PROCOPIUS MEETS HIS GOMME?
GREATREX ON THE PERSIAN WARS


Geoffrey Greatrex is well known for his work on both the Roman eastern frontier and Procopius, and he has now combined this expertise to provide a translation of Procopius’ two books on the Persian wars and, in a separate volume, a massive commentary. Even if he had not drawn attention (p. XIII) to the inspiration of the great commentaries on classical historians by Arnold W. Gomme et al. (Thucydides) and Frank W. Walbank (Polybius), the example would have been apparent, though Greatrex’s approach is in fact slightly closer to that of Simon Hornblower in his equally magisterial Thucydides commentary than to either of the earlier models.1 To be authoritative, such commentaries require prolonged immersion in the text in question, and Greatrex has earned his spurs by publishing on these matters for the past three decades.

The Commentary

This is identified as a historical commentary, just as those of Gomme and Walbank (but not Hornblower), though all these included numerous discussions of language and style. A short Introduction (pp. 1–29) surveys what little is known about Procopius’ life and the circumstances of the composi-

tion of the *Persian Wars*, aspects of his style, sources, the afterlife of his work, and relations between Rome and Persia in the sixth century. It also explains the structure of the commentary and its conventions (p. XXXIII): sections of the work are provided with introductions, before subsections receive their own introduction and finally the commentary proper proceeds by chapter and section, with a lemma quoting a passage of Greek followed by its translation. Among predecessors Gomme divided his commentary into sections with headings and occasionally added an introduction; his lemmata cited the Greek text subject to comment, but very rarely provided a translation. Walbank’s approach was similar, with only the occasional translation for disputed or significant phrases. By contrast Hornblower usually introduced his sections and always translated the Greek lemmata. Greatrex has taken this last approach one stage further by separating issues of history and historiography in his introductions, and has recognized the declining knowledge of Greek among his readership by both translating every lemma and transliterating every Greek word or phrase quoted within his entries. There is clearly a danger of repetition of material between his various introductory passages, but Greatrex is quite right to err on the side of clarity rather than concision.

The detailed commentary occupies the bulk of the volume, 632 pages, being followed by three appendices that survey Persian and Arabic sources for Sasanian history (pp. 665–673), tabulate the evidence in the *Persian Wars* for the length of Procopius’ stade (pp. 675–677), and translate the summary in Photius’ *Bibliotheca* of Nonnosus’ account of his embassy to the Ethiopians and Himyarites (pp. 679–685). Most sections in every chapter receive some comment; exceptions are rare (e.g. 2.5.18–25; 12.12–18; 19.39–42). There is a substantial bibliography (pp. 687–772), fifteen pages on ancient sources with their relevant modern translations and commentaries, and seventy pages of modern works that demonstrate the richness of the scholarly underpinning to the detailed discussions in the commentary. There is a very useful *Index Locorum* (pp. 773–816) of passages from other authors referred to, so that it is easy to follow up examples of Thucydidean influence, language from the Septuagint, or parallels in Maurice’s *Strategikon*, followed by a list of Latin terms (p. 817) in the text (*a secretis*, ἀπεκροθης, 2.7.15; *veredi*, ἑπεριθαυμαί, 2.20.20 are missing), and a table of cross-references to the ‘Regesten der

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2 The only omission I have noted is that of T.W. Greenwood: Sasanian Echoes and Apocalyptic Expectations: a Re-evaluation of the Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos. In: Museon 115, 2002, pp. 325–397, cited at pp. 668–669, nn. 10 and 11,
Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches’ (p. 818). Finally, two indices of “Persons and Titles” (pp. 819–836) and of “Peoples and Places” (pp. 837–851) in Procopius’ text; already in the prefatory material there are helpful tables that list these proper names as they appear in Procopius alongside the form used in the translation and commentary as well as other versions of the name, including modern place names. A minor regret is that there is no index either of people or places discussed in the commentary but not actually mentioned by Procopius in the text, e.g. the Hunnic leader Zilgibi, or of major issues under discussion or noted at disparate points, for example diplomatic practices, chronological vagueness, or Persian religion, though it would have been a challenge to construct such an aide. A consolidated list of favourite Procopian expressions and stylistic quirks would also have been of great assistance to anyone wishing to pursue the invitation to do further work on Procopius’ linguistic choices. Such requests, however, are really inspired by the quality and richness of what is provided.

The commentary is a feast of information and everyone will gain significant knowledge somewhere from the discussions presented here. These naturally cover the military and diplomatic aspects that constitute the core of Procopius’ narrative, but then range across his numerous digressions and excursuses, for example on the Hephthalites in central Asia or Axumites in Ethiopia, and his information on the titles and offices of Persian nobility. Much of the discussion of Book 1 reprises two earlier publications,3 suitably updated to take account of developments in the past 25 years, but the treatment of Book 2 breaks new ground altogether. On the linguistic front, the ‘Thesaurus Linguae Graecae’ has been put to good use to identify connections, not just with the usual suspects, Herodotus and Thucydides, but also Aristophanes, an author popular among contemporary poets, Attic oratory, the Septuagint, and certain Patristic authors. Whether Procopius could always distinguish the precise pedigree of every word or expression is debatable, since in general composition he might just have drawn upon his memory bank of suitable terms, but he could certainly decorate a forensic speech with the language of Isocrates and Demosthenes or a Christian passage with the expressions that he would have known from regular attendance at church

services; above all he knew when to be Herodotean or Thucydidean and had the knowledge to do so.

In such a massive enterprise there are bound to be minor glitches, while there will continue to be disagreements on topics that have been subject to scholarly debate. Occasionally a note may seem more like a display of knowledge, or of underpinning research, than an aide to Procopius: thus on p. 62 the king of the Hephthalites, whom Procopius refers to anonymously (1.3.17), is accorded a comment of ten lines in which possible variant names are recorded with relevant modern authorities before the discussion diverges onto the evidence of Theophanes Byzantinus. Whether this is completeness or overkill will be a subjective matter. If the discussion that follows seems long and overly critical, I would emphasize that it should not be seen to detract from the quality or importance of the commentary as a whole. Indeed, it is its very stature of the commentary that requires potential adjustments and corrections to be noted!

There are four substantive issues where I would question Greatrex’s comments.

1. The Fort of Mindouos

1.1. The location of the fort of Mindouos or Mindon that Belisarius attempted to construct in 528 is said to be “uncertain, perhaps modern Kasriahmeytharlo” in the note to the translation (p. 56 n. 89), though the commentary (p. 172) is more definite, with the suggestion by Christopher Lillington-Martin to locate it at the traces of a fortlet close to Kasriahmeytharlo being said to be based on a powerful case. The situation is actually more complicated than Greatrex presents, since Lillington-Martin’s views evolved: in his contribution to ‘The Byzantinist’, which Greatrex cited,4 Lillington-Martin did identify Mindouos with the remains of a small structure, with dimensions of 19 m x 26 m, located about 700 metres from Kasriahmeytharlo, 6.3 km east of Dara that resembles Roman watchtowers elsewhere on the frontier, but he subsequently postulated that the fort of Mindouos must be located on the actual site of the village of Kasriahmeytharlo, with the fortlet

as a dependent watchtower. Lillington-Martin did not explain his change of mind nor present evidence for any ancient construction underneath the village, but an obvious problem with identifying the fortlet or watchtower with Mindouos is that it is difficult to see how it could have been referred to by Kavadh as an injury to Persia even greater than the construction of Dara (1.16.7): this forward observation post would have provided Dara with early warning about activity around Nisibis, but not greatly increased the threat to that city. Of course, Kavadh may well have been exaggerating wildly, but Greatrex offers no comment on this possibility.

1.2. If Procopius’ statement is correct that Mindouos was “on the left as one goes towards Nisibis” (1.13.2) and the direction of travel is assumed to be from Dara, then it has to be located on the southern flank of the Tur Abdin plateau, where it was probably sited to secure one of the routes between the plateau, which the Romans controlled through forts and monasteries, and the region of Beth Arabaye around Nisibis. There might be some merit in the speculation of Anthony Comfort that it should be sought in the valley of the river Mygdon above Nisibis. Kavadh would have been right to view this as a most threatening development, since a strong Roman fortress in that area would have tightened the Roman noose around Nisibis, in particular by threatening its water supply from the river upstream, but the distance from Dara and proximity to Nisibis would have made it a very challenging project to accomplish. Granted that Greatrex was once inclined to

5 Ch. Lillington-Martin: Where was the Fortified Site of Mindouos Constructed?, an Oxford Master of Studies paper that is cited by E. Keser-Kayaalp and N. Erdoğan: Recent Research on Dara/Anastasiopolis. In: E. Rizos (ed.): New Cities in Late Antiquity. Documents and Archaeology. Turnhout 2017 (Bibliothèque de l’antiquité tardive 35), pp. 153–175 at p. 164 n. 61 as being available on academia.edu. Although this paper is not in fact currently available on academia.edu, I am very grateful to Christopher Lillington-Martin for providing me with a copy, and its discussion is presented in very similar terms in his Master of Studies seminar paper “Forts on Frontiers Facing ‘πολειτείας’ et al.”, which is accessible on academia.edu (https://www.academia.edu/12688591/Forts_on_frontiers Facing_%CE%B2%CE%AC%CF%81%CE%B2%CE%B1%CF%81%CE%BF%CE %B9_et_al).

