς Ἑβδομήκοντα. Only two of these mistakes—3829 instead of 3819 and 3679 instead of 3689—are attributable to confusion of letters.

⁸³ According to strictly chronological parameters, I find untenable the attribution of this chronography to George Syncellus as it has come to us, as has been suggested by J. Signes, “Theophanes at the Time of Leo VI,” in M. Jankowiak and F. Montinaro (eds.), *Studies in Theophanes* (Paris 2015) 159–176, esp. 169–176.

with the Alexandrian critics of Eusebius and in the second instance with Africanus.⁸⁴ In terms of genre, Syncellus' work is an annotated chronography emulating the renowned works of Africanus and Eusebius.⁸⁵ Its main controversial point is the date of the Incarnation, as expected from a (Christian) theological perspective, even more after Iconoclasm. Syncellus not only included regnal lists and *supputationes*, but also analysed and commented on the work of his most famous predecessors, producing an exceptional example of a genre which the later tradition mostly reduced to lists of names and numbers.⁸⁶ If not in terms of formal genre, given its state as a scholarly tract of technical knowledge and difficult reading, Syncellus' work left a clear imprint in later Byzantine chronological writing, which incorporated his computations.⁸⁷

The so-called Vatican chronicle is in fact a chronography compiling different chronological writings in *Vat.gr.* 2210 (ff. 163^r–187^v), which have been dated between Michael III (842–867) and Basil I (867–886).⁸⁸ It is a good example of Syncellus' worst suspicions about the lack of ἀκρίβεια in chronological matters. The first text bears the title of Χρονογραφεῖον σύντομον ἐκ τοῦ Εὐσεβίου τοῦ Παμφίλου πονημάτων. It includes a *supputatio* from Adam until Michael III and Theodora according to the Septuagint (63.1–34), another one according to Akylas' Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (64.1–13), a chronological note on the Olympic era (64.14–22), and another one

⁸⁴ For the Alexandrians Panodorus and Annianus see n.31 above.

⁸⁵ See Burgess and Kulikowski, *Mosaics of Time* I 227–230.

⁸⁶ Syncellus' chronography is in fact the most important witness of the other two, which are preserved, fragmentarily, through the indirect tradition (Africanus) or translations (Eusebius).

⁸⁷ See below on the Συναγωγὴ χρόνων preserved in *Matrit.* BN 4701.

⁸⁸ It was edited by A. Mai, *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio e Vaticanis codicibus* I.2 (Rome 1825) 1–39, and by A. Schoene, *Eusebii chronicorum libri II* I (Berlin 1866–75) 58–102. See Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus* 329–345, who dated it to 854. Ševčenko, *DOP* 46 (1992) 284–287, gives it the misleading title Vatican chronicle.

about a famous synchronism between the Olympiads and the Passion according to Phlegon of Tralles (64.23–65.5), recorded both by Africanus and Eusebius. After two brief chronologies of Israel plunderings (65.6–41 and 65.42–67.50) and two excerpts about the *translatio imperii* (68.1–22) and about the chronology of the Gospels (68.23–37), we find a compendium of lists including all the patriarchates, beginning with the Popes of Rome, and also a significant number of regnal lists: Chaldea and Arabia, Assyria, Egypt, Sicyon, Argos, Mycenae, Athens, Lacedaemon, Corinth, Latium, Rome (kings), Media, Macedonia, Alexander's successors in Egypt and Syria, Lydia, Babylonia, Persia (Achaemenids), Israel (kings, high priests and kings under the Romans), Persia (Sasanians) and Muslim caliphs (68.38–97.23).⁸⁹ The last text is a brief chronography taken from the works of Epiphanius of Salamis, including only an Old Testament chronology and the regnal lists of Persia, Egypt, and Rome-Byzantium (97.24–102.45).⁹⁰ Strong similarities in format and content between this last brief chronography and the Royal Canon have been noticed.⁹¹ This text seems to have been attached to the chronological writings in the manuscript during the reign of Basil I (867–886), but its core could be traced back to an earlier period as we see from its sources. The *Χρονογραφείον* itself uses the era of Philip as chronological landmark, revealing the influence of the Royal Canon. Since it was composed under Michael III, it might be taken as evidence that Syncellus was not very successful in banishing Eusebius and “pagan scholars” from Byzantine chronography.

⁸⁹ Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus* 330, who considers this text a most negligible work, nevertheless remarks the great number of lists included, which only can be compared with the number of the lists found in Eusebius, the *Excerpta Latina Babari*, and Syncellus. He wrongly analyses it as a unit.

