Justinianic Pandemic Sourcebook

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Read the sourcebook online at:

https://darmc.harvard.edu/justinianic-pandemic-sourcebook

This website is under construction.

The structure of the present document

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1. Abstract and Overview

We aim to create a convenient and reliable resource for scientists, scholars and the general public interested in the evidence documenting the Justinianic Pandemic of bubonic

plague (541-ca. 750 CE), as well as related disease and other events. We will build it progressively, as elements are ready. Today it offers what is to our understanding a comprehensive catalog of outbreaks of plague in the First Pandemic documented in written sources, and a non-comprehensive, but ever-expanding, collection of translations of selected primary accounts. Since the modern identifications of epidemic diseases as described in ancient texts are sometimes uncertain, we have sought generally to be inclusive of outbreaks of epidemic disease rather than exclusive, while, wherever appropriate, clearly noting uncertainty of identification.

We aspire to integrate these different evidentiary layers through a geodatabase that will allow the general public as well as researchers to easily access and search the evidence from the Pandemic and to visualize its spatial configurations (e.g., via GIS) or its genomic dimensions (e.g., via the Nextstrain platform).

Thus the final form of this resource aims to include:

- A substantial collection of historical records about the Pandemic and other contemporary epidemics in English translation or summary, along with the original text and brief commentary (this document);
- Geodatabases affording access to the different kinds of evidence from the period:
    - Outbreaks recorded in written records (draft version live)
    - Written records and the information on their authorship
    - Archaeological evidence in the form of an inventory of anomalous burials
    - Individuals buried in such features
    - Genetic evidence

For the historical records (this document), in most cases, we will provide new translations. They are important: when most of these works were written, Greek and Latin, for instance, were undergoing great linguistic change. This change is only poorly represented in the standard dictionaries and reference grammars. The appearance of extensive or even exhaustive collections of digital versions of these works has allowed us in many cases to scrutinize in depth the ways specific authors or milieux use various words and forms, often authorizing a level of confidence in how we translate those passages that has been hitherto impossible.

The overview of epidemic outbreaks (section 3) is organized by date and place of an apparent epidemic as reported. The translations and commentaries (section 4) are **arranged in the approximate chronological order in which the sources were written**, regardless of the date of the outbreak recorded. All passages from the same author or work relevant to epidemics **are grouped together,** so that each user can immediately see how and how much each individual author writes about epidemics.

For quick access to individual passages documenting individual outbreaks, go to section 3, "Overview of epidemic outbreaks documented in written sources." Simply clicking on the relevant URL(s) will take you to the relevant passages of the written records.

We present initially a sampling of some of the most important testimony in Greek, Latin, Old Irish, Arabic, and Late Sabaic; we will add new testimony as it becomes available.

Unless otherwise noted all years are given in the Common Era (CE =AD)

A note on terminology

Just as ancient systems for understanding disease differed deeply from modern ones, so the terminology for well-known infectious diseases, their outbreaks and symptoms, reflected very different ways of seeing and naming physical disorders (Grmek 1989, 1-16). In the case of novel infections, terminology predictably varied widely and was apt to change with time, place, literary genre, and speaker (McCormick 2021a, 51-53, 61-63, for a close study of one non-medical writer's use; Mulhall 2021, for a detailed analysis of the subtle terminology shifts among learned physicians who witnessed the plague).

The English word "**plague**" derives ultimately from the Latin *plaga* which means "a blow," and which came to mean also the wound caused by a blow (French *plaie*). The Vulgate Bible's frequent use of the word, particularly for the "ten plagues of Egypt" that forced Pharaoh to free the Israelites (Exodus 9:14, 11:1) and in the context of illnesses (e.g., Deut. 24:8, 28:59 and 61, etc.) encouraged its use for calamities, including epidemics, thought to reflect chastisements for sins that provoked divine anger and invited a return to correct behavior. See further *Thesaurus linguae latinae* 10.1:2289-2295, esp. 2293-2294.

The Greek term ***boubōn*** (βουβών) can and should be translated differently before and after the Justinianic Pandemic began; before 541, the standard pathological meaning of *boubōn* is "swelling of the lymph gland" (it can also simply mean "lymph gland" in a non-pathological context); after 541, it comes to be specifically associated with the symptoms of bubonic plague (Mulhall 2021, 504-517).

The Latin adjective ***inguinarius*** ("of or belonging to the groin") is generally accepted by scholars as prima facie evidence that an epidemic involved some disease resembling bubonic plague if not plague itself, because the noun *inguen* and its cognates designate swelling in the groin, i.e., the inguinal lymph glands. It is thus a good Latin adjectival parallel to the Greek *boubōn* (McCormick 2021a, 61-63).

The Arabic noun ***ṭā'ūn*** **(طاعون)** is derived from the root ***ṭa'ana***, or "piercing." Classical Arabic and New Persian sources employ this term to indicate bubonic plague specifically, for both the pandemic of the 6th-8th centuries and for the later "Black Death" of the 14th century

and beyond. Arabic ***wabā'*** **(وبأ)**, on the other hand, refers to any kind of epidemic disease, including bubonic plague (see *inter alia* Conrad 1982, 268-307; Conrad 1981a, esp. 79-82). An oft-cited Arabic maxim, especially common from the Second Pandemic, is that "Every ***ṭā'ūn*** is a ***wabā'*** but not every ***wabā'*** is a ***ṭā'ūn.***" In this sense ***wabā'*** is analogous to the Latin *lues,* in the general sense of "epidemic," whereas ***ṭā'ūn*** carries the specificity of *lues inguinaria*, that is, "inguinal epidemic," which modern people refer to as "bubonic plague." Our commentaries on Islamicate notices of plague or possible plague events specify which Arabic term is used.

We frequently use the word **epidemic** (known to the ancients) for convenience and clarity to communicate to the reader that a disease outbreak attested in the ancient sources was severe and affected many people in the same area at the same time. However, the word epidemic does not capture the range of meaning of the ancient terminology employed in our sources, such as, for instance, Greek *loimos/loimōdēs/loimikos* or Latin *lues*. While indicating severe and widespread disease, these terms carried for the ancients the additional associations of causation by bad air (miasma) and of affecting different people in different ways on the basis of a variety of factors (climate, season, an individual's humors, etc.) which collectively determine an individual's constitution and, in turn, predisposes them to contracting a specific disease. To emphasize this ancient usage, we sometimes translate "*loimos*-related" terminology with the deliberately archaic "**pestilence**." In our usage, pestilence does **not** specifically indicate *Yersinia pestis*.

Mortality: both Greek and Latin use abstract nouns formed from the root verb "to die" to describe mass death events. The Latin *mortalitas* and the less common Greek *thanatikòn* (θανατικὸν) or *thánaton* (θάνατον) are often linked, explicitly or through context, with disease outbreaks. Despite the often explicit link with epidemic disease, we translate these terms as "mortality." Additionally, this is sometimes how we translate the Latin *cladis*, which is often rendered as "disaster" or "catastrophe" in contexts when it is explicitly linked to symptoms of epidemic disease and seems to signify mass dying.

Illness vs. disease: Historians of medicine generally prefer to use the term "illness" to translate words having to do with sickness, such as, e.g., Greek *nosos* or Latin *morbus*. "Illness" captures the bodily specificity of sickness that characterizes the humoral theory of disease, which was dominant among both medical and non-medical ancient writers. Historians of medicine generally avoid the term "disease" in ancient contexts because of its associations with pathological agents as understood since the development in the nineteenth century of the germ theory of disease. While recognizing the significance of this terminological distinction, we have been less systematic in our rendering of the ancient texts.

Among the many witnesses collected in the first tranche of documents translated here, new readers may wish to go first to the rich eyewitness reports of Procopius regarding the initial outbreak of bubonic plague in 541-542, particularly in the then-capital of the Roman Empire, Constantinople; Gregory of Tours on six plague epidemics in western Europe; and the report of

Agathias of Myrina about the plague outbreaks of 542 and 558 in Constantinople. No less rich sources remain to be translated anew and added to this collection, such as the large segments of John of Ephesus' lost eyewitness account of the first plague outbreak in the Levant, Asia Minor, and Constantinople, as preserved in various later Syriac works (see, e.g., Witakowski 1996, 74-98) or that of the plague at Antioch in 592, in Evagrius' *Ecclesiastical History* 4.29 (Evagrius 2000, ed. Whitby 2000, 229-232). In the meantime, readers without access to a major research library may wish to have a look at that which is available online from John of Ephesus' reaction to the initial outbreak in the blog of Roger Pearse. For Evagrius, Walford 1846's antiquated translation is also available online.

A historical note

The present collection of primary materials from the Justinianic Pandemic emerged from a private seminar in late antique and medieval Greek philology organized to ensure sufficient acquaintance with the language at a time when Harvard University's offerings were temporarily limited. In 2015 the group focused on Procopius' famous account of the outbreak of plague at Constantinople. By the Spring of 2016, the participants' individual research projects were uncovering a growing number of different texts about the Justinianic Pandemic and the group decided it would be useful to concert our efforts. More work was done in the Spring and Fall of 2017. Over the course of the COVID-19 Pandemic, we returned to this theme with new collaborators and began a more systematic effort to collect and translate primary texts relevant to the Justinianic Pandemic. What you have before you is the provisional result of our labors, primarily completed during the 2021–2022 academic year, which we hope to expand and improve with time.

The translation of the Greek texts for the First Pandemic has been largely a group effort by Henry Gruber, Polina Ivanova, John Mulhall, and Jake Ransohoff, working with Michael McCormick, unless otherwise noted. The Greek texts from before 541 were translated by Mulhall. Latin translations are by McCormick unless otherwise noted. Gruber and McCormick have reviewed and revised all Latin and Greek translations. Arabic, Sabaic, and Middle Persian texts have been identified, critically appraised, and reviewed, revised, or translated by Bryan Averbuch. Celtic texts have been identified, critically appraised, and reviewed, revised, or translated by Nicholas Thyr. The author(s) of each segment and translation of this document are identified in the relevant introductions.

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2. Brief Introduction to the Justinianic Pandemic

By Michael McCormick

Opinions have varied widely on the nature and significance of the series of epidemics that struck the Roman, Persian, and Arab empires as well as their neighbors between 541 and ca. 750. Greek and Latin contemporaries largely saw most of these outbreaks as the same illness, designated variously as "inguinal," "bubonic," "glandular," "pestilential buboes," as well as more vaguely, which the sources translated below will show. Occurring in Asia, North Africa, and Europe and, according to leading specialists, counting between 18 (Stathakopoulos 2004, 113-123) and 39 (Harper 2017, 304-315) epidemic outbreaks, "waves" or "amplification events," these epidemics certainly constituted a pandemic by their overall duration, spatial extension, and gravity.

Gibbon discussed the plague in some detail but did not mention it among the first of his conclusions about the great causes of the fall of Rome, the "injuries of time and nature" (Gibbon 1776-1788, ed. Bury 1914, 7:317-320). In the earlier 20th century, the general histories of the late Roman Empire by J. B. Bury and Ernst Stein devoted significant attention to the initial outbreak of the Justinianic Pandemic, beginning in 541. The former confidently identified it as the same disease as the medieval Black Death, and suspected that it caused similarly high levels of death (Bury 1923, 2:62-66). The latter reckoned it the most serious calamity of Justinian's long reign, and underscored its demographic impact, particularly in the countryside. According to Stein, the rural population decline led to a jump in prices and especially to fiscal shortfalls and severe tax pressures which ruined many taxpayers at a time when the Roman Empire's military expenses were very high (Stein 1949, 2:758-761). More recently, A. H. M. Jones' great late 20th-century history of the late Roman Empire devotes, out of its 1518 pages, a mere three paragraphs and a couple of incidental mentions to the plague. Jones was perhaps inspired by Stein when he notes that it was "perhaps the most serious calamity which afflicted the empire" from the 540s to the 570s, and mentions that it probably contributed to manpower shortages in the sixth century, which was important for his vision of the empire's crises insofar as they reduced the empire's agrarian production and therefore its tax revenues (Jones 1964, 287-288, 818). Jones nevertheless attributed most of his assessment of the fall in agrarian production to high taxes, and assumed on "modern analogies" that high birth rates ought to have restored the population "rapidly from such temporary and local losses" as barbarian devastations, famines and epidemics (Jones 1964, 823, and 1043, whence both quotations).

More recent general histories continue to display divided opinions. The current standard German history of the later Roman Empire devotes barely six lines to the outbreak of the Justinianic Plague, and does not mention it among potential causal factors in the end of the Empire (Demandt 2007, 244).[1] Chris Wickham's magisterial synthesis of the archaeological evidence makes clear a decline of rural settlements ("but not a demographic collapse") offering a very rough estimate of ca. 50% population diminution in Merovingian northern France, and surmising that a similar drop may have occurred in much of Spain and Italy (Wickham 2005, 508). Because the archaeological dating (inexact though it may be) seems to locate most of this decline in the 5th century — i.e., before the Justinianic Pandemic — and because he did not see from the then available evidence signs of rural catastrophe, Wickham was inclined to minimize the rôle that the plague or massive disease mortality may have played in that rural demographic contraction (Wickham 2005, 504-508 and 548-549). More recently, Stephen Mitchell's historical survey of the later Roman Empire examined the archaeological evidence at some length for the entire Roman and post-Roman space, and came to the opposite conclusion, that plague likely played a major role in the demographic decline that, in his assessment, attended the end of antiquity (Mitchell 2015, 479-491, a new chapter added to the first edition [2009]). So it is fair to say that learned opinion continues to differ on the importance of the Justinianic Pandemic.

More specialized studies diverge no less in opinion. In 2004 Dionysios Stathakopoulos systematically surveyed famines and epidemics recorded in the written sources from 284 to 750 CE, particularly in the eastern Mediterranean, and included a valuable catalog of those events, particularly of outbreaks identified as plague; he has returned to the question in several studies.[2] Since 2000, in fact, numerous studies have sought to assess the impact of the Justinianic Pandemic in whole or in part. Their appraisals range from extremely significant and lasting to entirely minimal, positions represented today by Kyle Harper and by Lee Mordechai and his coauthors, respectively. Others' research argues for important but highly variable consequences chiefly for the initial outbreak, for instance, Mischa Meier, who has particularly illuminated the cultural and economic resonance of the Pandemic's early decades.[3] The bibliography focused on the written evidence is now so voluminous (Green 2021), and of such starkly differing scholarly quality, that a separate study in itself would be required to survey comprehensively, accurately, and critically, recent work on the testimony of literary, legal, epigraphical and documentary sources.

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[1] Cf. Demandt 2007, 597, where only the Antonine Plague is mentioned among potential epidemic causes of the fall of Rome, and dismissed since its demographic impact would have subsided by the fifth century; cf. Demandt 2014, 578, where demographic decline is judged irrelevant to the fall of Rome.

[2] Stathakopoulos 2002, 2004, 2007, 2012, 2013.

[3] Mordechai et al. 2019, "Rejecting"; Mordechai et al. 2019, "Inconsequential," whose shortcomings are severely but carefully documented by Meier 2020a and 2020b, and Sarris 2022; Eisenberg 2019; Meier 2003 Zeitalter, which analyzes in depth the cultural reaction to and mental impact of the epidemics among other catastrophes of the sixth century and, particularly, in the light of the eschatological expectations of the age. See esp. 373-387, 652-653 and passim; Meier 2004, 2016, etc.; Harper 2017, 199-249; see also Eisenberg and Mordechai 2020.

Surviving written records are relatively few between the second half of the sixth century and the middle of the eighth century; for long periods, they are even totally lacking for vast areas of the former Roman space and its neighbors. Men and women in these zones nevertheless existed, lived, and died, as archaeology shows peremptorily: absence of writings about them is not evidence of human absence from the scene. Even so, there exist more written sources that document the Pandemic than previous efforts have inventoried and than many participants in the debate realize. Some of those that do survive may be challenging to use for various reasons, including the inherent difficulty of the ancient languages in which they are written, and their literary character, profoundly shaped by the cultural and religious ideals of the time.

For users who are not deeply versed in the cultures of this era, it may be helpful to emphasize that many of these texts come from literary works and display features stemming from an educational system steeped in the Greek and Latin classics. Great value was placed on echoing prestigious masterpieces of classical literature, a kind of cultural and social signal of educational status that was clearly much appreciated by a readership raised on Homer, Virgil, Thucydides, etc. It was also a time when religion dominated the lives and mentality of most people, and various phenomena, natural or human, tended to be viewed, described, and understood through a religious lens replete with biblical allusions or quotations and references to demons, holy men and, occasionally, women, that would have been instantly familiar to most readers and hearers of these texts. Details on these intricacies of late antique literary expression and how to evaluate the originality of their content in witnesses to the Pandemic are supplied in the commentary column of these texts.

Finally, many of the most educated writers had some familiarity with the scientific medicine of their time. Its literature had developed over a thousand years from its origins in Hippocrates and the other medical writers of classical Greece. To simplify greatly, these late antique thinkers had been taught that good health reflects the balance of liquids in the body in harmony with the environment, and that disease reflected imbalances triggered by environmental disorders (Temkin 1973); they were skeptical of and understood differently popular ideas such as contagion (Nutton 1983). And so they tended to try to fit what they saw into the systems they had learned, perhaps, for instance, failing to record symptoms that would seem obvious to us, but which were invisible or irrelevant to them insofar as they did not fit the acknowledged ancient scientific patterns of disease. This collection of the written evidence for the Pandemic aims to help address these problems by supplying reliable translations and the original ancient and early medieval texts, as well as brief but indispensable textual comments or clarifications, of as many written sources as possible. It also includes references to epidemics whose identification is uncertain—many contemporary records are so succinct that they simply mention a “big dying” or disease outbreak without specifying its character—or whose reported symptoms do not point toward plague. Gregory of Tours, for instance, makes clear that, in 582, epidemics of two different kinds raged simultaneously in different parts of Gaul, plague in the south and “noxious pustules” in central Gaul (McCormick 2021a, 55-57). These unspecified or non-plague outbreaks

are clearly identified as such. Non-plague epidemics, whether they are concurrent with outbreaks of plague or not, are an important element of the pathocoenosis, that is, the overall constellation of diseases of this period (see Grmek 1989, 2-4, for this concept) that scholars and scientists need to weigh in their biomolecular assessment of anomalous burials and of the overall health status of late antique and early medieval populations. We hope that this collection of evidence will grow incrementally as known texts are translated, and as new texts are added to the debate.

In section 4, "**Written evidence,"** the testimony of individual authors, even about different outbreaks, will be kept together in one place, so that each user can immediately see how and how much each individual author writes about the outbreak. **Quick access to individual passages documenting individual outbreaks can be had by going to section 3, "Overview of epidemic outbreaks documented in written sources."**

Nevertheless the widespread absence of preserved written evidence means that ancient texts alone cannot suffice to reconstruct what really happened, where, and when. That is why the robust recovery of molecular evidence in the form of the DNA of the pathogen itself from the remains of its victims is so important. Victims are irrefutably documented by the ancient DNA of the pathogen in their remains. Although the biomolecules are fragile and robust preservation is the exception rather than the rule, they constitute a completely new, indeed revolutionary source of knowledge for the global history of past plague pandemics, including of course the Justinianic.

Robust recoveries from the medieval pandemic in specialized laboratories of the ancient DNA ("aDNA") of *Yersinia pestis* were published starting in 2010 (Haensch et al. 2010; Bos et al. 2011), definitively proving that the disease was bubonic plague. Earlier results (Wiechmann and Grupe 2005) identifying *Yersinia pestis* as the causative agent of deaths in a sixth-century cemetery in Bavaria—where no written source documents the Justinianic Pandemic—were confirmed with the most rigorous protocols in 2013 (Harbeck et al. 2013). Notwithstanding the extreme rareness of well-preserved disease aDNA, a second pair of victims were identified in another contemporary Bavarian cemetery three years later; in this case the aDNA was well enough preserved to allow whole genome sequencing (Feldman et al. 2016). Three years later the Max Planck-Harvard collaboration identified thirty new victims bearing the aDNA of the bubonic plague that killed them in eight new cemeteries in Bavaria, France, Spain and Britain (Keller et al. 2019). Further successful recovery of the aDNA of *Y. pestis* in the remains of more victims dating from the sixth to the eighth century has recently been reported (Neumann 2021) elsewhere in Spain and France, as well as on the Black Sea coast and in Lebanon, and will soon be published. In most cases, the aDNA is well enough preserved to allow phylogenetic analysis, indicating where a particular plague bacterium is situated in the overall evolution of the pathogen, and thus when, at what stage, and with what virulence characteristics that bacterium reached and killed its victim. None of these molecularly documented outbreaks are mentioned in the surviving written sources. This is why the future geodatabase of evidence of the Justinianic Pandemic ultimately must include aDNA evidence, as well as the broader set of anomalous

burials that seems to surge in these centuries, if the goal is to reconstruct, measure, and appraise the historical consequences of this pandemic.

In the meantime, the user is invited to find here a first series of translations of a small part of the written evidence related to the Pandemic and other epidemics of the time.

3. Overview of epidemic outbreaks documented in written sources

3.1. Overview of plague outbreaks before 541 CE with links to ancient written sources by John Mulhall

Descriptions of Bubonic Plague in Greek Literature before the Sixth Century

The following represent the descriptions of illnesses in Greek literature that can be confidently identified with bubonic plague. See Mulhall 2019; see also Mulhall 2021.

Before ca. 100 CE: Unknown location

1. Dionysius Kurtos (Dionysius the Hunchback), cited by Rufus of Ephesus; see Oribasius, *Medical Collections,* 44.14.

Before ca. 100 CE: Libya

1. Poseidonius and Dioscurides, cited by Rufus of Ephesus; see Oribasius, *Medical Collections,* 44.14.

Ca. 100 CE: Libya, Egypt, Syria

1. Rufus of Ephesus

First or Second Century CE: Unknown location

1. Aretaeus, *On the causes and signs of acute diseases*, 2.3

3.2 Overview of Plague Outbreaks and Other Epidemics with Links to Written Evidence 541 - ~750 CE

By Marcel Keller (Keller et al. 2019, SOM) on the basis principally of Harper 2017, 304-315 and Stathakopoulos 2004, revised by Michael McCormick, with contributions from Henry Gruber, Jake Ransohoff, John Mulhall, Reed Johnston Morgan, and Bryan Averbuch.

This Draft Overview is based on the earlier work of Dionysios Stathakopoulos and Kyle Harper. We continue to add events as we learn about them. We will gratefully receive references

to further texts and passages relevant to epidemic outbreaks in western and central Eurasia and North Africa in this period. Events in pink signal materials not in Keller 2019 and Harper 2017.

The overview is organized by date and place of an apparent epidemic as reported. Many are explicitly, plausibly, or possibly identified as bubonic plague, and **printed in boldface**. In many cases, the wording of the original is too concise or vague to allow specification of a disease outbreak as bubonic plague, although that identification certainly remains possible. Other epidemics are recorded here as well, as discussed above in Section 1, but they are listed in plain type. Outbreaks not included in Keller, Harper, and Stathakopoulos are in pink font. For more details on this question of disease identification, see the introduction to and translation of the individual sources. The URLs will take the reader to the primary sources already incorporated in this work. For details of the editions of the sources tabulated in this Section 3, see Keller et al. 2019, Supplementary Information, 23-27 and Harper 2017, 351-357, as well as our bibliography. The numbers given for Harper 2017 and Stathakopoulos 2004, refer to entries in, respectively, the Appendix (pp. 304-315) / Catalog of epidemic (pp. 177-386) events in each. When texts have already been included in the sourcebook, hyperlinks on authors' names (e.g., **541: Pelusium**, Procopius *Wars* 2.22.6) will take the reader to the introductions to the respective authors/works; the hyperlinks to specific sections in the works (e.g., **541: Pelusium**, Procopius *Wars* 2.22.6) will take the reader to the English translation of those passages.

541: Pelusium

1. Procopius, *Wars* 2.22.6
2. John of Ephesus, *Fragment E* (not translated in Witakowski 1996: see, e.g. Pearce)
3. See also Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 103

541: Gaza, Ashkelon, Negev

1. For possible epigraphic evidence, see Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 102; see also the epigraphic material in Conrad 1996, 95.

541: Alexandria

1. Procopius, *Wars* 2.22.6
2. John of Ephesus, *Fragment E* (two mentions, e.g. Pearce and Witakowski 1996, 77)
3. *Chronicle of Seert* (1908-1911, 185)
4. Michael the Syrian (1899-1924, vol. 2, pp. 235–238)
5. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 104

542: Jerusalem and countryside

1. Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Cyriacus* (1939, 10)

2. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004 no. 105

542: Izra' or Azra'a (Syria; ancient Zora)

1. Inscription in Restle and Koder 2012, 51-53, no. 1
2. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 106

542: Antioch

1. *Life of Symeon Stylites the Younger* (1962, 69)
2. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 107

542: Apamea

1. Evagrius, *Ecclesiastical History* (2000, 4.29)
2. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 108

542: Emesa

1. Zacharias Rhetor, *Fragment* ch. 9 (1924)
2. Leontios of Neapolis, *Life of Symeon the Fool* (1963, 151)
3. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 109

542: Myra

1. *Life of Nicholas of Sion* (1984, 52)
2. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 110

542: Constantinople

1. Procopius, *Wars*, 2.22, 2.23; and *Secret History* 41.1-4
2. John of Ephesus, *Fragment E* 74–93
3. John Malalas, *Chronicle* (2000, 482)
4. Theophanes, *Chronographia* (1883), AM 6034
5. John the Lydian (John Lydus), *On the Magistracies of the Roman State* 3.16
6. Jordanes, *Getica* 19
7. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 111

542?: Sykeon (though perhaps a later amplification event)

1. *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*, 8 (1970, vol. 1, 7–8)
2. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 112

542: North Africa

1. Victor of Tunnuna, *Chronicle* a. 542 (2001, 201)
2. Corippus, *Iohannis* 3.343–400 (1970, 60-62)
3. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 114

542: Sicily

1. Manganaro 2001, 133
2. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 115

542 or 543: Atropatene (Azerbaijan)

1. Procopius, Wars, 2.24.1-12

542-544 or, possibly, 558 or 561-562: Aphrodisias

1. Statue raised to a benefactor who banished "epidemic and famine": Roueché and Reynolds 1989, no. 86.

543: Sufetula

1. For possible epigraphic evidence, see Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 117

543: Italy, Illyricum

1. Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicle, Continuation*, a. 543 (107)
2. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 116

543-547: Gaul, Arles, Reims, Trier

1. Gregory of Tours, *Histories,* 4.5, 6.15, 6.33
2. Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers* 6.6, 17.4
3. Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors,* 78
4. Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs,* 50
5. See also: McCormick 2021a, 66-75

543: Spain

1. Victor of Tunnuna, *Chronicle* (2001), and *Consular Chronicle of Zaragoza* , ad a. p.c. Basili II.
2. See also: Kulikowski 2007, 150–151

543: Valencia

1. *Council of Valencia*, a. 546
2. See also: Gruber 2018

543–544: Rome

1. *Inscriptiones Christianae urbis Romae* 1.1452; 2.4287; 7.17624; 2.5088; 2.4289; 8.20839; 2.5087 (epitaphs in calendar order from February 1, 543 - April 5, 544).
2. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 118

544: Ireland, Britain

1. *Annals of Ulster s. A. 545*
2. See also: Dooley 2007, 216; Maddicott 2007, 173–174

547: Yemen (unspecified epidemic, plausibly bubonic plague)

1. South Arabian (Sabaean) Inscription at the Ma'rib Dam
2. See: Avanzini 2013-present (Corpus of Late Sabaic Inscriptions)

558: Constantinople

1. Agathias, *Histories*, 5.10
2. John Malalas, *Chronicle*, (2000, 18.127)
3. Theophanes, *Chronographia* (1883), AM 6050
4. Agapios, *Universal History (Kitab al-'Unwan*) (1910-1915)
5. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 134; Harper 2017, no. 1

558? or 561-562?: Aphrodisias

1. See above 542-544: Aphrodisias

561–562: Cilicia and Anazarbos, Syria, Mesopotamia, Antioch

1. Theophanes, *Chronographia* (1883), AM 6053
2. *Life of Symeon Stylites the Younger*, 126–129
3. *Chronicle to the Year 640*
4. Barhadbšabba, *Cause of the Founding of the Schools*, 388–389
5. *Chronicle of Seert*, 185–186
6. Amr ibn Matta, 42–43

7. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 136, Harper 2017, no. 2

565: Liguria, Northern Italy

1. Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards*, 2.4
2. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 139, Harper 2017, no. 3

571: Italy, Gaul, Bourges, Chalon-sur-Saône, Clermont, Dijon, Lyon

1. Marius of Avenches, a. 571
2. Gregory of Tours, *Histories* 4.31–32
3. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 144; Harper 2017, no. 4; McCormick 2021a, 75-79

573–574: Constantinople, Egypt, Syria and Antioch

1. John of Biclar, *Chronicle*, a. 573
2. Agapios, *Universal History (Kitab al-'Unwan)* 1910-1915
3. John of Nikiu, *Chronicle,* 94.18
4. *Chronicle up to the Year 846*, 174
5. Michael the Syrian, 10.8 (1899-1924, 346)
6. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 145; Harper 2017, no. 5

582–584: Southwestern Gaul, Narbonne, Spain, unspecified epidemic in Mérida

1. Gregory of Tours, *Histories,* 6.14, 6.33
2. *Lives of the Holy Fathers of Merida,* 5.8 (unspecified epidemic)
3. See also: Harper 2017, no. 6; McCormick 2021a, 79-81

583: Lyons (unspecified epidemic)

1. Council of Lyons, a. 583, canon 5

585: Mâcon (blows of unspecified illnesses); sacrilegious additional body disposal in recent tombs

1. Council of Mâcon, a. 585, canons 1 and 17

586: Constantinople

1. Agapios, *Universal History (Kitab al-'Unwan)* (1910-1915)
2. See also: Harper 2017, no. 7

588: Gaul, Lyon, Marseille, Spain

1. Gregory of Tours, *Histories,* 9.21–22

2. See also: Harper 2017, no. 8; McCormick 2021a, 81-85

590– ca. 594: Rome, Narni, Ravenna, Istria and Grado, Rhône Valley, Avignon, Viviers

1. Gregory of Tours, *Histories,* 10.1, 10.23
2. Gregory the Great, *Dialogues* (1978-1980, 4.18, 4.26, 4.37)
3. Gregory the Great, *Register* (*Ep.*) (1979b, 2.2)
4. Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards,* (1878, 3.24, 4.4)
5. *Book of the Pontiffs (Liber pontificalis)* (1898, 65)
6. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, nos. 151, 154; Harper 2017, nos. 9, 10; McCormick 2021a, 85-88

592: Syria, Palestine, Antioch

1. Evagrius, *Ecclesiastical History* (2000, 4.29)
2. *Inscriptions from Palaestina Tertia* nos. 68–70 (vol. 1b, 147-153)
3. Hassan ibn Thabit in Conrad 1981, 154
4. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 155; Harper 2017, no. 11; Benovitz 2014

597: Thessalonica and countryside

1. John, *Miracles of St. Demetrius* (1979-1981, 3, 14)
2. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 156; Harper 2017, no. 12

598: Thrace

1. Theophylact Simocatta, *Histories* (1997, 7.15.2)
2. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 159; Harper 2017, no. 13

599–600: Constantinople, Asia Minor and Bithynia, Syria, North Africa, Italy, Marseille

1. Michael the Syrian, 10.23 (1899-1924, 387)
2. *Chronicle up to the Year 1234* (1916)
3. Gregory the Great, *Register (Ep.)* 9.232, 10.20
4. Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* (1878, 4.14)
5. Elias of Nisibis (1964, a. 911)
6. Thomas of Margâ, *Book of Governors* (1893, 11)
7. Fredegar, *Chronicle* (1888, 4.18)
8. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 160; Harper 2017, no. 14; Biraben and LeGoff 1975, 75

603 August 29: epidemic, possibly of plague, at Rome

1. Gregory the Great, *Register* (*Ep.*) Appendix 9 (formerly *Register* 13.2)

609: Cortijo de Chinales (Spain)

1. *Corpus inscriptionum latinarum* (CIL) 2.7.677
2. See also: Harper 2017, no. 15; McCormick 2016, 327

619: Constantinople, Alexandria

1. *Miracles of St. Artemius* (1909, 34)
2. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 173; Harper 2017, no. 17

626–628: Palestine, Mesopotamia

1. Michael the Syrian, 11.3 (1899-1924, 409)
2. Eutychius, *Annals* (1904)
3. al-Ṭabarī, 1061
4. Arabic sources in Conrad 1981, 159–163
5. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, nos. 177, 178; Harper 2017, no. 18

638–639: Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia

1. Michael the Syrian 11.8 (1899-1924, 423)
2. Elias of Nisibis (1964, AH 18)
3. *Chronicle to the Year 1234* (1916, 76 = AH 18)
4. Arabic sources in Conrad 1981, 167-185
5. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 180; Harper 2017, no. 20

663–666 [Irish sources indicate 664-668]: England, Ireland

1. Adomnán, *Life of Columba* (1991, 47)
2. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (1991, 3.23, 27, 30; 4.1, 7, 8)
3. Bede, *Life of Cuthbert* (1940, 8)
4. See also: Harper 2017, no. 21; Maddicott 2007

670–671: Kufa

1. Arabic sources in Conrad 1981, 250–253
2. See also Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 185; Harper 2017, no. 22

672–673: Egypt, Palestine, Mesopotamia, Kufa

1. Theophanes, *Chronographia* (1883), AM 6164
2. Agapios, *Universal History (Kitab al-'Unwan)* (1910-1915)
3. Arabic sources in Conrad 1981, 253-260
4. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, nos. 185, 186; Harper 2017, no. 23

680: Rome, Pavia

1. Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards* (1888, 6.5)
2. *Book of the Pontiffs (Liber pontificalis)* (1898, 81)
3. See also Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 192; Harper 2017, no. 24

683–687: England, Ireland

1. Adomnán, *Life of Columba*, (1991, 47)
2. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (1991, 4.14)
3. See also Harper 2017, no. 25; Maddicott 2007

687–689: Syria, Mesopotamia, Basra

1. John bar Penkaye, *Book of the Main Events* (*Ktābā d-rēš mellē*) (1989, 15, 160–165 (68–71))
2. Mubarrad, the *Recollections of the Plague of the Torrent*
3. Further Arabic sources in Conrad 1981, 263-269
4. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, nos. 194, 195; Harper 2017, no. 26

689–690: Egypt

1. Arabic sources in Conrad 1981, 271-273
2. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 196; Harper 2017, no. 27

Between 687 and 702: Visigothic Kingdom: Spain

1. *Mozarabic Chronicle of 754*, 41
2. See also: Harper 2017, no. 28; Kulikowski 2007, 153–154, and next two entries

693-694: Visigothic Kingdom: Southwestern Gaul (Septimania)

1. 16th Council of Toledo
2. 17th Council of Toledo
3. See also: Harper 2017, no. 28, who combines this event with outbreaks in the

Mozarabic Chronicle, and Kulikowski 2007, 153–154

695 / 696: Unspecified epidemic, Libya (Antabulus)

1. Ibn Abd al-Hakam, *Conquest of Egypt and North Africa*, ed. Torrey 1901, 203

701: Spain, possibly Toledo

1. *Mozarabic Chronicle of 754*, 45

698–700: Constantinople, Syria, Mesopotamia

1. Elias of Nisibis (1964, AH 79 and 80)
2. *Chronicle to the Year 819* (1916, AG 1011)
3. Theophanes, *Chronographia* (1883), AM 6190 and 6192
4. Nikephoros, *Short History* (1990, 41)
5. Leo Grammaticus, *Chronicle* (1842, 167)
6. al-Ṭabarī: *History of Prophets, Kings, and Caliphs*, at year 79
7. Arabic sources in Conrad 1981, 274-277.
8. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, nos. 198–200; Harper 2017, no. 29

704–706: Syria, Mesopotamia, Basra, Kufa

1. Michael the Syrian 11.17 (1899-1924, 449)
2. *Chronicle of Zuqnin* (1927, 1933, a. 1016)
3. Arabic sources in Conrad 1981, 277-280
4. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, nos. 201, 203; Harper 2017, no. 30

707–709: Spain

1. *The History of Early Al-Andalus (Akhbâr majmu'a)* (2012, 50)
2. See also Harper 2017, no. 31, Kulikowski 2007

713: Syria

1. *Chronicle of Disasters*, a. 1024
2. Michael the Syrian 11.17 (1899-1924, 452)
3. *Chronicle to the Year 819* (1916)
4. *Chronicle to the Year 846* (1907, a. 1024)
5. See also Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 205; Harper 2017, no. 32

714–715: Egypt

1. Severos, *History of the Patriarchs* (1906-1915, 17)
2. See also Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 207; Harper 2017, no. 33

718–719: Syria, Mesopotamia, Basrah

1. Arabic sources in Conrad 1981, 286-289
2. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 209, Harper 2017, no. 34

724-725: unspecified epidemic in Egypt

1. Conrad 1981, 289

725–726: Syria, Mesopotamia

1. Theophanes, *Chronographia* (1883*,* AM 6218)
2. [Hugeburc], *Life of Willibald* (1887, 4)
3. Michael the Syrian, 11.19 (1899-1924, 436)
4. Agapios*, Universal History (Kitab al-'Unwan)* (1910-1915)
5. Elias of Nisibis (1964, AH 107)
6. *Chronicle to the Year 819* (1916, a. 1036)
7. See also Conrad 1981, 290-291; Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 213; Harper 2017, no. 35

729: Syria

1. Michael the Syrian, 11.21 (1899-1924, 463)
2. Harper 2017, no. 36

732–735: Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia

1. Theophanes, *Chronographia* (1883), AM 6225
2. Agapios, *Universal History (Kitab al-'Unwan)* (1910-1915)
3. Arabic sources in Conrad 1981, 291-292
4. See also Stathakopoulos 2004, no. 214; Harper 2017, no. 37

743–750: Egypt, North Africa, Syria, Mesopotamia, Basrah, Sicily, Italy, Greece, Constantinople, Armenia

1. Severos, *History of the Patriarchs* (1906-1915, 18)
2. Michael the Syrian, 11.22 (1899-1924, 465–66)
3. *Chronicle of Zuqnin* (1927, 1933, a. 1055–1056, a. 1061– 62)

4. *Chronicle to the Year 1234* (1916)
5. Theophanes, *Chronographia* (1883), AM 6238
6. Nikephoros, *Brief History* (1990, 67)
7. Nikephoros, *Antirhetikos III* (1863, 496B)
8. Theodore Studites, *In praise of Plato* (1903, 805B–D)
9. Michael Glycas, *Annales* (1836, 527)
10. John Zonaras, *Epitome of Histories* (1870, 15.6)
11. John of Naples, *Deeds of the Bishops of Naples* (1878, 42)
12. Arabic sources in Conrad 1981, 293-307
13. See also: Stathakopoulos 2004, nos. 218–222, Harper 2017, no. 38, McCormick 2007, 292

4. Written Evidence

4.1. Written Evidence of Plague before 541

By John Mulhall

Rufus of Ephesus

The following passage of the physician Rufus of Ephesus (flourished ca. 100 CE) survives only in the medical encyclopedia completed in 360 CE by the physician Oribasius, in his *Medical Collections,* 44.14. In the passage, which is labeled "From the works of Rufus. On *boubōn*," Rufus describes an illness known as "pestilential *boubōnes*."[4] This passage represents the oldest surviving description in Greek literature of an illness that can be confidently associated with plague (Mulhall 2019). Specifically, Rufus' description matches modern descriptions of plague in five ways: first, the development of unusually sized swellings of the glands that resemble plague buboes ("large, hard, and not suppurating"); second, it is associated with a "sharp fever;" third, it is lethal ("most deadly"); fourth, it is accompanied by delirium ("disturbance of the entire body, and delirium"); finally, Rufus even includes a description that resembles the development of secondary sores, which can occur at what we know today to be the spot of primary infection, i.e., typically, the spot where a victim has been bitten by an arthropod (swellings "not only in the accustomed places, but

[4] The label is preserved in a scholion ἀπὸ τῶν Περὶ τῶν ἐκτός παθῶν. Raeder, the editor of Oribasius' *Collectiones*, records the scholion (scholiast "R2" in MS Vat. Gr. 1885) to the opening line of the passage (Oribasius 1928-1933 44.14) that reads "ἀπὸ τῶν Περὶ τῶν ἐκτός παθῶν."

also on the part behind the knee and at the bend of the arm although such inflammations do not happen there at all"). Rufus distinguishes this disease, which he calls "pestilential (*loimōdeis*) *boubōnes*," from common "*boubōnes*", which are "easily resolved without danger." These common "*boubōnes*" are most likely lymphangitis resulting from an infection. Regardless, Rufus is explicit that the common "*boubōnes*" have a different pathology from the deadly "pestilential buboes."

Rufus himself considers these "pestilential *boubōnes*" to be a disease of his day. They are, Rufus tells us, "especially seen around Libya and Egypt and Syria." Rufus also cites three different authorities who, Rufus believes, described the same disease: Dionysios Kurtos, Posseidonios and Dioscorides. It is not clear when these three were writing, and so we cannot be sure when these authors observed plague. It is frequently stated that Dionysios Kurtos was active in the third century BCE and that Poseidonius and Dioscorides were active in the first century BCE, but these attributions are mistaken (Mulhall 2019, 170-174). Though we cannot be certain when these three authors saw "pestilential *boubōnes*," they certainly would have witnessed it before Rufus was writing around the turn of the first century CE. Rufus' passage accordingly provides evidence that four authors described bubonic plague by around the end of the first century CE.

Edition: Raeder 1928-1933, 6.2.1.131.32-132.18.

Bibliography: Mulhall 2019; Mulhall 2021.

Date of event: Before 100 CE.

Date of record: ca. 100 CE.

English Translation	Commentary	Greek Text
A *boubōn* is that which, for whatever causes, manifestly rises on the neck and armpit and thigh both with and without fever; and necessarily a fever following a *boubōn* is accompanied by shivering. If there is no other attendant cause, they easily resolved themselves without danger.	"*boubōn*": See our note on terminology.	Βουβὼν ὁ μὲν ἐπὶ ταῖς τυχούσαις αἰτίαις φανερῶς παρὰ τράχηλον καὶ μασχάλας καὶ μηροὺς ἀνιστάμενος ἄνευ τε πυρετοῦκαὶ σὺν πυρετῷ· ἀνάγκη δὲ τὸν ἐπὶ βουβῶνι πυρετὸν φρικώδη εἶναι, καὶ εἰ μηδὲν ἄλλο συναίτιον ᾖ, λύεσθαι ῥᾳδίως ἄνευ κινδύνου· "
About this Democritos says that, "with the application of lead with the datepalm, it either becomes entirely devoid of inflammation or		περὶ τούτου Δημόκριτός φησιν ὅτι, μολύβδου μετὰ φοινικηΐου περιαφθέντος, ἢ τὸ παράπαν ἀφλέγμαντος γίνεται ἢ πολλῷ δὴ

it makes it a lot more bearable”		ῥᾴζει·”
Then there are the *boubōnes* called pestilential, which are especially seen around Libya and Egypt and Syria, and are most deadly and highly acute. Dionysius Kurtos and his followers make mention of them. Dioscorides and Posidonius offer the most details in their writing on the epidemic that occurred in Libya in their time. And they said that a sharp fever followed closely and terrible pain, disturbance of the entire body, and delirium and the swelling of *boubōnes* that are large, hard, and not suppurating, not only in the accustomed places, but also on the part behind the knee and at the bend of the arm although such inflammations do not happen there at all.	“Then there are”: *hoi de* creates contrast with the more “common” *boubōnes* mentioned above. “*Boubōnes* called pestilential” The term *loimōdēs* is an adjectival form of the Greek word *loimos* (λοιμός), which can be translated into English as “epidemic,” or “pestilence,” “plague” in their general sense meaning widespread illness or epidemic (as opposed to specifically Y. pestis). *Loimos* is by no means a term reserved for technical use, but over time *loimos* does develop a possible technical valence as learned physicians such as Galen try to explain the phenomenon of epidemics or “plagues” (*loimoi*) within their theories of medicine. In Galenic theory (which forms the basis of late antique medical theory), *loimos* is understood to be caused by the interaction between bad air surrounding the body and the susceptibility of the body to the *loimos*. Typically, *loimos* did not imply one specific disease, since it was understood that different bodies reacted differently to the bad air (for ancient medicine’s tendency to distinguish different human bodies’ susceptibility to diseases see note on “*nosos*”). Rufus’ passage represents the first time *loimos* is associated with Plague in extant Greek literature	οἱ δὲ λοιμώδεις καλούμενοι βουβῶνες θανατωδέστατοι καὶ ὀξύτατοι, οἳ μάλιστα περὶ Λιβύην καὶ Αἴγυπτον καὶ Συρίαν ὁρῶνται γινόμενοι· ὧν μεμνημονεύκασιν οἱ περὶ τὸν Διονύσιον τὸν κυρτόν. Διοσκουρίδης δὲ καὶ Ποσειδώνιος πλεῖστα διειληλύθασιν ἐν τῷ περὶ τοῦ κατ’ αὐτοὺς γενομένου λοιμοῦ ἐν Λιβύῃ· παρακολουθεῖν δ’ ἔφασαν αὐτῷ πυρετὸν ὀξὺν καὶ ὀδύνην δεινὴν καὶ σύστασιν ὅλου τοῦ σώματος καὶ παραφροσύνην καὶ βουβώνων ἐπανάστασιν μεγάλων τε καὶ σκληρῶν καὶ ἀνεκπυήτων, οὐ μόνον ἐν τοῖς εἰθισμένοις τόποις, ἀλλὰ κατ’ ἰγνύας καὶ ἀγκῶνας, καίτοι ἐνταῦθα μὴ πάνυ τι γινομένων τῶν τοιούτων φλεγμονῶν.”

	(see Mulhall 2019, 164–174). For more on *loimos* in Greek medical theory, see Nutton 1983 and Leven 1997, 20-21, as well as our note on terminology above.	
Perhaps the *boubōn*-like affection in Hippocrates indicates the aforementioned disposition.		τάχα δὲ καὶ τὸ παρ’ Ἱπποκράτει βουβωνῶδες πάθος τὴν εἰρημένην διάθεσιν δηλοῖ.
And such a *boubōn* might sometimes even happen in the genitals, just as both the pestilential sore and fever which they call pestilential; yet these are the most prevalent, such that they are common of age and of nature, emerging particularly in some seasons	Oribasius also preserves Rufus’ description of a “pestilential (*loimōdes*) sore” (Oribasius 43.41: *Ek tōn Roufou. Peri loimōdous elkous*): “From the works of Rufus, About a pestilential sore. And something is called a ‘pestilential sore,’ when there is a collocation of a strong inflammation and a sharp fever and delirium. And to some the *boubōnes* painfully harden, and are not destroyed for a long time on those sores. And it happens most to those who live around marshy areas.” (1.) Καλεῖται δέ τι καὶ λοιμῶδες ἕλκος, ᾧ συνεδρεύει φλεγμονὴ ἰσχυρὰ καὶ πυρετὸς ὀξὺς καὶ παραφροσύνη. ἐνίοις δὲ καὶ οἱ βουβῶνες ἐπωδύνως σκληρύνονται, καὶ οὐκ εἰς μακρὰν ἐπὶ τούτοις τοῖς ἕλκεσιν ἀπόλλυνται. (2.) γίνεται δὲ τὰ πολλὰ τοῖς περὶ τὰ ἕλη οἰκοῦσιν.	γένοιτο δ’ ἄν ποτε καὶ ἐν αἰδοίῳ ὁ τοιοῦτος βουβών, ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ ἕλκος τὸ λοιμῶδες καὶ ὁ πυρετὸς ὃν λοιμώδη καλοῦσιν· τὸ μέντοι πλεῖστον ἐπιδήμια τὰ τοιαῦτά ἐστιν, ὥστε κοινὰ εἶναι ἡλικιῶν καὶ φύσεων ἔν τισιν ὥραις ἐξαιρέτως ἀπαντῶντα.
Careful inquiry into all these features is necessary in order that we might treat the customary *boubōn* as one that is in no way		ἡ δ’ ἱστορία παντὸς τοῦ τοιούτου χρησίμη, ἵνα τὸν μὲν συνήθη βουβῶνα θεραπεύωμεν ὡς οὐδὲν δύσκολον ἔχοντα, τὸν δὲ λοιμώδη

difficult, and the pestilential one with prognosis and stricter attention.		μετὰ προαγορεύσεως καὶ προσοχῆς ἀκριβεστέρας.

Aretaeus, On the causes and signs of acute diseases 2.3

By itself this passage by the physician Aretaeus (first or second century CE, see Nutton 2006, 1.1051-1052 for his date) would be of limited interest. However, in light of Rufus' passage, this line by Aretaeus can be read as further evidence of the knowledge of plague before the sixth-century Pandemic. Until Late Antiquity, Aretaeus is the only surviving source besides Rufus to refer to "pestilential buboes" (βουβῶνες λοιμώδεες). A plausible interpretation would be that Aretaeus was referring to precisely the same illness that Rufus describes in the above passage.

Edition: Aretaeus, ed. Hude 1958, 2.22.8-9.

Bibliography: Mulhall 2019, 174-175; Mulhall 2021; Nutton 2006.

Date of event: 1st-2nd century CE.

Date of record: 1st-2nd century CE.

English Translation	Commentary	Greek Text
Pestilential *boubōnes* arise from the liver, and are especially malignant, and from nothing else.	"Pestilential": see note above.	Βουβῶνες μὲν οἱ λοιμώδεες ἥπατος καὶ σφόδρα κακοήθεες, ἐξ ἄλλου δὲ γίγνονται οὐδενός.

4.2 Written Evidence of Plague and Other Epidemics, 541-~750

Inscription commemorating death of bishop Varus of plague on a church in Zora (Azra'a or Izra'), Syria, 542-543

Fig. Z1: Inscription above the entrance of church, Zora. Courtesy of Johannes Koder.

This inscription was raised by the villagers over the entrance to mark their building of a church dedicated to the prophet Elias in Zora or Zorava (mod. Azra'a or Izra', Syria = Pleiades: Zoraa/Zerabene 32.873194, 36.25657) in year 437 of the era of Arabia, i.e., March 22, 542-March 21, 543, and mentions the bishop Varus, manifestly recently deceased, "on whom God brought the doom of the bubo and armpit." After Justinian's Edict 7, this appears to be the surviving record whose composition was the closest chronologically to the Pandemic itself. The inscription provides independent evidence that the outbreak quickly reached deep into the continental countryside of Syria and killed members of the elite, such as this bishop. In these early months of the outbreak, the community of this prosperous village was still able to express their collective grief in a traditional and expensive fashion in the form of this commemorative inscription.

Zora was a village bishopric typical of the prosperous farm country of the limestone massif of the Hauran, east of the Golan Heights (Mango 1991); it lies about 25 km east of the Roman road that runs from Galilee to Damascus, which is 70 km due north of Zora.

Michael McCormick

Edition: Restle and Koder 2012, 51-53, no. 1.

Bibliography: Koder 1995; Kislinger and Stathakopoulos 1999, 93; Stathakopoulos 2004, 281, no. 106; Restle and Koder 2012, 48, 51-53, no. 1; Feissel 2006, 267.

Date of event: 542-543.

Date of record: ca. 542-543.

English Translation	Commentary	Greek Text
+ The inhabitants of Zora with	437: year of the province of	+ Οἱ ἀπὸ Ζορ(ᾶς) ἐξ ἰδίων ναὸν

their own resources built a church of the prophet Elias with the zealous efforts of deacon John the son of Menneas, in the year 437 under the bishop Varus, most beloved by God, to whom God brought the doom of bubo and armpit.	Arabia, or Bostra, March 22, 542-March 21, 543 "doom": *potmon.* Poetic term going back to Homer. "bubo": *bonbon.* A slight phonetic variant on the well-documented variant form *bombōn* of *boubon*: Restle and Koder 2012, 52.	ʾΗλίου προφήτου / σπουδῇ ʾΙωάννου Μεννέου διακ(όνου) ἐν ἔτ<ε>ι υλ̣ζ' ἔκτισαν ἐπὶ Οὐάραυ θεοφ(ιλεστάτου) ἐπισκόπου / ᾧ ἐπήγαγεν ὁ θεὸς πότμον βονβῶνος (καὶ) μάλ*ης* *Conventions used in transcription of the Greek text: () common abbreviation; <> missing letter added; italics: letter damaged but legible.*

Council of Valencia, Spain, in 546 CE, Canon 4

The church council (deliberative assembly of bishops) held in the Spanish port city of Valencia in 546 CE documents a highly unusual concern with the procedures to follow in the case of a bishop's sudden death from illness. Only the seemingly small number of six bishops attended, their sees presumably nearby but unrecorded. The text is preserved as part of the compilation of early medieval church councils from Spain known as the *Collectio Hispana.* Of the six canons (legal rules) promulgated by the council, four (2, 3, 4, and 5) address matters arising from the sudden or unexpected death of a bishop, including disruption of traditional funerary rituals. Canon 4 does not report an outbreak of the plague, *per se*, but addresses what happens if a bishop dies suddenly and cannot be buried properly. The bishop must be kept "in a coffin apart from the others" until he can be buried, suggesting that there are others dying as well, i.e., that there is mass death and the risk of collective burial. The explicit discussion of sickness, and what occurs should a bishop die of illness, is highly unusual in the conciliar record, as is the concern that bishops be kept until burial in a separate place, apart from other bodies. In addition, the reference to an "old custom" that needs to be preserved suggests threats to traditional burial practices. This unusual legislation has been connected to the disruption of burial practices due to the initial outbreak of the Justinianic Pandemic (cf. accounts in Procopius, Gregory of Tours, John of Ephesus, inter alia) and the presence of mass graves in Valencia (Gruber 2018). For other episcopal legislation prompted by burial customs disrupted by exceptional mortalities, see below: Council of Mâcon, 585 CE and Synod of Auxerre, 561-605 CE.

Henry Gruber

Edition: Martinez Diez and Rodriguez 1966-2002, 4.315.

Bibliography: Gruber 2018.

Date of event: ?542-543 CE.

Date of record: 546 CE.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
4. On the funeral rites of a dying bishop: in which way he should be buried.	This is canon 4 of 6; the other canons are: 1, on the liturgy; 2, that when a bishop dies, no one should take any of his goods or the goods of the church; 3, that those bishops near the dying bishop are prohibited from taking his property; 5, a prohibition on wandering clerics. The sixth urges that "no one should ordain foreign clerics, nor should he be a cleric who has not made his clerical vow where he has been assigned." The date is occasionally disputed, but the most trustworthy manuscript tradition dates the council to 546. See Gruber 2018, n4.	IIII. De exsequiis morientis episcopi, qualiter humetur.
They also establish this with forward-looking advice, namely, that, because the funerals of holy bishops are often deferred due to the absence of a commending bishop, so that the venerable limbs of the pontifex are buried quite late so that they are altogether subject to injury, a bishop who, after the death of his brother, is called to bury him, should hurry. Even more, one warned that sickness has been put in a body should not delay visiting, so that either he should	"holy bishops": *sanctorum antestitum*. Throughout the text, the terms *episcopus*, *pontifex*, *antestis*, and *consacerdos* are used seemingly interchangeably for "bishop." "injury": *iniuria*. Here, *iniuria* seems to mean more general harm, perhaps a physical one. Below, given that it is associated with a failure to perform certain rights, a more precise meaning--slander--has been used. "communion": *sacrificium Deo*.	Illud etiam provido consilio decernentes, ut, quia saepe sanctorum antestitum per absentiam commendatoris episcopi exsequiae differuntur ita ut veneranda pontificis membra dum tardius funerantur iniuriae omnino subiaceant, episcopus qui post mortem fratris ad sepeliendum eum solet invitatus occurrere, infirmum magis et adhuc in corpore positum admonitus visitare non differat, ut aut de relevatione consacerdotis amplius gaudeat, ut certe de

rejoice more fully in the recovery of his co-bishop, or he should advise his brother with respect to the arranging of his house and put into effect his laudable desires. And, leaving from the world, communion is made in commendation of him, and he should commit him to the tomb soon with utmost care, and he should not complete this differently from the way canonically stated above.	Literally "a sacrifice to God," in Visigothic conciliar legislation this means the celebration of the Eucharist, e.g., 16 Toledo, canon 6, ed. Vives 1963, 503, on the type of bread allowed to be used in communion rite (*in sacrificio offerant*).	ordinatione domus suae fratrem admoneat eiusque probabilem voluntatem in effectu transmittat; ac recedentem a saeculo, oblatum in eius commendatione sacrificium Deo, mox sepulturae tradat diligentissime, et superius constituta canonice non differat adimplere.
If, however, as is accustomed to happen, a bishop should die a sudden death, and the neighboring bishops are not able to come from afar, the lifeless body of the bishop should not be buried at once, but honorably entrusted, and for one day and night only kept with a crowd of brothers and religious and the wakefulness of psalm-singers. And [the body] should be placed by priests with great care in a coffin apart from the others until, with a bishop having been invited without delay from wherever, it should be solemnly entombed by this man as is proper, so that the occasion for slander might be lifted and the old custom for burying bishops be observed.	"As is accustomed to happen": *ut fieri solet*. Suggests a response to a real situation rather than a hypothetical. "Sudden death": *obitu repentino*. The "sudden death" can be a reference to plague; see comments on the speed of the disease in, e.g., Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* 4.6.19, who describes illness from plague as "repentinus"; see also the speed of plague highlighted in Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, 10.1. "in a coffin": *in loculo*. Compare with Cassiodorus 1952, *Church History* 3.12.8, as a "golden coffin": "corpus autem imperatoris in aureo loculo collocatum, ad Constantinopolim est devectum, et in palatii celso loco repositum." Not a tomb, which in Iberian inscriptions is almost always a *tumulus*, e.g., Vives 1942, no. 276, p. 83:	Si autem, ut fieri solet, antestitis obitu repentino discesserit, et conlimitanei sacerdotes de longinquo minime adesse potuerint, uno die tantum cum nocte exanimatum corpusculum sacerdotis non sine fratrum ac religiosorum frequentia uel psallentium excubatione seruatum a presbyteris cum omni diligentia in loculo conditum seorsum non statim humetur, sed honorifice commendetur, donec sine mora, inuitato undecumque pontifice, ab ipso ut condeceret sollemniter tumuletur, ut et iniuriae tollatur occasio et mos antiquus in sepelliendis sacerdotibus observetur.

	Sefronius tegetur tomolo antestis in isto (1); no. 278, p. 124: *hic quiescit in tumulo Sergius pontifex scs* (2). “apart from the others”: *seorsum*. Adverbial form of *seorsus, -a, -um*: “sundered,” “separate,” “apart.” The phrase “in a coffin apart from the others” likely reflects measures intended to prevent hasty interment in one of the series of mass graves excavated around the Valencia cathedral. See Alapont Martín and Ribera i Lacomba 2009, especially 83-85, for details of these mass graves. Keller et al. 2019 reports positive biomolecular evidence for *Y. pestis* in one of the mass graves surrounding the sixth-century cathedral. Radiocarbon dates are consistent with a sixth-century outbreak, although the phylogenetic classification of the recovered ancient pathogen DNA suggests a later outbreak than the initial wave. The focus on the “old custom of burying bishops” and preserving it suggests that burial practices were under threat. For similar effects of plague, see Procopius, *Wars* 2.23.12; Gregory of Tours 5.1 (*Hist.* 4.31). “observed”: *observetur*. Vives 1963, 63–64, prints the last word as: *servetur*, i.e., “be preserved”	

	rather than *observetur*, "be observed."	