6 Previously Greatrex: Rome and Persia (note 3), p. 158, was prepared to consider that the starting point was to the south of Nisibis, in order to align with the information of Pseudo-Zachariah (see below); this speculation is ignored here.

consider a location on the lower course of the Mygdon, this issue might have merited specific comment.

1.3. A problem in trusting Procopius’ information, however, is that Pseudo-Zachariah (9.2b) located the Roman defeat that ended this initiative in the desert of Thannuris, i.e. over 70 km south of Dara, whereas Procopius placed it at the building site (1.13.6); the names of the commanders involved proves that they are referring to the same event. In his previous discussion Greatrex correctly stated that it is difficult to disregard Pseudo-Zachariah’s account, which preserves specific details about the battle, whereas Procopius skates over the defeat, perhaps because Belisarius escaped ingloriously with his cavalry forces while abandoning the infantry. He does refer once to this earlier discussion (p. 172), but only for the date of the campaign, which is not in doubt. This significant disagreement in our sources is now dismissed in a single sentence that suggests, implausibly, that the two authors might have been referring to separate events (p. 169). There has been a significant change of mind on this issue, but this is neither acknowledged nor explained.

1.4. 25 years ago, Greatrex accurately summarized the debate about Mındouos as that its site “eludes final resolution”; this is the only safe conclusion.

2. The Battle of Dara, 530

2.1. With regard to the location of the 530 battle at Dara Greatrex (p. 180) appears to favour the traditional site, immediately to the south of the city walls, on the basis that πύλη, ‘gate’, in the singular is not used as a synonym for πύλαι, ‘gates’, a term that was applied to narrow defiles through mountains (e.g. the Cilician Gates through the Taurus north of Tarsus) or between mountains and the sea (Thermopylae). As a result, the site of the battle should be sought “a stone’s throw” from the city’s south gate, “the gate that

11 At 1.10.4 Procopius does refer to the Darial Pass through the Caucasus as a πυλίδα, though the formulation of its name, Κασπία, clearly distinguishes it from Procopius’ expression at 1.13.13.
lies opposite the city of Nisibis” (τῆς πύλης, ὑπὸ τοῦ βάλτου Νησίβηδος καταντικρύ νείται: 1.13.13), where Belisarius had a defensive trench dug to protect his troops. This location is supported by Procopius’ statement that Belisarius made his pre-battle speech to the troops “in front of the circuit wall” (1.14.20; Greatrex’s commentary ad loc. does not discuss this supplementary evidence). On this basis it is right to reject the location 2.5 km to the south-east proposed by Lillington-Martin: although Lillington-Martin coined the name “Dara Gap” for the site, there is nothing that could be described as a defile and even the notion of a gap is uncertain, while Belisarius would not have recalled his troops from such a deployment in order to harangue them in front of the city walls. Somewhat misleadingly, however, Greatrex states that the two locations are not that different and his plan of the battle (p. 184) places the Roman lines between 300 and 400 metres from the city; although “a stone’s throw” is obviously an imprecise term, its other use in Procopius, for the side of Hadrian’s Mausoleum at Rome (5.22.13), suggests a distance of not much more than 100 metres, which would fit with the location of the pre-battle harangue. Belisarius was well aware of the defensive advantages of fighting close to city walls (2.18.11–13) and will have exploited this at Dara to position his troops where they could secure some support from artillery mounted on the main towers; by contrast, digging a defensive ditch 2.5 km from the city, between the church at Ambar and the slopes of the Tur Abdin plateau, would have created a static Roman position that was vulnerable to being outflanked on its west, and hence isolated from Dara. It


13 Belisarius regarded his camp 42 stades (2.18.3), i.e. just under 9 km, from Nisibis as ideal for an attacking army, since the length of the Persian flight, in the event off a defeat, would enable the Romans to mingle with them and enter the city (2.18.14–15); Lillington-Martin’s site is sufficiently distant from the walls to create this risk.
is most unlikely that any of the field walls to the south of the city that I identified and have been located more precisely by Elif Keser-Kayaalp and Nihat Erdoğan existed in the early sixth century, so that these cannot be used to push the battlefield further from the actual city: when the Persians attempted to mine the south walls in 540 they must have started their tunnel relatively close to the main wall rather than several hundred metres away.

2.2. The configuration of the trench that Belisarius had dug to increase his troops’ confidence, is disputed, with the debate evenly balanced between those who infer that the central section projected forwards and others who prefer to see this as withdrawn closer to the city walls. Procopius’ description at 1.13.19, ἕδειαι μὲν τὰ ἐγχώμα τῆς ἀριστερὰς ἔνερβεν ἣν τῆς ἀρτην ἡ τῆς ἀρτην ἱεραίας, is unclear: the ἕδειαι [...] ἄρατερὲς refers to the left or east end of the trench, while from comparison with 1.13.14 the ἁρτην ἱεραίαι is one of the two perpendicular trenches in the middle of the earthwork, but ἔνερβεν, “up from below/behind”, could support either interpretation. Surprisingly, Greatrex does not discuss these difficulties at either 1.13.14 or 19, though earlier (p. 181) he cites with approval Maxime Petitjean’s support for his own preference to have the trenches project forwards. In their translations Henry B. Dewing, followed by Anthony Kaldellis, and Greatrex all fudge the difficult clause ἔνερβεν ἥτις ἀρτην ἱεραίαι, each opting for “which/that joined the cross trench”. To my mind this might be rendered ‘which was in front of (literally ‘from beneath’) the perpendicular trench’, viewing the disposition from the perspective of those standing on the walls, which could be compared to that of someone observing a ship sailing out, literally ‘up’, to sea. In this case the passage would be translated ‘the extremity of the left straight section, which was in front of the perpendicular trench’.

2.3. On tactical grounds it seems likely to me that the central section of the trench was set back closer to the walls. First, in battles attacking sides might well push their opponents’ centre backwards, a tendency exploited to devastating effect by Hannibal at Cannae and by Narses at Casilinum and to a certain extent Busta Gallorum; I would suggest that Belisarius designed his trench to take account of this. Second, with the central section withdrawn,

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the two Hunnic contingents stationed at the angle, which Greatrex (pp. 184, 201, following Sylvain Janniard) accepts were meant to be concealed from the enemy, would have been obscured to an extent by the troops stationed ahead of them along the outer elements of the ditch, whereas if the central section projected forwards the Hunnic units would be thrust visibly in the face of the Persians, so that their interventions in the battle would not have been as dramatic. Greatrex (p. 182) refers to a detailed discussion in his 1998 book, which in fact adds nothing to the commentary but confusingly appears to place the Hunnic contingents of Sunicas and Simmas behind the trench, whereas Procopius states that they were in front of it (1.13.20).

2.4. Greatrex’s disposition of the Roman troops in relation to the trench also calls for comment. In figures 11–14 he places the regular Roman cavalry beyond the end of the trenches, under John on the right and Buzes on the left, with only the infantry behind the trenches. Procopius, however, states that the units of cavalry and the infantry army were stationed “all along the trench”, παντού τῆς τάφου (1.13.22), and there is no reason to interpret this to mean that they “were deployed on both sides of the trench” (p. 185) rather than stationed behind it. Procopius’ statement that the eastern part of the trench extended to the hill (1.13.19) is at odds with Greatrex’s plans where Buzes’ cavalry is located between the end of the trench and the hills that are about 300 metres further. It is noticeable that, after the attention devoted to the trench in describing the Roman dispositions, it does not play a part in Procopius’ account of the battle: the Persians knew it was there (1.14.15), and the Romans do not seem to have attempted to disguise it to create the sort of trap into which their own troops had fallen in 528.

2.5. On the plan of the city (p. 499, fig. 28; Translation p. 156), the horrea or granaries are wrongly labelled as a cistern, even though he cites my 1987 discussion where I followed the correct identification by Marlia Mundell Mango, who noted the similarity of the structure to the Hadrianic granaries at Patara; their solid walls distinguish them from the various cisterns at

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15 Greatrex: Rome and Persia (note 3), p. 173 n. 12. In principle one might expect to have this important issue fully discussed in the definitive commentary.

Dara. On Greatrex’s plans an unlabelled structure is marked just inside the west wall that should be named as a cistern.

3. The Plague

3.1. Procopius’ long ‘Thucydidean’ account of the arrival of bubonic plague in Constantinople in 542 receives close consideration from Greatrex. Procopius does not comment in the Wars, however, on what impact the plague may have had on Roman military operations in 542 or 543, though he does observe that all the Persian army had been struck during its time in Adarbigan (2.24.8) and that royal fear of the plague influenced Khusro to leave Adarbiganon for Assyria where the plague had not yet taken hold (2.24.12). This silence about the Roman army merits discussion in the context of the possible severity of its impact on Roman military performance and recruitment, which some scholars regard as very significant; even if I have doubts about the extreme conclusions, I accept that the plague will have caused some disruption to military life, at least initially. Greatrex offers no comment at all, though he is prepared to speculate that Khusro cut short his invasion of Euphratesia because of fears about the plague’s approach (pp. 7, 27, 561).

