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WARFARE AND TRAGEDY: THE SIEGE OF AMIDA (502 CE) AND ITS AFTERMATH ACCORDING TO PS. JOSHUA THE STYLITE AND PS. ZACHARIAH RHETOR¹

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ABSTRACT

The chronicles of Ps. Joshua the Stylite and Ps. Zachariah the Rhetor (or Mytilene) highlighted much of the Roman-Persian tension as well as gave quite detailed information about the local people of the region and their daily lives. Unlike the other historians of this era, these two authors recorded important details that would enable us to understand the stages of a siege during the Roman-Sasanian conflicts and the psychology of the people under the blockade. The resistance of the Amida people during the three-month siege, the city being taken over by the Sasanians, the subsequent famine, and many other details were recorded by these authors. This study will be a commentary on the daily life of the people in the region, the residents of the city during the siege, and will also be an analysis of the information given by the sources regarding the Amida siege of 502 itself.

Keywords: Ps. Joshua the Stylite, Ps. Zachariah Rhetor, Amida, The Roman-Persian Wars, Upper Tigris

SAVAŞ VE TRAJEDİ: PS. JOSHUA THE STYLITE VE PS. ZACHARIAH RHETOR'A GÖRE AMIDA KUŞATMASI (MS. 502) VE SONRASI

ÖZ

Ps. Joshua the Stylite (Tr. Çileci Yeşua) ve Ps. Zachariah Rhetor'un (Tr. Hatip Zekeriya) kronikleri, Roma-Sasani mücadelesinin önemli birer kaynakları olarak

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sınır bölgesinde ikâme halkın gündelik yaşamları hakkında da oldukça detaylı bilgiler sunmaktadırlar. Dönemin diğer tarihçilerinin aksine bu iki yazar, Roma-Sasani mücadelelerinde bir kuşatmanın nasıl cereyan ettiğine ve kuşatma esnasında surların arkasındaki insanların psikolojilerine ve neler yaşandığına dair de oldukça geniş malumatlar vermişlerdir. Amidalıların üç aylık kuşatma boyunca direnişleri ve şehrin Sasaniler tarafından ele geçirilmesi akabinde ortaya çıkan açlık ve benzeri felaketler bu iki yazar tarafından kaleme alınmıştır. Bu çalışma, 502 Amida kuşatması hakkında bilgiler veren söz konusu iki yazarın eserlerini analiz ederek, geç antik çağda bölgede kuşatma altındaki insanların gündelik yaşamı üzerine bir yorum olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ps. Joshua the Stylite, Ps. Zachariah Rhetor, Amida, Roma-Sasani Savaşları, Yukarı Dicle

INTRODUCTION

There were three main phases to relations between the Sasanian and Roman empires. The most notable feature of the first phase, which lasted from the early third century until the death of Julian, was the aggressive nationalism of Sasanian diplomacy, which stressed the Sasanians's links with the Achaemenid past and their right to their ancestral Achaemenid territories. In the second period, from Julian's death to 500, conflict was rare. However, at the start of the sixth century a new, different and chaotic phase in Roman-Persian relations began.²

Although the fifth century passed with consistent peace between the Roman and the Sasanian Empires, the sixth century would be a period of confusion and chaos. The violence increased day by day and by the middle of seventh century the struggles of subsequent sieges and wars on the frontier reached its peak. Kavad who ascended the Sasanian throne in 498 after a short break improved his relationship with Hephthalites in the east and began to redirect his Sasanian armies westward to Rome. After a two year threat to his throne in 496-498, he eventually regained the throne with the support of Hephthalites. However, this time, he had to materially compensate him for this support.³ For this reason, after beginning to engage the Roman Empire, Kavad demanded a large sum of money from Anastasius, the Roman Emperor. According to Theophanes, Anastasius

² This classification and its details belong to specialist Whitby. (Whitby, 1988, p. 202-209).