South Arabian Inscription at the Ma'rib Dam (Yemen) recording an epidemic disease outbreak in 547-548 CE

NOTE: Special thanks to Alessandra Avanzini of the **Digital Archive for the Study of pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions (DASI)**, for her permission to reproduce excerpts of her edition of the inscription and translation. For the full inscription, along with bibliography and photos of the inscription and site, see this link.

King Abraha of Ḥimyār (Yemen) (reigned from before c. 535-after 559) erected this inscription in March 548 CE to commemorate his rebuilding of the ancient monumental dam of Ma'rib (original construction ~500s BCE), along with other political and religious accomplishments. According to late Roman/Byzantine sources, Abraha had once been the slave of a Roman merchant involved in trade with the Horn of Africa, but ascended to the throne of Ḥimyār following a revolt against a proxy king appointed by the ruler of Ethiopia. Following major damage to the Ma'rib dam in 547, Abraha assembled a workforce drawn from his Ethiopian, Ḥimyārite, and Bedouin subjects to make repairs. In his inscription, Abraha recounts that a deadly outbreak of epidemic disease forced him to disperse the tribes involved in the project, only reconvening them after the disease had subsided. John of Ephesus noted that the Justinianic Plague of 541 reached Ḥimyār before spreading to the Mediterranean. The event of 547 suggests that the people of Yemen, as in the Roman and Persian empires, continued to suffer from subsequent outbreaks of plague following the initial onslaught. Nevertheless, Abraha records his reception of Roman, Persian, Ethiopian, and Arabian embassies while the tribes were dispersed. In spite of the Pandemic, the status of Ḥimyār, which was critical for Mediterranean access to Indian Ocean trade via the Red Sea, remained a major concern for the Roman, Ethiopian, and Persian states. The latter would invade and seize control of the kingdom in the late sixth century. For the dating of the inscription to March 548, see inter alia Nebes 2003 or the DASI website.

Bryan Averbuch

Edition: CIH 541 (Sadd Ma'rib 5), ed. and trans. in Avanzini, 2013-, "Corpus of Late Sabaic Inscriptions," in "Corpus of South Arabian Inscriptions (CSAI)/ Digital Archive for the Study of pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions (DASI)." See variant translation in Nebes, ed. and trans. 2005.

Bibliography: Beeston 2012; Conrad 1981; Hoyland 2001; John of Ephesus in Michael the Syrian 1901, trans. Chabot; Nebes 2003; Nebes, ed. and trans. 2005; Hoyland 2002; Schiettecatte 2018; Webb 2018.

Date of Event: 547-548 CE.

Date of Record: March 548 CE.

English Translation	Commentary	Sabaean Text
1-8. “With the power, the aid, and the mercy of Rḥmnn, of his Messiah and of the Holy Spirit. Have written this inscription I, Abraha, ʿzl-y, the Ethiopian king rmḥs³ zbymn, king of Sabaʾ, ḏu-Ray-dān, Ḥaḍramawt and Ymnt, their nomads in Ṭwdm and in Thmt.”	For ease of reading, line numbers have been eliminated from the translation. Ellipses indicate further text on the same line. Readers may consult the full translation on the CSAI website (see link above). **“‘zl-y”**: unclear meaning, but probably a title or part of a title or personal name. **“rmḥs³ zbymn”:** unclear meaning but also probably a title or part of a personal name.	1 b-ḫyl w-[r]dʾ w-rḥ— 2 mt Rḥmnn w-Ms¹— 3 ḥ-hw w-Rḥ [q]ds¹ s¹ṭrw 4 ḏn ms³ndn ʾn ʾbrh ʿzl— 5 y mlkn ʾgʿzyn rmḥs³ | 6 z-b-Ymn ((Zbymn)) mlk S¹bʾ w-ḏ-R— 7 ydn w-Ḥḍrmwt w-Ymnt | 8 w-ʾʿrb-hmw Ṭwdm w-Thm—
41-46. “…The appeal to come to the aid of Sabaʾ reached him when the dam, the anchoring wall Ḫbs²m and the sluice gates of the large water distribution system (?) were destroyed in the month ḏ-Mḏr-ʾn of the year seven…” 55-63. “…Then the king sent a summons to the tribes to seal up [the breaches], collect earth, make the facing in dressed stones, to construct in masonry, ḫfgm, make a facing in trimmed polished stone (?) apply the plaster, restore to a sound state the dam, the anchoring wall and the damage that had been done at Mārib. He fixed a rendezvous with them for the month ḏ-Ṣrbn of the year seven…		41 wytn w-k-wṣḥ-hm— 42 w ṣrḫm bn S¹bʾ k- 43 ṯbr ʿrmn w-ʿwdn 44 w-Ḫbs²m w-mḍrft 45 ḏ-ʾfn b-wrḫ ḏ-Mḏr— 46 [ʾ]n ḏ-l-s¹bʿt w-bʿd-n 55 n ʾlht qs¹dw w-ml— 56 kn ḏky ʿẓtm ʿly 57 ʾs²ʿbn l-ḥrrtm w- 58 ms¹rm w-grbtm w-b— 59 rʾm w-ḫfgm w-nhmt → 60 w-ṣhrm l-ʿḏbn ʿrmn w-ʿ— 61 wdn w-mṯbrtn ḏ-b-Mrb w-h— 62 wʿd-hmw b-wrḫn ḏ-Ṣrbn ḏ-l- 63 s¹bʿt w-bʿd-n ḏk— 70 rn ʿwdn w-k-w— 71 ḍʿn l-hwṯrn ʿw— 72 dn kn ḍllm w-ʿw—

70-75. …After they had laid the foundations of the anchoring wall the plague arrived among the tribes and in the city. When he (Abraha) saw that the plague caused numerous victims among the tribes, he allowed them to depart, his Abyssinians and his Ḥimyarites. 87-96. …Following this the ambassador of Negus and the ambassador of Rome arrived at his court, as well as the diplomatic mission of the king of Persia, the envoy of Mḏrn, the envoy of Ḥrṯm son of Gblt and the envoy of ʾbkrb son of Gblt. After the plague had subsided thanks to Rḥmnn, the tribes descended in accordance with his first summons which he had made at their second rendezvous. The tribes arrived during the last ḏ-Dʾwn. 130-136. …He had completed his work in fifty-eight days and he returned after eleven months. In the month ḏ-Mʿn of the year six hundred and fifty-eight.	**"The plague":** South Arabian *ḍllm*/*ḍlln*. Avanzini 2013- translates this as "plague," while Nebes 2005 has *épidémie*. Given the timing, bubonic plague is the likely culprit. Avanzani, personal communication on *ḍllm*/*ḍlln:* "the meaning is almost sure from contexts (see textual search in DASI). More than "plague" it could mean "calamity, deadly disease." For an etymology, the Biella's dictionary suggests the Ar. ḍull "state of perishing."" This therefore does not necessarily mean bubonic plague but may mean only "epidemic disease" The Roman, Persian, and Ethiopian envoys all probably arrived by sea, suggesting that Red- and Arabian Sea ports were still open despite the epidemic.	73 s¹m b-ʾs²ʿbn w-hgrn w-k-l rʾyw k- 74 ḫny ḍlln ʿly ʾs²ʿbn ʾḏnw l-hm— 75 w l-ʾḥbs²-hmw w-ʾḥmr-hmw w- 87 r Ḥḍrmwt w-ḏ-Qrnt w-k-wṣḥ-<h> m— 88 w mḥs²kt ngs²yn w-wṣḥ-hmw 89 mḥs²kt mlk Rmn w-tnblt 90 mlk Frs¹ w-rs¹l Mḏrn w-rs¹— 91 l Ḥrṯm bn Gblt w-rs¹l ʾbkrb 92 bn Gblt w-k-bʿd-n ḏ-tryd ḍll— 93 n b-ḥmd Rḥmnn wrdw ʾs²ʿbn ḫg 94 b-ʿẓt-hmw qdmtn s²tʾ-hmw | 95 ʿly mwʿd-hmw ʾḫrn w-k-wṣḥw 96 ʾs²ʿbn b-mdt ḏ-Dʾwn ʾḫrtn | 130 ḥlb s¹qym ḏ-tmrm w-k[ml]— 131 w mqḥ-hmw b-ṯmny[t w-ḫ]— 132 ms¹y ymtm w-qf[lw] 133 b-ʾḥd ʿs²r ʾw[rḫ]— 134 m b-wrḫ ḏ-Mʿn ḏ-l- 135 ṯmnyt w-ḫms¹y w-s¹— 136 ṯ mʾtm

Procopius of Caesarea

Procopius states that he was himself present in Constantinople when the plague arrived in the spring of 542 (*Wars* 2.22.9); alongside John of Ephesus, he offers one of the two most important historical accounts of the Pandemic's initial outbreak in his history of Justinian's wars; it was written within a decade of the event.[5] His account is generally precise, skeptical, and highly

[5] Some passages of the first two books of the *Persian Wars* were clearly written in 545; book 2 ends with events of 549 and shows no awareness of later developments, while Procopius' opening words of the final, eighth book of the

reliable; he supplies complementary details in various books of the *Wars* and the *Secret History*. His otherwise veiled hatred of Emperor Justinian and Theodora is palpable in his comments in the unpublished (and extremely dangerous) diatribe against them, the *Secret History.*

Procopius [Greek form: Prokopios] was born ca. 500 in Caesarea Maritima (mod. Caesarea/Qesarya, Haifa District, Israel). He trained as a lawyer (*advocatus*), and served as legal advisor (*assessor*) to the east Roman general Belisarius, whom he accompanied on military campaigns in northern Syria (527-531) and in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy (533-ca. 540). Three of his works survive: a history of the emperor Justinian's *Wars* in seven books, completed by 551, with an eighth book added later (ca. 553); a panegyric for Justinian's building projects, completed ca. 553-555; and a polemical *Secret History* (*Anekdota*) criticizing Justinian and his court, likely written ca. 550 but unpublished in Procopius' lifetime. An alternative opinion prefers 559, but he seems to show no awareness of the outbreak of 558: see below *Secret History* on plague on the date (Greatrex 1994). The ambitious classicizing Greek style of his works show that he aimed at an audience of highly educated civil servants and members of the elite in the imperial capital of Constantinople and around the eastern Empire.

He left an eyewitness account of the plague's first outbreak in Constantinople and a detailed description of its pathology (*Wars* 2.22-23: **1**), composed within nine years of the event. He claims that the plague "started" in the Egyptian port city of Pelusium [Pelousion] (near mod. Port Said, Egypt, on the Suez Canal), from whence it spread to "the entire earth" (*Wars* 2.22.6); he says explicitly (*Wars* 2.22.9) that he was present in Constantinople when the plague struck the city in "the middle of spring" during its "second year" (no later than March, 542). In keeping with the literary values of his time, Procopius famously but subtly reminds his reader of Thucydides' celebrated description of the epidemic that struck Pericles' Athens in such a way as to systematically underscore how different the sixth-century plague was from the ancient Athenian epidemic in its symptoms, effects, and scope (see Commentary). We incorporate in our commentary the results of Mischa Meier's (1999) close analysis of the differences and similarities in the two descriptions. Meier has concluded that in addition to displaying his literary talent in rivalry with his classical model, Procopius sought to show both the greater scope of the Justinianic epidemic and the success of the imperial government in responding to it. He documents that the initial outbreak also reached Atrapatane (mod. Azerbaijan), where, in 542 or 543, it affected a Persian army poised to invade the Roman Empire (**2**). Procopius draws a connection between the 536 event and the unceasing wars, epidemic, and other mortalities that ensued (**3**), and returns to the initial outbreak in his *Secret History* (**4**). In Book 6, Procopius refers to another epidemic (*loimos*) of uncertain but assuredly non-bubonic nature that accompanied a food shortage (*limos*) during the Gothic siege of Rome and the summer heat of 537.[6] Procopius died after 553 and

Wars, which treats events from 550 to 553, says that the previous seven books had already gone out to the public when he set to writing this update: *Wars* 8.1.1-3, Haury 2.487.1-488.6; see Teuffel 1889, 250-256, with the corrections of Haury 1891, 3-9. Greatrex 1994, 113, concludes that the first seven books of the *Wars* appeared in 550-551.

[6] *Wars* 6.3.1, 6.4.17 and 6.1.1, Haury and Wirth 2.159.19-20, 167.22-168.1; 174.9-16; he also reports in *Wars* 8.20.46, 2.597.12-17, on the "pestilential (*to loimōdes*) quality of the airs" of the "island" of "Brittia," which he locates north

probably before 565; some scholars identify him with an official of the same name, who served as urban prefect of Constantinople from 562-563.

Jake Ransohoff, Michael McCormick

Edition: Procopius 1962-1964.

Bibliography (general): Cameron 1985; Greatrex 1994, 2022; Jones et al. 1971, 3:1060–1066, "Procopius 2"; Lillington-Martin and Turquois 2018.

Select bibliography on Procopius' description of the outbreak of the Pandemic: Allen 1979; Biraben 1975, 1:25-48; Biraben and Le Goff 1975; Greatrex 2022, esp. 565–588; Harper 2017, esp. 199–245; Horden 2005; Little, ed., 2007; Meier 1999, 2002, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2008, 2016; Mordechai and Eisenberg 2019; Mordechai et al. 2019; Sarris 2002, 2022; Stathakopoulos 2000; Stathakopoulos 2004 nos. 102, 104, 111.

***Italics* in the Greek text identify words that are borrowed from and allude to other literary works. See Commentary for details.**

For Procopius' mention of a non-plague epidemic during the siege of Rome in 537, the "pestilential" character of the airs on a northern European island identified as "Brittia" and the "pestilential" location of a town on the empire's eastern frontier, see n7 below.

1. Procopius, *Wars*, on the plague outbreak of 541-542

1.1 Procopius, *Wars* (2.22-23): the 541-542 outbreak of the Justinianic Pandemic in the Roman Empire and at Constantinople.

Edition: *Wars* 2.22-2.23, ed. Haury-Wirth 1962-4, 1:249.8-250.12

Bibliography: See above, general Procopius bibliography.

Date of event: 541-542.

Date of record: no later than 550-551. See note 6 above.

English Translation (Ransohoff, Mulhall, Gruber, Ivanova, and McCormick, 2017)	Commentary	Greek Text
2.22.1. In these years an epidemic occurred, which, in fact came	*Years: chronous.* The word can be translated as "times" or "years."	2.22.1; 1:249.8-17. Ὑπὸ δὲ τοὺς χρόνους τούτους λοιμὸς γέγονεν,

of the Frankish kingdom and between Britain and Thule, as well as, in *Buildings* 3.5.15, 4.95.13-14, the very unhealthy or pestilential (*loimōdestaton*) situation arising from the putrid waters around Bizana in the Roman province of Armenia II (mod. eastern Turkey).

close to extinguishing the whole human race. For all the things that strike from heaven, some explanation of a cause might perhaps be stated by daring men since those with specialized knowledge often like to tell marvelous tales about causes that are in no way comprehensible to humans, and to fashion causes which are beyond the bounds of inquiry into physical nature, knowing full well that while they are saying nothing sound, they consider it good enough for them if by chance they persuade some random people, deceiving them with this theory.	For "years" see (Kislinger and Stathakopoulos 1999, 85). "epidemic:" *loimos.* Procopius uses *loimos* most frequently to refer to the plague of his day but also in reference to other epidemics.[7] See our note on terminology above. Galen, too, uses *loimos* to refer to epidemics and to the Antonine plague of his own day.[8] For the use of the term *loimos* in the Hellenistic period, see also Nutton 2004, 147-149. "strike": *episkēptousin*: Procopius uses the word *episkēptō* frequently, often for a storm or event that strikes suddenly out of the blue, evoking lightning. In Attic law it had been used to denounce a person for perjury, and Emperor Julian had used it more recently in the sense of blame. Procopius (*Wars* 2.24.5) uses the same combination of *episkēptō* with *loimos* when discussing how plague fell upon the Persian army while the	ἐξ οὗ δὴ ἅπαντα ὀλίγου ἐδέησε τὰ ἀνθρώπεια ἐξίτηλα εἶναι. ἅπασι μὲν οὖν τοῖς ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἐπισκήπτουσιν ἴσως ἂν καὶ *λέγοιτό τις* ὑπ' ἀνδρῶν τολμητῶν αἰτίου λόγος, οἷα πολλὰ φιλοῦσιν οἱ ταῦτα δεινοὶ *αἰτίας* τερατεύεσθαι οὐδαμῇ ἀνθρώπῳ καταληπτὰς οὔσας, φυσιολογίας τε ἀναπλάσσειν ὑπερορίους, ἐξεπιστάμενοι μὲν ὡς λέγουσιν οὐδὲν ὑγιὲς, ἀποχρῆν δὲ ἡγούμενοι σφίσιν, ἤν γε τῶν ἐντυγχανόντων τινὰς τῷ λόγῳ ἐξαπατήσαντες πείσωσι.

[7] Procopius uses *loimos* 17 times, 12 of which refer to or include the initial outbreak of the bubonic pandemic: 4 times in this section, and Wars 2.24.5 and 12, as well as 4.14.6 and Secret History, 4.1; 6.22; 12.17; 18.44 and 23.20; in *Wars* 6.3.1 and 2, 6.4.16, and 6.6.1, *loimos* refers to a non-plague epidemic during the siege of Rome in 537 (see Stathakopoulos 2004, 270, no. 94) and during operations in Lazica, apparently, in 541: *Secret History* 2.27.

[8] Galen, *Commentary on Hippocrates' Epidemics* defines *loimos* as a species within the genus of "Epidemics." A *loimos* is the worst sort of epidemic: "It is thus clear that whatever are the most wicked from the species of epidemic diseases are called pestilential (λοιμώδη/*loimōdē*)." (Galen, *In Hippocratis librum primum epidemiarum commentarii iii.* ed. Wankebach 17a.11 (CMG p. 9): "δῆλον οὖν ὡς ἐκ τοῦ γένους τῶν ἐπιδημίων νοσημάτων, ὅσα κακοηθέστατα γίνεται καὶ λοιμώδη καλεῖται.") For the Antonine Plague as *loimos*, see Galen, *Methodus medendi*, 5.12, ed. C.G. Kühn, *Claudii Galeni opera omnia*, 10 (Leipzig: Knobloch, 1825).360.18-361.1: "εὕρομεν δὲ μάλιστα τὴν θεραπείαν αὐτῶν ἐνθένδε κατὰ τὸν μέγαν τοῦτον λοιμὸν, ὃν εἴη ποτὲ παύσεσθαι, πρῶτον εἰσβάλλοντα."

	Byzantine army was delayed coming to meet them in Mesopotamia: "During that march, Constantianus fell ill and much time was spent, and it happened that the epidemic struck the Persians." "ἐν δὲ τῇ πορείᾳ ταύτῃ Κωνσταντιανοῦ νοσήσαντος καὶ χρόνου τριβέντος συχνοῦ τὸν λοιμὸν ἐπισκῆψαι Πέρσαις ξυνέπεσε." *Episkēptō* here evokes Thucydides' (*Peloponnesian Wars* 2.47.3) use of closely related word *engkataskēptō* (ἐγκατασκήπτω) to describe outbreaks of the epidemic disease in the opening sentence of his description of the Athenian plague. Early in the epidemic's outbreak at Constantinople, Justinian used the same word in the same context: *Edict* 7 (to be added). "from heaven": *ex ouranou*. In his unpublished subversive tract, *Secret History* 6.22-23, Procopius refers explicitly to his account here of the plague, and describes the ruling emperor Justinian as more destructive than the plague pandemic, because he fell upon the whole population like some affliction (*pathos*) from heaven, whereas at least some people escaped the plague. The *Secret*	

	History 7.7 further echoes *Histories* 2.23.3, implicitly identifying the hated Justinian with the plague. This configuration of allusions adds special weight to Procopius' words about "daring men." "explanation of a cause": *tis...aitiou logos*. *Logos* is a principle of intelligibility, a word, a story, etc. It could be taken here in a positive sense, e.g., "theory/explanation," or negative, e.g., "story," "tale." Since Procopius is criticizing people with specialized knowledge, we have favored "explanation" but the double-entendre is likely intentional. "daring men": *hup'andrōn tolmētōn*: a cultivated contemporary reader might have recognized the allusion to the words (*tolmētas…andras)* of the satirist Lucian's dialogue *Icaromenippus or the Sky Man*, 8, about a charlatan who claims to have discovered the nature of the universe by flying through it, and who dismisses previous philosophers and cosmographers as charlatans. Procopius in this way rejects explanations for the plague offered by contemporaries. "those with specialized knowledge": *hoi tauta deinoi.* Procopius uses this expression for	

	individuals with specialized knowledge, e.g., geographers (*Wars* 8.6.2.1) or interpreters of weather omens (*Wars* 8.15.23.2) "fabricate causes": *terateuesthai:* Procopius uses the word 7 times, typically with a nuance of falsehood and deception. "inquiry into physical nature": *physiologia*.	
2.22.2. However, for this evil, there is absolutely no way to express in words or to understand with insight any ostensible reason except, in fact, to attribute such things to God.	"this evil": *toutō mentoi tō kakōn*. The root meaning of *to kakon* is badness, evil: LSJ s.v. B. Like Thucydides (2.47.4; 2.51.4-5; 2.52.3; 2.54.1), Procopius uses *to kakon* as a rather euphemistic synonym for the disease (2.22.21, 2.22.34, 2.23.2), as indeed other contemporaries seem to do, e.g., Justinian *Edict* 7, preamble.	2.22.2; 1:249.17-20. τούτῳ μέντοι τῷ κακῷ πρόφασίν τινα ἢ λόγῳ εἰπεῖν ἢ διανοίᾳ λογίσασθαι μηχανή τις οὐδεμία ἐστὶ, πλήν γε δὴ ὅσα ἐς τὸν θεὸν ἀναφέρεσθαι.
2.22.3. For it did not occur in a region of the earth or to certain people, nor did it characterize a season of the year, whence clever reasoning might be capable of finding causal relationships. Rather, on the one hand it enveloped the whole earth, and on the other, sparing neither sex nor age, it harmed all walks of human life, even though they were so different and even opposite to one	A leading etiological theory of ancient medicine held that places and environments caused sickness, for instance, fevers from bad air emanating from a marsh (Nutton 2006, 137-162, esp. 140-142). Procopius was aware of this theory, as evidenced by his use of the term "pestilential air" in *Wars* (8.20.42-46); see also below, (2.23.11) on the "stinking	2.22.3; 1:249.20-250.3. οὐ γὰρ ἐπὶ μέρους τῆς γῆς οὐδὲ ἀνθρώπων τισὶ γέγονεν οὐδέ τινα ὥραν τοῦ ἔτους ἔσχεν, ὅθεν ἂν καὶ σοφίσματα αἰτίας εὑρέσθαι δυνατὰ εἴη,ἀλλὰ περιεβάλλετο μὲν τὴν γῆν ξύμπασαν, βίους δὲ ἀνθρώπων ἅπαντας ἔβλαψε, καίπερ ἀλλήλων ἐς τοὐναντίον παρὰ πολὺ διαλλάσσοντας, οὔτε φύσεώς τινος οὔτε ἡλικίας

another.	air" in Constantinople.	φεισάμενον.
2.22.4. In the case of this disease alone differences in no way helped, neither in the location of settlements nor in the pattern of their daily life nor in natural bent nor in their pursuits nor in whatever other way people differ from each other.		2.22.4; 1:250.3-6. εἴτε γὰρ χωρίων ἐνοικήσει εἴτε νόμῳ διαίτης, ἢ φύσεως τρόπῳ, ἢ ἐπιτηδεύμασιν, ἢ ἄλλῳ ὅτῳ ἀνθρώπων ἄνθρωποι διαφέρουσιν, ἐν ταύτῃ δὴ μόνῃ τῇ νόσῳ τὸ διαλλάσσον οὐδὲν ὤνησεν.
2.22.5. It struck some in the summer, others in winter, and still others during the other 50 seasons. So let each one speak in whatever way he knows about these things, both rhetorician and astrologer; I for my part will say from where the illness began and in which manner it destroyed human beings.	"rhetorician": *sophistēs*; sole occurrence in Procopius. "astrologer": *meteōrologos;* cf. Procopius*, Secret History* 37. "illness": *nosos*	2.22.5; 1:250.5-12. ἐπέσκηψε δὲ τοῖς μὲν ὥρᾳ θέρους, τοῖς δὲ χειμῶνι, τοῖς δὲ κατὰ τοὺς ἄλλους καιρούς. *λεγέτω μὲν οὖν ὥς* πη *ἕκαστος περὶ αὐτῶν γινώσκει καὶ* σοφιστὴς *καὶ* μετεωρολόγος, *ἐγὼ δὲ* ὅθεν τε ἤρξατο ἡ νόσος ἥδε καὶ τρόπῳ δὴ ὅτῳ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους διέφθειρεν ἐρῶν ἔρχομαι.
2.22.6. It started from Egyptians who reside in Pelousion. And separating into two, it went in one direction to Alexandria and the rest of Egypt and, in the other, it came to the Palestinians who share borders with the Egyptians. And from there it reached the entire earth, always advancing by a route and traveling at fitting intervals.	"It started from the Egyptians": *Ērxato men ex Aiguptiōn.* Procopius echoes the opening words of Thucydides (2.48.1) about the geographic origins of the Athenian plague. "And separating into two…": *genomenē de dicha pē.* Thucydides, *Peloponnesian Wars* 2.48.1, described how the plague reportedly started from Ethiopia and spread to Egypt and Libya and into the Persian Empire. "Advancing by a route": *hodō.* The Greek word means road or route (a ship can follow a *hodos*).	2.22.6; 1:250.13-18. *Ἤρξατο* μὲν *ἐξ Αἰγυπτίων* οἳ ᾤκηνται ἐν Πηλουσίῳ. γενομένη δὲ δίχα πὴ μὲν ἐπί τε Ἀλεξανδρείας καὶ τῆς ἄλλης Αἰγύπτου ἐχώρησε, πὴ δὲ ἐπὶ Παλαιστίνους τοὺς Αἰγυπτίοις ὁμόρους ἦλθεν, ἐντεῦθέν τε κατέλαβε τὴν γῆν σύμπασαν, ὁδῷ τε ἀεὶ προϊοῦσα καὶ χρόνοις βαδίζουσα τοῖς καθήκουσιν.

	The sense is unambiguous. See further on fitting intervals. "Fitting intervals": *chronois...tois kathēkousin*. Procopius uses this expresses in 2 other passages, where it clearly means "at/for the expected times" that is, on the regular schedule: *Wars* 7.6.6 (soldiers not paid on schedule) and *Secret History* 28.9 (an extension in the normal statute of limitations for certain lawsuits from forty to 100 years). The implication is clearly that the infection traveled according to the usual communications routes and on the usual schedules by which people traveled on those routes. Procopius explains this more fully (*gar*, "for") in the next sentence.	
2.22.7. For it seemed to move upon fixed conditions and to stay in each place during a set time, wreaking destruction superficially on none of humankind, even as it spread out in either direction all the way up to the extremities of the inhabited world, as if it feared that some innermost recess of the earth might escape it.	"upon fixed conditions": *epi rhētois.* The expression is common in classical Greek and refers to stated and expected conditions.	2.22.7; 1:250.18-23. ἐπὶ ῥητοῖς γὰρ ἐδόκει χωρεῖν καὶ χρόνον τακτὸν ἐν χώρᾳ ἑκάστῃ διατριβὴν ἔχειν, ἐς οὐδένας μὲν ἀνθρώπων παρέργως τῷ φθόρῳ χρωμένη, σκεδαννυμένη δὲ ἐφ' ἑκάτερα μέχρι ἐς τὰς τῆς οἰκουμένης ἐσχατιὰς, ὥσπερ δεδοικυῖα μή τις αὐτὴν τῆς γῆς διαλάθοι μυχός.
2.22.8. For it spared no island, cave nor mountain ridge that had human inhabitants. But if somewhere it sidestepped some land or it did not touch the people there or took hold of them with small effect, it returned there at a		2.22.8; 1:250.23-251.7. οὔτε γὰρ νῆσόν τινα ἢ σπήλαιον ἢ ἀκρώρειαν ἐλίπετο ἀνθρώπους οἰκήτορας ἔχουσαν· ἢν δέ πού τινα καὶ παρήλασε χώραν, ἢ μὴ ψαύσασα τῶν ταύτῃ ἀνθρώπων ἢ ἀμωσγέπως αὐτῶν ἁψαμένη,

later time, without affecting at all those living nearby whom it had earlier struck most harshly. But but it did not leave that former place until it rendered correctly and justly the number of dead which it had managed to destroy the previous time among those living nearby.		ἀλλὰ χρόνῳ τῷ ὑστέρῳ αὖθις ἐνταῦθα ἐπανιοῦσα τῶν μὲν περιοίκων, οἷς δὴ πικρότατα ἐπέσκηψε πρότερον, οὐδαμῶς ἥψατο, τῆς δὲ χώρας ἐκείνης οὐ πρότερον ἀπέστη ἕως τὸ μέτρον ὀρθῶς καὶ δικαίως τῶν τετελευτηκότων ἀπέδωκεν, ὅπερ καὶ τοῖς ἀμφ᾽ αὐτὴν ᾠκημένοις χρόνῳ τῷ προτέρῳ διεφθάρθαι τετύχηκεν.
2.22.9. Starting always from the coast, this disease in just this way would go up into the inland territories. In the second year it came to Byzantium, in the middle of spring, where it happened that I too was staying at that time.	"In the second year": In the preceding section, Procopius had just treated the Persian invasion of early spring 542 (*Wars* 2.20.1-21.34; see Rubin 1960-1995, 1:340). It has been generally and plausibly been assumed that Procopius here means the second year of the plague, but it is unclear how, in this case, Procopius understands the beginning or the end of the year.[9] It seems unlikely that here he is thinking of the emperor's regnal	2.22.9; 1:251.7-11. ἀρξαμένη δὲ ἀεὶ ἐκ τῆς παραλίας ἡ νόσος ἥδε, οὕτω δὴ ἐς τὴν μεσόγειον ἀνέβαινε χώραν. δευτέρῳ δὲ ἔτει ἐς Βυζάντιον μεσοῦντος τοῦ ἦρος ἀφίκετο, ἔνθα καὶ ἐμοὶ ἐπιδημεῖν τηνικαῦτα ξυνέβη.

[9] Procopius appears to be inconsistent in how he dates the beginning of the year: April 1, Justinian's coronation date as coemperor, would be the beginning of the regnal years that Procopius frequently cites, e.g., *Wars* 1.22.17 (which in a few cases, he makes coincide with the Thucydidean formula of the end of winter: see further below); 1.16.10; or 2.5.1; etc.; "the beginning of the year" ceremonies in the new Senate House that Justinian built must refer to the consular celebration of January 1 (*Buildings* 1.10.7, cf. Janin 1964, 154-156); and a Thucydides-inspired year that ends with "winter" and seems to start somewhere between "winter" and "summer," the latter including the summer solstice (ca. June 21), which Procopius seems to prefer to Justinian's regnal years from Book 6 forward: *Wars* 6.2.38, cf. Thucydides, 5.81.2; *Wars* 6.12.41, and 6.13.1 for the summer solstice; 6.22.25, etc. According to Justinian's legislation, Nov. 47.1, legal documents must be dated by the emperor's regnal year (in his case, April 1), the consulate (January 1), the indiction, which begins on September 1, and the month and day. As of February 2022, McCormick has found no evidence that Procopius used indictional dating, although this would be a good explanation of his counting of years of the plague outbreak.

	year (which began on April 1), which he uses frequently in these books of the *Wars*. This would suit the first outbreak at Pelusium by placing that outbreak between April 1, 541 and March 31, 542; however it is hard to reconcile with the transmitted date in Justinian's *Edict* 7 (March 1, 542), which depicts the plague on that date as new and ongoing, clearly in Constantinople. See however the discussion of that text when it will have been added. The most reasonable solution, if the date in Justinian's *Edict* 7 is not a copyist's mistake, is that Procopius is not rigorously consistent in referring to time; here he may well be thinking of years in a Thucydidean-style of long "summers," (including spring and fall) and short "winters," i.e., periods suited to military activity or inactivity, respectively (Gomme, Andrews et al. 1986 5:365-6; cf. Martin, in Strassler 1996, 623-625). Procopius' dating of the end of the second year of the Gothic war to the end of winter in early 537 offers a cogent parallel: *Wars* 6.2.38.[10] He could also be thinking in terms of the normal fiscal year or indiction of the Roman Empire,	

[10] Haury and Wirth 2:159.16-18: "τότε δὲ ὅ τε χειμὼν ἔληγε καὶ τὸ δεύτερον ἔτος ἐτελεύτα τῷ πολέμῳ τῷδε, ὃν Προκόπιος ξυνέγραψεν." "Then winter ended and the second year finished of the war whose history Procopius composed."

	which began on September 1, or the old Roman, Julian, calendar and consular year, which began on January 1 (Grumel 1958, 174-176 and 193-203). Either of these ways of reckoning a new year could place the initial outbreak of the plague in Egypt in the late summer 541 and are consonant with the plague reaching Constantinople in a "second year" which includes spring 542. See also the next comment, for the implications of the seasonal date. "Byzantium": Procopius uses the pre-imperial name of Constantinople as a matter of literary archaism. "middle of spring": *mesountos tou ēros.* If the dating clause of Justinian's *Edict* 7, March 1, 542, is correct the plague had already broken out in Constantinople by that date, since *Edict* 7, preamble mentions "the misfortune of death." Procopius may not have a precise date for spring in mind, but simply remembered that spring weather had arrived in the capital where, as he says, he was himself present. On the other hand, he elsewhere locates an event which occurred on March 23 as happening in the beginning	

	of spring.[11] This would imply that the plague broke out in Constantinople in April and that the text of the dating formula of Justinian's *Edict* 7 is indeed corrupt. This appears the most satisfactory interpretation on present evidence.	
2.22.10. It came about in this way. Apparitions of demons looking like every kind of human being appeared to many; whoever encountered them perceived that they had been struck by the man they encountered: wherever he hit their body, they immediately contracted the illness as soon as they saw that apparition.	"demons": *daimonōn*, or "demons" who were widely believed to interact intensively with humans throughout late antique society. Ancient scientific theories of disease left little place for contagion. Nevertheless eyewitnesses of the Justinianic Pandemic came to believe that contagion somehow transmitted the disease, at least in some cases. This passage looks like an early effort to incorporate contagion into the etiology of plague. "looking like every kind of human being ": *es pasan anthrōpou idean*. Contemporary Constantinopolitan readers would probably have recognized this as a delicate allusion to the rumor that the demons were taking the appearance of monks and clerics, reported by John of Ephesus, 4th	2.22.10; 1:251.11-15. ἐγίνετο δὲ ὧδε. φάσματα δαιμόνων πολλοῖς ἐς πᾶσαν ἀνθρώπου ἰδέαν ὤφθη, ὅσοι τε αὐτοῖς παραπίπτοιεν, παίεσθαι ᾤοντο πρὸς τοῦ ἐντυχόντος ἀνδρὸς, ὅπη παρατύχοι τοῦ σώματος, ἅμα τε τὸ φάσμα τοῦτο ἑώρων καὶ τῇ νόσῳ αὐτίκα ἡλίσκοντο

[11] A contemporary Constantinopolitan civil servant and literateur defined spring as lasting from February 7 to May 8, which would place mid-spring around March 23: John the Lydian (Lydus), *De ostentis*, 60, ed. C. Wachsmuth (Leipzig, 1863), 122.14-15; McCormick 1998, 53n27. On the other hand, Procopius elsewhere places the beginning of spring on Easter, in 536, i.e. March 23 (March 25 in the modern Gregorian calendar) when he refers to an Easter mutiny in 536 as occurring "with the beginning of spring" (Ἅμα δὲ ἦρι ἀρχομένῳ, ὅτε οἱ Χριστιανοὶ ἑορτὴν ἦγον, ἣν δὴ Πασχαλίαν καλοῦσι, στρατιώταις στάσις": *Wars* 4.14.7; cf. Rubin 1995, 37.

	account, e.g., Witakowski 1996, 97-98.	
2.22.11. At first, those who encountered them tried to ward them off by pronouncing the most sacred of names and performing other religious rituals as best they could. But they accomplished nothing at all, since most of those who fled were destroyed, even in shrines.	Procopius uses *exosioō* (ἐξοσιόω) of performances of both Persian and Christian religious rituals: e.g., *Wars* 2.24.2; 3.21.18. Dewing translates *apotrepesthai auta epeirōnto, tōn te onomatōn apostomatizontes ta theiotata* as "to turn them aside in other ways". It literally means "the most sacred of names," and Dewing's translation does not convey the full meaning of this passage). John of Ephesus reports the same behavior and the words of the invocations, but says clearly that they especially targeted people wearing religious garb. "most of those who fled were destroyed, even in shrines": *kan tois hierois…diephteironto*. Procopius may echo the thought, but not much of the wording, of Thucydides' observation on the uselessness against dying of religious rituals and oracles during the plague (2.47.4): *hosa te pros hierois hiketeusan ē maneteiois kai tois toitoutois ekrhēsanto, panta anōphelē ēn, …teleutōntes…*"[12]	2.22.11; 1:251.15-20. κατ' ἀρχὰς μὲν οὖν οἱ παραπεπτωκότες ἀποτρέπεσθαι αὐτὰ ἐπειρῶντο, τῶν τε ὀνομάτων ἀποστοματίζοντες τὰ θειότατα καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἐξοσιούμενοι, ὡς ἕκαστός πη ἐδύνατο, ἦνυον μέντοι τὸ παράπαν οὐδὲν, ἐπεὶ κἀν τοῖς *ἱεροῖς* οἱ πλεῖστοι καταφεύγοντες *διεφθείροντο*.

[12] "…ὅσα τε πρὸς ἱεροῖς ἱκέτευσαν ἢ μαντείοις καὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις ἐχρήσαντο, πάντα ἀνωφελῆ ἦν, τελευτῶντές τε αὐτῶν ἀπέστησαν ὑπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ νικώμενοι."

2.22.12. Later they did not think fit even to hear friends when they called, but locked themselves in their houses, and then tried to pretend that their friends were not knocking even if they were breaking down their doors, because they feared that it might be one of the demons calling.		2.22.12; 1:251.15-252.1. ὕστερον δὲ οὐδὲ τοῖς φίλοις καλοῦσιν ἐπακούειν ἠξίουν, ἀλλὰ καθείρξαντες αὐτοὺς ἐν τοῖς δωματίοις, ὅτι δὴ οὐκ ἐπαΐοιεν προσεποιοῦντο, καίπερ ἀρασσομένων αὐτοῖς τῶν θυρῶν, δειμαίνοντες δηλονότι μὴ δαιμόνων τις ὁ καλῶν εἴη.
2.22.13. The disease [plague] overcame others in a different way. They saw a vision in a dream and seemed to experience the same thing from the person who came at them, or to hear a message foretelling them that they had been enrolled in the number of those who would die	"disease [plague]": loimos.	2.22.13; 1:252.1-5. τισὶ δὲ οὐχ οὕτως ὁ λοιμὸς ἐπεγίνετο, ἀλλ' ὄψιν ὀνείρου ἰδόντες ταὐτὸ τοῦτο πρὸς τοῦ ἐπιστάντος πάσχειν ἐδόκουν, ἢ λόγου ἀκούειν προλέγοντος σφίσιν ὅτι δὴ ἐς τῶν τεθνηξομένων τὸν ἀριθμὸν ἀνάγραπτοι εἶεν.
2.22.14. But waking or dreaming, most had no inkling of what was coming, and then they happened to be overcome by the disease.	Procopius describes the onset of the illness as occurring in most cases without warning, perhaps prompted by Thucydides' statement (although without verbal parallels) that some were struck without any warning in full health (2.49.2). "disease": *nosos*. The Greek word *nosos* refers to a state of sickness and is inseparable from ancient ideas of health. In our own	2.22.14; 1:252.5-7. τοῖς δὲ πλείστοις οὔτε ὕπαρ οὔτε ὄναρ αἰσθομένοις τοῦ ἐσομένου εἶτα τῇ νόσῳ ξυνέβη ἁλῶναι.

	translations we have generally rendered the term not as “disease” but as “illness,” to avoid importing modern medical ideas into our ancient texts. Informed by the germ theory of disease, modern medicine tends to identify illnesses based on the pathogen that causes them, such as a bacterium or a virus. Ancient theories of medicine were developed without a germ theory. Where modern medicine gives explanatory power to a causative agent acting on the body, ancient theories of medicine tend to place more emphasis on the receptivity of specific human bodies to illness. Since in this latter understanding illnesses were often largely personal (the result of a specific person’s bodily state), ancient theories of medicine tend to privilege symptoms over discrete diseases. For more on the differences between ancient and modern theories of disease, see Temkin 1962 and Cunningham 1992, as well as the Note on terminology above.	
2.22.15. This is how they were taken. They suddenly came down with a fever, some as soon as they had awakened, others while they walking, yet others while they were doing something else.		2.22.15; 1:252.7-9. ἡλίσκοντο δὲ τρόπῳ τοιῷδε. *ἐπύρεσσον ἄφνω*, οἱ μὲν ἐξ ὕπνου ἐγηγερμένοι, οἱ δὲ περιπάτους ποιούμενοι, οἱ δὲ ἄλλο ὅ τι δὴ πράσσοντες.

2.22.16. And their body did not change from its previous coloring, nor was it warm as when a fever sets in, nor did any inflammation appear, but a sort of fever was so mild from the start and even until evening that it gave no sign of danger either to the sick persons themselves or to the physician who touched [them to take their temperature.]		2.22.16; 1:252.9-15. *καὶ τὸ μὲν σῶμα οὔτε* τι διήλλασσε τῆς προτέρας χροιᾶς *οὔτε θερμὸν ἦν*, ἅτε πυρετοῦ ἐπιπεσόντος, οὐ μὴν οὐδὲ *φλόγωσις* ἐπεγίνετο, ἀλλ' οὕτως ἀβληχρός τις ἐξ ἀρχῆς τε καὶ ἄχρις ἑσπέρας ὁ πυρετὸς ἦν ὥστε μήτε τοῖς νοσοῦσιν αὐτοῖς μήτε ἰατρῷ *ἁπτομένῳ* δόκησιν κινδύνου παρέχεσθαι.
2.22.17. No one at all of those to whom this happened expected to die from it. An [inguinal / bubonic] swelling (boubōn) arose on some people on the same day [as the fever], on others on the next day, on still others, not many days later. [The bubo arose] not only there, where the private parts of the body are beneath the abdomen and are called boubon, but also within the armpit, and for some, beside the ears and at various places on the thighs.	*Boubōn*: the word first occurs in the Iliad 4.492, apparently in the sense of "groin;" cf., e.g., Hippocrates, Epid 5.1.7 and 7.1.52 and also, a swelling of an inguinal ganglion: Hippocrates Epid. 2.1.11 and 2.2.24 and Aph. 4.55, discussed in Mulhall 2019; Aristotle, *Problemata* 883b21. The etymology is unclear and controverted: cf. Chantraine 1968, 188, s.v.; Beekes, "βουβών" in: Robert S. P. Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, Consulted online on 12/06/2019, and *Diccionario griego-español* online s.v., βουβών consulted June 12, 2019. See further the discussion in Mulhall (2021).	2.22.17; 1:252.15-22. Οὐ γὰρ οὖν οὐδέ τις τελευτᾶν τῶν περιπεπτωκότων ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἔδοξεν. ἡμέρᾳ δὲ τοῖς μὲν τῇ αὐτῇ, τοῖς δὲ τῇ ἐπιγενομένῃ, ἑτέροις δὲ οὐ πολλαῖς ὕστερον βουβὼν ἐπῆρτο, οὐκ ἐνταῦθα μόνον, ἔνθα καὶ τὸ τοῦ σώματος μόριον, ὃ δὴ τοῦ ἤτρου ἔνερθέν ἐστι, βουβὼν κέκληται, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς μάλης ἐντὸς, ἐνίοις δὲ καὶ παρὰ τὰ ὦτα καὶ ὅπου ποτὲ τῶν μηρῶν ἔτυχε.
2.22.18. These things happened	Procopius, *Secret History*, 6.22.1	2.22.18; 1:252.23-253.3. Τὰ μὲν

up to this point in almost the same fashion to everyone who fell victim to the disease. As to what happened from this point forward, however, I cannot say whether the difference of the symptoms was in how bodies differed or rather just in whatever he intended who inflicted this disease.	(cf. 12.16-17) suggests that the plague was due either to Justinian's demonic power and drive to destroy the human race, or to God's anger at Justinian's evil. Here, in his public work, it is likely no accident that the individual who caused the plague might—but need not—be construed as God (as Dewing does).	οὖν ἄχρι τοῦδε πᾶσιν ὁμοίως σχεδόν τι τοῖς τῇ νόσῳ ἁλισκομένοις ξυνέβαινε· τὰ δὲ ἐνθένδε οὐκ ἔχω εἰπεῖν πότερον ἐν τῷ διαλλάσσοντι τῶν σωμάτων καὶ ἡ διαφορὰ τῶν ξυμπιπτόντων ἐγίνετο, ἢ ὅπη ποτὲ βουλομένῳ εἴη τῷ τὴν νόσον ἐπαγαγόντι.
2.22.19. A deep lethargic state overcame some, others, acute delirium; both suffered the characteristic effects of the disease. Those who were overcome by lethargy forgot all of their usual companions and were seeming always to sleep.	"deep lethargic state": *kōma bathu:* On the translation of *kōma* as "coma," LSJ s.v.	2.22.19; 1:253.4-8. ἐπεγίνετο γὰρ τοῖς μὲν κῶμα βαθὺ, τοῖς δὲ παραφροσύνη ὀξεῖα, ἑκάτεροί τε τὰ πρὸς τὴν νόσον ἐπιτηδείως ἔχοντα ἔπασχον· οἷς μὲν γὰρ τὸ κῶμα ἐπέκειτο, πάντων ἐπιλελησμένοι τῶν εἰωθότων σφίσιν ἐς ἀεὶ καθεύδειν ἐδόκουν.
2.22.20. And if someone took care of them, they were eating amidst this, but others who were not cared for died quickly from lack of nourishment.	"Amidst this": *metaxu*, i.e. "amidst" their sleep; this is the frequent sense when Procopius uses this word absolutely.	2.22.20; 1:253.8-10. καὶ εἰ μέν τις αὐτῶν ἐπιμελοῖτο, μεταξὺ ἤσθιον, τινὲς δὲ καὶ ἀπημεληµένοι ἀπορίᾳ τροφῆς εὐθὺς ἔθνησκον.
2.22.21. However, those who were overcome by the evil of delirium were beset by both sleeplessness and much delusion, and imagining that some people were coming to kill them, they became upset and screaming terribly, rushed off as if to escape.	Literally "by the evil [*to kakon*] of delirium", cf. 2.22.2, 2.22.34, 2.23.2 and in Justinian's Edict 7, preamble.	2.22.21; 1:253.10-14. οἱ μέντοι τῷ τῆς παραφροσύνης ἁλόντες κακῷ ἀγρυπνίᾳ τε καὶ φαντασίᾳ πολλῇ εἴχοντο, καί τινας ὑποπτεύοντες ἐπιέναι σφίσιν ὡς δὴ ἀπολοῦντας ἐς ταραχήν τε καθίσταντο καὶ ἀναβοῶντες (22) ἐξαίσιον οἷον ἐς φυγὴν ὥρμηντο.
2.22.22. Those who cared for them were burdened by unceasing		2.22.22; 1:253.14-16. οἵ τε αὐτοὺς θεραπεύοντες καμάτῳ

toil and continuously suffered cruelly.		ἀπαύστῳ ἐχόμενοι τὰ ἀνήκεστα ἐς ἀεὶ ἔπασχον.
2.22.23. This is why everyone pitied them [the caretakers] no less than the sick, not because they contracted the disease from their attending to them but because they suffered such great distress. For it happened that neither physicians nor ordinary persons contracted this evil when they touched those who were sick or who had died, since on one hand, many withstood this service beyond all expectation while constantly burying or caring for those who were in no way connected with them, while on the other hand, many died immediately when the disease befell them without any cause.	"Without any cause": *aprophasistōs*. Dewing's translation of "straightaway" does not accurately convey the word's semantic force, which in this case may be more appropriately rendered "without cause."	2.22.23; 1:253.16-25. διὸ δὴ ἅπαντες αὐτοὺς οὐχ ἧσσον ἢ τοὺς πονουμένους ᾠκτίζοντο, οὐχ ὅτι τῷ λοιμῷ ἐπιέζοντο ἐκ τοῦ *προσιέναι* (οὔτε γὰρ ἰατρῷ οὔτε ἰδιώτῃ μεταλαχεῖν τοῦ κακοῦ τοῦδε τῶν νοσούντων ἢ τῶν τετελευτηκότων ἁπτομένῳ ξυνέβη, ἐπεὶ πολλοὶ μὲν ἀεὶ καὶ τοὺς οὐδὲν σφίσι προσήκοντας ἢ θάπτοντες ἢ θεραπεύοντες ταύτῃ δὴ τῇ ὑπουργίᾳ παρὰ δόξαν ἀντεῖχον, πολλοὶ δὲ τῆς νόσου ἀπροφασίστως αὐτοῖς ἐπιπεσούσης εὐθὺς ἔθνησκον), ἀλλ' ὅτι ταλαιπωρίᾳ (24) πολλῇ εἴχοντο.
2.22.24. For they were resisting those who had fallen out of their bedding and were rolling on the floor, and again had to use force, pushing and pulling them when they wanted to throw themselves out of their homes.		2.22.24; 1:253.25-28. ἔκ τε γὰρ τῶν στρωμάτων ἐκπίπτοντας καὶ καλινδουμένους ἐς τὸ ἔδαφος ἀντικαθίστων αὖθις καὶ ῥιπτεῖν σφᾶς αὐτοὺς ἐκ τῶν οἰκημάτων ἐφιεμένους (25) ὠθοῦντές τε καὶ ἀνθέλκοντες ἐβιάζοντο.
2.22.25. If water happened to be nearby, they wanted to dive into it, not so much because of a desire to drink --for many jumped into the sea-- but because of insanity.		2.22.25; 1:253.28-254.3. ὕδωρ τε οἷς παρατύχοι, ἐμπεσεῖν ἤθελον οὐ δὴ οὐχ ὅσον τοῦ ποτοῦ ἐπιθυμίᾳ (ἐς γὰρ θάλασσαν οἱ πολλοὶ ὥρμηντο), ἀλλ' αἴτιον ἦν μάλιστα ἡ τῶν φρενῶν νόσος.

2.22.26. They had a lot of trouble with food. They did not readily take it. Many died from lack of a caregiver, either exhausted by starvation or because they jumped off a high place.		2.22.26; 1:254.3-7. πολὺς δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ περὶ τὰς βρώσεις ἐγένετο πόνος. οὐ γὰρ εὐπετῶς προσίεντο ταύτας. πολλοί τε ἀπορίᾳ τοῦ *θεραπεύ*οντος διεφθάρησαν, ἢ λιμῷ πιεζόμενοι, ἢ ἀφ᾽ὑψηλοῦ καθιέντες τὸ σῶμα.
2.22.27. For those who escaped a deep lethargy or madness, the boubon caused necrosis, and they died when could no longer stand the pain.	"Deep lethargy": *kōma*.	2.22.27; 1:254.7-10. ὅσοις δὲ οὔτε κῶμα οὔτε παραφροσύνη ἐνέπεσε, τούτοις δὴ ὅ τε βουβὼν ἐσφακέλιζε καὶ αὐτοὶ ταῖς ὀδύναις οὐκέτι ἀντέχοντες (28) ἔθνησκον.
2.22.28. One might be able to prove that it unfolded in the same way for all the others but, since they were completely out of their senses, they were in no way able to grasp their pain, because the illness that was affecting their mind deprived them of their perception.	"illness": *pathos*.	2.22.28; 1:254.10-14. τεκμηριώσειε δ᾽ ἄν τις καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἅπασι κατὰ ταὐτὰ ξυμβῆναι, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπεὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς ὡς ἥκιστα ἦσαν, ξυνεῖναι τῆς ὀδύνης οὐδαμῇ εἶχον, τοῦ πάθους αὐτοῖς τοῦ ἀμφὶ τὰς φρένας παραιρουμένου τὴν αἴσθησιν.
2.22.29. Accordingly some of the physicians who were at a loss because of the inability to understand the symptoms, thinking they might discern the main character of the illness in the buboes, decided to investigate the corpses of those who had died. They decided to dissect some of the buboes, and found a terrible kind of a malignant pustule had grown inside them.	"illness": *nosos*. "a terrible kind of a malignant pustule": *anthrakos deinon ti khrēma*. *Anthrax, anthrakos,* "charcoal, carbuncle, malignant pustule" (LSJ s.v. 2 and II.2) is used also to describe the bubo itself. Procopius, *Buildings* 1.7.6, uses *deinon ti khrēma* to describe a frightening discharge from Justinian's knee.	2.22.29; 1:254.15-20. Ἀπορούμενοι γοῦν τῶν τινες *ἰατρῶν* τῇ τῶν ξυμπιπτόντων ἀγνοίᾳ τό τε τῆς νόσου κεφάλαιον ἐν τοῖς βουβῶσιν ἀποκεκρίσθαι οἰόμενοι, διερευνᾶσθαι τῶν τετελευτηκότων τὰ σώματα ἔγνωσαν. καὶ διελόντες τῶν βουβώνων τινὰς ἄνθρακος δεινόν τι χρῆμα ἐμπεφυκὸς εὗρον.
2.22.30. Some died immediately,	This sentence begins a series of	2.22.30; 1:254.20-23. ἔθνησκον

some, many days later; on the body of some black boils the size of a lentil broke out, and they did not even live a day, but they all died right away.	statements about the timing and manifestation of death and the difficulty of offering prognoses or effective therapies for avoiding a fatal outcome (*Wars* 2.22.31–36).	δὲ οἱ μὲν αὐτίκα, οἱ δὲ ἡμέραις πολλαῖς ὕστερον, τισί τε *φλυκταίναις* μελαίναις, ὅσον φακοῦ μέγεθος, *ἐξήνθει τὸ σῶμα*, οἳ οὐδὲ μίαν ἐπεβίων ἡμέραν, ἀλλ’ εὐθυωρὸν ἅπαντες ἔθνησκον.
2.22.31. A kind of spontaneous vomiting of blood overcame and killed many immediately.		2.22.31; 1:254.24-255.1. πολλοὺς δὲ καί τις αὐτόματος αἵματος ἐπιγινόμενος ἔμετος εὐθὺς διεχρήσατο.
2.22.32. I am able personally to attest that the most experienced doctors predicted that many would die who shortly thereafter emerged unexpectedly free of harm, while they affirmed that many would be saved who were going to be destroyed right away.		2.22.32; 1:255.1-6. ἐκεῖνο μέντοι ἀποφήνασθαι ἔχω, ὡς τῶν ἰατρῶν οἱ δοκιμώτατοι πολλοὺς μὲν τεθνήξεσθαι προηγόρευον, οἳ δὴ κακῶν ἀπαθεῖς ὀλίγῳ ὕστερον παρὰ δόξαν ἐγίνοντο, πολλοὺς δὲ ὅτι σωθήσονται ἰσχυρίζοντο, οἳ δὴ διαφθαρήσεσθαι ἔμελλον αὐτίκα δὴ μάλα.
2.22.33. So this illness offered no causality conducive to human understanding: for all an unintelligible outcome occurred most often: even the baths helped some and harmed others just as much.	“illness”: *nosos*.	2.22.33; 1:255.6-10. οὕτως αἰτία τις ἦν οὐδεμία ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ νόσῳ ἐς ἀνθρώπου λογισμὸν φέρουσα· πᾶσι γάρ τις ἀλόγιστος ἀπόβασις ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἐφέρετο, καὶ τὰ λουτρὰ τοὺς μὲν ὤνησε, τοὺς δὲ οὐδέν τι ἧσσον κατέβλαψεν.
2.22.34. Many who were not cared for died, and many	Here Procopius opens his sentence by directly echoing	2.22.34; 1:255.10-16. ἀμελούμενοί τε πολλοὶ ἔθνησκον,

inexplicably survived. Furthermore, the therapies turned out either way for those who received them and, to say it all, no method was devised by a human for surviving, either by guarding against getting sick, or to recover once the sickness struck: contracting it was without any cause, and surviving was spontaneous.	Thucydides' wording (*Peloponnesian Wars* 2.51.2: *ethnēskon* de hoi men *amele*ia, hoi de kai panu *therap*euomenoi, etc.).[13] He seems then to echo the earlier statement of Thucydides (2.47.4) that "no human art" (*anthrōp*eia *tekhnē oudemia*) helped against this disease. "Method" : *therapeia*: used in this medical sense only here in Procopius. "sickness": *to kakon* (2.22.21, 2.22.2, 2.23.2)	πολλοὶ δὲ παρὰ λόγον ἐσώζοντο. καὶ πάλιν αὖ τὰ τῆς θεραπείας ἐφ' ἑκάτερα τοῖς χρωμένοις ἐχώρει, καὶ τὸ ξύμπαν εἰπεῖν *οὐδεμία* μηχανὴ *ἀνθρώπῳ* ἐς τὴν σωτηρίαν ἐξεύρητο, οὔτε προφυλαξαμένῳ μὴ πεπονθέναι οὔτε τοῦ κακοῦ ἐπιπεσόντος περιγενέσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ παθεῖν ἀπροφάσιστον ἦν καὶ τὸ περιεῖναι αὐτόματον.
2.22.35. Death was manifest in advance for women who were pregnant and were overcome by the illness. For some miscarried and died, while others gave birth and were destroyed immediately along with their newborns.	"illness": *nosos*.	2.22.35; 1:255.17-20. καὶ γυναιξὶ δὲ ὅσαι ἐκύουν προῦπτος ἐγίνετο τῇ νόσῳ ἁλισκομέναις ὁ θάνατος. αἱ μὲν γὰρ ἀμβλίσκουσαι ἔθνησκον, αἱ δὲ τίκτουσαι ξὺν αὐτοῖς εὐθὺς τοῖς τικτομένοις ἐφθείροντο.
2.22.36. However they say that three women who were giving birth survived while their children died, and one happened to die while in labor, but gave		2.22.36; 1:255.20-23. τρεῖς μέντοι λεχοῦς λέγουσι τῶν παίδων σφίσιν ἀπολομένων περιγενέσθαι, καὶ μιᾶς ἤδη ἐν τῷ τοκετῷ ἀποθανούσης τετέχθαι τε καὶ

[13] "ἔθνησκον δὲ οἱ μὲν ἀμελείᾳ, οἱ δὲ καὶ πάνυ θεραπευόμενοι. ἕν τε οὐδὲ ἓν κατέστη ἴαμα ὡς εἰπεῖν ὅτι χρῆν προσφέροντας ὠφελεῖν· τὸ γάρ τῳ ξυνενεγκὸν ἄλλον τοῦτο ἔβλαπτεν."

birth and the child survived.		περιεῖναι τῷ παιδίῳ ξυμβῆναι.
2.22.37. To those whose bubo was both swelling bigger and had come to suppuration, it happened that they were delivered of the illness and survived, since it was clear that for them, the acute phase had abated to such a state of the malignant pustule and, in most cases, this was a sign of health. Those whose bubo persisted in the earlier form suffered the evils which I have just mentioned.	"discharge of pus": *to puon*: Procopius uses this word only here. "illness": *nosos*. Procopius uses the expression ἐς τοῦτο with the genitive in the sense of "to this point, to such a state of, to this measure of": Wars, 2.30.17 οἷς γε δὴ ἐς τοῦτο ἀσθενείας περιεστήκει τὰ πράγματα; Wars 4.2.10: ἐς τοῦτο ἡμῖν περιέστηκε τύχης τὰ πράγματα (note the identical word order) "Malignant pustile": *anthrax*. "evils": *ta kaka*	2.22.37; 1:255.23-256.4. ὅσοις μὲν οὖν μείζων τε ὁ βουβὼν ἤρετο καὶ ἐς πῦον ἀφῖκτο, τούτοις δὴ περιεῖναι τῆς νόσου ἀπαλλασσομένοις ξυνέβαινεν, ἐπεὶ δῆλον ὅτι αὐτοῖς ἡ ἀκμὴ ἐς τοῦτο λελωφήκει τοῦ ἄνθρακος, γνώρισμά τε τῆς ὑγείας τοῦτο ἐκ τοῦ ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἐγίνετο· οἷς δὲ ὁ βουβὼν ἐπὶ τῆς προτέρας ἰδέας διέμεινε, τούτοις περιειστήκει τὰ κακὰ ὧν ἄρτι ἐμνήσθην.
2.22.38. It happened to some of them that the thigh on which the bubo had swollen up completely withered dry, and the bubo did not suppurate at all.	"suppurate": *empuos*, which appears only here in Procopius.	2.22.38; 1:256.4-6. τισὶ δὲ αὐτῶν καὶ τὸν μηρὸν ἀποξηρανθῆναι ξυνέβη, ἐφ' οὗ ὁ βουβὼν ἐπαρθεὶς ὡς ἥκιστα ἔμπυος γέγονεν.
2.22.39. To others it happened that they survived but their tongue was not intact: either they lisped or spent their life uttering inarticulate sounds with difficulty.		2.22.39; 1:256.6-8. ἄλλοις τε οὐκ ἐπ' ἀκεραίῳ τῇ γλώσσῃ περιγενέσθαι τετύχηκεν, ἀλλ' ἢ τραυλίζουσιν, ἢ μόλις τε καὶ ἄσημα φθεγγομένοις βιῶναι.
2.23.1. The disease lasted for four months in Constantinople, but it was especially at its peak during about three.	"About": *malista*	2.23.1; 1:256.9-10. Ἡ μὲν οὖν νόσος ἐν Βυζαντίῳ ἐς τέσσαρας διῆλθε μῆνας, ἤκμασε δὲ ἐν τρισὶ μάλιστα.

