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“MAHASBERD REGAINED”

Armenian medieval fortifications are still little studied, despite the dramatic remains which have been preserved in Ani. Thus a systematic analysis of the huge fortified works that protected the city throughout its history has been one of the main tasks of the French archaeological mission of Ani, led by Professor Jean-Pierre Mahé. It sheds a new light on the urban history and the technical, architectural and poliorcetic culture, and makes it possible to outline a frame of reference for the other sites in the area, both in Turkey and in the Republic of Armenia. As participants in this study, we couldn't but take a special interest in the small fortress known as Mahasberd, located in the valley of the Akhourian, 2 miles as the crow flies from the former capital city of the Bagratid kingdom, to the South (fig 8). It is located on a small basalt plateau which overlooks the river from the height of about 40 meters, and characterized by a front with three high towers close to each other with a berm as well as a ditch dug in the rock; although it was generally presented as an outpost of the Bagratid capital, and thought to have been built by its sovereigns, this small fortress was still fairly enigmatic: it did not have any epigraphic Armenian resources, nor was it present in the medieval sources or even recognized by the archeologists of the early 20th century; it is today off limits, as it is located on a part of the border which is an exclusively military area.

A first visit of the site in 2005³⁴ enabled us to collect unprecedented information about the function, organization and evolution of the fortified work, particularly on the analysis of its entry sequence. It helped to highlight its role as controlling an access path to a ford across the river, in an environment of abrupt basalt cliffs. Indeed the small fort overlooks a point of inversion between two turns

³⁴ The visit was undertaken by N. Prouteau and Ph. Sablayrolles as part of the French archeological mission in Ani. Cf. Ph. Dangles and N. Prouteau, *Observations sur quelques forteresses de la région d'Ani (12th -17th century)*. Pp. 273-299

of the river, where the flow slows down, thus making up an environment that is favourable to alluvial deposit, hence to a crossing point.

The entry to the fortress is laid out at the north-eastern end of the fortified front: a first quadrangular enclosure, which was accessible through a door formerly topped with a brattice, opens onto the different ways of access to the fortress on one side, and to a natural ledge in the cliff on the other side, leading to the ford.

A study of the fortress door and its approach revealed three successive positions of the work (fig 2/4): two positions concerning the door itself as well as the wall it is set into, and a late rebuilding of the upper part of the walls and towers, including the battlements which are still in good shape on photographs of the early 20th century. This work site, made of rough rubble masonry, contains two blocks above the door on which Arabic characters were inscribed. The most important inscription, the only one that could be studied (fig 5), dates this restoration back to the middle of the 18th century³⁵. The small fort was then still a strategic spot in the context of the Persian – Ottoman conflicts which exhausted the area between the 16th and 19th century, but don't seem to have gone as far as Ani, which was then deserted³⁶.

Although they are characteristic, the two other former positions of the door in Mahasberd do not give any clue as to any accurate dating. The basic aspect of the primitive door (a narrow passage under a monolith tympanum) would lead us to think it is ancient but can also be understood as a mark of archaism or as being justified by the modest size of the work it was defending. The panel with its chamfered frame in which the door dating from the second period is set can also be found in the big gate of Ani (13th century), but we lack fuller examples of gates for the 10th to 12th century in the area, which would enable us to date this particular motif. The mouldings on the capitals bearing the arch of this second passage could be compared to the ones of the Igador postern in Ani, the smallest and best preserved of the four gates that we know of in the primitive northern outer wall

³⁵ These inscriptions are neither recorded by N. Khanikoff, *Inscriptions musulmanes du Caucase*, *Journal asiatique* n°20, 1862, p. 57-155., nor by A. Хачатрян, *Корпус арабских надписей Армении VIII-XVI вв.* [A. Khatchatrian, *A Corpus of Arabic inscriptions in Armenia 8th -16th century*] Ереван 1987.

We thank Professors J.-M. Mouton (EPHE, Paris) and F. Imbert (Aix Marseille University), for agreeing to examine the main inscription which hadn't been studied until today. Their expertise both show it can be dated back to the Hegira 1160s' decade. The analysis of the language and the identity of the person the inscription attributes the restoration to is still under way.

³⁶ Mahasberd is given by the treaty of 1639 to the Ottoman Pasha of Kars, who is supposed to dismantle it. Dr R. Ali Kavani, «The treaty of 1639 and its consequences for Armenia and Armenians », *Armenia and Armenians in international treaties*, *Armenian Review*, vol. 52, 2010.

which is attributed to the campaign of King Smbat at the end of the 10th century or the beginning of the 11th century. However we don't know what the outer decoration of this door looks like, as it is still masked by the masonry that was used to condemn it in the 13th century.