³ See on the support given by Hephthalites to Kavad: (Procopius, Wars, I.7.1); Ολίγω δὲ ὕστερον χρήματα Καβάδης τῷ Ἐφθαλιτῶν βασιλεῖ ὄφειλεν, ἅπερ ἐπεὶ αποστίννουν οἱ οὐχ οἰός τε ἦν, Ἀναστάσιον τὸν Ῥωμαίων αὐτοκράτορα ἦτει ταῦτά οἱ δανεῖσαι τὰ χρήματα: ὁ δὲ κοινολογησάμενος τῶν ἐπιτηδείων τισὶν ἐπυθάνετο εἶ γέ οἱ ταῦτα ποιητέα εἶη.' (Also see: Frye, 1983, p. 149-51; Morony, Sasanids, p. 76; Daryae, 2009, p. 27; Greatrex, 1998, p. 51-2).

approached this demand cautiously and reported to the Sasanian king that if he demanded a loan, they should make a written agreement. (Theophanes, A.M. 5996) After his council convened, and the issue was brought forward, he was advised to reject it. Eventually the loan demanded by Kavad was rejected by Anastasius himself.⁴ It is likely the Sasanian King predicted that Anastasius would give this answer and that this situation was just a pretext to legitimize preconceived intentions to attack. Kavad carried out a rapid attack with his army and entered Roman territory in August, 502. First, Kavad and his army passed through Armenia, besieged and eventually captured the city of Theodosiopolis (modern Erzurum). (Ps. Joshua the Stylite, 48; Malalas, 16.9; Procopius, *Wars*, I. 7. 3; Procopius, *Buildings*, III. 5. 3-4; Ps. Zachariah, VII. 22). Then the Sasanian army marched on Sophanene to the south and they came to the city of Martyropolis (Modern Silvan). Theodore, the satrap of the region, delivered a substantial tribute for the city to the Sasanian King and consequently he and the city were spared.⁵ Kavad finally came to the city of Amida (modern Diyarbakir) in October 502 and besieged the city.

1. City of Amida (=Diyarbakır)

Amida (known as Diyarbakır now), situated on the upper Tigris close to a bend in the river, surrounded by good agricultural land and not far from Eğil, a small town some 40 kms to the north that had been the seat of the Armenian dynasty of Ingilene/Sophene. Amida is strongly fortified by emperor Constantius II in 354 and Ammianus Marcellinus recorded this event:

This city was once small, but Constantinus, when he was still a Caesar, in order that the neighbours might have a secure place of refuge, at the same time that he built another city called Antoninupolis, surrounded Amida with strong walls and towers; and by establishing the an armoury of mural artillery, he made it a terror to the enemy and wished it to be called after his own name.⁶

⁴ οἵπερ αὐτὸν τὸ συμβόλαιον ποιεῖσθαι οὐκ εἶων. ἀξύμφορον γὰρ ἀπέφαινον εἶναι βεβαιοτέραν τοῖς πολεμίοις χρήμασιν οἰκείοις ἐς τοὺς Ἐφθαλίτας τὴν φιλίαν ποιήσασθαι, οὓς δὴ ἐς ἀλλήλους ξυγκρούειν ὅτι μάλιστα σφίσιν ἄμεινον εἶναι. (Procopius, I. 7. 2)

⁵ εὖ γὰρ εἰδότες οἱ τῆδε ὠκημένοι ὡς οὐδὲ βραχεῖάν τινα χρόνου στιγμήν τῷ στρατοπέδῳ ἀνθέξουσιν, ἐπειδὴ ἀγχοῦ τῶν Μήδων στρατὸν ἤκοντα εἶδον, ἅμα Θεοδώρῳ τῆνικαδε Σοφανηνῆς σατραπεύοντι καὶ τῆς σατραπείας ἐνδιδυσκομένῳ τὸ σχῆμα, Καβάδῃ προσῆλθον εὐθύς, σφᾶς τε αὐτοὺς καὶ Μαρτυρόπολιν αὐτῷ ἐνδιδόντες, φοροῦς τε τοὺς δημοσίους ἐνιαυτοῖν δυοῖν ἐν χερσὶν ἔχοντες. (Procopius, B. III. 2. 4-8)

⁶ “Hanc civitatem olim perquam brevem Caesar etiam tum Constantius, ut accolae suffugium possint habere tutissimum, eo tempore quo Antoninupolim oppidum aliud