⁹⁰ Adler, *JThS* 41 (1990) 472–501, has suggested that Epiphanius might have used as source a work combining Africanus and Eusebius which through his own work or that of Malalas could have exerted a great influence on later Byzantine chronography.

⁹¹ Roueché, *JWarb* 74 (2011) 11, 15.

For its part, the *Συναγωγή χρόνων* contained in *Matritensis* BN 4701 (olim 121) is a tenth-century version of a third-century Greek chronography already translated into Latin as *Liber generationis*, originally conceived as a guide to Old Testament chronology.⁹² As we have seen, we have a partial version of this lost third-century work in the compilation known as *Excerpta Latina Barbari*. There is no evidence of its relation to the chronicle apparently written by a Hippolytus—to my knowledge, there is no textual evidence of this chronicle at all—although Bauer’s edition was based on the contrary premise, that *Matritensis* BN 4701 contains the Greek original of the beginning of Hippolytus’ chronicle, and this view has exercised an enormous influence.⁹³ In this tenth-century version we find an abbreviated and interpolated chronography, deleting most of the lists and expanded instead with geographical information provided by the *diamerismoi* and the *stadiasmoi*. In the initial part, which provides the necessary introduction to biblical history, we find Syncellus’ calculations of the interval between Adam and the division of the Earth (A.M. 2767, p.44 Bauer).

Karpozilos believes all these works to be a product of the ninth century, with Mango and Ševčenko.⁹⁴ He also considers their content to be derived from the fourth/fifth-century Greek prototype of the *Excerpta Latina Barbari* and its later adaptations. He finds no proof of their reelaboration during the so-called Dark Ages and identifies two turning points in their content, the reign of Anastasius (491–518) and the mid seventh century, which often occasion substantial gaps in the content or coincide with (the beginning of) later up-datings. He includes a classification of these works, distinguishing between three basic types: universal

⁹² See Burgess, *Traditio* 68 (2013) 8 n.13. Ed. A. Bauer, *Die Chronik des Hippolytos im Matritensis Graecus 121* (Leipzig 1905), repr. A. Bauer and R. Helm, *Hippolytus Werke IV Die Chronik* (Berlin 1955).

⁹³ See n.49 above and Burgess and Kulikowski, *Mosaics of Time* I 366–371.

⁹⁴ See n.2 above, and C. Mango, “The Tradition of Byzantine Chronography,” *HarvUkrSt* 12/3 (1988/9) 360–372; Ševčenko, *DOP* 46 (1992) 279–293.

chronicles, short chronicles (with names and *supputationes*), and local chronicles. To the first type he assigns the *Excerpta Latina Barbari*, Peter of Alexandria's chronicle, and the *Anonymus Matritensis*; to the second, the short chronography attributed to Patriarch Nicephorus, the *Συναγωγή χρόνων* edited by De Boor,⁹⁵ and the *Χρονογραφεῖον σύντομον* included in *Vat.gr.* 2210. The third group (local chronicles) is beyond the scope of this article. He also adds that the chronological tables included in many manuscripts may belong to a fourth type.

For her part, Samodurova identifies another different three types of Byzantine “short chronicles”: short compendia of recent history (*χρονικὸν νέον*), universal chronicles (*χρονικὸν παλαιόν*), and chronological notes or lists of dates restricted to the summing up of the years from Creation or other historical milestones (*ψηῆφος ἐτῶν*), that is, *supputationes*. In her opinion, the difference between the first two types lies largely in the structuring principle, which in the first type is annalistic and in the second onomastic. According to its content, she further divides the second type into four groups: those chronicles beginning with Adam, those beginning with Abraham, those beginning with the Chaldean and Assyrian monarchies followed by the other ancient reigns until Rome and Byzantium, and compendia of regnal lists including the duration of the reigns and the most important events attached to them.⁹⁶

I believe that the classifications of Karpozilos and Samodurova both need revision in light of the most recent research on the chronicle genre and tradition, as they are based on unclear notions of the genre and on an imprecise use of terms. In both classifications there is a persistent tendency to call “chronicles” what are in fact “chronographies” and to describe as “universal” the compendium of regnal lists of the ancient empires which characterized the chronographical genre since the Hellenistic period. Thus, the work of Peter of Alexandria and the *Anonymus*

⁹⁵ *Nicephori patriarchi Constantinopolitani opuscula historica* (Leipzig 1880) 218–226

⁹⁶ Samodurova, *VV* 27 (1967) 153–161, at 155–158.

