

Matthew of Edessa

Matt'ēos Uṙhayets'i

DATE OF BIRTH	Unknown; before 1100
PLACE OF BIRTH	Unknown
DATE OF DEATH	Unknown; possibly by 1138
PLACE OF DEATH	Unknown; probably Edessa

BIOGRAPHY

The only information about the life of Matthew of Edessa is contained in his one surviving work, the *Chronicle* (*Zhamanakagrut'iwn*). He was a priest, and probably a lifelong resident of the city of Edessa (modern Urfa in Turkey). Writing in the 1130s, he describes himself as an old man and an elder of a monastery. He was a passionate adherent of the non-Chalcedonian Armenian church, but did not have the scholarly training of a *vardapet* scholar. He resolved, nevertheless, to write the *Chronicle* despite this deficiency, since he felt it necessary to leave a record of the suffering that the Armenian nation bore at the hands of 'the Turks, and of their Roman brothers'. Matthew intended to continue his history to the Armenian year 580 (1131-32), but the final entry that can be attributed to him is the one for the Armenian year 577 (1128-29), which was probably written in late 1137. It is likely that he died shortly thereafter. His *Chronicle* was continued down to the Armenian year 611 (1162-63) by an otherwise unknown priest named Gregory, resident in the nearby town of Kesun.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Primary

Matt'ēos Uṙhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, ed. M. Mēlik'-Adamean and N. Tēr-Mik'ayēlean, Vagharshapat, 1898, pp. 112-14, 277-82

Matt'ēos Uṙhayets'i, *Patmut'iwn Matt'ēosi Uṙhayets'woy*, Jerusalem, 1869, pp. 133-35, 34^o-47

Secondary

T.L. Andrews, 'The new age of prophecy. The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa and its place in Armenian historiography', in E. Kooper (ed.), *The medieval chronicle VI*, Amsterdam, 2009, 105-23

- A.E. Dostourian, 'The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa (Matteos Urhayetsi)', in R.G. Hovannisian (ed.), *Armenian Tigranakert and Diyarbakir/Edessa*, Costa Mesa CA, 2006, 155-64
- R.W. Thomson, 'Aristakes of Lastivert and Armenian reactions to invasion', in R.G. Hovannisian (ed.), *Armenian Karin/Erzurum*, Costa Mesa CA, 2003, 73-88, pp. 83-87
- R.W. Thomson, 'The concept of "history" in medieval Armenian historians', in A. Eastmond (ed.), *Eastern approaches to Byzantium. Papers from the thirty-third spring symposium of Byzantine studies*, Aldershot UK, 2001, 89-99, pp. 96-97
- A. Bozoyan, *Byuzandiayi arevelyan k'aghak'anut'yunë ew Kilikyan Hayastanë ZhB dari 30-70-akan t'vakannerin*, Yerevan, 1998, pp. 27-29
- V.A. Arutjunova-Fidanjan, 'L'image de l'empire byzantin dans l'historiographie arménienne médiévale (Xe-XIe s.)', in B. Martin-Hisard et al. (eds), *L'Arménie et Byzance. Histoire et culture*, Paris, 1996, 7-17, pp. 9, 16
- S.P. Hayrapetean, *A history of Armenian literature. From ancient times to the nineteenth century*, Delmar NY, 1995, pp. 231-33
- G.K. Moumdjian, 'The chronicles of Sebeos, Levond Vardapet, Stepannos Taronetsi Asoghik, and Matthew of Edessa', *Bazmavēp* 152 (1994) 378-94, pp. 391-92
- J. Etmekjian, *History of Armenian literature. Fifth to thirteenth centuries*, New York, 1985, pp. 347-52
- N. Pogharean, *Hay groghner (5-15 tar)*, Jerusalem, 1971, pp. 218-19
- S. Runciman, *A history of the Crusades*. Vol. 1: *The First Crusade and the foundations of the kingdom of Jerusalem*, London, 1954, pp. 334-35
- H. Achařean, 'Matt'ëos Urhayets'i', *Handēs Amsōreay* 67 (1952) 350-54
- C. de Cirbied, *Notice de deux manuscrits arméniens contenant l'histoire de Matthieu Eretz*, Paris, 1912

