

**CONSTANTINE AND HIS MOTHER BUILD A CITY:
HELEN OF EDESSA AND MARTYROPOLIS**

Imperial cities, by definition, intimately connect with imperial rulers. Some, like Niš, grew famous as their birthplaces. Many were renamed to honour the reigning emperor or a member of his family. Others gloried in the walls and monuments with which particular emperors adorned them. With Constantine these imperial gifts began to include churches rather than temples, and the deposition of the relics of saints, whose shrines radiated the city's fame and by extension its benefactor. Imperial munificence was vindicated through the glory of the saints' lives, their deaths, and the reputed wonder of their miracles. Saint and ruler magnified one another. 'Augustopolis' and cities named for saints, for example Sanctos, Xanten on the Rhine, were two expressions of a single idea, the imperial city as personification of majesty and divine approbation.

To the studies of Niš as a provincial capital, Constantine's creation of Constantinople, and the Constantinian devotional and monumental remodelling of Jerusalem, this paper adds a case-study from the imperial frontier: Martyropolis on the headwaters of the Tigris. Today it is Silvan, a town of south-eastern Turkey, called Mayâfârqîn or plain Fârqîn by its Aramaic-speakers, Muhargin by Kurds, and in Syriac anciently known as Maipherqat. Tradition declared that Constantine and Helena fortified the city, built its Great Church, and safeguarded its water supply; their names were inscribed on its walls. In addressing the issues of the symposium and providing a first unified overview of Silvan's related archaeology, this article also explores further the presentation of Constantine's mother Helena as a native of Mesopotamia, not Bithynia as customarily accepted.¹

That image adds interest to a wider theme across earlier essays: the likely resonance of her name in Helena's lifetime. Was her reputation enhanced, then or posthumously, by awareness of the heroic and divine aspects of the Greek Helen?² What of further comparisons available to Eastern Christians? There

¹ Graham Jones, 'Helen of Mesopotamia: The view from Edessa', in Miša Rakocija (ed.), *Niš and Byzantium. Ninth Symposium, Niš, 3-5 June 2010. The Collection of Scientific Works IX* (Niš, University of Niš, 2011), pp. 427-46, hereafter Jones, 'Edessa'.

² Graham Jones, 'The power of Helen's name: Heritage and legacy, myth and reality', in Miša Rakocija (ed.), *Niš and Byzantium. Seventh Symposium, Niš, 3-5 June 2008. The*

was Queen Helena of Adiabene, east of the Tigris, whose career, three centuries before that of her namesake, resembles it closely, probably influencing her son's religious conversion, building public monuments in the Holy City, and long remembered for her piety.³ Helena's name also appears to have been borne by, or assigned by tradition to a queen of Abgar V of Edessa, capital of neighbouring Osrhoene between the Tigris and the Euphrates, and an Edessan princess, mentioned in tenth- and twelfth-century texts which made Constantine her son.⁴

Like Adiabene, Osrhoene experienced early conversion to Christianity and took Constantine's mother into its historiography in a further scenario which reinvented her as a first-century empress Protonike, 'First Victory'. This idea, and the inter-linking of Protonike, the Herodian Berenice, and the composite biblical figure of Veronica, fed anti-Jewish sentiment.⁵ The figure of Helen/a begins to emerge as a bridge between the ancient and Christianised worlds of the Mediterranean and Near East. The case of Martyropolis is further testimony, involving a third Mesopotamian kingdom, Sophanene, and bringing Constantine and Helen/a together in a pseudo-historical act of imperial city-building.

Marūthā, his city, and its history

Helen of Edessa, the subject of a report dated by one scholar to the mid-fifth century but attributed to the slightly earlier Marūthā, bishop of Maipherqat,⁶ appears again in a text describing Marūthā's city.⁷ A physician, Marūthā famously mediated with the Sassanid Persian king Yazdegerd I on behalf of emperors Arcadius in 399 and Theodosius II in 408, also healing the king's headaches and his son's 'demons'.⁸ A mass of relics which Marūthā brought back from his

Collection of Scientific Works VII (Niš, University of Niš, 2009), pp. 351-70.

³ Graham Jones, 'Helena of the Cross, the Queen of Adiabene, and royal myth-making in the Holy City', in Miša Rakocija (ed.), *Niš and Byzantium. Eighth Symposium, Niš, 3-5 June 2009. The Collection of Scientific Works VIII* (Niš, University of Niš, 2010), pp. 447-70.

⁴ Jones, 'Edessa', pp. 428-35.

⁵ Jones, 'Edessa', pp. 439-45.

⁶ Jones, 'Edessa', pp. 428-35.

⁷ On Silvan's history, Vladimir Minorsky and Carole Hillenbrand, 'Mayyāfāriḳīn', in P. Bearman *et al* (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam. A Dictionary of the Geography, Ethnography and Biography of the Muhammadan Peoples* (2nd edn, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 2011), 6, p. 928, hereafter *EI*.

⁸ In later accounts, Yazdegerd's daughter. Socrates Scholasticus, *The Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, 2 (Buffalo, Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890), 7, ch. 8. For career summaries, Elizabeth Key Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius between Rome and Iran* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999), Ch. 2, 'Martyr Cult on the Frontier: The Case of Mayperqat',

first mission – representing the victims of Sapor II's persecution (341), 1,150, mostly Assyrian, and Bahram IV's (388-399)⁹ – led to the city's renaming as Martyropolis. The earliest record of these remarks about Helen comes seven centuries after Marūthā's lifetime, in 1177, when a locally born scholar, Ibn al-Azraq al-Fariki ('the Farikene'), copied material from a Syriac tash'ita ('account' or 'history') preserved in a Melkite church.¹⁰ Convinced of its authenticity, he had it translated into Arabic by a Christian.¹¹ Circa 1223 Al-Azraq's

hereafter Fowden, 'Plain', pp. 45-59, esp. pp. 48ff.; Francis Mersham, 'St. Maruthas', in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (16 vols, New York, Robert Appleton, 1907-14), hereafter 'Catholic Encyclopedia', 9 (1913); Eugène Tisserant, 'Marouta de Maypherqat (Saint)', *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, 10 (Paris, Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1928), pp. 142-49, hereafter Tisserant, 'Marouta'; David Bundy, 'Marutha of Maipherqat', *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (2nd edn, New York/London, 1997), pp. 732-33. Hagiography: *Acta Sanctorum* (Brussels, Société des Bollandistes), 4 Dec., pp. 565-66; *Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca* [BHG], ed. F. Halkin (3 vols in 1, Brussels, Société des Bollandistes [1957]) = *Subsidia Hagiographica* 8a, 2265 [Greek, ?early fifth century] and 2266 [eleventh century, based on 2265] (both trs. with commentary by Jacques Noret, 'La vie grecque ancienne de S. Marūthā de Mayferqat', *Analecta Bollandiana* 91 (1973), pp. 77-103, hereafter Noret, 'Vie grecque'); a twelfth-century copy of an Armenian translation of a Syriac Life, seventh century or later, printed in *Vark' ew Vkyabanout' iunk' Srboç* ['Lives and Passions of the Saints'] (Venice, 1874), 2, pp. 17-32, is trs by Ralph Marcus, 'The Armenian Life of Marutha of Maipherkat', *The Harvard Theological Review* 25 (1932), pp. 47-71, hereafter Marcus, 'Marutha'. Its precursor may be shadowed in MS Sinai, Syr. 24, fol. 200: Sebastian P. Brock, 'A fragment from a Syriac Life of Marutha of Martyropolis', *Analecta Bollandiana* 128:2 (2010), pp. 306-11, hereafter Brock, 'Life'.

⁹ Brock, 'Life'.

¹⁰ Abd Allah bin al-Azraq al-Fariki, *Tarih Mayyafariqin*, MSS BL Or. 5803, hereafter Al-Azraq, 'MS 5803', and 6310 (at fol. 7b *et seq.* in MS 5803), hereafter 'Al-Azraq', summarised and discussed by H[enry] F. Amedroz, 'Three Arabic MSS. on the history of the city of Mayyāfāriqīn', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1902, pp. 785-812, hereafter Amedroz, 'MSS', p. 796, and Chase F. Robinson, 'Ibn al-Azraq, his *Ta'rikh Mayyāfāriqīn*, and early Islam', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (Third Series), 1996, 6, pp. 7-27, hereafter Robinson, 'Ibn al-Azraq'. The synoptic version is in Yāqūt, 4, 703-7 (see below) and Abu Yahya al-Qazwini, *Kitab Athar al-bilad wa-akhbar al-'ibad* ('Monument of Places and History of God's Bondsmen'), ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, Dieter, 1848), 2, pp. 379-80, hereafter Al-Qazwini, 'Kitab', and trs. with notes by Joseph Marquart [a.k.a. Josef Markwart], 'Mipherqet und Tigranokerta', *Handes Amsorya* [organ of the Mekhitarists of Vienna], 1916, hereafter Markwart, 'Handes', cols 125-35, and *Sudarmenien und die Tigrisquellen nachgriechischen und arabischen Geographen* (Vienna, Mechitharisten-Buchdruckerei, 1930), pp. 184-202, hereafter Markwart, 'Sudarmenien'. Minorsky, *EI*, mistakenly called the church Jacobite.