Although these preliminary remarks enable us to link the history and the forms of Mahasberd small fort to the history and the local technical and stylistic evolutions between the 10th and 13th century, a deeper and new understanding of the site was only really possible thanks to the discovery – via the satellite pictures available through Google Earth in 2004/2005³⁷ – of a much more important urban fortified settlement, located directly above the fort on the edge of the plateau, more than 100 meters above the river level (fig 6). The seat of this site which is still today called Eski Mahasberd in Turkish (the old Mahasberd) benefits from an exceptional physical location: a vast portion of the plateau, which stretches elliptically on a north-west south-east axis and is isolated by two small valleys, looks from a distance like a suspended island in the deep notch of the valley (fig 7). The urban area slopes gently to the south-east and is protected on each side by steep escarpments; it joins the plateau through a narrow pass on the west only.

This layout is precisely the one described in the main source available regarding the site. The Deacon Zak'aria K'anak'erc'i (1627-1699) reports that Emperor Maurice (582-602), of Armenian descent, “sent to his homeland an Armenian named Mahas to build in Armenia a town bearing his name. Once he had found a suitable place in the canton of Shirak, near and south of Ani, on the river Akhurian, on a slope between two mountains, three sides of which were steep rocks, the western one offering a small sloping space and easier access, and as he was satisfied with the location, Mahas surrounded it with walls, built a door and named the place Mahasberd.”³⁸

We were able to visit the urban site of “Upper”-Mahasberd, which had never been studied before, in Autumn 2013³⁹. The preserved remains of the fortifications are mostly located on the western front which links the urban site to the plateau by a slightly inclined pass. This fortified front (fig 1) is relatively short (approximately

³⁷ We would like to thank Philippe Sablayrolles, topographer for the French mission in Ani, who was the first to discover the presence of these remains and informed us.

³⁸ Zakaria the Deacon, 1876.

³⁹ We would like to thank the Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage (NIKU) and its General Director, C. Paludan-Müller, who helped make this excursion possible. T'oramanyan only alludes to the site, when mentioning “before” Mahasberd, on a very wide plateau, the ruins of a city, surrounded by walls and many various structures. T. T'oramanyan, *Matériaux pour l'histoire de l'architecture arménienne*, 1], p. 312, 1948.

250 meters from west to east). It includes the gate to the town and seven unevenly spaced salients. It is highly homogeneous as regards the building technique, without any clear trace of previous works or further additions. There are however very different types of work: two round towers, three U-shaped towers, two quadrangular towers. There is no doubt the wall went further east and west of this main fortified front, to the top of the natural escarpments surrounding the plateau. Several fragments remain. With one exception we will deal with later, they are all fragments of straight curtain walls without any salient.

The gate to the town is located near the southern end of this front (fig 9). It is a simple 3.50 meter wide passage in the wall, which is very thick there. The jambs on each side of the passage make up a large pile underlined by two recesses. It is devoid of any visible trace of door panels or beams. The covering of this passage, if it ever existed (arch, lintel?) was not preserved. The most singular characteristic of this gate is that it seems to have been flanked by two clearly asymmetrical works. On the north east side, we find a very significant salient (about 9 meters), a U-shaped tower whose main axis is not perpendicular to the curtain wall but leans to the west, as if to be parallel to the path leading to the gate. The wall of this tower, which is more than 2.50 meters wide, opens onto an inner room, accessible at the gorge by a 0.90-meter wide door, between two jambs supporting a semicircular arch (fig 10). The same type of door, with slight variations in width, opens onto all the inner rooms in all the towers that we will describe. The room in the tower is 4.50 meters wide at its gorge but gets significantly smaller on its protruding side, both sides of the tower being not parallel.

Another structure may have existed southeast of the entry passage, but it is difficult to figure out any of its outlines with the few remains that are currently visible. The ruins seem to indicate a level of thickness which might have been that of a big buttress or a turret which would have been smaller than the western tower, and probably full. Indeed, beside this structure is a vaulted niche which is around 3.50m wide and probably as much in depth; it was built inside the curtain wall and the work in front of it (fig 11). This niche is likely to have been opening onto the inside of the town (the front façade is missing) and does not indicate any trace of a door that could have opened into a tower.

To the east of the niche, the city wall seems to get its average width again (around 2 meters) right next to imposing structures that are resting on the angle marking the western boundary of the “entrance front”. On the outside, this angle

contains a tower whose interior is perfectly circular (fig 12). Its diameter inside is 5.50 meters, with walls that are about 2 meters thick. The entrance door, at the back, is set in a short section of the wall forming an angle between the neighboring walls. This part of the work is sufficiently high for us to notice the posts of a window above the access door, which must have been as wide as the door and provided light to the room in the tower.

To the west of the door and of the U-shaped tower which defends it, two fairly evenly spaced towers of the same type and size are to be seen (less than 20 meters from each other); the second one is near an inside corner set in the curtain wall.

