

*Histoire urbaine de l'Orient romain tardif*

## The Archaeology of Late Antique and Medieval Cilicia: Landscape, Architecture, and Connectivity

Günder Varinlioğlu

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## THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF LATE ANTIQUE AND MEDIEVAL CILICIA: LANDSCAPE, ARCHITECTURE, AND CONNECTIVITY

Conférences de M<sup>me</sup> Günder VARINLIOĞLU,  
université des Beaux-Arts Mimar Sinan d'Istanbul,  
directeur d'études invitée

Cilicia, extending from Pamphylia in the west, to Syria in the east, lay on the busy maritime lanes of the Eastern Mediterranean between the Levant and the Aegean. The rugged Taurus Mountains separated Cilicia from the Anatolian plateau in the north, while the passage was facilitated by a few mountain passes and river valleys. As such, the region was oriented towards the Mediterranean, which was the fundamental agent for connectivity. Cilicia was geographically divided into two distinct entities. *Cilicia Trachea* in the west, or Late Antique Isauria, was a mountainous, rugged, and agriculturally poor region. Nevertheless, the capital of the province, Seleucia on the Calycadnus River (modern-day Silifke), and the port cities of Corycus and Elaiussa-Sebaste, possessed vibrant, rural hinterlands that prospered in late antiquity. The region west of the Calycadnus River, where the mountainous range becomes prohibitively rugged, was both less urban and less densely inhabited. To the contrary, *Cilicia Pedias*, east of the Lamus River, was a fertile, well-irrigated, and relatively flat region, which was significantly more prosperous and more urbanized, as attested by its religious, commercial, and urban centers.

In the twentieth century, the scholarship on Late Antique and Medieval Cilicia was guided by written sources and epigraphic surveys, while architectural studies were limited to religious and military architecture. The past two decades witnessed an upsurge in archaeological surveys and excavations, led by Turkish, Italian, German, British, and American institutions and scholars: Excavations at urban centers, such as Elaiussa-Sebaste, and Olba, or a rural site like Kilisetepe; thematic architectural studies on Byzantine houses; landscape archaeology surveys along the Göksu River Valley and in Western Cilicia Trachea; settlement archaeology projects in the Taşucu Gulf, and in the hinterland of Seleucia ad Calycadnum and Elaiussa Sebaste; and epigraphic surveys across Cilicia. Thus, recent research has significantly contributed to our understanding of the architectural traditions, settlement patterns, and landscape transformation, particularly in rural contexts for which written evidence is both sparse and biased.

### *I. Moving into and across Cilicia: Pilgrims, Traders, and Armies*

The first lecture presented the geography of Cilicia in such a way to underline the patterns of maritime and land connectivity. The Christian pilgrimage centered around the site of St. Thecla constituted the main case study to understand how the natural

and man-made features have shaped movement across this geography. The vast pilgrimage site of St. Thecla (Meryemlik), located ca. 2 km south of Seleucia ad Calycadnum, was among the most important Christian pilgrimage sites of Late Antique Asia Minor. Sacred travel to this site was already well-established by the last quarter of the fourth century, and it may have survived until the fall of the Armenian rule in Cilicia in 1375. Situated on a low hill overlooking the Mediterranean, St. Thecla occupied a liminal position between the limestone hills in the North and the Calycadnus River's delta in the South. For marine travelers, the closest port was only 6 km south, at Holmoi (modern-day Taşucu) which served as a major port of call for marine vessels tramping along the coastline of Asia Minor, and especially for those sailing from and to Cyprus. More distant harbors east of the Calycadnus Delta, such as Corasium, Corycus, and Elaiussa Sebaste, were also well-connected to Seleucia and St. Thecla via the coastal route.

