

SOME CONSIDERATIONS  
ON THE ARMENIAN LAPIDARY LEXICON AT ANAVARZA

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The fortress of Anavarza<sup>1</sup> deserves particular attention within the historical panorama of Cilician buildings for two main reasons. First of all, it holds considerable territorial interest because of its location in the center of the Cilician Pedias, on an outcrop of stone in the middle of the plain of the Ceyhan river and its tributaries. Second, it is endowed with an important architectural patrimony, both for Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, and especially for the period of Armenian occupation and habitation<sup>2</sup>. A new reading of the different building techniques on the site can enable us to appreciate the alternating of the various powers that came to occupy the fortress<sup>3</sup> and that periodically updated its defensive systems and often re-employed stones *in situ*, borrowing them from their original position. Furthermore, we can detect the Armenian presence

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<sup>1</sup> The fortress of Anavarza lies on an outcrop, while the late antique city lies on the plain, on the west flank. The rock was used as acropolis. According to **M. Gough**, *Anazarbos*, *AnatSt* 2 (1952); 85-12, esp. 85, n. 1, and **R. W. Edwards**, *The Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia*, Washington, Dumbarton Oaks, 1987), 71, n. 2, the name Anazarbus indicates the ancient city, while the medieval fortress shares the name of Anavarza with the modern village. The Byzantine name is Anabarza or Anazarbos, whereas the Armenian toponyms are Anavarz, Anawarza, Anarzaba, and Anarzap.

<sup>2</sup> For more details on the history of Anavarza, see **L. Alishan**, *Sissouan ou l'Arméno-Cilice* Venice, 1899, p. 272-283; **G. Bell**, *Notes on a Journey through Cilicia and Lycaonia* (*Revue Archéologique*, 1906, n. 7); **R. W. Edwards**, *Ecclesiastical Architecture in the Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia*, *DOP* 36, 1982, p. 155-176; **idem**, *Ecclesiastical Architecture in the Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia: Second Report*, *DOP* 37, 1983, p. 124-146; **idem**, *The Fortifications of Armenian Cilicia* (see previous note); **idem**, *The Role of Military Architecture in Medieval Cilicia: the Triumph of a Non-Urban Strategy* (**R. Hovannisian and S. Payaslian** (eds.), *Armenian Cilicia* (UCLA Armenian History and Culture, Series 8, Costa Mesa, Mazda Publishers, 2008, p. 153-244; **H. Hellenkemper**, *Zur mittelalterlichen Landschaftsgeschichte zwischen Tauros und Euphrates* (**F. K. Dörner**, *Kommagene in der Antiken Welt*, Zürich, 1975); **idem**, *Burgen der Kreuzritterzeit in der Grafschaft Edessa und im Königreich Kleinarmenien*, Bonn, Rudolf Habelt Verlag, 1976; **idem**, *Kirchen und Klöster in der nördlichen Euphratesia* (**S. Sahin, E. Schwertheim and J. Wagner** (eds.), *Studien zur Religion und Kultur Kleinasiens: Festschrift für Dörner zum 65. Geburtstag am 28. Februar 1976*, Leiden, 1978, S. 389-414; **H. Hellenkemper and F. Hild**, *Kilikien und Isaurien*, *TIB* 5, Vienna, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1990.

<sup>3</sup> For these comings and goings, see **G. Schlumberger**, *Un empereur byzantin au Xe siècle*, Nicéphore Phocas, Paris, 1890, 191 ff.; **S. Vailhé**, *Anazarbe*, *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques*, Paris, 1914, 1504-1506; **G. Dédéyan**, *Les Arméniens entre Grecs, Musulmans et Croisés: étude sur les pouvoirs arméniens dans le Proche-Orient méditerranéen* (1068-1150), Lisbon, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2003, 2:405 ff., 602 ff., 726 ff.; **Edwards**, *Fortifications*, 67.

on the site from a rich decorative apparatus that we can still appreciate, despite its decayed condition, and that includes frescoes<sup>4</sup> and inscriptions<sup>5</sup> connected to the church of T'oros, in addition to a variety of works in stone.

