

# RES ANTIQUITATIS



JOURNAL OF ANCIENT HISTORY

VOLUME 2  
2011

CHAM

# RES ANTIQUITATIS

Journal of Ancient history

Volume 2

Centro de História de Além-Mar

# CHAM

Universidade Nova de Lisboa  
Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas  
Universidade dos Açores

## **Res Antiquitatis. Journal of Ancient History**

Volume 2 / 2011

Price: € 12

Published by

Centro de História de Além-Mar

Universidade Nova de Lisboa / Universidade dos Açores

cham@fcsh.unl.pt

+351 21 790 8300 (ext. 1551)

Sponsored by

**FCT** Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia

MINISTÉRIO DA CIÊNCIA, TECNOLOGIA E ENSINO SUPERIOR

ISSN 1647-5852

Legal ref. code 308682/10

Copies: 250

Printed in Portugal by

Papiro-Relevo, Lda.

R. Bartolomeu Dias, n.º 5 R/C

2855-416 VALE DE MILHAÇOS

Cover design: Marcel L. Paiva do Monte



### **Editor**

Francisco Caramelo – Universidade Nova  
de Lisboa

### **Assistant Editor**

Marcel L. Paiva Monte – Universidade Nova  
de Lisboa

### **Editorial Board**

António Ramos dos Santos – Universidade  
de Lisboa  
José das Candeias Sales – Universidade Aberta  
Zoltán Biedermann – University of London  
Juan Luis Montero Fenollós – Universidade  
da Coruña  
Leonor Santa Bárbara – Universidade Nova  
de Lisboa  
Rui Loureiro – Instituto Superior Manuel Teixeira  
Gomes  
Brigitte Lion – Université François Rabelais  
– Tours  
Nuno Simões Rodrigues – Universidade de Lisboa  
José Virgílio Garcia Trabazo – Universidade  
de Santiago de Compostela

### **Advisory Board**

Jean-Claude Margueron – École Pratique  
des Hautes Études  
José Augusto Ramos – Universidade de Lisboa  
Luís Filipe Thomaz – Universidade Católica  
Portuguesa  
Maria Helena Trindade Lopes – Universidade  
Nova de Lisboa  
José Ribeiro Ferreira – Universidade de Coimbra  
Francolino Gonçalves – École Biblique  
et Archéologique Française de Jérusalem  
Jack Sasson – Vanderbilt University  
Michel Hulin – Université Paris Sorbonne  
– Paris IV  
Stanislava Vavroušková – Orientální ústav  
v Praze  
Sylvie Blétry – Université Paul Valéry  
Montpellier III  
Michel al-Maqdissi – Direction Générale  
des Antiquités et Musées (Damas, Syrie)  
Dejannirah Couto – École Pratique des Hautes  
Études  
Mario Liverani – Sapienza – Università di Roma  
Antonio Ruiz Castellanos – Universidad de Cádiz  
Dolors Folch – Universitat Pompeu Fabra  
José Remesal Rodríguez – Universitat  
de Barcelona  
Simo Parpola – Helsingin Yliopisto  
John Baines – University of Oxford  
Ana Isabel Buescu – Universidade Nova de Lisboa  
Sebastião Tavares de Pinho – Universidade  
de Coimbra

# Table of Contents

Editorial.....	9
<b>Studies</b>	
Stanislava VAVROŠKOVÁ: Perception of India in the Heart of Europe. Transition Through Centuries .....	13
Juan Luis MONTERO FENOLLÓS: The Tower of Babel Before Archaeology. The Ziggurat of Babylon according to European travellers (XII-XVII centuries) .....	31
Rui Manuel LOUREIRO: The Indian Journeys of a Spanish Ambassador: Don García de Silva y Figueroa and his <i>Comentarios</i> (1614-1624).....	51
Susana MOTA: The Household Religion in Ancient Egypt: Problems and Constraints .....	71
Telo Ferreira CANHÃO: Eroticism and Sensuality in <i>Papyrus Westcar</i> .....	83
Ronaldo G. Gurgel PEREIRA: Greek <i>Nomos</i> and Egyptian Religion: Cultural Identity in Hellenistic Egypt.....	103
José das Candeias SALES: La monnaie des Ptolémées – Les séries de Ptolémée I.....	133
Elias PINHEIRO: The Sintashta Cultural Particulars and the Origin of the War Chariot .....	149

## Interview

- Jean-Claude Margueron (*conducted by Francisco Caramelo and Juan Luis Montero Fenollós*) ..... 171

## Short Notes

- M. al-MAQDISSI, P. BUTTERLIN, F. CAMELO, I. MÁRQUEZ ROWE, Jean-Claude MARGUERON, Juan Luis MONTERO FENOLLÓS, B. MULLER: Définition du Moyen Euphrate ..... 203

- Juan Luis MONTERO FENOLLÓS: Le site urukéen de Tell Humeida au Moyen Euphrate syrien. Premières recherches archéologiques ..... 205

- Juan-Luis MONTERO FENOLLÓS; Francisco CAMELO; Ignacio MÁRQUEZ ROWE: Le site de Tell Qabr Abu al-'Atiq, le royaume de Mari, l'Assyrie et le verrou de Khanuqa. Projet Archéologique Moyen Euphrate Syrien (2008-2010) ..... 217

- Sylvie BLÉTRY: La campagne 2010 de la mission archéologique franco-syrienne à Halabiya-Zénobia ..... 229

- Emma LOOSLEY: The Citadel of Zalabiyeh on the Euphrates: Placing the Site in its Historical Context and a Summary of the First Archaeological Field Season (2010)..... 259

- Yaarob ABDULLAH: The Works of the Syrian Mission in the Byzantine City (Tell Al Kasra) in Five Seasons (2006–2010)..... 269

## Reviews

- André de Campos SILVA: review of Toby WILKINSON, *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt: The History of a Civilisation from 3000 BC to Cleopatra*, 2010 (book review) ..... 289

- Miguel VALÉRIO: review of Aline TENU, *L'expansion médio-assyrienne. Approche archéologique*, 2009 (book review)..... 295

Katia M. P. POZZER: review of Brigitte LION; Cécile MICHEL (eds.): <i>Histoires de déchiffrements. Les écritures du Proche-Orient à l'Egée</i> , 2009 (book review) .....	303
Marcel L. P. MONTE: review of <i>The State Archives of Assyria Online</i> (website review) .....	305
Paula VEIGA: review of <i>The Institute for the Preservation of Medical Traditions</i> , Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (website review) .....	311
Isabel ALMEIDA; Luís DUQUE; Maria de Fátima ROSA: review of <i>Torre de Babel – Historia y Mito</i> . Museo Arqueológico de Murcia (Spain), 9th December 2010 – 20th March 2011 (exhibition) .....	321

## **Abstracts**

# Editorial announcement

*Res Antiquitatis. Journal of Ancient History* continues to incentive and to publish research works on Antiquity and its reception. The publication of quality articles, the internationalization of Portuguese research and the creation of opportunities to divulge the work of senior and young researchers are still its priorities. Volume nº 1 had a very significant diffusion and received excellent reactions and compliments from Portuguese and foreign researchers. This stimulates us to proceed with this project and our effort of placing this journal among internationally recognized reference periodicals.

In the present volume, nº 2, in the *Studies'* section, there are two research areas that deserve to be mentioned: the first one is Egypt, which received special attention and is object of various studies comprised in a very wide chronological range. The second is dedicated to the reception of Antiquity, that was object of some of the communications presented at an international conference organized by CHAM at Fundação Oriente (Lisbon, 9th-10th of March 2009) entitled «Percepções do Oriente e da antiguidade na Europa da Época Moderna» («Perceptions of the Orient and Antiquity in Modern Age Europe»).

The *Short Notes'* section is integrally dedicated to archaeological studies centered mainly in the area of the Halabiya-Zalabiya gorge. Many of its authors whether coordinate or participate on archaeological missions in this region and adjacent areas. *Res Antiquitatis* intends to become a *forum* where syntheses about the works taking place in these archaeological sites can be published annually, respecting some geographical coherence though not excluding other incoming contributions. In this issue we would like to highlight the presence of a short note about the Middle Euphrates signed by the participants of the *IV<sup>e</sup> rencontre syro-franco-ibérique d'archéologie et d'histoire ancienne du Proche-Orient* which took place at Madrid in 2009. This note's intention is to propose a proper definition of the concept of Middle Euphrates, which has been subject of certain ambiguities in historiography.



One of the most relevant texts in this volume of *Res Antiquitatis* is the interview made to Jean-Claude Margueron, the great archaeologist who excavated in Syria for decades: he directed for 25 years the archaeological mission of Mari, the ancient city on the Euphrates. This interview was made at Murcia (Spain) in March 2011, seizing the opportunity opened by his participation in the cycle of conferences concerning the exhibition *Torre de Babel. Historia y Mito*, which took place in the Museo Arqueológico de Murcia. This is a great interview that results in an impressive testimony of his intellectual life and of his intense archeological activity.

Finally, we would like to mention the existence of *Res Antiquitatis'* website (<http://resantiq.wordpress.com>), which intends to keep updated news, especially about the journal itself. The abstracts of the studies presented in this issue will soon be available online, as well as the citation rules of the call for papers for the next issue (nº 3). The very positive impact of this journal's first volume, that we hope to achieve continually, makes us believe that this project has a future.

Francisco Caramelo  
Editor

# Perception of India in the Heart of Europe. Transition through Centuries

Stanislava Vavroušková  
Orientální ústav v Praze  
(Oriental Institute, Prague)

## Introduction

Since the Middle Ages, we Europeans have had a particular fascination with Orient and all which can be called Oriental – be it material (spices, textiles, special objects) or culture and spiritual values (religion, philosophy, mythology, subjects in literature *etc.*). The images of the Orient in general and of India in particular as constructed by the British, French and German intellectual elites have long maintained their central position and have been extensively described and commented upon. The perception of Orient and India in particular in the area which is generally known as Central Europe has developed in different way. Unlike European powers (Great Britain, France, Portugal, Netherlands and Spain), which had experienced overseas expansions for centuries and had colonies/dependent areas in Asia and thereby had a direct contact with their people and culture, the people of Central Europe were in quite a different position. To be more specific, the people of the Czech lands (Bohemia and Moravia), which now constitute the Czech Republic, were then a part of the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Being a landlocked country, the Czech lands had practically no direct overseas contacts until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It should be noted that in multi-national Austro-Hungarian monarchy Czechs were an ethnic minority. Moreover, the Czechs were subjected to a long period of systematic Germanization. By the end of

18<sup>th</sup> century whole sections of the population were not fluent in their own language and they began to speak German better than Czech. The entire education and administration system was German, while Czech was kept alive mostly in the countryside. It was only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the Czechs were able to fight back for their language and national identity. New Czech elite and intellectuals emerged and they responded to the germanization by efforts to revive the language and culture which had a long and splendid tradition before the installment of Habsburg rule.

Culture and language played a key role in the overall process known as the Czech national revival. In their efforts to raise the status of the Czech language, the first generation of revivalists was looking for inspiration in Greek and Latin as well as Sanskrit, the classical language of ancient India.

The main credit for attracting interest of the first revivalists to Indian languages belongs to Father Karel Příklad. Czech-born Catholic priest Karel Příklad joined the Society of Jesus and was sent in 1748 on a mission to India. He lived for 11 years in Goa, teaching as a Professor of Theology at the Jesuit College. When in 1759 the Jesuit order was suppressed in Portugal and Portuguese overseas settlements, Příklad was deported to Lisbon, and later in 1767, he returned back to Bohemia. Only one of his writings has been preserved. It is a systematic presentation of Konkani language (one of the dialects spoken at Malabar coast), a manuscript written in Latin and published by José Pereira under the title *Principia linguae brahmanicae* in Benares and later in the journal *Archív Orientální* edited by the Oriental Institute, Prague.<sup>1</sup>

In 1791, the manuscript of Karel Příklad reached Josef Dobrovský (1753–1829), a Czech Jesuit scholar, philologist and founder of Slavonic linguistic studies in Bohemia. While reading the Příklad's manuscript on Konkani grammar, Dobrovský was struck by some

---

<sup>1</sup> Pereira, J. (ed.), "Karel Příklad, S. J., *Principia linguae brahmanicae*: A Grammar of Standard Konkani", *Archív orientální. Quarterly Journal of African and Asian Studies* 36/4 (1968), pp. 625-684.

similarities between Konkaní language (of the same language family as Sanskrit) and Slavonic languages (such as in verbal inflexions, in the existence of instrumental case in nouns, *etc.*). Dobrovský was most probably the first scholar in Bohemia to notice the affinities between Indian and Slavonic languages. Stimulated by Dobrovský's findings, as well as by the results achieved by Western scholars on India, some other Czech scholars started to study Sanskrit and the ancient Indian literature and published articles on Indian languages and culture as well as translations of Indian literature into Czech.

### **Romantic perception of India by Czech revivalists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century**

As compared to Dobrovský, whose interest in India was motivated purely by scholarly reasons, the younger generation of revivalists was enchanted by the exotic India represented to them and their perception of India was rather romantic. Because there was practically no precise and first-hand information on India, there developed an image of a sort of fantasy country. The revivalists were keen to find a proof that the Czech culture is closer to Indian culture than that of Western nations in general and the German one in particular, *i.e.* the Czech culture is older, nobler, and thus better than the German one in any respect. The idea of close relationship between the old Slavs and ancient Indians was drawn from the work of Polish author Valentyn Skorochód Maiewski, *O Slawianech a ich pobratymcach (On Slavs and Their Relatives)* published in Warsaw in 1816.<sup>2</sup>

In language discourse the Slavonic languages (namely Czech) were claimed to be direct descendants and the closest relatives of Sanskrit. Of the many followers of this opinion, two brothers, Josef and Antonín Jungmann, should be named here. Josef Jungmann (1773–1847), a

---

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in: Strnad, J., "India as Reflected in Czech Conscience in the Era of the National Revivalist Movement in the Nineteenth Century (ca. 1800-1848)", *Archiv orientální. Quarterly Journal of African and Asian Studies*, Oriental Institute, 75/3 (2007), p. 284.

well-known Czech linguist, was also attracted to India and Sanskrit. He published in the learned review *Krok* (Pace) some studies in Indian poetry, e.g. *Krátký přehled prozodie a metriky indické* (A Brief Survey of Indian Prosody and Metric)<sup>3</sup> and some other articles. In 1828 he published the translation of Indian short story *Čtyři sprostní brahmíni* (Four Ordinary Brahmins)<sup>4</sup> and he referred to Sanskrit as the «real mother of the Slavonic languages and the most perfect language the under the Sun.» Josef Jungmann was interested in the prosody and metrical systems used in the poetry of different European languages as well as in Sanskrit. He was of the opinion which he shared with some contemporaries and many literati of the later generation that the only natural way of poetry in Czech and the Slavonic languages should employ metrical versification inherited by Greeks, Latins and Slavs from their common cultural background. He believed that it was only later, under the German influence, that the Czech poetry has been spoiled by shifting towards the syllabotonic, accented prosody. Thus the Czech revivalist poets started to compose their poetry in hexameters but also in old Indian meters (*árjagíti*, *sárangí*, *upačitra* and others). They made it so to prove that the Czech language is very close to the language of European antiquity (Greek and Latin) and the so-called mother of IE languages Sanskrit, and that in fact Czech is much closer to them than German which was (with its syllabotonic prosody) somehow excluded from this more noble language group. Jungmann expressed his strong belief in the superiority of the Czech language by a Czech verse composed in Indian meter called *árjá*. «You can boast of the Indian origin of your speech, O Teuton: your speech is the Indian's beauty's stepdaughter, but mine is her true daughter.»<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Jungmann, J., “Krátký přehled prozodie a metriky indické podle Henry Thom. Colebrooka v Asiat. Researches Vol.10” (A Brief Account of Indian Prosody and Metrics, after H. T. Colebrook in Asiatic Researches, Vol.10) *Krok I*, 1 (1821), pp. 33-63.

<sup>4</sup> Jungmann, J., “Čtyři sprostní brahmíni” (Four Ordinary Brahmins). *Časopis Společnosti vlasteneckého Museum w Čechách II*, 3 (Praha) 1828, pp. 71-83.

<sup>5</sup> Jungmann, J., *Krátký přehled prozodie a metriky indické podle Henry Thom. Colebrooka v Asiat. Researches Vol.10* (A Brief Account of Indian Prosody and Metrics, after H. T. Colebrook in Asiatic Researches, Vol.10) *Krok I*, 1, Praha (1821), p. 39.

This was a sort of fiction of course, but a long-lasting one – the so-called Indian episode in Czech revivalist poetry lasted more than thirty years (in fact the last attempt of this kind was published in 1851).

The lack of direct and serious information on India quite often resulted in pure fantasies and idealizations of the country as a cradle of world culture as well as of the Indian people. Antonín Jungmann (1775–1854) wrote in his article *O Hindích* (On Indians) published in 1821:

«Hindostan can rightly be called mother of the human races and teacher of all arts... The nation is very good, kind, well mannered, affable, honest and fair spoken, noble and sober and very clean, gentle and hospitable... it is neither bloodthirsty nor vengeful but submissive, though it has also martial tribes, *e.g.* Marathas, Varawas, *etc.*»<sup>6</sup>

Antonín Jungmann was busy also in the field of comparative mythology<sup>7</sup>. Looking for parallels between the Slavonic pantheon and the so called “prestigious” Greek and Indian mythologies, he arrived at some interesting conclusions. Jungmann compared the main Slavonic god Perun (god of thunder) to Brahma, the main god of ancient India. He also drew attention to the similarity of the Czech and Sanskrit words used for fire (in Sanskrit «*aghi*» and in Czech «*oheň*») – the object of devotion among Slavs as well as among old Indians. He pointed out that the name of Slavonic goddess of winter and death *Morena* resembles the Sanskrit word *Marana* (meaning death) as well as that the word *rarášek* (meaning an evil spirit or demon in Czech) resembles *rákšasi* (demon in Sanskrit), *etc.*

Perhaps the most curious example of adopting Indian mythology to Slavonic pantheon can be found in the epic poem *Slávy dcera*<sup>8</sup> (*The*

---

<sup>6</sup> Translated from Czech. Jungmann, A., “O Hindích” (On Indians) *Krok I*, 2 (1821), pp. 65-81.

<sup>7</sup> Jungmann, A., “Krátký obsah náboženství pohanského u Slovanů, zvláště u Čechů” (Brief Survey of pagan religion of Slavs, particularly of Czechs), *Krok*, II, 3 (1831), pp. 339-392.

<sup>8</sup> Kollár, J., *Slávy dcera (The Daughter of Slava/Glory)* Odeon, Praha, 1971.

*Daughter of Slava/Glory*) composed by the Slovak poet Ján Kollár (1793–1852) and published and edited for the first time in Pest in 1824. The goddess Slava who is presented here as a symbol of Slavonic race was actually never known and worshipped as a goddess – she is just the poet's imagination. Kollár even gave her an Indian etymology: he claimed that Slava was actually old Indian goddess *Sváhá*<sup>9</sup>. This construction was entirely fictional. Nevertheless, it was taken seriously well up to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The image of India constructed by Czech intellectuals during the national revivalist period can not be seen as a specific way of European Orientalism – the quantity of information coming to the small country in Central Europe was too small for this to develop. We should say that the way India was perceived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was in some cases romantic and unreal. Nevertheless, the writings on India served their purpose – to encourage the pride of oppressed Czech people in seeking their new national identity and help them to develop into a modern nation in a modern Europe.

### **The 20<sup>th</sup> century India and Czechoslovakia – similar experiences, shared dreams, common purpose**

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century found both the Czech and the Indian societies undergoing a transition, which in some respects displayed similar characteristics. Both the Indian and the Czech people were striving to achieve independence and both were looking beyond the borders of their countries to find encouragement and support for their cause. While the struggle of the Czech nation was virtually unknown beyond Austria-Hungary, the Indian national movement started to attract the attention of people worldwide. The Czech nation, which was already seeking self-determination for quite a long time, looked with sympathy

---

<sup>9</sup> Suková, L., *Obráz Indie v české společnosti a literatuře 19. století* (The Image of India in Czech Society and Literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century), Praha, Filizofická fakulta University Karlovy, 2001. (B.A. thesis, unpublished), p. 22.

on the freedom struggle of the Indian people. The Czech newspapers started to write about India in a more profound and detailed way. News appeared about the *svadeshi* movement, which developed in the Bengali provinces and presented the first real challenge to the British government<sup>10</sup>. The Czech society also began to discover the organizational structure of the Indian national movement (through the report on the meeting of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta in 1906) and began to get acquainted with the names of some of the Indian national leaders and prominent freedom fighters, for example Bipin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and namely of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, whose adventures in London and Paris, his daring escape and subsequent arrest during his deportation from Britain to India were covered by the Czech press. During World War I, articles were published about the Indian troops fighting on various battlefields, and the interest in economic and political development in India was also growing. An editorial article in one of the Czech dailies in 1915 reads: «The industrial development of this greatest colony in the world will bring in its wake changes in all directions. The country will finally achieve its economic and, simultaneously, political independence. And the present war, which will mark a new stage in the history of India, will accelerate the process whereby India will achieve independence.»<sup>11</sup>

In the newly formed Republic of Czechoslovakia after World War I (1918) the feeling of solidarity with India, which still remained a colony, developed among Czech intellectuals and general public. A great part in this development was played by the Indian scholars in Czechoslovakia and their growing prestige in both India and the world. The Prague India scholars fostered the growing interest in India by their translation work and by their own publications. As early as 1924 the *Nithi Dharma*, written by Gandhi<sup>12</sup>, was translated into Czech language, followed in

---

<sup>10</sup> *Národní listy*, 25. 11. 1905.

<sup>11</sup> *Právo lidu*, 11.4. 1915. (translated from Czech).

<sup>12</sup> Gándhí Mahátma, *Ethické náboženství: Nithi Dharma*, (transl. from English by W.F. Waller), Sfinx, Praha, 1924.



1931 by the Czech translation of Gandhi's autobiography with a foreword by V. Lesný<sup>13</sup>. A book by Moriz Winternitz (written in German), entitled *Mahatma Gandhi*, was published in 1930<sup>14</sup>. The scholars presented the Indian cultural values, current problems, political aspirations and the campaigns of the Indian national movement in the newspapers (journals), both Czech and German. They also wrote and published their own books presenting India as it was, in a sober manner which reflected the Indian reality – in other words, they tried to write about things which they believed the readers wanted to know and should know about India.

### **Scholarly perception – India studies at the Charles University and the founding of the Oriental Institute in Prague**

Among the most prominent Indian scholars in Czechoslovakia were Otakar Pertold (1884–1965), Professor of Comparative Religion at the Charles University, specialized in South India and Ceylon<sup>15</sup>; Moriz Winternitz (1863–1937), Professor and Head of the Department of Indo-European Comparative Linguistics at the German University in Prague, specialized in ancient Indian literature<sup>16</sup>; and Otto Stein (1893–1942), specialized in ancient Indian history and archaeology. Winternitz and Stein actively participated in the development of Indology in India proper, where they won great respect for their knowledge and lectures, particularly in Calcutta and Tagore's Shantiniketan. In 1929, they brought out the first issue of *Indologica Pragensia*, stressing in the foreword that they «attach special importance to the closest connection

---

<sup>13</sup> Gandhi, M. K., *Můj život (My Life)*. Translated by Pavla Moudrá. With a Foreword of Vincenc Lesný, Orbis, Praha, 1931.

<sup>14</sup> Winternitz, M., *Mahatma Gandhi*, Verlag der Deutschen Gesellschaft für sittliche Erziehung, Prag (Praha), 1930.

<sup>15</sup> In 1921 Otakar Pertold became the first Czechoslovak Consul in India, Bombay.

<sup>16</sup> Winternitz, M., *Geschichte der indischen Literatur* (3 vols.) Leipzig, 1905-1922, published in English version for Calcutta University, 1927, 1933, 1959.

with our Indian colleagues and friends»<sup>17</sup>. While in Calcutta, Otto Stein contributed to the monthly *Prabuddha Bharata* an article evaluating Indian studies in Czechoslovakia of his time<sup>18</sup>: «Taking into account the Czechoslovak Republic as a state of some 15 million inhabitants, one must confess that in her universities the representation of India's culture can hardly be called inadequate, adding that Indology is not fostered by some egoistic motifs or is not a special lucrative source of those who devote their lives to it. We must rather appreciate the idealism and the economy of work by which it is able to reconstruct, from thousands of miles away, the complex edifice of a culture that we call India.»

India scholars lectured in the universities and already in the 1920's they began to pursue a wide variety of activities in the Oriental Institute in Prague (which was established with the help of Czechoslovak President T. G. Masaryk). This institute still exists in Prague as well as the international scholarly journal *Archív orientální* that the institute has been publishing since 1929. The great part of the activities of the Oriental Institute were undertaken by Vincenc Lesný (1882–1953), prominent India scholar focused on classical studies (Sanskrit, Prakrits and Buddhism), Professor and Head of the Department of Indology, Charles University, Prague. His visits to India subsequently led him to turn his attention more to the modern Indian languages, namely Bengali, modern literature and the current Indian problems: Hindu-Muslim relations, constitutional reforms, social problems, prominent personalities of Indian political (Mahatma Gandhi) and cultural life.<sup>19</sup>

The Czech India scholars established contacts with the prominent scholars, artists and politicians. Some of these contacts later developed

---

<sup>17</sup> *Indologica Pragensia*. Herausgegeben von Moriz Winternitz und Otto Stein, Verlag Rudolf M. Rohrer, Brünn – Prag – Leipzig – Wien 1929. Vorwort / Foreword.

<sup>18</sup> Stein, O., "India's Culture as a Subject in Prague", *Prabuddha Bharata*, Calcutta 39/5 (1934), pp. 242-246.

<sup>19</sup> Lesný summed up his impressions and experience gained in India in three books, published in Czech: *Dnešní Indie* (Today's India), Máj, Praha, 1924; *Duch Indie* (The Spirit of India), Státní nakladatelství, Praha, 1927; *Indie a Indové. Pout' staletími*. (India and Indians. Through the Ages), Orientální ústav, Praha, 1931.

into life-long friendships, which transcended the purely personal level and influenced the perception of India in modern Czechoslovakia for a long time. Among the Indians who left deep impact on the Czech society (such as Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru) was probably the most prominent the world-known poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), who became a personal friend of Moriz Winternitz, writer and journalist Karel Čapek, composer Leoš Janáček and the prominent India scholar Vincenc Lesný<sup>20</sup>. Tagore became and for a long time remained a symbol of India for the Czech society.

### **Tagore and his impact on the Czech thinking and culture**

It was through Lesný that Rabindranath Tagore established his contact with the small nation in Central Europe. Lesný mastered Bengali and he was the first European to translate Tagore's poetry directly from the original, a fact that Tagore himself appreciated in a letter dated Aug. 5, 1936:

«Dear Professor Lesný, I considered it a very happy day you have become connected with us by bonds of friendship in Shantiniketan. It is the aim of Shantiniketan to mutually connect the hearts of people from various nations through the meeting of knowledge. We consider your assistance and friendship in realizing its aim very valuable. It is astonishing for me to see how deeply you penetrated into the heart of Bengali language and mastered my writings, within a short time. In no other foreigner I have ever seen such a concentration and strength of judgment. Accept my heartiest thanks for making the readers of your country acquainted with my writings.»<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Lesný mastered Bengali and was able to translate Tagore's poetry from the original. He published also a biography of the poet – *Rabindranáth Thákur = (Tagore): Osobnost a dílo*, J. Šnajdr, Kladno 1937. The book was later published in English: *Rabindranath Tagore, His Personality and Work* (translated by Guy McKeever Phillips), Allen and Unwin, London, 1939.

<sup>21</sup> Letter of Aug. 5, 1936, *Central Archives of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Collection Lesný*, file IIb1, i. no. 315

The correspondence between Lesný and Tagore started, however, already before World War I. The file of the correspondence between the two of them contains, among other things, Tagore's letter, dated Dec. 15, 1913, which is very likely an answer to the very first letter written by Lesný to Tagore. It reads: «Dear Sir, It has greatly delighted me to receive your letter and to learn that our language is not unknown to you...Yours truly, Rabindranath Tagore.»<sup>22</sup>

### **Tagore – a genius of poetry and a friend of Czechoslovakia**

Lesný had first met Tagore in person in October 1920 in London and invited him to visit Prague. While in New York, Tagore also received a letter of invitation from Moritz Winternitz.

Tagore came to Prague on June 18, 1921. The first visit of the poet, whose work was known in the Czech lands already since the pre-war years, had left a deep impression on the Czech public. The several days he spent in Prague were filled with lectures, recitals and meetings. Only hours after he arrived he was introduced by Lesný in the great hall of the Charles University, which was packed with people. The poet lectured on philosophy and religion and received an overwhelming applause. His following lectures under the auspices of the university and his public lecture in Lucerna, the biggest hall in Prague of that time, met with similar success. Tagore's visit of Prague received wide media coverage. Before he arrived, Lesný introduced him and his work, including Tagore's educational experiments and his "*Abode of Peace*", in a student journal<sup>23</sup>. The journalists also pointed out that in the wake of the Amritsar tragedy, which happened in 1919, the poet in protest returned the British knighthood, which was awarded to him in 1915.

---

<sup>22</sup> Letter of Dec. 15, 1913, *Central Archives of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Collection Lesný*, file IIb1, i. no. 315.

<sup>23</sup> Lesný, V., "Rabindranáth Thákur a jeho Dům pokoje. U příležitosti básníkova očekávaného příjezdu do Prahy" (Rabindranath Tagore and his Abode of Peace. On the occasion of the expected arrival of the poet to Prague), *Studentský věstník* (Prague) 1, 20 (1926), pp. 1-3.

For the second time Tagore visited Prague on October 9, 1926, this time as a guest of the Czechoslovak writers, organized in the recently established (1925) P.E.N. Club in Prague, whose president at that time was the world-known Czech writer Karel Čapek. Tagore was accompanied by several friends, including Ramanand Chatterjee, the editor of the *Modern Review* (published in Calcutta), who later published detailed reports about this visit. Tagore, who came to Prague via Berlin and Dresden, was praised in Prague not only as «genius of poetry and friend of Czechoslovakia», but also as «an opponent of fascism and propagator of rapprochement between races and nations, whose work had a mighty impact on European spiritual life in the period of post-war disintegration of cultural values.» During his week-long stay in Prague, he again lectured in Lucerna, appeared on the Czechoslovak radio, and recited his poetry in the National Theater, where he attended the performance of his play *The Post Office* in Czech language.

The charisma, which Rabindranath Tagore possessed, also influenced the Czech art. Among the things which remind us of his visits is a cycle of love songs inspired by Tagore's poetry and composed by Josef Bohuslav Foerster (1859–1951) or a *Lyrical Symphony* (seven chants based on Tagore's words) by Austrian composer Alexander Zemlinsky (1872–1942).

The most prominent among the Czech composers inspired by Tagore was Leoš Janáček (1854-1928). His vocal composition *Potulný šílenec* (*The Wandering Madman*) is a polyphonic work for a male choir with soprano solo based on the words from the Tagore's *Gardener*. Janáček had met personally with Tagore in 1921, when he was present at his lecture on Buddhism at the Charles University and at a public lecture on Bengali literature, where Tagore recited his own poetry. The deeply impressed composer then summed up his feelings and admiration for the poet in his article, which was published in journal *Lidové noviny*.

«The poet entered the hall silently. It seemed to me as if a white sacred flame flashed high above the heads of the many thousands

present. He said: You should know how to read my poems – therefore I am speaking to you. It was not a speech – it sounded like a song of a nightingale, smooth, simple, void of any harshness of the diphthongs. It occurred to me to fall in with a gay chord with the initial sounds of the poems he read out. I heard soft harmonious voices or sounds but it was incoherent to me. The melody kept on falling down in a torrent of tones. And the voice was permeated by the soft sorrow of his song: It is time to go, Mother. Or by emotion: Here she comes! And by the strong faith of his prayer: Will you, Father, let my country rise again to freedom? I listened to words burdened by the heavy weight of lead: Oh Lord, thou hast taken any moment of my life into thine hands. I followed the modulation of this song-tune at its important points. In his song of the “Tame bird in the cage and the free bird in the forest” Tagore’s tone was longing with the whisper of a tame bird in the cage and was crying, heavy with tears, in the words. “Woe unto me, I know not any forest songs. Their love is tormented by ardent desire, but, I cannot fly wing by wing.” There is no doubt that the Bengali poet is supremely musical. He spreads tone with every single syllable just as we do in our country in songs. As he was leaving, indescribable grief showed on his face. He spoke to us in his language which we could not understand but from the sound alone we were able to recognize the bitter pain in his soul. I saw and heard the prophet of his people.»<sup>24</sup>

Tagore was the first Indian who openly declared his friendship towards Czechoslovakia, when the country faced the hard trials of the Munich Agreement in 1938. As the tension in Europe increased and the crisis loomed, the prominent personalities of culture in Czechoslovakia turned to their friends and colleagues abroad with appeals for support. On Christmas Eve 1937, in a very well-prepared program, the unique message and appeal for peace were presented in a direct broadcast to India. The world-known Czech writer Karel Čapek addressed

---

<sup>24</sup> Translated from Czech. *Lidové noviny* (Brno), June 26, 1921.

Rabindranath Tagore and Vincenc Lesný simultaneously interpreted his speech from Czech to English:

«Tagore, a great master, a harmonious voice of the East, we greet you in your Shantiniketan. We greet you from Czechoslovakia, where snow is falling, from a Europe, in which we are feeling lonely, from the Western World, where not even the most developed nations can shake one another's hand in brotherly greeting. And yet despite the distance between our countries and cultures, we are extending a fraternal hand to you, to you poet of sweet wisdom, to your peaceable Shantiniketan, to your great India, to your immense Asia, to that Asia, too, which is being laid waste by weapons invented in the West. At a moment when at both the easternmost and the westernmost fringes of our common continent guns are thundering, a tiny voice of Western Democracy is calling to you at the close of the year: May the World live on, but let it be a world of equal and free people.»<sup>25</sup>

Tagore was listening in Vishvabharati and his answer came shortly after by telegraph: «Friends in Czechoslovakia, in the terrible storm of hatred and violence raging over humanity accept the goodwill of an old idealist who clings to his faith in the common destiny of the East and West and all people on the Earth. Rabindranath.»<sup>26</sup> Moreover, Tagore, touched by the message from Prague, sent to Lesný a poem full of emotions and anxiety which was later found among Lesný's documents<sup>27</sup>. Tagore's letters to Lesný, written in the following months, showed that he was closely watching the developments in Europe and was deeply concerned with the fate of Czechoslovakia. In August

---

<sup>25</sup> Translated from Czech. Quoted in: Strnad, J.; Filipický, J.; Holman J.; Vavroušková, S., *Dějiny Indie (History of India)*, Nakl. Lidové noviny, Praha, 2003, p. 876.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in: Krása, M., *Looking Towards India: A Study in East-West Contacts*, Orbis, Praha, 1969, p. 92.

<sup>27</sup> The poem is typed in English, untitled, dated on Dec. 25. 1937 in Shantiniketan, and bears Tagore signature. Collection Lesný, *Central Archives of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Collection Lesný*, File IIb1, i. no. 315

1938, he wrote: «We are all greatly concerned with the drift of political conditions in Central Europe. You must be passing through days of terrible anxiety. Be assured that the whole-hearted sympathy is with your country and the cause of humanity.»<sup>28</sup> In the fall of 1938 Tagore publicly condemned the Munich Agreement, which in effect meant the occupation of the border regions of Czechoslovakia by the Nazi Germany. He was again among the first people to express sympathy and to offer encouragement to the Czech people. In a telegram, addressed to the Czechoslovak President, Edvard Beneš, we read: «I can only offer profound sorrow and indignation on behalf of India and of myself at the conspiracy of betrayal that has suddenly flung your country into a tragic depth of isolation, and I hope that this shock will kindle a new life into the heart of your nation leading her to a moral victory and to an unobstructed opportunity of a perfect self-attainment.»<sup>29</sup> Indignation, caused by the Munich dictate, also influenced Tagore's literary work and is expressed in a bitter poem *Prayashcitta* (The Penance)<sup>30</sup>. Tagore also gave the covering letter, which he sent to his friend Lesný together with the poem, to the British and Indian press.

*“Uttarayan”*

*October 15, 1938.*

*Shantiniketan, Bengal*

*«Dear Dr. Lesny,*

*I feel so keenly about the suffering of your people as if I was one of them. For what has happened in your country is not a mere local misfortune which may at the best claim our sympathy, it is a tragic*

---

<sup>28</sup> Letter of Aug. 20, 1938, *Central Archives of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Collection Lesný, File IIb1, i. no. 315.*

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in: V. Lesný's public lecture on Tagore, 1946 Collection Lesný, *Central Archives of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic File IIb9, i. no. 436.*

<sup>30</sup> When, on March 15, 1939, the rump of Czechoslovakia was occupied by the Germany, Tagore wrote another poem *Ahban* (*A Call*) which he sent to Canada.



*revelation that the destiny of all those principles for humanity for which the peoples of the West turned martyrs for three centuries rests in the hands of cowardly guardians who are selling it to save their own skins. It turns one cynical to see the democratic peoples betraying their kind when even the bullies stand by each other.*

*I feel so humiliated and so helpless when I contemplate all this, humiliated to see all the values, which have given whatever worth modern civilization has, betrayed one by one and helpless that we are powerless to prevent it. Our country is itself a victim of these wrongs. My words have no power to stay the onslaught of the maniacs, nor even the power to arrest the desertion of those who erstwhile pretended to be the saviours of humanity. I can only remind those who are not yet wholly demented that when men turn beasts they sooner or later tear each other.*

*As for your country, I can only hope, that though abandoned and robbed, it will maintain its native integrity and falling back upon its own inalienable resources will recreate a richer national life than before.*

*I am sending you a copy of my English rendering of a recent poem of mine, yet unpublished, in which my outraged sentiment has found its expression. You may use it as you like, though it will also be published in the November issue of the Vishva-Bharati Quarterly. If you like I can also send you the Bengali original.*

*With the best wishes and regards,*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Rabindranath Tagore.»<sup>31</sup>*

---

<sup>31</sup> Letter of Oct. 15, 1938. Collection Lesný, *Central Archives of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic*, File IIb1, i. no. 315.

The original version of the above mentioned poem (Prayashcitta) was sent to Lesný in February 1939. In the covering letter Tagore writes that it was sad to read «... all the news about the great betrayal of your magnificent country at the hands of England and France... I met Mr. Nehru... and he gave me a graphic description of the woes of mutilation of Czechoslovakia... Let me only hope, your brave people will not fail to rebuild once again your own future.»<sup>32</sup>

Similar experiences and shared dreams of freedom and independence in this particular time of European crisis influenced not only the leading personalities but also the general public in both India and Czechoslovakia. It helped to strengthen their mutual friendship, which survived even after the occupation of Czechoslovakia when all direct contacts between both countries had been interrupted. After the war, Czechoslovakia was one of the first states to establish diplomatic relations with the newly independent India on November 28, 1947.

---

<sup>32</sup> Letter of Febr. 14, 1939. Collection Lesný, *Central Archives of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic* File IIb1, i. no. 315.

# **The Tower of Babel Before Archaeology. The Ziggurat of Babylon according to European travellers (XII-XVII centuries)**

Juan Luis Montero Fenollós  
Universidade da Coruña

Before 1913, when German archaeology would reveal the challenges of what was the Tower of Babel, a ziggurat which the Babylonians called Etemenanki, the only source of information that was available in Europe about Babylonia and its famous tiered tower was the Old Testament and the stories by classical authors such as Herodotus, Diodorus, or Strabo.

From Late Antiquity, and especially during the Middle and Modern Ages, various Europeans travelled to Near East, enlightened by reading the Greco-Roman and biblical texts. Most of them were religious, merchants, diplomats, soldiers, doctors, and botanists. This explains the diversity of reasons and motivations for their trips. However, almost all of them demonstrated an enormous interest in regard to the search for tangible evidence about the remote origins of Christianity. One monument would become the centre of their interests. This is none other than the Tower of Babel, which was described in some detail in the book of Genesis and by classical authors.

This search for the relics of Christianity dates back to Ancient history. A good example is Egeria, a nun from the time of the Emperor Theodosius, a native of *Gallaecia*, who used the Old Testament as a guide for her trip around the Holy Land<sup>1</sup>. In her trip to Mesopotamia, the nun searched for, by means of the book of Genesis, the traces left

---

<sup>1</sup> Arce, A. (ed.), *Itinerario de la virgen Egeria*, Madrid, 1996.

by the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob<sup>2</sup>. She even tried to reach the city of Ur, a visit that was not possible due to the IV century A.D. conflict between the Romans and the Sassanians. Although she does not make reference to it in her work, Egeria possibly had among her projects to search for the remains of the Tower of Babel. It is a task that would fit in well with that “exploration of biblical archaeology” which around the year 384 A.D. led her to the region of the Euphrates River.

In the XII century, and especially in the XVI and XVIII centuries, we can find many European travellers who demonstrated various degrees of interest in the discovery of the ancient Orient. Three historical places would be focused on: Babylon and the Tower of Babel; Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrians; and, finally, Persepolis, the great capital of the Persian Achaemenid dynasty. From this period, the stories of about forty authors are conserved, in which the mythical Tower of Babel, the ziggurat called Etemenanki in Babylonian language is described and situated<sup>3</sup>. It is not my objective in this article to analyze the total works of the authors, but a representative selection of those authors who wrote their works between the XII and the XVII centuries.<sup>4</sup>

One of these first Occidentals who thought he had located the famous Babylonian tower was the rabbi **Benjamin of Tudela**, who between 1165 and 1170 made an extensive tour of the Near East (Syria, Mesopotamia and Egypt). The result of this personal experience is his *Travel Book* or *Séfer-massa'ot*, in which he contributes some interesting data about the archaeology of this region, albeit somewhat sporadic and occasional<sup>5</sup>. Benjamin of Tudela provides us with useful

---

<sup>2</sup> Montero Fenollós, J.L., “De Gallaecia a Oriente: monumentos y lugares visitados por Egeria en su peregrinación por la Mesopotamia del siglo IV d.C.”, in X. Leira (ed.), *Aulas no camiño. Diálogos nun camiño da cultura europea*, A Coruña, 2007, pp. 255-274.

<sup>3</sup> An updated vision about the ziggurat of Babylon can be seen in Montero Fenollós, J.L. ed., *Torre de Babel. Historia y mito*, Murcia, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> An exhaustive study about the European travellers from the XII to XVIII centuries and the discovery of the ancient Orient has been realized by Invernizzi, A. (ed.), *Il Genio Vagante. Viaggiatori alla scoperta dell'Antico Oriente*, Alessandria, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> An excellent critical edition in Spanish is that of Magdalena Nom de Déu, J. R., *Libro de Viajes de Benjamín de Tudela*, Barcelona, 1989. Consult the same author, “Testimonios arqueológicos del Oriente

information for archaeological research. Among other things, he speaks about the Babylonian ruins, which occupied an area of 30 miles according to his calculations. About the Babylonian tower he wrote the following description:

«Desde allí [desde Hillah] hay cuatro millas hasta la Torre que edificaron los de la generación que vivió la separación de las razas, construida con ladrillos *ayûrra*. La longitud de su basamento es de como unas dos millas, su anchura como unos cuarenta codos y su longitud como unos doscientos codos. Cada diez codos hay caminos, y por ellos se sube, allí, en espiral, hasta arriba, viéndose desde allí una extensión de veinte millas, pues el país es llano. Desde los cielos cayó fuego en su interior partiéndola hasta lo más profundo.»<sup>6</sup>

As we can see, Benjamin of Tudela situated the Tower of Babel 4 miles from the town of Hillah. The rabbi made the mistake of identifying the ruins of the Birs Nimrud ziggurat (located a few kilometres south of Babylonia), instead of the monument described in the book of Genesis.

Between the end of the Middle Age and the Renaissance, the most popular travel book about journeys to the Orient was the one by **Sir John of Mandeville**, written in French in 1355 and translated into Latin and various modern languages. However, it is a work of fantasy and it is not the result of the impressions of a personal journey. With regard to the Tower of Babel, he claimed that it had a height of 114 *stadia* and it was located on the road that led to the kingdom of Chaldea in a region where people did not dare to enter because it was inhabited

---

Próximo reflejados en el *Séfer-Masa'ot* de Benjamín de Tudela (Siria, Mesopotamia y Egipto)", *Arbor* 180 (2005), pp. 465-488. The purpose of this long journey was none other than becoming knowledgeable of the situation of the Jewish communities of the Mediterranean basin and the Orient. He described the customs and the monuments of the cities where he came across these communities. His journey began in Tudela (Navarra, Spain) and via Marseille and Rome, he arrived in Constantinople. He visited, among other cities, Beirut, Damascus, Aleppo, Mosul, and Baghdad.

<sup>6</sup> Magdalena Nom de Déu, J. R., *op. cit.*, 1989, pp. 96-97.

by dragons, snakes, and poisonous beasts. This author has absolutely no usefulness in terms of Babylonian archaeology.

«(...) quant la grande tour de Babel estoit commenciee a faire, ou les murs estoient ia fais lxiiii. Stades de haut; ui est es grans desers darrabe, sur le chemin quant on va vers le royaume de Caldee. Mais il y a lonc temps que homs nosa aller ne aprouchier a la tour, car elle est toute deserte et y a grans dragons et serpens et diverses bestes venimeues grant plante la entour.»<sup>7</sup>

Beginning in the XVI century, various travellers and adventurers, enlightened once again by reading the classics and the bible, offered us new stories with some interest in relation to Babylonia and its famous tower. The first of them was the Venetian merchant **Cesare Federici**, who between 1563 and 1581 accomplished a long journey between Venice, India, and Burma. He was the first European traveller who described in detail the Euphrates route he followed between Aleppo and the Persian Gulf, where he headed towards India. He situated Babylonia after the city of Fallujah, near Baghdad, and he described the Tower of Babel in the following manner:

«La Torre di Nembrot è posta di qua dal fiume verso l'Arabia in una gran pianura, lontano dalla città intorno a sette overo otto miglia, qual è da tutte le bande ruinata e con le sue ruine s'ha fatto intorno quasi una montagna, di modo che non ha forma alcuna; pur ve n'è ancora un gran pezzo in piedi, circondato e quasi coperto affato da quelle ruine. Questa torre è fabricata di quadrelli cotti al sole a questo mod: hanno posto una man di quadrelli e una di stuore fatte di canne, tanto forti ancora, ch'è una maraviglia ed è smaltata di fango invece di calcina. Io ho caminato intorno al piede di questa torre, nè gli ho trovato in alcun luogo intrata alcuna (...)»<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Invernizzi, A. (ed.), *op. cit.*, 2005, p. 85.

<sup>8</sup> Pinto, O. (ed.), *Viaggi di C. Federico e G. Balbi alle Indie Orientali*, Roma, 1962, p. 5.

Based on his personal observation, Federici, with great precision, provided us with information about the construction technique of Mesopotamian architecture, and in particular the ziggurat. The building he described was denominated the Tower of Nimrod, a clear allusion to the brave hunter who exerted his dominance in that dark period between Noah and Abraham. In Genesis, it is affirmed that Nimrod ruled in Babel<sup>9</sup>. However, what Federici described were not the remains of the Tower of Babel, but rather those of a different ziggurat. Due to its location near Baghdad, he must have been describing the ziggurat of Aqar Quf (30 km west of Baghdad), which still conserves a great part of its nucleus. The construction technique is consistent with the description of the Venetian merchant.

Around the same time, the physician and botanist **Leonhardt Rauwolff** of Augsburg travelled around the region of Mesopotamia, where between 1573 and 1576 he compiled various documents about subjects related to natural history (botany and pharmacology). Although his writings were of a relative value for archaeology, Rauwolff dared to make some interpretations of historical topography in the area of Fallujah, based on information garnered from the Bible and classical authors such as Ptolemy. Thus, as did Federici, he identified the Tower of Babel with the huge mass of adobe situated in Aqar Quf. He believed that this was the location of the Babylonian tower that the sons of Noah undertook to reach the sky, and which was half a league wide and in ruins.

«(...)hinderdemindernehederBabylonischehoheThurngestanden, den die Kinder Noah (welche erstlich dise landscafft nach der Sündflut bewohnet) biss an Himmel zuebawn angefangen (...)»<sup>10</sup>

New European travellers from the late XVI century repeated the mistake of confusing the Tower of Babel with Aqar Quf and situating

---

<sup>9</sup> Genesis 10, 10.

<sup>10</sup> Invernizzi, A. (ed.), *op. cit.*, 2005, p. 133.

the ruins of Babylon close to Baghdad, which they called the «New Babylon». This was the case with the Venetian **Gasparo Balbi**, who visited Baghdad in 1579 on his way to India. His description of the Babylonian tower was very similar to that of Cesare Federici:

«(...) incamminammo al nostro viaggio sempre per detta città vecchia di Babilonia, la qual lasciavamo sempre a man sinistra, e levato che fu il sole, vedemmo alcuni pezzi di muraglie grosse tutte rovinate, e ivi vicino un pezzo della grandissima torre di Babilonia in un luogo detto Carcuftate nemerù (...).

La torre di Nembrot è lontana da Babilonia più di otto miglia e è di qua dal fiume Tigris, la quale i Mori chiamano Disela in loro linguaggio, posta in una gran pianura verso l'Arabia e è tutta rovinata, con le suerovine si ha fatto intorno quasi una montagna. Pur ve n'è ancora un gran pezzo in piedi, che quasi è coperto da quelle rovine. Fu fabricata già con peitra cotta al sole e con stoie di canna anchora ese fortissime (...)»<sup>11</sup>

A few years later, in 1583, the English merchant **John Elred**, on a trip from Aleppo to Baghdad (which he called «New Babylon»), once again repeated the assertion that the ruins of Aqar Quf were the remains of the Tower of Babel. Impressed by the size of the monument, whose height was comparable to that of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, he made notes about the construction technique, which was characterized by a structure where adobes alternated with layers of reeds:

«Here also are yet standing the ruines of the olde tower of Babel, which being upon a plaine ground seemeth a farre off very great, but the nerer you come to it, the lesser and lesser it appeareth; sundry times I have gone thither to see it, and found the remnants yet standing above a quarter of a mile in compasse, and almost as high as the stone-worke of Pauls steeple in London, but it sheweth

---

<sup>11</sup> Pinto, O. (ed.), *op. cit.*, 1962, pp. 93 and 96.



much bigger. The bricks remaining in this most ancient monument be halfe a yard thicke, and three quarters of a yard long, being dried in the sunne onely, and betweene every course of bricks there lieth a course of mattes made of canes, which remaine sound and not perished, as though they had beene layed within one yeere.»<sup>12</sup>

Between 1605 and 1607, the Portuguese soldier **Nicolau de Orta Rebelo** embarked on a journey from Goa to Marseille. This route passed through Persia and Mesopotamia before reaching the Mediterranean. In the account of his adventures, he described Babylon as a great city surrounded by adobe walls, with mosques in its interior and bisected by the Tigris River. It is clear that this description did not correspond to the ruins of the Mesopotamian city but rather to the ancient city of Baghdad, which was founded in 762 by Arabs. From the city, the Portuguese traveller observed the remains of a very old tower that he interpreted as the biblical tower<sup>13</sup>. Based on his description and the location, Orta Rebelo was referring to the ziggurat of Aqar Quf, situated 30 kms west of Baghdad:

«Está mais à vista desta Cidade hũa Torre muy antiga, a que os Judeos chamão de Membrolh, filho, ou neto, que foi de Noe, a qual elle fundou naquelle tempo pouco mais, ou menos, que foi fundada a Babilonia, estará della para a banda do Sul nove leguas, he feita como parece de tijolos cozidos ao Sol, e por cima destes tijolos vai outra cama de vimes, ou vara do que quer que he assim hũa cama de hũa couza, outra cama de outra liada de madeira, que ainda no pedaço que está em pé, pode haver vistigios para muitos mil annos, conforme aos que já tem durado; terña en redondo hum terço de meya Legoa.»<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Invernizzi, A. (ed.), *op. cit.*, 2005, p. 149.

<sup>13</sup> Serrão, J. Veríssimo, *Un voyageur portugais en Perse au début du XVIIe siècle, Nicolau de Orta Rebelo*, Lisboa, 1972, p. 154-158.

<sup>14</sup> *Idem*, p. 158.

It seems that Orta Rebelo was a travelling companion of **Fray Gaspar de São Bernardino**, a Portuguese priest who in 1605 returned from India where he worked as a missionary<sup>15</sup>. He knew that the tower called Corcofa (*i.e.* Aqar Quf) by the Arabs was considered to be Nimrod's tower, but he was well aware of the story of the construction of the Tower of Babel from Genesis 11. This biblical passage indicates that the tower was built with bricks baked in kilns. However, the tower of Aqar Quf was constructed with raw sun-dried bricks. For this reason, the identification by some authors of these ruins as being those of the biblical Babel has to be ruled out.

«Outras tres legoas da cidade, da parte do Ponente alem do rio Tigris, na Mesopotamia està huma torre chamada Corcova, tamaña como a nosa de Bethlem, que alguns cuydão ser a de Nembroth, no que enganão, porque Corcova he de adobes secos ao sol, e a outra de ladrillos cozidos ao fogo (*Lateres coctos igni. Gene. c. 11*)...»

«(...) a tivemos pera vernos a torre de Babel, a qual està fora do caminho ordinario oyto legoas, e quando os que estiverão em Babylonia dizem que a virão, ha se entender que falão de Corcova, que fica à vista da cidade, e não da propia de Babel.»<sup>16</sup>

It was not until the beginning of the XVII century that for the first time a Western traveller denounced the confusion that reigned among the Europeans in distinguishing Babylon from Baghdad. This was the case of **Pedro Teixeira**, a Lisbon doctor from a Jewish Portuguese family, for whom the city situated next to the Tigris was founded long after the biblical Babylon, which, in addition, was bisected by the Euphrates River<sup>17</sup>. In 1610, Teixeira wrote that:

---

<sup>15</sup> Invernizzi, A., "A la ricerca della torre di Babele con i primi viaggiatori", in *Andata e ritorno dall'antico Oriente*, Milano, 2002, p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> Invernizzi, A. (ed.), *op. cit.*, 2005, p. 163.

<sup>17</sup> Fuente del Pilar, J. J., "Pedro Teixeira y su viaje por Mesopotamia", *Arbor* 180 (2005), pp. 627-643.

«Esta ciudad Bagdad, confunden comúnmente los que Della tratan con Babilonia, movidos (á mi juicio) por la vizinidad del lugar adó aquella antiguamente estuvo; que de aquesta no dista mas que una buena jornada: y para entender que es cosa muy diferente una de otra, bastará saber que Babilonia estava sobre el rio Eufratres, y Bagdad está sobre el Tigris.»<sup>18</sup>

Pedro Texeira was, in addition, the first European author who did not consider the ziggurat of Aqar Quf to be the remains of the biblical Tower of Babel:

«(...) andadas como tres leguas dimos en las ruynas de una grande ciudad, de que aun hoy estan en pie una alta monara, o alcoran, y dos pedazos de grueso muro de cal y ladrillo, à la cual los Arabes llaman Karkuf.»<sup>19</sup>

Between 1614 and 1626, **Pietro della Valle**, a nobleman born in Rome, travelled around the Near East, visiting various areas containing archaeological ruins for pure pleasure. In 1616, he travelled to Baghdad in order to visit Babel, which according to him was the real Babylon, the place where the famous tower had been erected. On the 23rd of November in that same year, Della Valle headed for Babil, south of Baghdad, thinking, with the logical assumption of typonymic survival, that this hill of remains had to indicate the localization of the ancient Babylon<sup>20</sup>. This deduction about Babylon was correctly arrived at because it is supported by a serious linguistic base, given the correspondence between the Arabic Babil and the Greco-Roman Babylon:

«Che si aquella Bâbel antica, e la torre di Nembroto, non c'è dubio, secondo me, perché oltre che il sito lo dimostra, da' paesani ancora

---

<sup>18</sup> Invernizzi, A. (ed.), *op. cit.*, 2005, p. 179.

<sup>19</sup> *Idem*, p. 180.

<sup>20</sup> Invernizzi, A. (ed.), *Pietro Della Valle. In viaggio per l'Oriente. Le mummie, Babilonia, Persepoli*, Alessandria, 2001, pp. 50-56.

hoggidì è conosciuta per tale, et in aravico chiamata volgarmente Babèl; stringendo però alquanto la pronuntia di quell'e dell'ultima sillaba, conforme al loro costume, onde è, che i Latini hanno usato di scriverla con y. Alla qual voce babèl in aravico, o Babyl, scrivendola alla latina, se si aggiunge in fine la doppia vocale come va, con la sua terminatione in caso retto, viene a punto a farsi Babelon, o Babylon, come da' Latini à estat chiamata.»<sup>21</sup>

However, the identification of the hill called Babil as the celebrated tower, from the point of view of both the toponym and the square design suggested by the ruins, was erroneous. In fact, the remains were from the summer palace which King Nebuchadnezzar II had built in the north of the city of Babylon, and not the Tower of Babel. This mistake seems minor to me because Della Valle was correct in locating the ruins of Babylon, but he did not have the necessary means to recognize the identity of the palace buried beneath that hill called Babil. The tower was situated 3 km south of the summer palace.