3.2. It is in fact clear that by the end of May the plague had not reached the Roman forces based at Hierapolis and Europus, or Khusro’s army nearby, since the Persian army only came into danger during its time in Adarbiganon; if the plague had affected its soldiers in 542, they would have carried the disease with them back to the Tigris valley and further. This is important information: whereas the plague spread rapidly by sea through the presence of infected rats on board a ship, by land its progression was much slower and more sporadic. Although the plague had probably reached the coast of

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Palestine in August 541, nine months later it had still not travelled the 600 km from Gaza to Hierapolis, or a shorter distance from ports such as Laodicea and Seleucia further north. Undoubtedly the plague did reach the Roman eastern armies at some point in 542, both in their quarters in cities such as Hierapolis and in camps while on campaign, since in both places stores of food will have attracted rats. Perhaps mortality among serving soldiers was lower than in civilian populations, because of the availability of medical care or their general fitness and health, but, as our recent experience of a pandemic has shown, even an epidemic with a relatively low mortality rate does cause significant disruption. If an unnamed king merits ten lines of commentary, Procopius’ silence about the plague and the Roman army deserves some comment.

3.3. The information about Khusro in Adarbiganon is interesting for the progression of the plague and the state of the Roman-Persian frontier, but these aspects are not discussed by Greatrex. Whereas Khusro’s army in Adarbiganon was under threat, in Assyria, i.e. the Tigris valley, the plague was not yet “settled”, αὐτὸς ἄκαθος (2.24.12). I offered speculative comments on this in a recent article: the disease had probably travelled rapidly by sea from Constantinople to Lazica, perhaps in May 542 and then gradually made its way inland and upwards. Granted its progression over land in the Levant, it would be unwise to postulate that in Transcaucasia it covered more than twice the distance in about half the time, so that it was probably threatening Khusro’s forces in mid 543.

4. The Chronology of 542–545

4.1. The problem in these years is that Procopius failed to mention explicitly the end of one campaign year, so that an assumption has to be made about where this should fall. The traditional view was that the long account of the plague (2.22–23) effectively masks a year end, with the following events in Adarbiganon and Persarmenia occurring in 543 and the siege of Edessa in


544. In 1999, however, Ewald Kislinger and Dionysios Stathakopoulos argued that these dates should be late 542 and 543, with the missing year-end having to be located during the negotiations for a truce that followed Khushro’s failure at Edessa; this revision has secured some adherents, including Greatrex.\textsuperscript{20} Greatrex and myself have already disagreed on this, a discussion that he summarises (p. 589) by stating that his recent article has provided “a detailed refutation” of my arguments in favour of the traditional chronology.\textsuperscript{21} This is scarcely the case, since Greatrex opened this response by conceding that “there is no way to resolve this issue definitively: either interpretation is possible, given the limits of the evidence. We can only discuss the balance of probabilities.”\textsuperscript{22} This is exactly the position that I had set out, but Greatrex’s preference for the new chronology solidified in the \textit{Commentary} as assumptions have become facts. In such a work it would have been prudent to have presented both possible chronologies, as he in fact did at the end of his own article, and to have refrained from labelling as misguided supporters of the traditional chronology, especially those who wrote before publication of the Kislinger and Stathakopoulos’ article.\textsuperscript{23}

4.2. This is not the place to set out in detail why I continue to find Greatrex’s assumptions unconvincing and the traditional chronology more plausible, so I simply note the salient issues. First, after crossing the Euphrates no earlier than the end of May 542, Khushro was not in a hurry to march east to campaign in Adarbigan: instead he turned south to march down the Euphrates and indeed may have returned to the vicinity of Ctesiphon before deciding what to do next. Second, as set out above, the plague is likely to have taken over a year to travel at least 1,000 km from the Black Sea coast to Takht-I Suleiman, crossing from Roman-aligned to Persian territory, to approach there in the middle of 543, rather than the four or five months allowed by


\textsuperscript{22} Greatrex, ibid., p. 570.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p. 576.
Greatrex. Third, Procopius’ practice is to insert material that is not part of the main military narrative at the end of a campaign year, as Greatrex acknowledges (p. 503); there is no cogent reason for him to have departed from this practice when describing the plague’s impact on Constantinople. This long account might help to explain his silence about the plague’s arrival in the Roman army: since he had already described the plague’s ravages, there was no need to repeat this, while disruption to military life meant that there were no major campaign initiatives to report in the latter part of 542. Fourth, there is no basis for the assumption that Procopius’ statement “In the following year, Khusro the son of Kavadh, invaded Roman territory for the fourth time” (2.26.1) must refer to consecutive invasions.²⁴ Fifth, Greatrex assumes, but does not prove, that the peace negotiations after the siege of Edessa must have taken well over a year, even though both Justinian and Khusro had already been moving towards an agreement; there is little discussion of these alleged delays in the commentary.

4.3. These points do not disprove the Kislinger-Stathakopoulos hypothesis, merely make it much less plausible to my mind than the traditional chronology. Greatrex’s commentary, which aspires to be a Thucydidean ktema es aei, ‘possession for eternity’, should have presented both possibilities on this matter, as it does on a number of points where alternative interpretations are possible (e.g. pp. 180–181 on the site of the Dara battle).

Specific Points

p. 37, 1.1.6–17. No reference is provided for Julian’s Homeric comparison for emperor Constantius (or. 2.53a), though this can be tracked down via the Index Locorum at p.783.

p. 47, 1.2.7. Greatrex attributes Yazdgard I’s poor reputation in Persian sources to power struggles between the crown and nobility, but his sympathetic attitude towards Persia’s Christians was probably also a factor.

p. 70, 1.4.16. The extra details about the pearl story that Cedrenus preserves might just have been his own, or an intermediary’s, embellishment of Procopius’ account rather than proof of independent access to Procopius’ source.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 575–576; there is no discussion of this unfounded claim in the Commentary.
p. 79, 1.5.2. Vahram Tchobin was not the only non-Sasanid to occupy the Persian throne, since Shahrvaraz, who ruled for forty days in 630, was also from outside the dynasty.

pp. 101–102, 1.7.3. Discussion of Kavadh’s invasion route would have been helpful, as was provided in Rome and Persia at War (note 3 above) pp. 80–81. It is possible to make some observations about the rate of progress of this royal expedition, which is said to have been engaged in “a lightning campaign”: the Roman frontier was crossed on 22nd August and Amida reached on 5th October, a total of 45 days during which the king overawed Theodosiopolis into surrender and accepted the submission of Martyropolis without resistance. In all he will have covered a bit over 300 km; even allowing a couple of weeks for his dealings with the two cities, which might be too much, his rapid advance only managed to average about 10–12 km a day.

p. 108, 1.7.12. Greatrex suggests that the περιβολος, ‘circum wall’, should be interpreted as the outer proteichisma, but this is unlikely since in the following two sections it must refer to the main wall, which Kavadh failed to batter down and then attempted to overtop with his siege mound.

p. 116, 1.8.1. It is unclear why the army of the magister militum per Orientem had to be mobilised at Antioch; Hierapolis, much closer to the frontier, is a more likely location.

p. 118, 1.8.6–20. It is uncertain how successful Areobindus’ campaign in 503 really was: he only penetrated as far as Nisibis, where he drove back some disorganized local forces, but was forced to abandon camp and flee as soon as Persian reinforcements arrived. It is not evident that Procopius has, as claimed (p. 120), omitted anything of significance, or that he deliberately downplayed Anastasian successes to increase the glory of Justinian’s achievements and Belisarius’ victory at Dara in 530, as stated at Rome and Persia at War pp. 75–76.

p. 120, 1.8.10. The provision by Procopius in this section of two different measurement units, days’ journey and stades, may well reflect a desire for stylistic variation (cf. 1.4.20–29, for three different words used for fisherman) rather than different sources.

p. 121, 1.8.10. If Arzamon is located at Apadna (map at p. 98), the route from it to Constantina did not have to cross the Tur Abdin.
The choice of “picnicking” to describe the Roman army taking its lunch, either at Tricameron in 533 or here, is unnecessarily flippant.

Greatrex rightly notes that Procopius omits Kavadh’s invasion of 504, which secured a considerable ransom from Edessa, even though he could not capture the city, and ravaged as far as the Euphrates; this silence is at odds with the belief that Procopius was belittling Anastasian achievements.

Although Pseudo-Zachariah 7.6b refers to the proposed fortress that was to be located at Dara as a place of refuge for the army, it is misguided to describe the reasons for its construction as “largely defensive”, since Pseudo-Zachariah 7.6.a records that the generals were reacting to the difficulty they had in besieging Nisibis, the sort of problems that had afflicted Arebindus during his attack in 503. The security of Dara as a forward base would enable the Romans to be much more aggressive, which is why the Persians were so upset by its construction.

It seems very unlikely that Procopius would decide not to record events in Lazica because these had been “widely reported by the chroniclers” and so were well-known. There is no indication that Procopius anywhere relied on such external accounts to complement his own, which was after all intended to be a permanent record of events. Pseudo-Zachariah demonstrates that he omits various events, for example Belisarius’ failed attempt to build a fort in the Melabasa hills at the eastern end of the Tur Abdin.

