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The date of Joannes Lydus' *De magistratibus*

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Joannes Lydus (born 490 A.D.), a contemporary of the emperor Justinian, left us three works : *De mensibus*, *De ostentis* and *De magistratibus*. Especially the latter is important, because it contains much information about the Byzantine civil service in the sixth century A.D. The attempts made so far to date Lydus' works have not exactly led to a consensus. This is due to a lack of starting points. In this article, I propose to examine one of the few starting points there are : *De magistratibus* I, 2.

We do not know much more about Lydus' life than what he himself tells us about his own career in *De magistratibus* 3, 26-30. In this short, autobiographical excursus, we read that he came to Constantinople in 511 A.D., aged 21, and got the

1) I am indebted to professor W. J. AERTS, of the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, who read a draft version of this article and made a number of very helpful remarks.

opportunity to work as a stenographer in the praetorian prefecture, under his fellow-Lyidian, Zoticus. In addition to this, he was an ardent student, who acquired a reputation for his knowledge of Roman history and of Latin. Justinian was apparently quite taken with Lydus' erudition : he let him deliver a panegyric in the presence of an embassy from Rome, commissioned him to record the 527-532 war against the Persians, and finally recommended him to the city prefect for a job as a teacher at the university. Apart from this, Lydus nominally continued to hold office within the praetorian prefecture and to increase his rank from time to time, until he finally retired in 551-552, after a career spanning 40 years and a few months. He probably died before the end of Justinian's reign, i.e. before November 14th, 565 (2) .

Most scholars assume that Lydus wrote his works *De mensibus*, *De ostentis* and *De magistratibus* after his retirement, in the given order (3). The assumption is made in spite of the fact that Lydus has clearly done a lot of research during his active career, which laid the basis for the three works (4). Only STEIN mentions

2) About Lydus e.g. A. KLOTZ, RE s.v. Lydus nr. 7; Anastasius C. BANDY, *Ioannes Lydus On Powers or the magistracies of the Roman State*, Philadelphia 1983, Introduction p. IX-XXVI; James CAIMI, *Burocrazia e diritto nel De magistratibus di Giovanni Lido*, Milano 1984.

3) KLOTZ, *op. cit.* note 2, col. 2211; BANDY, *op. cit.* note 2, p. XXVII; R. WÜNSCH, *Joannis Lydi De magistratibus populi romani libri tres*, ed. R. Wuensch, Leipzig 1903, p. V-VI; E. STEIN, *Histoire du Bas-Empire II*, Amsterdam 1968, p. 732. CAIMI provides an excellent summary of the discussion about the date : *op. cit.* note 2, p. 111-124.

4) This is apparent from Mag. III, 28; cf. BANDY, *op. cit.* note 2, p. XV.

the possibility that Lydus may have started working on *De mensibus* before his retirement, because otherwise only three years, between 551 and 554, would have been left for the composition of both that work and *De ostentis*, a period which STEIN considers too short for the purpose (5). In spite of all the differences of opinion concerning the date of Lydus' works, scholars broadly agree about one point: work on *De magistratibus* started in December, 554. This conviction is based on the passage *Mag. I, 2* :

Ἀνύονται τοιγαροῦν ἐκ τῆς Αἰνείου ἐπὶ τὴν Ἰταλίαν παρόδου ἕως τοῦ πολιτισμοῦ τῆς Ῥώμης ἐνιαυτοὶ ἐννέα καὶ τριάκοντα καὶ τετρακόσιοι κατὰ Κάτωνα τὸν πρῶτον καὶ Βάρρωνα, τοὺς Ῥωμαίους· κατὰ δὲ Ἀφρικανὸν καὶ Κάστορα <καὶ> τὸν Παμφίλου ἔτη ζ' καὶ ι' καὶ υ'. ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ πολιτισμοῦ μέχρι τῆς ἐκβολῆς τῶν ῥηγῶν διέδραμεν ἔτη τρία καὶ τεσσαράκοντα καὶ διακόσια. οἱ δὲ τῶν ὑπάτων ἄχρι Καίσαρος τοῦ πρῶτου ἐνιαυτοὶ ε' (ἢ κατ' ἐνίους ἕξ) καὶ ξ' καὶ υ'. ἀπὸ δὲ Καίσαρος ἕως Κωνσταντίνου διαγέγονεν ἔτη τριακόσια ἑβδομήκοντα πέντε· ἐξ αὐτοῦ δὲ ἄχρι τῆς Ἀναστασίου τοῦ βασιλέως τελευτῆς ἔτη σκδ' πρὸς μῆσιν ἑπτά, ἐξ ὧν ἄν τις ἐννέα ἐξέλῃ ἐνιαυτούς, οὓς ἐπὶ τῆς ἱερᾶς

