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(1) NORTH WATER GATE AND NORTH-EAST CURTAIN FROM THE WEST. *Photo J. G. Crow.* (2) NORTH GATE FROM THE EAST. *Photo J. G. Crow.*



(1)



(2)

(1) NORTH GATE FROM THE SOUTH-EAST SHOWING TYPE B MASONRY. *Photo J. G. Crow.* (2) SOUTH WATER GATE AND WEST TURRET FROM THE NORTH. *Photo J. G. Crow.*

## PROCOPIUS AND DARA \*

By BRIAN CROKE AND JAMES CROW

Plates XI–XII

The question of the degree of continuity in urban life from antiquity into later times has recently emerged as a preoccupation among scholars of the late antique and early medieval periods.<sup>1</sup> Considerable attention is currently being devoted to the fate of the classical city and of the traditional patterns of urban life, with special reference to features such as reduction of physical area in individual cities, decline of population, changes in use or physical decay of classical buildings and the emergence of new social organizations as reflected in urban topography and development.<sup>2</sup> Attempts to refine and analyse these issues with greater precision have largely stemmed from the recent upsurge of interest in late Roman archaeology, well demonstrated in such major excavations as those at Sardis, Aphrodisias, Caesarea, Carthage, Ephesus and Thessalonika.<sup>3</sup> Yet the archaeological evidence can only tell part of the story. We must still rely a great deal on literary evidence, and the interconnection of the literary and the archaeological material is the subject of this article.

For all studies of late antique cities the single most important contemporary literary text is the *Buildings*, or *De Aedificiis*, of Procopius of Caesarea. Where it provides (as often) the only literary evidence for a particular site we need to be able to evaluate its contribution critically. So far there have been remarkably few detailed discussions of the value of its evidence either from the literary or the archaeological standpoint.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the traditional view that the reign of Justinian witnessed a major effort to secure and refortify the defences of the eastern frontier, based on the information provided by Procopius, still largely holds the field, despite the availability of other sources of information which could be used to clarify Procopius' picture.<sup>5</sup>

The *Buildings* was designed as a panegyric on the Emperor Justinian. Its date is controversial, but it may have been written in A.D. 554.<sup>6</sup> Of the six books which comprise the work (it is perhaps unfinished) at least the first, covering Constantinople and its environs, appears to have been designed for the imperial court; <sup>7</sup> the work as a whole draws on a mixture of personal observation and what seems to be archival material.<sup>8</sup> Within the constraints of panegyric, Procopius sets out to list and describe the building activities of

\* Unless otherwise stated all references are to the *Buildings*, and translations are generally those of H. B. Dewing, *Procopius VII, Buildings*, Loeb Classical Library (1940, reprinted 1971).

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, A. Kazhdan and A. Cutler, 'Continuity and Discontinuity in Byzantine History', *Byzantion* 52 (1982), 437 ff.; more generally, R. Hodges, *Dark Age Economics. The Origins of Towns and Trade* (1982).

<sup>2</sup> For an independent view and a guide to recent literature see Averil Cameron, 'Images of Authority: Elites and Icons in Late Sixth-century Byzantium', *Past and Present* 84 (1979), 3–35 (reprinted in *Continuity and Change in Sixth-century Byzantium*, 1981); and P. Brown, 'A Dark Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy', *EHR* 88 (1973), 1–34 (reprinted in *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (1982), 251–301).

<sup>3</sup> Bibliography on individual cities in R. Stillwell (ed.), *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Classical Sites* (1976) and subsequently in the annual volumes of *Arch. Bibl.*

<sup>4</sup> This gives rise to such typical statements as that of J. A. S. Evans to the effect that the *Buildings* 'provides a full and remarkably accurate account of Justinian's building programme' (*Procopius* (1972), 77). Soon to appear is a major new study of Procopius: Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century*. In the meantime the best guide to Procopius and his *Buildings* is B. Rubin, 'Prokopios von Kaisareia', *RE* 23, 1 (1957), 572–87 and *Das Zeitalter Justinians I* (1960), 175–7; see too the commentary by W.

Pülhorn in O. Veh's German translation of the *Buildings* (1977).

<sup>5</sup> e.g. R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (1981), 271: 'The security of the Empire under Justinian and his successors entailed a vast building programme lasting until the turn of the century . . . Procopius presents an impressive picture of the building programme'; or P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* (1971), 154: 'From the Black Sea to Damascus the emperor's foresight was crystallized in stone'. An archaeologist's view may be represented by R. E. M. Wheeler, 'The Roman Frontier in Mesopotamia', *The Congress of Roman Frontier Studies*, ed. E. Birley (1949), 124: 'Here in the *Buildings* is a documented basis for the study of sixth-century fortification, with which the fieldworker must familiarize himself at the outset'.

<sup>6</sup> G. Downey, 'The Composition of Procopius' *De Aedificiis*', *Trans. Am. Phil. Soc.* 78 (1947), 171–3. For the question of the date: E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire* II (1949), 837; and for the emperor's reputation as a builder: J. Irmscher, 'Justinian als Bauherr in der Sicht der Literatur seiner Epoche', *Klio* 59 (1977), 225–9 and G. Downey, 'Justinian as a Builder', *Art Bulletin* 22 (1950), 262–6.

<sup>7</sup> G. Downey, 'Notes on Procopius, *De Aedificiis*, Book I', *Studies Presented to David M. Robinson* 2 (1953), 719–25.

<sup>8</sup> cf. M. Perrin-Henry, 'La Place des listes toponymiques dans l'organisation du livre IV des Edifices de Procope', *Geographica Byzantina* (Byzantina Sorboniensia 3, 1980), 93–106.

Justinian 'lest future generations disbelieve they were the work of a single man' (1. 1. 17). So vast was his work, says Procopius, that 'you might say that God's provision for the safety of the Roman people allowed Justinian to succeed to the empire just to be a builder' (2. 9. 11). In the course of reinforcing this impression, he lists hundreds of cities and forts throughout the empire which Justinian supposedly either built or restored.

Although the *Buildings* has no extant parallel as such, its concentration on imperial building forms part of a long tradition in imperial panegyric. Yet this literary influence on the structure and content of the *Buildings* has as yet hardly been properly recognized or analysed.<sup>9</sup> The work as a whole still needs to be subjected to an adequate literary and historical critique. That is not, however, our purpose here. Rather, we have chosen to concentrate on the archaeological and literary evidence which can shed light on Procopius' account of Justinian's buildings in the eastern frontier region, and especially his lengthy description of the fortress of Dara in Mesopotamia. Such a study provides insight into the techniques used by Procopius in magnifying the achievements of Justinian and will supplement the detailed analysis of individual passages initiated by Downey's study of the evidence of the *Buildings* on Antioch.<sup>10</sup>

The choice of Dara for such a study is not difficult to justify. From its foundation in A.D. 507, it was the major Roman fortress on the Persian border, and the literary sources for it are relatively abundant and detailed. The city had a brief life—just over a century—and there is little later construction to complicate the archaeological record. Finally, while the physical remains at Dara are not as well preserved as those of other contemporary eastern fortresses, notably Sergiopolis (Resafa) and Zenobia (Halibiye), the combination of extant literary sources and clearly defined physical remains is unique, and makes it an obvious candidate for a comparative study.<sup>11</sup>

#### I. THE EASTERN FRONTIER REGION IN THE *BUILDINGS* OF PROCOPIUS

Systematic research into Procopius' presentation of Justinian's building activity in the east has so far been concentrated on his evidence for Antioch.<sup>12</sup> His methods here are instructive. Rather than discuss the rebuilding of Antioch after the damaging earthquakes of A.D. 526, 528, 553 and 557, he concentrates instead on the aftermath of the Persian sack of the city in A.D. 540, which provides better material for his panegyric purpose. He exaggerates the destruction inflicted by the Persians and conveniently neglects to mention that they had actually left the walls intact.<sup>13</sup> We find selective omission and misrepresentation of this kind throughout Book 2, which covers the cities and forts of the eastern provinces (Fig. 1). Sometimes construction that is manifestly earlier in date is attributed to Justinian. For instance, Procopius describes the city of Batnai (Suruc) in Mesopotamia as being unwallled before it was fortified by Justinian (2. 7. 18); yet it was certainly walled in 504, when the Persians seized it (Jo. Styl. 63), and it was rebuilt some time after by the Emperor Anastasius (ibid. 89). Likewise, in Book 1, Procopius ascribes to Justinian the church of SS. Peter and Paul in the capital (1. 4. 1), but since the church was certainly

<sup>9</sup> Except now for Averil Cameron, op. cit. (n. 4 above), chap. 4.

<sup>10</sup> For Sergiopolis: W. Karnapp, *Die Stadtmauer von Resafa in Syrien* (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Denkmäler Antiker Architektur 11) (1976); for Zenobia: J. Lauffray, 'El-Khanouqa, préliminaires géographiques à la publication des fouilles faites à Zenobia par le Service des Antiquités de Syrie', *Annales Archéologiques de Syrie* 1 (1951), 41-58. See also the plan of the towers in Karnapp, figs. 100-9.

<sup>11</sup> The literature on Dara is limited. See especially W. Ensslin, 'Zur Gründungsgeschichte von Dara-Anastasiopolis', *Byz.-neugriech. Jb.* 5 (1927), 342-7; P. Collinet, 'Une "ville neuve" byzantine en 507: La fondation de Daras (Anastasiopolis) en Mésopotamie', *Mélanges offerts à G. Schlumberger* (1924) 1, 55-60; C. Capizzi, *L'imperatore Anastasio* (Or.