The textual tradition on Thecla, especially her miracles, make clear that Thecla's presence was not limited to her pilgrimage site. Thecla moved from place to place in Isauria. For example, her cult was transferred to Dalisandus, a site which might be located in the Calycadnus Valley, northwest of Seleucia. Thecla's miracles mention the pilgrims from Constantinople, Antioch (Syria), and Cyprus, but predominantly from Isauria and Cilicia. Her cult, however, spread all across the Mediterranean and Europe, foremost to Cyprus, but also to Italy, Gaul, Germany, North Africa, Armenia, Palestine, and Syria. Yet, determining her spiritual movement in Isauria and Cilicia seems to be a greater challenge. The archaeological evidence linking the cult of Thecla to specific sites in Cilicia does not yet exist. However, in the fourth century when pilgrimage to St. Thecla has been textually and archaeologically attested, the offshore islands in the Taşucu Gulf developed permanent settlements and functioned as way-stations for boats and smaller vessels, sailing from one anchorage to another. Among them, Boğsak Island (Asteria) stands out with certain architectural and spatial features that are commonly found in Late Antique contexts associated with sacred places and sacred travel. As such, these islands have the potential to help us understand the variety, richness, and messiness of mobility (cf. Lecture 4).

## II. *Building with limestone: the architectural landscapes of rural Cilicia*

The architectural landscapes of rural Cilicia Trachea bear extensive archaeological evidence to study the long-lasting traditions of stone quarrying, stone working, and stone masonry. While the majority of the buildings were built using the local limestone, sandstone was also quarried and was preferred for vaulted construction due to its lightness. On the other hand, the alluvial Cilicia Pedias does not have the extensive limestone resources that are characteristic of Cilicia Trachea. The establishment of stone masonry as the prevailing construction technique, especially in Cilicia Trachea, is dated to the Hellenistic period. From the definitive annexation of Cilicia into the Roman empire under Vespasian, all through the Late Antique and Medieval periods, mortared stone masonry in its largest definition formed the basis of the construction techniques. In rural Cilicia Trachea, epigraphic, textual, and archaeological evidence indicate a process of economic growth and building activity between the

fourth and seventh centuries, which reached its climax in the fifth and sixth centuries, especially with the construction of monumental basilicas. In this active period of construction, funerary inscriptions record a wide range of architectural professionals (e.g. builders, contractors, masons). Moreover, textual evidence suggests that the fame of Isaurian builders spread beyond the frontiers of the province in the late fifth and sixth centuries, during which Isaurian masons and workers actively participated in architectural projects in Syria, Palestine, Constantinople, and perhaps also Italy.

In this lecture, four case studies were used to present the built habitat in the context of Late Antique rural development: Karakabaklı and Işıkkale are adjacent villages located in the hinterland of Seleucia ad Calycadnum and the harbor of Corasium. Akören I and II constitute a similar case study in the hinterland of Anazarbus. Karakabaklı and Işıkkale are distinguished from other villages in their vicinity by the density of their habitat, the quality of their construction, their monumental basilicas, and their urban armatures, such as tetrapylons and paved streets. Otherwise, like their rural counterparts, they do not have preconceived plans, although certain planning criteria may be observed, particularly in the development of ecclesiastical and public areas. Karakabaklı seems to be wealthier village inhabited by landowners, church officials, traders, while Işıkkale stands out as an important center of agricultural production, reserved for the working population. Regardless of their socio-economic disparities, between the fourth and seventh (or later) centuries, the hinterland of the Isaurian coastline witnessed the appearance of commercial, religious, and maybe administrative rural centers, inhabited by the landowners and the workers alike.

The two villages known as Akören were administratively and ecclesiastically connected to Anazarbus, the metropolis of Late Antique *Cilicia Secunda* (eastern Cilicia Pedias). The remains at Akören II date back to the Hellenistic period, which were later incorporated into the Roman settlement. Both villages were densely built up between the first and third centuries. Unlike the rural settlements in Cilicia Trachea, they did not undergo an unusual development in late antiquity. Instead, the size and shape of the Roman settlement were preserved, the houses were maintained, and sometimes enlarged without major changes to their interior organization. The most significant transformation was the construction of four churches in the fifth and sixth centuries.