5) STEIN, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 839 note 6.

Ῥώμης ἔτυχε βασιλεύσας Κωνσταντίνος. συνάγεται δὴ ἀπὸ τοῦ πολιτισμοῦ τῆσδε τῆς εὐδαίμονος πόλεως πέντε καὶ δέκα καὶ διακόσια ἔτη πρὸς μῆσιν ἑπτὰ. συνέλοι οὖν ἄν τις ἀπὸ Αἰνείου ἕως τῆς Ἀναστασίου τοῦ χρηστοῦ τελευτῆς τοὺς πάντας ἐνιαυτοὺς ἕξ καὶ τεσσαράκοντα πρὸς ἑπτακοσίοις καὶ χιλίοις πρὸς μῆσιν ἑπτὰ, ὡς Ἕλληνες οἴονται κατὰ πάντας τοὺς ἑκατέρας φωνῆς συγγραφέας.

Now, from the arrival of Aeneas in Italy to the founding of Rome four hundred and thirty-nine years came to an end according to the Romans Cato the Elder and Varro, but four hundred and seventeen years according to Africanus, Castor and the disciple of Pamphilus. From its founding, however, to the expulsion of the *reges* two hundred and forty-three years went by. The years of the consuls to the first Caesar were four hundred and sixty-five, or sixty-six according to some. From Caesar to Constantine three hundred and seventy-five years elapsed; but from the latter to the death of Anastasius the emperor it was two hundred and twenty-four years and seven months, from which one might deduct nine years during which Constantine happened to reign in sacred Rome. Accordingly, the sum of the years since the founding of this blessed city is two hundred and fifteen and seven months. Therefore, one would calculate the totality of years from Aeneas to the death of the upright Anastasius as one thousand seven hundred and forty-six and seven

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months, as the Greeks believe according to all the historians in both languages (6).

The length of the several periods indicated by Lydus reasonably agrees with dates known from other sources. From the foundation of Rome (753 B.C. according to Varro) until the expulsion of the kings (509 B.C.) 243 years (7). Then 465 (or 466) years until Caesar, so that Lydus dates the latter's death to 45 B.C., as WÜNSCH points out (8). After that, 375 years until Constantine (the Great); starting from 45 B.C., this takes us to 331 A.D. (9). The date of Constantinople's foundation is May 11th, 330, a fact sufficiently remarkable to serve as the point of reference for Constantine's reign (10). Counting back 375 years from 330, we end up in 46 B.C., the year which is used in Sextus Julius Africanus' chronography as the point of reference

6) Translation: BANDY, *op. cit.* note 2.

7) I am not concerned overmuch by irregularities of 1 or 2 years in the length of these periods; the only truly disturbing error is in the final period. On chronology in general, see e.g. E.J. BICKERMAN, *Chronology of the Ancient World*, New York 1980²; about the date of Rome's foundation, especially p. 77-78.

8) WÜNSCH, *op. cit.* note 3, p. VI; also CAIMI, *op. cit.* note 2, p. 114.

9) On how to calculate a period of time between two given dates, B.C. and A.D. respectively, see BICKERMAN, *op. cit.* note 7, p. 90 and SONTHEIMER, *RE s.v. Zeitrechnung*, col. 2470-2471. WÜNSCH (*op. cit.* note 3, p. VI), BANDY (*op. cit.* note 2, p. XXXIII) and CAIMI (*op. cit.* note 2, p. 114) are apparently unaware of this calculating method.

