

Back to Anemurium in Rough Cilicia

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Back to Anemurium in Rough Cilicia: revisiting legacy data

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RUSSELL, J. 2021. *The Canadian Excavations at Anemurium in Cilicia*. Archéologie et histoire romaine 45. Toulouse: Éditions Mergoïl. Pp. 155. ISBN 978-2-35518-117-7.

The Canadian excavations at Anemurium (1965–1993) were a pioneering project that put the archaeology of Rough Cilicia, then a marginal field, on the scholarly agenda. A distinguished research team, under the leadership of E. Alföldi-Rosenbaum and L. Smith, then J. Russell, consistently published interim field reports, preliminary conclusions, and thematic studies (e.g., necropolis, mosaic inscriptions and pavements, pottery) from their diligent fieldwork.¹ This short monograph, or rather collection of articles, is a most welcome – albeit long-anticipated – addition to this impressive corpus.

¹ Alföldi-Rosenbaum 1971; Russell 1987; Williams 1989; Campbell 1998.

The book comprises seven chapters, each with a distinct subject, which consist of extended field reports about four churches (Chapters 1–4), Tomb BI 16 (Chapter 5), an inscription from Tomb AVII 4 (Chapter 6), and the odeum and theatre (Chapter 7). In the preface, H. Williams presents the history of research at Anemurium and the city's development as revealed by the Canadian excavations. This is followed by a summary of each chapter in English and Turkish.²

Chapter 1 by J. Russell and C. W. J. Eliot is a comprehensive field report on the 1978 excavations at the so-called Necropolis Church, AII 1, built extra muros at the eastern edge of the cemetery. The excavations uncovered five construction phases, spanning from the first decade of the 5th c. CE (under or soon after Arcadius) to 700 CE. The church was built adjacent to unidentified pre-Christian structures as a simple basilica without a narthex or pastophoria. In a second phase ca. five to ten years later, it received a north pastophorion and a north corridor. The dating is based on mosaic inscriptions naming army officers as their benefactors. The authors argue that these individuals, who were first stationed in Anemurium against Isaurian attacks, must have started to invest in the city once they had become part of the community. The third phase, dated to the last quarter of the 5th c., involved extensive remodeling: a narthex, a baptistery, and new mosaics including the "Peaceful Kingdom" in the sanctuary. Phase four corresponds to the abandonment of most of the church after a collapse in ca. 580; only the eastern section of the south aisle and the chapel were renovated and used until ca. 700. Other parts of the church served as a graveyard until the beginning of the 13th c. The fifth and final phase (12th–14th c.), when a modest chapel was built on the earlier sanctuary, coincided with the Armenian occupation of Anemurium, which probably came to an end with the Seljuk advances after 1225.

Chapter 2 by J. Russell and H. Williams presents the excavations (1978–79, 1982, and 1985) of the Church of Holy Apostles, which is among the few coastal churches preserved in Rough Cilicia. This is another three-aisled basilica with a narthex and perhaps a north corridor, while its atrium is the only example in Anemurium. Unlike for the Necropolis church, distinct phases cannot be reconstructed. However, a terminus post quem is provided by the city wall of 382 CE, which was pierced for the construction of the church, while the massive platform underneath probably dates from the early 5th c. On the other hand, the mosaic inscription in the narthex, which mentions the Holy Apostles, was installed in the fifth year of the indiction, that is, 437 or 452 CE. Based on this evidence, the authors date the construction of the church to the second quarter of the 5th c., after the end of the Isaurian uprisings. Floor mosaics were renewed in a later phase, datable to 481 CE, during the reign of Zeno (*contra* Campbell: early 6th c.). In the late 6th and 7th c., the mosaics of the south aisle were covered with white marble revetment to serve secular purposes. Finally, the church was abandoned during Heraclius's reign, followed by the collapse of its roof by the mid-7th c.