The most peculiar element can be seen a bit further (around 40 meters) from this angle. It is a second circular tower, bigger than the previous one (its lower diameter is of 7 meters), with 1.80-meter-wide walls. Its particularity lies in the fact that it is built on either side of the straight curtain wall, and one quarter of its circumference protrudes from the inner side of the curtain wall (fig 13). The access door has exactly the same characteristics as the ones in the other towers. The blocks on the jambs have several holes which might have been used to insert blocking beams or grids; they were most likely added later. The tower is built with stone courses whose height (around 0.70 meters) is superior to that of the curtain wall, though on further examination of the mortars, both seem to have been built at the same time. It is more likely that the difference would be due to the organization of the working site, than to a real gap in time. This big cylindrical tower marks the limit of the pass connecting the urban area to the plateau. Further west, the slope gets steeper, thus defending the site in a natural way.

There are still two more salients to the north west of the round tower, which are smaller and more widely spaced, and built on a more or less regular quadrangular design. The first one (fig 14) is clearly trapezoidal in shape: the front and the north side tilt to the north so as to stick to the wall. The design of the second one is more regular. Both show exactly the same masonry and the same door design at the gorge.

The curtain wall seems to go on beyond the second tower but what remains of it does not currently allow us to see any further detail about its development. The materials and techniques used in those works are very homogeneous and do not show any visible sign that anything was restored, added or transformed as was the case for the top parts of the small fort in the valley, which are missing here. The blocks of stone used may come from the quarry that cuts the plateau just opposite

the entrance gate of the town. During our short visit we did not notice any stone mark nor inscription.

The stone courses are of various heights and made of fairly long blocks (they are often twice as wide as high), three sides of which are upright (the back side, the upper and lower sides); on the lateral side and on the back, the more irregular shape of the stone makes it mix more easily with the mortars. The blocks acted both as cladding and formwork and did not go very deep in the wall itself. The cladding of the works which are oriented towards the exterior of the town is more carefully built than the one inside (i.e the inside of the towers and the side of the outer wall that is turned towards the town): there, the blocks are smaller and were more unevenly laid.

On the other sections of the town's perimeter, close to the natural slopes going down to the valley, several portions of the wall can still be spotted. The most significant one is on the south-western front and seems to continue the curtain wall after the tower in the southern corner. The other remains are more ruined. The walls are thinner, which may be due to the fact that those fronts were less exposed, as they benefited from the natural protection of the steep slopes. It may also be assumed that they were either part of a civilian structure, or of a later exterior wall.

On the eastern part of the northern front of the plateau, there is a pile of ruined masonry whose cladding has almost totally been destroyed. It is located next to one of the less steep parts of the slope. It could be a secondary door which was an opening onto the prairies stretching at the bottom of the slope, thus enabling an access, further down, to the citadel and the river banks.

The area marked by the natural limits of the plateau has a very long oval shape, and is around 150 to 180 meters wide and more than 800 meters long. It presents many superimposed structures, none of which is significantly high in its current condition. The upper level is often made of walls that were built with blocks of roughly squared basalt, probably mixed with clay mortar which has disappeared. A village might have been built later there, and possibly turned into animal pens. Still, it should be reminded that in Ani, lime-based mortar was not used for the common houses, nor, even, for some of the structures of the "palace" of the citadel; it was only used for churches and fortifications.

Under this first layer there are occasional alignments of walls clad with tufa stone, using the technique of loose rubble filling masonry. Two particular structures stand out: in the south eastern part of the plateau we could identify the remains of a church (fig 15). The remaining blocks enabled us to see its layout: it

seems to be a small church, of free cruciform type, with a nave that is around 6 meters wide and 14 meters long. Clearing the remains more thoroughly would certainly help to confirm this layout and to get to its paved part.

The most important structure that was preserved is located north of the church, almost exactly in the axis of the urban settlement's gate. It is built with yellowish tufa blocks that are roughly similar to the ones of the surrounding wall, although they are (at least the few ones that can be seen) higher than they are wide, so that they look more like standing blocks. Their sides are built with lime mortar. They seem to be arranged in the shape of a central long hall with doors on either side opening on quite large rooms. Contrary to what the aerial view seemed to indicate, it is unlikely to be a caravanserai (the hall seems to be too narrow and the walls too thick for that), but it could be a residential structure. To the north of this structure, the rock reaches a relatively open vast area that might have been a public place.

We couldn't explore the plateau near the entrance to the side as thoroughly as we wished but it does not seem to contain any remain of a suburban area. The outbuildings of the city, if they ever existed, would rather have been located on the south eastern and north eastern slopes of the city, and before the fortified front of the citadel further down, where the funeral area is also probably located.

Mahasberd and the Akhurian valley during the Middle Ages.

