

Laura Carrara, Mischa Meier and Christine Radki-Jansen (eds.), *Die Weltchronik des Johannes Malalas: Quellenfragen* (=Malalas Studien 2). Stuttgart (Franz Steiner Verlag) 2017. ISBN 978-3-515-11644-2 (Print) 978-3-515-11645-9 (E-Book). 409 pages.

Three volumes have been published so far in the series *Malalas Studien*. While the first one deals with various aspects of this author and his work, the subject of the second one is the controversial question of the sources used in his *Chronicle*. In the Introduction (9–24), Laura Carrara and Olivier Gengler give an outline of the research on this topic from Hermann Bourier¹ to the present as well as an overview of the 14 articles (7 in English, 7 in German) which follow. The volume concludes with an *index locorum* (393–402) and an index of persons and place names (403–409).

Although John Malalas mentions as his sources dozens of authors,² and even names ten of them in the preface, his assertions on this matter have generally met with suspicion. In the former decade, Warren Treadgold went as far as arguing that, for the period up to 503, his only source was the work of Eustathius of Epiphaneia.³ In a sharp contrast, Peter van Nuffelen (“Malalas and the Chronographic Tradition”, 261–272) criticizes what he calls “a hermeneutics of suspicion”, and calls for an effort to take Malalas seriously. Van Nuffelen argues that Theophilus and Clemens, two of the names mentioned in the preface, were active in Alexandria and Antioch respectively, while a third one, Timotheus, may be located somewhere in Syria, perhaps in Apamea. Both Theophilus and Clemens combined Christian chronography with local traditions, and this is precisely the kind of historical writing which we lack for the period from Eusebius of Caesarea to Malalas. As for the mysterious Bottios, often considered an invention of Malalas, he “must be identical to the Bruttius cited by Jerome and the Brettios quoted by Georgius Syncellus.” (267)

Malalas certainly relied, probably indirectly, on some sources which he never mentions (at least in the current state of preservation of his *Chronicle*). This was the case of the *Book of Jubilees*. Together with Flavius Josephus' *Antiquities*, this Second Temple apocryphal text provided him with extra-biblical material which he reshaped according to his euhemeristic approach, as argued by William Adler (“From Adam to Abraham: Malalas and Euhemeristic Historiography”, 27–47). According to Umberto Roberto (“The Influence of Julius Africanus' *Chronographiae* on Malalas' View of Ancient History”, 49–69), Africanus' chronological work was popular in Alexandria, but hardly so in Antioch. He therefore believes that Malalas, who testifies to the

¹ H. Bourier, *Über die Quellen der ersten vierzehn Bücher des Johannes Malalas*, vol. I-II, Augsburg 1899–1900.

² For an alphabetical list of the authors mentioned in the *Chronicle*, see E. Jeffreys, “Malalas' Sources”, in *Studies in John Malalas* (=Byzantina Australiensia 6), Sydney 1990, 167–216, at 172–196.

³ W. Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians*, New York 2007, 246–256; Idem, in *Gnomon* 90 (2018) 759–760.

influence of Africanus in various ways (direct quotations, undeclared quotes, ideas and opinions specific to him), used his work indirectly. At any rate, he was not in possession of the whole of it. In one quotation (III, 11), Malalas says that due to the great flood under King Ogyges, Attica “remained barren and uninhabited for 270 years (ἐπὶ ἔτη σο’), as is related in the writings of Africanus.” According to Roberto (53 and n. 11), this figure should be corrected to 206 (ἐπὶ ἔτη σς’).

The most important witness for the text of Malalas' *Chronicle* is the *Bodleianus Baroccianus* 182, a nearly complete manuscript which, however, offers an abbreviated version and not the original text. As the historiography for the third-century crisis is poor, it is all the more regrettable that there is a lacuna in this manuscript for the years 211–253. Laura Mecella (“Malalas und die Quellen für die Zeit der Soldatenkaiser”, 73–98) examines Hans Thurn's attempt to reconstruct the missing part in the *apparatus criticus* of his posthumous edition. She argues that the indirect tradition has preserved further material which can be traced back to Malalas. This probably was the case with the brief report given by a 13th-century text, Theodoros Skutariotes' *Synopsis Chronike*, on the *ludi saeculares* held in 248 to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of Rome's foundation. As for the material used by Malalas himself for the years 235–284, Treadgold's attempt to assign it to a single author, namely Eustathius of Epiphaneia, is not borne out by a comparison between Malalas and John of Antioch.

For Julian the Apostate's Persian expedition and its aftermath, Malalas used the lost work of Magnus of Carrhae, a contemporary and an eyewitness (XIII, 21-23 and 27). This is the subject of a detailed study by Bruno Bleckmann (“Magnus von Karrhai: Zur Bedeutung der Malalas-Chronik für die Rekonstruktion der Zeitgeschichte Julians”, 99–133). Compared to Ammianus Marcellinus (another eyewitness) and Zosimus, Malalas is richer in details on some matters. Whenever Malalas and Ammianus Marcellinus contradict each other, the latter is not necessarily to be preferred. Malalas' text is not always clear, but Magnus' work does not seem to have been systematically rewritten.

