

From Edessa to Urfa: the Fortification of the Citadel is the outcome of an archaeological research project focused on a specific monumental area in the city of Urfa (Turkey). Its citadel, Urfa, is better known to the general public by its ancient name, Edessa. Three seasons of fieldwork were carried out (2014-2016), concentrating on the study of the evidence preserved above ground and employing the methods of stratigraphic analysis to identify the building sequence of the citadel and to characterise the various building phases. Transformation of the relative sequence into absolute chronology depended primarily on inscriptions *in situ*, but also on typological elements (masonry type, decorative elements, specific architectural forms). Data from the written sources also contributed relevant information regarding the development of the fortification works and the establishment of an absolute sequence.

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Tonghini

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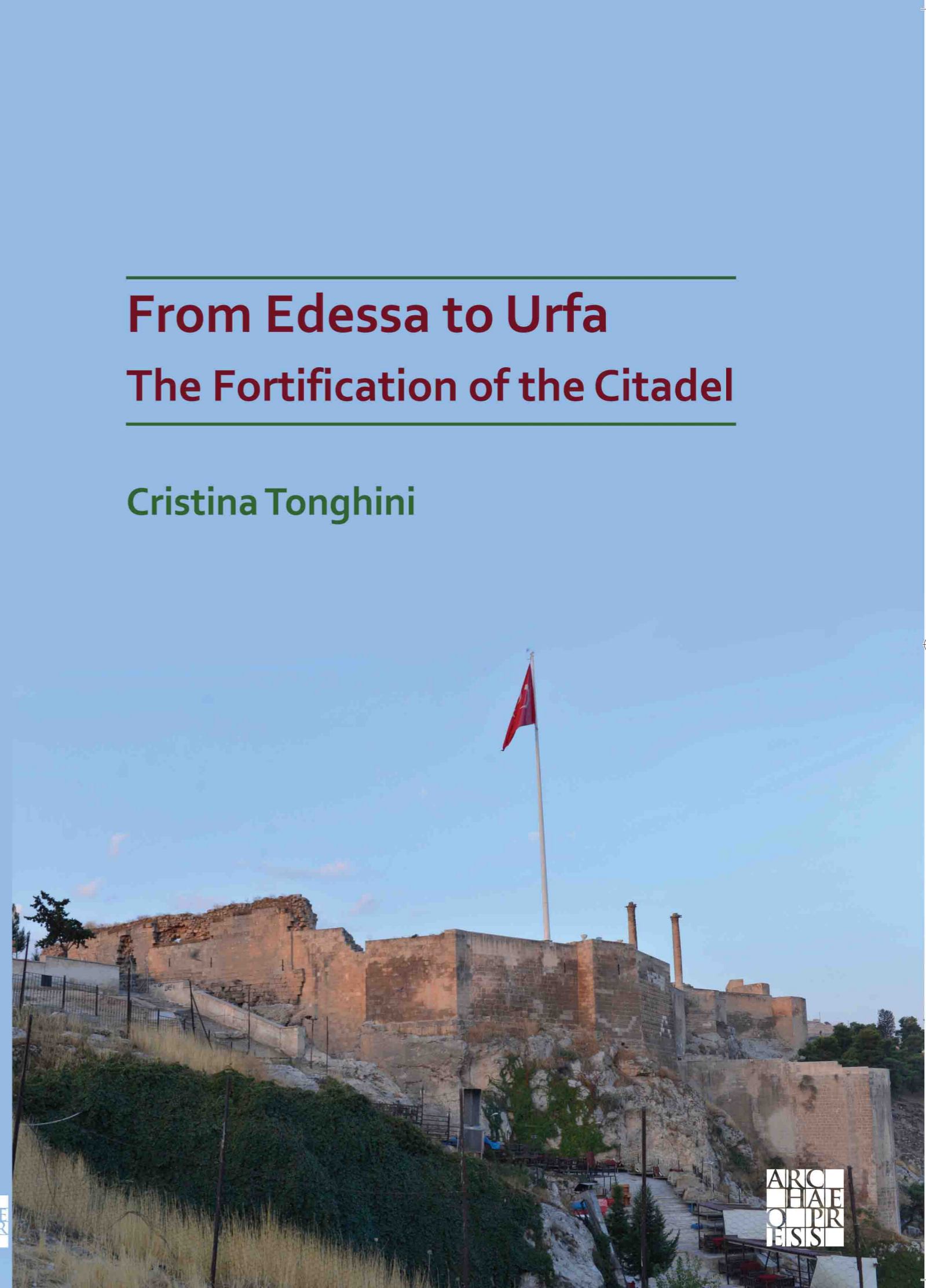
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ISBN 978-1-78969-756-8



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ARCHAEOPRESS ARCHAEOLOGY



ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD

Summertown Pavilion

18-24 Middle Way

Summertown

Oxford OX2 7LG

www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978-1-78969-756-8

ISBN 978-1-78969-757-5 (e-Pdf)

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Cover image: General view of the citadel from the north-east. Photo Luca Tarducci (2015).

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Chapter 3

The citadels and the city walls in the Syriac sources

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Despite the centrality of Edessa for the Syriac world, both epigraphic and historical sources in Syriac on the citadels and the walls of the city are surprisingly scant, especially as far as earlier centuries are concerned. Unfortunately, these relatively few mentions in the Syriac sources do not allow us to locate the citadels with much precision, although the chronicles of the second millennium happen to distinguish an 'upper' and a 'lower' citadel, occasionally specifying the location of the latter on the eastern side of the city, while the 'upper' citadel must be identified with the one in the south-east of the city.