A quick observation of the site confirms and clarifies the analysis we had drafted on the sole basis of the satellite photograph: Mahasberd can no longer be considered as being only the small fort that many authors saw – without any adequate reason - as an outpost to the near Bagratid capital (fig 16). The site should be seen as a bigger complex, encompassing the town of Mahasberd, its suburban area, probably located on the north and southeastern slope, and the small fort at the ford which overlooks the road leading to the valley; the small fort should be given its ancient name, Cark'ar, as revealed by a colophon dated at 1222⁴⁰. The finding of the main urban settlement, which covers an area of about 16 ha (40 acres) confers credibility to the topographic description made by the the Deacon Zak'aria; the typology of the church layout whose remains were found – a free cruciform layout, which was common in the 7th century – is consistent with the chronological context

⁴⁰ Colophon which was transmitted in a manuscript dating from 1681: Ms695, p. 188a, parallel to W88, p. 66. A.S. Mat'evosyan, *Colophons arméniens XIIIe s.*, Erevan 1984, p. 131. This information was communicated by J.-P. Mahé in a post scriptum to Dangles et Prouteau, *Observations* (quoted n. 1), p. 284

mentioned by the chronicler. Mahasberd would then be part of the campaign of reinforcement of the Byzantine presence in the area at the beginning of the 7th century, in the same way as in Mren, which is only 30 km further away to the south. At that time, the future Bagratid capital was little more than a small town set on the location of the hill of Aljkaberd, and maybe of the citadel. Ani only competed in dimension with the urban settlement of Mahasberd after the construction of a new wall by King Ashot III, who made Ani his capital in 961. It became really prominent at the very end of the 10th century with the spectacular extension King Smbat II carried out. As regards the links between both cities, we can but wonder about the apparent absence of large-scale monuments inside the fortified perimeter of Mahasberd, as well as about the shift of the place name which finally seemed to refer to the citadel only: that could be the sign of an early abandonment of the town. Thus, the account Zak'aria makes of the treacherous capture of the town in favour of the Pasha of Kars in 1635 could well refer to the citadel only; indeed, it still played a defensive part in the middle of the 18th century whereas the town itself had been abandoned.

Mahasberd and the Local Medieval Fortifications

The rediscovery of the defensive structures of Mahasberd broadens the corpus of regional fortifications and opens new perspectives for a better understanding of how shapes and techniques circulated in a context subjected to significant impacts, perceptible even to date. The works of Mahasberd-Cark'ar's fortifications seem to have used techniques that were largely used in the local context. However, we should qualify this assessment, as it is mostly based on a survey of the second medieval campaign that we identified; the first one, the more primitive one, is only visible today in the partial ruins of the gatehouse. On the contrary, the defensive structures of the town of Mahasberd present, whatever the criteria of analysis we use, original solutions which were unknown or rare in Ani and around it – where we can find the impact of the important works led by the different protagonists of the history of this town from the end of the 10th century to the beginning of the 15th century.

We find both in Mahasverd and Ani a systematic use of the loose rubble filling masonry technique: however, in Ani the blocks used are squared off on their external side only, with different degrees of precision according to the period. The other sides are only very roughly prepared, with the block forming a sort of wedge locked into the mortar, and each stone rests on the other one on an edge that is

sometimes only a few millimeters wide. The facing walls make up the formwork which does not have any stability of its own. This technical characteristic is not always used in Mahasberd, where the blocks used are frequently squared off on the two sides and built up like a wall before being filled. The blocks are longer and built with crossed joints.

None of the towers in the outer wall of Ani that are attributed to the campaigns of fortifications of the Bagratid sovereigns seem to have rooms inside. The towers are set in a curve of the wall, and sometimes have a wall at their gorge and are filled with earth in order to make up a walkable terrace – but can also sometimes remain empty. On the contrary, the towers in Mahasberd always contain rooms, which are accessible via a door at the gorge and probably lit by a bay window placed above the entrance. The walls are generally of the same thickness and have the same technical and dimensional characteristics in the whole structure (sides, flanks, gorge, curtain wall), even if it should be underlined that the most exposed parts seem to have been cut in a more sophisticated way. We do not know what the rooms in the towers were covered by (vault? floorboards?), as there are no remains of the upper parts. There is no trace of arrow slits either: the rooms do not seem to have been used as active defensive spots. Most of Ani's structures are built on a U-shaped plan which is often irregular (in the angles between the curtain wall and the flanks and in the length of the flanks). Quadrangular layouts are rare (only two instances out of thirty towers on the northern wall). A circular layout is only to be found twice in structures that do not belong to the Bagratid campaigns: a turret from the beginning of the 13th century, in the eastern valley, and an archaic tower whose very few remains are located at the eastern end of the defensive wall of the citadel. By contrast, the variety of forms that we find in Mahasberd's short front is all the more striking as it is accompanied by a great homogeneity in techniques and details. This could be due to a geographic logic: the two cylindrical towers are set on the most exposed part of the front, whose center is defended by three evenly spaced U-shaped towers that are oriented for maximum efficiency towards the entrance, which is itself on the side of the eastern tower. The quadrangular salients seem to have been less evenly scattered along parts of the wall that were less exposed, probably in places where it was topographically possible. If this variety in shapes, which is typical of Byzantine fortifications, is rare in the local heritage, it could be because it is still very imperfectly known: we know nothing about the potential fortifications of Mren, and we miss some of the major monuments in

Kars, such as its outer wall - whose long straight walls were made of alternating round or square towers - which was systematically destroyed at the end of the 19th century.