The description of the ruins that Della Valle interpreted as those belonging to the Tower of Babel is the following:

«In mezzo di una grande e pianissima campagna, vicino, circa a mezo miglio, al fiume Eufrate, che le passa in quel luogo quasi per ponente, si rileva infin'hoggi sprà terra una gran mole di fabrica rovinata, tutta d'un massiccio; o che fosse così da principio, come a me pare; o che le rovine l'habbiano cagionato, e ridottala comme si vede a guisa di un monte; di che però non apparisce molto segno. La sua forma è uadra, a punto da torre, o da pirámide; rivolta giusto, con le quattro faccie, allí quattro angoli del mondo; ma, se non m'inganno, o non procede dalle rovine (che può esser facilmente), apparice hora alquanto più lunga da tramontana a mezo giorno, che da levante a ponente. Il circuito attorno, misurato alla grossa, è mille e cento trenta quattro passi de i miei; che secondo me, fanno

---

<sup>21</sup> *Idem*, p. 140-141.

intorno a mezzo miglio. Misura, sito e forma di fabbrica, che chiama Strabone Sepultura di Belo (Lib. 16); e che deve esser quella che nelle Sacre Lettere (Gen. 10 et 11) è detta la Torre di Nembrotto, nella città di Babilonia, o Babèl, come infin'oggi questo luogo si chiama. Come fosse a' suoi tempi questa bella fabbrica, Herodoto (Lib. 1), autore antichissimo, lo describe minutamente: cioè, che erano otto torri, una sopra l'altra, di fabbrica massiccia, con le scale di fuori attorno per salire: e molte altre cose che appresso a lui si possono vedere. Strabone non fa mentione né delle scale, né delle altre bellezze; perché, come egli dice (Lib. 16), era stata già rovinata da Serse; et Alessandro Magno, che la voleva ristaurare, fu prevenuto dalla morte. E' cosa da notare, che dal detto monte di rovine in poi, non si vede in quel luogo né pur segno di altra cosa, che mostri esservi stata una città così grande; vendendosi solo in alcuni luoghi certi fondamenti in terra di mura rovinate, cinquanta o sessanta passi dai monti lontani (...). La figura è difforme, come sogliono haver tutte le fabbriche rovinate: dove scoscesa, dove pianache si può salire, dove ha Segni di torrenti per l'acqua delle pioggie che corre abbasso; e dentro ancora, di sopra, dove concava, dove rilevata, in somma a guisa di un confuso monte. Non vi si vede segno alcuno di scala per salire, né di porta per entrare; di fuori, e come parti più deboli furon le prime ad esser rovinate, in modo che non ne apparisce più né vestigio, né segno.»

«Dentro, andando per di sopra, si trovano alcune grotte; ma tanto rovinate, che non se discerne che cosa fossero; e di alcune sto anche in dubbio, se siano cose fatte con la fabbrica, ovvero dapoi, da genti di campagna per ricovrarvisi, il che mi par più verisimile (...); ma torniamo all'ordine della torre. La materia di che è composta tutta la fabbrica è la più curiosa cosa che vi sia, e da me fu con diligenza osservata, rompendola con picconi in diversi luoghi. Son tutti mattoni molto grandi e Grossi di terra cruda, seccati, come io credo, al sole, a guisa delle tappie di Spagna; e son murati, non con buona classe, ma pur con teraccia; e per più fortezza, tra mattone

e mattone, mescolate con quella terra che serve di calce, vi sono come a solaio certe annucce palustri spezzate, ovvero paglie dure da fare stuoie. A luogo a luogo poi, vi sono mescolati in diversi parti, massimamente dove più importa per sostegno, molti mattoni della medesima grandezza, ma cotti e sodi, e murati con buona calce, o con bitume: però li crudi sono senza dubbio assai più.»

«Di tutti questi mattoni, cotti, e crudi, co'l bitume attaccato, e di quelle cannuccie che hanno in mezo, io hebi gusto di pigliarne, e ne porto meco per mostrarli in Italia a gli antiquarii curiosi, che certo mi par sia una bella antichità; facendosi mentione dell'uso in queste paese di fabricar con bitume in vece di calce, non solo da Giustino (Lib. 1), abbreviator di Trogo nelle fabbriche di Semiramide, ma dalla Sacra Scrittura (Ge. 11.3) medesima nella fabrica a punto di questa stessa torre e città; l'edificio della quale la Scrittura Sacra a Nembrotto (Gen. 10), et i profani a Belo attriuiscono; onde non male il Bellarmino (Ann. Mundi 1791) nella sua Chronologia stampatagli anni a dietro, che io vidi la prima volta in mano di un padre giesuita in Costantinopli, crede che Belo e Nembrotto siano tutto uno; e Strabone (Lib. 16), con Herodoto (Lib. 1), e gli altri ethnici, chiamò, come dissi di sopra, sepoltura de Belo questa stessa pirámide, che dagli scrittori sacri bien detta Torre di Babilonia, o di Nembrotto. Hebbi gusto ancora di far ritrar Babèl dal mio pittore in prospettiva, e là proprio ne fece il disegno da due parti, che erano le più belle vedute, e contengono tutti quattro i suoi lati; en ne farà poi quadri, con più diligenza.»<sup>22</sup>

Pietro Della Valle proved to be very knowledgeable of classical sources. He examined the monument with a modern scientific spirit in the sense that he identified the building materials and techniques (adobe, bricks, reeds, and bitumen), he attempted to interpret the construction (not identifying any access, neither stairs nor a door), and

---

<sup>22</sup> Invernizzi, A. (ed.), *op. cit.*, 2001, pp. 137-140.

he raised the issue of dating. It seems like he was the first Westerner to realize small excavations in Babylon, more out of a desire to increase his knowledge rather than to appropriate archeological artefacts. In 1769, the Jesuit Father Atanasius Kircher would make two panels of the Tower of Babel based on the description and the design of Della Valle, and with illustrations by *Turris Babel*.<sup>23</sup>

This correct localization of the Babylonian ruins realized by the Roman patrician would still take some time to prevail. New travellers of the XVII and even the XVIII would continue to refer to Aqar Quf as the location of the remains of the Tower of Babel. This was the case of **García de Silva y Figueroa**, the Spanish ambassador of Felipe II to the Shah of Persia<sup>24</sup> between 1614 and 1624. In his writings, he first situated the Babylonian ruins, which he never visited, in the Euphrates near Fallujah, but he was doubtful of a popular interpretation which placed the Babylonian tower in this place, and, citing Cesare Federici, he eventually opted for Aqar Quf.

“Y como estos pedaços de çimientos que agora se veen y muestran se van continuando por mas de tres leguas, en medio del dicho espacio a quedado un altissimo cinborrio ó cúpula, sobre gruesas paredes de ladrillo, tenido vulgarmente por todos por la torre de Babel y confusión de las lenguas, aunque algunos, con mas aparencia y similitud de verdad, y entre ellos Cesar Federici, veneçiano, dizen ser rreliquia suya un grande y levantado collado con muchas rruinas de ladrillos crudos al derredor, que se vee desde muy lexos en medio de aquella llanura, pudiendo ser con mas certeza el dicho collado la pirámide arruinada que Alexandro quiso rrestaurar en Babilonia, sigun Strabon, libro 16. La memoria de la torre, aunque su principio nadie podrá ni se atreverá á negallo, pero como obra de la primera antiguedad del mundo y tan propinqua á la universal

---

<sup>23</sup> Invernizzi, A. (ed.), *op. cit.*, 2005, fig. 35-36.

<sup>24</sup> Córdoba, J. M., “Un caballero español en Ispahán. La embajada de don García de Silva y Figueroa al sha Abbás el Grande (1614-1624), *Arbor* 180 (2005), pp. 645-670.

inundación del diluvio, ella mesma con el discurso de tantos siglos del todo la consumo, pues no solo en tiempo de Alexandro, pero ni en el que alcanço Herodoto, se halla algún rraastro della.”<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, for the rich and famous Parisian merchant **Jean Baptiste Tavernier**, who between 1632 and 1668 realized a series of trips to the Orient, the tower of Aqar Quf was not the Tower of Babel but rather a tower constructed by an Arab prince in times of war, according to a local tradition. In 1652, he visited the region between Basra and Mosul and he wrote the following about the Babylonian tower:

«Le vulgaire, comme j’ay dit, croit que ce sont les restes de la tour de Babylone: mais il y a plus d’apparence à ce que disent les Arabes qui l’appellent Agarcouf, et qui tiennent que cette tour fut bâtie par un prince Arabe qui y tenoit un fanal pour assembler ses sujets en temps de guerre... ce reste d’édifice appelé vulgairement Tour de Babylone, et qui ne merite pas qu’on prenne la peine de l’aller voir. Car enfin il n’y a aucune apparence que se soient les restes de l’ancienne Tour de Babylone, selon la description que Moysse nous en fait dans l’histoire de la Genese.»<sup>26</sup>

In 1658, the Carmelite Father **Vincenzo Maria de Santa Caterina de Siena**, and six years later, another religious named **Giuseppe Sebastiani** in their pilgrimage to oriental lands, visited the region of Baghdad and ruled out the option of Aqar Quf. They identified the Tower of Babel with the current Birs Nimrud<sup>27</sup>.

«Passammo vicini ad un monticello, qual dicono alcuni sij reliquia dell’antica Torre di Babele (...) m’arrendo all’opinione degl’Arabi, che questo fosse un luogo fabricato dagli antichi Assirij per dar segno

---

<sup>25</sup> Invernizzi, A. (ed.), *op. cit.*, 2005, p. 219.

<sup>26</sup> *Idem*, p. 280.

<sup>27</sup> Invernizzi, A. “Les premiers voyageurs”, in B. André-Salvini (dir.), *Babylone*, Paris, 2008, p. 506.



col fuoco alle terre cinconvicine, (...) mà più dalle reliquie della Torre, la quale sin'al giorno d'hoggi è chamiata di Nembrot.»<sup>28</sup>

«(...) per la vicina torre, che si chiama di Nembrod (benche altri voglino che la vera si aquella che si vede presso à Bagdad (...))»<sup>29</sup>

The debate and the uncertainty about the location of the Tower of Babel continued throughout the XVIII and XIX centuries. In 1899, a German archaeologist entered on the scene. Robert Koldewey realized the first methodical exploration of the ancient city of Babylonia, for the purpose of finding the true location of the Tower of Babel. Influenced by the reading the classics and with the help of the topographic maps made by the English and the French, he began to unearth the principal buildings of the city from the Neo-Babylonian era: the palace, the walls, the Ishtar Gate, the processional way, the temples, etc. And finally, in 1913, the excavation of the ziggurat, the famous tiered tower of the Bible, took place<sup>30</sup>. After a long search, there was an absolute certainty of having found the exact location of the Tower of Babel, the monument that the Babylonians called Etemenanki.

Until this archaeological discovery was made, Western travellers had proposed three hypotheses about the location:

- Birs Nimrud (fig. 1). Today we know that it is the ziggurat of the ancient Mesopotamian city of Borsippa, south of Babylon<sup>31</sup>.
- Aqar Quf (fig. 2). It is the ziggurat of the ancient city of Dur Kurigalzu, a monument built by the Kassite dynasty in the XIV century B.C.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Invernizzi, A. (ed.), *op. cit.*, 2005, p. 270.

<sup>29</sup> *Idem*, p. 266.

<sup>30</sup> Koldewey, R. *The Excavations at Babylon*, London, 1914, p. 188.

<sup>31</sup> Allinger-Csollich, W., "Birs Nimrud I. Die Baukörper der Ziqqurrat von Borsippa. Ein Vorbericht", *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 22 (1991), pp. 383-499.

<sup>32</sup> Gullini, G., "New Suggestions on Ziggurat of Aqarquf", *Sumer* 41 (1981), pp. 133-137.

- Tell Babil (fig. 3). The identification of the hill called Babil with the famous tower, because of the toponymy and the square form of its ruins, was an error. In fact, the remains were from the summer palace of King Nebuchadnezzar in the north of the city of Babylon.<sup>33</sup>

Why were these mistakes made when searching for the Tower of Babel? I think that part of the reason can be found in the classical sources and other part in the archaeology. The key is the poor state of conservation in which the ziggurat of Babylon has arrived to us and mentioned by authors such as Strabo and Arrian<sup>34</sup>, who described the dilapidated state of the monument, attributing it to the demolition carried out by the Persian King Xerxes around 482 B.C. They claim that in the times of Alexander the Great the monument had already been at a very advanced state of destruction. The Macedonian conqueror planned to rebuild it.<sup>35</sup>

In the Middle Ages, there would hardly have been visible remains of the ziggurat of Babylon, meaning that it was difficult if not impossible to carry out the identification on the part of the travellers who visited the region.

Today, after almost two millennia of neglect, looting, and destruction, far from it being the impressive monument described in Genesis, the Tower of Babel is nothing more than a simple adobe core. Because of its precarious condition, its remains are very far from what the human imagination constructed over centuries, reflected very well by the works of Peter Bruegel or Gustave Doré.

European travellers from the XII to the XVII centuries reached Baghdad by two routes: one from the north passing near the ruins

---

<sup>33</sup> Nasir, M., "The so-called summer palace (Nebuchadnezzar's life palace)", *Sumer* 25 (1979), pp. 156-159.

<sup>34</sup> *Anabasis* VII, 17; *Geography* XVI, 1, 5.

<sup>35</sup> «(...) for merely the clearing away of the mound was a task for ten thousand men for two months, so that he could not finish what he had attempted; for immediately the king was overtaken by disease and death», declared the geographer Strabo (XVI, 1, 5).

of Aqar Quf, and the other one from the south which ran near Birs Nimrud. It is logical, therefore, that both Mesopotamian ziggurats, conserved at a height of about 50 meters, were identified because of their monumental resemblance with the Tower of Babel, which only had its foundations remaining (fig. 4).



Fig. 1: The ziggurat of Birs Nimrud (Andrae, E.W.; Boehmer, R.M., “Die Orientbilder von Walter Andrae, *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 20, 1989, taf. 61).



Fig. 2: The ziggurat of Aqar Quf (Photo: J.-C. Margueron).



Fig. 3: Tell Babil (Andrae, E.W.; Boehmer, R.M., *op. cit.*, 1989, taf. 60).



Fig. 4: The ziggurat of Babylon today (Photo: R. Kolinski).

# **The Indian journeys of a Spanish ambassador: Don García de Silva y Figueroa and his *Comentarios* (1614-1624)**

Rui Manuel Loureiro  
Centro de História de Além-Mar

The main purpose of my paper is to present and to explore briefly a travel account written in the early decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century by Don García de Silva y Figueroa, Spanish ambassador sent to Persia by King Felipe III of Spain (and also Portugal, where he is styled Felipe II). The topics that I will try to address will be (and not necessarily in this order): Who was this man? Why did he travel all the way to India and then to Persia when he was more than 60 years old? What kind of travel account did he write? Why this text is scarcely known among historians of European interactions with Asia, despite its enormous relevance? What sort of information may we gather from this source?

## **The biography of Don García de Silva y Figueroa**

Although two Spanish researchers, in recent years, have been carefully looking into the biography of Don García de Silva (and I allude here to Carlos Alonso and Luis Gil)<sup>1</sup>, not much is known about this Spanish fidalgo. He was born in 1550, in Zafra, within a lesser noble family. He studied at the University of Salamanca and served as administrative magistrate in several Spanish regions, namely in Jaén

---

<sup>1</sup> Alonso, Carlos, *D. García de Silva y Figueroa, Embajador en Persia*, Badajoz. Diputación Provincial, 1993; Gil, Luis, *El Império Luso-Español y la Persia Safávida*, 2 vols., Madrid, Fundación Universitaria Española, 2006-2009.

and Badajoz. He probably also visited Italy, in some period of his life. The Italian traveller Pietro della Valle, who came across our man in Kazvin, describes him as «rather old, not only with a white beard, but also toothless [...]. But he is very well dressed, Spanish fashion».<sup>2</sup>

Some of Figueroa's cousins are relatively well known, since they held important offices in the Spanish overseas civil service: Don Juan de Silva was governor of the Philippines and Don Jerónimo da Silva was captain of Ternate, in the Maluku islands. Pietro della Valle, when asked at the Persian court if Don García was Portuguese or Spanish, gave a perfect answer, saying that he had relatives in both kingdoms, but «by inclination and profession he was a Spaniard»<sup>3</sup>. Otherwise, not much is known about him, until the moment when King Felipe III, in 1612, appointed him as ambassador to Persia. We have to bear in mind, here, that since the early 1580's the kingdom of Portugal, for better or for worse, was under the rule of Spain, in what the Portuguese historians call the Iberian Union.

### **Reasons for the Indian journey**

The complicated plot that took this Spanish nobleman to embark in Lisbon in April 1614, when he was 64 years old, in one of the Portuguese ships bound for India, began many years before, in Persia, when a young man named 'Abbas seized the reins of power, in 1588, after the murder of his older brother. The rise to power of Shah 'Abbas I signalled a turning point in Safavid geopolitics, since the young ruler immediately showed the necessary leadership qualities to deal with the complex demands of Persia's situation.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Pietro della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle il Pelegrino* (2 vols.), Brighton, G. Gancia, 1843, vol. 1, p. 719: « È vecchio assai, non solo con barba bianca, ma anchi senza denti: è robusto con tutto chio [...]. Venne molto ben vestito [...], alla Spagnuola.»

<sup>3</sup> Pietro della Valle, *Viaggi*, vol. 1, pp. 250-251: « ma che d'inclinazione e professione era Spagnuolo.»

<sup>4</sup> See Blow, David, *Shah Abbas: The Ruthless King Who Became an Iranian Legend*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2009.

There was not a solid central state, since the power of the shah depended on the military cooperation he was able to obtain from the several Qizilbash factions. These tribal groups of Turkman origin (whom the Portuguese sources style as *gazeisbaixos*) had until then maintained the Safavid polity. But the conflicts and conspiracies were too frequent among them. On the other hand, while the western provinces of Persia were under Ottoman rule, large areas of Khorassan, on the east, were controlled by the Uzbeks. After ascending to the throne, Shah 'Abbas began to establish his own army, independent from the Qizilbash, slowly controlling internal oppositions; at the same time, state administration was centralized and reorganized. Once his political position was solid, the Persian ruler, through a skilful combination of military campaigns and diplomatic initiatives, faced his external opponents, winning successive battles against the Ottomans and the Uzbeks, thus consolidating and even enlarging the frontiers of his empire. Portuguese contemporary writers frequently mention Shah 'Abbas. António Bocarro presents him as a «great man of war, in spirit and in ruses, able to achieve his goals by any means available», in short, a sort of Iranian Machiavelli.<sup>5</sup>

Eventually, Safavid power started spreading to the margins of the Persian Gulf, that until then had lived with relative autonomy. With the conquest of Bahrain in 1602, 'Abbas had decided to oppose the traditional Portuguese maritime hegemony over those regions. And in the following decades the Persian Shah set in motion a progressive assault on Portuguese positions, some of which dated from the early years of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and had its epicentre at the island and fortress of Hormuz. This process, eventually, would bring about the conquest of this island by an Anglo-Persian coalition in 1622.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> António Bocarro, *Década 13 da História da Índia*, ed. R.J. de Lima Felner (2 vols.), Lisbon, Academia Real das Ciências, 1876, vol. I, p. 34: « grande homem de guerra, assi no espírito como de invenções e traças para poder conseguir o que pretendia, fosse por quaesquer meios que pudesse.»

<sup>6</sup> See Couto, Dejanirah ; Loureiro, Rui Manuel, *Ormuz: 1507 e 1622, Conquista e Perda*, Lisbon, Tribuna da História, 2007, and Floor, Willem, *The Persian Gulf: A Political and Economic History of Five Port Cities, 1500-1730*, Washington DC, Mage Publishers, 2006.



The fortress of Hormuz was one of the most profitable within the Portuguese overseas empire, profits coming from taxes collected at its custom's house, from the extremely intense commercial traffic that crossed the Strait of Hormuz, coming or going to Basrah, Bandar Gombroon, Masqat, Tatta, Diu, and many other ports in the African and Indian coasts. The "pearl in the ring", the metaphorical designation for the barren island of Hormuz, was a most strategic place within the dense network of territories, fortresses and factories that formed the so-called *Estado da Índia*, or Portuguese State of India. That's why the Spanish crown, for two decades, since the 1600's, tried to maintain a diplomatic dialogue with Shah 'Abbas, through the regular exchange of emissaries and ambassadors. Although in the horizon there was always talk of an anti-Ottoman alliance between the Habsburgs and the Safavids, the Iberians wanted at all cost to maintain a Portuguese solid presence in the Persian Gulf area.

Several diplomatic missions were entrusted to Portuguese friars, and namely to the Augustinian António de Gouveia<sup>7</sup>, but with no practical results, for the Safavid tentacles were slowly closing on Hormuz. Shah 'Abbas, who enjoyed to discuss political matters in his campaign tent, or in one of his palaces, eating and drinking, on a given moment, requested from the Iberian authorities the dispatch of a non-religious ambassador of high social status, because, in the words of a Portuguese chronicler, «he was fed up of having to deal with friars».<sup>8</sup> After many debates between Madrid and Lisbon, Don García de Silva y Figueroa was finally chosen in 1612 for the Persian mission.

As it turned out, he was not the perfect choice. Apparently, he was a rather supercilious man, not easy to make friends with. But above all, while in Lisbon, Goa or Hormuz, he was a Spaniard and a representative of the Spanish crown in a Portuguese environment, faced everywhere,

---

<sup>7</sup> See Alonso, Carlos, *Antonio de Gouvea, O.S.A, Diplomático y Visitador Apostólico en Persia*, Valladolid, Estudio Agustiniiano, 2000.

<sup>8</sup> António Bocarro, *Década 13 da História da Índia*, p. 370: «por meio de frades, com que, dizia o Xá, estava já cansado de tractar.»

and especially among Portuguese overseas authorities, with suspicion and mistrust. He notes in his writings that the Portuguese «not only dislike the union with the Spanish monarchy, but in no case whatsoever want to be called or seen as Spaniards»<sup>9</sup>. During his mission to Persia, that extended for a decade, from 1614 to 1624, he travelled a road full of difficulties and hardships. As a sign of the total failure of his mission, Don García was in Portuguese India when the fall of Hormuz took place, with the expulsion of the Portuguese from that island at the mouth of the Persian Gulf.<sup>10</sup>

### **Reasons to write a travel account**

Don García de Silva was a most cultivated man, who had studied at Salamanca, but who had certainly continued to read throughout his life. A Portuguese 17<sup>th</sup> century chronicler, António Bocarro, who probably met him in Goa, claims that the ambassador was a man «of sound judgement and subtle understanding, who had travelled and read a lot, and who was conversant in both the Latin and the Italian languages».<sup>11</sup> Besides being fluent in Latin and Italian, he also knew well the western classical literature. Rather as a modern traveller, he carefully prepared for his journey to Persia, reading widely and collecting a selection of books (and perhaps collections of manuscript extracts) to carry along. In his writings, he claimed that «the lesson of Antiquity is the true light and knowledge of what there is to know in the world».<sup>12</sup> And, above all, he was a compulsive diarist that during his extensive oriental travels, besides penning many dozens of letters, wrote a voluminous

---

<sup>9</sup> Don García de Silva y Figueroa, *Comentarios de D. Garcia de Silva y Figueroa de la embajada que de parte del rey de España don Filipe III hizo al rey Xa Abas de Persia*, ed. Manuel Serrano y Sanz (2 vols.), Madrid, Sociedad de Bibliófilos, 1903-1905, vol. 2, pp. 360-361: «no sólo aborrecen la unión con la monarchia de España, pero por ningún caso quieren nombrarse ni ser tenidos por españoles.»

<sup>10</sup> See Gil, Luis, *El Imperio Luso-Español*, vol. 2, pp. 241-358.

<sup>11</sup> António Bocarro, *Década 13 da História da Índia*, p. 370: «bom juízo e subtil entendimento, visto e lido e muito versado na língua latina e italiana.»

<sup>12</sup> Don García de Silva y Figueroa, *Comentarios*, vol. 2, p. 155: «la lección de la antigüedad, que es la que da verdadera lumbre y conocimiento de todo lo que se deve saber del mundo.»

travel account. The *Comentarios* (cf. **plate 1**), the title under which his manuscript of about 1000 pages became known, describe in minute detail his long journey from Lisbon to Persia, as well as the sea journey back to Europe, during which he died of the “Luanda sickness”, one of the designations of scurvy.<sup>13</sup>

Has it might be imagined, a cultivated traveller, prone to classical letters, gifted with insatiable curiosity and with acute powers of observation, had to produce a travel account well worth of our attention. Through the pages of the *Comentarios*, Don García de Silva alternately acts as geographer, naturalist, ethnographer, historian and antiquarian, jotting down his day-to-day observations in a systematic fashion. Certainly it was a form of occupying his long hours of leisure, but perhaps he was also preparing a final report of his embassy, for publication upon his return to Europe.

### **Editorial history of the *Comentarios***

The *Comentarios* have a rather unusual editorial history. The autograph manuscript, concluded in 1624, is kept today at the Biblioteca Nacional, in Madrid. In 1668 a partial French translation was published in Paris, *L'ambassade de D. Garcias de Silva y Figueroa en Perse*, by Abraham de Wicquefort (cf. **plate 2**), who is well-known for his works on diplomatic theory, and who certainly had a special interest on Persia, since he also translated the travel accounts of Adam Olearius (1656) and Thomas Herbert (1663). I will allude later on to an 18<sup>th</sup> century edition of a small part of Don García's account. But the first and only complete edition of the *Comentarios* appeared in Madrid, in two volumes, in 1903-1905, under the responsibility of Manuel Serrano y Sanz, with the title *Comentarios de D. Garcia de Silva y Figueroa de la embajada que de parte del rey de España don Filipe III hizo al rey Xa Abas de Persia*, with a short introduction, but no annotations.

---

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Don García de Silva y Figueroa, *Comentarios*, *passim*.

This was a book-club edition, in 150 copies, published by the Sociedad de Bibliófilos Españoles, which is today quite rare.

Since then, and until recently, Don García's travel account fell into oblivion, completely ignored by Portuguese modern historiography, despite being a first rate source for the history of the *Estado da Índia* during the Iberian Union. But things are about to change.

### **Structure of Don García's *Comentarios***

The title of the *Comentarios* is certainly inspired by the homonymous work of Julius Caesar. In fact, such a title was quite popular, and two other examples come to mind, regarding Portuguese accounts related with the Persian Gulf: the *Comentários de Afonso de Albuquerque* (Lisbon, 1557, with a second edition in Lisbon, 1576) and the *Comentários de Rui Freire de Andrade*, compiled by Pedro Craesbeck (Lisbon, 1647). Don García writes in the third person, but the manuscript is autograph, as a comparison with his many letters clearly shows. The *Comentarios* include a long travel account, that begins in Lisbon in April 1614 and finishes somewhere in the Atlantic ten years later, after an extensive itinerary, real and textual, that accompanies its author first to Goa, then to Masqat and Hormuz, from there to the Persian mainland, back to India, and again on a sea voyage to Europe.

A summary of some of the contents of the *Comentarios* will show their extraordinary relevance as a source for the study of early modern interactions between Europe and Asia. Instead of following the successive books in chronological order, and do it in a thorough fashion, I will draw attention to some topics dealt with in the *Comentarios* and to a selected set of problems worthy of exploration. It is possible to organize the ambassador's account in four different areas:

- 1.** First, there is the sea voyage in the *carreira da Índia* (books I, VII and VIII, nearly 200 pages). This is one of the best descriptions we have of the long maritime route between Lisbon and Goa, since Don García, with a clear knowledge of mathematics and astronomy,

registers everything that happens on board the Portuguese ships: the position of the ship, the measurements of latitude, the direction of the winds, the state of the weather, the reckoning of distances, and also the daily events, the diseases, the human losses, and so on. With an astrolabe in hand, the ambassador takes his own measurements, frequently disagreeing with the pilot of his ship, the celebrated Gaspar Ferreira Reimão. One may judge the total neglect of the *Comentarios* by the fact that dozens of studies have been dedicated in Portugal to this pilot, who had been travelling to India since the late 1580's, and not one of them uses the crucial information included in this important source<sup>14</sup>. It will be worth mentioning that many of Don García's comments on navigation present obvious similarities with the contents of *Roteiro da navegação da carreira da Índia*, published by Gaspar Reimão in Lisbon in 1612.

**2.** A second geographical area described by the ambassador is the Persian Gulf entrance, with the Portuguese controlled ports of Masqat and Hormuz, which he visited on his way to Persia, and again on the return journey to India (book III, about 50 pages). He pays attention to the fortifications, to the religious buildings, to the different human groups who lived in both cities, and to their social and cultural practices. Even being the shortest section of his account, Don García includes a wealth of relevant information, namely about the topography of both cities, and the daily life of its inhabitants.

**3.** The main body of the *Comentarios* include, as it would be expected, the Persian ventures of Don García de Silva (books IV, V, VI and part of VII, about 600 pages). For two and a half years, the ambassador travelled through the Safavid realm, in order to meet Shah 'Abbas and to deliver his embassy, accompanied by one hundred men, who travelled in a caravan of 400 hundred camels. The daily events of his journeys are registered; the caravanserais where they lodge are noted;

---

<sup>14</sup> See Jana, Ernesto, "Reimão, Gaspar Ferreira" in *Dicionário de História dos Descobrimentos Portugueses*, ed. Luís de Albuquerque; Francisco Contento Domingues, 2 vols., Lisbon, Caminho, 1994, pp. 938-940.

the landscapes are carefully sketched; the main Persian cities (such as Lar, Shiraz, Isfahan, Kazvin) are described in detail, with their palaces, mosques, bazaars, public squares, gardens and bridges, celebrated tombs; the social, cultural and military practices of the Persians are explained; many characteristics of Shia Islam are duly stressed; the main political and military actions of the Shah are annotated; the contours of the silk trade affair are highlighted; and all the interactions with civil, military and religious authorities are recorded, as well as those with other European travellers or residents. By the way, one European who seems to have captured Silva y Figueroa's attention, obviously, is Robert Shirley, the English adventurer, who was then extremely active between Persia, the *Estado da Índia* and the Iberian Peninsula<sup>15</sup>. One characteristic of Don García's description is worthy of attention: he travels with his library in hand, be it the Old Testament, Greek and Latin authorities, or modern chronicles or travelogues, which he uses frequently to find references to the geography and history of ancient or modern Persia. This part of the *Comentarios*, in fact, sometimes reads like an historical geography of Western Asia.

Concerning the Persian section of the *Comentarios*, among many other topics, three are especially noteworthy, for their novelty in the context of contemporary European travel literature. On the one hand, the ambassador's visit to, and comments on, "Chilminara", or Čehel Menara, the ruins of Persepolis, which, as a true antiquarian, he describes in detail, even including in his manuscript several drawings made by his painter (**plate 3**, **plate 4** and **plate 5**). It is possible that his attention was drawn to Persepolis by António de Gouveia, a Portuguese Augustinian who travelled extensively in Persia, also as an ambassador, and published in 1611, in Lisbon, an account of his journeys.<sup>16</sup> But Don

---

<sup>15</sup> See Davies, D.W., *Elizabethans Errant: The Strange Fortunes of Sir Thomas Shirley and His Three Sons*, Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1967.

<sup>16</sup> António de Gouveia, *Relaçam em que se tratam as guerras e grandes victorias que alcançou o grãde Rey da Persia Xá Abbas do grão Turco Mahometto, & seu filho Amethe*, Lisboa, Pedro Craesbeck, 1611, fls. 30v-32. See Carreira, José Nunes, *Do Preste João às Ruínas da Babilónia*, Lisbon, Editorial Comunicação, 1990, pp. 85-98.

García was the first European to prepare such a minute description of these famous ruins and to mention «the completely unknown letters» that could be found there, which he also reproduces. His description of Persepolis is quite illustrative of his method of combining experimental observation with bookish information, since he tries to interpret the ancient ruins using classic texts of Homer, Diodorus Siculus, Harrian, Plutarcus, Quintus Curtius, and also the works of Sebastiano Serlio, a contemporary theorist of architecture.

On the other hand, the ambassador's references to Central Asian history and geography, and especially to the famous Tamerlane (or Timur Gurgan), are extremely interesting. Don García used as a source the account of Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo's 15<sup>th</sup> century embassy to Samarkand, which was first published in Seville in 1588 by Gonzalo Argote de Molina<sup>17</sup>, and which he probably carried with him. But he also had access to three different Persian chronicles, which are quoted extensively in the *Comentarios*, and which he probably got in Portuguese or Spanish translation, either from Augustinian or Carmelite missionaries he met in Isfahan, or from the *Relaciones* of the Portuguese traveller Pedro Teixeira, published in Antwerp in 1610, and which were also part of his traveller's library<sup>18</sup>. The Persian chronicles were the works of Khvandamir, Mirkvand, and one "Calif Emir Alixir", whom, according to Silva y Figueroa, described the history of Tamerlane «with so much elegance and propriety, that he owes no debt to the ancient Latin or Greeks»<sup>19</sup>. The importance of this part of the *Comentarios* was duly acknowledged by the eighteenth century editors of the *Historia del Gran Tamorlan*, reissued in Madrid in 1782.

The third topic in the Persian section I want to point is Don García's polemic with the Jesuits about the existence of Cathay, and specifically

---

<sup>17</sup> See a recent edition in López Guzmán, Rafael (ed.), *Viaje a Samarkanda: Relació de la Embajada de Ruy González de Clavijo ante Tamerlán (1403-1406)*, Granada, Fundación El Legado Andalusi, 2009, pp. 115-321.

<sup>18</sup> See Loureiro, Rui Manuel, "Drogas asiáticas e práticas médicas nas *Relaciones* de Pedro Teixeira (Antuérpia, 1610)", *Revista de Cultura / Review of Culture* (Macau) 32 (2009), pp. 24-40.

<sup>19</sup> Don García de Silva y Figueroa, *Comentarios*, vol. 2, p. 171: « con tanta elegância y propiedad que no tiene que enbidiar á ninguno de los antiguos latinos, ni gregos.»

with Jerónimo Xavier and Manuel Pinheiro, who had lived in Agra. This fabled land, popularised in medieval European travel accounts, had been identified by the Jesuits with China, on the basis of Bento de Góis's travels in Central Asia in the early years of the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>20</sup>. But the ambassador, based on his readings of the accounts of Marco Polo and Hayton of Armenia published in volume II of Ramusio's *Navigazioni et Viaggi* (Venice, 1559)<sup>21</sup>, which he probably carried with him, and on information collected during his travels through Persia, claimed that there was in Central Asia a land called Cathay, which was totally distinct from China.

4. Finally, within the *Comentarios*, there is a fourth set of annotations, concerning Don García's long residence in Goa, where he lived for several years, first between 1614 and 1617, on the way to Persia, and then on his return, from 1620 to 1624 (books II and VII, again nearly 200 pages). Portuguese writers, as a rule, did not elaborate on the topographical details of the capital of the *Estado da Índia*, which was assumed to be well known. Non-Portuguese authors, on the contrary, were attentive to Goan topography. Such was the case of Dutch traveller Jan Huygen van Linschoten, who included descriptions, drawings and maps of Goa in his *Itinerario*, published in Amsterdam in 1596<sup>22</sup>. But the ambassador's description of the territory and of the city of Goa is undoubtedly the most minute and accurate which had been produced until then. After a tour of the island, including rivers, canals, urban settlements, fortifications, harbours, exotic natural productions and animals, the ambassador then turns to the city proper, which he describes as if with map in hand, following different streets and calling attention to the main urban features. Curiously enough, the only

---

<sup>20</sup> See Didier, Hugues, *Fantômes d'Islam et de la Chine: Le voyage de Bento de Góis s.j. (1603-1697)*, Paris, Chandeigne & Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2003.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Parks, George B., "The Contents and Sources of Ramusio's *Navigazioni*" in R.A. Skelton; George B. Parks (eds.), Giovanni Battista Ramusio, *Navigazioni et Viaggi: Venice 1563-1606* (3 vols.), Amsterdam, Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1967-1979, vol. 3, pp. 1-39.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Jan Huygen van Linschoten, *Itinerário, Viagem ou Navegação às Índias Orientais ou Portuguesas*, (eds. Arie Pos; Rui Manuel Loureiro), Lisbon, CNCDP, 1997, *passim*.



cartographic drawing included in the *Comentarios* depicts the territory of Goa, and was certainly obtained from the celebrated Portuguese cartographer and cosmographer Manuel Godinho de Erédia, who was then a Goan resident.<sup>23</sup>

The description of the city of Goa also includes material about its inhabitants, which are divided in several groups, according to their relation with the Portuguese. The Indian Brahmins, which the ambassador styles as «the superior class of their priests and scholars»<sup>24</sup>, deserves special attention, namely regarding their social and cultural practices, and also their philosophical and cosmological beliefs. Apparently, Don García was helped by two informants: one «Banyan doctor who treated his servants, named Rama» and a Franciscan friar called João de São Matias, who had been living in India for more than twenty years. The information collected included references to the «scholastic language» used by Brahmin scholars to write their treatises, clearly an allusion to Sanskrit. According to the ambassador, this language had «an alphabet of very perfect figures», which had «double vowels and three and four different types of consonants, distinguished from one another by certain dots». These letters, in his words, are «so perfect and ancient, that they may be reckoned the first in the world».<sup>25</sup>

An important detail: when Don García first arrived in Goa, the *Estado da Índia* was under attack on several fronts. The relations with the Mughals were extremely tense, on account of the capture by the

---

<sup>23</sup> See Mariás, Fernando, “Don García de Silva y Figueroa y la percepción del Oriente: la ‘Descripción de Goa’”, *Anuario del Departamento de Historia e Teoría de Arte – Universidad Autónoma de Madrid* (Madrid), vol. 14, 2002, pp. 137-149; and also Loureiro, Rui Manuel, “Manuel Godinho de Erédia revisited” in Fátima da Silva Gracias; Celsa Pinto; Charles Borges (eds.), *Indo-Portuguese History: Global Trends*, Goa, n.e., 2005, pp. 411-439.

<sup>24</sup> Don García de Silva y Figueroa, *Comentarios*, vol. 1, p. 189: « La superior clase de los bramenes es la de sus sacerdotes y sabios.»

<sup>25</sup> Don García de Silva y Figueroa, *Comentarios*, vol. 1, pp. 192-193: « el alfabeto, que es de figuras muy perfectas »; « los caracteres y notas, como se a dicho, sean tan perfectas y antiguas que se pueden estimar por las primeras del mundo.»

Portuguese of a ship carrying Muslim pilgrims; the Indian ruler of Ahmadnagar, was waging war on the Portuguese controlled fortress of Chaul; Dutch and English ships were expected at Surat, another sign of the growing European competition against the Portuguese in Asia, which had started to develop since the final years of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in the wake of the Iberian Union<sup>26</sup>. And yet, nothing of these matters transpires in the description of Goa, as if the Spanish ambassador wanted to draw a positive picture of the capital of the *Estado da Índia*, irrespective of current political and military affairs. Current matters, he referred to in his correspondence with the Spanish crown.<sup>27</sup>

### **Conclusion**

My last point is that the *Comentarios*, with a handful of exceptions, have been rather neglected by modern researchers. And yet, the travelogue of Don García de Silva y Figueroa is well worth of our attention, on several different and complementary accounts. The *Comentarios* are obviously a first rate historical source in the context of early modern interactions between Europe and Asia. A wealth of geographical, historical and ethnographical information can be gathered from its pages. But the ambassador's account is also important in what it reveals about its author's personality, attitudes, cultural formation, and methods of work. Don García appears as an extremely tolerant man, when it comes to cultural and religious differences, registering information about Jews, Muslims, Hindus and heterodox Christians with perfect objectivity, apparently without prejudice. One just has to take a look at his impartial descriptions of Persian mosques, Muslim holy men, or Islamic festivities such as the Ashura celebration, which in other contemporary European pens would raise a series of negative judgements. Also, the ambassador is, at all times, a true scholar, always

---

<sup>26</sup> See Valladares, Rafael, *Castilla y Portugal en Asia (1580-1680): Declive imperial y adaptación*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2001.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. García de Silva y Figueroa, *Epistolario Diplomático* (ed. Luis Gil), Cáceres, Institucion Cultural "El Brocense", 1989, *passim*.

with his books close to him, permanently comparing his experiences with the writings of ancient or contemporary authorities, European or Asian. The extent and the pertinence of his readings, the contents of his travelling library, in sum, are truly amazing for a man of his day and age. These, along with the use he makes of Persian manuscripts, certainly deserve further inquiry.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> See the collection of studies gathered in Loureiro, Rui Manuel; Resende, Vasco (eds.), *Estudos sobre D. García de Silva y Figueroa e os seus «Comentarios» da embaixada à Pérsia (1614-1624)*, Lisbon, Centro de História de Além-Mar, 2011.



L'AMBASSADE  
DE  
D. GARCIAS DE SILVA  
FIGVEROA  
EN PERSE,  
CONTENANT

*LA POLITIQUE, DE CE GRAND EMPIRE,  
les mœurs du Roy Schach Abbas, & une Relation exactte de  
sous les lieux de Perse & des Indes, où cét Ambassadeur a esté  
l'espace de huit années qu'il y a demeuré.*

Traduite de l'Espagnol  
Par Monsieur DE WICQFORT.



A PARIS,  
Chez LOUIS BILLAINE, au second Pillier de la  
grand' Sale du Palais, au grand Cefar.

---

M. DC. LXVII.  
AVEC PRIVILEGE DV ROY.



Plate 3

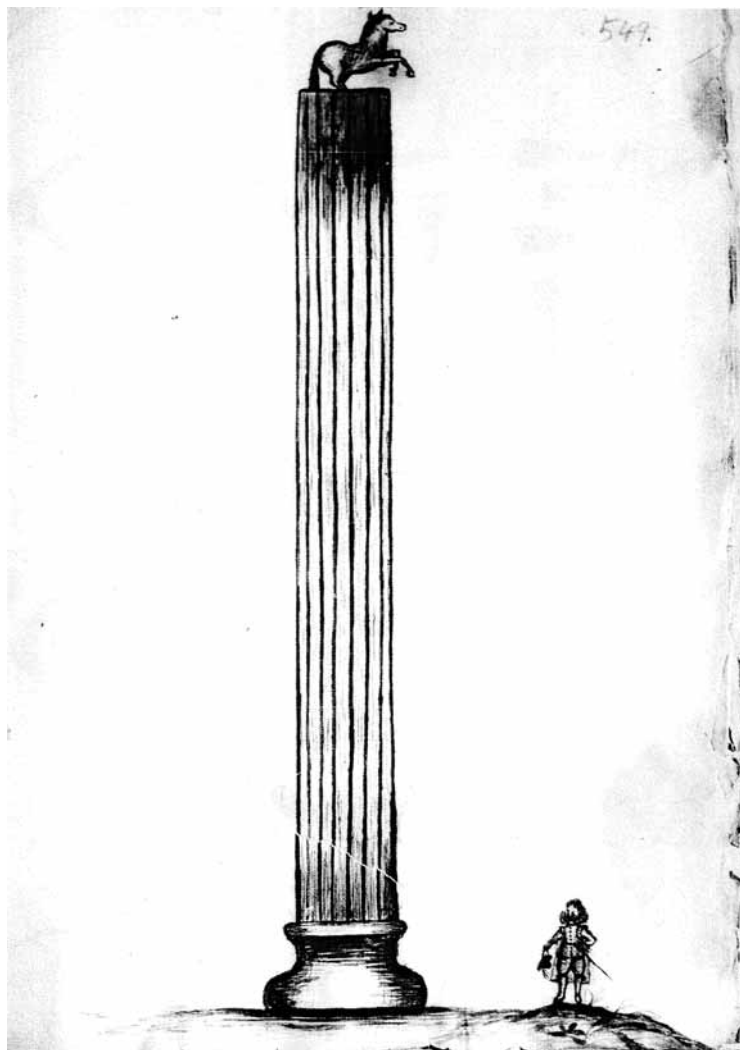


Plate 4

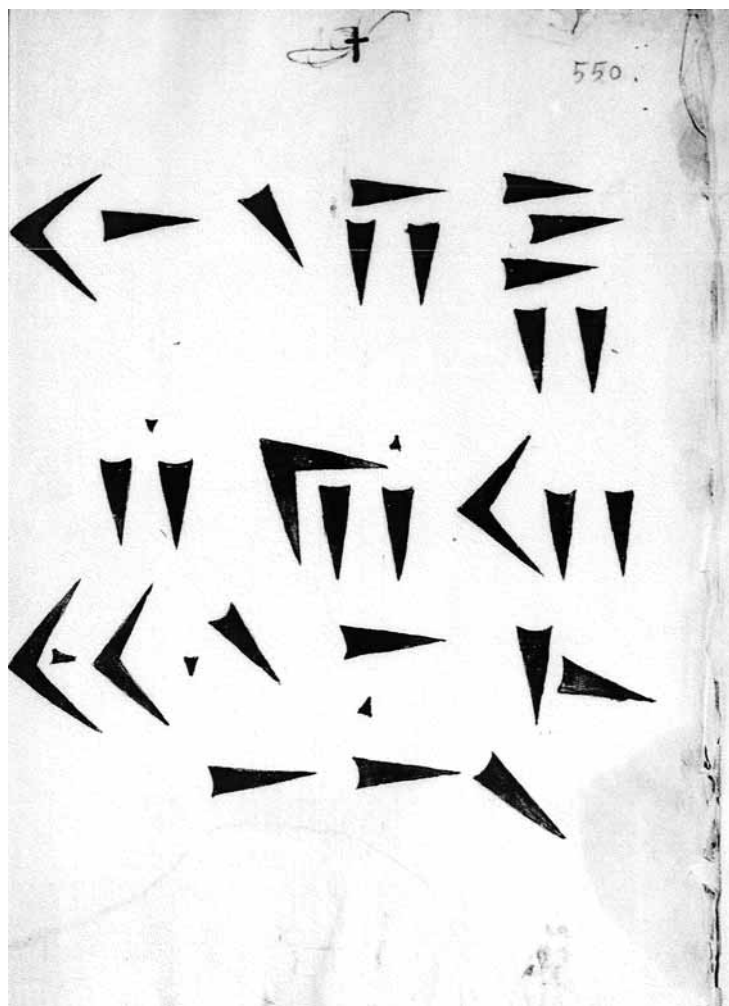


Plate 5



# The Household Religion in Ancient Egypt: problems and constraints

Susana Mota  
Instituto Oriental – FCSH-UNL

Of all facets that compose Egyptian Religion, there is one – the Household Religion – to which, for several reasons, has not been given the proper attention by the historiography. Interestingly, if Religion is one of the most studied domains of Ancient Egypt civilization<sup>1</sup>, what we first noticed when we started to study the Household Religion is the almost complete absence of works of synthesis or reference on the subject<sup>2</sup>. According to Ritner, the Household Religion is a subject that is not only absent, but also apparently avoided and ignored<sup>3</sup> because the issue is not addressed in the great works of reference on the religious domain of Ancient Egypt civilization, or, being so, only in a notoriously brief<sup>4</sup> way.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Derchain, P., “La Religion égyptienne” in *Histoire des Religions* I, Encyclopédie de la Pléiade, Paris, 1970, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> There are only four studies specifically devoted to the Household Religion: Friedman, F., “Aspects of domestic life and religion” in L. H. Lesko (ed.), *Pharaoh's workers. The villagers of Deir el Medina*, Ithaca – London, 1994, pp. 82–97; Lesko, B. K., “Household and domestic religion in Ancient Egypt” in J. Bodel, S. Olyan (eds.), *Household Religion in Antiquity* (The Ancient World: comparative histories), Malden – Oxford – Victoria, 1994, pp. 197–209; Ritner, R., “Household Religion in J. Bodel; S. Olyan (eds.), *Household Religion in Antiquity* (The Ancient World: comparative histories), Malden – Oxford – Victoria, 1994, pp. 171–196; Stevens, A., “Domestic Religious Practices.” in J. Dielman; W. Wendrich (eds.), *UCLA – Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, Los Angeles, 2009, pp. 1-31. (<http://escholarship.org/oc/item/7s076628w>). The first one focuses only on Deir el-Medina. Moreover, the existing studies often engage in specific locations or just in one type of practice.

<sup>3</sup> The author states that «the term ‘household Religion’ is conspicuously absent from the field of Egyptology.» Cf. Ritner, *art. cit.*, p. 171.

<sup>4</sup> Generally, the Household Religion is analyzed only as a facet of the Personal Piety. Cf. *ibidem*.

The purpose of this paper is to try to understand which problems and constraints better explain or justify this situation. These relate, in one hand, with the issue of the available sources, and, in the other hand, with the very definition of Household Religion.

In his daily life, the Egyptian believer had the possibility to engage in various forms of worship, which allowed him to contact with the divine and thus respond to his religious devotion. These practices include the participation in the festivities of the religious calendar, whether public festivals or divine processions, the votive offerings in the great temples or small chapels, and even the procedures related to the funerary cult. To this long list we must add the Household Religion, namely, the proceedings of religious nature which took place at home.

Therefore, we noticed the existence of a group of religious practices that, with greater or lesser proximity to the Official Cult, were accessible to the believer. However, when we delve specifically about one of them, in this case the Household Religion, it is necessary to clarify the relationship they had with each other. More precisely, it is essential to define the criteria underlying this classification.

It is in this context that we identify the first uncertainties. When we look at the four works referred earlier in this paper, we clearly recognize this issue. For Stevens and Friedman, the Household Religion is, simply, a group of religious actions that were put into practice within the family home<sup>5</sup>. However, both Ritner and Lesko consider this perspective reductive, because they understand that the Household Religion includes all religious practices to which the believer had access in his daily life.<sup>6</sup>

The authors' opinions are divided in two different classifications: one that sees the Household Religion as a specific practice, and other that sees it as a set of different practices.

These disagreements of criteria will surely constraint the approach to be made on this issue. Before we seek a possible solution for this

---

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Stevens, *art. cit.*, p. 1; Friedman, *art. cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Ritner, *art. cit.*, p.186; Lesko, *art. cit.*, p. 197, 200.

matter, we should introduce another question, of terminological nature, that can help us to choose the best path to follow.

For some authors, speaking about Household Religion is like speaking about Private, Practical, Popular or Personal Religion<sup>7</sup>. Regardless of what is meant by each of these expressions in particular<sup>8</sup>, it's clear that they have a broad range of meanings, and therefore it is perfectly acceptable to use them to designate all the referred practices. Nevertheless, does the expression Household Religion allow this same coverage or, on the contrary, does it reduce undoubtedly the scope of action and calls for a concrete analysis of its specificities?

As a matter of fact, these practices have more similarities than differences. They share the motivations, in some cases the typology of procedures, and even some deities<sup>9</sup>. The essential difference is the space where they occur. However, each one has characteristics that allows them to be analyzed by it self. So, why wouldn't we do it with the Household Religion?

We believe that, if it is possible to look at the religious practices of the Egyptian man as a whole and consider them in this way, it is also necessary to look at each one of them in particular. In this manner, it is possible to obtain a detailed and deep knowledge about each one of them, thus recognizing them for their intrinsic value. If we understand the Household Religion as a group of practices and not as a specific practice with its own proceedings<sup>10</sup> that took place in a defined place – the house – could it be misrepresented and even, once again, relegated to second place?

---

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Ritner, *art. cit.*, pp. 172, 186; Lesko, *art. cit.*, p. 200.

<sup>8</sup> Luiselli gives us a brief clarification about the scope of these expressions: Luiselli, M., "Personal piety (Modern Theories related to)." in J. Dielman; W. Wendrich (ed.), *UCLA-Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, Los Angeles, 2008, pp. 4, 5.

<sup>9</sup> In the case of the Household Religion, beyond the worship of major deities of the Egyptian pantheon, the preference lies on the so-called domestic gods. These gods had no temples or priests and their place of worship were the private homes. Cf. David, R., *The Pyramid Builders of Ancient Egypt. A Modern Investigation of Pharaoh's Workforce*, London – New York, 1986, p. 81.

<sup>10</sup> We consider as proceedings pertaining to the Household Religion the worship of the domestic gods, the ancestor's worship, magic, the names and also other types of uses which, although less directly, had underlying religious sentiments, such as infant burials or the interpretation of dreams.

We consider that, to give to the Household Religion its due relevance and to ensure that its understanding is as complete as possible, it is preferable to see it only as a set of religious proceedings that took place in the household context. Although, one should not ignore its relationship with the other practices that surround it.

The second constraint to the study of the Household Religion is related to the available sources because, despite their variety, they have characteristics that hinder their analysis. We will begin by identifying the material available and then we will characterize the problems associated with them.

For the study of Household Religion, textual and material sources<sup>11</sup> are available. In the first group we have everyday texts, *e.g.* letters that refer to religious procedures conducted at home; medical and magical spells that clarify the concerns that motivate these practices; offering formulae and dedicatory texts and also other kind of written sources that, even indirectly, can provide some data on the subject, such as the calendars of lucky and unlucky days and transactional documents.

The vestiges of material culture can be grouped into three different sets: cultic facilities, objects and decorations. The cultic facilities allow us to build an idea about the domestic ritual space. In several houses, from different places and periods, it was possible to identify altars, niches, wall recesses with worship formulas and also portable equipment such as offering tables.

Concerning the objects, there were found samples of different typologies, apparently related to the cult, such as stelae, statuettes, anthropoid-busts, ceramic figurines, both human and deities, ostraca with images, various wands and amulets.

The decorations, painted or carved, in walls or lintels, illustrate scenes of devotion to a particular deity or deities. At first sight, we are confronted with a plethora of sources which seems to lead us directly to the understanding of the Household Religion. Nevertheless, there is a

---

<sup>11</sup> Stevens offers a complete characterization of the available sources. Cf. Stevens, *art. cit.*, pp. 1-9.

number of barriers that need to be circumvented in order to obtain the most consistent image possible.

First of all, we can say that we have a range of sources of fragmentary, scattered and indirect nature<sup>12</sup>. And, although quite varied, the existing sources are in a very small number if compared with those accessible to the study of Official Religion.<sup>13</sup>

Regarding its diachrony, the sources are unevenly distributed across time with an obvious prevalence for those dating from the New Kingdom or later periods. This fact complicates the possibility of a deeper knowledge of this religious practice in more remote periods.<sup>14</sup>

At this point we can add the problem of the spatial location. The available material comes mainly from two locations in particular: Deir el-Medina and Tell el-Amarna<sup>15</sup>. This fact suggests that these places are the only ones where it is possible to obtain a deeper characterization of this religious phenomenon. These settlements, crucial to the study of the Household Religion, are not, however, the only ones from where come the available sources. So, despite its higher contribute, it is possible to go beyond them both in geographic and temporal terms<sup>16</sup>. For example, Lahun, a settlement from the Middle Kingdom, may be considered a key site for the study of the Household Religion before the New Kingdom. This site provides several types of objects that help to characterize the domestic religious environment experienced daily by believers in that town.<sup>17</sup>

Space and time are two major difficulties for the construction of a complete image about the Household Religion in Ancient Egypt. However, this dating and location applies to most sources, but not to all of them. Beyond Deir el-Medina and Tell el-Amarna, there are at least more eighteen places where was located material associated with

---

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> According to Ritner the predominance of the sources related to the Official Cult justifies the preference to his study over the Household Religion. Cf. Ritner, *art.cit.*, p. 172.

<sup>14</sup> Stevens, *art. cit.*, pp. 1-3.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Ritner, *art.cit.*, p. 172; Stevens, *art. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Ritner, *art.cit.*, p. 172.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Stevens, *art. cit.*, p. 3; David, *op. cit.*, pp. 134-137.

this religious practice. Nine of them being dated from periods previous to the New Kingdom.<sup>18</sup>

Circumvented these difficulties, yet others arise, this time related to the proper interpretation of the sources and the identification of its context of origin.

The material sources to which we resort to study this religious practice are found in domestic context, that is, in the houses that the Egyptian archaeology has been studying over the years. Nevertheless, not always the provenance or the origin context of a given material is one hundred percent safely determined<sup>19</sup>. And this question can lead one to assume that an object is connected to the Household Religion when it is actually related to other forms of worship. In other words, we can assign to a source a function that isn't really its own<sup>20</sup>. This confusion can go further because we may consider that an object has religious purposes when it might be merely decorative or even only a toy.<sup>21</sup>

Renfrew and Bahn speak of this difficulty in categorizing the sources within the religious archeology:

«One problem that archaeologists face is that these belief systems are not always given expression in material culture. And when they are – in what one might term 'archaeology of cult' defined as the

---

<sup>18</sup> According to Stevens the places where were identified sources related to the Household Religion are: Abydos (Early Dynastic Period – Old Kingdom – First Intermediate Period); Lahun (Middle Kingdom); Qasr el-Sagha (Middle Kingdom); Buhen (Middle Kingdom – New Kingdom); Lisht (Middle Kingdom – Second Intermediate Period – New Kingdom – Third Intermediate Period); Tell el-Dabaa (Middle Kingdom – Second Intermediate Period); Askut (Middle Kingdom – New Kingdom); South Abydos (Middle Kingdom – New Kingdom); Deir el-Ballas (Second Intermediate Period – New Kingdom); Sesebi (New Kingdom); Tell el-Amarna (New Kingdom); Amara West (New Kingdom); Deir el-Medina (New Kingdom); Medinet Habu (New Kingdom – Third Intermediate Period); Kom Medinet Ghurab (New Kingdom); Kom Rabia, (New Kingdom – Third Intermediate Period); El-Ashmunein (Third Intermediate Period); Luxor (Late Period); Tell el-Muqdam (Late Period) e Karanis (Third Century CE). Cf. Stevens, *art.cit.*, pp. 12–20.

<sup>19</sup> In Qasr el-Sagha, for example, were identified objects (stelae) in domestic context, which the archaeologist believes may not be originally from the houses but from a nearby cemetery. Cf. Sliwa, J., "Die Siedlung des Mittleren Reiches bei Qasr el-Sagha. Grabungsbericht 1987 und 1988", *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Abteilung Kairo* 48 (1992), p. 185.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Ritner, *art. cit.*, p. 172.