10) OBERHUMMER, *RE s.v. Constantinopolis*, col. 963.

for Caesar (11). If we add the period until the emperor Anastasius' death as given by Lydus, to this date of May 11th, 330, we come to December 11th, 554. Anastasius, though, died in July, 518 (12). Convinced that the year 554 has to be significant in any case — how could Lydus make a mistake concerning the most recent period (13)?—, scholars have generally assumed that it must be the year in which this particular passage was written by Lydus. Thus, a fixed point was finally obtained to find the elusive date of Lydus' works (14).

The point, however, is not quite as fixed as it is taken to be. Whoever takes it as such is compelled to explain the mistake in the duration of the last period as given by Lydus. WÜNSCH thought he could do so by assuming an omission. The text should read : "... from the latter (Constantine) until the death of the emperor Anastasius there was a period of <188 years, and until today> 224 years and 7 months" (15). As KÜBLER and

11) Heinrich GELZER, *Sextus Julius Africanus und die byzantinische Chronographie* I, Leipzig 1880, p. 224.

12) The exact date is unclear; OEHLER, RE s.v. Anastasios I, col. 2067 gives July 1st; STEIN, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 216-217 gives the night of July 9th-10th.

13) WÜNSCH, *op. cit.* note 3, p. VII : "tam gravem errorem calculi in temporibus, quibus ipse interfuit, committere Lydus nullo pacto potuit".

14) Apart from the works, already quoted, by KLOTZ, WÜNSCH, STEIN and BANDY : W. ENBLIN, *Zur Abfassungszeit von des Johannes Lydus περὶ ἄρχων*, *Philologische Wochenschrift* 62 (1942), p. 453. Strangely, no-one takes Lydus to the letter, which would have meant adding nine years less to the founding date of Constantinople, and arriving at 545 as the year in which Lydus wrote.

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KROLL already pointed out (16), this solution is refuted by the length of the entire period from Aeneas to Anastasius' death which Lydus gives in the next sentence, and which adds up exactly to the sum of the separate periods given earlier. This prompted CAIMI to give up the year 554 as a fixed point for the date of *De magistratibus* I, 2. Basing himself on other arguments, he asserts that there is little reason to assume that Lydus wrote anything after 552. CAIMI especially points out that a number of significant events is mentioned nowhere in *De magistratibus*: partial reconquest of Spain in 552, reorganisation of the administration of Italy in 554, the earthquake in Constantinople in 557, and the return of the plague in 558 (17). For the moment, I shall leave this matter for what it is (18).

As to the alleged significance of the year 554, we can adduce a number of texts which have, so far, not been connected to this passage from Lydus. They confirm CAIMI's doubts about the year and make its significance very doubtful indeed. Taken together, they throw a rather confusing light on the chronography

16) B. KÜBLER, *Joannis Lydi de magistratibus populi Romani libri tres*, Edidit Ricardus WUENSCH, *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 25 (1904), p. 942; W. KROLL, (same title), *Berliner Philologische Wochenschrift* 2 (1904), p. 869. More recently: CAIMI, *op. cit.* note 2, p. 115.

17) CAIMI, *op. cit.* note 2, p. 123; cf. BANDY, *op. cit.* note 2, p. XXXV.

18) CAIMI's arguments, of course, are *e silentio* and therefore not compelling in themselves. STEIN thinks that he can distill from *Mag.* III, 55 that this particular passage was written between 557 and 561: STEIN, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 839-840.

in sixth-century Constantinople. The emperor Justinian says, in his proud preface to the Digest :

Erat enim mirabile Romanam sanctionem ab urbe condita usque ad nostri imperii tempora, quae paene in mille et quadringentos annos concurrunt, intestinis proeliis vacillantem hocque et in imperiales constitutiones extendentem in unam reducere consonantiam ...

Indeed, when Roman jurisprudence had lasted for nearly fourteen hundred years from the foundation of the city to the period of our own rule, wavering this way and that in strife within itself and spreading the same inconsistency into the imperial *constitutiones*, it was a marvelous fact to reduce it to a single harmonious whole...(19).

However, if we count from Varro's traditional date of Rome's foundation (April 21st, 753 B.C.) to Justinian's reign (April 4th, 527 A.D. (20)) we arrive at a total of 1279 years. This is not a matter of textual corruption, because the same calculation can be found in another introductory constitution to the Digest :

19) Const. *Tanta*, pr. (translation from the WATSON-translation of the Digest). The parallel constitution Δέδωκεν has a lacuna in this place.

