

## THE PAPHOS "LIGHTHOUSE BLOCK" RECONSIDERED

(PLATE XVI)

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In 1995, I was privileged to join efforts with several respected colleagues in publishing what was primarily a consideration of the possible existence and location of a lighthouse serving the Hellenistic-Roman port of Nea Paphos.<sup>1</sup> The design of such a lighthouse, some of us believed, might be reflected on an architectural block carved with relief, which had previously been found in 1938 in Kato Paphos.<sup>2</sup> Recently, it has come to my attention that this tower relief, which we employed as a springboard for our discussion of ancient lighthouses, may in fact belong to the Venetian era.<sup>3</sup> As leading author of the original article, I take complete responsibility for any albeit *bona fide* error, and hereby would like to attempt briefly to correct the record.

The carved architectural block in question is badly defaced and worn (Pl. XVI: 1). The inscription, as well, is only partly preserved. Nevertheless, when the block is compared with known Venetian emblems in a better state of preservation, such as that above the Porta della Carta on the west front of the Doges' Palace in Venice,<sup>4</sup> or those here in Cyprus above the entrance to the house of the Dragoman Hadjigeorgakis Kornessios in Nicosia<sup>5</sup> and above the Sea Gate in the fortification walls of Famagusta,<sup>6</sup> the similarities become apparent.<sup>7</sup>

Concerning the ninth-century story behind this standard Venetian emblem, Norwich recounts that

*one day... when Saint Mark was travelling from Aquileia to Rome, his ship chanced to put in at the islands of Rialto. There an angel appeared to him and blessed him with the words, 'Pax tibi, Marce, evangelista meus. Hic requiescet corpus tuum' [Peace be unto you, Mark, my evangelist. On this spot shall your body rest].*<sup>8</sup>

Norwich comments, "the first of these [Latin] sentences must be familiar to all visitors to Venice, since it is inscribed upon the open book that

*the ubiquitous winged lion of the city holds in his paw.*"<sup>9</sup>

Venetian emblems similarly inscribed appear to have been familiar sights outside of Italy as well. The relief slab in the House of Hadjigeorgakis Kornessios (hereafter the "HHK Relief") similarly depicts the winged Lion of Venice (Pl. XVI: 2), whose head is turned toward the viewer; its right paw rests on an open bible inscribed: "PAX TIBI MARCE EVANGELISTA MEUS".<sup>10</sup> To the viewer's left is a bi-level tower with a surmounting flag, while in the centre a shield with a double-headed eagle, adorned with an oval containing a cross on a little knoll, is flanked by stylized hills extending above branches holding five pomegranates; below, a band of anthemion stretches across the bottom of the block.<sup>11</sup>

The HHK Relief's original provenance remains unknown, but the slab certainly predates its present context, for the central heraldic emblem

1. J.R. Leonard, S.L. Tuck, R.L. Hohlfelder, I. Nicolaou, "Evidence for a Lighthouse at Nea Paphos?", *RDAC* 1995, 237-48.
2. *Idem*, 238-41, figs 2-4, 7. The block (PM 680) is now in the collections of the Paphos District Museum.
3. My heartfelt thanks go to Prof. D. Michaelides, for gently steering us back on course.
4. J.J. Norwich, *A History of Venice* (London 1983), 340, fig. 31.
5. E. Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou, *The House of the Dragoman of Cyprus, Hadjigeorgakis Kornessios* (Nicosia 1991), 12-3, figs 1, 4-6.
6. C. Enlart, *Gothic Art and the Renaissance in Cyprus* (English Ed., London 1987), 453, fig. 381; R. Wideson, *Portrait of Cyprus* (The Hague, N.D.), pls 127-8.
7. I would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank my colleagues and mentors in Cyprus who graciously provided valuable assistance in tracking down information and bibliography on an historical period I cannot claim as my own, especially Drs D. Michaelides, V. Karageorghis, S. Hadjisavvas, M. Metcalf, and A.H.S. Megaw.
8. Norwich, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 28.
9. *Idem*.
10. Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 12.
11. *Idem*.

