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THE DATE OF PROCOPIUS' BUILDINGS *IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT SCHOLARSHIP*

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Abstract

The article discusses the date of composition of Procopius of Caesarea's *De Aedificiis* or *Buildings*. It advances a detailed rebuttal of arguments recently put forward by Denis Roques for dating the work to c.560 and deals in particular with the passage of Theophanes concerning the construction of the Sangarius bridge. It concludes by favouring the traditional dating of c.554 for the work.
Metadata: Procopius, *Buildings, De Aedificiis*, Justinian, Byzantine literature

Résumé

L'article traite de la date de composition de l'œuvre de Procope, *De Aedificiis* ou *Les Constructions*. Il propose une réfutation en détail des arguments avancés dernièrement par Denis Roques, selon lesquels l'œuvre fut composée vers 560 et discute surtout d'un passage de Théophane concernant la construction du pont sur le Sangarius. Il conclue en appuyant la datation traditionnelle de c.554 pour la composition de l'œuvre.
Metadata: Procope, *Constructions, De Aedificiis,* Justinian, Littérature byzantine

Resumen

El artículo se ocupa de la fecha de composición de la obra de Procopio, *De Aedificiis* o *Las Construcciones.* Ofrece una detallada refutación de los argumentos presentados recientemente por Denis Roques, según los cuales la obra fue compuesta en torno al 560, y discute especialmente un pasaje de Teófanes acerca de la construcción del puente sobre el Sangario. Finaliza apoyando la fecha tradicional de *ca.* 554 para la composición de la obra.
Metadata: Procopio, *Construcciones, De Aedificiis*, Justiniano, Literatura bizantina

THE DATE OF PROCOPIUS' BUILDINGS *IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT SCHOLARSHIP*

Geoffrey Greatrex

In the last few years there has been a huge increase in work on Procopius. While much of this has focussed, as usual, on the *Anecdota* or *Secret History,* there have also been important discussions of the *De Aedificiis* or *Buildings*. A new Italian translation and commentary on *Buildings* i.1 appeared in 2011, while an exhaustive translation and commentary of the entire work in French by Denis Roques was published in the same year. Of course, neither of these works could take the other into account – that of Roques is in any case posthumous – and consequently they adopt quite different stances as to the dating of the work, in both cases on the basis of good arguments. It is not necessary to dwell on the points raised by Cesaretti and Fobelli in their work, since they rely chiefly on the arguments of earlier scholars in their advocacy of the earlier dating, that is to around A.D. 554.[1] On the other hand, it is important to give due consideration to the lengthy case that Roques builds up for a later dating: he prefers to place the work in 561, although those who prefer the later date have generally opted for c.559. We propose therefore in this article to analyse his arguments in detail to determine whether there are grounds for revising the majority view, which continues to prefer c.554; even if it emerges that they are insufficient to warrant a shift in the consensus, they

[1] P. Cesaretti – M.L. Fobelli, *Santa Sofia di Costantinopoli*, Milano 2011, 15-19, who rightly highlight the fact that those who had conspired against Justinian in 549, such as Artabanes, continued to hold high office (*Aed*. i.1.16), an argument neglected by most. See further n. 39 below. I am grateful to the anonymous readers of *Estudios bizantinos* for their helpful comments, as also to Dariusz Brodka, Helen Hardman, and Anthony Kaldellis. Remaining mistakes are my own.

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nonetheless deserve serious scrutiny, the more so as his book has thus far unfortunately attracted little attention.[2] We shall deliberately focus quite narrowly on the issue of the dating of the work, rather than on other aspects of it that have come to the fore recently, since we have devoted a separate study to developments in the last decade in Procopian scholarship.[3]

A. The Sangarius bridge

Our discussion will concern Theophanes, and, to a lesser extent, Cedrenus, as much as Procopius. It has long been evident that if Theophanes' mention of the start of work on the construction of the Sangarius bridge (A.M. 6052, p. 234) could be linked to Procopius' description of the work being carried out (*Aed.* v.3.10), then we would have a terminus post quem for the *Buildings* of 559/60, the date assigned by Theophanes (and Cedrenus) to this entry. This is a central plank in the argument put forward by Michael Whitby in 1985 and one by which Roques sets much store.[4] It is, however, a slender reed, despite the insistence of Roques that «the precise chronological data that Theophanes provides is in no way contaminated by errors» and that those who pretend otherwise do so simply out of *parti pris* for the earlier dating of the *Buildings*.[5] Before we scrutinise more closely the chronicler's entries for this period, it is worth pausing to note that it is well established that he has few qualms about rearranging his material to suit his interests: this emerges very clearly

[2] D. Roques, *Procope de Césarée. Constructions de Justinien Ier,* Alessandria 2011, but note the useful review of C. Saliou in *MEG* 12 (2012) 350-355. Cf. the Polish translation of P. L. Grotowski, *Prokopiusz z Cezarei, O budolach (Peri ktismaton),* Warsaw 2006, whose introduction, 62-64, applies some of the same arguments as those advanced by Roques.