2.23.2. At the beginning, a few more than usual were dying; then the evil (*to kakon*) increased yet more, and after that the number of the dead was reaching 5,000 each day, and then again it came to 10,000 and even more.	Procopius' emphasis on the gradual onset of the epidemic underscores his next point, that his society's crucially important burial customs were only abandoned in stages. "The evil": *to kakon*, which is often used as a term for this disease. Dewing translates as "mortality rate," which takes unwarranted liberties with the Greek.	2.23.2; 1:256.10-15. καὶ κατ'ἀρχὰς μὲν ἔθνησκον τῶν εἰωθότων ὀλίγῳ πλείους, εἶτα ἔτι μᾶλλον τὸ κακὸν ἦρετο, μετὰ δὲ ἐς πεντακισχιλίους ἡμέρᾳ ἑκάστῃ ἐξικνεῖτο τὸ τῶν νεκρῶν μέτρον, καὶ αὖ πάλιν ἐς μυρίους τε καὶ τούτων ἔτι πλείους ἦλθε.
2.23.3. At first each person was taking care of the burial of the dead in his own household, which either surreptitiously or by force they dumped *into tombs that did not belong to them*. And thereafter, *everything was thrown into confusion* in every respect.	Procopius echoes Thucydides, *Peloponnesian Wars* 2.52.4 on the disregard for propriety in funeral rites: "*all* the customs which they had previously observed for *burials were thrown into confusion and each person* was arranging burial…" ("nomoi te *pantes xunetarakhthēsan* …peri *tas taphas,* ethapton de hōs *hekastos* edunato. Kai polloi es anaiskuntous *thēkas* … *epi* puras gar *allotrias*…") and parallels in terms of the customs of his own time how people usurped tombs that did not belong to them just as Athenians dumped their dead onto funeral pyres that were not theirs.[14] "confusion and disorder everywhere became complete": *panta en hapasi xunetarakhthē*.	2.23.3; 1:256.15-18. τὰ μὲν οὖν πρῶτα *τῆς ταφῆς* αὐτὸς *ἕκαστος* ἐπεμελεῖτο τῶν κατὰ τὴν οἰκίαν νεκρῶν, οὓς δὴ καὶ *ἐς ἀλλοτρίας θήκας* ἐρρίπτουν ἢ λανθάνοντες ἢ βιαζόμενοι· ἔπειτα δὲ *πάντα* ἐν ἅπασι *ξυνεταράχθη*.

[14] Thucydides, *Peloponnesian Wars* 2.52.4: "Νόμοι τε πάντες ξυνεταράχθησαν οἷς ἐχρῶντο πρότερον περὶ τὰς ταφάς, ἔθαπτον δὲ ὡς ἕκαστος ἐδύνατο. καὶ πολλοὶ ἐς ἀναισχύντους θήκας ἐτράποντο σπάνει τῶν ἐπιτηδείων διὰ τὸ συχνοὺς ἤδη προτεθνάναι σφίσιν· ἐπὶ πυρὰς γὰρ ἀλλοτρίας φθάσαντες τοὺς νήσαντας οἱ μὲν ἐπιθέντες τὸν ἑαυτῶν νεκρὸν ὑφῆπτον, οἱ δὲ καιομένου ἄλλου ἐπιβαλόντες ἄνωθεν ὃν φέροιεν ἀπῆσαν."

	Procopius uses exactly the same words to describe emperor Justinian's destructive impact on the Roman Empire: *Secret History* 7.7.	
2.23.4. For slaves *were left* without masters, and gentlemen who previously had been very wealthy were deprived of the service of their slaves who either were sick or died, while *many households became entirely devoid* of people.	Procopius echoes but varies Thucydides' wording on empty households: "apōllunto *erēmoi, kai oikiai pollai* ekenōthēsan *aporia* tou therapeusantos."[15] (For *aporia*, see next).	2.23.4; 1:256.19-22. δοῦλοί τε γὰρ ἔμειναν δεσποτῶν *ἔρημοι*, ἄνδρες τε τὰ πρότερα λίαν εὐδαίμονες τῆς τῶν οἰκετῶν ὑπουργίας ἢ νοσούντων ἢ τετελευτηκότων ἐστέρηντο, *πολλαί τε οἰκίαι* παντάπασιν *ἔρημοι* ἀνθρώπων ἐγένοντο.
2.23.5. For this reason it happened that some of the notables lay many days unburied for lack of means. The providential care for this matter came to the emperor, as was right.	Dewing supplies the words "of the city." "Providential care." Dewing's loose and idiomatic translation of *pronoia* (as "to the lot of") neglects the term's significance as a propaganda buzzword in respect to imperial governance. In choosing this word, Procopius may be alluding to the preamble of Justinian's *Edict* 7, promulgated in the earlier stages of the outbreak at Constantinople: "Just as the power of virtue always appears among adversities, so the *emperor's providence* (*basilikē pronoia*) and stewardship is displayed among the subjects' difficulties."	2.23.5; 1:256.22-25. διὸ δὴ ξυνέβη τισὶ τῶν γνωρίμων τῇ ἀπορίᾳ ἡμέρας πολλὰς ἀτάφοις εἶναι. ἔς τε βασιλέα ἡ τοῦ πράγματος πρόνοια, ὡς τὸ εἰκὸς, ἦλθε.
2.23.6. So the emperor assigned		2.23.6; 1:256.25-257.4.

[15] "…ἀπώλλυντο ἐρῆμοι, καὶ οἰκίαι πολλαὶ ἐκενώθησαν ἀπορίᾳ τοῦ θεραπεύσοντος."

soldiers from the palace and money, and ordered Theodore to oversee this task. Theodore was in charge of the imperial rescripts, ever announcing the requests of petitioners to the emperor and then communicating back whatever he decided. In Latin the Romans call this office referendarius.		στρατιώτας οὖν ἐκ παλατίου καὶ χρήματα νείμας Θεόδωρον ἐκέλευε τοῦ ἔργου τούτου ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, ὃς δὴ ἀποκρίσεσι ταῖς βασιλικαῖς ἐφειστήκει, ἀεὶ τῷ βασιλεῖ τὰς τῶν ἱκετῶν δεήσεις ἀγγέλλων, σημαίνων τε αὖθις ὅσα ἂν αὐτῷ βουλομένῳ εἴη. ῥεφερενδάριον τῇ Λατίνων φωνῇ τὴν τιμὴν ταύτην καλοῦσι Ῥωμαῖοι.
2.23.7. While those whose households had not yet become entirely empty arranged the burial of their own dependents,		2.23.7; 1:257.4-6. οἷς μὲν οὖν οὔπω παντάπασιν ἐς ἐρημίαν ἐμπεπτωκότα τὰ κατὰ τὴν οἰκίαν ἐτύγχανεν, αὐτοὶ ἕκαστοι τὰς τῶν προσηκόντων ἐποιοῦντο ταφάς.
2.23.8. Theodore spent the emperor's money and even spent his own on top of that to keep burying the dead who had no one to care for them.		2.23.8; 1:257.6-9. Θεόδωρος δὲ τά τε βασιλέως διδοὺς χρήματα καὶ τὰ οἰκεῖα προσαναλίσκων τοὺς ἀπημελημένους τῶν νεκρῶν ἔθαπτεν.
2.23.9. When all the existing burial places came to be filled with the dead, and they had dug and buried the dead as best they could in all the places that surround the city one after another, they moved on. But then those who were digging the graves could not keep up with the number of the dead, and went up to the towers of the perimeter wall which is in Sycae [across the Golden Horn from downtown Constantinople].	Sycae: “The Figs”: name of the leafy sixth-century suburb (Regio XIII) of Constantinople across the Golden Horn from the City, modern Galata, which had its own wall: Janin 1964, 466-467.	2.23.9; 1:257.9-16. ἐπεὶ δὲ τὰς θήκας ἁπάσας, αἳ πρότερον ἦσαν, ἐμπίπλασθαι τῶν νεκρῶν ἔτυχεν, οἱ δὲ ὀρύσσοντες ἅπαντα ἐφεξῆς τὰ ἀμφὶ τὴν πόλιν χωρία, ἐνταῦθά τε τοὺς θνήσκοντας κατατιθέμενοι, ὡς ἕκαστός πη ἐδύνατο, ἀπηλλάσσοντο, ἔπειτα δὲ οἱ τὰς κατώρυχας ταύτας ποιούμενοι πρὸς τῶν ἀποθνησκόντων τὸ μέτρον οὐκέτι ἀντέχοντες ἐς τοὺς πύργους τοῦ περιβόλου ἀνέβαινον, ὃς ἐν Συκαῖς ἐστί·

2.23.10. And stripping off the roofs, they threw the bodies there in disorder, *heaping* them together however it happened, and filling up practically all of the towers with *the bodies*. Then they were trying to cover them up again with the roofs.	A possible allusion to another passage of Thucydides (*Peloponnesian Wars* 7.87), about the dead at the siege of Syracuse (*tōn nekrōn* homou ep'allēlōn *xunnenē*menōn).[16]	2.23.10; 1:257.16-20. τάς τε ὀροφὰς περιελόντες ἐνταῦθα ἐρρίπτουν τὰ σώματα οὐδενὶ κόσμῳ, καὶ *ξυννήσαντες*, ὥς πη ἑκάστῳ παρέτυχεν, ἐμπλησάμενοί τε *τῶν νεκρῶν* ὡς εἰπεῖν ἅπαντας, εἶτα ταῖς ὀροφαῖς αὖθις ἐκάλυπτον.
2.23.11. As a result of this, the *stinking air* carried over to the city and distressed the people there even more, especially when a favorable wind was blowing from that direction.	"Stinking air": *pneuma dusōdes*. Procopius describes the general stink arising from the piles of rotting corpses with the same words (*pneuma… dusōdes*) that Thucydides (2.49.2) used for the fetid breath of the sick.[17] "Distressed": *elupei*, more appropriately "afflicted." Procopius is probably reflecting ancient medical theories of harmful air, in addition to the distressing impact of the smell of the rotting course corpses.	2.23.11; 1:257.20-23. καὶ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ *πνεῦμα δυσῶδες* ἐς τὴν πόλιν ἰὸν ἔτι μᾶλλον ἐλύπει τοὺς ταύτῃ ἀνθρώπους, ἄλλως τε ἦν καὶ ἄνεμός τις ἐκεῖθεν ἐπίφορος ἐπιπνεύσειε.
2.23.12. At that time, *all the customary observances about burials* were disregarded. For the dead were not carried out, escorted by the usual funeral processions, nor were psalms sung over them as customary. Rather it sufficed if someone carried one of the dead people on his shoulders to the city's shoreline and dumped him there, where they were throwing [the	Procopius again opens a sentence with a clear allusion to Thucydides (2.52.4; *nom*oi *te pant*es…*peri tas taphas*; see also above, on *Wars* 2.23.3) but tailors his more expansive description to reflect his society's very different rites of funeral and inhumation, rather than Athenian cremation.	2.23.12; 1:257.24-258.4. *Πάντα τε* ὑπερώφθη τότε τὰ *περὶ τὰς ταφὰς νόμι*μα. οὔτε γὰρ παραπεμπόμενοι ᾗ νενόμισται οἱ νεκροὶ ἐκομίζοντο οὔτε καταψαλλόμενοι ᾗπερ εἰώθει, ἀλλ'ἱκανὸν ἦν, εἰ φέρων τις ἐπὶ τῶν ὤμων τῶν τετελευτηκότων τινὰ ἔς τε τῆς πόλεως τὰ ἐπιθαλάσσια ἐλθὼν ἔρριψεν, οὗ δὴ ταῖς ἀκάτοις ἐμβαλλόμενοι σωρηδὸν ἔμελλον ὅπη παρατύχοι

[16] "τῶν νεκρῶν ὁμοῦ ἐπ' ἀλλήλοις ξυννενημένων."

[17] "εὐθὺς αἱματώδη ἦν καὶ πνεῦμα ἄτοπον καὶ δυσῶδες ἠφίει."

bodies] into boats in heaps, and going to take them off wherever they might.		κομίζεσθαι.
2.23.13. Then too whoever among the population had earlier been rioters [of the Factions], abandoned their hatred for each other, and in common cared for the funerary observances for the dead, carrying out and burying the dead even if they did not belong to their own group.	The Factions, fan clubs of the late Roman Empire's competing chariot teams, were notorious for their rioting against one another: Richard Lim, in Nicholson 2018 579, s.v.	2.23.13; 1:258.4-8. τότε καὶ τοῦ δήμου ὅσοι στασιῶται πρότερον ἦσαν, ἔχθους τοῦ ἐς ἀλλήλους ἀφέμενοι τῆς τε ὁσίας τῶν τετελευτηκότων κοινῇ ἐπεμέλοντο καὶ φέροντες αὐτοὶ τοὺς οὐ προσήκοντας σφίσι νεκροὺς ἔθαπτον.
2.23.14. But those who previously were disposed to shameful deeds and took pleasure in the company of evil people shook off their criminal behavior and started striving scrupulously for godliness, though they had neither discovered self-control nor suddenly become some kind of lovers of virtue,	"took pleasure in the company of evil people":" in his use of *ponēros* ("base"), Procopius may be thinking of a common expression, of rejoicing in the company of evil people (rather than referring to evil things or deeds, as per Dewing's translation), eliding a word for "people"; cf. e.g. Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 2.9; cf. e.g., Procopius, *Wars* 7.14.28 (πονηροὶ μέντοι ἢ κακοῦργοι).	2.23.14; 1:258.8-13. ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅσοι πράγμασι τὰ πρότερα παριστάμενοι αἰσχροῖς τε καὶ πονηροῖς ἔχαιρον, οἵδε τὴν ἐς τὴν δίαιταν ἀποσεισάμενοι παρανομίαν τὴν εὐσέβειαν ἀκριβῶς ἤσκουν, οὐ τὴν σωφροσύνην μεταμαθόντες οὐδὲ τῆς ἀρετῆς ἐρασταί τινες ἐκ τοῦ αἰφνιδίου γεγενημένοι·
2.23.15. since it is impossible to change easily whatever has been fixed in men by nature or by learning over a long time, except when some divine good might		2.23.15; 1:258.13-19. ἐπεὶ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ὅσα ἐμπέπηγε φύσει ἢ χρόνου μακροῦ διδασκαλίᾳ ῥᾷστα δὴ οὕτω μεταβάλλεσθαι ἀδύνατά ἐστιν, ὅτι μὴ θείου τινὸς

inspire them. But at that time practically everybody was terrified by what was happening and, expecting to die very soon, under what was naturally complete duress, discovered virtuousness, temporarily.		ἀγαθοῦ ἐπιπνεύσαντος· ἀλλὰ τότε ὡς εἰπεῖν ἅπαντες καταπεπληγμένοι μὲν τοῖς ξυμπίπτουσι, τεθνήξεσθαι δὲ αὐτίκα δὴ μάλα οἰόμενοι, ἀνάγκῃ, ὡς τὸ εἰκὸς, πάσῃ τὴν ἐπιείκειαν ἐπὶ καιροῦ μετεμάνθανον.
2.23.16. And that is why, as soon as they were rid of disease and survived, and they already suspected themselves to be safe, seeing that the evil had moved on to some others, they *quick-changed* their mind back to bad things, displaying more evilness of conduct than before, surpassing even themselves by their extreme wickedness and other lawlessness. One would not be asserting a falsehood to say that, whether by chance or by providence, this disease selected and let escape the most evil people. But these things were revealed at a later time.	"quick-changed": *angkhistrophon* authis tēs gnōmēs *tēn metabolēn.* Procopius echoes Thucydides' wording (2.53: *angkhistrophon tēn metabolēn)* about the quick reversal of fortunes and the proclivity to evil during the Athenian plague,[18] but applies it to the mental disposition of evil Constantinopolitans. "this disease selected and let escape the most evil people:" Justinian contracted the plague and survived: *Secret History* 4.1; Procopius is surely making a veiled reference to him here.	2.23.16; 1:258.20-259.3. ταῦτά τοι, ἐπειδὴ τάχιστα τῆς νόσου ἀπαλλαγέντες ἐσώθησαν ἔν τε τῷ ἀσφαλεῖ γεγενῆσθαι ἤδη ὑπετόπασαν, ἅτε τοῦ κακοῦ ἐπ' ἄλλους ἀνθρώπων τινὰς κεχωρηκότος, *ἀγχίστροφον* αὖθις τῆς γνώμης τὴν *μεταβολὴν* ἐπὶ τὰ χείρω πεποιημένοι μᾶλλον ἢ πρότερον τὴν τῶν ἐπιτηδευμάτων ἀτοπίαν ἐνδείκνυνται, σφᾶς αὐτοὺς μάλιστα τῇ τε πονηρίᾳ καὶ τῇ ἄλλῃ παρανομίᾳ νενικηκότες· ἐπεὶ καὶ ἀπισχυρισάμενος ἄν τις οὐ τὰ ψευδῆ εἴποι ὡς ἡ νόσος ἥδε εἴτε τύχῃ τινὶ εἴτε προ- νοίᾳ ἐς τὸ ἀκριβὲς ἀπολεξαμένη τοὺς πονηροτάτους ἀφῆκεν. ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν τῷ ὑστέρῳ ἀποδέδεικται χρόνῳ.
2.23.17. At that time also it did not seem easy to see anyone	"Byzantium": Constantinople; see above	2.23.17; 1:259.4-7. Τότε δὲ ἀγοράζοντά τινα οὐκ εὐπετὲς

[18] "ῥᾷον γὰρ ἐτόλμα τις ἃ πρότερον ἀπεκρύπτετο μὴ καθ' ἡδονὴν ποιεῖν, ἀγχίστροφον τὴν μεταβολὴν ὁρῶντες τῶν τε εὐδαιμόνων καὶ αἰφνιδίως θνῃσκόντων καὶ τῶν οὐδὲν πρότερον κεκτημένων, εὐθὺς δὲ τἀκείνων ἐχόντων."

going about in public places in Byzantium. Everyone was staying home: whoever happened to have a healthy body was either caring for the sick or mourning those who had died.	(*Errōsthai* (*rōnnumi*) occurs only here in Procopius)	ἐδόκει εἶναι ἔν γε Βυζαντίῳ ἰδεῖν, ἀλλ᾽ οἴκοι καθήμενοι ἅπαντες, ὅσοις ξυνέβαινε τὸ σῶμα ἐρρῶσθαι, ἢ τοὺς νοσοῦντας ἐθεράπευον, ἢ τοὺς τετελευτηκότας ἐθρήνουν.
2.23.18. And if you did manage to encounter someone going about outside, he was carrying one of the dead. All business ceased and the workers abandoned all crafts and whatever other work each had in hand.		2.23.18; 1:259.7-11. ἢν δέ τις καὶ προϊόντι τινὶ ἐντυχεῖν ἴσχυσεν, ὅδε τῶν τινα νεκρῶν ἔφερεν. ἐργασία τε ξύμπασα ἤργει καὶ τὰς τέχνας οἱ τεχνῖται μεθῆκαν ἁπάσας, ἔργα τε ἄλλα ὅσα δὴ ἕκαστοι ἐν χερσὶν εἶχον.
2.23.19. And so, for instance, in a city absolutely abounding in all good things, an acute food shortage intruded. It was considered difficult and very important to get enough bread or anything else, with the consequence that some of the sick seemed to suffer an untimely death due to malnutrition.		2.2.19; 1:259.11-16. ἐν πόλει γοῦν ἀγαθοῖς ἅπασιν ἀτεχνῶς εὐθηνούσῃ λιμός τις ἀκριβὴς ἐπεκώμαζεν. ἄρτον ἀμέλει ἢ ἄλλο ὁτιοῦν διαρκῶς ἔχειν χαλεπόν τε ἐδόκει καὶ λόγου πολλοῦ ἄξιον εἶναι· ὥστε καὶ τῶν νοσούντων τισὶν ἄωρον ξυμβῆναι δοκεῖν ἀπορίᾳ τῶν ἀναγκαίων τὴν τοῦ βίου καταστροφήν.
2.23.20. To say it all, it was totally impossible to spot someone wearing a uniform in Byzantium, especially when it happened that the emperor became ill, for even he had a bubo swell up: in a city which held the leadership of the entire Roman Empire, everyone was wearing civilian garb and staying home.	"chlamys": the cape of state service. In the late Roman Empire, both civil servants and soldiers wore uniforms. "Byzantium": Constantinople; see above "emperor": Justinian became ill with the plague; see also Secret History 4.1	2.23.20; 1:259.17-22. καὶ τὸ ξύμπαν εἰπεῖν, χλαμύδα οὐκ ἦν ἐνδιδυσκόμενόν τινα ἐν Βυζαντίῳ τὸ παράπαν ἰδεῖν, ἄλλως τε ἡνίκα βασιλεῖ νοσῆσαι ξυνέβη (καὶ αὐτῷ γὰρ ξυνέπεσε βουβῶνα ἐπῆρθαι), ἀλλ᾽ ἐν πόλει βασιλείαν ἐχούσῃ ξυμπάσης τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἀρχῆς ἱμάτια ἐν ἰδιωτῶν λόγῳ ἅπαντες ἀμπεχόμενοι ἡσυχῇ ἔμενον.

2.23.21. These were the conditions involving the plague both in Byzantium and in the rest of the land of the Roman Empire. It also struck the land of the Persians and all the other barbarians.	"The plague": loimos "Byzantium": see above "struck": episkēptō	2.23.21; 1:259.22-25.τὰ μὲν οὖν ἀμφὶ τῷ λοιμῷ ἔν τε τῇ ἄλλῃ Ῥωμαίων γῇ καὶ ἐν Βυζαντίῳ ταύτῃ πη ἔσχεν. ἐπέσκηψε δὲ καὶ ἐς τὴν Περσῶν γῆν καὶ ἐς βαρβάρους τοὺς ἄλλους ἅπαντας.

1.2 Procopius, *Wars* 2.24.1-12: on plague and the Persian army in Atropatene (Azerbaijan) in 542 or 543.

Procopius follows his description of the initial outbreak of plague with the Persian preparations for an attack on the Roman Empire's eastern provinces from Azerbaijan and reports that the epidemic (*loimos*) struck the Persian king Chosroes' army which were were beset by "*the* illness" (*hē nosos*) when they had advanced into Azerbaijan; they then moved back into the Persian heartland to escape the illness, since they thought they would be safe there from the epidemic (*loimos*) which had not yet reached that area, as it later would (*Wars* 2.23.1). Following directly on the lengthy description of the outbreak and spread of the plague among the Romans, and the last words of the preceding chapter ("It [the plague] also struck (*epeskēpse*) the land of the Persians and all the other barbarians"), it is indubitable that Procopius is referring to the same epidemic (he uses the usual verb *episkēpto* for the plague striking both the Roman Empire and the Persian army: *Wars* 2.24.5). Whether the Roman ambassadors to the Persian king who were delayed by illness also suffered from plague is unknowable. The date is controverted. Traditionally placed in 543 (Stein 1949-1959, 2:543; Rubin 1960-1995, 1:342-3; Meier 2003 [*Zeitalter*], *320n84, apparently largely on the grounds that the alternative, 542, would compress too many events into too short a time; an argument has however been made for 542: Kislinger and Stathakopoulos 1999, 94-95 with 82-85; Stathakopoulos 2004, 147.

Edition: *Wars* 2.24.1-12, ed. Haury and Wirth 1.259.26-262.6

Bibliography: see above entry for Procopius.

Date of event: 542 or 543.

Date of record: no later than 550-551.

English Translation (McCormick)	Commentary	Greek Text
2.24.1. Chosroes [the Persian king] came into the region of	"Chosroes": Khosrow I, King of Kings of the Sasanian Empire,	2.24.1. Ἐτύγχανε δὲ ὁ Χοσρόης ἐξ Ἀσσυρίων ἐς χωρίον

Adarbigana toward the north wind, where he was planning to invade the Roman Empire through Persarmenia. … 2.24.3. Someone who had been sent here from Byzantium announced to Chosroes that the ambassadors Constantine and Sergius would arrive very soon indeed for the purpose of a treaty… 2.24.5. Expecting them, Chosroes remained quiet. In the course of this journey, Constantine became ill, and when much time had passed, it happened that the epidemic struck the Persians. 2.24.6. For just this reason Nabedes, who then held the office of commander in Persarmenia, at the king's instruction sent the bishop of the Christians in Doubios, to Valerian, the general in Armenia, criticizing the slowness of the ambassadors, and urging the Romans to make peace with great eagerness…	531 to 579. "Adarbigana": region of the Sasanian Empire, modern Azerbaijan and northern Iran: (Schippmann 1987). "Persarmenia": the largest, eastern region of ancient Armenia, controlled by the Persian Empire: See Garsoïan 1991, "Armenia," in Kazhdan 1991 online, accessed 6/15/19. "Doubios": mod. Dvin, Armenia.	Ἀδαρβιγάνων ἥκων πρὸς βορρᾶν ἄνεμον, ἔνθεν διενοεῖτο ἐς τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴν διὰ Περσαρμενίων ἐσβάλλειν… 2.24.3. ἐνταῦθα σταλείς τις ἐκ Βυζαντίου παρὰ Χοσρόην ἀπήγγελλε Κωνσταντιανόν τε καὶ Σέργιον πρέσβεις ἐς αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τῇ ξυμβάσει αὐτίκα δὴ μάλα ἀφίξεσθαι.. … 2.24.5 οὓς δὴ ὁ Χοσρόης προσδεχόμενος ἡσυχῆ ἔμενεν. ἐν δὲ τῇ πορείᾳ ταύτῃ Κωνσταντιανοῦ νοσήσαντος καὶ χρόνου τριβέντος συχνοῦ τὸν λοιμὸν ἐπισκῆψαι Πέρσαις ξυνέπεσε. 2.24.6. διὸ δὴ Ναβέδης τηνικαῦτα ἐν Περσαρμενίοις τὴν στρατηγίδα ἔχων ἀρχὴν τὸν ἐν Δούβιος τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἱερέα βασιλέως ἐπαγγείλαντος παρὰ Βαλεριανὸν τὸν ἐν Ἀρμενίοις στρατηγὸν ἔπεμψεν, αἰτιασόμενόν τε τὴν τῶν πρέσβεων βραδυτῆτα καὶ Ῥωμαίους ἐς τὴν εἰρήνην ὁρμήσοντα προθυμίᾳ τῇ πάσῃ….

2.24.8. So, on the one hand, the bishop said these things [that Nabades had instructed him]. On the other, the bishop's brother met Valerian in secret, and told him that Chosroes was facing great difficulties, that his son, set on usurpation, had revolted, and that Chosroes, with his entire army had been beset by the illness, and in fact, this was why he now wanted to enter into a treaty…. 2.24.11. When the commanders saw that this letter [from the emperor] that had been delivered [in which Justinian urged a prompt attack on the Persian forces], they rushed into the territory of Armenia with all their troops.	"the illness": *nosos*.	2.24.8. ὁ μὲν οὖν ἱερεὺς τοσαῦτα εἶπεν· ὁ δὲ τοῦ ἱερέως ἀδελφὸς Βαλεριανῷ ἐντυχὼν λάθρα Χοσρόην ἐν μεγάλοις εἶναι κακοῖς ἔφασκε· τόν τε γάρ οἱ παῖδα τυραννίδι ἐπιθέμενον ἐπαναστῆναι καὶ αὐτὸν ὁμοῦ ξὺν παντὶ τῷ Περσῶν στρατῷ τῇ νόσῳ ἁλῶναι· διὸ δὴ καὶ Ῥωμαίοις τανῦν ἐς τὴν ξύμβασιν ἐθέλειν ἰέναι… 2.24.11… ταῦτα ἐπεὶ ἀπενεχθέντα οἱ ἄρχοντες τὰ γράμματα εἶδον, ἅπαντες ὁμοῦ τοῖς ἑπομένοις ξυνέρρεον ἐς τὰ ἐπὶ Ἀρμενίας χωρία.
2.24.12. But a little earlier, Chosroes had left Adarbigana out of fear of the illness and had gone off with his whole army to Assyria where, in fact, the calamity of the epidemic had not yet broken out.	"the illness": *nosos*. "Assyria": Procopius uses an archaic name for the heartland of the Persian Empire, including Ctesiphon and Seleucia: *Wars* 2.28.4 and *Secret History* 2.25. Chosroes retreated southward, in other words. "the calamity of the epidemic had not yet broken out": *oupō endedēmēkei to tou loimou pathos*. Procopius' statement that the epidemic had not *yet* (*oupō)* broken out there implies that it did break out there later.	2.24.12 Ἤδη δὲ ὁ Χοσρόης ὀλίγῳ πρότερον τὸ Ἀδαρβιγάνων δέει τῷ ἐκ τῆς νόσου ἀπολιπὼν ἐς τὴν Ἀσσυρίαν παντὶ τῷ στρατῷ ἀπιὼν ᾤχετο, ἔνθα δὴ οὔπω ἐνδεδημήκει τὸ τοῦ λοιμοῦ πάθος.

1.3 Procopius, *Wars* (4.14.6.2): since 536 solar event, war, epidemic and other mortalities

Since the 536 solar event, war, epidemic, other mortalities have not ceased. This refers to the years down to the time that Procopius was writing, i.e., 536 to ca. 553 (see above).

Edition: Procopius, *Wars* 4.14.6.2, Haury and Wirth 1962-1964, 1:483.1-5.

Bibliography: Buntgen et al 2016.

Date of event: 536 and ongoing.

Date of record: before 550-551.

English Translation	Commentary	Greek Text
4.14.6.2: Since it happened that it [the 536 solar event] occurred, neither war, nor epidemic, nor anything else leading to human dyings has ceased.	"epidemic": *loimos*.	ἐξ οὗ τε ξυμβῆναι τοῦτο τετύχηκεν, οὔτε πόλεμος οὔτε λοιμὸς οὔτε τι ἄλλο ἐς θάνατον φέρον τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀπέλιπε.

2. Procopius, *Wars*, on an epidemic in Rome during the siege of 537

Procopius, writing about the earlier invasion of Gothic Italy, refers in Book 6 to an epidemic (*loimos*) of uncertain but assuredly non-bubonic nature that accompanied a food shortage (*limos*) during the Gothic siege of Rome and the summer heat of 537.

Edition: Procopius, *Wars* 6.3.1, ed. Haury and Wirth 2:159.19-24.

Date of event: 537

Date for record: no later than 550-551.

3. Procopius, *Secret History*, on the plague outbreak of 542

Procopius' polemical unpublished *Secret History*, a lengthy and vitriolic attack on Justinian, Empress Theodora and their leading officials, was likely written ca. 550 and never published (Greatrex 1994, 103-105; see also below). It adds new information about the impact among the army's commanders of a rumor that Justinian had died when he suffered the plague, their reaction, and the political backlash that they suffered when the emperor recovered and word reached the court of their reaction (2.**1**). In the rest of this passage (*Secret History* 4.5-31), Procopius narrates that Theodora took that reaction to be directed against her, summoned the

generals to Constantinople, imprisoned Bozos for two years and four months, and terrorized but finally delivered Belisarius into the power of his wife Antonina. The other sections relevant to late antique disease events (2.2-3) are diatribes against Justinian and Theodora, their demonic destructive power and their connections to the plague epidemic.

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3.1. *Secret History* 4.1-4: Rumors of Justinian's death from plague at Constantinople in 542 trigger discussions about his succession in the Roman army.

Edition: Procopius, *Secret History* 4.1-4. Haury and Wirth 3:24.17-25.

Date of event: 542.

Date for record: ca. 550.

English Translation	Commentary	Greek Text
4.1 Around the same time, another such thing happened to befall him [Belisarius]. While the plague that I recorded in my previous narrative was ravaging the people in Constantinople, it happened that emperor Justinian became so terribly ill that people were saying that he had died.		Ὑπὸ τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον καί τι ἕτερον αὐτῷ ἐπιπεσεῖν ξυνηνέχθη τοιόνδε. ὁ μὲν λοιμὸς, οὗπερ ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν λόγοις ἐμνήσθην, ἐπενέμετο τοὺς ἐν Βυζαντίῳ ἀνθρώπους. βασιλεῖ δὲ Ἰουστινιανῷχαλεπώτατα νοσῆσαι ξυνέβη, ὥστε καὶ ἐλέγετο ὅτι ἀπολώλει.
4.2 Rumor spread this report about and carried it all the way to the Roman army. There some of the leading officers began to say that, if Romans should ever put another such emperor in charge of them in Byzantium, they would never allow it.		4.2. τοῦτον δὲ τὸν λόγον περιαγαγοῦσα ἡ φήμη διεκόμισεν ἄχρι ἐς τὸ Ῥωμαίων στρατόπεδον. ἐνταῦθα ἔλεγον τῶν ἀρχόντων τινὲς ὡς, ἢν βασιλέα Ῥωμαῖοι ἕτερόν τινα ἐν Βυζαντίῳ καταστήσωνται σφίσιν, οὐ μήποτε αὐτοὶ ἐπιτρέψωσιν.
4.3 When it happened a little		4.3. ὀλίγῳ δὲ ὕστερον βασιλεῖ μὲν

later that the emperor got better, the commanders of the Romans' army accused each other.		ῥαΐσαι ξυνέβη, τοῖς δὲ τοῦ Ῥωμαίων στρατοῦ ἄρχουσι διαβόλοις ἐπ' ἀλλήλοις γενέσθαι.
4.4 Both the general Peter and John, whom they call the "Glutton" declared that they had heard both Belisarius and Bouzos saying what I have just described.	Peter: Jones et al. 1971-1992, 2:870-871, "Petrus 27." John: Jones et al. 1971-1992, 3:665-667, "Ioannes 64." Belisarius: leading general and Procopius' superior (Jones et al. 1971-1992, 3:181-224, "Belisarius 1"). Bouzos: see Jones et al. 1971-1992 3:254-7, "Buzes."	4.4. Πέτρος τε γὰρ ὁ στρατηγὸς καὶ Ἰωάννης, ὅνπερ ἐπίκλησιν Φαγᾶν ἐκάλουν, Βελισαρίου τε καὶ Βούζου ἐκεῖνα λεγόντων ἰσχυρίζοντο ἀκηκοέναι ἅπερ μοι ἀρτίως δεδήλωται.

3.2. Secret History 6.22-23: Justinian was worse than the plague, because as many people survived or entirely escaped the plague as died from it, while Justinian spared no one.

Procopius pursues his theme that Justinian was so terrible, he was even worse than the plague of 542 (which seems to be the only one Procopius knows about at the time of writing, since it was "the epidemic which I described"). This statement accords best with the opinion that the *Secret History* was written around 550.

Edition: Haury and Wirth 1961 3:42.2-10

Date of event: no specific event.

Date of record: ca. 550.

English Translation (McCormick)	Commentary	Greek Text
6.22. Although the epidemic which I described in the earlier account struck the entire earth, as many people escaped as it succeeded in destroying, whether	"epidemic": *loimos* "Struck": *episkēpsanta*	6.22. τὸν μὲν οὖν λοιμὸν, ὅσπερ μοι ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν λόγοις ἐρρήθη, καίπερ ἐπισκήψαντα εἰς τὴν γῆν ξύμπασαν, διέφυγον ἄνθρωποι οὐχ ἥσσους ἢ ὅσοις

they did not contract the disease at all or they recovered when it did happen that they contracted it.		διαφθαρῆναι τετύχηκεν, ἢ οὐδαμῆ τῇ νόσῳ ἁλόντες ἢ περιγενόμενοι, ἐπειδὴ σφίσιν ἁλῶναι ξυνέβη.
6.23. But it happened that not a single person who was a Roman escaped this man. Rather, just like some other calamity falling from Heaven on all mankind he left absolutely no one unharmed.	"from Heaven": ex ouranou, the identical wording that Procopius uses to discuss the plague when he first introduces it in *Wars* 2.22.	6.23. ἄνδρα δὲ τοῦτον διαφυγεῖν ἀνθρώπῳ γε ὄντι Ῥωμαίῳ τῶν πάντων οὐδενὶ ξυνηνέχθη, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ τι ἄλλο ἐξ οὐρανοῦ πάθος ὅλῳ τῷ γένει ἐπεισπεσὸν ἀνέπαφον οὐδένα παντελῶς εἴασε.

3.3. *Secret History* 12.16-17: Justinian and Theodora were the two most evil people ever, but they were abetted by fortune, since earthquakes, epidemics and floods occurred frequently in their time.

Edition: *Secret History* 12.16-17, Haury and Wirth 1962-1964 3:80.7-18.

Date of event: no specific event.

Date of record: ca. 550.

English Translation	Commentary	Greek Text
Indeed, although many human beings since time immemorial have been extremely terrifying by chance or by nature, and some have overthrown cities or countrysides or some such thing of their time, no one except these individuals have had the ability to wreak the destruction of all human beings and calamities on the entire inhabited world.	"the entire inhabited world": *gēs tēs oikoumenēs hapasēs*. Procopius may mean literally, the entire earth (so far as he was aware of it); the *oikoumene* "inhabited world" was however also a common informal expression for the Roman Empire.	πολλῶν ἀμέλει γεγονότων ἐκ τοῦ παντὸς αἰῶνος ἀνθρώπων τύχῃ ἢ φύσει φοβερῶν ἐς τὰ μάλιστα, οἱ μὲν πόλεις, οἱ δὲ χώρας, ἢ ἄλλο τι τοιοῦτο καθ' αὑτοὺς ἔσφηλαν, ὅλεθρον δὲ ξυμπάντων ἀνθρώπων ξυμφοράς τε γῆς τῆς οἰκουμένης ἁπάσης οὐδεὶς ὅτι μὴ οὗτοι ἄνθρωποι ἐργάζεσθαι ἱκανῶς ἔσχον.

Even fortune aided their [Justinian and Theodora's] purpose by cooperating in the destruction of human beings, for it happened that it destroyed most frequently around that time with earthquakes, epidemics, and flooding rivers, as I will tell next.	"epidemics": *loimos*	ὧν δὴ καὶ ἡ τύχη ὑπούργει τῇ γνώμῃ συγκατεργαζομένη τῶν ἀνθρώπων διαφθορὰν σεισμοῖς τε γὰρ καὶ λοιμοῖς καὶ ὑδάτων ποταμίων ἐπιρροαῖς ὑπὸ τὸν χρόνον τοῦτον πλεῖστα διολωλέναι τετύχηκεν, ὥς μοι αὐτίκα λελέξεται.

3.4. *Secret History* 18.1-4 and 44-45: Procopius emphasizes the destructive mortality caused by the demonic reign of Justinian and Theodora.

Procopius epitomizes his claim for the demonic character of Justinian and Theodora and their reign by reviewing the destructive mortalities and disappearing human populations arising from all causes connected with the imperial couple: war, natural disasters, and the plague. After the opening statement (18.1-4), in a section not translated below but readily available elsewhere in English translation,[19] Procopius presents his assessment of the desolation caused by Justinian and his policies region by region, starting with Africa (18.5-12), whose human losses he claims were five million people; Italy was even more desolate than Africa and he claims for Europe a loss of about 200,000 Romans killed or enslaved with each of the barbarian invasions that he presents as nearly yearly (18.13-21); eastern provinces were depopulated by Arab attacks and Persian invasions, while the invaders themselves suffered heavy losses, so that Justinian was able to destroy not just the Romans but the barbarians as well (18.22-32). To these losses Procopius adds those caused by insurrections inside the empire (18.33-36). Many other natural catastrophes occurred either through Justinian's demonic power or through God's punishment of the Roman Empire because of its evil ruler (18.37), including river flood disasters (18.38-40) and the destruction of various cities of the Empire by earthquakes (18.41-43). Procopius concludes with, as it were, the final blow, the plague (18.44-45), as translated below.

Edition: *Secret History* 18.1-4 and 44-45; Haury and Wirth 1962-1964 3:111.22-112.11 and 119.12-19.

Date of event: no specific event.

Date of record: ca. 550.

English Translation	Commentary	Greek Text

[19] E.g., Procopius, *The Anecdota or Secret History*, tr. H.B. Dewing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), 213-27.

18.1. That he was no human being, but some kind of humanoid demon, as has been said, one could prove by measuring the magnitude of the evils that he did to mankind.		Ὅτι δὲ οὐκ ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλὰ δαίμων τις, ὥσπερ εἴρηται, ἀνθρωπόμορφος ἦν, τεκμηριώσαιτο ἄν τις τῷ μεγέθει σταθμώμενος ὧν εἰς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους κακῶν ἔδρασεν.
18.2 For the power of the doer becomes manifest by the extremity of the things done.		ἐν γὰρ τῷ ὑπερβάλλοντι τῶν πεπραγμένων καὶ ἡ τοῦ δεδρακότος δύναμις ἔνδηλος γίνεται.
18.3 To tell exactly the number of those who were killed by him would never be possible, it seems to me, for anyone at all or for God.		τὸ μὲν οὖν μέτρον ἐς τὸ ἀκριβὲς φράσαι τῶν ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ ἀνῃρημένων οὐκ ἄν ποτε, μοὶ δοκεῖ, τῶν πάντων τινὶ ἢ τῷ θεῷ δυνατὰ εἴη.
18.4 One could more quickly count every grain of sand than those whom this emperor destroyed. Enumerating to the greatest extent the space which has come to be empty of inhabitants, I say that countless times 10,000 times 10,000 died.	“countless times 10,000 times 10,000”: *muriadas muriadōn murias*. *Murias, muriados*, “myriad” is the Greek number 10,000. These words could mean literally “10,000 times 10,000 times 10,000,” i.e., 100,000,000,000, one hundred billion, if “murios, -a, -on” is taken at the numeral value of 10,000. However, “murios, -a, -on” is commonly used to mean “countless”: LSJ s.v. That “one hundred billion” is manifestly impossible has suggested to some scholars that the text is corrupt or interpolated: Haury and Wirth 3.208. The number seems to be without	θᾶσσον γὰρ ἄν τις, οἶμαι, τὴν πᾶσαν ψάμμον ἐξαριθμήσειεν ἢ ὅσους ὁ βασιλεὺς οὗτος ἀνῄρηκε. τὴν δὲ χώραν ἐπὶ πλεῖστον διαριθμούμενος, ἥνπερ ἔρημον τῶν ἐνοικούντων ξυμπέπτωκεν εἶναι, μυριάδας μυριάδων μυρίας φημὶ ἀπολωλέναι.

	parallel in the corpus of texts included in the digital *Thesaurus linguae graecae*. Were it corrected to read "10,000 times 10,000," it would yield the number of 100 million, but there is little evidence to warrant that correction. While *muriades muriadōn* occurs as well *muriai muriadaes* in Greek mathematical texts and elsewhere as different ways of expressing the real number 100,000,000, Procopius' formulation appears to be without parallel in the large body of Greek literary texts available online in the *Thesaurus linguae Graecae*.[20] He is presumably using "murios, -a, -on" in its common sense of "countless" In sum, it seems most likely that this phrasing is another way for Procopius to say that a countless number died because of Justinian.	
18.44. When the plague which I mentioned earlier came along [in addition to these previous disasters], it carried off about half of the surviving population.	"about half": *tēn hēmiseian malista*. A standard use of *malista* with numbers, including in this exact phrase elsewhere in Procopius, e.g., *Hist*. 5.19.5 and 7.1.4.	ἐπιγενόμενος δὲ καὶ ὁ λοιμὸς, οὗ πρόσθεν ἐμνήσθην, τὴν ἡμίσειαν μάλιστα τῶν περιγινομένων ἀνθρώπων ἀπήνεγκε μοῖραν.
18.45. Destruction of so many		τοσούτων μὲν ἀνθρώπων ἐγένετο

[20] The Greek expression *muriai muriades* in the apocalyptic vision of the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7:10, in the Greek Septuagint version of the Old Testament; in the New Testament Apocalypse 5:11 mentions *muriades muriadōn*.

human beings occurred when Justinian was initially managing the Romans and later when he held the office of emperor.	"initially managing": this refers to Justinian's exercise of power behind the throne of his uncle, emperor Justin I (518-27), before he succeeded him as emperor.	φθόρος, Ἰουστινιανοῦ πρότερον Ῥωμαίοις διοικουμένου τὴν πολιτείαν καὶ ὕστερον τὴν αὐτοκράτορα ἀρχὴν ἔχοντος.

Epidemic and food shortage at Aphrodisias, inscription, ca. 542? Alternative dates: 558? 561-2?

Three statues with inscriptions were raised to honor Rhodopaeus, likely holder of the municipal office of "father of the city": Roueché and Reynolds 1989, nos. 85-87, pp. 136-141, plates xxi (no. 85) and xxii (nos. 86, 87) (cf. Reynolds et al. 2007, nos. 5.16-17 and 11.515), possibly as early as ca. 542. No. 86 praises his benefactions concerning the baths and actions concerning the city's grain supply, and that he "drove away epidemic and famine." Although the phrase "epidemic and famine" (*loimos kai limos*) was a stereotyped expression, the editors observe that it is astonishing here, insofar as no. 86 is the only reference to food shortages in the rich 500-year epigraphic record of this wealthy city in western Asia Minor. Rhodopaeus' titles point to a date well into the sixth century, when the statues will have been raised. The inscription no. 87 that accompanied a third statue of Rhodopaeus identifies the baths as the Olympian Baths (known today as the Hadrianic Baths), near which nos. 85 and 86 were found.

These circumstances and the fact that serious food shortages followed the first outbreak of the plague in Constantinople and Asia Minor led Roueché and Reynolds 1989, 139-141, to attribute no. 86 to Rhodopaeus' intervention to organize food supplies in the wake of the epidemic of 541-542. They further and astutely note that the earlier inscription, no. 85, was composed in elegiac verse and inscribed with great care, while no. 86 offers a strange mixture of prose and poetry, suggestive of an author trying to but incapable of writing poetry, and 87 follows no. 86; both 86 and 87 are more crudely inscribed than 85. All of this suggests to Roueché and Reynolds 1989, 141, that the contrast between nos. 85 on one hand and 86 and 87 on the other suggests "a loss in the intervening period of people competent to compose texts and inscribe them" (141). While the connection with the plague outbreak of 542-543 seems most likely, one cannot completely rule out that the inscriptions refer to the outbreaks of 558 or 561-562.

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Fig. Aphrodisias-1: Post-epidemic inscription on the base of the statue to Rhodopaeus. Courtesy of Charlotte Roueché.

Fig. Aphrodisias-2: Epigraphic squeeze (= handmade pressed copy) of inscription, showing the whole text. The key phrase appears on line 4. Courtesy of Charlotte Roueché.

Fig. Aphrodisias-3: Pre-epidemic inscription honoring Rhodopaeus: notice the superior craftsmanship of the lettering, compared to Figs. Aphrodisias 1 and 2.

Edition: Reynolds et al. 2007, 5.17-18 (cf. Roueché 1979, no. 86-87).

Bibliography: SEG 39-1099; Jones et al. 1971-1992, 2: 942, "Rhodopaeus".

Date of epidemic: 542-543? 558? 561-562?

Date of record: 542-543? 58? 561-562?

English Translation (Roueché and Reynolds, modified, 1989)	Commentary	Greek Text
no. 86, 137. The never-to-be-forgotten benefactor, who, with baths and with command of the grain-supply, drove away epidemic and famine, Rhodopaeus, lover of his country; the city, loving him, has adorned him with this second marble image, repaying him with worthy	"epidemic and famine": *loimon kai limon*: a stock phrase in late Greek, but see introduction to this entry for its exceptional character at Aphrodisias. As is our usual practice, we have avoided the word "plague" unless the disease	[τὸν ἀ]ληθάργητον εὐ-[ερ]γέτην τὸν λου- [τ]ροῖς καὶ σιταρχίαις λοιμὸν καὶ λιμὸν ἀπε- λάσαντα Ῥοδοπαῖον[τ]ὸν φιλόπατριν ποθοῦ- [σ]α πόλ{ε}ις δευτέρῃ [τ]ῇδ' εἰκόνι μαρμάραι κοσμήσασα

honors. ☩	is positively identified as bubonic plague.	ἀξίαις [ἡ]μείψατο τιμαῖς
no. 87, 138. To Good Fortune. The *magnificentissimus* Rhodopaeus, the lover of his country and defender of the people, the originator of the generous gift of the summer Olympian bath, and giver of grain as well as founder, renewer of pleasures that had been forgotten, the never-to-be-forgotten benefactor to us in everything, privately and publicly—the city [has honoured him] adorning him with a statue for the third time.	*Magnificentissimus*: "most magnificent" honorific title in the late Roman Empire which, by this date, seems associated mainly with local dignitaries.	ἀγαθῇ τύχῃ·τὸν μεγαλοπρεπέστατον Ῥοδοπαῖον τὸν φιλόπατριν καὶ ἀ<ρ>ωγὸν τοῦ δήμου, τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς φιλοτιμίας τοῦ θερινοῦ Ὀλυμπίου λουτροῦ καὶ σιτοδότην ὁμοῦ δὲ καὶ κτίστην, τὸν ἀνανεωτὴν τῶν ληθαργηθισῶν τέρψαιων, τὸν δὰ πάντα [ἡμῶ]ν ἰδίᾳ τε καὶ κοινῇ ἀληθάργητον εὐεργέτην ἀνδριάντι κοσμήσασα. τὸ τρίτον ἡ πόλις

Jordanes, *Gothic History* (*Getica*): Jordanes mentions in 551 the recent epidemic of plague in a comparison with the third-century "Plague" of Cyprian.

Jordanes, a Goth, wrote two histories in Latin, the *Romana (Roman History)* and *Getica (Gothic History)*, around 551 in Constantinople. All that we know about the author's life comes from within the text of his *Getica*, where he writes that he was a notary to the Gothic leader Gunthigis in Moesia before undergoing a conversion (*conversio*) (*Getica* 266). Van Nuffelen and van Hoof 2020, 5-6, interpret this conversion as a transition from secular to religious life, though not necessarily monasticism, and not from paganism or Arianism to Nicene Christinaity. The details in the *Getica* make clear that he spent his later years, after this conversion, around the city of Constantinople, and the claim by Jordanes in the passage below that the Plague of Cyprian (249-270 CE) was "rather similar to that which we experienced nine years ago," is a major component of the case that (at least this portion of) the *Getica* was composed in 551, nine years after the first major outbreak of the Justinianic Pandemic in that city (542). It also suggests that Jordanes was in Constantinople during that outbreak. The following passage thus narrates an earlier disease event from the vantage of a witness of 542, and reveals the manner in which historical descriptions of other epidemics may provide valuable indirect evidence of the experience of the Justinianic Pandemic, through comparisons explicitly (as in this case) or implicitly drawn. His text leaves unclear whether he thought the similarity lay in the symptoms and course of the

disease or its dramatic mortality. The evidence for the symptoms of the Plague of Cyprian suggests the similarity lay in the mortality. See on the earlier, Cyprian epidemic's symptoms and seriousness the new evidence developed by Harper 2015.

Reed Johnston Morgan

Editions: Mommsen 1882, 84-85.

Bibliography: Jones et al. 1971-1992, 3:713-714 "Iordanes 1"; Heather 2018.

Date of event: 542 CE.

Date of record: 551 CE.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
19. When Decius died, Gallus and Volusianus then acquired rule over the Romans, and at this time a pestilent sickness, rather similar to that which we experienced nine years ago, defiled the face of the entire world but especially devastated Alexandria and places throughout the whole of Egypt, as Dionysius the historian tearfully lays out regarding this disaster, which our venerable martyr of Christ and bishop Cyprian also describes in the book whose title is *On the mortality*.	"Decius died": *Defuncto tunc Decio*. Emperor Decius (249-251) was killed in battle against the Goths in June 251.	19. Defuncto tunc Decio, Gallus et Volusianus regnum potiti sunt Romanorum, quando et pestilens morbus, pene istius necessitatis consimilis, quod nos ante hos novem annos experti sumus, faciem totius orbis foedavit, supra modum tamen Alexandriam totiusque Aegypti loca devastans, Dionysio storico super hanc cladem lacrimaviliter exponente, quod et noster conscribit uenerabilis martyr Christi et episcopus Cyprianus in libro, cuius titulus est "de mortalitate".

John the Lydian (Lydus)'s Lost description of the outbreak of plague at Constantinople in 542, "On the Abominable Plague, and how it stopped in Constantinople," from *On the Magistracies of the Roman State* (*De magistratibus*) 3.16

Thanks to Prof. Daniel Caner.

This hitherto little-noticed contemporary reference to a lost eyewitness account of the first outbreak of the Justinianic Pandemic at Constantinople by the imperial civil servant, John the

Lydian ("Lydus"), illustrates how fragile the written record is for the Pandemic. John was born in Philadelphia in Lydia in 490, fluent in Latin as in Greek and came to Constantinople in 511, where he spent 40 years working in various capacities in the Praetorian Prefecture of the East and as a literary figure; he earned Justinian's gratitude for the panegyric he delivered before visitors from Rome, an invitation to compose a history of a victory in the Persian wars around 530, and an appointment to one of the imperial professorial chairs of the capital, perhaps around 543.

The sole surviving manuscript of this treatise is damaged, and lacks the final folios (Paris, B.N.F. Suppl. gr. 257, 10th century). According to the Table of Contents, the last chapter of book 3 treated the plague but it is now lost. The reference to the end of the plague in the chapter heading could be taken to reinforce the dating of the composition of this work to between summer 556, apparently the latest event it mentions, and 558 (Dubuisson and Schamp 2006, 1.1:xlvi), for it seems to imply no knowledge of the return of plague to Constantinople in 558 (see below, Agathias 2. The place of this chapter according to the surviving table of contents after an equally lost chapter 15 on the Nika riot and Justinian's rebuilding of the burned out capital and Hagia Sophia, and empress Theodora, clearly connects "the abominable epidemic" with the outbreak of plague in the capital: Dubuisson and Schamp 2006, 1.1: xxvii-xlvi.

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Edition: Dubuisson and Schamp 2006, 1.2:7.111-12.

Bibliography: Meier 2020, 6.

Date of event: 542.

Date of record: 556-558.

English Translation	Commentary	Greek Text
16. Concerning the most abominable epidemic, and how it stopped.	"Epidemic": *loimou*. See the Note on terminology above.	Ις′ περὶ τοῦ ἀπευκταιοτάτου λοιμοῦ, καὶ ὅπως ἀπεπαύσατο.

Lyons, May 583: Bishops assembled at Lyons decree that a bishop may only fail to celebrate Christmas and Easter services in his own cathedral when there are disease outbreaks or by royal command

The solemn liturgies of Christmas and Easter held in the cathedrals of early medieval Europe were the annual pinnacles of the worship led by each diocese's bishop. General authorization by this group of bishops from the ecclesiastical provinces of Lyons, Vienne, and Sens to exempt the bishops from their most important liturgical duty is an extraordinary measure. That it was henceforth granted automatically in case of "invasion of disease or royal order" shows the

episcopate's institutional awareness of a dramatically new disease environment in the Rhone corridor, the Loire valley, and environs, and could be construed to permit bishops to flee their cathedral towns during epidemics. The previous year, an epidemic disease that Gregory of Tours (*Histories* 6.14) calls "noxious pustules," and which may correspond to modern smallpox (*Variola major*) had raged in central and northern Gaul, while bubonic and possibly pneumonic plague ravaged Visigothic southern France. The canons were signed by the archbishops of Lyons and Vienne, and the bishops of Autun, Grenoble, Valence, Mâcon, Nevers, and Chalon-sur-Saône. Strikingly, twelve bishops were absent from the council and represented only by delegates (de Clercq 1963, 233.42-60), possibly reflecting disruptions from the previous year's epidemics that may have persisted into the spring of 583.

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Edition: Council of Lyons, May 583 CE, canon 5, de Clercq 1963, 232.34-35.

Bibliography: McCormick 2021a, 199.

Date of event: 582.

Date of record: 583.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
5. Also let no bishop celebrate Christmas or Easter anywhere else except in their own church, except for an invasion of disease or by royal order.	"in their own church": *ad ecclesiam suam*, i.e., in their cathedral.	5. Et ut nullus episcoporum natalem domini aut pascha alibi nisi ad ecclesiam suam praeter infirmitatis incursum aut ordinem regium celebrare praesumat.

Mâcon, 585: 67 bishops and episcopal envoys assembled at Mâcon from across all of Gaul punish sabbath violators in order to repel the blows of disease and failed harvests; they also condemn intrusive multiple burials.