The first millennium: of walls and floods

Only one source of the second millennium, the *Chronicle of 1234*, generically mentions the city walls in reference to the Seleucid foundation of Edessa: the city was (re-) built¹ by Seleucus

'with a strong and solid, very high wall, of beautiful structure and decoration. He also made high and admirable towers; little remains of one of them, in the eastern part above the exit of the waters that flow out of the city. We will show later on how this wall built by Seleucus was destroyed and fell apart [a reference to the flood of 525].'²

Our epigraphic documentation on the citadel is limited to one piece of evidence in Syriac, which, however, is admittedly precious as it stems directly from the citadel and attests to its earliest stages: this is the famous inscription of Queen Shalmath,³ which can be read on one of the two columns that can still be seen standing on the citadel:

'I, Aptuḥa, com[mandant], son of ..., [...m]ade this column and the statue above it for Šalmat, the queen, daughter of Ma'nu, the crown prince, wife [of...], my lady [and my benefactor].'⁴

The latest editors of the inscription suggest a dating to the first half of the 3rd century AD.⁵

An early (and hypothetical) mention of the citadel in a non-historical source is found in Addai's speech to the Edessans, which is the core of the apocryphal *Doctrina Addai*. The apostle is addressing the pagan citizens of Edessa and scolding them for their impious cults: 'What is this great altar which you built in the midst of the citadel?⁶ And what are those going and coming offering upon it to demons, and sacrificing on it to devils?'⁷ Addai, then, is maintaining that the Edessans worship their gods in the citadel. Although obviously deprived of historical value for the 1st century, this information probably points to the persistence of at least one major pagan cult place, most probably in a citadel some time during the long formation period of this apocryphon (3rd to 5th century).⁸ It is not possible, however, to understand whether the reference concerns a citadel in a proper sense (see footnote 6), let alone to establish what citadel may possibly be meant (see below for the presence of more citadels within the city as recorded by the Syriac sources).

Sporadic mention of the walls is found in Syriac acts of martyrs; suffice it here to recall the 'Story of Ḥabbib' published by F.C. Burkitt in 1913. The martyrology is set in 309-10 and mentions the West Gate of Edessa, the so-called Gate of Arches or of Vaults,⁹ where the martyr is

⁵ Earlier scholars supposed that the pillar itself was erected by Justinian along with its twin, and that the earlier inscription can be explained as a result of reuse (Texier and Pullan, in Drijvers and Healey 1999: 46), whereas the two columns are mostly regarded today as having once belonged to the palace of the Abgarids. Without further archaeological evidence, however, it is impossible to decide for either interpretation.

⁶ According to Desreumaux's French translation (Desreumaux 1993: 86), but the Syriac has *mditto*, 'city, town.'

⁷ *Doctrina Addai* 54, trans. Phillips: 26.

⁸ This is the opinion of Drijvers 1982: 39.

⁹ The Gate of Arches is mentioned twice in the *Chronicle of Ps.-Joshua the Stylite*. In section 27, the chronicle describes a pagan festival that includes the laying of candles along the bank of the river Dayṣan 'from the Gate of the Theatre and as far as the Gate of the Arches' (*Chronicle of Ps.-Joshua the Stylite*, ed. Chabot: 254; trans. Trombley and Watt: 25); this is the only known mention of a 'Gate of the Theatre' in Syriac sources. In section 29 it describes the administration of Alexander, governor of Edessa in 496-97 and 497-98: among his merits, the chronicle mentions the construction of a walkway 'by the Gate of the Arches' (*Chronicle of Ps.-Joshua the Stylite*, ed. Chabot 1927: 256; trans. Trombley and Watt 200: 27).

¹ According to legend, it was originally founded by the biblical Nimrod.

² *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 105-106/96.

³ 'Šalmat is probably the daughter of King Ma'nu IX (r. 213-39), who was crown prince' (Drijvers and Healey 1999: 47).

⁴ See Segal 1970: 33; Drijvers and Healey 1999: 45-48 and pl. 1.

brought to be burnt after interrogation by the Persian governor of the city. The anonymous author specifies that the Gate is situated 'over against the cemetery which was built by 'Abshelama, Abgar's son' (this Abshelama unfortunately remains unidentified).¹⁰

Historical sources are particularly scarce in the first millennium. They mainly record the recurrent floods, especially those of 201 and 525, and the damage they caused to the city walls. The main sources are the *Chronicle of Edessa* and the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*. Research on second-millennium sources up to the 13th century provides a richer harvest, as the citadel and the walls are mentioned in relation to important historical events after 1000. The sources, in this case, are the *Chronicle of Michael the Syrian* (end of the 12th century), the *Chronicle of 1234* (first half of the 13th century), and the civil section of the *Chronicle of Barhebraeus* (13th century).

The *Chronicle of Edessa*, which goes up to the year 540 and was written shortly after it,¹¹ mentions the walls only in reference to their occasional collapse: it records a major one, caused by a great flood in 201 (AG 513). On that occasion,

'the fountain of water which proceeds from the great palace of Abgar the great king increased, and it prevailed, and it went up according to its former manner, and overflowed and ran out on all sides, so that the courts and the porches and the royal houses began to be filled with water.'

The waters, however, encountered the obstacle of a series of 'cataracts,' iron gates that were probably designed to regulate the input of water into the city.

'But not prevailing against them, the waters rose like a great sea beyond the walls of the city. And the waters began to come down from the apertures in the wall into the city. And Abgar the king stood on the great tower which was called that of the Persians, and saw the water by the light of torches, and he commanded, and they took away the gates and the eight cataracts of the western wall of the city where the river flowed out. But that very hour the waters broke down the western wall of the city, and entered the city, and overthrew the great and beautiful palace of our lord the king, and they carried away everything that was found before them, the desirable and beautiful edifices of the city, whatever was near the river to the south and to the north of it.'¹²

The dynamic of the flood is clear: the waters of the Daysan river cannot flow through the wall as they are stopped by the 'cataracts;' they thus accumulate on the western wall of the city (the course of the Daysan being eastward), surmount and break it down. The chronicle then records, in dry notes, two further and probably minor episodes of inundation, which caused breaches in the city walls: in 303 (614 AG),¹³ and in 413 (724 AG);¹⁴ a slightly longer note relates the human and material damage caused by the inundation of 525 (836 AG): 'And in the year 836 many waters entered Edessa for the fourth time and broke down the walls of it, and overturned its dwellings and drowned its children, and made in it much destruction.'¹⁵ In conclusion (par. 106), the *Chronicle* recapitulates the four inundations known to it and associates them with the names of the bishops in the city on each occasion.¹⁶