After a great construction, Amida was still small and captured by Shapur in 359. Ammianus Marcellinus states that there were then only 20.000 people in the town, including soldiers and refugees. (Ammianus Marcellinus, XIX, 2. 14. Also see: Comfort, 2008, p. 283) But after this siege, which he detailed describes, the town soon recovered and was greatly expanded to cope with new refugees coming from Nisibis in 363. Thus, Amida has grown twice as much with this renovation. (Chronicon Paschale, 554; Zosimus, III, 34. I; Malalas, XIII, 27) Diyarbakır is famous today for its round of dark basalt walls, originally constructed by Constantius but many times repaired (and opened new gates during middle ages). The walls are currently 5.5 kilometres long and stretches 1.1 km from north to south, 1.5 km from east to west; it had to be substantial enlarged after 363 to encompass the new quarter settled by refugees from Nisibis. (Comfort, 2008, p. 284) Albert Gabriel published a study of the city and in particular of its walls in 1940 and put forward an idea about Jovian's expansion of the city walls.

2. On the Sources

Along with the recent research of G. Greatrex and N. Lenski concerning the siege of Amida, F. Haarer have outlined quite a detailed study on the period of Emperor Anastasius and his reign (See: Greatrex, 2010, p. 227-51; Greatrex, 1998, p. 83-94; Lenski, 2007, p. 219-37; Haarer, 2006, Haarer, 1998). However, the main sources about the siege are particularly the writings of the so-called Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor⁷ and Ps. Joshua the Stylite. It is not known exactly who was the author of this work, but it is thought to be written probably around the year of 570 near the city of Amida and attributed to an unknown author called Ps. Zachariah. The writings of Ps. Joshua, the other chronicle, were written by a Miaphysite Syrian who is actually from Edessa. It covers the period between 496-506 often called by the author the "period of distress" for the local people. In this account attributed to Ps. Joshua, there is information that cannot be found in any other sources. For example, there are detailed descriptions of local locust invasions, famines, social events of the region, details of the Amida siege

struxit, turribus circumdedit amplis et moenibus, locatoque ibi conditorio muralium tormentorum fecit hostibus formidatam suoque nomine voluit appellari." (Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, XVIII, 9.1). Also, Jacob the Recluse's Syriac history describes the foundation of Amida as; "After the Emperor Constantius, son of Constantine the Great, had built Amida, he loved it more than all the cities of his empire and submitted to it many lands, from Resaina (modern Ceylanpınar) as far as Nisibis and also the land of Maipharqat (modern Silvan) and of Arzon and as far as the frontiers of Qardou. Because these lands were on the Persian frontier, Persian brigands made continual incursions into these territories and devastated them. (Dodgeon and Lieu, 1991, p. 136).

⁷ *Rhetoric*, which referred to the art of using language to affect audiences. The term *rhetor* is referred to a teacher of rhetoric or a person skilled in the art of rhetoric.

itself, and even local price fluctuations in food and various drinks. From the perspective of the Greek literature, Procopius a sixth century historian, only gives some information about the details of the siege, but his knowledge probably comes from Eustathius of Epiphania⁸. In fact, according to Malalas, another sixth century historian like Eustathius and Procopius, Eustathius was the most “knowledgeable” source about this siege, but he died shortly after the city's fall and his work was left half finished. (Malalas, 15. 9.) Unfortunately, Evagrius and Malalas who came after him preferred to “summarize” these writings of Eustathius regarding the siege and recorded it with very little detail. (On the subject see: Treadgold, 2007, p. 725).⁹