Christ. Anal. 184, 1969), 216-21 (includes further bibliography). For the remains at Dara (all with plates): C. Preusser, *Nordmesopotamische Baudenkmäler. Altchristlicher und islamischer Zeit* (Wiss. Veröffent. d. deutschen Orient. Ges. 17) (1911), 44-5, fig. 12, pls. 54-7; C. Mango, *Byzantine Architecture* (1976), 24, 39; M. Mundell, 'A Sixth Century Funerary Relief at Dara in Mesopotamia', *Jahrb. d. Öst. Byz.* 24 (1975), 209-27 and J. G. Crow, 'Dara. A Late Roman Fortress in Mesopotamia', *Yayla* 4 (1981), 12-20.

<sup>12</sup> G. Downey, 'Procopius on Antioch: A Study of Method in the *De Aedificiis*', *Byz.* 14 (1939), 362.

<sup>13</sup> Downey, op. cit. (n. 12), 361-78. The much vaunted Justinianic restoration appears to have fared no better than its predecessors, for in 573 the walls had largely collapsed (Evagr., *HE* 5. 9).

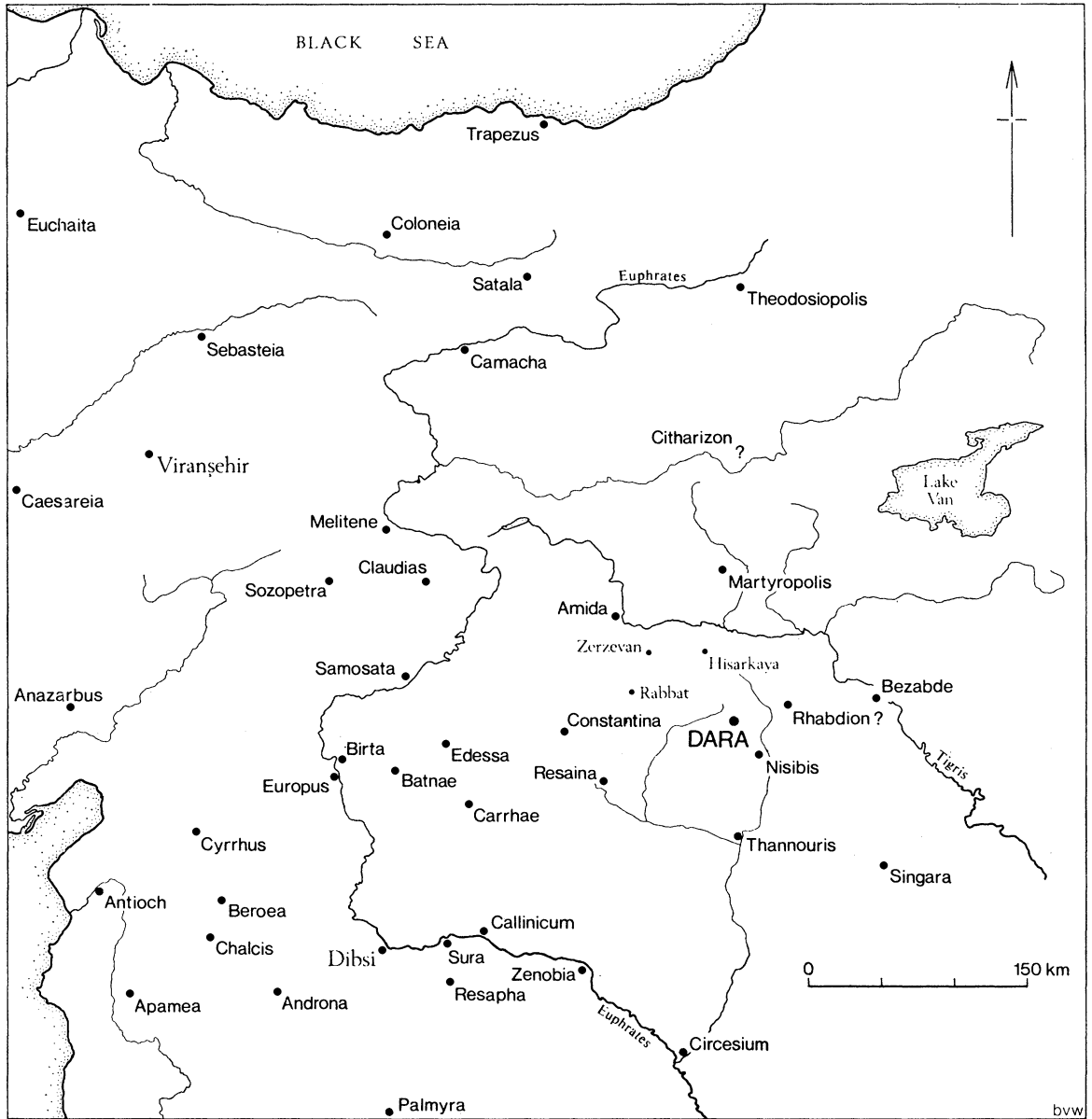


FIG. 1. MAP OF THE EASTERN FRONTIER SHOWING THE PRINCIPAL LATE ROMAN FORTRESSES.  
DRAWN BY B. V. WILLIAMS.

standing in June 519, it seems clear that it was built before Justinian, probably by Anastasius.<sup>14</sup> So too Justinian is given credit for the harbour of Eutropius at Chalcedon (1. 11. 22) whereas in fact it was the work of a late fifth-century Eutropius.<sup>15</sup>

Another frequent Procopian device in the *Buildings* (as in the *Secret History*) is to count Justinian's reign from 518, the beginning of that of his uncle Justin I (1. 3. 1). This allows the panegyrist to credit all Justin's building activities to Justinian. So it is that Justin's popular renovation of the walls of Edessa (Urfa) after the ruinous flood of 525 (Jo. Mal. 418) is listed as an achievement of Justinian, along with a considerable number of Edessan churches (1. 4. 29). Further, Procopius exaggerates even more by suggesting that the walls of Edessa were already dilapidated before the flood (2. 7. 11–16), which is difficult to believe since we know from a local contemporary description that the walls were repaired, and a new outer wall built, just a few years beforehand (Jo. Styl. 89). Not only does Justinian acquire Justin's edifices in Procopius' account, but the author also adds to the emperor's tally several constructions undertaken by Anastasius but only finally finished after his death. The walls of Melitene (Malatya) are a good example (3. 4. 19).

Other misrepresentations in the *Buildings* are less easily detectable. Constantina (Viranşehir) is described as a shoddily built city, its walls thrown together with mud (2. 5. 2), which is hard to accept in the case of a fortress that withstood a Persian siege in 501/2 and was the headquarters of the *dux* of Mesopotamia before Dara was built in 507/8.<sup>16</sup> The same consideration applies to Circesium (Buseire), the headquarters of the *dux* of Osrhoene; <sup>17</sup> this had the additional advantage of being surrounded by rivers on all sides except one, which was completely fenced off with a long wall. These natural defences proved too formidable for Chosroes in 540 (*Wars* 2. 5. 2–3). Nonetheless, Procopius claims that its walls had been ruined with the passing of the years until Justinian restored them (2. 6. 2). Quite apart from the improbability that this situation should have been allowed to develop at a major military base like Circesium, the notion of walls crumbling through age and neglect is a regular literary and panegyric *topos* in the *Buildings* (e.g. 1. 4. 9; 2. 2. 1; 2. 5. 1; 2. 6. 2; 2. 7. 5; 2. 7. 17; 2. 8. 8–25; 3. 4. 7; 3. 4. 11; 3. 6. 14). We have no means of assessing the credibility of most of these examples. In the case of Callinicum, however, Procopius would have us believe that Justinian was forced to dismantle the city's antique walls (2. 7. 17, cf. 2. 9. 2). Certainly Callinicum, previously Nicephorium, had been a Hellenistic foundation, but it had been completely rebuilt late in the fifth century and renamed Leontopolis after its new imperial founder (Mich. Syr. 9. 1 (Chabot II, 126)). Again, Procopius' blanket statement that the city's walls were in ruins needs to be treated with caution.

More generally, it has been observed that Justinian's fortifications, as described by Procopius, were probably not so important after all, since much of the work ascribed to Justinian is unlikely to have been original.<sup>18</sup> In support of this the city of Zenobia would appear to provide some evidence. Certainly Justinian was responsible for some construction there.<sup>19</sup> Procopius provides an extended description of his work (2. 8. 8–25) but there remain inconsistencies in his account, for it is inconceivable that the isolated hill west of the city (2. 8. 21–2) should not have formed part of the earlier circuit. In practice the citadel hill was the prime factor which determined a fortified settlement at this point in the Euphrates valley. Procopius is simply employing here the same *topos* of high ground threatening the defences which he uses at Antioch (2. 10. 12), Armenian Theodosiopolis (3. 5. 9) and Dara (2. 1. 26–7, with n. 60 below). It must be observed, however, that in the case of Zenobia

<sup>14</sup> At least it is mentioned as complete in a letter of June 519 (*Coll. Avell.* 218, pp. 679–80).

<sup>15</sup> *Patria* III. 166 (Preger, 267). There is no reason to prefer the evidence of Procopius to that of the *Patria* as does *PLRE* 2 (1980), xxxvii, s.v. 'Eutropius'. Eutropius 'protospatharios and quaestor' may be more accurately assigned to the early fourth century (R. Janin, *Constantinople byzantine*<sup>2</sup> (1964), 238–9).

<sup>16</sup> Jo. Styl. 58. It was earlier the headquarters of the legion I Parthica (*Not. Dig. Or.* xxxvi. 29 (Seeck, 78)). The fortifications were constructed in the early fourth century by Constantius Caesar at the same

time as the work at Amida (Amm. Marc. 18. 9. 1). For a description of the defences see J. G. Taylor, 'Journal of a Tour in Armenia, Kurdistan and Upper Mesopotamia with notes of Researches in the Deyr-sim Dagh in 1866', *Journ. Royal Geog. Soc.* 38 (1868), 281–361, esp. 354; much less survives to be seen today.

<sup>17</sup> Also the headquarters of the legion IV Parthica (*Not. Dig. Or.* xxxv. 24 (Seeck, 76)).