The *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, written around the end of the 8th century, so approximately two and a half centuries later than the *Chronicle of Edessa*, describes or mentions the same floods and also records a further one, which occurred well into the 'Umayyad period in 742-743 (1053-54 AG).¹⁷ In the winter, abundant rains, which had also caused a bridge over the Tigris near Amid to fall, provoked a dramatic rise in the River Daysan. Being swollen, the river could not flow out of the city normally and exercised a strong pressure on the eastern wall, flowing back into the inhabited centre and also causing the wall to fall apart:

'At this time Edessa was also devastated. Abundant and heavy rain made the river called Daysan, which runs through the city of Edessa, overflow. The mighty waters flooded (the city), and the exit in the eastern side of the wall became blocked. And the waters dashed against it, receded, then rose up, flooding the streets of the city. The flood ruined all the merchandise belonging to shop owners, and numerous houses collapsed. Because of the fact that this happened during the day, people were able to abandon their houses and flee and thus they were not harmed.'¹⁸

The *Chronicle of Zuqnin* devotes more attention to the destruction caused by the inundation of 525 than does the *Chronicle of Edessa*,¹⁹ especially stressing the heavy toll in human lives and the sorrow of the survivors:

¹⁰ *Story of Ḥabbīb*, ed. Burkitt: 125.

¹¹ Debié 2015: 527.

¹² *Chronicle of Edessa*, ed. Guidi: 1-2; trans. Cowper: 30-31.

¹³ *Chronicle of Edessa*, ed. Guidi: 3-4; trans. Cowper: 32. Also recorded by the *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot 1/3.

¹⁴ *Chronicle of Edessa*, ed. Guidi: 6; trans. Cowper: 34.

¹⁵ *Chronicle of Edessa*, ed. Guidi: 10-11; trans. Cowper: 37.

¹⁶ *Chronicle of Edessa*, ed. Guidi: 13; trans. Cowper: 39.

¹⁷ In 740 (1051 AG) according to the *Chronicle of 1234* (ed. Chabot: 312-313/243-244); in 739 (1050 AG) according to Michael the Syrian (ed. Chabot: II, 505).

¹⁸ *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, ed. Chabot: 176-177; trans. Harrak: 165-166.

¹⁹ However, it assigns it to the same year, 525 AD (836 AG), as the *Chronicle of Edessa* and the *History of Ps.-Zachariah* 8.4 (ed. Brooks:

'While many were sleeping, many others bathing in the public bathhouse, and others still taking supper, huge torrents of water suddenly rushed along the River Daysan and found their way into [...], which is in the middle of the city in which this River Daysan ran. Suddenly, in the darkness of the night, the city wall was breached from the top and (the debris) stopped up and held back the mass of water at its exit. And it rose up massively and went over all the marketplaces and all the houses of the city that were along the river. In one hour, or perhaps two, water filled the city and it was inundated. Suddenly the water rushed through all the gates of the public bathhouses, and all those who were in it drowned ... Concerning the way the city wall broke, the water gushed in and the city was evacuated, and concerning all the misfortunes that the flood had caused throughout the plain of Edessa and Harran. When most of the city [was inundated] and submerged - except for the aforementioned places - water stagnated and the city became like a lake. Then the city wall broke, first (from) above and (then) below, unable to bear the thrust of the flood. Three breaches suddenly opened up and the towers collapsed, were carried off and were swept away by the power of the tide of water.'²⁰

As can be seen, the Syriac sources focus more on the dynamics of the incident and on the grief at the loss of people and animals, whereas one has to turn to Procopius' *Buildings* to get a sense of the concrete reconstructions undertaken by Justinian.²¹ Michael the Syrian briefly notes that in 521-22 (probably meaning 525 by virtue of a scribal error) 'there was a violent rain and the River Daysan, which flows through Edessa, caused a great flood in which many places were destroyed; almost the whole of the wall fell apart. Justinian sent gold and had the wall repaired.'²² Some pages later, Michael repeats the description of the same flood at greater length with the words of the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, adding that 'three breaches' opened in the wall and that the 'towers' in the wall 'fell down.'²³

75; trans. Greatrex et al.: 295): 'in the year 836 of the Greeks, in the third [indiction], on the twenty-second of April, the waters of the river Daisan, which enter and pass through the city, filled up and overflowed, and ruined two sides of the wall, and drowned many because it was dinner time.' The *Chronicle of 724* gives a slightly different date for it, namely 523-24 (835 AG); ed. Brooks: 150; trans. Chabot: 115, 'anno 835 submersa est Edessa.' A different dating, i.e. 520-21 (832 AG) is given by Jacob of Edessa in his *Chronography* (ed. Brooks et al. 1905: 319).

²⁰ *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, ed. Chabot: 44-46; trans. Harrak: 68-69 (corrected through use of Witakowski 1996: 42).

²¹ Procopius' passage is amply discussed by Niccolò Zorzi in Chapter 2. The historical sources of the second millennium also mention this great flood, but do not provide details: the *Chronicle of 1234* records that the flood 'destroyed most of the wall' and that 'Justinian ordered that the city and its wall should be restored' (ed. Chabot: 191/150-151). For Michael the Syrian see the text below.

²² *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* IX.12, ed. Chabot: 266 T; II, 169 V.

²³ *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* IX.16, ed. Chabot: 271 T; II, 180 V.

For the sake of comprehensiveness, one should also mention a short notice in the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* recording a breach in the city walls of Edessa, which the author refers to as an inexplicable miraculous 'sign.' This 'occurred in the wall of Edessa. There was a breach in the wall to the south of the Great Gate. The stones of that section were scattered to no small distance from it.'²⁴ This event is seen as accompanying an eclipse of the sun occurred on the 1st of October (1 *Tishrin*) 499 (811 AG).

The *Chronicle of 1234* also mentions another major flood in 668 (AG 979; in 666/977 AG according to Michael the Syrian),²⁵ which allegedly destroyed the walls and submerged the whole city.