3. Before the Siege

Most of the historical records we have about what daily life was like in Amida and the region around it before the siege of 502 are very thin. However, Ps. Joshua the Stylite and Ps. Zachariah's chronicles include extremely vivid and exceptionally detailed records and it presents the most thorough information about how ordinary people in the region lived at the end of the fifth century and the beginning of sixth century. Ps. Joshua who is a native of north Mesopotamia and a Syrian author, is naturally a first-hand witness of the events in the region. For instance, Ps. Joshua talked about an epidemic that arose in Edessa and its surroundings in 494. He mentioned how the epidemic horribly effected the people's physical appearance with swelling and wounds (Ps. Joshua the Stylite, 25-26). The wounds recorded by the author probably pointed to leprosy. But as a pious religious man, he attributed this and all the bad events that happened to them thereafter to “the sinfulness of the people.” He made great efforts to defend this idea in his writings. At the time of this epidemic, Ps. Joshua also recorded some economic effects of that year. He mentioned at one point that 30 *Modius* wheats (approximately 390 liters) were sold for 1 *Solidus* (i.e. gold coin) within the city of Edessa in 494 (Ps. Joshua the Stylite, 26). It was in fact quite a balanced price for the wheat, and it shows at that stage that the food scarcity had not yet started in the region. Nevertheless, looking at the prices of wheat and barley in the following years demonstrates significantly high inflation levels. (About the subject, see: Jones, 1964, p. 444-45).

⁸Eustathius is an historian from Epiphania who lived in the 6th century and his work includes the period from Creation to the 12th year of Emperor Anastasius. Although large part of the work is lost nowadays, the writers such as Evagrius and Malalas made large quotations from Eustathius. Procopius must also be among those who used this work of Eustathius. (See: Greatrex, 2010, p. 244; Lenski, 2007, p. 220).

⁹ Evagrius noted only these sentences about the siege: “... Kavad broke *the treaty and set out from their own territories, he first invaded Armenia and, after capturing a town called Theodosiopolis, they approached Amida, a song city in Mesopotamia, and captured it by siege.*”, (Evagrius, III, 37).

Furthermore, Ps. Joshua writes that a four-year amount of tribute for the city of Edessa, as much as approximately 63 kg of gold, was donated by Emperor Anastasius in 498 (Ps. Joshua the Stylite, 31). It is not known whether perhaps sectarian reasons might have played a role in this significant contribution from the Emperor –as the people of Edessa and the Emperor Anastasius both had sympathies with Miaphysite doctrine. Nevertheless, the people of Edessa were naturally very pleased and grateful for this generous gesture from the emperor. The relative optimism however quickly crumbled as a locust infestation came two years after this and dragged the people into a great misery. This locust infestation which affected the entire region, damaged the vast majority of crops in the area so much so that the author states at one point that 4 *Modius* wheats were sold to 1 Solidus that year. The locust infestation and the loss of crops precipitated a huge inflation in the agricultural market. Ps. Joshua writes that the famine and starvation had become so devastating that the people were even boiling and eating pieces of dead animals (Ps. Joshua the Stylite, 40).

As the famine continued until the years of 501-502, this continued to effect the city of Edessa and its surroundings up until the siege of Amida in 502. However, the wine market of that year was abundant and the prices of wine fell significantly. Since the winter and spring months had lots of rain, there was an abundance and fruitfulness in other harvests as well. In the same year, dance and dance performances were banned in the cities by an edict of Emperor Anastasius (Ps. Joshua the Stylite, 46). These dance performances were actually a part of a traditional ritual belonging to the pagan period before Christianity. Anastasius decided to ban this festival, called *Brytae*, particularly due to the fact that it was causing confusion in the capital in 499-500. As this decision was applied in northern Mesopotamia, Ps. Joshua being a faithful Christian seems to have welcomed the prohibition of this ritual, which he described as a “demonic festival.”¹⁰

4. The Siege and Fall

King Kavad came to Amida in October of 502 and saw the city relatively unguarded¹¹ and immediately laid siege to it. From this point on, the most detailed sources of the siege come from Ps. Joshua, Ps. Zachariah, and Procopius. According to the account given by Ps. Joshua, Anastasius agreed to pay tribute to Kavadh at the last minute, and even sent his commander Rufinus to Kavad with a large amount of gold. While Rufinus was on the way, he came to Caesarea and heard the news of the cities looted by Kavad. He decided to leave the gold in Caesarea and when he finally reached

¹⁰ About Pagan festivals in the region, see: Greatrex and Watt, 1999, pp. 1-21.