The provision of five plans for the different phases of the battle of Dara is much clearer than attempts to present the complexities in one or two plans.

The fact that Roman forts along the Euphrates did not attempt to oppose Azarethes’ advance does not prove that they were dilapidated; this was not the function of their small garrisons.

At Diocletian’s division of Mesopotamia, the eastern or northern part continued to be called Mesopotamia while it was the western part that became Osroene.

The same route was also used by Khusro in 542, though for part of his advance he may have marched along the east bank of the river.
p. 241, 1.17.40. It would have been helpful to have spelled out the possible implications of assigning a fifty-year period for the supremacy of al-Mundhir rather than referring to a contribution to a Festschrift that is not widely available.

p. 257, 1.18.32. Granted that Maurice’s Strategion (11.1) advised Romans on how to reduce casualties from superior Persian firepower, the comment about a lesser discrepancy in the firepower of the two sides might be interpreted to suggest that at Callinicum the Persians were not as dominant as usual. This was certainly not the case.

pp. 310–311, 1.21.5. The note provides a cross-reference to the discussion at 1.8.22 but then just repeats its information.

p. 321, 1.22.13. The comment that “Rufinus had supported Khusro’s adoption by Kavadh” is a bit obscure, since Khusro was already Kavadh’s son; Pseudo-Zachariah 9.7a in fact refers to Rufinus’ advice that Kavadh should choose Khusro as successor.

p. 324, 1.23–25, “History”. The fall of John the Cappadocian in 541 was orchestrated by parvenus similar to himself (e.g. Antonina, Theodora), so it is difficult to see how the plot demonstrates continuing tensions between traditional aristocrats and the parvenus, though these are very likely to have existed. What it does demonstrate is the constant competition for influence with Justinian in the polyocracy at his court.

p. 347, 1.24.19. Greatrex’s supports the suggestion of Rene Pfeilschifter that towards the end of the Nika Riot Justinian dismissed the senators from the palace in order to create space there for the reinforcements arriving from Thrace. This is implausible, since these troops were still fighting their way towards the city centre and there was no guarantee that they would succeed in reaching the palace. If space was lacking, which I think unlikely, the senators could quickly have been sent back to their houses after the troops had arrived.

p. 351, 1.24.30. The location of the Placillianae and Helenianae palaces is not indicated; the former, also known as the Flacillianae, was in the eleventh

region near the Holy Apostles, while the latter was in the twelfth region on the southern slopes of the Xerolophus hill west of the forum of Arcadius.

p. 363, 1.25.10. It might have been noted that, although Procopius denigrates the rough cloak adopted by the disgraced John as a garment suitable for a pagan priest, it could equally have been worn by a Christian ascetic.

p. 373, 1.26. The digression in the second paragraph on the attempted coup in Africa in the late 530s obscures the discussion of the coup at Dara.

pp. 388–389, 2.2.11. It would have been worth referring to the reflections on ἀμφιβόλως at Evagrius, HE 3.25.

p. 409, 2.4.5. The belief that Potidaea was ruined before the Huns captured it depends on Procopius Buildings 4.3.22; it would be prudent to be cautious of such assertions, unless there is external corroboration, since they are clearly designed to highlight Justinian’s reconstruction at the site.

p. 411, 2.4.6. On “myriads”, it would have been worth referring to Conor Whately’s discussion,26 which is cited elsewhere. The exaggeration was obviously intended to underline the gravity of this raid.

p. 412, 2.4.8. The Huns must have seized the vessels to make their initial crossing to Asia from Sestus to Abydus, not the other way round.

pp. 415–416, 2.4.26. Khusro’s similar treatment of the ambassador Theodore in 576 might have been noted.

p. 420, 2.5.1. Procopius’ statement that Khusro’s invasion “conspicuously violated”, or “clearly broke” the 532 agreement is relevant to discussion of his attitude to responsibility for the breakdown of peace (pp. 378–379), but the connection is not made.

p. 421, 2.5.4. Although a journey of no more than 100km might seem short for “an active man” in three days, it is likely that the march from opposite Circresium to Zenobia would have taken the royal army much longer.

p. 428, 2.6.1. Greatrex states that ἴσωμα, ‘name’, has generally been omitted in translations, but Kaldellis, “nominally”, had already corrected Dewing on this detail.

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p. 431, 2.6.10. It is improbable that a rock located 140 metres from the circuit wall could have posed the existential threat that Procopius describes and which led to the capture of the city. A rock this far from the defences could not have been defended for long by 300 men against determined assailants, as Procopius suggests (2.8.13), since they would easily have been isolated. The fatal rock is more likely to have been near a section of wall on the steep slopes of Orocasias, where the earthquakes of the late 520s might have contributed to changes in the terrain.

p. 439, 2.7.19. Granted that Greatrex assumes, plausibly, that Bishop Megas spent one day in Antioch on his mission, that would leave him with three days each way, not two, for the travel between Antioch and Beroea. This is another indication that Procopius’ journey time for an active man (2.7.2) was not necessarily achieved in practice by individuals or armies.

p. 445. The plan of Antioch identifies the walls on either side of the Iron Gate as Justinianic. The earliest phases of the Iron Gate are pre-Justinianic and the walls either side of it were probably part of the late antique circuit.

p. 447, 2.8.9. The possible width of the upper rampart wall in a late Roman fort can be inferred from the Gertrude Bell photograph of the southern walls at Dara, where there was probably scarcely room for more than two people. This might seem a weak defence, but it meant that even if besiegers managed to secure a foothold on a section of the curtain wall they would find it difficult to mount a strong attack on the adjacent towers that prevented them from expanding on their success.

p. 449, 2.8.17. It is true that cavalry forces, if they remained on horseback, would have been of limited use inside a city, but Roman cavalry were trained to dismount to fight on foot, as they did effectively at Callinicum in 531.

p. 462, 2.10.9. There is no basis for the assertion that Justinian built walls on several sides of Antioch. A suitably cautious conclusion from Buildings 2.10.10–12 would be that his efforts were focused on the vicinity of the weak point on Orocasias.

pp. 470-471, 2.11.7. The obvious contemporary parallel for τράχηλος used of a mountain defile is Petra Pertusa in Italy, on the passage of the via Flaminia through the Appenines.
p. 498, 2.13.15. Procopius’ statement that Kavadh granted the bishop of Constantina all the food he had collected for the siege of the city is implausible, since shortage of supplies contributed to his withdrawal (Pseudo-Joshua 58).

p. 524, 2.16.10. The comment in Belisarius’ speech that Justinian was far removed from events and so could not respond to opportunities is a simple statement of the realities of life in a world with relatively slow communications, so suggestions that it might be indirect criticism of Justinian, or even a metaphorical allusion to his prioritisation of other matters, are implausible.

p. 537, 2.19.2. Although Sisauranon was technically only half a day’s journey from Roman territory, this measured the time it took to climb the four kilometres to the fort of Rhabdion, which was so remote that Procopius could suggest, inaccurately, that it constituted an enclave in Persian territory (Buildings 2.4.10–11). Procopius does not in fact claim that he had visited Rhabdion, merely that he had spoken to some local inhabitants (Buildings 2.4.3), which could have happened at Dara; in any case, even if he had claimed a visit, it would be imprudent to trust his claim to autopsy, any more than it is for occasions when Herodotus seeks to validate dubious information by asserting that he had seen it.

p. 539, 2.19.14. The comment on Dewing’s translation is obscure, since he actually translated the text as “the Assyrians”; clearer to rephrase as “‘the Assyrians’, as Dewing translates, rather than ‘Assyria’”.

p. 540, 2.19.19. It is not clear why τὸτε, ‘then’, indicates some “narrative confusion”. Belisarius had been besieging Sisauranon for some time, and after the dispatch of the raiding parties across the Tigris he managed to capture some of the Persian defenders who were desperately seeking food.

p. 542, 2.19.25. I am not convinced by the suggestion of awkwardness in the narrative here. In the previous section Belisarius had razed the defences of Sisauranon, but has not yet returned to Roman territory, presumably maintaining his forward position to await the return of his raiding parties or identify other ways to hurt the Persians. The transition from his activities to those of al-Harith is managed by a natural μὴν [...] δὲ contrast, after which Procopius concludes his account of the campaign by describing the end of the raid and the decision by Belisarius to send back the contingents from the local forces in Lebanon.
p. 554. It is a pity that Europus, which is pivotal to the events of early summer 542, is not marked on the map at p. 417, though its general location can be inferred.

p. 564, 2.21.32. It is unlikely that Khusro could have reached Callinicum before the end of June, considering that on his march north he had been at Perozshapur on 18th April. It could even have been slightly later, and the fact that farmers harvested crops in May does not mean that they would not have continued to bring them to market in their neighbouring city over the following months.

p. 582, 2.23.5. It would have been worth noting that this information about Justinian’s actions indicates that the emperor probably did not catch the plague in its early ravages in the capital.

