

# From Edessa to Urfa

## The Fortification of the Citadel

Cristina Tonghini

ARCHAEOPRESS ARCHAEOLOGY



ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD

Summertown Pavilion

18-24 Middle Way

Summertown

Oxford OX2 7LG

[www.archaeopress.com](http://www.archaeopress.com)

ISBN 978-1-78969-756-8

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

© Archaeopress and Cristina Tonghini 2021

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

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owners. This book is available direct from Archaeopress or from our website [www.archaeopress.com](http://www.archaeopress.com)

# Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Conventions.....	iv
Credits.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Özet.....	v
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction to the city, from Edessa to Urfa.....	1
The citadel in previous studies.....	3
Medieval fortifications in the Near East: a personal itinerary from Shayzar to Urfa.....	5
The project: aim, methodology and the presentation of the results.....	9
<b>Part 1 The fortification of the citadel: the written sources</b>	
Building and re-building: a summary of events.....	11
<b>Chapter 2: Edessa and its fortifications in Byzantine times (6th-11th centuries) (N. Zorzi).....</b>	<b>13</b>
The age of Justinian.....	14
The 7th century.....	19
The siege of Edessa of 944 and the <i>translatio</i> of the <i>mandylion</i> to Constantinople.....	19
The second half of the 10th century.....	19
The 11th century events.....	20
<b>Chapter 3: The citadels and the city walls in the Syriac sources (E. Fiori).....</b>	<b>28</b>
The first millennium: of walls and floods.....	28
The second millennium: Turks and Crusaders.....	31
<b>Chapter 4: Edessa in Armenian sources (T.L. Andrews).....</b>	<b>37</b>
Appendix: Descriptions of Edessa's fortifications in Matthew's <i>Chronicle</i> .....	42
<b>Chapter 5: The citadel of al-Ruhā' in the Arabic sources: an overview.....</b>	<b>45</b>
The early Islamic period (7th-10th centuries).....	45
The middle Islamic period (11th-14th centuries).....	46
<b>Chapter 6: The fortifications of Edessa in medieval Latin sources (D. Pringle).....</b>	<b>50</b>
Concerning the cities of the Persians in the Promised Land, especially Edessa or Roas, its conquest, and the war that the Christians are preparing.....	53
Appendix: 'The cities of the Persians in the Promised Land, especially Edessa or Roas, its conquest, and the war that the Christians are preparing' (1146).....	54
<b>Chapter 7: Ruhā in the Persian sources: an elusive presence (S. Cristoforetti).....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Chapter 8: The citadel of Urfa in the Ottoman written sources (O. Usta).....</b>	<b>62</b>
Introduction.....	62
A note on terminology and sources.....	63
Before the Ottomans.....	65
In the 16th century.....	65
In the 17th century.....	68
In the 18th and 19th centuries.....	70
<b>Part 2 The inscriptions from the citadel</b>	
<b>Chapter 9: Notes on some Greek inscriptions from Edessa (N. Zorzi).....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Chapter 10: The Arabic inscriptions of the citadel of al-Ruhā' (Urfa/Şanlıurfa) (R. Giunta).....</b>	<b>82</b>
Abbasids.....	82
Mamluks.....	84

Aq Qoyunlu .....	86
Ottomans .....	90
Other .....	94
<b>Part 3 The fortification of the citadel: the material evidence</b>	
<b>The archaeological analysis .....</b>	<b>102</b>
The site .....	102
Field-work methodology .....	102
Presentation of the results .....	103
<b>Chapter 11: The material evidence: Period 1 (post 3rd-6th centuries?) .....</b>	<b>105</b>
Chronology .....	105
The archaeological analysis .....	109
<b>Chapter 12: The material evidence: Period 2 (post 6th-11th centuries?) .....</b>	<b>118</b>
Chronology .....	118
The archaeological analysis .....	122
<i>Spolia</i> in Tower L1: a preliminary note (A. Ricci) .....	129
<b>Chapter 13: The material evidence: Period 3 (late 11th-12th centuries?) .....</b>	<b>132</b>
Chronology .....	132
The archaeological analysis .....	136
<b>Chapter 14: The material evidence: Period 4 (13th-14th centuries) .....</b>	<b>141</b>
Chronology .....	142
The archaeological analysis .....	144
<b>Chapter 15: The material evidence: Period 5 (15th century) .....</b>	<b>160</b>
Chronology .....	160
The archaeological analysis .....	162
<b>Chapter 16: The material evidence: Period 6 (16th century) .....</b>	<b>172</b>
Chronology .....	173
The archaeological analysis .....	175
<b>Chapter 17: The material evidence: Period 7 (17th century) .....</b>	<b>181</b>
The archaeological analysis .....	181
<b>Chapter 18: The material evidence: Periods 8 (18th-19th centuries) and 9 (post Ottoman to the present)...</b>	<b>184</b>
Period 8 (18th-19th centuries).....	184
Period 9 (post Ottoman to the present) .....	184
<b>Chapter 19: The masonry typology (with Technical Notes by J.-Cl. Bessac) .....</b>	<b>187</b>
<b>Chapter 20: Conclusions .....</b>	<b>203</b>
The constructional history: a summary.....	203
Military architecture, building techniques and beyond.....	206
<b>Plates .....</b>	<b>211</b>
<b>Appendix .....</b>	<b>250</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>256</b>

