

REVIEW

Review of *Conservation of Classical Monuments in the Mediterranean Region. A Study of Anastylosis with Case Studies from Greece and Turkey*. BAR International Series, 2800, Oxford

Conservation of Classical Monuments in the Mediterranean Region. A Study of Anastylosis with Case Studies from Greece and Turkey by Kalliopi Vacharopoulou, BAR International Series, 251 pages, Oxford, 2016, 28 b&w images, ISBN: 9781407314853

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In this new study, Kalliopi Vacharopoulou explores the concept and practice of anastylosis through its application to classical monuments in Greece and Turkey. For introductory purposes, anastylosis is considered to involve “*the re-assembly of existing, but dispersed, members of a monument and is implemented within a framework for the preservation and presentation of ancient monuments*” (p. vii). However, as Vacharopoulou demonstrates through her research, a precise definition, adhered to internationally, remains elusive; as does a clear idea of the place of anastylosis within conservation strategies and provision for detailed practical guidance. These are the issues that she seeks to redress through her work, which she conducts by analysing the contribution of conservation charters, exploring the history of monuments subject to anastylosis, and by surveying the views both of professionals involved in the practice and of the visiting public. This culminates with Vacharopoulou’s own composition of a new, comprehensive definition and an accompanying set of guidelines.

In chapter one, Vacharopoulou introduces the concept of anastylosis, her choice of research methods and case studies, and problems surrounding the definition of the practice. Chapter two provides extensive

background into the context of cultural heritage management. This chapter focuses particularly on the development of conservation standards through the twentieth century. She emphasizes how attitudes concerning acceptable practices within heritage management and conservation have evolved through this period and how anastylosis needs to be reassessed in light of

these changes. Issues raised include debates surrounding principles such as reversibility, minimum intervention, and authenticity. How we move from these theoretical premises to the practical application of anastylis is identified as a key concern. However, these first two chapters are, at times, somewhat repetitive and a little too thorough in their inclusion of contextual materials perhaps not strictly relevant to this study. Chapter three is where more substantial discussion begins. While chapter two provides an overview of the shifts experienced through the 20th century, chapter three connects these with the specifics of anastylis.

Vacharopoulou traces the origins of the term back to AD 843 and the restoration of icons following the triumph of iconolatry over iconoclasm in the Orthodox Church. It emerged as the type of strategic interventive technique that we associate with the term today in the 19th century following the work commenced on the Athenian Acropolis following Greek independence. The term was coined in this context by the Greek engineer Nikolaos Balanos, who used it to describe his working method of reassembling surviving, but scattered pieces of the Acropolis monuments. This led to the inclusion of the term in the Athens Charter (1931) as part of the technique of conservation. Balanos contrasted his practice of anastylis with reconstruction. This was later echoed by the Venice Charter (1964), which separated the two practices: anastylis depends on the incorporation of original pieces, while reconstruction involves the adoption of new material – the latter is largely ruled out. There is, however, some grey area between the two – it is rarely possible to conduct anastylis with the inclusion of absolutely no new material. Vacharopoulou also shows that there are significant divergences between both the frequency and the way in which this very term of ‘anastylis’ is used in modern parlance across the world. For instance, while it is commonly used in both Italy and Greece, it is rarely referred to in countries such as the United Kingdom and United States.

Moreover, in Greece, it is often employed as a catch-all term, denoting both anastylis specifically and restoration more generally. This raises the potential for confusion.