p. 589, 2.24.1. There is no discussion of the route taken by Khusro to reach Adarbiganon. On Greatrex’s assumption that he continued directly from his 542 march into Euphratesia, he would probably have taken the Keli Shin pass, as the army supporting Khusro II did in 590.

p. 591, 2.24.5. Here Greatrex appears to accept, correctly, that there is no conclusive evidence for dating events either to 542 or to 543, in contrast to his normal assertions that 543 is wrong.

p. 593, 2.24.10. It might be noted that Kaldellis dated the appointment of Martin to winter 542/543. It is slightly unfair to accuse the editors of the “Regesten der Kaiserurkunden” of “misdating” the appointment to 543, since there are two possible chronologies for events.

p. 594, 2.24.11. A cross-reference to the similar formulation at 2.4.26 would be in order.

p. 605, 2.26–27, “Historiography”. There is no discussion of the implications for Procopius’ collection of information and composition of the later addition of further details about the siege of Edessa (8.14.35–37). The comment that, despite the plague, the war in Mesopotamia ended with a Roman success begs a number of questions. There is no indication in Procopius’ account that the citizens of Edessa had been seriously weakened by the plague that must have affected them over the preceding two years.

p. 614, 2.26.44. I think it unlikely that the Romans attempted to raise the height of their wall opposite the mound by building on top of the circuit wall there, since, if it was constructed like the circuit wall at Dara, it would not
have been thick enough to support any further weight. It is more likely that the defenders rapidly built a separate brick structure on the inner face of the wall.

p. 622, 2.28–30. Since Khusro did not regard Lazica as rightfully belonging to the Romans, there is no reason to suppose that his agreement to do no further harm to the Romans would cover activities in Transcaucasia.

p. 623, 2.28.1. The criticism of PLRE III for “misdating” the siege of Edessa to 544 is unfair; as has been pointed out, two chronologies are available for these events and PLRE was published long before the earlier chronology was even suggested.

p. 641. The river Boas/Akampsis, which is important for the discussion on 640, is unfortunately not marked on the map.

In a few comments either the full lemma is not translated or the translation covers more than the lemma. I have noted the following: 1.2.11; 1.12.7; 1.18.21; 2.2.11; 2.4.8; 2.11.4; 2.21.17; 2.22.3; 2.25.32; 2.27.19.

There are a very few copy-editing glitches:

p. 89, 1.6.3–4. Inverted comma missing to close translation of the quotation.

p. 89. The lemma labelled 6.8 in fact relates to 1.6.6.

p. 102, 1.7.4 (second lemma). “however” used incorrectly for ‘but’.

p. 157, second paragraph, fourth line. After the end of the USSR in 1991, and especially in current circumstances, it is insensitive to use the term “the Ukraine”.

p. 231, 1.17.7. ‘Geography of’ is probably what has been omitted between ‘The’ and “Ananias”.

pp. 271–272. Six lemmata that should be labelled 19.3 are listed as 19.2.

p. 502, 2.13.26. The comma after σφάζεσθαι in the lemma must be a typo.

p. 562, line 2. The reference should be to Whately 2015, not 2016.

p. 580. The second lemma numbered 22.35 is in fact 22.36.

p.615. The header should read ‘ii.26.45–27.3’.

By placing himself in the succession of Gomme and Walbank, Greatrex has invited the application of the very highest standards to his work. Although the commentary might not always reach the Olympian heights of his models, this is still a labour of fundamental importance for both Procopius and the history of Roman-Persian interactions in the first half of the sixth century.
He will undoubtedly return to some of the specific issues and there is a possibility that he will extend his work to embrace Book 8, since at p. 593 he refers to a future commentary on 8.10.8–22, though whether this will be a commentary on all the Persian chapters in Book 8, or even on the whole Book, is unclear. I look forward to further debate on a number of the major issues!

**The Translation**

Greatrex’s predecessors in compiling major commentaries did not accompany them with a translation and his decision to abandon precedent might be questioned. Dewing’s complete translation of Procopius’ works in the Loeb has its flaws, but for the *Wars* most of these have been ironed out in the revision by Anthony Kaldellis, and it would have been possible for Greatrex to discuss his further corrections and improvements in the commentary, with a consolidated list of proposed changes at the end. Instead he has taken the opportunity to resurrect, revise, and fill out the translation of extracts that Averil Cameron published in the short-lived ‘The Great Histories series’ in 1967. This is preceded by the same “Table of Names” (pp. XIII–XXIII) as in the *Commentary*, and a short introduction (pp. 1–15) that essentially abridges that in the *Commentary*. Somewhat bizarrely the translation, which naturally has the same thirty-three plans, is followed by an Appendix (pp. 211–218) in which Phoutius’ summary of Nonnosus’ account of his embassy is presented in the same translation as published in the *Commentary*. The volume ends with the indices of “Persons and Titles” (pp. 219–236), and “Peoples and Places” (pp. 237–251) that are used in the *Commentary*. In the Preface to the *Commentary* (pp. XI–XIV; p. XIII), but surprisingly not in the Preface to the *Translation* (pp. IX–X) where it might have been more


appropriate, Greatrex comments that he has drawn on translations into German, Spanish and Polish, as well as a forthcoming one into French.

Individual approaches to translation differ. In comparing Greatrex (hereafter G) with the previous translations into English by Dewing (D), Kaldellis (K),\(^{29}\) I have attempted to apply the guidance given by the General Editors of the esteemed Liverpool series, “Translated Texts for Historians”, that translations should represent the ancient text as accurately as possible and be couched in good English. Although Greatrex does not discuss his approach, it is unlikely to be different from this, since he has produced a translation that reads well and, in the main, adheres reasonably closely to Procopius’ text.

1. Corrections and other improvements by Greatrex

1.1.3 ἀπει... τοῖς πεπρωμένοις; G’s “everything that happened” is more precise than D-K’s “all the events to be described”.

1.1.9 κελαιμένοις; G’s “leaning” reflects the Homeric antecedent (Iliad 11.371), whereas there is no justification for D-K’s “seeking safety behind”.

1.5.1 ἐπὶ τὸ βιοικτέρον G’s “more autocratic” or D’s “more high-handed” are preferable to K’s literal “more violent”, since this leads into Kavadh’s disruption of the kingdom by imposing unpopular Mazdakite practices.

1.5.28 ἀλλος; G’s “the whole thing”, referring to the flayed skin stuffed with straw, reflects this, whereas D-K omit this.

1.9.21 ἐνδεοτέρως ἐκτὰ τὴν χρέαν; G’s “insufficient for their needs” renders this correctly, recording that Glones had put the Persians on starvation rations, whereas D-K’s “more sparingly than were needed/was necessary” wrongly suggests that he could have been more generous with supplies.

1.17.22. G notes D’s omission of ἕν, “one”, although this had already been corrected by K.

1.20.1 μέτρων ὡς ἑρώτῃ; G’s “on a large scale” is a possible alternative to D-K’s “outrageously”, for which ‘immoderately’ would be preferable.

\(^{29}\) D-K refers to where Kaldellis had preserved Dewing’s version.
1.24.8 τῶν δὲ πολιτῶν ἐς τι καθαρὰν: G’s “any noble citizen” is preferable to D’s “all of the citizens who were sane-minded” and K’s “all law-abiding citizens”, though ‘sound’ would be preferable to “noble” since Procopius was probably not just referring to the aristocracy here but to all those whose sound common sense ensured they were free from factional passions.

1.24.10 ἡ κατάστασις ἑκείνη προσαγωγεῖται: G’s “the event has taken its name” is preferable to D’s “the insurrection has been called by this name” or K’s looser “this was the name that the uprising would bear”, especially for κατάστασις, ‘event’ or even ‘affair’.

2.3.9 ἐπὶ τὸ πρότερα ἡμέρ: G’s “to their previous temper” plausibly applies this ambiguous phrase to the inhabitants’ attitude, as he explains (Commentary, p. 394), although he accepts that D-K’s “to their former homes” is possible; ‘to their previous state’ might preserve the ambiguity.

2.5.4. Here and elsewhere G translates Procopius’ references to peoples such as the Syrians as indicating the relevant province, whereas D-K retain the peoples.

2.5.13 καθαρὰς ἄρσεις: G’s “white loaves” corrects D’s “clean loaves” and K’s “pure loaves”.

2.7.28. G’s “lack of sense” for ἁγνωμοσύνης is an improvement on D’s “want of consideration” and K’s “ ingratitude”, which are not so good as a contrast to ἀδήνειαν, ‘weakness’; ‘lack of judgment’ would also be possible.

2.8.10 κατὰ τὴν τῆς ἀκρας ὑπερβολήν: G’s “down from the heights of the hill” improves D-K’s “along the crest of the hill”, which makes less sense in practical terms, since the Persians were exploiting that fact that they could fire down on the defenders, both from the nearby rock and also at places where the walls dropped down the steep contours of the mountain.

2.8.24 δὴ: G includes “evidently”, omitted in D-K.

2.13.13 ἀδελεγεῖσται: As G notes in his commentary, the superlative adverb should be translated “perpetually” rather than “completely” as in D-K.

2.13.21 τάφῳ G corrects K, who had wrongly changed D’s “trench” to “moat”.