## Acknowledgements

First of all, I wish to express my gratitude to colleagues who have agreed to give their contribution to the research on the citadel of Urfa and whose expertise has considerably enriched the results offered in this volume. I should also like to thank the members of the small team who took part in field-work at Urfa, a reduced version of the Shayzar team: Enrico Reali, Luca Tarducci, Cinzia Tavernari and Valentina Vezzoli.

I am grateful to my friend and colleague Daniela Meneghini, who was at my side when I visited a number of fortifications in South-eastern Turkey, in 2012, at an early stage of the project.

I wish to thank a number of people who provided support in setting up and in developing the project: the then Italian Ambassador, Gianpaolo Scarante, and the cultural attaché Gianluca Biscardi; the director of my department at that time Paolo Calvetti; my colleagues Guido Rosada, Maria Teresa Lachin and Nicolò Marchetti. For their precious help and fruitful cooperation in field-work in Şanlıurfa thanks are due to our colleagues of Kültür Varlıklarını Koruma Bölge Kurulu Müdürlüğü and of the Müze Müdürlüğü, especially Ramazan Baylan, Bülent Üçdağ and Muhittin Çiçek.

Special thanks go to the late Maria Pia Pedani, who shared her knowledge of the country and of its history, and provided connections that were vital for the development of the project.

I owe a debt of gratitude to many friends and colleagues who in various ways have provided help, advice and ideas in the various phases of the project: Frédéric Bauden, Massimiliano Borroni, Martino Diaz, Antonella Ghersetti, Julia Gonnella, Mattia Guidetti, Claus-Peter Haase, Hansgerd Hellenkemper, Jeremy Johns, Hugh Kennedy, Bora Keskiner, Lorenz Korn, Mehmet Önel, Scott Redford, Alessandra Ricci, Eleanor Sims, Jan Wilson, Duccia Zilio-Grandi.

For their essential support with the Turkish language I thank: Giampiero Bellingeri, Raffaella Biondo, Francesco Boraldo, Nora Elbe, Matthias Kapler.

Anna Camuffo is thanked for her precious help with the administrative aspects of the project.

I am very grateful to John Millerchip for his patient and meticulous work with the revision of the English manuscript.

Funds for the project were provided by the Ca' Foscari University of Venice and by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## Conventions

For the sake of simplification, the modern name of Urfa is used in this publication instead of the various historical possibilities, and instead of the most recent version of it, Şanlıurfa.

For the transliteration of the names of people and places, each chapter dealing with a specific language follows the transliteration system in use in the field of studies concerned. In the rest of the volume, the current version of place names is provided (for example Harran, as it is spelled in today's Turkey, and not Ḥarrān), while for historical toponyms and people the traditional transliterated version of the language of reference is used (*Nūr al-Dīn Zangī*; *Kāhtā* if we use the ancient Arabic toponym for today's Yeni Kale).

Years referring to the Muslim and Syriac calendars are preceded respectively by H (*hijri*) and AG (*Anno Graecorum*), while those relating to the Christian era are not indicated by AD to avoid overloading the text.

## Credits

Texts and photos are by C. Tonghini except where specified otherwise.

Architectural survey: Enrico Reali. Rectified photo-mosaics: Enrico Reali (Total Station Survey) Luca Tarducci (photos and rectification).

Preparation of architectural figures and plates for publication: Enrico Reali.

Archaeological characterization of figures and plates: Cristina Tonghini.

English revision of text: John Millerchip.

Translation from Italian to English: Ch. 2 (Sergio Knipe); Ch. 10 (Neal Putt).

## Abstract

The study offered in this volume is the outcome of an archaeological research project focused on a specific monumental area in the city of Urfa: its citadel.

Urfa is better known to the general reader by its ancient name, Edessa. Most of the studies concerned with Edessa/Urfa have so far been based on the written documentation and are dedicated to the earlier part of its long history. The post-classical period has rarely been the object of dedicated research, especially as far as the material evidence is concerned. This is due in part to the fact that little evidence of the earlier Urfa survives in the modern urban fabric of today. An exception is the city walls, fragments of which can still be seen, including an imposing citadel. An archaeological project was therefore set up to help the potentials of this specific evidence to emerge.