Chapter 3 by J. Russell and C. W. J. Eliot presents the Central Church, III 13 C, also known as the Treasure Church, in the central section of the city's northern quarter. Three short campaigns in 1982, 1985, and 1987 revealed a three-aisled basilica with a narthex, a south corridor, and an ambulatory with pastophoria embedded in the straight eastern wall. In Russell and Eliot's words, this is a "clean and traditional design," (82) ubiquitous

² While I applaud the effort of the authors to include a summary in Turkish, the translation of archaeological, historical, and architectural terms contains several mistakes.

in Rough Cilicia. Following the Cilician tradition, the southern pastophorion functioned as a baptistery. Its stepped baptismal basin was surmounted by a four-columned ciborium decorated with mosaics. The sanctuary contained remains of a synthronon, cathedra, and altar, and a chancel screen with reliefs (e.g., stylized tree, wild goat, Maltese cross). The church was richly decorated with floor mosaics accentuating its spatial divisions, except for the north pastophorion, which had an opus sectile floor. The rich palette of colors and geometric patterns (e.g., interlocking circles, stepped pyramids, two-strand guilloches) dominate the design of the mosaics, while birds (e.g., duck, peacock) and animals (e.g., wild dog, deer) fill the roundels in the nave. The mosaic floors suggest that the church was built no earlier than the first half of the 5th c., and possibly towards the end of that century, under the emperor Zeno. The church also stands out for its architectural sculpture, such as Corinthian capitals and impost blocks decorated with crosses, including a rudimentary or unfinished Ionic impost capital. The nomenclature of Treasure Church derives from the burial artifacts excavated in the south aisle. In its first phase, the burial included 35 gold pieces: earrings, thin repoussé plaques, open-work crosses, small hemispheres, and gold fabric fragments. Unusual for the modest Christian community of Anemurium, these finds belong to high-class jewelry of the 6th and 7th c. In the early 7th c., multiple bodies were buried with their heads placed at the eastern end, contrary to Christian practice. The church was abandoned in the mid-7th c., then suffered a sudden collapse.

Chapter 4, again by J. Russell and C. W. J. Eliot, discusses the results of the excavations (1978) at Church III 10 C, located ca. 80 m south of the Palaestra E III 2b. This is yet another “typical” Late Antique Cilician basilica: nave flanked by north and south aisles, a straight east wall enclosing the pastophoria linked by an ambulatory, a narthex with a south entrance. Because excavations did not reveal sufficient evidence, the authors believe that the church may have been built in the 5th c., when Anemurium was flourishing. Coins of Justin II (565–78) found under the debris suggest that the roof of the narthex and south aisle collapsed ca. 580. The church area was not cleared or renovated but was used in some fashion during the 7th c. The abandonment took place soon after 660, the latest coin recovered on the premises dating from 651–58, during the reign of Constans II.

Chapter 5 by S. Campbell presents Tomb BI 16, located northwest of the Necropolis church. This was a two-story tomb complex consisting of two distinct units. It deserves further study because it has more phases and better preserved frescoes than any other tomb in the necropolis. Its figural decoration is representative of the cultural change that Anemurium – and the Eastern Mediterranean for that matter – underwent from the mid-3d to the 5th c. The tomb complex’s two sections and two floors were not interconnected for most of their history. Three types of rooms can be identified: antechambers, burial chambers, and gathering halls. The complex’s size, high-quality decoration, and infrastructure suggest that it belonged to wealthy individuals. The artists responsible for the decorative programs were familiar with contemporary trends in Roman art. From 250 to 400 CE, decoration shifted from semi-religious themes, such as deities, heroes, and personifications of the Seasons, to secular subjects such as servants, portraiture, and daily life. Campbell explains this change in terms of the transition from a pagan worldview, which involved mourning, contemplation, and consolation, to the belief in the after-life that was prominent in the mystery religions of the 3rd and 4th c. CE. Although the tomb does not include any obvious Christian iconography, Campbell associates the thematic shift with the teachings of St. Augustine of Hippo, who promoted introspection to approach God, in contrast to Plato’s concept of the order of the universe, as represented

in the personifications of the Seasons. As the author also admits, how St. Augustine's writings would reach a backwater military outpost is unclear. Instead of such a "subtle connection" (106), the shift should perhaps be sought in artistic fashions that propagated much faster than ideas.

Chapter 6 by N. Kennell presents an inscription from Tomb AVII 4 that Russell had recorded cursorily in a field notebook in 1974. The excavation campaign came to a sudden end when the Turkish military was positioned on the Cilician coast before the so-called Cyprus Peace Operation. The inscription is noteworthy for several reasons: first, it comprises the names of not only the tomb's builder (Menodoros), but also his mother, wife, and two brothers; second, Menodoros's name incorporates the Anatolian god Men, rarely found in southern Asia Minor, which Kennell associates with a Western onomastic influence; third, the names of the other individuals (e.g., Apollonios, Athenadotos, Manakon) are also theophoric, which was a common practice in Anatolia, especially in nearby Lycia.