2.18.7 ὡς ἤστα: G corrects the error that K had introduced into D’s translation by ignoring the negative.
2.18.17 δηλοῦντε: G’s “obviously” is preferable to D-K’s “as they surely would”. In G’s translation it is Peter and John, as part of Belisarius’ instructions, who are to be aware of the probably Persian tactics, whereas D-K wrongly assign this awareness to Belisarius.

2.18.18. G notes a correction to D’s apparatus; K had already changed D’s “gourds” to “cucumbers” for σικόνις.

2.19.31 σύμμικτο: G’s “parched” is preferable to D-K’s “dry and hot”.

2.20.20 ἀνεψάσθη: Although K had in most places corrected D’s “nephew” to “cousin”, here he wrongly retained “nephew”.

2.21.2 τά ἐς τὴν ἡμέραν ὑπηρετάτων: D-K’s “privy counsellor” is unlikely to mean much now, even to readers in the United Kingdom, so that G’s “saw to the emperor’s tranquillity” is a decided improvement.

2.21.3 σινθεῖναι: G’s “fine cloth” is preferable to D-K’s “heavy cloth”, since Belisarius will have wanted his tent to be impressive.

2.22.21 οὐ μέντοι τῇ τῆς παραφρασίης ὀλόντες κακοῦ ἄγρυπνός τε καὶ φαντασία πολλῇ ἐχόντο: G’s “But those afflicted by the frenzy were seized by terrible sleeplessness and multiple hallucinations” is in most respects preferable to D’s “But those who were seized with delirium suffered from insomnia and were victims of a distorted imagination” or K’s “Those gripped by the madness of dementia, on the other hand, could not sleep and became delusional”, except for attaching κακοῦ, “terrible”, to the feminine áγρυπνός rather than the preceding words.

2.25.7 ἐς τοῦ ἄρους τὰ ἔγχεια: G’s “at the foot of the mountain” improves on “extremity” (D) or “extreme end” (K), as G explains (Commentary, pp. 599–600).

2.28.3. As G points out (Commentary, p. 624), there is nothing in the Greek to justify D-K’s “a second time”, even though this was indeed the second embassy.

2.28.25 μονόστροφος: G’s “single-minded”, citing Lampe s.v. 2, is an improvement on D-K’s “singular in their ways”, but ‘constant’ (also Lampe s.v. 2) might be even better, since the problem for the Laz was the inflexibility of the Persians.

2.30.51. G plausibly argues that the ἐπερ clause must describe the divine power rather than what it dangles before men, as D-K interpreted.
2. Some emendations considered or adopted by Greatrex

1.18.16. G plausibly adopts the emendation suggested to him by Richard Burgess of τὰ ἑαυτά, “the same”, for the manuscripts’ τὰ ἑαυτα, “these things”. As a result, Hermogenes is shown to agree with Belisarius rather than side with the impatient troops, a difficulty that D-K smoothed over by adding “also” to their translation. It is slightly confusing that G, although accepting the emendation, prints the lemma with the reading of the manuscripts.

2.4.5. G accepts the suggestion in Donald S. Robertson’s review of Dewing’s translation that Jakob Haury’s text (ἡν οἱ πάλαιοι Ποτίδαιαν ἔκλαυον, ὃσα γε ἡμᾶς εἰδέναι) οὐ τευχωμαχήσαντες πρότερον should be repunctuated as (ἡν οἱ πάλαιοι Ποτίδαιαν ἔκλαυον), ὃσα γε ἡμᾶς εἰδέναι οὐ τευχωμαχήσαντες πρότερον, so that the qualification ὃσα γε ἡμᾶς εἰδέναι, “as far as we know”, applies to the besieging skills of the Hunnic raiders rather than to the name of the city that had been called Cassandrea since the end of the fourth century BC. This is possible, although Procopius might be wanting to suggest a certain cleverness on his part in knowing the old name (even if it is the name in Thucydides).

2.15.34. The deletion of the hapax πρόπονοι does not really change the sense, since the Laz are saying that they will be both leaders or guides on the journey and the first-movers or ground-breakers in the labour of clearance; the balance of πρόπονοι [...] ἐγεμόνες might favour retention.

2.21.2 ἐπιστέψασι (Haury) or ἐπιστρέψασι (manuscripts). G seems to be attracted by the manuscripts’ reading, though Haury’s simple emendation offers much better sense.

2.22.16. Acceptance of the reading ἄχρι εἰς πέρας, “until the end” in one manuscript does make far better sense of the comment about the progression of the plague than the majority reading ἄχρι ἐπιπέρας “until evening”, and the change is minimal.

3. Predecessors preferable to Greatrex

These improvements are outnumbered by places where Downey and/or Kaldellis present a translation that renders Procopius’ Greek more fully or precisely than Greatrex while still offering a good English version.
3.1. Words omitted by Greatrex

1.1.2 ὁμοίας: K’s “similar” or D’s “of the same sort” are needed.

1.1.15 παρ’ ἀκούσα τῶν ὄστων τὸ δεξιὸν D offers “about opposite the right ear” and K “all the way to the right ear”, which attempt to incorporate μάλιστα, which G’s “beside the right ear” ignores; ‘very close to the right ear’ might be suitable.

1.5.18 πολλά: D-K represent this through “heaped”.

1.20.2 τῶν: “this” Ethiopian army, as D-K, rather than “the” G.

1.24.55 πολλά: D’s “at length” or K’s “severely” represent this.

2.1.13 ἐνδιώ: D-K’s “he alleged” captures the force of the word, which G disregards.

2.5.26 ἕμπασα “whole” (D-K).

2.7.15 ἔγγραφε: D-K “It happened that”.

2.7.16 ἀπεκ: D “everybody”, K “everyone”.

2.7.28 ἐν τε καὶ καλῶς: D-K’s “well and suitably” renders both elements, whereas G restricted himself to “well”.

2.9.8 τῷ λόγῳ: D-K “in/with words”; G also omits this at 2.9.10.

2.9.12 τῷ χρόνῳ: D offers “based on age” and K “in point of years”.

2.9.13 ἀεί: D-K “every time”.

2.11.15 πολλά: D-K “much gold”.

2.11.17 ἐγέρθη: D “it befell that” (D) or K “took place there”.

2.11.17 πολλά: “great” (D), “bright” (K).

2.12.8 ἀπάντησε: D-K “all”.

2.12.28 σὺν βασιλέας “to the kingdom” (D), “on the throne” (K).

2.14.3 τῶν ἀρχιπάτων D-K “of the magistrates”.

2.14.9 Ἀρτάνως γὰρ: D’s “For Martin” gets this right, whereas K’s “Martin, by contrast” wrongly introduced an adversative, which G corrects, although he omits the γὰρ which explains why Martin was not among the commanders being sent out at this time. None of the three translations attempts to include
ἐπεξήνευ ‘it happened’, which is part of the explanation for why Martin was already in the East.

2.18.9 τῶν ἔλλην: D-K “every other”.
2.19.32 ὄραξ ἀθανατό: D-K “in the summer season”.
2.20.18 εἰθῆς [...] πάντως D-K “straight [...] all”.
2.20.26 ὡς D-K “immediately”.
2.21.14 ἀπάντατον D-K “all”.
2.21.20 πολλάς: D-K “many”, which is needed to underline the exaggerated myriads of the barbarians the Romans would have to face.
2.21.28 φάνας D-K “in their eyes” or just ‘to them’.
2.22.37 μείζων D “to an unusual size”, K “very large”.
2.23.19 ἀπαντᾶτον D-K “all”.
2.26.23 ἀπεχθέω: D-K “right”, which emphasises that the earth was being piled directly on the felled trees; it might be worth considering the minor emendation to ἀπεχθάνοις, to mean that the earth was piled ‘indiscriminately’ on the trees.
2.26.24 ἐς ἀέτη: D-K point to the continuous nature of the mound’s internal bonding through “kept laying”.
2.26.29 διαφανὲς: D-K “adequate”.
2.26.36 αὐτὸ πολλά: D-K “most”.
2.26.46 ἀπόδειξις D-K “from there”.
2.29.2 Περσῶν: D-K “of the Persians”.
2.30.27 πανταχόθι: D-K “all along”.
2.30.52 ἀλλάξ: ‘other’. Only D attempts to reflect this with “such”.

3.2. Weaker translation than the Greek word
1.6.6 ποτεμενακὼς ἐπιλαβόοσης: This is correctly and fully represented by D-K’s “one day as night drew near”, in contrast to G’s “One night”.

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1.18.9 τὸν τε κινδύνον κατορρωθήσαντες: D-K’s “were terrified at the danger” is preferable to G’s “were overcome by fear”, though ‘shuddered/quivered in fright at the danger’ might be better still.

1.20.10 διαφερόντως ἁγῶθ: D-K’s “exceptionally able” captures this better than G’s “very experienced”, relevant since the sentence contains another exaggerating adverb in παντάπασιν, “utterly”.

1.23.14 ὑπερρήξε: D’s “exceedingly” or K’s “furiously” are stronger than G’s “very”.

1.26.2 δύνας: D’s “mightily” or K’s “badly” are stronger than G’s “very”.

