

Walter the Chancellor

DATE OF BIRTH Unknown: late 11th century
PLACE OF BIRTH Unknown
DATE OF DEATH After about 1122
PLACE OF DEATH Unknown

BIOGRAPHY

Walter is known only from his work, *The Antiochene wars*, where he refers to himself as 'the author Walter' and 'I myself, Walter the Chancellor'. He was chancellor of Antioch at the least between the years 1114 and 1122, the period covered by his narrative, though another chancellor, Ralph, is recorded in 1127.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Primary

Walter is known only from references in the *Antiochene wars*.

Secondary

- T.S. Asbridge and S.B. Edgington, *Walter the Chancellor's The Antiochene wars. A translation and commentary*, Aldershot UK, 1999, pp. 5-6
H.E. Mayer, *Varia Antiochena. Studien zum Kreuzfahrerfürstentum Antiochia im 12. und frühen 13. Jahrhundert*, Hanover, 1993, pp. 75-77
H. Hagenmeyer, *Galterii Cancellarii. Bella Antiochena*, Innsbruck, 1896 (extensive intro. and notes)

WORKS ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

Bella Antiochena, 'The Antiochene wars'

DATE Unknown; Book 1 probably between late 1115 and mid-1119;
Book 2 after 1119

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Latin

DESCRIPTION

The *Bella Antiochena* occupies 54 pages in its modern edition (Hagenmeyer), and 94 in translation (Asbridge and Edgington). It is an account of two wars waged by the Latin Christians against the Turks

in northern Syria: Book 1 covers the war of 1115, in which Count Roger of Antioch defeated Bursuq ibn Bursuq of Hamadān (14 September); Book 2 describes the defence of Antioch against the forces of Il-Ghāzī ibn Artuq of Mārdīn in 1119, in which Roger was killed in the battle of the Field of Blood (28 June), King Baldwin II of Jerusalem's subsequent arrival, and the second battle of Tall Danith (14 August). A short closing section (chs 13-16) tells of Il-Ghāzī's defeat by King David IV of Georgia (1121) and his death (1122).

Book 1 sheds interesting light upon the normalization of Christian relations with the Turks within 20 years of capturing Antioch: Roger's response to the threat from Bursuq was to seek an alliance with Tughtegin of Damascus (d. 1128) and Il-Ghāzī of Mārdīn. They campaigned together, but were unable to bring Bursuq to battle, and the Muslim forces had returned home before the first battle of Tall Danith in which Antiochene and Edessan forces defeated Bursuq. The neutral stance towards Il-Ghāzī, the villain of Book 2, the triumphal note on which the book ends, and the lack of any reference forward to the second war make it most probable that Book 1 was composed between late 1115 and mid-1119.

In contrast, Book 2 attempts to explain the disastrous defeat of the Antiochenes and the death of Roger in the battle of the Field of Blood in 1119. The causes and consequences of the defeat are described in detail, including the Turks' treatment of their prisoners of war, among whom was Walter himself: he was held captive in Aleppo in the later months of 1119. Book 2 was therefore written after that. Notably, Il-Ghāzī has become 'prince of delusion and dissent' in this book, and his death is luridly described. In general, Walter has a fairly accurate picture of relationships between different Muslim leaders, but a confused and hostile understanding of their religion.

The authenticity of the work is not in any doubt. It is unique in being focused on the northern territory of Antioch, rather than the kingdom of Jerusalem. Fulcher of Chartres (q.v.) wrote a shorter account of the same events, but did not have Walter's eyewitness status. Both Walter and Fulcher's works were used by William of Tyre (q.v.). Albert of Aachen (q.v.) wrote an independent account, but his *Historia* finishes in spring 1119, so there is no report of the second war. Orderic Vitalis (q.v.) and Matthew of Edessa (q.v.) also add useful details. Relevant parts of these five works are translated in Asbridge and Edgington, pp. 173-204.

SIGNIFICANCE

This is a uniquely detailed account of episodes in Muslim-Christian relations in the early years of Latin settlement in Syria, giving clear details of their fluid nature. The earliest and best surviving manuscript was given by William of Grassegals to King Louis VII of France at the time of his coronation in 1137. In this and the other five earliest MSS, Walter's history is grouped with the First Crusade narrative of Raymond of Aguilers (q.v.) and the *Historia Hierosolymitana* of Fulcher of Chartres, suggesting early recognition of the importance of the work.

MANUSCRIPTS

- MS Paris – Reg. Lat. 14378 (the Grassegals MS; see above)
- MS Berne – 261 (12th century)
- MS Paris – Reg. Lat. 5131 (13th century)
- MS Paris – Arm. 1102 (13th century)
- MS London, BL – Add. 8927 (13th century)
- MS Clermont – 262 (14th century)
- MS Vat – Reg. 547 (14th century)

EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS

- Asbridge and Edgington, *Walter the Chancellor's The Antiochene wars*, pp. 77-171
- Hagenmeyer, *Galterii Cancellarii. Bella Antiochena*, pp. 61-115 (based on all extant MSS)
- Bella Antiochena*, ed. P. Riant, *RHC Occ.* 5, Paris, 1895, pp. 73-132 (based on all extant MSS)
- Quellenbeiträge zur Geschichte d. Kreuzzüge*, vol. 1, ed. H. Prutz, Danzig, 1876, pp. 1-55 (uses 3 MSS)
- Bella Antiochena*, in *PL* 155, cols 995-1038 [uses Bongars]
- Gesta Dei per Francos*, vol. 1, ed. J. Bongars, Hanover, 1611, pp. 441-67 (based on MS Berne 261)

STUDIES

- A. Mallett, "The other" in the crusading period: Walter the Chancellor's presentation of Najm al-Din Il-Ghazi, *Al-Masaq* 22 (2010) 113-28
- Asbridge and Edgington, *Walter the Chancellor's The Antiochene wars*
- T.S. Asbridge, "The "crusader" community at Antioch. The impact of interaction with Byzantium and Islam", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9 (1999) 305-25

- A.V. Murray, 'Ethnic identity in the crusader states. The Frankish race and the settlement of Outremer', in S. Forde, L. Johnson and A.V. Murray (eds), *Concepts of national identity in the Middle Ages*, Leeds UK, 1995, 59-73
- J. Rubenstein, 'Putting history to use. Three crusade chronicles in context', *Viator* 35 (1994) 131-68
- Mayer, *Varia Antiochena*

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