<sup>18</sup> E. Honigmann, *RE* IV A, 1716 s.v. 'Syria'.

<sup>19</sup> Lauffray, *op. cit.* (n. 10). See comments by Karnapp, *op. cit.* (n. 10), 28 n. 99.

there is independent support for the notion of Justinianic building, because in 540 during the Persian invasion Chosroes quickly bypassed Zenobia as being unimportant and run down (*Wars* 2. 5. 7).

There are, on the other hand, further clear incongruities in the *Buildings*. For example, the walls of Sergiopolis are described as barely adequate to deter Saracens, though mud walls normally sufficed for that (2. 9. 3-4). Like so many of the frontier fortresses, however, Sergiopolis had been rebuilt by Anastasius and renamed Anastasiopolis. It has even recently been argued that the impressive remains at Sergiopolis are substantially the work of Anastasius, rather than Justinian.<sup>20</sup> In any event, Procopius can be convicted of misrepresentation, since in 542 the city's defences were said to be sufficiently stout to ward off Chosroes (*Wars* 2. 20. 10 ff.). In the *Buildings* Procopius says that the walls of Sura (Suriya) were totally inadequate and that it could be captured easily (2. 9. 1), yet in 540 its walls were in fine shape and the city could only be taken by treachery (*Wars* 2. 5. 8-27). Procopius claims too that the walls of Satala (Sadak) were carelessly constructed (3. 4. 2) and could be felled without effort, but in 530 the walls were secure enough to keep the Persians at bay (*Wars* 1. 15. 9-17), just what we would expect in a former legionary headquarters and the base of the *dux* of Armenia.<sup>21</sup> At Chalkis (Kinnesrin) Justinian's work of restoration can be dated precisely to 550/1.<sup>22</sup> According to Procopius in the *Buildings* the walls of the city were completely decrepit (2. 2. 1), yet only a decade earlier Chalkis was well fortified and fought off Chosroes (*Wars* 2. 12. 1). Once again it looks as if Procopius has over-stated the extent of Justinian's work at a particular site.

These examples suffice to show the extent to which Procopius distorted and exaggerated in the *Buildings* in order to amplify the emperor's reputation. It suggests that one must be cautious in handling the information contained in it, particularly in order to date physical remains. It also exposes the danger of the circular argument that because Procopius indicates a Justinianic date for a particular construction, then remains of similar style in other locations must also be Justinianic. It has been held, for example, that the walls of Amida (Diyarbekir) must be Justinianic simply because they are similar to those of Dara, and Procopius cites both as the work of Justinian (2. 3. 27). But the fragmentary building inscription at Amida merely records an official's name and provides no independent evidence to confirm a Justinianic date for the restoration of Amida's defences.<sup>23</sup>

This situation then leads us to inquire about the light that archaeological and epigraphic evidence are able to shed on the *Buildings*. Relevant excavation reports and studies are patchy, particularly for the eastern provinces, but what we do possess only erodes our confidence still further. Although it is apparent, for instance, that Justinian was responsible for a good deal of building along the Danubian frontier and in the Balkans, the evidence to date suggests that it was Anastasius who was most responsible for the extensive re-fortification programme there.<sup>24</sup> In particular, reconstruction of places like Tomi and Histria which Procopius specifically ascribes to Justinian were, it is now thought, actually the work of Anastasius.<sup>25</sup> As far as the east is concerned, recent research has concluded, as noted above, that the walls of Sergiopolis were built by Anastasius, not Justinian; <sup>26</sup> while Procopius' description of North African sites he knew at first-hand can now be seen to be deceptively selective.<sup>27</sup>

Turning now to the epigraphic evidence, there are eighteen inscriptions of Justinianic

<sup>20</sup> Karnapp, *op. cit.*, 51-3.

<sup>21</sup> The legion involved was XV Apollinaris (*Not. Dig. Or.* xxxviii 13 (Seec 84)) with *RE*<sup>2</sup> (1921), 59 s.v. 'Satala'. For the remains see T. B. Mitford, 'Roman Frontier in Cappadocia' in D. Haupt and H. G. Horn, *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms* II (1977), 501-16.

<sup>22</sup> *IGL Syr.* 2, 348, 349. For the defences see R. Mouterde and A. Poidebard, *Le Limes de Chalcis, Organisation de la Steppe en Haute Syrie Romaine* (Bibl. arch. et hist., 38) (1945), 8-9, pl. 1.

<sup>23</sup> D. van Berchem, 'Recherches sur la chronologie des enceintes de Syrie et de Mésopotamie', *Syria* 31 (1954), 254-70, esp. 262-7. See, however A. Gabriel, *Voyages archéologiques dans la Turquie*

*orientale* (1940), 134-5, 175-82 and D. Oates, *Studies in the Ancient History of Northern Iraq* (1968), 103-6.

<sup>24</sup> I. Barnea, 'Nouvelle Contribution à l'histoire de la Dobrudja sous Anastase 1<sup>er</sup>', *Dacia* n.s. 11 (1967), 355-6; V. Velkov, *Cities in Thrace and Dacia in Late Antiquity* (1977), 47, 108, 213 and J. G. Crow, 'The Late Roman Frontier of Lower Moesia', in *The Frontiers of the Roman Empire* (forthcoming).

<sup>25</sup> I. Barnea, 'Contributions to Dobrudja History under Anastasius I', *Dacia* n.s. 4 (1960), 363-74.

<sup>26</sup> Karnapp, *op. cit.* (n. 10).

<sup>27</sup> Averil Cameron, 'Byzantine Africa—the Literary Evidence', in *University of Michigan Excavations at Carthage* VII (1982), 31, 33-6.

date recording the construction of fortifications in Syria.<sup>28</sup> Only three of these—at Ma'an,<sup>29</sup> Chalkis<sup>30</sup> and Cyrrhus<sup>31</sup>—are imperial inscriptions recording either the name of the emperor or of an imperial official. The remaining inscriptions attest works of private defence, a symptom of the decline of the frontier armies in the sixth century.<sup>32</sup> The small number of imperial military inscriptions is in sharp contrast with epigraphic evidence from the reconquered provinces of North Africa, where twenty-eight imperial inscriptions are known from forts and defences of Justinianic date.<sup>33</sup> A possible explanation for the relative lack of imperial inscriptions from Syria may be found in the identification of the agency which put up the fortifications. In Africa we may assume that the work of construction was largely organized by the occupying field army, but for Syria and Mesopotamia it is clear that the Church frequently organized the construction of defences, which were paid for by imperial grants.<sup>34</sup> But even if this was the normal procedure, it is unlikely that the imperial authorities would have allowed such expenditure to have gone unrecorded. It can only be assumed that the small number of imperial inscriptions in Syria actually reflects a limited effort of fortification by Justinian comparable to the widespread contraction and weakening of the military forces there, together with a building up of alliances with local tribes.<sup>35</sup>

The inscription from Cyrrhus provides a further illustration of the state of Justinianic defences. It is of special importance because, unlike those from Chalkis and Ma'an, it is in its original position, cut in the voussoirs and keystone of the acropolis gate. The defences of the acropolis may be dated with certainty to the reign of Justinian.<sup>36</sup> Another inscription of Justinian is reported from Cyrrhus,<sup>37</sup> but remains unpublished. It is unclear whether further work of fortification was carried out on the lower city walls; possibly the acropolis fortifications represent the main Justinianic work. The city had been in decline since the fourth century at least<sup>38</sup> and it is quite probable that the vast earlier circuit was abandoned by the sixth century. Contraction of the defended circuit is a feature of Justinianic fortifications attested in the law codes (e.g. *Cod. Just.* 27. 2. 14) as well as by Procopius, even in the *Buildings*.<sup>39</sup> For Cyrrhus, however, Procopius does not mention any such feature of the defences; rather, they are described in extravagant terms (2. 11. 4). One is, therefore, entitled to suspect that here too he is using an empty rhetorical formula to describe what was now little more than a defended hilltop.

All these facts throw doubt on our traditional picture of the relative roles of Anastasius and Justinian in reconstructing the various fortresses in the network of defences in the East. Above all they compel us to look more closely at what Procopius at least appears to have regarded as one of Justinian's most marvellous deeds—the rebuilding of Dara. It is doubly valuable to scrutinize Procopius' picture of Dara because it is a place he himself knew at first hand.

## II. SITE AND CONSTRUCTION OF DARA

When the Persians finally captured Amida in January 503 after a protracted siege, the Roman empire lost a crucial base for its expeditions in Mesopotamia. Even after they had

<sup>28</sup> Many of the Syrian defences are discussed in W. Liebeschuetz, 'The Defences of Syria in the sixth century', *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms II* (n. 21 above), 490-3, with references to the archaeological evidence.

<sup>29</sup> *IGL Syr.* 4, 1809 (dated to 547/8).

<sup>30</sup> *IGL Syr.* 2, 348, 349 (dated to 550).

<sup>31</sup> *IGL Syr.* 1, 145, 146, 147 (dated to c. 542).

<sup>32</sup> Liebeschuetz, *op. cit.* (n. 28), 495-9.

<sup>33</sup> D. Pringle, *The Defence of Byzantine Africa from Justinian to the Arab Conquest* (B.A.R. 99), 1980. See also J. Durliat, *Les dédicaces d'ouvrages de défense dans l'Afrique byzantine* (Coll. de l'École française de Rome 49) (1981), where one finds in the inscriptions from the reign of Justinian (Nos. 1-23) the same tendency to exaggerate by representing a reconstruction or partial construction as a complete one (e.g. No. 9, with commentary, pp. 110-1 (cf. *ILS* 831)).

<sup>34</sup> D. Claude, *Die byzantinische Stadt im 6.*

*Jahrhundert* (1969), 137-8; A. J. Festugière, 'La vie de Sabas et les tours de Syrie-Palestine', *Rev. Bibl.* 70 (1963), 92-3.