¹¹ Jean-Maurice Fiey, 'Mārūthā de Martyropolis d'après Ibn al Azraq', *Analecta Bollandiana* 94 (1976), pp. 35-45, hereafter Fiey, 'Marutha', p. 36; 'Martyropolis syriaque', *Le Muséon* 89:1-2 (1976), pp. 5-38, hereafter Fiey, 'Muséon'. For Al-Azraq as historian, Carole Hillenbrand, 'The History of the Jazira 1100-1150: The Contribution of Ibn al-Azraq al-Fariki', unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1979, and Harry Munt, 'Ibn al-Azraq, Saint Marūthā, and the Foundation of Mayyāfāriqīn (Martyropolis)', in Arietta Papaconstantinou, Muriel Debié, and Hugh Kennedy (eds), *Writing 'True Stories': Historians and Hagiographers in the Late Antique and Medieval Near East*. Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 9 (Turnhout, Brepols, 2010), pp. 149-74, hereafter Munt, 'Al-

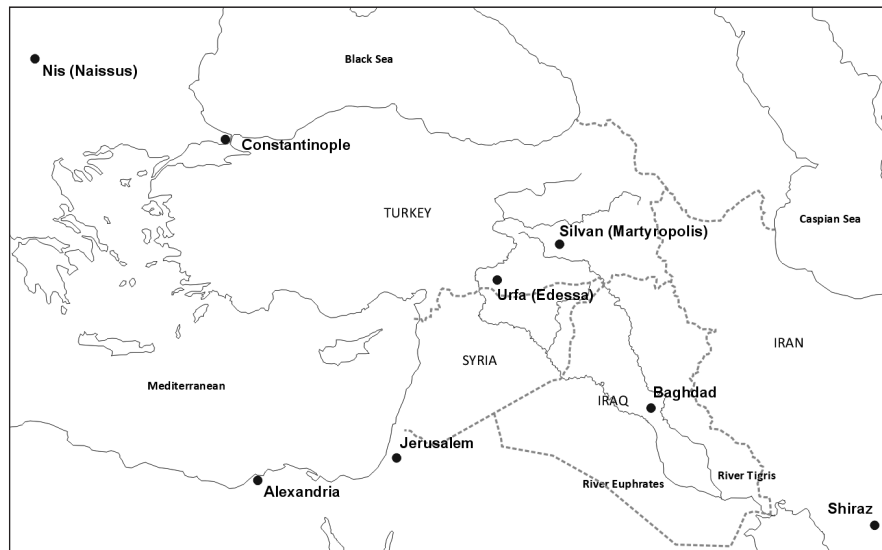


Fig.1. Silvan/Martyropolis in the wider setting.

Сл.1. Силван/ Мартирополис у ширем окружењу.

material was embedded by the Greek-Syrian biographer and geographer Yâqût al-Hamawî (1179-1229) in his 'Dictionary of Nations',¹² detectable through signposting phrases like 'until our days'.¹³

Silvan lies 70km north-east of Diyarbakir (ancient Amida) and 115km south-west of Lake Van (Fig. 1), where the deeply incised southern foothills of the Hazro massif (Albo Dagi) meet the Tigris plain. Several scholars have thought it a possible location of Tigranakert, Armenia's ancient capital built circa 80 BCE by Tigran the Great.¹⁴ More recent research makes it likelier this was modern Egil, further west,¹⁵ and mid-nineteenth-century inhabitants

Azraq' (p. 152 for a summary of his career).

¹² Yâqût al-Hamawî, *Mu'jam albuldân* [modern Arabic edition], ed. Farid al-Jundi (6 vols, Beirut, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1990), 5, pp. 236-8, and [an older edition] *Jacut's Geographisches Wörterbuch: aus den Handschriften zu Berlin, St. Petersburg und Paris*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (6 vols, Leipzig, F. A. Brockhaus, 1866-73), hereafter Yâqût 'Buldan', 4, pp. 703-08, trs. Markwart, 'Handes' and 'Sudarmenien'. A short extract, trs Jean Sauvaget, is in 'Mayyâfâriqîn, Bitlis, Akhlât', in Albert Gabriel, *Voyages archæologiques dans la Turquie orientale, avec un recueil d'inscriptions arabes par Jean Sauvaget* (2 vols, Paris, E. de Boccard, 1940), hereafter Gabriel, 'Voyages', 1, Texte, pp. 219-20, and 2, Planches, plates 76-80, at 1, pp. 219-20. Yâqût's source is discussed by Fiey, 'Marutha'.

¹³ For this, noted by Markwart, 'Sudarmenien', p. 185, see Amedroz, 'MSS'. Where Al-Azraq and Yâqût refer to Marûthâ, their common source is a lost Syriac text, possibly the one translated into Armenian.

¹⁴ e.g. C[arl] F[erdinand Friedrich] Lehmann-Haupt, *Armenien, Einst und Jetzt* (Berlin, B. Behr's Verlag, 1910), hereafter Lehmann-Haupt, 'Armenien', 1, pp. 381ff.

¹⁵ Richard Lim (ed.), *Another Look at East and Southeast Turkey: A Traveller's Handbook* (Diyabakir, Union of Southeast Anatolia Region Municipalities, 2009), 8, Diabakir,

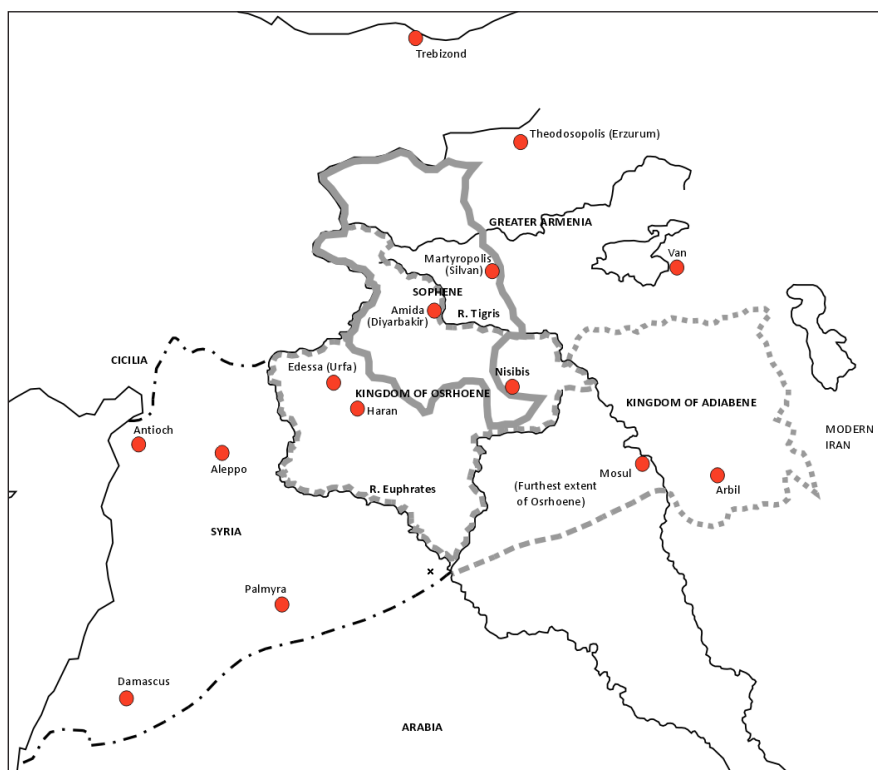


Fig.2. Upper Mesopotamian kingdoms in Late Antiquity (greatest extents): Sophene, continuous thick line; Osrhoene, heavy broken line; Adiabene, lighter broken line. Dash-dot lines indicate approximate northern and southern extent of Syria.

Сл.2. Краљевства Горње Месопотамије у позном античком периоду (увећано): Софена, непрекидна пуна линија; Ошрена, пунија испрекидана линија; Адиабена, слабија. Линије црта тачка означавају приближни северни и јужни обим Сирије.

of Silvan believed their town was founded by Noupfar, one of the king's sisters – Noupfargerd (Np'rkert, Np'ret) being the name Armenian geographers gave it in the seventh century.¹⁶ Together with Amida, Edessa (modern Urf), and Nisibis (modern Nusaybin), the future Martyropolis grew wealthy from the region's location astride one of the world's great crossroads of trade and

hereafter 'Another Look', p. 294. Ronald Syme, ed. Anthony Richard Birley, *Anatolica: Studies in Strabo* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995, repr. 2003), hereafter Birley, 'Anatolica', p. 65. T. Rice Holmes, 'Tigranocerta', *Journal of Roman Studies* 7 (1917), pp. 120-38.

¹⁶ J. G. Taylor, 'Travels in Kurdistan, with Notices of the Sources of the Eastern and Western Tigris, and Ancient Ruins in their Neighbourhood', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, 35 (1865), pp. 21-58, hereafter Taylor, 'Kurdistan'. On the references in the Armenian Geography attributed to Moses of Chorene and trs. by K[eropé] P[Petrovich] Patkanian or Patkanov, see Josef Markwart, *Iranshahr nach der Geographie des Ps. Moses Xorenac'i*, Abhandlungen der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Philologisch-Historische Klasse. Neue Folge, Band 3 (1899-1901) (Berlin, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1901), pp. 142, 161-62. Markwart connected Armenian Np'rkert with Syrian Maifarqet.

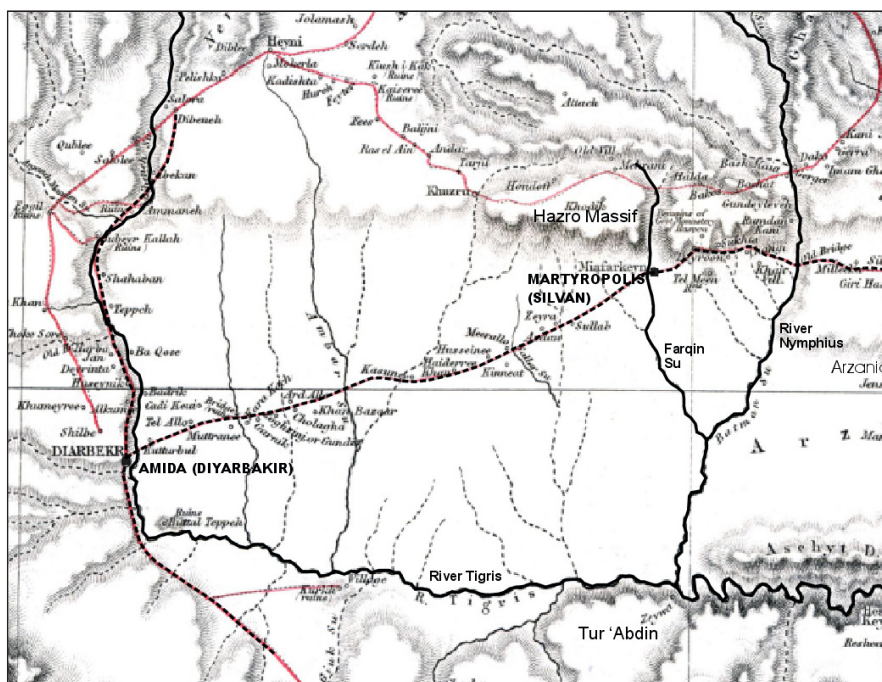


Fig.4. Silvan/Martyropolis in its region.