### III. *Urban space and architecture in late antique and medieval Cilicia*

The third lecture discussed the characteristics of urbanism in Cilicia using two case studies: Anemourium in Cilicia Trachea and Anazarbus in Cilicia Pedias have both been the subject of archaeological investigations. Anemourium is a coastal city occupying the western end of the Plain of Anamur, the largest arable land in Western Cilicia Trachea. As such, it has become a burgeoning market center, a vibrant center of industrial production, and the largest settlement of this plain. The city's harbor acted as a way station on the maritime routes along the southern coast of Asia Minor, especially for the boats crossing to Cyprus. The Roman phase of the city from the first to the third centuries marked the climax of urbanization, when a circuit wall, public buildings (e.g. baths), and an impressive necropolis *extra muros* were built. This phase of prosperity was hindered first around 260, when the Sassanid army advanced

through coastal Cilicia, then in the following century, by the rebellions of the Isaurians. One indication of the general state of insecurity might be the construction of an additional (maritime) wall in 382. The city has experienced its second phase of major building activity in the early fifth century, possibly after the defeat of Isaurians in 408. During the fifth century, in addition to the churches, smaller baths were also built. This renewed prosperity is often associated with the rise of Zeno to the Byzantine throne in 474–491, during whose reign Isauria has experienced a significant building activity in urban and rural contexts. On the other hand, the buildings that constituted the core of the Roman city (e.g., bath-palaestra, theatre, odeon) were taken over by industrial and domestic development. This provincial town fits well in the new type of city that was forming in the early Byzantine period, which was predominantly a domestic, commercial, agricultural, and industrial center with minimal public amenities and the public life centering around churches.

In the aftermath of the 580 earthquake, the churches fell out of use either completely or partially. It is plausible that the post-earthquake Anemourium had a much lower population. Nevertheless, it remained an active center of production (especially pottery) in the sixth and seventh centuries. Asia Minor endured the Persian invasions in 610–630. There is, however, no clear evidence that the city was severely affected. Similarly, the Arab navies that invaded Cyprus in 649 and 653/4 do not seem to have raided Anemourium. In fact, in the mid-seventh century, table-wares were still imported, local pottery production continued, and monetary economy did not cease until 660's. Nevertheless, the general state of insecurity, a declining population, and a shattering interregional economy seem to have led to a gradual abandonment until the early eighth century. During the second half of the eleventh century, the city, the necropolis, and the citadel may have been partially reoccupied. Similarly, the site may have been used by an Armenian population during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Future archaeological investigations might shed light to the medieval phases of Anemourium.

Anazarbus (medieval Ain Zarba) in Cilicia Pedias, is an inland city located in the northeastern part of the fertile Çukurova plain and at the crossroads of several routes connecting to the Anatolian plateau, Mesopotamia, North Syria, and the Levant. Anazarbus has been continuously inhabited from the first century BCE until its destruction and abandonment in 1374 by the Mamluks of Egypt. Anazarbus lies on a fertile plain dominated by a grandiose *limestone* massif. The city has developed on the plain at the foothill of this mighty crag, which served as the acropolis of the pagan city, the headquarters of the Byzantine garrison, and the center of the Armenian settlement. The earliest occupation of the site may potentially go back as far as the second millennium BC, but the nature of this inhabitation is unknown. Evidence for Hellenistic settlement is only slightly more clear. An intensive surface survey in correlation with the city's later Roman grid suggests that the site on the plain may have been settled or used during the first century BC, when the Roman Empire ruled the region through the vassal dynasty of Tarkondimotos. The growth of the Roman city in the plain (ca. 100 ha) started in the second half of the second century and continued until the first half of the third century. This was originally an unfortified settlement whose layout followed an orthogonal grid. Its colonnaded *cardo* was an unusually long and

wide avenue accommodating wheeled and pedestrian traffic, shops, and tabernae. The *decumanus*, albeit narrower and shorter, was also a monumental avenue flanked by colonnades on either side. At the southern boundary of the city was an unusual combination of a theatre, an amphitheater, and a hippodrome. The end of this first phase prosperity may have come to an end in the mid-third century by Persian conquests. Like in Anemourium, the fourth century is considered to be a period of stagnation due to the threat of the Isaurian rebels. The period spanning from the early fifth century, when Anazarbus became the capital of *Cilicia Secunda*, and the Arab occupation of the seventh and eighth centuries, is a period of urban transformation and large scale construction work, which included the city walls, the monumental gateways, and the newly built churches. In this period, although the city was severely hit by the earthquakes of 525 and 561, it was quickly rebuilt first by Justin, then by Justinian.

