



## BOOK REVIEW

### A NEW CRITICAL EDITION OF A MAJOR SOURCE FOR THE HISTORY OF THE SOUTHEASTERN MEDITERRANEAN WORLD IN LATE ANTIQUITY

**Johannes (Hans) Thurn** (ed.), **Ioannis Malalae** *Chronographia. Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae/series Berolinensis*, no. 5 (Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), pp. 30\*+555, plates.

“Lively, indiscriminating, often muddled, firmly orthodox in theology, a jumble of battles, high politics, ecclesiastical intrigue, earthquakes, tittle-tattle and sensationalism, it offers a fascinating glimpse of the intellectual world of the ordinary man under Justinian”. This extraordinary condensed description of the late Robert Browning (*The Byzantine Empire*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1980, 35) serves as an excellent introduction to the *Chronography* of the 6th-century Antiochene chronicler John Malalas (c. 491-578), considered the oldest representative of Byzantine vernacular chronography (see surveys by K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur*, 2nd ed., Munich 1897, 325-334 and updated Greek trans., I, Athens repr. 1974, 658-679, G. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, 2nd ed., I, Berlin 1958/ repr. Leiden 1983, 329-334 and H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, I, Munich 1978, 319-326 and updated Greek trans., II, Athens 1992, 116-125; on the recent survey by Karpouzelos see below; cf. also, recently N. Laskares, “Ιωάννης Μαλάλας, ο θεμελιωτής της Βυζαντινής χρονογραφίας”, *Ιστορικά Θέματα* 13, Dec. 2002, 104-119). Malalas’ long text was recently edited in the authoritative series *CFHB*, posthumously, by the German byzanti-

nist, Professor Johannes (Hans) Thurn (1934-1993) of Würzburg University, also editor in the same series of the historiographical works by John Skylitzes in 1973 [*CFHB* no. 5; Thurn also published a partial German translation of it in the series *Byzantinische Geschichtsschreiber* no. 15, Graz-Wien-Köln 1983] and –in collaboration with A. Lesmueller-Werner– by Joseph Genesisios in 1978 [*CFHB* no. 14]. Thurn in fact died prematurely while the present edition under review was in progress –hence the explanatory foreword by the academician Professor A. Kambyles (co-editor of the *CFHB* series) before the table of contents. Based on a sole surviving 11th or 12th-century Oxford manuscript (Bodleian Library/ Barroccius 182), the text was heretofore mostly utilized in the editions by L Dindorf in the Bonn *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae* corpus (1831) and by J.-P. Migne in his *Patrologia Graeca* vol. 97 (Paris 1860), cols 9-790, text on 65-717; a large section of it was also published by C. Müller in his *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum* IV (Paris 1851), 535-622, while some more excerpts of it, known to researchers as *Fragmenta Tusculana*, survive in MSS of the Grottaferrata monastery and were published in *Patrologia Graeca* vol. 85 (1853), cols 1808-1824.

Malalas originated from Antioch (mod. Antakya in southeastern Turkey) and was most probably a hellenized Syrian ("Συροβυζαντινός" in J.J. Norwich, *Βυζάντιο, οι πρώτοι αιώνες*, Athens: Intered, 1996, 149) – the Syriac word *melēl* or *malal* signifies 'rhetor' (cf. J.B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire, A.D. 395-565*, II, New York repr. 1958, 435 n.1) or even 'scholastikos', i.e. lawyer (cf. J. Evans, *Η ενοχή του Ιουστινιανού*, Athens: Odysseas, 1999, 27). Since J. Haury's tentative identification (in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 9 [1900], 337-356) there are some scholars (inclusive of R. Browning. "Malalas John", *Penguin companion to Literature*, IV, Harmondsworth 1969, 198-199) who tend to associate him with the ecumenical patriarch John III Scholastikos from Antioch (565-577) (cf. M. Anastos, in *Ιστορία Ελληνικού Έθνους* by Ekdotike Athenon, vol. VII, 1978, 349; on this issue see now Sp. Troianos, "Ιωάννης Γ' ο από Σχολαστικών και Ιωάννης Μαλάλας", *Αναφορά εις μνήμην Μητροπολίτου Σάρδεων Μαξίμου*, V, Genf 1989, 33-39 and Karpozelos, I, 539-540), though this is sometimes rejected (B. Baldwin, in *Oxford dictionary of Byzantium* [=ODB], New York-Oxford 1991, 1275b). Malalas' work entitled "*Chronographia*", most famous in Byzantine times, consists of 18 books covering the period from Creation (5508 B.C. according to Byzantine tradition) until the final years of Justinian I's reign, i.e. A.D. 563 (cf. Krumbacher, *Ιστορία*, I, 659, Hunger, *Bvζ. Λογοτεχνία*, II, 117, Karayannopoulos-Weiss [see below], 281 no.87, Karpozelos, I, 540) and not 565, as often observed (e.g. A. Hohlweg, in *Tusculum Lexikon*, 3rd ed., Munich-Zurich 1982, 402 and Greek trans., I, Athens 1993, 260, W. Treadgold, *History of Byzantine state and society*, Stanford U.P. 1997, 902, Averil Cameron, "Historiography, Byzantine", *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* 6, 1985, 243b and A. Littlewood, "Historiography, Byzantine", *Encyclopedia of Greece and the Hellenic Tradition* [=Enc.Greece], I, Chicago-London 762a). The final book ends abruptly and it has been conjectured that it may have ended in A.D. 574 (see E. Chryssos, *Jahrbuch der ös-*