The survey of professionals, examined in chapter six, makes Vacharopoulou’s point regarding these discrepancies and the risk of confusion very clear. In spite of Balanos’ early assertions, opinions remained split over whether anastylis should be considered a method of reconstruction or restoration, or an amalgamation of the two. Responses were similarly divided concerning the practicalities of how anastylis should be conducted – whether, for instance, there should be a minimum percentage of surviving material to render anastylis appropriate and, if so, what this percentage should be; and whether natural or artificial stone should be used in any places where it is necessary to introduce new material. Much of this variation can be attributed to the fact that it is extremely difficult, and often unhelpful, to adopt a strict, formulaic approach to monuments in different places, with different origins, and in varying states of preservation. Indeed, in spite of these manifest difficulties regarding the ‘correct’ definition and approach of anastylis, opinion is split as to whether or not the current charters provide sufficient guidelines. It appears irrefutable that anastylis has not been precisely defined, but whether new guidance is necessary remains a point of contention. Vacharopoulou rightly highlights the importance of a clear, but flexible, definition and guidance. However, her results may have benefited from greater theoretical input from conservators, who were largely excluded from this survey. She focused only on those with practical experience of anastylis: this included, for instance nine architects (out of a total of 23 participants) and four architect-restorers, but only one participant specifically titled as a conservator-restorer.

The visitor survey is discussed in the same chapter and reveals the lack of distinction made by the public between terms such as anastylis, reconstruction, and restoration.

Given the mixed messages from the professionals, they can hardly be blamed! Nevertheless, the vast majority held that anastylis and site conservation attracts tourists and that the public should have more of a voice in the decision-making process. The question over whether anastylis is truly helpful for aiding public interpretation of monuments and the extent to which it should be geared towards this aim is dealt with in chapter three. Vacharopoulou brings together her discussion in chapter eight with her definition of anastylis and guidelines related to its practice; this is followed by concluding remarks in chapter nine. The definition she gives is as follows (p. 107):

Anastylis forms a method of intervention to ancient monuments, applied for reasons of preservation and interpretation. It forms an intervention strategy, decided, planned, and implemented within the wider framework of heritage management and conservation.

Anastylis should be understood as the re-assembly of original dismembered parts of structures. It can most readily be applied to any monument consisting of individual architectural members. These monuments are connected with regularly cut members, connected to each other horizontally, vertically or otherwise, with small dry metallic joints, when necessary, and little or no mortar. Monuments of this type are made of durable material, such as stone, marble, and granite. Their members can be re-assembled in their original positions and be allocated their original structural role. The original structural behaviour should be preserved too, given that the great majority of elements are found and identified. The dry joints allow their replacement or completion with minimum new material. Integration of new members and completions of original ones do not require extensive amounts

of new material. The original form of the building can be indicated.

This is a comprehensive definition, set apart from the terms of restoration and reconstruction, and its adoption would help to ensure greater consistency and better understanding across heritage professionals around the world. The accompanying guidelines (pp. 108–131) are sensible and reflect current trends in conservation. Whether or not they are wholly necessary remains uncertain. For the most part, they consist of general principles of conservation, of which all professionals dealing with the preservation of ancient monuments should ideally be fully aware. Where the guidelines do relate very specifically to anastylis, we may question whether they are flexible enough. Flexibility was a key concern highlighted by Vacharopoulou's research, particularly through the survey, but the guidelines contain some rather rigid criteria – such as that '*Original material should survive in amounts of at least 70–80%...*' (p. 118). Nevertheless, they do provide a useful summary of the various conservation issues it is necessary to examine when considering such an intervention – this is perhaps particularly helpful for non-conservation professionals involved in anastylis.

One of the greatest strengths of the book is the wealth of information on anastylis programmes relating to the monuments used for case studies (in chapters four and five, and the appendices). Chapter four deals with case studies from Greece: the Erechtheion and the Parthenon from the Athenian Acropolis; the Enkoimeterion and the Propylon of the Gymnasium from the Sanctuary of Asklepios at Epidauros; and the Hellenistic Stoa of the Acropolis of Lindos, Rhodes. Chapter five contains the case studies from Turkey: the Library of Celsus, Ephesus; the Temple of Trajan, Pergamon; and the Hellenistic Nymphaeum at Sagalassos. One downfall of this work is the fact that the text has not been updated since research was conducted between 2001 and 2005. Therefore, new studies such as

Kousgaard (2016) and Hardy (2008) are not considered. The narrative style is often rather dry and repetitive. Nevertheless, this book remains an important introduction to the practice of anastylis and issues surrounding it.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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