<sup>21</sup> Stevens, *art. cit.*, p. 3.

system of patterned actions in response to religious beliefs – there is the problem that such actions are not always clearly separated from other actions of everyday life: cult can be embedded within everyday functional activity, and thus difficult to distinguish from it archaeologically.»<sup>22</sup>

There is an illustrative example of this problem: the *box bed* or *lit clos*. In the first division of some houses of el-Medina were identified these architectural structures that raise serious doubts about its functionality. Some scholars believe that they were altars where was provided cult to the domestic deities; others, however, without denying them a religious binding, think that they were an area closely connected to the feminine world, especially associated to the delivery and subsequent woman's purification period.<sup>23</sup>

The interpretation of the sources raises serious difficulties because we cannot truly assess the contribution of a particular object or structure without knowing exactly its aim in the context (space and time) where it belonged.

One possibility to circumvent this issue is by comparison. We can try to use sources whose purpose has already been identified to classify similar material. In the case of the *box bed*, for example, it is possible to use identical structures found in Amarna, whose purpose was defined thanks to the presence of cultic objects on site. It was noticed that those structures were cult places so, that may serve to prove the theory that ascribes the same aim to the *box bed* in el-Medina.

Having already identified the main constraints of the available sources for the study of the Household Religion, we turn to analyze a particular issue, one that Ritner considers to be the major reason for the absence of this theme in the bibliography – the absence of a thorough knowledge about the domestic architecture.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Renfrew, C.; Bahn, P., *Archaeology. Theories, methods and practice*, London, 1996, p. 388.

<sup>23</sup> Friedman, *art.cit.*, pp. 97-111; Lesko, *art. cit.*, pp. 205-206; Meskell, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-136.

<sup>24</sup> Ritner states: «The reasons for this absence are not hard to discover and become apparent when one consults the necessarily brief entries on 'house' in some reference works.» Ritner, *art. cit.*, p. 171.

Ritner considers that the study of the domestic architecture has been clearly neglected in favor of the study of temples, tombs and palaces<sup>25</sup>. This fact conditions the knowledge that is possible to have, not only of the houses but also of the space that the cult occupied in them.

This preference is not only be due to a clear contrast between the greatness and monumentality of some buildings and the simplicity and triviality of others. To this reality also contributes the fact that we are dealing with constructions that, besides of being made of perishable materials, were subjected to various levels of occupation and are currently in a high state of degradation, due to the utilization of the materials undertaken by the indigenous communities.

However, if after the work of H. Rieke, *Der grundriss des Amarna – Wohnhouses* (1932), the subject was relegated to second plan, the truth is that one can say that the topic has gained new life and currently has become again a target for study by the bibliography. “In recent years the study of urbanism in Egypt has been brought more and more to the center of attention.”<sup>26</sup> Thereby, it becomes increasingly easy to have access to details about the domestic architecture in Ancient Egypt. And so, it’s possible to try to overcome this impediment.

Here, once again, the settlements in evidence are el-Medina and Amarna, certainly due to the relevance of their contribution: «Despite the growth of settlement archaeology in Egyptology over the last thirty years, the site of el-Amarna (...) is still regarded as providing the best opportunity for understanding the social and economical dynamics of the Egyptian city.»<sup>27</sup>

This analysis of the available sources for the study of the Household Religion makes us realize that we stand before a group of material that

---

<sup>25</sup> Ritner, *art.cit.*, p. 171. Arnold strengthens this idea: «Domestic architecture was for a long time neglected by Egyptology in favor of monumental and religious architecture»: Arnold, F., “A Study of Egyptian Domestic Buildings” *Varia Aegyptiaca* 5 (1989), p. 123.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, p.75.

<sup>27</sup> Shaw, I., “Egyptian patterns of urbanism. A comparison of three new kingdom settlement sites” in C. J. Eyre (ed.) *Proceeding of the Seventh International Congress of Egyptologists, Cambridge, 3 – 9 September 1995* (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 82), Leuven, 1998, p. 1049.



presents several issues that need to be resolved so that their contribution may be potentiated. Nevertheless, despite the fragmentary, scattered and indirect nature of sources, despite the severe limitations in terms of provenance and dating, despite the difficulties of interpretation and although there still is much work to do in the domestic archaeology field, it seems possible to provide an overview of the religious practices in domestic context.

Namely, the problems and constraints that are related with the Household Religion might be really frightening when we intend to undertake a thorough analysis of this religious practice; however, they are not truly deterrent to its implementation. If we see the Household Religion as a practice *per se*, that is, if we limit its proceedings to those which took place within the home, we reduce the scope of action and only by doing so the path is already simpler and facilitated. Then, regarding the sources, it is really necessary to always remember the constraints associated with them, but without letting they become more vigorous than the contribution they can give.

Thus, we know that it will be easier to characterize the Household Religion in the New Kingdom and in later periods and, moreover, understand some of its dynamic in prior periods if we resort to places like Lahun, for example. This settlement dates from the Middle Kingdom and contradicts the idea of the almost exclusive provenience from el-Medina and Amarna.

Concerning the interpretation of sources, if it is imperative not to make a misleading analysis, it is also necessary to be bold, and to search for landmarks in the plethora of the available material to infer conclusions that are as reliable as possible. In other words, we should not discourage and give up before uncertainty, but rather seek similarities that allow us to create concrete hypotheses. The available material is diverse; the specific bibliography is poor but the works dedicated to related issues is immense; the excavation reports are an essential tool; and the capacity to look beyond the uncertainties becomes an essential requirement. Thus, we consider that the available features allow us to try to overcome the difficulties, so that in the future

we get a clearer picture of this religious practice. This is a task that we intend to pursue.

## **Bibliography**

ARNOLD, F., “A Study of Egyptian Domestic Buildings”, *Varia Aegyptiaca* 5 (1989), pp. 75–93.

ARNOLD, F., “Houses” in D. B. Redford (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, Vol. II, Cairo, The American University in Cairo Press, 2001, pp. 122-127.

DAVID, R., *The Pyramid Builders of Ancient Egypt A Modern Investigation of Pharaoh's Workforce*, London – New York, Routledge & Keagan Paul, 1986.

DERCHAIN, P., “La Religion égyptienne” in *Histoire des Religions* I, Encyclopédie de la Pléiade, Paris, Éditions Gallimard, 1970, pp. 63-140.

FRIEDMAN, F., “Aspects of domestic life and religion” in L. H. Lesko (ed.), *Pharaoh's workers The villagers of Deir el Medina*, Ithaca – London, Cornell University Press, 1994, pp. 82-97.

LESKO, B. K., “Household and domestic religion in Ancient Egypt” in J. Bodel; S. Olyan (eds.), *Household religion in antiquity*, The Ancient World: Comparative Histories, Malden – Oxford – Victoria, Blackwell Publishing, 2008, pp. 197-209.

LUFT, U. H., “Religion” in D. B. Redford (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, Vol. III, Cairo, The American University in Cairo Press, 2001, pp. 139-145.

LUISELLI, M., “Personal piety (Modern Theories related to)” in J. Dielman; W. Wendrich (eds.), *UCLA – Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, Los Angeles, 2008, pp. 1-9  
(<http://repositories.edlib.org/nelc/uee/1053>).

- MESKELL, L., *Vies privées des Égyptiens. Nouvel Empire 1539-1075*, Paris, Éditions Autrement, 2002.
- RENFREW, C.; BAHN, P., *Archaeology. Theories, Methods and Practice*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1996.
- RITNER, R., “Household Religion in Ancient Egypt” in J. Bodel; S. Olyan (eds.), *Household religion in antiquity* (The Ancient World: comparative histories), Malden – Oxford – Victoria, Blackwell Publishing, 2008, pp. 171-196.
- SHAW, I., “Egyptian patterns of urbanism. A comparison of three new kingdom settlement sites” in C. J. Eyre (ed.), *Proceeding of the seventh International Congress of Egyptologists, Cambridge, 3 – 9 September 1995* (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 82), Leuven, Uitgeverij Peeters, 1998, pp. 1049-1060.
- SLIWA, J. 1992. “Die Siedlung des Mittleren Reiches bei Qasr el-Sagha. Grabungsbericht 1987 und 1988”, *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Abteilung Kairo* 48 (1992), pp. 171-191.
- STEVENS, A., “Domestic Religious Practices” in J. Dielman; W. Wendrich (eds.), *UCLA - Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, Los Angeles, 2009, pp. 1-31 (<http://escholarship.org/oc/item/7s076628w>).

# Eroticism and Sensuality in *Papyrus Westcar*

Telo Ferreira Canhão  
Centro de História da Universidade de Lisboa

Beyond a certain cult to whom we sometimes want to connect the Egyptians and their monumental constructions, religious beliefs or ways of understanding life and death, they were real human beings similar to ourselves. Even recognizing that pharaonic Egypt kept a certain decorum and reserve on themes concerning sexuality (with a monumental artistic spoil, early as pre-historical ages as far as 3000 years of history, most of the pornographic iconography which reaches the present time is from late eras, some of the New Kingdom but the majority from Greco-roman period), the Egyptians lived it as we live our own: either discreetly or sometimes in an exuberant way, and also giving reason to a certain pornographic nature or sickly minds, some even covered by their complex religion. Adultery, polygamy, incest, prostitution, homosexuality, masturbation and even necrophilia and bestiality<sup>1</sup>,

---

<sup>1</sup> About these last issues, there aren't as much documental, textual or iconographic evidences, as the first ones. Besides those, we all know, from the world conception of Atum through masturbation, and the divine conception *post mortem* of Horus, that Isis's magic, assuming the form of bird, permitted to conceive with the dead Osiris, there are also ithyphallic gods, gods with aggressive sexual behaviour and a structure of thought that admitted a powerful sexual life after death. Moreover, of course, we have Herodotus testimony in II, 89: «When they die, the notable wives aren't immediately sent to embalm, the same with very beautiful or highly considered women; they'll be delivered to embalm when they are dead for two or three days already. They act this way to prevent that embalmers united themselves to these women; it is said that one of them was surprised while he was uniting himself to the corpse of a very recent deceased woman, and was exposed by a colleague». Moreover, in II 46, Herodotus relates one event that was probably a ritual act: «The inhabitants of Mendes venerated all animals of the caprine species, males, more than females, due to the fact they possess horns of a larger dimension; there is one they venerate more then the others. When he dies, there is an enormous grief in the entire district. The goat and god Pan in Egyptian language were called Mendes. At my time, something extraordinary happened in that district: a goat had sexual intercourse with a woman at everybody's sight, this act became to be an object of sexual exhibition». Lise Manniche talks also about an act of exhibitionism concerning

are human and divine practices, real or dreamt, documented in texts and images from ancient Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

Egyptian tales are a valuable source of information that according to Gustave Lefebvre, «offer us society, its hierarchy, different classes, and also moral ideas and religious beliefs, a faithful portrait, full of life, rich colours, details carefully written, which allow us to see into the most deep of the Egyptian soul. Out of this, it matters not only to the history of literature, but probably even more to civilizations»<sup>3</sup>. To get the closest approach possible to «moral ideas» from the «Egyptian soul» that Lefebvre mentions, we propose to analyze two of the five tales generally designated as *Khufu and the Magicians*, which come to us in a single manuscript: *Papyrus Berlin 3033*, known as the *Papyrus Westcar*.<sup>4</sup>

The justification of this designation is commonly accepted, usually with no discussion, because of information of Richard Lepsius information, whose manuscript was given to him by Miss Mary Westcar, during his stay in England (1838/1839). Nevertheless, we can register a small imprecision: Miss Westcar got married about twenty years earlier, on the 3rd July 1819 and was living in Italy when Lepsius was in England and she had never been in Egypt. What would have happened then? The parents, John and Mary Westcar, were friends and neighbours of Dr. John Lee, lawyer, antiquary and patron of science, whose name was also associated to another papyrus, a judicial papyrus from Lord's Amherst

---

bull Apis, which virility was reinforced when a woman showed her intimacy. She also relates that in the books of dreams, of which are known two examples, one written to the man (*Papyrus Chester Beatty III recto* or *BM 10683*, from circa 1175 B.C.) and another written to the woman (*Papyrus Carlsberg XIII*, which is in Copenhagen, from II century B.C.), can be found examples of relations between humans and animals, showing that if in reality they didn't exist, they lived in a wide erotic imagination: «Man could copulate with jerbos [small rodent from the dipodideos] swallows and pigs, while women could choose between the rat, horse, donkey, sheep, wolf, lion, crocodile, snake, baboon, ibis or hawk. Frequently dreams were auguries of fate» (Hérodote, *L'Égypte. Histoires, livre II*, Paris, 1997, pp. 63-65 and 109-111; see Manniche, L., *Sexual Life in Ancient Egypt*, London – New York – Bahrain, 2002, pp. 28 and 100-102.

<sup>2</sup> See Manniche, L., *op. cit.*, 2002, pp. 12-30.

<sup>3</sup> Lefebvre, G., *Romans et Contes égyptiens de l'époque pharaonique*, Paris, 1988, p. XXV.

<sup>4</sup> See Canhão, T. F., *A literatura egípcia do Império Médio: espelho de uma civilização*, Ph. D thesis in *History – Ancient History*, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa, Lisboa, 2010, Volume Two, pp. 21-75.

collection. A nephew of the couple, Henry Westcar, the sole member of the family who visited Egypt, would have brought it to England in 1824 and gave it to Dr. Lee. Lepsius visited Lee in 1838, who granted him the papyrus to study, which was kept in his possession till his death. After he deceased, in 1886, his son found it between his papers and donated it to the Berlin Museum<sup>5</sup>. Apparently Lepsius and Mary never crossed their ways, remaining her name connected to the papyrus, probably a confusion of Lepsius or John Lee, due to the proximity to the Westcar family, at the exchange moment of the papyrus from the hands of the first to the second. Anyway the origin of the name of the papyrus is the Westcar family; not Mary but her cousin Henry.

The five tales are artificially connected with each other and only the three middle texts are complete, missing the initial part of the first and the end of the last one. Obviously the inexistence of the beginning and the end, gives the possibility that originally they could have been five or any other number of texts. Lefebvre, for instance, based on the possibility that the builder of the Great Pyramid could have had nine sons and the fact that each tale is introduced by a different son, opens the possibility that they could have been originally nine<sup>6</sup>, the same number of kings of the V dynasty, so we say. We do know for a fact how the nine was important to Egyptians in its magic symbolic of numbers; plurality of pluralities. Anyway, the perusal of the *Papyrus Westcar* allows us to understand that it is a work of political propaganda, written with the purpose of relating the origins of the kings of the V dynasty. «The birth of the V dynasty», the name ascribed today, is unquestionable, although at the time of that relate it didn't make any sense. It's mostly the treatment given to the «attachment to the fourth tale»<sup>7</sup>, which in

---

<sup>5</sup> Dawson, R. W.; Uphill, E. P.; Bierbrier, M. L. (1995), *Who Was Who in Egyptology*, London, 1995, pp. 241-242 and 438.

<sup>6</sup> Lefebvre, G., *op. cit.*, p. 71.

<sup>7</sup> Simpson says, «it's presented as a sort of an attachment»; Lefebvre calls it firstly «a supplemental chapter» and ahead, «supplement to the fourth tale: the birth of the kings of the V dynasty»; (Simpson, W. K., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, New Haven/London, 1973, p. 15; Lefebvre, G., *op. cit.*, p. 70; Parkinson, R. B., *The Tale of Sinuhe and Other Ancient Egyptian Poems (1940-1640 B.C.)*, Oxford, 1997, p. 105.

our opinion, is not correct. On the contrary, it's the climax of this text. All the other tales are the «attachments». There it is legitimate the lawfully right to the throne of the kings of the V dynasty, through the relate of the birth of its three first kings – Userkaf, Sahure Neferirkare Kakai – delivered by Isis, Nephtis, Meshkhenet, Heket and Khnum, having the former narratives created the favourable environment to their divine birth.

The manuscript is a copy from circa 1600 B.C., II Intermediate period, more precisely, from the Hyksos period, from XV or XVI dynasty<sup>8</sup>, approximately a thousand years later the events there related. Although the colophon hasn't survived, we believe that it wasn't the original, which would probably be from the XII dynasty or even earlier, with a possible decrease of the temporal spacing between the literary dating and the historical dating to half. The original length of papyrus is unknown, it actually measures 1.69 meters, but its width, today around 33.5 centimetres, being admissible that it could have had initially 38/39 centimetres, due to the fact that the text has no margins and that usually a few centimetres blank around it were left, to protection of the text in case of deterioration of the papyrus.<sup>9</sup>

Its state of preservation is not the best, alternating lighter passages with others darker and exhibiting in between a few zones very badly treated; there are holes in the papyrus. It's totally written in lines, 295 in overall, some of them with many flaws, in a very cursive hieratic writing, set in twelve “pages” of 25, 26 or 27 lines, with exception of the first one that only has twelve lines separated by a blank column with circa 1.5 centimetres, space not always totally respected<sup>10</sup>. Its much deteriorated starting allows us to imagine that one or two pages might be missing, being the first related tale practically inexistent. It merely survived the funerary offer that ends and with which the king Khufu thanks king Djoser and his first lecturer priest, whose name's

---

<sup>8</sup> Erman, A., *Die Märchen des Papyrus Westcar*, I, (einleitung und commentar), Berlin, 1890a, p. 1; Lefebvre, G., *op. cit.*, p. 70; Parkinson, W. K., *op. cit.*, 1997, p. 105.

<sup>9</sup> See Parkinson, R. B. and Quirke, S., *Papyrus*, London, 1995, pp. 38-39.

<sup>10</sup> Erman, A., *op. cit.*, 1890a, plates 1 to 12.

also missing, the relate of the prodigy just attended. Nine “pages” in *recto* supplemented with three more in the *verso*, at the end of which the text abruptly terminates, being also lost, as we mentioned, the end of the fifth tale.

One day, about 4.600 years ago, king Khufu fought tedious hearing fantastic tales, each one presented by one different son, where magic was the main character. In the middle of Ancient Kingdom, two historical scenarios were imagined: on one hand the action occurs in Khufu’s time, in the IV dynasty, on the other hand we can hear relates of events occurred years earlier, in the III or even in the IV dynasty, focusing several kings. From the three complete tales of the *Papyrus Westcar*, we will only come up with two, for being the only ones that emanate a strong erotic and sensual charge. One of them, the second on the papyrus alignment, is usually pointed out as «Un prodige sous le roi Nebka. Le conte du mari trompé» (Gustave Lefebvre) or simply «The deceived husband» (Luís Araújo). It’s also known by the titles: «Le crocodile de cire» (Pierre Grandet), «Châtiments d’amours adultères» (Pascal Vernus) or «The Marvel which happened in the time of king Nebka» (William K. Simpson)<sup>11</sup>. The king’s son, the future sovereign Khafre, tells that when the first lecturer priest Ubainer attended the founder of the III dynasty, Nebka («the *ka* is the lord») – known as Sanakht («strong protection») and brother of his successor, the famous Djoser –, to Ptah’s temple, in Memphis, his wife committed adultery continuously, having Ubainer been informed of the situation through a faithful woman-servant. This case compels him to execute a wax sculpture of a crocodile, to read a magic formula and deliver it to the servant with precise instructions. In the fulfilment of these instructions, the wax crocodile transformed itself into a real crocodile capturing the man when he was taking his usual bath in the lake of Ubainer’s house, after consuming the act. They remain seven days at

---

<sup>11</sup> Lefebvre, G., *op. cit.*, p. 74; Araújo, L. M., *Mitos e Lendas do Antigo Egipto*, Lisboa, 2005, p. 163; Grandet, P., *Contes de l’Égypte ancienne*, Paris, 1998, p. 65; Vernus, P., *Chants d’amour de l’Égypte antique*, Paris, 1992, p. 44; Simpson, W. K., *op. cit.*, p. 16.



the bottom of the lake till Ubainer's return. When he returned with the king, who he informed about the situation, the man, who was still alive, was condemned to death by the sovereign that offered him to the crocodile. The wife of the first lecturer priest was also condemned to death by the pharaoh, but by fire. The tale ends with a funerary offer exactly the same of the first tale, changing only the names of the honoured.

The «Tale of the deceived husband» is clearly a text where good moral behaviours are defended, because adultery was a behaviour condemned by the ancient Egyptians. In the epoch of these tales, the Old Empire, punishment was death, only ordered by the pharaoh; later, in the Greco-Roman epoch, these matters could have been solved through divorce. The tale reveals that the Egyptians had an erotic imagination quite sophisticated, but much closer to an esthetical dimension than to pornography and apparently, denouncing feelings at anyone's hand.

Our attention could rely upon several aspects of the text, from magic to death penalty, going through the king's role, through the offerings or by the tedious of Khufu, but, what really matters is the analyse of the adulterer behaviour and, especially, the way it is transmitted. After Ubainer left with the king Sanakht, the text says through several lacunae:

«So, Ubainer's wife fell in love with a man... Then she sent him a box full of clothes... He came with the servant. A few days later, as there was a pavilion in Ubainer's garden, he told Ubainer's wife: "There is certainly a pavilion in Ubainer's garden! Well, let's have a moment there!" Then, [the wife] of Ubainer sent a message to the chief servants who was in charged of the garden saying: "Ordain to prepare the pavilion [of the garden]". She spent there all day drinking with the man ... .. happy... And when night fell, he invited her to go down to the lake and then the woman-servant ... ..»<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> PW 1, 23 to 2, 23.

Due to the papyrus state, this phrase is kept in suspension, leaving the doubt upon the woman-servant's task.

The first impression is that besides the name of the pharaoh Sanakht it just appears Ubainer's name. Never named are: the wife, the lover, the chief of woman-servants, and the woman-servant who always accompanies the wife. We do know the importance of names in the pharaonic Egypt! What really mattered was the act itself, to allow a conclusion that reached all the Egyptian society, and not the persons themselves. Only those on the moral and good behaviour' side were nominee. This situation is reinforced, as on other tales, by the name given to the deceived husband that shapes his character. The name Ubainer is composed by the union of the *uba* verb, which means «to pierce (stone)», «open», «explore», «reveal», with the substantive *iner* that means exactly «stone», «rock»<sup>13</sup>. We may, then, translate this name for “he who pierces stone”, that in this context has clearly a sexual connotation which means a powerful phallus. It's an indication of virility of its title-older that only could end well in this story. Ubainer solves the question favourably assisted by magic, but the final word and the punishment of the prevaricators that could only be applied by the pharaoh, whose power hangs over the tale, the same as other pharaohs upon other tales, bearing the stamp of political propaganda.

Ubainer's wife simply fell in love with a man with whom she had no daily contact. To show him her intentions she sent him a box full of clothes. A woman-servant took the clothes and returned with a man. Such a gift might infer that the man was of a lower social condition, and only through this passage, it's not clear whether he came with the woman-servant to express his gratitude for the gift or for any other reason. He only took the liberty for a direct sexual approach a few days later, making the proposition to go to the pavilion of the garden and there “have a good moment”. At this point, there is a clear intention of privacy, a certain erotic tension, a sexual charge, because it seems that until that moment he was received at Ubainer's house like a

---

<sup>13</sup> Faulkner, R. O., *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, Oxford, 1996, pp. 23-24 and 58.

normal visitor. From this point on the situation will change to another, which was apparently unusual, especially to unwanted and indiscreet, regards.

The woman didn't sustain unnecessary conversations, neither false prejudicial excuse, confirming the initial interest, giving the orders to prepare the pavilion where she spent the day drinking with the man. Unfortunately here, it's neither the elegance nor decency with which this theme is treated that deprives us of knowing what happened in the pavilion, but due to the fact that this part of the papyrus is quite damaged. However, one word, or at least what lasts of it, seems to have survived: the word «happy». Such happiness culminates in the final act: the refreshing bath at the lake. The bath is the element that shows us that these visits to the pavilion of Ubainer's garden were regular and continuous, as later on Ubainer will affirm explicitly when speaking to his chief of servants: «When the man walks down the lake, as his daily habit, you'll throw immediately the crocodile... after him»<sup>14</sup>.

When finally we make ready to work out magic, we have another description:

«Then, Ubainer's wife sent a message to the chief of servants who was in charge of the garden, to say: "Make the pavilion of the garden ready. Look, I shall go there to rest!" Then the pavilion was prepared with all sorts of good things. They [sic] go there, and there they spent a nice day with the man. At nightfall, the man did what he usually does. Then, the chief of servants immediately threw the wax crocodile to the water. He transforms into a seven cubits crocodile and grabs the man (with his mouth)»<sup>15</sup>.

There are clearly dissonances with the first description. On the first time, the message to the chief of servants was dry: «Make the pavilion of the garden ready». This time it seems that there was the necessity

---






<sup>14</sup> *PW* 2, 27-2, 28.

<sup>15</sup> *PW* 3, 5-3, 12.

for a justification: «Make the pavilion of the garden ready. Look, I shall go there to rest!» Before due to the bad shape of the papyrus or not, we «only» know that they drank, the «pavilion was prepared with all sorts of good things». More than the creation of a favourable environment, it seems a way of presenting those who served well. The first time they found happiness, this time «they had a nice day». Now the idea given is more of joyful routine and less of happiness than the initiation provides. Actually, it was a daily routine, as we have seen before and now reinforced with one more phrase inscribed with this meaning: «And when the night fell, the man did what he daily did».

Another point to speak about is the behaviour of the servants. We have the chief servant who was in charge of the garden and a woman-servant. Their roles are antagonistic. Or they have the same role but respond to characters that are in opposite sides. The chief of the servants is faithful to the master of the house, being his eyes, his ears, and even the one who, in his absence will run the punishment prepared by him for both lovers. A person from whom the housewife keeps apart, communicating only through «messages» always sent at distance. Always in the shadow, he will finally watch out the necessary and sufficient to relate the case to his master, without, due to the bad state of the papyrus, letting us know exactly how. Therefore the woman-servant is a «friend and confidant» of the mistress of the house being through her that she approaches initially the man. She was the one who gave the man the clothes as a gift, and possibly the complementary message, introducing him at her mistress's house. It was her, who in the first description, in truly connivance with the illicit, could have been vigilant in the garden, revealing the insecurity in which the act occurred.

One of the passages is yet doubtful. In the second description, it is clearly said: «They went there and had a nice day with the man». There is no doubt: Ubainer's wife and her woman-servant were the only two feminine characters of this tale. The first doubt arises from the reading of this excerpt of the papyrus. None of the consulted photographs, those published by A. Erman in 1890 and those of W. D. Davies

published in 1988, both of good quality, allow the total reading of this word at the end of the ninth line of third “page”, having to rely upon the transcriptions made by Erman in 1890 to hieroglyphic Egyptian, and by Blackman, in 1936, this one published by Davies together with the most recent photographs of the papyrus. Erman read this passage keeping the missing character, , and Blackman for the missing character gave a suggestion to which there is no alternative: in that flaw, it would be the G. N35 character () reading <sup>16</sup>. Apparently the only chance of restoring seems to be the suffix pronoun in the third person plural, common to both masculine and feminine, in a verbal construction of the gender *sDm.in.f* that describes an accomplished action, corresponding therefore to a past: *wn.in.sn*. To be a suffix pronoun in the third person feminine singular, that could be the character G. O34 () which was exactly the best suited, what was the justification that we could give to the presence of a mark of plurality, the character G. Z2 () immediately after the restored space and two spaces after the G. O34 character? On the other hand, the ending of the phrase, the circumstantial complement of company «with the man» doesn't allow us to put the phrase in the masculine; in this context, «They went there to have a pleasant day with the man» doesn't make any sense. Who would «they» be? It's not possible to put this phrase in the masculine.

Therefore, the woman-servant accompanied her mistress to perform a vigilance service? The deterioration of the papyrus also doesn't allow us to assume that at the first time it had been in vigilance. If that was the fact, how would it justify that «they had a pleasant day with the man»? Would she have been involved in this alcove episode? This is a problem that seems not to concern the translators in general: the plural is not in context, there is even a missing character in the original word, so instead of «they» it is translated to «she» and the situation

<sup>16</sup> Erman, A., *op. cit.*, 1890a, plate III; Erman, A., *Die Märchen des Papyrus Westcar*, II (*glossar, palaeographische bemerkungen und feststellung des textes*), Berlin, 1890b, plate's III transcription; Blackman, A. M., *The Story of King Kheops and the Magicians. Transcribed from Papyrus Westcar (Berlin Papyrus 3033)*, Whitstable (edited for publication by W. V. Davies), 1988, p. 3 and plate 3.

is solved. We may as well accept to be told that it could be an error of the original or of the copyist, and that it's necessary to do a change in context (hard to do if we want to present side by side the hieroglyphic Egyptian transcription, the transliteration and the translation!). As we have already seen in other tales, the mistakes were very frequent; in the lines that we now scrawl, we will still prove a clear pronoun change that, in a certain way, proves a weak knowledge of its application or, at least, certain carelessness. Nevertheless, we understand that if the text is not explicit, doubt is legitimate. It can be said that that in the previous actions developed in the pavilion, the narrative points out the involvement of only two lovers. But the uncompleted phrase «and when the night came, he immediately made the invitation to go down to the lake and then the woman-servant ... ...», if it's not said what the woman-servant was supposed to do, it doesn't say what she was doing there either, in such an intimate ambiance in the company of two other characters! Another argument that could be used to contradict this opinion is the fact that in the end there are only two and not three convicted! However, even there we are prevented from being objective, once that in no circumstance the woman-servant was submitted to any punishment. Even if it was only to be faithful to her mistress in a litigation of this nature against her master, the truth is that she didn't commit any adultery, after all the illicit in focus in this tale.

Deductive error or truth? We ignore other examples of this practice in ancient Egypt, but from what we can deduce through the mutilations of the text, it seems that we can have here the registration of one of the most ancient manifestations of a sexual relationship between three people, behaviour generically named today by the French expression *ménage à trois*. As far as we know, Egyptian tales register at least another case in which the conditions of the text determinate the doubt of the investigators, associated to sexual behaviours of the ancient Egyptians. The conjugation between the fact that nothing is clearly expressed and the fact of being a text despoiled of parts that could be enlightening, it reminds us of *The Tale of the King Neferkaré and General Sasenet*. There, one king, possibly Pepi II, is watched by «the

first amateur detective» related by History that followed the king in a series of surreptitious displacements to general's home. Apparently they were love visits<sup>17</sup>. Also there, nothing is explicit, not even the text is completed, which feeds the doubt: homosexual behaviour or not? As in the «Tale of the deceived husband», it only exists the idea of a certain furtive and conspiracy ambience, with indicia that allow us to jump to certain conclusions, without being, however, bearer of any certainty.

However, for a plot in which the theme is clearly condemned by coeval society, adulterer's behaviour was less than furtive. It seems that Ubainer's wife wanted to be uncovered! At least that was the author's wish. Due to this fact, we have our doubts about the fact that the woman-servant could or could have not been surveying! That is expressed nowhere! Perhaps due to this, the tale is marked by the insistence in the number seven: seven fingers length for the wax crocodile, seven cubits of length for the real crocodile, seven days stood the priest lecturer with the king and that the man survived in the bottom of the lake at the crocodile's mouth. Seven, the sum of the plurality with the totality: the tale should be an example for anyone, culminating in an exemplar punishment for everybody. Perfect!

---

<sup>17</sup> None of the three fragments of this tale (one in wood from the XVIII<sup>th</sup> dynasty, one ostracum from the XX<sup>th</sup> dynasty and a theban papyrus from the XXV<sup>th</sup> dynasty, written in a similar style to those of the *Papyrus Westcar* tales and seemed to reflect also persons and behaviours of the Old Kingdom) presents the end of the narrative, but its plot has risen an inflamed discussion about who might be the person that enjoys the love favours of the king. Apparently it could have been the general Sasetet himself, to whose place the king ran furtively at dead of night, until just because it's known for sure that in ancient Egypt, «other sources show that homosexuality was seen as an aberration of the ideal pattern of familiar life, similar to adultery» (Parkinson, R. B., *Voices from Ancient Egypt, an Anthology of Middle Kingdom Writings*, London, 1991, pp. 54-56). The denouncing of this behaviour shouldn't let us vacillate for being the figure of the king. When, perhaps, the words «god» or «divine» are applied to the Egyptian sovereign, it's not a reference to the physical being but to the sacred character of his function. He would be more a «king-priest» than a «king-god», once his practice derives from the religious commitment assumed before the gods, in whose will his individual action is dissolved. In fact, the pharaoh was a man that sometimes was laid across the divine word, which, even so, marked a great difference towards the common of the mortals (Canhão, T. F., «*O meu caminho é bom*». *O Conto do Camponês Eloquente. Texto hieróglifo, transliteração, tradução comentada e análise de uma fonte documental*, MA dissertation in History of Pre-Classical Civilizations – Area of Egyptology, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas da Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisboa, 2003, p. 205).

If in this tale the hastiness of Ubainer's wife allowed a certain exaltation of sex, the next one tends more to stimulation and pleasure of the senses. The third tale in alignment with the *Papyrus Westcar* is not that prosaic; on the contrary, it is an authentic exercise of aesthetics. Known as «The Boating party» (M. Lichtheim), «The nautical trip» (Luís Araújo), «Un prodige sous le roi Snéfrou. Le conte des rameuses» (Gustave Lefebvre), «L'eau pliée en deux» (Pierre Grandet), «Les distractions du pharaon Snéfrou» (Pascal Vernus), «The Marvel which happened in the reign of King Snefru» (William K. Simpson) or «How Djaja-em-ankh saved the day» (Lise Manniche)<sup>18</sup>, has now as a reporter prince Bauefré. Searching a way of occupying king's Snefru time, founder of the IV<sup>th</sup> dynasty, father and predecessor of Khufu, his priest lecturer chief Djadjaemankh, suggested him a promenade in the royal lake, in a vessel conducted by the most beautiful girls of the palace. During the promenade, one of them let fall into the water a fish-pendant of new turquoise<sup>19</sup> that garnished her hairs. She stopped

---

<sup>18</sup> Lichtheim, M., *Ancient Egyptian Literature. A Book of readings*, vol. I: *The Old and Middle Kingdoms*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1975, p. 216; Araújo, L. M., *op. cit.*, 2005, p. 167; Lefebvre, G., *op. cit.*, p. 77; Grandet, P., *op. cit.*, p. 68; Vernus, P., *op. cit.*, p. 138; Simpson, W. K., *op. cit.*, p. 19; Manniche, L., *How Djadja-Em-Ankh saved the Day: A Tale from Ancient Egypt*, New York, 1977.

<sup>19</sup> In the Middle Kingdom, the ornaments in fish form were quite popular, many of them made in metals and precious stones. Particularly those that reproduced the *Synodontis batensoda*, a fish that had a quite peculiar habit of swimming in the vertical with the mouth upwards and the tale downwards, as it is possible to find in some tombs relieves. Maybe because that's the position in which he appeared suspended in a wire and other jewels. (Brewer, D. J.; Friedman, R. F., *Fish and Fishing in Ancient Egypt*, Cairo, 1990, p. 4). There are beautiful exemplars in gold, that are believed that could be protective amulets against drowning or enchantments favourable to fertility. From the fish-cat family, some are still related to motherhood and children. Maybe for that reason, the insistence towards the king wasn't a simple whim but the fear of losing protection (Houlihan, P. F., *The Animal World of the Pharaohs*, Cairo, 1996, pp. 131 and 133; Castel, E., *Egipto. Signos y símbolos de lo sagrado*, Madrid, 1999, pp. 305-306). The particular form of the jewel, the fish, has a strong erotic connotation, as it stands out in several Egyptian love poems, where it appears specially the *tilapia* fish of which red colour potentates the erotic charge. There is also the reference to a beloved woman that plays with «fat fishes». Would it be an indicium's of fertility or lust? There's also the expression of happiness of the lover that has his heart «mad of happiness like the red fish in the lake» due to the arrival of his beloved one (Manniche, L. *op. cit.*, 2002, p. 80; Vernus, P., *op. cit.*, pp. 88 and 95; Araújo, L. M., *Estudos sobre erotismo no antigo Egipto*, Lisboa, 1995, p. 116). The grammar construction of the phrase, forces to read «a fish form wire of new turquoise» and not «a new fish form wire of turquoise»; it was not the wire that was new but the turquoise: it was believed that at the time the turquoise would lose its colour, the reason for a new one to be more valuable (Parkinson, R. B., *op. cit.*, 1977, p. 122).



roaring and guiding the other roars, forcing them also to stop, calling the attention of the king. She refused to keep on roaring and answering the pharaoh that she didn't want him to substitute the lost pendant, she only wanted hers. Without any other solution, the king called Djadjaemankh to solve the situation. By magic arts, he puts half the water of the lake over the other half and caught the pendant, and gave it back to the owner. He returned the lake to its original position and all end in a great party. This tale also ends with the same funerary offer equal to the first one, only changing the name of the homages.

It's not the magic of overwhelming half the water of the lake over the other half, likewise Moses before the waters which went apart in the Red Sea, not even the fact that king Snefru appeared to be a calm, comprehensive and affable man, that interest us. Not even the fact that the king walked around the palace looking for an occupation, like Khufu he fought tedious by hearing fantastic tales. Somewhere else, about the behaviour of the heracleopolitan Pharaoh Nebkauré Kheti, who ordered to retain a certain Khuenanupu to keep himself distracted with his rhetorical, we already affirm and justify that the appeal of the pharaoh's boreness is a literary stratagem to frame the expression that follows that type of affirmations<sup>20</sup>. What we want to point out is the proposition presented to the king and the way in which the scene took place, overflowing sensuality and eroticism.

The proposition of the chief lecturer priest Djadjaemankh to Snefru was simple: «...provide a boat with all the beauties of your palace! The heart of your majesty will calm, seeing the uproar rowing upwards and downwards. And you'll see the beautiful swamps of your lake. You'll see your fields and their beautiful shores. Your heart will appease with that.» In Djadjaemankh's perspective it wasn't exactly the beauty of the women which would calm his heart, but the clamour with which the proposed task would be performed. The beauty was in the swamps of the lake, in the fields and its banks. As we'll see the king had a vision of things quite different from this image, apparently his brother, whose name gives

---

<sup>20</sup> See Canhão, T. F., *op. cit.*, 2003.

us an exemplar description of his constitution and appearance: *djadja* means «head», «crane»; *in* is the preposition «in», «with»; *ankh* means «life». So Djadjaemankh means «crane-with-life», in other words he should have been a tall figure, slender and thin, fleshless; that kind of person today would be called “skinny”, or “ambulant corpse”. If it wasn’t for the fact that the Egyptians considered that thought, intelligence, will or feelings were developed by the heart, playing no role whatsoever in the brain, and we could think that this name made justice to someone with an unusual activity and intellectual capacity!

The king grabbed the idea and affirmed: «I will, most certainly do my boat promenade!» He gave immediately the following order: «Bring me twenty ebony oars covered with gold, with sandal grasp oars covered with electro»<sup>21</sup>. It’s not strange that the owner of everything that existed in Egypt wished to surround himself with all the best! We are still creating the environment and it all had to be perfect! Soon he added: «Bring me twenty women with beautiful bodies, with firm breasts and braided hair and that haven’t given birth yet.» Snefru knew what he was talking about! The fact they were twenty was related to boats equipage that exceptionally was composed by women rather than men. The details of «beautiful bodies» are full of eroticism and sensuality: «firm breasts», pride of those who possess them and greediness of those who desire them, «braided hair», the hair an element of seduction upon which Egyptians had an entire aesthetic related to refined and ostentatious wigs always full of beautiful and precious ornaments, «and that haven’t given birth yet», which means plain bellies, sensual and with no deformations particularly of those who had already faced a pregnancy<sup>22</sup>. It’s not all! The order ends with

---

<sup>21</sup> Alloy of gold and silver.

<sup>22</sup> Unlike L. M. de Araújo, who interprets the phrase «and that haven’t given birth yet» as if the king had demanded the presence of twenty virgins, in the context it seems much more appropriate our interpretation. It is an aesthetic appreciation that is at stake and not an anatomic or moral one. Besides, virginity should not have interfered in the body structure as pregnancy would, such as, not being a virgin and not having given birth could maintain the favourable plastic to the pharaohs’ delight. We have researched in dictionaries and other works and we could not find the word «virgin» or any other, or concept to which it could be related. The same way, we have never detected in any text, expressed

the following demand: «And let them bring (too) twenty nets and give those nets to the women when they undress their clothes». That's what the Egyptians systematically show us in relieves and paintings! Especially in the New Kingdom, the slender and slim figure of the Egyptian women more than what can be guessed, is seen through the generous transparencies of their linen clothes, here replaced by nets. The Egyptians knew perfectly well the principle that what is veiled is much more seductive than what is impudently exposed: covered only with a net, roars are not entirely naked, they were barely dressed. This is the most eroticist touch of the tale.

Next, it is proved that, in fact, this was not Djadjaemankh magic, because «they kept on roaring downwards and upwards and his majesty's heart was happy to see them roaring». As we had insinuated before, his majesty's heart was not happy to hear them, but to see them roaring. Paying attention to this tale and several events of his reign, Snefru, besides being a good pharaoh was an aesthete. He did not appreciate only what is good. He also appreciated the beauty. The way he treated works of art to which he became affected, besides demonstrating the truth art lover that he was, shows us too that he was a true gentleman. Instead of using his «status» of «Lord of the Two Lands» when the fish-pendant of new turquoise of the poop roar, the one who established the rhythm and led the roars, fell into the water, he let her contradict him, refusing his gift to replace the lost jewel and still found a way to recover the object.

---

or implied, any idea that displayed that, that issue was brought up by ancient Egyptians (Araújo, L. M., *op. cit.*, 1995, pp. 121-122; Manniche, L., *op. cit.*, 2002; Manniche, L., *Egyptian Luxuries. Fragrance, aromatherapy, and cosmetics in pharaonic times*, Cairo, 1999; Faulkner, R. O., *op. cit.*, 1996; Allen, J. P., *Middle Egyptian. An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs*, Cambridge, 2000; Gardiner, A., *Egyptian Grammar*, Oxford, 1994; Sánchez Rodríguez, A., *Diccionario de Jeroglíficos Egipcios*, Madrid, 2000; Machado, M. J., “Casamento” in Araújo, L. M., (dir.), *Dicionário do Antigo Egípto*, Lisboa, 2001, pp. 188-189; Araújo, L. M., “Adultério” and “Erotismo” in Araújo, L. M., (dir.), *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32 e 326-329; Nunes Carreira, J., “Mulher” in Araújo, L. M., (dir.), *op. cit.*, pp. 585-592; Yoyote, J., «Érotisme», «Famille», «Femme» and «Marriage» in Posener, G. *Dictionnaire de la civilisation égyptienne*, Paris, 1998, pp. 106-107, 110-111, 115-116 and 162-163; Shaw, I.; Nicholson, P., “Erotica”, “Marriage”, “Sexuality”, “Toys” and “Women” in *British Museum Dictionary of Ancient Egypt*, London, 1995, pp. 93, 170-171, 265-266, 293-294, 306-307).

When Djadjaemankh arrived to solve the problem, «his majesty told him: Djadjaemankh, my brother, I did as you told me to, and the heart of his [*sic*]<sup>23</sup> majesty calmed down when he saw them roaring. However, the fish-pendant of new turquoise of one of them, the poop roar fell into the water and she immediately stopped, stopped roaring and breaking the team. Then I asked her: “Why don’t you roar?” and she answered: “The fish-pendant of new turquoise fell into the water”. Then I told her: “Roar!” I myself will replace it.” However, she answered him: “I like my object best then a similar one!» Here it is proved beyond doubt that what quieted his majesty’s heart was seeing them roaring. It is also proved that when one’s misfortune made them all stop, that disappointed the king, who did everything to have his boat moving again, or better, their bodies in movement. In this case, he did not move mountains, but lakes. The text follows:

«Then, first lecturer priest Djadjaemankh pronounced the magic words and immediately put half the water of the lake over the other half, founding the fish-pendant which was over a shell [turtle]. Then he went after it and he returned it to its owner. As to the water, that was twelve cubits (depth) in the middle (of the lake), ended with twenty-four cubits after being overlapped. Then he pronounced the magic words and conducted the waters to its normal position. His majesty spent (the rest) of the day in feast in company of all the royal house.»<sup>24</sup>

As Lise Manniche well observed: Djadjaemankh saved Snefru’s day<sup>25</sup>. Even the simple detail of the fish-pendant being over a turtle shell and not in the mud or over a stone or a potsherd, was accounted

---

<sup>23</sup> In the manuscript there is a change between the suffix pronoun: it should be the first person of the singular masculine (*.i*) and not the third person of the singular masculine (*.f*), as it is normal in similar cases of the direct speech. It should be read, then, «...and the heart of my majesty...»

<sup>24</sup> *PW* 6, 7-6,14.

<sup>25</sup> Manniche, L., *op. cit.*, 1977.

by the author, as being perfectly framed in the poetic and paradisiacal environment of the tale.

To conclude it is necessary to make it clear that we should not consider the Egypt of the pharaohs as a country of permissibility, lasciviousness or disorder. These two tales express exactly the opposite: the first promotes the correction of a deviation, of a non-acceptable social fanciness; the second is a hymn to aesthetic, to beauty. None of them falls into obscenity or simple wiggery, able to be listened to in any royal salon. The developed plots make that characters in the limelight are women, only possible due to the respect they deserved in ancient Egypt, based on the theoretical principle of *maat*, which embraced everybody in a singular form, rich or poor, man or woman, granting absolute equality in the fundamental rights. Egypt had clearly a more open society, tolerant and uninhibited than its contemporaries did, where women were quite respected possessing freedom and privileges unimaginable for women of coeval societies, and even for some in modern societies.

Beyond several examples given through art, in which it is accompanied by literature obviously in a smaller number, it is the juridical criterion that shows best the status of liberty and independence in which women lived in ancient Egypt. Surely in New Kingdom, or even before, single women, married ones or widows had legal authority to attend their own business, selling, buying or legating, without the need of any authorization. They could also serve as witnesses in deals or decisions. In the inheritances without will, they had the same rights as their brothers. Moreover, if the right of management of a property acquired by the couple during the marriage belonged to the husband, the wife got one third of all the properties of the couple in case of divorce or death of the husband. The other two parts were retained by the husband in the first case, or split up between the heirs in the second, according to the rules often written.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Canhão, T. F., *op. cit.*, 2003, p. 159.

Not only the women of the dominant social groups had this status! In Cairo's *stele 27-6-24-3*, from the Ramesside period, there is an example that, even directly connected to the idea that the Egyptians had slavery – more a labour dependency than a real property detained by someone over somebody else – that shows us the concept they had of women in pharaohic Egypt. Two women-slaves, never treated as «citizens», had the liberty to sell their own lands, incidentally to their owner, but the document itself attests the possibility of being done to someone else<sup>27</sup>. It's a clear sign that they did not need the agreement of their master to do business, neither could he take advantage of his situation. In the roman sense - men-object or human machines deprived of any rights – slavery was not practiced in Egypt otherwise than in the Ptolemaic period<sup>28</sup>. Sticking to the point, without any details or justifications in the opinion of the Egyptians it was clear, that each one was equal to each other, either free or non-free, men or women. This way, in Egypt they could all enjoy eroticism and a natural but delicate sensuality.

---

<sup>27</sup> Kruchten, J.-M., "Law" in *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Ancient Egypt*, vol. 2, Oxford, 2001, pp. 279.

<sup>28</sup> Canhão, T. F., "Datação e temática do Conto do Camponês Eloquentes" in *Cadmo* 15 (2005), pp. 177-178.

# Greek *Nomos* and Egyptian Religion: cultural identity in Hellenistic Egypt

Ronaldo Guilherme Gurgel Pereira  
Instituto Oriental – FCSH-UNL

## 1. On political usages of Egyptian religion

When Alexander the Great entered Egypt with his army in 332 B.C. the Egyptians had recently been defeated in their latest attempt to break the Persian rule, under pharaoh Khababash<sup>1</sup>. After a last and brief period of Egyptian contestation, the Persians restored their rule, disbanded the Egyptian army and established a Persian garrison. Consequently, when the Macedonians took up the administration of Egypt, there were no longer a native army or military elite. Huss<sup>2</sup> surmises that the Persian king Dareios III absorbed the remainder of the Egyptian army after the revolt led by Khababash. The author also observes that the Macedonians made large use of the bureaucratic and administrative Egyptian elite (the «land's administrators» or ἰσμηνοῦς). Apart from this, no military authority was bestowed on Egyptians. As Rostovtzeff explains<sup>3</sup>, the Macedonians are likely to have kept the native administration since they needed an efficient administrative

---

<sup>1</sup> Khababash led a revolt against the Persians in ca. 337 B.C. He is briefly mentioned in the Satrap Stele (Cairo CG 22182), dated to times of Ptolemaios son of Lagos – or Lagide – when he was still but a satrap ruling in the name of Alexander IV, the official successor of Alexander the Great. This stele was dedicated in commemoration of the restoration of the rights of a temple at Buto, after Ptolemaios Lagide victory over Demetrius Poliorcetes at Gaza in 312 B.C. This stele mentions (lines 32-44) an inspection around the Delta region prepared by this pharaoh so that any effort of another invasion by the Persian fleet could be blocked off. Cf. Simpson, W. K., (ed.), *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, London, 1972.

<sup>2</sup> Huss, E., *Der Makedonische König und die ägyptischen Priester*, Stuttgart, 1994, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Rostovtzeff, M., *A Large Estate in Egypt in the Third Century BC*, Rome, 1967), p. 3.

body. This was crucial in their struggle against the newborn Hellenistic kingdoms of Syria and Macedonia.

The political relations between Macedonian and Egyptian elites had many strands<sup>4</sup>. On the one hand, the Macedonian army was initially welcomed as liberator from the Persian domination; on the other hand, the Macedonians needed some sort of justification for their rule over the Egyptians nonetheless. The well-established Egyptian priests required more well-founded arguments than the mere “right of conquest”. This meant negotiation. The great social prestige the priests enjoyed as well as the influence they could exercise over society made them key factors in the process of recognition and legitimacy of the Macedonian dynasties<sup>5</sup>. After all, what the Macedonians tried to simulate was a natural and valid continuation of the ancient pharaonic lineage.

Throughout its Hellenistic rule, Egyptian priests functioned as major mediators establishing native acceptance of the Macedonian authority. The following generation of Macedonian kings, *i.e.* the *basilei*, pursued the strategy adopted by Alexander, which most foreign rulers of Egypt made use of as well. He took on the title of pharaoh and consequently assumed all prerogatives and duties such a position demanded within the Egyptian symbolic universe. In other words, in his role as pharaoh, the *basileus* had to meet the demands of an Egyptian king. Inevitably, this introduced a peculiar *realpolitik* at the Hellenistic court in Egypt, where native traditions and royal Egyptian ideology were considered to be important elements of the “affairs of the king”.

At the beginning of the Hellenistic administration of Egypt, Ptolemy I seized the opportunity to build on Egypt’s religiousness as means of reaching its population. A good example of this scheme

---

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Huss, *op. cit.*, offers a very consistent debate about the different ways and dimensions of the possible negotiation, cooperation and opposition between the Ptolemaic kings and the Egyptian priestly elites.

<sup>5</sup> In Egypt, there were two distinct Macedonian dynasties: the Argeade, who were the blood-lined successors of Alexander the Great, and the Lagide, who were the blood line successors of Ptolemy son of Lagos – or Lagide. Ptolemy (later known as Ptolemy I), was a former general of Alexander, then Satrap on behalf of the Argeade and at last the first Macedonian king of Egypt after the integrity of Alexander’ Empire collapsed due to his generals’ disputes.



is the introduction of the Sarapis cult; *i.e.* the birth of a new Greek-Egyptian syncretistic deity created with the help of Egyptian and Greek sages. According to Kessler, the introduction of Sarapis enabled the Greek masses to take part in the Egyptian festivals at the Sarapeion of Alexandria<sup>6</sup>. The god's cult soon became popular among the Hellenised population of Egypt and spread throughout the eastern Mediterranean basin and towards all the places owned by the Lagides<sup>7</sup>. Religiousness thus worked as a driving force that brought cohesion to the new social structure of Hellenistic Egypt. It formed part of each Lagide ruler's agenda to build, expand, and restore Egyptian temples. The widespread popularity of the Egyptian gods, cults and religious practices among the Hellenised population also meant the maintenance of the social prestige enjoyed by the native priests.

Once Egypt's aristocracy was reduced to priests, "spirituality" became an important political tool for the elites on both sides, *i.e.* Egyptians and Greeks/Macedonians. According to Sahlins<sup>8</sup>, "politics" serves as the essential mediator between man and society, nature and cosmos. By means of the political "instrumentalisation" of religiousness, Hellenistic Egypt developed a new symbolic *campus*<sup>9</sup>, which in turn created channels through which power could be negotiated. This was possible because both elites recognised the new political channels as a valid means of communication between the respective representatives of Hellenistic and Egyptian bodies or "symbolic jurisdictions". Since both

---

<sup>6</sup> The author understands it as a Hellenistic attempt to connect the Egyptian and Macedonian calendars and their cultural habits. See: Kessler, D., "Das hellenistische Sarapeum in Alexandria und Ägypten in ägyptologischer Sicht" in M. Görg; G. Höbl (eds.), *Ägypten und der östliche Mittelmeerraum im I. Jahrhundert v. Chr.*, Wiesbaden, 2000, pp. 163-230.

<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Sarapis was later worshipped throughout the entire Roman Empire as an aspect of Zeus/Jupiter.

<sup>8</sup> Sahlins, M., *Islands of History*, Chicago, 1985.

<sup>9</sup> Cf.: Bourdieu, P., *Le Sens Pratique*, Paris, 1980). The author defines as "*campus*" a cultural concept for a symbolic and delimited field or sphere in a society, in which antagonism between different instances of power could both agree as valid for the legitimacy of the negotiations. A *campus* could be understood most simply as some sort of "jurisdiction of *habitus*". In this case, in Hellenistic Egypt, the social importance of the priestly social group implied in a reconnaissance of their specific line of action on Egyptian society as the best way to achieve a channel for political negotiations.

sides needed each other to achieve symbolic and political legitimacy as well as to gain support among both their rivals and allies, it was necessary to establish a symbolic space in which both groups could interact as representatives of their respective symbolic universes.

What occurred in such a space can be seen in the so-called “Synodal decrees”<sup>10</sup>, where priests and kings acted interconnectedly due to their shared interest, namely the welfare of (priests and) Egypt<sup>11</sup>. All decrees start by reporting the individual benefactions made by the particular king to Egypt and its temples. By royal order, priests all over Egypt had to regularly meet for political deliberations in a synod<sup>12</sup>. The decrees were produced at the end of their session. They gave an account of all aspects concerning the king’s domestic and foreign policies and dealt with several issues regarding Egypt’s social organisation.

To the modern reader, the decrees serve as valuable minutes of the discussions between the king and the priests. The list of topics varies and may include, among others, the creation of a new *phyle* of priests or a reform of the Egyptian calendar – as can be found in the Decree of Canopus. The Raphia Decree, on the other hand, offers details of a military campaign to Syria including the return of lost sacred statues to the Egyptian temples and fiscal privileges granted them (as reduced taxes, for instance). The Memphis/Rosetta Decree makes reference to the organisation of a new fleet and army, an amnesty given to rebels, and the concession of fiscal privileges to the temples. All decisions taken were made public in every Egyptian temple by means of a stone stela that was inscribed in three languages: Greek, Demotic and hieroglyphs.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> The idea of regular synods existed already since the Ramesside times. However, with the Ptolemaic rule, this practice was adopted with some innovations. For instance, the text of the decrees then followed some Hellenistic canons such as the invocation of Fortune, and the oath formula. There is a comparative study concerning the Ptolemaic synodal decrees and their antecessors in: Vallbelle, D.; Leclant, J. (éds.), *Le Décret de Memphis*, Paris, 1999.

<sup>11</sup> Although the priests worked together with the king, the temples also enjoyed some economic autonomy.

<sup>12</sup> Ptolemy V Epiphanes determined the end of the obligatorily of those regular synods. See: Crawford, D. J; Quaeguebur, J.; Clarysse, W., *Studies on Ptolemaic Memphis*, Leuven, 1980.

<sup>13</sup> See: Huss, *op. cit.*, 1994, for a detailed analysis on the social and political context of the decree’s production. See also Höbl, G., *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, London, 2001.

Seen from a broader perspective, the synods and their issued decrees formed part of a larger context of political relations between two spheres of power in activity in Egypt. The decrees worked as official and organised reaction of the Hellenistic government to home affairs – albeit clad in Ptolemaic religious practices. The priests returned the king's favour in form of material and symbolic support. This brief sketch helps to understand the role the priests played in the legitimacy of the Hellenistic ruler cult in Egypt. It is important, however, to note that this cult did not form a linear continuation of dynastic Egypt practices.

In the traditional Egyptian royal cult, pharaoh, due to his divine status (*ntr*), received a cult both during his life and after his death. He acquired and maintained his divinity with the help of specific kingship rituals. These began with his coronation, which was also the most important ritual. In this ceremony, the king was transformed into a god by means of the god's union with the royal soul (*k3*). As a god, pharaoh was identified with the sun god Re as well as with the manifestations of the gods Horus and Osiris<sup>14</sup>. The actual cult became popular at the beginning of the rule of Amenhotep III (ca. 1390-1352 B.C), *i.e.* during the New Kingdom. It followed the pattern of the daily temple rituals of other gods very closely and kings even erected (colossal) statues of themselves where offerings were deposited<sup>15</sup>. As this clearly shows, pharaoh was understood to be the mortal bearer of divine functions; at the core, he was essentially a mediator between the natural and the supernatural world.

The dynastic royal model stands in stark contrast to the Hellenistic *basileus* in Egypt, who totally depended on his own charisma and political skills for his transformation into a living god. The deification of the *basileus* based on his superior character (*arete*) stands in closer connection to the Greek custom of hero-worshipping than any

---

<sup>14</sup> Since the Middle Kingdom, the pharaoh was also identified with the god Amun-Re.