Сл.4. Силван/ Мартирополис у својој области.

with Martyropolis its capital (Fig. 3) – Procopius called it Justinianopolis. Nevertheless it was lost to Persia after a series of battles and sieges, passing to Muslim Arabs circa 700 and in 983 to the Kurdish Marwanid dynasty, whose capital it frequently was.²⁰ The walls were restored by Mumahhid al-Dawla Sa'id (997-1011), who submitted to Basil II, receiving the titles of magistrate and dux of the East.²¹ His name survives over a gate.²² At the peak of Marwanid power, Nasr al-Dawla Ahmad ibn Marwan (1011-61) built a new palace, bridges, baths, and a hospital.²³

²⁰ Birley, 'Anatolica', pp. 56, 65, citing the *Codex Justinianus* and Procopius, *De aedificiis* ['On Buildings'], trs. H. B. Dewing, *The Buildings of Procopius*, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1940), hereafter Procopius, 'Aedificiis', 7, Bk 3, Ch. 2:2. H. F. Amedroz, 'The Marwānid dynasty at Mayyāfāriqīn in the tenth and eleventh centuries A.D.', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (Jan., 1903), pp.123-54, hereafter Amedroz, 'Marwānid'.

²¹ Ephrem-Isa Yousif, *Les Chroniquers Syriaques* (Paris, L'Harmattan, 2002), hereafter Yousif, 'Chroniquers', excerpts trs by him into English at <<http://www.ofkparis.org/english/kurdish-princes.htm>>, and 'Marwanids', <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marwanids>>, both accessed December 3, 2011.

²² *The Chronography of Elias bar-Sinaya, Metropolitan of Nisibe*, ed. and trs. L.-J. Delaporte (Paris, 1910), p. 138.

²³ Yousif, 'Chroniquers'. Cf. Carole Hillenbrand, 'Marwanides', *EI*, 2nd edn, 6 (1991), pp. 611-12. On the hospital, see Usaybia, *Uyun Al Anba Fi Tabaqat Al Atibba*, a

The then Mīyafaraqīn or Maipherqat also had a noted school – alumni included the seventh-century mathematician Anania and in the eleventh the court philosopher and physician Ibn Butlān and the Christian physician Gabriel bin 'Abd Allah bin Bokhtisho. Nevertheless, decline set in after a former vizier overran the city in 1085 and carried off the Mawanids' treasures. By around 1150 it was little more than a large village,²⁴ though Ayyubid kings of Mesopotamia ruled, rebuilt defences and minted coins here from 1200 until 1260 when it was sacked by the Mongols. When Antonio Tenreiro, en route between Portugal and India, visited in 1529, he was told the city had been destroyed in Timur/Tamurlane's invasion of 1401.²⁵ Finally the region was devastated by episodes of inter-communal violence towards the end of the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth, worsened by geographic isolation, obscurity, neglect and under-development of this part of the Ottoman territories, and deprivation from famines in the 1880s.²⁶ In 1895, 700 Armenians allegedly died in a church set on fire by Kurds.²⁷

Silvan was now much reduced, judging by the drawings and descriptions of the Orientalist Carl Ferdinand Friedrich Lehmann-Haupt²⁸ and his companion Waldemar Belck²⁹ in 1899. Already in the 1830s the soldier Helmuth von Moltke recalled 'only rubble and the fresh signs of the destructive war which brought trouble to the Kurds' alongside 'the beautiful tower of a great castle where the Arsazes' successors lived'.³⁰ Today, the revitalised town and neighbourhood constitute a prosperous district of Diyarbakir province, with 76,000 inhabitants. In 1881/2-1893 the enumerated population of the administrative district was only about a quarter of that:³¹ 500 to 600 families in Silvan itself in 1899, two-thirds Kurdish, 150 Armenian, 28 Syrian Orthodox ('Jacobites') and 25 Chaldean.³²

collect of biographies (Cairo, 1921, rep. Beirut), p. 341, trs. by Yousif. See also Robinson, 'Al-Azraq', p. 24.

²⁴ Anne Elizabeth Redgate, *The Armenians* (Oxford, Blackwells, 1998, repr. 2002), p. 188.

²⁵ Antonio Tenreiro, *Itinerario de Antonio Tenreiro* (Lisbon, 1560, rep. Typ. Rolandiana, 1829), hereafter Tenreiro, 'Itinerario', Ch. 27, p. 406, col. 2.

²⁶ Sébastien Courtois, *The Forgotten Genocide: Eastern Christians, the Last Arameans*, trs. Vincent Aurora (Piscataway NJ, Gorgias, 2004), pp. 1-2, 11.

²⁷ Fiey, 'Muséon', p. 23.

²⁸ Lehmann-Haupt, *Armenien*, between pp. 381 and 429, esp. illustrations on pp. 399, 'Farkin-Tigranokerta von der Kalah aus', and 419, 'Das kurdische Felsschloss Boschât'.

²⁹ Waldemar Belck, 'Aus den Berichten über die armenische Expedition', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 31, Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte, Verhandlungen, 1899, pp. 236-75, hereafter Belck, 'Expedition', at pp. 270-75.

³⁰ Helmuth, Graf von Moltke, *Moltke's Briefe aus der Türkei* (Hamburg, 1927), p. 302.

³¹ 5,186 Muslim males, 6,189 females; 3,049 Armenian males, 3,511 females; 239 Monophysite males, 285 females; 78 Greek males, 84 females; 69 Catholic males, 83 females; 24 Protestant males, 21 females. Kemal H. Karpat, 'Ottoman population records and the Census of 1881/82-1893', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 9:3 (October 1978), pp. 237-74, p. 265.

³² Belck, 'Expedition', p. 272.

Helen's place in a jumbled chronology

Al-Azraq's material – 'Account of the beginning of the building of Mayyāfāriqīn, he who undertook it, and in what time' – also surveys some of its pre-Islamic monuments and was inspired by a book about the building of Baghdad'.³³ Al-Azraq added other literary and epigraphic sources plus his own comments on the monuments' location, dating, and condition, ending with historical notes on the city under Persian rule and its Arab conquest.³⁴

Helen, a princess of Edessa,³⁵ is taken to wife by Theodosius II when he journeys through the Orient (i.e. the Roman prefecture of the East). Theodosius founds Constantinople, and in a subsequent episode wrenched out of chronological time, Constantine and his mother Helena (seemingly identified with the Edessan princess, making Constantine Theodosius' son) build 'certain parts' of Martyropolis, including its Great Church. The Sassanian king had a daughter for whom no cure was forthcoming in Persia, so he had asked Constantine for help. The emperor sent Marūthā, physician-bishop and son of city governor Liyuta. The king showed his thanks for his daughter's recovery by making peace with Rome and allowing Marūthā to gather the bones of martyrs and take them home. Constantine in turn offered to help Marūthā to fortify his city. Marūthā began the work, but enemies put it about that he planned to abandon allegiance to Rome. Constantine sent officials to investigate, and on receiving their reassurance put his support behind the project. He and his mother come to see the work, and with three ministers ('viziers') contribute monuments to the scheme of public architecture.

The building is said to have been undertaken during the government of 'King' Antūs (also spelled Antūš, Antŷš) – an inscription on a gate referring to 'Antūs and Aldokūs' had been mentioned by Sem'ān, a Christian astronomer at Alexandria, originally from Constantinople, probably Stephanus of Alexandria (circa 500x555 to circa 622). Antūs is likely to have been satrap of Sophanene, while Aldokūs' name possibly combines the Arabic article with Latin dux.³⁶ The latter military title would be appropriate on the frontier – after Armenia's partition, the more northerly parts remaining to Rome were ruled from Theodosiopolis (Erzurum) by a Count (comes) of Armenia³⁷ – and Martyropolis did indeed receive a dux circa 500.³⁸

The 'anachronismes flagrants',³⁹ of which this may be one, leave the chronology hopelessly confused. Fiey suspected that Al-Azraq's material conflated two generations, those of Marūthā and his father the governor.⁴⁰ Another ac-

³³ Al-Azraq, MS 5803, fols. 7a-b, translated by Robinson, 'Al-Azraq', p. 11.

³⁴ *Ibid*, fols. 7b to 12b, cited by Fiey, Robinson and other commentators.

³⁵ A recent treatment of the city and kingdom is J. B. Segal, *Edessa, 'the Blessed City'* (Piscataway, New Jersey, Gorgias Press, 2001), hereafter Segal, 'Edessa'.

³⁶ The suggestion of Fiey, 'Marutha'.

³⁷ Garsoïan, 'Dynasty', p. 93.

³⁸ J. D. Howard-Johnston, *East Rome, Sassanian Persia and the End of Antiquity* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006), p. 221.

³⁹ Noret, 'Vie grecque', p. 98.

⁴⁰ Fiey, 'Marutha'.

count of Marūthā, a Life claiming to be a translation from Syriac into Armenian, dated to the seventh century or later and known from a text of the twelfth,⁴¹ describes how his grandfather Outa or Ota (n.b. Liyuta in the Syriac tash'ita), 'chief of wise men' (i.e. magi) converted to Christianity after marriage to Maria, daughter of an Armenian chief of Sasun, 50km north-east of Maipherkat, acquiring the name Marūthā (Marūthā the First, therefore). Maria built the church where their grandson studied for the priesthood.

A text purporting to be a report by him of the Council of Nicaea in 325, further places Marūthā II in the second decade of the fourth century. Here 'Marouta of Mepairkat' was one of only eleven assembled bishops not bearing marks of torture.⁴² Perhaps the first Marūthā, 'a pagan high-priest of Mesopotamia' as one Orientalist described him,⁴³ also became bishop, following his marriage-conversion dated to 313. (Popular etymology read Syriac marūthā, 'lordship', as Mar Utha, 'Lord of Utha'.⁴⁴ Could that extend to 'Holy', 'Saint' Outa?)

Munt has found Al-Azraq guilty of switching Constantine and Theodosius in his source narratives so as to have the former found both Constantinople and Martyropolis.⁴⁵ However, the Syriac intention may have been different: to reconcile the original creation of the fortified city and its re-creation as Martyropolis.

A further purpose seems clear: in Edessenēs' eyes Constantine's mother was a princess of their city. The story thus mirrors the traditions in Britain, also written down in the twelfth century and set at the end of the fourth, that Helen was daughter of a regional king, Cole of Colchester according to English narratives, Eudaf of Caernarfon in the Welsh. This Helen was married to the usurper Magnus Maximus (383-388), a contemporary and quondam comrade of Theodosius the Great. Another parallel with medieval British legend is that the wall of Martyropolis is attributed specifically to Constantine and its Great Church jointly to 'the king and his mother'.⁴⁶ British traditions credited Helen daughter of Cole with the walls of Colchester and Helen of Caernarfon with the Roman roads of Wales, 'Sarn Helen'.⁴⁷ Communities in various parts of the former empire claimed Helena as their own.⁴⁸ As for Theodosius II's actual

⁴¹ Marcus, 'Marutha'.