Three seasons of field-work 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). A survey of the abundant written sources from different periods, in different languages (Byzantine Greek, Syriac, Armenian, Arabic, Medieval Latin, Persian and Ottoman Turk) contributed relevant information regarding Urfa and the development of the fortification works.

The volume is organised into three parts. The first contains the results of the survey of written sources, organised according to the language or period involved. The second part offers a study of the inscriptions found at the citadel. The third part presents and discusses the results of the archaeological and architectural analysis, organised in relation to the sequence that was established and arranged into nine different periods. A study of classical decorative elements re-employed in the masonry and a general typology of the masonry of the citadel complete this third part, offering new evidence on the evolution of building techniques through a detailed characterization of the various building phases and their components.

## Özet

(translated by O. Usta)

Bu ciltte yer alan çalışma Urfa şehrindeki özel bir anıtsal alanı, şehrin kalesini, ele alan bir arkeoloji projesinin sonucudur.

Genel okuyucu için Urfa daha çok antik ismi ile bilinmektedir, Edessa. Edessa/Urfa ile ilgili şimdiye kadar yapılan çalışmaların çoğu yalnızca yazılı belgelere dayanarak şehrin uzun geçmişinin daha erken dönemlerine odaklanmaktadır. Özellikle maddi kanıtlar söz konusu olduğunda klasik sonrası dönem nadiren özel bir çalışmanın konusu olmuştur. Bu kısmen erken dönem Urfa'dan geriye az sayıda kalan kanıtın modern kentsel dokunun içinde yer alması nedeniyledir. Görkemli kalesi de dahil olmak üzere bölümleri hala görünen şehir duvarları ise bir istisna oluşturur. Bu nedenle bir arkeoloji projesinin bu özel maddi mirasın potansiyellerinin ortaya çıkması için hazırlanması gerekti. 2014 ve 2016 yılları arasında toplam üç sezonluk bir saha çalışması gerçekleştirildi. Bu çalışmalar yüzeyde kalan korunmuş maddi kalıntıların incelenmesine hasredildi. Çalışmalarda stratigrafi analizi metotları kullanarak kalenin yapım dizileri tanımlandı ve çeşitli yapım aşamalarının özellikleri saptandı. Birbiriyle bağlantılı olan yapım dizilerinin kronolojik bir sıraya dönüştürülmesi öncelikle yerinde bulunan yazıtlara bağlı olsa da tipolojik unsurlara (duvar tipi, dekoratif unsurlar, özel mimari biçimler) da bağlıydı. Farklı dönemlerden ve farklı dillerden zengin yazılı kaynakların (Bizans Grekçesi, Süryanice, Ermenice, Arapça, Ortaçağ Latincesi, Farsça ve Osmanlı Türkçesi) etüt edilmesi Urfa ve tahkimat çalışmaları ile ilgili bilgilere katkı sağladı.

Bu cilt üç kısma ayrılmıştır. İlk kısım yazılı kaynakların araştırma sonuçlarını içermektedir ve ilgili dil ve döneme göre bölümlere ayrılmıştır. İkinci kısım kalede bulunan yazıtların incelenmesine ayrılmıştır. Üçüncü kısım dokuz farklı döneme ayrılmış yapım dizilerini inceleyen ve tartışan arkeolojik ve mimari analizlerin sonuçlarını sunmaktadır. Üçüncü kısım klasik süsleme unsurlarının duvarcılıkta yeniden kullanılmasının ve kale duvarlarının genel bir tipolojisinin bir incelenmesi ile tamamlanmaktadır. Bu inceleme de çeşitli yapım aşamalarının ve bileşenlerinin ayrıntılı bir tavsifi sayesinde yapım tekniklerinin gelişimi üzerine yeni kanıtlar sunmaktadır.



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The studies presented in this volume focus on the citadel of Urfa, a landmark of the cityscape in the past as it still is today.

Contemporary visitors do not perceive much of the long and glorious past of the city through what has survived. It is mainly the fabric of the Ottoman period that emerges now, with its religious, commercial and residential buildings, and only fragments of the ancient and medieval town can still be glimpsed within the dense urban fabric of intra-mural Urfa. Of these, the citadel is one of the more conspicuous elements of the built environment and, to some extent, one of the better-preserved components of the historical city.

Although the citadel can be regarded as a primary source of information for the history of Urfa, it has rarely been the subject of in-depth studies. Those of today's visitors who climb up to the citadel are welcomed with a few, not very accurate, lines concerning the history of the monument itself and they are left with the impression of an empty plateau - with sporadic and much-restored architectural features - from where one can enjoy a great panoramic view over the city.