In 585, 7 archbishops, 52 bishops, and 8 delegates from 10 ecclesiastical provinces in both Frankish kingdoms of the time convened at Mâcon to promulgate 20 canons regulating the behavior of lay and ecclesiastics. The very first canon explains at length that severe punishments will be inflicted on all those who do not honor the sabbath: litigants will lose their lawsuits, peasants and slaves will be severely beaten and clerks or monks will be excommunicated from their communities for six months; these punishments and restoration of respectful behavior on the sabbath will render the mind of God agreeable to the faithful and remove and repel epidemics and poor harvests. Canon 17 decries the reopening of tombs in which the dead have not yet decayed in order to add more bodies and, even worse, doing this in tombs that are the property of others. Should this happen in the future, the intrusive bodies will be thrown out of the tomb. Coming in a

council legislating for the whole of Gaul, these canons reflect the disease mortalities of recent years, notably the 582 epidemic of noxious pustules in central Gaul and plague in the south in 582 and again in 584. The blow of the failed harvests refers to the famine which afflicted almost all of Gaul in 585, according to Gregory of Tours, *Histories* 7.45 (Krusch and Levison 1951, 365.7-16), who notes that many (*plurimi*) died of starvation. The length and dramatic tone of the canons, and the severity of the penalties indicate the gravity of the recent mortalities in the eyes of this large group of ecclesiatistical leaders. For other episcopal legislation recognizing disruptions in burial customs reflecting exceptional mortalities see above, Council of Valencia 546, and below, synod of Auxerre 561-605.

Michael McCormick

Edition: Council of Mâcon, 585 CE, canons 1 and 17, de Clercq 1963, 239.31-240.68 and 246.287-293.

Bibliography: McCormick 2015, 338; McCormick 2021a, 57.

Date of event: 582-584.

Date of record: 585.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
1. For we see the Christian people recklessly handing Sunday over to contempt and indulging in constant labors just like on regular days. Therefore we decree by this our synodal letter, that each of us should admonish in the most holy churches the community subject to us; and if in fact they lend assent to the admonition, they will go forth to their own advantages; otherwise, they will be subject to the punishments defined by us divinely. And so all you Christians who do not bear this name in vain, lend your ear to our admonition, knowing that it is a characteristic of our authority to look toward your advantage and		1. Videmus enim populum christianum temerario more die dominica contemtui tradere et sicut in priuatis diebus operibus continuis indulgere. Propterea per hanc sinodalem nostram epistolam decernimus, ut unusquisque nostrum in sacrosanctis ecclesiis admoneat sibi subditam plebem; et si quidem admonitioni consensum praebuerint, suis proderunt utilitatibus, sin autem, subiacebunt poenis a nobis diuinitus definitis. Omnes itaque christiani, qui non incassum hoc nomine fruimini nostrae admonitione aurem accomodate, scientes, quoniam

to keep you from evil deeds. Observe the Lord's day which gave birth to us a second time and freed us from all sins…. And so if any of you will think little and treat with contempt this healthy exhortation, let him know that he will be punished first by God according to what he deserves and then that he will also be subject implacably to episcopal anger. If he is in litigation, he will lose the case without recourse; if he is a peasant or a slave, he will be beaten by very heavy blows of sticks; if he is a cleric or a monk, he will be excommunicated from the company of his brothers for six months. For all of these measures will both render the mind of God agreeable toward us and remove and repel the blows of sicknesses and poor harvests. …. 17. We have learned that many people have re-opened tombs when the corpses of the dead have not yet decayed and put their dead on top of them or--this is a sacrilege--usurped the religious places of other people for their own dead, that is, without the permission of the owner of the tombs. And therefore we decree that no one should do this from now on. If this will be done,	"the blows of sicknesses and poor harvests": *plagas morborum uel sterelitatum*. For discussion of both *plaga* and *morbus*, see our Note on terminology above.	nostrae est auctoritatis utilitate uestrae prospicere et a malis operibus cohercere. Custodite diem dominicam, quae nos denuo peperit et a peccatis omnibus liberauit. .... Si quis itaque uestrum hanc salubrem exortationem parui penderit aut contemtui tradiderit, sciat se pro qualitatis merito principaliter a deo punire et deinceps sacerdotali quoque irae implacabiliter subiacere; si causedecus fuerit, irreparabiliter causam amittat; si rusticus aut seruus, grauioribus fustium ictibus uerberabitur; si clericus aut monachus, mensibus sex a consortio suspendatur fratrum. Haec namque omnia et placabilem erga nos dei animum reddunt et plagas morborum uel sterelitatum amouent atque repellunt. ... 17. Comperimus multos necdum marcidata mortuorum membra sepulchra reserare et mortuos suos superimponere uel aliorum, quod nefas est, mortuis suis relegiosa loca usurpare, sine uoluntate scilicet domini sepulchrorum. Ideoque statuemus, ut nullus deinceps hoc peragat. Quod si factum fuerit, secundum legum auctoritatem superimposita

according to the authority of the laws let the corpses which have been added be thrown out from the aforesaid burials.		corpora de eisdem tumulis reiactentur.

Gregory of Tours on plague and other epidemics in Gaul, Italy, Spain, ca. 543-ca. 594

By Michael McCormick

0.1 Overview

Gregory, born 538 in the Auvergne region of modern France to a leading family of Clermont-Ferrand (Puy-de-Dôme), was bishop of Tours from 573 until his death ca. 594 (Heinzelmann 2016, 20-30) and a significant figure in the Merovingian kingdoms of his time. The most important Latin historian preserved from the sixth century, his prolific historical and hagiographical works offer the most detailed early medieval narratives in Latin of plague and other epidemic diseases. With rare exceptions (Mordechai and Eisenberg 2019; Faure 2021), modern historians have found his rich historical testimony credible and accurate, albeit shaped by his politics and literary ambitions as well as by the mentality and culture of his time (Goffart 1988, 112-234; Heinzelmann 2001; Reimitz 2015; Murray 2016a).

Gregory's concern with epidemic disease, including the most serious one he encountered, "inguinal epidemic" (*lues inguinaria*), that is, bubonic plague, may go back to his childhood memories of escaping the first epidemic outbreak of the Justinianic Pandemic in his home, sometime between 543 and 547, as well as, possibly, also, smallpox (*Variola major*). Detailed study (McCormick 2021a) shows that his testimony about epidemics --as about other aspects of his times-- is, naturally, inspired by his personal and pastoral concerns. His reports are reliable and informative but also geographically constrained. Of the 22 different places and regions where he knows unambiguously about plague, only four are further than 400 km from his hometown of Clermont (Fig. GT-1). Furthermore, his works include 22 mentions of plague that refer to six different epidemic outbreaks between ca. 543-547 and ca. 591-594; he treats four of these in greater detail (below, nos. 2, 6, 8, 10.2). Among the most salient details to emerge from Gregory of Tours' reports of plague in his lifetime: two epidemics can be dated to springtime, and the initial outbreak has recently been shown as likely to have reached Gaul from a western Mediterranean port (see below, no. 1); contagion mirrors communications infrastructures and affected the countryside as well as towns, which populations tended to flee. Symptoms, epidemiology, and heavy mortality align with the ancient DNA proof from victims in two places where Gregory mentions "inguinal epidemic" that the pathogen was *Yersinia pestis*; pneumonic plague is suggested in two cases.

Gregory also reports many disease outbreaks referred to only as epidemics or with symptoms differing from those of bubonic plague, particularly in Gaul (see below, 0.2, under 464, 563, 577, 580, 582 (twice), 586, 588, 590C), often as evidence for the power of holy men to ward off diseases and protect their towns. He sometimes repeats his descriptions of an event in more than one work, adding or suppressing details; the dates and relations among his different works are controverted. His mentions of earlier outbreaks are only vaguely or implicitly dated, as detailed below. He likely wrote and revised his *Ten Books of Histories* over a number of years; his reporting of events becomes more detailed and precise and, usually, more clearly dated or datable, as he reaches the period when he was writing; his political perspective seems to reflect the situation ca. 590, and he continued writing and revising the *Histories* and, probably, his other works, until his death. Mostly unfinished, his works lack the final polish he may have intended, which can complicate exploiting their testimony (Murray 2008, Murray 2016b; Shaw 2016) .

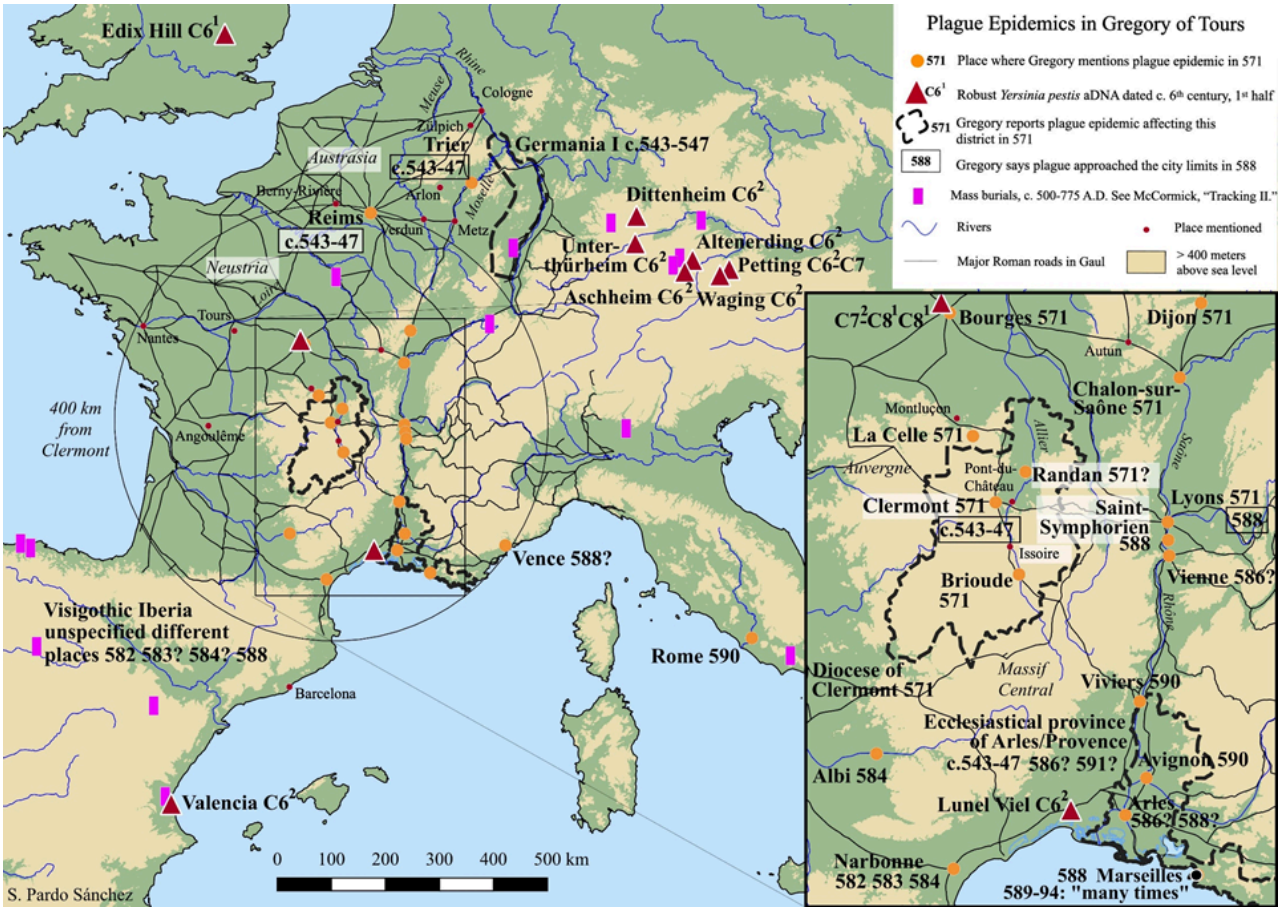

Fig. GT-1. Bubonic plague outbreaks in Gregory of Tours.

0.2 Conspectus of Gregory of Tours' evidence for epidemics including inguinal (bubonic) plague, noxious pustules (smallpox?) and dysentery in their apparent chronological order.

464 CE: a great epidemic (lues) of unspecified nature, apparently in Gaul. See *Hist.* 2.8 (dated by Krusch to 464 and associated with Anjou).

Between 543 and 547: the initial outbreak of plague in southern and central Gaul**,** which so far can be securely dated only between **543 and 547.** Information on this initial outbreak can be found in *Hist*. 5.4; *Life of the Fathers/Liber Vitae patrum*; *Glory of the Martyrs/Liber in gloria martyrum* 50. **See below, Gregory of Tours 2.1-3**

1. Probably in **543/547**, the relics of St. Remigius protected Reims from the outbreak of plague that struck the province of Germania I (more or less the modern middle Rhineland) and, possibly, did not return there before the late 580s: *Glory of the Confessors/Liber in gloria confessorum*, 78 = **see below, Gregory of Tours 2.4**

2. Very probably in **543/547,** plague reached the city limits of Trier**,** under bishop Nicetius (525-85): *Life of the Fathers/Liber Vitae patrum* 17.4 = **see below, Gregory of Tours 2.5**

3. No plague occurred in Clermont between **543/547** and **ca. 551 or later**. There is no implication that plague returned to Clermont immediately ca. 551: *Life of the Fathers/Liber Vitae patrum*, 7 = **see below Gregory of Tours 2.6**

563: An infectious disease characterized by fever and noxious pustules affected Gregory and a subordinate cleric at Clermont; it may have been smallpox (*Variola major*) and it raged considerably further than Clermont: *Miracles of St. Martin* 1.32-33; McCormick 2021a, 57. See below Gregory of Tours 3.

Before 571: omens announced the plague epidemic of 571; the details of the omens and their chronology, along with the absence of plague in Clermont until after St. Gall of Clermont's death (see below Gregory of Tours 2.1 and 2.6) argue that, so far as Gregory knew, Gaul escaped the plague outbreak recorded in the Mediterranean between **558** and **562.** (See above, 3. Overview of primary sources for mortality crises.) For the omens, see below, Gregory of Tours 4.

571 CE: a plague outbreak in Gaul that followed these portents. This, the second plague outbreak in Gaul reported by Gregory, is traditionally, and very probably, correctly, dated to **571**. It is mentioned in four of Gregory's works. See below, Gregory of Tours 5.

1. Gregory gives the most detailed account of the epidemic as it affected Clermont in his *Histories,* 4.31-32; = see below, Gregory of Tours 5.1.

2. A comet in **563** announced that future catastrophe would hit Clermont (in **571**): *On the Course of the Stars/De cursu stellarum ratio*, 34, MGH SRM 1.2.419.16-420.2.

3. *Miracles of St. Julian*, 26a, 132.1-27 reveals that Gregory fled to the shrine of St. Brioude because his personal merits would not suffice to protect him from the epidemic at Clermont. He mentions that two of his slaves fell sick with plague, and one died.= **see below, Gregory of Tours 5.2.**

4. The fourth passage mentioning the **571** epidemic occurs in his *Life of the Fathers*, 9. Although the text is damaged, it shows that the devil tried to trick a woman into averting the plague by giving gifts to a saint. St. Patroculus, an anchorite at La Celle (Allier) sees through the deceit. See below, Gregory of Tours 5.4.

577, Spring: a great epidemic (*lues*) of unspecified nature breaks out in Tours; *Hist*. 5.17, 215.12. See below.

580: a very serious dysenteric epidemic including noxious pustules breaks out across almost all of Gaul: *Hist*. 5.34, 238-241; *Miracles of St. Martin* 2.51-52 and see below, Gregory of Tours 7.

580 Carpitania (area of Toledo) Biraben and Le Goff 1969, 1495, erroneously cite Gregory, Hist. 6.33, as documenting an outbreak of bubonic plague in the area of Toledo. They conflate Gregory's mention of a locust plague in that region reported by king Chilperic II's ambassadors returning from Visigothic Spain and plague in unspecified different places (per loca) of Visigothic Iberia, and especially the three years of plague (lues) at Narbonne, on which see below, Gregory of Tours 8.

582: **Possibly three different epidemics** unambiguously dated to this year:

582A: Tours region? A serious epidemic (*lues*) follows flooding of Loire and other prodigies: *Hist*. 5.41, 248.12-13: see below.

582B: noxious pustules in Gregory's region of central France: *Hist*. 6.14. See below, Gregory of Tours 8.1.

582C: and plague at Narbonne: *Hist*. 6.14-15; *Hist* 7.1; *Life of Martin*, 3.34; cf. *Life of Martin*, 1.32-33. See below, Gregory of Tours 8.1.2.

582-584: **Plague at Narbonne in the Visigothic kingdom**. Chilperic II's returning ambassadors report that Narbonne was especially devastated by plague for three years: when the people who had fled returned to the town, they were killed by plague. Gregory dates these events, including the return of the ambassadors, to year nine of king Chilperic II (584). See below, Gregory of Tours 8.

584, Summer-September: **Plague at Albi**. Gregory describes the death of Salvius, bishop of Albi, during the plague outbreak which killed most of the inhabitants of Albi; he explicitly identifies his death as "this year" (=584 according to the editor). See below, *Hist* 7.1 (Gregory of Tours 8.2).

586: Many bishops die in an unspecified epidemic. See below, Gregory of Tours 9.

588: **Three different epidemics.**

588A: dysenteric epidemic in **Gaul**. See below, *Hist*. 9.13 (Gregory of Tours 10).

588B: unspecified epidemic in **Italy**. See below, *Hist*. 9.20 (Gregory of Tours 10.1).

588C: plague comes from Spain to Marseilles and moves up the **Rhone valley**; possibly related deaths of bishops: see below, *Hist*. 9.21 (Gregory of Tours 10.3)

Approximately 589-594: more plague outbreaks at Marseilles: see below, Gregory of Tours 10.3.

590: **Three different epidemics.**

590A: plague at **Rome**, early in the year. See below, *Hist*. 10.1 (Gregory of Tours 11.1).

590B: plague in **Viviers** (Ardèche, France): see below, *Hist*. 10.23 (Gregory of Tours 11).

590C: A Frankish army that invaded **Italy** suffered an epidemic of dysentery. See below, *Hist*. 10.3 (Gregory of Tours 11.2).

591: Bubonic plague in Marseilles? See below, Gregory of Tours 11.3

1. Gregory of Tours. Great epidemic of unspecified nature that devastated the population, possibly in the Loire region, in or around 464.

Gregory of Tours, *Histories* 2.8 (Krusch and Levison 1951, 65), records an epidemic after a battle of Childeric at Orleans and a Saxon advance on Angers. Marius of Avenches mentions the battle under 463 (*Chronicle*, a. 463, Mommsen 1894, 332), and before the death of Aegidius in 464 (Hydatius, *Continuation of Jerome's Chronicle*, 228, Mommsen 1894, 33). Arndt hypothesized that this information derives from a lost chronicle from Angers (Krusch and Levison 1951, 65n1). Stathakopoulos 2004, 243 no. 70, notes an epidemic at Rome in 467.

Edition: Krusch and Levison 1951, 65.

Date of event: ca. 463.

Date of record: ca. 590.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
A great epidemic wasted the population at that time.	"great epidemic": magna … lues.	Magna tunc lues populum devastavit.

2. Gregory of Tours describes in three different works (Histories 5.4; Life of the Fathers, 6; Glory of the Martyrs, 50) the epidemic of plague that reached southern and central Gaul in or around 543 and certainly no later than 547.

Gregory mentions this epidemic outbreak chiefly because of the miraculous protection of the city of Clermont which he attributes to the sanctity of its then bishop, Gallus I, and his own mother's experience. It is the only plague story that he retells in three different works, allowing clarification of his exact meaning but adding a chronological complication. His accounts reveal that plague affected the Rhone valley and especially the ecclesiastical province of Arles as well as unspecified different regions, that it reached the diocese of Clermont in early spring (and therefore was more likely transmitted to Gaul from a nearby, rather than a distant, Levantine port) and, finally, that it persisted through the summer or recurred in late October.

This outbreak is traditionally dated to 543; it certainly occurred in the period 542-547. The traditional scholarly chronology of Gallus' pontificate depends on the assumption that Gregory is referring here to an outbreak of plague that must have dated to 543; Gallus' death is dated to 551 based on that same assumption combined with the prophecy reported below that he would die eight years after protecting his flock from the plague (e.g., Pietri and Heijmans 2013, 853). In fact, we can only say that Gallus was certainly dead by 555 or 556 at the latest, when his successor Cautinus was involved in the death of Guntharius, bishop of Tours, which means in turn that the prophecy implies that the epidemic occurred in 547 at the latest (Guntharius' approximate date of death can be calculated from the lengths of episcopates of his predecessors carefully recorded by Gregory: Duchesne 1907-1915, 2:306-307; cf. McCormick 2021a, 67). Gregory was a native of Clermont or its region and spent his youth in the church there, so he is very well informed about the local traditions; he must have experienced this outbreak as a small child, as indeed one might suspect from his vivid description of his mother's terror for her family during the outbreak.

The commemorative procession St. Gall founded and described in *Histories* 4.5 and *Life of the Fathers* 6 suggests that the plague became known to Clermont early in March which, in light of the considerable travel time from the eastern Mediterranean and then up the Rhone, makes 542 very unlikely as the earliest date that the Pandemic could have reached Clermont. Therefore, the contagion reached Gaul in early March in some year between 543 and 547.

In the *Glory of the Martyrs*, 50, Gregory unambiguously dates to November his mother's terrifying dream that she interpreted as the impending destruction of her household. The bishop is not likely to have mistaken either the date of a major liturgical celebration in the church in which he spent his early career, nor an event in his own life. One possible interpretation is that the liturgical celebration was arbitrarily fixed in the Lenten season, and that this first outbreak of plague actually reached southern and central France around November. In my opinion, a more likely interpretation would be that the first outbreak of plague in this region lasted from March until November, i.e., eight months. This contrasts with the duration of the initial outbreak of the plague in Constantinople (four months, see above), but may make sense for describing the presence of plague in an extensive region.

The sudden marking or "painting" of houses and churches may be another case of "blood rain," a well-known meteorological phenomenon in which air masses transport Saharan dust and deposit it across Europe; when the dust is iron-rich and exposed to water, it turns red, and was interpreted in Antiquity and the Middle Ages as an omen. Gregory himself records such a case in 582 (*Hist.* 6.14). If this is correct, these passages of Gregory document the arrival of a (warm) Saharan air mass over central France in November, probably of 543, and in any case between 543 and 548. See in general Dutton 2008; Bohleber et al. 2018. A warm air mass so late in the year could be relevant to the duration of the outbreak. The following entries look at the different versions of this report more closely.

2.1 Gregory of Tours describes the outbreak of plague in southern and central Gaul in or around 543 and certainly no later than 547.

Version 1: the *Histories* 4.5.

Although the rest of the broader region was devastated, so long as Gallus lived, Clermont was spared deaths from the plague thanks to his prayers; an annual procession on foot to the shrine of St. Julian, some ca. 60 km from Clermont, was founded in thanksgiving and celebrated in mid-Lent. If, as discussed above, the date chosen for the commemoration reflected the original threat of plague, the plague arrived in central Gaul in the spring that year. In 543, mid-Lent occurred in the week of Monday March 9. This record therefore documents that plague was raging in various regions known to Gregory, and among them, especially the province of Arles. At this date, the ecclesiastical province of Arles comprised, in addition to Arles itself, the dioceses of Vaison, Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux/Orange, Cavaillon, Carpentras, Apt, Gap, Sisteron, and Embrun (Duchesne 1907-1915, 1:136-137).

Given Gregory's own association with Clermont, as well as that of some of his likely readers, it is unlikely that he could have invented and trumpeted in multiple places the absence of the plague from the region of Clermont. Something about the transmission and communications network that year therefore gave his native region special protection from contagion. Gregory's report further implies that there was no plague in Clermont until sometime after 551-555. If the Pandemic indeed was raging in the spring, assuming the typical seaborne transmission and given seasonal Mediterranean shipping patterns, ships arriving, e.g., at Marseilles in early March of 543 were likely not coming from distant ports such as Alexandria, Constantinople or even Carthage, for this would imply setting sail from those ports in February or even January, something that would have been highly exceptional (McCormick 2001, 450-468). The further implication would be that the contagion reached the ports of southern Gaul from Spain, Italy or, possibly, Africa.

Edition: *Hist.* 4.5, ed. Krusch and Levison 1951, 138.8-25.

Date of event: 543-547.

Date of record: ca. 590.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
4.5. In the time [of bishop Gallus I], when the epidemic which they call bubonic was raging across different regions and was especially devastating the province of Arles, holy Gallus was fearful, not so much for himself as for his people. And while he was praying day and night that he should not live to see his flock be devastated, an angel of the lord appeared to him in a vision during the night. His hair and clothing were as white as snow and he said to him: “You are doing well, bishop, *to beseech the Lord on behalf of your people*. Your prayer has been heard. And behold: you and your people will be delivered from this sickness and, so long as you are alive, no one living in this region will die from this slaughter. So do not fear now. But after eight years, be afraid.” Whence it was clear that, when these years had passed, he would depart from this life.	“epidemic”: *lues.* See above, Note on terminology. “which they call bubonic”: *quam inguinariam vocant:* see above, Note on terminology.	4.5. Huius tempore cum lues illa quam inguinariam vocant per diversas regiones desaeviret et maxime tunc Arelatensim provinciam depopularet, sanctus Gallus non tantum pro se quantum pro populo suo trepidus erat. Cumque die noctuque Dominum deprecaretur, ut vivens plebem suam vastari non cernerit, per visum noctis apparuit ei angelus Domini, qui tam caesariem quam vestem in similitudinem nivis candidam efferebat, et ait ad eum: "Bene enim facis, o sacerdos, *quod sic Dominum pro populo tuo supplicas.* Exaudita est enim oratia tua; et ecce! eris cum populo tuo ab hac infirmitate liberatus, nullusque te vivente in regione ista ab hac strage deperiet. Nunc autem *ne timeas*; post octo vero annos time". Unde manifestum fuit, transactis his annis eum a saeculo discessisse.
He awakened and, thanking God for this consolation, that He deigned to comfort him through this heavenly messenger, he founded those rogation processions that in the middle of Lent go on foot singing psalms to the basilica of St. Julian the martyr. This is about 360 stadia	In classical sources, the measurement of a Roman *stadium* is ca. 185 m, which yields a distance of 66.6 km, close indeed to the distance that can be measured along the approximate route of the Roman road on MAPS (ca. 41 Roman miles, i.e., ca. 61 km). This is an	Expergefactus autem et Deo gratias pro hac consolatione agens, quod *eum* per caelestem nuntium confortare dignatus est, rogationes illas instituit, ut media quadragesima psallendo ad basilicam beati Iuliani martyris itinere pedestri venirent.

away.	extraordinary length for a liturgical procession, giving insight into the fear that the disease outbreak brought.	Sunt autem in hoc itinere quasi stadia 360.
Then also, the walls of both houses and churches were seen to be marked by a sudden appearance, for which reason this writing was called a Thau by ignorant people.	In the parallel version of this story in *Glory of the Martyrs*, 50, Gregory seems to have feared the text would be unclear, for he states there that the walls "were marked and painted" (signarentur atque **caraxarentur, 74.2)** "Ignorant people": *rusticus* in Gregory refers often simply to an "ignorant person" (Bonnet 1890, 26); one might doubt how many country folk (*rustici*) would spontaneously think of the Latin text of Ezekiel 9.4, where the avenging angels killed all those who had not been marked by the Greek letter *tau*. Cf. Vulgate Psalms according to the Hebrews, 36.38 on tau and the protection of the just. *Glory of the Martyrs*, 50, might suggest that Gregory's neighbors whose houses had been marked by in the Limagne region east of the city suffered losses, while his own house, apparently unmarked certainly did not, by his account. Thus the mysterious markings in the Auvergne did not correspond to the Biblical *tau*, which explains why Gregory taxes those who assimilated the two as "rustics (ignorant people)." "this writing": what was the neuter in classical Latin had	Tunc etiam in subita contemplatione parietes vel domorum vel ecclesiarum signari videbantur, unde a rusticis hic scriptos Thau vocabatur.

	become masculine in late popular Latin: Bonnet 1890, 346.	
Although, as we have said, that epidemic consumed those regions, thanks to the intercession of St. Gallus' prayers, it did not reach the city of Clermont.	"epidemic": *lues* Gregory here contrasts the regions devastated by the plague with the city (*civitas*) of Clermont. Throughout his works, he uses the word *civitas* in both its traditional sense, designating both the built up center as well as all the rural territory subjected to the center (i.e. the modern ecclesiastical term "diocese") and more narrowly, to refer to the urban nucleus itself: Longnon 1878, 7-8. Since the angel's message states that no one in this region will die from plague (above), Gregory may be using the term "city" in a sense which is more extensive than the built-up center of the diocese. Nevertheless, he states explicitly in *Glory of the Martyrs*, 50, that this epidemic reached the region of Clermont, the Auvergne.	Cum autem regiones illas, ut diximus, lues illa consumeret, ad civitatem Arvernam, sancti Galli intercedente oratione, non attigit.
Which is why I reckon it no small grace that deserved that while he was in place as shepherd, through the Lord's protection, he did not see his flock devoured.	"grace that deserved": *qui* here is used in the non-declined absolute form of Late and Popular Latin for the subject case, and modifies the feminine antecedent *gratia* (Väänänen 1981, 125).	Unde ego non parvam censeo gratiam, qui hoc meruit, ut pastor positus oves suas devorari defendente Domino non videret.

2.2 Gregory of Tours describes the outbreak of plague in southern and central Gaul in or around 543 and certainly no later than 547. Version 2: the *Book of the Life of the Fathers*, 6.

The plague affected various regions, and it especially devastated the province of Arles.

Edition: *Life of the Fathers* 6, Krusch 1969, 234.15-235.1

Date of event: 543-547.

Date of record: ca. 590.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
When the epidemic which they call bubonic was raging across different regions and was especially ravaging at that time the province of Arles, holy Gallus was fearful, not so much for himself as for his people. And while he was praying day and night that he should not live to see his flock be devastated, an angel of the lord appeared to him in a vision during the night, who had both hair and clothing as white as snow, and he said to him: “Divine piety is looking well on you, bishop, as you plead on behalf of your people, for your prayer has been heard. And behold: you and your people will be delivered from this sickness and, so long as you are alive, no one living in this region will die from this slaughter. Do not fear now. But after eight years, be afraid.” Whence it was clear that, when these years had passed, he would depart from this life.	“epidemic which they call bubonic”: *lues illa quam inguinariam vocant*. See above, Note on terminology.	Cum autem lues illa quam inguinariam vocant per diversas regiones desaeviret et maximae tunc Arelatensim provintiam depopularet, sanctus Gallus non tantum pro se quantum pro populo suo trepidus erat. Cumque die noctuque Dominum deprecaretur, ut vivens plebem suam vastari non cerneret, per visum noctis apparuit ei angelus Domini, qui tam caesariem quam vestem in similitudine nivis candidam efferebat et ait ad eum: "Bene enim te, o sacerdos, prospectat divina pietas pro populo tuo supplicantem; ideoque ne timeas, exaudita est enim oratio tua; et ecce eris cum populo tuo ab hac infirmitate liberatus, nullusque, te vivente, in regione ista ab hac strage deperiet. Nunc autem noli metuere; post octo vero annos time". Unde manifestum fuit, transactis his annis eum a saeculo

		discessisse.
He awakened and, thanking God for this consolation, that He deigned to bring comfort through a heavenly messenger, he founded those rogation processions that in the middle of Lent go on foot singing psalms to the basilica of St. Julian the martyr [at Brioude]. This is about 360 stadia away.	On the distance, see above.	Expergefactus autem et Deo gratias pro hac consolatione agens, quod [et] per caelestem nuntium confortare dignatus est, rogationes illas instituit, ut media quadragesima psallendo ad basilicam beati Iuliani martyris itinere pedestri venirent. Sunt autem in hoc itenere quasi stadia 360.
While, as we have said, that pestilence was consuming the other regions, thanks to the intercession of St. Gallus' prayer, it did not reach the city of Clermont.	"pestilence": *lues*.	Cum autem regiones alias, ut diximus, lues illa consumeret, ad civitatem Arvernam, sancti Galli intercedente oratione, non attigit.
Which is why I reckon it no small grace that deserved that while he was in place as shepherd, through the Lord's protection he did not see his flock to be devoured.	"grace that deserved": *qui* here is used in the non-declined absolute form of Late and Popular Latin for the subject case, and modifies the feminine antecedent *gratia* (Väänänen 1981, 125)	Unde ego non parvam censeo gratiam, qui hoc meruit, ut pastor positus, oves suas devorari, defendente Domino, non videret.

2.3 Gregory of Tours describes the outbreak of plague in southern and central Gaul that reached the Auvergne in or around 543 and certainly no later than 547.

Version 3: *Book of the Glory of the Martyrs*, 50.

This version is more personal than the two previous, and clearly reflects the influence of Gregory's mother Armentaria on her son, who was four or five years old when the epidemic struck Gaul. This version alone states explicitly that the epidemic reached the region of Auvergne, even if the episcopal center of Clermont was spared. Gregory's family seems to have resided in the

Limagne region, east of Clermont (Heinzelmann 2016, 20), and this is probably where the miraculous preservation of his household occurred. The fact that the mysterious markings (very possibly reflecting a Saharan Dust Event, see McCormick 2021, 69) were interpreted, as Gregory has Armentaria imply, the fate of houses in an approaching "blow" or plague and that, as Gregory states, his household remained safe even though the neighbors' houses had been marked (probably implying that his had not been marked), further might suggest that households around theirs suffered losses. Gregory's point is that the absence of presence of the markings in Clermont differed from the *tau* that protected the righteous from the biblical visitation of death in Ezekiel.

Edition: *Book of the Glory of the Martyrs*, 50, Krusch 1969, 73.34-74.3.

Date of event: 543-547.

Date of record: ca. 590.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
When that bubonic epidemic which was driven was driven off by the prayer of holy Gallus the bishop reached the Clermont region and the walls of houses and churches were marked and painted in a sudden beholding, it appeared to my mother in a night vision as if the wine stored in our cellars had become blood.	"When…reached": *Cum… adveniret*. Gregory uses the subjunctive with cum where classical authors would prefer the indicative; it bears a nuance of generalization and, perhaps, repeated occurrences. See Bonnet 1890, 684-685. "that bubonic epidemic": *lues illa inguinaria.* See above, Note on terminology.	73.34-74.3 Cum autem ad Arvernam regionem lues illa inguinaria adveniret, quae sancti Galli episcopi oratione depulsa est, et in subita contemplatione parietes domorum atque eclesiarum signarentur atque caraxarentur, matri meae apparuit in visu noctis quasi vinum, quod in apothecis nostris habebatur, sanguis esset effectus.
While she was weeping and saying, "Woe is me, because my house has been marked for a blow, a certain man said to her: "You do know that tomorrow, which will be November 1, the passion of the martyr Benignus will be celebrated?" "I know," she said. "Go," he said, "and perform a vigil all night long in his honor and have a Mass celebrated, and	"Marked for a blow: *signata est plagae.* The Latin word for "blow" is the origin of our word "plague" and may already have acquired this sense here and below. See our note on terminology. "Have a Mass celebrated":	Cui lamentanti ac dicenti: "Vae mihi, quia signata est plagae domus mea", ait ei vir quidam: "Nosti", inquid, "quod post pridie, quod erit in Kalendis Novembris, passio Benigni martyris caelebrabitur?" "Novi", ait. "Vade", inquid, "et vigila totam noctem in honore ac revoca missas, et liberaberis a plaga".

you will be delivered from the blow." She woke up from the dream and did what she had been ordered to do, although the neighbors' houses had been marked, our house remained untouched.	*revocare missas*: for the translation, see Krusch 1969, 460, s.v. *missa, missae* and 146n6. "Tomorrow": *post pridie:* In classical Latin, post pridie should mean "(day) after the preceding day," i.e., "the day after tomorrow." However, late usage sometimes confused this expression with postridie, i.e., "tomorrow." See [Barbara] Suter, Thesaurus linguae Latinae, 10.2:1229–32, at 1230, s.v. *pridie*, 1.b.e. The nightmare thus occurred on 30 or 31 October (McCormick 2021a 69n159). "blow": *plaga*. "although the neighbors' houses had been marked, our house remained untouched": *signatisque vicinorum domibus, domus nostra inviolata permansit*. Gregory implies that his house had not been marked by the mysterious signs, and presumes that the reader knows the story of Ezekiel 9.4 (*above, comment on previous version of event*), that the Lord's avenging angels killed all those whose houses had not been marked by a sign. This might further imply that the neighboring houses which had been "painted" suffered losses, so that the marking did not really parallel the Biblical miracle advanced by the ignorant.	Expergefacta autem a somno, implevit quae sibi fuerant imperata, signatisque vicinorum domibus, domus nostra inviolata permansit.

2.4 Gregory of Tours, for A.D. 543? Certainly between 543 and 593/4: the relics of St. Remigius (d. 532/3) protect Reims, in Belgica II, from the plague that hit "Germania I," and presumably transited via Belgica I. Probably ca. 543.

Last among the miracles that Gregory's *Glory of the Confessors*, 78, attributes to St. Remigius, bishop of Reims, during his lifetime (ca. 436-533) or afterward, is his posthumous defense of Reims from plague, when "bubonic epidemic (lues) was raging in Germania Prima (I)." Since the ecclesiastical hierarchy of which Gregory was a proud leader was modeled on the Roman imperial administrative geography, he presumably used the term "Germania I" knowingly to refer to, in modern terms, approximately the left bank of the Middle Rhine valley (McCormick 2021a, 70). The presence of plague in the Merovingian Rhineland likely also relates to the plague outbreak Gregory mentions in connection with Trier (see 4.3).

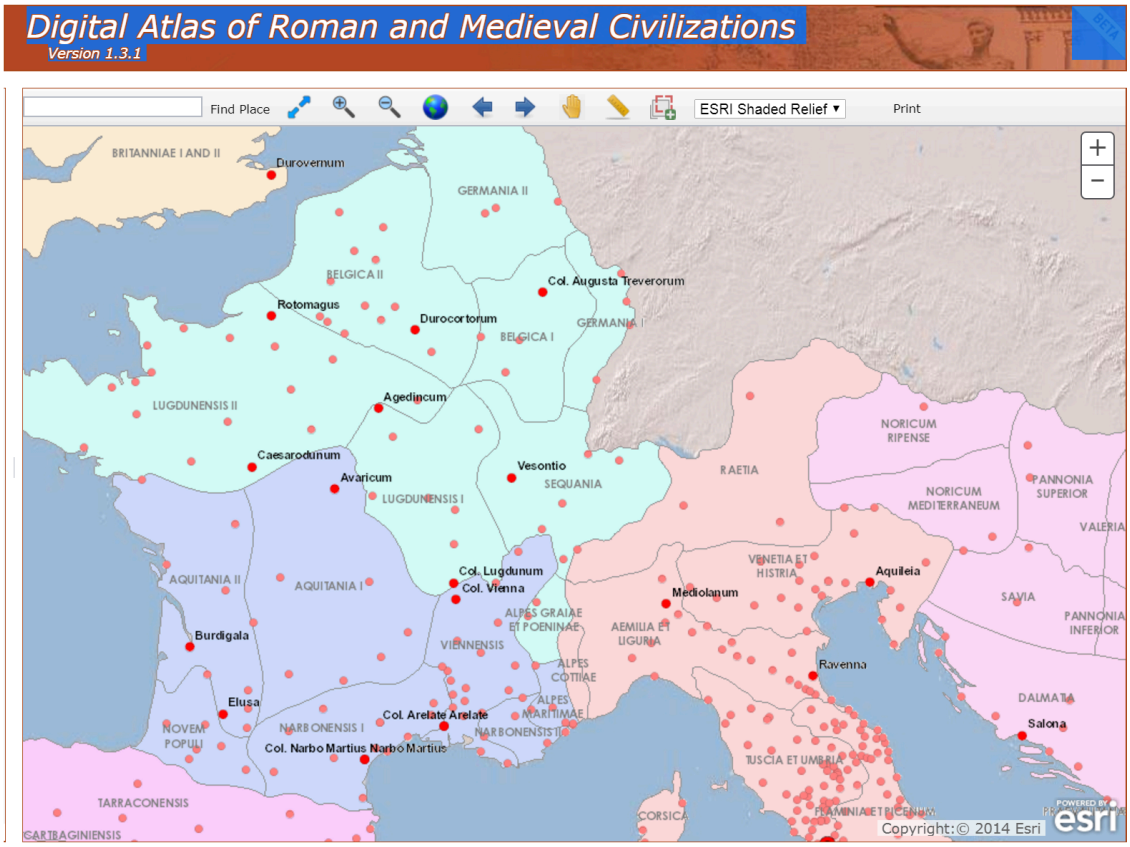

Fig. GT-2. Provinces of Late Roman and Merovingian Gaul.

The strictest interpretation of the unspecified chronology of this event is that it occurred some time between the initial outbreak of plague in Gaul, presumably ca. 543 (see above) and

Gregory' death in 594, since he seems continuously to have revised and added to his works in the course of his life. However, the phrase "quod illud gestum est tempore, cum lues inguinaria populum primae Germaniae devastaret" should be translated "what happened in *the* time when a bubonic epidemic wasted the population of Germania Prima." This implies that, at the moment of writing this section (sometime between presumably the 580s and 594), the plague had hit the population of Germania Prima only once (for details, see McCormick 2021a, 71-72). The further implication is that plague broke out there only once, i.e., that, as far as Gregory knew, the plague struck at least one less time in that region, compared to his own, where it was known in ca. 543-547 and 571, as well as reappearing in the Rhone valley in 588.

According to Gregory, the plague progressed right up to the city limits of Reims, suggesting that it spread from Germania I via Belgica I to Belgica II. This, joined with the apparent solitary outbreak in northeastern Gaul, invites us to link this outbreak with that reported in the vicinity of Trier, in Belgica I. See below.

Edition: Krusch 1969, 345.20-346.12.

Date of event: 543? before ca. 590.

Date of record: ca. 590.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
Nor is it right to omit what happened in the time when the bubonic epidemic was devastating the population of Germania Prima. When everyone was terrified at hearing about this disaster, the people of Reims ran together to the tomb of the saint to beseech a remedy fitting to this thing. Lighting candles and not a few lamps, they stood vigil all night long with hymns and heavenly psalms. And when morning came, a discussion considered what might still be lacking in the praying. And so they identified through divine revelation, how, following prayer, the town could be fortified by an	"what happened in the time when..." *illud gestum est tempore*: *illud* seems to be used for *illo*, as indeed some medieval copyists thought; cf. the nearly identical phrase and word order "praesenti gestum est tempore" *Hist*. 10.25, 517.17. "this disaster": *huius cladis. Clades* means "destruction," "disaster," "slaughter" and seems to derive from a root meaning "to be slaughtered": Ernout 2001, 124, s.v. It is frequently used of military operations and in the context of epidemic death; on the latter, e.g., Lucretius 6.1125; it was glossed in antiquity as	Sed nec illud sileri placuit, quod illud gestum est tempore, cum lues inguinaria populum primae Germaniae devastaret. Cum autem omnes terrerentur huius cladis auditu, concurrit Remensium populus ad sancti sepulchrum, congruum huius causae flagitare remedium. Accensis cereis lichnisque non paucis, hymnis psalmisque caelestibus per totam excubat noctem. Mane autem facto, quid adhuc precatui desit, in tractatu rimatur; repperiunt etenim, revelante Deo, qualiter, oratione praemissa, adhuc maiori propugnaculo urbs pro pugnacula munirentur. Adsumpta igitur palla

even greater rampart as its defences. So they took the draping from the tomb of the saint, and put it together in the fashion of a litter; and, when they had lighted candles and candelabras on top of crosses, they raised their voices in canticles, and processed around the town with its settlements. Nor did they pass any home that they did not include in this circuit. What more can I say? After not many days, the aforementioned epidemic came to the boundaries of this diocese. But coming right up to the spot where the relic of the saint had come, as if it perceived an established boundary, not only did it not dare to enter inside, but pushed back by his power, it also left the places that it had penetrated at the outset.	"catastrophe" and with various terms for epidemic disease: *Thesaurus linguae latinae* 3:1240:61-62. It is frequently used in late antiquity for epidemics, particularly of plague, such as, e.g., omens for plague of 571. "epidemic": lues. "boundaries of this diocese": *fines huius civitatis*. Gregory uses *civitas* for both the built-up center of the administrative territory of a bishopric and for the overall territory or diocese: Longnon 1878, 8-13. Here the context and the reference to *fines* make clear that he is referring to the diocese.	de beati sepulchro, conponunt in modum feretri; accensisque super cruces cereis atque cereferalibus, dant voces in canticis, circumeunt urbem cum vicis. Nec praetereunt ullum hospitium, quem non hac circuitione concludant. Quid plura? Non post multos dies fines huius civitatis lues adgreditur memorata. Verum tamen usque ad eum locum accedens, quo beati pignus accessit, et si constitutum cerneret terminum, intro ingredi non modo non est ausa, sed etiam quae in principio pervaserat huius virtutis repulsu reliquid.

2.5 Gregory of Tours writes that plague reached the borders of Trier, 543? Certainly before 573.

Plague reaches the borders of Trier, under bishop Nicetius (525-585), *Life of the Fathers* 17.4, ed. Krusch 1969, 281.13-23. Gregory says his informant was Aridius, abbot of Limoges, who was raised and tonsured by Nicetius: 17 praef., 277.23-29, and died in 591 (Krusch 277n3). Aridius left Trier some time before 572, when he drew up his will, and probably considerably before 572 (McCormick 2021a, 73).

The brief biography recounts the holy bishop's power in fasting and praying incognito long nights in different shrines around Trier. After an exorcism performed in the middle of the night at the shrine of St. Maximinus, and before a miracle of a huge fish catch in a broken trap in order to make a present to the king, Gregory describes the miraculous revelation of the spiritual defenses of Trier against plague. The passage shows that demons were believed to be spreading the plague.

The location of the mysterious thunderclap on the Roman bridge over the Moselle at Trier may hint that Aridius and other locals connected the contagion with river shipping, although the mention of the gates and extramural burial complexes of the late Roman bishops to the north and south of the city points to fear of contagion from the Roman road system also.

If indeed Gregory's failure to specify which outbreak this was suggests that he reckoned it "the" outbreak in these regions, it probably refers to the initial waves of plague. Combined with 2.4 on the plague at Reims, this passage would then show that the disease was moving along the Rhine axis first, and then into Belgica I and Trier, presumably up the Moselle river. Whether it was moving up or down the Rhine is not clear. This passage underscores the terror that news of the disease caused, and significance of spiritual authority and protection when all other forms of protection failed. It also indicates that the town of Trier, if not the environs, was spared, for reasons that are not clear.

Edition: *Life of the Fathers* 17.4, ed. Krusch 1969, 281.13-23.

Date of event: 543? before ca. 573.

Date of record: ca. 590.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
When the inguinal epidemic was devastating terribly Trier population who lived in the area surrounding the city, and God's bishop [Nicetius] was beseeching unceasingly the Lord's mercy for the flock entrusted to him, there was a loud noise at night like a powerful thunderclap above the bridge over the [Moselle] river, such that one might have thought that the city was swallowed up. When the whole population sat up, terrified, in their beds, expecting fatal death, a voice was heard, clearer than the others amidst the noise: "And what will we do here, my companions? At one gate Bishop Eucharius		Cum autem lues inguinaria Trevericum populum in circuitu civitatis valde vastaret, et sacerdos Dei pro ovibus conmissis Domini misericordiam inploraret assidue, factus est sonus de nocte magnus tamquam tonitruum validum super pontem amnis, ita ut putaretur urbs ipsa dehiscere. Cumque omnis populus exterritus in lectulis resedisset, letifero eis interitum operiens, audita est in medio rumoris vox una ceteris clarior, dicens: "Et quid hic, o socii, faciemus? Ad unam enim portam Eucharius sacerdos observat, ad aliam Maximinus excubat, in medio

watches, at the other Maximinus keeps guard, in the middle Nicetius stays busy. We cannot achieve anything beyond here unless we leave this town to their protection." When this voice was heard, the sickness immediately stilled, and no one else died from it. Whence there is no doubt that it [the town] was protected by the aforementioned prelate's power.	"and no one else died from it": *nullusque ab eo ultra defunctus est*. The phrasing makes clear that others had already died in the area around Trier. "Whence there is no doubt that it [the town] was protected by the power of the aforementioned prelate." As written the grammar literally would be translated "that the power of the aforementioned prelate has been defended." Since the final *m* in *virtutem* would in any case have been silent and the very next word starts with *m-*, Gregory likely was using the ablative here, as he does elsewhere, and *defensam* modifies an implicit *urbem*, understood from the words of the demon. Cf. the similar contexts in *Histories* 5.25, 231.1, 6.7, 277.4, 9.9, 423.19; *Miracles of St. Martin*, 2.59, 179.7.	versatur Nicetius; nihil hic ultra praevalere possumus, nisi sinamus hanc urbem eorum tuitioni". Haec voce audita, statim morbus quievit, nullusque ab eo ultra defunctus est. Unde non ambigitur, virtutem memorati antestitis fuisse defensam.

2.6 Gregory of Tours. Clermont after 551-555: plague implicitly returns (sometime) after death of Gallus I

See above, Gregory of Tours 2.1-3. Gallus dies of a high fever accompanied by loss of hair. Gregory does not suggest he died of plague; the prophecy that plague would not strike Clermont so long as he lived was apparently fulfilled, since Gregory insists on it in works whose audience will have included his contemporaries in his hometown of Clermont: No plague occurred in Clermont between **543/547** and **ca. 551 or later** (see above, Gregory of Tours 2). There is no implication that plague returned to Clermont immediately ca. 551: *Life of the Fathers*, 6.7, 235. Combining this information with the chronology of the portents of the epidemic of 571 in Gaul (see below Gregory of Tours 5), allows us to deduce that Gregory was probably not aware of any further plague outbreaks in Gaul between the first epidemic of 543/547 and that of 571.

3. Gregory of Tours. Clermont and Tours, 563 Gregory suffers from and is cured of an infectious illness of noxious pustules.

Gregory dates this illness carefully, but does not explicitly say that it was an epidemic. That his cleric suffered from it also certainly shows it was contagious and, possibly, epidemic. Gregory fell sick at Clermont, as did at least one of his clergy (Armentarius, who shares the name of Gregory's mother (Heinzelmann 1994, 13-14) and was therefore presumably a relative). Gregory insists on making a pilgrimage from Clermont to the shrine of St. Martin at Tours, if only to be buried there. At Tours they both are cured. The symptoms he experienced were noxious pustules, fever, weakness, a sense of being near death, loss of appetite and thirst that went on for about 40 days (the period when he had lost his taste for wine). His cleric became mentally incompetent. Although Gregory does not explicitly identify their illnesses as part of an epidemic, the symptoms recall smallpox (McCormick 2021a, 57 and 60).

Edition: *Miracles of St. Martin* 1.32-1.33, Krusch 1969, 153.25-154.35.

Date of event: 563.

Date of record: ca. 573-581. See Shaw 2016, 107-110.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
So, having laid out what has occurred with respect to other, let me turn to what the power of this patron effected for unworthy me. In the 163 year after the ascent of the holy and praiseworthy gentleman holy Martin the bishop, when bishop Eufronius was directing the church of Tours for the 7th year, in year 2 of the most glorious king Sigibert, I lapsed into sickness with noxious pustules and fever and, being unable to eat or drink, I was taken to such a state that, having lost all hope of the present life, I was thinking exclusively of what was needed for my burial. For death besieged my soul with	"unremitting eagerness":	1.32 Ergo his exactis quae circa alios gesta sunt, adgrediar quae circa me indignum virtus praesentis est operata patroni. Anno centesimo sexagesimo tertio post assumtionem sancti ac praedicabilis viri beati Martini antestitis, regente eclesiam Turonicam sancto Eufronio episcopo anno septimo, secundo anno Sigiberthi gloriosissimi regis, inrui in valitudinem cum pustulis malis et febre, negatoque usu poti atque cibi, ita agebar, ut, amissa omni spe vitae praesentis, de solis sepulturae necessariis cogitarem. Obsedebat enim mors assidua

unremitting eagerness, desiring to drive the soul from my body. Then, already really half dead, I called on the name of holy bishop Martin and recovered a bit. With an effort that was still slow, I began to prepare a trip, for the idea had taken root in my mind that I ought to visit the place of his venerable tomb. I was so overcome by this desire that it mattered not to me whether I would live if I delayed departing. And I who had barely escaped the burning of the sickness, began to be ignited again by the fever of desire.	*Obsedebat enim mors assidua cum ardore*. Although one might be tempted to construe *assidua* with *mors*, nouns in *–or* which had been masculine in the classical period have frequently become feminine, as they remain in French today (cf. *ardeur*; also Bonnet 1890, 503-504). Gregory uses the elegant word order "modifying adjective + cum + modified noun" sparingly. Cf. e.g., *Miracles of St. Martin*, 1.11, 145.18: *maiori cum munere*.	cum ardore, animam cupiens expugnare de corpore. Tunc iam valde exanimus, invocato nomine beati Martini antistitis, parumper convalui et lento adhuc conamine iter incipio praeparare; insederat enim animis, ut locum venerabilis sepulchri visitare deberem. Unde tanto desiderio adfectus sum, ut nec vivere me oporterem, si tardius direxissem. Et qui vix evaseram ex ardore incommodi, coepi iterum desiderii febre succendi.
And without delay, though still weak, I set out on the trip with my people. When we had only traveled 2 or 3 stages, I entered the forests, and I again came down with fever and began to fare so badly that everyone was saying that I was dying. Then my friends came up to me and said: "Let's go home, and if God wants to call you, die in your own home. But if you escape, you can very easily fulfill the vow of your trip. It is better to go home than to die in the wilderness." [Nevertheless Gregory persuaded his companions to continue, even if he should die at Tours. They continue and reach the shrine.]		Nec mora, adhuc parum fortis iter cum meis arripio, actasque vel duas aut tres mansiones, ingressus silvas, corrui rursum febre et tam graviter agere coepi, ut omnes me autumarent vitam amittere. Tunc accedentes amici, videntes me valde lassum, dicebant: "Revertamur ad propria, et si te Deus vocare voluerit, in domo tua morere; si autem evadis, votivum iter facilius explicas. Satius est enim reverti ad domum quam mori in heremo".

1.33. At that time, one of my clerics, Armentarius by name…who was energetic in service and faithful in what was entrusted to him, when the poison set in, had lost his mind completely from the malignant pustules and was driven to such a state that he could neither understand nor do anything at all. The third night after we reached the holy basilica, we decided to make a vigil, which we did. When morning came, and the signal had been given for matins, we returned to our lodging. Resting in our beds, we slept almost until 8 AM. I awakened and all bitterness of weakness and heart was gone, and I felt that I have recovered my earlier health. Rejoicing, I called the household slave who served me. But Armentarius got up quickly and stood before me, saying, “Master, I will obey your command.” But thinking he was still lacking his senses, I said, “If you are able, call a slave.” And he said: “I will do whatever you order.” Stunned, I asked what this meant. He said: “I understand that I am quite well, but my mind fails on one thing: how did I get here?” And he set about serving me just as he had been accustomed to do before the bad experience. … Nor will I omit this, that for the first time in 40 days, I enjoyed		1.33. Eo tempore unus ex clericis meis Armentarius nomine, bene eruditus in spiritalibus scripturis, … in servitio valde strenuus et in commisso fidelis, inficiente veneno, a pustulis malis sensum omnem perdiderat et ita redactus fuerat, ut nihil penitus aut intellegere possit aut agere. Tertia vero nocte postquam advenimus ad sanctam basilicam, vigilare disposuimus; quod inplevimus. Tertia vero nocte postquam advenimus ad sanctam basilicam, vigilare disposuimus; quod inplevimus. Mane autem facto, signo matutinis horis conmonito, reversi fuimus ad metatum. Qui lectulis quiescentes, usque ad horam prope secundam dormivimus. Expergefactus ego, amota omnem languoris et cordis amaritudinem, sentio me praestinam recepisse salutem, et gaudens puerum familiarem, qui mihi serviret, evoco. Exsurgens autem Armentarius velociter, coram me stetit et ait: "Domine, ego parebo quod iusseris". At ego aestimans eum adhuc esse exsensim, aio: "Si potes, voca puerum". Et ait: "Ego quaecumque praeceperis adimplebo". Obstupefactus interrogo, quid hoc

drinking wine, although, thanks to the illness, I had until now I had found it repugnant.		esset. Qui ait: "Intellego me valde sanum; sed unus error est animi, quod nescio, de qua hic parte advenerim". Et incipiens, ita mihi inpendit servitium, sicut erat solitus ante taedium. Tunc ego exultans et flens prae gaudio, gratias omnipotenti Deo tam pro me quam pro ipso refero, quod, intercedente patrono, incolomem me corpore, illum mente reddiderit, et unus occursus ex fide etiam alteri amenti, qui nec petere noverat, praestetisset. Sed nec hoc praeteribo, quod post dies quadraginta eodem die primo vinum delectatus sum bibere, cum illud, faciente incommodo, usque tunc exosum habuerim.

4. Gregory of Tours South central Gaul: omens of coming disaster --plague-- proliferate from 563-565 until the outbreak of 571.

Gregory, *Histories*, 163.17-164.18: Gregory devotes this chapter (*Hist*. 4.31) to the outbreak of plague in Clermont and to the omens which preceded it. The implication of the prodigies foreshadowing the plague is that Gregory did not know of any outbreaks of plague in his home region of Gaul between 563 and 571. Given the absence of plague in Clermont also implied by Gregory of Tours 2.6 between 543 and 551-555, it is probable that plague was absent from the Clermont region from 543 to 571. That is reinforced by the link Gregory draws in *On the course of the stars*, between a “year-long” comet that occurred “before” the otherwise unspecified outbreak at Clermont. This would explain Gregory’s horror and detailed description of the mortality there in 571, since it would then have been the first time he experienced plague as an adult.

1. 563: Tsunami on lake Geneva and the Rhone river. A prodigy occurred in the territory of the fortified settlement (*castrum*) of Tauredunum on the Rhone in the Valais of modern Switzerland. After a strange groaning sound had been heard for more than 60 days, a mountain

collapsed, causing a huge landslide of the settlement into the Rhone, and producing a tsunami in Lake Geneva which destroyed the low-lying areas of Geneva and other lakeside settlements: Marius of Avenches, ed. Mommsen 1894, 237, a contemporary, records the same event under the year 563, supplying the date. Kremer et al. 2012 detected an important geological deposit on the bottom of Lake Geneva radiocarbon dated AD 381-612, which they identify as the result of this event and use to reconstruct its details.

2. Further prodigies terrified the region of Clermont before the mortality (*cladem*); see McCormick 2021a, 63-64:

   a. *Hist*. 4.31, 164.18-165.2: Frequent appearance of three or four halos (*splendores*: lit. "brightnesses") around the sun that ignorant people call "suns." On the phenomenon of such halos, and their frequency particularly in springtime, in Gaul, see Weiss 2003. Gregory does not specify the year.

   b. A solar eclipse on October 1 of an unspecified year: *Hist*. 4.31, 165.2-5. Gregory reports that ¾ of the sun was darkened on the Kalends of October. This has been identified as the eclipse of October 3, 563, which had a magnitude of 0.55 at Clermont at 7:21 AM: Schove 1984, 100. Gregory has rounded off the date, perhaps from memory.

   c. A comet appeared above Clermont region for a full year: *Hist*. 4.31, 165.4-6. This refers to the great comet of July-October 565, whose duration Gregory has misremembered or exaggerated: Schove 1984, 292.

   d. In an unspecified year, a crested lark flew into the church of Clermont (presumably the cathedral) during the liturgical office for an unspecified feast, and beat its wings to extinguish lights before being killed by the ushers; another bird behaved similarly in the basilica of St. Andrew: *Hist*. 4.31, 165.6-12.

