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[History](#), [Ancient History](#)



10/29/12 HIS 004A Justinian The Emperor The Secret History is an extremely rare historical document that takes an inside investigation of the crimes of the Roman Empire in the sixth century. It explains the government that was determined to undermine the basic fundamental set of laws through corruption, abuse, and intolerance. The Secret History by Prokopios, is most notably directed at the reign of tyrant leaders; Justinian and his wife Theodora. Prokopios' writings display many concerns relating to the decay of moral standards, the rise of corruption, and the promotion of incompetent men and women in Byzantine society. Prokopios' concerns for this society are outlined through Belisarios' expensive affection to Antonina, Justinians and Theodoras disregard to Roman laws, and the bloody impact from unqualified militant power. Belisarios was an unfit general for the Roman Empire who saw his life quickly become destroyed through the corruption of his wife, Antonina and Theodora. Belisarios saw his misfortune crumble as soon as he set eyes on Antonina. Antonina came from a family of poverty, deceit, and lies. She found lust in just about everything she laid eyes on and was an extremely dishonest wife. Although Belsarios knew of her lustrous background, he still fell madly in love with her. He knew she cheated on him but still bent over backwards for her love. Their marriage helped gain Antonina power in the empire, power which was used for her selfish desires. Corruption soon flared as Antonina was caught sleeping with her son. The news of this enraged Belsarios but his cowardly personality wouldn't believe the news. His mental weakness illustrates the incompetency of a very important leader for the Roman Empire. In contrast, his evil ridden wife completely dominated and emasculated control over Belsarios. Prokopios

writes, " For it is in fact not blood but deeds that typically determine how much affection people will have for each other...Remember that sins of women do not fall only upon husbands but taint their children all the more...I greatly love my own wife, and if there is some way in which I can be avenged against the one who ruined my family, I will do her no harm. " The deep love Belsarios experienced ultimately led to his failure at general. His soldiers lost respect for him as a leader and soon after so did the Justinian and Theodora. Enemy barbarians found ease in fighting against a disinterested army. Foreign enemies took control of cities and conquered Roman civilians. Eventually Belsarios would be exiled from his position as general. His promotion exemplifies one of the reasons why Prokopios was questioned the methods of this new regime. Justinian and Theodora would continue to follow a path of destruction as they consistently disregarded the Roman Laws to abide by. Justinian and Theodora constantly changed and disregarded laws and manipulated the administration in order to consume the wealth of his subjects. As Emperor, following Justin in 527, he immediately engaged in unlawful activities. Within the first ten days he had already killed the overseer of the palace eunuch. Not too long after he reportedly killed Vitalianos after giving him a guarantee of safety. One of the first things he commenced was ridding of the law that anyone with Senator ranking can't marry someone of the lowest social class. Justinian did this because he fell in love with a prostitute named Theodora. Justinian's influence to change any law he wanted to was a huge reason that led to the fall of the empire. All laws and contracts now lost any and all power that derived from the security of social order. This was just the beginning of a new era of rule. Justinian also

invested and consumed near all of the public funds the empire had on failed construction of roads near the coastline. As well, he illegally made gold coinage called, " kentenaria" to grow his wealth. Prokopios calls him, " prone to evil...a fool and a villain in one. " Justinian uses his evil to control everyone and everything. Prokopios states, " For it is in nature of wrongdoing to grow without limit when it is given free reign. " To add on to his unlawful ways, Prokopios also blames Justinian for trying to kill Theodotos, after Theodotos punished and jailed some of Justinians militants after they murdered some civilians. Justinian's reign as Emperor illustrates the extreme rise in corruption, as he should have never ruled. His continued rule also lead to a huge rise of promoting militant forces as his subjects. This militant focus at leading created a bloody period as militants saw a free reign to run terror for their emperor. Prikopios saw this as a big concern as Roman cities and its peoples were being robbed, killed, and conquered. Justinian and Theodora had a passion for the Hippodrome Fan Club where they adamantly encouraged the Blue club to be the best. The Blue team would soon gain a free reign to take control of the Justinian's Empire. The Blue club changed their haircuts to look more, " Hunnish" and they also changed clothes to make them look more violent. This also had a negative impact on social order. These Blue militants started robbing and killing their social betters and eventually innocent civilians. They would collect the money and clothes of their enemies and return them to Justinian. This is how Justinian gained illegal wealth. Justinian and Theodora found that giving power to their military on public affairs would enrich their lives and they exploited this for some time. Prokopios observed this period as total chaos. Prokopios was also

concerned with the corrupted highest offices. Justinian decided to add to offices to the magistracy in order to expedite torture and death sentences. The positions assigned called, " praetor and quaesitor, " granted jurisdiction over criminals. This further evolved an unjust system in which Justinian could relish on all the treasures from anyone he could. Justinian choosing whom we wanted for office enabled him to take advantage of gaining vast wealth from his subjects. Prokopios understood the severity of damage that Justinian caused throughout his reign as Emperor and if things weren't so dangerous I'm sure he would've done everything in his powers to stop the corruption, decaying moral standards, and incompetent people in power. Prokopios, through his unique personal experience of the Roman Empire in the sixth century, expands our knowledge on the truthfulness of one of the worlds more renowned leaders. We learn from Prokopios that Justinian was set out to destroy the restoration of the empire through unlawful acts and unqualified men and women held at high office positions. Prokopios expresses his concerns for the major destructive problems through the stories of Belsarios, Antonina, Theodora, and Justinian. Prokopios' documented findings have helped us learn more about our world's history, which makes the world a smarter place. History helps us learn from our past mistakes so we should be very thankful for Prokopios and all he went through.