[3] G. Greatrex, "Perceptions of Procopius in Recent Scholarship", forthcoming.

[4] M. Whitby, "Justinian's Bridge over the Sangarius and the Date of Procopius' *De Aedificiis*", *JHS* 105 (1985) 129-148, cf. D. Roques, *Constructions* (cit. n. 2), 54-55.

[5] Quotation from D. Roques, *Constructions* (cit. n. 2), 54. M. Whitby, "The Sangarius Bridge" (cit. n. 4), 138-140, is more circumspect about Theophanes' chronology.

from Mango and Scott's introduction to their translation, as from the work of other scholars. In some cases, entries are displaced across a wide (chronological) span, such as the embassy of Julian (or Nonnosus), shifted from the year 530 to 571/2; more commonly, however, he moved entries from one year to another, chiefly to distribute the material evenly and not be left with years for which there was nothing to report. He was also prepared to make adjustments in the interests of portraying an emperor in a certain light, whether as a good or bad ruler; in the case of Justinian, Roger Scott has shown that he consciously aims to promote his image as a conqueror, which explains, for instance, the inclusion of a précis of Procopius' *Vandalic War*.[6]

It will not do therefore to appeal to Theophanes to resolve the issue of the date of Procopius' *Buildings*. For even if it is accepted that the entry on the Sangarius bridge does derive from Malalas, it does not follow that he has assigned it to the correct year, notwithstanding arguments that in this section of his work he is more scrupulous as to his placing of material.[7] But a more important objection lies in the attribution of the entry to Malalas: Michael Whitby argues strongly that it was, but a closer examination of entries in

[6] C. Mango – R. Scott, with G. Greatrex, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor,* Oxford 1997, xcii-xcv, concluding that «his dates are not to be trusted without supporting evidence», cf. ibidem, 363 n. 7 (on the embassy, A.M. 6064, pp. 244-245, Mal. 18.56, on which see G. Greatrex, "Procopius and Roman imperial policy in the Arabian and Egyptian frontier zones", in J. Dijkstra – G. Fisher (eds.), *Inside and Out. Interactions between Rome and the Peoples on the Arabian and Egyptian Frontiers in Late Antiquity* [forthcoming]). See also M. Jeffreys, "A lacuna in Theophanes' Malalas?", in E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Studies in John Malalas,* Sydney 1990, 268-276; and R. Scott, "«The events of every year, arranged without confusion»: Justinian and others in the chronicle of Theophanes Confessor", in P. Odorico – P. Agapitos – M. Hinterberger (eds.), *L'écriture et la mémoire: la littérarité de l'historiographie,* Paris 2006, 49-65, at 62-65, on the reshaping of material by Theophanes.

[7] So M. Whitby, "Sangarius Bridge" (cit. n. 4), 139-140, cf. M. Jeffreys, "A lacuna" (cit. n. 6), 273. But see G. Greatrex, "Procopius and Agathias on the Defences of the Thracian Chersonese", in C. Mango – G. Dagron (eds.), *Constantinople and its Hinterland,* Aldershot 1995, 125-129, at 129 and n. 13, for cases of inaccurate chronology in this section. See also R. Scott's article in F. Montinaro – M. Jankowiak (eds.), *La Chronique de Théophane: sources, composition, transmission* (forthcoming).

Theophanes casts serious doubt on such a supposition. In the table below we have gathered together all the building notices from Theophanes and Cedrenus (who seems to be relying almost exclusively on Theophanes) from the period 559-602; for the preceding part of Justinian's reign there are almost no reports of building projects, but more entries concerning natural disasters and occasionally repairs carried out in the wake of them (as at A.M. 6051, pp. 232-233, the report about the collapse and repair of the dome of Hagia Sophia). Not surprisingly, given the turbulent political context, there are no such entries in the following period either.[8]