WORKS ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa

DATE 1122-37

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Armenian

DESCRIPTION

The *Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa* is the first work of Armenian 'diaspora' history, in that it was written a lifetime after the fall of the Armenian kingdom in the mid-11th century, by an Armenian living in the Syrian city of Edessa. It is arranged annalistically, and it uses a form of language that is not strictly classical, features that are reminiscent of Byzantine chronicles. It covers the years 401-577 of the

Armenian era, that is, 952/3-1128/9. The *Chronicle* currently exists in two 19th-century editions and at least 35 manuscripts. The first edition, published in 1869, is based on two manuscripts held by the Armenian patriarchate of Jerusalem; the second, published in 1898, is based on six manuscripts now held by the Matenadaran in Yerevan. The text is roughly 80,000 words long, including the continuation of Grigor.

Matthew, the priest who was its author, is otherwise unknown. The only biographical information that survives is in two authorial interludes, placed respectively after the entry for 500 (1051/52) and after a set of entries for 550 (1101/2), which have been used by editors as the basis for dividing the *Chronicle* into three separate books. The first book, covering the years 401-500 (952/53-1051/52), focuses on events in Byzantium and Armenia as their 10th-century strength against Muslim invaders begins to weaken in the mid-11th century, and Armenia loses its independence to the Byzantine Empire. Its central feature is a pair of prophecies attributed to the clerical scholar Yovhannēs Kozern, which set out the historical framework for the remainder of the *Chronicle*. The second book, covering the years 502-550 (1053/54-1101/2), is largely a litany of the physical and spiritual destruction of Armenia, both at the hands of the invading Seljuk Turks and through the attempts by successive Byzantine emperors to end the autonomy of the (non-Chalcedonian) Armenian Church. It ends with the arrival and initial successes of the crusaders, whose appearance had been predicted by Kozern in Book 1. These first two books were probably written over the course of the 1120s.

The third book, covering events that would have occurred during Matthew's own adulthood, was probably written around 1137. He resumes the narration in the year 500 (1101/2). He had intended from the outset to record 180 years of history, down to the year 580 (1131/32), but his last entry is for 577 (1128/29). This book is a detailed source of information about the deeds of the crusader lords of Edessa and Antioch, and the Turkish and Arab emirs who lived alongside and fought against them. It also reflects the shifting, ambivalent, and apparently contradictory attitudes that Matthew and his fellow Armenians displayed toward both the crusaders and the Muslims during the time when the text was composed.

Matthew's *Chronicle* has survived with a continuation by an otherwise unknown priest named Grigor, who lived in the nearby town of Kesun, and who recorded events for the years 585-611 (1136/37-1162/63). Grigor's attitudes, shaped by the collapse of the crusader

county of Edessa and the rise of the Armenian principality of Cilicia, portray the Armenians as a people under threat, and under occasional coordinated siege, from the Byzantines and the Turks who surrounded them.

SIGNIFICANCE

As a work of history from an Eastern Christian viewpoint, the *Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa* has often been used as an ‘impartial’ account of relations not only between Christians and Muslims before and during the crusades, but also between the Catholic crusaders and the Orthodox Byzantines. Matthew is, in fact, far from impartial in his account; he is a passionate partisan of the Armenian Church, and his attitudes toward Byzantines, Muslims, and crusaders are all directly influenced by the extent to which each of these groups sought peaceful coexistence or cooperation with the Armenian nobility and clergy. Unlike many works of Armenian history that preceded it, the *Chronicle* is not the work of a clerical scholar, and Matthew does not engage in a great deal of philosophical or theological discussion concerning Christians and Muslims. The theological texts that are preserved within the *Chronicle* – most notably the confession of faith attributed to the deposed young king Gagik II Bagratuni, delivered before the court of Constantine X Doucas in Constantinople – concern disputes between the Byzantine and Armenian churches. Taken as a whole, however, the *Chronicle* gives a nuanced, albeit not impartial, picture of the relations between Turkish conquerors and their Armenian subjects.