20) At that date, Justinian became *Augustus*, that is, co-emperor to Justin, and sole emperor when the latter died on August 1st of the same year : E. STEIN, RE s.v. Justinus, col. 1326-1327. As a matter of fact, Justinian had been *de facto* emperor ever since the beginning of Justin's reign in 518 : Procopius, Ἀνέκδοτα VI 19; cf. STEIN, *op. cit.* note 3, p. 226.

... *ut nihil extra memoratam consummationem possit esse derelictum, sed his quinquaginta libris totum ius antiquum, per millesimum et quadringentesimum paene annum confusum et a nobis purgatum, quasi quodam muro vallatum nihil extra se habeat.*

... so that nothing may be capable of being left outside the finished work already mentioned, but that in these fifty books the entire ancient law — in a state of confusion for almost fourteen hundred years, and rectified by us — may be as if defended by a wall and leave nothing outside itself (21).

Both constitutions, *Tanta* and *Deo auctore*, have been handed down in two separate textual traditions: the Florentine manuscript of the Digest, and the several manuscripts of Justinian's Code. Everywhere, it says "almost fourteen hundred". This precludes a scribal error. According to modern calculations, therefore, there is a period of less than 1300 years between the foundation of Rome and Justinian's reign, instead of "almost fourteen hundred". The peculiar character of these passages was pointed out at least as early as in Gothofredus' commentary of the *Corpus Juris* (22), but I have not found any explanation for it.

21) Const. *Deo auctore*, § 5 (translation from the WATSON-translation of the Digest).

22) "Atqui Iustiniani imperium incipit anno 1280 urbis". The earliest version I checked is in the edition of the *Corpus Juris* published by CAFFIN in Lyons, 1550, but there may well be older ones.

It is interesting to compare the emperor's calculation to that of his contemporary Joannes Lydus. According to Lydus, the period from the foundation of Rome to the death of Anastasius (the unofficial beginning of Justinian's reign) is 1746 years and 7 months (i.e. the period from Aeneas to Anastasius' death), less 439 years (from Aeneas to Rome's foundation), which makes 1307 years and 7 months; it adds up to 1316 years and 7 months to the official beginning of his reign. This at least is more than 1300 years, though not exactly "almost fourteen hundred". May we consider the calculations by Justinian and Lydus mutually consistent, or are their mistakes unrelated ?

Even when we assume that Justinian and Lydus used the same chronography, there remains the problem that Justinian's expression "almost fourteen hundred" implies a rather generous rounding off for a period of just over 1316 years. But this is not the only case of generous rounding off that we can ascribe to Justinian. The twin constitution *Tanta* /Δέδωκεν tells us that "almost two thousand" books by ancient authors formed the basis for the Digest :

sed cum omnia percontabamur, a praefato viro excelso suggestum est duo paene milia librorum esse conscripta et plus quam trecenties decem milia versuum a veteribus effusa, quae necesse esset omnia et legere et perscrutari et ex his si quid optimum fuisset eligere.

While we were conducting our thorough investigations, it was intimated to us by the exalted man aforesaid that nearly two thousand books and more than three million

lines had been produced by the ancient authors, all of which it would be necessary to read and scrutinize and out of them to select whatever might be best (23).

The parallel passage in the constitution *Δέδωκεν* says the same :

νῦν δὲ τὰς ἀπάντων τῶν ἔμπροσθεν νομοθετησάντων συναγαγόντες γνώμας ἐκ τοῦ πλήθους ἀπὸ τῶν βιβλίων, ἅπερ ἦν μὲν ἀμφὶ τὰ δισχίλια, ἀριθμὸν δὲ εἶχε στίχων οὐκ ἐλάττω μυριάδων τριακοσίων, ἐπὶ ἔμμετρόν τε ἅμα καὶ εὐσύνοπτον συνηγάγομεν ἄθροισμα.

Now we have gathered the opinions of all the legal scholars of old from the great mass of their books, which numbered about two thousand and contained no fewer than three million lines, and we have put them together in a succinct and handy collection (24).