In Mahasberd the presence of the big cylindrical tower that is built on either side of the curtain wall is one of the most peculiar feature of the whole structure, and has no equivalent in Ani. A relevant comparison can only be found in one of the least known sites of the local heritage, which is the outer wall of the princely residence of Aruč, located about 40km southeast of Mahasberd. What we have there are quadrangular towers, which are set in a very systematic way and all contain the same inner room, accessible through a small door placed in the inner angle between the wall and the tower. The outer wall of Aruč is documented by a source⁴¹, which associates it to the construction of the neighboring church between 660 and 670, but the role of the site as a fortified post is mentioned as early as in the 5th century. This outer wall was excavated at the end of the 20th century but the findings were only partially published⁴² and did not mention the modernization of its northern front, which was reshaped by adding U-shaped towers. We were able to carry out a new survey of it in the summer of 2012 (fig 17)⁴³.

To finish, the site of Mahasberd also presents a singular and even more puzzling example of a fortified gate. This gate, which is partially buried, cannot be totally studied today. The gate seems to have been defended either by a single tower – which can still be seen to the west of the passage – or by two works which are very asymmetrical in design and size. Such an outlay is not rare in medieval Armenia. The three main gates of Ani’s northern wall are set between two towers which are never strictly identical in size, as the entrance is always located near the strongest structure.

This asymmetry is even more visible in the gate of King Ašot’s wall or in the one of the citadel, protected by a huge square tower. The fortified front of the village of Kecivan Kalesi – Tunçkaya, about 40kms south of Mahasberd – shows an example of a door that was built between two very asymmetrical salients. We could also mention the wall of Akhtala’s monastery or the gate of the town of Loriberd. In most of these cases, however, this asymmetrical aspect can be accounted for by the position of the door, which is either at the end of a fortified

⁴¹ Yovhannēs Drasxanakertc‘i, 2004, p. 151.

⁴² K. Mat’evosyan, Aruč, Erevan 1987

⁴³ The research was carried out with Ph. Sablayrolles as part of the French mission of Ani-Pemza, which is now led by Professor Isabelle Augé (Montpellier university)

front and very close to a natural ravine, or set within a site with a double surrounding wall. This is not true of Mahasberd, where there is no trace of such a double wall ever existing.

Unfortunately it is very unlikely that the current military context restricting the access to the site of Mahasberd changes any time soon and allows us to make any further survey. We will have to settle for our own observations and the ones that were made in the same conditions. However, they may be interesting in that they will remind researchers of the importance of this site and the questions it raises. Indeed, it helps giving an outline of a corpus of fortified settlements prior to the Arabic conquest, thus helping us to reexamine how influential adjacent empires were on Armenian works. Moreover it also puts in perspective the dominant figure of Ani in the local context.

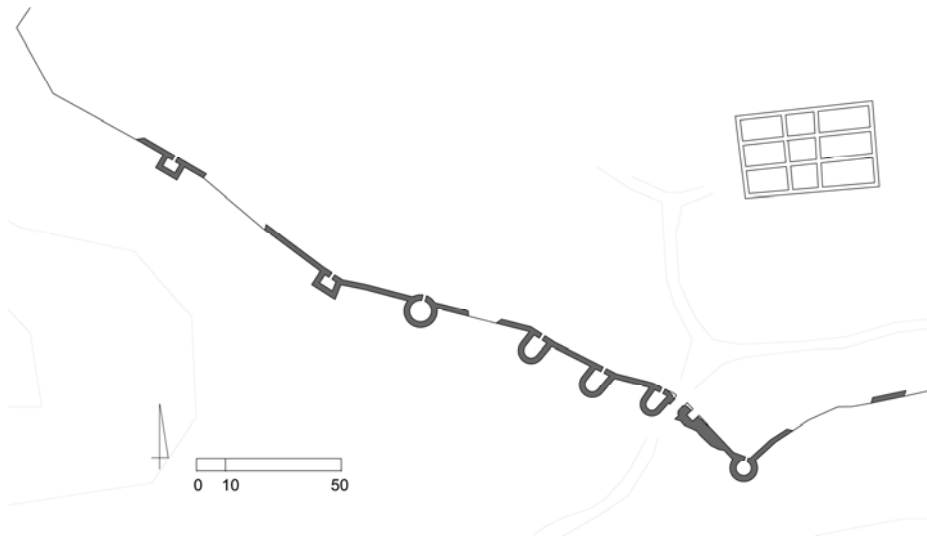


Fig. 1 - Urban fortification of Mahasberd, western front, sketch map. Drawing by Ph. Dangles