<sup>35</sup> Liebeschuetz, *op. cit.* (n. 28). Although recognizing a contraction in the military forces in Syria, Liebeschuetz (491) maintains confidence in Procopius as a source, and regrets that the *Buildings* 'becomes increasingly selective so that the fortifications of Euphratensis do not include mere forts'.

<sup>36</sup> *IGL Syr.* 4, 1809.

<sup>37</sup> E. Frézouls in J. Balty, *Apamée de Syrie. Bilan de recherches archéologiques 1965-1968* (1969), 90 n. 2. The original location of this inscription is unknown; it was found reused in the *cardo*.

<sup>38</sup> E. Frézouls, 'Recherches sur la ville de Cyrrhus', *Ann. Arab. Arch. Syrienne* 3/4 (1954), 106-11.

<sup>39</sup> Reduction at Leptis Magna (6. 4. 2-3) and Caesarea (5. 4. 7-14); movement uphill at Mocissus (5. 4. 15-18) and Bizana (3. 5. 15).



purchased Amida back the Roman army could make little headway further east, particularly against Nisibis (Nusaybin). The *magistri militum* complained to the emperor Anastasius that they could not be more successful against Nisibis without a nearer base for supplies and reinforcements, and refuge too when necessary; they needed a new fortress further east of Amida and Constantina. Acting on this advice Anastasius took the decision in 505 to turn the small village of Dara into a large, fortified and well-provided city which would assume the role of a forward base for future Roman campaigns against the Sassanians.<sup>40</sup> Dara was preferred to Ammudis, the other nominated village, probably because it best combined the military requirements of good water supplies with a naturally defensive position.<sup>41</sup>

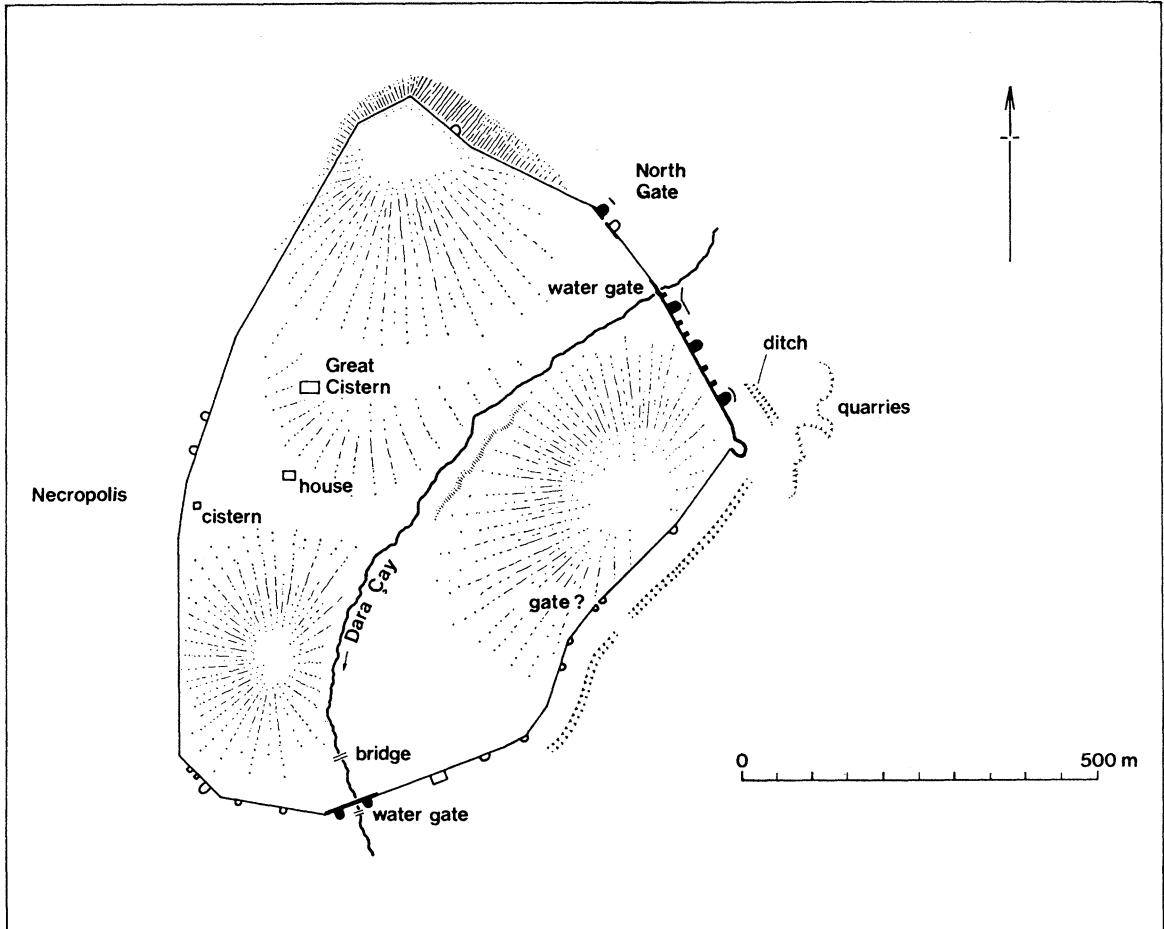


FIG. 2. SKETCH PLAN OF DARA AFTER PREUSSER, 1911, FIG. 12.  
REDRAWN BY B. V. WILLIAMS.

Dara was located eighteen km north-west of Nisibis and five km from the Persian frontier on the edge of the Mesopotamian plain just north of the modern Nusaybin-Mardin highway. It stood on three hills and was isolated by a narrow strip of low ground from the main scarp of the Tur Abdin plateau, which rises sharply to the north (Fig. 2). Through the centre flows the Daraçay (a tributary of the Habur), originating five km away at

<sup>40</sup> Capizzi, *op. cit.* (n. 11), 217-8 summarizes the sources.

<sup>41</sup> In the dry season of 1903 British military observers reported that Dara was the only watering point suitable for military purposes between Nisibis and Mardin (Admiralty War Staff Intelligence

Division, *A Handbook of Mesopotamia iv. Northern Mesopotamia and Central Kurdistan* (1917), 268). O. H. Parry, *Six months in a Syrian monastery* (1895), 159, notes that Dara is one of the best watered villages in Mesopotamia.

Kordis;<sup>42</sup> like the late Roman fortress at Viranşehir-Kaleköy in eastern Cappadocia,<sup>43</sup> the site was chosen because the physical features combined to provide a good, naturally defended position for a copious watering point. The circuit of the walls is irregular as it follows the crest of three hills. The internal area is fairly small, with a maximum internal diameter of about 1000 m, and the area suitable for habitation is limited by the steep, rocky ground, especially on the east side of the valley.

As a small village Dara came under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the bishop of Amida and the incumbent of the see of Amida at the time of Anastasius, Thomas, played an instrumental role in the construction of the new city.<sup>44</sup> At the same time the distinguished Roman official Calliopius was placed in charge of the construction of the fortress and he arrived there after the conclusion of war in 505, first tracing out the perimeter of the new city in the age-old way, with a hoe.<sup>45</sup>

The construction of a city such as Dara so close to the frontier was a blatant violation of the treaty of 441 which restrained both sides from constructing fortresses within the border region (Proc., *Wars* 1. 2. 15). The Persians protested vigorously but were in no position to obstruct the building of the new city, since they were more urgently distracted by the Ephthalite Huns (*Wars* 1. 10. 15). Nonetheless, the Persians did despatch skirmishing parties from Nisibis to interfere with progress. As a result the Romans moved a contingent under Pharesmanes from Edessa to Amida, in order to provide additional protection for those engaged in the construction of Dara (Jo. Styl. 90). Furthermore, we are informed that when the Persian king Kavad was no longer preoccupied with the Huns and resolved to put a stop to the construction, the walls were already sufficiently high to defend those seeking refuge behind them (Zach. Mit., *HE* 7. 6). The city was presumably well advanced by November 506 when the *magister militum*, Celer, together with Calliopius, who was apparently now stationed there, negotiated the final details of peace with the Persians (Jo. Styl. 100). Zachariah informs us that the city took two to three years to build (*HE* 7. 6). Since construction appears to have begun late in 505, it was presumably not completed until late in 507 at the earliest. It was formidable and elegant, comprising public baths, porticoes, storehouses, cisterns, a palace, churches, columns of Anastasius and many other buildings.<sup>46</sup> The emperor, following a traditional pattern, named the city after its imperial founder—Anastasiopolis—and bestowed on it the rank of *metropolis*, and it became the new base of the *dux* of Mesopotamia.<sup>47</sup>

The subsequent history of Dara confirmed the excellence of the original site and fortification. The city was besieged during the first Persian war of Justinian's reign and was the scene of Belisarius' first victory over the Persians in 530 (*Wars* 1. 13. 9–14. 55). During the second Persian war (539–44), in the campaign of 540 which saw the capture of Antioch by Chosroes, Dara alone was able to resist a Persian siege.<sup>48</sup> Apart from the restorations carried out by Justinian, further work was undertaken on the waterworks and elsewhere early in the reign of Justin II (565–78).<sup>49</sup> It was only in 573 that the city fell for the first time to Persian assault. The conduct of the Roman commanders shows how the city had become a symbol of Roman resistance in the east. No attempt was made to buy off the Persians or to conclude a truce once they had gained control of the defences. Rather, to the horror of the citizens, the gates remained locked; there was to be no escape. For seven days the fighting within the city continued and the resultant carnage was horrific.<sup>50</sup> This blow to Roman prestige was felt not only on the frontier but also in the capital; it pushed the emperor Justin over the threshold of insanity.<sup>51</sup>

From its capture in 573 Dara remained under Persian control. It could not be won

<sup>42</sup> E. Honigmann, *Die Ostgrenze des byzantinischen Reichs* (1935), 11 n. 6.

