

## Citation style

Selvaggi, Rocco: Rezension über: Antonio Palo (ed.), *La Cronaca dei Due Imperi. II: Il "Chronicon" di Idazio Vescovo (A.D. 379-468 & Fast. Hyd.)*, Eboli: Centro culturale studi storici - "Il saggio", 2022, in: *Plekos. Elektronische Zeitschrift für Rezensionen und Berichte zur Erforschung der Spätantike*, 26 (2024), S. 51-60, heruntergeladen über Website



## copyright

This article may be downloaded and/or used within the private copying exemption. Any further use without permission of the rights owner shall be subject to legal licences (§§ 44a-63a UrhG / German Copyright Act).

A MULTIVOLUME ITALIAN EDITION OF LATE ANTIQUE  
CHRONICLES (WITH TRANSLATION AND NOTES)

La Cronaca dei Due Imperi. Vol. I: Il *Chronicon* di Marcellino Comes (A.D. 379–534 & *Auctarium*). A cura di Antonio Palo. Testo latino a fronte. Eboli/Santa Maria di Castellabate: Centro Culturale Studi Storici – “Il Saggio” 2021. 178 pp. € 21.00. ISBN: 978-88-93603-11-9.

La Cronaca dei Due Imperi. Vol. II: Il *Chronicon* di Idazio Vescovo (A.D. 379–468 & *Fasti Hydatiani*). A cura di Antonio Palo. Testo latino a fronte. Eboli/Santa Maria di Castellabate: Centro Culturale Studi Storici – “Il Saggio” 2022. 121 pp., 2 maps. € 19.00. ISBN: 978-88-93603-48-5.

La Cronaca dei Due Imperi. Vol. III: *Chronica Theodericiana-Valesiana* (A.D. 474–526), *Consularia Hauniensia* (A.D. 455–641), *Chronicon Aven-ticense* (A.D. 455–581). A cura di Antonio Palo. Testo latino a fronte. Eboli/Santa Maria di Castellabate: Centro Culturale Studi Storici – “Il Saggio” 2022. 137 pp., 2 maps. € 20.00. ISBN: 978-88-93603-57-7.

La Cronaca dei Due Imperi. Vol. IV: Il *Chronicon* di Prospero d’Aquitania (A.D. 379–455), *Chronica Gallica ad 452* (A.D. 379–452), *Chronica Gallica ad 511* (A.D. 451–511). A cura di Antonio Palo. Testo latino a fronte. Eboli/Santa Maria di Castellabate: Centro Culturale Studi Storici – “Il Saggio” 2023. 128 pp., 4 maps. € 22.00. ISBN: 978-88-93604-11-6.

Late antique Latin chronicles, though crucial for comprehending the intricate history of the fifth and sixth centuries, have been relatively overlooked. This is not surprising, as their concise style and the fragmented way in which they present information render them more challenging than the works of more cohesive and renowned authors. Antonio Palo’s endeavour is therefore both intriguing and courageous. He has created a captivating and eloquently titled book series (“La Cronaca dei Due imperi”, i. e. “The Chronicle of the Two Empires”) that translates as well as comments some of the most significant late antique chronicles. Each book in the series adheres to a con-

sistent format, comprising an introduction, the Latin text with a facing Italian translation, and concluding notes. Nevertheless, there are variations in certain structural elements across the volumes.

The first volume deals with the *Chronicon* of Marcellinus Comes. The introduction spans a few pages (pp. 3–7), in which Palo outlines the manuscript tradition of the text and offers a brief overview of both the work and its author. The introduction concludes with a section titled “note alla pubblicazione”, in which Palo clarifies that his book marks the second translation of the *Chronicon* into a modern language,<sup>1</sup> the first in Italian, and explains that his choice of Italian as the language for the translation is motivated by what he argues are the limitations of English in rendering Latin texts. He also wished to underscore the linguistic affinity between Italian and Latin, and thereby enhancing the text’s usability. Additionally, Palo cautions that his translation prioritizes literal accuracy over artistic expression, given the often terse and elliptical nature of many chronicles.

