

## = Battle of Apamea =

The Battle of Apamea was fought on 19 July 998 between the forces of the Byzantine Empire and the Fatimid Caliphate . The battle was part of a series of military confrontations between the two powers over control of northern Syria and the Hamdanid emirate of Aleppo . The Byzantine regional commander , Damian Dalassenos , had been besieging Apamea , until the arrival of the Fatimid relief army from Damascus , under Jaysh ibn Samsama . In the subsequent battle , the Byzantines were initially victorious , but a lone Kurdish rider managed to kill Dalassenos , throwing the Byzantine army into panic . The fleeing Byzantines were then pursued , with much loss of life , by the Fatimid troops . This defeat forced the Byzantine emperor Basil II to personally campaign in the region the next year , and was followed in 1001 by the conclusion of a ten @-@ year truce between the two states .

## = = Background = =

In September 994 Michael Bourtzes , the Byzantine military governor ( doux ) of Antioch and northern Syria , suffered a heavy defeat at the Battle of the Orontes at the hands of the Fatimid general Manjutakin . This Fatimid victory shook the Byzantine position in Syria , and posed a grave threat to its Arab vassal , the Hamdanid Emirate of Aleppo . To prevent its fall , Emperor Basil II himself intervened in the region in 995 , forcing Manjutakin to retire to Damascus . After capturing Shayzar , Hims and Rafaniya , and building a new fortress at Antartus , the emperor withdrew , leaving Damian Dalassenos as the new doux of Antioch .

Dalassenos maintained an aggressive stance . In 996 his forces raided the environs of Tripoli and Arqa , while Manjutakin , again without success , laid siege to Aleppo and Antartus , but was forced to withdraw when Dalassenos with his army came to relieve the fortress . The next year , Dalassenos repeated his raids against Tripoli , Rafaniya , Awgh , and al @-@ Lakma , capturing the latter . At the same time , the inhabitants of Tyre , under the leadership of a sailor named Allaqa , rose up in revolt against the Fatimids and requested Byzantine assistance ; further south , in Palestine , the Bedouin leader Mufarrij ibn Daghfal ibn al @-@ Jarrah attacked Ramlah .

## = = Siege of Apamea and the Fatimid relief expedition = =

In early summer 998 , Dalassenos learned that a catastrophic fire had broken out in Apamea and destroyed most of its provisions , so he marched towards the city . The Aleppines too endeavoured to seize Apamea and arrived there first , but withdrew at the approach of Dalassenos , who could not permit a vassal to grow too strong and intended to capture the town for the emperor . Although ostensibly allies with the Byzantines , the Aleppines left the provisions they had brought with them to be collected by the inhabitants of Apamea , aiding them in their resistance . Subsequent events are presented by several authors , including the brief narrative of John Skylitzes and the more extensive accounts of the Christian Arab Yahya of Antioch and the Armenian Stephen of Taron . Arab accounts also survive , all apparently drawing upon the work of the 11th @-@ century historian Hilal al @-@ Sabi ; the most detailed version is preserved by Ibn al @-@ Qalanisi .

The governor of Apamea , al @-@ Mala 'iti , called for aid upon the Fatimids . According to Ibn al @-@ Qalanisi , the eunuch regent Barjawan appointed Jaysh ibn Samsama to command the relief army , naming him governor of Damascus and giving him a thousand men . Before confronting the Byzantines , the Fatimids had to deal with the revolt of Tyre and the rebellion of Ibn al @-@ Jarrah . The Byzantines attempted to aid the besieged at Tyre by sending a fleet , but it was beaten off by the Fatimids , and the city captured in June 998 . Ibn al @-@ Jarrah 's revolt was also suppressed , and Jaysh ibn Samsama returned to Damascus , where he stayed for three days to gather his forces for the relief of Apamea . There he was joined by the troops and volunteers from Tripoli , assembling a force numbering 10 @,@ 000 men and 1 @,@ 000 Bedouin riders of the Banu Kilab tribe . According to Skylitzes , the Fatimid army comprised the forces of Tripoli , Beirut , Tyre , and Damascus . Meanwhile , Dalassenos was vigorously pursuing the siege , and the inhabitants of

Apamea had been reduced to famine , being forced to eat cadavers and dogs , which they bought for the price of 25 silver dirhams ( according to Abu 'l @-@ Faraj , two gold dinars ) a piece .