The purpose of this study is to analyse two sculpted reliefs located on the springings of a transverse arch at the end of the corridor (**fig.1**) that connects the *donjon* with the central bailey<sup>6</sup> in order to complete the information that we have about the different phases of this part of the fortress, which still has to be deeply investigated. It is necessary to emphasize that, as Robert Edwards pointed out twenty-four years ago<sup>7</sup>, we still lack a survey of the entire outcrop, with the most accurate planimetry of the area still being the one that Edwards himself provided, based in turn on the contributions of Gertrude Bell, Michel Gough and Hansgerd Hellenkemper. Borrowing Baxandall's definition, our aim here is to sharpen our perception of the object<sup>8</sup> and to assign it its proper importance at the site, as a key to a deeper and more complete knowledge of this fortress.

Here it may be useful to state explicitly two arguments that stand in the basis of the present analysis. The first of these regards continuity between the architectural production of the Caucasus and that of Cilicia and, as a consequence, the inclusion of both of these within a single artistic panorama. The second argument regards the degree to which different iconographical languages are susceptible to comparison: because of the scarcity of the material evidence at our disposal, the Cilician sculptural heritage from this period does not allow us to arrive at answers or even to provide sufficient terms of comparison. However, if we deploy the iconographical lexicon employed for the illumination of manuscripts<sup>9</sup> and in coinage, it becomes possible for us to integrate our knowledge, using indirect methods of comparison<sup>10</sup>. A comparative study can therefore be truly interesting and useful, although we need to remain constantly aware of the need for prudence in establishing these connections.

The site of Anavarza presents a tripartite defensive system that can be divided into a southern bailey and a central bailey connected with a *donjon*<sup>11</sup>, in

<sup>4</sup> For a hypothesis regarding the frescoes, see **Bell**. *Notes*, 27, and **Gough**. *Anazarbus*, 127.

<sup>5</sup> **Langlois V.** *Inscriptions grecques, romaines, byzantines et arméniennes de la Cilicie*, Paris, 1854, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> Edwards identifies this corridor in his plans as J.

<sup>7</sup> **Edwards**. *Fortifications*, 67.

<sup>8</sup> **Baxandall**. *Forme dell'intenzione*, 55.

<sup>9</sup> **L. Der Manuelian**. *Stylistic Ties between Armenian Architectural Structure and Manuscript Illuminations of the 11th to the 14th Century* (Second International Symposium on Armenian Art, Erevan, 1978, p. 141-148).

<sup>10</sup> **J. -M. Thierry**. *Analyse critique des procédés de datation des monuments arméniens* (*Atti del Terzo Simposio Internazionale di Arte Armena*, Milano, 25 Settembre – 1 Ottobre 1981, Venice, 1981, 569-581).

<sup>11</sup> On the hypothesis of dating of the *donjon*, and especially on its definition as a *donjon*, see **Edwards**. *Fortifications*, 68-69. The inscription used as a tool for dating has been republished in

addition to a less distinctive northern bailey. The northern part of the southern bailey seems to be Byzantine, and the presence of Roman traces<sup>12</sup> demonstrates that this was the oldest part; a series of rooms and circular towers provide built testimony to this enclosure. The corridor J represents the connection of the tower with the central bailey, with a pointed arch profile; the masonry of the wall appears crude when compared to that of the transverse arch that ends the corridor in the northern part. The two reliefs under examination here lie at the base of this arch and are the only traces of sculptural decoration in the central bailey, with some reliefs and khatchkars inserted on the wall of the chapel K<sup>13</sup>.

The two reliefs face one another at the springings of a transverse arch. The first thing to note is the difference of themes and of choices in decoration: one sculptural relief has a floral subject, while the other shows a representation of a human figure. Moreover, the difference between the upper bands seems significant and raises the possibility that one or both of these could have been re-employed pieces. In chapel K of the central bailey, Edwards spotted the re-employment of Byzantine blocks and pieces of moulding<sup>14</sup>; accordingly, it may seem reasonable to imagine here the reuse of a pre-existing decorative apparatus, borrowed from some part of the historical site. However, the style of the sculpted decoration and the consistency of the stones make this hypothesis scarcely believable: in fact, it is quite difficult to imagine that these reliefs could originally have been used somewhere else.