For the last years of Byzantine rule over Edessa and the first centuries of Arab rule, the only accounts in Syriac we have are found in sources of the second millennium. Many Syriac sources record Khosrow I's failed attempt to besiege the city in 544 (*Chronicle of 1234*, Michael the Syrian, and Barhebraeus),²⁶ and the rebellion of general Narses against the Roman Emperor Phokas in about 603 (*Chronicle of Zuqnin*,²⁷ *Chronicles of 819* [10.23-24] and 846 [230.16-17], *Chronicle of 1234* [par. 85, Chabot 1920: 173], Michael the Syrian²⁸). The *Chronicle of 1234* adds that it is on account of the strength of its walls that Narses chose Edessa as his stronghold.²⁹

The last part of the first millennium saw a major destruction of the city walls in 754, but no contemporary Syriac source records it. Only second-millennium historians describe the events in Syriac. An account is provided by Michael the Syrian who relies in turn on a curious account by the Metropolitan bishop of Edessa Basil bar Shamuna (middle of the 12th century):³⁰

'At the time of the Arabs, its solid wall was destroyed. It had been built at the time of Seleucus, and Mar Ephrem celebrated it. The cause of its demolition was as follows: when Mansur the cheapskate was reigning, he had a palace built for himself in Raqqa. He sent to ask the Edessans for some of the

²⁴ *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, ed. Chabot: 4; trans. Harrak: 39. The same formulation occurs in the *Chronicle of Ps.-Joshua the Stylite*, 36, trans. Trombley and Watt: 35). The same *Chronicle* mentions the Great Gate in passing (ed. Chabot: 296; trans. Trombley and Watt: 44, and ed. Chabot: 289; trans. Trombley and Watt: 79).

²⁵ *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* XI.12, ed. Chabot: 433 T; II, 451 V.

²⁶ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 193/152; *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* IX.24, ed. Chabot: 287 T; II, 206 V; Barhebraeus, *Chronicon syriacum*, ed. Bedjan 1890: 79; trans. Budge: 79. Also mentioned in Ps.-Zachariah, *History* X.10 (ed. Brooks: 192; trans. Greatrex et al.: 415), and in the *Chronography of Jacob of Edessa*, ed. Brooks et al.: 321.

²⁷ *Chronicle of Zuqnin*, ed. Chabot 1927: 148; Harrak 1999: 140.

²⁸ *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* X.25, ed. Chabot: 390 T; II, 379 V.

²⁹ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 219-220/173.

³⁰ The fact is also mentioned *en passant* in the *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* XII.6 (ed. Chabot: 492 T; III, 22 V) and XII.7 (ed. Chabot: 494 T; III, 27 V). The *Chronicle of 1234* (ed. Chabot: 334-335/261-262) records the same events without adding further important details.

small marble columns that were amassed in the big church. They did not give them to him and he became angry. They rose up against him, since they feared him. He then came and besieged the city, and ruined the temple of Mar Sergius. Then some cunning men of that city came out to meet him secretly and plotted with him to give him the city, if he swore not to mistreat anyone. He promised that he would neither kill nor take prisoners nor change their condition nor take anything from the city except for a white horse, which he would take and kill by way of revenge. They did not understand what the sense of the word “horse” was until he entered the city to take possession of it. Then he affirmed that by “horse” he meant the wall. Thus he demolished that admirable wall and left only one tower standing, through which the waters flow out towards the mills. Forty years later [in 814 AD],³¹ at the time of King Ma'mun, Abu Shaykh Junadiya, who rose up against King Ma'mun, rebuilt it.³²

The *Chronicle of 1234* has a completely different version, which reflects the historical truth of the first years of the Abbasid revolution much more closely. According to it, among the supporters of the Umayyad caliphate who were trying to oppose Abū Ja'far there was a certain Manṣūr ibn Ja'wana,³³ who ‘seized Edessa, fortified it and strengthened his hold on it.’³⁴ Abū Ja'far besieged the city, took it, and punished it with the complete destruction of the wall. According to Barhebraeus, whose account of these events is quite condensed, ‘Abū Shaykh built the wall of Edessa at the expense of the citizens.’³⁵ The *Chronicle of 1234* adds that only ‘the notables and the rich men of the city’ were obliged to pay, and that they had to pay only half of the amount needed to reconstruct the wall.³⁶

Only Michael the Syrian and Barhebraeus³⁷ recall that the Qaysite Naṣr ibn Shabath al-'Uqaylī, a warlord who had risen up against al-Ma'mūn, besieged Edessa but had to turn away, discouraged by the resistance of the citizens: ‘all the Edessans climbed up the wall and even the women brought up stones to it.’³⁸ The date is not clear, but it must be in 815 or 816, when Naṣr had his base at Harran, which he had taken in 812, and the city walls had already been rebuilt.

Shortly after these events one further flood is recorded for the year 835 by the *Chronicle of 1234*.³⁹ The dynamic is typical:

‘in the year 1146 (AG) a great flood occurred. The river rose suddenly and broke its banks in the night while people were sleeping. The waters overflowed and surrounded the wall, which could not withstand the force of the waters and fell down. The waters entered the city ... The waters made a breach in the eastern side of the wall and went out.’

In conclusion, the sources of the first millennium mostly treat events concerning the city walls, and when they mention the citadel they do not provide any information that may enable us to identify it with any precision.

The second millennium: Turks and Crusaders

Three Syriac sources of the second millennium stand out for their mentions of Edessa's walls and citadel: The *Chronicle of Michael the Syrian*, the *Chronicle of 1234*, and the *Chronography* of Barhebraeus, which sometimes share the same sources and repeat the same descriptions of the same events.

Since all three chronicles aim at being a complete account of world history, they also relate events of the first millennium, as we have seen, and thus sometimes provide further details on the floods described in the first-millennium chronicles or relate first-millennium events which are not recorded in first-millennium Syriac sources.