*terreichischen byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15, 1966, 147-152).

A corroborative fact testifying to the work's popularity is its 10th-11th-century Slavonic translation upon which the M, Spinka and G. Downey based their English translation (*Chronicle of John Malalas: books VIII-XVIII from the Church Slavonic*, Chicago 1940), as well as the fact that it was extensively used by several contemporary or later Byzantine authors, like John of Ephesos, Evagrius, John of Antioch, Chronicon Paschale, John of Nikiou, John of Damascus, Theophanes the Confessor, George the Monk, George Kedrenos, John Zonaras, Theodore Skoutariotes and Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos (see J. Karayannopoulos, *Πηγαί βυζαντινής ιστορίας*, 5th ed., Thessalonike: Pournaras, 1987, 163-164 no. 126; J. Karayannopoulos-G. Weiss, *Quellenkunde zur Geschichte von Byzanz*, Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 1982, 281-282 no. 87, Hunger, op.cit., II, 123, Karpozelos, I, 55). On the other hand, its importance for modern scholarship is testified by important work done, for example, in Australia: the English translation of the *Chronography* published in 1986 (Elizabeth Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys, R. Scott, with B. Croke, Jenny Ferber, S. Franklin, A. James, D. Kelly, Ann Moffat and Ann Nixon, *The Chronicle of John Malalas: a translation* [ser. *Byzantina Australiensia*, no. 4], Melbourne 1986) and the collective volume on Malalas' personality and work, edited by E. Jeffreys, B. Croke and R. Scott (*Studies in John Malalas* [ser. *Byzantina Australiensia*, no. 6], Sydney 1990). Indeed, Malalas' rehabilitation is correctly stressed recently by Irfan Shahid (in *Byzantinische Forschungen* 26 [2000], 129), the foremost authority on Byzantine-Arab relations in the pre-Islamic period, who has diligently utilized the *Chronographia* in his *Byzantium and the Arabs in the sixth century*, vols I.1 (1995) and II.1 (2002).

In the first eleven books a variety of topics "parade" in the text, such as Adam and the Genesis, the ancient Egyptians and other Oriental peoples and ancient Greek mythology and history with emphasis on the Trojan War;

book twelve concentrates on Roman history, ending with the pre-Constantinian period, while books XIII to XVIII deal extensively with the early Byzantine centuries (early 4th-second part of 6th). Centering his interest around events which took place in (or are directly or indirectly connected with) his native Antioch, Malalas describes early Byzantine history in his final six books as follows: 13th (Period of Constantine I's dynasty and reigns of Theodosios I and Arkadios/ Dindorf's Bonn ed. pp. 316-360 = present ed. 243-271); 14th (Period of Theodosios Minor [II] to Leo Minor [II]/ Bonn 351-376 = present ed. 272-300); 15th (Reigns of Zeno and Basiliskos / Bonn 377-391 = present ed. 318); 16th (Reign of Anastasios I/ Bonn 392-409 = present ed. 319-335); 17th (Reign of Justin I/ Bonn 410-424 = present ed. 336-353); and 17th, the longest (Reign of Justinian I/ Bonn 425-496 = present ed. 354-432).