So an archaeological research project was started in 2014 in an attempt to understand the constructional history of the citadel as a first step toward a better knowledge of the political, economic, social and cultural context that made such an achievement possible. The results of this research are offered in the following pages.

### Introduction to the city, from Edessa to Urfa

The name Urfa or Sanliurfa, as the city is known today, does not say much to the general public outside Turkey. By contrast, the name of Edessa is very widely known, even outside academia: the extraordinary role the city played in the history of religion has left a deep mark in the universal memory. An impressive wealth of studies devoted to it has contributed over the last two centuries to disseminate a certain image of the city and to consolidate the myth being built around it. Indeed, several pages of the history of this city interconnect with biblical and Christian narratives.

It is probably its link with Christian relics, and, more specifically, with the celebrated *mandylion*,<sup>1</sup> that

contributed the most to the growth of its fame. The establishment of the Crusader County of Edessa (1098-1144) reinforced the image of the city as one of the pillars of Christianity in the Middle Ages. Its fall into the hands of 'Imād al-Dīn Zangī in 1144 had wide resonance in the chronicles of the period and shocked the Christian world.

Urfa, however, represents much more than a chapter in the history of Christianity.

The city enjoys a strategic location at the margins of the Mesopotamian plain, about 80km east of the Euphrates river, on a hilly area at the foot of the Taurus mountains, at an altitude of about 500-600m above sea level (Figure 1.1). A steep hill backs the city from the south and south-west, while the River Kara-koyun (ancient Daysan) constitutes its northern and eastern boundaries.

Natural springs originating at the base of the southern hill and the river Kara-koyun guaranteed the city its water supply, but the river was also responsible for devastating floods in the long history of the city. Over the ages Urfa controlled a strategic passage linking northern Mesopotamia to Anatolia, and for centuries occupied a prominent position in the circulation network.

Very little is known about the origin of the city; the historiographical tradition reports that it was founded - or rather re-founded - by Seleucos I on the site of the ancient Urhay, receiving the name of Edessa.<sup>2</sup> The written texts become more informative in relation to the 2nd century BC, when it became the seat of an independent dynasty; the Romans regarded these kings as 'Arabs', and they bore Nabatean or Parthian names.<sup>3</sup> In the context of the endemic rivalry between the Parthian and the Roman empires in this frontier area the city was disputed by the two powers, and eventually became part of the Roman Empire.<sup>4</sup> With the weakening of Roman power, the area again became a contested territory, open to the expansion movements

<sup>2</sup> For a summary of the early history of the city and a discussion of the various toponyms see Segal 1970: 1-8. For further details Duval 1892: 20-29.

<sup>3</sup> A complete list of the kings of the dynasty appears in two different Syriac chronicles, compiled in the 6th and 8th centuries respectively. Honigsmann 1934: 1062-1063 reproduces the complete list, based on earlier work, especially Duval 1892; for the list see also Segal 1970: 15 note 3. For an overview, see Segal 1970: 9-61. See Ch. 3.

<sup>4</sup> For an overview on this early period: Summer 2010.

<sup>1</sup> The bibliography on the *mandylion* is vast; for an overview Ch. 2, note 5; see also Ch. 5.



Figure 1.1. General map of the area, with the location of Urfa

of the Sassanians; however Edessa remained under the authority of the Romans, or Byzantines, as they are called in modern historiography, until the Arab conquest of the year 639. Edessa played an important role in the history of Christianity, and it is said to have been the earliest kingdom to adopt Christianity as its official religion, in the 4th century. As a capital of Christianity, it also became a renowned centre for

literary production in Syriac and the seat of a number of theological schools, important actors in the disputes that marked the history of Christianity in these early centuries.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> On this subject the bibliography is vast, and encompasses the aim of the present work. For an excellent and well-documented overview, though it is now outdated, see Honigmann 1934: 1063. For a more

The political and religious prominence of the city started to fade after the Arab conquest. Under the Muslim dynasties the city was known as *al-Ruhā'*, and then *Urfa*, toponyms most likely derived from the ancient name of *Urhay*, used in the past to identify the city as well as its region.

After the Arab conquest, control over Urfa changed a number of times, reflecting the political changes that affected the region: the various Muslim dynasties who held sway over the area, from the Abbasids through to the Ottomans, had a role in the complex history of Urfa, as did the Byzantines and the Crusaders. Its strategic importance emerges from the written texts which describe the struggle among the various powers of the region to take possession of the town and tell us of the efforts devoted to its fortification.