The first relevant historical episode relating to the walls and the ‘upper citadel/the citadel on the hill’ in the second millennium occurs just as it begins and is described by all the sources. Between the end of the 10th and the beginning of the 11th century Edessa was beset by continuous wars between Arabs and Byzantines. Especially burdensome for the city were the incursions of Muslim warlords and their bands, who plagued the countryside around it. Judah Segal efficaciously summarizes the events of the first quarter of the 11th century: ‘At the beginning of the eleventh century ... Edessa was in the hands of ‘Uṭair, cousin of Waththab, chief of the Banu Numair and ruler of Harran. As his deputy in the city, ‘Uṭair installed a certain Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad; later, jealous of Aḥmad's popularity, he caused him to be assassinated. In despair, the people of Edessa turned to the powerful Marwanid prince of Amid, Naṣr al-Dawla. ‘Uṭair was permitted by Naṣr al-Dawla to return to Edessa ... Naṣr al-Dawla divided control of the city. The Citadel he gave to the son of ‘Uṭair, and a smaller fort, probably in the east wall, he

³¹ This is incorrect. The reconstruction of the wall took place more than sixty years after the events.

³² *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* XVII.7, ed. Chabot: 650 T; III, 279 V.

³³ He seems to be known only to our chronicler and to Agapius of Manbij, see Hoyland 2011: 288.

³⁴ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 334/260; Engl. trans. from Hoyland 2011: 288.

³⁵ *Chronicon Syriacum*, ed. Bedjan: 137; trans. Budge: 125.

³⁶ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 9; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 6.

³⁷ *Chronicon Syriacum*, ed. Bedjan: 136; trans. Budge: 125.

³⁸ *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* XII.9, ed. Chabot: 499 T; III, 38 V.

³⁹ *Chronicle of 1234*: ed. Chabot: 9; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 20-21.

gave to the son of Shibl al-Dawla, another Numairid sheikh ... The two chiefs plotted and wrangled against each other.⁴⁰

Different sources, both in Syriac (Michael the Syrian and the *Chronicle of 1234*) and in other languages (Matthew of Edessa⁴¹ and John Skylitzes⁴²), state that after 'Uṭair the citadel was held by a certain Salman the Turk; according to Chabot, he was the son of 'Uṭair,⁴³ which would comply with the version given by Barhebraeus (see below), but he quotes no sources in support of this statement. The sources mentioning Salman agree on the fact that in the winter of 1031-32 he delivered the citadel of Edessa (most probably the citadel in the south-east of the city, since it is said to be 'on the hill') to the Byzantine *protospatharios* George Maniaces, the governor of the Byzantine thema of Telukh residing at Samosata. According to the *Chronicle of 1234*, the two were good friends; Salman, however, was on bad terms with the governor of Mosul, Shibl al-Dawla. Slanderers had apparently put one against the other: Salman was said to have calumniated Shibl since he was the son of a slave; Shibl was rumoured to have reacted by threatening to kill Salman. Salman thus decided to ask Maniaces for protection, promising to deliver the upper citadel, as is clearly stated in the sources, to the Byzantines. They plot a fake conquest of the citadel by Maniaces. The citadel is thus at once the background and the protagonist of the episode. The *Chronicle of 1234* narrates the events as follows:

'It was arranged that Maniaces should come secretly to meet Salman. They fixed a certain night on which he would come from the western gate of the Citadel on the hill. When this had been decided between them, Maniaces came with a small number of soldiers and hid them in ... the hills. He himself with his two attendants came near the gate according to the arrangement. He knocked at the gate. Salman was standing behind the gate, waiting; he opened the gate and the two met in the gate, Maniaces standing outside and Salman inside, speaking to each other by night and in a low voice ... Maniaces had appointed a sign for the soldiers. When they perceived the sign they were to approach the gate, and he had ordered those who accompanied him to take some little stone pebbles from the wadi. But when Salman and Maniaces conversed, the affair was not resolved in any way. Salman said to Maniaces: 'Go in peace, and let the secret and our friendship be preserved between us.' When he came as though to close the gate, the attendants of Maniaces threw the stones at the gate of the Citadel

and roused the soldiers who were in hiding and they came forward. Salman wanted to close the gate of the Citadel but it could not be closed. Maniaces and those with him leapt up and seized the citadel, slew the guards and brought out Salman and his family ... without in any way harming him.⁴⁴

Michael the Syrian, who repeats the words of the later chronicler, the West-Syrian Metropolitan of Edessa Basilios (12th century, see below), is even shorter:

After a certain time, the Greeks ruled [Edessa] once again, thanks to a man called Salman, who tricked the emir [Naṣr al-Dawla] and delivered the upper citadel of which he was the guard, to a Greek called Maniag.⁴⁵

By speaking of an 'upper citadel,' Michael the Syrian thus confirms the location of the citadel delivered by Salman as described in the *Chronicle of 1234*. The Byzantines managed only to hold this citadel and not to conquer the whole city, which Naṣr al-Dawla recaptured; they succeeded in taking the city only after the winter.

Barhebraeus gives a much less detailed account of the same events, where George Maniaces is not mentioned at all and the Byzantine Emperor Michael takes up the role of direct interlocutor of a 'son of 'Uṭair,' who sells the Citadel to the Emperor; there is no 'Shibl' but a 'son of Shibl' who is not governor at Mosul as in the *Chronicle of 1234*, but at Edessa. It is not specified where the citadel is, but this can be inferred from the passage:

'At this time two Arab Amirs were ruling in Edessa, viz. Bar 'Utair and Bar Shibal, each in a fort.⁴⁶ Bar 'Utair sent to Michael, king of the Rhomaye, and sold his fort to him for twenty thousand darics and four villages in the territory of the Rhomaye. And the Rhomaye came by night, and they assumed the mastery and went into the fort, and they made strong the defences thereof, for the building was like a Citadel. And some of them went down to the city⁴⁷ and destroyed the Mosque of the Arabs. And when Nasir Ad-Dawlah heard [this], he sent an army against Edessa and captured it, and they broke down its wall and entered the town. And they also captured the great church to which the Christians had fled, and they took spoil from them and their women. And they encamped against the fort of the

⁴⁰ Segal 1970: 217.