¹¹ Ἀμιδηνοὶ δὲ στρατιωτῶν μὲν, ἅτε ἐν εἰρήνῃ καὶ ἀγαθοῖς πράγμασιν, οὐ παρόντων σφίσι, καὶ ἄλλως δὲ ἀπαράσκευοι παντάπασιν ὄντες, ὅμως τοῖς πολεμίοις ὡς ἤκιστα προσχωρεῖν ἤθελον, ἀλλὰ τοῖς τε κινδύνοις καὶ τῇ ταλαιπωρίᾳ παραδόξαν ἀντεῖχον. (Procopius, I. 7, 4).

Kavad, he immediately asked him to accept this tribute and leave Roman territory. But Kavad did not accept this (Ps. Joshua the Stylite, 53-54).

After the siege started, these three important sources begin to give a detailed account of how the events unfolded. When the Sasanians could not penetrate the walls and gates with battering rams they tried another tactic. In order to attack Amida's high and strong walls, they decided¹² to try a method attempted by Shapur in 359 and began to build a hill (or mound) that had been piled up from the ground (Procopius, I. 7, 14; Ps. Joshua the Stylite, 54; Ps. Zachariah, VII, 22). But the people in Amida countered Kavad with a few unpredictable responses themselves. Initially, they began by digging a tunnel under this mound which caused it to collapse. Furthermore, Ps. Zachariah speaks of a 'weapon that the people from Amida developed' to bring down this mound. They mixed resin with a plant grown abundantly in the Southeastern Anatolia called 'fenugreek' and filled this mixture into newly flayed animal skins. Since this mixture was moderately flammable they were able to set fire to the wood supports supporting the mound from the walls to the bottom. Thus, the siege mound could not be supported and collapsed (Ps. Zachariah, VII. 23-24). After this success, there was great joy on the walls amongst the defenders. When Procopius spoke of this joy, he recorded that 'the prostitutes in the city climbed up the city walls and after being stripped naked, they made fun of the Sasanians' (Procopius, I, 7, 18-19).

The collapse of the siege mound was a terrible loss of morale for the Sasanian army, since it took incredible effort to build it. The sources mention at one point that Kavad considered leaving the siege and returning to his country. Nevertheless, Procopius stated that the Zoroastrians convinced Kavad to continue the siege while Ps. Zachariah speaks of another possible reason why the siege continued (Procopius, I, 7. 19). Kavad, who lost many soldiers and had his hand significantly weakened, sent an envoy to the city a few days before the fall of the city. Through his envoy he demanded gold and silver for his army's withdrawal. Leontius, the head of the council, not only rejected this offer of the Sasanian king but also demanded food from the harvest of that year in compensation for the destruction by Kavad and his army (Ps. Zachariah, VII. 25). It is likely the decision of Kavad to continue the siege was probably due to these disproportionate demands of the people from Amida. Although Ps. Joshua did not mention this event, he noted that the people from Amida were too confident of victory and they let their guard down too quickly (Ps. Joshua the Stylite, 60). When they saw the desire to negotiate in the last days of the siege and the despair of the Sasanian army, the people of Amida believed the siege would end in a short time.

¹² For the siege of 359, see: Lightfoot, 1989, pp. 285-94; Blockley, 1988, pp. 224-60; Lenski, 2007, pp. 219-36.

However, this is not what happened. At this point, the three sources tell similar stories, and they all agree that the fall of the city resulted from the ‘carelessness’ of the people of Amida. During the night of the city’s fall, Ps. Joshua noted without giving much detail that the priests holding the walls drank too much wine because of the cold weather and they fell asleep. The Sasanians, as a result, managed to climb up a section of the wall with stairs and quickly gained control of the walls (Ps. Joshua the Stylite, 66). Procopius has a slightly different account. He wrote that the Sasanians discovered an underground passage that could enter the city under one of the towers at night. So after guards of the city fell asleep during the nighttime festival, they passed underground and in the early morning killed the monks who had been sleeping on the walls. They captured the rest of the city subsequently by heavy combat.¹³ Ps. Zachariah confirms this secret passage, but it tells a different story. A thief living in the city called ‘Qutriga,’¹⁴ used a small ‘waterway’ to sneak into the Sasanian camp at night and would carry the food he had stolen back into the city. One night one of the Persian generals learned of the situation and followed Qutriga and chased him toward the walls. When the Persian soldiers who approached the walls did not see the monks who had thrown rocks at them, they immediately attacked the walls and captured the tower called Tripyrgion.¹⁵ According to Ps. Zachariah, the monks left the night watch and fell asleep because of the cold weather and because they drank too much wine, just as the accounts described in Procopius and Ps. Joshua (Ps. Zachariah, VII. 25-26).