Chapter 7 by T. Boyd presents the results of the excavations (1971, 1993) at the odeum and the theatre. The latter is a modest and possibly unfinished public structure adjacent to the palaestra-bath complex. Its cavea flattens near the city wall, which indicates that its construction should be dated after the 1st c. CE. In contrast, the odeum has several architectural features that suggest the presence of experienced builders and/or well-trained architects. Preserved almost to full height, it has a Π-shaped plan embedded in a rectangle, a design that is unknown outside Greece and Asia Minor. For its layout, the builders seem to have followed the principles set out by Vitruvius for theatres. The wall construction reflects a systematized building process: the core of rubble and mortar was laid in successive "pours," leaving each stratum to set before the next one was added on top. The most unusual feature of the odeum, however, is the U-shaped cryptoporticus, which is unknown anywhere else. Furthermore, the different spans of its barrel-vaulted arms created "a dilemma of geometry" (123) at the two intersections. This was solved in the northwestern corner bay by adding a ledge to equalize the dimensions, thus forming a square base for a groin vault. The southwest intersection, however, was surmounted by a stone-built segmental dome, which is rare in Roman architecture. As Boyd underlines, building a cryptoporticus under the cavea and joining barrel vaults of different widths required a robust knowledge of 3D geometry. Neither the odeum nor the theatre can be dated based on the results of the excavations. The non-figural mosaics of the odeum may be dated to the Antonine period (138–192 CE). Because Roman odea and theatres were often part of a contemporaneous building program, Boyd proposes the second half of the 2nd or the early 3rd c., when Anemurium was a flourishing town.

Text versus illustration

In each chapter, the authors describe meticulously not only the architectural features and decorative programs, but also the relationships between strata, debris, and finds, to explain how they identified and dated the construction phases. This brings to mind Russell's insightful paper for the 17th International Byzantine Congress, in which he warned historians about the pitfalls of archaeological interpretation.³ The thorough discussion of the excavated material in this volume is an excellent reflection of Russell's devotion to explaining archaeological reasoning lucidly for all fields of history. In contrast, the

³ Russell 1986.

illustrations accompanying the volume (especially Chapters 1, 2, and 4) do not have the same level of detail as the narrative. First, the site plan for Anemurium that has been included needs further refinement. Most striking is the absence of topographic contours, although they appeared in earlier publications.⁴ Even if the research team did not have the chance to go back into the field after the excavations were over, an improved graphical representation that also includes a legend would be a welcome update. Similarly, the map of Asia Minor showing the location of Anemurium could mark the places mentioned in the volume like Nagidus, the neighboring cities such as Arsinoe and Celenderis, or administrative and commercial centers such as Seleucia and Corycus.

In Chapter 1, the description of the architecture, building phases, mosaics, and finds is meticulous, albeit hard to follow in places. The inclusion of more visual material would make the text significantly more intelligible. For example, a drawing could replace or supplement the paragraph consisting of the list of measurements.⁵ Complex architectural descriptions could be simplified and shortened if they were supported by labeled drawings and photographs.⁶ After all, for a researcher interested in church architecture, plan, section, and elevation drawings are always the starting point. The description of the mosaics in Chapters 1 and 2 suffers from a similar problem. Although the authors may not want to repeat the written and visual material that appeared in Campbell's earlier publications, illustrations would certainly contribute to a better comprehension of the mosaic programs. For instance, readers would benefit from the inclusion of a schematic plan showing the locations of the mosaic fragments (like the plan of graves in Fig. 1.42) and a color photograph of the "Peaceful Kingdom" mosaic, whose colors are listed in the text. Even if the generous use of color photographs (currently limited to Chapter 6) may not have been an option, black-and-white photographs or drawings would make reading the material a more rewarding experience. Unlike the previous chapters, Chapter 3 is richly illustrated with photographs, including architectural sculpture, grave goods, and floor mosaics, scaled drawings of select mosaics, and, most significantly, the hypothetical reconstruction of the church. Likewise, Chapter 6 is an excellent combination of clearly written narrative, architectural drawings illustrating the chronological phases and spatial relationships, photographs (black-and-white and color), and drawings of the decorative programs.

The discrepancy between a carefully written narrative and "missing" or "outdated" illustrations shows that there is a need for publishers of archaeological monographs to include supplementary material, as do several scholarly journals including *JRA*. The CDs that used to accompany books a few decades ago are now obsolete. They have yet to be replaced by a new mechanism that will enable the authors to present fully their painstaking work in the field.

⁴ Russell 2002.

⁵ In addition, the authors chose to express the dimensions of small-size elements in meters instead of centimeters, which creates unnecessary decimals, such as 0.03 m (instead of 3 cm) or 0.105 m (instead of 10.5 cm).