The western relief (**fig.2**) is decorated with two lateral palms and two central rosettes; the upper band is dentellated. Regarding the use of floral decorations, this has an archaic and formative character, as the progressive decrease in the use of floral decoration in Armenian art is now a well-established fact<sup>15</sup>.

The eastern relief (**fig.3**) depicts a stylized human figure<sup>16</sup> and has a sum-mital band made from a ribbon of bead and reel. Although erasures prevent us from arriving at a clear reading of the sculptural apparatus, we can make some observations about the carved traces that we do have at our disposal. Here we

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**Hellenkemper.** *Burgen*, 291. *On the comparative approach to construction techniques*, see **Edwards.** *First Report*, 168-170, and *Second Report*, 134-140.

<sup>12</sup> **Gough.** *Anazarbos*, 123.

<sup>13</sup> *On the chapel*, see **Edwards.** *First report*, 168, and *Second Report*, 132-134.

<sup>14</sup> **Edwards.** *Second Report*, 132.

<sup>15</sup> **V. Harut'yunian.** 'La transmission des moyens décoratifs dans l'architecture arménienne au début de la période dite "Moyen Age Développé" (fin IXe - début Xe siècle)' (**G. Ieni, G. Uluhogian** (edited by), *Atti del terzo Simposio internazionale di arte armena, Venezia, 1984*, 270. *On observe le réemploi des motifs décoratifs du haut Moyen Age dans l'architecture arménienne de la nouvelle époque des la fin du ix siècle, alors qu'on n'en avait pas encore élaboré de nouveaux.* **Cfr. T. T'oramanyan.** *Nyut'er haykakan čartarapetut'yan patmut'yan, I-II*, 1942-48, 92.

<sup>16</sup> The plainness of the line can be read despite the advanced deterioration of the relief. It does not seem rash to insert this sculptural product in the panorama of progressive abstraction that started in the tenth century. This reflections can be connected to the observations made in the field of illumination of manuscripts; to the sober simplicity of the movement, it is contrasted with the scansion of the panneggio. **S. Der Nersessian.** *Observations sur la miniature arménienne* (**G. Ieni, L. B. Zekiyan** (eds.), *Atti del Primo Simposio Internazionale di Arte Armena, Venice, 1978*, 144-145).

can appreciate two aspects of the figure, namely the production of the stone and the position of the subject's arms. In particular, an examination of the character's posture may lead us to a better understanding of the represented figure, which is apparently masculine. The downward-turning position of the arms allows us to exclude the hypothesis of a sacral character for this figure, since such a position is incompatible with a posture of blessing<sup>17</sup>. At the same time, we must account for the fact that the male figure does not hold any objects of any kind. All this might conceivably lead toward a comparison with representations of the figure of Christ; this hypothesis, however, must be excluded, not only because of the vertical decoration, which reminds us of armour, but also and above all because it recalls the vocabulary employed in this period for the depiction of sovereigns. Indeed, contemporary production of illuminated manuscripts shows an increasing use of this posture in the portrayal of kings<sup>18</sup>, while in coinage we find even more similarities. A Hethumid coin from the end of the thirteenth century, representing a riding Smbat<sup>19</sup>, presents the same posture of the limbs, as we see in the following lexicon<sup>20</sup>. Sculptural witness to the possible nature of our carved character may be found in the contemporary patrimony of Armenian carved stone<sup>21</sup>. In particular, the representation of soldiers, their posture, and the presence of vertical *panneggio*<sup>22</sup> all invite us to consider the plausibility of this reading that I have just proposed, to confirm my dating of the artifacts, and to exclude the hypothesis of their being re-employed pieces. The carved figure may accordingly be included within the sculptural panorama of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; it rules out the possibility of the reutilization of existing pieces; and it emphasizes the contemporaneity of the completion of the corridor and the execution of the two reliefs. This sculpted figure does not hold or draw any kind of weapon, but the choice of having him wearing armor may have been motivated by the intention of emphasizing the sovereign's military character. Also of importance is the