Palo’s strength lies in delivering a translation that remains faithful to the original Latin text. There are, however, instances where he appears to ignore the semantic nuances of the Latin language. One such case is his translation of the verb *ingredior* concerning the sack of Rome by Geiseric which Palo renders as “to come” (“[...] dall’Africa giunge a Roma [...]”), yet “to enter”, or even “to attack” would be more appropriate, considering the verb’s broader semantic field.<sup>2</sup> The account of the Bulgarian attacks on Thrace provides another case in point: Palo translates *saepe* as “already” (“[...] la già depredata Tracia [...]”), whereas a more accurate rendering would be “often, frequently” to capture the frequency implied by the Latin term.<sup>3</sup> A third case regards the account of Theoderic’s march to the Thracian city of Anaplum: Palo asserts that the Gothic king was repulsed (“[...] è ricacciato immedia-

1 It would have been appropriate to also indicate here – and not only in the bibliography – that this is B. Croke (ed.): *The Chronicle of Marcellinus. A Translation and Commentary (with a Reproduction of Mommsen’s Edition of the Text)*. Sydney 1995 (*Byzantina Australiensia* 7).

2 Marcell. chron. 455: *Gensericus Rex Wandalorum [...] ex Africa Romam ingressus est [...]*. For *ingredior*, see W. Ehlers: *ingredior*. In: *ThLL* VII 1, 1954, col. 1567–1575, col. 1567, l. 53–73.

3 Marcell. chron. 455: *Consueta gens Bulgarorum depredatam saepe Thraciam [...] iterum devastavit*. For *saepe*, see E. Forcellini: *saepe*. In: *LTL* IV, 2nd ed.: 1945, p. 190.

tamente”), whereas Marcellinus Comes’ use of *revertor* implies that it was Theoderic’s own decision to withdraw.<sup>4</sup>

The notes, which according to the introduction should guide the reader towards a deeper understanding of historical events and philological debates, are not as successful in that. They are on the whole too concise and hence fail to accomplish their purpose.<sup>5</sup> Exemplary are instances where the notes merely provide the full name of a character mentioned in the *Chronicon*. This is notably evident in the case of (almost) all the consuls mentioned for dating. While Palo acknowledges that biographical details may be elusive for some of them, one wonders about the value of labelling Quintus Aurelius Memmius Symmachus, a renowned figure of the period, as a “senator” without offering further contextual information (p. 162, n. 149).

The volume concludes with a brief but thorough bibliography (pp. 176–178), despite some inconsistencies (e. g. the inclusion or omission of publishers). It omits, however, the important work by László Várady on the relationship between Jordanes and Marcellinus Comes, as well as the one by Marco Cristini on Ostrogothic politics and diplomacy, specifically concerning the *Auctarium Additamentum*.<sup>6</sup>

The second volume includes Hydatius’ *Chronicon*, along with an appendix on the *Fasti Hydatiani*, and follows the same structure as the first volume. In the brief introduction (pp. 3–5), Palo presents the chronicle, providing a manuscript list, an index of translations into modern languages and Hydatius’ short biography. In the “nota alla pubblicazione” Palo also elucidates the triple dating method employed in the *Chronicon* (Spanish aeras, Olympiads, *anni a nativitate Abraham*). Notably, he adds the relative *Anno Domini* and by doing so enhances the text’s accessibility. Once again, Palo demonstrates his competence as a translator, adept at elucidating the Latin text despite its terse chronicle style. Yet a few errors and misinterpretations of Hydatius’ text reduce the quality of this otherwise helpful translation.

4 Marcell. chron. 481: [...] *nulli tamen Romanorum noxius continuo reversus est* [...]. For *revertor*, see E. Forcellini: *revertor*. In: LTL III, 2nd ed. 1945, p. 135.

5 The page indicating the notes section, which on the other hand is present in the other volumes, is missing.

6 L. Várady: Jordanes-Studien. Jordanes und das ‘Chronicon’ des Marcellinus Comes. Die Selbständigkeit des Jordanes. In: *Chiron* 6, 1976, pp. 441–487; M. Cristini: The Diplomacy of Totila (541–552). In: *StudMed* 61, 2020, pp. 29–48.