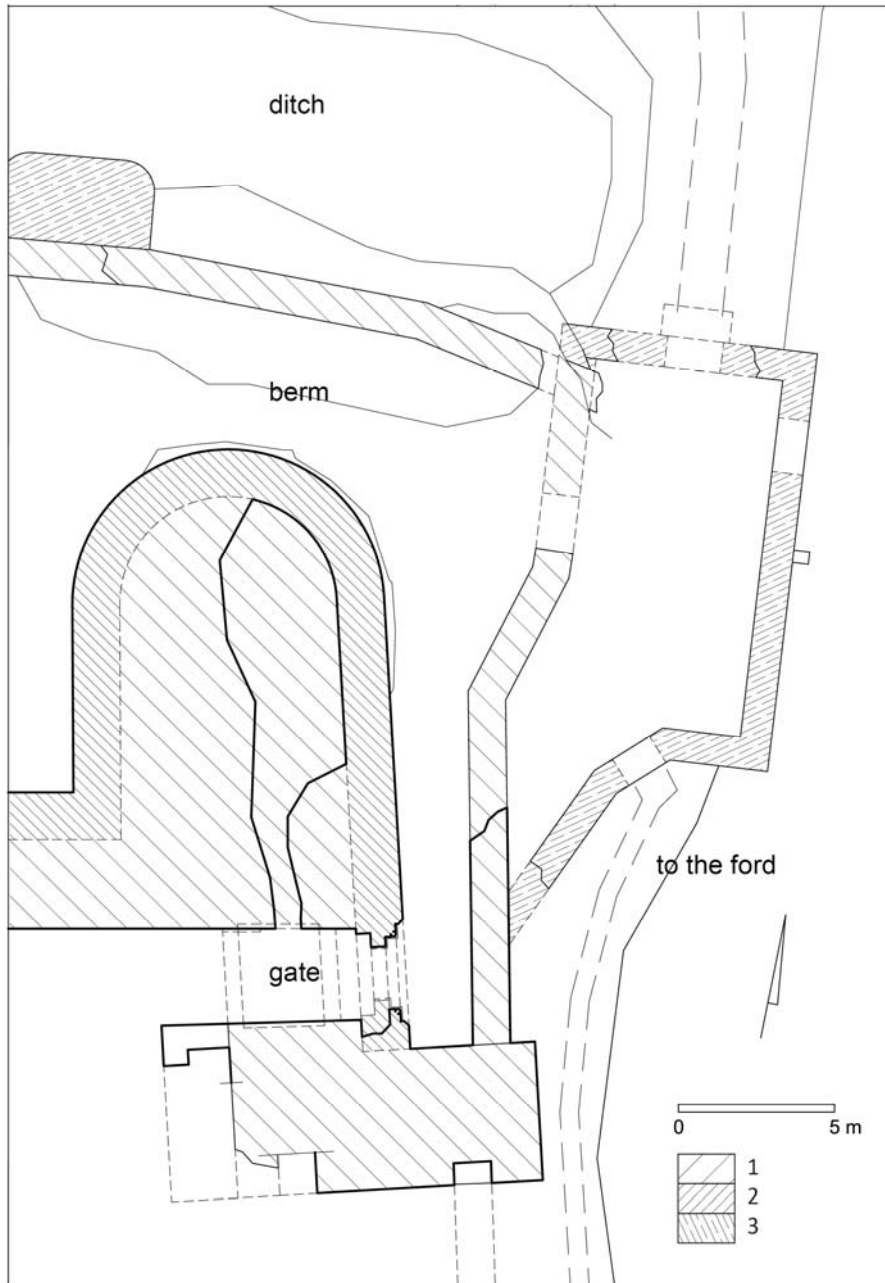


Fig. 2 – Gate to the fortress of Mahasberd-Cark'ar, map. Drawing by Ph. Dangles after N. Prouteau and Ph. Sablayrolles.



Fig. 3 – Fortress of Mahasberd-Cark'ar, entrance hall and gate. C1....