Date (A.M.), page	*Theophanes*	*Date* (regn. year), page	*Cedrenus*
6052, p. 234	Justinian began to build the Sangarius bridge, ἤρξατο κτίζειν	Justinian, 33rd, p. 678	Justinian builds (κτίζει) the Sangarius bridge and the church of the Theotokos at Pêgê
6061, p. 243	Justin began to build the Sophianae palace, ἤρξατο κτίζειν	Justin, 4th, p. 684	Justin builds (κτίζει) the Sophianae palace
6062, p. 243	Justin began to build the Deuteron palace (ἤρξατο κτίζειν), and undertook other building work	Justin, 5th, p. 684	Justin builds the monastery of Prinkipo (here Cedrenus has fuller details than Theoph.)
6063, pp. 243-4	Narses built (ἔκτισε) the house of Narses and the monastery of the Cathars (Bithynia)	Justin, 6th, p. 684	Same information as Theoph.

[8] We are drawing out here a point we first raised in G. Greatrex, "The dates of Procopius' works", *BMGS* 18 (1994) 101-114, at 110-111.

6064, p. 244	Justin began to build (ἤρξατο κτίζειν) the church of Peter and Paul in the Orphanage and that of the Holy Apostles in the Triconch; other building work	Justin, 7th, p. 684	Justin began to build (ἤρξατο κτίζειν) the church of Peter and Paul in the Orphanage; other building work
6068, p. 248	Justin repaired (ἔκτισε) the aqueduct of Valens	Justin, 11th, p. 685	Justin repaired (ἔκτισε) the aqueduct of Valens
6072, p. 250	Tiberius built (ἔκτισε) the Sophiae palace, renames the harbour of Julian after Sophia	Justin, 11th, p. 685	Justin cleans the harbour and renames it after Sophia, erects statues; further building projects noted (presumably from another source)
6073, p. 251	Tiberius began to build (ἤρξατο κτίζειν) the bath at Blachernae, restores churches	Tiberius, 4th, p. 690	Justin builds (κτίζει) the Blachernae bath, restores churches
6079, p. 261	Maurice built (ἔκτισε) the Carian portico at Blachernae		
6082, p. 267	Maurice finished the church of the Forty Saints, which Tiberius had begun to build (ἣν ἤρξατο κτίζειν)	Maurice, 8th, p. 695	Maurice completed the church of the Forty saints, which Tiberius had begun
6086, p. 272	Philippicus began to build (ἤρξατο κτίζειν) the monastery of Mary at Chrysopolis and other buildings	Maurice, 12th, p. 698	Philippicus builds (κτίζει) the monastery of Mary at Chrysopolis and other buildings
6088, p. 274	Maurice built (ἔκτισεν) the terrace of Magnaura		

6090, p. 277	Peter, brother of Maurice, built (ἔκτισε) the church of Theotokos in the Areobindus quarter; patriarch Cyriacus built the church of Theotokos in the Diakonissa quarter	Maurice, 16th, p. 699	Peter, brother of Maurice, built (ἔκτισε) the church of Theotokos in the Areobindus quarter; patriarch Cyriacus built the church of Theotokos in the Diakonissa quarter

It should immediately be apparent that Theophanes (and Cedrenus) were here exploiting a source that was well informed about building projects in Constantinople and its hinterland, which frequently employed the same formula (ἤρξατο κτίζειν, began to build)[9] to record the initiation of a project. Furthermore, the fact that these entries extend as far as the 590s immediately excludes the possibility that Malalas' chronicle can be that source: while some scholars believe that it might have reached as far as c.574, it certainly went no further than this.[10] The formula is to be found in Malalas' work, but only in two places, one of which concerns a building project started by Anastasius and completed by Justinian.[11] It is rare elsewhere in Theophanes, occurring only three more times in his *Chronicle*, in passages from the eighth century that do not concern buildings in Constantinople.[12] We are thus left with a source whose information is clearly quite detailed and that was interested in both imperial and non-imperial projects. In some cases, the start of building

[9] M. Whitby, "Sangarius Bridge" (cit. n. 4), 147-148, discusses the precise meaning of the phrase, concluding that it does possess inceptive force, i.e. that it does indeed record the start of construction.

[10] See B. Croke, "Malalas, the man and his work" in E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Studies* (cit. n. 6), 1-25, at 24-25, cf. M. Jeffreys, "A lacuna" (cit. n. 6), 276.

[11] Mal. 8.11, 18.17. The latter entry, which concerns the completion of the baths of Dagisthaeus in Constantinople, is reproduced very closely by Theophanes (A.M. 6020, p. 176) and Cedrenus (year 1 of Justinian, p. 645) and other chroniclers, e.g. Symeon the Logothete, *Chronicon,* ed. S. Wahlgren, Berlin 2006, 104.3 (p. 140.1-2).