⁴² 'A brief account of the council (of Nice), as given by Marutha of Meparkat by direction of the Patriarch Isaac', trs by Roger Pearse from Yale University Syriac MSS, 8, Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 53,27-54,10, published 2007 online at <http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/marutha_nicaea_02_text.htm>, accessed November 30, 2011. See also Oscar Braun, *De Sancta Nicaena Synodo. Syrische Texte des Maruta von Maipherkat nach einer Handschrift der Propaganda zu Rom Übersetzte*, (Muenster 1898), 4, pp. 128ff.

⁴³ Taylor, 'Kurdistan'.

⁴⁴ Marcus, 'Marutha', p. 56.

⁴⁵ Munt, 'Al-Azraq', pp.171-72.

⁴⁶ Al-Azraq, summarised by Amedroz, 'MSS'.

⁴⁷ Jones, 'Helen'.

⁴⁸ Graham Jones, 'Aspects of Helen: Byzantine and other influences on the reading of Constantine's mother in the West', in Miša Rakocija (ed.), *Niš and Byzantium. Second Symposium, Niš, 3-5 June 2003. The Collection of Scientific Works II* (Niš, University of Niš, 2004), pp. 13-27, hereafter Jones, 'Helen'.

wife, she was Athenais, daughter of a philosopher who was not a Christian. She converted and took the name Aelia Eudocia.⁴⁹ It is not known which religion or deities she and her father had followed, though her name suggests a Greek background. The names Aelia and Aelianus/a (the latter giving the modern Elia) have been said to derive ultimately from the Greek *helios* ('sun'). Aelia was also the name the Romans gave to Jerusalem, rebuilt after its destruction.

There is no doubting either the significance of Theodosius' name on Rome's eastern frontier. Two places were renamed Theodosiopolis. One was in Osroene: ancient Resaina, the modern Syrian border town of Ra's al-'Ayn. More important was modern Erzurum (Arz-e Rûm), renamed under Theodosius I following Armenia's partition in 387,⁵⁰ or in 415 by a general of Theodosius II.⁵¹ The figure of Theodosius, père or fils, was sufficiently memorialised in Mesopotamia for a union with Helena to slip effortlessly into regional myth.

The buildings 'of Constantine and Helen': Reconstructing Martyropolis

Martyropolis was a product of its location. Streams springing from the foot of the limestone massif and feeding the Batman Su (ancient Nymphius),⁵² carved a heart-shaped sloping and undulating knoll. The very name Maipherqat is explained as 'the divided waters', meaning the Farkin Su and its tributary which enclosed the walled city.⁵³ The former's 'extraordinarily strong' spring poured out such a volume of water (now canalised through irrigated gardens) that it created a flat-bottomed ravine down the western side of Silvan, enhancing the defensiveness of its walled core.⁵⁴

So much has changed, even since the French scholar Albert Gabriel, acting as a government-sponsored archaeological prospector, surveyed Silvan in 1932, that it is difficult to visualise the place when still a village. In May 1911 the visiting British archaeologist Gertrude Bell took notes and photographs of three ruined buildings: a basilica, domed church, and central mosque.⁵⁵ Of

⁴⁹ Kenneth G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982), pp. 112-14.

⁵⁰ Nina G. Garsoïan, 'The Foundation of Theodosiopolis-Karin', in *Armenian Karin/Erzerum*. University of California at Los Angeles Armenian History and Culture Series: Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces, 4, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (Costa Mesa, Mazda Publishers, 2003), pp. 63-72.

⁵¹ Frederick Walpole, *The Ansayrii and the Assassins: With Travels in the Further East in 1850 to 1851, including a Visit to Neneveh, Part 2* (London, R. Bentley, 1851), p. 176.

⁵² Kathleen Nicholl, 'Landscape development within a young collision zone: implications for post-Tethyan evolution of the Upper Tigris River system in southeastern Turkey', *International Geology Review*, 2009, pp. 1-19, p. 12.

⁵³ Dillemann, 'Mésopotamie', p. 254.

⁵⁴ Lehmann-Haupt, *Armenien*, p. 391; 'Weiterer bericht über den Fortgang der Armenischen Expedition', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 1899, pp. 281-90, p. 605; Belck, 'Expedition', p. 272.

⁵⁵ Gertrude Lowthian Bell, 'The Churches and Monasteries of the Tur 'Abdin and Neighbouring districts', *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Architektur* 9 (Heidelberg, 1913),

the churches, only rubble was visible in 1968.⁵⁶ Luckily some postcards and the occasional traveller's log allow a glimpse of what was. The archaeologist John George Taylor, British Consul-General for Kurdistan at Diyarbakir and Erzurum, passing through in October 1861,⁵⁷ described it as

'situated in the midst of gardens... Two small streams of little depth, that have their rise in copious springs close to the town walls, wash them on either side, and irrigate the rice-grounds and plantations. The town, wretched and miserable itself, is surrounded by a fine stone wall, and contains numerous relics of antiquity, but none of them seemingly older than the early Christian period.

'It is, however, undoubtedly of far more ancient date, and the numerous isolated heaps and long low mounds probably cover ruins, much older than any at present visible above ground... There is no doubt that a large, though a dilapidated town still existed here at the beginning of the fifth century, when it was restored by St Marūthā... From the centre of the vile hovels that compose the modern town rise the stately ruins built by Marūthā, where he transported and interred the relics of the martyrs who had suffered under Shapoor.'

At the end of the century, the German chemist and archaeological collaborator of Lehmann-Haupt, Waldemar Belck, wrote of the 'mute but eloquent testimony of a magnificent city' in the large ruined buildings 'appropriate for government offices, churches, and private houses'.⁵⁸ A 2.2km circuit of 25m-metre-high ramparts, fronted by a second wall, had enclosed a roughly rectangular, undulating area about 660m east-west and 500m north-south (Figs. 5)⁵⁹ on a man-made stone terrace.⁶⁰ Some 50 towers, bastions and buttresses were set 25m apart – the buttresses datable to the late fourth to sixth century.⁶¹ Nothing now survived of the crest of the ramparts, sections of the wall had large breaches, and of some of the towers only a corner of masonry survived, 'pointing upwards like a needle'. About a fifth to a quarter of the area within the walls was empty – 'a rubble-field' including a wasted strip 150-200m wide inside the northern wall.

Gabriel assigned a substantial part of the ramparts to Justinian (527-565), partly from the diagnostic internal steps and galleries of the massive U-shaped

pp. 61-109 plus 28 plates, hereafter Bell, 'ZfG', ed. and rev. in Bell/Mango. Bell's journals and photographs are in Newcastle University's special collections (the photographs online: <<http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk/photos.php>>, Album S, accessed December 16, 2011, hereafter Bell, S and number). Her notebooks are at the Royal Geographical Society, London.

⁵⁶ Jules Leroy, 'L'état présent des monuments chrétiens du Sud-Est de la Turquie (Tur 'Abdin et environs)', *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'année - Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, 112:4 (1968), pp. 478-93, hereafter Leroy, 'Sud-Est'.

⁵⁷ Taylor, 'Kurdistan'.

⁵⁸ Belck, 'Expedition', p. 271.

⁵⁹ Gabriel's plan in 'Voyages', 1, Fig. 159, p. 212. Another Look, p. 297. Crow, 'Amida', p. 444.

⁶⁰ Belck, 'Expedition', fig. on p. 271.

⁶¹ Crow, 'Amida', p. 444.

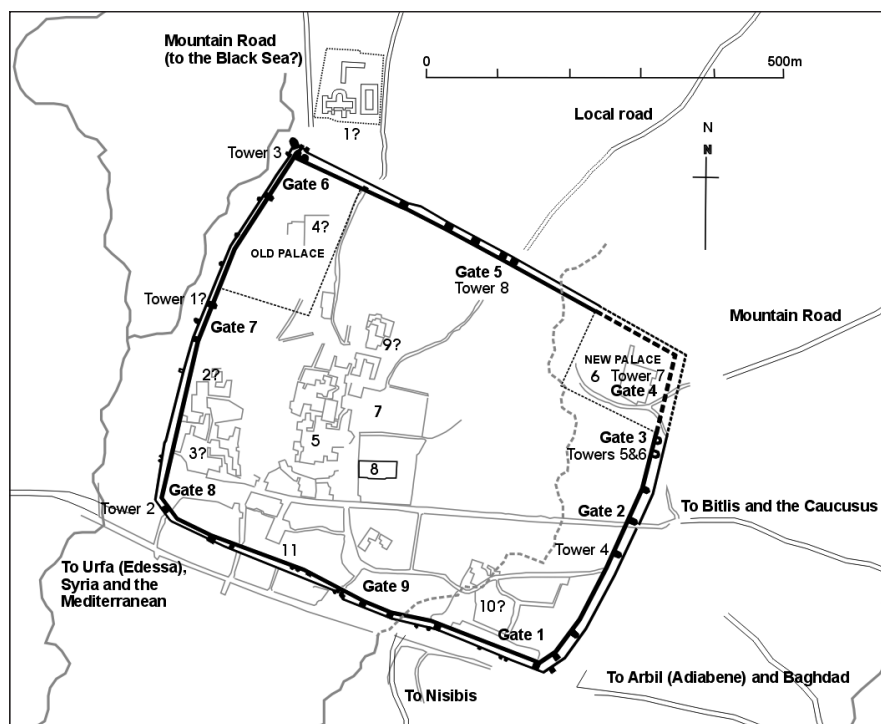


Fig.5. Silvan/Martyropolis: after Gabriel, 'Voyages', 1, Fig. 159, p. 212, modern municipal mapping, and satellite photography. 1 'Faubourg' (precursor village?) including 'church from time of Christ?'; 5 Citadel; 7 Site of Great Church (Basilica); 8 Ulu Cami; 10 Al-'Adhra; 11 Chaldean Church. For towers, gates, churches, see text.

