

The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor

Byzantine and Near Eastern History

AD 284–813

Translated with Introduction and Commentary by
CYRIL MANGO and ROGER SCOTT
with the assistance of Geoffrey Greatrex

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Preface

The Chronicle that goes under the name of Theophanes Confessor (d. 818) is a major source for the history not only of the East Roman or Byzantine Empire, but also for that of the Near East after the Arab conquest. That is not to say that its value is uniform for the entire period it covers, namely from AD 284/5 to 813. Roughly its first half in terms of pages of text, from AD 284/5 to 602, is based on sources that are, by and large, available to us in one form or another, although occasionally Theophanes does yield items of information that cannot be found elsewhere. From AD 602 to 813, however, Theophanes is for us a primary source in the sense that the writings he utilized have been almost entirely lost.

The purpose of our work was to provide a faithful translation of Theophanes as edited by C. de Boor (1883) with such annotation as would facilitate its use by historians. To that end we have added a double apparatus, namely: (i) An *apparatus fontium* indicating, whenever possible, the source used by Theophanes or, if such a source has not survived, parallel passages in other texts that are independent of Theophanes (i.e. are not derived from him); (ii) A set of brief explanatory notes. It goes without saying that, given enough time and space, the latter could have been expanded tenfold, but it was not our aim to provide an exhaustive commentary, which would have been almost tantamount to writing a history of the Byzantine Empire to AD 813. We can only hope that, armed with our text, the historian will not only know what Theophanes says, but will also be in a position to evaluate the worth of his statements.

Our work has been more than fifteen years in the making, partly because of other commitments borne by the two authors, partly because of the difficulty of conducting a collaboration across two oceans. For this delay we have paid the penalty of having been anticipated by two partial translations into English, the first by H. Turtledove, with elementary annotation, covering the period 602–813,¹ the second by A. R. Santoro, without any notes, confined to 717–803.² Both are highly inaccurate.

The past fifteen years have also seen a steady flow of publications devoted to various aspects of the Chronicle or to particular periods for which it is an important source. We should name in the first

¹ *The Chronicle of Theophanes* (Philadelphia, 1982).

² *Theophanes, Chronographia* (Gorham, Me., 1982).

place the exhaustive commentary on the years 715–813 by Ilse Rochow, omitting, however, all items of purely Near Eastern interest.³ Two works by I. S. Čičurov also deserve mention. The first, entitled *Byzantine Historical Writings*,⁴ consists of selected passages of Theophanes and the *Breviarium* of the Patriarch Nikephoros accompanied by a Russian translation and explanatory notes. The second, *The Place of the Chronographia of Theophanes in the Early Byzantine Historiographic Tradition*,⁵ attempts to analyse the Chronicle as a work of literature with special reference to the author's 'self-awareness', his attitude to prevailing conventions of historical writing, and the ideal image of the emperor. We cannot enter here into a discussion of the views expressed by the Russian scholar, although we may be permitted to say that the approach he has chosen appears to us inappropriate to a work that is avowedly compilatory and non-literary. A stream of publications by Professor Paul Speck of Berlin, concerned directly or indirectly with Theophanes and by now amounting to several thousand pages, has put us in a more difficult position. Professor Speck offers many incisive observations, but these are intermingled with so much hypothetical speculation that we decided, after some hesitation, to make only occasional reference to his works. We have also omitted for reasons of space much other bibliography which did not appear to us to make any original contribution.

The division of our labour has been as follows: R.S. undertook to translate and annotate roughly the first half of the Chronicle (AM 5777–6094), while C.M. is responsible for AM 6095–6305 and for Theophanes' 'Preface'. The Introduction is by C.M. except for the chronology of the Persian kings (III.2.i), the discussion of sources relevant to the first half of the text (IV.2–9 and part of 14) and the section entitled 'Treatment of Sources'. The List of Abbreviations, Glossary and Index have been compiled by Dr Geoffrey Greatrex, to whom we are also greatly indebted for editing our manuscript for the press.

C.M. would also like to thank Dr J. D. Howard-Johnston for advice on the events of the reign of the emperor Herakleios, Drs R. Hoyland and L. I. Conrad on matters relating to the Arabs, and, as always, his wife.

R.S. would like to thank Oliver Nicholson in particular and also Anthony Bryer, Brian Croke, Simon Franklin, Martine Henry,

³ *Byzanz im 8. Jahrhundert in der Sicht des Theophanes* (Berlin, 1991).

⁴ *Vizantijskie istoričeskie sočinenija* (Moscow, 1980).

⁵ *Mesto 'Chronografii' Feofana v rannevizantijskoj istoriografičeskoj tradicii* in the series *Drevnejšie gosudarstva na territorii SSSR* for 1981 (pub. Moscow, 1983).

Elizabeth Jeffreys, Margaret Mullett, and Michael Whitby. He is also very grateful for facilities made available to him as an honorary Research Fellow at the Centre for Byzantine Studies at the University of Birmingham and as a Fellow of Dumbarton Oaks, Washington.

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Conventions Adopted in the Present Publication

1. *Text*

Words that have been added to the English translation for the sake of clarity are placed in square brackets ([. . .]).

Words supplied by de Boor, mostly from the Latin translation by Anastasius, are in angle brackets (<. . .>).

Words or passages rejected by de Boor are marked [. . .].

Lacunae in the text are marked by an asterisk (*).

De Boor's pagination is indicated in the margin.

Passages that we consider to have been derived from Theophanes' Oriental source (on which see Introduction, IV.13) are printed in Avenir roman.

2. *Chronological Rubrics*

On the form of the rubrics, as they are given in the manuscripts and in de Boor's edition, see Introduction, III.

i. Full Rubrics:

We have used the abbreviation AM instead of 'Year of the World' and added in square brackets the corresponding AD date. Both are given in **bold** type. It should be understood that the AD date is the one theoretically equivalent to the AM according to the system of computation used by Theophanes and need not be the correct date for the events described.

ii. Abbreviated Rubrics:

We have inserted: (a) The AM and AD dates in square brackets; (b) The name of the ruler and bishop before the numeral, thus: 'Diocletian, 2nd year'. Strictly speaking, the name ought to have been also placed in square brackets, but that would have created such a plethora of brackets that we have taken the liberty of omitting them.

Whenever a new ruler or bishop is appointed, he is introduced in the manuscripts by the following formula (taking AM 5786 as an example):

Marcellinus, bishop of Rome, 2 years

Peter the Martyr, bishop of Alexandria, 11 years,

followed by the usual string of numerals, namely 10 (10th year of Diocletian), 6 (6th year of Ouarraches), 1 (1st year of Marcellinus), 22