<sup>43</sup> M. Restle, 'Viranşehir-Kaleköy, ein befestigter Platz in Kappadokien', *Jahrb. d. Öst. Byz.* 24 (1975), 196–207.

<sup>44</sup> Zach. Mit., *HE* 7. 6 with Capizzi, op. cit. (n. 11), 217–8.

<sup>45</sup> Marcell. com. *Chron.* (MGH. AA. xi, 100) with B. Croke, 'Marcellinus and Dara: A Fragment of his lost *de temporum qualitatibus et positionibus locorum*', *Phoenix* 37 (1983).

<sup>46</sup> Jo. Mal. 399. 15–17; Evagr., *HE* 3. 37; Zach. Mit., *HE* 7. 6.

<sup>47</sup> Jo. Mal. 399. 20; Procop., *Wars* 1. 22. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Liebeschuetz, op. cit. (n. 28), 487–99, esp. 498.

<sup>49</sup> Menander, fr. 15 (*FHG* iv 220).

<sup>50</sup> Jo. Eph., *HE* (Payne-Smith, 382–3) with P. Goubert, *Byzance avant l'Islam* 1 (1951), 69–71.

<sup>51</sup> Theoph. Sim. 3. 11. 2–3; Mich. Syr. (Chabot II, 312).

back by negotiation, nor by force, until it was finally conceded to the Romans in 591 as part of the price paid for Roman support by the Persian king Chosroes II in his attempt to recover his throne from the usurper Vahram.<sup>52</sup> Thirteen years later a Persian army with all its elaborate machinery was once again at the gates of Dara; and when they finally took the city in 606, after an eighteen-month siege, the Persians proceeded to dismantle the walls.<sup>53</sup> Dara changed hands once again during the victorious campaigns of the emperor Heraclius in the 620s, but finally fell to the Arab army under Iyad ibn-Ghanm, along with the rest of Roman Mesopotamia, in 639.<sup>54</sup> No longer a frontier city, it returned to its former status, although a Syrian bishop is attested there until the thirteenth century.<sup>55</sup> As with so many of the new cities of the sixth century throughout the empire, urban life at Dara ceased once its precise role was removed. By contrast, the ancient cities such as Nisibis and Edessa continued as urban centres throughout the middle ages until the present day. Nowadays the name of Dara is preserved only by a small village scattered within the shell of the sixth-century fortress.<sup>56</sup>

The most informative source for the foundation of Dara is a lengthy account in the history of Zachariah of Mitylene (preserved in a Syriac redaction) emphasizing the role of Thomas and the clergy of Amida as the agents of Anastasius. There is another detailed and contemporary account by a former aide of Justinian, Marcellinus *comes*, which is preserved in the St. Omer manuscript of his *Chronicle* but which appears to derive from his lost volumes 'On the Locations of Places'. It is quite possible that Marcellinus himself had actually visited Dara.<sup>57</sup> Otherwise, there is a brief notice in the sixth-century chronicle of John Malalas (repeated in the *Chronicon Paschale*, Theophanes and Cedrenus), to which may be added Evagrius Scholasticus (probably based on Malalas) and the detailed regional history of Joshua the Stylite written in 507 during the city's construction. The most detailed eye-witness description of Dara comes, however, from Procopius who accompanied Justinian's general Belisarius there in 529/30, although Procopius tells us less about Anastasius' original construction of Dara than about Justinian's extensive rebuilding of the city.

### III. OUTER AND INNER WALLS

Procopius' account of Dara opens the second book of the *Buildings* (2. 1. 4-3. 26), which describes Justinian's work of construction in the frontier provinces of Mesopotamia and Osrhoene. It is the longest description of any individual site, with the exception of Constantinople; more than double the length of the account of Antioch (2. 10. 2-25) and four times that of Zenobia (2. 8. 8-25). In its detail, it is comparable only with the description of the Great Church of Constantinople, St. Sophia. Both by its position in the *Buildings* and by the degree of detail given, Procopius presents Dara as a model for Justinian's achievement in restoring the security of the empire. The account follows the standard order which Procopius employs in the *Buildings*—fortifications, waterworks, public buildings and churches—and opens with a brief summary of the foundation of the city by Anastasius, referring the reader back to his own account in the *Wars* (1. 9. 20).

Even the most cursory reading will reveal obvious distortions. For example, Procopius would have us believe that Justinian was responsible for building barracks for the soldiers at Dara (2. 3. 26), when we would expect them to have formed a natural component of the original construction of what was essentially a military base. More seriously, he credits the emperor with the two main churches at Dara: that of St. Bartholomew and the main church of the city, the so-called 'Great Church' (2. 3. 26). The fact is, however, that

<sup>52</sup> Theoph. Sim. 5. 3. 10 with Goubert, op. cit. (n. 50), 167-8.

<sup>53</sup> A. Stratos, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century I*. 610-34 (1968), 61-2.

<sup>54</sup> Theophanes A. M. 6130 (de Boor, 340. 25) with A. Stratos, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century II*. 634-41 (1972), 85.

<sup>55</sup> R. Janin, 'Dara', *Dict. d'hist. et de geog. eccl.* 14, 83-4; Mundell, op. cit. (n. 11), 225-7.

<sup>56</sup> A list of some of the travellers' accounts of Dara

is to be found in Mundell, op. cit. (n. 11), 212 ff. Photographs taken by Gertrude Bell are a valuable record of the site seventy years ago. These are now kept in the Bell Collection, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Photographs from a more recent exploration of Dara by Cyril Mango, Ihor Ševčenko and Marlia Mundell Mango are housed in the Byzantine Photographic Collection at Dumbarton Oaks, Washington D.C.

<sup>57</sup> Croke, op. cit. (n. 45).

St. Bartholomew's was certainly the work of Anastasius (Theod. Anag., *HE* 2. 57 (Hansen 157. 9–11)), while Zachariah of Mitylene (*HE* 7. 6) leaves us in no doubt that the 'Great Church' was a chief preoccupation of the bishop and clergy of Amida involved in Dara's construction.

Justinian is praised first of all for his rebuilding of the walls of Dara. Procopius describes how the haste of the original building led to a number of structural deficiencies in the defences: the walls were too low and the masonry was loosely laid with poor quality mortar. This faulty construction was especially apparent in the towers, which had begun to collapse because of the processes of weathering (2. 1. 6–10).<sup>58</sup> Recognizing the strategic importance of Dara and the special danger from the sophisticated Persian siege engines, Justinian ordered the defences to be restored (2. 1. 11–14). The emperor provided the following remedies:

first of all he rendered the wall (which, as I have said, was very low and therefore very easy for any enemy to assault) both inaccessible and wholly impregnable for an attacking force. For he contracted the original apertures of the battlements by inserting stones and reduced them to very narrow slits, leaving only traces of them in the form of tiny windows, and allowing them to open just enough for a hand to pass through, so that outlets were left through which arrows could be shot against assailants. Then above these he added to the wall a height of about thirty feet, not building the addition upon the whole thickness of the wall, lest the foundations should be overloaded by the excessive weight which bore upon them, so that the whole work would suffer some irreparable damage, but he enclosed the space at that level with courses of stones on the outside and constructed a colonnaded stoa running all around the wall, and he placed the battlements above this portico, so that the wall really had a double roof throughout: and at the towers there were actually three levels for the men who defended the wall and repelled attacks upon it. For at about the middle of each tower he added a rounded structure upon which he placed additional battlements, thus making the wall three-storeyed (2. 1. 14–17, cf. *Wars* 2. 13. 17).

Although many of the towers were in ruins, they could not be demolished lest the enemy suddenly attack. To overcome this problem, Justinian ordered that the defective towers should be reinforced with external stonework cladding, rectangular in shape. Each tower was heightened by an extra turret placed on its summit (2. 1. 15–22). The outer wall (προτείχισμα) was also increased in height, and on the south side, where the approach was level and the ground suitable for siege mines,<sup>59</sup> he built a crescent-shaped, water-filled ditch with an outer wall to preserve the circuit walls from assault (2. 1. 23–5). A mound which lay between the main walls and the new outworks had covered enemy mining operations and this was levelled (2. 1. 26–7).<sup>60</sup>

As a preface to his account of Justinian's renovation of the walls of Dara, Procopius claims that the walls of Anastasius' city were hastily thrown together and inadequate, so that within a short time the elements alone reduced them to total ruin (2. 1. 7–19). We have already observed how Procopius utilizes this panegyric *topos* even when it is clearly untrue (e.g. 2. 5. 2, 2. 6. 2, 3. 4. 19, 3. 5. 7). It is no less false and exaggerated in the case of Dara. Zachariah's account of Anastasius' building of Dara (*HE* 7. 6) and Joshua the Stylite's claim that the walls were certainly strong enough to deter the Persians even before they were completed (Jo. Styl. 90) can be contrasted with Procopius' version in which the original workmen were so fearful of imminent Persian attack that:

<sup>58</sup> Procopius notes that the earlier walls were too low at a number of sites: 2. 5. 2 (Constantina); 3. 5. 6 (Theodosiopolis (Erzerum), with the restoration described as similar to that at Dara (3. 5. 10–12)); 3. 2. 10 (Martyropolis). That the walls had been poorly built is a common assertion, e.g. at Amida (2. 3. 27–8), Constantina (2. 5. 2), Chalkis (2. 9. 1) and Hemerium (2. 9. 10), where the walls were rebuilt in hard stone. Excavations at Dibsī Faraj-Neocaesarea showed that the earlier towers built of a soft limestone were encased in new walls of conglomerate and brick (R. P. Harper, 'Excava-

tions at Dibsī Faraj, northern Syria, 1972–1974: a preliminary note on the site and its monuments', *DOP* 29 (1975), 319–37, esp. 326–8). The rebuilding is dated after 453 and may be Justinianic in date.