In general, however, this more recent part of the history of Urfa is not as well known as that of the ancient town, with the possible exception of the Crusader period, when the County of Edessa was founded (1098-1144).<sup>6</sup> In fact, if one considers the volume of studies dedicated to Urfa, it is quite clear that the great majority have been devoted to pre-Islamic Edessa, and that the interest of the scholars has concentrated mainly on its copious written documentation.

This focus on the written documentation is due in part to the fact that little evidence of ancient Urfa survives in the urban fabric of today. Many traumatic events, such as wars and natural disasters, have affected the conservation of its built environment; and the modern expansion occurring in the most recent years has proceeded at a brisk pace, obliterating earlier traces. For a number of reasons no systematic excavations have been conducted in the town, and only occasionally have fragments of the earlier town emerged from the buried deposits, such as the celebrated Haleplibahçe mosaics;<sup>7</sup> more recently, an extraordinary necropolis has emerged, carved into the rock and dating back to the Roman period.<sup>8</sup> The cathedral and the other churches admired in the written texts were destroyed in the first centuries of the Arab conquest,<sup>9</sup> but the city built by the Muslim dynasties also seems to have been lost, with the exception of Ottoman Urfa. Indeed, only a few, isolated monuments of pre-Ottoman Urfa testify to the investment of the Muslim dynasties in its construction, such as the magnificent Great Mosque, of which the earliest datable components can be attributed to the 12th century.<sup>10</sup> This absence is even

more astonishing when we think how renowned the Armenian community of Edessa was for the skill of its master builders.<sup>11</sup>

An exception is constituted by the city walls, fragments of which can still be seen today, including an imposing citadel. These remains are probably the only piece of material evidence that reflects the long history of the town, and testifies to the intervention of the many actors who had a role in the development of the urban fabric. The present research sets out to help the potential of this specific evidence to emerge.

### The citadel in previous studies

As mentioned above, very little of the urban fabric of ancient and medieval Urfa has survived. An exception is constituted by its citadel, which occupies the rocky heights south of the historical town (Figure 1.2).

This prominent feature of the cityscape must have played a very important role in the history of Urfa itself. The citadel is not only an important element for the understanding of relevant chapters in the history of Urfa, but also constitutes a special observatory for the study of medieval fortification in the Near East.

It is well known that the development of medieval fortification in the Near East is the result of the interaction of various components: the legacy from the classical tradition and its transformation in the Byzantine period, the contribution of new actors in the region, such as the various Arab and Turkish dynasties and the role the Armenians played as master builders for the whole region are among the issues that still require further investigation. The long constructional history of the citadel of Urfa seems indeed to reflect this interaction and can be expected to provide new data concerning several aspects.

In spite of this, only rarely has the history of the citadel been specifically addressed and its architecture thoroughly examined. To date, no monographic studies have been dedicated to it.

However, it must also be said that a number of travellers (Ch. 8), and later, scholars, visited and occasionally surveyed the citadel in the past, and have left significant records in the specialistic literature.

The first map of Urfa was published by Carsten Niebuhr in 1778: it is a very schematic representation of the walled area and of the citadel, with no specific

recent work, see Segal 1970: 62-109. See Ch. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Ch. 6. See also Amoureux-Mourad 1988; Ferdinandi 2017; Hellenkemper 1976.

<sup>7</sup> Karabulut, Önal, Dervişoğlu 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Albayarak 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Guidetti 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Gabriel 1940: 280-283; Korn 2004: 285.

<sup>11</sup> The sources often mention the role of the Armenians in the process of fortification building in the Near East, and indeed the famous gates of 11th century al-Qāhira constitute the best-known and the best-preserved example: Dadoyan 1997; Pringle 2014. For a recent work on the subject see Vandekerckhove 2019.



Figure 1.2. General map of Urfa, with the location of the citadel. © Google Earth

features depicted inside them and a very conventional representation of the curtains (Figure 1.3).<sup>12</sup> Other maps were published in the following decades, but did not add much information to this earlier prototype.<sup>13</sup> We have to wait until 1916 for a more realistic general map of Urfa and its citadel.<sup>14</sup> This plan of the citadel then served as the basis of reference for most of the publications that follow. It records the presence of a mosque located along the southern curtain; no traces of it can be identified today.

Again, it is only with the 20th century that the pioneers of archaeological and architectural studies in the region visited the citadel, described and discussed its features and documented it with photos and drawings.