⁴¹ *Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, ed. Dulaurier: 47. On Matthew of Edessa see the recent study of Andrews 2017.

⁴² See the discussion of Skylitzes' passage by Niccolò Zorzi in Chapter 2.

⁴³ *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, ed. Chabot: III, 280.

⁴⁴ English translation in Segal 1970: 217-218.

⁴⁵ *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* XVII.8, ed. Chabot: 640 T; III, 280 V.

⁴⁶ This would imply a second citadel in the 11th century, which is also suggested by Matthew of Edessa (*Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, ed. Dulaurier: 46, speaking of three citadels) and by Byzantine and Arabic sources: Chs 2, 5.

⁴⁷ Despite the imprecision of Barhebraeus' account, this movement seems to confirm that the reference is to the same 'upper citadel' as in the *Chronicle of Michael the Syrian*.

Rhomaye, and they were wholly unable to draw nigh to it.⁴⁸

The *Chronicle of 1234* also informs us that the city walls, which were damaged during Naṣr-al-Dawla's counter-attack, were rebuilt by the Byzantines. In the following five decades, the latter maintained dominion over the citadel, whereas the city changed hands and was plundered more than once. Only in 1087 did the Seljuks get hold of the citadel. During their short rule, the citadel was again the stage for important events narrated in the *Chronicle of 1234*. In 1094 Tutush, the brother of the deceased Seljuk ruler Malik Shāh, captured Buzān, the Governor of Edessa, and claimed the city for himself. The *Chronicle of 1234* states that Buzān had appointed a Turk as supervisor of the citadel.⁴⁹ Neither the citizens nor the garrison of the citadel recognized Tutush as their governor, however, since they had been pleased by Buzān's rule. The *Chronicle of 1234* records the construction of a second, lower walled citadel or fortress located 'north of the eastern gate of the city,'⁵⁰ quickly built at the command of T'oros son of Hetum, Buzān's Armenian procurator in the city; indeed, T'oros feared an upcoming siege, and did not trust that the Turks of the citadel would remain loyal to Buzān.⁵¹ As a violent message to the citizens, Tutush sent Buzān's head to Edessa, carried by the general Alp Yaruq (al-Farij according to Michael the Syrian, al-Firj according to *Chronicle of 1234*, and al-Fariq according to Barhebraeus) who settled in the citadel. According to the *Chronicle of 1234*, Alp Yaruq was poisoned during a banquet in the citadel through a clever stratagem devised and carried out by a Christian lady.⁵² His soldiers were kept out of the citadel. Shortly thereafter, however, Edessa was besieged by yet another local warlord, Suqman of Seruj of the Turkmen Artuqid dynasty, together with Balduq, the governor of Samosata. The two managed to make breaches in the wall, but then Tutush attacked again and laid siege to the city in his turn. Tutush eventually died without capturing the city, and the *Chronicle of 1234* informs us that T'oros bought the citadel from the Turkish supervisor.⁵³ After the latter sieges, as Segal writes, 'the people of Edessa, harassed from all sides ... weary of the perils to which they were constantly exposed, looked elsewhere for succour, and so opened the strange interlude which was irrevocably to seal the fate of Christian Edessa.'⁵⁴ Indeed, the Crusaders had by that time reached the Middle East on their way to Jerusalem; the Christian Edessenes saw them as their ideal rulers, who could protect them from the

conflicting Muslim forces. In 1098 they thus invited Baldwin de Bouillon to take possession of the city.⁵⁵ T'oros, who had agreed to summon Baldwin against his will,⁵⁶ apparently tried to resist at the head of the city, and according to the account of the *Chronicle of 1234*, he ended up being cast from the walls of the lower citadel he had himself constructed, and slain by the populace,⁵⁷ whom he had fiscally oppressed during his rule. This marked the start of a succession of Crusader governors whom the Eastern chroniclers and historians describe as greedy and arrogant, and thus not loved by the Edessan population. The rule of the Crusaders was characterized by an incessant state of war with Turk commanders, who more than once besieged the city and made incursions in the surrounding countryside but could never take Edessa,⁵⁸ and by disputes between the Crusaders themselves. Concerning the Turkish sieges, the *Chronicle of 1234* is interesting for the mention of the walls. In 1106 or 1108 the warlord Mawdud ('governor of the East' according to the *Chronicle of 1234*⁵⁹, 'of Khorasan' according to Michael the Syrian⁶⁰) laid siege to city twice, but without capturing it. During the first siege, we are told, he encamped on the plain outside the city on its eastern side, 'around the citadel'⁶¹ (which, given the location, is highly likely to mean the lower citadel), but his troops mainly gave themselves to pillaging the countryside; the Franks reached Edessa to defend it and take the place of the enemies on the eastern side of the city, whereupon Mawdud withdrew. Not long afterwards, however, the Franks started marching back to the West, thus falling prey to Mawdud's attack on their way to Samosata.⁶² In 1107 or 1109, Mawdud tried to besiege Edessa again, initially encircling the whole city. Once again, his troops devastated the countryside, starving the city; he then pretended to withdraw, so that the Edessans 'would neglect to guard the walls;⁶³ but actually he hid himself and his army east of the city. A vanguard reached the east side of the wall in the night, under a tower guarded by an Edessan traitor, a certain notable called Quresh. A group of Armenian traitors lowered ropes to the vanguard, who could thus reach the top of the wall and in their turn lower ladders

⁵⁵ It is worth citing the famous sentence attributed to the Franks by Michael the Syrian: 'As well as Edessa believed in Christ before Jerusalem, so it has been given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ before Jerusalem' (*Chronique de Michel le Syrien* XV.7, ed. Chabot: 387 T; III, 184 V).

⁵⁶ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 56; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 41.

⁵⁷ Michael the Syrian does not relate the episode in detail and only records that T'oros 'had been killed by the people of Edessa' (XV.8, ed. Chabot: 389 T; III, 187 V).

⁵⁸ The *Chronicle of 1234* (ed. Chabot: 66-67; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 49) mentions a battle between the Franks and the troops of a certain Jekermish outside the city in front of the eastern gate. The Turks slaughter the Edessans, but withdraw without trying to besiege the city.