Pia Carolla (“New Fragments of Priscus from Panion in John Malalas? Issues of Language, Style and Sources”, 137–153) discusses four paragraphs on the reign of Theodosius II (408–450) whose ultimate source may have been Priscus. They report (a) Hypatia's murder (XIV, 12), (b) Cyrus of Panopolis' exile and episcopate in Cotyaeum (XIV, 16), (c) the appointment of Antiochus Chuzon as praetorian prefect of the East (XIV, 17), and (d) the execution of his successor Rufinus (XIV, 18), an otherwise unattested relative of the emperor. As pointed out by Carolla, the last item may be a garbled and misdated account of the murder of an earlier praetorian prefect called Rufinus, in 395, and in this case, it did not derive from Priscus. At first glance, Hypatia's murder, in 415, occurred too early to be reported by Priscus, yet the unnamed bishop said to have given the Alexandrians the liberty (παρρησία) to commit this crime was non-other than Cyril, whose long episcopate (412–444) overlapped in part the period covered by Priscus. There is no reason to doubt that

this historian mentioned both praetorian prefects called Antiochus Chuzon (the grandfather, in office in 430–31, and the grandson, in office in 448), but certainly not in the distorted form in which the appointment of the grandson is recorded by Malalas. As for Cyrus of Panopolis, J.R. Martindale (*PLRE II*, s.v. Cyrus 7) pointed to a difficulty. According to Malalas, Cyrus remained in Cotyaeum ἕως θανάτου, presumably his own death. This is contradicted by *The Life of Daniel the Stylite* (ch. 31), which says that Cyrus returned to Constantinople after the death of Theodosius II. As argued by Martindale, this contradiction may well be due to carelessness on the part of Malalas.

Dariusz Brodka (“Eustathius von Epiphaneia und Johannes Malalas”, 155–183) examines the available evidence for the lost work of the shadowy figure which, according to Treadgold, was Malalas' only source for almost the whole of his *Chronicle*. Eustathius seems to have been unique in dating the birth of Christ to the year 4350/4351 since the creation of Adam, for on this point he was not followed by anyone, even not by Malalas. Moreover, a comparison between Malalas, Evagrius and Theophanes, who all used Eustathius for the reign of Zeno (474–491), reveals that Malalas had other sources at his disposal. Pauline Allen (“Malalas and the Debate over Chalcedon: Tendencies, Influences, Sources”, 185–199) asks why Malalas, who certainly knew a lot about contemporary Christological controversies, did not write about them. A deliberate decision to avoid this issue is one possibility. According to another one, the reason would be the genre in which he wrote. Perhaps the chronicle “at least at this stage, did not allow full expression of a theological position, even supposing that the author was theologically interested or engaged.” (195) According to Michael Kulikowski (“Malalas in the Archives”, 203–215), Malalas wrote a *breviarium* and not a chronicle.⁴ Thus, he focused on the events themselves, not on their dates. Malalas did not make any use of *consularia*, and there is nothing to suggest that he was aware of their existence. Access to documents enabled him to cite dates by month and day, or at least by month, yet even in Book XVIII, written in part in Constantinople and reporting contemporary events, “the chronology is a disaster.” (211)

Roger Scott (“Malalas' Sources for the Contemporary Books”, 217–233) believes that Malalas began his *Chronicle* with Book XVII, which covers the reign of Justin I (518–527), moved to Books I–XIV, and then continued his account of the reign of Anastasius I (491–518) after the point where Eustathius of Epiphaneia's work abruptly ended. This hypothesis “helps explain why Book XVI [...], the first of the contemporary books, remains such an interesting mess.” (219) As there is a gap of nine years (503–512) in this book, it is perhaps from 512 onwards that Malalas relied on “things that came to my hearing”, to quote his preface. Scott suspects that imperial

⁴ For his arguments, see R.W. Burgess and M. Kulikowski, “The Historiographical Position of John Malalas: Genre in Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Middle Ages”, in M. Meier *et alii* (ed.), *Die Weltchronik des Johannes Malalas: Autor – Werk – Überlieferung* (=Malalas Studien 1), Stuttgart 2016, 93–117.

intervention played some role in the composition of Book XVII. As for Book XVIII, which deals with the reign of Justinian, there is no reason to assume that it was written by more than one author. The story about David, Goliath and Palmyra (XVIII, 2) is a piece of imperial propaganda probably included at the request of Justinian himself. While some contributors to this volume argue that Eustathius of Epiphaneia was not Malalas' only source for the period up to 503, Scott, in an appendix, leads the discussion in another direction. Eustathius was probably the source for some incredible anecdotes about fifth-century emperors which are preserved by authors such as Procopius of Caesarea, Evagrius, Theophanes and Georgius Cedrenus, but not by Malalas. This suggests that Malalas was selective in his use of Eustathius' work.