[12] A.M. 6202 (p. 377), A.M. 6206 (p. 384), A.M. 6216 (p. 403). The second passage concerns the building of ships, while the other two report building work in Arab territory and are attributed by Mango and Scott to the eastern "common source".

work is noted; more rarely, the completion of work started is reported. It seems quite possible that Cedrenus had direct access to the source just like Theophanes, rather than simply deriving his material exclusively from him, given not only the mention of the Pêgê church omitted by Theophanes, but also his clearer mention of the monastery of Prinkipo. Since our focus here is on the date of Procopius' *Buildings*, it would not be appropriate to delve further into what this source might be.[13]

We have nevertheless not quite exhausted the data presented in the table above. For although this postulated source may not be Malalas, it might yet have accurately recorded the start of construction work on the Sangarius bridge. Upon closer examination, however, its chronological accuracy – or at any rate Theophanes' deployment of its information – is open to challenge. Thus, if we take the second entry, concerning the start of work on the Sophianae palace in 568/9, Averil Cameron has established that the palace in question was already in existence at the start of Justin II's reign, as Corippus' panegyric to the emperor attests.[14] Likewise, the notice about Tiberius building the Palace of Sophiae in 579/80 also appears to be inaccurately placed: again, Averil Cameron has demonstrated that it existed already before Justin ascended the throne.[15] Unfortunately, too little is known about the other buildings mentioned by Theophanes, and so it is impossible to ascertain how accurately they are dated.

[13] Building notices are among the typical features of a "city chronicle": see B. Croke, *Count Marcellinus and his Chronicle*, Oxford 2001, 178-186. It is possible therefore that these notices derive from some such account, although it must be emphasised that city chronicles were not an official record, cf. R. Burgess, *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana*, Oxford 1993, 178-186.

[14] A. Cameron, "Notes on the Sophiae, the Sophianae and the harbour of Sophia", *Byzantion* 37 (1967) 11-20, at 12-13, cf. C. Mango – R. Scott, *The Chronicle* (cit. n. 6), 358 n. 2.

[15] A. Cameron, "Notes" (cit. n. 14), 14-15, rejecting the date assigned by Theophanes for the palace's construction and that attached by Cedrenus for the renaming of the harbour of Sophia, cf. C. Mango – R. Scott, *The Chronicle* (cit. n. 6), 371 n. 1.

It is time to conclude this section on the Sangarius bridge. Procopius (*Aed*. v.3.8-11) describes how Justinian has started work on this important project. Paul the Silentiary alludes to its completion in December 562, while it is also commemorated in an epigram in the *Anthologia Palatina*.[16] If one were to accept the later dating for the *Buildings*, viz. between 559 and 561, then this would leave a very short time for the construction of this imposing structure. Whitby and Roques cite the precedent of the fortifications of Dara, which were erected under Anastasius in just two or three years.[17] Yet the situation in the 550s was very different: Constantinople and its Bithynian hinterland experienced several earthquakes; that of August 554 inflicted much damage both on the capital and on the city of Nicomedia. Imperial resources were stretched to the limit. It took five years to rebuild the collapsed dome of Hagia Sophia – more time than it had taken to build the entire church in the 530s. To suppose that the emperor could deploy enough resources to complete such a grand-scale project within two years is thus highly unrealistic.[18] It follows from this that Theophanes' entry on the Sangarius bridge must be misplaced.

[16] Paul the Silentiary, *Descriptio Sanctae Sophiae, 928-933,* ed. C. De Stefani, Berlin 2011, tr. P. Bell, *Three Political Voices from the Reign of Justinian*, Liverpool 2009, 208; *Anthologia Palatina* ix.641*,* ed. and tr. W.R. Paton, *Anthologia Graeca*, vol. 3, Cambridge, Mass. 1917, pp. 354-355. On the bridge and the work itself see M. Whitby, "Sangarius Bridge" (cit. n. 4), 129-136, D. Feissel, "Les édifices de Justinien au témoignage de Procope et de l'épigraphie", *AnTard* 8 (2000) 81-104, at 94, K. Belke, "Prokops *De Aedificiis,* Buch V, zu Kleinasien", *AnTard* 8 (2000) 115-125, at 120-122, D. Roques, *Constructions* (cit. n. 2), 375 n. 23 (with further bibliography).

[17] M. Whitby, "Sangarius Bridge" (cit. n. 4), 141, cf. D. Roques, *Constructions* (cit. n. 2), 55.