"is a simplified form of the coat of arms of the Podocataros, one of the most important Latinized Greek families of Cyprus around 1500."<sup>12</sup>

The relief above the Sea Gate in Famagusta (hereafter "the SGF Relief") similarly depicts the winged Lion of Venice (Pl. XVI: 3), as indicated by the evidence of published photographs and drawings,<sup>13</sup> and appears to include the same inscribed Latin invocation to St. Mark. "*Pax Tibi Marce*" is clearly visible, while the rest appears largely obliterated. On the left stands a three-tiered tower, whose width diminishes upward with each successive, crenellated level. Numerous windows appear throughout the tower: four on the bottom, where an arched doorway is also represented, three in the middle, and two in the uppermost level. A flag flies from the tower's summit. Enlart dates the construction of the Sea Gate to 1496.<sup>14</sup>

On the Paphos block (Pl. XVI: 1), what appears to be the right rear leg of the Venetian Lion is clearly visible projecting downward near the bottom of the relief, while the right front paw rests atop the open book. A smooth blank space above the book may represent the location of the lion's head, which would originally have been carved in high relief. This heavily carved portion of the relief seems to have been broken cleanly from the block, leaving a smooth space very similar in shape to that of the lion's head on the HHK Relief. The rest of the block appears to have been roughly chiseled.

The tower on the Paphos block is clearly paralleled by that in the SGF Relief, as it is three-tiered, rests on a plinth, exhibits a width that diminishes upward with each successive level, and possesses rectangular windows. Like the Nicosia HHK Relief, the Paphos tower's crenellation appears only at the top of the first storey.

Finally, upon secondary consideration, in conjunction with the other parallels already cited, it would seem the Latin inscription on the Paphos block (Pl. XVI: 4) is noticeably reminiscent of the standard Venetian invocation seen on the HHK and SGF Reliefs, and may be construed as either:

PAX	EVAN		PAX	EVAN
TIBI	GELIS	or	TIBI	GELISTA
MARCE	TAMEUS		MARCE	MEUS

The first reading may be more likely, as a horizontal cutting appears in the primary position of the third line on the book's second page.

Given the preponderance of the evidence, the necessity to reconsider the origins of the Paphos block is clear. It would seem that this badly damaged, singularly unimpressive block may once have been a Venetian emblematic relief similar to those known from Venice, Nicosia, Famagusta, and elsewhere in the Venetian Empire. Perhaps the Paphos block originally adorned the entrance to the castle on the western breakwater of Paphos harbor, where in the late sixteenth century it was pulled down and severely defaced by triumphant Turks celebrating their victory over the once-Venetian-held port.

Despite this present reconsideration of the Paphos block, however, our primary arguments expressed in 1995, concerning the existence and placement of an ancient lighthouse at Nea Paphos, continue to be valid. Furthermore, the similarities between ancient towers and those of later periods indicate that such defensive or utilitarian architecture changed little over the centuries following the close of antiquity. The Venetians, it would seem, built their own towers (or at least depicted them in carved relief) in a manner strongly reminiscent of lighthouses and other towers built during earlier Roman times.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps, as the archaeological study of Nea Paphos continues, direct evidence for the existence, location, and design of the harbour's ancient *pharos* will eventually come to light.

12. *Idem*, 12-3.

13. *Supra*, n. 6.

14. Enlart, *op. cit.* (n. 5), 453.

15. Cf., e.g., our previous statement in 1995 that "Although tower construction in antiquity is rather generalized, especially in Greek and Roman architecture, many features of the tower relief from Paphos find excellent comparanda in both known architectural remains of ancient lighthouses and lighthouse representations in classical art;" Leonard *et al.*, *op. cit.* (n. 1), 239.



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ΤΜΗΜΑ ΑΡΧΑΙΟΤΗΤΩΝ

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