Malalas' debt to oral sources is the subject of Jonas Borsch and Christine Radki-Jansen ("Diplomaten und Anekdoten: Mündliche Quellen bei Malalas?", 235–259). If we take it that he worked for the *comes Orientis*, as is often assumed, Malalas had a privileged access to oral information as well as to official documents. Borsch argues that he obtained his information on the negotiations which preceded the conclusion of the so-called 'eternal peace', in 532, partly from official correspondence and partly from diplomats such as the *magister officiorum* Hermogenes. Radki-Jansen studies the story about Eulalius (XVIII, 23), an impoverished official who appointed Justinian as his testamentary executor. The emperor paid off his debts, and even provided his three daughters with decent dowries. As the structure and style of this episode has much in common with legends, it is reasonable to infer that Eulalius was not a historical figure.

Laura Carrara ("Johannes „der Rhetor“: Eine rhetorische Quelle für die Chronik des Malalas", 273–328) proves beyond reasonable doubt that in his description of the earthquake which hit Antioch in 526 (XVII, 16), Malalas used a rhetorical text. This may well have been the lost *Monodia on Antioch* written by Procopius of Gaza.⁵ Considering Malalas' poor style, such a conclusion might come as a surprise, and this urges Carrara to reopen the question of his education. As a Christian curriculum was not yet available in Greek, it cannot be ruled out that he followed, at least in part, the traditional one, and this would have enabled him to read and use high-level rhetorical texts.

Malalas integrated into his narrative four oracles and six prophecies whose purpose was to demonstrate that knowledge of the Christian God had been revealed to some pagans even before the birth of Christ. These oracles and prophecies, most of which were fabricated by Christians, are treated by Fabian Schulz ("Theosophische Weissagungen bei Malalals", 329–355). Despite the existence of parallels in a variety of sources and in several languages, it is impossible to establish where Malalas found his material, or to assess his own contribution to its shaping. In one instance (II, 2),

⁵ For the extant fragments, see *Procopius of Gaza: Discourses and Fragments*, ed. and trans. E. Amato et al., Paris 2014, 498.

the *Paschal Chronicle* as well as a new conjecture (ἔκγονον instead of ἔντομον) enable Schulz to improve the text given by Thurn.

In 562, a group of rich bankers (*argyropatai*; literally 'sellers of silver') plotted to murder Justinian, but they were betrayed, arrested and mildly punished before they could take action. In the last article in this volume, Wolfram Brandes ("Eine Verschwörung gegen Justinian im Jahr 562 und Johannes Malalas", 357–392) examines the three extant versions for this event (Malalas, XVIII, 141 in the *Baroccianus*; Theophanes, AM 6055; *Excerpta de Insidiis*, frg. 49), all derived from Malalas' unabridged account. Brandes, who focuses on lexicography and prosopography, argues that the wealth of details points to a document written in the imperial palace as to Malalas' source.

The *Baroccianus* (XVIII, 137) is the only evidence for the role played by the *argyropatai* in the consecration (or consecration feast) of a church, shortly before the plot. Here it is in, Greek and in English:

Μηνὶ αὐγούστῳ ἰνδικτιῶνος δεκάτης ἐγένοντο τὰ ἐγκαίνια τῆς ἁγίας μάρτυρος Θεοδώρας τῆς οὐσῆς πλησίον τῆς γεφύρης. κατὰ κέλευσιν δὲ τοῦ αὐτοῦ βασιλέως καὶ πρόβλησις ἐκ τῶν ἀργυροπρατῶν καὶ φῶτα πάμπολλα ἐγένετο.

"In the month of August of the 10th indiction there occurred the dedication of the church of the Holy Martyr Theodora, near the bridge. At the emperor's command the money dealers put on a display with lavish illuminations."⁶

As πρόβλησις is otherwise unattested in the sense of 'display', Brandes argues that it means here 'promotion' or 'appointment', as in some Middle Byzantine texts, and so Malalas' original text actually referred to the advancement of some *argyropatai* to senatorial ranks. However, as there is evidence for the involvement of craftsmen in similar ceremonies,⁷ this scepticism is not necessary.

It has long been fashionable to state and restate that *Quellenforschung* is no longer fashionable, yet the articles published in this volume show that it is still indispensable and fruitful for proper historical research.

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⁶ E. Jeffreys et al., *The Chronicle of John Malalas: A Translation* (Byzantina Australiensia 4), Melbourne 1986, 300–301.

⁷ A. Laniado, "Belisarius in the City of God: Stephanus Antecessor on Three Ceremonies in Constantinople and Antioch", in H. Börm and J. Wiesehöfer (ed.), *Commutatio et Contentio: Studies in the Late Roman, Sasanian, and Early Islamic Near East in Memory of Zeev Rubin*, , Düsseldorf 2010, 273–292.