T. E. Lawrence examined the citadel in 1909, and again in 1911; his notes and remarks constitute a first attempt at interpreting and dating some of the relevant features of the citadel, while his photographic documentation is of great value for understanding a number of key elements that have now disappeared or that have been transformed by modern restoration.<sup>15</sup> The photos taken by Gertrude Bell in 1907 and again in 1911 also represent an important reference for the study of Urfa and its citadel.<sup>16</sup>

Creswell visited Urfa and its citadel in 1919, while he was surveying the region and gathering evidence for his tremendous work on Islamic architecture; the photographs from his archive constitute a remarkable piece of documentation for the present research,

<sup>12</sup> Niebuhr 1774-1778, 2: pl. LI.

<sup>13</sup> For a list of early plans of Urfa see Gabriel 1940: 279 note 3.

<sup>14</sup> Guyer 1916: Pls 27 and 31.

<sup>15</sup> Lawrence 1988 (first published 1938); Lawrence 1939.

<sup>16</sup> Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University.

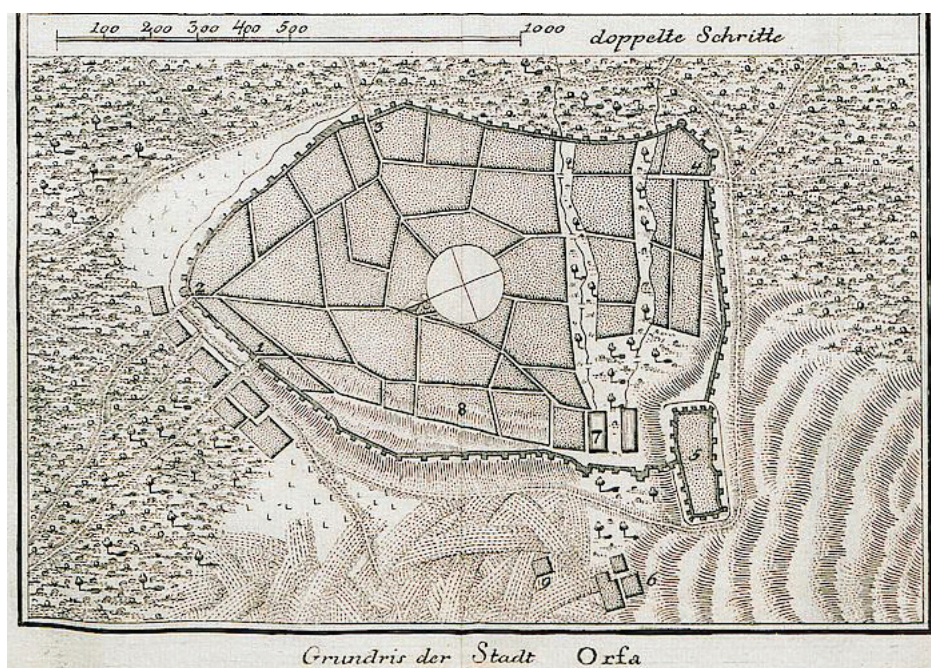


Figure 1.3. Urfa city walls and citadel. After Niebuhr 1774-1778, 2: Pl. LI

and they have been extensively used, referred to and occasionally reproduced in the present volume.<sup>17</sup>

Gabriel dedicates a few lines only to the citadel, but his remarks are, as is often the case, of great interest: at the time of his visit, in April-May 1932, the curtains seemed to have been in a good state, and he comments on the quality of the building bond (*appareil*); he reports that collapsed buildings covered the internal area, making it impossible to single out and survey the various structures.<sup>18</sup> He also admits that he finds it quite difficult to establish a chronology for the work, but he is in favour of a medieval date, rather than an early Byzantine one as proposed by other scholars.<sup>19</sup> He publishes a new plan of the walled city, based on the cadastral map provided by the municipality; it is more informative than earlier maps.<sup>20</sup> His plan of the citadel reflects the one published by Guyer in 1916.<sup>21</sup>

Hellenkemper in his work dedicated to the Crusader County of Edessa publishes the results of his survey of the fortifications in Urfa, with a focus on the citadel. This work contains a schematic map of the citadel, taken from Guyer 1916 with additions,<sup>22</sup> and a number of photographs that testify to the condition of the structures in 1968;<sup>23</sup> the quality of the photos makes

it possible to use them for interpreting some of the structures that have been rebuilt in recent times, such as Tower 3 (see Figure 14.26). His interpretation and discussion of the most important features of the fortification at Urfa and of its citadel are still very useful for an understanding of their long history.

Finally, the work of Sinclair is undoubtedly the most complete of all, as it takes into consideration the whole of the constructional history of the citadel and tries to identify the various phases. However, his survey work on the citadel of Urfa is part of a more general survey of Eastern Turkey, published in four volumes, and therefore the space devoted to the citadel is very limited.<sup>24</sup> In spite of its condensed character, it can still be regarded as the work of reference for many sites, including Urfa and its citadel. Moreover, Sinclair had the chance to visit this part of Turkey just before the most recent season of restoration, which has proved to be quite invasive for a number of sites, and he was able to examine evidence that has now disappeared, destroyed or covered with recent restoration. His photographs constitute documentation of great value for the monumental heritage of the whole area.