<sup>59</sup> In his account of the siege of 540, Procopius states (*Wars* 2. 13. 16) that the Persian siege tunnel lay to the east, the only approachable side. He tacitly corrects this in the *Buildings* (2. 1. 24).

<sup>60</sup> This mound was probably a tell, the remains of earlier settlement on the site. The plain south of Dara is still filled by the remains of prehistoric and later settlements of this form.

they did not carry out the building with care, since the haste inspired by their extreme eagerness detracted from the stability of their work. For stability is never likely to keep company with speed, nor is accuracy wont to follow swiftness. They therefore carried out the construction of the circuit-wall in great haste, not having made it fit to withstand the enemy, but raising it only to such a height as was barely necessary; indeed they did not lay the stones themselves carefully, or fit them together as they should, or bind them properly at the joints with mortar. So within a short time, since the towers could not in any way withstand the snows and the heat because of their faulty construction, it came about that the most of them fell into ruin (2. 1. 7-10).

There are two reasons for accusing Procopius of error and misrepresentation here: firstly, it is scarcely conceivable that such neglect would have gone unchecked at the Romans' most important forward base against the Persians, especially not in the case of Dara, now the headquarters of the *dux* of Mesopotamia; secondly, it plainly contradicts Procopius' own reports elsewhere. Far from being dilapidated so soon after being built, the walls must have been standing solidly to their original height of thirty feet for Justinian to have simply built on top of them, as Procopius says he did (2. 1. 16). Furthermore, the fact that in his eye-witness account of the battle outside Dara in mid-530 Procopius gives no hint that the defences were inadequate in any way (*Wars* 1. 13. 9-14. 55) should suggest that they were in perfect and well-maintained condition after all.

Although stationed in Dara himself in 530 Procopius never returned to the city after the expiry of Belisarius' appointment, so for subsequent incidents in and around Dara he would have had to rely on the reports of other participants and perhaps some written sources.<sup>61</sup> If his information is true that when Chosroes attempted to take Dara again a decade later (540) the walls were sixty feet high and the towers one hundred feet (*Wars* 2. 13. 17), just as described in the *Buildings* (2. 1. 16), then Justinian's programme of refortification must have been undertaken during the 530s. In other words the Dara that Procopius knew at first-hand was the original Anastasian city completed after 507. So for the account of Justinian's work at Dara contained in the *Buildings* he must have relied solely on second-hand information. All this we can deduce from our literary sources. What further light is thrown on the matter by the architectural remains at Dara? It is to this question that we now turn.

The fortifications at Dara are best preserved along the north-eastern side of the city (Fig. 2, Pl. XI, 1). Here the defensive system comprises a tall curtain wall, flanked at intervals of about 50 m by large U-shaped projecting towers. Between these main interval towers are small rectangular turrets, normally two in number. The U-shaped towers have a high, domical vaulted, circular chamber at first floor level (Pl. XI, 1), which has five wide, arched windows probably narrowed to the field by a thin curtain of facing stone.<sup>62</sup> In the north-eastern sector much of the inner face of the curtain is obscured by modern village houses, but at the east tower flanking the south water gate are preserved the remains of open stairs built with monolithic treads partly supported by corbels and partly bonded into the rear face of the tower wall.<sup>63</sup> Even if no traces of these stairs were preserved, the massive domical vault within the tower would suggest them, as it is unlikely to be pierced by internal stairs. The outer wall is well preserved in the north-eastern sector; it runs straight, parallel to the main curtain without any expansions in front of the towers as are found at Amida, Resina (Theodosiopolis) and Singara (Sinjar) (Fig. 2, Pl. XI, 1). A rock-cut ditch is seen at the north-eastern angle.

At the north water gate (Pl. XI, 1), as distinct from the north gate, the curtain survives up to the coping stones of the parapet walk, although no crenellations have remained. The

<sup>61</sup> 6. 7. 18 (written and oral sources); 2. 4. 1-5 (based on direct local experience). Archival material is probably the source of his detailed lists (4. 9; 4. 11), cf. Perrin-Henry, *op. cit.* (n. 8.)

<sup>62</sup> See the photographs in Mango, *op. cit.* (n. 11), pl. 37 and in S. J. Hill, *Gertrude Bell (1868-1926)* (1976), fig. 10. The blocking of these windows is probably post-Roman, when the tower was converted for domestic use.

<sup>63</sup> Similar open stairs behind the towers are known

from Amida and Sergiopolis. For Amida see Gabriel, *op. cit.* (n. 23), 96 ff. and for Sergiopolis, Karnapp, *op. cit.* (n. 10). Staircases at the rear of towers, on the inside, are found at Zenobia (Karnapp, *op. cit.*), Dibli Faraj (Harper, *op. cit.* (n. 58), fig. c) and Antioch (G. Rey, *Etude sur les monuments de l'architecture militaire des croisés en Syrie et dans l'île de Chypre* (1871), 188-9, figs. 48, 49). It is unlikely that there is any significant difference of date between the two types of staircase.

facing for the curtain is of well-dressed, smooth ashlar blocks interrupted only by the conduits for the river and on the inside by the arched entrance for an interval turret. The wall core consists of hard, mortared rubble with vertical bonding courses of ashlar headers. This use of vertical bonding courses is reminiscent of 'opus punicum' commonly found in Africa, but probably unique in Mesopotamia and Syria. Horizontal bonding courses of ashlar headers and stretchers were an established feature of late Roman construction methods, identical in function to brick bonding courses;<sup>64</sup> it is possible that vertical bonding courses were designed as a precaution against mining, since they would limit the section of wall which could collapse because of subsidence.<sup>65</sup> Similar facing may be seen between the north water gate and the north-eastern angle, but the vertical bonding is only certain in the east tower flanking the north water gate. The south water gate is identical in construction to the north (Pl. XII, 2).

West of the north water gate the curtain climbs the steep north-western hill; in general it is poorly preserved and it is not possible to determine whether the system of flanking towers and turrets was continued, as only one U-shaped tower is well preserved (Fig. 2). On the west side of the enceinte, the foundations of U-shaped towers with circular internal chambers were seen in the saddle between the north-western and south-western hills. But confirmation that the system of turrets and U-shaped towers continued may be seen at the south-western corner. Although the curtain wall survives only in fragments of wall core, it was set on a foundation of bedrock, with cuttings on the surface to receive the ashlar facing stones. These rock foundations were cut so that the quarry face was flush and vertical with the curtain wall and towers above, and acted as a socle of bedrock at least 4 m high.<sup>66</sup> The outline of the quarry face showed that the curtain was defended by U-shaped towers and rectangular turrets, identical in plan to those from the north-eastern curtain.

The main evidence for the structural history of Dara is found at the surviving U-shaped tower on the north-eastern curtain, west of the river (Pl. XI, 2). It is located at a point where the curtain deviates slightly towards the west. Examination of this structure shows it to be the west tower of the north gate. The gate is of a simple design, a single portal gateway flanked by two U-shaped towers. The east tower survives only in the jambs of the doorway and in the scar of the robbed east wall of the curtain. In front of the west tower are traces of the outer wall, which is positioned on the edge of the north scarp of the hill. As the north curtain is set back from this edge, this position would suggest that the inner and outer walls are contemporary.

Two distinct types of masonry were seen at the gate. Type A is of well dressed, plain ashlar blocks, facing to the front and rear a compact, mortared rubble core. The mortar is uniformly hard and has survived well in the joints of the facing stones and of the core where it was covered by the later work. The gate curtain and the west tower, which is bonded into the curtain, are built in this style. Type B abuts the rear face of the gate curtain. It is faced only to the rear, as the core abuts the inner face of the Type A gate curtain. The ashlar facing stones are larger and less regularly laid than Type A and the stones of the core were larger, bonded with a softer, less durable mortar, which survived poorly in the joints of the facing stones. Type B masonry ran across the rear face of the gate curtain and west tower. At the gateway, the jambs of Type B construction showed that it had been narrowed and the springers indicated that the arch had been lowered (Pl. XII, 1). Further traces of the additional wall of Type B masonry were found east of the gate, low down the slope. Whether this additional wall was continuous is unclear.

Elsewhere along the circuit much of the curtain survives only as a tumble of stone.

<sup>64</sup> For stone and brick horizontal bonding courses see J. B. Ward-Perkins, 'Notes on the structure and building methods of early Byzantine Architecture' in D. Talbot Rice, *The Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors, Second Report* (1958), 52-104. Stone bonding courses are to be seen on the walls of Antioch.

<sup>65</sup> In Greek fortifications, towers were not bonded into the curtain for a similar reason, see F. E. Winter, *Greek Fortifications* (1971), 158 n. 31.

<sup>66</sup> Deep rock-cut ditches were a feature of late

Roman fortifications in Mesopotamia; see the description of Kale Hetmi Tay, possibly the Rhabdios described by Procopius (2. 1. 1-13), in J. G. Taylor, 'Travels in Kurdistan with notices of the sources of the eastern and western Tigris, and ancient ruins in their neighbourhood', *Journ. Royal Geog. Soc.* 35 (1865), 21-58, esp. 52; and Rabbat Kalesi in Taylor, *op. cit.* (n. 16 above), 360-1, and G. Wiessner, *Nord-mesopotamische Ruinenstätten* (Studien zur spätant. u. frühchrist. Kunst, bd. 2) (1980), pls. 10-21.

But at two places, in the saddle, between the south-west and north-west hills, and immediately east of the south water gate, large ashlar facing stones were noted, similar to the type B construction from the north gate. On the upper part of the curtain wall of the north water gate, adjacent to the flanking U-shaped tower, may be seen a section of ashlar masonry, which is larger and less regularly laid than the rest of the curtain. This secondary work is similar to Type B construction and probably represents a repair to the upper curtain.<sup>67</sup>

The structural sequence at the north gate is clear. In Phase I, the gate comprises a single portal gateway flanked by U-shaped towers of Type A construction. Phase II represents modifications to the gate by thickening the curtain to the rear and slightly narrowing the gateway. It is built of Type B masonry, inferior in quality to that of Type A. In the absence of any additional archaeological or epigraphical evidence we must turn to the literary sources in order to date these phases. Two main periods of construction on the walls are the work of Anastasius and Justinian. Phase I is clearly primary and we may reasonably assume this to be Anastasian. Phase II is likely to be Justinianic.