5. Gregory of Tours (Hist. 4.31-33, 165.12-166.22): Epidemic of plague at Clermont and elsewhere in Gaul, including Lyons, Bourges, Chalon-sur-Saône, Dijon, Randan, Brioude in the spring of 571.

Now the mortality came to Clermont. In the *Histories*, Gregory describes the scale and symptoms in some detail. He does not explicitly **date** the event, though he states that bishop Cautinus of Clermont died of this plague. The year can be deduced with high probability as 571, as most historians accept.[21]

   a. The last datable omen announcing the coming disaster was the comet of July-October 565;

[21] It should be noted that the end of Cautinus' reign and the beginning of his successor's, Avitus, in 571, found throughout the literature, are based on the implicit acceptance and extension to their deaths of Marius' date of 571 for the epidemic. I have so far identified no liturgical or calendrical record of Cautinus' death anniversary which could confirm independently the death date of March 27, itself extrapolated from Gregory's statement that Cautinus died on the movable feast of Good Friday which, in 571, happened to fall on March 27.

therefore the outbreak at Clermont was after October 565.

b. Gregory describes the epidemic's impact at Clermont in whose cathedral clergy he served until 573, when he left Clermont to become bishop of Tours; therefore it dated before 573.

c. The contemporary chronicle of Marius of Avenches records in 571 a pestilence killing an innumerable number of people "in the above mentioned regions": a. 571, ed. Mommsen 1894, 238. In his entry for the previous year, Marius had mentioned the outbreak of a different illness among humans and cattle in Italy and Gaul: a. 570, 238. Marius calls the 571 epidemic *glandulae*.

d. Paul the Deacon, *History of the Langobards* 2.4 ed. Bethmann and Waitz 1878, 74.5-9, gives a detailed description of the inguinal pestilence that occurred in various provinces, and especially Liguria, in **571,** and also calls the buboes *glandulae*.

With respect to symptoms, Gregory (*Hist*.) says that the lesions appeared in the groin or armpit, they killed like a snake and that the illness progressed very quickly, for people died on the second or third day. It also caused people to lose their minds. He mentions (*Miracles of St. Julian*) an unceasing fever which intensified as death approached, and the inability to hold down food.

This epidemic occurred in the early spring. Cautinus, bishop of Clermont, fled Clermont and moved around to various places, clearly to escape the plague even as Gregory of Tours notes with obvious approval that the priest Cato refused to abandon his priestly duties and cared for the dying until he himself contracted plague and died. (*Hist*. 4.31). Gregory does not tell us to where Cautinus fled; Gregory does however reveal, implicitly, in another work that discusses plague at Clermont under Cautinus (*Miracles of St. Julian*, 46a), that he himself also fled his church at Clermont, clearly referring to this same event. Gregory presents his flight as motivated by modesty, since he realized his own merits would not suffice to save him: therefore he fled 60 km to the shrine of St. Julian of Brioude; the epidemic's timing suggests that both Gregory and Cautinus may have gone to Brioude with the annual procession commemorating Clermont's delivery from the first outbreak of the Justinianic Pandemic. In 571, that procession would have taken place in the first week of March (McCormick 2021a, 77; see the procession story above, Gregory of Tours 2.2). Nevertheless Cautinus returned to the city, contracted plague and died on Good Friday. Assuming this was indeed 571, as Marius of Avenches' mention of plague in this year suggests, when Easter fell on March 29, Cautinus died on March 27, as did his cousin Tetradius. Gregory does not explain why Cautinus returned to his cathedral. Two reasons would explain that change of heart. Eastertide was the greatest annual feast for a Merovingian episcopal see, and it could have been seen as an extraordinary dereliction of duty for a bishop to cancel these liturgical celebrations; a few years later, a conciliar decision would nevertheless explicitly exempt bishops performing the Easter liturgy in their cathedrals for only two reasons: epidemic outbreak and direct royal command. Perhaps more importantly, Gregory's story of plague in his household at Brioude shows that the epidemic had reached that settlement also, ending its attraction as a refuge. In any event, Cautinus' previous absence shows that the plague had come to Clermont some noticeable time before March 27, presumably at least a few weeks earlier, and underscores how a member of the elite whose

duties required him to reside in the city center avoided the town as much as possible.

Victims of high social rank: The named victims --a bishop, his cousin, the priest Cato, the unnamed abbot of Randan (about 40 km NE of Clermont) and the monk and priest Julian-- show that members of the Clermont elite suffered heavily from this outbreak.

Victims of low social rank: Gregory reports the death of one of his slaves from plague at Brioude, which he explains by the fact that members of his entourage recruited a sorcerer to cure him; he also reports the survival of another of his slaves which he explains by the application of a relic of dust from the tomb of St. Julian.

Demographic Impact: This epidemic outbreak clearly caused extraordinary mortality at Clermont: on one Sunday alone, there were 300 bodies in the basilica of St. Peter, whose location is unknown but which may have been part of a cemetery complex. That Gregory singles out the number and day suggests that this may have been the maximal mortality over a period of a few days (how long could the bodies have been left in the church without burial?); the phrasing suggests that there were also other bodies in other churches that Sunday. The fact that the bodies were taken to the church suggests that an effort was made to conduct funeral services en masse; Gregory's insistence that the priest Cato heroically performed funeral masses for individuals confirms this interpretation.

Initially normal burial practices were maintained, but when the townsmen ran out of sarcophagi or boards (for coffins or grave linings) they began burying people in pits of ten or more.

Flight from town: see above, about bishop Cautinus and Gregory himself; and, concerning Cato who refused to abandon his duties in Clermont, Gregory states that "many people fled the epidemic" *Hist.* 4.31, 166.1-2; Gregory reveals his own flight implicitly in another work (*Miracles of St. Julian* 46a, 132.1-4).

Geography: Randan must have been rural, but it is on the Roman road from Clermont and some 6 km W of the Allier R.

5.1 *Histories* 4.31-33.

Edition: Krusch and Levison 1951, 164.18-166.22.

Date of event: 571.

Date of record: written and possibly revised, 586-594.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
4.31. Similarly, great prodigies		4.31. Similiter et ante cladem

terrified the region before the Clermont mortality. [Gregory describes the prodigies, three of which are securely dated to 563 and 565: see above]		Arvernam magna regionem illam prodigia terruerunt
But now when that disaster came, such a slaughter of the population took place across the entire region that it is not even possible to count how many legions fell there. For when they ran out of sarcophagi or boards, they were burying ten or more people in one pit in the earth. On one Sunday, three hundred bodies of the dead were counted in the basilica of St. Peter alone.	"how many legions fell there": *quantae ibidem ceciderunt legiones*. This is an unusual expression. Gregory typically uses the term for a military unit, but does echo the Gospel use of "legion" to mean "very many" (e.g., Mark 5.9) when he refers to a "legion of demons" possessing someone: *Miracles of St. Martin* 1.38, Krusch 1969, 156.5. He might possibly also be echoing a description of disasters in the very popular retelling of Roman history by the Christian apologist Orosius (d. ca. 418): *History against the Pagans*, 5.5.15, ed. Zangemeister 1882, 290.13-15, referring to a disaster of the Roman army: "Vt non exprobem quot praetores eorum, quot legati, quot consules, quot legiones quantique exercitus consumpti sint…". "basilica of St. Peter": church of uncertain location, although the context suggests that it may have been located in a Christian burial ground: Prévot and Barral i Altet 1989, 37.	Iam vero adveniente ipsa clade, tanta strages de populo per totam regionem illam facta est, ut nec numerare possit, quantae ibidem ceciderunt legiones. Nam cum iam sarcofagi aut tabulae defecissent, decim aut eo amplius in unam humi fossam sepeliebantur. Numerati sunt autem quadam dominica in una beati Petri basilicam tricenta defunctorum corpora.
This death was also sudden. For starting in the groin or the armpit	On the meaning here of "like a snake" *in modum serpentis*, see	Erat enim et ipsa mors subita.

the lesion, like a snake, it was so killing the person with poison that on the next or the third day, he breathed his last. But the power of the poison also caused a human being to lose his mind.	Bonnet 1890, 274, confirmed by Gregory's usage elsewhere: *Hist*. 8.42, 408.22; *Miracles of St. Martin*, 3.59, 197.4, cf. McCormick 2021a, 79. "to lose his mind" *sensum...auferebat*: cf. e.g. *Hist*. 9.37, 457.14; 10.25, 519.6. Cf. Bonnet 1890, 204 on *homo*.	Nam nascente in inguene aut in ascella vulnus in modum serpentis, ita interficiebatur homo ille a veneno, ut die altera aut tercia spiritum exalaret. Sed et sensum vis illa veneni auferebat ab homine.
The priest Cato also died at that time. For, although many people fled from this epidemic, yet he kept burying the people and saying masses individually and never left the place. This man was a priest of much humanity and very much a lover of the poor. And I believe that, if he did have a bit of arrogance, this thing was a cure for him.	"epidemic": lue "saying masses individually": *missas viritim dicens*. The unusual emphasis on "individually" may hint that priests ceased saying funeral masses for individuals and began performing them for groups of deceased, assuming that the funeral mass had become customary in Gaul at this date (Leclercq 1923, 2710, 2714). See also Bonnet 1890, 470n10.	Tunc et Cato presbiter mortuos est. Nam cum de hac lue multi fugissent, ille tamen populum sepeliens et missas viritim dicens, numquam ab eo loco discessit. Hic autem presbiter multae humanitatis et satis dilectur pauperum fuit; et credo, haec causa ei, si quid superbiae habuit, medicamentum fuit.
But bishop Cautinus, although he had traveled around to different places because he feared this mortality, returned to the city. And contracting it, he died on the Friday of Our Lord's passion. And at the same moment, his cousin Tetradius also died. At that time Lyon, Bourges, Chalon-sur-Saône and Dijon were greatly wasted by this sickness.	"Contracting it": *incurrens.* In Gregory, *incurrere* is usually constructed with the accusative, and can refer to contracting an illness or symptom (*Hist*. 4.34, 169.3; 5.30 235.3; *Miracles of St. Andrew*, 5, Krusch 1969, 380.4) or incurring anger, etc. Haec appears as a neuter singular in Gregory (Bonnet 1890, 387) and this is how we have translated it. On *nam* (= *autem*): Bonnet 1890, 317.	Cautinus autem episcopus cum diversa loca, hanc cladem timens, circuisset, ad civitatem regressus est; et haec incurrens, parasciven passiones dominicae obiit. Nam ipsa hora et Tetradius, consubrinus eius, mortuus est. Tunc et Lugdunum, Bitorex, Cabillonum atque Divione ab hac infirmitate valde depopulatae sunt.

	Lyon and Chalon-sur-Saône were two key places on the communications corridor that ran up the Rhone, linking the interior of Gaul with the Mediterranean (McCormick 2001, 77-82).	
4.32. There was at that time in the monastery of Randan in the district of Clermont a priest of distinguished virtue, Julian by name. He was a man of great abstinence, who never consumed wine or main dishes, wore a hairshirt under his tunic in every season, was keen in vigils, and dedicated in praying. It was easy for him to cure the possessed, restore sight to the blind and drive off other infirmities by invoking the name of the Lord and making the sign of the cross. ...And one time in the basilica of St. Julian the martyr, we saw him cure a possessed person just by speaking. By praying he was frequently supply remedies to quartan and other fevers. In this time of pestilence, he was taken away from this world to his rest, full of days and of virtues.	"main dishes": *pulmentum*. Meat, fish or vegetables eaten along with porridge or alone. See *TLL* 10.2.2593-5. "basilica of St. Julian the martyr": the shrine of St. Julian of Brioude. "pestilence": lues.	4.32. Erat tunc temporis apud Randanensim monasterium civitatis Arvernae presbiter praeclarae virtutis Iulianus nomine, vir magnae abstinentiae, qui neque vinum neque ullum pulmentum utebatur, cilicio omni tempore sub tunicam habens, in vigiliis promtus, in oratione assiduus; cui inerguminos curare, caecos illuminare vel reliquas infirmitates depellere per invocationem dominici nominis et signaculum sanctae crucis facile erat. Idem cum stando pedes ab humore haberet infectos et ei diceretur, cur contra possibilitatem corporis semper staret, dicere cum ioco spirituali erat solitus: "Faciunt opus meum, dum et vita comis est, nec me eorum sustentatio, Domino iubente, relinquid". Nam videmus eum quadam vice in basilica beati Iuliani martyris inerguminum verbo tantum curasse. Quartanariis et aliis febribus saepe per orationem remedia conferebat.

		Qui sub hoc tempore lues dierum atque virtutum plenus ex hoc mundo est adsumptus in requie.
4.33 The abbot of his monastery also died then. He was succeeded by Sunniulf, a man of complete simplicity and charity.		4.33. Transiet tunc et abba monasterii ipsius, cui Sunniulfus successit, vir totius simplicitatis et caritatis.

5.2 The powers of St. Julian in the plague epidemic of 571

Edition: *Miracles of St. Julian***,** 46a, Krusch 1969, 132.1-27.

Date of event: 571.

Date of record: ca. 590.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
46a So, in the time of bishop Cautinus (…ca. 551/2-?571) when, since the sins of the people were increasing, the area of Clermont was being wasted by the destruction of the epidemic which they call bubonic, I sought out the settlement of Brioude, for this reason that, since I could not be defended by my own merits, I might be saved by the protection of the holy martyr Julian.	"destruction of the epidemic": *ab excidio lues* [sc. luis] "which they call bubonic": quam inguinariam vocant	132.1-27 Igitur Cautini episcopi tempore, quo, ingruentibus peccatis populi, Arverna regio ab excidio lues quam inguinariam vocant devastabatur, ego Brivatinsim vicum expetii, scilicet ut, qui meritis tutari nequibam, beati martyris Iuliani salvarer praesidio.
While I was staying in this settlement, one of our slaves was attacked by this sickness.	sickness: *morbo*	In quo dum commorarer vico, unus puer ex nostris ab hoc morbo corripitur, reclinatoque ad lectulum capite, graviter agere coepit.
There was an unceasing fever		

with a diseased fluid of the stomach such that if he took anything [as food], he immediately rejected it: food was no comfort for him, put rather was reckoned as death. Finally, when my people were seeing him terminally suffering, they called upon a certain sorcerer. He came right away to the sick person and tried to deploy his craft. He mumbled incantations, cast spells, and put knots around his neck, promising him he would live even as he handed him over to death. This was done without my knowledge. When I learned about them, I became very bitter, and I recalled what the Lord declared to king Ozias through the prophet Elias (4 Kings 1.16) “Because thou hast abandoned the Lord God of Israel and consulted the god of Accaron therefore from the bed on which thou art gone up, thou shalt not come down, but thou shalt surely die.” For after the sorcerer’s visit, he was burning more intensely with fever and gave up the ghost. When a few days had passed since his death, another slave began to struggle from a similar illness.	“diseased fluid of the stomach”: *cum stomachi pituita* death: *exitus* “Illness”: *incommodo*	Erat autem febris assidua cum stomachi pituita, ita ut, si aliquid acciperet, confestim reiceret; nec erat ei cibus confortatio, sed magis exitus putabatur. Denique mei cum viderent eum in extrema vexari, hariolum quendam invocant. Ille vero venire non differens, accessit ad aegrotum et artem suam exercere conatur. Incantationes inmurmurat, sortes iactat, ligaturas collo suspendit, promittit vivere quem ipse mancipaverat morti. Haec autem me nescio agebantur; quae cum mihi delata fuissent, amarissime reddor et cum gravi suspirio illud conmemoro, quod Dominus per Heliam prophetam Oziae regi pronuntiat, dicens: Quia dereliquisti dominum Deum Israel et consoluisti deum Acharon, ideo de lectulo, in quo ascendisti, non consurges, sed morte morieris. Nam iste post adventum harioli validius febre succensus, spiritum exalavit; cuius post obitum interpositis paucis diebus, puer alius simili laborare coepit incommodo.

Then I said to them: “Go to the martyr’s tomb and bring something back from there to the sick person, and you will see the mighty deeds of God, and you will know the difference between a righteous and an unrighteous person, and between a God-fearing person and one who does not serve Him.”		Tum ego eis inquio: "Accedite ad martyris tumulum et aliquid exinde ad aegrotum deportate, et videbitis magnalia Dei atque cognoscetis, quid sit inter iustum et iniustum et inter timentem Deum et non servientem illi".
Going off, they picked up a bit of the dust lying around the tomb. As soon as the sick man took it with some water, he received the remedy, recovered his forces, the fever was extinguished and he got better.		Accedentes autem, parumper pulveris circa sepulchrum iacentis sustulerunt. De quo ut hausit infirmus cum aqua, protinus adsecutus est medicinam, recuperatusque viribus ac restincta febre, convaluit.
Understand now, O all you who are foolish among the people, and after this you will break free, know that what the devil works in order to seduce the human race is nothing. And so I warn you, if someone has been signed with the sign of the cross, if someone has been purified by the cleansing of baptism, if someone has put off what is old and now is strong with the new man, let him set aside and disregard such things. Let him seek the patronage of the martyrs, through whom the miracles of cures are made famous, let him seek the helpful services of the confessors who rightly are called the friends of the Lord, and what he wishes he shall obtain.		Intellegite ergo nunc, o omnes qui insipientes estis in populo, et post ista discusseritis, scitote, quia nihil sunt quae ad seducendum humanum genus diabolus operatur. Ideo moneo, ut, si quis vixillo crucis signatus, si quis baptismi ablutione mundatus, si quis, vetustate deposita, in novo nunc homine viget, talia postponat ac neglegat; quaerat autem patrocinia martyrum, per quos sanitatum miracula celebrantur, postolet adiutoria confessorum, qui merito amici sunt dominici nuncupati, et quae voluerit obtenebit

5.3 A comet in 565 foreshadows an epidemic of plague at Clermont and elsewhere in Gaul in 571

Gregory of Tours, *On the course of the stars*, 34. For the identification of the comet as the one visible for at least three months from July 565 onward, see Schove 1984, 292. Gregory here uses only the word *pestilentia* to refer to an epidemic that he unambiguously identifies as bubonic plague in *Hist*. 4.31-33.

Edition: Krusch 1969, 419.14-420.8.

Date of event: 565.

Date of record: before 582 (Krusch 1969, 405).

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
Whenever the coma [of a comet] should appear to have a hairy tail and shine with a crown, it announces a royal death. If however, bearing a sword shape and glowing red, it should variegate the tail with black, it signals the destruction of the homeland. For this was how it appeared before the pestilence of the Clermont region, being suspended above that region for a whole year.	"Whenever": *Cum… apparuerit… sparserit*: *cum* with the subjunctive perfect conveys repeated eventualities in Gregory's Latin: Bonnet 1890, 684-685 "coma... have a hairy tail": *capud crinitum*. *Crinitus* means literally "long-haired" but refers to the tail of a comet. Kings of the Merovingian dynasty were distinguished by their long hair; this and the crown (*diademate*) implicitly explain the royal portent. "before": Gregory is referring here to the comet recorded in various sources and visible in western Europe from July to October of 565: Schove 1984, 292. He exaggerates its duration, and, as the portents from 563 cited along with this comet in *Hist*. 4.31 allows in this case up to 8 years between the omen and the disaster it presages. "pestilence": Gregory here uses only the word *pestilentia* to refer	Cum capud crinitum deadimate apparuerit fulgorans, regalem adnuntiat letum; si autem gladium ferens, rutilans, cum negrore sparserit comas, patriae monstrat excidium. Sic enim et ante pestilentia Arvernae regionis apparuit, pendens per annum integrum super regionem illam. [Quod enim has proferat tristitias, Prudentius cum de nativitatis dominicae Stella prudenter dissereret, haec in hymno sanctae Epyphaniae ait: *Tristis comita intercedat, Et sicut astrum sibi Offeruerit vapore, iam Dei Sublucendis tractu cadat.* Nam et priusquam Sigibertus rex obierit, crinita multis apparuit.]

	to a disease outbreak that he unambiguously identifies as bubonic plague in *Hist*. 4.31-33.	

5.4 Life of the Fathers, 9: During the plague epidemic of 571, the devil misled a lady into believing that a message from St. Martin promised safety from plague if presents were given to the anchorite St. Patroclus at his hermitage at La Celle (Allier).

Here Gregory tells the story of the devil's deception of a lady, Leubella, who was persuaded by him that by giving gifts, the population would be spared from the bubonic plague. Although the text is damaged, the general sense is clear (McCormick 2021a, 76-77). The devil seems to have impersonated Saint Martin (*The Life of the Fathers/Liber vitae patrum*, 9, ed. Krusch 1969, 254); apparently St. Patroclus saw through the devil's deception. Gregory situates this event in the period in which St. Patroclus was living in the wilderness, which Krusch (254n1 and 255n1) dates from Gregory's account here and in the *Hist*. (5.10, 204.18-205.3) about his death, as occurring between his founding in 558 of the hermitage at La Celle (Allier), 5 miles from his later monastery founded at Colombier (Allier) and his death date of November 19, 576. The reference to a diabolical deception of a woman who thought to save the population by making gifts to St. Martin suggests that Gregory may have been forced by the presumable failure of the intervention to protect Tours by denying that the message really came from St. Martin.

Edition: Krusch 1969, 254.8-16.

Date of event: 571.

Date of record: ca. 590.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
9. The deceit of evil persuasion could have no force in his presence. For, just as he was cleansing those who were possessed, so he was repelling through the power of the most holy cross the horrors which the author of sin [Satan] was surreptitiously introducing.	"author of sin": *auctor criminis*. An expression that Gregory uses	9. Nullas enim ante eum vires habere poterat persuasionis iniquae praestigium. Nam sicut hos qui vexabantur emundabat, ita et quae inmittebat occultae atrocia auctor criminis repellebat crucis sacratissimae per virtutem.

For during the bubonic epidemic, the devil <assumed the appearance of saint> †Martin†, having lied to a certain woman named Leubella, when she had wrongly made gift offerings to the saint [Patroclus] as though the population might be saved through them; when these had been delivered to the saint, thanks to the revelation of the Holy Spirit, not only did they disappear, but the inciter of evils himself, totally black, appeared before the saint and confessed what he had evilly done. For the devil often takes the shape of the angel of light, so that he can trick the innocent by this fraud.	for Satan, e.g. *Life of the Fathers* 17.3, ed. Krusch 1969, 280.31-32. †Martin†…had. The text seems corrupt here. One suspects a lacuna. The parallel expression a few pages later in the same work clarifies the meaning. Cf. Gregory's *Life of the Fathers,*10, Krusch 1969, 257.29: "Et ille: 'In veritate enim conperi, quod seductor sis, neque te Deum credo, cuius te speciem mentiris habere.'"	Nam Leubellae cuidam feminae, cum per luem illam inguinariam diabolus †Martinum† mentitus oblationes, quibus quasi populus salvaretur, iniquiter obtulisset; haec ad sanctum dilatae, non solum, revelante Spiritu sancto, evanuerunt, verum etiam ipse incentor malorum sancto teterrimus apparens, quae nequiter gesserat est professus. Transfigurat enim se saepe diabolus in angelum lucis, ut hac fraude decipiat innocentes.

6. Gregory of Tours: Portent at Chinon of a great epidemic occurs on Easter 577, and probably refers to the "dysentery" epidemic of 580

At a time when Gaul and Iberia disagreed on the date of Easter, a church collapsed at Chinon (Indre-et-Loire) during Mass on Easter Sunday 577, but all miraculously escaped. A terrible epidemic followed: Gregory of Tours, *Histories* 5.17; cf. McCormick 2021a, 65. Chinon was in Gregory's diocese of Tours. The epidemic probably reflects that of 580, given Gregory's interest in showing that portents announced epidemics in coming years, and his flexible attitude toward the amount of time that might ensue between a portent and the disaster it announced (cf. below, Gregory of Tours 7).

Gregory of Tours, *Histories* 5.17, ed. Krusch and Levison 1951, 248.

Date of event: 577.

Date of record: ca. 590.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text

A great epidemic devastated the population after these things.	"epidemic": lues	Magna post haec lues populum devastavit.

7. Gregory of Tours. Epidemic of dysentery in Tours region and across almost all of Gaul early August 580.

After a hot summer and autumn and much autumn rain (see below), a terrible epidemic of dysentery began in August and affected almost all of Gaul, sickening adolescents first; symptoms included fever and yellow and green vomit, and great kidney, head, or neck pain. The epidemic killed children treasured by Gregory of Tours. Many said it was a hidden poison/pathogen (*veninum occultum*). It also killed king Chilperic's sons, queen Austrigildis, wife of king Gunthramn, and the count of Angoulême: *Histories*, 5.34-36, Krusch and Levison 1951, 238-243. The reference to "hidden poison" and description of the scale of the illness and its features suggest that this could have been the same sickness that Gregory touches on briefly in the *Miracles of St. Martin* 2.51, Krusch 1969, 176: see further below.

Terrible portents had announced a very serious epidemic (*Hist*. 5.33, Krusch and Levison 1951, 237.21-238.18): strange weather added up to a very rainy late summer and autumn in central France (and Switzerland) along with evidence of exceptional heat. Twelve continuous days of rains in Clermont produced great flooding in Gregory's home area of the Limagne along the Loire and Allier rivers, prevented sowing and resulted in the destruction of buildings, fields and animals; the Rhone flooded too and part of Lyon's wall was destroyed—then trees bloomed a second time, as the rains ceased in September in Gregory's area. Gregory's description of autumn flooding is confirmed by Marius of Avenches (*Chronicle*, a. 580, ed. Mommsen 1984, 239) who documents heavy flooding that affected the upper Rhone and the Valais in October, also destroying the crops there; he says floods also damaged crops in Italy.

Gregory also cites great thunder and lightning storms at Tours and beyond that year. There was an earthquake at Bordeaux and refugees fled to other cities.

The suburb (*vicus*) of Bordeaux caught fire spontaneously, and houses (*domus*) and open areas around them or threshing floors (*areae*) with grain were destroyed. Orleans also burned in a terrible conflagration so that almost nothing remained of the property of the better off. In the territory of Chartres, blood rain fell. This all adds up to a warm and apparently dry summer which was followed, in September and October, by unusually wet weather, presumably conducive to gastrointestinal infections. Gregory was present at Berny-Rivière (Aisne, France) clearing his name of political accusations at the royal court in September when the king fell ill and his two sons died from this sickness: Heinzelmann 1994, 45-47.

This is probably the epidemic that Gregory refers to in connection with a prodigy at Chinon in 577. See above, Gregory of Tours 6.

7.1: In late summer and fall of 580, an epidemic of “dysentery” affects almost all of Gaul

Edition: *Histories*, 5.34-36, ed. Krusch and Levison 1951, 238-243.

Date of event: 580.

Date of record: ca. 590.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
5.34. A very serious epidemic followed these prodigies. For while the kings were disagreeing and once again preparing civil war, the illness of dysentery took hold of almost all of Gaul.		5.34. Sed haec prodigia gravissima lues est subsecuta. Nam et discordantibus reges et iterum bellum civile parantibus, desentericus morbus paene Gallias totas praeoccupavit.
Those who were sick suffered a strong fever with vomiting and great pain in the kidneys; the head or neck were also sick. The vomit was yellow or indeed green.		Erat enim his qui patiebantur valida cum vomitu febris renumque nimius dolor; caput grave vel cervix. Ea vero quae ex ore proiciebantur colore croceo aut certe viridia erant.
Many claimed that it was a hidden poison. The less educated named this “coral pustules”. The accusation is not incredible, because when cupping glasses were placed on the shoulders or thighs, and the boils were adduced and broke, and the fluid flowed out, many were cured. Herbs which were used to treat poisons when taken with water also brought help to many.	“coral”: McCormick 2021a, 58. “pustules”: *pusulas*. Gregory seems to use both forms *pusula* and *pustula* interchangeably. The authentic, original Latin form is *pusula*: see McCormick 2021a, 55-56 with n87.	A multis autem adserebatur veninum occultum esse, - rusticiores vero coralis hoc pusulas nominabant - quod non est incredibile, quia missae in scapulis sive cruribus ventosae, procedentibus erumpentibusque visicis, decursa saniae, multi liberabantur. Sed et herbae, quae venenis medentur, potui sumptae, plerisque praesidia contulerunt.
This illness started during the month of August and first snatched young adolescents and put them in bed. We lost sweet		Et quidem primum haec infirmetas a mense Augusto initiata, parvulus aduliscentes arripuit lectoque subegit.

children who were dear to us, whom we cherished on our lap or carried in our arms or fed with our own hand with very keen effort, when food was given. But having wiped away the tears, we say with holy Job: the Lord had given, the Lord has taken away. As it has pleased the Lord, so it has happened. Let his name be blessed for the ages.		Perdedemus dulcis et caros nobis infantulos, quos aut gremiis fovimus aut ulnis baiolavimus aut propria manu, ministratis cibis, ipsos studio sagatiore nutrivimus. Sed, abstersis lacrimis, cum beato Iob dicimus: Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit; quomodo Domino placuit, ita factum est. Sit nomen eius benedictum in saecula.
And in those days, King Chilperic was gravely ill. While he was recovering, his younger son, who had not yet been reborn through water and the Holy Spirit, began to be sick. Seeing him coming to the end, they cleansed him with baptism. While he was doing a bit better, his older brother, Chlodoberth by name, came down with this sickness. And seeing him in danger of death, his mother Fredegund, feeling penitent too late, said to the king: “Divine piety has put up with us doing evil for a long time, for it has rebuked us with fevers and other illnesses, and improvement has not followed…. [continuation of her speech, and description of their various acts of penitence] Despite Chilperic’s and the queen’s renunciation of their previous greed and taxation, and burning of the tax registers, both		Igitur in his diebus Chilpericus rex graviter egrotavit. Quo convaliscente, filius eius iunior, necdum aqua et Spiritu sancto renatus, aegrotare coepit. Quem in extremis videntis, baptismo abluerunt. Quo parumper melius agente, frater eius senior nomen Chlodoberthus ab hoc morbo correpitur; ipsumque in discrimine mortis Fredegundis mater cernens, sero penetens, ait ad regem: "Diu nos male agentes pietas divina sustentat; nam sepe nos febribus et aliis malis corripuit, et emendatio non successit. Ecce! iam perdimus filios. Ecce! iam eos lacrimae pauperum, lamenta viduarum, suspiria orfanorum interimunt, nec spes remanet cui aliquid congregemus. Thesaurizamus, nescientes, cui congregemus ea. Ecce thesauri remanent a possessore vacui, rapinis ac maledictionibus pleni! Numquid non exundabant prumptuaria

boys died: *Hist*. 5.34, 239.14-241.5.		vino? Numquid non horrea replebantur frumento? Numquid non erant thesauri referti auro, argento, lapidibus praeciosis, monilibus vel reliquis imperialibus ornamentis? Ecce quod pulchrius habebamus perdimus! Nunc, si placet, venite; incendamus omnes discriptionis iniquas, sufficiatque fisco nostro, quod sufficit patri regique Chlothario". Haec effata regina, pugnis verberans pectus, iussit libros exhibere, qui de civitatibus suis per Marcum venerant, proiectosque in igne, iterum ad rege conversa: "Quid tu", inquid, "moraris? Fac quod vidis a me fieri, ut, etsi dulces natos perdimus, vel poenam perpetuam evadamus". Tunc rex, conpunctus corde, tradedit omnes libros discriptionum igne; conflagratusque, misit qui futuras prohiberent discriptionis. Post haec infantulus iunior, dum nimio labore tabescit, extinguetur. Quem cum maximo merore deducentes a villa Brinnaco Parisius, ad basilicam sancti Dionisi sepelire mandaverunt. Chlodoberthum vero conponentes in feretro, Sessionas ad basilicam sancti Medardi duxerunt, proicientesque eo ad sanctum sepulchrum, voverunt vota pro eo; sed media nocte anilus iam et tenuis spiritum exalavit.

5.35 In these days, Austrigildis, queen of prince Gunthramn was consumed by this illness but, perceiving that she could not escape, *and sighing deeply*, before she gave up her worthless life, she wanted others to join her in death, that the funerals of others might be lamented amidst her funeral. …	"and sighing deeply": the editors note that Gregory may be echoing Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 2,753: "Et tanto penitus traxit suspiria motu." Gregory's phrasing seems closer to his near contemporary, Ennodius of Pavia, *Life of Epiphanius*, ed. Vogel 1885, 92: "alto trahens uerba suspirio" or the fifth-century Dracontius, *Orestis tragoedia*, 157, ed. Vollmer 1914, 200: "suspiria longa trahebat." The story of the queen's killing spree as she died seems patterned on stories about Herod, as noted by the editors: Krusch and Levison 1951, 241n3 with further references.	5.35 His diebus Austrigildis Guntchramni principis regina ab hoc morbo consumpta est; sed priusquam nequam spiritum exalaret, cernens, quod evadere non posset, alta trahens suspiria, voluit leti sui habire participes, agens, ut in exsequiis eius aliorum funera plangerentur. ...
5.36. Nanthinus, Count of Angoulême, also died, exhausted, from this sickness... [There follows a long account of his misdeeds that concludes with his death] … And after a few months, he fell ill to the aforesaid illness. Exhausted by an extreme fever, he was shouting "Wow, woe, bishop Eraclius is burning me, he is torturing me, he is calling me to judgement. I acknowledge the crime; I remember that I unjustly inflicted outrage on the bishop. I beg for death so that I am not tortured any more by this torment. While he was screaming this during the fever peak, the strength of his body ebbed and he gave up his unlucky ghost and left behind		5.36. Hac itaque aegritudine et Nanthinus Equolisinensis comes exinanitus interiit…. ...Post paucos vero menses a supradicto morbo corripitur; qui nimia exustus febre, clamabat, dicens: "Heu, heu! Ab Eraclio antistiti exuror, ab illo crucior, ab illo ad iudicium vocor. Cognosco facinus; reminiscor, me iniuste iniurias intulisse pontifici; mortem deprecor, ne diutius crucier hoc tormento". Haec cum maxima in febre clamaret, deficiente robore corporis, infelicem animam fudit, indubia relinquens vestigia, hoc ei ad ultionem beati antistitis evenisse. Nam exanime corpus ita nigredinem duxit, ut putares eum

indubitable evidence that this happened to him as vengeance for the holy bishop. For his lifeless body took on such a blackness that you would have thought that it had been roasted on live coals. And so everyone was amazed, filled with wonder and feared lest they inflict outrages on priests! Because the Lord is the avenger of his servants for those who hope in him.		prunis superpositum fuisse combustum. Ergo omnes haec obstupescant, admirentur et metuant, ne inferant iniurias sacerdotibus! quia ultor est Dominus servorum suorum sperantibus in se.

7.2: Symptoms of "dysentery" epidemic in late summer and fall of 580 across almost all of Gaul; cures occur at Tours from holy dust, oil, and water: *Miracles of St. Martin*, 2.51-52.

That Gregory is able to order dust to be taken from the tomb of Martin shows that this happened after he became bishop of Tours. Gregory records multiple "dysenteric" epidemics (McCormick 2021a, 58-60).

Edition: *Miracles of St. Martin*, 2.51-52, Krusch 1969, 176.23-177.8.

Date of event: 580.

Date of record: 581 (Shaw 2016, 110).

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
2.51. When that dysentery sickness with hidden pustules was afflicting many cities and, among other places, the city of Tours was struggling very greatly, many were cured by dust scraped from the holy tomb [of St. Martin.] More were freed when they smeared some oil from there; for some, the cure was the water with		2.51. Cum autem morbus ille dissentericus cum occultis pusulis multas attereret civitates, et inter reliqua loca urbs Turonica gravius laboraret, multi, abrasum a beato tumulo pulverem haustum, sanabantur; Plerique de oleo, qui inibi habetur, delibuti liberabantur; fuitque nonnullis remedium aqua illa, unde

which the tomb had been washed before Easter. So, while many favors were being bestowed on many people, I saw one person who had been brought to the basilica, while others were celebrating vigils, passing an uneasy night lying in despair from the dysentery. But at dawn he came to the tomb, drank dust with some wine, and came back from the tomb healthy.		sepulchrum ablutum est ante pascha. Igitur, cum multis multa tribuerentur beneficia, vidi unum in desperatione a disenteria iacentem, quem ad basilicam ductum, aliis vigilias celebrantibus, noctem inquietam duxisse; diluculo vero accedens ad tumulum, potato cum vino pulverem, sanus rediit e sepulchro.
52. Also another, taken by a strong fever and expelling the poison from his mouth and flowing excessively by the lower body, was lying in bed. And, when the poison was progressing, a lesion opened up in the loins of the sick person and in incredible fashion, was visible as it moved to the sole. It was as big as a goose egg. Then coming back up, with great pain it coursed up the sides, the arms and up to the neck. From here it went down the other side to the sole and went backwards to the place where it had started out. And while it was moving so through the members of the sick man, the wretch did not know where to go, what to do, except only to cry out with groans. Pain was driving the groaning, when so many pains attacked one small body. Finally when this had been reported to me, I gave the word that the usual		52. Alter quoque arreptus a febre valida, deiciens ore venenum et per inferiorem partem extra modum solutus, lectulo decubabat. Igitur, grassante veneno, laboranti oritur vulnus in inguine, et incredibili modo movet se visibilis usque ad plantam. Erat enim in magnitudine ovi anserini. Deinde sursum repetens, cum nimio dolore discurrit per latera, per brachia et usque ad cervicem progreditur; dehinc per aliud latus ad plantam usque deducitur; exinde retrorsum revertens, ad eum unde primo ortum fuerat venit. Cumque taliter per membra vagaretur aegroti, quo miser tenderet, quid ageret, nesciebat, nisi tantum voces cum fletibus dabat.

antidote be sought from the true physician and be taken from the tomb, and so that the dying man might have life. So the attendants ran in a great hurry, and, having picked up dust from the monument, took it to the sick man, and, mixed with wine, gave it to him to drink. As soon as he drank it, all pain disappeared so that he was restored to health in that very hour.		Exegebat enim dolor gemitum, cum in uno corpusculo tanti dolores inruerant. Tandem cum haec nobis nuntiata fuissent, indico, solitam tyriacam ad verum requiri medicum et, quo vitam moriturus haberet, adsumi de tumulo. At satellites cum magna festinatione currentes, elevato pulvere monumenti, deferunt ad aegrotum dilibutumque cum vino bibendum porregunt. Quo hausto, ita omnis dolor fugatus est, ut ipsa hora redderetur incolomis.

7.3 Portents in 581 presage epidemic in 582, Tours region.

According to Gregory of Tours, terrible portents in 581 foreshadowed a serious epidemic of unspecified nature that affected the population, presumably of the Tours region: A wolf entered the city walls of Poitiers; the Loire river flooded from the Cher river downstream more than the previous year; some claimed to see burning skies; a terrible wind storm blew in from the south and knocked down trees and houses; cocks crowed at sunset; in the heavens, the moon was covered with shadow (referring to a lunar eclipse on April 5, 581) and a comet appeared— *Histories* 5.41, Krusch and Levison 1951, 248. Gregory's conviction that portents announced epidemics (*On the course of the stars* 34, Krusch 1969, 419.14-420.8) may have encouraged him to mention an epidemic here; this report of an epidemic surely refers to the same event he describes in greater detail with respect to 582 in his home regions, and possibly refers also to the epidemic of bubonic plague in southern Gaul.

The lunar eclipse and comet can be dated to April 5, and January, respectively of 581 (Schove 1984, 102), and Gregory had reported heavy flooding of the Loire in the previous year, 580 (*Hist*. 5.33, 237-238). Gregory reports further portents shortly before the outbreak of the 582 epidemic (see Hist 6.14).

Edition: *Histories* 5.41, Krusch and Levison 1951, 248.

Date of event: 581.

Date of record: ca. 590.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
A serious epidemic among the population followed [these portents].	“epidemic”: lues	Gravis autem lues in populo subsecuta est.

8. Gregory of Tours reports plague in 582-584 at Narbonne, at various other places in the Visigothic kingdom, 584, and at Albi.

In year 9 of Frankish king Chilperic II (December 25, 583-December 24, 584), his returning ambassadors reported to Gregory that Narbonne in the Visigothic kingdom was especially devastated by plague which came, went, and returned for three years, i.e., 582, 583, and 584, so that when the people who had fled returned to the town, they were killed by plague (*Hist*. 6.33, Krusch and Levison 1951, 304.3-11); he also goes on to say that the same illness terribly affected Albi, on the Frankish side of the frontier, although it is unclear whether this continued there also for three years. Although Gregory here uses the broader term *lues* (“epidemic”) for the disease in Spain and Visigothic Narbonne, he elsewhere explicitly identifies the outbreak in 582 at Narbonne as “inguinal disease” (*inguinarium morbum*; *Hist*. 6.14, 284.16-18); and, at *Hist*. 7.1, he explicitly identifies the illness at Albi as plague. The fact that he spends most of chapter 6.14 describing other prodigies and a different kind of disease outbreak in that year further suggests that he did not know of any bubonic plague in the Merovingian kingdom in 582 except for the frontier regions with the Visigoths.

Edition: Gregory of Tours, *Hist*. 6.33, ed. Krusch and Levison 1951, 304.3-11.

Date of event: 584.

Date of record: ca. 590.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
6.33. In year nine of king Childeberth….When the envoys of prince Chilperic returned from Iberia, they announced that the province of Carpitania had been heavily devastated by locusts, such that no tree, no vine, no	“Year nine”: December 25, 583-December 24, 584.	6.33. Anno nono Childeberthi regis ... Legati principis Chilperici de Hispaniis regressi, nuntiaverunt, provintiam Carpitaniam graviter a locustis fuisse vastatam, ita ut non arbor, non vinea, non silva, non fructus

wood, no fruit of any kind nor anything green remained which had not been destroyed by locusts. They were saying that the hostilities which had been multiplying between Leovigild and his son were growing strongly.	"They were saying": *agebant*: phonetic deformation of Classical *aiebant* common in Late Spoken Latin: Väänänen 1981, 53.	aliqui aut quicquam viride remaneret, qui non a locustis everteretur. Agebant enim, inimicitias illas, quae inter Leuvichildum et filium suum pullulaverant, vehementer augere.
In different places, epidemic was raging, devastating the city of Narbonne especially forcefully: it was already the third year since it had taken hold there and subsided. When the population who had taken flight returned, once again they were wasted by the sickness. The town of Albi too labored particularly under this ailment.	"in different places": *Per loca*. Gregory uses this expression frequently in this sense (McCormick 2021a, 80n216). "epidemic": lues "there": Gregory clearly is referring to Narbonne as the site of multiple outbreaks in three consecutive years, but this does not necessarily imply that different areas in Spain did not also so suffer. "this ailment": *hoc inquomodo* (Class. *incommodo*). Gregory uses this word for illness 29 times: McCormick 2021a, 51-52 with note 52.	Per loca enim lues vastabat, sed maximae apud urbem Narbonensim validius desaeviebat, et iam tertio anno, quod ibidem adpraehenderat et requieverat; populique revertentes a fuga, iterum morbo consumpti sunt. Nam et Albigensis civitas maximae ab hoc inquomodo laborabat.

8.1 582 Epidemic of noxious pustules and fever at Tours, Nantes, and elsewhere in Gaul; possible smallpox.

Gregory of Tours unambiguously dates two epidemics to this year, regnal year seven of king Childebert II which began on December 25, 581, and year 21 of kings Chilperic (561-584) and Gunthchramn (561-593), *Hist* 6.14, Krusch and Levison 1951, 283.23-284.1).

- **One epidemic** implicitly affected the region of Tours and places to the north and was characterized by skin lesions which Gregory spells variously as *pustula* or *pusula*

(McCormick 2021a, 55n87) described as millet grains (based on today's millet ca. 02.25-2.5mm) according to Gregory in his *Histories* 6.14-15; this was the same epidemic which Gregory, *Miracles of St. Martin* 3.34, describes as having happened at Tours (McCormick 2021a, 56n90). That, besides the high fever, the boils were small and hard, with a white spot, that they covered the entire body, including the extremities down to the soles of the feet, and they covered the eyes; that they were painful,, and the pain was augmented when they burst and the pus stuck to peoples' clothes. The symptoms, mortality, course of the disease, and occurrence in January all align with smallpox (*Variola major*): see further McCormick 2021a, 55-58 and 60. Despite the epidemic's infectiousness, Gregory seems to have escaped it in 582. He reports, however, that he had suffered from the disease of noxious pustules in 563 but had recovered (*Miracles of St. Martin* 1.32-33), suggesting the acquired long-term immunity of smallpox survivors: Breman and Henderson 2002, 1301.

- The **second epidemic** implicitly did not affect the Loire basin but rather struck Narbonne and is unambiguously identified as bubonic plague.

According to *Hist*. 6.14, terrible omens preceded the epidemics, including unseasonable warmth in January, constant rains (rather than snow), confirming warmth in winter, and blood rain in Senlis and Paris at Easter, March 29, 582, presumably due to warm air masses coming from Africa and depositing iron-rich Saharan dust in northern France. More information about the first epidemic comes from Gregory's description of the death of bishop Felix of Nantes (*Hist*. 6, 15, 285.1-16), where we learn that it entailed a fever and blisters/boils on the shins, and affected Nantes. Evidence available in the early modern period placed Felix's death on January 8; Duchesne 1907-1915, 2:367 accepts this date, and gives his death as January 8, 582, although 583 is also possible (McCormick 2021a, 56n90).

8.1.1 Epidemic of noxious pustules and fever at Tours and Nantes, and plague at Narbonne, in the Visigothic kingdom, 582, according to Gregory, *Histories* 6.14-15.

Edition: *Histories*, 6.14-15, ed. Krusch and Levison 1951, 284-285.

Date of event: 582.

Date of record: ca. 590.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
6.14. So in the seventh year of King Childebert [II]'s reign, which was the 21st of Chilperic	On the date of 582, see above.	6.14. Anno igitur septimo Childeberthi regis, qui erat Chilperici et Gunthchramni

and Gunthramn, in the month of January, there were rainfalls, lightning and heavy thunder; blooms appeared on trees.	"Rainfalls": rather than snow, implying an unusually warm January. The unseasonable blooming of trees confirms the unusual temperature, as does the report of blood rain, below.	vicensimus et primus, mense Ianuario pluviae coruscationes atque tonitrua gravia fuerunt; flores in arboribus ostensi sunt.
A star, which I called a comet above, appeared in such a fashion that it was surrounded by black, like it was placed in some hole was shing thus among the dark shadows, shooting sparks and spreading its fiery tail. A ray of amazing size came out of it which looked like the huge smoke of a fire seen from afar. It appeared in the western sky in the 1st hour of the night.	"Comet": (cf. Gregory, *Histories* 4.31, 165, to which he refers here). Schove 1984, 292, confirms this, classifies it as a "three," and dates it to January, apparently from Chinese records.	Stilla, quem comitem superius nominavi, apparuit, ita ut in circuitu eius magna nigrido esset; et illa, tamquam se m in foramen aliquod posita, ita inter tenebras relucebat, scintillans spargensque comas. Prodebat autem ex ea radius mirae magnitudinis, qui tamquam fumus magnus incendii apparebat a longe. Visa est autem a partem occidentis in ora noctis prima.
On Easter Sunday, in the town of Soissons, the sky was seen to be on fire, such that two fires appeared, one of which was bigger, and the other smaller.	Easter Sunday: March 29, 582. Schove 1984, 292, identifies the celestial phenomenon as an aurora, i.e. a geomagnetic storm of solar origin.	In die autem sanctum paschae 2 apud Sessionas civitatem caelum ardere visum est, ita ut duo apparerent incendia; et unum erat maior, aliud vero minor. Post duarum vero horarum spatio coniuncta sunt simul, factamque pharum magnam, evanuerunt.
In the territory of Paris, however, real blood fell from a cloud onto the clothes of many people; it so stained them that people were rejecting their own clothes in horror. This prodigy occurred in three places within the territory belonging to that city. In the territory of Senlis, however, the house of a certain man, when he	"Territory": as the text below makes clear, Gregory locates the blood rain in the broader district subject to Paris, equivalent to the ecclesiastical diocese. See, e.g., Longnon 1878, 34-35.	In Parisiaco vero terminum verus sanguis ex nube defluxit et super vestimenta multorum hominum caecidit et ita tabe maculavit, ut ipsi propria indumenta horrentes abnuerunt. Tribus enim locis in termino civitatis illius hoc prodigium apparuit. In Silvanectinse vero terreturio hominis cuiusdam domus, cum

awoke, appeared spattered with blood on the inside.		ille mane surgerit, sanguine respersa ab intus apparuit.
But there was a great epidemic in that year: different illnesses, [lesions the size of] millet grains, with blisters and boils, which killed many people. But many sought treatment and escaped.	"Great…epidemic": magna…lues "different illnesses": *valitudines variae*, in the plural, is unclear. Gregory may mean different symptoms characterized this epidemic, either within this illness or in comparison to other epidemics. See McCormick 2021a, 56n88. "sought treatment": *adhibentes studium*. Gregory uses this expression for efforts to seek treatment for illness, whether they involve relics or physicians: *Miracles of St. Martin*, 4.43, ed. Krusch 1969, 210.22 and *Glory of the Confessors* 34, 319.21.	Magna tamen eo anno lues in populo fuit; valitudinis variae, milinae cum pusulis et vissicis, quae multum populum adficerunt mortem. Multi tamen, adhibentes studium, evaserunt.
We heard that in this year bubonic plague raged terribly in the city of Narbonne, such that there was no delay when a person was [fatally] seized by it.	"bubonic plague": *inguinarium morbum*. Note that this is the same epidemic outbreak that Gregory refers to above, but without making explicit that this epidemic was plague. Might this suggest that in this period of his writing, of recurrent bubonic epidemic, other epidemics whose nature he does not explicitly identify were in fact bubonic? "no delay": *nullum …spatium*. Gregory often uses spatium in the sense of some period of time: *Hist*. 4.51, 188.14; 5.6, 203.17; 6.13, 283.21; 6.17, 286.11, etc.	Audivimus enim eo anno in Narbonensem urbem inguinarium morbum graviter desevire, ita ut nullum esset spatium, cum homo correptus fuisset ab eo.

	"[fatally] seized": *correptus fuisset*. Gregory often uses this verb of someone overcome by sickness; it often explicitly leads to a fatal outcome: *Hist*. 2.1, 38.21-22; 4.18, 151.6-7; 5.5, 201.16-18, etc. A fatal outcome seems implicit in this case, explaining why this outbreak was particularly serious: *graviter*.	
6.15. Felix bishop of the town of Nantes collapsed with this [northern Gaul, i.e. pustules] sickness, becoming gravely ill… [His nephew, whom Felix was scheming to have succeed him as bishop with Gregory's support, was turned away by Gregory, returned to Nantes, pretending to follow Gregory's advice.] …But he [the nephew] returned [to Nantes] and pretended to follow [Gregory's] advice, because Bishop Felix seemed to be improving from this illness. But after the fever subsided, his shins produced boils (pusulas) from the humor. Then, applying an extremely powerful plaster of cantharides, the shins putrified, and he died a septuagenarian, in the 23rd year of his episcopate.	"Cantharides": *cantaredarum cataplasmam*: Spanish fly (*Lytta vesicatoria)* of the blister beetle family, from whom a toxic blistering agent can be extracted: Wikipedia, "Spanish fly," consulted Febraury 1, 2022.	6.15. Felix vero episcopus Namneticae civitatis in hac valitudine corruens, graviter aegrotare coepit... ...At ille regressus, consilium acceptum adimplere dissimulavit, eo quod Felix episcopus ab incommodo levius agere videretur. Sed postquam febris discessit, tibiae eius ab humore pusulas emerserunt. Tunc cantaredarum cataplasmam nimium validam ponens, conputrescentibus tibiis, anno episcopatus sui XXXIII, aetate septuagenaria vitam finivit.

8.1.2 Epidemic of pustules and fever at Tours 582, according to Gregory of Tours, *Miracles of St. Martin* 3.34

Gregory describes his eyewitness experience of this illness in the *Miracles of St. Martin*. This book of the *Miracles* was written after book 2, which was completed before November 581 (Shaw 2016, 110); Book 3 was probably completed between 586 or 587 and July 588 (Shaw 2016, 110). Gregory seems to follow a regular chronological order in presenting these miracles. According to the chronology refined by Heinzelmann 1981, 240, the sections 3.24-39 concern the period between November 11, 583 and July 4-7, 584. At the beginning of this chapter, Gregory situates the event he is about to narrate "in the previous year." See further McCormick 2021a, 56n90.

The symptoms included a high fever, and boils and small pustules covering the entire body. There were white boils that were hard, and very painful. When they fully developed, they burst, and the pus oozed onto clothing and stuck to it, causing even more pain. Physicians could do nothing to remedy this illness, except with God's help. Many did get help from St. Martin. Gregory then narrates the particular case of the wife of Count Ebroin who was so afflicted by the boils that they covered even her hands, the soles of her feet, and her eyelids. When she drank and was rubbed with holy water from the saint's tomb, her fever was immediately extinguished, and then the pustules drained without pain, and she was cured.

Edition: *Miracles of St. Martin*, 3.34, ed. Krusch 1969, 190.23-37.

Date of event: 582.

Date of record: ca. 586-588.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
3.34. Also in the previous year when the population of Tours was most heavily devastated by an epidemic sickness, there was an illness of the sort that, taken by a strong fever, a person would be entirely covered by boils and small pustules. The boils were white and hard, having no softness, but only brought excessive pain. Now if, when they had fully developed, popping, they started to ooze, then, since	"It was also in the previous year when": *superiore quoque anno cum*. As printed, the sentence is difficult to construe; one might be tempted to delete the *cum*. A simple solution is to correct the punctuation given by Krusch and Levison, and change to a comma the period they placed between *vastabatur* and *erat*. This section of the *Miracles* treats the period November 11, 583 to July 584: Heinzelmann, 1981, 240. Since	3.34. Superiore quoque anno cum gravissime populus Turonorum a lue valitudinaria vastabatur, erat enim talis languor, ut adprehensus homo a febre valida, totus visicis ac minutis pusulis scateret. Erant autem visicae albae cum duritia, nullam habentes mollitiem, nisi tantum dolorem nimium inferentes. Iam si data maturitate crepitantes coepissent defluere, tunc

clothing stuck to the body, the pain was increased even more. In this sickness, the art of the physicians could achieve nothing, unless it were applied with the Lord's help. For many seeking a blessing from the holy basilica deserved to receive help. But why is it necessary to recall about many cases, when the others deserved what we saw one woman deserved? For the wife of Count Ebroin, when she was afflicted by this epidemic, was so covered with boils that neither her hands nor the soles of her feet nor any part of her body remained free of them: even her eyes were covered and closed by them. When she was on the verge of death, she sought a blessing from the saint's tomb. Then was sent to her some of the water with which the saint's tomb had been washed for Easter. Finally, after her sores had been rubbed with it, she drank some of it. Her fever was quenched and, as the boils were seeping out painlessly, she was cured.	Gregory began the new year on March 1 (Giry 1894, 112; cf. W. Levison, MGH SRM 1.615, s.v. mensis), if he were writing this chapter before March 1, 584, he would be referring to the year previous to 583, i.e., March 582-February 583. "illness": *languor* "but": *nisi*. See Bonnet 1890, 321. "epidemic": lue	adhaerentibus corpori vestimentis, dolor validius augebatur; in qua aegritudine nihil medicorum poterat ars valere, nisi cum dominicum adfuisset auxilium. Multi enim de basilica sancta benedictionem petentes, opem merebantur. Sed quid de plurimis memorare necesse est, cum id meruerint ceteri, quod unam vidimus meruisse? Uxor igitur Eborini comitis, cum ab hac lue deteneretur, ita his operta visicis est, ut neque manus neque plantae neque ulla pars corporis eius vacua remaneret, sed et ipsi quoque oculi ab his contenebantur obtecti. Cum iam in discrimine mortis haberetur, sancti sepulchri benedictionem expetiit. Tunc transmissum est ei de aqua, qua beatum tumulum in pascha Domini est ablutum. Denique delibutis ex ea vulneribus, ipsa exinde potui sumpsit. Mox igitur restincta febre, decurrentibus sine dolore visicis, sanata est.

8.2 Gregory reports plague at Albi in 584 into September at least

Gregory, *Hist*. 7.1, reports that Bishop Salvius of Albi refused to flee his city even though the majority of the population had already succumbed to bubonic plague. This report claims that

plague killed more than half of the population, and that Salvius was unusual in refusing to flee the town. He cared for the few survivors of the plague outbreak until he himself died in what Gregory estimates was the 10th year of his episcopate. Salvius knew his time had come, got into his tomb and died. Gregory's account implies that the plague had already been ongoing for some time when Salvius died. This indicates that this outbreak at Albi had extended at least from the summer into mid-September, since Salvius' death was commemorated on 10 September (see Hrabanus Maurus' ninth-century *Martyrologium*, whose main sources were Bede's Martyrology and the Hieronymian Martyrology: September 10, Rabanus Maurus 1979, here 91.120-124; Duchesne 1907-1915, 2:43). Gregory, here *Hist.* 7.1, 323.15-17, dates Salvius' death to "this year," immediately following his previous description of the murder of King Chilperic I during the hunting season (i.e., fall) of 584. Note that Albi was a frontier bishopric of the Frankish kingdom, since its boundaries bordered on the Visigothic kingdom.

Edition: Gregory, *Hist*. 7.1, Krusch and Levison 1951, 323.15-17 and 326.15-23.

Date of event: 584.

Date of record: ca. 590.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
7.1. Although the effort should be to pursue the history remaining from the succession of the previous books, yet devotion requires first that some things be said about the passing of holy Salvius, who is known to have died this year. [There follows a brief biography and report of some of his wondrous deeds] But after a very long time, the holy man was drawn from his cell, elected to the episcopal office, and consecrated against his will. In the tenth year, I believe, of that office, when the bubonic plague was gaining strength and the majority of the population had		7.1. Licet sit studium historiam prosequi, quam priorum librorum ordo reliquid, tamen prius aliqua de beati Salvii obitu exposcit loquievotio, qui hoc anno obisse probatur... [...] Post multum vero tempus ipse vir beatus a cellola sua extractus, ad episcopatum electus, invitus est ordinatus. In quo, ut opinor, decimo anno cum agerit, invalescente apud Albigensem urbem inguinario

already died, even though only few residents remained, like a good shepherd, the holy man wanted never to leave that place. He kept continuously encouraging those who were still there to apply themselves to prayer and earnestly pursue vigils and to be always engaged in good things, both in deed and thought, saying: “Do these things so that, if God wants you to leave this world, you will be able to come not to judgement but to rest in peace. Since he was already recognizing thanks, I believe, to God’s revelation, the moment of his summons [to heaven], he prepared his own sarcophagus, washed his body, put on his garment and in this way breathed his last holy breath continuously focused on heaven.		morbo et maxima iam parte de populo illo defuncta, cum iam pauci de civibus remanerent, vir beatus tamquam bonus pastor numquam ab illo loco recedere voluit; sed semper ortabatur eos, qui relicti fuerant, oratione incumbere ac vigiliis instanter insistere et bona semper tam in operibus quam in cogitatione versare, dicens: "Haec agite, ut, si vos Deus de hoc mundo migrare voluerit, non in iudicium, sed in requiem introire possitis". Cum autem, ut credo, iam revelante Domino, tempus suae vocationis agnusceret, ipse sibi sarcofagum conposuit, corpus abluit, vestem induit; et sic intentum semper caelo beatum spiritum exalavit.