### Medieval fortifications in the Near East: a personal itinerary from Shayzar to Urfa

The complex issue of the fortification of settlements in the Medieval Near East has benefitted, in recent decades, from extensive new research; new data have helped to delineate a more complete picture of this

<sup>17</sup> K.A.C. Creswell Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

<sup>18</sup> Gabriel 1940: 279-280.

<sup>19</sup> Gabriel 1940: 279-280 and notes 1-2, 280.

<sup>20</sup> Worth noticing are the comments Gabriel 1940 makes on earlier maps: 279, note 3. He defines the general view of Urfa and its citadel published by Chesney (1850, 1: 114) as '*pittoresque mais non documentaire*' and dismisses the engravings by Buckingham (1827: 51, 69, 95) because they have '*aucun rapport avec la réalité*.'

<sup>21</sup> Guyer 1916: Fig. 20.2.

<sup>22</sup> Hellenkemper 1976: 40.

<sup>23</sup> Hellenkemper surveyed Urfa in 1968, email personal

communication, 2017.

<sup>24</sup> Sinclair 1987-1990, IV: 8-12.



Figure 1.4. General view of the citadel, from the N. Photo Tarducci



Figure 1.5. General view of the citadel, from the NE. Photo Tarducci



Figure 1.6. General view of the citadel, from the S. Photo Reali



Figure 1.7. The ditch on the eastern side, from the S



Figure 1.8. The present ascent to the gate of the citadel, from the NW



Figure 1.9. Modern circulation paths around the citadel, with Balıklıgöl park and the minaret of Maqām al-Khalīl on the right

multifaceted process; some periods and areas are better known than others, but many issues are still in need of in-depth investigation.

The most recent field projects on fortifications have concentrated especially on present-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel, while this topic seems to have been a marginal theme for archaeological research in present-day Turkey.

The extraordinary monumental heritage of Turkey includes a large number of fortifications of different periods, and only a few have been explored in depth. It can also be said that the potential of those fortifications that have been the subject of dedicated research in the past, such as the Armenian fortifications of Cicilia<sup>25</sup> or Crusader fortifications in the County of Edessa,<sup>26</sup> has not been fully exploited and new investigations could certainly provide further crucial elements.

All in all, therefore, it can be said that the fortifications of Anatolia represent a mine of information on the subject of medieval fortifications, and constitute a dream for any archaeologists wishing to pursue this topic; the present writer is no exception.

While the investigations at the citadel of Shayzar, Syria, were underway (2001-2011), the present writer was already aware of the fact that evidence from Turkish fortifications could help in defining a number of important issues, such as the complex relationship between Byzantine, Armenian, and Muslim architectural traditions. But it was only once field-work had to stop in Syria that the present writer actually started to work on the development of an archaeological project in the Turkish area. A first visit to a number of fortifications in south-eastern Turkey was carried out in the autumn 2012, guided by the publications of Edwards 1987 and Sinclair 1987-1990 among others.

This visit confirmed the potential of most sites for further research, but also revealed that a number of fortifications had in the meantime been heavily restored, and many others were undergoing the same process that would unavoidably result in the loss of legibility of the archaeological evidence. Quite naively and unrealistically some archaeologists – and this includes the present writer – keep hoping to find the same situation documented by the pioneers of the field in the early 20th century: sites in a ruinous state but untouched by modernisation and restoration.

The strategy adopted by the project that was designed after that visit, therefore, had to take into account the

<sup>25</sup> Edwards 1987; Vandekerckhove 2019.

<sup>26</sup> Hellenkemper 1976.

ongoing process; instead of focusing on a single site, it was decided to assess the legibility of a number of sites and test the methodology envisaged for fieldwork analysis on a numerically significant sample of fortifications. To avoid dispersion, it was also decided to focus on a specific historical problem: the Mamluk reconstruction of the frontier.

The project *Rebuilding the frontier: Mamluk military architecture on the northern front of the sultanate* was submitted to the Turkish Ministry of Culture in the autumn of 2013, with the support of the Italian Embassy in Ankara<sup>27</sup> and of DSAAM,<sup>28</sup> University of Venice. In spring 2014 the Commission designated by the Ministry approved the project, but asked for it to be transformed into the study of a single site, namely the citadel of Şanlıurfa.