<sup>15</sup> There are depictions of the king making offerings to his deified self. These statues represented the royal *ka* of the living king, and when he or she worships their own statue, they are actually worshipping the concept of deified kingship as represented in the royal *ka*, which the king embodies. See: Morenz, S., *Ägyptische Religion*, Stuttgart, 1960.

Egyptian practices. However, the heroes' cult was in fact a cult centring on dead people and was maintained to preserve role models for future generations. Overall, the royal Hellenistic cult may therefore be labelled innovative<sup>16</sup>. This idiosyncratic cult first emerged under Ptolemy I. It started out as another Greek hero cult in honour to Alexander, whose body had been transported from Babylon to Macedonia for his burial and subsequent placement in a shrine in Alexandria. Ptolemy, however, did not only give homage to the deceased; he seized the cult as an opportunity to promote himself as a legitimate successor to Alexander. Nonetheless, Ptolemy never claimed divine worship for himself. It was his son, Ptolemy II Philadelphos, who arranged the formal deification of his parents around 280 B.C, which proclaimed them as "Saviour Gods" (*Theoi Soteres*). Some years later, Ptolemy II Philadelphos and his wife, Arsinoe II, were also deified. In contrast to Ptolemy I, they were endowed with their new title of the "Sibling Gods" (*Theoi Adelphoi*) while still living. They were worshiped in the above-mentioned shrine of Alexander.


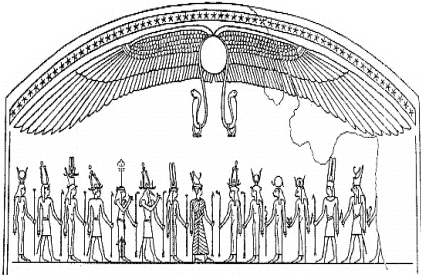


The development of the ruler cult as a Hellenistic "state religion" had the support and collaboration of Egyptian priests. The decrees they wrote usually<sup>17</sup> employed the Egyptian artistic canon thereby depicting the royal Macedonian family as a traditional pharaonic family. The following is a typical example of a Hellenistic Egyptian synodal decree:

---

<sup>16</sup> See: Préaux, C., *Le Monde Hellénistique*, vol. 1, Paris, 1997, pp. 238-71; Balsdon, J. P. V. D., "The Divinity of Alexander", *Historia* 1 (Stuttgart, 1950), pp. 363-388. Sanders, L. J., "Dionysius I of Syracuse and the Origins of Ruler Cult in the Greek World", *Historia* 40, (Stuttgart, 1991), pp. 275-87; Walbank, F. W., "Könige als Götter, Überlegungen zum Herrscherkult von Alexander bis Augustus", *Chiron* 17 (1987), pp. 365-82.

<sup>17</sup> Although the Decree of Raphia proclaimed that the pharaoh should be represented on horseback with Macedonian armoury and spear, the style remained Egyptian. See: Clarysse, W., "Ptolémées et Temples" in D. Vallbelle ; J. Leclant (éds.), *Le Décret de Memphis*, Paris, 1999, pp. 41-65 ; image of the stele in p. 47.

Table 1: Canopus Decree (Cairo CG 22186).

<p>A) The top of the stela from Kom el-Hisn, in the Delta. (Greek Momenphis; Egyptian <i>Jm3w</i>). <i>Capital of the third nome of Lower Egypt.</i><sup>18</sup></p>	<p>B) A <i>Facsimile</i> with a drawing of the same stela by Gunther Roeder (the segmentation of the texts was omitted by the author of this paper).<sup>19</sup></p>
 <p>A. 1) Top of the stela with part of the text written in hieroglyphs.</p>	 <p>This stela shows Ptolemy III Evergetes I and his wife, queen Berenike II, portrayed as gods at a gathering with their ancestors and Egyptian gods.<sup>20</sup></p>
 <p>A. 2) Middle section: The hieroglyphic text was chiselled atop its demotic version underneath which the Greek text can be found.</p>	 <p>A. 3) At the bottom of the stela follows the Greek version of the document.</p>

<sup>18</sup> Kamal, A. B., *Catalogue Général des Antiquités Égyptiennes: 22001- 22208 Stèles Ptolémaïques et Romaines*, Tome II, Le Caire, 1904, Plate LIX (top = A.1); LX (middle = A.2) ; LXI (botton = A.3).

<sup>19</sup> Roeder, G., *Kulte und Orakel im alten Ägypten, Band II*, Zürich, 1960, p. 151.

<sup>20</sup> Below the winged sun from the left side: Berenike I following Ptolemy I Soter (the first royal pair); Arsinoe II following Ptolemy II Philadelphos ( the second royal pair); then the goddess Seshat, the god Thoth and the third royal pair: Berenike II and Ptolemy III Evergetes I. Ptolemy III is in front of the goddess of the third Egyptian nome, followed by the goddesses Hathor, Sekhmet, Sekhat-Hor, and the gods Amun-Re, Horus and a last god, unrecognizable due to damages to the stela.

Portraying the Ptolemies as Egyptian pharaohs, the visual discourse suggests the ideal of continuity between the former pharaohs and the current dynasty. In addition to this, the decrees proclaimed the legitimacy of the cult to the royal family.<sup>21</sup> They made the good deeds of the king public, reinforced the loyalty of the priests and recorded contracts concerning both the king and the priests. In fact, the newly fashioned Hellenistic ruler cult received full support from Egyptian priests through the decisions taken during the synodal decrees:

Table 2: Synodal Decrees.<sup>22</sup>

<b>Ruler</b>	<b>Modern Name</b>	<b>Synod Location, Date</b>	<b>Reason for Synod</b>	<b>Royal Images Decried</b>
Ptolemy III Evergetes I	<i>Canopus Decree</i>	Canopus, 238 B.C.	Royal jubilee and deification of a princess	Deified princess Berenice
Ptolemy IV Philopator	<i>Raphia Decree</i>	Memphis, 217 B.C.	Victory at Raphia	King and queen
Ptolemy V Epiphanes	<i>Memphis Decree</i> (also known as <i>The Rosetta Stone; Rosettana</i> )	Memphis, 196 B.C.	Coronation of the king	King
Ptolemy V Epiphanes	<i>Philensis II</i>	Alexandria, 186 B.C.	Suppression of rebellion	King and queen
Ptolemy V Epiphanes	<i>Philensis I</i>	Memphis, 185 B.C.	Enthroning of Apis bull	King and queen

The decrees prescribed the inclusion of royal statues fashioned in Egyptian style inside Egyptian temples. However, the decrees also promoted social modifications, such as the creation of new priestly ranks, a calendar reform<sup>23</sup> and several fiscal benefits and privileges

<sup>21</sup> For the relations between the priestly synodal decrees and the ideology of the Hellenistic ruler cult, see: Thompson, D., *Ptolemaic Oinochoai and Portraits in Faience, Aspects of the Ruler Cult*, Oxford, 1973); Stanwick, P. E., *Portraits of the Ptolemies – Greek Kings as Egyptian Pharaohs*, Austin, 2002. See also Pollit, J. J., *Art in Hellenistic Age*, Cambridge, 1986.

<sup>22</sup> Table based on Stanwick, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. The Canopus Decree.

granted to the temples in the decrees made under Ptolemy V Epiphanes. On the whole, the Egyptian priests helped consolidate a new cultural element in Egypt by accepting and organising the royal cult. On top of that, the decrees also featured passages on tax balances, fiscal privileges and several other political aspects relevant to the Greek/Macedonian government and the Egyptian priests. Politics played an important role in this process of social transformation altogether as both elites needed to establish platform on which their concerns could be debated. The decrees in turn functioned as intermediary medium to securing their respective ambitions. Generally speaking, they served as a balanced foundation for the discussions of power relations between political institutions, *i.e.* the throne and the temples.

As was already mentioned, the decrees were produced in three languages, namely two Egyptian scripts, hieroglyphs and demotic, as well as in Greek. The Greek name for the decrees, ψήφισμα, suggests some degree of symbolic submission on the part of the Egyptian priestly class<sup>24</sup>. On the other hand, the original Egyptian term for these decrees, *wḏ*, *i.e.* “(to) order or (to) command”, implied a priori that giving the orders was a pharaonic and divine prerogative<sup>25</sup>. According to one example given by Valbelle<sup>26</sup>, the royal decrees written under the Saïtes showed a tendency to reproduce Old Kingdom protocols. Gunn’s analysis of the royal protocol on a Saïte stela of pharaoh Apries highlights the use of the phrase «Le roi lui-même (dit): “Sa majesté a ordonné [...]”»<sup>27</sup>. Overall we may say that Egyptian priests

---

<sup>24</sup> ψήφισμα (*Psephisma*) is essentially an oath taken by those part who compromise themselves into fulfill the promises firmied by the Hellenistic decree. Indeed, there was already an interesting debate concerning whenever the synodal decrees from the Ptolemaic age should be classified as Egyptian or Hellenistic documentation. See: Clarysse, *art. cit.*, in D. Vallbelle; J. Leclant (éds.), *Le Décret de Memphis*, Paris, 1999, pp. 41-65.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *wḏnsw*: «royal decree». Moreover, this term had also a magical meaning, connected to the divine capacity of creation through the will. See: Bickel, S., “La Cosmogonie égyptienne avant le Nouvel Empire” in *OBO* 134, Fribourg, 1994, p. 101, and Morenz, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

<sup>26</sup> Valbelle, D., “Décrets égyptiens antérieurs aux Lagides” in D. Vallbelle; J. Leclant (éds.), *Le Décret de Memphis*, Paris, 1999, pp. 67-90. This article establishes a comparative analysis between the Egyptian priestly decrees from the Pharaonic and Hellenistic ages. It deals with several examples from different Dynasties.

<sup>27</sup> Gunn, B., “The Stele of Apries at Mîtrahina”, *ASAE* 27 (1927), pp. 211-237.

during the Hellenistic age made use of a traditional political means of communicating with the pharaoh. A new addition, however, was that it was no longer the pharaoh who issued the decrees and took responsibility for their contents but the priests; they now took over the authorship and responsibility for the production of the decrees. In this sense, we may say that Hellenistic pharaohs enjoyed less symbolic power than his dynastic counterparts did.

The mentioned examples underline the priests' attempts at making the decrees appear to have been issued voluntarily or as a reward in recognition of the royal efforts to please the Egyptian temples and the country's people. Incorporating elements of Hellenistic protocols in these texts, the decrees achieved the status of acceptable by the Hellenistic Power. Thus the latter was satisfied with the alleged Egyptian symbolic submission implicit in a *ψήφισμα*, while the Egyptians were equally pleased with the usurpation of the traditional symbolic pharaonic prerogative of ordering the production of a decree.

There was no such thing as an Egyptian clergy in the Lagide Empire. As Huss observes, the Ptolemaic kings established – to some extent – a free spiritual space throughout the *hieratikoi* and *hieroi nomoi* respectively. This can also be perceived in the fact that priests were self-governed<sup>28</sup>. Moreover, Egypt was dotted with several temples for various deities, and inside temple walls different political points of view were common. The native priestly elite in Hellenistic Egypt was a complex and heterogeneous group with very particular objectives and strategies.

Since the Macedonian kings adhered to Egyptian rituals and symbolic prerogatives, the local priests were willing to recognise them as pharaohs. Following their native sacred rituals and symbolic prerogatives, Egyptian priests recognised the Macedonian kings as pharaohs. The priests also took part in the promotion of regular synods, at which the exchange of honours, prestige and privileges bestowed on both parties and mutually recognised were written on stelae and

---

<sup>28</sup> Huss, *op.cit.*, p. 51.



consequently positioned throughout Egypt. Nonetheless, it was the same Egyptian priests who also supported the many and long regional rebellions that rose during the Ptolemaic rule – including some led by native self-proclaimed rebel pharaohs<sup>29</sup>. The Ptolemies, for their part, sought to control Egyptian temples by unifying them as one body. The organisation of regular synods proved a helpful tool in this undertaking. Eventually, a ψήφισμα-*wd* became a key factor in the establishment of regular dialogue between Egypt's ruler and its priests. Although some of the elites were willing to negotiate their support of the Hellenistic authority, the relationship between the Macedonian king and the Egyptian priests remained a complex issue overall.

## **2. On *Nomos* as “Greek” self-perception**

Although many Hellenised settlements were founded in Egypt following the great influx of Hellenic and Hellenised immigrants, Hellenistic Egypt only featured three ‘true’ Greek *poleis*<sup>30</sup>. The first of these was Naucratis in the Delta, which had been created centuries

---

<sup>29</sup> See: Polybius V, 107, 1-3; XIV, 12, 3-4; for the Egyptian military (the native veterans from the Battle of Raphia, against Antiochus III from Syria) revolt against Ptolemaios IV. This revolt happened from 207 B.C. to 186 B.C. across the southern (namely the region of Thebes, or “Thebaid”) Egypt and was crushed only by Ptolemaios V. For many years Egypt had a rebel pharaoh ruling the rebelled lands in South: the first, since 206 B.C., was Hor-em-Akhet, and later, since 199 B.C., Ankh-Wennefer. There is another rebellion described in the Rosetta Stone, lines 19 -20 (Greek text) between 198 B.C. and 197 B.C. – at the Delta, by this time – crushed again by Ptolemaios V. Even Alexandria faced a revolt, against the brothers Ptolemaios VI Philometor and Ptolemaios VII Evergete II (at the time in dispute for the succession), led by the Greco-Egyptian Dionysus Petoserapis (see Diodorus XXI 15 a., for the rebellion at Alexandria). After his defeat at Alexandria, Petoserapis fled to the country and started a new revolt against the Lagides (see Diodorus XXX 17 b., for the second revolt led by Petoserapis). Finally, a second revolt at the Thebaid started in-between 91 - 88 B.C., again with full priestly support, against Ptolemaios X Alexander I. It was partially controlled by his successor Ptolemaios IX Soter II (by the time in his second reign). At this time, the rebel province would be “pacified” only in 30 B.C., by Cornelius Gallus, after the Roman conquest of Egypt. See: Veïsse, A.-E., *Les «révoltes égyptiennes»: recherches sur les troubles intérieurs en Égypte du règne de Ptolémée III à la conquête romaine*, Leuven, 2004.

<sup>30</sup> The Greek “colonisation policy” in Egypt differed from the one they used in other places, where they founded one Greek-fashioned city after another. Their aim in Egypt, on the other hand was not to recreate a Greek world within the new cities.

before the arrival of the Macedonians. This was followed by Alexander's founding of Alexandria on the Mediterranean coast. Finally, Ptolemy I established Ptolemais<sup>31</sup> (or Ptolemais Hermiou<sup>32</sup>) in Upper Egypt. The Greek settlers – most of whom stemmed from the army – were sent to the countryside, so-called *chora*, where the majority of them received land in exchange for military services. Of this cleruchy<sup>33</sup> Höbel writes that:

«This system of allotting land to military settlers probably spread over all the grain-producing lands of the Ptolemaic empire, [...]. Scattered over the entire country, the kleruchs introduced Greek ideas and technology into the agricultural environment in which they were living.»<sup>34</sup>

Broadly speaking we may say that Hellenisation was a consequence of the attempt to construct a *homogeneia*, i.e. a community that was tied not only by blood, but also by common behaviour, values, customs, traditions, laws, etc. In other words, the aim was a community joined by a common consensus of customs and laws, or, differently put, a community united by a common *nomos*<sup>35</sup>. What is more, the Hellenistic

---

<sup>31</sup> For further explanations about the exception status of Ptolemais, and for a general analysis about the foundation of new Greek cities and settlements in Hellenistic age, see: Préaux, C., *Le Monde Hellénistique* vol. 2, Paris, 2002, pp. 401-460. For Egypt's case, see: Mueller, K., *Settlements of the Ptolemies*, Leuven, 2006.

<sup>32</sup> For the epithet ἐρμείου, see Ptolemy, *Geography* (4.5.66). R.S. Bagnall comment about Ptolemais as being «the metropolis of the Thinite nome». Cf.: Bagnall, R. S., "Cults and Names of Ptolemais in Upper Egypt", *OLA* 85 (1998), pp. 1093-1101; Strabo describes this city (17.1.42,813) as the largest city of Upper Egypt and not smaller than Memphis (Egypt's second city): μεγίστη τῶν ἐν Θηβαΐδι καὶ οὐκ ἐλάττων Μέμφεως.

<sup>33</sup> The Greek idea of cleruchy originated during the Classical period, however there was also an Egyptian similar precedent dated back to the New Kingdom – *vide* Appendix 01 for chronological correspondences – See: Bagnall, R. S. "The Origins of Ptolemaic Cleruchs", *BAmSocP* 21 (1984), pp. 7-20. For further analysis of land status in Hellenistic Egypt, and specially in the Fayum, see: Crawford, D. J., *Kerkeosiris: an Egyptian Village in the Ptolemaic Period*, Cambridge, 1971.

<sup>34</sup> Höbl, G., *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, London, 2001, p. 61.

<sup>35</sup> *Nomos* is a cultural convention that aims at promoting symbolic agreement and therefore the idea of social cohesion. By this terms, "to be honest" always was an individual choice, however the Greek definition of "honesty" was given by the group's *nomos*.

*homogeneia* comes closest to our modern concept of a nation. This ties in well with Hall's argument that a nation is not only a political entity, but also a unit that produces meaning, *i.e.* system of cultural representations<sup>36</sup>. Hall conceives nation as a symbolic community that is marked by its power to generate a sense of identity and, consequently, solidarity and loyalty.

Another element which is crucial to the understanding of Hellenistic Egypt is *nomos*, which played an important role in the growth of the concept of "Hellenic" in a new reality of cultural interactivity, *i.e.* in the process of creating what we now call "Hellenistic". The concept of *nomos* is apparent in numerous ways ranging from culture in general, laws, traditions and human artefacts (*e.g.* the polis, gymnasium, *etc.*) to the way people distributed of gifts. *Nomos* originally meant the common law found in a society that exclusively followed ancient customs and established social norms<sup>37</sup>. *Nomos* even included specific moral values, such as the notion of decency and comfort found in social relationships. It therefore stood in contrast to any form of "arbitrary" or "chaotic" decisions<sup>38</sup>. In addition to these aspects, Benveniste notes that the term *nomos* was also used to refer to a pasture shared by virtue of customary law.<sup>39</sup>

As we have seen, *nomos* gained its legitimacy through a consensus based on social relationships and habits. It grew out of a group's interest to perpetuate the commonwealth of its individuals and eventually developed into an efficient system that promoted social cohesion. It provided and helped create a sense of social and cultural identity among its members, who recognised its validity and obeyed the order of the symbolic universe it entailed. Ultimately, *nomos* was a common denominator of values and judgements uniting different individuals, who adopted the *nomoi* as unquestionable truth, reality and norm. Apart

---

<sup>36</sup> Hall, S., "Who needs 'identity'" in S. Hall; P. Du Gay., *Questions of Identity*, London, 1996, pp.1-17.

<sup>37</sup> Benveniste, E., *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, Paris, 1969, p. 85.

<sup>38</sup> "Arbitrary" in order to escape from any kind of social normative code. The term implies the absence of any sort of law, criterion, order, *etc.*

<sup>39</sup> Höbl, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

from social cohesion, *nomos* also fostered the continuity of an ancestral past, be it historical or symbolical, and encouraged individuals to heed their cultural traditions. It was as a consensus creator par excellence and the ultimate mechanism for identifying and differentiating people who recognised Greek laws, *i.e.* Greeks – us, and individuals that did not obey them, *i.e.* barbarians – the others. By the same token, any disturbance of what was considered normal by a Greek community was felt to be an infringement of a taboo and consequently “barbarian” – in other words, outside a Greek *homogeneia*.

### **3. On religion and Egyptian identity**

Everyday life in Hellenistic Egypt soon gave rise to intercultural marriages producing a succession of generations that were able to switch between two cultural identities<sup>40</sup>. It is safe to posit a closer co-existence of Greeks and Egyptians than has previously been assumed. Furthermore, integration it is likely to have occurred among every social class, not only elites. Religion as such seems to have allays served Egyptians as key identity marker. The Egyptian Negative Confession, *i.e.* spell 125 of the Egyptian New Kingdom’s *Book of the Dead*, can be read as a definition of Egyptian identity and nicely sums up what was thought to be proper social behaviour:

«[...] I know the names of the 42 Gods who exist with thee in this broad hall of the two Truths, [...]. I have brought thee truth; I have done away with sin for thee. I have not sinned against anyone. I have not mistreated people. I have not done evil instead of righteousness. I know not what is not (proper); [...] I have not

---

<sup>40</sup> Recent studies how Hellenistic elites actually helped to intermedate the relations between Greek and Egyptian symbolic universes. Dioskourides is a case of biculturalism: Greek officer in an Egyptian sarcophagus covered with hieroglyphs and even using the Egyptian custom of matrilineal filiations. See: Collombert, P., “Religion égyptienne et culture grecque: l'exemple de Dioskourides”. *CdE* 75 (2000), pp. 47-63. For other emblematic cases, see also: Coulon, L., “Quand Amon parle à Platon (La statue Caire JE 38033)” *RdE* 52 (2001), pp. 85-125; and Germeur, I., “Les syngènes Aristonikos et la ville de Tp-bener”, *RdE* 51, (2000), pp. 69-78.

increased nor diminished the measure, I have not diminished the palm; I have not encroached upon fields. I have not added to the balance weights; [...] I have not driven small cattle from their herbage. [...] I have not (failed to observe) the days of haunches of meat. [...] I am pure. [...]. I have not been deaf to words of truth.»<sup>41</sup>

In addition to this, Egyptian religiousness also functioned as an effective mechanism of social organisation. It spiritually permeated every dimension of everyday life and was deeply connected with what Egyptians perceived as “culture”. Egyptians essentially understood being Egyptian as a matter of following what they called “Maat”, *i.e.* truth or righteousness. Maat belonged to the key concepts of Egyptian mentality and was present in all dimensions of its people’s natural and spiritual life<sup>42</sup>. Furthermore, supernatural phenomena could be explained with reference to Maat. Ultimately, the native people living in Egypt did not only consider each other to be “Egyptians” due to their public adherence to the principle of Maat, but also with regard to their private behaviour. To respect Maat was always also a private matter.

#### **4. Egyptian religion and Greek identity**

Greek-Hellenistic perception of culture, on the other hand, was essentially political and had jurisdiction over the public dimension of everyday life. In Egypt, this public domain was supplemented by Egyptian piety, which was present in various ways in Hellenistic quotidian life. Cultural hybridism, biculturalism and syncretism were all relevant and complementary elements of the formation of the new symbolic universe in Hellenistic Egypt. Thus, even those who had no extraordinary blood-ties with Egyptians adopted Egyptian religious

---

<sup>41</sup> See: Allen Th. G., (transl.), *The Book of the Dead*, Chicago, 1974, pp. 97-98.

<sup>42</sup> For the social dimension of Maat see: Assmann, J., *Maat – Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im alten Ägypten*, München, 1990.

practices as part of their culture. Simply put, it was considered “Greek” to pursue Egyptian religion. This was possible because, as was the case with Egyptian funerary practices, Egyptian customs did not interfere with the principle that being Greek was the antonym of being a “barbarian”. The Greek’s feeling of supremacy rested upon the assumption of cultural superiority, which had been largely debated since the Classical Greek period<sup>43</sup>. The innovation of the Hellenistic discourse was the use of “culture” as a political tool. Since the justification and legitimacy of an imperial attitude based on cultural superiority became increasingly problematic, Hellenistic civilisation employed the concept of Hellenisation as means towards achieving an effective and systematic domination.

The *nomos* also played a crucial role in the way Greeks dealt with Egyptian religion. At a certain moment in history, the Hellenised inhabitants of Hellenistic Egypt reached a consensus on what being Greek involved in an Egyptian reality. Thus it was agreed that a Greek in Egypt was still Greek even if he worshipped Isis and called her son “Isidoros”, *i.e.* «the gift of Isis». These were interpreted as Greek behaviour and accepted since they were in line with the new *nomos* developed in Egypt: a Graeco-Egyptian *nomos*. In other words, a series of innovations taking place within the existing symbolic universe gave birth to a Hellenistic-Egyptian symbolic universe. On the other hand, some Greek things were adopted by the Egyptians, as for instance their language. In addition to this, Hellenised non-Greeks immigrants settled Egypt together with Greeks, and Greeks chose spouses among both the Hellenised and Egyptian native population. Their co-existence thus naturally gave birth to biculturalism. Moreover, the growing bicultural population laid the ground for practicing Egyptian religion

---

<sup>43</sup> Debates concerning the differences between Greeks and non-Greeks where an important issue since the Late Classical period in Greece and remained a relevant subject even during the Roman domination. For most relevant observations about it, see: Plato’s *Republic* 436a; 469c; 471c. It is interesting to compare with Aristotle’s *Politics* 1.2; 7.7. The idea of superiority over non-Greeks concerning the customs, traditions, laws, was summarized in the Greek concept of right social conduct contained by the idea of *nomos*.

in Egyptian manner and defined how Egyptian jobs were to be done in Greek fashion. Due to this mediation, Egyptian practices were more easily tolerated and became acceptable as Greek practices.

The question we need to ask ourselves now is: How could the original idea of *nomos* be “updated” to fit in with this new reality? This is a relevant question since practising Egyptian religion and doing Egyptian jobs in a Greek manner were not mere consequences of cultural hybridism, syncretism, biculturalism, *etc.* Being Greek in Egypt allowed such apparently contradictory behaviour. What we have to find out, however, is *how* it came into existence. As we shall see, the mixture of symbolic universes happened as a consequence of everyday interactions. Since these are dynamic and unplanned par excellence, day-to-day practice – or what is called *Altagspraxis* in German – is a category of social relations which is not immune to misunderstandings, adaptations innovations and reformulations. To the Graeco-Egyptian population adopting Egyptian practices posed no problems for their Greek discourse of identity, *i.e.* the way they saw themselves. Outsiders, on the other hand, judged differently, since they were excluded of the social and cultural symbolic agreement promoted by that community’s *nomos*.

Hellenistic Egypt, however, viewed “being” Greek as publicly acting in line with what was expected by the group’s *nomos*, *i.e.* the readiness to seek consensus for the sake of maintaining social “normality”. It goes without saying that what the Greeks defined as “normal” was undergoing a process of reconfiguration in Egypt. What was regarded to be “*nomos*” in Egypt did not feature a geographical dimension, as had been the case during Classical age. *Nomos* had been redefined as something which could be perceived in social public activities. This is the reason why a witness of one’s behaviour served as the ultimate monitoring instrument in the maintenance of the *nomos*. Since private acts received less attention, *i.e.* were less witnessed by other people, they fell out of the jurisdiction of the *nomos*.

The concept of identity upheld by Hellenistic elites in Egypt fits well into what Hall defines as “master identity”. A “master identity” describes the core aspects of somebody’s cultural identity that cannot

be consciously altered or abandoned. No matter how many Egyptian customs the Greeks incorporated into their lives in Egypt, in their own eyes they always remained true to themselves, *i.e.* they remained Greeks<sup>44</sup>. They were also not willing to change their cultural identity since, at least in their own eyes, the Greek culture was far superior to any other civilisation. This ties in well with Hall's statement that a «master identity» may involve the «desire to dominate the nature of the other.»<sup>45</sup> What the Greeks attempted to do was to find a way to remain Greek while adapting to their new Egyptian environment. They did this consciously as well as at an unconscious level; consciously, because they promoted a certain discourse; unconsciously because they naturally underwent a process of re-evaluating what they regarded as Greek and what as Egyptian.

We can now link this to the concept of *nomos*. It was *nomos* that helped the Greeks decide if they were still being Greeks or not. *Nomos* formed the cultural bond between them; it served as a means of defining their “master identity” and was actively promoted. In fact, in the eyes of the Greeks, *nomos* and “master identity” were synonyms. In the case of Egypt, the “master identity” was the search of a universal ideal of Greek culture, which enabled everyone to become Hellenised (albeit not unanimously and uniformly).

The Greek *nomos* in Egypt differs greatly from other *nomoi* found in Hellenistic societies. It clearly belongs to Hellenistic Egypt and was developed right there, not in Rome and not by another Hellenistic civilisation. Overall, it is not possible to subsume the different cultural identities found in the various Hellenistic societies by one “master identity,” because such a “master identity” always gained its power within a specific political reality. Social interactions between natives and foreigners/immigrants naturally led to the mutual incorporation of initially alien cultural elements. The nature and the outlook of this

---

<sup>44</sup> It goes without saying that this may differ from what outsiders thought of their behaviour. We should not forget, however, that self-perception and perception by outsiders are always likely to differ.

<sup>45</sup> Hall, S., “The Question of Cultural Identity” in S. Hall; D. Held; T. McGrew (eds.), *Modernity and its Futures*, Oxford, 1992, pp. 273-326.



incorporation differed from Hellenistic society to Hellenistic society. Differently put, there was a Macedonian *nomos*, an Egyptian *nomos*, a Syrian *nomos*, etc. What nevertheless linked these different societies to each other was the desire to remain Greek while living in a new cultural environment.

This process of adopting foreign elements resulted in the diminishment of the original symbolic barrier between “us” and “them”. As Hall explains, this was driven by “erosion of identity” as well as the emergence of new identities<sup>46</sup>. Burke, on the other hand, holds that cultural adaptation can be seen as an attempt to establish double-contextualisation and re-contextualisation whereby an item is removed from its original location and modified in such a way that it fits a new environment<sup>47</sup>. If we apply this to Hellenistic Egypt, we may define “master identity” as the attempt to maintain Greek “normality”. However, this does not necessarily imply an impermeable Greek identity but is likely to allow exceptions and readjustments in day-to-day practice. Sahlins<sup>48</sup> has demonstrated how unpredictable innovations resulting from daily interactions are. Thus, the interactions between foreign cultural practices and native ways of doing things eventually produced unexpected results, *i.e.* “inventions” that were not directly absorbed by the discourse of *nomoi*. On the whole, we can say that the “cultural encounter”<sup>49</sup> between “Greeks”<sup>50</sup> and Egyptians triggered

---

<sup>46</sup> Hall, *art.cit.*, in S. Hall; D. Held; T. McGrew (eds.), *Modernity and its Futures*, Oxford, 1992.

<sup>47</sup> Burke, P., *Hibridismo Cultural*, São Leopoldo, 2003, p. 91.

<sup>48</sup> Sahlins, M., *Islands of History*, Chicago, 1985. See also the excellent debate about crucial theoretical problems for Human Sciences such the comparative rationality: Sahlins, M., *How “Natives” Think: About Captain Cook, for Example*, Chicago, 1995. This was his response to the academic attacks from Obeyesekere, G., *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific*, Princeton, 1992.

<sup>49</sup> It is important to remember that a culture is an abstraction; therefore, two cultures cannot “do” anything. An intercultural encounter happens when people meet each other and then their respective cultures serve as symbolic filters so that they might be able to classify the other throughout their own available symbolic systems.

<sup>50</sup> The single quotation marks are necessary since not all foreign participants of the prevailing condition in Egypt were ethnically of Hellenic origin. The nobility itself was Macedonian, and many Persians, Jews, Thracians, etc., participated in the migratory flux into Hellenistic Egypt. Yet still they were considered non-barbarian anymore once they were recognized as “Hellenized”, and despite it must be understood as a prime condition to citizenship, to be Hellenized is not necessarily the same thing as to achieve the juridical status of “citizen”.

a process of mutual negotiation of two distinct ways of perceiving the world. While Egyptian law and customs were connected to their ancestral heritage, religiousness and the subjection to a pharaoh as well as to the social and symbolic prestige of the priestly class – in fact, this whole complex was considered to mirror cosmic order – the Greeks viewed their *nomoi* as the barriers of symbolic universes.

Sahlins termed the possibility of altering symbolic meanings through day-to-day practice «empiric risk»<sup>51</sup>. According to him it involved a “risk” since the production of new meanings could go unnoticed. One of the most emblematic Hellenistic additions to Egyptian traditions was the establishment of social acceptance of marriages between brothers and sisters. Taking a critical view towards this Hellenistic practice, Assmann claims that the marriage between brothers and sisters was, as many other examples, a case of mistaken interpretation of Egypt’s past and consequently produced an entirely mistaken conception of Egyptian culture<sup>52</sup>. Roberts similarly remarks that: «[N]o concession by Hellenism to oriental manners is more striking than this; it is noteworthy that in the *Gnomon* of the *Ideos Logos* it was found necessary specifically to forbid such marriages to Romans.»<sup>53</sup>

## 5. Greeks and Egyptians under Roman rule

Life in Egypt broadly remained the same after the Roman conquest. The Egyptians took the view that the Roman emperors were merely a new dynasty of foreign pharaohs, as had been the case with the Macedonians and Persians. Lewis points out that:

---

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Sahlins, *op. cit.*, 1985.

<sup>52</sup> Assmann, J., *Weisheit und Mysterium*, München, 2000). p. 20. Assmann stresses that in a failed attempt to produce some degree of archaism, the Hellenistic Egypt became a victim of “Egyptomania”.

<sup>53</sup> Roberts, C. H., “The Greek Papyri” in J. R. Harris (ed.), *The Legacy of Egypt*, Oxford, 1971, p. 386. The collection of civil regulations created by Augustus, the *Gnomon* of the *Ideos Logos*, aimed to control the social behaviour of Egypt’s Hellenised citizens. Cf. Seckel, E.; Schulbart, W., *Der Gnomon des Idios Logos*, *BGU* V, I, 1210, Berlin, 1919; Uxkull-Gylleband, W. G., *Der Gnomon des Idios Logos*, *BGU* V, II, Berlin, 1934. The passage mentioned says: «23. It is not allowed to Romans get married to their sisters, neither their Aunts ...» cf. *BGU* V, I, 1210, 70.

«Temples continued to be built and decorated in the native Egyptian style all through the three centuries of the Principate. On their walls the Roman emperors appear in the traditional settings, attitudes, and trappings of Egyptian royalty – the pharaonic garb and crown, the hieroglyphic cartouche enclosing the ruler’s name, [...] the standard titles and honorifics of the pharaohs, such as “son of Ra”, “beloved of Ptah and Isis”, and so on.»<sup>54</sup>

Apart from a few adjustments, the Romans maintained the Ptolemaic administrative structure of Egypt. Thus, the administrative districts remained in the same shape as they had been during the Lagide rule. However, the *strategos* was now a mere a civil official who did not wield any military power. The only armed force allowed in Egypt were the Roman legions, who were permanently present in fortified camps and distributed in strategically important areas of the country. Nevertheless, despite the new Roman administration and legislation, there was no clear-cut cultural separation between Hellenistic Egypt, *i.e.* from Alexander the Great until Cleopatra VII, and Graeco-Roman Egypt, *i.e.* from Octavian Augustus Caesar until Theodosius<sup>55</sup>. That is because with regard to its culture, Egypt followed the tendency of the whole east Mediterranean which remained positively Greek in its self-perception. Thus the entire eastern Mediterranean basin continued being ‘Hellenised’ during the Roman rule. Among other things that meant that *lingua Franca* remained Greek, to be more precise, the so-called *koine* (lit. “common”). Furthermore, the Greek Gymnasiums were built and Greek education unquestionably remained the social model pursued by Hellenised elites.

However, during the Republican period, Romans had a generally negative opinion about Egypt’s Hellenistic elite despising them as

---

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 15.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*: «In local administration some Ptolemaic titles were retained, but where that was done the responsibilities of the office, (...) were usually altered. For the rest, new offices and new titles were created as needed, and new regulations are in evidence governing important aspects of economy, society, and religion» (p.17).

“degenerated” – *i.e.* a people who had become barbarians<sup>56</sup>. They consequently established a new juridical classification that made a clear distinction between Greeks, Romans and Egyptians. Transgression of class boundaries was penalised according to the so-called *Gnomon of the Idios Logos*. In it we read:

«38. Those born of an urban Greek mother and an Egyptian remain Egyptians but inherit from both parents.

39. If a Roman man or woman is joined in a marriage with an urban Greek or an Egyptian, their children follow the inferior status.»

...

«44. If an Egyptian registers a son as an *ephebe* (of a polis), a sixth is confiscated.»

...

«49. Freedmen of Alexandrians may not marry Egyptian women.»<sup>57</sup>

Since the Graeco-Egyptian *nomos* differed from the one the Romans agreed with, the Romans despised Hellenistic Egypt as a “barbarised” or “decayed” civilisation. Roman disdain for the ways of Ptolemaic Egypt – particularly its royal cult – had emerged long before Octavian Augustus<sup>58</sup>. With the beginning of his rule, however, the Romans’ attitude further exacerbated and developed into political and ideological hostility<sup>59</sup>. Their claim that «the Greeks in Egypt became barbarians or degenerate themselves» has to be taken with a grain of salt

---

<sup>56</sup> See: Polybius V, 34; Strabo XVII, I, II; Justin XXIX and Titus Livy XXXVIII, 37 – who blames the weather.

<sup>57</sup> *BGU* V, I, 1210. Commented by Lewis, N., *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule*, Oxford, 1985, p. 33.

<sup>58</sup> The political differences between the Roman Republic and Ptolemaic Egypt are actually far more complex, and date back to the time before Augustus. What is to be said here is that the Roman civilization developed a different way to consider itself more “Hellenic” than “Barbaric” from the one developed in Egypt. Romans had a different way to think the idea of “degree of civilization / Greekness” than in Egypt, it is thus understandable that the pro-Roman intellectuals produced a picture of Egypt as a place where decayed and barbarized Greeks and Macedonians dwelt.

<sup>59</sup> Lewis, N., “Brief Communications: The demise of the Demotic document: when and why” *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 79 (1993), p. 281.

though. After all, is it not a “barbarian civilisation” that is making such accusation? The Romans themselves certainly fell into this category as they did not speak Greek and had no blood-ties with Greeks. In fact, Cicero himself admitted that the Romans had their own definition of “barbarian”, which differed from the one the Greeks used.

«[Scipio] – Now tell me: was Romulus a king of barbarians?  
[Laelius] – If as the Greeks say, all men are either Greeks or barbarians, I am afraid he was; but if that name ought to be applied on the basis of men’s manners rather than their language, I do not consider the Greeks less barbarous than the Romans.»<sup>60</sup>

So what was really happening when Rome, or pro-Roman writers<sup>61</sup>, disqualified Hellenism in Egypt? On the whole, it was a matter of definition – and the Romans won the argument due to one crucial detail: their legions. Even after the Roman conquest and the subsequent re-classification of most Greeks as barbarians like the Egyptians, many subcategories between “citizen” and “barbarian” developed in the countryside due to the prominence of the Graeco-Egyptian *nomos* as the only mediator between Greeks and world around them. Overall, Roman Egypt featured a very heterogeneous society that included native Egyptian peasants and the Hellenised descendents of Greek settlers. The individual degree of Hellenisation formed the only means of distinction.

Ultimately, Roman administrative politics aimed at restraining social mobility. For a better understanding of this policy, the following offers excerpts of norms taken from a code of administrative and social

---

<sup>60</sup> See: Cicero XVI: *De Republica, De Legibus*, translated by C. W. Keyes – Loeb, Cambridge, 1970. In Cicero’s *De Republica* I, XXXVII, 58: «(Scipio) cedo, num’ Scipio ‘barbarorum Romulus rex fuit?’ (Laelius): si ut Graeci dicunt omnis aut Graios esse aut barbaros, vereor ne barbarorum rex fuerit; sin id nomen moribus dandum est, non linguis, non Graecos minus barbaros quam Romanos puto.»

<sup>61</sup> Plutarch’s ironies about the Egyptian religion and gods can be seen in *De Iside et Osiride*. The social reality of the reader will be extremely relevant to establish the possible line of dialogue between author and receptor. During Herodotus’ Classical age, for instance, culture and politics had a different connection one to the other than in Plutarch’s Graeco-Roman world. Plutarch’s criticism may also symbolize the mentality’s changing concerning how culture itself was thought during the Graeco-Roman period.

regulations established in Egypt. The *Gnomon of the Idios Logos* also had regulations which directly affected Egyptian priests. With their establishment began a stricter foreign control over the priests' activities. Thus we are told that:

«71. For the priests it is not allowed to have another occupation than the cult of the gods, neither to go forth in woollen clothing and neither to have long hair, even not when they are away from the divine procession.»<sup>62</sup>

...

«76. A priest who wore woollen clothing and had long hair (was fined) 1000 drachmas.»<sup>63</sup>

It is important to remember that with the arrival of the Romans in Egypt native priests began to live as a closed community disconnected from the people around them. Following the orders of Augustus, the Roman policy of subordination also foresaw the embedding of all Egyptian priests and temples under the command of a Roman official in Alexandria<sup>64</sup>. Furthermore, Augustus abolished temple-owned estates, which used to make up the main income of Egyptian temples back in pharaonic and Ptolemaic times. Inevitably, the priests lost part of their social prestige, economic autonomy and general cosmic importance during the Roman period. They were no longer a relevant power within Egyptian society. The Roman administration turned the Egyptian priests into an extension of the Roman bureaucracy transforming them into a formal clergy subordinated to a “high-priest”, *i.e.* a Roman administrator appointed by the Roman *praefectus* from Alexandria.

In 212 A.D, the Roman emperor Caracalla issued an edict granting Roman citizenship to all inhabitants of the Roman Empire<sup>65</sup>. However,

---

<sup>62</sup> BGU V, I, 1210, 181 – 187.

<sup>63</sup> BGU V, I, 1210, 188.

<sup>64</sup> See: Otto, W., *Priester und Tempel im Hellenistischen Ägypten*, Leipzig, 1905 – Berlin, 1908 – Rome, 1975.

<sup>65</sup> The so-called “Antonine Constitution” (*P. Giss.* 40). Lewis, *op. cit.*, 1985, p. 34 explains: «only the “capitulated”, whose identification remains matter of scholarly dispute, were excluded.»

in the case of Egypt, «the class relationships, the restrictions, show no essential modifications.»<sup>66</sup> In other words, the Graeco-Egyptian society maintained its complex strategies of negotiating differences during the Roman administration. This ties in well with Derrida's observation that the reproduction of the dichotomy "Us" vs. "Them" is a way of perpetuating pre-existing power relations. It is crucial to notice, however, rather than being fixed, this relation is produced by a dynamic and unpredictable process he called «*différance*»<sup>67</sup>. Indeed, classifying themselves as the positive opposite of their foreign counterpart lay at the root of Greek and Egyptian conception of identity during the Hellenistic period. The results of this process were newly defined identities and cultural ideologies that were compatible with the new circumstances of their lives.

### **List of Abbreviations**

*ASAE* – *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* (Caire).

*BAmSocP* – *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* (Duhran – NC).

*BGU* – *Ägyptische Urkunden aus den Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin – Griechische Urkunden* (Berlin).

*CdE* – *Chronique d'Égypte* (Bruxelles).

*JEA* – *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* (London).

*OBO* – *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* (Fribourg).

*OLA* – *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* (Leuven).

*RdE* – *Revue d'égyptologie* (Paris).

---

<sup>66</sup> Lewis, *op. cit.*, 1985, p. 35.

<sup>67</sup> Derrida, J., *On Grammatology*, Baltimore – London, 1976.

## **Bibliography**

ALLEN, T. G. (transl.), *The Book of the Dead*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1974.

ASSMAN, J., *Weisheit und Mysterium*, München, C. H. Beck, 2000.

\_\_\_\_\_, *Maat – Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im altem Ägypten*, München, C. H. Beck, 1990.

BAGNAL, R. S., “Cults and Names of Ptolemais in Upper Egypt”, *OLA* 85 (1998), pp. 1093-1101.

\_\_\_\_\_, “The Origins of Ptolemaic Cleruchs”, *BAmSocP* 21 (1984), pp. 7-20.

BALSDON, J. P. V. D., “The Divinity of Alexander”, *Historia* 1 (1950), pp. 363-388.

BENVENISTE, E., *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1969.

BICKEL, S., *La Cosmogonie égyptienne avant le Nouvel Empire (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 134)*, Fribourg, Éd. Universitaires, 1994.

BOURDIEU, P., *Le Sens Pratique*, Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1980.

BURKE, P., *Hibridismo Cultural*, São Leopoldo, Unisinos, 2003.

CLARYSSE, W., “Ptolémées et Temples” in D. Valbelle; J. Leclant, (éds.), *Le Décret de Memphis*, Paris, 1999, pp. 41-65.

COLLOMBERT, Ph., “Religion égyptienne et culture grecque: l'exemple de Dioskourides”, *CdE* 75 (2000), pp. 47-63.

COULON, L., “Quand Amon parle à Platon (La statue Caire JE 38033)”, *RdE* 52 (2001), pp. 85-125.

CRAWFORD, D.; QUAGEBEUR, J.; CLARYSSE, W., *Studies on Ptolemaic Memphis* (Studia Hellenistica 24), Leuven, 1980.



- CRAWFORD, D. J., *Kerkeosiris: an Egyptian Village in the Ptolemaic Period*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1971.
- DERRIDA, J., *On Grammatology*, Baltimore – London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.
- GERMEUR, I., “Les syngènes Aristonikos et la ville de Tp-bener”, *RdE* 51 (2000), pp. 69-78.
- GUNN, B., “The Stele of Apries at Mitrachina”, *ASAE* 27 (1927), pp. 211-237.
- HALL, S., “Who needs ‘identity’” in S. Hall., P. du Gay, *Questions of Identity*, London, Sage, 1996, pp. 1-17.
- , “The Question of Cultural Identity” in S. Hall; S. Held; T. McGrew (eds.) *Modernity and its Futures*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 273-326.
- HÖBL, G., *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, London, Routledge, 2001.
- HUSS, W., *Der Makedonische König und die ägyptischen Priester*, Stuttgart, Steiner, 1994.
- KAMAL, A. B., *Catalogue Général des Antiquités Égyptiennes: 22001-22208 Stèles Ptolémaïques et Romaines Tome II*, Le Caire, 1904.
- KESSLER, D., “Das hellenistische Sarapeum in Alexandria und Ägypten in ägyptologischer Sicht“ in M. Görg; G. Höbl (eds.), *Ägypten und der östliche Mittelmeerraum im I. Jahrhundert v. Chr.*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2000, pp. 163-230.
- LEWIS, N., “Brief Communications: The demise of the Demotic document: when and why”, *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 79 (1993), pp. 276-81.
- , *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1985.
- MORENZ, S., *Ägyptische Religion*, Stuttgart, W. Kohlhammer, 1960.

- MUELLER, K., *Settlements of the Ptolemies* (Studia Hellenistica 43), Leuven, 2006.
- OBEYESKERE, G., *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992.
- OTTO, W., *Priester und Tempel im Hellenistischen Ägypten*, Leipzig, 1905 – Berlin, 1908 – Rome, Arno Press, 1975.
- POLLIT, J. J., *Art in Hellenistic Age*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- PRÉAUX, C., *Le Monde Hellénistique*, 2 vols. – Nouvelle Clio, Paris, PUF, 1997-2002.
- ROBERTS, C. H., “The Greek Papyri” in J. R. Harris, (ed.), *The Legacy of Egypt*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 355-89.
- ROEDER, G., *Kulte und Orakel im alten Ägypten, Band II.*, Dusseldorf – Zürich, Artemis & Winkler, 1960.
- ROSTOVITZ, M., *A Large Estate in Egypt in the Third Century BC*, Rome, 1967 (Rep. of Univ. Wisconsin Press, 1922).
- SAHLINS, M., *Islands of History*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1985.
- , *How “Natives” Think: About Captain Cook, for Example*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- SANDERS, L. J., “Dionysius I of Syracuse and the Origins of Ruler Cult in the Greek World”, *Historia* 40 (1991), pp. 275-87.
- SECKEL, E.; SCULBART, W., *Der Gnomon des Idios Logos*, *BGUV*, I, 1210, Berlin, 1919.
- SIMPSON, W. K. (ed.), *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, London – New Haven, Yale University Press, 1972.

- STANWICK, P. E., *Portraits of the Ptolemies – Greek Kings as Egyptian Pharaohs*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 2002.
- THOMPSON, D., *Ptolemaic Oinochoai and Portraits in Faience, Aspects of the Ruler Cult*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1973.
- UXKULL-GYLLEBAND, W. G., *Der Gnomon des Idios Logos, BGU V, II*, Berlin, 1934.
- VALBELLE, D.; LECLANT, J. (éds.), *Le Décret de Memphis. Colloque de la Fondation Singer-Polignac à l'occasion de la célébration du bicentenaire de la découverte de la Pierre de Rosette*, Paris, Fondation Singer-Polignac, 1999.
- VALBELLE, D., “Décrets égyptiens antérieurs aux Lagides” in D. Valbelle; J. Leclant, (éds.) *Le Décret de Memphis*, Paris, 1999, pp. 67-90.
- VEÏSSE, A.-E., *Les révoltes égyptiennes: recherches sur les troubles intérieurs en Égypte du règne de Ptolémée III à la conquête romaine* (Studia Hellenistica 41), Leuven, 2004.
- WALBANK, F. W., “Könige als Götter, Überlegungen zum Herrscherkult von Alexander bis Augustus”, *Chiron* 17 (1987), pp. 365-82.

# La monnaie des Ptolémées – Les séries de Ptolémée I

José das Candeias Sales

Universidade Aberta; Centro de História da Universidade de Lisboa

Après la mort d’Alexandre, avec l’établissement des grands royaumes hellénistiques, on assiste à un développement important dans la typologie monétaire qui va modifier radicalement le monnayage et marquer l’idéologie même qui lui est associé: la création du portrait royal. Comme un nouvel élément de la typologie monétaire, l’introduction du portrait, avec des caractéristiques de contrôle impérial, est due, peut-être, à Alexandre le Grand, ou même à Philippe II de Macédoine, son immense évolution se produisant néanmoins surtout sous les dynasties des diadoques.<sup>1</sup>

Cette généralisation, en tant que pure institution hellénistique, visant à exprimer l’essence et l’idéologie d’une nouvelle forme de monarchie, est basée sur une souveraineté personnelle et charismatique<sup>2</sup>. Les séries les plus importantes de monnaies ont été produites par

---

<sup>1</sup> Jones, J., *A dictionary of Ancient Greek Coins*, London, 1986, p. 193; Rebuffat, F., *La monnaie dans l’Antiquité*, Paris, 1996, p. 179; Fleischer, R., “Hellenistic royal iconography on coins”, dans P. Bilde; T. Engberg-Pedersen; L. Hannestad; J. Zahle (éds.), *Aspects of Hellenistic Kingship* (Studies in Hellenistic Civilization VII), Aarhus, 1996, p. 29; Von Reden, S., *Money in Ptolemaic Egypt: From the Macedonian Conquest to the End of the Third Century B.C.*, Cambridge, 2007, p. 36; Brown, B., “Art history in coins. Portrait issues of Ptolemy I”, dans A. Adriani; N. Bonacasa; A. Di Vita (éds.), *Alessandria e il mondo ellenistico-romano: studi in onore di Achille Adriani*, Vol. 2, Roma, 1992, p. 405-417; Howgego, C., *Ancient History from Coins*, London – New York, 1995, p. 52, 53; Le Rider, G., *Alexander the Great: Coinage, Finances, and Policy*, Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, 2001; Sales, J., “Les monnaies de l’époque ptolémaïque au Portugal”, dans Z. Hawass; L. Brock (éds.), *Egyptology at the Dawn of the 21st Century. Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Egyptologists, Cairo, 2000*, Vol. 2, *History and Religion*, Cairo, 2002, p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, R., *Hellenistic sculpture. A Handbook*, London, 1995, p. 19.

les Ptolémées d'Égypte malgré l'utilisation qu'en ont fait aussi les Séleucides de Syrie et les Antigonides de la Macédoine.<sup>3</sup>

Les portraits royaux de ces pièces sont de véritables chefs-d'œuvre de l'art hellénistique, permettant de tracer avec profusion de détails les caractéristiques physiologiques des personnages principaux de l'époque (hommes et femmes, rois et reines). Sur le portrait monétaire au sein des monarchies hellénistiques, Jean Babelon a écrit: «Les différents stades de l'évolution du portrait monétaire après Alexandre forment autant de chapitres d'une histoire où les considérations esthétiques viennent se joindre aux notions historiques et psychologiques, en débutant par le réalisme pour aboutir à l'abstraction, en passant par le vérisme, puis le classicisme hellénisant de l'Empire romain»<sup>4</sup>.

Le réalisme de ces représentations est si considérable qu'elles constituent la première preuve observable digne de crédibilité des personnages historiques du monde ancien. Certains d'entre eux, par exemple les rois de la Bactriane, ne sont connus que par ces pièces.<sup>5</sup>

La pratique hellénistique d'utiliser les portraits sur les pièces contrastaient, en effet, avec les habitudes des cités grecques classiques dont les types de pièces jouaient surtout sur la figuration des dieux et des héros locaux (avers) et leurs attributs, symboles ou animaux (revers). C'est le cas des pièces présentent la tête de la déesse Athéna (avers), la chouette chevêche (*Athene noctua*), symbole de connaissance et sagesse, le rameau d'olivier, le croissant de lune et l'ethnique ΑΘΕ, abréviation de *nomisma tôn ATHEnaiôn* (avers) – fig. 1. Les deux pratiques (hellénique et hellénistique) étaient, cependant, basées sur des images en relief, en se réservant l'avers, la face principale de la monnaie, à la tête des dieux ou des souverains, à droite.

Dans l'Égypte ptolémaïque, le monnayage a été une prérogative des souverains, parfaitement en accord avec le fait que le roi soit, en théorie et dans la pratique, le seul propriétaire du sol/ de la terre, le plus grand

---

<sup>3</sup> Howgego, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> Babelon, J., "Numismatique", dans *L'histoire et ses méthodes*, Encyclopédie de la Pléiade, Paris, 1961, p. 364.

<sup>5</sup> Davis, N.; Kraay, C., *The Hellenistic Kingdoms. Portraits, Coins and History*, London, 1973, p. 270.

négociant et banquier du pays. Le pouvoir du roi découle de la victoire et de la conquête; c'est un pouvoir absolu et personnel qui s'exerce sur de vastes territoires qui lui appartenaient personnellement. Grâce aux émissions successives de la monnaie, le pouvoir royal ptolémaïque révèle et proclame ses idéaux et objectifs.<sup>6</sup>

### **Types et inscriptions**

C'est François Rebuffat qui a écrit que «C'est toujours le pouvoir politique qui décide des diverses caractéristiques d'une monnaie nouvelle, de son poids, de son titre, du taux de tolérance qui peut lui être accordé, mais aussi de son type et des ses légendes»<sup>7</sup>. Dans l'Égypte lagide, la politique financière-monétaire est, en effet, œuvre du roi et d'un groupe restreint de conseillers et de «techniciens» dirigé par le dioécète qui programme, met en œuvre et contrôle le monnayage<sup>8</sup>.

Différents en poids (et parfois en métal), les pièces de monnaie des Ptolémées ont avec d'autres dynasties hellénistiques une homogénéité et une unité fondamentale de style en commun. Il y a une distribution canonique des types de figures: l'avvers est destiné principalement aux effigies des souverains, avec des attributs de la royauté ou de sa déification (toujours à droite), alors que le revers est réservé pour d'autres symboles et assimilations (par exemple, le nom et les titres royaux et les divinités protectrices), en règle à gauche. Les deux parties des pièces peuvent contenir des inscriptions (en plusieurs champs), toujours en grec, langue qui exprime, pour elle-même, de l'identité.

Toutefois, il existe un certain nombre de monnaies, appelé «pièces de monnaie dionysiaque» qui brisent les traditionnelles effigies des souverains et révèlent, auparavant, le buste du roi comme Dionysos

---

<sup>6</sup> Walbank, F., "Sources for the period", dans F. Walbank; A. Astin; M. Frederiksen; R. Ogilvie (éds.), *CAH*, Vol. VII, Part I – *The Hellenistic World*, 2<sup>e</sup> ed., Cambridge, 1984, p. 19, et Jenkins, G., *Ancient Greek Coins*, London, 1990, p. IX.

<sup>7</sup> Rebuffat, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>8</sup> Davesne, A., "L'atelier monétaire d'Alexandrie au III<sup>e</sup> siècle av. J.-C.", dans J.-Y. Empereur (éd.), *Commerce et artisanat dans l'Alexandrie hellénistique et romaine. Actes du colloque d'Athènes. 11-12 décembre 1988*, Athènes – Paris, 1999, p. 431, 432, 442.

avec un diadème ou une couronne de lierre, le thirse sur les épaules et parfois l'aide de la *nébris*. La plupart de ces drachmes et didrachmes d'argent sont originaires de Chypre et représentent un certain nombre de rois lagides.<sup>9</sup>

L'inscription principale d'une monnaie (normalement le nom du roi / reine et ses titres: *basileus* / *basilissa* «X») fournit des informations précieuses concernant l'émetteur qui est à la fois le garant de l'acceptabilité de la monnaie dans les divers territoires sous leur juridiction.

La persistance et/ ou les flottements des types utilisés sont particulièrement révélateurs des continuités structurelles ou des changements cycliques et, en même temps, de l'écho qu'ils veulent perpétuer. Dans tous les cas, les types de monnaies ont, cependant, une fonction symbolique. Pour le portrait royal, la personne représentée est symbolique de l'État qu'il représente.<sup>10</sup>

### **Les séries de Ptolémée I**

Un exemple typique d'un projet personnel inhérent à l'émetteur de la monnaie est celui de Ptolémée (367-283 avant J.-C), futur Ptolémée I Sôter I (*PP VI*14538), historiquement le créateur d'un nouveau, original et pérenne système monétaire, dans la mesure où il a été l'organisateur des transactions financières nécessaires à accroître les réserves et à établir des ateliers de monnayage, pour la suite définitivement structurés par son fils, Ptolémée II Philadelphie (*PP VI* 14540)<sup>11</sup>. Simultanément, avec les transformations des types monétaires, il a réussi à célébrer les mérites de la nouvelle dynastie. Son cas illustre de

---

<sup>9</sup> Tondriau, J., "Rois lagides comparés ou identifiés à des divinités" *CdE*, n°s 45-46, 1948, p. 141-143.