[18] The data on earthquakes is conveniently gathered by E. Guidoboni et al., *Catalogue of ancient earthquakes in the Mediterranean area up to the 10th century,* tr. B. Phillips, Rome 1994, 336-343 (nos. 219, 222-225), not all of which caused damage, however. See Mal. 18.118, Theoph. A.M. 6046 (p. 229) on the earthquake of August 554, no. 219 in Guidoboni. On the issue of the availability of resources see G. Greatrex, "Procopius and Agathias" (cit. n. 7), 128-129.

In the case of two other entries that we have noted above, he has attributed too late a date to the start of building work; it seems sensible therefore to propose that he has done the same here. Since Procopius' notice is to be found in both the longer and shorter recensions of the *Buildings*, it is possible rather that work began even as early as 550.[19]

B. Other issues

The remaining arguments in favour of a later dating can be dealt with more briefly. It will be helpful to respond to each of the points made by Roques in turn.[20]

(1) Some parts of the monastery of St Catherine in Sinai (*Aed.* v.8.1-9) might date to between 548 and 562. No doubt, but this hardly helps to resolve the issue.[21]

(2) The work that Justinian undertook at Nicomedia – Procopius (*Aed.* v.3.7) mentions the restoration of the baths of Antoninus – must have been in response to the earthquake of August 554. But as Roques himself notes in his commentary, the city suffered as a result of numerous earthquakes in Late Antiquity, such that even by the time of the 554 tremor its buildings were in poor condition. Procopius himself makes no reference to a recent earthquake, contenting himself merely with stating that Justinian renovated the baths, part of which had collapsed, and noting their remarkable size. The passage therefore offers no chronological clues.[22]

[19] As we note in section C below, it now seems likely that the shorter recension preceded the longer one; the latter would date to c.554 on this theory. It would be useful if we could establish a consistent margin of error in Theophanes' dating of building projects, but as has been seen, we lack other sources with which to compare his reports.

[20] D. Roques, *Constructions* (cit. n. 2), 56-57.

[21] See further D. Feissel, "Les édifices" (cit. n. 16), 100-101.

[22] On the dilapidated state of the city see C. Foss, "Nicomedia and Constantinople", in C. Mango – G. Dagron (eds.), *Constantinople* (cit. n. 7), 181-190, at 186, although he

(3) Procopius mentions the building of the church of the Theotokos at Pêgê (*Aed.* i.3.6), which, according to Cedrenus (as noted above), took place in the 33rd year of Justinian's reign, the same year, indeed, in which he places the start of work on the Sangarius bridge. Roques has here adduced an interesting new piece of evidence, but its worth is limited, for, as we have seen, the source that Cedrenus and Theophanes rely on here for these notices does not seem to be reliable.[23]

(4) Justinian replaced an unreliable wooden bridge on the way from Constantinople to Rhegium in Thrace (*Aed*. iv.8.16-17). The wooden bridge, Roques affirms, must have been destroyed in the earthquake of December 557. But Procopius makes no reference to any such destruction, emphasising rather the instability of the earlier bridge, which posed a risk to travellers.[24]

(5-6) The repairs to the road leading to Rhegium and the restoration of the infrastructure of nearby Athyras (*Aed.* iv.8.4-9, 18) are likely to have taken place around the time of Justinian's visit to Selymbria; here too (*Aed*. iv.9.12) he made repairs. Procopius also relates (*Aed.* iv.9.6-13) work carried

too supposes that Procopius refers to restoration work after the 554 earthquake, so also K. Belke, "Prokops *De Aedificiis*" (cit. n. 16), 123, cf. D. Roques, *Constructions* (cit. n. 2), 374 n. 20. Of course, Procopius, writing in 554, could have mentioned Justinian's work in anticipation, so that even if the allusion were to the 554 tremor, this would not greatly strengthen the case for a late dating of the *Buildings*: the fact that this section is found only in the longer recension of the work may well indicate that it was indeed a later update, cf. n. 37 below.

[23] There is no other evidence about this church, although the monastery clearly existed by 536 at the latest: see S. Efthymiadis, "Le monastère de la Source à Constantinople et ses deux recueils de miracles. Entre hagiographie et patriographie", *REB* 64-65 (2006-2007) 283-309, at 285, although he does not discuss Cedrenus' dating.