Matritensis are not universal chronicles, but chronographies. Nor is the *Excerpta Latina Barbari* a universal chronicle, but a chronography. For its part, the Χρονογραφικὸν σύντομον attributed to the patriarch Nicephorus is in fact a short chronography, a compendium of regnal and episcopal lists, and not a universal chronicle as described by Samodurova. The onomastic structuring principle noticed by her is characteristic of the chronographic genre, while the annalistic one is typical for the chronicle. As to the *Συναγωγή χρόνων* edited by De Boor and the *Χρονογραφεῖον σύντομον* included in *Vat.gr.* 2210, the first is a short chronography ending with a *supputatio*, as we have seen, and the latter a “chronographic compilation” made up of three different texts of a chronographic kind without a clear chronological arrangement between them—two *supputationes* accompanied by a chronological note, a short chronography, and another chronography even shorter.

3. *Conclusions*

Byzantine studies have largely neglected chronological writing because of their subliterary nature. The focus on historiographical narrative can be also associated with the supposed scarcity of proper chronicles—i.e. texts chronologically structured with a minimum of narrative—and with the prevailing view of historiography as a source for history and not as an object of study in itself. However, chronological writing is not only a source for history, but a manifestation of historical culture. From the viewpoint of Christian historical thought, it bears essential information about important facts. The ancient kings characterized by Mango as “ghostly presences” of “pagan prehistory” were certainly associated in Byzantine culture with moral virtues, decisive events, particular periods, and important analogies (or polarities), among other things.⁹⁷ And chronological writing also had a practical and an antiquarian function.

⁹⁷ Mango, *HarvUkrSt* 12/3 (1988/9) 372. See the construction of synchronisms in Hellenistic historiography on a didactic or moral basis (Asheri, *SCI* 11 [1991/2] 52–89), or the self-identification of Byzantium with Israel (P. Magdalino and R. Nelson, “Introduction,” in *The Old Testament in Byzantium* [Washington] 2010 1–38).

Byzantine chronological writing was based on the Hellenistic chronographical tradition—halfway between astronomy and history—as it was received and reworked by Christian chronographers. From their precedents, Christian chronographers took the regnal or consular lists and synchronized them with biblical history, establishing a chronology for the whole history from Creation which incorporated their particular notion of world era—whether millenarian or not. Different chronological proposals were made, among which those of Africanus and Eusebius stood out. Neither of their chronographical works has come down to us, but Byzantine chronographies incorporated their *series regum* or worked on them. Their legacy permeated virtually all Byzantine chronological writing, but it is extremely difficult to assess in the present state of research, in the absence of reliable editions and studies of Byzantine chronographies. The Royal Canon, relatively well studied as an independent list, shows that particularly renowned examples of regnal lists could be uninterruptedly updated over centuries. Even though we do not have manuscripts dated to the seventh and eighth centuries, the sources of later chronographies and the evidence of the preserved manuscripts suggest that chronographic texts were regularly copied and updated. The late eighth century and the early ninth seem to be a particularly important period in the history of Byzantine chronological writing. If Late Antiquity was the age of the expansion of Christianity, with apologetics playing a major role in Christian literature, the eighth and ninth centuries were a time of major conflicts within Christianity that gave new life to the Greek chronicle tradition—Syncellus and Theophanes—creating the need for a new chronological framework that was free of unorthodox connotations. The chronicle genre and its chronological subgenres—in particular chronography—adopted then a new literary function, replacing apologetics with polemics.

Controversy might have invalidated the chronological arguments of the first book of Eusebius' chronicle in their original terms, but the Greek chronicle tradition took advantage of his *series regum* to continue developing historical chronology in

various formats and structures, constantly correcting, expanding, updating, and annotating them. A long and rich tradition behind George Syncellus can explain how he undertook such an ambitious revision of the Eusebian chronology at the beginning of the ninth century. To do so he must have had powerful reasons, textual resources, and outstanding precedents to analyse and criticise. His work would have been meaningless if Eusebius had not been read and known in any form in the Greek-speaking world. Byzantine chronological writing deserves a detailed study in its own right. A great deal of research remains to be done in this very interesting field which is related to, among others, mathematical astronomy, narrative historiography, Christian polemics, and historiographic thought.⁹⁸

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Dept. of Classical Philology
Univ. of Valladolid
Valladolid, Spain
varona@fyl.uva.es

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