<sup>10</sup> Howgego, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>11</sup> Picard, O., "Remarques sur la monnaie de bronze dans l'Égypte lagide", dans in J.-Y. Empereur (éd.), *Commerce et artisanat dans l'Alexandrie hellénistique et romaine. Actes du colloque d'Athènes. 11-12 décembre 1988*, Athènes – Paris, 1999, p. 415; *idem*, "Problèmes de numismatique alexandrine", dans *Alessandria e il mondo ellenistico-romano. Atti del II Congresso Internazionale italo-egiziano (Alessandria, 23-27 novembre 1992)*, Roma, 1995, p. 101.

façon paradigmatique le processus graduel de rupture qui caractérise les émissions monétaires.

L'histoire politique de Ptolémée I est l'histoire d'un «self-made man who became king only through his merit»<sup>12</sup>. Alors qu'il n'était encore qu'un satrape d'Égypte, le général d'Alexandre a frappé de la monnaie comme, d'ailleurs, tous les diadoques, pour payer les grandes armées pendant les guerres qu'il a conduit<sup>13</sup>. Sous Philippe III Arrhidée (323-317 avant J.-C.) et Alexandre IV Aigos (317 à 311/ 305 avant J.-C.) il a frappé des monnaies d'or et d'argent avec les mêmes types utilisées sous Alexandre le Grand<sup>14</sup>: Alexandre est représenté comme un jeune imberbe, avec *anastole* du lion (tout comme les pièces de monnaie qu'il avait émis), suggérant bravoure et vaillance, dans une iconographie qui le place à mi-chemin entre le roi et les jeunes dieux et héros comme Héraclès, Apollon et Achille. Par son monnayage, le satrape égyptien a consciencieusement reconnu l'autorité des «successeurs légaux» d'Alexandre (fig. 2).

À partir de 312-311 avant J.-C., date qui signale une nouvelle division de l'empire d'Alexandre, et de 310 avant J.-C., moment de l'assassinat d'Alexandre IV Aigos, pour Cassandre de la Macédoine<sup>15</sup>, les avers des monnaies du diadoque Ptolémée laissent les têtes d'Héraclès avec la dépouille du lion et élisent la tête d'Alexandre le Grand, à droite,

---

<sup>12</sup> Bingen, J.; Bagnal, R., *Hellenistic Egypt: Monarchy, Society, Economy, Culture*, Edinburgh, 2007, p. 15, 27.

<sup>13</sup> Mørkholm, Otto, "The ptolemaic coinage in Phoenicia and the fifth war with Syria", dans E. Van't Dack; P. van Dessel; W. van Gucht (éds.), *Egypt and the Hellenistic World. Proceedings of the International Colloquium. Leuven. 24-26 May 1982*, Lovanii, 1983, p. 241, 242.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 50, 51; Mørkholm, O.; Grierson, P.; Westermarck, U., *Early Hellenistic Coinage: From the Accession of Alexander to the Peace of Apamea (336-188 B.C.)*, Cambridge, 1991, p. 56; Price, M., *The Coinage in the Name of Alexander and Philip Arrhidæus*, Zurich – London, 1991, p. 376 no. 304, pl. LXXXVI; p. 498 no. 397, pl. CXIV.

<sup>15</sup> L'ensemble de la période de 323 à 280 avant J.-C. est marqué par les guerres de diadoques d'Alexandre. Après la division de 323 avant J.-C., immédiatement après la mort d'Alexandre, il y a une nouvelle répartition des fonctions, en 321 avant J.-C., en Triparadeisos (Oronte supérieure, au nord de la Syrie.) La période de 315-311 avant J.-C. est marquée par la troisième guerre des diadoques, qui aboutira, en 311 avant J.-C., à une nouvelle division de l'empire. C'est suite au résultat de cette guerre et de ce partage que Ptolémée modifie sa stratégie de représentation monétaire et commence à préparer son imposition comme roi d'Égypte (7 de novembre de 305 avant J.-C.).



coiffé de la dépouille d'éléphant, trompe, oreille et défenses (*exuviae elephantis*), commémorant ses conquêtes orientales<sup>16</sup> (fig. 3).

Le portrait d'Alexandre avec le diadème royal est un phénomène à titre posthume présenté par ses différents diadoques, y compris Ptolémée. Ces pièces de monnaie avec la représentation et le nom du défunt Alexandre portent des attributs simples de Dionysos, d'Amon (corne ondulé de bélier<sup>17</sup>), de Héraclès (dépouille du lion de Némée<sup>18</sup>) et de Zeus (l'aigle) ou composites (tels que, dans la même représentation, la dépouille d'éléphant et la corne du bélier<sup>19</sup>). Au revers, Zeus trônant apparaît, torse nu et barbu, à gauche, avec le sceptre dans sa main gauche et l'aigle d'ailes fermées sur sa main droite, avec l'inscription ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ, « d'Alexandre » (fig. 4).

Au revers des tétradrachmes d'argent avec le buste d'Alexandre le Grand, apparaît aussi, à droite, Athéna Alkidemos, déesse de la guerre de Macédoine, divinité tutélaire de Pella (le berceau des dynasties

---

<sup>16</sup> Kraay, C.; Hirmer, M., *Greek coins*, New York, 1966, pl. 217, Fig. 796 (tétradrachme: 16,80 gr.) et p. 381; Von Reden, *op. cit.*, p. 39; Sear, D., *Greek Coins and their Values*. Vol II – *Asia and North Africa*, London, 1979, p. 731, 732; Svoronos, I., *Ta nomismata tou kratous tôn ptolemaíon*, Athènes, 1904, 24, 32, 35, 43, 44, 46, 96, 139, 170.

<sup>17</sup> Le dieu égyptien Amon, dont Alexandre a consulté l'oracle, en 332 avant J.-C., dans l'oasis de Siuah, avait le bélier comme un de ses animaux sacrés, de queue courte et cornes recourbées (*ovis platyura aegyptiaca*). Par l'association établie par les Grecs entre Amon et Zeus, l'iconographie de la corne de bélier présente dans les pièces d'Alexandre suggère précisément sa connexion avec Zeus-Ammon, c'est à dire, exprime la mission divine du Conquérant (Sales, J., *As divindades egípcias. Uma chave para a compreensão do Egipto antigo*, Lisboa, 1999, p. 215, 216).

<sup>18</sup> Héraclès, le fils de Zeus et d'Alcmène, a été le héros (civilisateur, culturel, panhellénique, cosmopolite et protecteur de l'humanité) le plus célèbre de l'Antiquité et l'ancêtre héroïque de la dynastie des Argéades. Sa force, son courage et ses grandes réalisations ont été objet de nombreuses histoires et poèmes dans le monde antique. La dépouille du lion avec laquelle il est figuré indirectement fait allusion au lion de Némée qu'il avait étranglé de ses propres mains. Alexander s'arroge d'être l'incarnation de Héraclès, son *alter ego*. Alexandre est, en ce sens, le «nouvel Héraclès» (Lacroix, L., "Héraclès, héros voyageur et civilisateur", dans *Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques, 5<sup>e</sup> série, Tome LX*, 2-3, 1974, p. 34-59; Lévêque, P.; Verbanck-Piérard, A.; "Héraclès héros ou dieu ?", dans C. Bonnet; C. Jourdain-Annequin (éds.), *Héraclès. D'une rive à l'autre de la Méditerranée. Bilan et perspectives*, Bruxelles – Rome, 1992, p. 43-65; Bonnet, C., "Héraclès en Orient: interprétations et syncrétismes", dans C. Bonnet; C. Jourdain-Annequin (éds.), *Héraclès. D'une rive à l'autre de la Méditerranée. Bilan et perspectives*, Bruxelles – Rome, 1992, p. 165-170.

<sup>19</sup> Voir le tétradrachme frappée en Alexandrie par Ptolémée I, c. 305 avant J.-C., dans Green, P., *D'Alexandre à Actium. Du partage de l'empire au triomphe de Rome*, Paris, 1997, p. 5.

hellénistiques), avec *chiton*, casque, lance et bouclier rond, dans une attitude d'attaque, accompagnée d'un petit aigle aux ailes fermées, avec l'inscription ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΕΙΟΝ ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ, « alexandrin (monnaie) de Ptolémée », ou ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΕΙΟΝ, « alexandrin » (fig. 5 et 6). R. A. Hazzard date l'introduction de ces éléments de vers 315 avant J.-C et mentionne son utilisation par Ptolémée I Sôter I après 300 avant J.-C. Il y a d'innombrables pièces ptolémaïques avec ces représentations.<sup>20</sup>

Ptolémée fut le premier des diadoques à adopter ce genre de type monétaire de l'Athéna guerrière en style archaïque. Pour celui qui avait obtenu son royaume par la force de la lance (*chôra doriktêtos*) et que avait valorisé la composant militaire de son pouvoir, c'est un symbole important de faire connaître ces faits.

Ptolémée n'était plus une personne dépendante des héritiers directs d'Alexandre (Philippe Arrhidée et Alexandre IV) et cherchait à établir idéologiquement un lien direct avec le général macédonien. D'une part, il vénère Alexandre à travers des portraits déifiés; d'autre part, il prépare, pour ainsi dire, la prise complète de la *basileia* en territoire égyptien, en revendiquant une « ascendance » significative et légitimatrice de son héritage.

Tout ce développement symbolique et idéologique des émissions monétaires de Ptolémée I a été le produit des nouvelles conditions conjoncturelles qui, outre le fait de posséder le corps d'Alexandre, furent marquées par la disparition de Perdikkas, tué par un de ses officiers, et par une nouvelle division de l'empire d'Alexandre. Toutes ces modifications furent favorables aux revendications politiques du satrape d'Égypte.

A partir de 305 / 304 avant J.-C., c'est-à-dire, à partir du moment où il prend le titre de *basileus*, Ptolémée I abandonne l'étalon attique (au lieu du poids de 17,20 g. il adopte un tétradrachme de ± 14,30 g), établit des ateliers d'émission à Alexandrie, à Cyrène et à Chypre et

---

<sup>20</sup> Voir par exemple Kraay, C. M., *Archaic and Classical Greek Coins*, Berkeley – Los Angeles, 1976, pl. 217, Fig. 797 (tétradrachme: 17,03 gr.) et p. 381; Hazzard, R., *Ptolemaic Coins. An Introduction for Collectors*, Toronto, 1995, p. 72, 73.

se fait représenter sur les pièces d'or, d'argent et de bronze où figure inscrit son nom<sup>21</sup>. Tous les nouveaux rois (à l'exception de Lysimaque de Thrace) ont fait ce remplacement de la tête d'Héraclès-Alexandre par leur propre portrait diadémé, Ptolémée I ayant toutefois été le premier à le faire<sup>22</sup>. Il est l'un des premiers rois vivants à être représenté sur les pièces.

L'inscription du nom du souverain dans le revers des pièces est l'affirmation de son indépendance. Néanmoins, les revers continuent à évoquer les symboles «alexandrins» (char de guerre tiré par des éléphants ou la figure d'Alexandre)<sup>23</sup> (fig. 7). D'une part, les *regalia*. D'autre part, le respect pour Alexandre

Le revers de nombreuses pièces présente également un nouveau type: un aigle debout, les ailes fermées, sur foudre (fig. 8). C'est l'oiseau de Zeus, placé sur l'arme du grand dieu. Si on ajoute à cela l'*aegis* autour du cou de Ptolémée I, elle-même utilisé par Zeus (et Athéna), on voit le premier des Ptolémées surgir comme un roi déifié<sup>24</sup>.

Le portrait de Ptolémée I est fortement individualisé et réaliste. Comme l'a écrit P. Jouguet: « C'est une figure énergique, au regard profond sous des arcades sourcilières très proéminentes. La bouche est fine et serrée, le menton robuste, le nez légèrement aquilin; le diadème enserre les boucles rebelles: physionomie royale et guerrière, d'une majesté naturelle et sans faste »<sup>25</sup>. Il ne s'agit pas d'une figure belle, à la manière grecque classique, mais elle suggère une immense énergie

---

<sup>21</sup> Kraay, *op. cit.*, pl. 218, Fig. 799 (tétradrachme: 16,38 gr.) , p. 382; Préaux, C., *L'économie royale des Lagides*, Bruxelles, 1939, p. 269; Jenkins, *op. cit.*, p. 139; Davis, N.; Kraay, C., *op. cit.*, p. 272; Hazzard, *op. cit.*, p. 1; Bagnall, R., *The administration of the Ptolemaic possessions outside Egypt*, Leiden, 1976, p. 176, 177; Howgego, *op. cit.*, p. 52, 53; Franke, P.; Hirmer, M., *La monnaie grecque*, Paris, 1996, 143; Cadell, H. ; Le Rider, G., *Prix du blé et numéraire dans l'Égypte lagide de 305 à 173*, Bruxelles, 1997, p. 9; Sales, J., *Ideologia e propaganda real no Egipto Ptolomaico (305-30 avant J.-C.)*, Lisboa, 2005, p. 233.

<sup>22</sup> N. Davis, C. Kraay, *op. cit.*, p. 272; R. Hazzard, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> G. Jenkins, *op. cit.*, p. 139, e I. Svoronos, *op. cit.*, p. 111, 147, 150.

<sup>24</sup> O. Picard, «L'économie lagide et le monnayage alexandrin», dans *La gloire d'Alexandrie*, Paris, 1998, p. 216, e N. Davis, C. Kraay, *op. cit.*, p. 38, 39.

<sup>25</sup> P. Jouguet, «L'Égypte Ptolémaïque (323-30 avant Jésus-Christ)», dans G. Hanotaux (éd.), *Histoire de la nation égyptienne*, Vol. III, Paris, 1961, p. 8.

et expressivité<sup>26</sup>. La force physique fut une influence dans le modèle de maturité héracléenne et pratiquement tous les diadoques l'ont cultivé. C'est ce que l'on appelle la «Zeitgesicht» des diadoques et fondateurs des dynasties hellénistiques.

La disposition des cheveux de Ptolémée I, avec le diadème emblématique de sa dignité royale, rappelle, toutefois, les portraits d'Alexandre le Grand. La propagande joue ici son rôle; elle cherche ses desseins. L'inscription d'avers soutient et renforce l'idéologie: ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ, « du roi Ptolémée »<sup>27</sup> (fig. 9 et 10).

Il est ainsi possible de détecter à travers ces émissions sous l'autorité de Ptolémée deux grands moments d'une énorme importance politique et idéologique:

- première période: jusqu'à 305-304 avant J.-C. Avers: portrait d'Alexandre; revers: Zeus ou Athèna; inscriptions: ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ, ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΕΙΟΝ e ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΕΙΟΝ ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ.
- deuxième période: à partir de 305-304 avant J.-C. Avers: portrait de Ptolémée I; revers: aigle royal; inscription: ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ.

Les séries de Ptolémée I Sôter nous renseignent par conséquent, sur le développement de l'ambition croissante du nouveau seigneur de l'Égypte et révèlent, donc, ses progrès de satrape dépendant à *basileus* indépendante, roi résident en Égypte<sup>28</sup>.

---

<sup>26</sup> R. Fleischer, *op. cit.*, p. 30 e 31.

<sup>27</sup> Voir I. Svoronos, *op. cit.*, 150, 182, 190, 192, 198, 204, 217, 220, 238, 255, 285. L'utilisation du génitif («le roi») au lieu du nominatif suggère non seulement que ces pièces ont été émises sous l'autorité du roi, mais qu'elles étaient, en quelque sorte, ses propres biens. (N. Davis, C. Kraay, *op. cit.*, p. 274).

<sup>28</sup> Préaux, *op. cit.*, p. 268 ; Bingen, J., Bagnall, R., *op. cit.*, p. 23 ; Turner, E., "Ptolemaic Egypt", dans F. Walbank ; A. Astin ; M. Frederiksen ; R. Ogilvie (éd.), *CAH, Vol. VII, Part I – The Hellenistic World*, 2<sup>e</sup> éd., Cambridge, 1984, p. 128.

Dans environ 20 ans, le fondateur de la dynastie ptolémaïque («the ideal king of the Hellenistic period») <sup>29</sup> a mis en place un système d'ateliers de monnayage différentiable des autres monnayages hellénistiques <sup>30</sup>. En même temps, il a créé un modèle que, jusqu'à Cléopâtre VII, tous ses successeurs imiteront, sauf dans l'expression d'énergie et de détermination que l'on voit dans le monnayage du fondateur de la dynastie, c'est-à-dire, se présenter aux avers des pièces avec des diadèmes et autres emblèmes.

Il y a sans doute une relation entre le monnayage et la souveraineté/autonomie politique. Le monnayage éclaire souvent (et clarifie) le comportement politique et culturel des souverains émetteurs. Le pouvoir politique peut imposer, comme l'a fait Ptolémée, sa propre monnaie ou adopter des systèmes de poids et de dénomination que lui convient mieux, avec plus ou moins d'acculturation et de rapprochements face à d'autres systèmes plus anciens ou contemporains. Et surtout la monnaie peut fonctionner comme un moyen de négociation (*medium* idéologique) pour l'acceptation du pouvoir par les communautés de sujets.

---

<sup>29</sup> Hazzard, R., *Imagination of a monarchy: Studies in Ptolemaic propaganda*, Toronto, 2000, p. 104.

<sup>30</sup> Von Reden, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

## Illustrations



**Fig. 1:** Pièce athénien. Après 449 avant J.-C. Tétradrachme, 16.85 g.  
Avers : Tête d'Athéna de style archaïque à droite, portant le casque attique à cimier, décoré de trois feuilles d'olivier et d'une volute florale, avec collier et boucle d'oreille.  
Cheveux coiffés en boucles parallèles.

Revers: Chouette debout à droite regardant de face; un rameau d'olivier et un croissant de lune à gauche; lettres ΑΘΕ à droite  
(SNG Copenhagen 39).



**Fig. 2:** Pièce de Ptolémée I Sôter I, tétradrachme, vers 17,19 g., 26 mm.  
Alexandre le Grand à droite figuré avec tête de Héraclès  
(G. Jenkins, *op. cit.*, p. 124, 342).



**Fig. 3:** Pièce de Ptolémée I Sôter I, tétradrachme, 17,10 g.  
Avers: Tête d'Alexandre le Grand avec les *exuviae elephantis*  
(I. Svoronos, *op. cit.*, 33).



**Fig. 4.** Pièce de Ptolémée I Sôter I, tétradrachme, vers 17 g.  
Avers: Tête d'Alexandre le Grand avec la dépouille d'éléphant et la corne de bélier.  
Revers: Zeus trônant à gauche, avec le sceptre dans sa main gauche et  
l'aigle d'ailes fermées sur sa main droite  
(D. Sear, *op. cit.*, p. 731, 7746).



**Fig. 5:** Pièce de Ptolémée I Sôter I,  
Tétradrachme en nom d'Alexandre, frappé en Alexandrie. 15,96 g., 28mm.  
Avers: tête d'Alexandre à droite avec la dépouille d'éléphant.  
Revers: Athéna Alkidemos, à droite, avec *chiton*, lance et bouclier rond, dans une attitude d'attaque, accompagné par un petit aigle d'ailes fermées sur foudre, à droite  
(I. Svoronos, *op. cit.*, 33V).



**Fig. 6:** Pièce de Ptolémée I Sôter I,  
Tétradrachme similaire à la fig. 4  
(I. Svoronos, *op. cit.*, 40).





**Fig. 7:** Pièce de Ptolémée I Sôter I, statère, 7,09 g., 12 mm.

Avers: Tête diadémée de Ptolémée I.

Revers: Alexandre en char de guerre tiré par des éléphants

(I. Svoronos, *op. cit.*, 126).



**Fig. 8:** Pièce de Ptolémée I Sôter I, Pentadrachme, 17,94 g., 25 mm.

Revers: aigle d'ailes fermées sur foudre, avec l'inscription ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ

(I. Svoronos, *op. cit.*, 204).



**Fig. 9:** Pièce de Ptolémée I Sôter I, Pentadrachme, 17,94 g., 25 mm.  
Avers: Tête diadémée de Ptolémée I, à droite, avec *agegis*  
(I. Svoronos, *op. cit.*, 204).



**Fig. 10:** Pièce de Ptolémée I Sôter I, Tétradrachme, 14,28 g.  
Avers: Tête diadémée de Ptolémée I à droite et avec *aegis*.  
Revers: aigle d'ailes fermées sur foudre, avec l'inscription ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΥ  
(I. Svoronos, *op. cit.*, 265).

# The Sintashta cultural particulars and the origin of the war chariot

Elias Pinheiro  
Centro de História de Além-Mar

One of the most debated subjects in current archaeology is the origin of the light war chariot. If until c. 1970, the war chariot was considered a foreign element of steppe origin in the Middle East, afterwards, the notion that it might instead be a local Middle Eastern development took precedence. However, the publishing of *Sintashta*<sup>1</sup> in 1992 gave new life to the steppe hypothesis. This, however, was met with considerable criticism.

When considering the steppe origin hypothesis for the war chariot, Littauer and Crouwel raise a series of points which question its validity, through the analysis of the economic and technological context in which the steppe chariot would have been developed, deeming it improbable. They instead suggest that the steppe chariot is nothing but a crude imitation of Near Eastern chariots, and whose sole purpose is status display. The reasoning behind this claim lies in the apparent superfluous nature of the chariot on the steppe.

According to the authors, when compared with the Near East, the chariot is fairly useless on the steppe, especially considering the availability of a more effective alternate method of transportation, the mount itself.

It is an undisputed fact that the chariot suffers from severe limitations on the steppe and its immediate surroundings. The terrain is far from optimum: snow, high grass, deep mud and hard ground

---

<sup>1</sup> Gening, V. F.; Zdanovic, G. B.; Gening V. V., *Sintashta: archeologicheskiye pamyatniki ariyskikh plemen Uralo-Kazahstanskikh stepei*, Chelyabinsk, 1992.

found on the steppe itself had a considerable impact on the speed and manoeuvrability of the chariot. On its fringes, the closed woods, steep terrain, soft sand and swamp terrain would have the same effect.

Furthermore, when considering the socio-economical context of the steppe, there was no use for such a vehicle. Besides its limitations in battle<sup>2</sup>, its inability to match the speed and agility of herded horses and wild animals meant that the mount would be a better alternative for both herders and hunters. The chariot would be of minor importance for migrating nomadic groups due to its inability to carry heavy loads, its lack of comfort over great distances, and its complexity, which would make it impossible to repair *en route*. Heavy carts or pack animals would be a much better alternative.

These limitations, in conjunction with the existence of better alternatives, and the lack of prototypes, made, according to the authors, the steppe chariot a needless and superfluous object.

In contrast, in the Near East, a fast transportation method was needed, and the absence of a suitable mount made the technological development of faster and better vehicles a priority. According to Littauer and Crouwel, this need arose from the social and economic context found in Near East and southern Mesopotamia in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, which «consisted of a number of city-states, with a common language, religion and shrines. Industry and commerce were highly developed, as were the arts and crafts; architecture was ambitious. Literacy fostered written laws and litigations and facilitated trade. Although transport of all types could come downstream by river, it had to go upstream by land, and land travel was encouraged by the level terrain.»<sup>3</sup> The chariot was developed to allow better communication between different communities, who shared similar institutions and a striving industry and commerce, but that were geographically apart.

Therefore, in the Near East, the chariot was a much-needed conveyance, a product of a developed and complex society, in order to

---

<sup>2</sup> Littauer, M. A.; Crouwel, J. H., “The Origin of the True Chariot”, *Antiquity* 40 (1996), pp. 934-939.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*, p. 936.

suppress the combined limitations of its social, economic, and political organization and geography. This necessity was what motivated the improvement of already existing methods of transportation that led to the development of the light chariot.

According to the authors, «The scenarios are one of improvement and development out of an established and very useful artefact versus one of the new creation of a superfluous artefact.»<sup>4</sup> Unlike its near eastern counterparts, for the development of the steppe war chariot, another motivation rather than necessity must be found.<sup>5</sup>

However, this is a very simplistic approach to the problem. It fails to take into account the particular circumstances gathered at the southern Uralian steppes during the Sintashta-Arkaim period that might have contributed to the development of the war chariot.

Despite being named after a single eponymous settlement, the Sintashta culture encompasses a series of settlements, located in the fluvial plains<sup>6</sup> of the Tobol and Ural rivers' tributaries, in the Trans-Uralian steppe. The settlements are either round- or oval- shaped in layout, with the houses positioned in concentric circles, leaving the centre of the settlement free of any constructions. The houses were usually of rectangular shape, all of similar size, between 100 and 250m<sup>2</sup>. Larger settlements display more houses, rather than larger ones. The houses were built exclusively using frame-pillar technique, with the foundations dug into the bedrock, while soil was the main building material. The houses were built adjacent to each other, with the back against a common defensive wall. Each occupant was responsible for building the parcel of the wall attached to his own house, therefore greatly reducing the costs of construction.

Internally, the houses were divided in three distinct areas: living quarters, an economic area, and a small antechamber at the entrance. One of the most remarkable traits of these settlements is that most,

---

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*, p. 938.

<sup>5</sup> *Idem*, p. 935.

<sup>6</sup> The exception is the Chekatay site, located in a lake bank.

if not all, of the houses had one or more walls adjacent to a well and to a cupola-shaped furnace. The combination of these two factors creates optimum conditions for metallurgy, and the abundance of remains demonstrates the existence of a high volume of metallurgical production. However, the defining architectonic trait of the Sintashta-type settlements is their heavy fortifications.

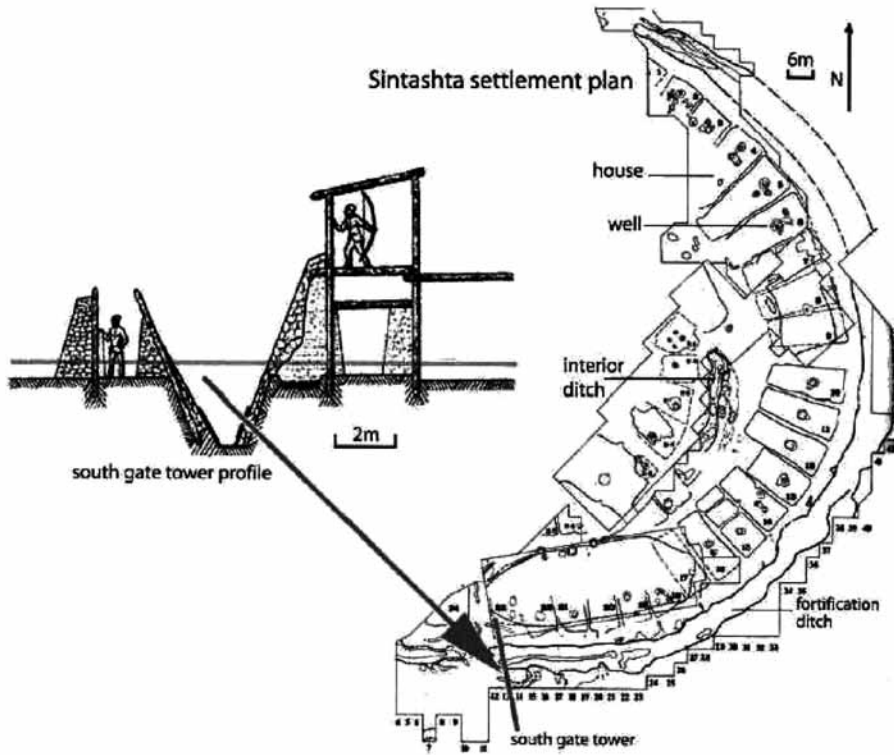


Fig. 1: Sintashta settlement: layout and fortifications.<sup>7</sup>

The Sintashta settlements were, by any standard, heavily fortified. Its main line of defence was the combinations of ramparts and ditches, often followed by an outer wall. Weaker sections of the wall, like entrances, were additionally fortified with towers. The ditches averaged between 2 to 4m wide, depending on the size of the adjacent wall, and

<sup>7</sup> Gening, V. F.; Zdanovic, G. B.; and Gening V. V., *op. cit.*, figs. 7 and 12.

usually around 1.5m deep. The wall was built using soil and wood<sup>8</sup>. Two parallel walls were built, with the gap between them filled with rock and earth removed from the ditch. The frame structure was reinforced with wood and loam soil. This construction method allowed for surprisingly high walls, up to 6 metres in height<sup>9</sup>.

The presence of fortifications denounces the intention of permanently protecting a specific location, which is a very uncommon practice amongst groups of nomads. Something pushed these groups to settle in a particular location, which was potentially desired by hostile populations, hence the need for defences. It has been shown that groups of nomadic peoples tend to orbit towards critical locations in times of need<sup>10</sup>. When faced with low production and/or increased competition, populations tend to settle near critical resources, in order to protect them for themselves. This seemed to be the case with the Sintashta type settlements.

When one considers the northern hemisphere in the last 9000 years, one can notice four phases of rapid climatic change<sup>11</sup>:

- Phase 1. 560-800 BP – “minor glacial epoch”
- Phase 2. 1300 – 800 BP – Middle Ages optimum
- Phase 3. 2900 – 2300 BP – Iron Age cold
- Phase 4. 7000 – 6000 BP – Climatic Optimum

This data shows that rapid climatic change tends to occur in alternate cycles of increase and decrease in overall temperature. However, these are general observations. Local studies clearly show that while the

---

<sup>8</sup> Stone was used in Olginskoye and Alandskoye outer defensive wall.

<sup>9</sup> Koryakova, L. N. and Epimakhov, A. V., *The Urals and Western Siberia in the Bronze and Iron Ages*, Cambridge U.P., 2006, pp. 68 - 75

<sup>10</sup> Rosenberg, M., “Cheating at Musical Chairs: Territoriality and sedentism in an evolutionary context”, *Current Anthropology* 39/5 (1998), pp. 653-681.

<sup>11</sup> Dergachev, V.A.; Zaitseva, G.I; Timofeyev, V. I; Sementsov, A. A. and Lebedeva, L. M., “Izmeneniya prirodnykh protsessov I radiouglerodnaya khronologiya arkheologicheskikh pamyatnikov”, in G.I. Zaitseva, V. V. Dergachev, V. M. Masson (eds.), *Arkheologiya I Radiouglerod*, St. Petersburg, Institute for History of Material Culture, 1996, pp. 7-17; p. 13.

broader changes tend to be global in nature, locally, its consequences can vary considerably, not only between different climatic regions, but between apparently similar cycles<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, one has to consider the local effects of climate change in order to correctly assess its potential effect in a human population. This has been done extensively for the Volga-Ural steppe.<sup>13</sup>

The correlation between geological and archaeological periodization was made by Ivanov and Chernyanski:

---

<sup>12</sup> Koryakova, L. N. and Sergeev, A., “Geographicheskiy aspekt khozyaistvennoi deyatel'nostim plemen sargatskoi kulturi”, in V. Stoyanov (ed.), *Voprosy archeologii Urala* 18, Sverdlosk, Ural State University, 1986, pp. 90-98. Klimenko, V. V., “Klimat i istoriya v epokhu pervykh vysokikh kultur (3500–500 gg. Do n.e.)”, *Vostok [Oriens]* 4 (1998), pp. 5-41; Klimenko, V. V., “Klimat i istoriya ot Konfutsiya do Mukhammeda”, *Vostok [Oriens]* 1 (2000), pp. 5-32; Klimenko, V. V., “Klimat i istoriya v sredniye veka”, *Vostok [Oriens]* 4 (2003), pp. 5-41.

<sup>13</sup> For details see: Koryakova, L. N. and Epimakhov, A. V., *Op. Cit.*; Alexandrovsky, A. L., *Paleoklimaty golotsena po dannym izucheniya pogrebennykh pochvstepnoi zony* (Paper presented to the Chteniya, posvyashchennye 100-letiyu deyatel'nosti V. A. Gorodtsova v Gosudarstvennom Istoricheskom Muzeje), Moscow, 2003, pp. 192–3; Ivanov, I.V., Chyernyanskiy S.S., “Obshshiy zakonomyernosti razvitiya chyernozyemov Yevrazii i evolyootsiya chyernozyemov Zaooral'ya”, *Pochvovedeniye* 9 (1996) pp. 1045–1055 (Trans-Urals); Ivanov, I. V.; Chernyansky, S. S., “Voprosy arkhologicheskogo pochvovedeniya i nelotorye rezultaty paleopochvennykh isledovaniy v zapovednike ‘Arkaim’ ” in S. Y. Zdanovich (ed.), *Arkheologicheskyy istochnik i modelirovaniye drevnykh tekhnologiy*, Chelyabinsk, Center “Arkaim” Institute of History and Archaeology of RAS, 2000, pp. 3-16 (Trans-Urals); Nemkova, V. K., “Stratigraphiya pozdnei poslednikovykh otlozheniy Preduraly'a”, in V. L. Yakhimovich (ed.), *K istoriy pozdnego pleistotsena i golotsena Yuzhnogo Urala i Preduralyja*, Ufa, BF AN SSSR, 1978, pp. 4-45 (Middle Urals); Duryagin, V. V., *Ozernyye geosistemy vostochnogo sklona Yuzhnogo Urala i ikh izmeneniye v zone tekhnogenogo vozdeistviya* (Ph.D. dissertation), Perm, Perm University, 1999 (Southern Urals).



*The Sintashta cultural particulars and the origin of the war chariot*

Time		Periodization						
Thousands years BP	Centuries	Geological	Thermic epochs	Epochs of humidification of Eurasian steppe	Archaeological			
					Epochs	Cultures		
						Eastern Europe	Urals, Northern Kazakhstan	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
0	20		Warming		Contemporanarity			
1	15	SA <sup>1</sup>	SA <sup>1</sup> Cooling, "minor glacial period"	SA <sup>3</sup> Moistening	Middle Ages	Late	Late Nomads	Late Nomads
	10		SA <sup>2</sup> Warming, "minor climatic optimum"					
2	5	SA <sup>2</sup>	SA <sup>1</sup> Cooling	Early Sub-athlantic alternation of micro-pluvilas and micro-arids	Iron Age	Sarmatians	Late	Early Nomads
	0						Huns	
3	5	SA <sup>1</sup>	SB <sup>3</sup> Cooling	Late sub-boreal moistening	Bronze Age	Sauromatians	Early	Sargary
	10						Scythians	
4	15	SB <sup>2</sup>	SB <sup>2</sup> Thermic optimum	Early Sub-boreal aridization	Middle	Cimmerians	Srubnaya	Fyodorovo Alakul Petrovka Sintashta
	20						Catacombnya	
5	25	SB <sup>1</sup>	SB <sup>1</sup> Cooling	Late Atlantic Moistening	Early	Late Yamnaya	Late	Tersek-Botai cultures
	30						Early Yamnaya	
6	35	AT <sup>3</sup>	AT <sup>3</sup> Thermic maximum		Eneolithic	Eneolithic cultures	Late Neolithic	
	40							

Table 1: Correlation between geological and archaeological periodization in the Eurasian Steppes.<sup>14</sup>

The Holocene climatic optimum corresponds to the Atlantic period (AT<sup>3</sup>), where a thermic maximum met with high percentages of moist. After c. 2500 BC, the climate in the steppes became colder (SB<sup>1</sup> cooling). This decrease in temperature, coupled with an ongoing process of aridization (sub-boreal aridization) led to significant changes to the

<sup>14</sup> Ivanov, I. V., and Chernyansky, S. S., *op. cit.*, 1996.

climatic landscape in the southern Urals. Unlike the Volga steppes, where these changes did not lead to a significant displacement of climatic zones<sup>15</sup>, the Trans-Uralian steppes, naturally colder and more arid, saw significant change. The increased aridity meant a significant decrease in marsh-like areas, favoured by pastoralists as winter refuge, due to abundant forage<sup>16</sup>. In turn, this led to a significant increase in competition for locations, prompting some groups to settle near them.

Groups of Poltavka and Abashevo pastoralists began to settle in key locations near marshlands. It is relevant that most of the Sintashta settlements, despite their obvious need for protection, were located on the fringes of the floodplains of small and medium rivers, sacrificing the added protection offered by higher ground. This shows that the primary concern of these populations was not the protection of the settlement itself, but rather the protection of the access to marshland.

Even the smallest of these settlements was heavily fortified (Chernorech'ye III, approx. six structures). This suggests a state of endemic warfare. It is not possible to identify one single reason for this conflict. The simplest explanation would be competition between hostile tribal groups for the same resources. However, this might not be the only reason.

Sintashta type settlements specialized in metallurgical production. Almost every structure excavated at major settlements showed remains of smelting furnaces and slag from copper ore (fig.2). The great majority of bronze objects were made with arsenical bronze, avg. 1-1.25% arsenic, with only 2% of objects excavated made of tin bronze. From a mining site of Vorovskaya Yama, east of the Ural River, an estimated six thousand tons of quartzitic rock was extracted for the ground<sup>17</sup>. This intense production meant a great demand for metal. These levels

---

<sup>15</sup> Koryakova, L. N. and A. V. Epimakhov, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> Anthony, D. W., *The Horse, the Wheel and Language*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2007, p. 389.

<sup>17</sup> *Idem*, pp. 391-392.

of production suggest foreign trade, rather than an exclusive domestic use. That seemed to be the case.

The shift in production visible in Late Bronze Age steppe settlements can be understood as part of a much broader process, which also includes South Central Asia urban complexes

Of all the bronze objects unearthed at Sintashta sites, only 2% were made of tin bronze. The reason for this is the extreme scarceness of tin throughout the old world. However, tin was one of the most important commodities in Near East and Mesopotamia.

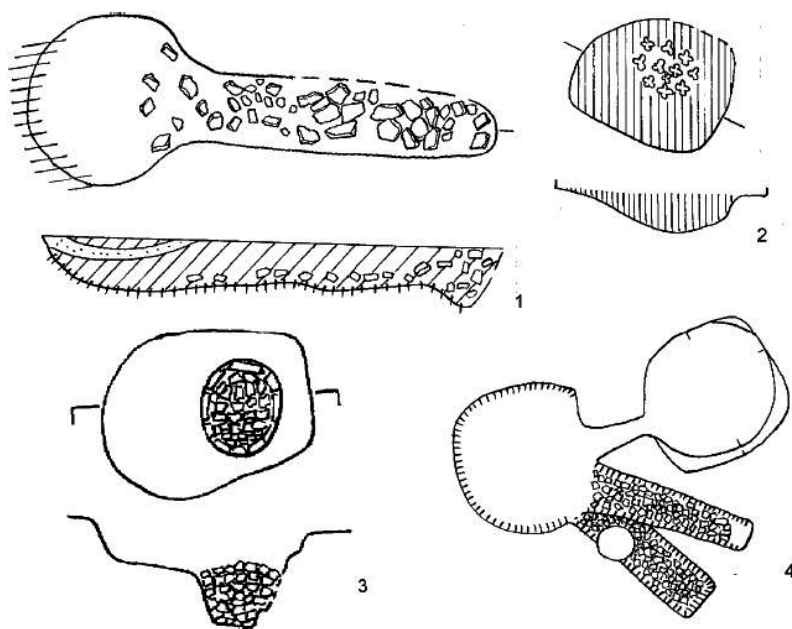


Fig. 2: The furnaces of Sintashta settlements 1, 3, 4 – Arkaim, 2 – Sintashta.<sup>18</sup>

The origin of the tin imported to the Near East and Mesopotamia is still under debate. J. E. Dayton<sup>19</sup> lists several possible locations for

<sup>18</sup> Grigoryev, S. A., *The Investigation of Bronze Age Metallurgical Slags of the Sintashta Culture in the Southern Ural*, Chelyabinsk, Russia, Southern Ural Branch of History and Archaeology Institute UB of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 1999.

<sup>19</sup> Dayton, J. E., "The Problem of Tin in the Ancient World", *World Archaeology* 3/1 (1971), pp. 49-70.

the sources of tin traded in the Near East, and concludes that it lies in Europe. That might have been the case, considering Europe had vast deposits of tin or copper ore with high percentages of tin. However, this poses a problem. By the author's own admission, most of the European sites were not explored by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium<sup>20</sup>. On the other hand, evidence suggests that significant quantities of tin were imported to Anatolia and the Near East from the *east*, not the *west*. This does not mean that there was no tin being imported from Europe, but that there was another source available.

After 2000 B.C., tin was exported to Anatolia from northern Syria, while Mari imported its tin from Anshan and Susa, in Elam<sup>21</sup>. Although the source of the northern Syrian tin is not known, it is possible that it might be the same as in Mari. An alternative source for tin is the Indus valley cities of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa. About 30% of tested bronze objects found in Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa were made of tin bronze, despite in low percentages (70% had a 1% tin to a 99% copper ratio). Tin bronzes were found in sites in Oman, in the Arabian Peninsula, in conjunction with other imports from the Indus<sup>22</sup>. This opens the possibility that some of the tin used in Mesopotamia and Near East had its origin in the Indus Valley.

However, this also raises a problem: neither Elam nor the Indus valley cities had significant tin deposits available. Therefore, one must conclude that they also imported tin from elsewhere. The most probable origin for the tin imported by Elam and Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa is the Zeravshan River valley, where the oldest known tin mines were found. Evidence shows the existence of links between this region and Sintashta type steppe cultures, at least since c.2100 B.C. In upper Zeravshan, cheek-pieces, found in a burial site at Zardcha-Khalifa, are direct copies of the ones found in Sintashta. Furthermore, a closer link can be found between the two regions. Ceramic found at the settlement

---

<sup>20</sup> *Idem*, pp. 54-58.

<sup>21</sup> Anthony, D. W., *op. cit.*, pp. 418-419.

<sup>22</sup> *Idem*, p. 419.

of Tugaj is very similar to the one seen in Petrovka culture sites, a variant of Sintashta culture in Northern Kazakhstan<sup>23</sup>. However, that which might be the best evidence regarding the exchanges between both cultures are the appearance of horses and horse motifs in the southern urban societies after c. 2000 B.C.

Considering that many settlements seem to have been abandoned around 2000 BC, most notably the sites of Sarazm and Zaman Baba, some authors have suggested an actual migration of steppe peoples to this region at the time<sup>24</sup>. That might have been the case. Prior to c.2000 B.C., bronze objects found at Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex (BMAC) sites tended to be made with arsenical bronze, while other metal objects were made of either unalloyed copper or a 8-10% lead copper alloy. However, after 2000 B.C. tin bronze became much more common in BMAC sites, reaching over 50% of the objects in some cases. However, this is true only in Bactrian sites. In Margiana sites, tin bronze remained a rare commodity<sup>25</sup>. This might be explained by the proximity between Bactrian sites and the Zeravshan river valley. This allows for two different conclusions. First, considering that no tin was found in Zeravshan sites before the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C., it is possible to conclude that the mines began to operate c. 2000 B.C., closely after the establishment of Sintashta steppe cultures in northern Kazakhstan and shortly before the appearance of Petrovka culture pottery in the region. Secondly, there was direct trade between Bactrian BMAC towns and Zeravshan settlements.

Considering that the BMAC towns had extensive contacts with both the Iranian Plateau and with the Indus Valley, a possible tin trade route emerges. Tin gathered at Zeravshan river valley, either by Petrovka miners, or at the very least, by populations with close contact with

---

<sup>23</sup> Masson, V. M., "Cultures of the Steppe Bronze Age and Urban Civilizations in the South of Central Asia" in *Complex Societies of Central Asia from the 3rd to the 1st Millennium BC*, 2 vols. (JIES Monograph 46), Washington – Chelyabinsk, The Institute for the Study of Man / Institute of History and Archeology: Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Chelyabinsk State University, 2002, pp. 548-549.

<sup>24</sup> Anthony, D. W., *op. cit.*, p. 421.

<sup>25</sup> *Idem*, p. 425.

Sintashta-type cultures, was transported to the south, through BMAC towns, until it reached either Elam or Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa. This places the steppe cultures of southeast Urals at the beginning of an important trade route. This explains the major shift in production, as well as the extreme specialization, observed in Sintashta-type settlements in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. By c. 2100 B.C., Sintashta sites were no longer herding settlements, but heavily fortified, highly specialized, metallurgical military complexes. This does not contradict the current knowledge of the Sintashta culture metallurgy. Being closely linked with Abashevo metallurgy, it represents the last remnants of the Circumpontic metal tradition, while at the same time reflecting the beginning of the Eurasian technocultural network. This stage of affairs, later fuelled by the Seima-Turbino transcultural phenomenon, led to the fully development of bronze metallurgy in Eastern Europe forest zone.

As mentioned earlier, the initial stimulus for permanent settlement came from the need to secure critical resources in a time of scarceness, brought by climatic change. Between 2100 and 1800 B.C. more than 20 fortified settlements were created between the Ural and Topol rivers<sup>26</sup>. The high proliferation of settlements indicates fierce competition for the available resources, while the presence of fortifications suggests that numbers alone were not enough to protect a certain location. These circumstances indicate a change in warfare. Traditionally, steppe warfare between nomadic groups was limited to cattle raiding and tribal skirmishes. However, if that was the case in the Sintashta period, the concentration of several groups in one settlement would be sufficient to deter any further hostilities, and thus, render the fortifications unnecessary. However, that was not the case. Not only were the settlements heavily fortified, there is evidence that there was fierce competition between hostile groups, not for the control of the settlement itself, but for its location. G. B. Zdanovich and

---

<sup>26</sup> *Idem*, p. 390.

I. M. Batanina<sup>27</sup> have demonstrated that newly-arrived populations preferred to raze previous settlements and then proceed to build on the same location, rather than build a new settlement in a new location:

«It is interesting to note that it would have seemed preferable for the newly arrived population to build a new fortified center in a new site, even if it is near the old one. However, this did not happen. The bearers of the new geometrical symbols ruined the old structures with their own buildings and intentionally crossed them to create their own original settlement landscape.»<sup>28</sup>

This shows that, despite its impressive fortifications, there were warring groups strong enough to take and destroy an entire settlement. This was an age of fully-fledged conflict: «"Squares" demonstrate an especially "hostile" attitude towards "ovals" and "circles". The destroyed circumferences are at the bottom of the cultural layers of the square settlements Rodniki, Stepnoe, Ustye, probably Kamysty, and Chekatai. Aerial photographs show the imposition of different defence systems and help to suggest the succession of changes in the settlements planning schemes.»<sup>29</sup>

The necessity to control key locations in order to secure access to critical resources, combined with a constant flow of wealth originating from long-distance metal trade, made possible the formation of alliances and the gathering of large groups of warriors, thus creating a vicious circle of escalation in conflict, which in turn led to an exponential increase in the intensity of warfare.

---

<sup>27</sup> Zdanovich, G. B.; Batanina, I. M., "Planography of the Fortified Centers of the Middle Bronze Age in the Southern Trans-Urals According to Aerial Photography Data" in *Complex Societies of Central Asia from the 3rd to the 1st Millennium BC*, 2 vols. (JIES Monograph 46), Washington – Chelyabinsk, The Institute for the Study of Man / Institute of History and Archeology: Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Chelyabinsk State University, 2002, pp. 121 - 138

<sup>28</sup> *Idem*, p. 124.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*. "Squares", "ovals", and "circles" refer to different groups of people, categorized according to the geometrical shape of their defensive system.

The state of intense warfare, fuelled by a constant flow of wealth, became the breeding grounds for new customs, new tactics, and new weapons. This increase in conflict can be seen in the Sintashta culture graves. For the first time in the region, large deposits of weapons are found buried next to human remains. Earlier burials seldom displayed weapons, and in the rare cases when that happened, mainly in Abashevo graves, it was limited to a single axe or projectile weapon. In contrast, in Sintashta culture graves, a great number of different weapons can be found, as well as numerous projectile points. At the same time, the frequency of weapons burials increased drastically. David Anthony suggests an increase from less than 10% of all graves containing weapons in earlier Bronze Age cultures, to a maximum of 54% of adult graves in Sintashta culture graves.<sup>30</sup>

Another clear indicator of increased conflict is the emergence of new weapons. This development in armaments can best be seen in projectile points. Older lanceolate arrowheads with flat bases became longer. A new type of projectile-stemmed point appeared, consisting of a long (avg. 4-10 cm long) blade with a thick medial ridge. Being stemmed, it was probably used in javelins rather than in arrows. Besides these projectile points, a new type of socketed spear head, made of bronze or copper and heavier than its predecessors was also found<sup>31</sup>. Because of its mass and weight, this spearhead might have been used in close combat rather than as a throwing weapon. In this period of martial technological development, the war chariot might have arisen.

According to Littauer and Crouwel, the war chariot is a superfluous artefact in the steppe, mainly because of the existence of a more suitable alternative, the horse. That might have been the case in conventional tribal warfare, consisting on occasional skirmishes and cattle raids. This type of conflict is characterized by small and quick engagements. Rather than being used as a weapons platform, the horse was probably used to create a surprise element, and later a swift retreat. In comparison

---

<sup>30</sup> Anthony, D. W., *op. cit.*, p. 395.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem.*



with modern-day horses, Bronze Age horses were little more than sturdy ponies. While some could carry a man, they certainly could not endure the hardships of battle. They could not carry a fully armoured warrior for long periods of time, and being an animal with a fight or flight response heavily geared towards flight, in the case of mares and geldings, or of extreme aggression, in the case of stallions; it would be extremely difficult to manage in any sort of formation or tactical use. While this was no serious drawback in earlier tribal warfare, when the horse served as transportation to light-armoured warriors, during the Sintashta period, where large-scale battles were fought between large groups of organized, and judging by their graves, heavily-armed troops, the horse simply could not be used effectively in the battlefield. It was possible to use it as a mount, but it wasn't possible to use it as *cavalry*.

It is reasonable to expect that Sintashta warriors were aware of the horses' potential as a weapon. However, a way to circumvent its natural limitations had to be found before horses could be used to full effect on the battlefield. The chariot is the solution to this problem.

Therefore, the war chariot, rather than a superfluous object in the steppe, is a much-needed war machine that allowed horses to be deployed on the battlefield, during a time of endemic large-scale conflict. At the time, the necessity was far greater on the steppe than in the Near East, thus providing a stimulus for its local development.

That seems to have been the case. The discrepancy (fig. 3) in size of known steppe war chariots has been interpreted by Littauer and Crouwel as a sign of its inadequacy as a war machine, discarding them as imitations of Near Eastern ones.

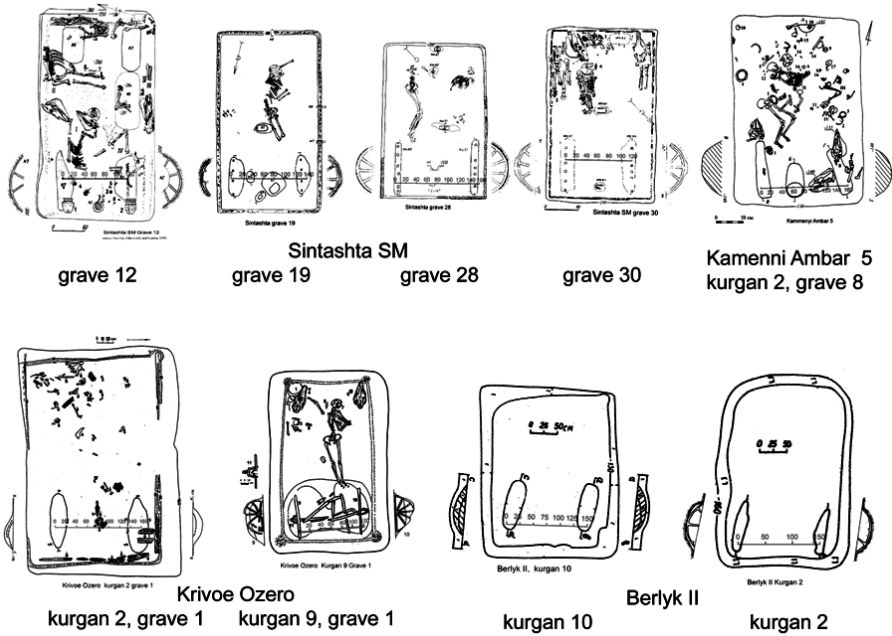


Fig. 3: Gauge discrepancies in different steppe chariots.<sup>32</sup>

However, these discrepancies, if anything, suggest experimentation with a new technology, rather than imitation of an already-established one.

Chariots and draught teams are difficult and expensive to maintain. However, considering that Sintashta society relied heavily in the control of critical locations and long distance trade, it is expected that whoever controlled these two factors had the means to maintain chariot troops. It is safe to assume the existence of a military elite in Sintashta settlements, if for no other reason, because of its graves.

At present, all of Sintashta culture funerary sites are marked with kurgans, with the exception of Sintashta's SM and SII funeral complexes. The layout of the graves inside the funerary space, limited by a circular perimeter, reflects the hierarchical nature of its society.

<sup>32</sup> Anthony D. W.; Dorcas R. B., "The Secondary Products Revolution, Horse-Riding, and Mounted Warfare" (<http://users.hartwick.edu/anthonyd/harnessing%20horsepower.html> – November 2009).

Despite the fact that all graves share a common design, there are significant discrepancies in both size and content. The largest of all the graves (3-4m length) usually occupy the central area of the complex, with smaller and simpler graves surrounding them, interspersed with areas reserved for sacrificed animals.

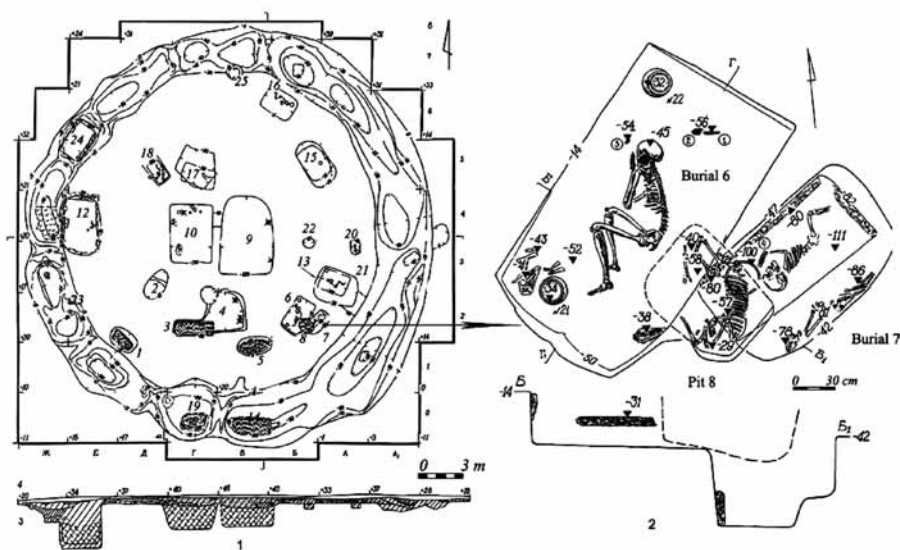


Fig. 4: Bolshekaranganski Kurgan (1) general plan and kurgan profile; (2) burials 6 and 7 and pit 8: general plan and profile (1 – knife and remains of scabbard; 2 – crystal; 3 – *astragali* [talus bone]).<sup>33</sup>

All of the graves show remains of animal sacrifice, mostly domestic animals, but also wild canines, like wolves or foxes. The presence of horse remains in conjunction with chariot remains shows that not all of the sacrificed animals were meant as ritual food. The number and species of the sacrificed animals is also a clear indicator of status. Men were usually buried with a horse, while women and children were buried with small horned domestic animals. Furthermore,

<sup>33</sup> Zdanovich, D. G., “Arkheologiya kurgana 25 Bolshekaranganskogo mogilnika” in D. G. Zdanovich (ed.), *Arkaim nekropol*, Chelyabinsk, South Ural Press, 2002, pp. 17-110.

men's graves usually contain weapons, while women's graves tend to contain tools. It is interesting to note that the chariot graves contain an above average amount of weapons, which accounts for its martial importance<sup>34</sup>. Furthermore, the great number of sacrificed animals found in certain graves<sup>35</sup> is proof of the importance of its occupant. A large number of sacrificed animals meant a large number of attendees at the funeral rites. With sacrifices of ten or more animals in certain graves, it is estimated an attendance of hundreds of people.<sup>36</sup>

However, the lack of a separated necropolis, combined with the inexistence of evidence for a clear social differentiation on the settlements themselves, gives some insight into the nature of this military elite. It was highly symbolic, and operated inside a communal sphere. However, there is clearer evidence of this military elite and its nature. According to V. M. Masson:

«Judging by the presence of monumental cult complexes in Margiana (Gonur, Togolok) and Bactria (Dashly, Djarkutan), this tendency towards a theocratic form of social organization was also preserved in the urbanized societies of south Central Asia in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC.[...]Nevertheless, it is characteristic of that in the epoch of the Early Iron Age, when traditional urbanized centers of the Bronze Age become destitute, monumental temple complexes and rich glyptic inscriptions disappeared simultaneously. Citadels on powerful platforms were put in the foreground as organizational centers. This can prove military and aristocratic dominance in the way of politogenesis. Furthermore, due to the armed elite which moved in chariots, the military and aristocratic way of politogenesis [sic] was characteristic of steppe societies of the Sintashta-Arkaim period.»<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Koryakova, L. N. and Epimakhov, A. V., *op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>35</sup> Up to twelve (Stepnoye 7-4, Sintashta and Khripunovo cemeteries).

<sup>36</sup> Koryakova, L. N. and Epimakhov, A. V., *op. cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>37</sup> Masson, V. M., *op. cit.*, p. 553.