[24] Cf. D. Roques' translation, *Constructions* (cit. n. 2), 276 and 331 n. 70. E. Mamboury, "Les fouilles byzantines à Istanbul et dans sa banlieue immédiate en 1936-7", *Byzantion* 13 (1938) 301-310, at 308-310, makes the same inference as Roques but had no more information at his disposal, although he was able to observe traces of this bridge. See also B. Croke, "Procopius' *Secret History*: Rethinking the Date", *GRBS* 45 (2005) 405-432, at 429 and n. 63.

out on the Long Walls of Thrace, which were in a poor state and vulnerable to attack. Following arguments put forward by Whitby, Roques proposes that these projects were undertaken in connection with the journey made by Justinian to the region in 559, just after the onslaught of the Kotrigur Huns, whose inroad had inflicted much damage and been repulsed only with difficulty.[25] Since the invasion of the Kotrigurs is securely dated, there is no reason to challenge the placing of Theophanes' notice of Justinian's visit. But there is no reason either to infer that Procopius' description refers to work carried out on this particular occasion, especially since he makes no reference to the emperor's own involvement, whereas usually he strives hard to emphasise the important role he played in all his many projects.[26] Moreover, given what we have already noted about the stretch in imperial resources involved in completing the Sangarius bridge within a couple of years if we accept the late dating, the idea that major work was simultaneously being undertaken in the Thracian hinterland becomes still less plausible.

[25] M. Whitby, "Sangarius Bridge" (cit. n. 4), 145-146 (admitting that it is only 'possible' that Procopius refers to this work). Cf. S.B. Torbatov, "'Skifskie anomalii" Prokopiia kesariĭskogo i vopros o vremeni sostavleniia ego traktata "o postroĭkakh"' ["Scythian anomalies" of Procopius of Caesarea and the question of the dating of the compilation of his treatise "On Buildings"], *VizVrem* 61 (2002), 49-58, who argues that Procopius' failure to mention certain places in the province of Scythia in the work points to a date after their destruction in the Kotrigur raid of 559. But as we noted in G. Greatrex, "Recent work on Procopius and the composition of Wars VIII", *BMGS* 27 (2003), 45-67, at 46-48, Balkan raids were sufficiently frequent in the 540s and 550s for us not to be able to identify unspecific references (or archaeological evidence) specifically with that of 559. Cf. also F. Montinaro, "Byzantium and the Slavs in the reign of Justinian: comparing the two recensions of Procopius's Buildings", in V. Ivanišević – M. Kazanski (eds.), *The Pontic-Danubian Realm in the Period of the Great Migration* (Centre de recherche d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance 36 – Arheološki institut, Posebna isdanja, Knjiga 51), Paris – Belgrade 2011, 89-114, for a detailed consideration of this section of the *Buildings*.

[26] E.g. at *Aed.* ii.3.8 (his dream about Dara), cf. *Aed.* ii.7.9 (Edessa), and J. Elsner, "The rhetoric of buildings in the *De Aedificiis* of Procopius", in L. James (ed.), *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture*, Cambridge 2007, 33-57, at 40 (on Hagia Sophia).

(7) Procopius refers to the construction of a bridge at Siberis in Galatia (*Aed.* v.4.1-6), which Roques, following Belke, ties in with the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*. This hagiography of the early seventh century sheds valuable light on life in Bithynia in the late sixth and early seventh centuries and has consequently been the focus of much scholarship.[27] Now in the *Life of Theodore*, the hagiographer refers to an episode when the holy man responded to the progressive erosion of soil by the river Siberis by planting a cross and calling upon the river to alter its course, which it duly did. He also strode into the middle of the river in order to render it safer to cross, since several people had died while trying to do so. At a later point in the *Life*, on the other hand, we hear of a bridge across the river.[28] Here, then, we seem to have an external control for the composition of the *Buildings*. On the basis of various chronological indicators in the *Life* it is argued that he was born c.530 and that the river episode took place when he was at least 25 years old, i.e. in 555 at the very earliest. Hence the bridge must have been built after this date.[29] The weakness of this line of argument is immediately apparent. First, the episodes concerning the Siberis river are not precisely dated by the hagiographer; moreover, it is possible that the writer has inserted the second one, concerning the wading into the river, after the first because it had the same focus, not because it took place at the same time. Second, the existence of a bridge does

[27] D. Roques, *Constructions* (cit. n. 2), 57, 377 n. 29, K. Belke, "Prokops *De Aedificiis*" (cit. n. 16), 118-119, S. Mitchell, *Anatolia. Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor,* 2 vols., Oxford 1993, ch. 19, C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages. Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800,* Oxford 2005, 406-411. See also D. Barchard, "Sykeon Rediscovered? A Site at Kiliseler near Beypazarı", *Anatolian Studies* 53 (2003) 175-179, for a suggestion as to Sykeon's location with the map in S. Mitchell, ibidem, vol. 2, 135. Edition and French translation, A.J. Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéon*, 2 vols., Brussels 1970, partial English tr. in E. Dawes – N. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints,* Oxford 1948.