The fall of Amida on January 10, 503¹⁶ after a three-month siege occurred “without demolishing any walls or opening any door,” according to the words of Ps. Joshua's (Ps. Joshua the Stylite, 53). While the sources indicate that the Sasanians looted the city for three days, Ps. Zachariah and Ps. Joshua write that eighty thousand people in the city of Amida were killed

¹³ Procopius states that Sasanians entered the city from the underground passage, the walls were pushed back at the beginning, but in the meantime King Kavad approached to the city walls and by drawing his sword, he frightened those who returned. Then, the number of Sasanians increased and the control of the city was captured. (Procopius, I, 7, 20-30).

¹⁴ According to Hamilton and Brooks, the origin of the word comes from ‘kategoro’ in Greek, and it means ‘guilty’. (See. Ps. Zachariah, p.238 n.56).

¹⁵ The mentioned tower is in the western part of the city and it means “three small towers” in Greek. Therefore, the tower group standing here side by side can be understood in light of that. Today, it found between Urfa Gate and Yedi Kardeş Tower; and in my opinion, it should be sought in a part of the northeast of the tower known as Ulu Beden. In fact, despite not being seen today, Albert Gabriel mentioned four pedestrian gates and a stream bed in his study (Gabriel, 1940, p. 100).

¹⁶ The date of January, 10 is given by Ps. Joshua the Stylite. Procopius also noted that the city fell 80 days after the siege began (Procopius, I. 7. 30), Ps. Zachariah states that it took more than three months without giving a definite date.

(Ps. Zachariah, VII, 28; Ps. Joshua the Stylite, 53; Procopius, I, 7, 29-30). Both authors report that these corpses were carried outside the northern gate of the city and the corpses were piled into two large mounds (Ps. Zachariah, VII, 28; Ps. Joshua the Stylite, 53). Still, there were survivors of the massacre and according to Ps. Zachariah's account, King Kavad forgave the crowds gathered in the 'Great Church of the Forty Martyrs' church within the city. Immediately afterwards, he confiscated all the treasures from the homes of the city's nobles and from the churches. While Ps. Joshua chose to remain silent regarding the events that occurred after the fall of the city, Ps. Zachariah provides very detailed information. After Kavad entered the city, Cyrus, one of the nobles in the city had Leontius and Paul captured:

Then the king searched for the leaders of the city and its administrator, and the brought to him Leontius, Governor Cyrus who was shot by an arrow, and the rest of the nobles. The Persian killed Paul the son of Zaynab the steward because they found he had a lot of gold, that he would not divulge to the king (Ps. Zachariah, VII, 29).

Kavad murder of Paul would have had an intimidating function and deterring role to those who thought of hiding their own treasure like Paul. Besides this, another detail given by Ps. Zachariah is important for our understanding of river transportation on the Tigris river. The Sasanians had sent all the spoils from Amida to the south toward modern-day Iraq by floats made of wood. This turns out to be important evidence of the existence of river transport on the Tigris river within the sixth century, as the author himself is writing in the sixth century. As a matter of fact, with this information, it is easy to explain the remains of that harbor which was a Roman garrison on the Tigris River in the east of Amida and compare it to the excavations of which have been continuing in Çattepe (Pafenses).¹⁷

After the precious treasures and goods were looted like this, Kavad captured the city's nobles and artisans. According to Ps. Zachariah, these prisoners were not treated honorably:

Finally, the important men and all of the master craftsmen were collected up in the fetters and set aside as the king's captives. They were sent to his country with an armed force that took them down. Influential men in the king's army approached him and said: 'Our families and our brothers have been killed in the battle by the inhabitants of the city,' and the asked him that one tenth of the men be given to them as compensation for vengeance. They gathered and counted

¹⁷ For a recent discussions on Çattepe (ancient name is *Pafenses* in the *Notitia Dignitatum*) see: Sağlamtimur, Ozan, and Uhri, 2018, pp. 241-61; Sağlamtimur, and Ozan, 2017, p. 26-39; Sağlamtimur, 2014, pp. 28-39.

them (?) out and gave to them in proportion to the group, and they put them to death, killing them in every manner (Ps. Zachariah, VII. 30).