Masson identified a direct correlation between the organizational centres of a society and its political organization. During the Late Bronze Age, urban societies of Central Asia had their organizational centres in temple complexes, similar to early Sumerian city-states. However, during the early Iron Age, this system of organization changed, with the temple complexes being replaced by fortified citadels, of close similarity with the ones found in complex steppe societies of the previous period. Considering that there is a direct link between organizational centres and political organization, and that the late Central Asia Iron Age societies display the same organizational model (the same centres) as the earlier Bronze Age steppe societies, it is safe to assume that these also shared a common political system.

Therefore, one can conclude that the Sintashta societies were organized as military aristocracies, a system that was later implemented in central Asia, as groups of steppe dwellers began to migrate south. These migrations can be seen in the change of architecture and burial rites in the middle and late 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC. Not only did several Sintashta-Arkaim type settlements begin to appear further south, a new type of culture emerged, formed by elements of both cultures in symbiotic union (Vakhsh type cultures). Furthermore, in cemeteries in Bactria and Margiana, new types of graves appeared where stone laying and ceramic facing in the walls were reminiscence of northern burial types.<sup>38</sup>

Ultimately, the war chariot was a much-needed artefact in the steppe, and the conditions required for its development were all gathered in the Sintashta steppes. The abundance of wealth and intensive warfare created the conditions for experimentation in both weapons and tactics. Despite the horse being used as a mount before, the advent of a new type of large-scale conflict created the need to circumvent the animal's natural limitations. This was accomplished by the development of the war chariot. Its martial potential was further

---

<sup>38</sup> *Idem*, p. 554.

enhanced by parallel developments in ranged weapons, the most significant of which is the introduction of a long-bladed javelin.

The steppe societies at the Sintashta region were of an extremely complex nature. The dissolution of the Circumpontic metallurgical network led to the development of a particular technology, characteristic to the Sintashta region, and shared by several settlements. This is proof of extensive and highly detailed contacts between different populations. Furthermore, there is definitive proof of contact with the urban societies of South Central Asia, which would facilitate long distance trade. Dismissing a possible steppe origin for the war chariot on the ground of its social simplicity alone is an oversimplification, and should be avoided. The organizational changes that occurred in steppe societies after c.2500 BC, in conjunction with contact with new urban cultures that led to interaction in long-distance trade systems, allowed for the development of military elites, which controlled great wealth, and thus could afford to train and maintain the highly-specialized chariot troops. This, however, should not be understood as definitive proof for a steppe origin. That is not the purpose of the present work. It merely states a possibility, often discarded by a simplistic approach to the problem. The extent and importance of the Sintashta findings is yet to be fully assessed by experts, and new evidence surfaces every day. Until such work is done, no definitive answer can be given to where the light war chariot truly originated.

## Interview: Jean-Claude Margueron\*

*The French archaeologist Jean-Claude Margueron is one of the most prominent specialists on the material culture and architecture of the Ancient Near East. Having a very long accumulated experience in fieldwork, he directed multiple excavation projects, such as that of Mari, the Middle Euphrates city in Syria, from 1979 to 2004. In 2005, he was appointed the charge of Directeur d'Études émérite of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (IV). Now retired, J.-Cl. Margueron granted this interview in March of 2011, by occasion of a conference integrated in the Exhibition Torre de Babel – Historia y Mito, held at the Archaeological Museum of Murcia, Spain.*

**Question: Comment avez-vous commencé à travailler dans l'archéologie en Orient? Comment et quel a été votre premier contact avec l'archéologie du Proche-Orient?**

C'est un contact indirect. Enfant, je suis passé par toute une série de découvertes. Le premier livre que je me rappelle avoir lu a été un livre d'histoire, pas un livre avec des histoires, mais un livre d'histoire sur la France: c'était le début d'une passion qui ne m'a jamais quitté. J'ai adoré lire les biographies de certains personnages célèbres: je me rappelle – j'y ai justement pensé hier et c'était un des premiers – le Cid Campeador quand j'avais 8 ans, mais aussi Du Guesclin, rien que des grands personnages, parfois romancés comme Ivanhoé. Derrière les hommes, c'était une première découverte de l'histoire et la prise de conscience de l'événement historique.

Dans un deuxième temps, vers 10-12 ans, à l'occasion de divers séjours dans les Alpes, j'ai découvert la géographie physique et presque en même temps la géologie: c'était donc l'espace, dans ses

---

\* This interview was conducted by Francisco Caramelo and Juan Luis Montero Fenollós.

formes variées, qui entrainait dans mon univers. Je me souviens aussi des explorations faites à bicyclette vers l'âge de 12 ans avec un ami, dans les carrières de la région parisienne, à la recherche aussi bien de fossiles que de spécimens pétrographiques et, de nos récoltes, nous faisons des collections déjà raisonnées.

C'est à peu près dans le même temps que je me suis passionné pour un livre sur la géologie des Alpes, qui m'a fait découvrir que les formes de l'espace dans lequel nous vivons ont une histoire et se transforment avec le temps.

Ainsi, le milieu et l'histoire: ce sont les deux directions essentielles de mes intérêts de jeunesse, un balancement perpétuel entre l'espace et la chronologie, les deux fondements de l'histoire.

Et puis il y a eu le hasard qui a fait que j'ai rencontré, en 1947, sur les plages de l'Atlantique – j'avais alors 13 ans et demi – des jeunes qui étaient les enfants d'André Parrot. Cela a été alors le début de ma découverte progressive de l'archéologie comme un domaine d'action qui, sur le terrain, rejoignait l'histoire.

Evidemment, je n'ai pas immédiatement conceptualisé tout cela avant d'atteindre l'âge des choix. Mais je me rends compte que toute mon enfance a tourné autour de ces deux ou trois directions. Dans tout cela, la littérature m'intéressait peu. Je lisais autre chose que de l'histoire parce que j'étais dans un milieu cultivé, où on lisait et où on parlait. Mais ce qui m'attirait, c'était la réalité matérielle des choses, de leur forme et de la façon dont elles se font, dont elles se créent dans l'histoire.





**Question: Est-ce le destin? La réalité vous a conduit dans une certaine direction...**

Oui, à côté des tendances il y a eu le hasard, comme cette rencontre avec les fils et les filles d'André Parrot parce que, jouant sur les plages, nous sommes devenus des camarades; les années passant, les relations se sont poursuivies à Paris et, par ses enfants, j'ai appris à connaître le père et ses activités; je peux dire que, dans les trois ou quatre années qui ont suivi cette rencontre, en même temps que l'apprentissage de la liberté, j'ai concrétisé en moi le désir de faire de l'archéologie. Et je n'ai jamais pensé à le faire en France: ma rencontre avec Parrot, mes origines protestantes – nous étions des fidèles pratiquants, dans ma famille – se sont rejointes dans ma pensée en établissant un lien entre l'Orient et l'archéologie, l'Orient et l'histoire. C'est cela qui a fait que, un jour, j'ai été prêt à me lancer dans cette voie, mais j'hésitais.

J'hésitais: à 15 ou 16 ans, quand il s'est agi de décider d'un métier, je ne savais pas encore. À seize ans, je suis parti un été avec ma bicyclette en Hollande pour y étudier toutes les installations hydrologiques: un travail d'ingénieur avec un peu d'histoire, mais pas d'archéologie. Peu après, parce que j'avais presque décidé de faire des études historiques, j'ai repris la bicyclette et je suis parti tout l'été en Italie du Sud, dans ce pays pratiquement *terra incognita* pour y faire de l'histoire de l'art et de l'archéologie des monuments que j'ai cherché à replacer dans leur époque. C'était toujours ce balancement entre deux tendances, l'une matérialiste et pratique des choses, l'autre cherchant à interpréter et à comprendre sur un mode historique.

Peu avant ce voyage, j'avais revu Marion Parrot qui m'avait dit avoir accompagné son père en Syrie comme intendante de la Mission de Mari. Alors je l'ai taquinée en lui disant que c'était possible parce qu'elle était la fille de son père, mais que cela ne pouvait arriver aux autres et sur un ton moqueur et envieux: «Tu crois qu'il m'emmènerait, moi?...» Et voilà que peu après j'ai reçu un coup de téléphone de son père qui me demande: « Je veux vous voir. Pour la prochaine campagne: j'ai besoin d'un photographe. Est-ce que vous savez faire des photos? Si oui, est-ce que vous voulez venir comme photographe à Mari?» Je n'ai pas hésité une seconde et j'ai dit: «Oui, oui, bien sûr.» Je n'allais pas manquer une occasion pareille!

J'avais 19 ans. Je sortais de mon bac! L'histoire me tenaillait. Et voilà qu'on me proposait "d'entrer en archéologie": pouvais-je refuser! Et voilà comment, à l'automne 1954, j'ai pris pour la première fois la route de l'Orient. Cela a été ma chance.

**Question: Vous aviez donc décidé de vous engager dans l'histoire?...**

Bien entendu ma voie était celle de l'histoire, parce que cela faisait 15 ans que je m'y complaisais et que l'archéologie n'existait pratiquement pas dans le champ des formations universitaires en général et, encore

moins dans le domaine de l'Orient. Aussi, à ce moment-là, au retour de cette première mission à Mari, j'ai pris naturellement la voie d'un futur enseignant: une licence d'histoire et géographie à la Sorbonne. Ce n'est pas que je renonçais à l'archéologie juste après y avoir goûté, mais l'évidence s'est alors imposée que l'archéologie était l'une des démarches fondamentales vers la connaissance historique.

Au début, je pensais surtout faire une licence, puis m'arrêter pour travailler sur les chantiers. Je n'étais pas un foudre de guerre pour les études à ce moment-là. Mais, ma licence obtenue, je me suis aperçu que, si je ne faisais pas l'agrégation, la voie universitaire ne me serait pas offerte, que j'aurais de la peine à trouver une activité de terrain, un véritable travail d'archéologue.

L'histoire contemporaine, pour différentes raisons, m'attirait moins, mais j'y ai quand même trouvé du grain à engranger; j'étais absolument passionné par l'Antiquité et le Moyen-Âge, par la compréhension que les textes et les penseurs nous donnaient des mondes disparus: par exemple *La philosophie au Moyen Âge* d'E. Gilson a été l'occasion d'une découverte de l'universalité de la pensée ancienne. Si ce n'était pas la voie que j'allais emprunter, c'était néanmoins la certitude de la richesse de cette Antiquité capable de produire des penseurs d'une telle profondeur.

L'approche de la géographie physique, à l'Université, a confirmé la place que je lui avais accordée au cours de mon adolescence. Si la géographie économique m'intéressait moins, en revanche l'étude des cartes, l'analyse des reliefs, la compréhension des paysages, savoir pourquoi telle montagne s'est formée, comment les volcans agissent, l'action d'un tremblement de terre, le jeu des forces internes, les modes d'action de l'érosion... représentaient autant de découvertes des forces dans lesquelles l'homme évolue et qui jouent sur son histoire.

En outre, j'ai fait mon service militaire à l'époque de la guerre d'Algérie comme officier d'artillerie: l'approche topographique du terrain était particulièrement développée dans la formation et j'ai trouvé alors un champ d'application merveilleux à la géomorphologie apprise à la Sorbonne: le rôle des petites crêtes et des petits thalwegs

pour la survie des soldats prenait tout son sens et j'ai été ainsi confronté à la connaissance des micro-reliefs que je devais retrouver par la suite à la surfaces des tells.

Oui, le passage par la géographie m'a absolument passionné et si je ne me suis pas précipité sur l'Histoire de l'Art comme tant d'archéologues, c'est parce que la nécessité de comprendre les phénomènes liés à la terre, les processus d'accumulation, les modalités de transformation des dépôts humains ou naturels s'est imposée à moi comme un absolu. Peu d'archéologues se sont intéressés à la morphologie des tells et pourtant c'est l'intérêt que je lui accordé qui m'a permis de réaliser cette étude des villes où la topographie a joué un si grand rôle.

Mais vous allez me dire: «Tout cela est reconstruit par vous-même. Vous avez maintenant 76 ans. Vous avez donc longtemps pensé à tout ce que vous avez fait. Et là vous cherchez à vous justifier». Je cherche peut-être à me justifier mais, en même temps, je dois vraiment bien dire que je n'avance que ce qui m'a intéressé: l'histoire, les hommes dans l'histoire, le terrain, la morphologie, la terre... Qu'est-ce que c'est finalement que l'histoire, sinon l'homme dans le temps et sur la terre...

**Question: C'était un intérêt nouveau pour cette époque-là, une sensibilité différente par rapport à l'archéologie traditionnelle. Ce n'était pas la tendance, ce n'était pas la norme de l'archéologie...**

Non, ce n'était ni la norme, ni la tendance dominante, qui prétendait alors faire de l'archéologie sociale, particulièrement incertaine, voire inopérante. Ma position par rapport à l'Histoire doit être précisée. Avec un père philologue et historien, j'ai baigné dans un milieu où l'histoire était reine: j'étais parfaitement capable de m'intéresser et de suivre ce qu'il faisait. C'était une histoire à laquelle je pouvais adhérer, car c'est une excellente approche, même si elle est incomplète; ce n'était pas celle vers laquelle moi je désirais aller, car elle laissait un énorme

pan dans l'ombre: à la critique des documents écrits je voulais ajouter la connaissance, aussi critique, du milieu et des aptitudes techniques de l'homme intégré dans son univers. L'approche archéologique, elle aussi incomplète, était une autre façon d'aborder l'histoire: l'une complétait l'autre. C'était là le point important.

**Question: Quels sites avez-vous explorés et quels sont ceux dont vous avez dirigé la fouille ?**

J'ai tenté une fois ou l'autre de fouiller en France, sans succès, peut-être parce que l'archéologie nationale ne m'intéressait pas tellement et que l'Orient était mon objectif.

Ma première expérience fut la fouille d'un cimetière italique à Paestum, en Italie. Ce fut un massacre fait par des incompetents en archéologie (mes camarades et moi), sous les ordres d'un directeur qui cherchait seulement à récolter des vases pour meubler des musées.

Peu après, je suis parti à Mari où je fis une double rencontre. La première, celle de l'Orient et du désert. La seconde, celle de la fouille d'une ville: première expérience d'une richesse extrême qui devait marquer toute la suite de ma vie.

A cette époque, Mari était dans le désert et accessible uniquement par la piste: en plus de trois mois nous avons eu trois ou quatre visiteurs seulement! Les horizons infinis et toujours changeants, une vallée ample, mais sans activité, quelques tentes de semi-nomades, le poste frontière avec l'Irak et son petit bourg (Abou Kémal) à une douzaine de km en aval, la première agglomération à plus d'une centaine de km en amont sur le fleuve (Deir ez Zor), des nuits merveilleusement étoilées... on ne peut rien oublier d'une telle immersion!

Ce fut aussi ma première fouille véritable. Encore très modeste parce que j'avais tout à apprendre; mais, outre le travail photographique – prise de vue et développement –, André Parrot m'avait confié la fouille des tombes où j'ai fait mes premières armes: ce n'était pas encore pour moi le temps de l'apprentissage de la grande architecture, mais celui

des signes que l'homme laisse de son passage et de son voyage vers l'Au-delà. Si certains aspects de la fouille pratiquée à cette époque-là pouvaient prêter à critique, la diversité des recherches était telle et le monde à découvrir était si vaste pour moi, que malgré certaines imperfections, il y avait à apprendre à tout moment. Et puis, mes moments de liberté, je les passais à me promener dans les ruines de ce palais qui devait devenir par la suite l'un de mes premiers grands centres d'intérêt.

Après cette campagne de Mari en 1954, d'où je suis revenu en sachant que j'avais trouvé ma voie, mais aussi que j'avais tout à apprendre, une longue période de 11 années s'est écoulée, consacrées aux études jusqu'à l'agrégation, au service militaire et à mes premières années d'enseignement au lycée, sans la moindre fouille. Mais je crois pouvoir dire que j'ai alors acquis le bagage historique et géographique qui me permettait de faire de l'archéologie une discipline pleinement historique et non une simple annexe d'une ethnologie du passé.

Je peux dire que les deux premières fouilles de 1954 ont été des expériences, qu'elles ont été suivies par l'acquisition d'un savoir théorique et que ce n'est qu'à partir de 1965 que j'ai commencé à entrer véritablement dans le circuit archéologique actif. D'autant plus qu'à cette date, j'ai été nommé Pensionnaire de l'Institut d'Archéologie de Beyrouth où je devais rester jusqu'en 1969. Je me suis alors plongé dans le monde du Proche-Orient, je l'ai sillonné en tous sens, j'ai visité systématiquement les sites en restant parfois deux ou trois jours sur place avec les équipes en activité pour suivre leurs travaux. C'est ainsi que j'ai eu mon premier contact avec Ugarit à l'automne 1965. Et, dès lors, j'ai multiplié les chantiers.

J'ai retrouvé Mari en 1965 et 1966, mais André Parrot a préféré, à l'issue de cette campagne, changer la composition de son équipe, notre entente n'ayant plus été aussi étroite: peut-être ai-je été parfois maladroit. Mais nous n'étions pas fâchés, comme la suite devait le montrer.

J'ai participé alors à une campagne de fouille de trois mois à Suse, en Iran, site prestigieux, sous la direction du Père Stève et de Jean

Perrot. Le Père Stève était un homme remarquable qui m'a beaucoup appris parce qu'il avait une attitude toujours critique sur ce qu'il fallait faire, sur la signification des observations, parce qu'il n'appliquait pas, comme tant d'autres, des recettes toutes faites élaborées souvent loin du contexte archéologique: c'est le préconçu qui tue l'archéologie. Avec Stève, il fallait toujours réfléchir, toujours aller au-delà de l'apparence, toujours aborder les questions par une analyse systématique. Cette fouille de Suse a donc été pour moi extrêmement riche. La façon dont le Père Stève a été écarté de la direction à la fin de cette campagne m'a permis de constater que, dans cet univers professionnel, de belles qualités humaines jointes à de grandes qualités scientifiques ne faisaient pas bon poids devant une ambition dépourvue de tout scrupule.

Puis j'ai participé, en pleine période de mai 1968, sous la direction de Henri de Contenson, à la fouille d'un petit site néolithique au sud de Damas, Tell Ramad: une plongée dans l'univers pré-urbain.

C'est André Parrot qui m'a proposé de prendre la direction de Larsa à l'automne 1969 parce qu'il voulait consacrer ses efforts sur Mari. C'est donc à lui que je dois de m'être engagé dans la carrière d'un chef de mission, alors qu'il m'avait naguère écarté de Mari.

Quand j'ai pris en main Larsa, je ne me considérais pas alors comme formé. J'avais le sentiment profond que j'allais avoir à engager, à partir des expériences passées et nouvelles, une réflexion permanente sur les fondements de l'archéologie et sur les modalités d'action de l'archéologue. J'avais eu un regard critique sur les chantiers où j'étais passé, mais je ne savais pas encore définir la démarche analytique qui me permettrait de réaliser une véritable recherche scientifique; différencier les couches et identifier la brique crue parmi d'autres matériaux paraissaient souvent difficile.

Cependant un apport essentiel des années soixante est venu de ce que j'avais déposé un sujet de thèse sur l'architecture palatiale mésopotamienne. Jusqu'alors seuls les Allemands (W. Andrae, R. Koldewey, H. Lenzen, E. Heinrich) s'étaient intéressés à ce domaine qui paraissait presque "réservé"! Or les difficultés que je rencontrais avec cette discipline ont été un élément moteur des voies nouvelles que j'ai

cherché à explorer. Je n'étais pas ignorant de la nature de l'architecture, sujet qui m'intéressait depuis mon adolescence (toujours le goût pour la forme) au point que j'avais caressé un temps l'idée d'en faire mon métier, mais c'est bien la prise de conscience, par l'étude des palais, que l'architecture archéologique n'apparaissait que sous une forme toujours tronquée – jamais transcendée par les archéologues pour retrouver sa réalité ancienne – qui m'a permis d'engager une réflexion archéologique renouvelée, en théorie et sur le terrain.

Mais ce n'était pas un long fleuve tranquille. En outre un drame familial est venu rendre la suite de cette démarche très incertaine.

### **Question: Et Emar?**

Puis il y a eu l'aventure d'Emar, une très belle aventure qui m'a aidé à surmonter la perte de mon épouse. On m'a demandé d'aller fouiller un site – Meskéné – qui allait être enseveli dans le futur lac Al-Assad en cours de réalisation dans la partie nord du Moyen-Euphrate en Syrie. Les fouilleurs de la cité médiévale de Barbalissos avaient trouvé, à proximité de leur champ de fouille, une tablette cunéiforme.

On s'est alors souvenu que ce site sous le nom de Emar, était mentionné dans les textes de Mari (XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle av. J.-C.). On m'a alors envoyé, en décembre 1972, faire un sondage avec très peu de moyens: une petite équipe de 4 personnes, trois semaines de fouille, mais une superbe récolte d'objets, de tablettes, une belle architecture et le nom du site qui était bien Emar sont venus récompenser les premiers efforts faits dans des conditions parfois difficiles. Mais tout cela datait du 13<sup>e</sup> et non du 18<sup>e</sup> siècle. Il fallait résoudre ce problème, c'est pourquoi à mon retour j'ai dit à mes autorités du ministère des Affaires Étrangères: «Il faut absolument en urgence faire une fouille: c'est une fouille de sauvetage.» On m'a concédé une petite subvention pour une seule campagne que j'ai réalisée en juin-juillet 1973 avec de nouveau une récolte exceptionnelle et la certitude qu'aucun niveau du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle n'existait à l'emplacement de Meskéné.



La suite de l'opération c'est que tous les ans, jusqu'en 1976, je conduisais la "dernière" campagne: au total il y en eut 6, plus une à tell Faq'ous. Cela a été une superbe aventure.

Pourquoi, cette affaire a-t-elle été si enrichissante pour moi? C'est qu'il est rapidement devenu évident que l'hypothèse de départ était une idée préconçue et que j'ai eu beaucoup de mal à faire admettre qu'il ne fallait pas la conserver. On me disait: «Vous avez retrouvé le site d'Emar mentionné dans les textes de Mari et identifié par Georges Dossin, vous devez donc retrouver le niveau: cherchez, continuez à creuser, vous le trouverez.» L'idée préconçue et partiellement fausse était plus forte que mes observations de fouille. Et j'ai vu des fouilleurs s'installer après moi sur le site et interpréter les données en faussant leur signification pour affirmer que le niveau du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle était présent: un niveau en fait inventé de toutes pièces, fait de murs de fondation dans lequel il n'y avait que du matériel non *in situ* et en très petite quantité. C'est malheureusement significatif des erreurs possibles quand on fouille avec des idées toutes faites !

La même mésaventure s'est répétée une dizaine d'années plus tard lorsque l'on a récusé ma conclusion – pourtant établie après des sondages et des analyses topographiques et stratigraphiques – sur l'absence de village à l'origine de l'agglomération de Mari, en affirmant: " Il y a toujours un village à l'origine des villes. Cherchez, fouillez bien et vous le trouverez". En fait, encore une fois, au départ, une idée préconçue!

La lacune était réelle, mais on préférait envisager une incompétence pour rester fidèle à un schéma bien établi.

Emar a été aussi une expérience fantastique parce qu'il apparaissait bien que la ville retrouvée appartenait au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle et qu'il s'agissait d'une ville nouvelle. Cela allait à l'encontre de tout ce que l'on disait sur les origines des cités et pourtant les Allemands trouvaient au même moment une ville nouvelle à Habuba Kabira. Ces découvertes réalisées entre 1970 et 1974 marquent un tournant capital dans la connaissance que nous pouvions avoir de l'urbanisme syro-mésopotamien.

### **Question: Et Larsa?**

Ma première direction de fouille – Larsa – a tourné court après deux campagnes (1969 et 1970) à cause d'un différend entre les Antiquités de Bagdad et le Musée du Louvre, qui ne me concernait en rien. J'ai été pris comme otage et j'ai dû arrêter de fouiller! Quand j'aurais pu recommencer, j'avais engagé la fouille d'Emar, puis celle d'Ugarit: je n'était donc plus disponible et c'est Jean-Louis Huot qui a repris la fouille de Larsa.

Sans parler de tout l'aspect exotique – la fouille dans le désert, à 80 km de toute agglomération, l'absence d'eau, la "guerre" avec des bédouins pour avoir l'eau du puits, etc... – cette expérience a été d'une grande richesse parce que c'était un grand site mésopotamien du Sud où je m'exerçais pour la première fois et où j'ai commencé à mesurer la difficulté d'engager une fouille urbaine. Expérience intéressante mais qui m'avait laissé un peu sur ma faim puisque j'ai dû abandonner le palais que j'étais en train de fouiller.

### **Question: Et Ugarit?**

Dans le même temps, un problème de succession s'était posé à Ugarit. Le service des Antiquités de Syrie et les responsables français s'étaient mis d'accord pour m'offrir la succession, à moi qui, non préparé à la côte méditerranéenne, ne la souhaitais en aucune façon. Pourtant j'ai été pratiquement contraint d'accepter et cette affaire m'a valu de solides inimitiés en France où certains estimaient que c'était une chasse gardée pour d'autres.

Peu importe; j'ai décidé de faire l'expérience d'une première campagne (1975) pour définir les caractères propres du site. La deuxième campagne (1976) m'a permis de préciser un programme envisageable à long terme. Il s'agissait de faire une large fouille dans les niveaux du Bronze Moyen qui étaient presque totalement inconnus puisque Claude Schaeffer s'était concentré sur le niveau supérieur,

daté du Bronze Récent. Le refus brutal du Service des Antiquités (je devais me concentrer sur la ville finale pour ramasser les tablettes) m'a conduit à démissionner, car je ne pouvais admettre que mon rôle d'archéologue était limité à la récolte des tablettes, en dépit de l'intérêt de ce type de document...

Ma deuxième campagne à Ugarit en 1976, a été celle de l'adieu à la direction de ce site. Mais l'un des responsables français, Ph. Guillemain au ministère des Affaires Étrangères, m'a chargé alors de la publication du palais, non réalisée par Claude Schaeffer.

Ainsi, ayant quitté Ugarit par la porte, j'y revenais, sans l'avoir de nouveau demandé, par la fenêtre et à partir de 1989, j'ai fait régulièrement des séjours à Ugarit pour étudier le palais et comprendre son insertion dans le milieu urbain... Ce fut une grande chance, car cette étude du palais (plus tardive), me permit de constater qu'il était parfois possible, grâce aux traces laissées sur des parois murales, de reconstituer toute l'histoire d'un palais dont les étapes n'avaient même pas été entrevues lors de la fouille, qui était passée allègrement au travers de tous les sols. Une stratigraphie horizontale reconquise par la verticalité des parois: beau sujet de réflexion!

A l'issue de cet intermède à Ugarit, j'ai souhaité conduire une recherche sur un promontoire situé à une douzaine de km en aval de Meskéné, tell Faq'ous, qui paraissait avoir joué un rôle dans le système défensif d'Emar.

Cependant l'affaire d'Ugarit avait laissé des rancœurs et je n'ai pu réaliser qu'une petite partie de mon objectif. J'ai vraiment cru alors que j'allais voir s'arrêter mon activité archéologique de terrain et, alors que j'envisageais une démarche pour chercher un site dans la plaine du Khabur, André Parrot et Philippe Guillemain se sont mis d'accord pour me confier en 1979 la direction de Mari, que j'ai assumée jusqu' à ma retraite en 2004.

Voilà tous les sites où j'ai été amené à travailler. Au fond, c'est une carrière assez droite, malgré une formation que j'estime insuffisante sur le terrain, mais qui a été compensée par une imprégnation historique

et géographique, par de multiples expériences non archéologiques (hydrologie, morphologie, architecture...). Et j'ai eu la chance aussi de trouver des appuis à des moments décisifs, de rencontrer de bons archéologues comme le Père Stève, des chercheurs et des savants de tout premier ordre comme Henri Seyrig ou Jean Deshayes.

**Question: Quelle est votre contribution à la connaissance historique et archéologique du Proche-Orient?**

Je pense avoir exploré un domaine, connu en soi – l'architecture –, selon une démarche qui n'avait pas été mise en œuvre avant moi en archéologie orientale et qui a mis en évidence des traits nouveaux. Je ne me suis pas satisfait d'étudier un monument de façon autonome dans sa nudité archéologique ou par ses seuls composantes technologiques ou encore par le biais de l'utilisation de l'espace: je l'ai approché sous tous ces aspects-là, mais aussi dans son intégration au milieu urbain.

Et, pour cela, j'ai commencé par définir exactement ce que la ruine archéologique permettait de connaître du monument, puis j'ai tenté de préciser tous les paramètres – archéologiques ou architecturaux – qui autorisaient une approche aussi précise que possible du volume originel, certes disparu, mais dont les caractéristiques essentielles (j'oserais dire "l'ADN") étaient forcément inscrites dans la base retrouvée par la fouille, donc dans les ruines conservées.

L'étude des palais de l'âge du Bronze m'a conduit progressivement vers la définition de différentes démarches à mettre en œuvre. Quand j'ai eu achevé ma thèse, soutenue en 1978, je n'avais pas pour autant obtenu une connaissance complète de l'architecture, ni même de ces palais. J'ai pris alors conscience que, pour justifier pleinement mes propositions, il fallait aller voir ce qui se passait en amont du Bronze Ancien (au Néolithique lors de la naissance de l'architecture et au Chalcolithique) et en aval à l'âge du Fer. Comment étaient les temples? Et les maisons? Il fallait que j'élargisse mes enquêtes tout autour de mon premier centre d'intérêt, non pour devenir un ultra-spécialiste de

l'architecture, mais pour voir comment le milieu humain se développait avec cette architecture dans les tells et comment se faisait l'évolution de la cité.

Ce qui a favorisé l'élargissement de l'enquête, c'est qu'à partir de 1983, j'ai eu la chance, outre ma charge de professeur à Strasbourg, d'enseigner à l'École Pratique des Hautes Études en délivrant des cours de recherche: chaque semaine, j'apportais un document nouveau à l'approche critique. J'ai pu ainsi analyser un pan très large de la documentation en confrontant point par point le texte de la publication avec les plans, les coupes et les photos, en mettant en évidence les contradictions, voire les erreurs. Cette démarche n'était absolument pas habituelle dans la discipline où l'on se contente d'ordinaire de répéter ce qu'a dit le fouilleur sans s'interroger sur la pertinence de son discours et sans analyse critique des documents. Et quand on récuse ses conclusions, c'est le plus souvent sans justification détaillée, sur des positions de principe sans rapport avec ses observations.

En outre, je passais mon temps à aller du terrain à la théorie, du texte au terrain, dans un mouvement perpétuel de va-et-vient: confrontation et enrichissement réciproque. Une relation étroite et directe entre le terrain et l'architecture s'est ainsi établie, qui a débouché sur la découverte progressive de la cohérence du bâti dans son milieu, ici la ville.

Au fur et à mesure que je défrichais la masse documentaire, des liens nouveaux apparaissaient entre tous ces édifices. Pouvait-on envisager alors de publier une nouvelle histoire de l'architecture du monde mésopotamien? Mais il fallait avant tout passer au crible de la critique l'ensemble de la documentation architecturale syro-mésopotamienne selon les mêmes critères, ce que je n'avais fait encore que partiellement. Pour cela j'ai cherché à mettre sur pied, au CNRS, une équipe de travail sur l'architecture mésopotamienne: celle-ci, dominée par le matériau "terre", paraissait aux responsables du CNRS sans intérêt par rapport aux architectures de pierre de l'Égypte et du monde classique. Je n'ai donc pas réussi. Et je suis resté seul à faire les analyses indispensables, une tâche qui excédait les possibilités d'un seul individu.

J'en ai gardé une certaine amertume parce que, manifestement, je n'ai réussi à faire comprendre ni la nouveauté, ni la haute technicité de cette architecture, ni ce qu'elle exprimait de la civilisation dont elle était l'émanation. Je n'ai pas donc pas trouvé le soutien qu'il fallait pour engager ce centre de recherches. Ce n'est pas à l'honneur des autorités scientifiques du CNRS. Mais l'avenir devait me confirmer que la raison n'est pas le moteur de nos responsables, ni scientifiques, ni administratifs.

Toutes mes recherches, toutes mes analyses architecturales et mes restitutions étaient soutenues par le terrain. C'est ainsi que s'est imposé progressivement le rôle fondamental joué par les fondations (pourtant largement négligées par les collègues): les cités n'existent et ne perdurent que par leurs fondations (l'infrastructure compartimentée) comme le montre l'enquête que je viens de réaliser sur une soixantaine de villes.

J'ai pris aussi conscience que l'architecture, quel qu'ait été mon angle d'attaque, me ramenait toujours à l'extraordinaire importance de l'homme comme créateur de son milieu, qu'il ne construisait pas des maisons n'importe comment, qu'on ne jetait pas les déchets par la porte, qu'on ne se contentait pas de dire: « La maison est détruite, je vais la reconstruire au-dessus...». J'ai pris conscience que l'univers construit, habité, de la Mésopotamie était le résultat d'une pensée d'une cohérence totale sur le milieu dans lequel les habitants vivaient et sur la façon dont ils réagissaient à ce milieu, d'une compréhension étonnante du système hydrologique qu'il fallait maîtriser si on voulait éviter la disparition de la cité lors des pluies diluviennes ou par les inondations. Tout l'ensemble de la ville est dominé par l'hydrologie: la morphologie générale, les quartiers, les enceintes, les portes de la cité, le réseau des rues, les pas de porte des maisons, la pente des rues, les réseaux de récupération des eaux de pluie, tout cela est le fruit d'une réflexion préalable à la construction, d'une surveillance et d'un contrôle pendant la vie de la cité. Aucun développement anarchique, mais, au contraire une véritable planification et pour cela un pouvoir nécessairement fort: Karl Wittfogel (*Le despotisme oriental*) n'avait peut-être pas autant tort que certains l'ont avancé depuis.

Le monde de la Mésopotamie est un monde qui n'est pas le fruit du hasard. C'est un monde voulu, construit, pensé; les premières villes ne sont pas une dérive de villages dégoûtants, anarchiques et non structurés. La ville n'est pas le produit d'un système économique hydro-agricole comme l'exposent certaines théories. Dès le début, la ville est une création volontaire liée à l'essor des échanges, nécessité par la recherche de matières premières à l'aide de la navigation fluviale. La ville est intrinsèquement liée à l'aménagement d'un réseau de canaux dans le Sud et le centre de la Mésopotamie, comme le montrent Larsa, une ville sans fleuve qui ne vit que par les canaux, ou Nippur, Isin, Mashkan Shapir...

Le Nord est différent. Mari forme une limite qui tient encore de la Mésopotamie centrale, mais appartient déjà à la moitié septentrionale où des canaux en nombre plus limité y jouent un rôle différent. Ces derniers sont énormes et c'est ce que j'ai découvert en commençant les fouilles à Mari, résultat que certains continuent de contester. Mais Mari joue un rôle d'une autre nature, parce qu'elle représente le pôle majeur, la capitale, de la Mésopotamie septentrionale.

C'est quand même l'architecture qui m'a amené vers tout cela, car elle a conduit vers le sens et la valeur qui émanent de cette civilisation syro-mésopotamienne, et je dis bien syro-mésopotamienne, parce que le Levant, l'Anatolie, l'Iran représentent des univers différents; mais il ne faut pas séparer la Syrie de la Mésopotamie. Ça, c'est la civilisation du pays des deux fleuves, l'Euphrate et le Tigre. C'est le même univers avec des variantes régionales: ainsi l'hydrologie du nord, celles du centre et du sud ne sont pas identiques, mais il y a une unité géographique, tendue par le fil des fleuves, tellement forte qu'elle saute aux yeux quand on regarde une carte. Eh bien, cette unité, dans un contexte d'architecture fondée sur l'argile, a donné naissance à une civilisation urbaine qui est totalement cohérente et qui est pensée dans sa globalité.

**Question: Pensez-vous que les tendances de l'archéologie actuelle, c'est l'archéométrie et la simple description,**

**dépourvues d'une réflexion critique? Quelles sont les interrogations qui ont défini votre travail?**

Tout d'abord ce qui me surprend, c'est la faible tendance des spécialistes actuels à s'interroger sur les traits fondamentaux de cette civilisation, à poser des questions devant certains résultats des fouilles, à ne pas s'étonner de certaines lacunes, à ne pas s'interroger sur les laps de temps des phénomènes observés, comme la très faible durée des empires centrés sur la Babylonie centrale, à ne pas fonder une réflexion sur les forces régionales, à définir les oppositions entre ces "empires" et les royaumes, à expliquer les dimensions très différentes des villes de Syrie et de Mésopotamie. Ainsi comment comprendre l'absence de villages à l'époque urbaine, alors que l'ensemble de la population doit vivre des produits de la terre? Pourquoi la ziggurat n'apparaît-elle qu'à la fin du III<sup>e</sup> millénaire et ne devient-elle caractéristique que de la Mésopotamie centrale, méridionale et assyrienne, sans pénétrer en Syrie, pas même à Mari, en dépit d'une récente annonce? Qu'est-ce qui a pu conduire à l'apparition de plans de temples différents selon les régions? Quand on parle "temples", on ne traite que de morphologie architecturale, alors que la forme n'est pas forcément significative de la fonction. Y a-t-il une seule sacralité par rapport au profane, ou bien des degrés peuvent-ils être définis? Que de questions envoûtantes au regard des sempiternelles et inutiles études des tessons de fouille! Et il y en a tellement d'autres!

En second lieu, je suis très inquiet de l'utilisation que font certains de l'archéométrie. Je suis tout à fait d'accord pour introduire les données scientifiques, analytiques, mesurables parce qu'il n'y a de science que du mesurable. L'archéométrie oui, mais à condition que l'archéologue ait lui-même une certaine compétence dans la science sollicitée pour établir la cohérence des résultats avec l'archéologie.

Quand, à partir de quelques lames minces réalisées sur des prélèvements de la plaine du Khabur, l'archéomètre annonce qu'à la fin du III<sup>e</sup> millénaire, une sécheresse drastique a entraîné famine et désertification des campagnes, provoquant une surpopulation dans



les villes, sans que la moindre confirmation ait été recherchée dans le domaine archéologique, je ne peux que récuser l'adoption de cette information par nombre de collègues. Par un fait exprès, peu après, on a annoncé qu'au même moment les sédiments lacustres attestaient cette sécheresse. Mais ces annonces sont en désaccord total avec l'observation archéologique, car, à proximité du Khabur, Mari donne au même moment une image exactement inverse avec une pratique renforcée de la protection contre l'eau de pluie et l'humidité et une absence totale de signes d'une surpopulation soudaine. Exemple remarquable du danger qu'il y a à appliquer une information archéométrique à un état archéologique porteur d'une signification différente. Je reviendrai sur cette question ailleurs, mais il est clair qu'on ne peut faire usage de l'archéométrie sans discernement et laisser croire qu'elle seule permet de pratiquer une archéologie scientifique.

Deuxième exemple: déduire, à la suite de mesures faites avec un appareil à évaluer la résistance à la pression et aux charges (architecturales), que les bâtiments des tells mésopotamiens ne pouvaient avoir un étage en raison d'un sous-sol trop peu résistant, c'est donner sans nuance la primauté à l'information archéométrique; or, l'analyse architecturale des maisons montre, de façon certaine, qu'il y avait un étage. Il fallait donc ne pas s'appuyer sur la donnée archéométrique, avancée sans nuance, pour récuser l'analyse architecturale, mais rechercher la solution que les anciens auraient pu mettre en œuvre comme ils l'ont effectivement fait par le procédé de l'infrastructure compartimentée.

Troisième exemple. Un programme international de recherche en cours vise à unifier toutes les informations stratigraphiques pour une certaine période pour dater des ensembles de façon totalement harmonieuse. On m'a demandé de fournir toutes les mesures  $C^{14}$  recueillies à Mari pour les intégrer dans une étude d'ensemble qui devait donner la vérité... je me suis enquis de l'approche critique qui était mise en œuvre dans cette opération. On m'a répondu que les spécimens étaient étudiés en fonction de leur position dans la stratigraphie. Mais a-t-on pris en considération qu'une importante

partie des spécimens n'étaient peut-être pas en bonne position dans une stratigraphie théoriquement parfaite, qu'elle pouvait venir de terres déplacées avec les échantillons, que ces terres occupent parfois plus de 80% de la masse d'un tell, que les infrastructures compartimentées sont remplies de terres le plus souvent d'origine inconnue...? Croit-on vraiment que cette approche – théoriquement sûre parce que faisant appel aux sciences exactes – donnera des résultats fiables alors que le milieu de la position stratigraphique est totalement aléatoire?

L'archéométrie: oui, mais à bon escient, avec l'esprit critique nécessaire et en commençant par comprendre réellement la nature et les modalités des dépôts humains menant à la formation d'un tell; elle pourra, alors, apporter ses données à une archéologie abordée elle-même de façon réellement scientifique.

De toute façon il faudrait, avant de faire intervenir certaines analyses archéométriques, commencer par assurer les fondements méthodologiques de la pratique archéologique. Or, nous sommes loin d'avancer en terrain sûr; deux exemples suffiront à mesurer le chemin à parcourir: l'importance accordée à la signification d'un tesson de vase, et le nombre des strates en stratigraphie urbaine.

Les tessons de céramique passent pour les marqueurs les plus sûrs de la chronologie. Sous prétexte que l'on peut suivre l'évolution des formes céramiques, que certaines d'entre elles sont représentatives de séries bien datées, la pratique archéologique habituelle a conclu que trouver un tesson caractéristique d'une série bien définie permettait de dater à coup sûr le niveau auquel il appartient. Et c'est ainsi que le système de la datation des strates archéologiques s'est mis en place. On avait simplement oublié:

- qu'un tesson ce n'est pas un vase, que le premier est infiniment plus meuble que le second: certes, trouver un vase sur un sol est sans doute significatif de l'appartenance de ce sol à l'époque du vase et que l'assimilation peut paraître licite,
- mais, compte tenu de sa mobilité, un tesson isolé sur un sol n'a aucune signification et il est indispensable de se demander où

- sont les autres fragments du vase auquel il a un jour appartenu si l'on veut dater le sol ou la couche;
- que près de 80% des tells (ou plus) sont constitués de terres déplacées, souvent plusieurs fois remuées et remplies de tessons d'origines diverses dont la signification chronologique ne peut être démontrée;
  - qu'en réalité un tesson isolé est un tesson déplacé dans le temps et dans l'espace et l'on ne sait jamais de combien, ni dans le temps, ni dans l'espace. Dans ces conditions, comment ose-t-on dater un niveau avec un ou même quelques tessons sans liens les uns avec les autres?

Une conclusion essentielle est que la plupart des études de céramique sont à reprendre sur de nouvelles bases et, dans l'état présent, il faudrait arrêter de dater les couches par une céramique dont les caractéristiques chronologiques ne sont pas assurées. Je ne crois pas m'être fait comprendre sur cette question et pourtant il y a une trentaine d'années, j'ai écrit sur ce sujet deux articles qui sont restés complètement ignorés.

Le deuxième exemple touche à un aspect tout aussi essentiel du raisonnement archéologique puisqu'il est fondé sur la stratigraphie.

Parce qu'on confond de simples surfaces horizontales avec des sols d'usage, parce qu'on n'a pas encore réellement compris que l'architecture repose sur des fondations et souvent sur une infrastructure compartimentée dont les modalités de fabrication peuvent varier assez considérablement, à la faveur de la moindre discontinuité dans un mur on a multiplié les couches stratigraphiques comportant des sols et des niveaux d'usage imaginés. Ainsi méconnaissance des exigences de l'architecture de terre et des processus de formation des tells ont conduit littéralement à inventer des couches et des phases qui n'ont jamais existé. Je ne donnerai ici qu'un seul exemple. L'équipe américaine de Chicago a défini dans la stratigraphie du petit quartier qui s'étend entre le Temple Ovale et le Temple de Sin à Khafadjé une séquence de 12 niveaux auxquels ont été associées des rues et,

chaque fois, de 2 à 6 ou 7 maisons : au total près de 50 maisons ont été minutieusement dessinées, décrites et commentées. En réalité, compte tenu de la pratique de l'infrastructure compartimentée et de l'usage du nivellement, il y a en tout et pour tout 2 niveaux urbains complets avec 6 maisons seulement. Ai-je besoin de signaler qu'en tout état de cause, et sans même prendre en considération toutes les réserves que je viens d'énoncer sur l'usage des tessons dans la chronologie, ranger la céramique retrouvée en 12 ou 2 niveaux ne peut donner le même résultat!

Alors, pour en revenir à votre question: oui à l'archéométrie, mais à une archéométrie intelligente, réellement adaptée à la nature de l'enquête archéologique spécifique du Proche et du Moyen Orient. Quand on aura compris cela, alors on posera avec les scientifiques des questions susceptibles de mieux faire comprendre la civilisation qui s'est développée dans le Pays des Deux Fleuves. Mais pour cela une formation réellement scientifique devrait être dispensée aux futurs archéologues.

**Question: À votre avis, quel est l'avenir de l'archéologie au Proche-Orient?**

Voulez-vous dire un avenir sombre ou lumineux? Le problème se pose réellement, même si les archéologues en sont peu conscients compte tenu de la densité des tells dans certaines régions. Je ne veux pas parler des incertitudes liées au contexte politique, qui peut évoluer très vite en mettant un terme à la recherche sur le terrain pour de longues années, voire pour toujours. Je vais me placer seulement sur le plan de la valeur heuristique de la discipline et de son rapport réel à l'histoire.

Je le dis tout net au risque de me faire vilipender, moquer ou simplement rejeter et à terme ignorer: si on continue à penser et à enseigner que l'archéologie, c'est creuser pour trouver quelque chose et, de préférence, de beaux objets (statues, dépôts de fondation, bijoux... ainsi que des tablettes évidemment! toutes trouvailles qui confèrent la

gloire à l'inventeur!), que les méthodes de la fouille sont au point depuis Wheeler dans la mesure où il a finalisé le concept stratigraphique (je ne connais pas de fouilleur qui ne se proclame pas stratigraphe), on aura abouti à créer un monstre sur un passé qui n'a jamais existé. C'est en appliquant ces principes que l'on a réussi à construire une histoire de l'Orient irréaliste, même pas virtuelle ou possible. Deux niveaux urbains à Khafadjé au lieu des douze établis par les fouilleurs! Est-ce que l'on pense à ce que cela implique pour l'histoire de la ville, reflet en fait de l'histoire tout court, sur la documentation qui risquerait de fonder une irréaliste histoire de l'architecture? A la suite d'une mauvaise direction donnée aux recherches stratigraphiques nous avons, à ce jour, construit (et nous sommes toujours en train de construire) une fausse histoire archéologique du monde syro-mésopotamien (et sans doute bien au-delà) avec des données qui n'ont rien à voir avec le réel. Car, ne nous y trompons pas: il n'y a pas que Khafadjé dont il faut réinterpréter la stratigraphie proposée...

Alors, il faut reprendre et réinterpréter systématiquement la documentation passée; il faut aussi adapter les futures recherches aux nouvelles méthodes d'analyse. Peut-être tout ne sera-t-il pas bouleversé; certaines lignes subsisteront; mais il est certain que le schéma final ne sera pas conforme à l'actuel. Sur les sites qui n'ont pas été trop dévastés, il sera possible de faire des sondages destinés à rectifier ce qui a été dit; à l'occasion de ces nouvelles recherches, il faudra revoir les anciennes publications et établir les jonctions. Mais il ne faut pas espérer tout réadapter: Tello me paraît un cas bien difficile et je ne suis pas certain que le palais de Babylone soit «récupérable» à la suite d'une fouille destructrice (que l'on peut excuser étant donné l'époque) mais aussi des dégâts réalisés par Saddam Hussein et maintenant par une action de l'Unesco dont je ne vois pas le bien-fondé scientifique.

Un avenir lumineux: oui si le tournant est pris vite et avec énergie, si personne ne s'engage dans la fouille sans le nouveau «viatique». Mais où trouvera-t-on une autorité capable d'imposer ce «deal»? Aussi, je suis très pessimiste sur l'archéologie. Et pourtant je voudrais retrouver mon enthousiasme juvénile quand André Leroi-Gourhan, Henri

Seyrig, Daniel Schlumberger, Jean-Claude Gardin, Jean Deshayes, Philippe Bruneau indiquaient des voies qui n'ont pas été suivies. Mais les certitudes de certains collègues dans l'erreur sont terriblement ancrées et leur trop fréquente incapacité à prendre en considération les analyses et découvertes des autres est ahurissante.

Je reste inquiet quand je vois que les conclusions de mes recherches sur les palais (par exemple) ne sont pas prises en considération par les collègues qui écrivent sur l'un ou l'autre des palais que j'ai étudiés, qu'ils ne citent même pas mon étude où je corrige nombre d'erreurs et rectifie les perspectives. Certes, j'ai pu me tromper, mais alors il faut le démontrer et l'expliquer clairement, ce qui n'a jamais été fait.

Je reste inquiet quand je vois que ce n'est pas réellement la perspective de faire avancer notre connaissance du passé, mais le souci, souvent non fondé, de se placer comme un novateur qui justifie les prises de position souvent avancées avec fracas.

Je suis toujours inquiet quand je constate, dans nos disciplines historiques, une absence complète d'esprit critique, absence qui ne permet plus de se placer dans une perspective historique et l'on vire vers une sorte d'ethno-sociologie dépourvue de toute base méthodologique scientifique. Et l'on croit avancer à l'aide d'hypothèses qui servent de base pour de nouvelles hypothèses aussi peu fondées, qui, elles-mêmes, redonnent de nouvelles hypothèses... Cycle sans fin! D'où vient cette destruction de l'esprit historique? Une étude se termine par des conclusions, non par des hypothèses. Sinon, à quoi bon?

**Question: Quels ont été les moments les plus heureux et les plus difficiles dans votre carrière, dans le domaine de l'archéologie du Proche-Orient?**

C'est difficile de répondre: en fait, ma vie professionnelle et ma vie familiale n'ont fait qu'un tout. Il y a eu des moments très difficiles, par exemple, quand j'ai perdu ma femme Dominique, cela a été très dur.

Rien, même pas Emar ou Mari, ne pouvait compenser. C'est redevenu beaucoup plus lumineux à partir de 1987.

Il reste que, professionnellement, Emar et Mari m'ont apporté des joies profondes, chaque fois que, sortant d'une explication traditionnelle, mais insuffisante, s'ouvrait un nouveau champ de réflexion.

Un moment difficile: 2004 et la retraite.

**Question: Qu'a signifié Mari pour vous, à un niveau personnel et professionnel?**

Cette fois je vais vous faire rire. Vous savez quand je suis né? Le 25 octobre 1934. Le 25 octobre: vous remontez neuf mois avant. Ça vous amène où ?

**A la découverte de Mari?**

Non, c'est la découverte de la statuette de Lamgi-Mari, maintenant appelé Ishqi-Mari. À deux, trois ou quatre jours près cela correspond exactement. C'est quand même étonnant que la statuette de Mari réapparaisse et que mes parents se rencontrent le même jour, sans doute, et me donnent naissance 9 mois plus tard. Et 20 ans après, très exactement, je suis, moi, sur le site. Remarquable, non ?

**Prédestiné?**

Je n'ai pas le sens de la prédestination, malgré mon appartenance au protestantisme. Ce n'est pas dans mes concepts mais j'ai trouvé la coïncidence notable. Qui pouvait penser que mes parents se sont aimés le jour où Parrot avait fait cette trouvaille "royale" et que moi j'allais travailler sur le site pendant 50 ans? Parce que, en fait, ma vie, c'est Mari. J'ai fait quantité d'autres choses: Emar, Larsa, Ugarit, mais sans le vouloir ma vie, c'est Mari. J'en ai pris pleinement conscience

à un certain moment: premier contact avec la ville de Mari à 19 ans en septembre 1954. Dernière fouille, fin octobre 2004 à Mari. Et dans ce demi-siècle où la capitale du Moyen Euphrate a été toujours présente en moi et dans mes recherches, 25 années de fouilles lui ont été entièrement consacrées.

Mais il ne faut pas tout limiter à ce site car j'ai conduit quelque 33 campagnes en tout sans compter les huit campagnes de recherche sur le palais d'Ugarit. Au total une quarantaine d'opérations dont j'ai été le maître: je suis certainement l'archéologue de la génération qui a le plus fouillé, celui dont l'expérience de terrain est la plus longue et la plus diversifiée.

Si j'ai eu une vision de l'archéologie très différente de celle de certains collègues, c'est parce que j'ai fouillé des sites variés dans tout le domaine syro-mésopotamien. Je ne suis pas allé dans un autre monde; je suis resté dans le monde des Deux Fleuves, le saisissant dans son unité et sa diversité dans toute sa longueur, de l'extrême Nord-Ouest (Ugarit et son débouché sur la Méditerranée) jusqu'à l'extrême Sud-Est (Larsa et l'ouverture sur l'Iran et le Golfe arabo-persique) et dans l'intervalle, Emar, Faq'ous, Mari. Je pense que cela a joué beaucoup.

**Question: Que diriez-vous à un étudiant qui veut se spécialiser dans l'archéologie du Proche-Orient?**

Je vais, pour vous répondre, me référer à ma propre expérience (études d'histoire et géographie, voyages de formation en hydrologie et en architecture monumentale, atelier d'architecture).

Je lui dirais d'abord qu'il faut avoir la vocation: ce n'est pas un métier, c'est nécessairement une passion. Qu'il faut être ouvert sur le monde, savoir le regarder, et non pas seulement dans les livres.

Je lui dirais qu'il faut faire les études les meilleures qui soient. Mais s'il me demande où, j'aurais sans doute beaucoup de peine à le conseiller, car je ne connais guère de centres d'excellence en archéologie orientale à l'heure actuelle. De toute façon il faut viser haut, le plus



haut possible et savoir que ce n'est pas la licence ou la thèse qui fera de vous un bon archéologue.

Je lui dirais qu'il faut compléter dans toutes les directions sa formation universitaire: il faut avoir une formation historique à partir des textes; l'apprentissage d'une analyse de vase ou d'image ne suffit pas pour faire de l'architecture; le tell s'apprend à la fois avec de la morphologie, de la topographie, de la géologie, des travaux publics; la connaissance des lois de l'érosion est indispensable pour comprendre l'évolution d'un site et, sans l'hydrologie, le site dans son environnement est mal perçu.

Je lui dirais qu'il ne s'agit pas de devenir un ultra-spécialiste dans tous ces domaines, mais qu'il faut les posséder suffisamment pour saisir les interactions multiples qui conduisent à la vie, à l'évolution d'un site. Il faut que l'archéologue soit capable sur tel ou tel point de faire intervenir un véritable spécialiste qui ne verra pas le reste de l'écheveau, mais lui laissera le soin de mesurer l'implication de son diagnostic sur l'ensemble du champ étudié.

Je lui dirais: vous voulez étudier la céramique, alors passez plusieurs mois chez un ou plusieurs céramistes. C'est plutôt dans l'architecture que vous comptez vous spécialiser ? Alors le mieux est de faire une formation dans une école ou dans un atelier où plusieurs architectes travaillent et échangent (c'est là que j'ai le plus appris, tous les matins pendant 4 années...). Je lui dirais: si on veut travailler sur un matériel précis, il faut aller au-devant de la pratique, à la fois faire et réfléchir; ne vous contentez pas de la teinture d'apprentissage, sûrement insignifiant, que l'on vous donne à l'Université.

Faut-il multiplier ces exemples? Je pense que le sens en est facile à comprendre: l'archéologie, c'est une approche, un état d'esprit qui implique une réelle formation pluridisciplinaire dont on ne doit pas hésiter à approfondir certains aspects tout au long de sa vie. Il n'y a pas plus mauvaise démarche quand on se lance dans l'archéologie de terrain que de penser que, à elle seule, la thèse est une preuve de savoir-faire.

**Question: Pour finir, quels sont vos projets actuels?**

La devise de la famille de Guillaume d'Orange: «Il n'est pas nécessaire d'espérer pour entreprendre, ni de réussir pour persévérer», je l'ai faite mienne: un certain âge est là, mais il ne faut pas lâcher. Cela ne veut pas dire qu'on réussit tout, ni qu'on a réussi. Mais il faut persévérer... Sinon quoi? La tête sur l'oreiller, et tout arrêter, en attendant que la mort vienne? Elle viendra bien un jour! Donc si je continue, c'est bien pour cela.

Pour certains, c'est parce que je ne sais rien faire d'autre: je devrais plutôt profiter du temps de la retraite, voyager, me consacrer plus aux miens... cela pourrait être une voie. Mais j'ai le sentiment que je ne suis pas arrivé au bout de ce que j'ai à dire de nouveau à l'issue de mon expérience scientifique. Ce ne sont pas des projets nouveaux – d'ailleurs ils seraient presque impossibles à réaliser dans notre système administratif dirigiste, et trop souvent sans intelligence – mais le souci de faire aboutir ce qui est inachevé de ma vie professionnelle, arriver à donner le plus possible, tout ce que j'ai encore à faire. Outre ma thèse (les palais) et trois ouvrages de synthèse (Les Mésopotamiens, Le Proche-Orient et Mari) j'ai beaucoup écrit d'articles (200 de fond non répétitifs, plus une centaine de vulgarisation), ce sont des études écrites au coup par coup, sans lien réel de l'une à l'autre; j'ai suivi ma pensée, une pensée qui au fur et à mesure des découvertes s'est structurée, mais dont il me faut maintenant montrer la cohérence d'ensemble et la façon dont elle modifie l'image traditionnellement donnée de la civilisation syro-mésopotamienne.

Outre les rapports de fouille (Emar – avec Béatrice Muller –, le palais d'Ugarit...) plusieurs ouvrages de synthèse sont en chantier: l'une sur l'urbanisme de Mari qui permettra de mettre en valeur les enseignements de la Grande Coupe réalisée à Mari comme principe nouveau d'analyse stratigraphique, une autre sur le palais de Mari réintégrant le matériel (avec Béatrice Muller), une autre encore sur l'architecture syro-mésopotamienne. Est maintenant prête pour l'édition une étude sur la naissance du premier urbanisme, qui devrait paraître en 2012.