It is possible to calculate the number of works used in composing the Digest. These works are listed in the so-called *Index Florentinus*, which follows the constitution *Δέδωκεν* in

23) Const. *Tanta* § 1 (translation from the WATSON-translation of the Digest).

24) My own translation — WATSON's translation, due to an unfortunate error, repeats the translation of the constitution *Tanta* where it should have given the translation of the constitution *Δέδωκεν*.

the Florentine manuscript of the Digest. Also, every fragment in the Digest is preceded by an indication of its provenance (*inscriptio*). The Index Florentinus and these inscriptions to the fragments form two lists with slight differences: some items from the Index do not appear in the Digest at all, and some inscriptions mention a work which is absent from the Index (25). All in all, there is a total of 1528 different books at the most (26), which is not quite the same as "almost two thousand". Concerning numbers, Justinian appears to have preferred a nice round one to an exact one.

An extra argument for rounding off to "almost fourteen hundred" years may have come from the number symbolism which surrounds the Digest :

... et in septem partes eos digessimus, non perperam neque sine ratione, sed in numerorum naturam et artem respicientes et consentaneam eis divisionem partium conficientes.

We have divided these books into seven groups, not inconsequentially or irrationally, but having regard to the nature and practice of enumeration and an allocation of parts in accordance therewith (27).

25) About the *Index Florentinus*: L. WENGER, *Die Quellen des römischen Rechts*, Wien 1953, p. 588-591.

26) A.M. HONORÉ and Alan RODGER, *How the Digest commissioners worked*, ZSS (rom. Abt.) 87 (1970), p. 314.

27) Const. *Tanta* § 1 (translation from the WATSON-translation of the Digest).

The constitution Δέδωκεν says the same:

οὐ περαιτέρω τε πέντε καὶ δέκα μυριάδων
στίχων ἀριθμὸν αὐτῷ δόντες καὶ εἰς ἑπτὰ τοῦτο
διαθέμενοι πραγματείας, καὶ τοῦτο οὐ παρέργως,
ἀλλὰ τῆς τῶν ἀριθμῶν φύσεώς τε καὶ ἀρμονίας
στοχασάμενοι.

We have given (the Digest) a number of no fewer than one hundred and fifty thousand, distributed over seven parts, not just like that, but with a view to the character and the harmony of numbers (28).

A period of "almost fourteen hundred" years, two times seven centuries, probably had better symbolic value than one of "more than thirteen hundred" years. This would be due to a preference for numbers based on seven, rather than on an abhorrence from the number thirteen : the idea of thirteen being an unlucky number probably did not yet exist in Justinian's day (29).

28) § 1; cf. note 24 above.

29) About the number 13 : J.H. GRAF, *Über Zahlenaberglauben, insbesondere die Zahl 13*, Bern 1904; Ernst BÖKLEN, *Die «Unglückszahl» Dreizehn und ihre mytische Bedeutung*, Leipzig 1913. More generally : Vincent Foster HOPPER, *Medieval Number Symbolism*, New York 1969; Christopher BUTLER, *Number Symbolism*, London 1970. About number symbolism in the Digest : F. HOFMAN, *Die Zahlenspielerei in der Einteilung der Digesten*, *Zeitschrift für Rechtsgeschichte* 11 (1873) p. 340-351; P. KRETSCHMAR, *Schreiberschertz oder Zahlensymbolik ?*, *ZSS (rom. Abt.)* 58 (1938) p. 202-237; H.J. SCHELTEMA, *Over getallen in het Corpus*

The combination of Lydus' and Justinian's texts creates a confusing picture. Lydus could easily have made an isolated mistake: he is not known for the exactness of his data (30). But combined with Justinian's fourteen hundred years, the mistake takes on a new dimension. Justinian and Lydus belong to the same time, the same town and the same circles: it is only logical to assume that they share the same chronography. Before investigating whether there was a general chronographical confusion reigning in sixth-century Constantinople, though, it is necessary to look at another point. Not without reason, WÜNSCH considered it strange that Lydus' mistake should have been made in the most recent period, after Constantine the Great (31). One would reasonably expect the mistakes to have been made rather for the more distant past. Can we find an explanation for this ?