The Sasanians deported these prisoners to ‘Veh-az-Amid-Kavadh’ which was a new city established by Kavad that was often involved in the Roman-Persian conflicts.¹⁸ Ps. Zachariah recorded this troubling information about the prisoners, but Procopius was much more optimistic about the fate of these prisoners. He explains these prisoners had been treated with great generosity by Kavad, and were soon released to return to their home.¹⁹ Subsequently, Emperor Anastasius showed great honor to these prisoners who were released from imprisonment and he eventually abandoned Amida's seven-year tax (Procopius, I. 7. 35).

Our sources have given a significant amount of space in their writings to the events in the city after the siege. During the Roman-Persian struggles, it was ordinary for cities and fortresses on the frontier to change hands frequently. However, in general it is difficult to find sources with detailed information on the events that took place after the fall of a city. But the siege of Amida in 502 and the fall of the city are an exception. After the fall of Amida, both Ps. Joshua and Ps. Zachariah gave ‘frightening’ information about the situations of the survivors in the city. They make the case that these survivors experienced a terrible horror through the events that followed.

After the fall of the city, Kavad had left an army of three thousand people in Amida and returned to his country (Ps. Zachariah, VII. 31). The majority of the survivors of Amida were women, children and the elderly. After the news that the city came into the hands of the Sasanians, the Romans sent forces to the region. According to Ps. Zachariah’s account, they began ambushing people outside the city and virtually ‘drove the Sasanians mad.’ They eventually killed Aglon, the Persian governor in the city.²⁰ The

¹⁸ On the deportation of captives see: Greatrex, 1998, p. 93, Morony, 2004, p. 171-72; Kettenhoffen, *Deportations*, p. 300-301.

¹⁹ But, according to Procopius, this behavior of Kavad was a trick because he was worried about the prisoners’ sneaking away and tarnishing the king’s image (Procopius, I. 7.34).

²⁰ The Romans responded to Amida's fall with commanders such as Patricius, Hypatius and Aerobindus who came to the area and attacked the Sassanid lands. But their forces were not yet capable of attacking Amida, and they prepared a plan to take over the city cunningly. Regarding this plan that was recorded by Ps. Joshua and Ps. Zachariah in their works in different but similar ways. Zachariah gives more detailed information compared to Joshua. Accordingly, General Patricius, who came to the city but did not dare to attack since he couldn't afford it, met with a shrewd man named ‘Gadana’ living in the city. Gadana persuaded Aglon, the city's Persian ruler, to go out with around 300-400 soldiers. Indeed, they succeeded in this plan. Ganada convinced Aglon that there were a few Romanians traveling around and also he could capture many animals with Romanians. Aglon, who sent his spies out of

Sasanians, whose numbers decreased some more after this incident, responded with very strict measures. These measures include the removal of a market established just outside the city's walls, a prohibition of the people of the city from going out of the city walls unless they were accompanied by cavalry units, and the remaining Sasanian soldiers were not permitted to buy anything from the public. Therefore, not only were the people of Amida completely isolated from the outside world, but also famine and starvation began to take effect in the city. At this point Ps. Zachariah recorded the following words:

Then the market stopped because of the killing of Aglon and of the cavalry, and the important men who remained in the city, some ten thousand men were seized and imprisoned in the stadium and some ten were without food. Some of them died, and others ate their (sandals?) and their excrement and drank their urine. Finally, they attacked one another, and when they were all about to perish, those who remained in the stadium were released into the city like dead men from their graves (Ps. Zachariah, VII. 33).