For example, the following passage that discusses the synod of Toledo in 400,<sup>7</sup> contains significant grammatical inaccuracies that alter the original meaning of Hydatius' text: “[...] Sinfosio e Dictinio, e altri con i loro vescovi della provincia Galizia, condannano i seguaci Priscilliani e la loro blasfema eresia [...]”: First, *episcopi* does not agree with *his*, but with *alii*; second, *Priscilliani* is not an adjective for *sectatores*, but a substantive in the genitive singular; third, *eius* is not plural, but singular. The most glaring mistake is the failure to recognize that *sectatores* is not an accusative, but a nominative, matching Symphosius and Dictinius. As a result, the meaning of Hydatius' notice is distorted: Symphosius and Dictinius themselves were followers of Priscillian! The accusative directed by *condemnant* is only *haeresem*, while Palo incorrectly assumes that *sectatores* is also an accusative, leading him to add a conjunction to complete the sentence meaningfully. A more accurate translation of this passage would be: “[...] Symphosius, Dictinius and with them other bishops of the province of *Gallaecia*, all followers of Priscillian, condemned his most blasphemous heresy [...]”.

Another example is the mistranslation of the passage relating the initial unrest between the Suebi and the Galicians.<sup>8</sup> Palo states that the Suebi, led by King Hermeric, plundered the distant areas of Galicia, which remained secure within its fortifications thanks to the local population. They then resolutely restored the peace that their actions had violated, involving both massacre and the imprisonment of the families that they controlled (“I Suebi che sotto il re Ermerico depredano le zone lontane della Galizia, che nelle fortificazioni si teneva al sicuro grazie alla popolazione, riportano con risoluzione la pace che con i loro atti avevano violato, in parte con il massacro, in parte con la prigionia delle famiglie che controllavano”). The first inaccuracy concerns the localization of the Suebian raids and revolves around the misinterpretation of the adjective *medius* which means “central”.<sup>9</sup> The Suebi did not plunder distant regions, but rather the central areas of Galicia, which were still fully under Galician control. The translation and historical reconstruc-

7 Hyd. chron. 31: [...] *Symphosius et Dictinius et alii cum his Gallaeciae provinciae episcopi Priscilliani sectatores haeresem eius blasphemissimam [...] condemnant.*

8 Hyd. chron. 91: *Suevi sub Hennerico rege medias partes Gallaeciae depraedantes per plebem quae castella tutiora retinebat, acta suorum partim caede, partim captivitate pacem quam ruperant familiarum quae tenebantur redhibitione restaurant.*

9 For *medius*, see V. Bulhart: *medius*. In: ThLL VIII, 1939, col. 581–598, col. 582, l. 13–62.

tion of the subsequent events are also flawed, possibly from a misunderstanding of the ablative absolute introduced by *acta*. The victims of the massacre and imprisonment are not the local population (*plebs*), but the Suebi themselves, who subsequently renew the peace they had violated. The return of families (*familiarum* [...] *redhibitione*) is indeed a clause of this peace and is not syntactically or conceptually linked to the imprisonment (*captivitate*) of the Suebi. A more accurate translation of the entire passage would be:

The Suebi who under King Hermeric plundered the central regions of Galicia, renewed the peace, which they had broken, by returning the families they held, when a part of them [i. e. the Suebi] was massacred, a part captured by the population who occupied the safest fortresses.<sup>10</sup>

A third example of mistranslation concerns the passage about the peace between the Suebi and the Galicians in 432.<sup>11</sup> Palo asserts that the Suebian king Hermeric continually benefited from peace with the Galicians (“[...] Ermerico che continuamente trae vantaggio dalla pace coi Galiziani [...]”). Yet it is unclear why he ascribes this meaning to the verb *praedor*, which belongs to an opposite semantic field (i. e. “plunder”).<sup>12</sup> Additionally, it seems that Palo does not link the accusative *pacem* to *reformat*, but to *praedabatur* – a connection that is undoubtedly incorrect. The accurate translation is instead that Hermeric renewed the peace with the Galicians whom he assiduously plundered.

The notes in the appendix (pp. 99–112) are more detailed than in the previous volume, although they could benefit from additional historical information in some instances. Even a brief description of some significant events of the fifth century, such as the *foedus* of 411 among the barbarians for the partition of the Iberian Peninsula (Hyd. chron. 49) and the Vandal sack of Rome of 455 (chron. 167), would have been helpful to the reader’s understanding of the text. On the other hand, certain notes offer genuinely

10 For *castella*, I preferred a generic translation as “fortresses”. The real nature of the *castella* still keeps busy scholarship on Suebi, since it is not clear to what refers Hydatius with this term. See P. C. Díaz Martínez: *El reino suevo (411–585)*. Madrid 2011 (Akal Universitaria 312), pp. 169–174.