Сл.5. Силван/ Мартирополис: после Габријела, „Путовања“, 1, Сл.159, стр. 212, мапа општине у данашње време, и сателитска фотографија. 1 „Фабург (Faubourg)“ (претеча села?) укључујући „цркву из времена Христа“; 5 Тврђава; 7 Положај Велике цркве (Базилика); 8 Улу Ками (Ulu Cami); 10 Ал Адра (Al-'Adhra); 11 Халдејска црква. За куле, капије, цркве, видети текст.

towers flanking one or more gates.⁶² This agrees with the reports of Procopius of Caesaria, who visited Martyropolis as legal adviser to Justinian's general Belisarius on campaign against the Persians between 527 and 531. The ramparts' thickness had been trebled and their height doubled to 40ft (12.2m).⁶³ Even so, the city remained insufficiently fortified and in 502 had been overrun by the Persians. In 590 a tower was undermined by besieging Romans, who subsequently stormed Martyropolis by bombarding the walls from Ocbas, a fortress on a precipice 'on the opposite bank' (on the west, therefore?) with a commanding view of the city.⁶⁴ Tisserant calculated that Al-Azraq's description

⁶² Gabriel, 'Voyages', p. 217; Crow, 'Amida', pp. 443-44, 450

⁶³ Procopius, 'Aedificiis', 7, Bk 3, Ch. 2:10-12 (p. 191).

⁶⁴ Evagrius [Scholasticus], *Ecclesiastical History. A History of the Church in Six Books, from A.D. 431 to A.D. 594* (London, Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1846), pp. 301-03. 'Uq'ba is today Anoshirwan Kala', Fiey, 'Muséon', p. 7.

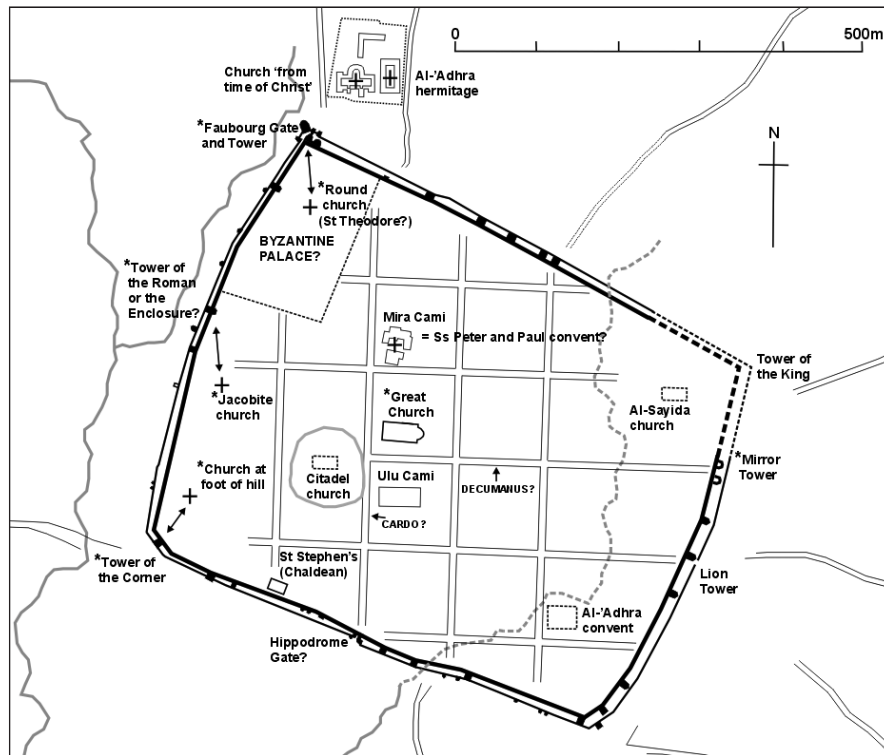


Fig. 6. Martyropolis, 'city of Constantine and Helen': Asterisks, buildings associated with them; Crosses, conjectured locations; Streams tinted.

Сл.6. Мартирополис, „Град Константина и Јелене“: Звездице, објекти у вези са њима; крстићи, претпостављене локације; Потоци су затамњени.

of Marūthā fortifying his city on behalf of the 'King of the Romans' against raids by 'the Persians of Arzun [Arzania]' dated the wall which Justinian later strengthened to 399x410/420.⁶⁵ This fits Minorski's conclusion that the fortification making Martyropolis one of the most important military centres on the frontier was begun by Arcadius (395-408), and allows for its completion under his brother Theodosius II. Evidence of even earlier defences is a mutilated Greek inscription on the north wall dated to the reign of the Armenian king Pap (369-74).⁶⁶

The internal Late Antique layout of Martyropolis is 'unknown', though anecdotal evidence points to two intersecting main streets.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, by

⁶⁵ Tisserant, 'Marouta', pp. 142-49.

⁶⁶ Lehmann-Haupt, 'Armenien'.

⁶⁷ James Crow, 'Amida and Tropeum Traiani: a comparison of Late Antique fortress cities on the Lower Danube and Mesopotamia', in A. G. Poulter (ed.), *The Transition to Late Antiquity on the Danube and Beyond, Proceedings of the British Academy* 141 (2007) (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 435-55, hereafter Crow, 'Amida', p. 450

attempting to reconcile Al-Azraq's information and the Life of Marūthā⁶⁸ with Bell's material, Gabriel's drawn survey and descriptions, satellite photography,⁶⁹ and other electronic and local sources (Fig.5),⁷⁰ one can begin a reconstruction of what was attributed to Constantine and Helena (Fig.6). The street-line dividing the Ulu Cami and basilica plots is aligned with the Justinian eastern gate and the citadel. A parallel axis linking the south-west and modern eastern gates approximates to the existing main thoroughfare. Repeating the insula depth, ~100m (330 Roman feet), meshes with the South Gate, and squaring the insulae brings in the northern gate also, with the citadel occupying two squares and facing the basilica and Ulu Cami, probably across the cardo. The north wall length is ~600m (3 stadia + 33 Roman feet), which is also the distance from the north-west angle to the south gate.

GATES: Eight were attributed to Constantine in Al-Azraq's tash'ita, one more than Gabriel identified as Byzantine,⁷¹ one less than the total. Long-distance roads arrive at Silvan's corners and two of its sides (Fig.5). Some gates survive, with thresholds and lintels bearing decorated inscriptions.⁷² For example, as Taylor noted, 'In one of the arched passages leading from the northern gate... is a long, though defaced, inscription in the character of the lower empire, and some isolated memorials of the same nature are met with outside, on the town walls' (still visible).⁷³

Following Al-Azraq's order ('AA') (the queries are Sauvaget's) and additional descriptions by Saladin's biographer, Baha ad-Din ibn Shaddād (1145-1234) ('IS'),⁷⁴ names and locations can be matched, and numbered as in Fig.5.

1. South wall, east end (probably): Gate of Funerals or (?)Pigs (Bâb al-Khanâzîr); Arzan Gate [IS]; Asaği Mahalle ('Lower Quarter') [modern].

2. East wall, midway [not on Al-Azraq's list].

3. East wall, two-thirds north: Bâb Kalûnadj (?), Kalûfah (?), modern Süslü (Turkish 'fancy'), Kulfa (Arabic 'difficulty', 'inconvenience'); Mirror, Deliverance, or New Gate, between the Timpanists and Mirror Towers (below) [IS]. AA recorded the names of 'the king and his mother Helena' here.⁷⁵

4. East wall, north end: Gate of Desire, al-Şahwa (or Counsel, ash-Shura?), small entrance to the New Palace pierced through the Tower of the King (below).

5. North wall, midway: Mountain Gate [probably the modern Boşat Gate, leading to Boşat or Boyunlu fortress, 12km north].

⁶⁸ Al-Asraq, MS BL Or. 5803, pp. 213-21.

⁶⁹ Principally in Google Earth.

⁷⁰ Including photographs posted by the Silvan Facebook group and on other Internet sites.

⁷¹ Gabriel, 'Voyages', p. 218.

⁷² Another Look, p. 298.

⁷³ Taylor, 'Kurdistan'.

⁷⁴ Fiey, 'Maruta'; Sauvaget in Gabriel, 'Voyages', p. 220, fig. 166, and citing an MS of Ibn Shaddād, f.69r and v.

⁷⁵ Gabriel, p. 219.

6. North wall, west end: Faubourg Gate (ar-Rabaḍ) (Survives; see Tower 3).⁷⁶

7. West wall (probably): Joy and Sorrow Gate (al-Farah wa l-Ghamm), ‘so-called from the two sculptures... a man waving his hands and another bowed down under the weight of a stone on his head... By cause of these images, sorrow does not attend the inhabitants of the city, or at least very rarely’. Also Gate of the Old Palace (al-Kaṣr al-Atîk) ‘built by the Hamdanides’.

8. South wall, west end (probably): ‘beside the exit of water from the city’.

9. South wall, midway (possibly): Hippodrome Gate ‘built by Sayf ad-Dawla to give access to the Old Castle’.

TOWERS (numbered as in Fig. 5): Al-Azraq’s tash‘ita described how ‘king’ Constantine ordered each of three ministers (‘viziers’ – probably to be understood as provincial officials) to contribute a tower to Marūthā’s defences, and a church (see below). Inscriptions with ‘the names of the king and his mother Helena’ were still visible on the towers (all on the west side?), in Yâqût’s day.⁷⁷

1. Roman (Burdj ar-Rumiya, i.e. Byzantine), or **Cattle-pen Tower** (Al-Zariba). Its associated church was that of the Jacobites ‘on the slope’ or incline. Provisionally mapped on the west.

2. Corner Tower (al-Râwiya), known in Yâqût’s time as Burdj Ali bin Wahab. Decorated ‘at the top of its south-west angle with a large cross taillée or creusée, said to be facing Jerusalem [so at the city’s south-west corner], where a cross like it is on the Church of the Resurrection’. The accompanying church faced the Carpenters’ Bath.

3. Faubourg Gate Tower, in the city’s north-west corner, associated with ‘the round church’. Ruined in the vizier Fahr al-Dawla bin Gahir’s siege in 1085. Materials used to repair adjacent parts of the wall.⁷⁸

Other towers: On the eastern wall:

4. Lion (Aslanli) or Şêr û Piling **Tower**. Pentagonal, south of the eastern, Kulfa Gate, built by the Ayyubid king Al-Awhad (1200-10). Named from an relief showing a lion and tiger facing a sun.⁷⁹

Flanking the eastern gate:

5. Timpanists or Drummers Tower (Aṭṭabbâlîn).

6. Mirror Tower (al-Mirât). ‘An immense mirror [between the two towers] reflected the sunlight on to the mountains’. On the tower were inscribed ‘the names of the king and his mother Helena’. This must be the Justinian-type, rounded bastion tower, a little north and very close to the Kulfa gate, backing on to the Halil cemetery.