[28] *V. Theod. Syk.* 45 (pp. 40-41), 121 (p. 98.28). On the issue of the erosion in this region see D. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy c.300-1450*, Cambridge 1985, 62-64.

[29] K. Belke, "Prokops *De Aedificiis*" (cit. n. 16), 119, discusses the chronology on the basis of the *Life* in detail.

not preclude people from crossing a river elsewhere, even nearby, because they may fail to appreciate the strength of the current. Lastly, we do not know the precise date of Theodore's birth: at the age of twelve he was struck by the plague (presumably in 542), which means it should be c.530, but no doubt these ages are approximations, so that the date of 555 could easily be shifted several years forwards or backwards.[30] It follows that this piece of evidence is insufficient to prove a later or earlier date for the *Buildings*.

(8) Roques returns to Theophanes to date the reconstruction of the church of St Thekla in Constantinople described by Procopius at *Aed*. i.4.28. He argues that this rebuilding must have taken place after the fire that devastated much of this quarter of the city in December 560, according to the chronicler's entry for A.M. 6053 (p. 235).[31] Yet Procopius clearly specifies (*Aed*. i.4.29) that this church, along with several others near the Harbour of Julian, was erected during the reign of Justin I, i.e. between 518 and 527. The passage of Theophanes is therefore irrelevant.[32]

(9) Roques raises again the issue of the defences of the Thracian Chersonese and the attack of the Kotrigurs in 559, to which he believes Procopius alludes in his description of work carried out by Justinian in response to recent failures at *Aed*.iv.10.5-18. Roques does not take into account, however, points that we made already in 1995, which demonstrate that Procopius refers not to the raid of 559, but rather to that of 540, which he also describes in the *Persian Wars* (ii.4.3-12).[33]

[30] See K. Belke, "Prokops *De Aedificiis*" (cit. n. 16), 119, S. Mitchell, *Anatolia* (cit. n. 27), vol. 2, 122-123.

[31] Cf. D. Roques, *Constructions* (cit. n. 2), 128 n. 103, rather more uncertain that at 57. Zonaras, *Epitome Historiarum*, ed. L. Dindorf, vol. 3, Leipzig 1870, xiv.10, p. 285, ascribes the work rather to Justin II, casting doubt on Theophanes' placing of the entry.

[32] As D. Roques seems to acknowledge, *Constructions* (cit. n. 2), 129 n. 105.

[33] M. Whitby, "Sangarius Bridge" (cit. n. 4), 145 for this link. Curiously, D. Roques, *Constructions* (cit. n. 2), 335 n. 193bis, 336 n. 195, seems to accept the earlier dating, con-

So much for the numbered arguments of Roques. Elsewhere he seeks to strengthen his case by a few further points, which also merit brief consideration. He argues, for instance, that Procopius' claim (*Aed*. i.1.16) that Justinian had more than doubled the size of the empire only holds true for the period after Roman forces had retaken parts of Spain, i.e. after 556. Although we are sympathetic to the notion that the Romans were able to visualise their empire in a manner similar to that of modern-day scholars – a view that is not necessarily widely held – it seems unreasonable to expect precision on such a general point.[34] The reconquest of North Africa and of Italy no doubt sufficed for Procopius to make his claim. He also returns to an argument initially deployed by Michael Whitby in 1985, viz. that the construction of a new church in Edessa (*Aed*. ii.7.6), commemorated in a Syriac hymn, is likely to date from late in the episcopacy of Amazonius (c.540-560). Andrew Palmer's work on the *Chronicle of Edessa* points rather to the opposite conclusion, however: he proposes that Justinian's work is likely to date from the early 540s, perhaps in an effort to bolster the position of the Chalcedonian bishop against the growing strength of Miaphysite opposition.[35]

flicting with his arguments at 56-57. See G. Greatrex, "Procopius and Agathias" (cit. n. 7), 126-127, cf. idem, "The dates" (cit. n. 8), 108-109. E. Kislinger, "Ein Angriff zu viel", *BZ* 91 (1998) 49-58, at 53-56, argued that even the *Wars* passage referred to the 559 raid, but, as has been shown elsewhere, G. Greatrex, "Recent work" (cit. n. 25), 46-49, this is highly unlikely. See also n. 25 above.