How far do these structural observations compare with Procopius' account of the Justinianic work at Dara? First, the towers: Procopius does not specify the original shape of the towers, but he is clear when describing the rectangular cladding added to many of the towers because of their disrepair (2. 1. 19). None of the towers examined showed any trace of such a repair but, since not all the towers are now extant, it is possible that cladding was carried out on a few. Furthermore, he unfavourably compares the inferior quality of the earlier work with that of Justinian (2. 1. 7-10), but the remains suggest that the opposite was true, for the Phase I masonry uses a harder mortar than the Phase II additions. Second, the addition to the curtain wall: Procopius records that the curtain wall was raised with a vaulted gallery (2. 1. 15-17). At only one point does the curtain survive to its full height, at the north water gate. This is clearly of one build, without any extra gallery, although from its position it may be atypical. However, it stands in excess of 30 feet, the figure which Procopius considered to be the height of the original wall.<sup>68</sup> The evidence of the additional wall of Type B construction at the north gate could be interpreted as the internal base for the addition of the vaulting which Procopius describes, but alternatively, since it does not survive as a continuous wall, it may be considered to be a widening of the gate curtain and the provision of a staircase behind it.

Two photographs taken by Gertrude Bell during her visit to Dara in 1911 show an upper curtain wall rising above the front of the main curtain at the south water gate. No trace of this upper work now survives, but it is possible to estimate that this wall rose to a height of about 18 m or 60 feet, a figure similar to that recorded by Kinneir and which agrees with the height given by Procopius in the *Wars*.<sup>69</sup> From the two Bell photographs none of the specific features which Procopius details in the *Buildings* can be recognized. The outer face of the wall appears to be of one build without the tell-tale blocking of the embrasures, and the inner face does not display any trace of corbels or vaulting to support an upper rampart walk such as survives at Resafe and other sites on the Eastern frontier.<sup>70</sup> At no point does the structural record correspond to the description given by Procopius except for the total height of the wall, a fact attested in the *Wars* but not the *Buildings*.

Third, the repairs resulting from a great flood: Procopius records that the outer wall was destroyed, the inner wall required repairs and the north gate was removed further up the hill (2. 3. 22-3). No comment may be made on the outer wall as it does not survive north of the north water gate. The main curtain appears to survive in its primary state;

<sup>67</sup> Rough ashlar is also seen on the inner face of the north water gate, low down, in the spandrels of the arched conduits; this is distinct from both Types A and B. A detailed survey would no doubt reveal further variation in masonry styles.

<sup>68</sup> As noted above, Procopius states that the walls were sixty feet high in 540 (*Wars* 2. 13. 16), from which we are obliged to assume that their original height was thirty feet. In practice, however, the curtain is unlikely to have been a constant height overall, given the varied nature of the terrain. At

Amida, Gabriel (op. cit. (n. 23), 96-113) records that the curtain varied from 8-12 m.

<sup>69</sup> The Bell photographs are published and discussed by Crow, op. cit. (n. 11 above), 17-18, figs. 11, 12; an earlier description of the south water gate is found in W. Kinneir, *Journey through Asia Minor, Armenia and Koordistan* (1818), 440-1.

<sup>70</sup> Karnapp, op. cit. (n. 10 above); also at Hisarkaya, (Wiessner, op. cit. (n. 66), pl. 5) and at Antioch (Rey, op. cit. (n. 63), 192, figs. 50, 51).

the form of the turrets and the type of construction are both identical with the curtain wall to the east. Also the main curtain is identical in construction to the south water gate and there is no suggestion that this required any renewal. Secondary work is restricted to the masonry similar to the Type B construction described above. From its position, this later work is too high up the curtain to have been occasioned by flooding; rather it was probably required after bombardment by stone-throwing artillery. As to Procopius' new north gate, we have seen that the north gate which survives is primary and is located above the level of flooding. No trace of an earlier gate closer to the river was observed. The description of the north gate would appear to be mistaken, but it may provide an insight into how Procopius composed his account. Learning from some source, probably official, that the gate had been rebuilt, he elaborated this fact by combining it with the story of the flood and the emperor's devices to prevent further damage.

Certain aspects of the description cannot now be verified from the surviving remains. None of the towers remains to its original height, so it is not possible to look for evidence of the additional turrets which Procopius records. No trace of the additional outwork on the south side was seen, although it might show up when the fields are under crop. However, a line of triangular dressed stones was observed close to the modern road leading south from Dara. These are probably the coping stones for the merlons of the parapet. They may represent traces of this additional outwork, the more regular ashlar blocks having been removed for re-use in modern building.

Finally, it is worth noting one omission in Procopius' description of the walls that would appear to be significant. In his contemporary account of Anastasius' original construction, Marcellinus describes what was known as the 'Herculean tower' (*turris Herculeae*) which appears to have formed part of the north wall and was probably located at the top of the slope in the north-west sector of the city. This enormous tower commanded a panoramic view and acted as a lookout in the directions of Amida and Nisibis.<sup>71</sup> There is no mention of this tower in Procopius' description of the decayed state of the Anastasian walls, yet the tower was still standing tall and formidable when the Persians tried to build a siege tower higher than it in 573 (Jo. Eph., *HE* 6. 5). The fact that this Anastasian tower was still the highest point in the city's fortifications after Justinian's rebuilding, combined with Procopius' failure to mention it, suggests that the original walls had by no means suffered from time and the elements to the extent suggested by the panegyrist (2. 1. 7-10).

In most cases, therefore, where we can directly compare Procopius' account of the fortifications with the structural remains at Dara it appears that his statements are either literally false or else at least to be treated with reservation. In fact, hardly any detail of his description can be positively confirmed, although certain points can no longer be verified because the physical remains either do not survive or are unclear. So it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that for Dara Procopius is not a reliable witness. Further consideration of Procopius' account only serves to reinforce this conclusion.

#### IV. DARA'S WATER SYSTEM

Having considered the fortifications, Procopius' account continues with a description of Dara's water system which exemplifies another Procopian *topos*: that is that in the *Buildings* Justinian is constantly credited with redirecting or blocking the course of rivers (2. 7. 7-10; 8. 16-18; 10. 6-8, 16-18), like Queen Semiramis at Babylon (Herodotus 1. 185); or else with constructing new channels, cisterns and aqueducts in cities and forts where water supplies were always precarious (2. 4. 13, 22-4; 5. 9-11; 9. 6; 11. 5-7). In the time of Justinian cisterns were constructed, Procopius informs us, between the inner and outer wall and near the church of St. Bartholomew (2. 2. 1-2),<sup>72</sup> in order to store water coming into the city from the river, which flowed from the north and could not be diverted from supplying the city because no level ground intervened. The river was canalized before

<sup>71</sup> *Chron.* (*MGH.AA.* xi, 100) with Croke, *op. cit.* (n. 45).

<sup>72</sup> Since the city was already provided with cisterns (*Zach. Mit.*, *HE* 7. 6), those built between the walls were probably to provide a water supply for cattle

penned there in time of siege (cf. *Proc.*, *Wars* 2. 13. 18). At Beroea (Aleppo) in 540, cattle exhausted the water supply in the citadel and the citizens were forced to surrender (*Proc.*, *Wars* 2. 7).



it entered the city and at the curtain wall the conduits were secured by stout iron bars.<sup>73</sup> The waters flowed through the city, filled the reservoirs and were led out of the city to the plain beyond in a manner similar to that described for the north water gate (2. 2. 3–6).<sup>74</sup>

Procopius' account then turns to the difficulty of controlling the water supply and how this was resolved, the chief problems being the need to deny an enemy access to the water supply during a siege and to prevent flood damage to the city and its defences (2. 2. 7–9).<sup>75</sup> He then goes on to explain how, in the time of Justinian, one of the members of the garrison at Dara had a large pit dug down at a certain spot inside the city. He thereby discovered an underground river 'either in consequence of a dream or led to do it of his own accord' (2. 2. 10). It just so happened that at the time heavy rains brought into flood the river that normally flowed through Dara. When the city itself was awash, it was observed that rather than keep flowing on its normal course out of the southern side of the walls, the river flowed into the pit instead and then went underground, resurfacing days later about forty miles away near Resaina-Theodosiopolis 'and it was recognized by the objects which it had carried off from the houses of that city' (2. 2. 16).<sup>76</sup> This was a useful discovery, for it meant that in future when the city was under siege from the southern side, the river's flow could be halted by closing sluice gates in the city walls and forcing the river into its underground course (2. 2. 17–18). Procopius then cites two occasions when the besieging army was hard-pressed by lack of water and forced to abandon the siege 'outwitted by the foresight of the Roman emperor' (2. 2. 19–21).

While there is no reason to disbelieve the facts of this account, since such underground rivers were widely known in Mesopotamia (Philostorgius, *HE* 3. 9), there is reason to doubt Procopius' integrity in listing the exploitation of the discovery among the achievements of Justinian. If that were the case, it would probably have formed part of Justinian's rebuilding programme at Dara after 530. Yet Procopius goes on to say that this engineering feat was employed against the Persians who came to besiege Dara 'during the reign of Cabades' (2. 2. 19) that is in 530, precisely when Procopius himself was there. One's suspicions are immediately aroused, especially because in the course of narrating a later campaign at Dara he offers quite a different version of this phenomenon :

But as soon as this river gets inside the circuit wall (προτείχιμα), it flows about the entire city, filling its cisterns, and then flows out, and very close to the circuit-wall it falls into a chasm, where it is lost to sight. And where it emerges from there has become known to no man up to this time. Now this chasm was not there in ancient times, but, a long time after the emperor Anastasius built this city, nature unaided fashioned and placed it there, and for this reason it comes about that those desiring to draw a siege about the city of Dara are very hard pressed by scarcity of water (*Wars* 8. 7. 8–9).