⁷⁶ Fiey, ‘Maruta’, p. 37. *Rabaḍ* means a district or quarter of a town outside the central *madīna*.

⁷⁷ Yâqût, 4, pp. 705ff, trs. J. Sauvaget. NB, ‘towers’ plural.

⁷⁸ Fiey, ‘Maruta’, noticed that the talisman was not included in Yâqût’s reuse of Al-Azraq’s material.

⁷⁹ Another Look, p. 298

Other towers:

7. King's Tower, defending the New Palace, incorporating the Gate of Desire. At the north-east angle of the wall, where the ramparts had disappeared by the 1930s, is the Zembilfiros ('Basketmaker's') tower.

8. Tower near the Mountain Gate. Following (7) the wall led 'north by the tower on which is a man's figure' having 'a mark of red iron'. Probably the tower near the Bosat Gate, with inscription acclaiming Sultan Al-Malik Al-Adil (1200-1217).

PALACES: The **Old Palace** or 'castle' (Qaṣr al-'Atīk), built by the Hamdanids (890-1004) on the site of its Byzantine predecessor in the city's north-west angle (Gabriel's opinion), southwards towards the western gate. The smaller **New (Hiṣn) Palace**, popularly known as the seraglio, built in the north-east angle by the Marwanid ruler Nasr al-Dawla in 1012/13, extends almost to the eastern gate. It incorporated the King's Tower, belvedere and garden. Water for its basins and baths was brought from Ra's al-'Ayn ('Head of the Spring'), three miles north.⁸⁰

CHURCHES: Armenian (Orthodox and Catholic), Syrian (with a bishop), and Protestant churches operated in the late-nineteenth century and in 1913 St Joseph's was opened for Silvan's 500 Chaldeans.⁸¹ Two ruined medieval churches survived from the seven reported by Al-Azraq, four already then destroyed or ruined.⁸² There may have been others. Marūthā's 'Armenian' Life says Theodosius II gave villages, farms, vineyards and olive groves 'to the churches of God'.⁸³ Invading Persians burned churches and monasteries across the region in 585, including the convent of John the Baptist, 11 miles west.⁸⁴ Tenreyro remarked in 1529 on monasteries and churches adorned with the painted images of saints.⁸⁵ Relics included the right hand of the apostle Bartholomew, secreted by a Syriac priest in 1260 from soldiers of the Armenian Taj al-Din.⁸⁶

Scholars have differed on number and locations. This list (numbered as in Fig.5, see also Fig.6) begins with the four in ruins in 1177.

1. An extramural church, 'from the time of Christ', a wall still standing, 'where, before the foundation of the city, there was a large village' – i.e. on the earlier settlement site.⁸⁷ In Marūthā's, 'Armenian' Life, his grandmother Maria established priests and monks on her husband's lands, built a church in this village where Marūthā studied for the priesthood (or restored the church

⁸⁰ Gabriel, 'Voyages', p. 213. See also fig. 166 on p. 220. Al-Azraq, MS 5803, fol. 131a, cited by Amedroz, 'Marwānīd', p. 131.

⁸¹ Fiey, 'Muséon', p. 23.

⁸² Bell/Mango, pp. 123-30.

⁸³ Marcus, 'Marutha', p. 68.

⁸⁴ Fiey, 'Muséon', p. 9.

⁸⁵ Tenreyro, *Itinerario*, Ch. 27, p. 406, col. 2.

⁸⁶ Fiey, 'Muséon', p. 19.

⁸⁷ **On the city before Marūthā's day**, Fowden, 'Plain', directs the reader to Ernest Honigsmann, *Die Ostgrenze des byzantinischen Reiches... 363-1071...* (Brussels, 1935), p. 7, n. 5.

‘from the time of Christ’?⁸⁸), and a convent where she died. There were suburbs north, west, and south of the walled city,⁸⁹ but the Faubourg Gate was in its north-west corner. Satellite photography shows outlines of what appear to be (?excavated) buildings – no shadows visible – just north of here (Figs 5,6).⁹⁰ The largest, orientated east-west, has a northern apsidal extension. Ibn Shaddād (1145-1234) reported monasteries on a hill north of Mayyāfāriḳīn, while Tenreiro was told **Our Lady Hermitage**, north of the town, was a place of many miracles.⁹¹ A Seljuk governor, Kiwām or Kawām al-Mulk Abū ‘Alī al-Balkhī, exasperated by the nāḳūs (rattles summoning Christians to worship) of a monastery in Mayyāfāriḳīn, destroyed it. ‘Christ’s time’ may have been suggested by the Bartholomew relic or a mummified corpse, allegedly of one of Jesus’ disciples, at **St Thomas’ monastery**. Al-Muḳaddasī (946-1000) said this was one farsakh (probably one to two hours’ journey on foot, say around four miles) from Mayāfārḳīn, perhaps the cave-complex monastery Hasun Maḡara, 7.5km east of Silvan.⁹²

The other ruined churches in 1177 were perhaps those named in association with Constantine’s ministers’ towers (2 to 4).

2. Jacobites’ church (Al-ja’āqiba) on ‘the slope’ (that of the citadel?), linked with Tower 1 (above). Likely resting place of the Syriac-protected hand of Bartholomew. Fiey identified it with Al-‘Adhra (below) but that has a conventual plan and an intra-mural site would more likely serve a tightly-drawn community. Jacobites rejected the Chalcedonian dogmas of 451 – forced through by the Melkites (literally ‘Royalists’) – and had a bishopric in Mayyāfāriḳīn in 1075.⁹³ In Martyropolis they could have adapted a pre-existing church.

3. Church ‘at the foot of the hill’, facing the Carpenters’ Bath, associated with Tower 2.

4. ‘The round church’, associated with the Faubourg Gate tower, so possibly the Byzantine Palace chapel. Nasr al-Dawla demolished it in 1043 to clear ground for his refurbished Faubourg Gate. Here the third minister ‘made a talisman representing a great dragon’.⁹⁴ Could it have been part of a composite figure with St Theodore, like the statuary once surmounting the twin columns in the Piazzetta in Venice? The talisman may have survived. Sometime before 1215, a church of ‘Mart Dāris(?)’ (?Mar T[a]dāris, St Theodore?⁹⁵) at

⁸⁸ Fiey, ‘*Muséon*’, p. 24.

⁸⁹ Gabriel, ‘*Voyages*’, p. 213. The southern faubourg contained the caravanserais, baths, the horse market, and the Mosque of Banī Marwān.

⁹⁰ Google Earth, 2010, Latitude 38° 8’ 49.41” North, 41° 0’ 16.99” East.

⁹¹ Ibn Shaddad, fol. 70b, cited by Carole Hillenbrand, *EI*.

⁹² Al-Muḳaddasī, *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions. Ahasan al-Taḡasim Fi Ma’rifat al-Aqalim*, trs. Basil Anthony Collins (Reading, Garnet Publishing, 1994); Taylor, ‘Kurdistan’.

⁹³ S. Vryonis Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1971), p. 53; Anon., *Chronicle of 1234*, ed. by J. B. Chabot, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, 82 (Syriac)/354 (French) (Paris, 1916, 1974), pp. 292/220; this account is dated 1074.

⁹⁴ Fiey, ‘*Maruta*’, noted that Yāqūt’s text did not include the talisman.

⁹⁵ Fiey, ‘*Muséon*’, p. 27.

Mayyāfāriqīn contained 'a talisman against snakes, a serpent with two heads'.⁹⁶ Round churches often imitated the aedicule around Christ's tomb at Jerusalem, traditionally attributed to Helena, and the Ascension church on the Mount of Olives. A round church of St Theodore at the foot of the Palatine Hill in Rome circa 600, to which children were brought for cures, appears to have been built within a temple like those of the medic-god Aesculapius, whose prime attribute is a snake, symbolic of healing.⁹⁷

5. Fortress or citadel church on the acropolis,⁹⁸ focus of civil and military authority. Traditionally known as the 'fortress', 'a fitting name in the light of its location, but also because of the relics it housed'.⁹⁹ Reasonably assigned by tradition to the Melkites and must have predated the Islamic conquest. Scholarly confusion is evident between this church, the basilica (7), and the Peter and Paul convent (9). Al-Azraq said his tash'ita was from the Melkite church (implying there was no other), Marūthā's burial place, built by him in the centre of the city on his return from visiting Theodosius.¹⁰⁰ Relics were transferred 'to the Melkite church' from the church of the Virgin (6).¹⁰¹

A purple marble reliquary, 1.08m high by 1.25m wide, in the form of an antique sarcophagus, was found by Bell in 'the Saray', the Palace, probably meaning the citadel rather than the New Palace seraglio, and removed to Diyarbakir Museum in 1954 with two small reliquaries of the same stone and similar design.¹⁰² Mango provisionally dated its frontal cross after 457 when this became an imperial style, and wondered if it housed the prized relic of the Peter and Paul monastery, 'moved to the qaṣr' after the monastic church was eventually destroyed.¹⁰³ However, that was in an urn, doubtless smaller, leaving the other reliquaries unexplained.

6. Convent ('House') and church of Our Lady (Dār Al-Sayida), a 'great church' attributed to Marūthā, occupied part of the 'summit of the hill' where the New Palace was built. Replaced by a garden, its relics (mašāhid¹⁰⁴) removed to 'the Melkite church', it lay beside the King's Tower. The palace itself adjoined one of the bastions, which Al-Dawla 'incorporated in the edifice, so guarding against its being held apart from the city and against himself'.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁶ Al-Harawī, *Guide des lieux de pèlerinage*, ed. F. Sourdel-Thomine (Damascus, 1953-57), pp. 65, 145.

⁹⁷ Francis Mershman, 'St Theodore of Amasea', *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 14.

⁹⁸ Bell/Mango, Plates 12-14; S099, S152.

⁹⁹ Fowden, 'Plain', p. 55, n. 45.

¹⁰⁰ Munt, 'Al-Azraq', p. 157; Fiey, *Muséon*, pp. 27-28.