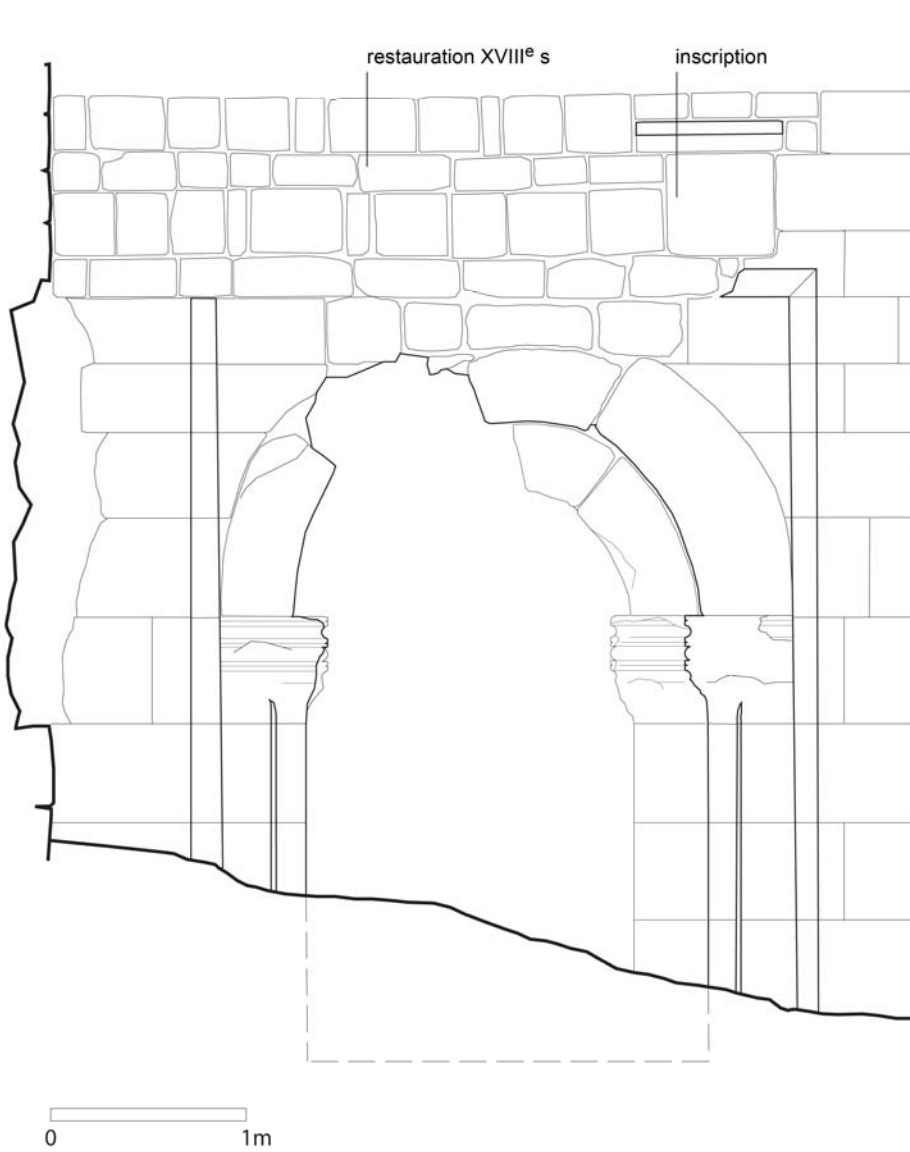


Fig. 4 – Gate to the fortress of Mahasberd-Cark'ar, eastern elevation. Drawing by Ph. Dangles after N. Prouteau and Ph. Sablayrolles.



Fig. 5 –Fortress of Mahasberd-Cark'ar, mid -18th century inscription.



Fig. 6 – Mahasberd settlement, fortress and town. Google Earth satellite view.



Fig 7 – Mahasberd town settlement, north western view. Cl. Ph. Dangles



Fig 8 - Fortress of Mahasberd-Cark'ar, north eastern view



Fig. 9 - Mahasberd, entrance front, gate, outer side.



Fig 10 - Mahasberd, entrance front, western tower of the gate



Fig.11 - Mahasberd, entrance front, gate, niche on the inner elevation



Fig.12 - Mahasberd, entrance front, eastern cylindrical tower



Fig.13 - Mahasberd, entrance front, big western cylindrical tower



Fig.14 - Mahasberd, entrance front, rectangular western tower



Fig. 15 - Mahasberd, cathedral's apse



Fig.16 - Mahasberd, general view from the town to the north: on the left, the fortress; on the right in the distance: citadel, cathedral and church of the Redeemer in Ani.