Pour tout cela il me faut de l'aide: mais les anciens collaborateurs des missions ne sont pas toujours présents pour réaliser les synthèses promises, rarement engagées: c'est dommage! Car il faut comprendre qu'on ne peut se contenter de mettre bout à bout des articles qui ne sont généralement pas lus: il faut refondre l'ensemble des études partielles pour faire une nouvelle synthèse.

# Définition du Moyen Euphrate

M. al-Maqdissi, P. Butterlin, F. Caramelo, I. Márquez Rowe,  
Jean-Claude Margueron, J. L. Montero Fenollós, B. Muller<sup>1</sup>

A la suite des rencontres syro-franco-ibériques d'archéologie et d'Histoire Ancienne du Proche-Orient, il a paru essentiel aux participants de proposer une normalisation de la terminologie utilisée par les archéologues au sujet de la vallée de l'Euphrate syrien. Il nous semble en effet que le terme de "Moyen Euphrate" désigne aujourd'hui des réalités diverses qui ne rendent compte ni de l'unité de l'ensemble, ni de ses différents segments.

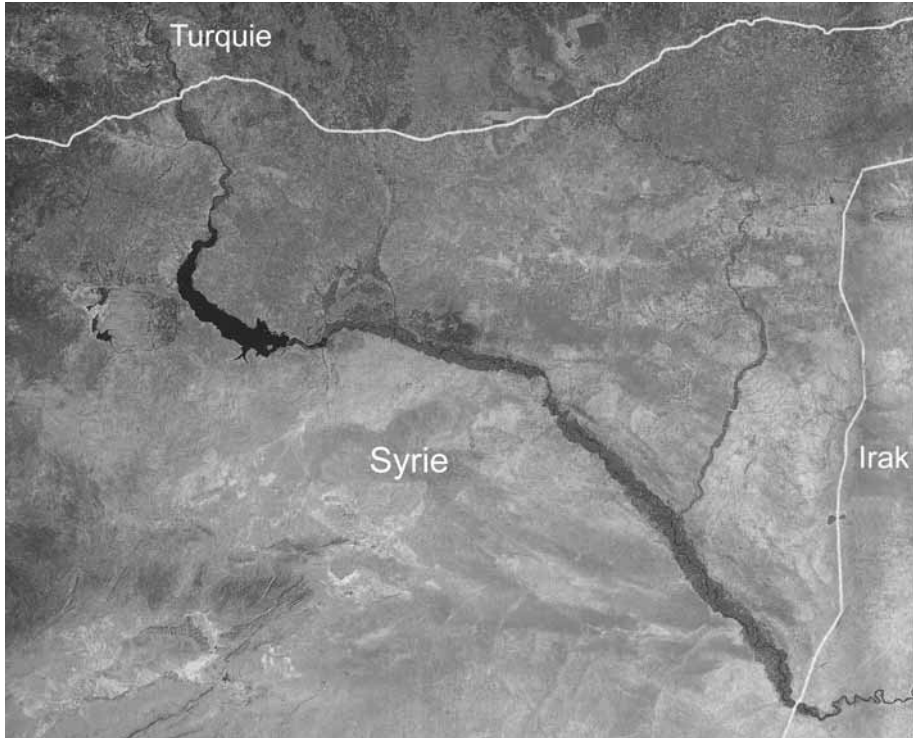
L'usage s'est en effet imposé, à la suite des intenses recherches conduites dans les secteurs de Tabqa et de Tishrin, de restreindre le Moyen Euphrate à ces régions, les sections situées en aval devenant même une "basse vallée de l'Euphrate syrien". C'est ignorer complètement toute la géomorphologie d'un fleuve dont on sait qu'il a modelé des paysages très divers, en traversant trois milieux différents: un haut pays montagneux, une région de plateaux, puis l'ensemble formé par les plaines alluviales et deltaïques, en Irak. Il nous semble que le terme de bas Euphrate doit être réservé à cette dernière partie du bassin du fleuve. Dès lors, le terme de haut Euphrate s'impose pour désigner la partie du cours du fleuve lorsque il traverse Taurus et Anti-Taurus.

On réservera donc le terme de Moyen Euphrate, toujours sur des bases géographiques, à la portion de la vallée où le fleuve s'encaisse dans les plateaux qui s'étendent des montagnes méridionales de la Turquie à la plaine alluviale, c'est-à-dire à Hit, dans l'extrême ouest de l'Irak

---

<sup>1</sup> Participants à la IV<sup>ème</sup> rencontre syro-franco-ibérique d'archéologie et d'histoire ancienne du Proche-Orient (Madrid 2009).

actuel. Dans cette section de la vallée, une série de verrous définissent des alvéoles qui constituent autant de milieux très spécifiques et il est possible de distinguer une variante septentrionale du Moyen Euphrate d'une variante méridionale, le verrou de Halabiyé constituant assurément l'un des plus spectaculaires de ces resserrements.



Moyen Euphrate

# Le site urukéen de Tell Humeida au Moyen Euphrate syrien. Premières recherches archéologiques

Juan Luis Montero Fenollós  
Universidade da Coruña

Tell Humeida est un site archéologique situé sur la rive gauche de la vallée moyenne de l'Euphrate syrien, à 75 km au nord de Deir ez-Zor et près de la limite administrative avec le *mohafazat* de Raqqa (fig. 1). Le site a pris son nom d'une plante typique de la région appelée Hummed en arabe. De même, le tell est connu par les paysans de la région sous le nom de Tell Fuhhar («colline de la céramique»), à cause de la grande quantité de tessons qui existent encore dispersés sur la surface. L'accès est assuré par la petite route qui relie par le nord les villages de Jazeret Abu Humeida et Matab.

Les dimensions actuelles du site sont de 400 m d'ouest en est et de 180/140 m du nord au sud, c'est-à-dire qu'il occupe une surface de plus de 6 hectares. Il est formé de deux parties bien différenciées : une colline principale de forme à peu près circulaire (140 m de diamètre), haute de 11 m (fig. 2), et une zone ou « ville basse » qui s'étend sur 260 m vers l'est. La butte est utilisée en grande partie par un cimetière islamique créé en 1954, qui en 2007 était encore en usage. Dans le secteur septentrional de la colline, trois maisons en brique on été bâties.

La pente occidentale du tell a été exposée à une forte érosion, peut-être due à la proximité de l'Euphrate, qui est à l'origine d'une grande paroi verticale de plus de 3 m de hauteur et 17,30 m de longueur. Cette paroi a mis au jour différentes couches archéologiques. Un chemin

et la route vers Raqqa contournent la presque totalité de la colline principale de Humeida. Finalement, la partie basse du tell est traversée aujourd'hui par un canal d'irrigation, et elle a été occupée dans le secteur le plus oriental par des terres agricoles et quatre maisons.

### 1. Les travaux précédents (1883-1986)

Tell Humeida est un site archéologique connu dans la littérature de voyages depuis 1883. Le voyageur allemand Eduard Sachau est le premier à citer le tell dans son livre *Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien* sous le nom de Tell Elkhmêdâ, mais il n'apporte pas des données sur les ruines<sup>1</sup>. La première description, très brève, est celle de Gertrude Bell qui a visité les ruines de Khmeidah, nom qu'elle a employé pour se référer au tell, vers l'an 1910. La voyageuse anglaise décrit la présence des vestiges qui appartiennent à une grande ville : des pierres taillées carrées, des murs en briques cuites et un sarcophage en pierre. Par sa nature et sa situation, elle pense qu'il s'agissait des ruines de l'ancienne Thillada Mirrada, la douzième station citée par Isidore de Charax sur la route royale des Parthes<sup>2</sup>.

Jean Lauffray, à propos de ses travaux archéologiques à Halabiyé-Zenobia et sa région, décrit Tell al-Khoumeyda (qu'il appelle aussi Tell Abou Khmeyda) comme un site important, dont la surface est couverte de pierres de taille et de murs de briques cuites. Néanmoins, l'architecte français ne donne aucune précision sur la datation du site<sup>3</sup>. La dernière référence bibliographique que nous avons sur ce site archéologique est celle de Kay Kohlmeyer, qui a daté la colline de Humeida de l'Uruk Récent<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sachau, E., *Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien*, Leipzig, 1883, p. 255.

<sup>2</sup> Bell, G., *Amurath to Amurath*, London, 1924, p. 111.

<sup>3</sup> Lauffray, J., *Halabiyya-Zenobia, place forte du limes oriental et la Haute-Mésopotamie au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, 1983, p. 72.

<sup>4</sup> Kohlmeyer, K., "Euphrat-Survey. Die mit Mitteln der Gerda Henkel Stiftung durchgeführte archäologische Geländebegehung im syrischen Euphrattal", *MDOG* 116 (1984), p. 109; Kohlmeyer, K., "Euphrat – Survey 1984. Zweiter Vorbericht über die Mitteln der Gerda Henkel Stiftung durchgeführte archäologische Geländebegehung im syrischen Euphrattal", *MDOG* 118 (1986), p. 54.

## **2. Les travaux de la mission archéologique syro-espagnole : la période d'Uruk (2006-2011)**

Entre 2006 et 2009 la mission archéologique syro-espagnole à Deir ez-Zor a réalisé divers travaux de prospection sur le site : ramassage de tessons, plan topographique, relevé de la paroi stratigraphique occidentale, prise d'échantillons pour datation absolue, etc. La céramique récoltée en surface sur le tell correspond à trois grands périodes historiques : Romano-Byzantine, Uruk Moyen-Récent et Obeid. Néanmoins, la plus part des tessons ramassés appartient à la phase d'Uruk, ce qui fait penser que la principale occupation du site a eu lieu au milieu du IV<sup>e</sup> millénaire av. J.-C.

En février 2011, la mission a effectué la première campagne de fouille à Tell Humeida<sup>5</sup>. Deux sondages ont été réalisés. Le premier (AB-31) a été localisé dans la « ville basse » ; ici les travaux ont mis au jour plusieurs pièces d'un *balnearium* d'époque byzantine qui peut être comparé avec les bains récemment fouillés à Tell Kasra, en aval de Humeida.

Le deuxième sondage (J-13) a été réalisé dans la partie occidentale du site et a été situé au sommet de la paroi stratigraphique creusée dans ce secteur du tell par l'érosion (fig. 3). La fouille a permis d'attester deux grandes périodes d'occupation dans ce secteur du tell : byzantine et urukéenne.

---

<sup>5</sup> Je voudrais remercier le Dr. Michel al-Maqdissi, Directeur du Service des Fouilles de la DGAM, et monsieur le Directeur Général des Antiquités et des Musées de Syrie, Dr. Bassam Jamous, pour toutes les facilités reçues pour mener à bien ce projet de recherche. Ma gratitude est grande envers la Fondation Osmane Aïdi, qui nous a fourni l'hébergement, la nourriture de l'équipe et le transport nécessaires pour développer notre travail à Deir ez-Zor. Madame Rawa Batbouta (Chamtour, Damas) a mis à notre disposition tout ce dont nous avons besoin pour garantir le succès de notre travail. D'autre part, cette campagne a été possible grâce au patronage économique du Ministère de la Culture espagnol (Direction Générale de Beaux-Arts et Biens Culturels), du Ministère de la Recherche et de l'Innovation (HAR2010-15866) et de la Xunta de Galice (10PXIB 167197PR). L'équipe était constituée de Juan Luis Montero, Yarub al-Abdallah (co-directeur syrien), Francisco Caramelo, Ignacio Márquez, Eva Celdrán, Miguel Valério, Catalina Fontestad, Eloy Taboada et Ayham al-Fakhre. Les photographies de cet article ont été réalisées par Eloy Taboada.



De la période byzantine a été dégagé le rempart de la ville. Il s'agit d'une construction qui a des fondations de pierres de basalte et de calcaire non taillées, sur lesquelles a été construit un mur de briques crues (U.C.103) de format carré (46 sur 46 cm)<sup>6</sup>. Ce mur en brique a une épaisseur conservée de 2,50 m, tandis que la fondation en pierre dépasse légèrement les 3 m (fig. 4).

De la période urukéenne, nous avons pu identifier de façon provisoire trois phases. À la plus récente appartient un fragment de mur en brique (U.C.105), qui conservait une hauteur de trois assises d'un format de petites dimensions (22 sur 11 sur 9 cm). D'après son format, il s'agit d'un type de brique typique de la période d'Uruk, qui est connu dans l'archéologie du Proche-Orient sous le nom de *Riemchen* (fig. 5). Malheureusement, ce mur a été détruit en partie par la construction du rempart de la ville d'époque byzantine dans ce secteur.

La deuxième phase est représentée par l'U.S.1006. Cette unité est caractérisée par la présence très abondante de charbon de bois, d'ossements d'animaux et de céramiques écrasées (fig. 6). Parmi la céramique, il faut remarquer la présence massive de bols à bord biseauté, de tessons et de vases complets (fig. 7 et 8). Ces caractéristiques nous font penser qu'il s'agit d'un secteur de déchets, une sorte de dépotoir de la période urukéenne. Cette couche a une forte pente descendante vers l'ouest.

Dans les parois est et sud du sondage est attestée une portion d'un mur en brique très abîmé, qui est conservé sur quatre assises (U.C.106). Ce mur, qui est couvert par la couche de déchets (U.S. 1006), appartient évidemment à une phase constructive plus ancienne de la période d'Uruk.

Finalement, la trouvaille de trois fragments de faucilles de céramique mélangés dans la couche de déchets montre aussi l'existence d'une occupation du site à la période d'Obeid (fig. 9), dont la nature est à identifier la prochaine campagne. Une lame d'obsidienne et des tessons de céramique peinte obeidienne ont été trouvés aussi en surface.

---

<sup>6</sup> Ce même format de brique a été attesté dans le rempart de la ville byzantine de Tell es-Sin (al-Shbib, Sh., "Tall as-Sin. Les résultats des travaux de la mission syro-espagnole, 2005-2007", *Estudos Orientais* 10 (2009), p. 172.

### **3. Tell Humeida et l'expansion urukéenne sur le Moyen Euphrate syrien**

D'après les travaux de Bernard Geyer et Jean-Yves Monchambert, il y a six sites urukéens entre Abu Kémal et Deir ez-Zor, à savoir: trois en rive gauche (Diban 1, Diban 7 et Taiyani), deux en rive droite (Graiye et Ramadi) et le sixième (Dheina 4), qui est installé dans un *wadi* affluent de rive droite<sup>7</sup>. Pour la région comprise entre les verrous de Khanuqa et Tabqa, on connaît seulement la publication du site urukéen de Tell Bleibis<sup>8</sup>. Entre Khanuqa et Deir ez-Zor, le seul site de la période d'Uruk attesté est celui de Tell Humeida<sup>9</sup>.

En résumé, dans la région naturelle située entre les verrous de Khanuqa et Baghouz il y a sept sites datables, en principe, de la période de l'Uruk Moyen-Récent. Mais, à notre avis, seuls trois sites dans cette région du moyen Euphrate peuvent être catalogués comme des établissements urukéens «authentiques», au vu de l'importance des vestiges archéologiques. Il s'agit, du sud au nord, de Ramadi, Graiye (ou Qraya) et Humeida.

Actuellement, il y a très peu de sites de la culture d'Uruk (Chalcolithique Récent 4-5) qui soient en cours de fouille au Proche-Orient; parmi eux on peut souligner les suivants: Tell Hamoukar, Tell Feres es-Sharqi et Tell Brak, les trois situés dans la vallée du Khabur et Arslantepe, en Turquie<sup>10</sup>. Dans ce contexte, la

---

<sup>7</sup> Geyer, B.; Monchambert, J. Y. (éds.), *La basse vallée de l'Euphrate syrien du néolithique à l'avènement de l'islam*, Beyrouth, 2003, p. 244.

<sup>8</sup> Finkbeiner, U., "Tell Bleibis : Eine Burg der Urukzeit am Mittlerem Euphrat", in U. Finkbeiner *et al.* (éds.), *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte Vorderasiens. Festschrift für Reiner M. Boehmer*, Mainz, 1995, pp. 139-145.

<sup>9</sup> Quelques tessons d'Uruk ont été attestés par une équipe finlandaise à Tell et-Tibni, à la sortie de Khanuqa.

<sup>10</sup> Ur, J.A., *Tell Hamoukar, Volume 1. Urbanism and Cultural Landscapes in Northeastern Syria: The Tell Hamoukar Survey, 1999-2001*, Chicago, 2010; Forest, J. D.; Vallet, R., "Tell Feres al Sharqi: un site Chalcolithique Récent dans le Khabur (Syrie)", *Paléorient* 34/1 (2008), pp.191-198; Oates, J., "Tell Brak: Uruk pottery from the 1984 season", *Iraq* 47 (1985), pp.175-187; Frangipane, M. (éd.), *Economic centralization in formative states. The archaeological reconstruction of the economic system in the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium Arslantepe*, Roma, 2010.

fouille à Tell Humeida par une équipe syro-espagnole, sur le Moyen Euphrate syrien, a ouvert des perspectives très intéressantes pour l'étude de la culture proto-urbaine d'Uruk, au milieu du IV<sup>e</sup> millénaire av. J.-C. L'étude, encore provisoire, de la céramique trouvée au cours de cette première campagne à Humeida nous montre la présence des types les plus représentatifs caractérisant un site « Uruk authentique », comme Habuba Kabira: bols à bord biseauté (BRB), jarres à bec, jarres à décor incisé (croisillons), jarres à engobe rouge, jarres à engobe réservé, etc.<sup>11</sup>. D'autre part, les premières datations C-14 réalisées par un laboratoire de l'Université d'Uppsala ont donné des résultats tout à fait cohérents: 4820-4705 ± 45 BP (dates non calibrées).

---

<sup>11</sup> Sürenhagen, D., "Untersuchungen zur Keramikproduktion innerhalb der Spät-Urukzeitlichen Siedlung Habuba Kabira-Süd in Nordsyrien", *Acta Praehistorica et Archeologica* 5/6 (1974-1975), pp. 43-164; Sürenhagen, D., "The Dry-Farming Belt: the Uruk Period and Subsequent Developments", in H. Weiss (éd.), *The Origins of Cities in Dry-Farming Syria and Mesopotamia in the Third Millennium B.C.*, New York, 1986, fig. 3-10.

**Figures:**

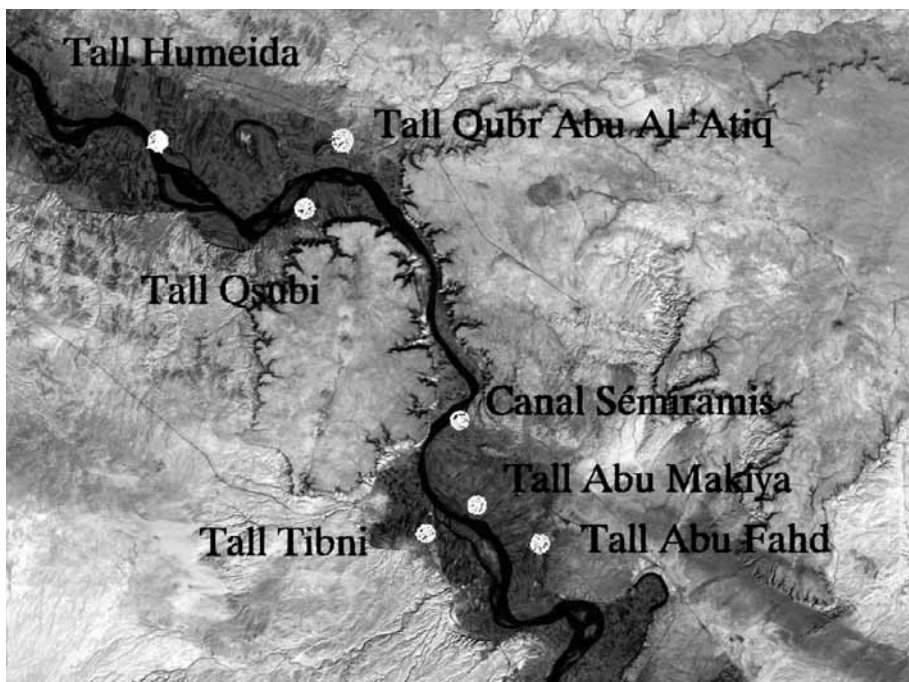


Fig. 1: Le verrou de Khanuqa et la situation de Tell Humeida en rive gauche.

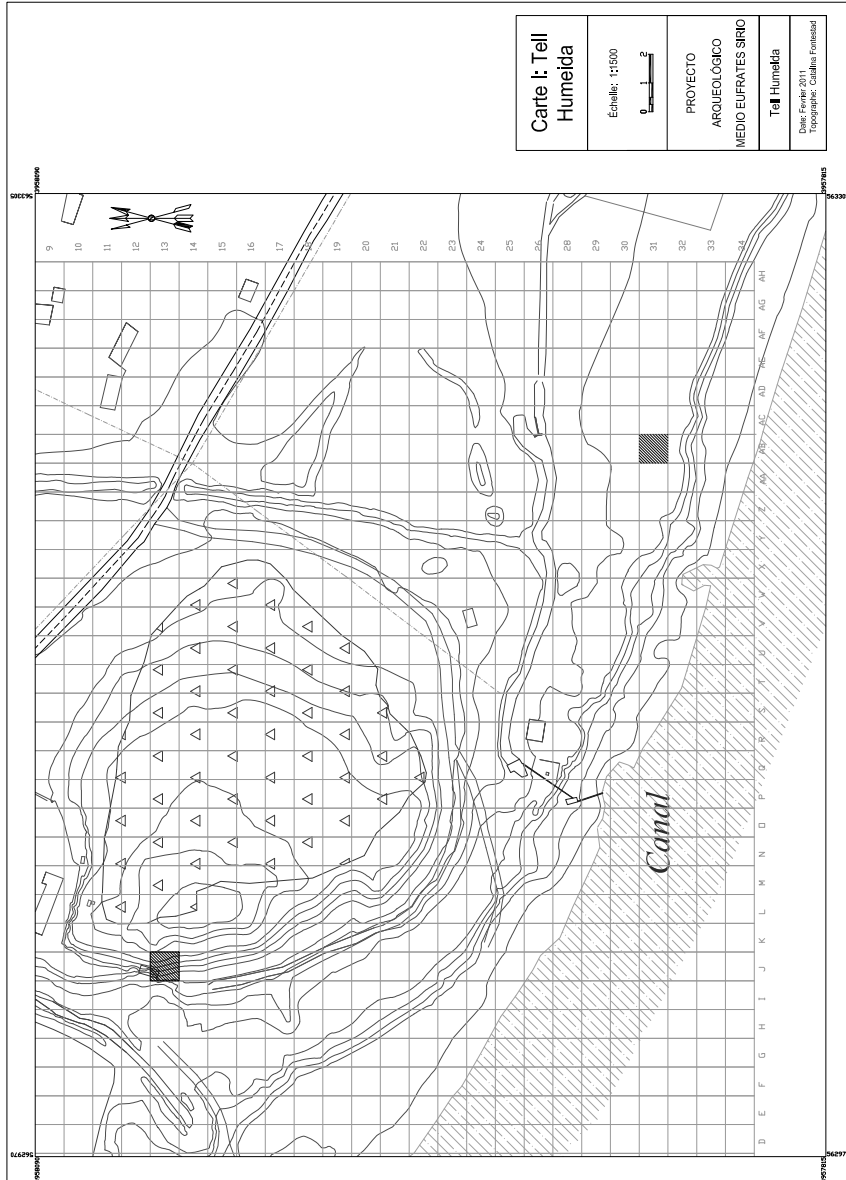


Fig. 2: Plan topographique de la colline principale de Humaida.



Fig. 3: Situation du carré J-13.



Fig. 4: Le rempart byzantin.



Fig. 5: Fragment de mur urukéen (*Reimchen*).



Fig. 6: Dépotoir urukéen.

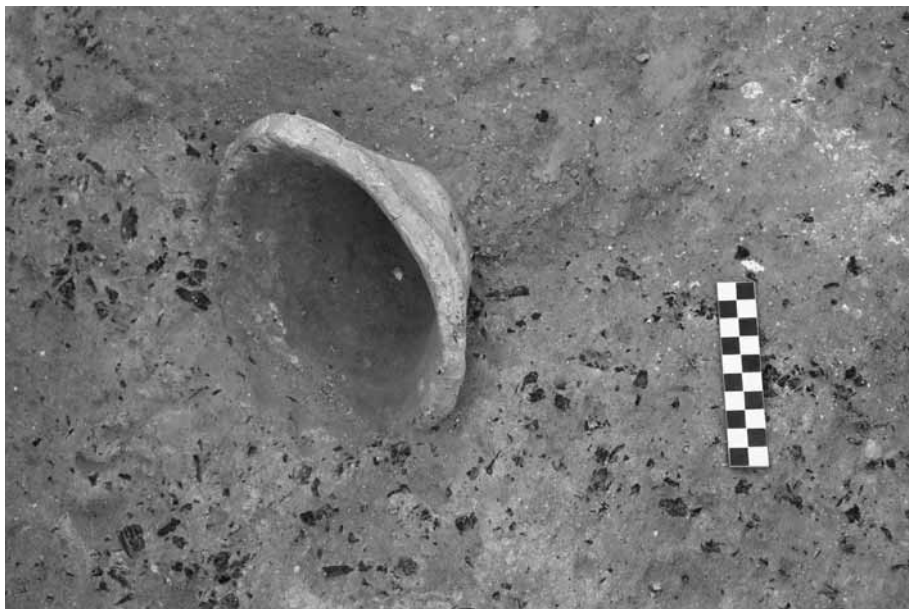


Fig. 7. Bol à bord biseauté *in situ*.



Fig. 8. Bols à bord biseauté.





Fig. 9. Fragment de faucille obeidienne en céramique.

# Le site de Tell Qabr Abu al-'Atiq, le royaume de Mari, l'Assyrie et le verrou de Khanuqa. Projet Archéologique Moyen Euphrate Syrien (2008-2010)

Juan Luis Montero Fenollós  
Francisco Caramelo  
Ignacio Márquez Rowe

La prospection (2005-2007) et les sondages (2008-2010) réalisés par la mission syro-espagnole dans la région de Deir ez-Zor<sup>1</sup> ont montré qu'une occupation de l'âge du Bronze existait dans la région de Khanuqa<sup>2</sup>. C'est ce qu'a mis en évidence tout particulièrement le travail mené à Tell Qabr Abu al-'Atiq, un site qui se présente clé pour étudier d'une part le mode d'articulation du royaume de Mari au III<sup>e</sup> millénaire av. J.-C., notamment sa limite septentrionale, et de l'autre le contrôle médio-assyrien dans la vallée de l'Euphrate, duquel nous

---

<sup>1</sup> Nous voudrions remercier Dr. Michel al-Maqdissi, Directeur du Service de Fouilles de la DGAM, et Monsieur le Directeur Général des Antiquités et Musées de la Syrie, Dr. Bassam Jamous, pour toutes les facilités reçues pour mener à bien ce projet de recherche. Nos plus sincères remerciements de même envers la Fondation Osmane Aïdi, qui nous a fourni l'hébergement, la nourriture de l'équipe et le transport nécessaires pour développer notre travail à Deir ez-Zor; Madame Rawa Batbouta (Chamtour, Damas) a mis à notre disposition tout ce dont nous avons besoin pour garantir le succès de notre travail. En outre, le Projet Archéologique Moyen Euphrate Syrien a été possible grâce au patronage économique du Ministère de la Culture espagnol (Direction Générale des Beaux-Arts et Biens Culturels), du Ministère de la Recherche et l'Innovation (HAR2010-15866), de la Xunta de Galice (07PXIB 167227PR et 10PXIB 167197PR), du CSIC (Madrid), du CHAM (Lisbonne) et de la Mairie de Ferrol.

<sup>2</sup> Montero Fenollós, J. L. *et al.*, "IV campaña del Proyecto Arqueológico Medio Éufrates Sirio. Sondeos en Tall Qabr Abu al-'Atiq: de los orígenes de la ciudad al período Asirio Medio", *Excavaciones en el exterior 2008. Informes y trabajos*, Madrid, 2009, pp. 191-199; Montero Fenollós, J. L. "Nouvelles recherches archéologiques dans la région du verrou basaltique de Halabiyé (Moyen Euphrate syrien)", *Estudios Orientales* 10 (2009), pp. 123-146; Montero Fenollós, J. L. *et al.*, "Tell Qabr Abu al-'Atiq: From an Early Dynastic City to a Middle Assyrian Fort. 5<sup>th</sup> Season Report of the Proyecto Arqueológico Medio Éufrates Sirio", *Aula Orientalis* 28 (2010), pp. 73-84.

n'avions connaissance archéologique jusqu'à présent qu'à Mari, son cimetière et les installations dégagées au chantier E<sup>3</sup>.

La fouille à Tell Qabr Abu al-'Atiq est à comprendre dans le cadre du "Projet Archéologique Moyen Euphrate Syrien (PAMES)", un programme de recherche créé en 2004 par la Direction Générale des Antiquités et Musées de Damas et l'Université de La Corogne. Ce projet conjoint est né pour étudier le secteur de la vallée de l'Euphrate syrien de 70 km de longueur environ, limité au nord par le verrou de Khanuqa, et au sud par le site de Tell as-Sin (10 km au sud-est de Deir ez-Zor).

Il est évident que le verrou basaltique de Khanuqa constitue une frontière naturelle (fig. 1), qui permettait donc à l'homme la possibilité d'exercer un contrôle sur le trafic fluvial de l'Euphrate. En effet, par sa nature<sup>4</sup>, ce défilé a pu servir pendant l'Antiquité comme frontière politique ; notamment vers la moitié du III<sup>e</sup> millénaire av. J.-C. il se présente comme une limite à caractère naturel où il était possible mettre une "fermeture" à la "porte" qui donnait sur le royaume et sur la ville de Mari depuis les pays du nord.

### **1. Tell Qabr Abu al-'Atiq: les travaux récents**

La fouille de Tell Qabr Abu al-'Atiq par la mission syro-espagnole à Deir ez-Zor fait partie de l'étude archéologique de la région du verrou de Khanuqa, entendu celui-ci comme une limite qui a servi de frontière politique dans la région du Moyen Euphrate syrien. C'est là qu'il faudrait placer, selon notre hypothèse, la frontière nord-ouest du royaume syro-mésopotamien de Mari. Or Mari vers la moitié du III<sup>e</sup> millénaire av. J.-C. n'est pas le seul exemple de la valeur géostratégique qu'a eu le verrou par rapport à sa territorialité. L'empire médio-assyrien au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle av. J.-C. est un autre.

Les premières campagnes de travail sur terrain de la mission syro-espagnole à Tell Qabr Abu al-'Atiq (2008-2010) se sont concentrées

---

<sup>3</sup> Margueron, J. C., *Mari. Métropole de l'Euphrate*, Paris, 2004, p. 530.

<sup>4</sup> Sur la géologie de la région, voir Demir, T. *et al.*, "Ar-Ar dating of late Cenozoic basaltic volcanism in northern Syria", *Tectonics* 26 (2007), pp. 19-59.

à réaliser un nombre de sondages au sommet de la colline principale du site et dans le secteur appelé “ville basse”. L’objectif de cette planification de fouille, c’est-à-dire vérifier l’occupation du site, a été conçu à partir des travaux de prospection des campagnes précédentes. Trois phases ont été repérées jusqu’au présent : Bronze Ancien en “ville basse” et Bronze Récent et époque islamique sur la colline.

### **1.1 “La ville basse”**

Les travaux menés en 2008 (sondages B et C) ont mis au jour un secteur d’un bâtiment aux murs en brique et aux fondations en pierre d’orientation ouest-est et nord-sud, dont la largeur varie entre 0,80 et 1,20 m (fig. 2); ces murs délimitent deux pièces complètes, la pièce 1 qui est presque quadrangulaire (3,20 sur 3,05 m), et la pièce 2 (3,13 sur 1,90 m), qui présente au nord une sorte de bassin rectangulaire (2,05 sur 0,95 m). Les deux pièces sont communiquées entre elles par le moyen d’une porte de 0,60 m de largeur; la pièce 1 donne accès à une autre pièce située au sud (appelée 4) par une porte aussi de 0,60 m de largeur. Les dimensions de ce bâtiment, qui se prolonge vers l’est (pièce 3) et le sud (pièces 4 et 5), devront être définies dans les prochaines campagnes.

La céramique découverte lors de ces travaux est représentée par une centaine de tessons et, plus important, par deux vases (une petite jarre et une grande jatte) trouvés sur place dans le sol de la pièce 1. L’étude préliminaire du matériel montre des analogies entre le mobilier céramique de la fin de la ville I et le début de la ville II de Mari.

D’autre part, l’analyse de la topographie du site a permis d’observer quelques aspects sur la morphologie de la ville du Bronze Ancien (fig. 3). À partir du centre du tell, on peut observer que les courbes de niveau dessinent un arc de cercle sur le plan, aspect qui est particulièrement visible dans la partie orientale du tell (la partie sud-ouest a malheureusement disparu à cause de l’érosion). Cette disposition des courbes de niveau nous a fait penser à l’existence à Tell Qabr d’une ville à plan circulaire.

Afin de concrétiser la morphologie urbaine du site, on a réalisé en 2009 une prospection géo-radar (GPR)<sup>5</sup>. Le GPR, on le sait bien, est une technique de télédétection de courte portée avec radar, déjà utilisée dans d'autres sites archéologiques syriens<sup>6</sup> ; chez nous il a servi à étudier une surface de 47.545 m<sup>2</sup> du site. Les résultats obtenus, encore provisoires, nous montrent quelques données très intéressantes par rapport à l'organisation urbaine de la ville. Le résultat le plus significatif a été l'identification d'une grande construction dans la limite orientale du tell, qui dessinait un arc de cercle. Par sa nature (6 m d'épaisseur) et sa localisation (en bordure du tell), il nous semble qu'il s'agit des vestiges du rempart de la ville du Bronze Ancien (fig. 4). Cette enceinte défensive aurait protégé une ville à plan circulaire de 400 m de diamètre environ. La morphologie urbaine provisoirement dessinée n'est pas une anomalie dans le dossier de l'urbanisme du Proche-Orient ancien. Bien au contraire, les villes circulaires sont une formule bien connue dans le domaine syro-mésopotamien du III<sup>e</sup> millénaire.<sup>7</sup>

## 1.2 La colline principale

La recherche que nous avons menée sur la colline principale du site a permis d'identifier jusqu'à présent deux phases d'occupation. La plus récente correspond à un cimetière islamique formé par des tombes en fosse simple, marquées, dans la plupart des cas, par des pierres alignées est-ouest. La phase suivante date de la période du Bronze Récent II.

Les travaux réalisés en 2009 et 2010 (carrés X23, X24 et Y23) ont eu pour objectif la délimitation de diverses pièces qui font partie d'un bâtiment construit en brique crue (avec des briques de 40 sur 40 cm) et identifié dans la première campagne (2008). La fouille a permis de dégager quatre pièces :

---

<sup>5</sup> La prospection a été dirigée sur le terrain par Alexandre Novo (Université de Vigo), qui a utilisé une équipe RAMAC-GPR avec une antenne de 250 MHz.

<sup>6</sup> Par exemple à Tell Qarqur, voir Casana, J. *et al.*, "Deep Subsurface Geophysical Prospection at Tell Qarqur, Syria", *Archaeological Prospection* 15 (2008), pp. 207-225.

<sup>7</sup> Margueron, J. C., "Urbanisme syro-mésopotamien et géométrie", *Ktèma* 35 (2010), p. 221.

**Pièce 1:** espace rectangulaire de 2,85 / 3,30 m sur 5,80 m (16,50 m<sup>2</sup>). Directement sur le sol de la pièce, on a trouvé tout un répertoire de vases en céramique de différents types. Tout le matériel archéologique est apparu écrasé et brûlé par l'incendie qui a détruit cette pièce.

**Pièce 2:** cet espace (qui a 3 m de longueur) est délimité, pour le moment, par trois murs et il communique, par une petite porte, avec la pièce 1.

**Pièce 3:** espace rectangulaire de 2,85 sur 6,63 m (18,80 m<sup>2</sup>). Comme dans la pièce 1 (fig. 5), on a trouvé sur le sol toute une série de vases en céramique de typologie diverse: bols carénés, gobelets à bouton, grandes jarres, *etc.* (fig. 6). La trouvaille la plus intéressante a été celle de deux tablettes cunéiformes qui étaient situées sur le sol et cachées en partie par deux vases en céramique et un poteau carbonisé.

**Pièce 4:** cette salle est définie partiellement par deux murs. La fouille de 2009 a permis la mise au jour d'une série de grandes jarres de stockage qui étaient sur les restes de fragments de bois carbonisé par l'incendie. Dans ce contexte, on a trouvé un sceau-cylindre avec la représentation de quatre divinités, entre lesquelles figure le dieu Adad.

## **2. En guise de réflexion historique.**

Les trois premières campagnes de fouilles archéologiques à Tell Qabr Abu al-'Atiq (2008-2010) ont mis au jour trois phases archéologiques, la dernière desquelles, matérialisée par les tombes islamiques, ne fait pas l'objet de notre présente analyse.

La phase la plus ancienne est bien datée par l'étude de la céramique, qui nous montre des analogies typologiques avec la céramique des

couches 8-14 du chantier B et le mobilier du tombeau 300 de Mari<sup>8</sup>. Les tessons ramassés en surface de la “ville basse” (métallique et Ninive V à décor excisé) nous font penser à une datation vers la fin de la ville I de Mari, ou plutôt début de la ville II (= Dynasties Archaiques II-III).

Les travaux menés sur le site ont permis d’attester qu’il s’agit d’une fondation nouvelle: vraisemblablement une ville à plan circulaire fondée au milieu du III<sup>e</sup> millénaire av. J.-C. Avec Mari et Terqa, Tell Qabr Abu al-‘Atiq configure la troisième ville circulaire connue dans la région du Moyen Euphrate syrien. On sait aujourd’hui que des villes circulaires ont été fondées depuis le IV<sup>e</sup> millénaire av. J.-C. dans la région syro-mésopotamienne, une morphologie urbaine qui devient régulière, voire normative au III<sup>e</sup> millénaire av. J.-C.; on la retrouve en effet dans des petits sites comme Byblos ou l’acropole d’Ebla (diam. 200 m), mais aussi dans les grands sites comme Mari ou Larsa (diam. 2000 m).<sup>9</sup>

À notre avis, pour bien comprendre le site de Tell Qabr Abu al-‘Atiq, il faut le faire dans le cadre de la territorialité du royaume mariote au Bronze Ancien. D’après notre hypothèse, la base territoriale de Mari a dû être établie dans la première moitié du III<sup>e</sup> millénaire av. J.-C. en deux phases historiques:

— **1<sup>ère</sup> phase** (vers 2900 av. J.-C.) : Le royaume mariote est fondé. Celui-ci comprend le territoire de la vallée situé entre le verrou de Baghuz et le confluent du Khabur et de l’Euphrate. Ce pays se caractérise par la présence de deux grandes villes (Terqa, au nord, et Mari, au sud) et un canal de navigation qui reliait la capitale (Mari) avec le Khabur (le nahr Dawrin).

— **2<sup>ème</sup> phase** (vers 2600 av. J.-C.) : Mari va élargir son territoire vers le nord jusqu’au verrou de Khanuqa. Les mariotes fondent à l’entrée

---

<sup>8</sup> Lebeau, M., “Rapport préliminaire sur la séquence céramique du chantier B de Mari (III<sup>e</sup> millénaire)”, *MARI* 4 (1985), pp. 93-126 ; Lebeau, M., “La céramique du tombeau 300 de Mari”, *MARI* 6 (1990), pp. 349-374 ; Lebeau, M., “La séquence stratigraphique du chantier B de Mari (III<sup>e</sup> millénaire): une révision de la datation”, *Akh Puratim* 2 (2007), pp. 221-225.

<sup>9</sup> Margueron, J. C., *op. cit.*, 2010, pp. 220-221; Huot, J. L. “À propos des villes géométriques”, in F. Baffi *et al.* (éds.), *Studi di archeologia orientale dedicati a Paolo Matthiae*, Roma, 2008, pp. 237-244.

du verrou, en rive gauche, une nouvelle ville circulaire (Tell Qabr Abu al-'Atiq) et creusent un nouveau canal (le nahr Sémiramis) à la sortie du verrou. Le fait qu'il n'existe pas de liaison directe entre la prise du Dawrin et l'arrivée du Sémiramis au Khabur fait penser en effet que les deux canaux du royaume n'ont pas été construits à la même époque.

La base territoriale du royaume de Mari au milieu du III<sup>e</sup> millénaire av. J.-C. comprendrait donc le secteur de la vallée de l'Euphrate moyen délimité par deux accidents naturels: le verrou de Khanuqa, au nord, et le verrou de Baghuz, au sud. Il s'agit d'un territoire qui s'étend sur 180 km du nord au sud ; il était contrôlé par trois villes circulaires: Mari (diam. 1900 m), la grande capitale, qui était la porte vers le sud de la Mésopotamie; Terqa (diam. 500 m), qui contrôlait l'accès au Khabur et à la route vers le nord, voire l'Anatolie; et Tell Qabr Abu al-'Atiq (diam. 400 m environ), la clé pour surveiller la porte d'accès aux royaumes du nord-ouest de la Syrie.

La deuxième phase archéologique attestée à Tell Qabr Abu al-'Atiq est celle du Bronze Récent II. Les travaux archéologiques réalisés ont permis de faire la mise au jour de plusieurs salles d'un bâtiment détruit par un incendie, dont l'effondrement a écrasé sur le sol des lots de vases et de jarres en céramique. L'étude de cet ensemble nous montre qu'il s'agit de ce que les céramologues ont appelé la "poterie administrative médio-assyrienne", un répertoire céramique standardisé sous le contrôle impérial assyrien. Les analogies typologiques avec les phases MA I-IIb du site de Tell Shaikh Hamad, dans la vallée du Khabur, et avec les niveaux 5-6 de Tell Sabi Abyad, au Balikh, nous permettent de situer la collection de Tell Qabr Abu al-'Atiq à la phase de la période médio-assyrienne datée vers la moitié du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle av. J.-C.<sup>10</sup>

La même datation est confirmée d'ailleurs par les deux tablettes cunéiformes trouvées dans la pièce 3. Écrites en dialecte médio-

---

<sup>10</sup> Pfälzner, P., "Late Bronze Age Ceramic Traditions of the Syrian Jazirah", in M. al-Maqdisi *et al.* (éds.), *Céramique de l'Âge du Bronze en Syrie*, II, Beyrouth, 2007, pp. 238, 250-254 et 258.



assyrien et décrivant des opérations administratives, elles témoignent en outre de la présence d'une administration, voire une élite politique sur cet emplacement. En fait, il est fort probable que le bâtiment mis au jour partiellement à Tell Qabr Abu al-'Atiq soit un *dunnu*, c'est-à-dire, la forteresse-type médio-assyrienne qui servait à plusieurs fonctions, notamment économique et politique. Ces deux fonctions principales deviennent plus évidentes quand on considère la situation privilégiée du site, et du point de vue agricole et du point de vue géostratégique. Dans ce contexte territorial, Tall Qabr Abu al-'Atiq a dû fonctionner comme un poste avancé de l'empire assyrien face aux Hittites de la région de Karkemiš et Emar, le "pays d'Aštata", et aux Kassites, arrivés de Babylonie jusqu'à la limite méridionale du Moyen-Euphrate (Mari et Terqa).

La présence des Assyriens dans la vallée moyenne de l'Euphrate, évoquée par les rois Adad-nêrârî I<sup>er</sup>, Salmanazar I<sup>er</sup> et Tukultî-Ninurta I<sup>er</sup> dans des inscriptions<sup>11</sup>, était jusqu'aujourd'hui seulement identifiée dans la nécropole dite "médio-assyrienne", qui avait occupé les ruines du palais de Zimri-Lim et dans la bourgade fouillée partiellement au chantier E de Mari<sup>12</sup>. Tell Qabr Abu al-'Atiq devient le seul site sur toute la vallée du Moyen Euphrate syrien à apporter une information nouvelle pour connaître le modèle d'expansion territoriale médio-assyrien au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle av. J.-C.

---

<sup>11</sup> Grayson, A. K., *Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia BC (to 1115 BC)*, Toronto, 1987, A.0.76.3: 41; A.0.77.1: 85; A.0.78.23: 29.

<sup>12</sup> Jean Marie, M., *Tombes et nécropoles à Mari*, Beyrouth, pp. 95-96; Margueron, J. C., *op. cit.*, 2004, p. 530-ss. Dans la région entre Mari et Deir ez-Zor prospectée par Geyer et Monchambert (éds., *La basse vallée de l'Euphrate syrien du néolithique à l'avènement de l'islam*, Beyrouth, 2003), on a identifié trois sites où la présence de céramique médio-assyrienne est claire: Jabal Maštala, Taiyāni 2 et Abu Harbūb 1. Les autres sites de la période du Bronze Récent ont donné des céramiques de tradition kassite.

*Le site de Tell Qabr Abu al-'Atiq*

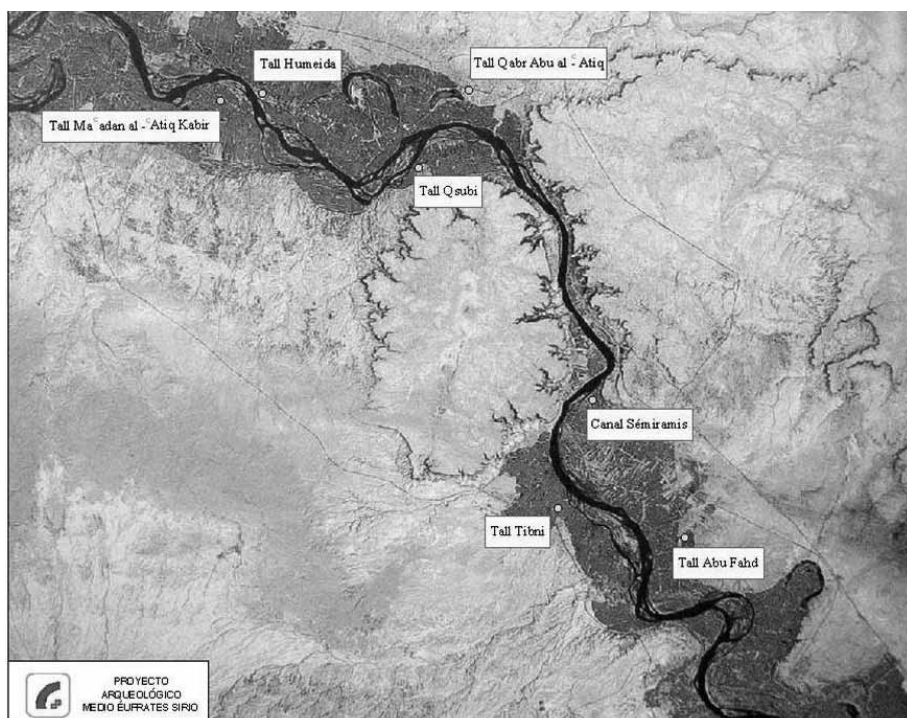


Fig. 1: Le verrou de Khanuqa



Fig. 2: bâtiment du Bronze Ancien

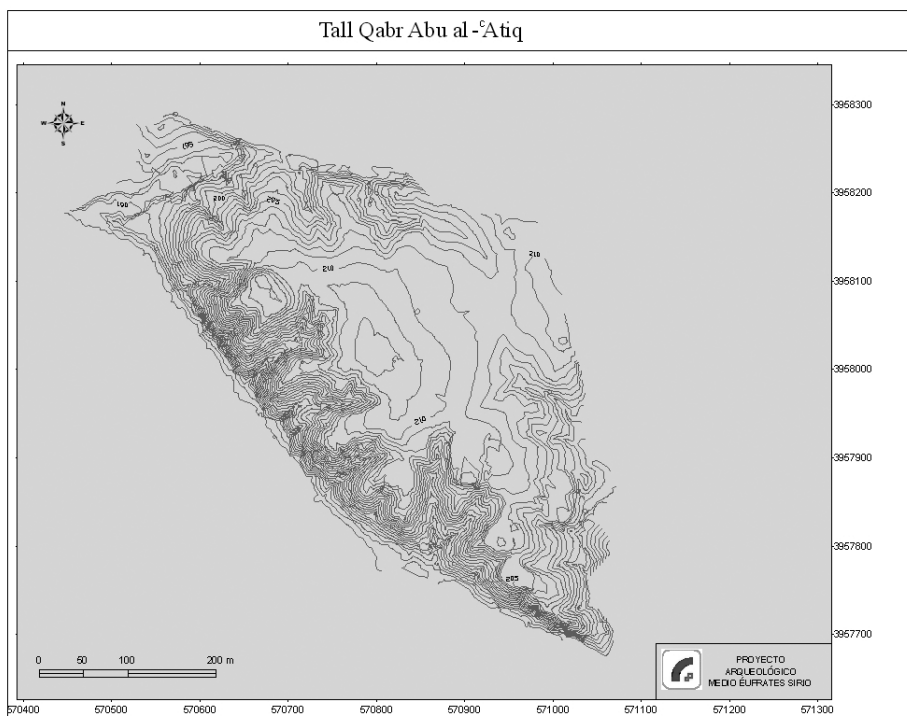


Fig. 3: plan topographique de Tell Qabr Abu al-'Atiq

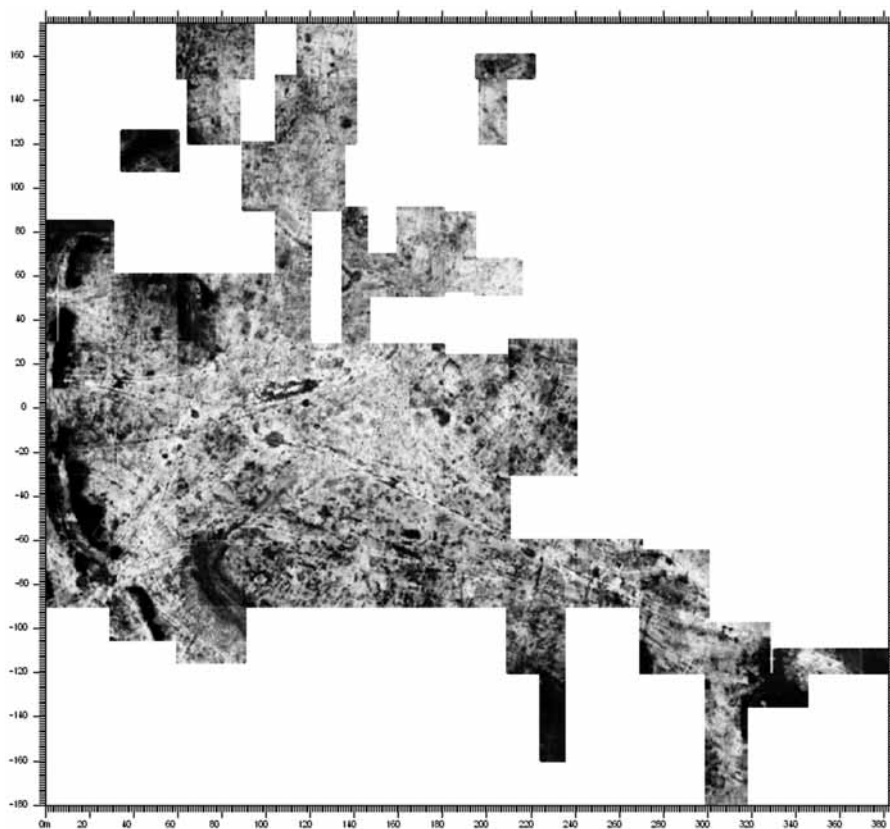


Fig. 4: prospection géo-radar



Fig. 5: pièce 3 du bâtiment médioassyrien.



Fig. 6: objets trouvés dans la pièce 3 du bâtiment médioassyrien.

# La campagne 2010 de la mission archéologique franco-syrienne à Halabiya-Zénobia

Sylvie Blétry  
Université Paul Valéry – Montpellier IV

La ville-forteresse de Zénobia que mentionne Procope de Césarée dans son *De Aedificiis*<sup>1</sup> est identifiée avec le site de Halabiya, situé à environ 60 km au nord de l'actuelle Deir Ezzor, dans la moyenne vallée de l'Euphrate, au débouché du défilé du Khanouqa. Procope attribue sa fondation à Zénobie, la reine de Palmyre, et en donne en outre une description détaillée. Il mentionne un certain nombre d'aménagements qui seraient selon lui dus à la politique de renforcement du limes, entreprise par Justinien (vraisemblablement au moment de la trêve de 545 conclue avec les Perses), aménagements qui tous ont été retrouvés. Ce fut là notamment l'œuvre remarquable de Jean Lauffray, qui travailla sur le site entre 1944 et 1945, et publia ses travaux quelques décennies plus tard.<sup>2</sup>

Le site de Zénobia-Halabiya présente encore d'impressionnants vestiges de ses fortifications de l'époque byzantine. Elles délimitent une ville dont la forme s'apparente à un triangle d'environ 600 m de côté, et dont la base (à l'est) s'appuie directement sur la rive droite de l'Euphrate. Si l'on suit Procope, c'est Justinien qui aurait consolidé la courtine sud, rebâti en partie le mur est et la courtine nord dans sa totalité, qu'il aurait déplacée de façon à agrandir la ville. Ce faisant,

---

<sup>1</sup> Procope de Césarée, *De Aedificiis*, II, VIII, 8-25.

<sup>2</sup> Lauffray, Jean, *Halabiyya-Zénobia, Place forte du limes oriental et la Haute Mésopotamie au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle, T.I – Les duchés frontaliers de Mésopotamie et les fortifications de Zénobia* (BAH 119), Paris, Geuthner, 1983; et T. II – *L'architecture publique, privée et funéraire* (BAH 138), Paris, Geuthner, 1991.

il aurait inclus la citadelle qui forme le sommet de notre triangle et implanté le grand bâtiment du prétorium encore bien visible aujourd'hui sur le rempart nord.

Depuis 2006, une mission franco-syrienne<sup>3</sup> a pris le relais des recherches de Jean Lauffray. Les fouilles se sont concentrées dans un premier temps sur plusieurs secteurs *intra muros*: ce sont principalement les secteurs du rempart antérieur à Justinien, (secteur 1), du forum («secteur 6»), de la porte nord («secteur 7») et d'un îlot d'habitat domestique dans le quartier sud (secteur 3, fig. 1). Depuis 2009, la mission a également mis à son programme la prospection des nécropoles: celles-ci devraient probablement être les premières victimes d'un projet de barrage, dont l'aménagement ne préserverait par ailleurs qu'une partie du site urbain, et qui devrait donc noyer la plus grande partie des tombes que nous avons pu répertorier. Nos interventions ont donc pris là un caractère d'urgence.

La campagne de mai-juin 2010 a réuni une quarantaine d'intervenants venus de France, d'Espagne ou de Syrie, dont une vingtaine d'ouvriers de Halabiya. Nos objectifs prioritaires portaient sur l'achèvement des fouilles des secteurs 3 et 7 et de la prospection systématique des nécropoles, dont nous présenterons ici les premiers résultats. La zone du «forum» (secteur 6) nécessitera sans doute une ou deux campagnes supplémentaires, mais nous rendrons compte ci-dessous de l'avancement de nos recherches dans ce secteur.

### **La zone dite du «forum»**

Notre secteur 6 est situé au sud-ouest d'une zone qui selon Jean Lauffray était vierge de toute occupation et aurait correspondu au forum de la ville lors du remaniement de Justinien. Elle se situe juste en contrebas d'une des églises du site (l'église nord ouest ou église 2). Les

---

<sup>3</sup> Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier, EA 4424 (C.R.I.S.E.S), Ministère français des Affaires étrangères et européennes et Direction Générale des Antiquités et des Musées de Syrie. Nos remerciements les plus sincères vont à la Fondation Osmane Aïdi, qui contribue pour une grande part au financement de la mission depuis son origine.

premiers sondages dans ce secteur ont eu lieu au cours des campagnes 2007–2008 et le secteur est fouillé de façon extensive depuis 2009. Il couvre désormais une surface d'environ 225 m<sup>2</sup> (fig. 2 et 3). L'essentiel de nos découvertes dans ce secteur ont porté sur trois phases successives de pièces dont l'usage (public ou privé) est d'une interprétation délicate. Dans leur partie nord-ouest, ces structures recouvrent le dallage d'une cour (pièce 6) dallée de grandes briques carrées d'argile cuite, de 40 cm de côté, à laquelle on parvenait depuis le nord par un escalier qui a conservé cinq marches. Sur cette cour donnait une fenêtre dont nous de possédons que la partie inférieure, et qui appartient au retour est d'un portique qui longe l'église sur son flanc septentrional. Le lien synchronique formel avec la cour devra cependant être confirmé lors de la prochaine campagne, car cette découverte a été faite au dernier jour de la fouille de 2010.

La phase suivante voit la réoccupation de cette cour et l'aménagement de 5 pièces (1 à 5). Leurs murs sont élevés en briques crues reposant sur un solin de blocs de gypse non équarris puis enduits au plâtre. Les briques sont de deux modules différents (50 x 50 x 8 cm et 30 x 50 x 8 cm) et les murs ont une largeur de deux briques. L'élévation maximale que nous avons retrouvée est de 70 cm. Sur une partie à l'élévation bien conservée d'un mur, dans la pièce 3, on a pu observer un décor sur le mortier de préparation de l'enduit ; il se compose de feuilles stylisées et de cercles en impression. Les sols, sauf celui de la cour, sont en terre battue. Sur le sol de la cour appartenant à cette phase, le matériel céramique est peu abondant, mais nous y avons en revanche retrouvé une grande quantité de mobilier métallique d'armement.