<sup>17</sup> *The symmetrical pose of the arms is the most interesting aspect, because it can be localized more frequently from the beginning of the twelfth century.*

<sup>18</sup> **T. F. Mathews, A. K. Sanjan.** *Armenian Gospel Iconography* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies 29, Washington, 1991). *An example can be found on pp. 30-31 (The Genealogy of Christ of the Second Painter, from Salomon to Salomon and from Rehoboam to Ahaz. The same posture can be found in some representations of the thirteenth century): see S. Der Nersessian. Miniature Painting in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies 21, Washington, 1993).

<sup>19</sup> **P. Z. Bedoukian.** *Coinage of Cilician Armenia*, New York, 1962, 1714. *The same coin is represented in Alishan. Sissouan, 463, with several other examples that seem to have the same iconographical reference.*

<sup>20</sup> *The coins of Leon III of the first decade of the fourteenth century proceed with this lexicon.* **Bedoukian.** *Coinage, 1753, 1832, 1835.*

<sup>21</sup> *I refer to the anthology of images proposed in Samvel Karapetian (ed.), Armenia, Erevan, 2009, 330-331.*

<sup>22</sup> **Karapetian.** *Armenia, 330. Fig.25, a relief of an armed horseman (1215), Koshik Cloister, Martakert District, Artsakh e fig.29, and a relief of an infantryman (1216), Koshik Cloister, Martakert District, Artsakh.*

location of this figure on the side of the corridor that opens out onto the plain, a choice which may very well have had a symbolic purpose.



Fig 1. The corridor J seen from the central bailey



Fig 2. The western relief



Fig 3. The eastern relief

The analysis of the reliefs turns the attention to the problem of the attribution of the corridor J to Byzantine, Armenian or Crusader patronage<sup>23</sup>; the section of the arch used in the hallway seems to suggest a Western sponsorship but in my opinion it seems plausible to consider this structure as Armenian. It can be useful to point out some considerations; first at all the contemporary achievement of arch and its reliefs, concordant with the coeval decorative apparatus at our disposal. It seems plausible to exclude the possibility of reuse of the pieces and to insert the achievement of the corridor J in the panorama of works of Levon II at the end of the XIII Century, commemorated in the inscription on the donjon<sup>24</sup>. Further analysis of the available sources can help us to understand if this representation, which seems to hover between a noble and a military character, may be identified with this particular baron. Future works

<sup>23</sup> It is certainly a fact that the east room of the donjon is an example of the Crusaders architecture, cfr. **Edwards**. *Fortification*, 70.

<sup>24</sup> **Hellenkemper**. *Burgen*, 291.

will have to delve into the question of the different evolutions in the realisation of the central bailey and the Armenian contribution.

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ԿԼԱՈՒԴԻԱ ՄԱՏՈԴԱ (Իտալիա, ք. Տուրին)

**Ամփոփում**

*Անաբարզայի բերդն աչքի է ընկնում ճարտարապետական հետաքրքիր լուծումներով: Հայ մշակույթի դրսևորումներ են բերդի գեղազարդ պատկերները, որմնանկարներն ու արձանագրությունները: Անաբարզա բերդի պատմության մասին ամբողջական պատկերացում է տալիս միջանցքի վերջում, կամարի լայնքով տեղադրված երկու բարեկիեֆը:*

**ОБ АРМЯНСКИХ ЛАПИДАРНЫХ НАДПИСЯХ КРЕПОСТИ АНАВАРЗА**

КЛАУДИА МАТОДА (Италия, г. Турин)

**Резюме**

Крепость Анаварза отличается самобытным архитектурным решением. Она богата украшена орнаментальным декором, фресками, барельефами и лапидарными надписями, свидетельствующими о наличии элементов армянской культуры.