9. Gregory of Tours mentions that in 586 many bishops died at a time when a serious epidemic of unspecified nature affected Provence.

Gregory states that many of the bishops died in this year, which he explicitly identifies as year 11 of King Childebert II (December 25, 585-December 24, 586). After describing the evil deeds and the death of the wicked Badegysilus, bishop of LeMans, from a fever, as well as controversies arising from his widow’s efforts to claim property from his successor the bishop had supposedly given to the church, Gregory continues by reporting the death and succession of Sapaudus, bishop of Arles, then states that there was a serious epidemic of unspecified nature in Provence, and that Evantius, bishop of Vienne also died. He chooses not to name all the other bishops (*sacerdotes*) who died, because they had monuments in their own cities. This seems to imply that both the named bishops of the Rhone towns died of the epidemic disease, as did others in Provence. If so, the epidemic affected a good number of high status individuals in multiple dioceses.

Edition: Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 8.39, 405.10-406.10.

Date of event: 588.

Date of record: ca. 590-594.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
39. In this year many of the bishops died. …[Story of Badegysilus and his widow]. Sapaudus bishop of Arles also died, and Licerius, the referendary of king Gunthramn was assigned in his place. At that time a serious epidemic vanquished Provence. Evantius, bishop of Vienne also died, in whose see Virus, a priest from among the senators, was substituted by the king's choice. And in this year, many bishops left this world, which I chose to pass over, because each has left their own monuments in their own city.	"Bishops": *sacerdotes*. In Gregory can mean either "bishops"or "priests." Godding 2001, 183-186. He rarely notes the death of ecclesiastics who are not prelates or exceptionally holy; along with the reference to their "monuments in their own city" this can only refer to bishops.	8.39. Eo anno multi episcoporum obierunt. Obiit et Sabaudus Arelatensis episcopus; in cuius loco Licerius regis Guntchramni refrendarius est adscitus. Gravis tunc Provinciam ipsam lues debellata est. Obiit et Euantius Viennensis episcopus; in cuius sede Virus presbiter de senatoribus, rege elegente, substituetur. Multique eo anno sacerdotum ex hoc mundo migrati sunt, quod praeterire volui, eo quod unusquisque in urbe sua sui reliquerit monimenta.

10. Gregory of Tours reports that, in the spring of 588, an epidemic of dysentery was raging at Metz, where the royal court was located, and that two afflicted individuals died near Paris while attempting to return home to Poitiers.

Gregory, *Histories* 9.13, ed. Krusch and Levison 1951, 428.7-13, reports that dysentery was raging at Metz, at a time when he was hastening there to the royal court of Childebert II. He left Childebert's court on an embassy to the court of Gunthramn at Chalon-sur-Saône, where he spent Easter (April 18; McCormick 2021a, 81-82). En route to Metz, thus in late March or early April, at

Reims, he met Wiliulf, a resident of Poitiers (returning from the royal court?) severely afflicted by the illness and suffering from a high fever. Wiliulf continued southward but when he reached the town of Paris, specifically the villa of Rueil (arr. Versailles, cant. Marly-le-Roi), he drew up his will and died; he was accompanied by his stepson, who was also ill. He too died, and their bodies were transported to Poitiers.

Edition: Gregory, *Histories* 9.13, ed. Krusch and Levison 1951, 428.7-13.

Date of event: 588.

Date of record: ca. 590.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
9.13. The sickness of dysentery was then raging in the town of Metz. At that time, when we were hastening to meet the king, met en route, at the town of Reims Wiliulf, a resident of Poitiers, struggling with this sickness and full of fever. Leaving Reims almost dead, he came to the town of Paris, with his stepson, and, drawing up his will, passed away. The boy too suffered from this fever and died. And so, together, they were carried back to the district of the town Poitiers and buried.		9.13. Graviter tunc morbus desentericus apud Metensim saeviebat urbem. His diebus nos, dum ad occursum regis properaremus, Wiliulfum civem Pectavum plenum febre, hoc morbo laborantem, in via offendimus, id est ad Remensim urbem. De qua profectus valde exinanitus, cum ad urbem Parisiacam cum filio uxoris suae venisset, apud villam Rigoialinsim, facto testamento, defunctus est. Puer vero, qui et ipse ab hoc langore tenebatur, obiit; et sic pariter in urbis Pectavae delati termino, tumolati sunt

10.1 Gregory learns from king Guntramn of a terrible epidemic of unspecified nature in Italy in the spring of 588.

Gregory travels from the court at Metz of his king Childebert II to the court of King Guntramn at Chalon-sur-Saône, with Felix, as ambassador: they convey Childebert's engagement

to fulfill his promises to Guntramn and, among other things, Childebert's request that Guntramn supply troops to help him recover his territory in Italy from the Lombards. Guntramn refuses, since that would be sending his men to their death, for he claimed that a very serious epidemic was currently raging in Italy. It is conceivable that Guntramn was prevaricating or exaggerating to avoid participating in the projected expedition, but it is also possible that the report is correct.

Edition: Gregory of Tours, *Hist*. 9.20, Krusch and Levison 1951, 440.10-12.

Date of event: 588.

Date of record: ca. 590-594.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
The king answered: "I cannot," he said, "order my army to Italy, so that I send them off to death. For a most serious epidemic is now wasting Italy."	"Most serious epidemic": Gravissima… lues	Respondit rex: "Non", inquid, "possum in Italiam exercitum meum dirigere, ut ultro eos morti tradam. Gravissima enim lues Italiam nunc devastat".

10.2 Gregory of Tours describes how a merchant ship from Spain introduced an epidemic of plague at Marseilles that moved up the Rhone in 588; he also mentions two Provençal bishops' deaths at this time, possibly in connection with the epidemic.

As Gregory learned during his stay in 588 (Piétri and Heijmans 2013, 943-944) at King Gunthramn's royal court at Chalon-sur-Saône, a critical node on the infrastructure connecting northeastern Gaul with the Mediterranean via the Rhone river corridor, bubonic plague (*lues inguinaria*) came to Marseille aboard a merchant ship from Spain by about 10 April 588 (McCormick 2021a, 81-83, with 82n224). Immediately after reporting his embassy on behalf of King Childebert II to the court of King Gunthramn at Chalon-sur-Saône), and how he took leave of the king, Gregory illustrated the piety of Gunthramn by describing King Gunthramn's reaction to the report of plague at Marseilles and its swift progress up the Rhone toward Lyons, which was part of Gunthramn's kingdom and on the route to Chalon-sur-Saône: like a bishop, the king organized prayer services to protect his people.

Initially the plague affected only one household despite the fact that many had done business with that ship's merchants. After slowly spreading through the

town, the epidemic spread like a wildfire "burning off the entire city." It moved up the Rhone valley toward Lyons (and Chalon-sur-Saône), but stopped south of the city; plague died down at Marseilles for two months. Gregory reveals that the population had abandoned the city, for he tells us that when the plague seemed to have abated, the population returned to Marseille, and the epidemic came back and killed those who had returned. He adds that the plague returned many times in the following years (i.e., ca. 589-594).

Fig GT-3. The Rhone corridor and main settlements, Visigothic Septimania and Merovingian Gaul

Temporarily or permanently, the plague, Gregory claims, stalled at "Octavum," i.e., the eighth milestone below Lyons on the Rhone, at the modern village of Saint-Symphorien d'Ozon, which lay at or near the confluence of the Ozon and the Rhone at that time. The mention of the small settlement on the Rhone outside Lyons may reflect a break in the transmission of the contagion, possibly caused by the blocking of vessels traveling up the Rhone in an area where the river and its shoals were, in the past, unstable (McCormick 1988, 60-61). In fact, recent dendroecological evidence shows that spring precipitation in northeastern France and southeastern Germany was below normal in 588, making lowered Rhone water levels possible exactly when this plague was unfolding (McCormick 2021a, 83). This outbreak or one of those that followed it may be the epidemic of bubonic plague that killed the victims recently identified from excavations at Lunel-Viel (Hérault), whose dating falls within these decades and the phylogeny of whose *Yersinia pestis* aDNA seems consonant. Lunel-Viel is near what looks like a minor early medieval landing and goods transfer site at Mas Deports on the Étang d'Or, one of the lagoons that constitute an important component of the late antique shipping (and smuggling?) route between Spain and Marseilles, along the southern French coast: see further McCormick 2019[2021] and fig. GT-4.

Fig. GT-4: location of Lunel-Viel and Mas Deports within the lagoons of the late antique shipping route from Spain to Gaul, and within the Visigothic province of Septimania, on the frontier of the Merovingian kingdom of Gaul ("royaume des Francs"), from the 18th-century Cassini map of France, adapted by Santiago Pardo Sánchez, SoHP.

[Fig. GT-5, Lunel-Viel, "Quartier central" (Hérault). Emergency burial, Individual 5, dumped in a robber trench that had removed stones from an abandoned Roman building. Individual 5 was robustly positive for the aDNA of *Yersinia pestis* (Keller et al. 2019, SOM, Tab. S1, 41.). Photo Claude Raynaud, CNRS].

Between 588 and whenever he wrote these lines prior to his death in 594, plague broke out "many times" at Marseilles (see next) certainly suggesting two or more outbreaks between 589 and ca. 594. N.B. The *capitula* (chapter headings) at the beginning of book nine simply call it "22. On the epidemic of the town of Marseilles" (" 22. De luae Massiliensis urbis," *Hist*. 413.11).

In the following chapters 22 and 23, still in reference to 588, Gregory notes that the bishops of Arles and Vence died at this time, possibly implying that they were among the victims of this outbreak.

Edition: Gregory of Tours, *Histories* 9.21-22, Krusch

Date of event: April 588.

Date of record: ca. 590-594.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
9.21. As we have often said, this king was great in giving alms and quick to participate in vigils and fasts. At that time it was reported that Marseille was being intensely wasted by bubonic plague and that this illness had quickly been manifested right up to the settlement of St. Symphorien d'Ozon near Lyons. But like a good bishop foreseeing remedies that could cure the wounds of a sinful crowd, the king ordered the whole population to assemble in the church and to celebration rogations with the greatest devotion and to take no other food than barley bread and plain water and urgently commanded all to be present at vigils. This was done at that time. For during three days, while his almsgiving was leading the way more generously than usual, he was so worried about his people that he could be considered not only a king but a bishop of the Lord, pouring his whole hope into	"bubonic plague": *a luae inguinaria*. "this illness": *hunc morbum* St. Symphorien d'Ozon: Octavum, i.e., at the eighth milestone south of Lyons: Longnon et al. 1920, 117. The town today lies ca. three km east of the modern course of the Rhône. Gregory expects his reader to know that the illness traveled swiftly from Marseille to the Rhone and then up the river corridor toward Lyon, at the Rhone's confluence with the Sâone. Chalon-sur-Sâone, where the news reached Gregory and the royal court, lies about two to four days' travel (ca. 120 km) upstream from Lyon. "Good bishop": *bonus sacerdus*. *Sacerdos* is ambivalent in Gregory of Tours, meaning both "bishop" and "priest": Godding 2001,183-186. The comparison of the king assembling the whole population in the church for a liturgical services suggests that, in	9.21. Ipse autem rex, ut saepe diximus, in elymosinis magnus, in vigiliis atque ieiuniis prumptus erat. Nam tunc ferebatur, Masiliam a luae inguinaria valde vastare et hunc morbum usque ad Lugdunensim vicum Octavum nomine fuisse caeleriter propalatum. Sed rex acsi bonus sacerdus providens remedia, qua cicatrices peccatoris vulgi mederentur, iussit omnem populum ad eclesiam convenire et rogationes summa cum devotione celebrare et nihil aliud in usu vescendi nisi panem ordeacium cum aqua munda adsumi, vigiliisque adesse instanter omnes iobet. Quod eo tempore ita gestum est. Per triduum enim ipsius elimosinis largius solito praecurrentibus, ita de cuncto populo formidabat, ut iam tunc non rex tantum, sed etiam sacerdus Domini putaretur, totam spem suam in Domini miseratione transfundens et in ipso iactans

God's mercy, and weighing the thoughts that came to him, he was considering by what means these ideas might be turned to good effect with complete integrity of faith.	this case, Gregory is thinking of a bishop.	cogitationes, quae ei superveniebant, a quo eas effectui tradi tota fidei integritate putabat.
9.22. Now we wish to lay out more deeply, how many sicknesses the town of Marseilles underwent in that terrible contagion, [as] we said above. For in these days, bishop Theodore [of Marseilles] had gone off to the king in order to make some petition against the patrician Nicetius. However, when king Childebert would not hear him about this, he prepared to go home. In the meantime, a ship from Spain carrying the usual cargo put into his port [of Marseilles]; it was wickedly carrying the kindling of this disease. Although many townspeople were conducting business with this ship, one house of eight occupants was suddenly left empty, when its residents were killed by this contagion. This conflagration of illness was not spread through all the houses right away. But, after a gap of a certain time, like a flame lit among the crops, it burned off the entire city with the fire of illness. But the bishop of the town arrived at the place, and kept himself within the compound of the	"Sicknesses": *aegrota*. *Aegrotum*, neuter, seems to be used to designate "sickness" once elsewhere in (Gregory, *Miracles of St. Martin*, 1.28, 152.3). Here it can be construed either as a neuter plural substantivized noun or, less likely in this case, as an adjective modifying *urbis* (which is nominative here: Bonnet 1890, 360-361). Gregory used the word frequently as an adjective, but always as referring to a person or persons who were sick. Construing the word as an adjective would give the meaning "how many things the town of Marseilles underwent when it was sickened by that terrible contagion." "contagion": *contagio* "in order": *quasi*: Bonnet 1890, 322. illness: morbus	9.22. Nam superius diximus, Massiliensis urbis contagio pessimo aegrota quanta sustenuerit, altius replecare placuit. His enim diebus Theodorus episcopus ad regem abierat, quasi aliquid contra Nicetium patricium suggesturus. Sed cum a rege Childeberto minime de hac causa fuisset auditus, ad propria redire disposuit. Interea navis ab Hispania una cum negutio solito ad portum eius adpulsa est, qui huius morbi fomitem secum nequiter deferebat. De qua cum multi civium diversa mercarentur, una confestim domus, in qua octo animae erant, hoc contagio interfectis habitatoribus, relicta est vacua. Nec statim hoc incendium lues per domus spargitur totas; sed, interrupto certi temporis spatio ac velut in segetem flamma accensa, urbem totam morbi incendio conflagravit. Episcopus tamen urbis accessit ad

basilica of St. Victor with the few who had stayed with him; there focusing on prayers and vigils through the whole destruction of the city, he was beseeching God's mercy, that dying would finally come to an end, and the population would be allowed to be left quietly in peace. And the plague stopped for all of two months, but when the population, feeling secure, had returned to the city, the disease again returned and those who had returned died. And from then on, the town has been oppressed many times by this dying. 9.23. ...Licerius bishop of Arles also died; through the intervention of Siagrius bishop [of Autun], abbot Virgilius of Autun was placed in his church. 9.24. Deotherius bishop of Vence also died; Fronimius was substituted in his place. This Fronimius was a resident of the town of Bourges….	"for all of two months": *valde minsibus duobus*. For *valde* in this sense with numbers, Bonnet 1890, 308, including this passage. "Dying": *interitu.* "And from then on" :see discussion in the next entry. In the next two chapters Gregory mentions the deaths of three bishops in that year. The first, Agericus (Airy) of Verdun, died of bitterness. Gregory does not specify the cause of death of the bishops of Arles and Vence, both of whose churches were in the zone afflicted by plague.	locum et se infra basilicae sancti Victoris saepta contenuit cum paucis, qui tunc cum ipso remanserant, ibique per totam urbis stragem orationibus ac vigiliis vacans, Domini misericordiam exorabat, ut tandem cessante interitu populo liceret in pace quiescere. Cessit vero haec plaga valde minsibus duobus, cumque iam securus populus redisset ad urbem, iterum succedente morbo, qui redierant sunt defuncti. Sed et multis vicibus deinceps ab hoc interitu gravata est. 9.23….Obiit autem et Licerius Arelatensis episcopus; in cuius eclesia Virgilius abba Agustidunensis, opitulante Siagrio episcopo, substitutus est. 9.24. Obiit autem et Deotherius Vinciensis episcopus; in cuius locum Fronimius subrogatus est.

10.3 Gregory of Tours concludes the account of the plague epidemic at Marseilles by noting that since 588, Marseilles has suffered plague outbreaks "many times." The many epidemics to which he refers probably included the Rhone plague of 590, as well as another likely outbreak of plague in 591.

Between 588 and whenever he wrote these lines before his death, probably in 594, plague broke out "many times" in Marseille. This sentence continues the description of the plague epidemic at Marseille in 588 (see previous). The phrasing indicates that at least two, and probably more, epidemics of plague hit Marseille in the six summers from 589 to 594 (*Histories* 9.22, Krusch and Levison 1951, 422.22-23). One of those outbreaks was likely that which Gregory noted

only further up the Rhone valley at Viviers and Avignon, in 590 (see next entry). At least one more epidemic erupted between 591 and 594, probably in 591, and it seems also to have been bubonic plague (see below, Gregory of Tours 11.3).

The near annual recurrence of plague in the Rhone valley after 588 suggests that the pathogen had become endemic in some host communities in the region.

Edition: Gregory of Tours, *Histories* 9.22, Krusch and Levison 1951, 442.22-23.

Date of event: 589-594.

Date of record: ca. 590-594.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
And from then on, the town has been oppressed many times by this dying.		Sed et multis vicibus deinceps ab hoc interitu gravata est.

11. Gregory reports that in 590 plague seriously devastated Viviers and Avignon, in the Rhône valley.

Gregory (*Hist*. 10.23) reports the epidemic outbreaks at the end of his account of the events of 590, after narrating celestial and other portentous events, from multiple bright spheres in the night sky that illuminated like day (no date), through Easter date variations, an earthquake on June 14, and an October solar eclipse which Gregory places in the middle of the month but which actually took place on October 4 (Schove 1984, 263). The plague possibly occurred late in the year, but Gregory's placement of it at the end of his description more likely reflects his own theory that plagues were presaged by various portents (see above, *On the course of the stars*). The fact that Gregory mentions that plague was particularly serious (*graviter…devastavit*) at two places on the lower Rhone river does not necessarily mean that it was absent elsewhere; in fact it may well have followed the usual pattern traveling up the Rhône, and started that year with one of the multiple undated outbreaks that Gregory reports at Marseille after 588. The fact that plague struck Rome from January 590 onward also makes transmission from Rome via Marseille plausible, given the contemporary shipping routes that linked Italy's Tyrrhenian coast with Provence (McCormick 2001, 77-82).

Edition: Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, 10.23, ed. Krusch and Levison 1951, 515.7-8.

Date of event: 590.

Date of record: ca. 590-594.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
Bubonic plague seriously devastated the towns of Viviers and Avignon.	"Bubonic plague": *lues inguinaria*	Vivariensim Avennicamque urbem graviter lues inguinaria devastavit.

11.1 Gregory's envoy witnesses the epidemic of plague at Rome that began in January 590 and the special religious services to protect from it ordered by the pope-elect Gregory I "the Great."

Plague, probably including a pneumonic outbreak, at Rome followed a terrible flood that in November 589 covered the city, wrecked ancient buildings and ruined the granaries of the church; Gregory, *Histories* 10.1 reports all of this based on the eyewitness report of Agiulf, his deacon who had been in Rome to obtain relics in 589-590 (McCormick 2021a, 86-88). Gregory states that the plague began in mid-January, after the flooding, and killed Pope Pelagius II (d. February 7: "right away," in fact three weeks into the plague: see Commentary). Imperial approval in Constantinople of the election in Rome delayed Gregory's consecration until September 3, 590, which explains Gregory of Tours' reference to the new pope as the "bishop who was to be appointed" (*sacerdos dandus*). This homily was therefore preached between February and September 590. The deacon was able to transcribe or obtain a transcription of the homily pope-elect Gregory preached during the outbreak about the novel liturgical procession he was organizing to try to end the epidemic.[22] This document from the middle of the event itself shows that death came swiftly, even before symptoms of illness were perceived; the disease wiped out entire households, and progeny died before their parents, perhaps hinting at particularly high mortality among youth. The pneumonic character of the outbreak is further comforted by the observation that 80 people participating in one of the processions collapsed and died within the space of one hour, even as Gregory kept urging them to pray. They were clearly not showing acute symptoms if they were walking in processions across the hilly city of Rome. Pope Gregory's sermon along with Agilulf's comments as recorded by the bishop of Tours shows that the litanic processions began at 9 AM in different places around the city and culminated in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore. If the pneumonic form of plague was present, the crowding of so many people into the closed space of the great fifth-century basilica likely represented a "super-spreader" event. Agilulf stayed through the epidemic until Gregory I's consecration as bishop of Rome, which took place on September 3, 590 (Duchesne and

[22] The accuracy of the account and of the homily text is fully confirmed by a later version of this same homily, adjusted and recycled 13 years later, as it is preserved in the *Register* of Gregory's letters (*Reg*. 13.2 ["Appendix 9"], ed. Norberg 1979, 2:1102-1104), under the date August 29, 603. It is highly likely that Gregory, always plagued by poor health, re-delivered this slightly revised version of the old homily under a new wave of plague on that date. The version of 603 made slightly different arrangements for the seven-part litanic procession. See below, Rome 603.

Vogel 1955, 3:93). Gregory of Tours implies that Agiulf avoided staying in Rome itself, for he says that Agiulf went to Rome to see the consecration from Portus (mod. Porto Romano), the Trajanic artificial harbor of the city of Rome ca. 25 km away, on the coast.

Fig. GT-6: Santa Maria Maggiore from space (Google Earth).

Fig. GT-7: Rome, fifth-century basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, interior today. Site of a super-spreader event in 590 CE?

Edition: Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* 10.1, Krusch and Levison 1951, 477.1-481.17.

Date of event: 590.

Date of record: ca. 590-594.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
10.1. So in the fifteenth year of King Childebert, our deacon, returning from Rome with relics of the saints, told how the previous year, in the ninth month [i.e. November by Gregory's calendar], so great a flood of the Tiber river covered the city of Rome that the ancient buildings collapsed, and the granaries of the church also were ruined, in which some thousands of bushels of grains were ruined. A multitude of snakes, including a big dragon that looked like a powerful beam, went down the river bed to the sea. But the beasts drowned in the stormy salt waves of the sea and washed up on shore. The mortality which they call inguinal followed right away. For, arriving in the middle of the eleventh month [i.e., January], it struck first of all [those who fell sick] Pope Pelagius [II] and extinguished him without delay, according to what is read in the prophet Ezechiel (9.6): "Begin at my sanctuary." When he had died, a great destruction of the population took place due to this	"Our deacon": Agiulf, according to Gregory elsewhere: *Life of the Fathers,* 8.6*,* Krusch 1969, 246.15-16; and for the saints in question and a miraculous escape from shipwreck when Agiulf was returning home from Rome: *Glory of the Martyrs* 82, ed. Krusch 1969, 93-94. "the previous year, in the ninth month": November 589 which they call inguinal: *clades, quam inguinariam vocant*, i.e. bubonic plague right away: *subsecuta est de vestigio.* Gregory's typically broad notion of a "short" lapse between a portent and the disaster it signaled is clear from his own chronological indication of some two months between the floods and the arrival of the plague. See	10.1. Anno igitur quinto decimo Childeberthi regis diaconus noster ab urbe Roma sanctorum cum pigneribus veniens, sic retulit, quod anno superiore, mense nono, tanta inundatio Tiberis fluvius Romam urbem obtexerit, ut aedes antiquae deruerent, horrea etiam eclesiae subversa sint, in quibus nonnulla milia modiorum tritici periere. Multitudo etiam serpentium cum magno dracone in modo trabis validae per huius fluvii alveum in mare discendit; sed suffocatae bestiae inter salsos maris turbidi fluctus et litori eiectae sunt. Subsecuta est de vestigio cladis, quam inguinariam vocant. Nam medio mense XI. adveniens, primum omnium iuxta illud, quod in Ezechiel profeta legitur: A sanctoario meo incipite, Pelagium papam perculit et sine mora extinxit. Quo defuncto, magna stragis populi de hoc morbo facta est.

sickness.	also next, and above, on portents 563-565, 565, 577, 581. "first of all [those who fell sick] pope Pelagius [II]": *primum omnium… Pelagium*. Pelagius' death date is recorded as February 7, 590 (Duchesne and Vogel 1981 3:92), and thus occurred about three weeks into the outbreak, rather than at the very beginning. "destruction": *stragis* "sickness": *morbo*	
But because God's church could not be without a helmsman, the entire people elected the deacon Gregory. This man, from the leading senators, had been dedicated to God since his adolescence, assembled six monasteries in his own property in Sicily, and established a seventh inside the walls of the city of Rome. He bequeathed to them abundant lands such as would suffice for their daily provisions, he sold the rest along with all the help of his house and distributed it to the poor… he was consecrated to the service of the altar of the Lord and as the seventh deacon, assigned to help the pope… [He was] trying very hard to escape this lofty position lest a certain vainglory from accepting such dignity steal him back in secular life, what he had earlier rejected.	"Steal him back": *...ei… iactantia quaedam subriperit*: on more or less analogous usages of the dative with verbs of taking, snatching, etc. in Gregory, see Bonnet 1890, 543.	Sed quia eclesia Dei absque rectorem esse non poterat, Gregorium diaconem plebs omnis elegit. Hic enim de senatoribus primis, ab adulescentia devotus Deo, in rebus propriis sex in Sicilia monasteria congregavit, septimum infra urbis Romae muros instituit; quibus tantum delegans terrarum copiam, quantum ad victum cotidianum praebendum sufficeret, reliqua vindedit cum omni praesidio domus ac pauperibus erogavit; … ad altaris dominici ministerium consecratur septimusque levita ad adiutorium papae adsciscitur. …hoc apicem adtentius fugire temptans, ne, quod prius abicerat, rursum ei in saeculo de adepto honore iactantia quaedam subriperit.

[Gregory of Tours then narrates how bishop-elect Gregory attempted to influence the emperor in Constantinople not to approve his election as bishop, but the City Prefect of Rome blocked his effort, and the emperor approved.]		
When it remained thus, that he would be blessed, and the epidemic was devastating the population, he delivered a talk in this fashion to the people urging them to do penance: Speech of pope Gregory to the people. “Dearest brothers, it is right that now at least that they are present and experienced, we should fear the scourges of God, which we ought to have dreaded when they still were in the future. Let the pain open the way to our conversion, and the very punishment which we are suffering soften the hardness of our heart for, as has been predicted by the prophet, “the sword has reached their very life” (Jeremiah 4.10). Behold! The fact is that the whole population is being struck by the blade of heavenly anger, and each is devastated by sudden slaughter. Sickness does not even precede death: as you can see, death forestalls the period of sickness.		Cumque in hoc restaret, ut benediceretur, et lues populum devastaret, verbum ad plebem pro agenda paenitentia in hoc modo exorsus est: ORATIO GREGORII PAPAE AD PLEBEM. Oportet, fratres karissimi, ut flagella Dei, quae metuere ventura debuemus, saltim praesentia et experta timeamus. Conversionis nobis aditum dolor aperiat, et cordis nostri duritiam ipsa quam patimur poena dissolvat; ut enim profeta teste praedictum est, "pervenit gladius usque ad animam". Ecce! etenim cuncta plebs caelestis irae mucrone percutitur, et repentina singuli caede vastantur; nec langor mortem praevenit, sed langoris moras, ut cernitis, mors praecurrit. Percussus quisque ante rapitur, quam ad lamenta paenitentiae convertatur. Pensate ergo, qualis ad conspectum districti Iudicis pervenit, cui non vacat flere quod

Whoever has been struck is snatched away before he can turn to the groans of penance. Ponder in what state someone appears before the severe Judge, who has not had time to bemoan what he has done. The various residents are not taken off piecemeal, but they all collapse together. Houses are left empty, parents watch the funerals of their children, and their heirs precede them in death.	Sickness: *langor*	fecit. Habitatores quique non ex parte subtrahuntur, sed pariter corruunt; domus vacuae relinquuntur, filiorum funera parentes aspiciunt, et sui eos ad interitum heredes praecedunt.
So let each of us take refuge in the lamentations of penance, while there is still time to weep before the blow. Let us recall before the eyes of the mind whatever we have committed in error, and let us punish tearfully whatever we have done wrong. “Let us anticipate his face in confession” (Psalms 92.4 iuxta LXX) and, as the prophet advises, “Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God” (Lamentations 3.41). Of course to lift up our hearts and hands to God is to raise up the effort of our prayer with the merit of good works. Surely he gives, he gives confidence to our terror who shouts through his prophet: “I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live” (Ezechiel	“to our terror”: *tremore nostro*: Gregory and his contemporaries commonly spoke and wrote “-e”	Unusquisque ergo nostrum ad paenitentiae lamenta confugiat, dum flere ante percussionem vacat. Revocemus ante oculos mentis, quicquid errando commisimus, et quod nequiter egimus, flendo puniamus. "Praeveniamus faciem eius in confessionem", et sicut profeta ammonet: "Levemus corda nostra cum manibus ad Deum". Ad Deum quippe corda cum manibus levare est orationis nostrae studium cum merito bonae operationis eregere. Dat profecto, dat tremore nostro fiduciam, qui per profetam clamat: "Nolo mortem peccatoris, sed ut convertatur et vivat". Nullus autem de iniquitatum

33.11). Let no one despair over the enormity of his iniquities. Three days of penance wiped away the inveterate faults of the Ninivites, and the robber who converted right in the midst of his death sentence deserved the rewards of life. So let us change our hearts, and presume already to have obtained what we ask for. The judge is swayed more quickly if the petitioner is corrected from his wickedness. So as the sword of such an ordeal is poised overhead, let us press urgently on with importunate weeping. For that importunateness that usually displeases humans, is pleasing to the judgement of truth, because a scrupulous and merciful God wishes forgiveness to be sought from him, he who does not wish to be angered as much as we deserve. Hence he says through the prophet: “Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me” (Psalms 49.15).	for the long *i* of the Classical dative: Bonnet 1890, 123-126. Ninivites: see Jonah 3:1-10 “robber” Luke 23:40-43	suarum inmanitate disperet; veternosas namque Ninnivitarum culpas triduana paenitentia abstersit, et conversus latro vitae praemia etiam in ipsa sententia suae mortis emeruit. Mutemus igitur corda et praesumamus nos iam percepisse, quod petimus. Citius ad praecem iudex flectitur, si a pravitate sua petitur corrigatur. Imminente ergo tantae animadversionis gladio, nos inportunis fletibus insistamus. Ea namque, quae ingrata esse hominibus inportunitas solet, iudicio veritatis placet, quia pius ac misericors Deus vult a se praecibus veniam exigi, qui quantum meremur non vult irasci. Hinc etenim per psalmistam dicit: "Invoca me in die tribulationis tuae et eripiam te, et magnificabis me".
So he bears witness to himself, because he desires to be merciful to those who invoke him who admonishes that he be invoked.		Ipse ergo sibi testes est, quia invocantibus miserere desiderat, qui ammonet, ut invocetur.

So then, dearest brothers, with a contrite heart and good works let us come to tears with a devout mind in a sevenfold litanic procession, right from dawn on Wednesday, according to the arrangement described below, so that the severe judge when he considers punishing our faults, may spare us from the sentence of the announced condemnation. Therefore let the clergy leave from the church of the holy martyrs Sts. Cosmas and Damian, along with the priests of Region Six. Let all the abbots with their monks [leave] from the church of the holy martyrs Sts. Protasius and Gervasius, along with the priests of Region Four. Let all the abbesses with their congregations leave from the church of the holy martyrs Marcellinus and Peter, along with the priests of Region One. Let all the children [leave] from the church of the holy martyrs John and Paul, along with the priest of Region Two. But let all laymen [leave] from the church of the holy protomartyr Stephen, along with the priests of Region Seven. Let all the widowed women [leave] from the church of Saint Euphemia along with the priests		Proinde, fratres karissimi, contrito corde et correctis operibus, ab ipso feriae quartae dilucolo septiformis laetaniae iuxta distributionem inferius designatam devota ad lacrimas mente veniamus, ut districtus iudex, cum culpas nostras nos punire considerat, ipse a sententia propositae damnationis parcat. Clerus igitur egrediatur ab eclesia sanctorum martyrum Cosmae et Damiani cum praesbyteris regionis sextae. Omnes vero abbatis cum monachis suis ab eclesia sanctorum martyrum Protasi et Gervasi cum praesbyteris regionis quartae. Omnes abbatissae cum congregationibus suis egrediantur ab eclesia sanctorum martyrum Marcellini et Petri cum praesbyteris regionis primae. Omnes infantes ab eclesia sanctorum martyrum Iohannis et Pauli cum praesbyteris regionis secundae. Omnes vero laici ab eclesia sancti protomartyris Stephani cum praesbyteris regionis septimae. Omnes mulieres viduae ab eclesia sanctae Eufimiae cum praesbyteris regionis quintae. Omnes autem mulieres coniugatae egrediantur ab eclesia sancti martyris Clementis cum

of Region Five. And let all the married women leave from the church of the holy martyr Clement along with the priests of Region Three, so that, coming forth from each individual church with prayers and tears, we come together at the basilica of holy Mary, ever virgin mother of our Lord, so that, beseeching for a very long time with weeping and groaning, we may be able to deserve forgiveness for our sins."		praesbyteris regionis tertiae, ut, de singulis eclesiis exeuntes cum praecibus ac lacrimis, ad beatae Mariae semper virginis genetricis domini nostri Iesu Christi basilicam congregemur, ut, ibi diutius cum fletu ac gemitu Domino supplicantes, peccatorum nostrorum veniam promerire valeamus.
As he was saying this, he commanded the crowds of clerics who had been assembled to sing psalms and beseech the Lord's mercy for three days. From nine o'clock in the morning, both choruses of those who were chanting psalms came to the church, shouting "Lord have mercy" through the city's streets. Our deacon, who was there, was claiming that while the population sent up words of supplication to the Lord, in the space of one hour 80 people collapsed and died. But the bishop elect kept on preaching to the people, so they would not stop praying. Moreover, from this man [Pope Gregory I], our deacon, as we said, received relics while he [Gregory] was still in the	"Lord have mercy": Kyrie eleison Bishop elect: *sacerdos dandus*, literally, bishop who was to be appointed; cf. somewhat similar usages in Augustine, *New Letter*s, 20.21, Divjak 1981, 106.7; St. Patrick, *Confession*, 32, ed.	Haec eo dicente, congregatis clericorum catervis, psallere iussit per triduum ac depraecare Domini misericordiam. De hora quoque tertia veniebant utrique chori psallentium ad eclesiam, clamantes per plateas urbis Kyrie eleison. Asserebat autem diaconus noster, qui aderat, in unius horae spatio, dum voces plebs ad Dominum supplicationis emisit, octoaginta homines ad terram conruisse et spiritum exalasse. Sed non distitit sacerdos dandus praedicare populo, ne ab oratione cessarent. Ab hoc etiam diaconus noster reliquias sanctorum, ut diximus, sumpsit, dum adhuc in diaconato degeret. Cumque latibula fugae

diaconate. And although he had prepared hiding places to flee to, he was snatched, dragged and led down to the basilica of St. Peter and consecrated there to the office of pontifical grace, was given as pope of the City. Nor did our deacon leave until his episcopal dignity: he returned from Porto Romano and witnessed with his own eyes how he was consecrated.	Hanson 2007, 104.6-7 and esp. below: "papa…datus est."	praepararet, capitur, trahitur et ad beati apostoli Petri basilica deducitur, ibique ad pontificalis gratiae officium consecratus, papa Urbis datus est. Sed nec distetit diaconus noster, nisi ad episcopatum eius de Porto rediret et, qualiter ordinatus fuerit, praesenti contemplatione suspiceret.

11.2 Gregory mentions that a Frankish army that invaded Italy in 590 was afflicted by an outbreak of dysentery.

A Frankish army that invaded northern Italy suffered seriously from dysentery, which killed many of them: *Histories* 10.3. Gregory attributes this to the airs to which the Franks were unaccustomed. The illness abated when the wind picked up, the rain fell and the air cooled a bit.

Edition: Gregory, *Histories* 10.3, ed. Krusch and Levison 1951, 485.13-17.

Date of event: 589-594.

Date of record: ca. 590-594.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
Chedinus entered the left side of Italy with thirteen dukes and captured 5 castles from which he also required oaths. The illness of dysentery also afflicted the army gravely, because the airs were inconsistent and inhabitual for these men, which is why many died. But when the wind rose and some rain fell and the air began to cool	"Left side" with respect to travelers coming from Gaul, i.e., eastern Italy.	Chedinus autem cum tredecim ducibus levam Italiae ingressus est, quinque castella coepit, quibus etiam sacramenta exegit. Morbus etiam desenteriae graviter exercitum adficiebat, eo quod aeris incongrue insuetique his hominibus essent, ex quo plerique interierunt. Commoto autem vento et data pluvia cum paulisper refrigiscere

a bit, it brought health in the sickness.		aer coepit, in infirmitate salubritatem contulit.

11.3 Gregory reports that the "frequently mentioned disease" invaded the province of Marseille in 591, almost certainly referring to another epidemic of bubonic plague

When Gregory writes that "the frequently mentioned disease invaded the province of Marseille," the context of that opening line of chapter 25 of book 10 of the *Histories* makes virtually certain that this is yet another outbreak of plague, following those mentioned for the previous years. In chapter 24 (Krusch and Levison 1951, 515-517), Gregory had digressed from events in Gaul to report the portentous destruction of Antioch, which he had just learned from an Armenian bishop named Simon who had come to Gaul to raise funds for the beleaguered Christians overseas. The previous chapter 23 (Krusch and Levison 1951, 515.7-8), had concluded with plague epidemics at Viviers and Avignon in 590; and plague outbreaks of 590 in Rome (*Hist.* 10.1,) and 588 in the Rhone valley (*Hist*. 9.21-22) had dominated his recording of epidemics in this period. Dysentery among a Frankish army in 590 (*Hist.* 10.3) is the only non-plague epidemic he reports in the intervening sections. The identification as plague is further reinforced by Paul the Deacon, *History of the Langobards* 4.4 (ed. Bethmann 1878, 117.13-14) who mentions bubonic plague at Ravenna, Grado and Istria apparently in 591. Gregory goes on to explain, once again, how this and other disasters, such as the famine he mentions in northern and central Gaul, were signs of the coming apocalypse as foretold in the Bible. This appears to be the latest outbreak of plague recorded by Gregory who, according to the general consensus, died on November 17, 594 (Piétri et al. 2013, 954). His *Histories* assiduously recorded events down to August 591; although his other works record some events in 592, and one in the first half of 593 (Piétri et al. 2013, 950-1), their focus on miraculous cures for more routine illnesses sheds no light on whether further outbreaks of plague struck Gaul between late 591 and 594.

Edition: Gregory of Tours, *Histories* 10.25, Krusch and Levison 1951, 517.16-17.

Date of event: 591.

Date of record: ca. 591-594.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
10.25. But in the Gauls, the frequently mentioned disease invaded the province of	"frequently mentioned disease": *morbus saepe nominatus*. See introduction to this text.	10.25. At in Galliis Masiliensim provintiam morbus saepe nominatus invasit.

Marseilles. Great hunger afflicted the inhabitants of Angers, Nantes, and Le Mans. "*Now all these are the beginnings of sorrow*." (Matthew 24.8) according to what the Lord said in the Gospel: "*and there shall be pestilences, and famines, and earthquakes in places*" (Matthew 24.7), and "*there will rise up false Christs and false prophets, and they shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce even the elect*" (Mark 13.22), just as has happened in the present time.		Andecavos, Namneticos atque Cenomanicos valida famis oppressit. Initia sunt enim haec dolorum iuxta illud quod Dominus ait in euangelio: Erunt pestilentiae et fames et terrae motus per loca; et exurgent pseudochristi et pseudoprophetae et dabunt signa et prodigia in caelo, ita ut electos in errore mittant, sicut praesenti gestum est tempore.

12. According to Gregory in spring 591 a serious (non-plague) epidemic of moderate but deadly headaches in the area of Tours and Nantes was driven off by devout litanic processions.

The litanic processions were reinforced by abstinence, fasting, and almsgiving.

Edition: Gregory, *Histories* 10.30, Krusch and Levison 1951, 525.15-18.

Date of event: 591.

Date of record: ca. 591-594.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
10.30. In this year, in the second month, in both the areas of Tours and Nantes, a serious epidemic wore down the population in such a fashion that anyone who became ill with a moderate headache was struck down and	"Second month": April in Gregory's calendar "Serious epidemic": gravis… lues	10.30. Hoc anno mense secundo tam in Turonico quam in Namnetico gravis populum lues adtrivit, ita ut modico quisque aegrotus capitis dolore pulsatus animam funderet. Sed factae rogationes cum grandi

died. But when rogation processions were staged with great abstinence and fasting, the blow of divine anger was averted, and the situation was made less severe.		abstinentia et ieiunio, sociatis etiam elemosinis, averso divini furoris impetu mitigatum est.

13. Gregory of Tours mentions miscellaneous cases of noxious pustules, scarring, etc., but does not supply explicit evidence that they were part of epidemic outbreaks.

Sparse details leave unclear in some cases whether, when Gregory mentions "pustules" he is referring to epidemics of noxious pustules with fever that he describes in greater detail in the preceding passages, or to some different kinds of non-contagious tumor, unusual lesions or rash (McCormick 2021a, 56n87); some could be construed as referring to smallpox (*Variola major:* McCormick 2021a, 60). Here are the main cases, in decreasing clarity of the connection of Gregory's epidemic illness of noxious pustules and fever.

1. Saint Monegund, a holy woman established in St. Martin's shrine at Tours:
    a. was adept at treating "the noxious pustule": *Glory of the Confessors* 24, 313.26. See below, Gregory of Tours 13.1.1.
    b. And cured a dying young woman who was completely "swollen" with the noxious pustule until the lesion burst in four different parts, the pus flowed out and she escaped death: *Life of the Fathers* 19.2, 288. A deacon's foot swelling from noxious pustule and cured at her tomb sounds different: *Life of the Fathers* 19.4, 290.3-8. See below, Gregory of Tours 13.1.2.
2. A "noxious pustule" (or rash) on the face had caused a fever and almost killed Gregory's great-uncle Nicetius as a child, long before he became bishop of Lyons in 552. He lay prostrate in bed for two days until his sudden recovery, but the noxious pustule permanently scarred his face: *Life of the Fathers* 8.1, 241–242. See below, Gregory of Tours 13.2.
3. Saint Eparchius' reputation (before 581) for curing "the poison of noxious pustules" (*pusularum malarum venenum*: *Histories* 6.8, 278) is evocative of epidemic. See below, Gregory of Tours 13.3.
4. *Miracles of St. Martin*, chapter headings, 134, announces the miraculous cure in Italy of a Byzantine soldier's (*in exercitu positus*) *pustula*; 1.13, 147; the "poison of the pustule." See below, Gregory of Tours 13.4.
5. Other saints' cures lack differentiating details: *Life of the Fathers* 13.1, 266; *Life of the Fathers*

15.3, 273; *Life of the Fathers* 16.3, 276; *Life of the Fathers* 20.3, p. 293; and *Histories* 5.10, 204–5. Bishop Namatius' fatal illness in 588, consisting of only three noxious pustules on his head, sounds different from the pustule fever epidemics: *Histories* 9.18, 432; the details also seem to differentiate the woman whose whole body was covered by sores or the man whose eyes were closed by the lesions: *Miracles of St. Martin* 1.8, 143 and *Glory of the Confessors* 10, 304, respectively.

13.1 St. Monegundis cures noxious pustules (with fever, pus).

13.1.1: Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, 24.

Edition: Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, 24, ed. Krusch 1969, 313.

Date of Event: Monegundis d. ?570, posthumous healings after, others before

Date of Report: ca. 590.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
24. In that town of Tours, holy Monigundis died. She was from the territory of Chartres. She left both her home region and parents for the sole reason of devoting herself to prayer. Through her, God often deigned to display miracles. For if anyone should contract noxious pustule and come to her, seeking a prayer, she would immediately prostrate herself to beseech the Lord, and collecting leaves of any vegetable or fruit tree, she would rub them with saliva and, making the sign of the cross over a sore, she would lay a leaf on it. Immediately all poison so vanished that the sick person would no longer carry anything appropriate to death.	"the sick person would no longer carry anything appropriate to death": *ut nihil dignum leti aegrotus ultra perferret.* Gregory's rather awkward	24. Apud ipsam vero urbem Turonicam beata Monigundis obiit. Fuit autem ex Carnotino territurio. Quae relinquens tam patriam quam parentes, ad hoc tantum Turonus expetiit, ut orationi vacaret. Per quam Deus crebro miracula ostendere est dignatus. Nam si quis pusulam malam incurrisset, ad eam veniens, orationem precabatur, confestimque illa prosternebatur ad supplicandum Dominum, et collegens folia cuiuslibet holeris aut pomi, saliva inlinebat, faciensque crucem super ulcus, inponebat folium. Confestimque ita omne venenum evaniscebat, ut nihil dignum leti aegrotus ultra

She very frequently also cured people with quartan fever and those who had sore throats.	phrasing suggests that part of her miraculous powers was that after the cure, no mark remained of the mortal infection. This seems to imply lasting scarring from the noxious pustule disease, something that would align well with the well-known scarring that marked survivors of smallpox.	perferret. Quartanariis quoque et gulam dolentibus, data benedicta aqua, saepius medebatur.
Today the sick constantly converge on her tomb and are cured. For how many people suffering from chills, how many on death's doorstep from noxious pustules as the poison was growing, how many sick from dysentery have been made well there cannot be laid out one by one. But, since we have recorded many of these in the book which we wrote about her life, what happened after that we cannot omit.	"we cannot omit": there follows the story of the miraculous cure of a servant girl of the archdeacon Probatus. Probatus seems to have become archdeacon in 591: Krusch 1969, 313n4.	Ad cuius nunc sepulchrum assidue infirmi confluunt et sanantur. Nam quanti frigoras passi, quanti a pusulis malis, veneno incrassante, praemortui, quanti a desinteria aegroti inibi sint sanati, viritim non potest explicari. Sed quoniam multa ex his in libro quem de eius vita conscripsimus memoravimus, quae deinceps gesta sunt tacere nequivimus.

13.1.2 Reference: Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers* 19.2, 288.

Edition: Gregory of Tours, *Life of the Fathers* 19.2, ed. Krusch 1969, 288.

Date of Event: Monegundis d. ?570

Date of Record: ca. 590.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text

19.2. Having been glorified by these miraculous signs among her relatives, lest she fall into the error of vainglory, she abandoned her husband, her family and her entire household, and, with faith, sought out the shrine of St. Martin the bishop. While traveling on this journey, she came to a settlement of the Tours city territory, named Esvres (Indre-et-Loire), which possessed some relics of the confessor St. Medard of Soissons, the vigil of whose feast was being celebrated that evening. She stayed up attentively praying during the service and, at the appropriate hour, came to the solemnity of the Mass with the rest of the population. While God's priests were celebrating the Mass, a certain girl came up to here, swollen up with the poison of the noxious pustule and fell at her feet saying: "Help me, because evil death is trying to take away my life." And she in her usual fashion prostrated herself in prayer, and petitioned God, Creator of all things, for her. And she stood up and made the sign of the cross upon her. And so the wound popped in four parts, the pus ran out, and importunate death left the girl.	"the vigil of whose feast": June 7	19.2. His signis glorificata inter parentes, ne vanae gloriae lapsum incurreret, sancti Martini antestitis basilicam, relicto coniuge cum familia vel omni domo sua, fideliter expetivit. Cumque iter coeptum carperet, venit ad vicum urbis Toronicae cui nomen est Evena, in quo beati Medardi Sessionici confessoris reliquiae contenentur, cuius et vigiliae ea nocte celebrabantur; in quibus illa adtente excubans in orationem, hora debita cum reliquo populo ad missarum accessit solemnia. Quae dum a sacerdotibus Dei celebrantur, advenit quaedam puella, pusulae malae veneno conflata, proceditque ad pedes eius, dicens: "Subveni mihi, quia mors iniqua vitam conatur eripere". At illa more solito in oratione prostrata, suggessit pro ea Deo omnium creatori, erectaque signum crucis inposuit. Sicque in quattuor partibus vulnus excrepans, puellam, pure decurrente, mors inportuna reliquid.

13.2 As a child, Nicetius (513-573), the future bishop of Lyons, survived the rash of noxious pustules and fever that left his face permanently scarred.

Nicetius was the uncle of Armentaria, the mother of Gregory of Tours, and the men knew each other well. Given that Nicetius' father had declined appointment as bishop of Geneva, the family was well-established in Burgundy, where Nicetius survived this illness in the paternal home, possibly at Chalon-sur-Saône (Heinzelmann 1994, 21). The description of facial rash, burning fever, unresponsiveness, infection/contagion, and recovery followed by permanent scarring could suggest smallpox (*Variola major*).

Edition: *Life of the Fathers* 8.1, ed. Krusch 1969, 241–42.

Date of Event: well before 552.

Date of Record: ca. 590.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
At a certain time, when he was still living in that house, the evil pustule rose up on his face. As the poison grew stronger and scorching hot, the sickness caused despair over the boy. But among many names of saints, his mother unceasingly invoked more specially the name of holy Martin for [the restoration of] his health. While for two days the boy had lain in bed with his eyes closed, he was offering no word of consolation to his grieving mother. Rather, as his mother veered between hope and fear, she was making the necessary preparations for his death according to the funeral rite when, in the evening of the second day he opened his eyes and said: "Where has my mother gone?" She came to him		Quodam vero tempore, cum adhuc in domo ipsa degeret, orta est ei pusula mala in facie; quod virus invalescens ac excoquens fecit puerum disperatum. Sed mater eius iugiter inter multa sanctorum nomina beati Martini nomen pro eius salute peculiarius invocabat. Cumque per biduum puer iacuisset in lectulo clausis oculis et nullum verbum consolationis matri lamentanti proferret; sed potius ipsa genetrix inter spem metumque titubans, iuxta ritum exsequiarum necessaria funeris praeparat, secunda die ad vesperum aperiens oculos, ait: "Quo ivit mater mea?" Quae statim adveniens, ait: "Ecce adsum, quid vis, fili?"

immediately and said: “Here I am, son, what do you wish?” And he answered: “Do not be afraid, mother, for St. Martin has made the sign of Christ’s cross over me and ordered me to get up well.” As soon as he said this, he stood right up from his bed, and divine power doubled the grace of this miracle, so that both the merit of Martin might be shown, and this boy, because he was destined to be a bishop, might be saved from the contagion. The scarring of his face was visible as a witness to this thing.		Et ille: "Ne timeas", inquid, "mater; beatus enim Martinus super me crucem Christi faciens, surgere me iussit incolomem". Haec effatus, statim surrexit a lectulo, geminavitque virtus divina miraculi huius gratiam, ut et Martini panderetur meritum, et hic, quia futurus erat pontifex, a contagio salvaretur. Testis enim fuit huius causae visa cicatrix eius in facie.

13.3 Saint Eparchius, a recluse of Angoulême, who died in 581, was famous for redeeming enslaved captives, overcoming the noxious pustules, exorcizing demons, and persuading judges to pardon the guilty.

Edition: Gregory of Tours, *Histories* 6.8, ed. Krusch and Levison 1951, 278.

Date of Event: Before 581.

Date of Record: ca. 590-594.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
6.8. He redeemed a great crowd of people with gifts of the devout, he often subdued the poison of the noxious pustules by the sign of the cross, and drove demons from the bodies of the possessed by prayer and frequently, by spreading sweetness, commanded		6.8. Magnam enim catervam populorum de oblationibus devotorum redemit; pusularum malarum venenum crucis signum saepe compressit, daemonas de obsessis corporibus oratione abegit et iudicibus plerumque, ut culpabilibus ignoscerent,

rather than entreated officials to pardon the guilty.		dulcedine profusa imperavit potius quam rogavit.

13.4 Gregory reports cures of the pustule illness in Italy told to him by Venantius Fortunatus.

Miracles of St. Martin, chapter headings, 134, announces the miraculous cure in Italy of a Byzantine soldier's (*in exercitu positus*) *pustula*; the text at 1.13, p. 147, describes the miracle against the "poison of the pustule" in greater detail, and states that Gregory learned of this miracle from his friend Venantius Fortunatus, who was born around Treviso, in northern Italy, and who had immigrated to Gaul. Venantius told Gregory that St. Martin was widely considered the best saint to turn to if one contracted the pustule illness, and reported his own father's escape from death. If this is indeed the same illness as the noxious postule epidemics described in Gaul, it is important evidence for similar epidemics in Italy, possibly of smallpox.

Edition: Gregory of Tours, *Powers of St. Martin*, Chapter headings, Krusch 1969, p. 134, and 1.13, 147.

Date of Event: Before 566? (Brennan 1985, 54).

Date of Record:

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
Here begin the chapter headings of book 1 about the powers of the bishop St. Martin. … 13. About the man who, serving in the army, suffered from the pustule.	Medieval books often opened with a list of chapter headings which served as a table of contents. In this case, the chapter heading contains information that is not included in the actual chapter. "serving in the army": *in exercitu positus*. Bonnet 1890, 715n1, proposes emending the manuscripts' reading *exercitu* to *exitu* which would result in a different translation, "placed in torment." The army in question was presumably that of the Roman reconquest and	INCIPIUNT CAPITULA LIBRI PRIMI DE VIRTUTIBUS SANCTI MARTINI EPISCOPI. … 13. De eo qui a pustula in exercitu positus laborabat.

	subsequent defense of northern Italy.	
13. I will not omit what I remember my venerable fellow servant [of Christ], the priest Fortunatus, recounted. A certain man in Italy, when he had been filled with the poison of the pustule was in such great danger that he despaired of living, asked certain individuals who had been to the shrine of St. Martin. Then one of the bystanders asserted that he had been. The sick man asked what he had brought from there as a blessing. He answered, saying he did not take anything. He questioned him again, asking what clothing he was wearing when he had gone to the saint's shrine. He answered: the one he was wearing at that very moment. Then, full of faith, he placed on the pustule a small piece cut from the garment. As soon as it touched the members of the sick man, the lesion of the pustule lost the power of its poison. Which piece by such a remedy both proclaimed the power of the saint and restored the sick man to safety.	"Poison of the pustule": *veneno pusulae* "proclaimed the power of the saint": *virtute sancti protulit*. The loss of the final -m is a banal spelling error in Gregory; I have translated the text as though it read *virtutem*. Other solutions are possible.	13. Sed nec hoc praeteribo, quod venerabilem conservum meum Fortunatum presbiterum retulisse commemoro. Quidam in Italia, dum veneno pusulae pervasus in discrimine sic ageretur, ut vivere disperaret, aliquibus interrogat, ad templum beati Martini quis fuerit. Tunc quidam ex adstantibus adserit, se fuisse. Requiret aegrotus, quid inde pro benedictione detulerit. Qui negat, se aliquid praesumpsisse. Cui iterum interrogat, qua tunc veste indutus sit, cum ad templum sanctum occurrerit. Respondit: ea quae super se ipso tempore utebatur. Tunc abscisam fideliter indumenti particulam inposuit super pusulam. Mox ut aegri membra tetigit, vulnus pusulae veneni vim perdidit; quae tali medicamine et virtute sancti protulit et infirmum refert incolomem.
He is asserting that the special cure has such vigor among the	"Lesion of the pustule":	Hanc apud Italos adserens specialem vigere medellam, ut, si

Italians that, if anyone is struck by the lesion of the pustule, he takes refuge in closest chapel of St. Martin and whatever he can snatch first, whether from the curtain over the door or the drapings that hang from the walls, if it he can stick it placed over the sick person, he becomes healthy. This remedy delivered his father in the flesh from death by the pustule, he asserted as a witness to his own father.	*pusulae…vulnere* "death by the pustule": *interitu pusulae*	quis pusulae percutiatur vulnere, ad propinquum quod fuerit beati Martini oratorium habeatur perfugium, et aut ex velo ianuae aut palliolis, quae pendent de parietibus, quicquid primum raptum fuerit, si aegro superpositum adhaeserit, sit salubre. Haec medella genitorem suum carnalem ab interitu pusulae, ut ipse patris sui testis adserit, liberavit.

Continuation of Chronicle of Marcellinus records plague in Italy, the East and Illyricum 543

The Anonymous *Continuation of the Chronicle of Count Marcellinus* records that plague devastated Italy after ravaging the East [of the Roman Empire] and Illyricum. The *Continuation* begins in 534 and ended sometime after 548, where the text breaks off. The *Continuation* seems to be contemporary to the events it reports and is preserved in a near contemporary manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library Auct. T.II.26, handwriting assigned to 6th -7th century, Italy, by Lowe 1972, 32, no. 233b). If the *Continuation* was compiled year by year, then it is quite contemporary.

Mommsen notes the *Continuation* offers particularly abundant and excellent information about Italy, but is also well informed about events elsewhere in the Empire, and concludes it was written in a well-informed milieu in Constantinople. However, precisely the fact that the Continuator first mentions plague when it struck Italy in 543, rather than in the eastern provinces or the capital, seems to argue for an Italian origin.

Michael McCormick

Edition: Marcellinus 1894, *Continuation* a. 543.2, ed. Mommsen 1894, 107.

Bibliography: Harper 2023, esp 385-387.

Date of event: 543.

Date of record: 543? Before ~600.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text

6. Year 3 after the consulate of Basil [543]. ... A great mortality devastated the land of Italy, the East and Illyricum, which had already been crushed in equal measure.	"land of Italy": *Italiae sol*. Marcellinus himself uses the expression "soils" for lands of the Roman Empire devastated by barbarians: *Romanorum sola vastaverunt*, Marcellinus Chron. a. 441.1, (Mommsen 1894), 80. It is unclear why Stathakopoulos 2004, 291, no. 116, thinks that this wording may imply overland transmission.	VI . POST CONSVLATVM BASILII ANNO III ... Mortalitas magna Italiae solum devastat, Orientem iam et Illyricum peraeque attritos

Victor of Tunnuna, a bishop from north Africa, records bubonic plague and devastating mortality across the world for the year 542 (or 543).

For his defense of his theological positions, Victor, bishop of Tunnuna, a see of uncertain location in North Africa, experienced multiple exiles in the Balearic islands, at Constantinople, and in Alexandria, and died sometime after the last entry in his chronicle, which records the succession of Justin II to Justinian (565). It is uncertain when and where he composed the entry for 542, although he may have written the whole work late in life while in exile (this seems to be Cardelle de Hartmann's supposition: 2001, 108*); he seems to have been living in Africa ca. 542-543, so he at least indirectly implies the presence of the plague in Africa. In keeping with the theological polemic of his work, he presents the plague as arising on the heels of the heterodox policies of the pope and others.

Victor dated the epidemic in the second year after the consulate of Basil (541), which normally should mean January 1-December 31, 543. However, according to Collins 2001 (= "Historical Commentary" in Cardelle de Hartmann 2001, 95-148, here 106-110), Victor here is counting the "second year" through inclusive reckoning (541= 1st year; 542 = 2nd year), citing a seeming parallel from Victor's dating of 2 post-consulates to year 2 and 3 after the consulates of Lampadius and Orestes (Victor, *Chronicle*, 114-116; Cardelle de Hartmann 2001, 37). Nevertheless, the events reported in 114-116 and 115 are all erroneously or uncertainly dated, and it is difficult to know for certain whether Victor did indeed count inclusively here or simply erroneously added a 3rd year after the consulate of Lampadius and Orestes.