11 Hyd. chron. 100: *Regresso Censorio ad palatium Hermericus pacem cum Gallaecis, quos praedebatur assidue, sub interventu episcopali datis sibi reformat obsidibus.*

12 For *praedor*, see F. Wiesinger: *praedor*. In: ThLL X 2.1, 1985, col. 587–590, col. 589, l. 74 – col. 590, l. 26. For *reformat*, see A. Viredaz: *reformat*. In: ThLL XI 2, 2016, col. 661–666, col. 665, l. 49 – col. 666, l. 23.

original comments. Two cases in particular are notable. The first one concerns the criterion used in the division of the Iberian Peninsula among the barbarians in 411: Palo suggests that Hydatius may have intended to evoke the partition of the garments of Christ during the Passion (p. 101, n. 38). The second case relates to the controversial identification of the *plebs Aunonensis* (p. 106, n. 124), which Palo places near the ancient city of *Tude* (western Galicia).

An excellent map of the Iberian Peninsula (pp. 113–114), the author of which is not indicated, and an index of places (pp. 115–117) follow. While both enhance Palo's work, it is regrettable that they were not also included in the first book. The second volume concludes with a well-structured bibliography (pp. 118–121), where readers will appreciate the inclusion of several texts on the Suebi, emphasizing Palo's rightful intention to underscore the close connection between Hydatius and scholarship on the Suebi. However, the bibliography has a notable gap due to the absence of the critical edition (with translation) of Hydatius published by Jan-Markus Kötter and Carlo Scardino,<sup>13</sup> which is universally considered on par with the work of Richard W. Burgess and Alain Tranoy.<sup>14</sup> As already noted for the first volume, the bibliography continues to be inconsistent in its presentation of publishers and places of publication.

The third volume comprises the *Chronica Theodericiana Valesiana*, *Consularia Hauniensia* and *Chronicon Aventicense*. As Palo laments in his “note alla traduzione”, these sources have long been confined to academic discussion. This suggests Palo's noble and commendable goal of facilitating broader readership to these historical texts. The structure of this volume follows the pattern established in the previous ones: a brief description of the works and, where possible, their authors (pp. 3–4), the customary brief note (referred here as “note alla traduzione”, p. 4), the Latin text with facing Italian

13 Chronik des Hydatius. Fortführung der spanischen Epitome. Ediert, übersetzt und kommentiert von J.-M. Kötter und C. Scardino. Paderborn 2019 (Kleine und fragmentarische Historiker der Spätantike G 9–10). On this edition see the review by R. Furtado in: *Plekos* 22, 2020, pp. 123–129, URL: [http://www.plekos.uni-muenchen.de/2020/r-koetter\\_scardino.pdf](http://www.plekos.uni-muenchen.de/2020/r-koetter_scardino.pdf).

14 The *Chronicle* of Hydatius and the *Consularia Constantinopolitana*. Two Contemporary Accounts of the Final Years of the Roman Empire. Edited with an English Translation by R. W. Burgess. Oxford 1993 (Oxford Classical Monographs); Hydace: *Chronique*. 2 vols. Par A. Tranoy. Paris 1974–1975 (Sources Chrétiennees 218–219).

translation, a few appendices (pp. 112–116), notes (pages are not numbered) and a bibliography (pages are not numbered).

Concerning the translation, Palo reiterates his goal to provide as literal a translation as possible (p. 4). However, this commitment at times becomes an impediment to clarity of meaning. This is evident in the passage from *Chronicon Aventicense* regarding the conflict between the Burgundian kings Gundobad and Godegisel:<sup>15</sup> “[...] e regno che aveva perso con quello che Godegiselo aveva ricevuto fino al giorno della sua morte governa felicemente”. Palo’s translation of *regnumque* at the start of the clause may feel awkward for Italian readers. A smoother transposition could have been: “[...] e governa felicemente fino al giorno della sua morte il regno che aveva perso con quello che Godegiselo aveva posseduto”. A similar case arises in the passage describing Frankish attacks on Thuringia:<sup>16</sup> “In quell’anno i Franchi devastano tutta la Turingia contro di essa che avevano cospirato contro i Sassoni”. A more accurate translation of the phrase *pro eo quod* would benefit the Italian text, so it could be rendered as “In quell’anno i Franchi devastarono tutta la Turingia per il fatto che aveva congiurato con i Sassoni”.