⁶ For example, a long sentence reads (12): "The second wall is a heavy foundation with a width of ca. 0.55 m and runs north-south across the aisle, its north end meeting the complex pier that is opposite the second pier from the west attached to the south side of the north corridor's north wall, its south the foundation beneath the stylobate."

Builders of Rough Cilicia

In the history of eastern medieval architecture, Cilicia and Isauria (Rough Cilicia) come to the fore for two reasons: first, domed basilicas may have been built here (e.g., Alahan, Hagia Thecla, Dağpazarı) half a century before Hagia Sophia in Constantinople;⁷ second, Isaurian builders were sought after in the Eastern Mediterranean from the last decade of the 5th through the first half of the 6th c.⁸ Despite the textual and material evidence for a well-developed building operation in Late Antiquity, scholars of Cilicia have only occasionally studied the surviving structures for the possible application of proportions, modular units, or similar metrological principles.⁹ Therefore, two chapters in this volume are noteworthy for bringing up questions of architectural metrology and planning principles. The Central Church, discussed in Chapter 3, has overall proportions of 5:4 (length:width), while the width of the nave versus each side-aisle is 2:1. However, the authors were unable to find any other proportional relationships or evidence that a modular unit was used to determine the size of the apse, narthex, nave, or aisles (56). They propose 29.5–30 cm as the dimension of a foot, but without a clear explanation and only in a footnote (n. 15).

The other instance is the odeum, where Boyd has identified the proportions of 3:2 (breadth:depth) and suggested 30.8 cm as the size of a foot. As was the case for the Central Church, the use of this modular unit in other parts of the building is unclear. Boyd also posits that the builders of the odeum may have applied Vitruvian principles for the layout of the orchestra:

Having fixed upon the principal center, draw a line of circumference equivalent to what is to be the perimeter at the bottom, and in it inscribe four equilateral triangles, at equal distances apart and touching the boundary line of the circle, as the astrologers do in a figure of the twelve signs of the zodiac when they are making computations from the musical harmony of the stars. Taking that one of these triangles whose side is nearest to the scaena, let the front of the scaena be determined by the line where that side cuts off a segment of the circle (A–B), and draw, through the center, a parallel line (C–D) set off from that position, to separate the platform of the stage from the space of the orchestra.¹⁰

The odeum and the Central Church are three centuries apart; in other words, temporally too distant to make any connections between the builders, ateliers, or traditions. However, can we credit engineers/architects trained in Roman building principles for the application of modular units, proportions, and principles? Now that several Roman and Late Antique Cilician cities, such as Anemurium, Celenderis, and Elaiussa-Sebaste, are extensively excavated and documented, scholars of Cilicia are in a better position to discuss the principles of construction and design in this geography that was known for its builders. Even if there is no direct line between the odeum and the “domed basilicas” of the region, the out-of-the-ordinary experiments of builders from Rough Cilicia is a topic that deserves

⁷ Hill 1996.

⁸ Mango 1966.

⁹ See Spanu 2010, 404–5 about the use of a local modular unit for fired bricks in Roman Cilicia, as opposed to the Attic-Roman standards; also see Hellenkemper 1989 about the continuation of the Attic-Roman foot in the early 6th-c. Canyella in Rough Cilicia.

¹⁰ Vitr. 5.6.1 (transl. Morgan 1914, 146–47). Whether Vitruvius’s prescriptions were applied in Roman theatres is controversial. See Sear 1990.

further study. These two chapters give scholars of Cilician architecture new material to expand upon.

Legacy data and new excavations in Anemurium

In the past two decades, archaeological work in Rough Cilicia has exponentially increased, including excavations at Nagidus, Celenderis, and Antiocheia ad Cragum, three cities less than 50 km from Anemurium.¹¹ More significantly, following the 2019 decision of the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism to invest in the so-called 12-month excavations/restorations across the country, Anemurium started to be re-excavated and rapidly restored for tourism. The new team led by M. Tekocak (Selçuk University) carried out general exploration and documentation in 2016–2017; the excavations started in 2018, and, one year later, they turned into continuous fieldwork (excavation, restoration, laboratory studies).¹² By 2021, the odeum, the Necropolis Church, and the Central Church, which are all discussed in the current volume, were re-documented and/or re-excavated.