The new task was approached with the greatest enthusiasm, boosted by the opportunity to focus on such an important site. The present writer had visited Urfa on just two occasions, in the late 1980s, while working in al-Raqqa.<sup>29</sup> But on the occasion of a brief transit in October 2013, it became clear that the town had grown tremendously in the meantime, and that the citadel was no longer the one depicted in the photos by Sinclair but had undergone major restoration. To retrieve useful data from the standing, heavily restored structures seemed a major and almost impossible challenge.

### **The project: aim, methodology and the presentation of the results**

The study offered in this volume is the outcome of an archaeological research project designed to establish the constructional history of the citadel of Urfa. Knowledge of such an important and integrated element of the built space, identification of the complex sequence and the characterisation of the various phases can be regarded as the first, indispensable step towards further research aimed at historical interpretation. It constitutes the basic documentation for further investigation of the society that created such an outstanding work of military architecture, to appreciate its technological achievements and to shed light on the political and economic factors that made it possible.

<sup>27</sup> I wish to express my gratitude to the Italian Ambassador at that time, Gianpaolo Scarante, and to the cultural attaché Gianluca Biscardi, for providing the maximum support in this early phase.

<sup>28</sup> I am particularly grateful to Paolo Calvetti, director of the department at that time, for his support in setting up the bureaucratic framework for the project. Invaluable help was provided in this phase by a dear colleague, the late Maria Pia Pedani, who shared her knowledge of the country and of its history, and provided connections that were vital for the development of the project.

<sup>29</sup> At the time my understanding of military architecture was extremely poor, and I took only a few photos of the citadel, a fact that I now bitterly regret.

This study is the precondition for the archaeological exploration of the buried deposit at the citadel; an indispensable step towards formulation of the most complete picture of the history of the citadel, and the only way to answer a number of questions that have emerged from the present study.

The recording of the remains also constitutes an essential element for the protection of the citadel, and, it is hoped, the basis for the development of comprehensive programmes of *mise en valeur*.

More specifically, the present study concentrates on the evidence preserved above ground employing the methods of the stratigraphic analysis of built remains (Part 3. Introduction).

Three seasons of fieldwork were carried out (2014-2016).<sup>30</sup>

The major difficulty in accomplishing this task was the poor legibility of the remains, a consequence of natural erosion, destruction and especially recent restoration. However, parts of the external face of the curtains have been spared the repointing of the joints, while the remains of a number of buildings in the internal area are virtually untouched. The stratigraphic analysis therefore relied on this relatively unspoilt kind of evidence to establish a first sequence, and, subsequently, an attempt was made to include the other structures in this model.

Stratigraphic analysis of the built remains provided a relative sequence, but to anchor it to absolute chronology we had to rely on other sources of information, such as epigraphic, typological and stylistic elements and the evidence from the written sources. Fortunately, a number of inscriptions were still present in the various structures, in the original position in most cases, and they constituted the framework for the formulation of an absolute sequence. Data from the written sources were also integrated into

<sup>30</sup> In 2014 the team consisted of E. Reali (architectural survey), C. Tonghini (stratigraphic analysis), assisted by C. Tavernari and V. Vezzoli, with Ramazan Baylan as inspector for the Kültür Varlıkları ve Müzeler Genel Müdürlüğü. In 2015 E. Reali and L. Tarducci carried out the architectural survey and photogrammetry; C. Tonghini worked on the stratigraphic analysis, with the assistance of C. Tavernari and V. Vezzoli, and Bülent Üçdağ as inspector for the Kültür Varlıkları ve Müzeler Genel Müdürlüğü; Raffella Biondo joined the team as an interpreter and organiser for logistics. In 2016 R. Giunta carried out the study of the inscriptions in Arabic and C. Tonghini completed the stratigraphic analysis, with Muhittin Çiçek as inspector for the Kültür Varlıkları ve Müzeler Genel Müdürlüğü. Jean-Claude Bessac provided his expertise in the study of the building material, on the basis of the photographic documentation. The three seasons were funded by the Università Ca' Foscari of Venice and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

For the translation of the documentation and of the reports from Italian to Turkish we were able to count on Nora Elbe; and for the translation from Turkish to Italian on Francesco Boraldo.

the final interpretation. Indeed, an important part of the research project concerned the study of the written documentation. This comprises a very large *corpus* compiled in a number of different languages over a long stretch of time, and required the cooperation of a team of historians specialized in the various periods and languages.

The presentation of the results is organised into three parts. The first contains the results of the survey of written sources, organised according to the language

or period involved. The second part offers a study of the inscriptions found at the citadel. The third part presents and discusses the results of the archaeological and architectural analysis, organised in relation to the sequence that was established and arranged into nine different periods; a general typology of the masonry of the citadel completes this third part.