Additionally, it should be noted that Palo occasionally leaves certain Latin words out of his translation. For instance, in the Italian text on the death of the Suebian king Rechiar (from *Consularia Hauniensia*), the entire dependent clause *ad infimum usque perdomuit* is missing. This is a significant omission because it refers to Hydatius’ famous statement *regnum destructum et finitum est Suevorum*, which has sparked scholarly discussions on the actual end of the Suebian kingdom in connection with Rechiar’s death.<sup>17</sup> A further example is the paragraph on the Nika riot,<sup>18</sup> which Palo translates as “Sotto questi consoli il patrizio Ipazio per la sedizione del popolo è rimosso [...]” (“Under these consuls the patrician Hypatius was removed by the sedition of the population”). Palo’s omission of the word *imperator* in his translation likely

15 Mar. Avent. chron. 500: [...] *regnumque quod perdiderat cum eo quod Godegeselus habuerat receptum usque in diem mortis suae feliciter gubernavit.*

16 Mar. Avent. chron. 556: *Eo anno Franci totam Toringiam, pro eo quod cum Saxonibus conjuraverat, vastaverunt.*

17 Addit. Prosp. Haun. chron. 457. The Italian translation for the missing part could be “fino a distruggerli [i. e. the Suebes] completamente”. Cf. Hyd. chron. 175.

18 Mar. Avent. chron. 532: *His consulibus Hypatius patricius seditione populi imperator levatus [...].* For *levo*, see S. Koster: *levo*. In: ThLL VII 2.2, 1974, col. 1227–1237, col. 1234, l. 81.

led to a mistranslation of *levatus* and, consequently, a misunderstanding of Hydatius' text, which refers to Hypatius' usurpation. A more accurate translation would be: "Under these consuls the patrician Hypatius was proclaimed emperor due to the sedition of the population".

Following the second volume, the notes in this book are more generous, providing a valuable resource for understanding the historical context. For instance, the commentary on Eutharicus is noteworthy, offering a clear and comprehensive exploration of an intriguing topic for historians – the awarding of the consulship to Flavius Eutharicus Cillica and its significance (p. not numbered, n. 42).<sup>19</sup> The meticulous attention to geographical identification issues, such as the location of *Ancones* (p. not numbered, n. 130) and *locus Aganensis*, is also valuable (p. not numbered, n. 172). In this regard, the inclusion of maps (pp. 115–116) following the notes, illustrating *Burgundia* and northern Italy, proves highly beneficial. Once more, the source of these maps is not specified.

Nonetheless, the most distinctive feature is an appendix to the Latin text ("L'eredità linguistica gotico-longobarda nella lingua italiana", p. 112–114), that provides a list, organized into semantic categories, of Italian words derived from the Gothic-Langobardic language. Here as well, his intention to underscore the relevance of the Italian language in his work is evident.

The volume concludes with a well-assorted bibliography, although page numbers are lacking, and the indication of publishers and places of publication remains inconsistent.

The fourth volume deals with the *Epitoma Chronicon* of Prosper of Aquitania, the *Gallic chronicles* (452 and 511) and, contrary to what the title suggests, also includes the *Consularia Caesarangustana*. Unlike previous volumes, the introduction (pp. 2–5) is surprisingly succinct: the discussion of Prosper and his *Epitoma Chronicon* is limited to basic information and the Gallic chronicles are described very briefly. Neither the reference editions nor the manuscript tradition are reported; for the Gallic chronicles, the geographical origin of the works is also omitted. Palo does not explain the reason for this change of scope for the introduction compared with previous volumes. However, he defends his decision to deal with Prosper's work only from the year 379 and clarify that the battle of Adrianople of 378 serves as the ideal starting

19 This footnote refers to *Anonymi Valesiani pars posterior 14*.

point for his analysis of the events of Late Antiquity, as it represents a universally recognized caesura in the late antique sources (p. 5).