⁵⁹ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 73; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 54.

⁶⁰ *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* XV.10, ed. Chabot: 594 T; III, 196 V.

⁶¹ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 73; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 54.

⁶² *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 74-75; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 55.

⁶³ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 76; trans. Abouna and Fiey 1974: 56.

⁴⁸ *Chronicon Syriacum*, ed. Bedjan: 214; trans. Budge: 192.

⁴⁹ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 48; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 35.

⁵⁰ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 57; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 42.

⁵¹ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 51-52; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 37-38.

⁵² See *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 52-54; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 38-39. Segal 1970: 224; much shorter and with no mention of the citadel in *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* XV.6, ed. Chabot: 384 T; III, 179 V.

⁵³ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 53; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 39.

⁵⁴ Segal 1970: 225.

for Mawdud's army. The alarm was given, and a handful of Mawdud's soldiers started crying from the west side of the wall, in order for the Edessans to believe that the army was on that side, while the major part of it was on the eastern side. Around sixty soldiers could thus climb up the eastern tower, and at dawn the Edessans saw that they were on the walls.⁶⁴ According to the account of the *Chronicle of 1234* the Frankish count Joscelin I climbed up the tower (also called by the *Chronicle* 'the great tower'⁶⁵) and after two vain attempts he managed to reach the top and with his own sword to defeat many of the Turks on the rampart.

At the beginning of the 1140s, however, the atabeg (regent) of Mosul, an Oghuz Turk called 'Imād al-Dīn Zangī aspired to expand his power and laid eyes on Edessa while the governor of the County of Edessa was the Frank Joscelin the Younger. The latter had 'drawn upon himself Zangī's enmity by making a pact with his Artuqid rival Qara Arslan.'⁶⁶ In 1144, Zangī took advantage of Joscelin's absence from Edessa and besieged the city in the last days of November. The siege is described by the *Chronicle of 1234* and by Michael the Syrian through the account of an eyewitness, the West-Syrian Metropolitan Basil. Detachments were settled in front of every gate; Zangī camped opposite the North Gate, which the *Chronicle* terms 'Gate of Hours.'⁶⁷ Zangī's siege was well prepared from the technical point of view, and the population, deprived of soldiers that could defend it, tried their best to withstand. Michael the Syrian and the *Chronicle of 1234*, both relying on the same account of Basil bar Shamuna, describe opposing excavations on the northern side of the wall, under the bridge of the Gate of Hours: on the outer side by Zangī's army, on the inner side by the population who also tried to stop the advance of the enemies by building a new wall. Zangī's soldiers, then, went on to mine two towers of the wall⁶⁸ and placed under them wood beams, fuel oil, fat, and sulphur, which they set on fire. They also made breaches in the wall with battering rams. The whole segment of wall between the two towers, and the towers themselves, fell down; the inner wall built by the Edessans was shorter than the segment of the outer wall that Zangī's army had destroyed.⁶⁹ Thus after four weeks, Zangī's army was able to enter the city and start plundering and slaughtering with Zangī's permission; the population, especially Muslims, rushed up to the citadel, but the Latin Archbishop and the Frankish garrison refused to open it, causing a major carnage,

which is recorded in great detail by the *Chronicle of 1234*⁷⁰ and with a high rhetorical *tirade* by Michael the Syrian.⁷¹ The fact that the populace 'rushes up' to reach the citadel seems to imply that the upper citadel is meant here, though the sources are not precise on this point. Seeing this, Zangī ordered that the sack of the city should cease immediately. The final capitulation was negotiated by Zangī, who had a mild attitude towards the city, with the Metropolitan Basil. The Franks in the upper citadel, despite their cruel refusal to open the gates to the people, were allowed to leave without suffering any damage.⁷²

The Citadel reappears soon in the Syriac sources. In 1145, as both the *Chronicle of 1234* and Barhebraeus relate, Zangī pays an official visit to the city and is welcomed at the East Gate by the Christians, then enters through the North Gate (the Gate of Hours). The chronicler informs us that after the siege the citizens had rebuilt the walls, the upper citadel (also with stones from the demolished churches of Mar Theodore and of the Archangel Michael)⁷³ and the seven fallen towers 'from the foundations,'⁷⁴ decorating the new wall with an account in Arabic characters narrating Zangī's capture of the city; a 'new castle, close to the beautiful shrine of Saint John'⁷⁵ (which has not so far been located; according to Segal⁷⁶ it was in the western part of the city) was being built for the ruler of Edessa. This building does not seem to be identifiable with a further new citadel different from the other ones, since the noun that denotes it (*birtō*) mainly means 'a palace, a castle' and is different from the term for 'citadel' usually employed by the *Chronicle of 1234* (*ḥesnō*). The chronicler then goes on to describe the new buildings of the city, tracing a picture of prosperity.⁷⁷ Already in 1146, however, Zangī died and Joscelin nurtured hopes of conquering Edessa again. He then organized a night expedition against the city. Both Michael the Syrian and the *Chronicle of 1234* relate the events, attesting to the same dynamics although the *Chronicle* is more detailed and Michael gives more room to a mourning over the victims.⁷⁸ On October 27th, 1146, Joscelin and his soldiers climbed the walls, killed the guards, and entered through the West Gate⁷⁹ (the 'Water Gate'⁸⁰), but gave themselves to plundering in the city instead of fighting the Turkish

⁶⁴ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 76; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 56.

⁶⁵ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 77; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 57.

⁶⁶ Segal 1970: 244.

⁶⁷ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 119; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 89; *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* XVII.2, ed. Chabot: 629 T; III, 260 V.

⁶⁸ These towers are mentioned only in *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* XVII.2, ed. Chabot: 629 T; III, 261 V.

⁶⁹ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 122; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 92; there was a breach in the inner wall according to Michael the Syrian (XVII.2, ed. Chabot: 629 T; III, 261 V).

⁷⁰ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 123; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 92-93.

⁷¹ *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* XVII.2, ed. Chabot: 629 T; III, 261-262 V.