Being of a Christian apologetic nature and addressed mainly to the lay public and various clerics/ monks of Malalas' time, the *Chronography* is characterized by a lack of profound scholarship of the classical type—a fact which made the great Krumbacher (who late in the 19th century defined it as “the first monument of considerable size in vernacular Greek idiom”: *Ιστορία*, I, 663) taint it as “an abominable creation”, “a coarse ... and childish book” on account of it being strewn with intervening legends and second-rate events of no consequence to the main narrative, the flow of which they moreover often interrupt (*ibid.*, I, 659-660). Its great importance as a linguistic monument of its time was observed by A. Vasiliev, who wrote that it was “the first considerable one written in the spoken Greek language, that vulgate Greek dialect, popular in the East, which mixed Greek elements with Latin and eastern expressions” (*History of the Byzantine Empire*, 2nd ed., Madison Wisc. 1976, 184; cf. also the specialized treatise by K. Weierholt, *Studien zum Sprachgebrauch des Malalas*, Oslo 1963).

Apart from his personal knowledge and experience regarding contemporary events, Ma-

lalas seems to have consulted for his work the works of Sextus Julius Africanus, Dominus, Theophilos, Timotheos, Nestorianos, Eustathios of Epiphaneia, as well as various (quite trustworthy) oral traditions (cf. Karayannopoulos-Weiss, *op.cit.*). He also seems to have made use of the work of the first century A.D. Jewish historiographer Flavius Josephus (see Eleanor Dickey, *Enc. Greece*, I, 859a and the bibliography in S. Bowman, *ODB*, 1074 b). Of particular importance are his accounts of Byzantium's foreign relations (especially with Sassanid Persia), of internal (dynastic) affairs, of earthquakes and other natural phenomena in Antioch and the southeastern Mediterranean area in general—the latter topic recently examined in detail by the Turkish scholar Dr Esin Ozansoy of Istanbul University in her articles “Malalas'in Khronographia'sinda Iustinianos dönemi doğa olaylari”, *Adalya* no. 1 (1996), 53-59 (generally on natural phenomena) and “Οι σεισμοί στην Αντιόχεια στη Χρονογραφία του Ιωάννη Μαλάλα”, *Mésogeios* 3 (Paris 1999), 83-98. Concerning earthquakes in Antioch and vicinity from the Hellenistic Seleucid ruler Antiochus VII (A38-129 B.C.) to the Byzantine emperor Justinian I (A.D. 527-565), Dr Ozansoy has demonstrated that they caused considerable damage in the area and that they were considered as “*theomeniai*” (i.e. God-sent misfortunes), that is, not simply natural disasters but manifestations of divine wrath and displeasure. On the other hand, Malalas is keen in introducing fables and legends in his narrative, like for example the popular legend of Saint Merkourios killing emperor Julian in the course of the latter's 363 Persian campaign (cf. A. Savvides, in *Στρατιωτική Ιστορία* no. 71 [July 2002], 57).

Dr Ozansoy's aforementioned contributions as well as a significant number of other recent publications on Malalas do not appear in Thurn's detailed Sekundärliteratur on pp. 19\*-30\* (editions are discussed on p. 12\*). The reason for this absence is obvious, since Thurn's premature death in 1993 forcefully stopped the bibliography in the early 1990s (another such attempt on a Malalas bibliogra-