This volume presents some further inaccuracies in the translation. For instance, in Prosper's account of Geiseric's conquest of Carthage in 439,<sup>20</sup> Palo translates *omnesque opes eius* as if it were an ablative absolute (“[...] distrutte tutte le sue opere [...]”). Instead, it is a simple accusative linked to the expression *in ius suum vertit*, meaning that Geiseric did not destroy the whole city, but rather appropriated all the wealth of Carthage. Similarly, when translating events from the year 405 in the *Chronica Gallica* 452,<sup>21</sup> Palo refers to the establishment of an army of Arians fleeing from a Roman city (“Gli Ariani di nazioni barbare, che poco prima erano stati allontanati dalla città romana, danno forma ad una guarnigione militare, ai quali avrebbero dovuto unirsi”). This interpretation stems from a series of syntactic and semantic mistakes, particularly regarding the words *orbis* and *erigo*.<sup>22</sup> The accurate translation should be: “the Arians, who shortly before had been driven out of the Roman world, found solace under the protection of the barbarian people to whom they had gone”.

A welcome improvement in comparison to the previous volumes in the more circumstantial notes apparatus (pp. 104–125). This provides the reader with ample resources to thoroughly comprehend the events that the sources included in the volume narrate. Notably, Palo demonstrates a particular interest in delving into religious themes such as Origenism and Manichaeism.

The book is rounded out with a set of four detailed maps on Gaul (pp. 98–101) and a concise bibliography (pp. 126–128). Regarding the maps, the first encompasses all the Gallic provinces, while the subsequent three are enlargements of the first one, focusing on specific pairs of provinces (*Aquitania – Gallia Narbonensis*; *Gallia Lugdunensis – Belgica*; *Germania Superior – Germania Inferior*). As in the case of the prior volumes, the source is not indicated. The bibliography shares the same issue observed in previous volumes – a lack of

20 Prosp. chron. 1339: [...] *Carthaginem dolo pacis invadit omnesque opes eius excruciat diversis tormentorum genere civibus in ius suum vertit* [...].

21 Gall. chron. 452,51: *Arriani, qui Romano procul fuerant orbe fugati, barbararum nationum, ad quas se contulere, praesidio erigi coepere*.

22 For *orbis*, see K. E. Bohnenkamp: *orbis*. In: ThLL IX 2, 1978, col. 916–920, col. 916, l. 79 – col. 917, l. 69; for *erigo*, see B. Rehm: *erigo*. In: ThLL V 2, 1935, col. 777–786, col. 784, l. 52–84.

a precise criterion for compilation. Palo not only includes texts directly related to Prosper and the Gallic chronicles but also incorporates monographs on key personalities of the fifth century (Aetius, Bonifatius, Anthemius).

Judging from the minimal notes in most of the volumes (perhaps intentional), Palo's work seems more likely to appeal to Italian readers and general public than to historians. On the one hand, the choice of a literal translation accentuates the dry and concise style typical of late antique chronicles. As Palo rightly points out, the lack of elegance in the chronicle style should not be viewed negatively within this literary genre. On the other hand, the translation often lacks precision, potentially leading readers to misunderstand historical events. Moreover, to better honour the commendable effort undertaken, more cohesive editorial criteria would have been beneficial, given some notable differences across the four volumes (in layout, wording, maps, and bibliography).

In conclusion, Palo's books are an unambitious yet informative publication designed to arouse curiosity about a genre – the late antique chronicles – largely unfamiliar to the general public.

---

Rocco Selvaggi, Universität Hamburg  
DFG Center for Advanced Study “RomanIslam – Center for  
Comparative Empire and Transcultural Studies”  
Academic Coordinator  
rocco.selvaggi@uni-hamburg.de

**[www.plekos.de](http://www.plekos.de)**

Empfohlene Zitierweise

Rocco Selvaggi: A Multivolume Italian Edition of Late Antique Chronicles (with Translation and Notes). In: Plekos 26, 2024, S. 51–60 (URL: <https://www.plekos.uni-muenchen.de/2024/r-palo.pdf>).

Lizenz: Creative Commons BY-NC-ND

---