But he describes the situation got even worse:

Starving women who were found in gangs seized some of the men by seduction, by deceit, and by craftiness, and overpowering them killed and ate them; more than five hundred men were eaten by women (Ps. Zachariah, VII. 33)

Just like Ps. Zachariah, Ps. Joshua also tries to clearly explain why the women who cannibalized the others fell into this state. According to him, the Sasanians had been supplying food for the city and for themselves by giving daily barley and wheat rations to the people of the city during the period until Aglon was killed. But Aglon's death changed the situation, and the Sasanians began to punish the people of Amida with hunger for revenge. In this way, some women in the city were organized and attacked some people who had fallen on the streets at night from exhaustion. They pulled them to houses or dwellings and killed and ate them. The Sasanians recognized this brutality because of the rising smoke and the smell of burning meat. They

the city walls, received information that there were only a few Roman cavalry. Thus, Ganada guided Aglon who went out of Amida with 400 horsemen and left him to the middle of the Romans' ambush. (Ps. Zachariah, VII. 32) According to Zachariah, Aglon was killed, and his head was brought to Constantina and exhibited. However, Joshua states that he was captured alive and promised to surrender Amida to the Romans (Ps. Joshua the Stylite, 68, (283). Procopius describes this ambush likewise and states that it took place near a village called Thilasamon, about 40 stades away from Amida. But Procopius added that the Romans were waiting with 1000 people against Aglon's 200 soldiers. And finally, just like Zachariah, Procopius also noted that Aglon was killed (Procopius, I. 9.5.19).

immediately intervened and executed the women who had done these things (Ps. Joshua the Stylite, 94-95. See also: Procopius, I. 9. 21-22).

CONCLUSION

The fall of Amida, one of the most populated cities of the eastern border, is undoubtedly an important event for these authors who are native to the region. As noted by Geoffrey Greatrex in his study of all three authors, the one who wrote with the most restrained and dignified tone is Ps. Joshua the Stylite. Although the stories of Ps. Zachariah and Procopius give more details about the siege, they are more focused on the dramatic and moral dimension (Greatrex, 2010, p. 228). It is difficult to answer the question of whether the records of this sorrowful narrative are biased or exaggerated. Unfortunately, the absence of any resources by the Sasanians does not give us a chance to look at an alternative perspective. Seeing the parallelism between the records of all three of the authors, we can say that the main common source is Eustathius. However, the differences found in the works of these authors would obviously be the quotations they have made from other works and the accounts they give from their own experiences.²¹ It should be noted that the chronicle attributed to Ps. Zachariah was written near Amida and Ps. Joshua is a native of the city of Edessa, the closest neighbor of Amida.

Apart from the parallelism between the sources, the other important point is that they provide surprising information about the situation of the people of the city and the daily life during a siege of Amida. From the time of Ammianus Marcellinus, who described the abandonment of Nisibis quite dramatically after the Treaty of 363, we can see in these records one of the most striking accounts of a siege during the Roman-Persian conflicts. The most important reason for this is the fact that just like Nisibis, which was abandoned in 363 and was the most populous city in the east of Rome at that time, Amida was also the most populated city along the eastern border and the city with the most well-fortified walls. Therefore, it is very natural to find plenty of written and oral materials about the fall of such a city that would have had significant regional effects during that time. The fact that the Romans had to leave Nisibis in 363 without any resistance and had to emigrate to Edessa and in particular to Amida had some psychological consequences. As we have come to understand from Ammianus Marcellinus and other resources written later in the century, this left a traumatic impression on the residents of those cities for generations.²² In 503, many of

²¹ For example; like the details given by Procopius about the ambush that fell upon Aglon that cannot be found in other resources or the information given only by Ps. Zachariah about the thief called 'Qutriga'.

²² On the subject. see: Ammianus Marcellinus, XXV, 9, 1-5; Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, I. 180. 4- 8; Malalas, XIII, 27; Chronicon Paschale, 554 (43); Zosimus,

the defenders of Amida who displayed points of overconfidence at times were the grandchildren of those who had to emigrate from Nisibis. Thus, in the strong resistance during the siege of Amida, the public memory from only a few generations before we might say left an impression that contributed to both the fervency of their defense and a brashness at one very critical point.

III, 34, I; Whitby, 1998, p. 197; Greatrex and Lieu, 2002, p. 1-13; Dignas and Winter, 2007, p. 131-134; Konuk, 2017a, p. 60; 74-5.

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