The lower city was eventually enclosed by two series of fortifications built in different phases. The first wall, which may date from the Theodosian period, seems to have surrounded the entire area of the city and even to have continued on the ridge. The second phase of the fortifications, possibly Justinianic in date, surrounded only the urban core. The construction of this new city wall, parallel to the spoliation of the buildings damaged by the earthquakes, is considered to be the beginning of a long process of transformation that lasted until the eighth century. The urban center was the first area to lose its orthogonal plan. Although, the Arab invasions during the second half of the seventh century may have led to an abandonment or a significant reduction of settlement and population, archaeological evidence for this period is also meager. In the late eighth century, the city was populated by new communities settled by the Abbasids. So far, our knowledge of this Abbasid town is limited to repairs of the fortifications (Harun ar-Rasid in 789, Caliph al-Mutawakkil in 861). Similarly, the nature of the settlement after the Byzantine reconquest by Nicephorus Phocas in 962, except for the repairs in the fortifications, is unknown. The continuity of settlement inside the city circuit can be somewhat followed until the twelfth through ceramic finds, however judging from the predominance of courseware, it seems that the city was replaced by a modest, rural settlement.

The limestone outcrop rising above the city is a key strategic location. The archaeological and architectural remains from the Hellenistic, Roman, Late Antique, and Abbasid periods are extremely limited. More sections can be attributed to the Byzantine garrison which occupied the outcrop after the tenth century conquest by Nicephorus Phocas. In 1098, the fortress was taken over by the armies of the first crusade, and was subsequently incorporated into Bohemond's Principality of Antioch. The main period of occupation of the citadel, however, seems to date from the Armenian period from the early twelfth to the fourteenth centuries. The Armenian history of Anazarbus starts in 1111, when Rubenid Baron Toros I Vahram of Edessa captured the fortress, made it his administrative center, and started an extensive building program in the city and its territory. Thus, under the Rubenids, Anazarbus has become one of the strongest Armenian fortresses in Cilicia. After Baron Levon II moved his headquarters to nearby Sis (Kozan) in the twelfth century, the citadel continued to be inhabited. In 1375, the Mamluks finally took over the citadel and established a garrison there through most of the fifteenth century.

#### IV. *The islandscapes of the Taşucu Gulf: Boğsak Archaeological Survey (BOGA) from 2010 to present*

The final lecture presented the results of the archaeological and architectural study of the Taşucu Gulf in Cilicia Trachea, by the Boğsak Archaeological Survey (BOGA) since 2010 under the direction of Gündür Varinlioğlu ([www.bogsakarchaeology.org](http://www.bogsakarchaeology.org)). Four islands lining the shores of the Taşucu Gulf underwent an unprecedented development in late antiquity during which they became the sites of large Christian settlements. The material evidence from the islands of Kösrelik, Dana, Güvercin, and Boğsak, suggests all-year-long occupation from the fourth to at least the end of the seventh/early eighth century. In the case of Boğsak, continuity is attested through the ninth century, while there is evidence for opportunistic (re)use of the island in the twelfth century. Within this period, the late fifth and sixth centuries are marked church construction across the province both on land and on the islands.