⁷² *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 124-125; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 93-94.

⁷³ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 132-134; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 100.

⁷⁴ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 132-133; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 100.

⁷⁵ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 133; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 100.

⁷⁶ Segal 1970: Plan I.

⁷⁷ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot 1916: 133-134; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 100-101.

⁷⁸ Barhebraeus has a more succinct account in *Chronicon Syriacum*, ed. Bedjan: 311-312; trans. Budge: 273.

⁷⁹ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 139; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 105.

⁸⁰ *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* XVI.5, ed. Chabot: 635 T; III, 270-271 V; Barhebraeus, *Chronicon Syriacum*, ed. Bedjan: 311; trans. Budge: 273.

garrison 'in the citadels'⁸¹ (as no further information is provided on their location, we must suppose that this means the lower and the upper citadel, i.e. the eastern and the south-eastern ones). Many Muslims fled into both citadels and the Turks gave them shelter, unlike the Franks in the previous siege: 'they did not behave like the Franks, who had closed the gate during the first siege.'⁸² On the following morning, Joscelin ordered the West-Syrian Metropolitan bishop, Basil, to prepare battering rams to attack the citadels; but the emirs of Aleppo, who had already informed their Edessan counterparts of the arrival of the Franks, had suggested that they 'watch over the city.'⁸³ They were thus ready to defend them. For six days, however, Joscelin only tried to take the lower citadel (thus presumably the eastern one), but could not capture it 'since it was very high and solid,'⁸⁴ in the meantime the city had been surrounded by Turks. In the night of the sixth day, informed of the presence of the Turks around the city and seized by fear, Joscelin decided to depart (secretly, according to the *Chronicle of 1234*);⁸⁵ the Christians of Edessa, who had helped him (or were obliged to do so according to Michael the Syrian), fearing to be abandoned to the Turks (Michael the Syrian and Barhebraeus affirm that the Frankish army obliged them to move), rushed after him to join his army. According to the *Chronicle of 1234*, thousands of desperate people packed the market street leading to the northern Gate of Hours,⁸⁶ and many of them were crushed. Once outside the city, the crowd, who had gathered 'around the tower, i.e. the Column of the Solitaries that had been erected in front of the Shrine of the Confessors,'⁸⁷ was surrounded by the Turks, who started to slaughter soldiers and civilians indiscriminately and pursued them into the plain. Many were killed and many taken prisoner, including the Armenian bishop of Edessa. The Turks then returned to Edessa, and sacked it for a year, devastating it completely. The *Chronicle of 1234* gives a detailed account of the lot of Edessa's Christians, and describes the Turkish invasion of Edessa as the first actual destruction of the city since its foundation by Seleucus at the end of the 4th century BC.⁸⁸ Some Christians who had sought refuge in the upper citadel still managed to flee the following night. Among them was the West-Syrian Metropolitan Basil bar Shamuna, who escaped to Samosata⁸⁹ and later wrote an account of the events of 1144-46. This was the last blow to the Syriac and Armenian communities, who 'from this disaster ... never recovered'⁹⁰ and the last major appearance of the citadel in Syriac sources. The

few mentions of later events regarding the cities allude to further sieges, but Edessa does not receive any major attention in the historical sources after the events of 1146. The *Chronicle of 1234* briefly records a siege by the atabeg of Mosul Sayf al-Dīn Ghāzī, the nephew of Nūr al-Dīn in 1174,⁹¹ and a siege by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in 1183.⁹²

Barhebraeus recalls a further siege occurring in 1235 (but it actually took place in 1234) during the conflict between the Ayyubid Sultan of Egypt, al-Kāmil, and the Seljuk Sultan of Rum, 'Alā al-Dīn Kayqubād I. Edessa came to be one of the points of contention. 'Alā al-Dīn, having heard of the dynastic problems of his enemy al-Kāmil who had been betrayed by his son, gave up a siege of Āmid, which was proving too difficult, and laid siege to Edessa in the month of June:

the men of Edessa who were inside the city fought upon the walls strenuously ... the men of Edessa were very audacious, and they hurled insults and mocking comments at the Sultan [*scil.* 'Ala l-Dīn], and because of this the Sultan was exceedingly angry, and he went personally to attack it. Therefore the troops of Beth Rhomaye fought with their utmost strength and skill, and they captured the city by means of the holes [which they made in the walls], and the ladders which they set up against the ramparts. And a countless host of men thronged into it, and they plundered and looted the houses of the nobles....the [Seljuk] Sultan fortified Edessa anew, and he left therein fighting men, and architects and carpenters ... When Kamil heard of the calamity which had taken place in Edessa, he sallied forth from Egypt with a great army and came against Edessa four months after the army of Beth Rhomaye had departed therefrom. And with great violence he destroyed the great tower of the fortress of Edessa, and he mounted the nobles, and the fighting men, and the artisans whom he found therein on camels and carried them away and sent them to Egypt.⁹³

Very unusually, Barhebraeus mentions here the concrete work of architects and carpenters, which, as we have seen in the previous pages, is normally ignored by the sources, despite the fact that the story of the citadel and of the city walls of Edessa is one of repeated destruction and rebuilding. This is the last mention of the city walls and of the citadel in Syriac sources; remarkably enough, although the city is eventually taken and its walls seriously damaged, it stresses for a last time the brave and strenuous resistance of the Edessans on their ramparts, as on many occasions before, closing its long (Syriac) story of sieges, destructions, and distress on a heroic note.

⁸¹ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 140; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 105.

⁸² *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 140; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 105.

⁸³ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 139; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 104.

⁸⁴ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 140; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 105.

⁸⁵ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 141; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 106.

⁸⁶ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 141; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 106.

⁸⁷ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 142; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 107.

⁸⁸ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 145; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 109.

⁸⁹ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 147; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 110.

⁹⁰ Segal 1970: 254.

⁹¹ *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 171; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 128-129.

⁹² *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. Chabot: 195; trans. Abouna and Fiey: 146.

⁹³ *Chronicon Syriacum*, ed. Bedjan: 468-469; trans. Budge: 401.

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