[34] D. Roques, *Constructions* (cit. n. 2), 54, cf. G. Greatrex, "Roman frontiers and foreign policy in the East", in R. Alston – S. Lieu (eds.), *Aspects of the Roman East*, Turnhout 2007, 103-173, at 130-142, on the issue of maps.

[35] D. Roques, *Constructions* (cit. n. 2), 55-56, cf. M. Whitby, "Sangarius Bridge" (cit. n. 4), 146. But see A. Palmer with L. Rodley, "The inauguration anthem of Hagia Sophia in Edessa: a new edition and translation with historical and architectural notes and a comparison with a contemporary Constantinopolitan kontakion", *BMGS* 12 (1988) 117-168, at 126-127, cf. A. Palmer, "Procopius and Edessa", *AnTard* 8 (2000) 127-136, at 132-133. Cf. already G. Greatrex, "The dates" (cit. n. 8), 112, responding to this point.

C. Conclusion

We do not propose to rehearse again the various arguments that have been advanced over the centuries for the early dating of the *Buildings*.[36] As we have noted elsewhere, the work is attracting more research now than at any other point. Federico Montinaro, who has made a detailed comparison of the longer and shorter recensions of the *Buildings*, argues that the shorter version, far from being an abridgement, represents what Procopius originally published, probably in 550/1, as an accompaniment to the first seven books of the *Wars*.[37] The longer recension, on the other hand, is an update of the first, taking into account new information that had come to his attention and adding more panegyrical elements, perhaps in response to pressure that had been brought to bear; according to Montinaro, it would date to c.554 and perhaps have accompanied *Wars* viii.[38] Thus, far from moving forwards in time, to as late as 561, the date of composition of the *Buildings* is rather shifting backwards, with an initial redaction in 550/1, followed by an update c.554. Furthermore, the mention of the continuing flourishing of the career of those who had been caught conspiring against the emperor (*Aed.* i.1.16), i.e. Arsaces, Artabanes and Chanaranges (*Wars* vii.32), which is to be found in both the short and the long recensions, represents a powerful argument for the earlier dating of the work, as Cesaretti and Fobelli recognise: while it is

[36] See (e.g.) P. Cesaretti – M.L. Fobelli, *Santa Sofia* (cit. n. 1), cf. A. Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, London 1985, 10-11, G. Greatrex, "The dates" (cit. n. 8), 107-110.

[37] F. Montinaro, "Byzantium" (cit. n. 25), 104. His full comparative edition is to be found in his doctoral thesis, *Études sur l'évergétisme impérial à Byzance (IVe – IXe siècles)*, Paris 2013, vol. 2.

[38] F. Montinaro, "Byzantium" (cit. n. 25), 105, cf. idem, "Power, Taste and the Outsider: Procopius and the *Buildings revisited*", in G. Greatrex – H. Elton (eds.), *Shifting Genres in Late Antiquity* (forthcoming). The notice on the Sangarius bridge is present already in the first version, which would imply a start of construction by 550/1.

known that Artabanes continued to command armies until 554, none of the three is attested in post after this date.[39]

The debate will thus undoubtedly continue, especially since others call into question the authenticity of extensive parts of the *Buildings*. Our aim here has been two-fold. On the one hand, we have attempted to offer a definitive refutation of many of the arguments brought forward over the years in support of the late dating of the work, in particular that which surrounds the erection of the Sangarius bridge. And on the other, we hope, despite our criticisms, to have highlighted the importance of Denis Roques' translation and commentary of the *Buildings*, which deserves much more attention than it has so far received.

[39] P. Cesaretti – M.L. Fobelli, *Santa Sofia* (cit. n. 1), 18, cf. G. Greatrex, "The dates" (cit. n. 8), 110 and n. 20. It must be admitted, however, that Paul the Silentiary's apparent allusion to the conspiracy of 548/9 at *Descriptio*, 940-949, where he mentions the rehabilitation of one commander (line 949), is puzzling; although he was writing just one month after the discovery of another plot (in November 562), no military men seem to have been involved in it, and thus the allusion must be to the earlier episode. The present tense used of the bestowal of office on him, however, need not imply that he was still in post as late as December 562. See E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, vol. 2, Paris 1949, 591 n. 1, P. Bell, *Three Political Voices* (cit. n. 16), 208 n. 85, cf. B. Croke, "Procopius' *Secret History*" (cit. n. 24), 428 n. 61, arguing that the allusion to the spared conspirators might be more appropriate at a later date (but still preferring the earlier date for the *Buildings*).