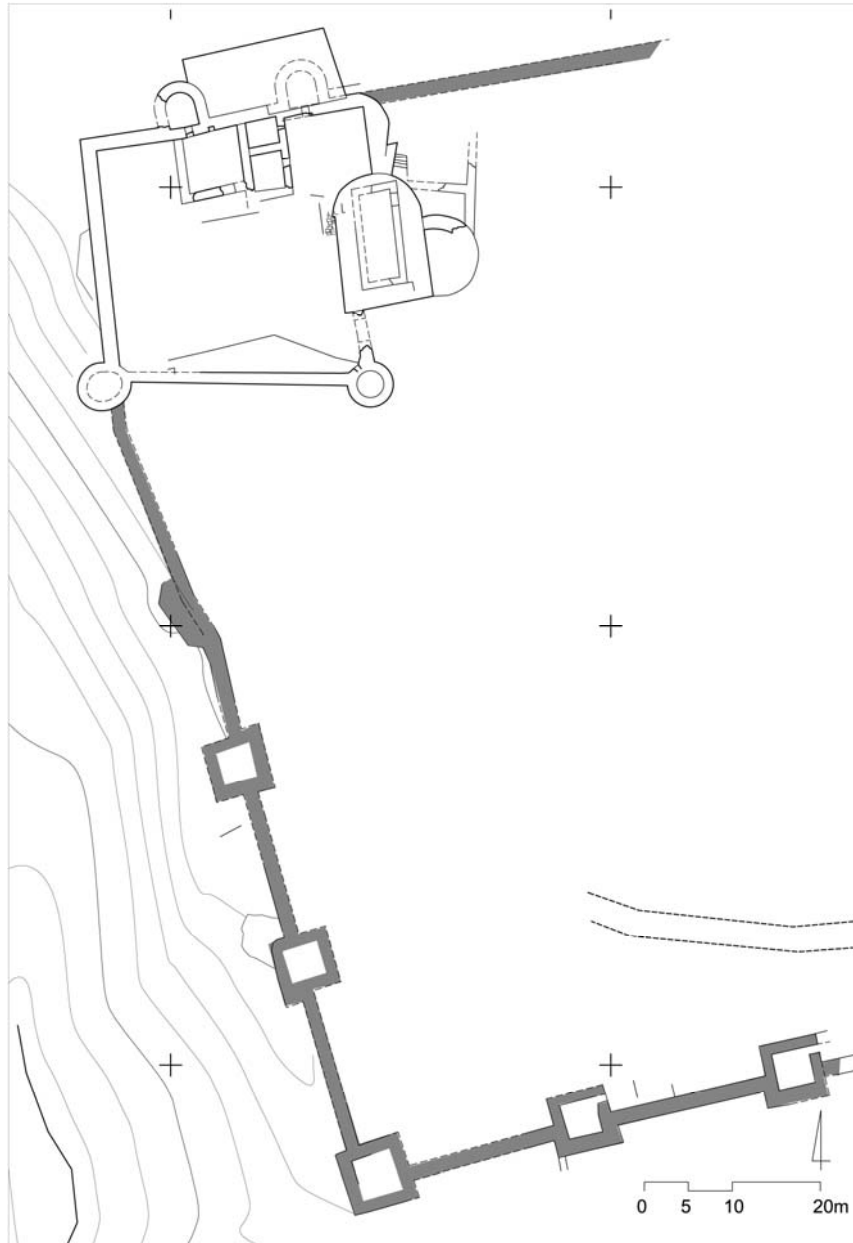


Fig. 17 – Aruč, overall map of the fortifications. The primitive surrounding wall is shown in gray. Measurements and drawing by Ph. Dangles and Ph. Sablayrolles.

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ՎԵՐԱԳՏՆՎԱԾ ՄԱՂԱՍԲԵՐԴ

ԱՍՓՈՓՈՒՄ

Անիից մի քանի կիլոմետր դեպի հարավ՝ հայ-թուրքական սահմանի մոտ՝ Ախուրյանի ափին գտնվող Մաղասբերդի մասին մեր տեղեկությունները բավական սահմանափակ են, և գրեթե ամբողջովին անհայտ է Մաղասբերդ քաղաքը, որի մնացորդների մասին մինչև այսօր ոչ մի հրապարակում չի եղել: Թորամանյանը միայն հպանցիկ հիշատակություն ունի Մաղասբերդ անունով փոքրիկ ամրոցի մոտ գտնվող բնակավայրի ավերակների մասին:

Քաղաքի մնացորդները գտնվում են բերդից վերև ու գրավում են բնական պաշտպանված սարահարթի մի մասը:

Հողվածն առաջին անգամ ներկայացնում է Ջ դարի վերջին Մորիկ կայսեր անունով կառուցված այս բնակավայրը՝ իր պարիսպներով ու բազմաթիվ կառույցների մնացորդներով, որոնց մեջ կա նաև մի եկեղեցի: Սրանով բացահայտվում է Ախուրյանի հովտում գտնվող ևս մի կարևոր քաղաքի գոյություն, որ հավանորեն բյուզանդական ազդեցություն է կրել Ջ դարի վերջում, այլ խոսքով՝ Բագրատունիների օրոք Անիի բարգավաճման շրջանից շատ ավելի վաղ: Շատ ինքնատիպ ու համեմատաբար լավ պահպանված Մաղասբերդ քաղաքի պարիսպների հայտնաբերումը նկատելիորեն հարստացնում է Հայաստանի վաղմիջնադարյան բերդաքաղաքների ցանկը:

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НОВООБРЕТЕННЫЙ МАГАСБЕРД

РЕЗЮМЕ

Наши сведения о Магасберде, находящемся в нескольких километрах к югу от Ани, у армяно-турецкой границы, на берегу Ахуряна, довольно ограничены. И почти полностью неизвестен город Магасберд, об остатках которого по сей день нет ни одной публикации. Тораманян лишь вскользь сообщает о руинах поселения у небольшой крепости под названием Магасберд.

Остатки города находятся выше крепости и занимают часть естественным образом защищённого плато.

Статья впервые представляет построенное в конце VI-го века поселение — название которого отсылает к имени императора Маврикия — с крепостными стенами и остатками многочисленных сооружений, среди которых есть одна церковь. Тем самым выявляется существование ещё одного важного города, находящегося в долине Ахуряна, который, вероятно, воспринял византийское влияние в конце VI-го века. Иначе говоря, значительно раньше возвышения Ани при Багратитдах. Обнаружение крепостных стен очень своеобразного и довольно хорошо сохранившегося города Магасберда ощутимым образом обогащает список средневековых городов-крепостей Армении.