2.8.10 ἵσχυσάτω D-K’s “most vigorously” represents the superlative, as opposed to G’s “hard”.

2.15.32 ὑπερρήξε: again, G has “very”, D-K “extremely” (as G has at 2.25.18).

2.16.6 ἐν τῷ παρόντι: D-K’s “at the present this time” covers this more completely than G’s “now”.

2.18.24 ἐς φυγὴν ὀχυρωντα: D-K’s “beat a hasty retreat” appropriately offers an element of speed, whereas G’s “turned to flight” is more neutral.

2.22.1 ἄποικος: the verb indicates an attack or assault (cf. G’s translations at 2.22.5, 23.21 etc.), so that here his “came from” is too weak. D’s “scourges” is preferable to K’s “calamities”, though both capture the hostile sense.

2.25.35 ὅλγα: D-K’s “some little” notes the limited nature of the achievement of Justus and Peranius better than G’s “some”, whether that is applied to the quantity of plunder they secured (D-K) or the part of the country they ravaged (G).

2.27.23 ὑπεντιάσαντες: D-K’s “confronted” is more appropriate than G’s “met”.

2.27.42 ἵσχυσάτω D-K’s “most vigorously” represents the superlative, which G’s “hard” ignores.

3.3. Other observations

1.16 ὅληθεν: D-K’s “on the truth” is preferable to G’s “really”.
1.3.17 κόσμημα ολοκληρωμένα: In his *Commentary* (p. 62) G notes that this favourite Procopian phrase does often refer to a senseless action; D’s “wantonly” is a bit dated, but ‘senselessly’ is better than K’s and G’s “recklessly”.

1.5.4 ἐξ’ ἐκτεταρτεῖ: D-K’s “on both sides” is closer than G’s “favouring different conclusions”.

1.5.40 ἐν τοῖς Ἀρμονίοις συγγραφή: Granted that in his introductory remarks (*Commentary*, p. 81) G refers to this as a “Composition of the Armenians”, which he accepts was a written source, it is strange that here he translates as “The account of the Armenians”, which, with the lower-case “account” could easily be interpreted as an oral report; D has “the Armenian History”, K “the History of the Armenians.”

1.7.5. All three translations render δίκαιος as “just”; this is not wrong, but ‘righteous’ might reflect Jacob’s holy status better; cf. also 2.13.13.

1.7.5 ὁ τὰς ἐς τὸν Ἱερον ἐς τὸ ἔκριτες ἔργα τοῦ: Procopius may be referring to the strict training, *askesis*, that holy men like Jacob endured before acquiring their status. D’s “who had trained himself with exactitude in matters pertaining to religion” captures some of this, though “with exactitude” is a bit clunky; K’s “who was very focused on the practice of religion” is too loose, while G’s “who was far advanced in religious knowledge and practice” introduces “knowledge” that is not in the Greek. Something along the lines of ‘who had trained himself strictly in divine matters’ might be preferable.

1.8.1 τότε: G’s “At the time of which I was speaking” is a considerable and unnecessary expansion; “At that time” (D-K) or just ‘then’, as G uses elsewhere (e.g. 1.19.1) is better.

1.11.2 μίσομαι τὸς: “a sort of anxiety” (D) or “a concern” (K) is better than G’s “the thought”, though in the commentary lemma he quotes “(or worry)” as an alternative.

1.11.3. G glosses ὁ νόμος correctly but unnecessarily as “the law of succession”.

1.11.22 δηλόν: K’s “explained” comes closest, whereas D’s “and his meaning was” does not capture the fact that Probus was clarifying the basis for his opinion, while G’s “reminded” introduces a different aspect.

1.11.34 ἐξ Περσῶν νόμιμα: K’s “the customs of the Persians” is preferable to D’s “the institutions of the Persians” or G’s “the Persian way of life”.
1.13.9 στρατιωτῶν λόγου πολλῶν δέξιας D’s “very formidable army” or K’s “formidable army” is preferable to G’s “very considerable army”; ‘most notable’ would be an alternative.

1.15.23. G discusses whether ἐκ τοῦ ἐπὶ πλῆθου should be interpreted temporally, as D “for a long time” or geographically as he prefers, “over a wide area”, though the parallel of 1.24.16 which he cites suggests that ‘as a rule’ would be preferable, to refer to the tendency of the Tzani to make unexpected attacks; K’s “got used to making” conveys this sense.

1.19.13 ἀνθρώπων παντελῶς ξημός: D’s “completely destitute of human habitation” or K’s “completely destitute of human presence” are preferable to G’s “completely desolate”, though better still is ‘completely uninhabited’, extrapolating from G’s translation of ξημός ἀνθρώπων at 1.19.3, which he might have adapted.

1.20.3 ἐν τινὶ τῶν ἔκειν ἐφορέσαν D-K’s “in one of the fortresses/forts there” preserves the periphrasis, as opposed to G’s “in a fortress there”.

1.20.12 χώραν ἀμείψαμένον ξημόν τε καὶ χρόνον πολλῶν ὕδων κατατείνωσαν: D’s “to cross a country which was a desert and which extended so far that a long time was required for a journey across it” is accurate if slightly laboured, but preferable to K’s “to enter a desert that extended over such a distance that it required much time to cross”; G’s “leave their country and go on a long and lonely journey” distorts the sense. An improvement might be ‘to cross a region that was a desert and extended for several days’ journey’.

1.22.9 ξυνάρχεις τε καὶ δυνῆ πολλῶν ἔχόμενος: D-K’s “much perturbed/shaken up by this, and, already filled with anger” is better than G’s “up in arms at this and in a great passion” since the supposed death of the friendly Rufinus would have upset Khusro.

1.22.13 ψαλείς τε πολῆς: D-K’s “lying prone” is sufficient, as opposed to G’s “with his face touching the floor”, which departs some way from the Greek (cf. also 2.7.34).

1.24.17 ἔπαρξηθα τοῦ δήμου: As G rightly notes (Commentary, p. 345), the expression harks back to Herodotus’ account of Cleisthenes’ actions in 508/507 BC, but his “to associate himself with the people” inverts the direction of travel, as opposed to D’s “to win the people to his side” or K’s “win the populace back to his side”.

1.24.31 ὃδε ἔμεινε D-K’s “not least” avoids the repetition of “lead [...] lead” in G’s version.

1.25.23 ὃς: It is most unlikely that Antonina was actually going to continue directly to the eastern frontier after entrapping John, since she needed to be sure that he did not foil the plan by appealing to Justinian (which would probably have worked, as Procopius comments at 1.25.30). It is therefore preferable to translate ὃς by “as if”, as D-K do.

2.1.1 πρόκειται G translates as singular “an excuse”, whereas at 2.1.11 he rightly offers “pretexts”, as D-K have in both places.

2.3.6 ἐπειδὴ καθ' ὃ τι παραπέμψῃ, γη ἐνεδέιπτο: All translations are challenged by the implications of καθ' ὃ τι. D offered “gained the opportunity of displaying his inward character”, K “was able to display the content of his character”, and G “displayed his character whenever he had the chance”, with D-K rendering ἐπειδὴ παραπέμψῃ, γη more closely than G. Elements from all might suggest, ‘took whatever chance he had to display his inner character’.

2.3.10 διαβολάζει: D-K’s “slanders” is better than G’s “accusations”.

2.3.19 ἐν δυσχωρίαις χαλεπάστα τε καὶ κρημνώδεσιν K’s “on extremely rough terrain full of precipices” improves on D’s “extremely difficult ground where precipices abounded”, whereas G’s “rough terrain that was both dangerous and mountainous” renders χαλεπάστα τε more closely but ignores the meaning of κρημνώδεσιν, ‘with cliffs’ or perhaps ‘craggy’.

2.3.30 πολλά [...] ἐλύτρα: K’s “strongly advised” is preferable to D’s “earnestly entreated” with regard to πολλά, which G’s “urgently besought” renders imprecisely, but ‘entreated/begged’ are better for ἐλύτρα; ‘frequently entreated’ or ‘repeatedly begged’ might be better still.

2.4.18 τίθεται ἡ τῶν πραγμάτων νεώμαξι φύσις: D’s “the nature of things is such as to make” is preferable to K’s version that omits ‘such’, since this reflects the periphrasis in νεώμαξι, while G’s “the nature of things makes” weakens this element even further.

2.4.26 τὰῦτα ἐπειδὴ ὁ Χοσρόης ἀπενεχθέντα ἀδεν D-K’s “Chosroes saw this message” is closer than G’s “Khusro had read this”, though does not completely capture the sense of ἀπενεχθέντα, ‘what had been brought’.

2.7.14 ἔγγυ τὰῦτα ἐπιτελεῖται: G’s “to fulfil their part of the deal” is similar to D’s “to carry out this agreement”, though perhaps more colloquial, while
K’s “to carry them out” is preferable since the agreement has just been mentioned in the previous clause and no noun is needed, but none of these attempts to render ἐφανερώσ, ‘in practice’, ‘to fulfil this/these in practice’ would suffice.