What this passage makes clear is that when Procopius was writing the eighth book of his history of Justinian's wars, that is in 553/4,<sup>77</sup> he was not aware of the version he gives in the *Buildings* about how and when the pit was built and the flood occurred. It therefore follows that the events reported by Procopius cannot have taken place by 530 when he was at Dara, yet the device for diverting the river to an underground course was certainly being used in 530 (2. 2. 19). Procopius, therefore, only learnt of the flood story between writing

<sup>73</sup> Joshua the Stylite (52) reports that the conduits at Edessa were similarly guarded with iron grilles and this was normal practice. At Dara holes to receive the iron bars are seen at both the north and south water gates (see pl. XII, 2).

<sup>74</sup> At this point in his description Procopius does not explain how the reservoirs were filled (cf. n. 82 below). The largest surviving cistern is placed on the slopes of the north-west hill (see fig. 2 and Mango, op. cit. (n. 11), pl. 37). J. B. Tavernier (*Les six voyages* I (1712), 233) noted seven or eight ruined churches. He saw two great cisterns to the north of the north church and a crypt, perhaps a cistern, beneath.

<sup>75</sup> Procopius also wrongly attributes to Justinian the waterworks of Edessa (2. 7. 2–10, cf. J. Wilkinson,

*Egeria's Travels* (1971), 284–7) and Antioch (2. 10. 15–18, but see Downey, op. cit. (n. 12), 371 ff.). In an early photograph of the Iron Gates at Antioch at least three structural phases are apparent: R. Dussaud, P. Deschamps and H. Seyrig, *La Syrie antique et médiévale, illustrée* (1931).

<sup>76</sup> Resaina has great springs, one of the principal sources of the Habur. The chasm which Procopius describes is most probably a natural swallow-hole, so some underground water system connecting Dara and Resaina is possible, although it is most unlikely that large objects were washed down it only to resurface later elsewhere. Unfortunately, Crow was unable to investigate the water system in any detail.

<sup>77</sup> Stein, op. cit. (n. 6), 717.

the eighth book of the *Wars* and the composition of the *Buildings*. To distort the facts by attributing the device to a fortuitous discovery in the reign of Justinian suited his panegyric purpose.

If, therefore, we combine the two Procopian passages just discussed, the underground river pit must have been discovered some time between the construction of the city in 507/8 and the first known use of the diversion scheme against the Persians in 530. Although Procopius does say that the underground river was discovered and the pit fashioned some time after (χρόνῳ πολλῷ ὕστερον) Anastasius built the city (*Wars* 8. 7. 9), this statement does not rule out a date in the reign of Anastasius.

Indeed, such a date would appear to be confirmed by another brief description of Dara from late in the reign of Anastasius. In the work of a certain Theodosius, entitled *de situ terrae sanctae*, which forms part of the popular tradition of pilgrim accounts and handbooks of the Holy Land in the sixth century, we find :

In Mesopotamia the emperor Anastasius built a city called Dara. It has a length of 3 miles on account of the fact that it was where the Persians, when they came to plunder the emperor's province, made a ditch because waters are not found at all except there. The river emerges in the city and at the end of the city plunges back underground so that this entire river is enclosed by the wall (*de situ terrae sanctae*, 29 (CCL 175, 124)).

Despite the looseness of this possibly lacunose description, one thing is certain : here is a pre-Justinianic notice of Dara that explains how the river that flows into the city goes underground just inside the southern wall.<sup>78</sup> The version in Procopius' *Buildings* is therefore a calculated misrepresentation. Moreover, the very fact that there survive from the original Anastasian wall conduits in the south water gate with sockets for a double metal grill and sluice gate to shut the conduits off<sup>79</sup> suggests that the function they served of stemming the river's flow formed part of the Anastasian design.

Procopius follows his account of how the river was diverted with a long description of how the emperor and his advisers arrived at a solution to control the floodwaters and prevent further damage (2. 3. 1-15). The Alexandrian master-builder Chryses, who was apparently responsible for much of Justinian's work in Mesopotamia, heard about the damage caused by the force of the river at Dara and in a dream was advised of a plan to dam up the river in the gorge before it reached the city (2. 3. 2-6), while Justinian was inspired in a dream with the very same plan but, Procopius assures us, Justinian's plan prevailed (2. 3. 14). The scheme involved the building of a barrage with sluices at the point where the river emerged from its gorge some forty feet in front of the outer wall.<sup>80</sup> In addition, the north gate which had been flooded was blocked up with very large stones and moved to a higher position up the hill, safe from further inundation (2. 3. 22-3). There is no evidence available to evaluate Procopius' account here, but his highly literary description and the co-incidence of the schemes of Chryses and Justinian lead one to doubt the role attributed to the emperor. The dam was probably part of the Anastasian design as well.

Procopius goes on next to explain how the emperor provided the city with both cisterns and an aqueduct, since previously it had neither (2. 3. 24). The lack of cisterns in the original plan is contradicted by specific testimony that the Anastasian city was well provided with cisterns (Jo. Mal. 399. 17; Zach. Mit., *HE* 7. 6), presumably those whose impressive remains still stand at Dara. Likewise, to claim credit for Justinian as the builder of the first aqueduct in the city is patently misleading since we know the aqueduct too was built by Anastasius (Zach. Mit., *HE* 7. 6).<sup>81</sup> It is possible, nonetheless, that Justinian was responsible for repairing the cisterns and aqueduct or for constructing extra ones.

<sup>78</sup> The *de situ terrae sanctae* is dated to the reign of Anastasius because the latest constructions mentioned in the work are Anastasian (cf. A. Heisenberg *Grabeskirche und Apostelkirche* 1 (1908), 106-10).

<sup>79</sup> See n. 73 above.

<sup>80</sup> From fig. 2, the plan of C. Preusser, fig. 12, the distance from the inner wall to the mouth of the gorge is at least 50 m. Even though the outer wall

appears to swing out as it reaches the north water gate, Procopius has underestimated this distance.

<sup>81</sup> In his first attempt to describe the water supply Procopius says that it came direct from the river (2. 2. 3-6). Since the surviving cisterns are located on high ground, this would have been impossible without sophisticated hydraulic equipment. He later corrects this statement (2. 3. 24), but still attributes the work to Justinian.

If Procopius' description of Dara is not to be trusted then we are also entitled to be suspicious about his account of Justinian's work at other sites where he claims a general similarity with the reconstruction at Dara. Armenian Theodosiopolis (Erzerum) is the most conspicuous example in this category. According to Procopius the curtain wall of Theodosiopolis was only thirty feet high by the time of Justinian, and not thick enough to be built on; nor did the city possess any outworks or moat (3. 6-8). What Justinian did was to have a deep ditch dug around the city (3. 6. 9) and, as at Dara, he constructed on the walls an extra gallery and outworks; he also narrowed the embrasures in the towers and modified the towers so that each became a separate fortress (3. 6. 12). This account of Procopius is extremely suspect when considered alongside a local description by the Armenian historian Moses of Chorene of the foundation of Theodosiopolis in 421 by the Roman general Anatolius.<sup>82</sup> First of all, Anatolius surrounded the site with a large ditch, and deep broad foundations for the walls were laid out. The ramparts included high-pointed towers 'like the prows of ships' on the northern and southern sides, while the eastern and western sides had large rounded towers. In the elevated centre of the city a square, known as an *Augusteon*, was laid out. The city was built on thermal springs and water was conducted around it by underground channels. Finally, it was filled with both arms and troops. As with Dara in the age of Justinian, Theodosiopolis which was reinforced and renamed by Anastasius can scarcely have been in the condition claimed by Procopius.

The aim of this study has been to shed light, mainly through the study of an individual site, on the value of Procopius' *Buildings* as a record of the fortifications on the eastern frontier in the reign of Justinian. Both here and in other cases where it is possible to evaluate its evidence by comparison with other sources, it has frequently been found to be exaggerated, misleading and sometimes contradictory. Recent research points rather to overall running down and withdrawal of Roman military forces in Syria during Justinian's reign;<sup>83</sup> similarly, a close analysis of the *Buildings* itself can be seen to imply that Justinianic work at Dara and elsewhere in the east contributed little more than a slight modification and repair of the Anastasian defences.

Throughout the *Buildings*, Procopius was influenced both by his panegyric purpose and by literary considerations. In this artful presentation, Justinian acquires the credit for construction which belonged more properly to Anastasius and Justin I, and what was in fact minor refurbishing is made to seem like major new building. The detailed analysis of Procopius' presentation of Dara is enough to suggest what is coming to be more widely recognized on general grounds too, namely that the *Buildings* is a sophisticated text worthy of far closer consideration in its own right, and only to be used with the utmost caution as a potential repository of factual information on Roman forts and cities in the sixth century.<sup>84</sup>

Sydney

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<sup>82</sup> *Hist. Arm.* 3. 59 (Langlois II, 166-7), cf. F. H. Weissbach, *RE* 5A (1934), 1924-6 s.v. 'Theodosiopolis, 2'. For the surviving pentagonal towers at Theodosiopolis, see R. H. Unal, *Les monuments islamiques anciens de la ville d'Erzerum et de sa région* (Bibl. arch. et hist. de l'Inst. français d'Archéol. d'Istanbul 22) (1968), 16, fig. 3.

<sup>83</sup> Liebeschuetz, *op. cit.* (n. 28).

<sup>84</sup> We should like especially to thank Averil Cameron for bringing us together for this project and for her subsequent advice, as well as the Leverhulme Trust for making possible Crow's visit to Dara.