N.B. The (1) Chronicle of Victor of Tunnuna was continued by (2) John of Biclar's *Chronicle* 106-107; the (3) marginal annotations known as Consular annals of Saragossa (*Consularia Caesaraugustana*) that reflect a Saragossan / Zaragozan point of view and are found in the manuscripts of John of Biclar. Although (1) and (2) certainly, and (3) possibly or probably have different authors, and therefore different places and dates of origin, as well as differing authorities on various matters, the works were copied in the Middle Ages together and probably formed a composite whole from very early in the manuscript tradition: see in general Hartmann 2001, 7*-9*, etc.

Michael McCormick

Edition: Cardelle de Hartmann 2001, 42.732-43.773

Date of event: 543, possibly 542

Date of record: 6th century

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
6. Year 2 after the consulate of Basil, Famous Gentleman [542 or 543].	For the date, see introduction above.	130. POST CONSVLATVM BASILII V.C. ANNO II ...
… A general mortality of the entire world followed the pattern set by these evils, and the better part of the population was beset by the blow [of the swelling] of the groin.	"world": *orbis terrarum*, often synonymous with the Roman Empire. "Pattern set by these evils": *horum exordia malorum.* Victor had just reported the intrigues of Empress Theodora on behalf of her preferred christology, the exile of pope Silverius and the installation of pope Vigilius. "the better part of the population": *melior pars populorum.* This is the only use of *melior pars* in the surviving text of Victor; another sixth-century African involved in the same controversies as Victor uses it clearly in the sense of "better"	Horum exordia malorum generalis orbis terrarum mortalitas sequitur et inguinum percussione melior pars populorum uexatur.

	along with "greater": Facundus, bishop of Hermiane, *Defense of the Three Chapters. To Justinian* / 6.1.73 and at 6.1.206, ed. Clément 1974. *"*by the blow*":* *percussione: percussio* is used by Victor's younger contemporary pope Gregory I (1979a) of punishments visited on sinners: *Commentary on Job/Moralia in Iob*, Preface 5, ed. Adriaen 1979. See Gregory 1979a. "of the groin": *inguinum*. See our note on terminology above.	

Consular annals of Saragossa (Zaragoza) record for 542 (or 543) that the plague crushed nearly all of Spain.

This record consists of marginal annotations apparently copied from a set of consular annals (historical notes added in the margins of tables of Roman consuls, two of whom were named each January and whose names designated the year in question, according to the Roman custom) into an early manuscript of John of Biclar's *Chronicle* (see below). The annotations are presumably more or less contemporary with the events they record. According to Cardelle de Hartmann (2001, 123*-124*), it may have been John Biclar himself who added them to his own *Chronicle*. In any case, the annotations were likely near contemporary to him. Their content is reliable, but their dating is sometimes inaccurate, as easily happened when marginal annotations were incorporated into the main body of another manuscript text. This annotation is appended at the end of the record for Year 2 after the consulate of Basil, which Collins interprets as 542, rather than the 543 which the formula usually implies: see the discussion above, on Victor of Tunnuna.

Michael McCormick

Edition: Consular annals of Saragossa, in Victor of Tunnuna, 130b, ed. Cardelle de Hartmann 2001, 44.

Bibliography: Kulikowski 2007, 150-151.

Date of epidemic: 542 or 543.

Date of record: sixth century.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
After the consulate of Basil, Famous Gentleman [542 or 543]. … In these days, bubonic plague wasted practically all of Spain.	"Bubonic plague": *inguinalis plaga*. See our note on terminology. "Wasted": *contriuit*. The root meaning of *contero* is "to crush, rub, wear out, exhaust." "Almost all of Spain": *totem pene Hispanian. Hispaniam*, as opposed to the plural *Hispanias*, refers to the geographical feature of the Iberian Peninsula rather than the constituent Roman provinces of the Diocese of the Spains.	His diebus inguinalis plaga totam pene contriuit Hispaniam.

Agathias of Myrina on the plague epidemic of 542 and the outbreak in Constantinople in 558

The historian Agathias (ca. 532–ca. 580) provides a detailed description of an outbreak of epidemic in Constantinople in 558 and valuable information about the 542 epidemic. In rather florid language, he describes important events of his time in generally accurate fashion, particularly when they touched close to home, and his is often the only account of them to survive.

Agathias characterizes the illness of 558 as "similar to the earlier one." Here Agathias surely has in mind the 542 outbreak at Constantinople, which he highlights in the brief summary of Procopius' *Wars* with which he concludes the preface of his *Histories* (Preface, 1 below). Given that he spent most of his working life in Constantinople (Cameron 1970, 31), Agathias was likely an eyewitness of the 558 outbreak. Agathias does not base his account on Thucydides (Cameron 1970, 62). Importantly, Agathias claims that, after the initial outbreak that struck Constantinople, the plague never really went away, but spread from place to place until it returned to Constantinople in 558. He adds further presentations and symptoms of the disease to those reported by Procopius, comparing the 558 outbreak to the older one, and notes that, although people of all ages died, the disease was particularly lethal for males in the age of puberty or their prime. Since some 15 years had passed since the first plague outbreak in Constantinople and those born since

then had not been exposed to *Yersinia pestis*, Agathias' observation appears here to align with the modern claim that survivors seem often to be resistant to infection (Pollitzer 1954, 137-8).

Agathias' description of the symptoms also shows that within two or three decades of the initial outbreak, subtle new thinking in contemporary learned medicine had reached so highly cultivated a layman in contemporary medicine. According to Agathias, the epidemic generates "continuous, not ephemeral 'fevers following buboes'." This phrase, "fevers following *boubōnes*," alludes to the Hippocratic corpus, which mentions at several points "fevers following boubōnes are all bad, except for *ephemerals*." In so doing, Agathias uses the Hippocratic corpus to interpret this disease in precisely the same way as John of Alexandria and Stephanus of Athens, contemporary medical authors whose comments on the Pandemic have often passed unnoticed (Mulhall 2021).

Agathias was born at Myrina in Asia Minor probably ca. 530; his mother died when he was three and was buried in or near Constantinople (Jones et al. 1971-1992, 3:990-991 "Pericleia"), suggesting that Agathias may have been in the capital from an early age. He was studying law in Alexandria in 551, and soon moved to Constantinople where he became a lawyer (*advocatus*). He was first active as a poet, leaving more than 100 poems, but turned to writing history in the reign of Justinian's successor, Justin II (565-578), picking up the history of the Empire's wars where Procopius had left off. He left his work unfinished and seems to have died between 579 and 582.

John Mulhall

Michael McCormick

General Bibliography: Cameron 1970; Jones et al. 1971-1992, 3:23-25, "Agathias"; Mulhall 2021.

Agathias 1: Procopius described the outbreak of the plague at Constantinople.

Agathias' preface summarizes in 11 sentences the eight books of Procopius' *Wars* that he aimed to continue. One sentence is devoted to the advent of the Pandemic, the "greatest epidemic."

Edition: Agathias 1967, *Five Books of Histories*, Preface, 28, ed. Keydell 1967, 8.22-25.

Date of epidemic: 542.

Date of record: 565-582.

English Translation	Commentary	Greek Text

28. Much also is said by him [Procopius] about the greatest epidemic, how for the first time it entered the human race, and what sorts of unexpected developments took place during it.	"the greatest epidemic": τοῦ μεγίστου λοιμοῦ. See our Note on terminology.	28. εἴρηται δὲ αὐτῷ πολλὰ καὶ τοῦ μεγίστου λοιμοῦ πέρι, ὅπως τε τὴν ἀρχὴν κατ' ἐκεῖνο τοῦ καιροῦ ἐς τὸ ἀνθρώπειον γένος εἰσήρρησε καὶ ὁποῖα ἄττα παράλογα ἐν αὐτῷ ξυνηνέχθη

Agathias 2: The return of plague to Constantinople in 558, the disease's persistence between 542 and 558, and its features.

Edition: Agathias 1967, *Five Books of Histories*, 5.10.1-7, ed. Keydell 1967, 175.28–176.27

Date of event: 542-558.

Date of record: 565-582.

English Translation	Commentary	Greek Text
5.10.1. And in the beginning of spring of that year [558 CE] the pestilential illness again fell upon the city and destroyed myriad multitudes, not completely ceasing in any way whatsoever from that point when it first entered our empire--I mean in the fif<teenth>year of the reign of Justinian.	"Spring of that year": 558 CE. Malalas and Theophanes also describe this outbreak in some detail (see, e.g., Stathakopoulos 2004, 304–306, no. 134). "the city": *tē polei*, i.e., the City par excellence, Constantinople. "Pestilential illness": ἡ λοιμώδης νόσος. See above for our Note on terminology. "our empire": *en tē kath'hēmas ...oikoumenē.* Literally, "in our part of the inhabited world" a common way of referring to the Roman Empire. "Fifth <teenth> year of the reign of Justinian": April 1, 541-March	5.10.1. Ἐκείνου δὲ τοῦ ἔτους ἅμα ἦρι ἀρχομένῳ ἡ λοιμώδης νόσος αὖθις τῇ πόλει ἐνέπεσε καὶ μυρία διέφθειρε πλήθη, λήξασα μὲν ἐς τὸ παντελὲς οὐδ' ὁπωστιοῦν, ἐξ οὗ τὴν ἀρχήν, φημὶ δὴ κατὰ τὸ πέμπτον <καὶ δέκατον> ἔτος τῆς Ἰουστινιανοῦ βασιλείας, ἐν τῇ καθ' ἡμᾶς εἰσήρρησεν οἰκουμένῃ.

	31, 542. The Greek text is slightly corrupt, for it drops the equivalent of "-teenth," which would place the appearance in the empire of the epidemic of bubonic plague in Justinian's fifth year (April 1, 531-March 31, 532), i.e. ten years earlier than its well established onset. The modern editor correctly restores the corrupt text by adding "καὶ δέκατον." The correction seems obvious, especially if the ancestor of the surviving manuscripts wrote the date in ordinal numerals, so that ιε ("15") was mistakenly copied as ε ("5").	
5.10.2 In the meantime, it [i.e., the "pestilential illness"] moved around frequently, at different times in different places, destroying one place after another and, in this way, giving some respite to the rest. At this very time it returned again to Byzantium, as if, I imagine, it had earlier been cheated and left there more swiftly, perhaps, than had been necessary.	"at different times in different places": *allote allothi*. This is an unusual phrase. A similar construction occurs only six times in the *Thesaurus linguae Graecae* (consulted 11/11/21), but the meaning is clear. "destroying one place after another": *kai topon ek topou lumēnamenē.* For the sense of succession in this idiom, see Liddell et al. 2007, s.v. "ek" I.3.	5.10.2 μεταβᾶσα δὲ πολλάκις μεταξὺ ἄλλοτε ἄλλοθι καὶ τόπον ἐκ τόπου λυμηναμένη καὶ ταύτῃ τοῖς λειπομένοις ἀνακωχῆς τινος μεταδοῦσα, τότε δὴ οὖν πάλιν ἐς τὸ Βυζάντιον ἐπανῆκεν, ὥσπερ, οἶμαι, τὸ πρότερον ἐξηπατημένη καὶ θᾶττον δήπου τοῦ δέοντος ἐνθένδε ἀπαλλαγεῖσα.
5.10.3 Indeed many died suddenly as if cataleptic from a strong apoplexy. But most lasted barely five days and were killed. The form of the illness was similar to the earlier one. For continuous, not ephemeral, "fevers following buboes" were	"Cataleptic": *katakhoi gegenēmenoi.* Agathias is using *katakhos* in the technical sense of the loss of voluntary motion current among the Greek medical writers: Liddell et al. 2007, s.v. "*katakhos*" II.3.	5.10.3 ἔθνησκον τοιγαροῦν πολλοὶ ἐξαπιναίως καθάπερ ἀποπληξίᾳ ἰσχυρᾷ κάτοχοι γεγενημένοι· οἱ δέ γε πλεῖστον διαρκοῦντες μόλις πεμπταῖοι ἀπώλλυντο. ἡ δὲ τῆς νόσου ἰδέα παραπλησία τῇ πρεσβυτέρᾳ ἐτύγχανεν οὖσα. πυρετοὶ γὰρ ἐπὶ

kindled, and they did not at all dissipate in due measure, but stopped only with the death of the one who had been taken [by the illness].	"apoplexy": The Greek word *apoplēxia* can correspond to several different modern symptoms. The word is associated with paralysis, but also has a meaning similar to the modern "stroke" (for the close association between the English word "stroke" and the medical term "apoplexy," in pre-modern medicine, see the *Oxford English Dictionary* s.v. "Stroke" n. 1, 6.a). For a late ancient description of *apoplēxia*, see Paul of Aegina, 3.18.1, ed. Heiberg 1921, 1:160. The impression given by the text is that the illness caused by the pandemic can effect a stroke-like response from the body resulting in sudden death. "Similar to the earlier one": Agathias has just referred to the first outbreak twice and had mentioned it as one of the most important events in Procopius' *Wars* in the Preface to this work . There can be no doubt that Agathias is here comparing the outbreak of 558 to that of 542. Buboes: see the Note on terminology above. "continuous not ephemeral 'fevers following buboes'": "*puretoi gar epi boubōsin" anēpteto sunekheis kai ouk ephēmeroi.* Agathias alludes to and quotes the Hippocratic Corpus, which describes "fevers	βουβῶσιν ἀνήπτοντο συνεχεῖς καὶ οὐκ ἐφήμεροι, οὐδὲ μετρίως γοῦν ὑποχαλῶντες, μόνῃ δὲ τῇ τελευτῇ τοῦ ἁλόντος ἀποπαυόμενοι.

	following *boubōnes*" at several points: *Aphorisms*, 4.55 (ed. Littré 1839–61, 4:522), *Epidemics*, 2.3.5 (ed. Littré 1839–61, 5:108). See Mulhall 2019, 161–162. In invoking this relatively obscure line from the Hippocratic Corpus, Agathias' description mirrors contemporary medical accounts of the illness of the pandemic. See Mulhall 2021.	
5.10.4 And without the preceding fever or any pain, while still doing their customary things, some collapsed at home or in the streets and suddenly became lifeless, as if they were pretending to be dead. And every age was destroyed indiscriminately, but especially those in their prime and those in pubescence, and males more in this case. For the female sex really did not suffer quite the same.	The differing mortality by age cohort points to increased resistance among survivors of the 542 outbreak. That by sex may reflect the lesser exposure of women to situations of proximity to vectors of contagion, i.e. rats or their fleas.	5.10.4 ἔνιοι δὲ μήτε θέρμης ἡγησαμένης μήτε ἄλλου ἀλγήματος, ἀλλὰ δρῶντες ἔτι τὰ εἰθισμένα, οἵκοι τε καὶ ἀνὰ τὰς λεωφόρους οὕτω παρασχὸν κατέπιπτον καὶ ἀθρόον ἄπνοι ἐγίγνοντο, ὥσπερ τὸν θάνατον σχεδιάσαντες· καὶ ἅπασα μὲν ἡλικία χύδην ἐφθείρετο, μάλιστα δὲ τὸ ἀκμάζον τε καὶ ἠβάσκον, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ πλέον οἱ ἄρρενες· τὸ γὰρ δὴ θῆλυ οὐ μάλα ὅμοια ἔπασχεν.
5.10.5 So the most ancient oracular sayings of the Egyptians and those among the Persians still steeped in the learning of the movement of celestial bodies say that in the infinite span of time, there occur some periods of time that are good and blessed, and some that are full of hardship and cursed, and that the present cycle of time ranks among the worst and most ill-omened. Hence, then, there are arising both wars		5.10.5 τὰ μὲν οὖν παλαίτατα τῶν Αἰγυπτίων λόγια καὶ οἱ παρὰ Πέρσαις ἔτι τῆς τῶν μετεώρων κινήσεως δαημονέστατοι χρόνων τινῶν περιόδους ἐν τῷ ἀπείρῳ αἰῶνι συμφέρεσθαι λέγουσι, νῦν μὲν ἀγαθὰς καὶ εὐδαίμονας, νῦν δὲ μοχθηρὰς καὶ ἀποφράδας, εἶναί τε τὴν παροῦσαν περιφορὰν ἐκ τῶν κακίστων ἐκείνων καὶ ἀπαισίων· ἐντεῦθεν τοιγαροῦν πολέμους τε ἁπανταχοῦ ξυνίστασθαι καὶ στάσεις ταῖς

everywhere and riots in the cities, and the epidemic sufferings are both lasting and continuous.		πόλεσι καὶ τὰ λοιμώδη πάθη μόνιμά τε εἶναι καὶ συνημμένα.
5.10.6 But others say that the wrath of the Almighty is the cause of the destruction, justly pursuing the crimes of the human race and cutting down the multitude.	"wrath of the Almighty" (literally, of the Higher One, referring to God): ὀργὴν τοῦ κρείττονος. Like other disasters that caused great mortality, in this period the epidemics of plague were frequently referred to with the biblical phrase "the wrath of God" or "of the Lord." See McCormick, in preparation.	5.10.6 ἕτεροι δὲ ὀργὴν τοῦ κρείττονος αἰτίαν εἶναί φασι τῆς φθορᾶς, μετιοῦσαν ἀξίως τὰ τοῦ ἀνθρωπείου γένους ἀδικήματα καὶ τὸ πλῆθος ὑποτεμνομένην.
5.10.7 It ought not to be undertaken by me to investigate either opinion and to declare which one is most true, maybe because I do not know, or maybe because even if I were to know, still this does not seem necessary or appropriate for the present work. For I have fully complied with the law of history when I mention only what has happened, even if briefly.	"maybe…maybe": *tukhon men...tukhon de.* A phrase favored by Agathias, who uses it 11 times in his *Histories*: *Thesaurus linguae Graecae*, consulted 11/11/21. "Still": ἀλλά in the apodosis after a concession or condition (Smyth 1959, paragraph 2728).	5.10.7 ἐμοὶ δὲ διαιτᾶν ἑκατέρᾳ δόξῃ καὶ ἀποφαίνεσθαι τὴν ἀληθεστάτην οὐκ ἐγχειρητέα, τυχὸν μὲν οὐδὲ ἐπισταμένῳ, τυχὸν δέ, εἰ καὶ εἰδείην, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον τοῦτό γε εἶναι δοκοῦν οὐδὲ τῷ παρόντι λόγῳ προσῆκον· μόνου γάρ μοι τοῦ ξυμβεβηκότος εἰ καὶ διὰ βραχέων ἐπιμνησθέντι ὁ τῆς ἱστορίας ἐκτεθεράπευται νόμος.

Between 561 and 605 (possibly ca. 585), an ecclesiastical meeting at Auxerre (France) prohibits anomalous burials, apparently reflecting a recent mortality crisis in Burgundy.

The only acts of a local, diocesan synod to survive from Merovingian Gaul in the sixth and seventh centuries was convened by bishop Aunacharius of Auxerre (561-605). Its 45 terse rulings regulate liturgical practices, prohibit superstitions and enunciates rules for the local life of the church; 43 abbots, priests, and deacons signed it, in addition to Aunacharious. Two regulations (canon 14 and canon 15) prohibit anomalous burials that seem very likely to reflect a recent mass mortality: bodies cannot be buried in a baptistry, and no more than one person may be buried in a

grave. That the very next regulation (canon 16) prohibits plowing and other work on the sabbath suggests that clergy of the cathedral and diocese of Auxerre connected these sins with the anomalous burials. This in turn may indicate that bishop Aunacharius was promulgating ca. 585 in his own diocese the decisions taken by the big council of bishops from across Gaul held at Mâcon in 585 which (see however De Clercq 1936, 76) prohibited multiple burials and unauthorized burials in "religious places of others" and which attributed the divine chastisement of epidemic and famine to violations of the sabbath (Council of Mâcon, canon 17 and canon 1: above), and which Aunacharius had attended and whose acts he signed, ed. De Clercq 1963, 248.334. If the local Auxerre synod is indeed from around 585, these burial prohibitions will reflect violations of normal burial practice stemming from the epidemic of "noxious pustules" in this region of central Gaul in 582, or the famines of 585 (see Mâcon discussion above).

Michael McCormick

Edition: De Clercq 1963, 267.44-47.

Bibliography: McCormick 2015, 338, n51.

Date of event: Before 561 and 605, possibly ca. 582-585.

Date of record: 561-605, possibly ca. 585.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
14. It is not allowed to bury bodies in the baptistry. 15. It is not allowed to place a dead person on top of another dead person. 16. It is not allowed to yoke oxen on Sunday, or to do other work.	In late antiquity, baptisteries were typically smaller separate buildings whose fount allowed immersion, within the bishop's cathedral complex. See Council of Mâcon (585), c.17, as well as Council of Mâcon (585), c.1	14. Non licet in baptisterio corpora sepelire. 15. Non licet mortuum supra mortuum mitti. 16. Non licet die Dominico boues iungere uel alia opera exercere.

John of Biclar records plague in Constantinople, 572-574.

John of Biclar witnessed with his own eyes thousands of deaths during the plague epidemic at Constantinople that began in 572 and came to a close in December 574. John, a Visigothic aristocrat of Catholic confession (most Visigoths at that date adhered to the Arian heterodoxy), was born ca. 550-556 in Santarem, Lusitania (modern Portugal). According to most scholars he studied in Constantinople (ca. 570/571-577/578), which makes him an eyewitness for this outbreak. He

says explicitly that he witnessed this outbreak of plague in "the royal city" in 572, which some scholars have taken to mean Toledo, capital city of the Visigoths, but surely means Constantinople. After his return to Visigothic Spain he was exiled to Barcelona for a decade; he founded a monastery called *Biclaro* and became bishop of Gerona between 589 and 592. He died, apparently after 614, and certainly before 631. He composed his chronicle after 589 and before 631, possibly in 602: John of Biclar 2001, 124*-143*.

Michael McCormick

Edition: John of Biclar 2001, 64.88-65.100.

Bibliography: Collins and Cardelle de Hartmann 2001.

Date of event: 572 to 574.

Date of record: between 589 and 631.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
23. IN YEAR 7 OF EMPEROR JUSTIN [II], WHICH IS YEAR 5 OF LEOVIGILD ... 26. In the royal city, a mortality of inguinal plague burst out, in which we saw many thousands of people die.	Year 7 of Justin II: November 13, 571-November 12, 572; Leovild's year 5 also fell in 572 CE. "Royal city": *regia urbe. Regia urbs* or *regia ciuitas* were at this time standard Latin terms for Constantinople, the capital of the Roman Empire, e.g., *Justinianic Code*, 1.3.30 and 1.30.51.2 (472 and 531 CE, respectively), from which the term's usage also for the royal residence of the Visigothic kings derives. Here it refers to Constantinople, and the "we saw" reflects John's presence in the city for his studies.	23. ANNO VII IUSTINI IMPERATORIS, QUI EST LEOUEGILDI V ANNUS. .... 26. In regia urbe mortalitas inguinalis plage exardescit, in qua multa milia hominum uidimus defecisse.
31. IN YEAR 8 OF JUSTIN [II], WHICH IS YEAR 6 OF LEOVIGILD 33. On the first day (of the reign) of Tiberius as Caesar, the inguinal	Tiberius II was appointed Caesar on December 7, 574. While John implies that the accession of the future emperor Tiberius coincided with and perhaps caused the end of the outbreak in December, in	31 ANNO VIII IUSTINI, QUI EST LEOVEGILDI VI ANNUS ... 33. Huius Tiberii Cesaris die prima in regia urbe inguinalis

plague in the royal city ended.	the later Middle Ages, Black Death outbreaks typically ebbed in cold weather conditions: Biraben 1975, 1:86-87 and 134-139.	plaga sedata est.

St. Theodore of Sykeon survives plague in Sykeon in central Anatolia at age 12, between 541 and 574.

St. Theodore, abbot of Sykeon and, for a time, bishop of Anastasioupolis, was born in the reign of Justinian (527-565) and died in 613, in Sykeon. Sykeon (mod. Kiliseler, south of Beypazarı, west of Ankara: Barchard 2003) on the Roman road from Constantinople (Istanbul) to Ancyra (Ankara), is east of Anastasioupolis. His biography was written by his successor, George, abbot of Sykeon, and is reckoned an excellent source for rural life in particular in the later sixth and early seventh centuries.

According to George, a bubonic plague epidemic came to Theodore's village when he was about 12 years old. Since he was born during Justinian's reign, that is, before November 14, 565, this can have occurred no later than ca. 587. Some six years after he recovered from plague, Theodosius, bishop of Anastasioupolis, consecrated him a priest at age 18, much earlier than the legitimate age for the priesthood (c. 21, pp.18-19). Emperor Maurice (582-602) and the patriarch Cyriacus (Kyriakos; 595-606) accepted his resignation as bishop of Anastasioupolis (c. 79; p. 66) between 595 and 602, after he had already exercised that office for some time. Of the amplification events of plague recorded for the eastern Mediterranean, those of 541-543; 558-*c.*562; 573-574; 586; 590-592 (Harper 2017, 277-280) could theoretically correspond to this outbreak. Nevertheless, a 12-year old in 592 can not likely have become a bishop, serve for some time, and resign 3 to 11 years later, ruling out the amplification of 590-592, and making that of 586 seem less likely. Hence the story of his sickness and cure must relate to 541-543, 558-562, or 573-574. No obvious reason militates for any one of these dates over another, assuming that the record of amplification events in the eastern Mediterranean is complete.

Michael McCormick

Edition: George of Sykeon, *Life of Theodore of Sykeon*: *Vie de Théodore de Sykéôn*, edited by A. J. Festugière, Subsidia hagiographica, 48. 2 v. Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1970, 1:7.1-8.21; commentary, 2:176.

Bibliography: Barchard 2003.

Date of event: 541-543, 558-562 or 573-574.

Date of record: 613-ca. 650.

English Translation	Commentary	Greek Text
8. When he was about 12 years old, a mortality arising from the bubo took place in this village with the results he too fell sick and close to death.	"Epidemic": *thanatikon*, literally "a dying event." "From the bubo": *ek tou bombōnos*: a not infrequent variant spelling for *boubōnos*. For buboes, see our note on terminology above.	8. Ὄντος δὲ αὐτοῦ ὡς ἐτῶν δώδεκα, ἐγένετο θανατικὸν ἐκ τοῦ βομβῶνος ἐν τῷ χωρίῳ ἐκείνῳ, ὥστε καὶ αὐτὸν ἀρρωστῆσαι παραπλήσιον θανάτου.
They took him to the chapel of St. John the Baptist that was close to the village, and laid him down at the entrance of the sanctuary.		Ἀπήγαγον δὲ αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ εὐκτηρίῳ οἴκῳ τοῦ ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ τῷ ὄντι πλησίον τοῦ χωρίου, καὶ ἀνέκλιναν πρὸς τὰ εἴσοδα τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου.
Above him, in the structure that held the cross, stood an icon of our savior Jesus Christ. As he was suffering in pain from the bubo, suddenly drops of dew dripped on him from the icon and, immediately, by the grace of God he was relieved of the affliction and became healthy, and went back to his home.		Ἐπάνωθεν δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ σταυροδόχῳ ἵστατο εἰκὼν τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ὀδυνωμένου τοίνυν αὐτοῦ ἐκ τοῦ βομβῶνος, ἄφνω ἐκ τῆς εἰκόνος ἐπέσταξαν αὐτῷ σταγόνες δρόσου, καὶ εὐθέως τῇ χάριτι τοῦ θεοῦ κουφισθεὶς τοῦ πόνου ὑγιὴς ἐγένετο, καὶ ἀπῆλθεν ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ.
While he was sleeping with his mother and the others who were with her, Christ's martyr George came and, casting all the others into the deepest sleep, he awakened him, at first, assuming the appearance of the aforementioned [St.] Stephen, and then, his own appearance, telling him: "Arise Master Theodore, dawn has come; let's go off to pray in the chapel of St. George."		Καθεύδοντος δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐν ταῖς νυξὶ μετὰ τῆς μητρὸς καὶ τῶν σὺν αὐτῇ, παραγινόμενος ὁ μάρτυς τοῦ Χριστοῦ Γεώργιος καὶ πάντας ὕπνῳ βαθυτάτῳ καταφέρων διύπνιζεν αὐτόν, τὰς μὲν πρώτας ἐν σχήματι τοῦ προγεγραμμένου Στεφάνου, ἔπειτα καὶ ἐν τῇ οἰκείᾳ ὁράσει, λέγων αὐτῷ· «ἀνάστα, κύρι Θεόδωρε, ἀνέβη ὄρθρος· ἀπελθόντες εὐξώμεθα ἐν τῷ μαρτυρίῳ τοῦ ἁγίου Γεωργίου.»

At that, since he arose with much joy and eagerness, he led him out of the house and took him up to his chapel while it was still dark, so the child could see demons' temptations. For the evil demons, enemies of the truth, were appearing on both sides of him in the shape of wolves and other wild beasts: opening their jaws wide they started to attack as though they would kill him, in order to terrify him out of his good intention. But Christ's martyr pulled him toward him and, like a man armed with a sword, chased them from him so that he would not be disturbed in the slightest by the beasts attacking him, and so that he would become even more eager to come up to the shrine constantly.		Τοῦ δὲ ἐπὶ τοῦτο μετὰ πολλῆς χαρᾶς καὶ προθυμίας ἀνισταμένου, ἐξάγων αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τῆς οἰκίας ἀνέφερεν ἐν τῷ εὐκτηρίῳ αὐτοῦ ἔτι σκοτίας οὔσης, ὥστε καὶ δαιμόνων πειρασμοὺς θεωρεῖν τὸν παῖδα· οἱ γὰρ πονηροὶ καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐχθροὶ δαίμονες ἐν εἴδει λύκων καὶ ἄλλων θηρίων ἐμφανίζοντες αὐτῷ ἑκατέρωθεν, κεχηνότες ὥρμων ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ ἀνελεῖν αὐτόν, ἵνα διὰ τῆς δειλίας ἀποστήσωσιν αὐτὸν τῆς ἀγαθῆς προθέσεως. Ὁ δὲ μάρτυς τοῦ Χριστοῦ προσλαμβανόμενος αὐτόν, ὡς ἀνὴρ κατέχων ῥομφαίαν ἐδίωκεν αὐτοὺς ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, ὥστε μηδόλως αὐτὸν θροηθῆναι ἕνεκεν τῶν ὁρωμένων αὐτῷ θηρίων, ἀλλὰ καὶ προθυμότερον γενόμενον ἀδιαλείπτως ἀνέρχεσθαι.

Pope Gregory I "The Great" on plague and other epidemics in Italy, 590-604

In spring or summer 590, bishop-elect Gregory I gave a sermon during a bubonic plague epidemic, which is preserved in Gregory of Tours.

For this sermon, which is preserved not in Gregory I's *Register* but rather in Gregory of Tours, see our entry above.

On August 29, 603, pope Gregory I the Great re-used the sermon he had delivered during the bubonic plague epidemic of January-February 590, revealing that an epidemic of uncertain nature was taking place at Rome.

The references to swift, numerous, and untimely deaths, taken over verbatim from the sermon Gregory I preached during the plague epidemic in 590, show that similar conditions prevailed when Gregory reused the same sermon 13 years later. It is plausible but not certain that

the 603 epidemic at Rome also was plague; for the symptoms recorded in the initial delivery of the sermon and its recycling in 603, see above. An epidemic, likely of plague, is known from Ravenna around 600: McCormick 2021a, 87n250. The text of the sermon was copied into Gregory's *Register* among the records of 603. Gregory had his hands more than full managing --and revamping the administration of--the Roman Church and suffered from ill health, so that such a recycling of an old sermon seems unsurprising.

Michael McCormick

Edition: Gregory I 1979b, *Register of Letters/Registrum*, ed. Norberg 1979, Appendix 9 (formerly *Register* 13.2), 1102-1104.

Bibliography: McCormick 2021a, 87n250, with further bibliography.

Date of event: August 29, 603.

Date of document: August 603.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
"Dearest brothers, it is right that now at least that they are present and experienced, we should fear the scourges of God, which we ought to have dreaded when they still were in the future. ...	The text of the homily preached in 603 is identical to the one preached in 590 printed above except for a few minor details of spelling and punctuation, down to the pope's concluding instructions for the litanic procession.	Oportet, fratres carissimi, ut flagella Dei, quae metuere uentura debuimus, saltem praesentia et experta timeamus. ...
….So he bears witness to himself, because he desires to be merciful to those who invoke him who admonishes that he be invoked.	Last identical sentence of the homily.	...Ipse ergo sibi testis est quia inuocantibus misereri desiderat, qui admonet ut inuocetur.
So then, dearest brothers, with a contrite heart and good works, let us come at **first dawn tomorrow with** tears with a devout mind to a sevenfold litanic procession according to the arrangement described below.	"At first dawn tomorrow": **crastina die primo diluculo:** Here Gregory adapts his earlier text to the current date, and adds a prohibition on work during the service. Note: the words in **bold** are changed from the first version of	Proinde, fratres carissimi, contrito corde et correctis operibus **crastina die primo diluculo** ad septiformem letaniam iuxta distributionem inferius designatam deuota **cum** lacrimis mente ueniamus.

	the sermon.	
Let none of you go out to the fields to do earthly work; let no one presume to do any business, so that, assembling at the church of the holy mother of God, we all who have sinned together, may, all together, lament the evils that we have done, so that the strict judge, when he considers punishing us for our faults, he may spare us from the judgment of condemnation which has been announced.	All business should be canceled tomorrow and all should focus on beseeching the Lord to avert the punishment which is pending.	**Nullus uestrum ad terrena opera in agros exeat, nullus quodlibet negotium agere praesumat, quatenus ad sanctae genetricis Domini ecclesiam conuenientes, qui simul omnes peccauimus, simul omnes mala quae fecimus deploremus, ut districtus iudex, dum culpas nostras nos punire considerat, ipse a sententia propositae damnationis parcat.**
There follows: Let the litanic procession of the clerics leave from the church of St. John the Baptist, the litanic procession of the men, from the church of the martyr St. Marcellus, the litanic procession of the monks from the church of the holy martyrs John and Paul, the litanic procession of the nuns from the church of the holy martyrs Cosmas and Damian, the litanic procession of the married women from the church of the holy protomartyr Stephen, the litanic procession of the widows, from the church of the holy martyr St. Vitalis, the litanic procession of the poor people and the children from the church of the holy martyr Cecilia.	The churches differ from those used as starting places for the various groups in 590; but the processions converge on the same church, of the Virgin, that is St. Maria Maggiore. See Barone 2008. Gregory has reworked the specific dispositions of specific groups of the church of Rome in this version of the letter. See above.	Sequitur: Letania clericorum exeat ab ecclesia sancti Iohannis baptistae, letania uirorum ab ecclesia sancti martyris Marcelli, letania monachorum ab ecclesia beatorum martyrum Iohannis et Pauli, letania ancillarum Dei ab ecclesia beatorum martyrum Cosmae et Damiani, letania feminarum coniugatarum ab ecclesia beati primi martyris Stephani, letania uiduarum ab ecclesia beati martyris Vitalis, letania pauperum et infantium ab ecclesiae beatae martyris Caeciliae.

He did it also in the basilica of Saint Sabina on the 4th day of the Kalends of September in the sixth indiction.	"He did it also": *Fecit et*: this refers to the giving of the sermon. "4th day of the Kalends of September in the sixth indiction" *sub die IIII kalendarum Septembrium indictione sexta:* August 29, 603 CE.	Fecit et in basilica sanctae Sauinae sub die IIII kalendarum Septembrium indictione sexta.

Funerary inscription from southeastern Spain commemorates a death in 609 CE due to plague

Fig. Cortijo-1: the inscription from the Cortijo de Chinales.

A funerary inscription from 609 CE (Spanish era 647) commemorates the death of someone from bubonic plague near the Cortijo ("farmhouse") de Chinales, on the southern edge of the Iberian Peninsula inland from Málaga. No further details for this outbreak are known, and the scale and duration are unclear. This is the only surviving funerary inscription from the Iberian Peninsula to explicitly mention plague. Note that in the online versions of the *Corpus of Latin Inscriptions (CIL)*, the provenance is said to be the city of Córdoba. However, *Hispania Epigraphica* 6 (2000, 168), clarifies that while the inscription is currently held in the Provincial Archaeological Museum in Córdoba it was found in Cortijo de Chinales (which is not a city, but rather a farmhouse or named estate): "It was found before 1958 in the farmhouse called Chinales, and is held in the

Provincial Archaeological Museum, Córdoba, inventory number 13087." There are two farmhouses in Andalucía with this name; one in Zafarraya (Granada) and the other in Alcalá la Real (Jaén). As far as I (=HLLG) know, none of the published sources for this inscription specify which. In either case, they are inland from the Mediterranean–these are not coastal sites.

Henry Gruber

Edition: *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* II(2) 7:677; online image from University of Alcalá de Henares, Centro CIL Online.

Bibliography: *Hispania Epigraphica* 2000, 168 (no author).

Date of event: 609.

Date of record: around 609.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
[---] died from bubonic plague, era 647 [609 CE]	"Bubonic plague": inguinali plaga. See our note on terminology. "Era 647": The Spanish era begins with year 1 in 38 BCE; 647 era is 609 CE	[-----]/ *ab inguinal/li plaga o/biit er(a) DC/XLVII*

The *Lives of the Holy Fathers of Merida* remember Bishop Masona for banishing unspecified epidemic disease from Mérida, Spain, upon his return from exile ca. 585 CE.

Masona, bishop of Augusta Emerita (Mérida), diocesan capital of Roman Lusitania and a major city in the Visigothic kingdom, was exiled in the 580s due to ongoing conflict with the Visigothic king Leovigild. The group biography of the sixth-century bishops of Mérida, composed two generations later, in the 630s CE, recounts that upon his return Masona banished food shortages, epidemics, and other disasters from the city. Masona was recalled from his approximately three-year exile ("three years or more," at 5.7.1, ed. Maya Sánchez 1992, 71) at an unspecified time relatively shortly before the death of King Leovigild in April 586. This places Masona's exile most plausibly around 582-585/586, precisely in the period when Gregory of Tours (Histories, 6.14, 6.33) reports plague and locusts in the Visigothic kingdom. An almost identical passage appears in the Life of Desiderius, describing Bishop Desiderius of Vienne: See Sisebut, *Life or Passion of St. Desiderius, Written by Sisebut the King* (ed. Gil 1972), 60 and below, Commentary. The latest event narrated by the anonymous author of the *VSPE* dates to 633, and since the *Life or Passion of St. Desiderius* was written by Sisebut (d. 621), it seems that the *VSPE*

borrowed this phrasing (along with many other short phrases) from the *Life or Passion of St. Desiderius*. However, the *VSPE*, written in Mérida, must have seemed at least plausible to a Méridan audience. Given the apparent chronological convergence with the Gregory of Tours' independent reporting of Iberian plague outbreaks and locusts (which would have presumably led to food shortages), the borrowed phrasing may be merely a literary flourish for real events, although the possibility that it is an embellishment without historical grounding cannot be ruled out on this evidence alone.

Henry Gruber

Edition: Maya Sánchez 1992.

Bibliography: Martyn 2008.

Date of event: ca. 582-585.

Date of record: ca. 630.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
The presence of the holy man--with God's mercy--ended the calamitous scarcities, repeated disasters of epidemic disease, and unaccustomed storms of the whole city which, because the shepherd was away, his absence had surely pressed.	The date of Masona's return from exile is unknown, but was soon before the death of Leovigild on April 21, 586. The three-year exile for Masona then fits in the period 582-585 when Gregory of Tours (*Histories,* 6.14, 6.33) records plague for Iberia. Compare with the very similar passage in Sisebut, *Life or Passion of Saint Desiderius* 11 (Gil 1972, 60): "Nam calamitatum penurias et crebras pestilentie clades insolentesque totius urbi procellas sancti viri presentia Domino miserante suspendit, quas indubie remoto pastore causa eius absentie pressit." The only difference in the two passages is the case of "city," dative in one and genitive in the other. See the introduction	nam calamitatum penurias et crebras pestilentie clades insolentesque totius urbis procellas sancti viri presentia Domino miserante suspendit, quas indubie remoto pastore causa eius absentie pressit.

	above for the apparent dependence of this text on Sisebut and its significance for the interpretations it allows of this text.	

Ḥassān b. Thābit (c. 570-659), in Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb: *Dīwān Ḥassān b. Thābit*, Poem on a late-sixth or early-seventh century plague outbreak in Ghassānid Syria.

The long life of poet Ḥassān b. Thābit (c. 570-659) straddled the pre- and early-Islamic periods. A member of the Arabian tribe of Khazraj centered on Yathrib (Medina), he frequented the courts of the Ghassānid chieftains of Syria and the Lakhmids of Iraq, whose tribes were allies and proxies respectively of the East Romans and Sasanians. He composed poetry on and received largesse from rulers of both tribes, and later, upon conversion to Islam, turned his talents to the praise of the Prophet Muḥammad. In the ninth century, Baghdad scholar Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb assembled more than 200 poems attributed to Ḥassān in a *dīwān* (collection of poetry). Here, Ḥassān describes an outbreak of bubonic plague which affected the Ghassānids, characterizing it as a scourge which the *jinn* (spirits: see discussion in Conrad 1994, 17-21) inflicted on humans. Tellingly, Conrad 1994 shows that the identifiable places mentioned in the poem are all located on or near Roman roads.

Bryan Averbuch

Edition: Hassān b. Thābit 1971, ed. ʻArafat, 228.

Bibliography: Hassān b. Thābit 1971, ed. ʻArafat, 228; Conrad 1994, esp. 18; Shahid 2002, v. 2.1, esp. 280-282; Shahid 2012; Boutz 2009, 118-119; Lichtenstädter 2012 and Ibn al-Nadim, ed. and trans. Bayard Dodge 1970, for Muhammad b. Habib.

Date of Event: c. 590-612 CE

Date of Record: After c. 612 CE—Before c. 659 CE

English Translation	Commentary	Arabic Text
And concerning the bubonic plague which was in Syria, he [Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb] said: *1. Its symptoms descended upon Buṣrā and in Rumaḥ/*	"concerning the bubonic plague": *ṭāʻūn* . This is the standard Arabic word for bubonic plague. Conrad 1994 renders "concerning a plague epidemic." See our Note on terminology.	و قال في طاعون كان بالشام: صابَتْ شعائره بُصرى و في رُمَحٍ منْهُ دُخانُ حَريقٍ كالأَعاصيرِ أفنى بذي بَعْلَ حتى بادَ ساكِنُها

It left smoke in its burning wake, as do whirlwinds *2. In Dhū Ba'l it annihilated until those who dwelt there perished/ along with all the inhabited strongholds of Khammān* *3. So were the tribespeople hastened [away] from their pressing tasks/ By the stinging of the Jinn, notorious in the land of the Romans.*	"Buṣrā": Modern Buṣrā (Bostra) "Rumaḥ": Modern Tall al-Rimāḥ. "Banners": Given the context, I have preferred "symptoms" to Conrad's "banners," though "signs" might be a more literal rendering than either of these. "Dhū Ba'l": Conrad 1994, 26 was unable to identify Dhū Ba'l. "al-Khammān": Modern Tall al-'Arār (Conrad 1994, 25). "Strongholds": *quṣūr.* Shahid 2002 disputes Conrad's interpretation of Ghassānid *quṣūr* as "compounds," As an alternative, I prefer "stronghold," since it avoids potentially anachronistic images associated with castles or mansions. Boutz 2009 (Partial Translation): "It brought destruction to Dhū Ba'l until its inhabitants perished / And (destroyed) every inhabited mansion in al-Khammān."	و كُلُّ قَصْرٍ من ٱلخمّانِ مَعْمُور فأَعجلَ ٱلقومَ عن حاجاتهم شُغُلٌ من وخزِ جنٍّ بأَرضِ ٱلرومِ مَذْكورِ

	"Tribespeople": Given the setting (Ghassānid tribal territory), I incline towards *qawm* as tribespeople or tribe, rather than people or nation. "Stinging of the Jinn": confer with Conrad 1994, 17-21, about the similarities to the darts of Apollo, and with Christian authors who attribute the plague to demons. "Notorious": Ar. *Madhkūr* often carries a positive connotation, but this cannot possibly be the case here, hence "notorious."	

Tírechán (ca. 688-693) refers twice to recent mortalities in Ireland in his *Collected Notes on Saint Patrick* (*Collectanea de sancto Patricio*)

The *Collectanea* is the only surviving work by Tírechán, a native of Connacht (in the west of Ireland) and partisan of the church of Armagh, by that time the headquarters of the cult of Patrick (the fifth-century missionary saint) and the hub of a powerful ecclesiastical network. The text purports to be an account of Patrick's circuit of Ireland and the miracles he performed along the way; in reality, the work reflects a very specific set of late seventh-century political and social circumstances, which allow it to be dated within a narrow timeframe (ca. 688-693; for details, see Charles-Edwards 2000: 438–40; note that the mentions of mortalities, which Charles-Edwards interprets as outbreaks of plague, help set the early bound for the date).

Tírechán alludes to exceptional mortalities twice. He first complains how the church of Clonmacnoise—a rival to Armagh—had used "the most recent mortalities" to take several dependencies away from Armagh (this is most likely a reference to the 683–684 epidemic in Ireland: Charles-Edwards 2000: 438–40). The other reference is less clear, but Tírechán appears to allude to the intercession of Erc, possibly the follower of Patrick mentioned in several other works about the saint, against an outbreak of disease. This last story may be independently preserved in a later poem by Cuán ua Lothcháin written in 1006; for a fuller argument, see Byrne and Francis 1994: 99.

Tírechán 1

Bibliography: Charles-Edwards 2000: 8–13, 438–40; Byrne and Francis 1994: 99; Doherty 1991.

Edition: Bieler 1979: B.8.1 (p. 130); B.25.1–2 (p. 142).

Date of event: ca. 683-684?

Date of record: ca. 688-693.

English Translation (Bieler, adapted by Thyr)	Commentary	Old Irish Text
B.25 (1) After this they [St. Patrick and others] established bishops at the holy church in Tamnach, whom the bishops of Patrick, that is, Bronus and Bitheus, consecrated; (2) they demanded nothing of the community of Dumech except their friendship only, but the community of Clonmacnoise claims them, as they hold forcibly many of Patrick's places since the most recent mortalities.	Tamnach: Tawnagh, barony Tirerrill, county Sligo, Ireland. Dumech: ?Shankill, county Sligo. "Friendship": *amicitiam*. "Friendship" (Irish *cairde*) in early medieval Irish law denotes "a solemn compact" ranging in content from "a simple armistice to far-reaching arrangements for mutual recognition and enforcement of legal claims" (Binchy 1941: 80; cf. Bieler 1979: 223). The implication is that Armagh treated Dumech as an equal, while Clonmacnoise has not. "Patrick's places": *locos Patricii*. A catch-all term for dependencies of Armagh. "Mortalities": *mortalitates*. See our Note on terminology.	B.25 (1) Post haec autem posuerunt episcopos iuxta sanctam ecclesiam hi Tamnuch, quos ordinauerunt episcopi Patricii, id est Bronus et Bi[e]theus; (2) non quaerebant aliquid a familia Dumiche nissi amicitiam tantummodo, sed quaerit familia Clono, qui per uim tenent locos Patricii multos post mortalitates nouissimas.

Tírechán 2

Edition: Bieler 1979: B.25.1–2 (p. 142).

Date of event: ca. 664-668?

Date of record: ca. 688-694.

English Translation (Bieler, adapted by Thyr)	Commentary	Old Irish Text
B.8 (1) Regarding the churches which he [Patrick] founded in the plain of Brega... [secondly], the church of Cerne, in which Erc is buried, who carried off the great mortality.	"The plain of Brega": A region of Ireland just north of modern Dublin, comprising parts of counties Dublin, Meath, and Louth. "Cerne": modern-day Carnes, county Meath, Ireland. "Erc": Likely Erc Sláine ("Erc of Slane"), a saint present in several early Lives of St. Patrick. Cerne served as the burial ground for the kings of Meath, who ruled from Slane, in the later seventh century (Swift 2004). "carried off": *portauit.* The Latin verb *porto* means simply to carry. Here the Latin appears to have been influenced by the semantics of Irish *beirid* (cognate with "to bear"), a word which can mean both "carry" and "carry off" (among other meanings: eDIL s.v. *beirid*). See further Byrne and Francis 1994: 99. "The great mortality": *mortalitatem magnam*. The *Annals of Ulster* use this term to describe the epidemic of 664–668 (Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill 1983:	B.8 (1) De aeclessiis quas fundauit in campo Breg... .ii. aeclessia Cerne, in qua sepultus est Hercus, qui portauit mortalitatem magnam.

	s.a. 664).This outbreak of 664 is likewise called a “great mortality” (*micel mancwealm*) in the E version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (Irvine 2004: s.a. 664; see also Maddicott 2007: 172–3). See further Byrne and Francis 1994: 99, as well as our Note on terminology.	

16th Council of Toledo, 693 CE, makes arrangements for seven of eight bishops from the province of Narbonne, absent due to plague

A church council (deliberative assembly of bishops) that met in the spring of 693 in Toledo, Spain, excused bishops from the area around Narbonne (in Septimania, Visigothic southern Gaul) because of an ongoing epidemic outbreak in the region at that time and made arrangements for them to ratify the acts of the meeting at Toledo. The disease is explicitly called bubonic plague (*inguinalis plaguae*). The council first met on April 25, 693, and could report on an outbreak which was "assailing" the Narbonne region. The geographical extent of the outbreak can be deduced from the fact that, of the eight bishops from Visigothic Gaul who could have attended the Council, only one did. When the council met from April 25 to May 2, the epidemic was already in progress in Narbonne, indicating an early spring outbreak at the latest.

Henry Gruber, Michael McCormick

Edition: Vives 1963, 515-516.

Date of event: Spring 693.

Date of record: April-May 693.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
And because, with the onrushing devastation of the bubonic plague, the bishops that belong to the see of Narbonne have in no way been assembled in this holy council [in Toledo], for this reason, we,	Council held at Toledo from April 25 - May 2, 693. “onrushing… devastation”: *ingruente …vastatione*. See Bobrycki 2023 for the wordplay	Et quia ingruente inguinalis plaguae vastatione ad Narbonensem sedem pertinentes episcopi nequaquam sunt in hac sancta synodo adgregati, ideo per hanc nostrae mansuetudinis legem

instituting this law of our clemency, order that all the bishops belonging to the administration of this [episcopal] throne come together in the same city of Narbonne and, when all the canons of this council have been fully read with watchful review, they should assent as signatories in due hierarchical order.	here on *ingruo* (to rush in) and *inguinalis*. "see of Narbonne": *Narbonensem sedem*: is ambiguous. Strictly, the phrase should refer only to the see of Narbonne. Here, however, it applies to the entire episcopal province, as the plural *episcopi* shows that more than one bishop is affected. administration: *diocesim*. Vives prints the word in square brackets, reflecting his decision to adapt this reading from one or more unspecified manuscripts which are not those on which he based his edition. The ecclesiastical province centered at Narbonne comprised eight sees, which therefore were excused from the council. They include: Agatha (Agde), Beterrae (Béziers), Castrum Helenae (Elna), Iulia Carcaso (Carcassonne), Luteva (Lodève), Magalona (Maguelone), Narbonne, Nemausus (Nîmes). See classically Duchesne 1907, 301, and more recently Schneider 2008, especially 78, for the development of these sees. Ervigius, the bishop of Béziers, was in fact at the council and signed the subscription list. The other seven were absent.	instituentes iubemus, ut omnes ad eiusdem cathedrae diocesim pertinentes episcopi in eadem urbe Narbona cum suo metropolitano adunentur et cunctis huius concilii capitulis vigilaci ab eis indagatione perlectis accedant ordinibus debitis suscriptores.

17th Council of Toledo, 694 CE, Preface. King Egica proposes an adjustment to persecution of the Jews in Visigothic Gaul, because that region is empty due to foreign invasion and plague.

King Egica's instructions to the church council (deliberative assembly of bishops) held in Toledo, Spain, in November 694, asked the bishops to decide what was to be done to the Jews and their property to curb their error; they reveal incidentally that the Gaulish territories of the kingdom had been depopulated by foreign invasion and bubonic plague.

The king requested episcopal support for dire measures against the Jews who had failed to convert, and against their property, but temporarily exempted the Jews who lived in the Visigothic province of Gaul (i.e., Septimania, the western part of the Roman province of Gallia Narbonensis, roughly the zone of southern France between the Pyrenees and the Rhone river), due to the depopulation caused by foreign invasion and the mortality of bubonic plague. These Jews and their property were entrusted to the duke of the province, so long as they corrected their life like true venerators of Christ. But if they were found to be corrupting the Christian faith, they were to be punished immediately like their aforesaid relatives. Although the text of the royal decree is somewhat unclear, the response of the bishops (Council 17 of Toledo, c. 8, p. 534-536), shows that the property of the unconverted Jews was to be confiscated by the royal treasury and they, their wives, and children were to be exiled from their homes, enslaved forever, and handed over to those whom the king would choose, while the king would manumit some of their former slaves and entrust them with some of the Jews' property and with performing the former masters' former duties for the royal administration.

The plague epidemic discussed probably refers to the same outbreak mentioned in 16th Council of Toledo, Spring 693, which could have been ongoing or whose effects might still have been felt at the time.

Henry Gruber, Michael McCormick

Edition: Vives 1963, 524.

Date of event: 694.

Date of record: November 694.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
In the name of the Lord, King Flavius Egica to the most holy fathers attending this synod. …[diatribe against the Jews who	King Egica sets the agenda for the meeting of bishops, including citing reports that elsewhere Jews had revolted against their	In nomine Domini, Flavius Egica rex sanctissimis patribus in hac synodo residentibus...

failed to convert]. … Therefore, in order that so dreadful a perversity, once vanquished, be destroyed, let them be curbed from their ancestral error by synodal correction or, if it seems right, let them be mowed down by the sickle that has only one shape; in such fashion also let the canonical judgment of your assembly establish with open expression that which it is appropriate to do about them and all their property, and let the severe judgment of our law ordain that it remain stable forever. Those Jews alone are excepted, for the moment, who are known to be residents of the province of Gaul, that is, below the mountain passes, or to belong to the duchy of that region: because, with onrushing sins, that same region is known to be emptied of people by both the raiding of a foreign people and by the mortality of bubonic plague, let them be in support of the duke of that land and unhesitatingly provide profit to the public needs, such that, like true Christ-venerators, according to the rule of the holy faith they correct their life and drive every error of unbelief from their hearts.	Christian overlords and many had been killed by the just judgment of God; according to recently revealed declarations that would be shared with the bishops, Jews across the sea had consulted with unspecified "others" in order to act together against the Christian kind and to corrupt Christian belief. Forced conversion or expropriation and enslavement were envisaged as remedies for what sounds like reports that the Jews previously persecuted by the Byzantine government were now welcoming the advancing forces of Islam in Roman North Africa. A temporary exception would be made for the Jews of Visigothic Gaul. "below the mountain passes": *infra Clausuras:* Although it has been debated, this clause means "below the *Clausurae*," *Clausurae* being the name for the Pyrenees mountain passes near the modern town of Les Cluses (Pyrénées-Orientales, France; cf. Julian of Toledo, *The Story of Wamba*, 11, ed. Krusch and Levison 1910, 511), from where one would descend into the southern French coastal plain which then belonged to the Visigothic kingdom; see also Castellvi 1995. "with onrushing sins": *Delictis ingruentibus*: compare with the anonymous Visigothic *Sermon on*	…Ut ergo tam dira incredulitatis perversitas victa dispereat, aut synodali emendatione a parentali refraenentur errore, aut si placet uniformi vestra sententia falce maneant iustitiae desecati, sic quoque ut quid de illis cunctisque rebus ipsorum agere conveniat canonica vestri coetus sententia patenti stylo constituat, quod nostrae legis censura perpetim stabile manere decernat, illis tantumdem hebraeis ad presens reservatis, qui Galliae provinciae videlicet infra clausuras noscuntur habitatores existere vel ad ducatum regionis ipsius pertinere, ut quia delictis ingruentibus et externae gentis incursu et plagae inguinalis interitu pars ipsa ab hominibus desolata dinoscitur, cum omnibus rebus suis in suffragio ducis terrae ipsius existant et publicis utilitatibus profectum incunctanter exhibeant, ita ut secundam sanctae fidei regulam ut verae christolicae vitam suam corrigant, et omnem genuinae incredulitatis errorem a suis cordibus pellant.

	the disaster, ed. Grégoire 1966, 214, where the plague is said to be recompense for "our increasing sins" (*peccatis nostris ingruentibus*…). On the wordplay of *ingruo* and *inguinalis*, see Bobrycki in press.	

Mozarabic Chronicle of 754 reports plague after 687 CE and perhaps in 701 CE in Spain, possibly in Toledo.

The *Mozarabic Chronicle of 754* is a Latin chronicle, written in Spain, possibly in Toledo, in the first decades of Arab rule (Cardelle de Hartmann 1999, 17-19). The latest entries date to 754. The absence of any information about the decisive event of the arrival of the fleeing Umayyad dynast Abd al-Rahman in Cordoba in 756 strongly argues for completion before that date, therefore, from the early 750s to ca. 755. In two entries, the chronicler seems to refer to bubonic plague in the Visigothic kingdom. In his entry on Egica's accession in 687, he writes that during his reign, bubonic plague (*plaga...inuinalis*) struck Iberia. In a second entry, specifically for 701 CE, he refers to the "aforementioned disaster," which, given the intervening content (on a successful defense of Orthodoxy and a remission of taxes), seems almost certainly to refer to the plague mentioned in his entry on Egica's accession. The duration and relative chronology of the plague outbreak is unclear: is the "aforementioned disaster" of plague a singular event in 701, referred to earlier, or is the chronicler referring to multiple events? An earlier outbreak, or one which persisted, is supported by the independently documented plague outbreaks in 693 and possibly 694, which are mentioned in the acts of the 16th and 17th Councils of Toledo, both held during the reign of Egica.

Henry Gruber

Edition: Mommsen 1894, 323-367, at 349-351; López Pereira 1980, 58, 64.

Date of event: Between 687 and 703 CE; certainly in 701 CE.

Date of record: 754.

