

PERCEPTIONS OF PROCOPIUS IN RECENT SCHOLARSHIP (*Addenda*)

Since the publication of my article in May 2014 a number of relevant items have come to my attention, which it would be opportune to publish here. I am grateful to the editors of *Histos* for allowing me to do so. I shall divide up the material, as in the article, into sections concerned with the *Wars*, *Anecdota*, and *Buildings*.

(a) *Wars*

In this case, an important new work has been published since my article came out in May: Anthony Kaldellis' revision of Dewing's translation of the entire *Wars* (2014), brought together in one paperback volume, accompanied by a large number of useful maps, plans and family trees. This is a substantial book, offering a translation that otherwise occupies five Loeb volumes, and at last makes Procopius' major work affordable for the general public. It should be noted, moreover, that the translation represents a significant revision of Dewing's. Kaldellis states that he has 'revised and modernised' it, and he has done so on an impressive scale. The translation is accompanied by explanatory notes and all the subsections within each chapter are clearly indicated. Furthermore, relevant dates are noted in the margins, while speeches are clearly signalled. No less importantly, the volume is equipped with an excellent index.

Although some Procopian material on 'barbarian' peoples was noted in my article, some important contributions were overlooked. Kaldellis (2013), a wide-ranging work on Byzantine ethnography, considers late antique writers in the field, notably Priscus, Procopius and Agathias, in ch. 1. Goffart (2006) has valuable discussions of Procopius' accounts of various peoples; more detailed treatments on particular peoples (and Procopius' portrayal of them) are to be found in Curta (2010). Thus Szmoniewski (2010) discusses the Antae, while both Steinacher (2010) and Sarantis (2010) consider the Heruls.¹ Nechaeva (2014) provides a detailed analysis of the mechanisms of Roman diplomacy in the fifth and sixth centuries and thus makes much use of Procopius.²

¹ I deal with this material in a forthcoming paper to be delivered at a Procopius conference to be held in Mainz in December 2014. See also Sarantis (2015).

² See my review of this work in *Sehepunkte* 14.9 (2014) [15.09.2014]: <http://www.sehepunkte.de/2014/09/25200.html>.

Lyvia Vasconcelos Baptista (2013) completed a doctoral thesis on the *Persian Wars*, examining the architecture of the work and how Procopius handles his material. It is worth noting that a recently published French translation of the Persian Wars, *Histoire de la guerre contre les Perses* (Clermont-Ferrand, 2012) is hardly new, being simply a slightly modernised version of the seventeenth-century translation by Cousin, a work already available on the web. Brodka (2007) deals chiefly with the preface to the *Wars* but has much of relevance to the entire work, arguing that for Procopius, ‘truth’ implied objectivity rather than partisanship, contrary to what has been argued for certain (if not all) ancient historians.

Alessandra Rodolfi (2008) reads Procopius’ *Vandal Wars* as a propagandistic account of Belisarius’ conquest of North Africa, in which he aims to show the alignment of the local population with the Roman army, united against the Vandals; as she admits, however, Procopius does not apply this image consistently and even undercuts this portrayal on occasion.³ Conant (2012) offers a much more detailed treatment of North Africa, in which Procopius’ work occupies an important place. Boustán (2008) calls into question the plausibility of the historian’s account of the spoils of Jerusalem brought to Constantinople by Belisarius after the defeat of the Vandals and their subsequent despatch back to Jerusalem (*Wars* 4.9.1–9). He rightly notes inconsistencies in Procopius’ own account, who elsewhere (*Wars* 5.12.41–2) reports that Alaric, rather than Geiseric, had seized this treasure, and points out that no other contemporary source refers to the spoils at all. Whether it follows that Procopius invented the episode to draw a parallel between the Flavian victory over the Jews and Justinian’s over the Vandals seems less certain, however.⁴ Börm (2013) examines closely Procopius’ passage (*Wars* 4.9.1–3) concerning the ‘triumph’ of Belisarius in Constantinople in 534 following his victory in North Africa. He stresses the emphasis placed on the emperor’s primacy, in that both the defeated king and the victorious general were obliged to prostrate themselves before him. He also notes that the ceremony may not have been as unique as Procopius makes out, perhaps in an effort to highlight Belisarius’ achievement: in this case the historian may have played down the degree to which Justinian, rather than Belisarius, triumphed.⁵

Massimo Ghilardi (2012) discusses in detail, with extensive quotations, Procopius’ account of the city of Rome in a recent monograph about Rome

³ Cf. the criticisms of Kaldellis (2013) 11, but her picture is more nuanced than one might initially suppose.

⁴ See Boustán (2008) 357–62 for his discussion of Procopius.

⁵ See esp. 85–6 for a useful discussion of Procopius’ attitude here.

and its monuments and administration under Justinian. He offers more specific analysis of particular passages in articles: Ghilardi (2006–9) discusses Rome’s monuments in a wide-ranging discussion, while Ghilardi (2006) focuses on the *Templum Pacis* of *Wars* 8.21, bringing recent archaeological evidence to bear. Relevant to the same theme is Borgognoni (2013), who offers a well thought-out analysis of Procopius’ treatment of Rome in more historiographical terms, arguing that the historian consciously filters his picture of the city to connect the east Romans with the former Roman empire; moreover, he deliberately plays down the Christian aspects of the city. Saradi (2000) represents another contribution to the study of the monuments of Italy and elsewhere in the works of Procopius, likewise seeing in his descriptions a link to the Roman past.⁶ Nicosia (2006) offers a historiographically informed treatment of the early phase of the reconquest of Italy. Also relevant to the *Gothic Wars* is ch.5 of the doctoral thesis of Michael Stewart (2012), which discusses virtue and manliness in this work.

(b) *Anecdota*

Stavroula Constantinou (2013) addresses the question of Procopius’ handling of punishment in this work, using theories of Foucault. As she admits, it is a ‘deeply literary’ approach; moreover, she seeks to demonstrate that the *Anecdota* is ‘a work of fiction’ that cannot be used as a historical source on Justinian’s reign.⁷ Wieling (2013) offers a detailed examination of *Anecd.* 29.17–25, seeking to relate Procopius’ criticism of Justinian’s interventions in matters of inheritance in Ascalon to laws of the time, in particular *Novel* 38 (of 536).

(c) *Buildings*

Cherf (2011) offers a translation and commentary on *Aed.* 4.2.1–22, the section on the defences of the pass at Thermopylae, emphasising the literary aspects of his description, harking back to Herodotus’ account of the defence of the Greeks in 480 BC, but also bringing to bear archaeological work to compare to Procopius’ account. He considers the possibility that this section may have been particularly polished in order to be delivered to an audience in person. Overall, however, he remains doubtful as to whether

⁶ Cf. Saradi (2006) ch. 3, a more general treatment of literary sources and cities in the sixth century.

⁷ Both quotations from 378. Her approach is thus comparable to Brubaker’s, on which see my article, p. 101.

the historian had visited the region himself, as likewise of the reliability of his descriptions.

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