Lydus indicates a number of sources for his figures. The most important among the persons mentioned is "the disciple of Pamphilus". This is Eusebius of Caesarea, church historian and chronicler, who was born between 260 and 264, became bishop of Caesarea, and died in 310, a victim of the persecutions of Christians started by Diocletian in 303 (32). Here, we are only

Juris Civilis, in: *Vrijheid en Recht*, Opstellen aangeboden aan prof. mr. E.H. 's JACOB, Zwolle 1975, p. 227-234.

30) BANDY, *op. cit.* note 2, p. XXXIII-XXXV.

31) Cf. note 13 above.

32) SCHWARTZ, RE *s.v.* Eusebios nr. 24, col. 1370-1384; GELZER, *op. cit.* note 11, vol. II, p. 23-107 and A.A. MOSSHAMMER, *The Chronicle of Eusebius and Greek Chronographic Tradition*, Lewisburg / London 1979.

interested in one of his works: his chronography. In this elaborate work, kings' dynasties, lists of archonts, the Olympic year, Roman consuls, biblical periods etc. have been neatly put side by side in parallel columns, a separate column being reserved for recording the most important events in a particular year. Eusebius' chronography was of an extraordinary scientific quality. It is remarkable because it in no way attempts to prove the superiority of christian over pagan chronography. Eusebius laid down the foundations on which later chronographies were built (33). His work ran to the time of Constantine the Great, i.e. the beginning of the fourth century A.D.

In the Western part of the empire, Eusebius' chronography was translated into Latin and extended until 378. It was also extended later in the East. This at least explains where Lydus could and must have obtained his reasonably exact figures for the earlier periods, up to Constantine : these had been calculated scrupulously by Eusebius. However, Lydus must have used an intermediate source: his figures are not identical to Eusebius' (34). But this still leaves the mistake in the most recent period. Is this mistake Lydus' own, or was there a general confusion in chronography in Constantinople at the time?

33) B. CROKE, *The Origins of the Christian World Chronicle*, in: B. CROKE and A.M. EMMETT (edd.), *History and Historians in late Antiquity*, Sydney 1983, p. 116-131.

34) D. SERRUYS, *La notation ascendante des nombres dans la chronique d'Eusèbe*, *Revue de Philologie* 38 (1914), p. 217.

A number of more recent chronographical works than Eusebius' survives. The fragmentary *Chronica Constantinopolitana* give reliable information especially for the period between the beginning of Constantine's reign (306 A.D.) and the middle of the fifth century. They have been updated regularly (in Constantinople) from 367 onwards; the earlier period was written down as a whole in that same year. The data they contain for periods earlier than 306 are unreliable (35). Their existence shows that Constantinople disposed of a chronography with correct dates up to the middle of the fifth century. In the West, Cassiodorus (ca. 490-585) wrote a chronography in 519 which ran to that same year. It contains, among other things, a list of emperors and the respective consuls. The list is reliable; moreover, Cassiodorus finishes by giving the sums of the years that went by in certain periods. He counts 240 years from Romulus to the first consuls, and a total of 1031 years from the first consuls to 519 A.D. The sum of these two figures, 1271 years, takes us to 753 B.C. for the foundation of Rome, if we count back from 519 A.D.(36). There is no big deviation as in Lydus' work. From Cassiodorus' chronography, it appears that in 519, it was possible in the West to correctly calculate the amount of time elapsed since the foundation of Rome. This does not, of course, necessarily imply the same for the East. To

35) SEECK, RE *s.v.* *Chronica Constantinopolitana*, col. 2454-2460.

36) HARTMANN, RE *s.v.* Cassiodorus nr. 4, col. 1672-1676; James J. O'DONNELL, *Cassiodorus*, Berkeley / Los Angeles / London 1979; Th. MOMMSEN, MGH vol. 11, *Chronica minora saec. IV, V, VI, VII*, München 1981.

examine the situation there, we may consult a contemporary of Justinian and Lydus, who left us yet another chronography.