Two coin hoards recently excavated at the Necropolis church are particularly worth noting. A hoard of 71 bronze coins was found in the longitudinal structure (Arcade, 32–33) west of the church, which the Canadian team had tentatively dated to the pre-Christian period.¹³ Their excavations had revealed evidence for 3rd-c. burials northeast of the arcade and domestic usage in the 7th c. The coins discovered 50 cm below the threshold south of the arcade, range from the reign of Valentinian II (375–92) to Marcian (450–57). If this represents a *terminus post quem*, then the arcade and the nearby structures might belong to Phase 3, in the last quarter of the 5th c., when the church was substantially remodeled. A second hoard of 41 bronze coins, discovered between the north wall and the west entrance of the baptistery, dates from 610 to 618, during the reign of Heraclius.¹⁴ This newly found Heraclian hoard joins the 20 coins of 570–666/668 CE excavated by the Canadian team in the north corridor and north of the narthex. The Canadian excavations suggested that most of the church was abandoned (Phase 4) after ca. 580, while the south aisle and chapel were renovated and used until ca. 700. This discovery will possibly help refine the phases of the Necropolis church.

The juxtaposition of old and new data acquired by two teams separated by three decades leads me to raise two issues in the publication of archaeological research. The first is the severe delays in the production of final monographs on archaeological projects. This review is not the place to discuss the (legitimate) reasons behind the challenges that must be overcome to bring a multi-authored publication to completion.¹⁵ Suffice it to say, it is quite often difficult to replicate the Herculean effort needed to sustain a field project during the publication phase once the field campaign(s) are over. The second issue is the crucial need for the archives of archaeological projects to be preserved, processed, and ideally digitized to enable future

¹¹ Durugönül 2007; Zoroğlu 1994; Hoff et al. 2015.

¹² For an article in English, see Tekocak and Aldemir 2021. The team publishes regularly (mainly in Turkish) both field reports and significant finds.

¹³ Oyarçin and Tekocak 2021.

¹⁴ Oyarçin and Tekocak 2020.

¹⁵ For example, limited time for research and publication after a tiring fieldwork campaign, the difficulties of collaborative work, the lack of financial resources for processing the data, and additional demands from the host country.

researchers to have access to the field data.¹⁶ Nowadays, several funding institutions (e.g., the British Academy, GABAM) require a statement about the applicants' plans for digital preservation. Though indispensable, such an endeavor is labor intensive and expensive for most researchers unless their host institution has the necessary infrastructure or resources.¹⁷

The authors of the current book state that “this volume presents reports.” In that spirit, they did not visit recent publications or mention the new archaeological project underway since 2016.¹⁸ The readers would benefit immensely from discussion of the newly discovered material from the viewpoint of the giants of Cilician archaeology who spent decades at Anemurium and placed this unknown site at the front and center of Late Antique studies. We can only hope that the old and the new data will eventually meet in published form, as well as on an open-access platform.¹⁹ This book is a most welcome and invaluable new arrival, which reminds us of the crucial importance of legacy data.

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¹⁶ For Rough Cilicia, see the digital pottery datasets in the Purdue University Research Repository: Autret et al. 2019; Varinlioğlu et al. 2023.

¹⁷ In Turkey, for example, although the number of year-long excavations/restorations has increased incrementally, neither the Department of Cultural Assets and Museums nor universities have the necessary infrastructure or policies for data preservation.

¹⁸ The most recent work to which the authors refer dates from 2013, a publication based on a 2007 conference. See Hoff and Townsend 2013.

¹⁹ The newly created Geographical Information Systems platform of the Turkish team could be the starting point of such a project. See Uslu Koçyiğit et al. 2022.

Faire l'histoire d'Antioche sur l'Oronte

- Oyarçin, K., and M. Tekocak. 2021. "Anemurium Nekropol Kilisesi'nden bir geç Roma definesi / A Late Roman Hoard in the Anemurium Necropolis Church." *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 52: 271–86.
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Faire l'histoire d'Antioche sur l'Oronte

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NEUMANN, K. M. 2021. *Antioch in Syria: A History from Coins (300 BCE–450 CE)*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

DE GIORGI, A. U., et A. A. EGER. 2021. *Antioch: A History*. London: Routledge/New York: Taylor & Francis.

Depuis le début du 21^e s., les recherches concernant Antioche sur l'Oronte se sont multipliées. La parution simultanée en 2021 des deux ouvrages ici recensés témoigne de cette vitalité. Andrea U. De Giorgi et Asa Eger proposent une synthèse de l'histoire de la cité de sa fondation à nos jours, soit vingt-trois siècles, Kristina M. Neumann une