phy was made by the Spanish scholar J.A Ochoa Anadon, "La bibliografía sobre la Cronografía de Juan Malalas", *Erytheia* 9.1 [1988], 61-75, where editions, translations and secondary works are amassed in the same list). There are however some notable omissions regarding pre-1990 publications as well, like e.g. Agne Vassilikopoulou-Ioannidou, *Η βυζαντινή ιστοριογραφία, 324-1204*, Athens 1984, 34-35, Browning's *Penguin companion* entry cited above, Aikaterine Christophilopoulou, *Βυζαντινή ιστορία*, I: 324-610, Athens 1975, 2nd ed., Thessalonike: Vantias, 1992, 180, A. Görling, *Mythos und Pistis. Zue Deutung heidnischer Mythen in der christlichen Weltchroniken des Ioannes Malalas*, Lund 1980, A. Hohlweg's entry in *Turculum Lexikon*, 3rd ed., Munich-Zurich 1982, 402-403 (and Greek trans., I, Athens 1993, 260-261), V. Istrin, "Pervaja kniga Hroniki Ioanna Malalji", *Zapiski Imper. Akad. Nauk* ser. 8, 1.3 (1897) and "Hronika Ioanna Malalji v slavjanskom perevodie, kn. XV-XVIII, *Sbornik otdelenija russkago jazyka I slovensnosti Imper. Akad. Nauk* 91, no. 2 (1914), Karayannopoulos' (and Karayannopoulos-Weiss') manuals cited above, J. Ljubarskij, "Hronografija Ioanna Malalji – problemi kompozicii", in A. Rexheuser-K. Ruffmann (edd.), *Festschrift Fairy von Lilienfeld*, Nürnberg 1982, 411-430 (=repr. in his recent *Vizantijskie i pisateli*, pp. 7-20, cited below), A. Momigliano's entry in the *Oxford Classical dictionary*, 2nd ed. (1984), 641b, A. Savvides' entry in *Μεγάλη Γενική Εγκυκλοπαίδεια "Υδρία"* 37 (Athens 1985), 262-263, N. Tomadakes, *Σύλλαβος βυζαντινών μελετών και κειμένων*, Athens 1961, 279-280 and entry in *Θρησκευτική και Ηθική Εγκυκλοπαίδεια* 6 (1965), cols 1208-1209, Zinaida Udaltsova, "Hronika Ioanna Malalji v Kievskoj Rusi", *Arheograficeskii ezhegodin k za 1965*, and H. Wada, "Το λεγόμενον θεῖον ἄπυρον bei Malalas", *Orient* 11 (1975), 25-34 (cf. also Th. Korres, «Το υγρό πυρ πριν από τον 7ο αιώνα», in *Η καθημερινή ζωή στο Βυζάντιο*, Athens: Byzantine Research Centre, 1989, 523-529, also not cited here). On the other hand, later contributions (not included by Thurn) include the following: A. Karpozelos, *Βυζαντινοί ιστορικοί και*

*χρονογράφοι*, vol. I (4ος-7ος αι.), Athens: Kanake, 1997, 538-558 (excellent survey with good bibl. on pp. 556-558), J. Ljubarskij, *Vizantijskie istoriki i pisateli. Sbornik statei*, Sankt-Petersburg 1999 (including his article on the Chronography's problems of composition cited above [pp. 7-20] as well as the article "Geroi hronografii Ioanna Malalji", on pp. 21-30), T. Lounges (Lounghis), *Η ιδεολογία της βυζαντινής ιστοριογραφίας*, Athens: Herodotos, 1993, 25-26, 31-35, Vl. Pheidas' entry in *Εγκυκλοπαίδεια Πάπυρος-Λαρούς-Μηριτάνικα* 40 (1990, repr. 1996), 131b-c, R. Scott, "Diplomacy in the 6th century: the evidence of John Malalas", in J. Shepard-S. Franklin (edd.), *Byzantine diplomacy*, London 1992, 157-165 and "The images of Constantine in Malalas and Theophanes", in P. Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines: the rhythm of imperial renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th centuries*, London 1994, 57-71. And a final minor observation: B Baldwin's entry in the *Oxford dictionary of Byzantium*, 1275 (cited anonymously on p. 27\*) deserved an eponymous mention, just like P. Schreiner's equivalent entry in the *Lexikon des Mittelalters* V.3 (1990), col. 588 (cited on p. 28\*); moreover, Korres' book on Greek fire (p. 25\*) is now in its 3rd ed. (Thessalonike: Vantias, 1995).

These bibliographical observations notwithstanding, Thurn's edition and commentary are exemplary, since he combined the skills of a classicist and a byzantinist-philologist. Malalas' new edition will surely serve as a standard reference tool for many generations of future researchers in the history of the early Byzantine Empire and its neighbours in the southeastern Mediterranean basin. Especially compiled indices (proper names, places, Greek words and various connotations) serve to this purpose and facilitate the scholar's work on a most important text.

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