We are dealing with Joannes Malalas, born around 490 in Antioch, where he spent most of his life. Later, he moved to Constantinople. His chronography, which has exercised great influence on later works, counts the years from Creation, so it always gives the years elapsed since Adam. From time to time, it also uses the Antioch era, which counted from 47 B.C. — in honour of Julius Caesar, according to Malalas (37). At the beginning of the eighteenth and final book, we come across a very interesting passage :

Γίνεται οὖν ὁ πᾶς χρόνος ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς
 Αὐγούστου τοῦ καὶ Ὀκταβιανοῦ Ἰμπεράτορος ἕως
 τῆς συμπληρώσεως τῆς δευτέρας ὑπατείας τοῦ
 βασιλέως Ἰουστινιανοῦ ἰνδικτιῶνος ζ' ἔτη φθ',
 ὡς εἶναι τὰ πάντα ἔτη ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἀδὰμ ἕως τῆς
 αὐτῆς ἰνδικτιῶνος ἔτη σνζζ', καθὼς εὗρον τὸν
 ἀριθμὸν τῶν ἐνιαυτῶν ἐν τοῖς συντάγμασι
 Κλήμεντος καὶ Θεοφίλου καὶ Τιμοθέου τῶν
 χρονογράφων ὁμοφωνησάντων. ἐν δὲ τοῖς
 χρόνοις Εὐσεβίου τοῦ Παμφίλου εὗρον τὸν
 ἀριθμὸν τῶν ἐτῶν ἀπὸ Ἀδὰμ ἕως τῆς ὑπατείας
 Ἰουστινιανοῦ βασιλέως τῆς ἐβδόμης ἰνδικ-

37) WOLF, RE s.v. Joannes nr. 22, col. 1795-1799; E. JEFFREYS, M. JEFFREYS and R. SCOTT, *The Chronicle of John Malalas*, Melbourne 1986.

τιῶνος ἔτη ,συλβ'. ἀκριβέστερον δὲ μάλλον οἱ περὶ Θεόφιλον καὶ Τιμόθεον ψηφίσαντες τοὺς χρόνους ἐξέτεντο. πάντων οὖν τὰ συγγράμματα φέρει ἕκτην χιλιάδα ἐνιαυτῶν περαιωθεῖσαν. ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἀπὸ κτίσεως ᾿Ρώμης ἕως τῆς δευτέρας ὑπατείας τοῦ θειοτάτου Ἰουστινιανοῦ ἔτη ,ασπ' μικρῶ πλεον ἢ ἔλασσον, ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς κτίσεως Κωνσταντινουπόλεως ἕως τῆς προγεγραμμένης ὑπατείας Ἰουστινιανοῦ καὶ τῆς συμπληρώσεως τῆς ἐβδόμης ἰνδικτιῶνος ἔτη ρζθ'. τῶν ἀρχαίων δὲ βασιλέων τοὺς χρόνους οὐ δεῖ ψηφίζειν κατὰ τὸν προειρημένον ἀριθμὸν τῆς βασιλείας αὐτῶν διὰ τὸ καὶ δύο ἅμα βασιλευσάει. ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ τὰ τέκνα αὐτῶν ἐκ παιδότην ἔστεφον οἱ πατέρες καὶ μετ' αὐτῶν ἐβασίλευον. ὁ οὖν χρονογράφος ἀνάγκην ἔχει γράφειν τοὺς χρόνους ὅσους ἐβασίλευσεν ἕκαστος βασιλεὺς. δεῖ οὖν τοὺς ἀναγινώσκοντας χρονικὰ συγγράμματα τῇ ποσότητι προσέχειν τῶν διαδραμόντων χρόνων καὶ μόνον ἐπὶ τῆς τῶν προγεγραμμένων πάντων βασιλείας.