English Translation	Commentary	Latin Text
In the time of this man [Justinian II], in era 726 [688 CE], in his	The concurrent dating systems here for Egica's accession do not	41. Huius tempore in eram DCCXXVI anno imperii eius

first year as emperor, in the seventieth of the Arabs, with Abd al-Malik ruling for five years, Egica, for the protection of the rule of the Goths attained the first and highest rulership. He reigned for 15 years. This man punished the Goths with bitter death. Moreover, the bubonic plague moved in mercilessly in his [Egica's] time.	concur; however, the Visigothic king Egica is securely attested to have become king on the death of his predecessor on November 14, 687. "Era 726": The Spanish Era dating system begins January 1, 38 BCE, i.e., the year here is given as 688 CE. The reign of Justinian II: the dating here is off, as his (first) reign began in September 685, which would place this event in his first year 685-686. "Seventieth of the Arabs": AH 70 is 689/690 CE, adding to the chronological confusion of this passage. "Abd al-Malik ruling for five years": the Umayyad caliph became governor in 684 and designated successor in 685, making his fifth regnal year either 689 or 690, still off from Justinian II and the Era date, but in accordance with the AH date. "In his time": *huius tempore* means "in *his* time," that is, during the reign of Egica, not "in *this* time." This is the main entry for Egica's rule, so this outbreak of plague need not refer to the year of accession. "Moved in": *inlauitur*, from classical *illabor*, to fall into, slip into, move into, with a characteristic Iberian shift to u	primo, Arabum septuagesimo, regnante Abdelmelic anno quinto, Egika ad tutelam regni Gothorum primum et summum obtinet principatum. Regnat annos XV. Hic Gothos acerua morte persequitur. Plaga insuper inuinalis huius tempore inmisericorditer inlauitur.

	between vowels.	
In the time of this man [Apsimar = Tiberius III), in era 738 [700 CE], in the first year as emperor, and in the eighty-second of the Arabs, with the [eighty] third having begun, with Abd al-Malik in his seventeenth year of rule, Witiza and his father ruled equally. And, in the era 739 [701 CE], not being able to bear the mortality of the aforementioned disaster, leaving the palace, they kept wandering around Spain. Having traveled across [Spain], and with his father having died his own death, [Witiza] held the kingdom most prosperously for the aforementioned number of years.	Apsimar = Tiberius III, ruled 698-705. "Mortality"*: exitium.* "Mortality of the aforementioned disaster"**:** *suprafate cladis... exitium: clades*: "destruction," "disaster," "slaughter" See above for *clades* in Gregory of Tours. The "aforementioned disaster" here must be the plague, as there are no other tragic events between the earlier mention of the plague and this passage. "They wandered": *Uagito* is the iterative of the classical *uago*. The *per Spaniam* here refers to the location of the wandering, not the geographical scope of the disaster. "His own death": *propria morte*: Egica died in his 90s. An alternative translation of the expression is "a proper death," as seen in, for example, in Festus, *Breviary* 21 (ed. Eadie 1967), to refer to the death of the emperor Caracalla by assassination, and in Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, at 20.23 (ed. Bonnard 1979), who uses this expression to contrast the apostle John's "natural" or "proper" death with his brother James, who was beheaded. In this reading, the death of Egica could be	47. Huius temporibus in era DCCXXXVIII, anno imperii eius primo, Arabum LXXXII simulque et tertio cepto, regnante Abdelmelec anno XVII, Uuittiza decrepito iam patre pariter regnant. Qui et in eram DCCXXXVIIII suprafate cladis non ferentes exitium per Spaniam e palatio uagitant. Qua decursa, propria morte deciso iam patre, florulentissime supra fatos per annos regnum retemtat...

	contrasted with a death by plague.	

The Annals of Ulster

The Annals of Ulster mention severe outbreaks of epidemic illness in Ireland—some of which are likely bubonic plague—that occurred in 545, 549, 664–668, and 683–684. They are the best witness to a collection of annals, now lost, which was probably first compiled at the monastery of Iona in northern Scotland beginning in the late sixth century. These entries are all shared with other surviving collections of annals, which implies that they had reached their current form likely no later than the middle of the eighth century. They document a number of epidemic outbreaks; the lists of prominent people who died in the outbreaks often allow mapping of places where epidemics occurred; the commemoration of their deaths in other sources clarifies the seasonality of different epidemics (e.g., the death of Mobhí Cláraineac in October of 545).

The *Annals of Ulster* are one of nearly a dozen related annals collections that document the history of early medieval Ireland. The earliest surviving manuscript dates to ca. 1489 CE (Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill 1983: ix). Despite the late date of the manuscript copy, this collection is the principal reference for early medieval Irish chronology. Notably it preserves clear signs of the various layers of its composition, on occasion even stating its source material (Charles-Edwards 2006: 22–3); in addition, the various scribes and compilers responsible for its current form showed greater reluctance to emend than those responsible for other annals collections; by respecting earlier language and orthography they make it possible to discern different chronological layers of composition (Ó Máille 1910).

Comparison of different annals collections has established the existence of a shared core text for the years before ca. 740, commonly called the "Iona Chronicle," after the monastery of the same name in northwestern Scotland (Evans 2010: 1–6). Contemporary recording, in the current state of our knowledge, is held to have begun in the mid-to-late sixth century, at the monastery of Iona (A. Smyth 1972; Charles-Edwards 2006: 7–9), though many of the entries for the years prior to ca. 660 may have been written in later centuries (Evans 2018: 5–8).

The *Annals of Ulster* provide a deceptively full chronological apparatus, including dates *anno Domini* ("year of the Lord") alongside other calendrical information. These should not be taken at face value. In the first place, there are frequent mistakes: for instance, where we have confirmation from outside sources, AD dates from ca. 710 to 1013 are consistently off by a single year (inconsistently off, and often by multiple years, before ca. 710: Charles-Edwards 2006: 39). Secondly—and more importantly—this chronological apparatus was added later. When, precisely, is difficult to say, but it was likely centuries after the Iona Chronicle was first created (Charles-Edwards 2006: 41).

Without biomolecular evidence from Ireland or the north and west of Britain, it is extremely difficult to identify the diseases named in the text. All four major outbreaks described

below could well have been caused by *Yersinia pestis*, the pathogen that causes bubonic and other forms of plague. For at least one, the outbreak of ca. 664–668, the written evidence makes virtually certain the identification as bubonic plague (Maddicott 1997); it is likely that the outbreaks of ca. 683–684 and of ca. 545 were plague as well (MacArthur 1949; Grace 2018: 77–82, 87–8). Some have thought that a further epidemic, in ca. 549, was characterized by jaundice (of unknown cause), since, in sources of the eleventh century and later, it is, for reasons that are unclear, called "yellow" (MacArthur 1949: 173–4); this conclusion is speculative. In addition to these four major outbreaks, the annals record several others, apparently less devastating in scope: a selection has been presented below, with a focus on those that have appeared in previous literature on the First Pandemic (for a full discussion, see Grace 2018).

Since the dates this annals collection provides are, on occasion, demonstrably wrong, there have been numerous attempts over the years to sift through the various collections to determine the true date of a given event (a useful example is Charles-Edwards 2006). Truly reliable reconstructions, however, remain far off. Reconstruction of the original chronological apparatus and the transmission history of these texts has, in recent years, spurred heated, sometimes vitriolic, debate (McCarthy 2018). For the purposes of this collection of written evidence for epidemic disease during the Justinianic Pandemic, most dates after ca. 660 are secure as noted below, vouchsafed by the testimony of other contemporary written sources; before ca. 600, where the annals stand alone, the dates are certainly *not* secure (Evans 2010: 171–88). Any date the text provides before the middle of the seventh century is subject to caution.

Nicholas Thyr

Selected Bibliography: Charles-Edwards 2006; Evans 2010; Grace 2018.

Edition: MacAirt and MacNiocaill 1983: s.a. 545, 549, 576, 664, 665, 667, 668, 683, 684.

Date of events: ca. 545-683.

Date of record: ca. 650 and later.

Note: \\words in double slashes// indicate an addition by a different scribe in the oldest manuscript copy. The editor expanded scribal abbreviations with italics; these have been suppressed below. As mentioned above, dates given by the text itself and the editorially-determined correct dates (in brackets above the translation) are usually a year apart. To prevent confusion, the dates given by the text itself will be marked with an asterisk if discussed in the commentary (e.g. '*544').

English Translation (Mac Airt/Mac Niocaill; adapted by Thyr)	Commentary	Latin and Old Irish Text

[545 CE] Kalends of January: \\First feria, second of the moon.// AD 544. The first mortality, which is called ‘blefed,’ in which Mobhí Clárainech (‘Boardface’) died.	“Kalends”: The first day of the month. “First feria”: The first day of the week (Sunday). “Second of the moon”: The day of the lunar month. In conjunction, the date, the day of the week, and the day of the lunar month should, in theory, provide a clear indication of date; due to copying errors, this is not always the case. Here, they point to 545 as the correct date. AD 544: As noted above, the year recorded in the Annals of Ulster is, before 1013, in general, a year too early (Walsh 1941: 365–9). It is customary, therefore, to apply a single-year correction to all entries before that date back to 489. This too argues for 545 CE. “The first mortality”: This entry, as it stands, is clearly not contemporaneous since it knows about later mortalities; however, it appears it came from some sort of early written record: the word *blefed* (*belefeth*) —is attested , it appears, only in the annals (eDIL s.v. *blefed*). The meaning of the word is uncertain. Mobhí Cláraineach: The twelfth-century Irish *Life of Columba* (Colum Cille) makes Mobhí the teacher of St Columba of Iona, and claims his school was held at what is now Glasnevin,	Kl. Ianair \\1. f., l. 2.// Anno Domini .ccccc^{o}.cl^{o}.iiii^{o}.·Mortalitas prima que dicitur blefed in qua Mo-Bí Clarainech obiit

	just north of Dublin (Herbert 1988: 278, n236). His feast day was October 12 in most churches (Ó Riain 2011: 457–8). (Feast days, celebrated annually on the date of the saint's death, are typically one of the most reliable sources of information about a given early medieval saint). This indicates that this epidemic was underway in October 545.	
[549] Kalends of January: \\Sixth feria, sixteenth of the moon// AD 548 [...] A great mortality in which these rested: Finnio maccu Telduib; Colum Ó Crimthainn; Mac Táil of Cell Chuilinn; Sinchell mac Cenannáin, abbot of Cell Achaid Drummfoto; and Colum of Inis Cealtra	"Kalends…": These data suit AD 549. Whether this is the correct date is unknown. "A great mortality": In other annals collections, this epidemic is given a name meaning "yellow" (see below, s.a. 556), leading some scholars to suggest it was relapsing fever, a louse- or tick-borne illness: MacArthur 1949: 174–175. "Finnio maccu Telduib": Otherwise known as Finnian of Clonard (a prominent monastery in east-central Ireland). Finnian, like Mobhí, was reputed to be a teacher of Columba (Hughes 1954: 25–7), and is said to have died on December 12th (Ó Riain 2011: 319–21). "Colum Ó Crimthainn, Mac Táil, Sinchell, Colum of Inis Cealtra": Pádraig Ó Riain is of the opinion that this list of saints, including Finnio, is entirely fabricated, and belongs to the eighth century or	Kl. Ianair \\6ª. f., l. 16.// Anno Domini .ccccºxlº.uiiiº. [...] Mortalitas magna in qua isti pausant: Finnio maccu [Tel]duib; Colaim nepos Craumhthainan; Mc. Tail Cille cuilind; Sincheall mc. Cenanndain, abbas Cille Achaid Drummfoto; ⁊ Columbę Insę Celtrae

	later (Ó Riain 1997: 14–7). In favor of Ó Riain's argument, this entry is the final one for this year, and the easiest method of inserting an entry to a pre-existing list is to place it at the end of the list for a given year (cf. Evans 2010: 67–72, 96). The feast day of Colum of Terryglass fell on December 13; that of Mac Táil, on June 11; and Sinchell's feast day, in most records, is on March 26. (Ó Riain 2011: 210, 424, 563).	
[556] Kalends of January: \\seventh feria, fourth of the moon//. AD 555. [...] \\A great mortality this year, that is, the *crón chonaill*, that is, the *buide chonaill*//.	"Kalends…": The ferial data suggest 556. "Crón chonaill": Literally, 'straw-ochre.' The first word is likely a scribal error for *crom*, 'crooked,' the reading of the other branch of transmission (Mac Niocaill 2012: s.a. 551).[23] The precise meaning of this term is uncertain. This entry has been added by a second scribe. "Buide chonaill": Literally, "straw-yellow"; what, precisely, this means is unclear. There appears to be no difference between'*crom* (*crón*) *chonnaill*' and '*buide chonnaill*.'	Kl. Ianair \\7. f., l. 4.// Anno Domini .ccccc^{o}.l^{o}.u^{o} [...] \\Mortalitas magna hoc anno, .i. in Chron Chonaill, .i. in Bhuide Chonaill.//

[23] What 'chonaill' means is a difficult question. It is clearly in the genitive singular, and could be of either 'Conall' (a proper name) or, with a slight (and plausible) emendation, *connall*, 'stalk, stubble,' a loanword derived from Latin *cannula* (eDIL s.v. condall; the *nd-nn* distinction is of little importance here). The latter interpretation receives support from other annals collections which have the form with double *n* (e.g. Mac Airt 1944: s.a. 551), as well as the opinion of early-modern Irish scholars themselves (Kelleher and Schoepperle 1918: 62.9–10).

[576]Kalends of January: \\fourth feria, 14th of the moon//. AD 575. [...] A spark of leprosy and an unheard-of abundance of nuts.	"Kalends…": 576. "A spark of leprosy…": *lepra* was an all-purpose term for skin ailments in Ireland (Grace 2018: 88–9); the argument connecting this to plague (Woods 2003–2004) is highly speculative.	Kl. Ianair \\4. f., l. 14.// Anno Domini .ccccc.lxx.u. [...] Scintilla lepręˢ & habundantia nucum inaudita.
[664] Kalends of January \\Second (feria), 27th (of the moon).// AD 663. Darkness on the Kalends of May at the ninth hour, and in the same summer the sky was seen to burn. The mortality came to Ireland on the first of August. [...] The mortality first flared in Ireland in Mag nItho of the Fothairt. From the death of Patrick 203 years; the first mortality, 112.	**"**Kalends…": Again, these data suit 664; that 664 is the correct date is independently confirmed by mention of the eclipse (O'Connor 1952–1953: 68, no. 89). "Kalends of May at the ninth hour": mid-afternoon on May 1st; the eclipse lasted from 3:48 to 6:02 (O'Connor 1952–1953). "Mag nItho of the Fothairt": The present-day Barony of Forth, County Wexford (Charles-Edwards 2006: 155, n. 2). Not coincidentally, perhaps, this region includes modern Rosslare Harbor, today home to many of the ferry services between Ireland, Britain, and France. **"**The first mortality": This would suggest 552 for the year of the "first mortality". There is no mortality under that date (i.e. *551). At some point, then, either there were only 112 kalends between the "first mortality" and this one, or there was an error in transcribing the Roman numerals at some early date. In medieval	Kl. Ianair \\2., 27.// Anno Domini .dcº.lxº.iiiº. Te[ne]breˢ in kl. Maii in nona hora, ⁊ in eadem estate coelum ardere uisum est. Mortalitas in Hiberniam peruenit in kl. Augusti. [...] In Campo Itho Fothart exarsit mortalitas primo in Hibernia. A morte Patricii .ccª.iii., prima mortalitas .cxii.

	scripts, *c.xii* and *c.xu* could be difficult to differentiate. Either is plausible. Both the death of Patrick in *457 (=457) and the mortality of *548 (=549) are three years too early in the lights of the synchronism, as are several other entries before 642 that can be verified against the historical record (Charles-Edwards 2006: 38–39); perhaps, as Charles-Edwards suggests, multiple records were added, several years too early, at a later date (Charles-Edwards 2006: 58). The other explanation, regarding the Roman numerals, has simplicity working in its favor; *c.xii* and *c.xu* can be very difficult to differentiate (as, for that matter, can *cc.iii* and *cc.ui*).	
[665] Kalends of January \\fourth feria, seventh of the moon; according to others, eighth of the moon.// AD 664. A great mortality. Diarmait mac Aedo Sláine and Blaimac and Mael Bresail, the sons of Mael Dúin, died \\that is, from the *buidhe chonaill*//. Ultán mac Caunga, abbot of Clonard. The going to sleep \\from the same illness, that is, from the *buidhe chonaill*// of Féichín of Fore, and Ailerán the Wise, and Cronán mac Silni. Cú cen Máthair mac Cathail [...],	**“**Kalends…”: Again, the correct date is 665. The confusion over the correct lunar age derives from a mistake in applying the correction to the lunar calendar known as the *saltus lunae*. “Diarmait mac Aedo Sláine”: This king of Tara features in many later sagas as joint-ruler with Blathmac, his brother, though their actual relationship to each other seems to have been considerably more fraught (Mac Shamhráin and Byrne 2005: 198–201). This entry appears to be erroneous. There is no recorded figure named	Kl. Ianair \\4.f., l. 7. alias luna .8.// Anno Domini .dcº.lxº.iiiiº. Mortalitas magna. Diarmait m. Aedo Slane ⁊ Blaimac ⁊ Mael Bresail filii Maele Duin morti sunt \\.i. don bhuidhe Chonaill//. Ultan m. Caunga, ab Cluana Iraird. Dormitatio \\de eodem morbo, .i. don bhuide Conaill// Feicheni Fabair ⁊ Ailerain sapientis ⁊ Cronani filii Silni. Cu cen Mathair m. Cathail [...] ri Muman moritur. Blaimacc Tethbae, Oengus Ulath, Manchan Leith, episcopi

king of Munster, died. Blaimacc of Tethba, Oengus of Ulster, Manchán of Lemanaghan, bishops and abbots and innumerable [others] died.	“Blathmac, son of Mael Dúin” (though there is a Mael Bresail son of Mael Dúin: O’Brien 1962: 437.36–7). The other branch of transmission solves this problem by rephrasing the entry to read “... and Blathmac, the two kings of Ireland, and Maelbresail, the son...” (Mac Niocaill 2012: s.a. 665). Ultán maccu Cunga: We know nothing of this figure besides what this entry tells us (Ó Riain 2011: 580). “Féichín…”: The following names are largely ecclesiastical figures, save Blathmac of Tethba and Cú cen Máthair. Some, such as Féichín, remained well-known figures. Others—such as Crónán mac Silni—are considerably more obscure. For four of these figures, we know the day on which they are reputed to have died: Crónán mac Silni on 11 November; Féichín, on 20/29 January; Manchán, 24 January (also 29 September); Ailerán, on 29 December (Ó Riain 2011: 235, 310–1, 429, 520).	abbatesque atque [alii] innumerabiles mortui sunt
[667] Kalends of January: \\sixth feria, first of the moon//. AD 666. Mortality \\in Ireland.//	“Kalends…”: AD 667.	Kl. Ianair \\6. f., l. 1.// Anno Domini .dc.lx.ui. Mortalitas \\in Hibernia//
[668] Kalends of January \\sixth feria, 12th of the moon//. AD 667. \\A great// mortality, \\i.e., the	“Kalends…”: AD 668. “Diarmaid and Blathmac”: In this	Kl. Ianair \\.ui. f., l. 12.// Anno Domini .dc.lx.uii.

buidhe chonaill//. [...] \\Diarmaid and Blathmac, the two kings of Ireland, and Féichín of Fore and many others died, that is, from the *buidhe chonnaill*, according to another book.//	later addition, the story represented in the 664 entry above has become streamlined over time. Diarmait and Blathmac are now joint-kings, while lesser kings have fallen away, and the only saint mentioned by name is the most prominent of them all, Féichín.	Mortalitas \\magna, id est an buidhe Chonaill.// [...] \\Diarmaid & Blathmacc, da righ Erenn, & Feichin Fobhair & alii multi mortui sunt, .i. don buidhe Chonaill [sic], secundum alium librum.//
[683] Kalends of January: [blank]. AD 682. [...] The beginning of the children's mortality in the month of October. [684] Kalends of January: [blank]. AD 683. The mortality of the little ones.	"The children's mortality": Perhaps, as MacArthur argued, a signal the older generation had some level of acquired immunity. (MacArthur 1949: 179–81). "The month of October": Compare the feast-day of Mobhí Clárainech, above.	Kl. Ianair. Anno Domini .dc^{o}.lxxx^{o}.ii^{o}. [...] Initium mortalitatis puerorum in mense Octimbris. Kl. Ianair. Anno Domini .dc^{o}.lccc^{o}.iii^{o}. Mortalitas paruulorum

Sén Dé ("God's Blessing"), a hymn (ca. 800 CE), with preface and commentary (ca. 1000 CE), that seeks God's protection from swift disease and epidemic pestilence, supposedly dating from ca. 664.

Sén Dé is a mixed Irish and Latin hymn that asks for the protection of God from, among other things, "swift disease" (*diangalar*) and "pestilence" (*teidm*). A preface (ca. 1000 CE) transmitted alongside the work claims the hymn was written by Colmán moccu Cluasaig (d. 662) to protect himself and his community from the plague of 664–668, though linguistic considerations suggest the poem was composed closer to 800. The preface provides important insight into how later generations viewed the seventh-century plague.

Shortly after the year 1000 CE, scholars at Armagh gathered a number of hymns, poems, and prayers (in Latin, Irish, or both at once), and provided each of them with an extensive critical apparatus. A preface described the author, and the time, place, and reason of composition; copious glosses explained difficult words, syntax, etymologies, and Biblical or patristic references (Herbert 2007: 89–91). This *Liber Hymnorum* ("Book of Hymns") survives in two later manuscripts, one from near the end of the eleventh century, the other from the early twelfth (Bieler 1948: 177; Henry 1970: 56–9).

This book of hymns ascribes *Sén Dé* ("God's Blessing") to Colmán moccu Cluasaig (also known as Colmán ua Cluasaig). While this ascription is sometimes taken at face value (e.g. Breen 2009), the Colmán of this preface appears to me (= Thyr) to conflate two separate figures: (1) Colmán moccu Cluasaig, head of a school at Cork, who died, according to the Clonmacnoise group of the Irish annals, in 662 (Mac Niocaill 2012: s.a. 662); (2) the better-known Colmán (Columbanus) of Inishbofin (county Galway), once head of the monastery at Lindisfarne (in northeast England). After losing a fierce debate about the correct method of calculating the date of Easter, Colmán departed Lindisfarne with a large retinue for the monastery of Iona (in northern Scotland) in 664, and from there in 668 for Ireland (Ní Mhaonaigh 2009; Orschel 2014), where he founded the monastery of Inishbofin off the west coast. He died there in 676 (Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill 1983: s.a. 676).

We know nothing directly about the historical role of either Colmán during the plague epidemic of the 660s; however, the conflated Colmáns had become indelibly associated with it by 1000 CE. The preface and commentary to *Sén Dé* frame the poem as a response to the plague, as Colmán and his community flee to safety on their offshore refuge; another poem attributed to Colmán, the "Lament for Cuimíne Fada," may allude to the same epidemic (Byrne 1980). According to these commentators (writing ca. 1000), two-thirds of the population died, including Ireland's most powerful kings and saints, in God's just punishment. The Irish elite had sought to reduce Ireland's overpopulation by asking God to kill the poor; God instead punished Ireland with a terrible epidemic, called *buidechair*. This is the first time that word appears in surviving Irish literature, but no symptoms are described. In etymological terms, this word appears to mean "yellow death/destruction" and, by the end of the Middle Ages, had come to designate jaundice (Marstrander 1910: 408–9; Ó Conchubhair 2019: 6.6). Bede, on the other hand, writing ca. 720, identifies the epidemic of ca. 664–668 as bubonic plague (Maddicott 1997).

We know little of the sources for this account. Certainly, the authors had access to the Irish annals (see "The Annals of Ulster," above). That the epidemic bears two different names in the preface (*buidechair* and *buide chonnaill*, perhaps itself another term for jaundice), and that the same information is told twice over, suggests the use of multiple written sources, as do the references to competing schools of thought, marked by the phrases "some say" and "others say" in the preface and commentary. This legend appears to have been fairly well-known between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, as two surviving Lives of Irish saints refer to it (Colgan 1645; Plummer 1910).

The hymn itself refers to some sort of widespread epidemic, but provides neither a name nor any symptoms. We have only a rough idea when it was composed. It is clear it was not all written at once (Gaidoz 1881–1883); for the oldest section, linguistic forms suggest a date in the earlier part of the ninth century (Stokes and Strachan 1903: xxxvi–xxxvii; see also Doherty 2008: 63–74). One could, perhaps, tie it to an entry in the *Annals of Ulster* under the year 826, when a "warning of pestilence" (*plág*, from Latin *plaga*) caused "great fear throughout Ireland" (Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill 1983: s.a. 826). It is possible, therefore, that this hymn was meant to protect against an epidemic outbreak in the ninth century; it is also possible it was written in the voice of a survivor

of an earlier epidemic. In either case, it had become associated with "Colmán" by the time the preface was written.

Nicholas Thyr

Bibliography: J. Doherty 2008; Gaidoz 1881–1883; Herbert 2007

Edition: Stokes and Strachan 1903: 298–305

Date of event: 664–668?

Date of record: ca. 1000

Note: The two manuscripts can differ significantly in their readings. I (Thyr) have followed the older manuscript ("T"), except once in the commentary where loss of text has rendered it illegible (rendered in italics).

A. Preface

English Translation (NT)	Commentary	Irish Text
Sén Dé. Colmán maccu Cluasaig, scholar of Cork: he made this hymn, to save himself from the *buidechair* that was in the time of the sons of Áed Sláine. For there were many people in Ireland at that time, and such was their number that there were only three nines of furrows for each man in Ireland: that is, nine for turf, and nine for meal, and nine for wood; so the better of the men of Ireland fasted around the sons of Áed Sláine and Féichín of Fore and Ailerán and Manchán of Liath and a good number besides, so that the population would be lessened, for a shortage of food had come on account of their great number; so it is for that reason the *buidechair* was brought upon them, so that the	"*Sén Dé*": The name of the poem, meaning "Blessing (Omen) of God" (<Lat. *signum*; eDIL s.v. *sén*). *Buidechair*: As noted in the introduction, this is the earliest appearance of the word. Note that it appears to be interchangeable with *buide chonnaill*, below. "The sons of Áed Sláine": Diarmait and Blathmac, joint-kings of Tara (and thus all Ireland) in sagas; according to the Annals of Ulster, they died of a "great mortality" in 665 (Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill 1983: s.a. 665) Furrows: a unit of measurement equated to the Roman *actus minimus* in a glossary indebted to the seventh-century Visigothic	Sén Dé. Colmán mac húi Chluasaig, fer legind Corcaige, is e dorigne in nimmun sa dia ṡóerad ar in mbuidechair robóe i rremis mac nOeda Sláne. Ar roptar imda doine i nHerinn in tan-sein, ⁊ rob e a nimmed connaroichtis acht trí nói immaire do cech f̓ir i nHerinn .i. a nói do móin, ⁊ a nói do min, ⁊ a nói do chaill; corothroiscset maithe fer nErenn im meic nÓida Sláne ⁊ im Féchine Fabair ocus im (Ailer)án ⁊ im Manchan Leith ⁊ im sochaide archena, im huatigud na ndoine, ar dodechaid tercca bíd ann ara nimmed. conid airesein tuccad in buidechair forru, conid de atbathatar meicc Æda Sláne isin bliadain-sin, ocus na sruite roráidsem, et alii multi. Dicunt alii combad Cholman dogneth

sons of Áed Sláine died from it that year, and the wise men we have mentioned, and many others. Some say (*dicunt alii*) that Colmán made all of it; others say that he only did two quatrains of it, and that the school made the rest of it, that is, half a quatrain for each one of them. In Cork it was made, in the time of the two sons of Aed Sláine, that is, Blathmac and Diarmaid.

This, then, is why it was made: A great pestilence had been brought upon the men of Ireland, that is, the *buide chonnaill*, and it reached across all Ireland, and it left no more than one of every three people in Ireland alive, and it is for his and his school's protection from that pestilence that Colmán made this hymn. And this is when he made it, when he had begun to travel to another island out on the sea off Ireland, to flee this pestilence, so that there were nine waves between them and the land, for pestilence does not cross over that, as the learned claim (*ut ferunt periti*); so one member of Colmán's school asked "What omen (*sén*) has made you go on a journey?" so Colmán said, "what omen (*sén*), but the blessing of God (*sén Dé*)?" For that is why they traveled, going out on the islands of the sea, to flee the disease.

scholar Isidore of Seville; according to this source, an *immaire* is four feet wide (Gwynn 1921–1923: 157).

"Fasted": An early Irish practice in which persons of lower social status went on hunger strike to shame their social betters into taking action. Though the actual practice had long faded by the time this text was written, there was a robust literary tradition of saints fasting against God (Binchy 1982). The preposition here, 'around', seems to indicate 'alongside,' with God the inferred target.

"Féichín…": all these figures appear in the Annals of Ulster as having died from a great mortality in 665 (Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill: s.a. 665).

"Cork": There is some confusion evident between this passage and below, where the text claims he made the hymn "when he had begun to travel to another island out on the sea": there is no suitable island near Cork that fits this description. More plausible, perhaps, is the account in the other manuscript: "This, then, is the place [of composition], from the island to Cork, until the island where they went in flight from the pestilence" (Stokes and Strachan 1903: 298); it could, in theory, be a garbled version of an itinerary

uile; atberat fairenn aile na dernai acht da rann de nammá, ⁊ in scol dia dénaim (ó sin) immach .i. lethrann cech fĭr dib. I Corcaig dorigned i namseir da macc Æda Sláne .i. Blaithmac ⁊ Diarmait. Is é immorro tuccait a dénma: teidm mór do-ratad for firu Hérenn .i. in Bude Conaill, co rosirestar Hérinn hule, ⁊ conafarcaib acht cech tres dune i nHerinn i mbethaid. ⁊ conid dia nanacul cona scoil doróne ar in teidm sen Colman in nimmun sa. ⁊ is ann dorola dosom a denam, in an ro-thinscanastar ascnam co araile inse mara Herenn amaig, for teched in tedma sa, co mbetis .ix. tonna eturru ⁊ tír, ar ní tic teidm tarais innunn, ut ferunt periti. co roiarfaig araile don scoil Cholman cia sen i tarla doib dul for sét. conid ann-sein atrubairt Colmán: "cia sén on tra," ol seissom, "acht sén Dé?" Ar issed rothrialsat som, dul for insib mara immach, for teched resin ṅgalur.

	from Iona to Cork to Inishbofin. *Buide chonnaill*: The text repeats itself in this paragraph, but using different phraseology and terminology, a sign of conflation from multiple sources. The term appears to mean "stalk-yellow" (see further the Annals of Ulster, above). "Another island": Inishbofin, county Galway. "Nine waves": A metaphor (and legal term of art) meaning, roughly, 'open sea' (Stokes 1904: 446).	

B. Hymn and Commentary

To distinguish the hymn from the medieval commentary on it (composed ca. 1000), the latter is given in the smaller font.

English Translation	Commentary	Irish Text
The prayer of Abel, son of Adam, Elijah, Enoch, to our aid, may they save us from swift disease* * that is, from the swift disease, that is, from the Buide Chonnaill wherever in the world it burns. Noah and Abraham, Isaac the wonderful son,	**"**wherever... it burns": This is only a possible translation. I take *fogair* as a form of *fo-geir*, "heats, inflames" (eDIL s.v. *?fo-gair*), as this verb is attested in a similar context in a late eighth-century homily ("the disease inflames the whole body"—*fo geir a nggalar in uile corp*: Stokes and Strachan 1903: 246). Stokes and Strachan (1903: 300) emend to *foguir*, 'of noise' (hence 'noisy'). See Doherty 2008: 24–5. I have kept the manuscript readings *cobair*	Itge Abéil maicc Adaim, Hēle, Enōc, diar cobair, ronsōerat ar dīangalar,* *.i. arin galar ndian .i. ar in mbude Connaill sechip leth fon ṁbith fogair. Noe ocus Abraham, Isac in macc adamra, immuntisat ar tedmaim,

may they surround us against pestilence that great fear not visit us. [...] May we be* forever without age, with the angels in everlasting life. *This is a half-quatrain, and the other half-quatrain was not found there, and this is what happened, the man whose turn it was to make it died from the pestilence, if each man made one stanza; if Colmán, however, made the whole hymn himself, this is why he left the half-quatrain without another half-quatrain, that is, "since He made my retinue incomplete, so shall I leave His praise unfinished."	and *fogair* against the editors' *cobuir* and *foguir*. **"**Great fear": *adamna*. The meaning of this word is somewhat unclear, but "great fear, terror" seems the most plausible solution. Cf. Annals of Ulster (Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill 1983) s.a. 826: *Adomnae mor for h-Erinn n-uile, .i. robudh plaige* ("Great fear in all Ireland: that is, a warning of pestilence"). "Forever": the meaning of *i llethu* remains unclear (eDIL s.v. *lethu*). "This is a half-quatrain…": This gloss speculates as to why this quatrain was just two lines long, instead of the customary four.	nachantairle adamna. [...] Robbem* cen es hil-lethu, la haingliu i mbith-bethu *Lethrand so ⁊ ni frith a lethrand aile and, ⁊ is ed dorale in fer dia torach[t] a de(nam) at bath don tedmaim maso lethrand cech fir do-ronsat anuasana. maso Colman immorro a oenur dorigne in nimmun sa, is airi foracaib in lethrann sa gen leth rand ele .i. ar roeccomlanaig seom mo muntir sa ecomlanaigfetsa a molad som.

Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb: *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*: A Plague Outbreak in the Sasanian Empire, 628 CE

Baghdad scholar Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb (d. 860), recorded the following account of the "Plague of Shiroē." He explicitly describes it as *ṭā'ūn*, the standard Arabic word for bubonic plague. Because it occurred during the lifetime of the Prophet Muḥammad (d. 632), the outbreak was generally included in lists of the great bubonic plague epidemics of Islamic times. It came at the end of a decades-long war with the Eastern Roman Empire, which had concluded in the defeat of the Sasanians under the famous *Shāhānshāh* (Middle Pers. "King of Kings") Khusrō II Aparwēz (r. 591-628). The alleged sudden death from bubonic plague of his son and alleged murderer, Kawād II Shiroē (r. 628), after only about eight months on the throne, along with numerous members of the Persian nobility, likely contributed to the subsequent years of political instability and civil strife which preceded the final collapse of the empire under invasion from Arabia. Abbasid-era authors often compiled reports such as this from earlier sources, including Sasanian chronicles in Middle Persian (Pahlavi), which have not survived. According to the Byzantine Theophanes (d. 817), Kawād II Shiroē died of poisoning .

Bryan Averbuch

Edition: Muhammad b. Habib 1942, ed. Lichtenstädter, 362-363.

Bibliography: Conrad 1981; Daryaee 2008 and Howard-Johnston 2010 for Kawād II Shiroē and Khusrō II Aparwēz; Lichtenstädter 2012 and Ibn al-Nadim, ed. and trans. Bayard Dodge 1970, for Muhammad b. Habib.

Date of event: 628.

Date of record: 9th century CE, before 860.

English Translation	Commentary	Arabic Text
Then Shīrawayh, son of Kisrā Abarwīz, rose up against his father, killing him and killing his own brothers. His reign lasted for eight months, during which the bubonic plague fell upon the nobles of Persia and the great ones among them, and both they and Shīrawayh perished in it.	Middle Persian: Kawād II Shiroē Khusrō II Aparwēz **"Persia":** In contrast to Mas'ūdī's account (see below), the geographical extent of the outbreak is very vague. **"bubonic plague"**: *ṭā'ūn*. This is the standard Arabic word for bubonic plague.	ثم وثب على كسرى إبرويز ابنه (شيرويه) فقتله وقتل أخويه. فكان ملكه ثمانية أشهر. و في ملكه وقع الطاعون في أشراف فارس و عظمائها. فماتوا ومات شيرويه فيه.

Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj: *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: A Prophetic Tradition (*Ḥadīth*) concerning bubonic plague

The Nishapur-born scholar Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (817-875), authored one of the two most authoritative collects of *ḥadīth*, or traditions, sayings, and stories concerning the Prophet Muḥammad. Volume Six, Book 39, Chapter 32 (in the Riyadh edition) of his vast compilation is devoted to *ḥadīth* concerning bubonic plague (*ṭā'ūn*), as well as soothsaying and bad omens. The identification as bubonic plague is therefore 9th c. or before. Characteristically for the genre, Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj did not try to give a single authoritative version of this originally oral tradition, but instead recorded all versions which seemed to have a reasonably reliable chain of transmission (*isnād*), carefully noting the sequence of individual reciters, back to the seventh century. This particular version (and many related ones), shows an understanding on the part of the early-Muslim community that the Pandemic had commenced prior to their own era but was still active, that it had severely affected other peoples and places before their time, and that outbreaks occurred in

intervals. While the admonition not to flee from a plague-infected area (or enter one) may seem wise in the 21st century, when much more is understand about methods of transmission, Conrad 1981a, *inter alia* 169-181 argues that this reflects early Islamic concerns with predestination. Thus, one cannot flee from the will of God, but one need not court death by approaching a plague-ridden area.

Bryan Averbuch

Edition: Muslim b. al-Hajjāj 2007, ed. Khaliyl et al., trans. al-Khattab, 68.

Bibliography: Muslim b. al-Hajjāj 2007, ed. Khaliyl et al., trans. al-Khattab; Conrad 1981a; Bowker 2003 for Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj.

Date of event: Allegedly before c. 632.

Date of record: Mid-ninth century, before c. 875.

English Translation	Commentary	Arabic Text
Abū al-Ṭāhir Aḥmad b. ʻAmrū and Ḥarmala b. Yaḥya related [the following] to me, saying: Ibn Wahb told the two of us on the authority of Yūnus, who heard it from Ibn Shihāb, who heard it from ʻĀmir b. Saʻd, who heard it from Usāma b. Zayd, who heard it from the Messenger of God (Peace be upon him!), who said: "Verily, this affliction or sickness is God's punishment, by means of which a number of nations prior to your time were chastised. Subsequently, it remained upon the Earth, sometimes disappearing, sometimes reappearing. Thus, if someone should hear of it in a [particular]	For a fully-vocalized version of the text, with classical diacritics, see Muslim b. al-Hajjāj 2007, ed. Khaliyl et al. This translation gives the full chain of transmission, which shows the perception on the part of the ninth-century compiler that the information stretched back to a sixth/seventh century informant. **"Messenger of God"**: the Prophet Muhammad **"affliction or sickness":** al-Khattab 2007 translated as: "This pain or this sickness (meaning plague)" **"sometimes disappearing, sometimes reappearing":** My rendering here is slightly less	حدَّثني ابو الطاهرِ أحمد بن عمرٍو وحَرْمَلة بن يَحْيَىٰ قالا: حدثنا ابن وهب: أخبرني يونس عن ابن شهاب: أخبرني عامر بن سعد عن أُسامة بن زيد، عن رسول الله ﷺ أَنَّه قال: "إِنَّ هذا الوجع أو السَقَم رِجْزٌ عُذِّب به بعض الأُمم قبلكم، ثم بقي بعد بالأرض، فيذهب المرة و يأتي الأخرى، فمن سمِع به بأرضٍ، فلا يَقْدَمَنَّ عليه، ومن وقع بأرضٍ وهو بها، فلا يُخْرِجَنَّه الفرار منه".

land, they should not proceed towards it. If someone happens to be in a land in which it occurs, they should not leave, [in order] to escape from it."	literal than al-Khattab's "coming and going", but the meaning is the same.	

Mubarrad: *Kitāb al-Ta'āzī wa al-marāthī*: Recollections of the "Plague of the Torrent," c. 686-687 CE

Abū al-'Abbās Muḥammad b. Yazīd b. 'Abd al-Akbar al-Thumālī al-Azdī, better known by his nickname al-Mubarrad (likely a corruption of al-Mubarrid, "the upholder of truth"), was a ninth-century Basra-born scholar, philologist, and pioneer of the Arabic-Islamic tradition of belles-lettres (Ar. *Adab*). In his "Book of Consolations and Lamentations" (*Kitāb al-ta'āzī wa al-marāthī*), Mubarrad compiled a variety of traditions concerning the "Torrential Plague," which devastated Basra in 686-687. Steeped in the traditions of his native Basra, Mubarrad tends to focus overwhelmingly on events there. As Conrad (1981a and 1981b) has shown, the concern of Basra traditionists with the history of plague in their own city can obscure the fact that the outbreaks were at times part of far more widespread epidemic events. In this case, Syriac authors such as Bar Penkaye confirm that the "Torrential Plague" devastated Iraq in general. Consistent with the larger themes of his book, Mubarrad's focus on human behavior during the outbreak, and particularly grief in the face of overwhelming loss, provides a fascinating window into how Muslim witnesses and their descendants interpreted the plague.

Bryan Averbuch

Edition: Mubarrad 1976, ed. Muhammad al-Dibaji, 210-211.

Bibliography: Mubarrad 1976, ed. Muhammad al-Dibaji; Conrad 1981a; Conrad 1981b; Sellheim 2012 for Mubarrad; Sezgin 2012 for Mada'ini.

Date of event: ca. 686-687.

Date of record: 896-897.

English Translation	Commentary	Arabic Text

1. Abū Ḥasan said: “It reached my ears that during the bubonic plague a man dug up a grave, extracted a corpse from it, and took its garments. He was struck by plague within the hour, died, and [was found] with the garments. 2. Sulaymān b. Qaḥdham said: I left [Baṣra] for Mecca during the Plague of the Torrent, and our household was filled [with people]. Then I returned, and it had emptied. My father said to me, “O my son! Not a single person remains of those whom you left here, except for me and my mother, your grandmother.” Muḥammad Abū ‘Abd Allah al-Tamīmī said: Muraffa' b. al-'Ala', one of the [clan of] Rabi'a b. Malik b. Zayd Manat [of the Tamīm tribe], fled from the plague. He had his 12 sons with him, who all died together. He buried them at the foot of Sanām Hill [overlooking Baṣra], and composed an elegy for them… [elegy follows].	This is a reference to Madā'inī (752-, before 843), an early Islamic historian whose lost work is much quoted by Ṭabarī and a great many others. The expression “he said” mimics the language used for oral chains of transmission, but the information was almost certainly copied from a book. **“the bubonic plague”:** (Ar. al-*ṭā‘ūn*) **“Plague of the Torrent”:** (Ar. *al-ṭā‘ūn al-jārif*) Notwithstanding the Prophetic admonition not to leave an infected area, the fact that people frequently did so is apparent in these and numerous other reports. See Conrad 1981a, e.g. 206-215 for further examples. **“Plague”:** (Ar. al-*ṭā‘ūn*)	قال أبو الحسن: بلغني أن رجلاً نبش في الطاعون قبراً فأخرج الميت من قبره وأخذ ثيابه فطُعن من ساعة فمات (فوُجد) والثياب معه. و قال سليمان بن قَحذم: خرجت في الطاعون الجارف الى مكة، و دارُنا مشحونة، فرجعتُ وقد خلت، فقال لي أبي: يابنيَّ ، ما بقي في دار أحدٌ ممّن تركت غيري و غيرُ أُمِّي جَدَّتِك. قال محمد أبو عبد الله التَّميمي: هرب المرَفَّع بنُ العلاء، أحدُ بني ربيعة ابن مالك بن زيد مناة، من الطاعون، و له اثنا عشر ابنا، فماتوا جميعاً، فدفنهم في سفح سنام...

Masʿūdī: *Murūj al-dhahab*: Account of the Plague in Sasanian Mesopotamia and southwestern Iran, 628 CE

The tenth-century historian, geographer, and raconteur Masʿūdī recorded a different version of the "Plague of Shiroē," in his multi-volume magnum opus, "Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems," which he completed in Egypt between 943 and 956, after a life filled with travel, adventure, and study, within and beyond the domains of Islam. Whereas his predecessor Muhammad b. Habīb focused on the fate of the Sasanian ruler and nobility during the outbreak, Masʿūdī records the tremendous loss of life among the populace at large, in Iraq and Southwestern Iran. His statements that "hundreds of thousands" and, according to most sources a half, and some sources, a third of the population perished, seem broadly consistent with the mortality rates which Romano-Byzantine and Syrian authors recorded for the initial outbreaks of the sixth century.

Bryan Averbuch

Edition: Masʿūdī 1966, ed. Pellat, vol. 1, 222; See the alternative French translation in Pellat 1962, vol. 1, 244-245.

Bibliography: Masʿūdī 1966, ed. Pellat; Masʿūdī 1962, trans. Pellat; Conrad 1981; Morony 2007; Daryaee 2008 and Howard-Johnston 2010 for Kawād II Shiroē and Khusrō II Aparwēz; Pellat 2012 for Masʿūdī.

Date of event: 628 CE

Date of record: 943-956 CE

English Translation	Commentary	Arabic Text

Then after him [Kisrā Abarwīz], reigned his son Qubādh, known as "Shīrawayh, the Seizer of his Father, the Perpetrator of Crimes against Him, and the Murderer of Him." The Persians call him "The Iniquitous." And in his days there was bubonic plague in 'Irāq and elsewhere in the clime of Bābil, in which hundreds of thousands of people perished. The majority say that half of the population died, while a minority says it was a third.	Middle Persian: Khusrō II Aparwēz Middle Persian: Kawād II Shiroē **"The Iniquitous:"** *al-Ghashūm*. **"clime":** *Iqlīm.* Conrad 1981 identifies the *clime* of Bābil with Iraq and the modern Iranian province of Khuzistan. **"Bubonic plague":** *Ṭā'ūn*, the standard Arabic word for bubonic plague. Pellat 1962 translates as *la peste*.	ثمَّ ملك بعده ولده قُباذ المعروف بشِيرَوَيْه القابض على أبيه والجاني عليه والقائل له، والفُرس تسمّيه الغَشوم؛ و في أيّامه كان الطاعون بالعراق وغيره من إقليم بابِل، فهلك فيه مئون من الألوف من الناس فالمُكثر يقول هلك نصف الناس والمقلّ يقول الثلث...

Ṭabarī: *History of the Prophets and of the Kings (Ta'rīkh al-rusūl wa al-mulūk)*: Bubonic Plague in Syria Forces Suspension of Military Campaigns, 698-699

The Caspian-born, Baghdad-based Muslim jurist, Qur'an commentator, and historian Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr b. Yazīd al-Ṭabarī (850-923) recorded a wide variety of reports and traditions concerning plague outbreaks in his magnum opus, the multi-volume *History of Prophets, Kings, and Caliphs* (*Ta'rīkh al-rusūl wa al-mulūk wa al-khulafā'*). The latter was an attempt to chronicle the history of the world, from creation to the rise, expansion, and development of Islam and Islamic civilization, down to the early tenth century. In keeping with the universalist spirit of his work, al-Ṭabarī preserved reports of plague outbreaks across wide swaths of the Islamic domains, rather than focusing on events in a single city such as Basra. Here, he concerns himself with a late seventh century outbreak in Syria, which, as Rowson 1989 points out, was omitted from the "canonical" lists of Islamic-era plagues, which tend to focus heavily on Iraq. Nonetheless, al-Ṭabarī holds that the outbreak devastated the population of Syria, and forced the cancellation of the annual raiding expedition into Byzantine territory. Such raids were vital to the prestige of the Umayyad Caliphs, and for the plunder with which they satiated their warriors and retainers, and

would probably not have been called off lightly. As Conrad 1981a, 274 notes, Byzantine and Syriac notices of plague at this time very likely refer to the same outbreak.

Bryan Averbuch

Edition: Tabari 1964 [1879-1901], ed. De Goeje et al. vol. 8, 1035-1036; See the alternate translation in Rowson 1989, vol. 22, 182.

Bibliography: Tabari 1964 [1879-1901]; Tabari 1989, trans. Rowson; ed. De Goeje et al.; Conrad 1981a; Rosenthal 1989 and Bosworth 2012 for Tabari.

Date of event: c. 698-699.

Date of record: 10th c., before 923.

English Translation	Commentary	Arabic Text
So commenced the year 79 [698/699 CE]: A remembrance of what occurred in it, in the way of momentous events: Among other things, the bubonic plague, which afflicted the people of *al-Shām* this year, until they were on the brink of annihilation due to the severity of it. Thus, nobody was able to mount a raiding expedition that year, according to what has been said, on account of the bubonic plague which occurred then, and the prodigious number of deaths [from it].	79: year 79 of Hegira, , which began on March 20, 698 (Gregorian). Year 80 began on March 9, 699. **"the bubonic plague…":** (Ar. al-*ṭā'ūn*) Rowson 1989 translates as "a plague so severe that they were all but annihilated." ***al-Shām:*** greater Syria The fact that the annual raids/expeditions into Roman territory were canceled may imply that the outbreak began either in the spring or summer of 698, since campaigning in Anatolia would have normally ended in autumn. Conrad 1981a, 274-276 further speculates that cancellation of the summer campaign may	ثم دخلت سنة تسع و سبعين ذكر ما كان فيها من الأَحداث الجليلة فمن ذلك ما اصاب اهل الشأم في هذه السنة من الطاعون حتّى كادوا يفنون من شدّته فلم يغز في تلك السنة احدٌ فيما قيل للطاعون الذي كان بها و كثرة الموت.

	have resulted from disruption of spring planting and food production due to plague mortality in the countryside, thereby denying the army the ability to commandeer supplies along the line(s) of march. See Rowson 1989, n. 656 for plague reports in or close to this year in Byzantine and Syriac sources.	

Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *De Thematibus* 17.6, on plague in Hellas and the Peloponnese, ca. 750:

De Thematibus (*On the Themes*) is a work attributed to the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII (r. 913–959), although its authorship likely involved multiple contributors writing under the emperor's supervision. Ostensibly a gazetteer of military provinces (*themes*), the text includes antiquarian trivia on topics only loosely related to the imperial administrative system of the 10th century and preserves information from earlier sources no longer extant. It has traditionally been dated to c. 934 (e.g., Pertusi 1952); more recent scholarship argues that the *De Thematibus* was reworked and augmented throughout the 930s and 940s, and may not have been completed until sometime after Constantine VII's death in 959 (Haldon 2021, 4–10).

This section (17.6) recounts an outbreak of plague during the reign of the emperor Constantine V (741–775) that affected "the inhabited world" (*oikoumene*), allowing Slavic peoples to resettle depopulated lands in the *themes* of Hellas and the Peloponnese previously occupied by Roman (i.e., Byzantine) inhabitants. While the passage offers no precise date for this epidemic, the text's use of the term *oikoumene*—often a synonym for the empire at large—indicates that its effects were not limited to Hellas and the Peloponnese. It may therefore belong to the same outbreak of plague that struck the city of Constantinople in 747 and is reported in the Chronicle of Theophanes (q.v.). Regardless, this event certainly represents one of the last outbreaks of the First Pandemic, which ceased c. 750.

Henry Gruber, Jake Ransohoff

Edition: Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, *Constantino Porfirogenito. De Thematibus*, 17.6, ed. A Pertusi, Studi e Testi 160 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1952), 91.

References: Ahrweiler 1981**;** Rochow 1991; Haldon 2021.

Date of event: c. 750 CE.

Date of record: c. 934 CE?

English Translation	Commentary	Greek Text
Greece and the Peloponnese…. The entire country was slavicized and became barbarian when the epidemic death consumed the entire inhabited world, in the time of Constantine, called the "Dung-Named."	"Hellas and the Peloponnese": "Epidemic death": loimikos thanatos. "Slavicized": on this term see Haldon 2021, 190 n. 483. Slavs in mountainous regions may have been less affected by plague? "Inhabited world": oikoumene, often a synonym for the Empire "Dung-named": Constantine V, despite his generally successful reign, was vilified by later Byzantine authors for his support of Iconoclasm and his denigration of monasticism.	ἡ Ἑλλάς τε καὶ ἡ Πελοπόννησος… Ἐσθλαβώθη πᾶσα ἡ χώρα καὶ γέγονε βάρβαρος, ὅτε ὁ λοιμικὸς θάνατος πᾶσαν ἐβόσκετο τὴν οἰκουμένην, ὁπηνίκα Κωνσταντῖνος, ὁ τῆς κοπρίας ἐπώνυμος

The Great Chronographer. On the plague at Constantinople, 541–542.

A 10th-century manuscript of the Paschal Chronicle (Vatican City, B. Apost. Vat. gr. 1941, which is the archetype of other copies of this chronicle) contains a series of excerpts taken from a lost historical work by a figure identified as the "Great Chronographer." The majority of these excerpts, added to empty spaces in the manuscript in a hand dated to the 11th century, concern natural disasters. The below excerpt on plague was added to the space after the Paschal Chronicle's entry for 530 CE. Although no date for the plague event is given in the excerpt itself, its content aligns it with Procopius and other sources on the initial outbreak of the Justinianic Pandemic in 541–542 (Schreiner 1977, 2:76). The identity of the "Great Chronographer" and the date that his historical work was composed remain topics of ongoing scholarly debate, with 750/1 being the earliest possible date and 1055 the latest. Mango 1986 and others have shown that the "Great Chronographer" drew on ninth-century sources, including the Chronicle of Theophanes (d. 817; cf. Whitby 1982), while Gastgeber 2015 suggests that the author may have worked in the mid- to late-10th century.

Michael McCormick, Jake Ransohoff

Edition: Die byzantinischen Kleinchroniken, ed. P. Schreiner, 3 vols., Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 12.1–3 (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1975–1979), 1:42–43.

References: Gastgeber 2015; Kennedy 2018; Mango 1986; Whitby 1982.

Date of event: 541-542.

Date of record: c. 1000?

Translation	Commentary	Original text
9. That in the reign of Justinian, a versatile and fierce disease struck humanity: some encountered apparitions in the fashion of demons and got the disease immediately—as they say, when the emperor himself contracted the disease he was spared by God's favor—others, being led astray on account of dreams, contracted the epidemic	"disease": *nosos*. "epidemic": *loimos*.	9. ὅτι ἐπὶ τῆς βασιλείας Ἰουστινιανοῦ πολύτροπός τις καὶ χαλεπὴ νόσος τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐνέσκηψε, καὶ οἱ μὲν δαιμονίως φάσμασι περιπίπτοντες τῆς νόσου μετεῖχον εὐθύς—ὡς <λέγουσιν> καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν βασιλέα τῆς νόσου μεταλαχόντα θεοῦ διασωθῆναι εὐδοκίᾳ—οἱ δὲ <δι'> ὀνείρους ἀποπλανώμενοι τοῦ λοιμοῦ μετελάμβανον·
At the moment of an attack of imperceptible fever that came on them, they were further divided into frenzied sickness and cataleptic sleep. Of whom those who kept lying in sleep were destroyed by starvation, while the others went to their doom from sleeplessness.	"Cataleptic sleep": *katakhōi hypnōi*; see note on Agathias, *Histories* 5.10.3. [insert hyperlink]	10. ἔτι προσβολῆς πυρετοῦ ἐπερχομένου ἀφανοῦς παραφόρῳ νόσῳ καὶ κατόχῳ ὕπνῳ κατεμερίζοντο. ὧν οἱ μὲν λιμῷ διεφθείροντο τῷ ὕπνῳ προσκείμενοι, οἱ δὲ ὑπὸ τῆς ἀγρυπνίας ἐχώρουν εἰς τὴν ἀπώλειαν.
Vomiting of blood overcame others and quickly killed them.	"Vomiting of blood": *epiginomenos haimatos*, cf. Procopius, *Wars* 2.22.31 [insert hyperlink].	ἄλλοις ἔμετος ἐπιγινόμενος αἵματος ταχέως ἀπεστερεῖτο τοῦ ζῆν.
Those whom the affliction of derangement did not attain developed a bubo either in the genital part of the body or in the interior of the armpit and amidst terrible pain left behind life.		ὅσοις δὲ τὸ τῆς παραφορᾶς οὐ συνήντησε πάθημα, οὗτοι βουβῶνος ἐπιγινομένου ἢ κατὰ τοῦ σώματος μόριον ἢ κατὰ τῶν μασχάλων ἐντός, ταῖς ὀδύναις ἐναπέρριπτον καὶ τοῦ ζῆν.
On some, carbuncles with pustules broke out on the body: they too were immediately dispatched to death.	"Carbuncles": *anthrax*.	τισὶν δὲ καὶ φλυκταίναις ἄνθρακες ἐξανθοῦσι τῷ σώματι· παρευθὺ τῷ θανάτῳ παραπέμπονται.

Because of the multitude of those who had died, the dead were neither carried out in funeral processions nor had psalms sung over them when they were buried: they were just thrown into pits.		ἐκ δὲ τοῦ πλήθους τῶν τελευτώντων οὔτε παραπεμπόμενοι οἱ νεκροὶ ἐκομίζοντο οὔτε καταψαλλόμενοι καθὼς ἔθος ἐθάπτοντο, ἀλλ᾽ εἰς τοὺς λάκκους ἀπερρίπτοντο.

Akhbār majmūʿa ("Collected Reports on the Conquest of al-Andalus") reports famine and epidemic disease, possibly plague, in Visigothic Iberia on the Eve of the Islamic Conquest.

Background: The date and authorship of the anonymous chronicle "Collected Reports on the Conquest of al-Andalus" (*Akhbār majmūʿa fī fatḥ al-Andalus*), are longstanding questions for historians of Iberia and early Islam (James 2012). The working supposition here is that the work is in essence a product of the late tenth or early eleventh century, and that, like so many near-contemporary chronicles from the eastern Islamic world, it incorporates a variety of earlier sources. In this short excerpt, the chronicler describes a Visigothic Iberia torn by civil strife, famine, and a deadly epidemic disease, on the eve of the Muslim invasion in 711 CE. The epidemic was said to have killed more than half the population of the kingdom. In the wake of this catastrophic loss, the Visigothic King Roderic was unable to muster more than 100,000 men to confront a mainly-Amazigh (Berber) Muslim expeditionary force of 12,000 under Tāriq b. Ziyād. The figure of 100,000, which is clearly exaggerated and symbolic rather than literal, implies that the Visigothic host, although still very large compared to Tāriq's expeditionary force, would have been greater but for the decimation wrought by the epidemic. The chronicler uses the word "epidemic," (Arabic *wabāʾ*) to describe the outbreak, rather than the specific "bubonic plague" (Arabic *ṭāʿūn*). Given the timing and very high mortality, it is likely, but not certain that the outbreak was bubonic plague.

Bryan Averbuch

Edition: Akhbār majmūʿa fī fatḥ al-Andalus 1867, ed. trans Lafuente y Alcántara, 8 (Arabic), 21-22 (Spanish); Akhbār majmūʿa fī fatḥ al-Andalus, trans. James 2012, 50.

Bibliography: Lafuente y Alcántara 1867; James 2012, Keller et al. 2019 and Supplement; For Tāriq b. Ziyād and the invasion of al-Andalus, see *inter alia* Molina 2012.

Date of event: c. 743-750.

Date of record: Late 10th or early 11th c., before 1028 CE.

English Translation (James 2012, modified)	Commentary	Arabic Text

"Then Rudhriq arrived accompanied by the flower of barbarian aristocracy of al-Andalus and the sons of its former monarchs…They approached with a vast army of around a hundred thousand men. [Not more]. That was due to a famine in al-Andalus in 88/707 and it continued through the year 88/707, 89/708, and part of 90/709. Then there was an epidemic in which half or more of the population died."	Ellipses denotes the omission of text not germane to the description of the disease outbreak. **"Rudhriq":** Roderic, King of the Visigoths **"barbarian aristocracy":** *khiyār a'ājim* **"[Not more]:"** i.e. not more than 100,000 because of the famine and epidemic. **"an epidemic ":** The chronicler uses Arabic *wabā'* "pestilence"or "epidemic" rather than the specific *ṭā'ūn* "bubonic plague." Modified from James 2012, "a plague." Lafuente y Alcántara 1867 translate as "una peste durante la cual murieron la mitad ó más de los habitantes." **"Then":** while famine often followed epidemic disease (especially plague), here, the order is reversed.	فأقبل اليهم رذريق ومعه خِيار اعاجم الاندلس و ابناء ملكها...فأقبل في جيش جحفل نحو المائة الالف وذلك ان الاندلس قد كانت جاعت سنة ثمان و ثمانين فدارت جوعاً سنة ثمان و سنة تسع و سنة تسعين و وبئت حتّى مات نصف أهلها .او اكثر

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