MANUSCRIPTS

- MS Venice, Mekhitarist Monastery – 887, pp. 48-182 (1590-1600)
- MS Vienna, Mekhitarist Monastery – 574, pp. 218-330 (1601)
- MS Yerevan, Matenadaran – 1731, fols 77r-272v (1617)
- MS Yerevan, Matenadaran – 5587, fols 253r-404v (1617)
- MS Yerevan, Matenadaran – 1767 (1623)
- MS Paris, BNF – Arménien 191, pp. 53-127 (1642-47)
- MS Yerevan, Matenadaran – 3519, fols 192r-305v (1647)
- MS Yerevan, Matenadaran – 1768, fols 176r-291r (before 1661)
- MS Yerevan, Matenadaran – 3071, fols 146v-233v (1651-61)
- MS London, BL – OR5260, pp. 189-296 (1660)
- MS Yerevan, Matenadaran – 1769, fols 215v-351v (1664)
- MS Venice, Mekhitarist Monastery – 901, pp. 1-289 (1669)

- MS Yerevan, Matenadaran – 1896 (1689; base text of 1898 Vaghshapat edition)
- MS Bzommar, Armenian Monastery – 449, pp. 117-288 (1699)
- MS Rome, Pontificio Collegio Armeno – 25, pp. 52-146 (17th century)
- MS Yerevan, Matenadaran – 3520, fols 71r-366r (17th century)
- MS Venice, Mekhitarist Monastery – 913, pp. 75-312 (17th century)
- MS Venice, Mekhitarist Monastery – 917, pp. 32-291 (17th century)
- MS Jerusalem, Monastery of St James – 1107, pp. 133-568 (17th century)
- MS Jerusalem, Monastery of St James – 1051, pp. 117-440 (17th century)
- MS Oxford, Bodleian Library – Arm e.32 (1700-05?)
- MS Yerevan, Matenadaran – 8232 (1709; folio range unknown)
- MS Yerevan, Matenadaran – 8159 (1716-19; folio range unknown)
- MS Paris, BNF – Arménien 200, pp. 69-270 (1728)
- MS Bzommar, Armenian Monastery – 644 (1775-1805; copied from MS Bzommar 449)
- MS Jerusalem, Monastery of St James – 3651 (18th century)
- MS Yerevan, Matenadaran – 2855 (18th century; folio range unknown)
- MS Yerevan, Matenadaran – 3380 (18th century; folio range unknown)
- MS Vienna, Mekhitarist Monastery – 243 (18th-19th century)
- MS Venice, Mekhitarist Monastery – 986 (1830-35)
- MS Yerevan, Matenadaran – 8894 (1848; folio range unknown)
- MS Yerevan, Matenadaran – 6605 (1849)
- MS Yerevan, Matenadaran – 2644, pp. 1-118 (1850-57)
- MS Yerevan, Matenadaran – 2899 (19th century)
- MS Vienna, Mekhitarist Monastery – 246 (19th century)
- Manuscripts containing excerpts of the Chronicle
- MS Yerevan, Matenadaran – 6686, fols 93r-111v (1582)
- MS Paris, BNF – Arménien 140, p. 254 (1652)
- MS Yerevan, Matenadaran – 1775, fols 22r-57v (1671)
- MS Yerevan, Matenadaran – 1781 (1756; folio range unknown)
- MS Oxford, Bodleian Library – Arm d.7, pp. 59-61 (18th century)
- MS Munich, Bavarian State Library – Cod. armen. 9, pp. 1-40 (1801)

EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS

- M.M. Ruwaydi, *Tārīkh Mattā al-Ruhāwī. Al-Ifranġ (al-Ṣalībīyūn), al-Muslimūn, al-Arman*, Irbid, 2009 (Arabic trans.)
- A.E. Dostourian, *Armenia and the crusades. The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, Belmont MA, 1993

- H. Bart'ikyan, *Zhamanakagrut'yun/Matt'eos Urhayets'i. T'argmanut'yuně, neratsut'yuně, ev tsanot'agrut'yunnerě*, Yerevan, 1973 (modern Armenian trans.)
- H.D. Andreasyan, *Urfalı Mateos vekayi-nâmesi, 952-1136 ve Papaz Grigor'un zeyli, 1136-1162*, Ankara, 1962 (repr. 1987, 2000; Turkish trans.)
- Matt'ëos Urhayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn*, ed. M. Mëlik'-Adamean and N. Tër-Mik'ayëlean, *Vagharshapat*, 1898, pp. 112-14, 277-82
- Matt'ëos Urhayets'i, *Patmut'iwn Matt'ëosi Urhayets'woy*, Jerusalem, 1869, pp. 133-35, 340-47
- É. Dulaurier, *Chronique, 962-1136, avec la continuation de Grégoire prêtre jusqu'en 1162*, Paris, 1858
- É. Dulaurier, *Récit de la première croisade. Extr. de la Chronique de Matthieu d'Édesse*, Paris, 1850
- C. de Cirbied and F. Martin, *Détails historiques de la première expédition des Chrétiens dans la Palestine sous l'empereur Zimiscès, tirés d'un manuscrit arménien inédit de la Bibliothèque Impériale / composé dans le douzième siècle par Mathieu d'Édesse*, Paris, 1811 (French trans.)