¹⁰¹ Fiey, *Muséon*, p. 25.

¹⁰² Bell/Mango, p. 129 and Pl. 50, Cyril Mango, 'A newly discovered Byzantine imperial sarcophagus', *Istanbul Arkeologi Müzeleri Yıllığı* 15-16 (1969), pp. 307-09, Fig. 1.

¹⁰³ Marlia Mundell Mango, Bell/Mango, p. 130, and *Travaux et Mémoires. Centre de Recherches d'histoire et de civilisation byzantines* [Paris] 9 (1985), p. 95.

¹⁰⁴ Amedroz 'shrines'. *Šāhid* an ancient Christian Arab term, 'patron' (Fiey, *Muséon*, p. 25).

¹⁰⁵ Al-Azraq, MS 5803, fol. 131a, cited by Amedroz, 'Marwānid', p. 131.



Fig.7. View from acropolis, 1899 (Lehmann-Haupt): Basilica (left), Ulu Cami (right), eastern ramparts (middle distance).

Сл.7 Поглед са акрополиса, 1899.год. Леман-Хаупт (Lehmann-Haupt): Базилика (лево), Улу Ками (Ulu Cami) (десно), источни бедеми (средња удаљеност).

7. Cathedral, or Great Church, supposedly the city's oldest, probably Bell's ruined basilica north of the Ulu Cami,¹⁰⁶ drawn by Lehmann-Haupt (Fig.7).¹⁰⁷ The Great Church, centrally sited, was 'presumably very close to where the cardo and decumanus crossed', an appropriate location for the 'great church' of the city 'of the martyrs', founded by a bishop.¹⁰⁸ A highly decorated arch south-east of the basilica, photographed by Bell, marked the probable entrance from the decumanus.¹⁰⁹ 'Great Church' was how the principal church of

¹⁰⁶ As suggested by Fiey, 'Martyropolis', pp. 24-30, with which Bell's editor Mango agreed.

¹⁰⁷ Lehmann-Haupt, *Armenien*, p. 399. Mango's bibliography comprises Samuel Guyer, 'Surp Hagop (Djinndeirmene), einer Klosterruine der Kommagene', *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, hereafter 'RfK', 35 (1912), pp. 498-508, at p. 501; 'Amida', *RfK* 38 (1916), pp. 193-237, at pp. 209-12, 216, figs 9, 15; and *My Journey down the Tigris: a raft-journey through dead kingdoms*, trans. J. McCabe (London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1925), hereafter Guyer, 'Journey', pp. 114-17, pl. 7; Josef Strzygowski, *L'Ancien art chrétien de Syrie* (Paris, Boccard, 1936), hereafter Strzygowski, 'Syrie', p. 29; J. Leroy, 'L'état présent des monuments chrétiens du sud-est de la Turquie (Tur 'Abdin et environs)', *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (1968), pp. 478-93, hereafter Leroy, 'Monuments', pp. 480ff.; and Marlia C. Mundell, 'The sixth century sculpture of the monastery of Deir Za'faran in Mesopotamia', *Actes du XIVe Congrès International d'Etudes Byzantines*, Athens, 1976.

¹⁰⁸ Bell/Mango, p. 124. On the role of bishops in late antique urban construction, Hugh Kennedy, 'From Polis to Madina: Urban change in Late Antique and Early Islamic Syria', *Past & Present* 106 (Feb., 1985), pp. 3-27, p. 19.

¹⁰⁹ Bell, 'ZfG', p. 88; 'Newcastle', S158.

another Mesopotamian city, Dara, was described.¹¹⁰ The Silvan basilica's size fits a pre-Chalcedonian cathedral and its 'exceptional' length – 36.65m without the apse¹¹¹ – and southern entrance¹¹² match one of Bell's two basic classifications of northern Mesopotamian churches: 'parochial', long from east to west, contrasting with 'monastic', broad from north to south, terms chosen because their function generally coincided with their form.¹¹³ Taylor was charmed: 'The building is solid, lofty, capacious, and (like the large church of St. James, at Nisibis) highly ornamented, – the capitals of the columns by a kind of basket-work of peculiar elegance... and the interior by a broad belt, representing clusters of grapes and foliage.' Marble must have adorned the wall of the apse, Bell concluded, with mosaics across the ceiling. The church must have been 'magnificent'.¹¹⁴ By 1911, only the outer shell remained, imperfectly. The north wall had almost disappeared. The north side of the apse was obscured by modern buildings; the nave and side aisles were a mulberry garden. Bell believed the missing capitals of the two arcades were those in the Ulu Cami, but Mango agreed with Fiey that the mosque's dating, soon after the basilica's description by Al-Azraq, demanded that the mosque's columns had been taken from somewhere else.¹¹⁵

Was this Al-Azraq's 'great church' 'built by Constantine and Helena'? Bell thought so. Al-Azraq understood it was the first built in the city because the cross was represented in the middle of the altar: 'a sign in the house of Christians for the first church which they built'.¹¹⁶ A sculptured cross possibly prompted a connection with Constantine and Helen. Large crosses carved in relief in apsidal conches are a notable and common feature of early churches further south, in the ʿTur 'Abdin.¹¹⁷ The plan of the apse reminded Bell of the Eleona, Helena's Church of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, Al-Azraq's attribution of the basilica to Constantine and Helen because of its cross is dismissed as traditional cliché. 'On formal grounds' the church could be dated to between 410 and 420, Mango concluded. Its large size accorded well with a number of Syrian basilicas of the late fourth, early fifth century.¹¹⁹

The process of funding and building what might be called Marūthā's victory church – celebrating his return from Persia with peace and the recovered relics of martyrs – is described in the 'Armenian' Life: Marūthā 'requested the

¹¹⁰ Procopius, *Aedificiis*, 2, Bk 3, Ch. 26.

¹¹¹ Bell/Mango, p. 58.

¹¹² Mango, 'Introduction', p. x.

¹¹³ Mango, 'Introduction', p. viii.

¹¹⁴ Bell, 'ZfG', pp. 109, 86.

¹¹⁵ Bell/Mango, p. 125.

¹¹⁶ This passage is absent from Yāqūt's and Al-Qazwini's texts. Fiey, 'Maruta', pp. 42-43.

¹¹⁷ Marlia Mango, 'Introduction', in Bell/Mango, hereafter Mango, 'Introduction', p. xi.

¹¹⁸ Asher Ovadiah, *Corpus of the Byzantine Churches in the Holy Land*, Theophaneia 22 (Bonn, Peter Hanstein, 1970), pp. 82ff, pl. 33.

¹¹⁹ Bell/Mango, p. 125.

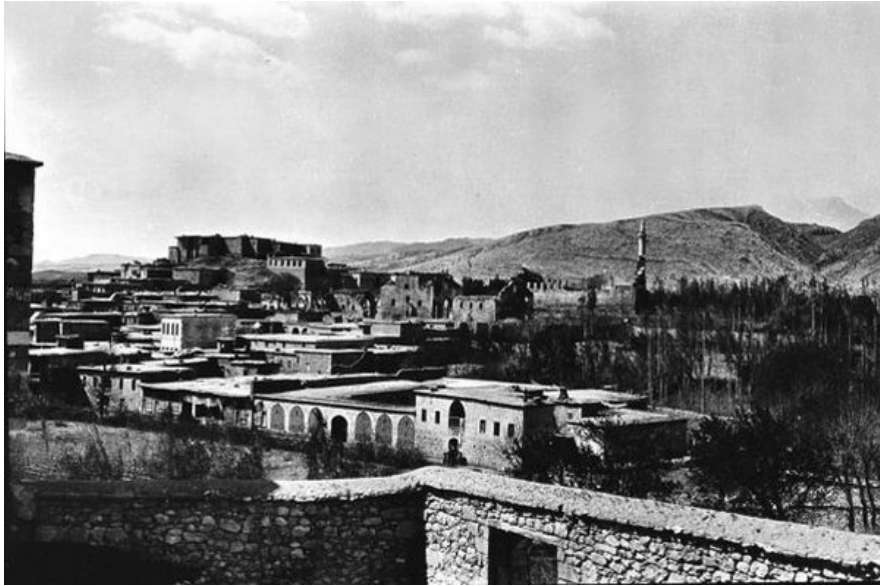


Fig.8. Acropolis, Ulu Cami (centre) and basilica from Al-‘Adhra, 1911 (Bell, S100).

Сл.8. Акрополис, Улу Камі (Ulu Cami) (центар) и базилика од Ал Адре (Al-‘Adhra), 1911. (Бел (Bell), S100).

emperor [here Theodosius II, Helen’s husband in Al-Azraq] to fortify the city of Cop’k’ [Soplene] with a strong wall and to build a church to the glory of God in the midst of the city... [where] a certain number of all the saints might be brought together and that it should be named the City of Martyrs. And the emperor said... “the expenses of the building will be paid by me, as much as is needed.” And he gave treasures of gold and silver, and craftsmen from the land of the Greeks and overseers and workmen as many as were needed.’¹²⁰ On balance it seems likely this, rather than the citadel church, housed the relics Marūthā brought from Persia, an action commemorated by the Greek church on February 6 and in a Syrian calendar on the Friday after Easter.¹²¹ Relics of martyrs were also said to have been placed in arches of the city wall – a powerful, supernatural defence,¹²² though the ‘Armenian’ Life of Marūthā reports that he ‘made altars within the walls of the house of God [my italics] and placed reliquaries within them, arranging them with admirable skill’.¹²³

According to Al-Azraq’s tas’hita, the ‘well’ of the ‘great church’ of Constantine and Helena was also provided by Constantine. If a spring-fed pool is meant, it might be possible to locate such a feature. Alternatively, the water

¹²⁰ Marcus, ‘Marutha’, pp. 67-68.

¹²¹ Adrian Fortescue, *The Lesser Eastern Churches* (London, Catholic Trust Society, 1913, repr. Piscataway, NJ, Gorgias Press, 2001), pp. 46-47.

¹²² Markwart, ‘Handes’.

¹²³ Marcus, ‘Marutha’, p. 68.



Fig.9. Ulu Cami (photo, Nejat Satici).