The islands of the Taşucu Gulf were not suitable places for exploitation or inhabitation, save for their strategic advantage along the maritime networks. They had no ground water; arable land was either non-existent or very limited. Therefore, they depended on a functioning trade network through which food, pottery, tools, clothing, fuel, etc. could be acquired. This meant that coasters and other small vessels crisscrossed this maritime space on a regular, perhaps even daily basis, thus connecting the islands to each other and to the mainland. This localized, everyday movement of commodities, people, and knowledge extended the geographical range of the islands' connections further upland, toward the mountainous hinterland. The history of the islands should be evaluated in the context of the nearby regional administrative, religious, and commercial centers of the Roman and Byzantine periods: Seleucia ad Calycadnum, the capital of the province of Isauria, was the administrative, religious, commercial, and military center of the region. St. Thecla, in the outskirts of the city, was a major regional sacred site (cf. Lecture 1). These two places were accessible from the Mediterranean via the harbor at Holmoi, which was a major port of call. Otherwise, the Taşucu Gulf itself did not have any urban centers. Similarly, its countryside was sparsely inhabited in Antiquity or the Middle Ages. This stands in contrast to the busy countryside, in the hinterland of coastal villages and towns like Corasium, Corycus, and Elaiussa-Sebaste, especially in late antiquity (cf. Lecture 2).

Despite these disadvantages, the two largest islands of the gulf, namely Boğsak (ancient Asteria) and Dana (ancient Pitusu/Pityoussa, medieval Provensale) acquired extensive maritime settlements in late antiquity. These settlements have extensive remains of domestic life (houses), industrial production (metalworking and limestone quarrying), trade (imported pottery), services (baths), and Christian ritual (churches). The settlement of Asteria, spread out on the entire surface of the island (ca. 7 ha), was not a city (cf. Lecture 3). Dozens of mortared stone masonry buildings along the coastlines and concentrating especially in the northern and northeastern slopes, must have had residential, commercial (e.g., shops), and utilitarian (e.g., storage) functions. The island had seven churches, six of which were timber-roofed, three aisled-basilicas, built some time between the second half of the fifth and sixth centuries. The cemeteries occupied the summit and the upper ridges, while later examples



gathered around the churches. The residential quarters included modest, undecorated, and densely packed houses organized along terraces, and having a clear view of the port of Holmoi and St. Thecla in the horizon. Asteria also stands out by its ecclesiastical complex on its summit, consisting of a three-aisled basilica church with a domed square chapel with a cruciform interior, annexed to its northeast. This complex reached by a paved avenue displays several architectural features that are reminiscent of pilgrimage sites, especially of St. Thecla (cf. Lecture 1).

Dana Island (Pityoussa) was used as early as the pre-Classical period, possibly for military and strategic purposes, when a fort was built on its southern summit. The northwestern shore of the island has been used in some fashion in the early Roman period, however, the growth of a large maritime settlement occurred in the fourth century, parallel to Asteria on Boğsak Island. This Christian settlement was spread over an area of ca. 30 ha and included dozens of structures (possibly houses, hostels, shops, restaurants, ateliers), public baths, five basilical churches (another one was built in the fort), and massive limestone quarries, also used as cemeteries. In this period, the fort was revamped, while a basilica church with an exterior chapel was added inside the enclosure. This complex was accessed via a stone-paved avenue reminding the example on Boğsak Island. One wonders whether the expansion of Dana's settlement, which acquired six churches in the fifth and sixth centuries, may have benefited from the addition of pilgrimage services to this important port of call along highly frequented maritime routes. Furthermore, Dana Island stands out with its extensive limestone quarries, which is among the largest in the Eastern Mediterranean. The upper border of the settlement is lined by this industrial zone (ca. 1.5 km long, 150–200 m wide), where the limestone geology of the island was exploited for building material, which was not only used for construction on the island, but also exported.

### *Conclusion*

This seminar presented the architectural and settlement landscapes of Late Antique and Medieval Cilicia in the context of intra-regional and inter-regional connectivity. Archaeological surveys and excavations revealed sites and monuments that were previously unknown in the scholarship. Recent research, especially regional surveys, have shed light to the economic, religious, and logistic networks that have supported a complex cultural landscape, as the region continuously changed hands between competing powers, and has received an influx of peoples through pilgrimage, invasions, and wars.