= = Battle = =

The two armies met on the large plain of al @-@ Mudiq ( cf . Qalaat al @-@ Madiq ) , surrounded by mountains and located near the Lake of Apamea , on 19 July 998 . According to Ibn al @-@ Qalanisi , the Fatimid army 's left wing was commanded by Maysur the Slav , governor of Tripoli ; the centre , where the Daylamite infantry and the army baggage train were located , was under the command of Badr al @-@ Attar ; the right was commanded by Jaysh ibn Samsama and Wahid al @-@ Hilali . According to all accounts , the Byzantines charged the Fatimid army and drove it to flight , killing some 2 @,@ 000 and capturing the baggage train . Only 500 ghilman under Bishara the Ikhshidid remained steadfast and held firm against the assault , while the Banu Kilab simply abandoned the fight and began looting the battlefield . At that point , a Kurdish rider , named Abu 'l @-@ Hajar Ahmad ibn al @-@ Dahhak al @-@ Salil by Ibn al @-@ Athir and Ibn al @-@ Qalanisi and Bar Kefa by the Byzantine sources and Abu 'l @-@ Faraj , rode towards Dalassenos , who was near his battle standard on top of a height and was accompanied only by two of his sons and ten men of his retinue . Believing the battle won and that the Kurd wanted to surrender , Dalassenos took no precautions . As he approached the Byzantine general , Ibn al @-@ Dahhak suddenly charged . Dalassenos lifted his arm to shield himself , but the Kurd launched his spear at him . The general wore no cuirass , and the blow killed him .

Dalassenos ' death changed the tide of the battle : the Fatimids took heart and , shouting " the enemy of God is dead ! " , turned on the Byzantines , who fell into panic and fled . The garrison of Apamea too sallied forth , completing the Byzantine debacle . The sources give various numbers for the Byzantine dead : Maqrizi mentions 5 @,@ 000 , Yahya of Antioch 6 @,@ 000 , and Ibn al @-@ Qalanisi as many as 10 @,@ 000 dead . Most of the remaining Byzantines ( 2 @,@ 000 according to Ibn al @-@ Qalanisi ) were taken prisoner by the Fatimids . These included several senior officers , including the famed Georgian patrikios Tchortovanel , a nephew of Tornike Eristavi , as well as the two sons of Dalassenos , Constantine and Theophylact , who were bought by Jaysh ibn Samsama for 6 @,@ 000 dinars and spent the next ten years as captives in Cairo . Stephen of Taron gives a slightly different account of the battle , whereby the victorious Byzantines were surprised by an attack by the regrouped Fatimids on their camp and that one of Dalassenos 's brothers and one of his sons were killed , as well as the general himself . This version is commonly rejected by modern scholars .

= = Aftermath = =

Dalassenos ' defeat forced Basil II to personally lead yet another campaign in Syria the following year . Arriving in Syria in mid @-@ September , the emperor 's army buried their fallen in the field of Apamea and then captured Shayzar , sacked Hisn Masyat and Rafaniya , torched Arqa , and raided the environs of Baalbek , Beirut , Tripoli and Jubayl . In mid @-@ December , Basil returned to Antioch , where he installed Nikephoros Ouranos as doux , although according to his self @-@ description as the " ruler of the East " , his role seems to have been more extensive , with plenipotentiary military and civilian authority over the entire eastern frontier . In 1001 , Basil II concluded a ten @-@ year truce with the Fatimid Caliph al @-@ Hakim .