Сл. 9. Улу Ками (фотографија, Нејат Сатици).

supply attributed to Constantine may be related to the aqueduct constructed by Sayf ad-Dawla (916-967), Emir of Aleppo, to serve the old castle, leading from the spring in the faubourg and entering the city by the Faubourg Gate.¹²⁴

8. The Great Mosque, Ulu Cami, formally the Selahaddin Eyyubi Cami after the hero Saladin, Salah ed-Din al-Ayyubi (1138-93); one of the largest mosques in the region. Ruined when Bell visited, rebuilding began in 1913. Some sources 'say it is a converted Byzantine church,'¹²⁵ three external half-pillars on the twelfth-century south wall suggestive of Byzantine style (Fig.9) – the interior domes and arcades have a similar feel. **Gabriel** concluded it occupied the site of an early Islamic mosque.¹²⁶ The site's previous use remains tantalising.

9. Ss Peter and Paul convent, still operating in 1177, the last of Marūthā's constructions, built in the Jewish quarter (Zuqāq al-Yahūd), near the synagogue.¹²⁷ Identification with Bell's basilica¹²⁸ seems unlikely, given the latter's central location. Conceivably it was replaced by the Mira mosque further north

¹²⁴ Marius Canard, *Sayf al-Dawla* (Algiers-Paris, J. Carbonel, 1934), p. 209.

¹²⁵ Another Look, p. 292.

¹²⁶ Gabriel, pp. 221-28.

¹²⁷ Al-Azraq, MS 5803, fol. 11a; Munt, 'Al-Azraq', p. 157.

¹²⁸ Fiey, 'Martyropolis', pp. 29.



Fig.10a. Basilica: south aisle apse and nave, south-east corner, with acanthus leaf decoration (Bell, S176).



Fig.10b. Basilica: archway (Bell, S158).

Сл.10а. Базилика: јужна бочна лађа, апсида и наос, југоисточни угао, са декорацијом листа акантуса (Бел (Bell), S176).

Сл.10б. Базилика: надсвођен пролаз (Бел (Bell), S158).

(Fig.6). Here in a black marble urn Marūthā deposited a glass flask containing blood of Joshua son of Nun (Iso bin Nun). He brought it from Constantinople after visiting Theodosius – giving special interest to the dedication in honour of Rome's civic saints, now 'the saints who are in the church of Great [i.e. New] Rome' (Constantinople). The relic was thought to heal leprosy. In 967 a daughter of Sayf al-Dawla established a waqf (charitable endowment) here in thanks-offering for a cure.¹²⁹ Tisserant argued that in reality the relic belonged to the synagogue.¹³⁰

10. **Al-'Adhra ('The Virgin')**, photographed by Bell¹³¹ on ground sloping away 'rapidly' to the west, most probably in the city's south-east corner,¹³² matches her 'monastic' type of church: nearly square, with a nave widest north to south, three chambers to the east, and a western narthex.¹³³ Al-'Adhra, 27m sq without the eastern chambers, enclosed a central space supporting a dome

¹²⁹ The patient's identity, given by Al-Azraq on fol. 11r, is noted by Munt, 'Al-Azraq', p. 167.

¹³⁰ Fiey, 'Maruta', pp. 42-43, note 3.

¹³¹ Bell/Mango, Plates 15-19, 28; Guyer, 'Journey', pp. 118ff., Plates *A, 9A.; Strzygowski, 'Syrie', pp. 30, 99ff., 170, figs 62, 66; Leroy, 'Monuments', p. 480; H. Buchwald, *The Church of the Archangels in Sige near Mudania* (Vienna, 1969), hereafter Buchwald, 'Sige', p. 48, and notes pp. 216-19, pp. 50-52, 59-62; W. E. Kleinbauer, 'Zvartnotz and the origins of Armenian architecture', *Art Bulletin* 54 (1972), pp. 256-62; R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (pbk edn, London, 1975), pp. 310ff., 340; Fiey, 'Martyropolis', pp. 24-30.

¹³² Bell, 'ZfG', p. 89. Guyer, 'Journey', p. 118, placed it in the south-west quarter. However, Bell's Pl. 38 was clearly taken in front of it (the walls in the foreground of Pls. 38 and 56 are identical), facing the Ulu Cami, basilica and citadel.

¹³³ Marlia Mango, 'Introduction', in Bell/Mango, p. ix.



Fig.11. Ad'Adhra convent, north side (Bell, S177).

Сл.11. Ад Адра (Ad'Adhra) манастир, северна страна (Бел (Bell), S177).

on four arches, and closely resembled St Sofia at Salonika.¹³⁴ Fiey concluded this was the church (re)built at Mayâfârqîn by bishop Athanasius Sandalaya in 752.¹³⁵ Buchwald suggested 825x50, re-using or imitating fifth- or sixth-century spoilia,¹³⁶ and Mango a commemoration of Armenia IV's creation in 536 with Martyropolis as provincial capital.¹³⁷

11. St Stephen's, the Chaldean (Kildani) church, near the south-west gate, was converted first to a cinema and in 1988 became the Belediye Cami mosque. One wall to the right of the entrance survives from the church and bears frescoes.¹³⁸

Conclusion

Historicity apart, the case of Martyropolis underlines the iconic importance of Constantine and Helen/a in areas of cultural interplay. Constantine stands for the offspring of the arriving imperial ruler, the strong outsider who refreshes the clan. Helen/a stands both as mother of kings and indigenous bride, symbolising a land willingly seduced and occupied. Here tradition wedded Helen, princess of Edessa, with Theodosius. At Edessa itself, Helen the beauty of the Potters' Quarter is taken to wife by Constantius Chlorus, or, in the ver-

¹³⁴ Bell/Mango, p. 61, who cites on St Sophia, M. Kalligas, *Die Hagia Sophia von Thessalonike* (Würzburg, 1935); Leroy, 'Sud-Est', p. 480.

¹³⁵ Fiey, 'Muséon', p. 26.

¹³⁶ Bell/Mango, p. 65; Buchwald, 'Sige', pp. 48, 59, 61; Bell/Mango, p. 127.

¹³⁷ Bell/Mango, p. 127.

¹³⁸ Another Look, p. 297.

sion attributed to Marūthā, by Valentinian. As Protonike she marries Claudius. The British Helen, legendary wife of Magnus Maximus, plays the same role. More is happening in Al-Azraq's narrative than mere tampering with sources. Conceivably the 'king' named with 'his mother Helena' on towers and a gate was a satrap of Sophanene.

Long before Rome's arrival, Mesopotamia had been inseminated by the Hellenes; its emperors stood in the shadow of Alexander. When in 358 Olympias, daughter of Constantine's Prefect of the East, was sent by Constantius II to be a wife of the Armenian Aršak II, medals were struck with the image of her namesake, the mother of Alexander, and the inscription 'OLYMPIAS REGINA'.¹³⁹ The echos of Alexander and Olympias in memorialising Constantine and Helena are unexplored. Helen/a, reflex of Olympias, also bore the name of the Greek Helen, so that the fall of Jerusalem, to which her discovery of the Cross and church-building posed a counterpoint, easily recalled the fall of Troy. As Mary, Christ's mother, is Second Eve, overcoming the serpent, bearing Redemption, so Constantine's mother is Second Helen, redeeming and rebuilding the polis. As Chase Robinson has remarked, Al-Azraq, like many historians, was fond of strong and lasting rulers. Rulers changed frequently 'rule only with short-term interests in mind: they are oppressive and tyrannical; taxation is harsh; rural security breaks down... the city goes to ruin'. Strong, able rulers bring stability, rule justly; the people regain confidence; the city prospers. 'Urban building is more than just pretty architecture or sturdy walls: it is a barometer of effective rule.'¹⁴⁰

Progenitrix of emperors, Helen also stands in a line of female city founders. Some said Tigran's daughter Noupbar founded what became Martyropolis, others a woman named Mayyā, or sometimes Fārikīn.¹⁴¹ Cities like countries bear names in the feminine case, like Roma, are personified as female in Antique iconography, and have female patrons, like Athena. Architecturally, Silvan's monuments seem the work of Anastasius and/or Justinian, whose frontier campaigns secured civilian life at Martyropolis into the Islamic era.¹⁴² The inscriptions look acclamatory, part of the processional elements of civic ritual.¹⁴³ Imperial propaganda, public or private, encouraged the cult of the mother and son who personified Christian monarchy and the ideals of the imperial city.

¹³⁹ Garsoïan, 'Dynasty', p. 89. Cf. medal in *Dinar* 23 (2004), p. 8, Fig. 11, typical of many such in Late Antiquity.

¹⁴⁰ Robinson, 'Al-Azraq', pp. 26-27.

¹⁴¹ Yâqût, 'Buldan', 4, 703; Ibn Shaddād, 'Al-A'laq', p. 260, cited by Munt, 'Al-Azraq', p. 162, fn. 63, but not found in Al-Azraq.

¹⁴² Crow, 'Amida', p. 453.

¹⁴³ Charlotte Roueché, 'Acclamations in the Later Roman Empire: New evidence from Aphrodisias', *The Journal of Roman Studies* 74 (1984), pp. 181-99.

Грејем Џонс
**КОНСТАНТИН И ЊЕГОВА МАЈКА ГРАД:ЈЕЛЕНА ИЗ ОДЕСЕ И
МАРТИРОПОЛИС**

Царски градови били су блиско повезани са царским владарима. Неки, попут Ниша, постали су познати као места рођења царева. Многи су променили име у част владајућег цара или члана царске породице. Други су их славили тако што су њихове зидове и споменике красили поједини владари. Са Константином царски дар јавних споменика почео је да укључује градњу цркви пре него храмова, и полагање моштију светитеља, чије су светиње зрачиле славу града. Царска дарожљивост оправдавана је кроз славу живота светитеља, начином на који су умрли, и њиховим прослављеним чудима. Светитељ и владар величали су један другог. Августополис и мартирополис представљали су два израза једне идеје, царског града као персонификације величанствености и божанског одобравања.

Проучавању Ниша као престонице Провинције, Константиновом стварању Цариграда, и посвећеном и монументалном преображају Јерусалема, овај рад додаје пример са границе царства: мартирополис, на изворишту реке Тигар. Традиционално се сматра да су Константин и Јелена утврдили град, изградили његову Велику цркву, и сачували његово водо-снабдевање. Поред тога што разматра питања овог симпозијума и даје осврт на обнову и археологију мартирополиса (данашњи Силван у југоисточној Турској), рад баца више светла на приказ Константинове мајке Јелене као родом из Месопотамије а не из Витиније као што је обично прихваћено, тема која представља ауторов допринос симпозијуму 2010.год.