STUDIES

- Andrews, 'The new age of prophecy'
- T.L. Andrews, 'The chronology of the Chronicle. An explanation of the dating errors within Book 1 of the Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa', *Revue des Études Arméniennes* 32 (2010) 141-64
- C. MacEvitt, 'The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa. Apocalypse, the First Crusade and the Armenian diaspora', *DOP* 61 (2007) 254-96
- T.W. Greenwood, 'Armenian sources', in M. Whitby (ed.), *Byzantines and crusaders in non-Greek sources, 1025-1204*, London, 2007, 221-52, p. 234
- Dostourian, 'The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa (Matteos Urhayetsi)'
- C. MacEvitt, 'Christian authority in the Latin East. Edessa in crusader history', in S.J. Ridyard (ed.), *The medieval crusade*, Woodbridge UK, 2004, 71-83
- Thomson, 'Aristakes of Lastivert and Armenian reactions to invasion'
- Thomson, 'The concept of "history" in medieval Armenian historians'
- A. Bozoyan, *Byuzandiayi arevelyan k'aghak'anut'yuně ew Kilikyan Hayastaně ZhB dari 30-70-akan t'vakannerin*, Yerevan, 1998, pp. 27-29

- Arutjunova-Fidanjan, 'L'image de l'empire byzantin dans l'historiographie arménienne médiévale (Xe-XIe s.)', in Hayrapetean, *A history of Armenian literature*
- R.W. Thomson, *A bibliography of classical Armenian literature to 1500 A.D.*, Turnhout, 1995, pp. 151-52
- G.K. Moumdjian, 'The chronicles of Sebeos, Levond Vardapet, Stepannos Taronetsi Asoghik, and Matthew of Edessa', *Bazmavēp* 152 (1994) 378-94, pp. 389-94
- R.I. Mat'evosyan, 'Matt'ēos Uṙhayets'u "Patmut'yan" tarēnt'erts'umerē Bagratunineri veraberyal', *Patma-banasirakan Handes* 117 (1987) 120-25
- Etmekjian, *History of Armenian literature*
- J. Gouillard, 'Gagik II défenseur de la foi arménienne', *Travaux et Mémoires* 7 (1979) 399-418
- J. Shepard, 'Scylitzes on Armenia in the 1040s, and the role of Catechou Cecaumenos', *Revue des Études Arméniennes* 11 (1975-76), 269-311, pp. 278, 280-82, 284-305
- L. Khach'ikyan, 'Yakob Sanahnets'i zhamanakagir XI dari', *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani* 13 (1971) 22-47, pp. 29-32, 40-47
- N. Pogharean, *Hay groghner (5-15 tar)*, Jerusalem, 1971, pp. 218-19
- H. Bart'ikyan, 'Matt'ēos Uṙhayets'u "Zhamanakagrut'yan" mej handipogh mi k'ani byuzandakan terminneri masin', *Lṙaber* (1969), 72-77
- Runciman, *A history of the crusades*
- Acharean, 'Matt'ēos Uṙhayets'i'
- H. Pērperēan, "Bnagrakan k'ani mē srbagrut'iwner Matt'ēos Uṙhayets'i "Zhamanakagrut'yan" mēj ew Ch'mshkiki kolmē Ashot Olormatsi ullats'i namakin verjabanē", *Sion* (1950) 54-57 and 87-89
- K. Kostanean, *Matt'ēos Uṙhayets'i*, Vagharshapat, 1899
- C. de Cirbied, *Notice de deux manuscrits arméniens contenant l'histoire de Matthieu Eretz*, Paris, 1812

Tara L. Andrews