2.7.19 ἁγνός: K’s “unholy” captures the religious dimension better than D’s “outrageously” or G’s “disgracefully” (at 2.10.5 G translates the superlative as “most impious”).

2.7.19. Granted that G notes the relevance of the repetition of αὐτὸν at 2.7.22, which he translates as “needless” (better than D-K’s “wrongfully”), it would have been preferable to have used ‘needlessly’ here.

2.9.5 αὐτοῦ: D-K’s “at the first cry” is better than G’s “without a blow” since even a success at the first shout might have involved some blows.

2.9.7 τερατευόμενος τε καὶ διαφυτοπόμενος: G’s “This was the fanciful and deceitful tale” introduces the notion that Khosro is telling a story, though “fanciful” for τερατευόμενος improves on D’s “Such high-sounding and airy words” and certainly on K’s “Such bizarre and affected words”; ‘fanciful and airy words’ might combine the best of these versions.

2.11.17 κατ’ αὐτὸν: D-K’s “above him”, namely the bishop, is better than G’s “above it”, which suggests he is emending to κατ’ αὐτῷ to refer to the wood.

2.12.11. G introduces “ostensibly” into the account of Abgar’s hunting expedition; there is nothing in the Greek to support this, and Abgar was indeed attempting to capture animals.

2.12.30 διὰ τὸ τύμα: G translates with both “by this means” and “for the following reason”; the former is wrong and, in any case, unnecessary.

2.13.23 τὸν πάντα λόγον D-K translate as “everything”, whereas G introduces an idea of deception with “the whole ruse”. No such ruse has been mentioned, and ‘the whole story’ of the Persian tunnel is what is meant.

2.14.5 μέντοι: Neither D-K’s “Thus” nor G’s “So”, reflects the adversative force; ‘however’ would be appropriate for this transition from the description of the city of New Antioch in Persia and the portent that had foreshadowed the fate of the Roman city.

2.14.5 ἀπεκριθεί: G’s “even though”, for the relative pronoun introduces a qualification to the clause about the law, whereas Procopius is just making a statement of fact.
2.15.25 τοῖς ἀναγκαῖοις: D-K’s “necessities of life” is preferable to G’s “basic produce”.

2.15.35 ἐπεφήμιζεν K’s “his disinformation claimed” rightly recognizes that Khusro is alleging why he was making this expedition, which neither D’s “kept saying in explanation” nor G’s “put it about” captures, although ‘alleged’ would be quite sufficient rather than K’s expansion.

2.18.6 ἀποκράταρα: D-K’s “supreme commander in the war” is closer than G’s “to direct the war himself”.

2.19.10 ἐξ ἀλληθρονφέρει D-K’s “leads to destruction” is closer than G’s “brings destruction”.

2.19.35 ἐμβλήμα προεῖθεν: D-K’s “opened a discussion” is preferable to G’s “invited a discussion”.

2.19.44 ἐξ τοῦ ὀροβοτ κατοικίστηκεν [...] ἔχειν: D’s “becoming disorderly, they demanded” is preferable to K’s “becoming loud and insubordinate, they demanded”, which makes too much of ἐξ τοῦ ὀροβοτ κατοικίστηκεν, while G’s “In the ensuing disorder they decided” might suggest that the disorder was a general matter rather than the behaviour of those demanding that Belisarius retreat. As G notes, ἔχειν can be translated as both “demanded” and “decided”; he adduces parallels from books 1 and 3 for his preference “decided”, but they cannot be decisive for the interpretation here.

2.19.45. Although the Persians removed corpses on pack animals, it is more likely that wounded men were carried back on carts, so that ὑποβόαμεν, literally ‘yoke animals’, is more likely to imply carts, as D-K translate.

2.20.14 ἐπιλειτόντος An aorist rather than a present participle, so D’s “had failed” or K’s “had run out” are preferable to G’s “was failing”.

2.22.2 ἡ λόγια εἶπεν ἡ δικαιοξία λογίσασθαι: D’s “to express in words or conceive in thought” is better than K’s rather loose “to give a rational account, or even to cope with it mentally”, while G’s “giving a reason or conceiving one in the imagination” misses the contrast of λόγια [...] δικαιοξία.

2.22.3 περιεβάλλετο: “embraced” (D-K) is more accurate than G’s “was spread”; it is also worth retaining the mild adversative force of ἦ at the start of the clause, which G disregards.

2.22.19 τῶν εἰμιδότων As G notes this can be translated either as “usual habits”, as he does, or as “those who were familiar to them” (D) or “loved ones”
(K); the Thucydidean precedent for victims of the Athenian plague forgetting their friends, which G cites, in fact favours D-K’s interpretation.

2.22.23 ἀντέχων: Although G’s “stood up […] to” is possible, the use of ἀντέχοντες at 2.23.9, where he translates “keep up with”, supports the idea of keeping going here, which D represents by “held out in performance” and K by “continued to perform”.

2.22.24 ἐκπίπτοντας καὶ καλυπθόμενος […] ἀντικαθίστων: D’s “kept putting” or K’s “kept falling” capture the repetitive nature of the activity represented by the imperfect tenses better than G’s “had to put […] had fallen”.

2.23.11 ἔλπη: K’s “bring grief” or better D’s “distressed” are preferable to G’s “did harm”.

2.23.19 ἐπεικώμαξεν: D’s “was running riot” was not improved by K’s “was careering about”; G’s “ran riot” followed D, but D’s imperfect is preferable.

2.24.11 ταύτα ἐπει ἀπενεχθέντα οἱ ἄρχοντες καὶ γράμματα ἔδοξαν: Again (cf. 2.4.26) none of the translations completely captures the sense of ἀπενεχθέντα, ‘what has been brought’.

2.26.28 τεχνίται: G translates as “specialists”, namely siege engineers. It does, however, seem unlikely that poliorcetic experts would have been tasked with the physical construction of a siege mound, for which Khusro needed skilled craftsmen to ensure his structure was solid and stable. D’s “artisans” or K’s “builders” are more appropriate.

2.26.40. G glosses τάσσει with “options”, which fits the context, though D-K’s “words” is weaker, and hence more appropriate since there is no noun in the Greek.

2.27.1 διώρυχα: G translates as “trench”, but D-K’s “tunnel” has to be preferred since the defenders of Edessa were digging a concealed passage under the mound, not an open trench.

2.27.7 οὐδὲνα ἄνεντες καρπόν: G translates “without losing an opportunity”, but cites the parallel at 2.25.31, where he translates “losing no time”; this would be better here too. D-K have “not slackening their efforts for a moment” here and “wasting not a moment” at 2.25.31; the latter would also suit the context here.
2.27.36 περροκατηφως D-K’s “whisk” adopts one of Liddle/Scott/Jones’s definitions; G’s “sprinkler” is not wrong, since the boiling oil was being sprinkled, but might suggest garden equipment.

2.28.14. There is nothing in the Greek to justify G’s modifying “quite”; D’s “did not actually” captures the force of the γε in μένται γε better than K’s laconic “but did not” while omitting the μένται.

2.28.26 ἀναπόσωσικο: Henning Börm’s suggestions, commended by G, include “inaccessible”, which resembles Dewing’s “difficult of access”; G’s “baffling” might suggest that the laws could be accessed, but were then found to be incomprehensible.

2.29.2. D-K preserve the structure of Procopius’ sentence, which G distorts unnecessarily by attaching Vahriz to ἀπολεξόμενα rather than ἐπιστήματος.

2.30.34. D preserves the comparative force of ἐγγυτέρω, ‘nearer’, which is dropped by K’s and G’s, “near”.

2.30.46 ἀλας παμπληθεῖ: D-K’s “great quantities (or amounts) of flour” represents this correctly, whereas G’s “a huge quantity of various supplies, including flour” transfers “huge quantity” to the preceding ἄλα ἐπιστήματι, with the result that he has to omit ἄλα; better would be ‘other supplies including great quantities of flour’.

These comments are based on the passages that Greatrex cites in his lemmata in the Commentary, which represent no more than 20% of the Greek text, though I have looked at a few other passages to confirm that my observations are representative. Some might seem pedantic, and I would accept that not every superlative has to be translated as such or that every word in the Greek can always be reflected in a translation while preserving the quality of English. At many points it is not a case that Greatrex is in error, only that he could easily have represented Procopius’ Greek more precisely without sacrificing the quality of his English version in any way. An obvious conclusion from the above comments is that Greatrex has not produced the definitive English translation of Wars 1–2 since, despite some genuine improvements and corrections, these are outnumbered by places where his version is inferior to those of Dewing and/or Kaldellis. If he felt that he could not stick too closely to their versions, so that change was necessary, that would be a pity. Whatever the reason, his translation cannot be recommended
ahead of Kaldellis’ revision of Dewing, whatever the errors that this does contain, and the fact that it presents the whole of the *Wars* in a single volume is also an advantage; those who appreciate the convenience of a parallel text and translation are not served too badly by Dewing’s *Loeb*, even if his expression will sometimes strike contemporary readers as a bit dated. If the commentary had printed a consolidate lists of proposed corrections to Dewing and Kaldellis and of changes to the text, it would have been easy for all those with the earlier versions to keep this by their texts. As it is, all three versions will often need to be consulted.

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