The whole period from the accession of Augustus Octavian Imperator to the completion of the second consulship of the emperor Justinian in the 7th indiction is 559 years, so that the total of years from Adam to this indiction is 6497, which is the number of years I found in the works of Clement, Theophilos and Timotheos, the chroniclers who agree among themselves. In the

chronology of Eusebius Pamphilou, I found the number of years from Adam to the consulship of the emperor Justinian in the 7th indiction to be 6432, but the chroniclers Theophilos and Timotheos have calculated and recorded the years with greater accuracy. The writings of all therefore indicate that the sixth millennium had been passed. So from the foundation of Rome to the second consulship of the most sacred Justinian, there were 1280 years more or less; from the foundation of Constantinople to the consulship mentioned above of Justinian and the completion of the 7th indiction is 199 years. One must not add up the years of the earlier emperors according to the number mentioned above for their reigns, because two used to reign at the same time; equally fathers would crown their children from infancy and reign with them. The chronicler must thus record how many years each emperor reigned, but readers of chronicles must pay attention simply to the sum of the years that have elapsed in the case of the reigns of all the emperors mentioned above (38).

38) Joannes MALALAS, *Chronographia* XVIII, 8. Translation: JEFFREYS et al. (*op. cit.* note 37). Professor AERTS pointed out that not all the numbers given by Malalas are correct; neither 6497 nor 6432 fits. These numbers are based on the Byzantine era, which starts with Adam in the year 5509 B.C. (RE *s.v.* Aera, col. 652). But the "4" in 6497 is in *rasura* and in a later hand (JEFFREYS et al., p. 247), so we should probably read 6097 and 6032. The latter number yields the year that comes closest to the mark, in spite of Malalas' preference: 523 A.D. The other numbers appear to be correct.

Two things are important in this passage. First : there are fifteen places in his chronography where Malalas gives an addition of years, using Adam as a point of reference. This, of course, is the basis of his chronography. On the other hand, only in this single case does he record a stretch of time from the foundation of Rome and from the foundation of Constantinople. Second : this is the only occasion on which he elaborates on how and how not to calculate the duration of such a stretch of time. This makes this passage a rather unique one, and Malalas must have had a special reason for writing it.

I would suggest that this reason can be found in the text we started with: Lydus, *De magistratibus* I,2. There is a clear parallel between the two texts. Both combine a calculation of the time elapsed from the foundation of Rome to Justinian's reign with a calculation of the time elapsed since the foundation of Constantinople. We have seen Lydus err in his calculation, and that is precisely the point raised by Malalas: just how should one calculate such a period of time, and which mistake should definitely be avoided. Apart from signalling the mistake, Malalas also points out where he thinks its origin lies: Lydus has simply added up the reigns of emperors, without looking out for overlaps. We need not concern ourselves with the question whether or not this is the real origin of the mistake. Lydus himself never mentions the duration of emperors' reigns in *De magistratibus*. Neither does adding up the numbers of years given by Malalas for the reigns of individual emperors yield

anything like the mistaken number of 224 years between Constantine and Anastasius that we find in Lydus.

In any case, Malalas helps us on two scores. We now know that it was definitely possible in the Eastern part of the empire, in the sixth century, to correctly calculate a stretch of time like the one our authors are concerned with. There is no general confusion in this respect. Secondly, Malalas confirms that Lydus' text simply contains its author's mistake; the text has not been corrupted, as WÜNSCH (among others) thought (39).

The combination of all these passages enables us to draw two conclusions. In the first place, there may not have been a general chronological confusion in the sixth century, but in Constantinople, Justinian and Joannes Lydus were apparently using a peculiar chronography of their own. We cannot completely prove a relationship between their errors, but its existence is not unlikely. The two met, and Justinian must have been conversant with the contents of Lydus' work. Possibly some more light may be shed on this matter by comparing works of other writers (40).

The second conclusion is a very simple one. Whatever may be wrong with the passage *De magistratibus* I,2 : it cannot be used to show that Lydus started this work in 554. Lydus' calculation is wrong, and his contemporary Malalas already said

39) Cf. note 15 above.

40) The only other one I thoroughly checked is Procopius; he does not give us any help.

so. This effectively eliminates what has for a long time been considered a fixed point in dating Lydus' works. Whether Lydus miscounts on his own, or on imperial authority, the last point in time he mentions in this particular passage is the year in which Anastasius died, and not the year in which he himself was writing it. This means that CAIMI's arguments, *e silentio* as they may be, grow in importance, and it may well be that *De magistratibus* was indeed completed by 552 (41). The discussion remains open, but at least one false argument has been removed.

41) Cf. note 18 above.