Une troisième phase se caractérise par l'ajout de murs destinés à réduire la surface des pièces par rapport à la phase précédente. Une cour est alors installée, sur laquelle ouvrent les pièces 1, 2 et 4; on y aménage de deux tannurs. Dans la pièce 2 ont été retrouvées une quinzaine de jarres ou d'amphores entières (US 6211) posées sur le niveau de sol. A l'entrée de la pièce se trouvait un petit four. Grâce à l'abondant matériel céramique, notamment un grand nombre d'amphores de Syrie du Nord, on peut supposer que cette pièce pouvait servir de cellier.



Le matériel numismatique est en cours de traitement à Damas, mais d'ores et déjà nous pouvons constater que s'y mêlent monnaies islamiques et byzantines. L'ensemble de la céramique appartient quant à elle à la phase de transition entre époques byzantine et omeyyade, période au cours de laquelle ce matériel est peu discriminant et pour laquelle une chronologie absolue fine est actuellement impossible à établir.

Nous émettons l'hypothèse que ces structures ont pu jouer un rôle dans l'approvisionnement des troupes stationnées à Zénobia à partir de la fin du VI<sup>e</sup> siècle et au VII<sup>e</sup> s. Ce bâtiment occupe un espace qui, au début de la rénovation justinienne, a dû constituer une aire ouverte délimitée au sud par un *decumanus*, sur lequel elle s'ouvrait par un portique; à l'est et au nord de cet espace qu'il interprétait comme le forum, Jean Lauffray a retrouvé les vestiges partiels de maisons de prestige, dont l'une est organisée autour d'une cour et qui ouvrent sur le forum par un portique. L'occupation de la partie occidentale de cet espace que constitue notre secteur 6 nous échappe provisoirement encore pour ce qui est de cette première phase, en particulier en bordure du chevet de l'église 2 et de ses portiques latéraux. Mais il apparaît donc qu'au cours de deux phases ultérieures, les importantes structures que nous avons dégagées prennent alors place et viennent sans doute donc bouleverser la fonction de ce quartier de la ville.

### **Le secteur de la porte nord (secteur 7)**

Près de la porte nord, des dégagements entrepris dès 2007 par la direction des Antiquités de Deir Ezzor ont révélé des éléments architectoniques appartenant à la portion la plus septentrionale de la voie principale qui traverse la ville entre les portes II et VI et de son portique oriental. Cette portion du *cardo* étant inédite, nous avons entrepris la fouille de ses abords à partir de 2008: le radier de la voie et le stylobate du portique sont alors apparus ainsi que les bases, retrouvées en place, de trois colonnes, et les vestiges effondrés (peut-être à des fins de récupération dès l'Antiquité tardive) de plusieurs fûts

et chapiteaux de colonnes. Il a été en outre possible d'observer le sol de circulation du portique et la limite orientale de celui-ci, matérialisée par un mur de direction nord-sud. Par la suite, nous avons découvert l'existence, au-delà du portique, de deux grandes pièces séparées par une cour dallée, qui forment un bâtiment indépendant (fig. 4 et 5).

Depuis la voie, on pouvait accéder au portique par deux seuils, l'un au sud et l'autre à l'ouest du bâtiment (seuils 4 et 5) et, depuis le portique, on pénétrait d'une part dans la pièce 2 et d'autre part dans la cour dallée (seuils 1 et 2). L'accès à la pièce 1 n'était possible que depuis la cour, par un dernier seuil (seuil 3).

Une voie secondaire, perpendiculaire au *cardo*, sépare le rempart nord du bâtiment identifié. Au sud, celui-ci était délimité par un égout recouvert par de grosses dalles de gypse taillées et qui appartient au secteur 1 que nous avons fouillé de 2006 à 2008. Il circulait peut-être au niveau ou sous un *decumanus* secondaire, mais dans ce cas le niveau de celui-ci a disparu à l'occasion d'une réoccupation tardive par des structures d'habitat de notre secteur 1.

Cet habitat est venu par ailleurs recouvrir ce que nous avons interprété comme le radier de fondation d'un premier rempart de l'époque byzantine, que Justinien aurait, selon Procope de Césarée<sup>4</sup>, démantelé pour reconstruire, plus au nord le rempart qui est aujourd'hui conservé. De nouvelles structures appartenant à cet habitat tardif ont été retrouvées en 2010: elles jouxtent ou recouvrent les fondations du rempart primitif et même les dalles de couverture de l'égout: sur l'une d'entre elles, on aménage un grand tannur. Plus à l'ouest, elles viennent spolier le portique qui longe le *cardo*.

Les techniques de mise en œuvre laissent penser que le bâtiment a connu plusieurs phases. Dans un premier temps, les murs sont reposent sur un soubassement qui alterne des gros blocs taillés de gypse (de 60 à 80 cm de large) avec des séquences de moellons de basalte sommairement équarris. Cette technique est conservée pour les murs qui limitent la pièce 1. Mais le soubassement des murs de la pièce 2 sont

---

<sup>4</sup> Procope de Césarée, *De Aedificiis*, II, VIII, 19-20.

simplement construits en moellons de basalte bruts et sommairement équarris avec de rares pierres en gypse, et ne comportent plus les blocs de grand appareil de gypse taillé qui concourraient au maintien des murs dans la première phase. Les vestiges conservés de la pièce 2 sont donc postérieurs même s'il ne fait aucun doute que cette pièce existait déjà lors de l'aménagement primitif du bâtiment. L'élévation des murs était en brique crue (modules: à la base, 32 cm sur 9 cm, et en élévation 44 cm sur 9 cm). Sur le sol de la cour et de la pièce 2, nous en avons retrouvé partiellement les effondrements des murs 7015-7043 (entre la pièce 1 et la cour) et 7067-7117 (entre la cour et la pièce 2). Ils étaient enduits au plâtre de gypse. Par ailleurs, nous avons aussi retrouvé deux états du dallage superposés (le plus récent étant très proche de la surface actuelle, il ne se présente plus que dans un état très lacunaire et il constituait contre le mur est de la cour une sorte d'estrade), et les traces de deux enduits successifs recouvrant les murs de brique. C'est au cours de la seconde phase que la limite est du bâtiment a été repoussée vers l'est, mais en raison du passage de la route actuelle, il nous est impossible d'en déterminer la limite orientale définitive.

Dans la cour et dans la pièce 1, contre certains murs, ont été construites, avec de matériaux de remploi ou un blocage de bloc de basalte, des banquettes recouvertes de fragments de briques. Dans la cour, une fosse soigneusement aménagée et protégée a détruit le dallage. Le sol de la pièce 1 était recouvert par la couche de destruction de la toiture, constituée de poutres en bois et d'un treillis de roseaux incendiés; sur ce sol nous avons retrouvé un important dépotoir contenant des verres à boire brisés auxquels se mêlent des monnaies byzantines (Anastase ou Justinien) et omeyyades. Dans la cour, plusieurs fragments de glissière placés de champ sur le dallage, ainsi qu'une grosse dalle de gypse ont dû servir d'embranchements pour accéder à l'estrade constituée par le second niveau de dallage.

Ce bâtiment a donc connu deux périodes de fonctionnement. La première est contemporaine de la construction de la dernière portion (nord) du *cardo*. La seconde se rattache sans doute à l'époque qui suit la conquête omeyyade. Rien n'interdit de penser que la pièce 1 a

continué alors de fonctionner dans ses limites primitives alors que la cour et la pièce 2 ont été réaménagées. La situation et la configuration de ce bâtiment invitent à l'interpréter comme une structure publique, probablement affectée à un usage d'octroi, placée à l'entrée nord de la ville.

### **Secteur 3. Ilot d'habitat domestique**

Les photographies aériennes montrent qu'au sud de la ville il existait une série d'au moins quatre îlots d'habitat domestique. Nous avons fouillé l'un d'entre eux qui constitue notre secteur 3. Il est apparu, dès le début de la fouille en 2007, qu'il était divisé sur quasiment toute sa longueur nord/sud par un mur percé de seulement deux seuils. La partie est (secteur 3A) a d'abord fait l'objet d'une série de sondages stratigraphiques, tandis que la partie ouest (secteur 3B) était fouillée de façon extensive à partir de 2009 (fig. 6). Les résultats des sondages montrent qu'il s'agit d'un habitat tardif; les datations les plus hautes remontent à l'extrême fin de la période byzantine, alors que le matériel de surface appartient à la fin de l'époque omeyyade, voire à la période abbasside. Mais d'une façon générale, le matériel est peu abondant. Dans le secteur 3A, nous avons trouvé quelques traces d'occupation domestique: un tannur dans la pièce 2 (à ciel ouvert ?), et, dans l'espace 11 qui est une cour, deux petits fours à métallurgie domestique. Dans la partie 3B, les structures sont tout aussi rares : un foyer dans les pièces 14 et 17, un petit tannur et un foyer dans la pièce 12, un autre petit tannur dans la pièce 19 et dans ces deux dernières pièces, les traces des trous des poteaux qui devaient soutenir des auvents. Les murs sont construits en blocs de basalte ou de gypse de tout venant ou encore d'éléments taillés en remploi, liés à la terre et enduit d'une fine couche de plâtre. Les sols sont recouverts d'un mortier composite de sable, charbon, plâtre et de fins graviers, sur lequel est enduite une mince couche de plâtre pur.

Le plan du secteur 3B nous montre une organisation de l'espace autour de la pièce 19, qui occupe une surface deux fois supérieure à

celle des autres pièces. Celles-ci fonctionnent en général deux par deux, avec une seule ouverture sur l'extérieur. Nous avons sans doute affaire à une structure d'habitat appartenant à une famille étendue ou de plusieurs noyaux d'une même structure familiale vivant ensemble. Chaque noyau familial disposait de deux pièces tandis que la pièce 19 fonctionne comme un espace commun ou privilégié. Le dernier niveau d'occupation, qui est celui que nous avons dégagé dans le secteur 3B, témoigne de l'occupation tardive du site à la fin de la période omeyyade et à période abbasside.

### **Prospections et dégagements dans les nécropoles**

Les deux nécropoles de Halabiya-Zénobia sont situées au nord et au sud du site urbain délimité par ses fortifications, à respectivement 100 m et 60 m des remparts (Fig. 7). Les tombes les plus éloignées sont à 1,1 km du rempart nord (n°4), et 1,3 km du rempart sud (n°120), mais il s'agit là de deux tombes assez isolées. Nous avons procédé à une prospection de ces deux nécropoles en 2009 et 2010, à la suite du recensement des aménagements funéraires de Jean Lauffray<sup>5</sup>. Celui-ci signalait 51 tombes ; nous en identifions désormais 222, dont 94 sont des emplacements à vérifier<sup>6</sup>. La nécropole sud ne comporte que 19 tombes, et par conséquent celle du nord 203. Nous avons pu cartographier la position de chaque tombe (Fig. 8, 9, 10 et 11), et, après dégagement, fait les relevés de 29 tombes. Nous avons aussi enrichi la typologie de Jean Lauffray.

---

<sup>5</sup> Lauffray, *op. cit.*, t. II (BAH 138), Paris, 1991, pp. 191-224. Son inventaire des vestiges extra muros comporte 121 points, mais tous ne sont pas, tant s'en faut, des monuments funéraires. Les numéros postérieurs à 64 dans la nécropole nord et à 121 dans la nécropole sud ont été identifiés lors de nos prospections.

<sup>6</sup> L'identification des tombes ont été rendues délicates par le fait que, de nos jours encore, de nombreuses fouilles clandestines ont été pratiquées et parfois encore juste après notre passage. Toutes n'ont sans doute pas été fructueuses mais, sur le terrain, ces «visites» des nécropoles ont produit de très nombreuses traces de creusement dont nous n'avons pas toujours pu vérifier systématiquement s'ils correspondaient effectivement à l'emplacement d'une tombe.

Les tombes de Halabiya-Zénobia sont pour la plupart collectives et monumentales: nous n'identifions que 13 tombes individuelles, qui peuvent être des fosses, des *arcosolia* uniques à cuve ou à banquette creusés dans le rocher, des loculi uniques (en général hypogées). Trois tombes individuelles (n° 254-255-256) mais juxtaposées, dont les parois en brique ont été construites à flanc de talus, constituent pour le site un *hapax*. On remarquera que le module de ces briques est le même que celui du dallage du secteur 7 ou des bains du centre urbain (40 cm de côté).

Les tombes plus évidentes sont les tombeaux-tours, au nombre de 30<sup>7</sup>, dont les vestiges, même très endommagés, sont bien visibles. Nos prospections ont permis d'en ajouter deux à la liste de Jean Lauffray (n° 233 au sud et 244 au nord). Il s'agit de monuments de plusieurs mètres de haut (la mieux conservée (n° 120) possède encore 8,65 m d'élévation), qui comportent plusieurs étages, mais, en l'état actuel, la plupart d'entre eux (sauf les n°4 et 120) ne sont, au mieux, conservés que quelques assises au-dessus du rez-de-chaussée. D'une manière générale et pour autant qu'on puisse les observer, ce niveau est constitué d'une chambre centrale quadrangulaire, munie sur trois ou quatre de ses côtés d'*arcosolia* sous lesquels sont disposées des cuves (simples ou doubles) ou des banquettes (fig. 12)<sup>8</sup>. Dans trois cas au moins (n° 4, 13 et 15), une fosse centrale est creusée dans le sol pour accueillir des inhumations secondaires lorsqu'on débarrasse les emplacements funéraires pour de nouvelles inhumations. De ce premier niveau part un escalier tournant, qui mène aux niveaux supérieurs, où les emplacements funéraires peuvent être de cuves ou des loculi ménagés dans l'épaisseur des parois.

Quant à leur aspect extérieur, ces tombeaux-tours sont construit dans un blocage de gypse, où l'on distingue plusieurs lits (destinés à imiter une construction en grand appareil) et recouvert d'un enduit au

---

<sup>7</sup> En y incluant la tour à *loculi* extérieur qui surmonte la tombe troglodyte n° 36.

<sup>8</sup> Tous les plans et coupes des tombes ont été réalisés par les étudiants de l'Universidad de Valencia, sous la direction des profs. Végas Manzanares et Mileto, Lidia García Soriano, Lourdes García Cerezula et Salvador Tomas Marquez.

plâtre de gypse. L'enduit blanchâtre recouvre aussi le décor rapporté, qui est composé de niches et de demi-colonnes alternées. Sur la plupart, le nombre de colonnes est restreint et leur diamètre est compris entre 35 et 60 cm (fig. 13). Les tombeaux-tours n° 120 et n° 4 font ici figure d'exception: on voit encore, par exemple, sur la façade nord de la tour n°120 une grosse demi-colonne de 60 cm encadrée de part et d'autre de 6 demi-colonnes de 20 cm de diamètre (ce décor à la parthe est un des arguments pour la dater d'une époque plus précoce que les autres tombeaux-tours de Halabiya); sur la façade nord de la tour n° 4 (fig. 14), on voit encore deux paires de demi-colonnes de 35 cm de diamètre (ce qui peut inciter à penser que cette tour constitue une transition entre le tour n° 120 et les autres). Le tombeau-tour n° 120 possède aussi une structure interne unique au sein de la nécropole de Halabiya: la chambre centrale remplacée par un grand loculus perpendiculaire à la première volée de marches de l'escalier, puis par une chambre fermée le long de la seconde et incluse dans l'épaisseur du bâtiment. Les tombeaux-tours sont aussi parfois munis de loculi extérieurs. L'effondrement de certains de ces monuments rend difficile toute conclusion statistique, mais on peut citer le tombeau tour n° 45 qui est possède deux en façade (à l'est, de part et d'autre de la porte) et six sur son côté nord (fig. 15).

Un autre type de tombes monumentales est celui des hypogées. D'une façon générale, on y accède par un dromos en escalier, qui débouche sur une chambre quadrangulaire, où sont taillés des arcosolia, qui eux-mêmes surmontent des banquettes, des cuves, ou des loculi. Dans leur grande majorité (77 %), la chambre est de plan cruciforme, mais dans d'autres cas elle peut avoir un plan rayonnant (n° 62, nécropole nord) ou plus atypique (n° 345, nécropole sud) (fig. 16). Des loculi perpendiculaires peuvent être creusés à partir de la base des arcosolia comme dans la tombe n° 63 (fig. 17). Nous en avons identifié 54 de façon certaine, mais une grande partie de ceux dans lesquels nous n'avons pu pénétrer sont probablement des hypogées collectifs à chambre centrale, au regard des traces qui affleurent au sol.

Il existe un type intermédiaire entre les tombeaux tour et les hypogées. Certaines tombes en effet sont partiellement enterrées et, si

elles adoptent la forme interne des hypogées<sup>9</sup>, elles ont été aménagées au flanc d'un talus et recouvertes d'une construction maçonnée qui rattrape le niveau du talus et en signale l'emplacement. On ne saurait pour autant les qualifier de monuments ni de tours en raison de leur faible élévation (fig. 18). Jean Lauffray avait incidemment fait l'hypothèse de l'existence ce type à propos de la seule tombe n°25<sup>10</sup>, et nous en dénombrons actuellement 24, dont 9 dans la nécropole sud. C'est en outre dans la partie aérienne maçonnée de la tombe 230 de la nécropole sud que nous avons pu observer partiellement la présence d'une chambre (de 2,56 m sur 1,74): cet aménagement n'est ici rendu possible que par la hauteur du talus contre lequel elle s'appuie; les autres constructions qui surmontent ce type d'hypogées sont trop détruites et ou ne présentent pas une élévation suffisante pour qu'on puisse déduire l'existence d'une telle chambre.

D'autres tombes ont été creusées dans les falaises, c'est pourquoi on ne peut à proprement parler les qualifier d'hypogées, mais plutôt de tombes troglodytes. Si certaines possèdent un plan interne cruciforme, nous avons pu observer un certain nombre de plans atypiques: vastes chambre quadrangulaires ou aux contours irréguliers et, parfois, des chambres doubles communiquant entre elles (tombe n° 35 et 36). Dans ces deux dernières tombes, des loculi ont été ménagés sous les banquettes. Parmi ces tombes troglodytes, certaines sont individuelles (6 sur 25), dont une seule dans la nécropole sud (n°228).

Cette typologie peut être complétée par quelques observations plus générales. Les portes de toutes les tombes (celles que nous avons retrouvées sont constituées d'une épaisse dalle de gypse ou d'un blocage maçonné) ouvrent à l'Est. Les seules exceptions sont les tombes creusées dans une des falaises de la nécropole septentrionale orientées vers le nord, et le tombeau-tour n° 120, dont l'entrée se trouve au sud, et c'est là encore une autre de ses particularités.

---

<sup>9</sup> La plupart du temps elles ont un plan cruciforme à 3 *arcosolia*, mais il y en a 4 qui sont individuelles (*arcosolium* ou *loculus* unique)

<sup>10</sup> Lauffray, *op. cit.*, T. II (BAH 138), Paris, 1991, p. 200.



Par ailleurs, si nous avons pu y pénétrer, c'est qu'elles étaient bien visibles et qu'elles avaient été pillées avant notre passage. La campagne 2011 permettra peut-être de fouiller un hypogée inédit que nous avons repéré au dernier jour de la campagne 2010. N. Toll avait recueilli dans la fouille du tombeau-tour 13 deux lampes<sup>11</sup>; nous-mêmes, au cours de nos dégagements n'avons retrouvé que très peu de matériel céramique: il n'est de toute façon que résiduel après les pillages. Quelques inscriptions peintes nous donnent une onomastique chrétienne. Ces quelques indices, ainsi que la proximité typologique avec les hypogées de la nécropole byzantine de Tal Al Sin<sup>12</sup> nous conduit à proposer une datation en majorité byzantine pour les nécropoles de Halabiya. Il ne faut cependant pas négliger l'hypothèse d'une réoccupation à cette époque de tombes de construction plus ancienne, notamment pour les tombeaux-tours. Mais la présence de chambre cruciforme à *arcosolia* (sauf pour la tour 120) nous invite à proposer cependant une date plus tardive<sup>13</sup> que pour les tombeaux-tours d'autres nécropoles de la moyenne vallée de l'Euphrate (Doura Europos<sup>14</sup>, Baghouz<sup>15</sup>, Tabbous<sup>16</sup>, Serrin<sup>17</sup> notamment) qui sont datés entre les II<sup>e</sup> et III<sup>e</sup> s. ap. J.-C.

<sup>11</sup> Toll, N. P., "The Necropolis of Halabie-Zenobia" in *Seminarium Kondakovianum: recueil d'études, histoire de l'art, études byzantines, Annales de l'Institut Kondakov*, vol. IX (1937), pp. 17-18 et pl.VI. Les lampes peuvent être datées des III<sup>e</sup>/IV<sup>e</sup> siècles.

<sup>12</sup> Montero Fenollós, Juan Luis; Al-Shbib Shaker, (eds.), *La necrópolis byzantina de Tall as Sin (Deir Ezzor, Syria)*, Madrid, Memorias del Proyecto Arqueológico Médio Éuphrates Sirio (BPOA 4), 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Lauffray, *op. cit.*, T. II – (BAH 138), Paris, 1991; Toll, N. P., "The Necropolis of Halabie-Zenobia" in *Seminarium Kondakovianum: recueil d'études, histoire de l'art, études byzantines, Annales de l'Institut Kondakov*, vol. IX (1937), pp. 11-22 et Will, Ernest, "La tour funéraire de Palmyre" et "La tour funéraire de la Syrie et les monuments apparentés", *Syria* 26 (1949), pp. 87-116 et pp. 258-312. Tous ces auteurs, suivant en cela les dates de la fondation de la ville proposées par Procope proposent une datation entre le III<sup>e</sup> et le IV<sup>e</sup> siècles. Plus récemment, Clauss 2002 propose le 1<sup>er</sup> siècle av. J.-C. (pour le tombeau-tour n.° 120) et le I<sup>er</sup> s. ap. J.-C. pour les autres tombeaux-tours.

<sup>14</sup> Toll, N. P., *The Necropolis of Doura-Europos, The excavations at Doura-Europos (1935-1936)*, Report IX, Part II, New Haven, 1946.

<sup>15</sup> Clauss, Pascale, "Les tours funéraires du djebel Baghoúz dans l'histoire de la tour funéraire syrienne", *Syria* 79 (2002), pp. 155-194.

<sup>16</sup> Sarre F.; Hertzfeld E. E., *Archäologische Reise im Euphrat- und Tigris-Gebiet*, Reimer, Berlin, 1921, vol. I, fig. 76 et Toll, N. P., *The Necropolis of Doura-Europos, The excavations at Doura-Europos (1935-1936)*, Report IX, Part II, New Haven, 1946, p.146; Lönnqvist, M. *et al.*, "Documenting, Identifying and Protecting a late Roman-Byzantine Fort at Tabus on the Euphrates" in S. Dequal, *Proceedings of the XX International Symposium CIPA*, Torino, pp. 427-432.

<sup>17</sup> Gogräfe, Rüdiger, "Die Grabtürme von Sirrin (Osroëne)", *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 8 (1995), pp. 165-201 et Matilla Seiquer, Gonzalo, "Suburbana. Grandes villas: Sirrín-Serre", *Romanización y Cristianismo en la Siria Mesopotámica – Antig. crist.* (Murcia) XV (1998), pp. 299-306.

Il nous semble aussi que l'on peut proposer quelques hypothèses sur la signification et l'organisation sociales des nécropoles de Zénobia-Halabiya. On peut sans beaucoup de risque affirmer que ces tombeaux collectifs et souvent monumentaux ont servi aux membres d'une élite sociale, ce qui invite à ne pas voir dans le site de Zénobia-Halabiya une simple ville de garnison, mais bien un centre urbain possédant sa propre classe de notables.

Par ailleurs, il nous semble probable que se regroupent autour des tombeaux-tours certaines tombes appartenant aux autres types. Les tombeaux-tours fonctionneraient alors comme des sortes de sêma. Il se pourrait dans ce cas qu'ils aient été édifiés pour les chefs ou les ancêtres de familles et leurs proches, tandis que les générations suivantes ou d'autres membres contemporains moins éminents aient choisi un emplacement proche de la sépulture plus prestigieuse qu'est le tombeau-tour du chef de famille.

Enfin, nous avons remarqué, dans la tombe n° 230 de la nécropole sud, où nous avons retrouvé dans une fosse creusée dans le sol les restes de 30 squelettes, que le piédroit de la porte possédait un dispositif de fermeture de l'intérieur. On en retrouve un similaire pour la tombe voisine n° 228. Dans les tours n° 13 et 15, N. Toll avait également retrouvé un grand nombre de squelettes<sup>18</sup>. Nos hypothèses confirment celles de Jean Lauffray, qui ne connaissait pas les tombes n° 228 ni n° 230: certaines tombes auraient servi de refuge pour la population au cours des différents sièges qu'a subi la ville, lors des conquêtes perses puis arabes.

---

<sup>18</sup> Lauffray, *op. cit.*, T. II (BAH 138), Paris, 1991, p. 213, note 12 et p. 217 à propos des tombeaux-tours 13 et 15 (Toll, *art. cit.*, *Annales de l'Institut Kondakov*, vol. IX (1937), p. 17) et même s'il est vrai que les squelettes auraient tout aussi bien pu être déposés dans les fosses lors d'inhumations secondaires.

## Bibliographie

CLAUSS, Pascale, “Les tours funéraires du djebel Baghoûz dans l’histoire de la tour funéraire syrienne”, *Syria* 79 (2002), pp. 155-194.

GOGGRÄFE, Rüdiger, “Die Grabtürne von Sirrin (Osroëne)”, *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 8 (1995), pp. 165-201.

LAUFFRAY, Jean, *Ḥalabiyya-Zénobia, Place forte du limes oriental et la Haute Mésopotamie au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle, T. I – Les duchés frontaliers de Mésopotamie et les fortifications de Zénobia* (BAH 119), Paris, Geuthner, 1983.

\_\_\_\_\_, *Ḥalabiyya-Zénobia, Place forte du limes oriental et la Haute Mésopotamie au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle, T. II – L’architecture publique, privée et funéraire* (BAH 138), Paris, Geuthner, 1991.

LÖNNQVIST, M. *et al.*, “Documenting, Identifying and Protecting a late Roman-Byzantine Fort at Tabus on the Euphrates” in S. Dequal, *Proceedings of the XX International Symposium CIPA*, Torino, pp. 427-432.

MATILLA SEIQUER, Gonzalo, “Suburbana. Grandes villas: Sirrîn-Serre”, *Romanización y Cristianismo en la Siria Mesopotámica – Antig. crist.* (Murcia) XV (1998), pp. 299-306.

MONTERO FENOLLÓS, Juan Luis; AL-SHBIB, Shaker, (eds.), *La necrópolis byzantina de Tall as Sin (Deir Ezzor, Syria)*, Madrid, Memorias del Proyecto Arqueológico Médio Éufrates Sirio (BPOA 4), 2008.

SARRE, F.; HERTZFELD, E. E., *Archäologische Reise im Euphrat- und Tigris-Gebiet*, Reimer, Berlin, Vol. I et III, 1911, Vol. II et IV, 1921.

TOLL, N. P., “The Necropolis of Halabie-Zenobia” in *Seminarium Kondakovianum: recueil d’études, histoire de l’art, études byzantines, Annales de l’Institut Kondakov*, vol. IX (1937), pp. 11-22.

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Necropolis of Doura-Europos, The excavations at Doura-Europos (1935-1936)*, Report IX, Part II, New Haven, 1946.

WILL, Ernest, “La tour funéraire de Palmyre” et “La tour funéraire de la Syrie et les monuments apparentés”, *Syria* 26 (1949), pp. 87-116 et pp. 258-312.

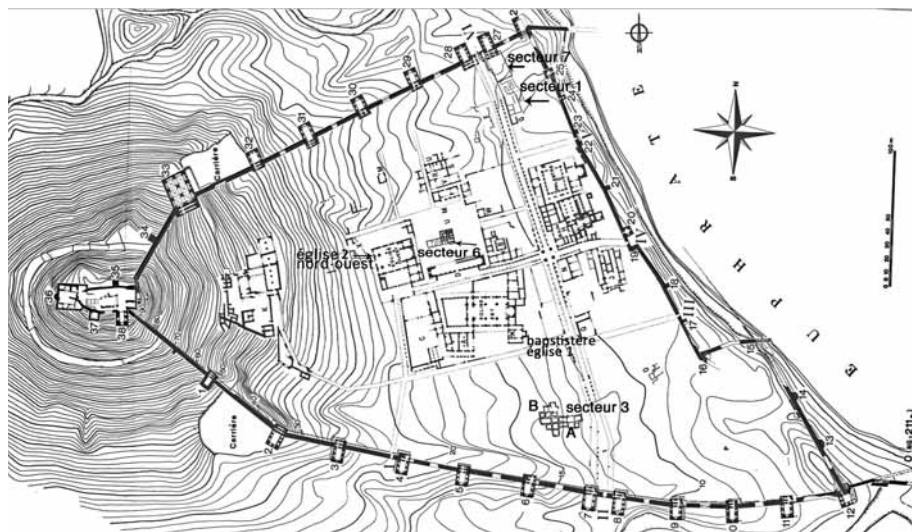


Fig. 1. Emplacements des secteurs étudiés depuis 2006 sur le plan de Lauffray II, pl.LIX.  
S. Blétry.

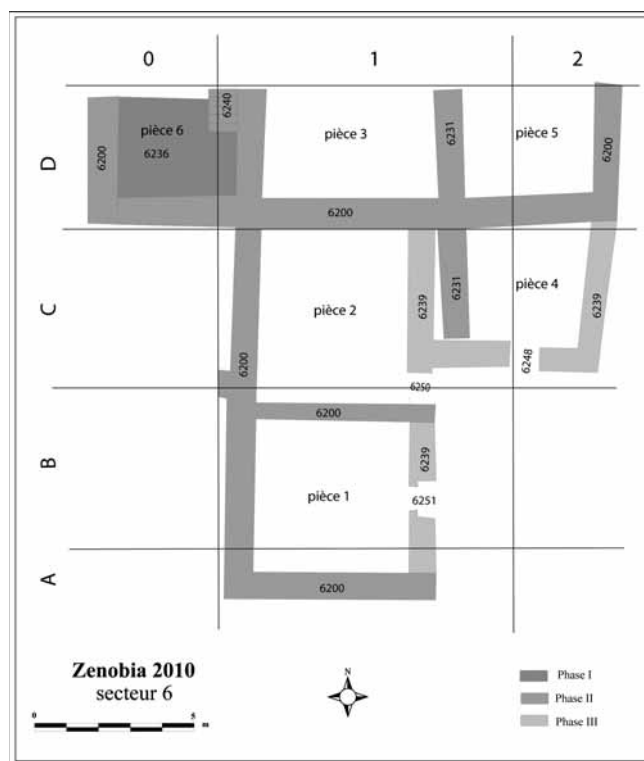


Fig. 2. Plan du secteur 6 (zone du forum). M. al Besso et F. Ayash.

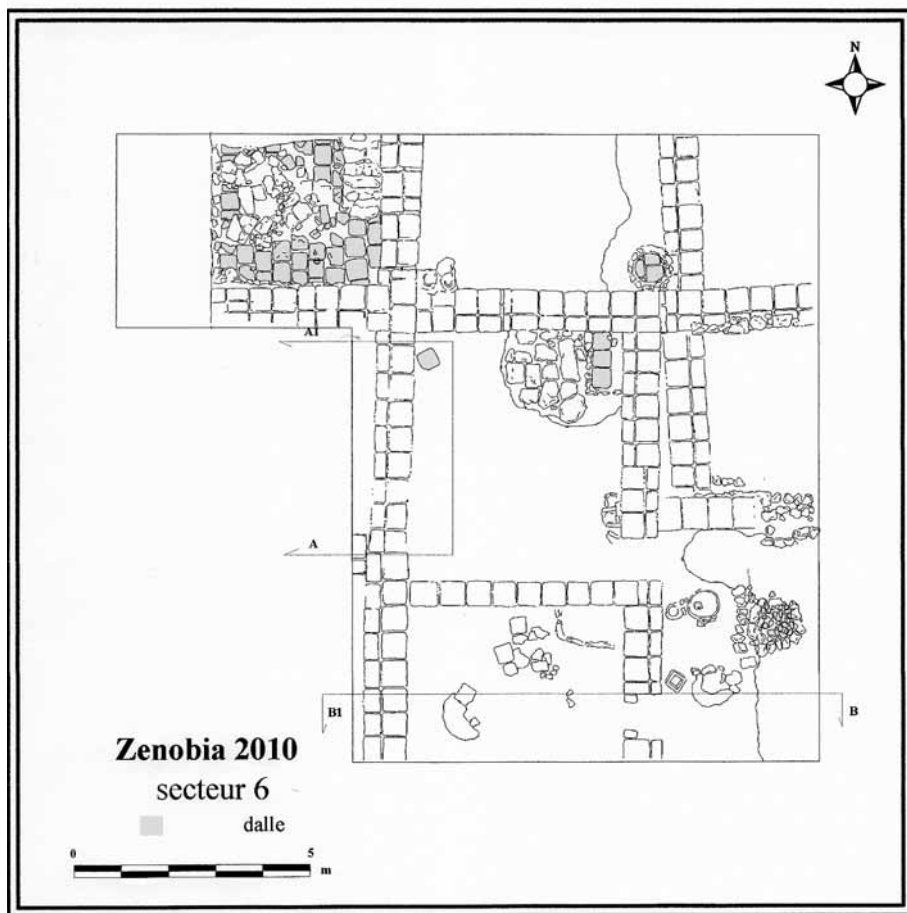


Fig. 3. Relevé du secteur 6 (zone du forum). M. al Besso et F. Ayash.



Fig. 4. Relevé du secteur 7 (porte nord). S. es Safi.

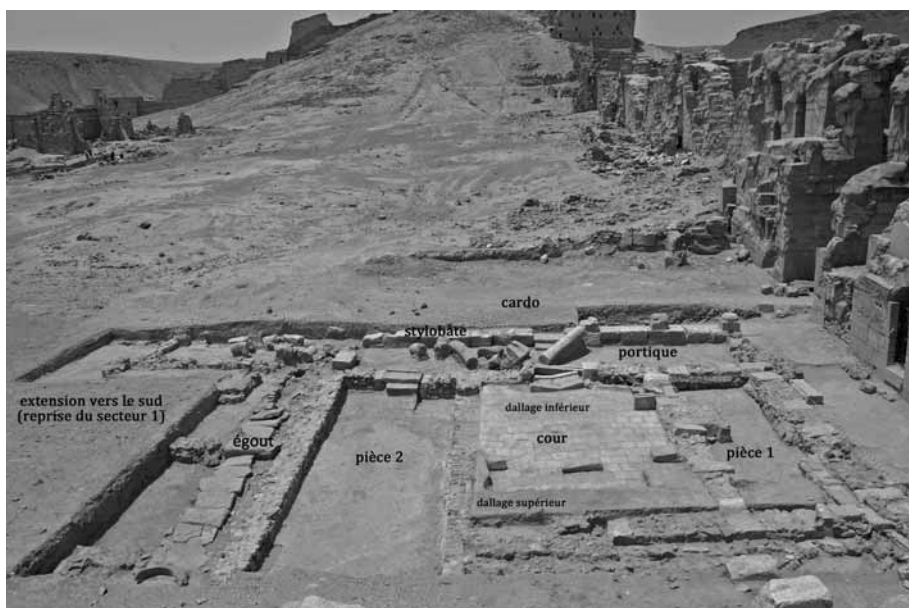


Fig. 5. Vue du secteur 7 depuis l'est. Cliché S. Blétry.

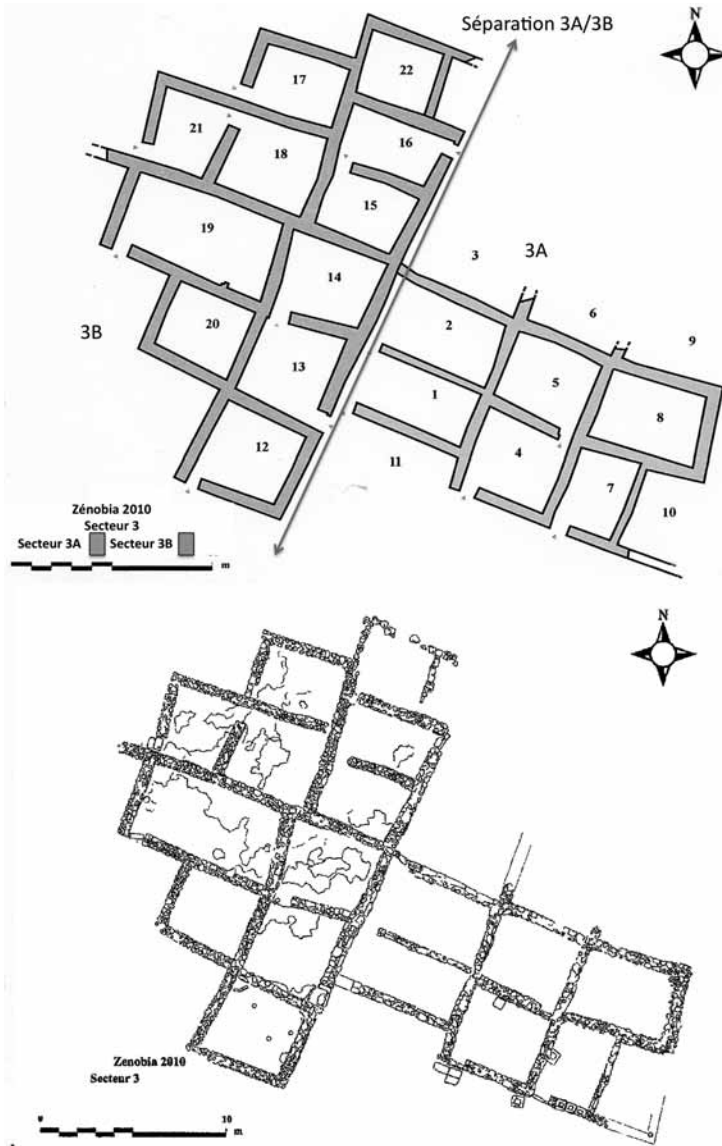


Fig. 6. Plans du secteur 3 (îlot d'habitat domestique).





Fig. 7. Carte générale des nécropoles. S. Blétry.

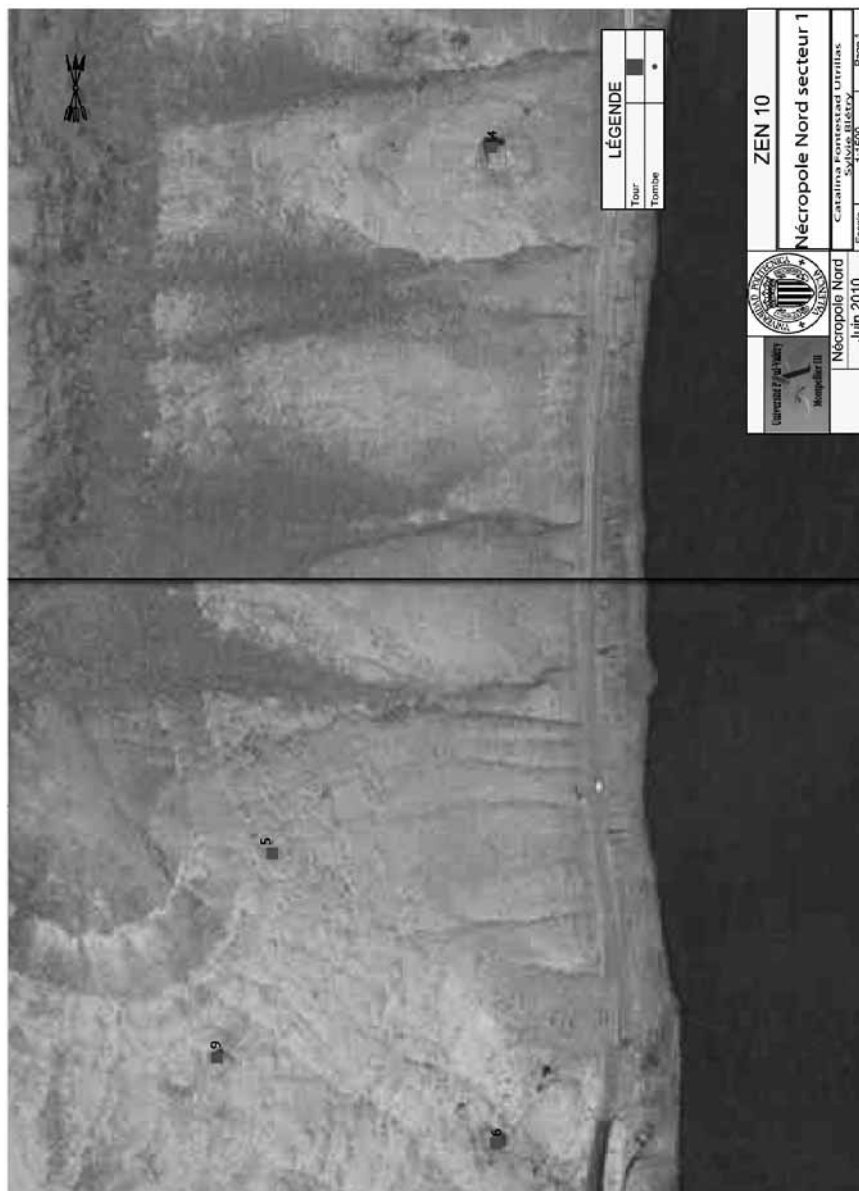


Fig. 8. Carte du secteur 1 de la nécropole nord. S. Blétry.



Fig. 9. Carte du secteur 2 de la nécropole nord. S. Blétry.

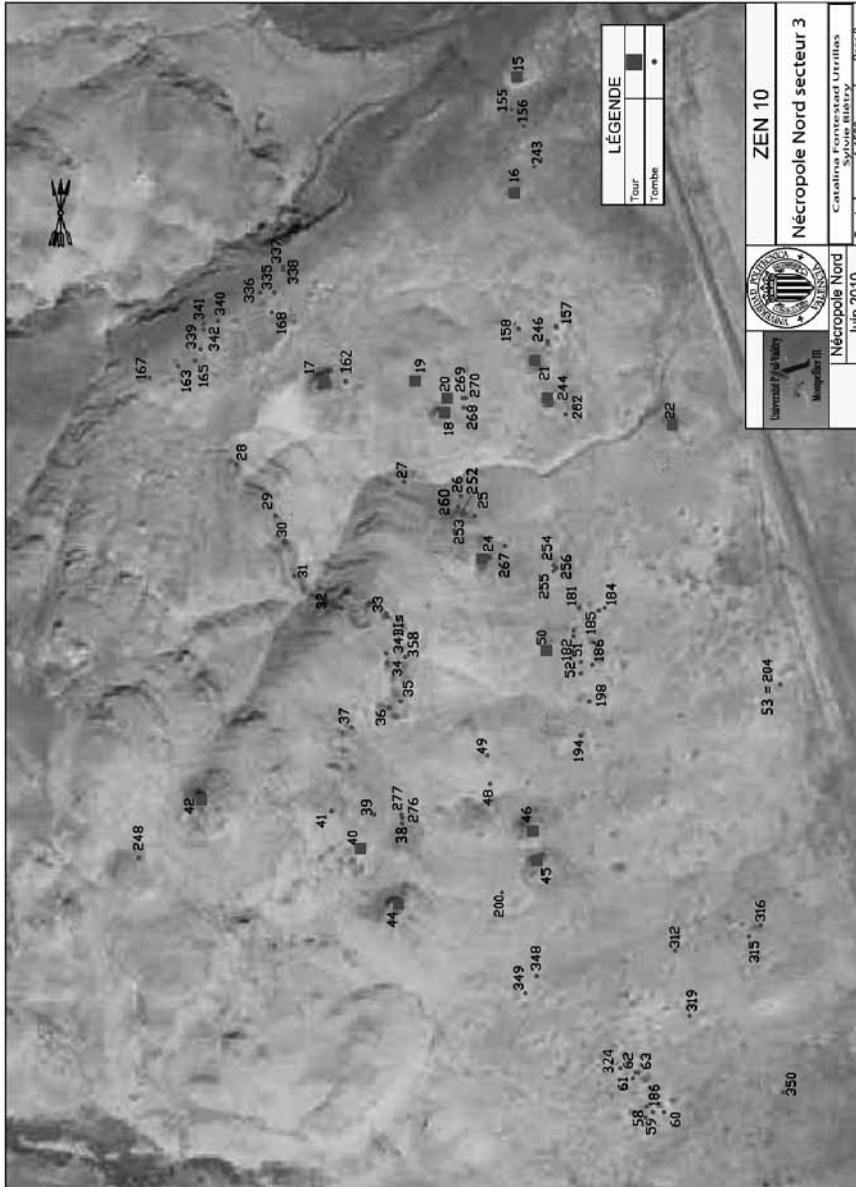


Fig. 10. Carte du secteur 3 de la nécropole nord. S. Blétry.

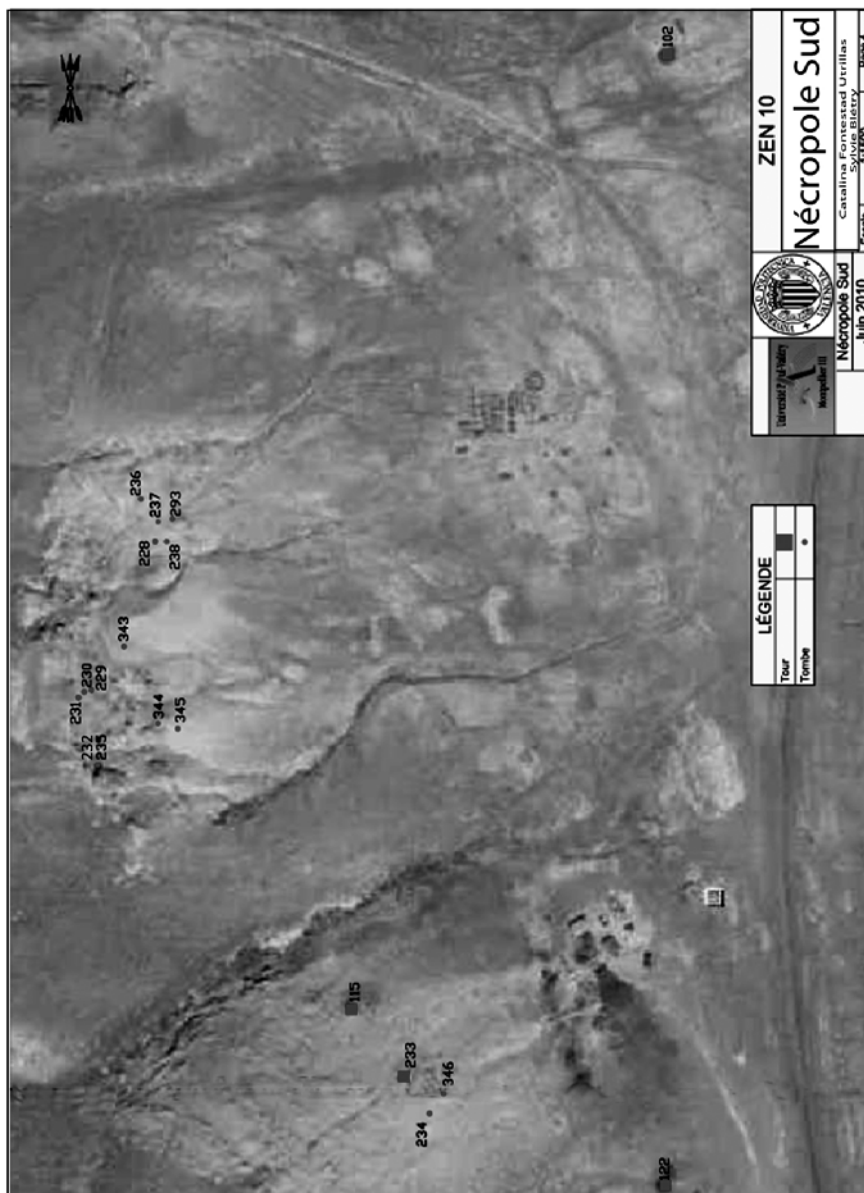
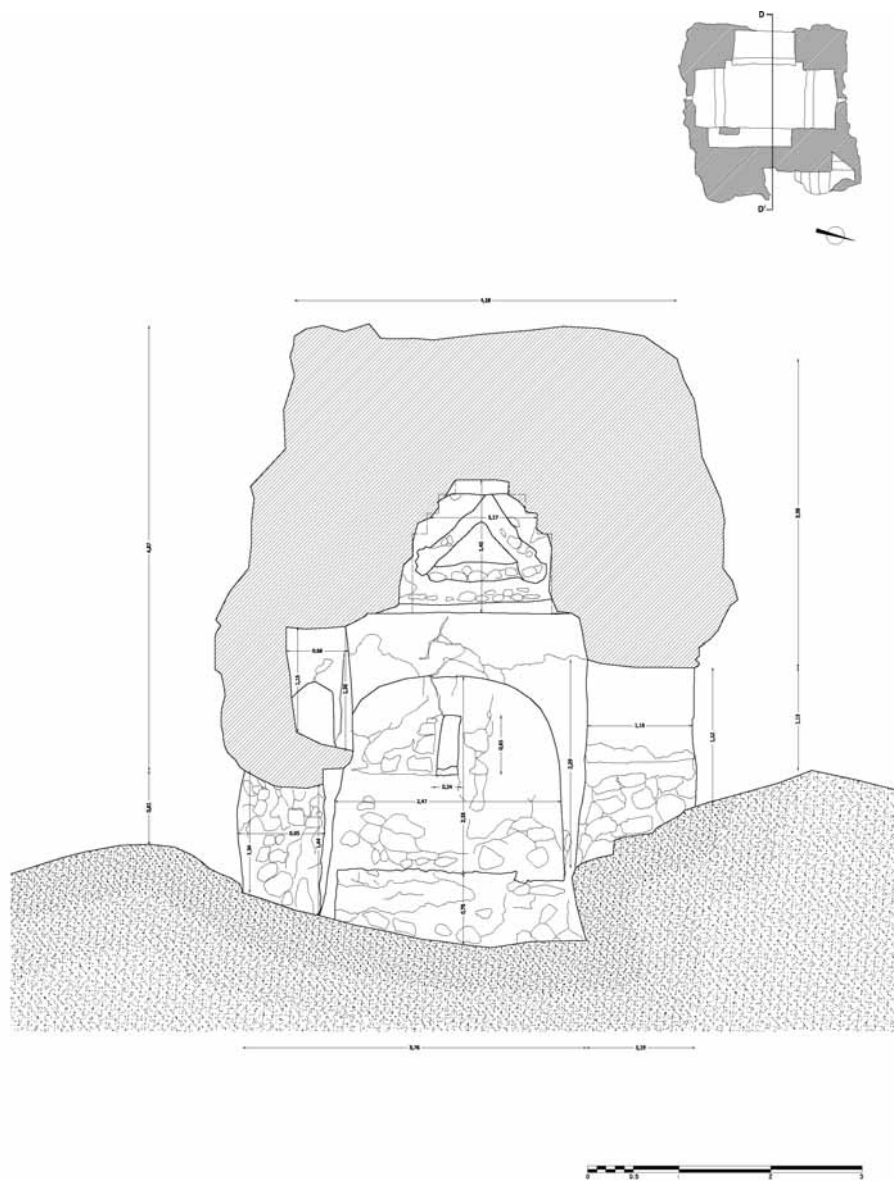


Fig. 11. Carte de la nécropole sud. S. Blétry.



RELEVÉ TOMBE N° 07  
NECROPOLE NORD, HALABIYEH/ZENOBIA, SYRIE, JUIN 2010

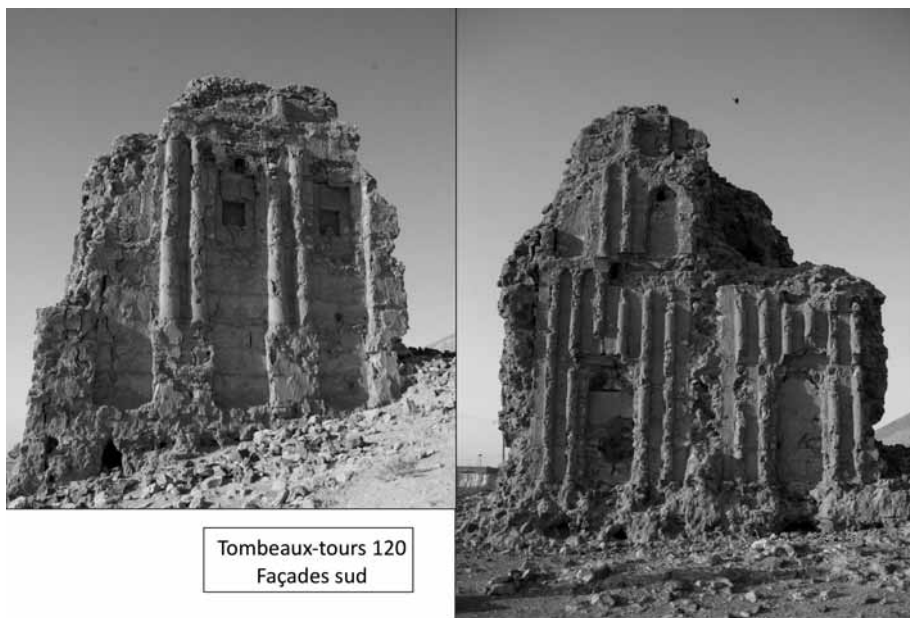
RELEVÉS ARCHITECTURAUX SOUS LA DIRECTION DE: CAMILA MILETO Y FERNANDO VEGAS ARQUITECTOS  
REALISÉ PAR: LOURDES GARCÍA, SALVADOR TOMÁS

06.4  
cm + m  
1:50

Fig. 12 Coupe du tombeau-tour 7.



Fig. 13. Façade nord du tombeau tour 17.



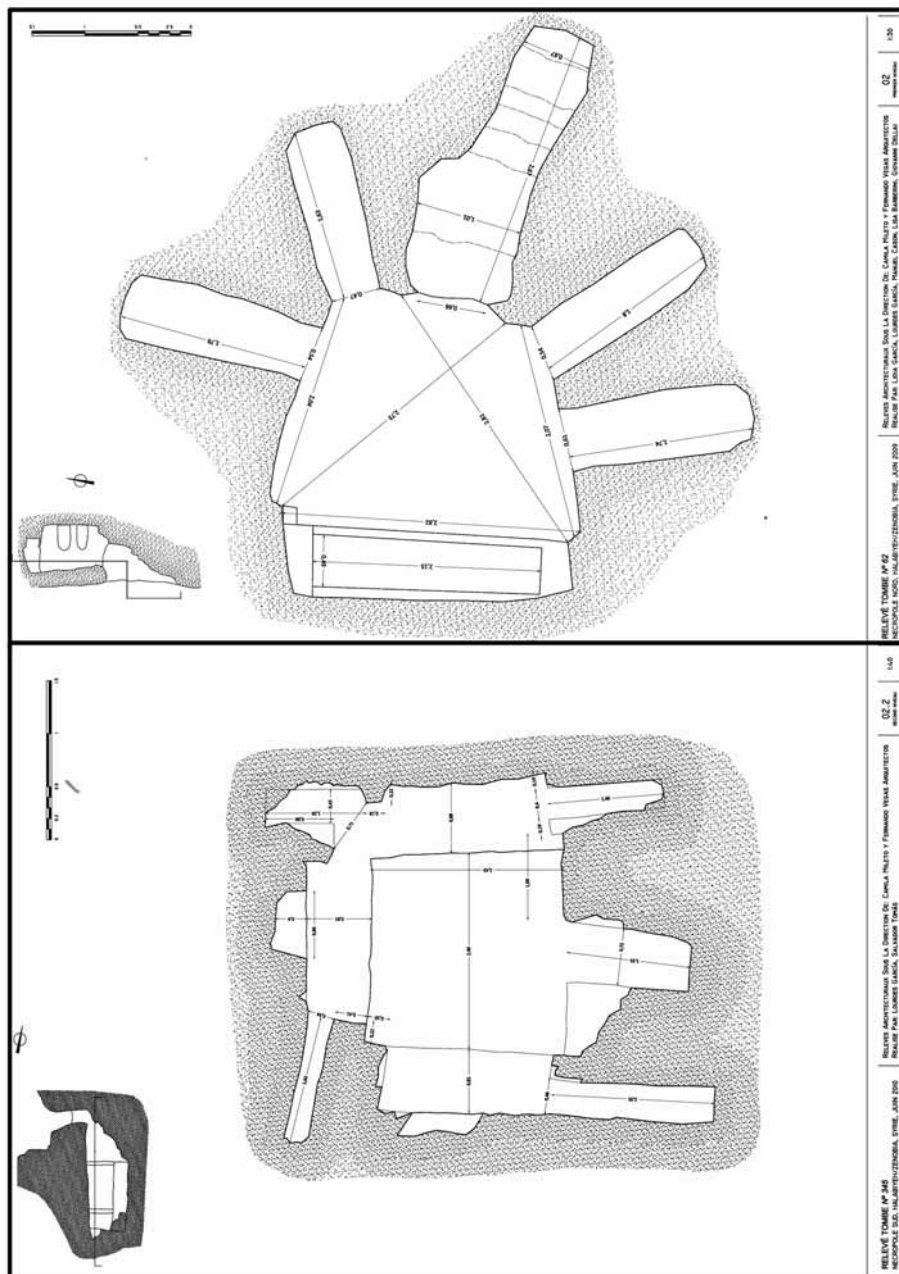
Tombeaux-tours 120  
Façades sud

Fig. 14. Façades des tombeaux-tours 4 et 120.



Fig. 15. Façade nord du tombeau-tour 45.





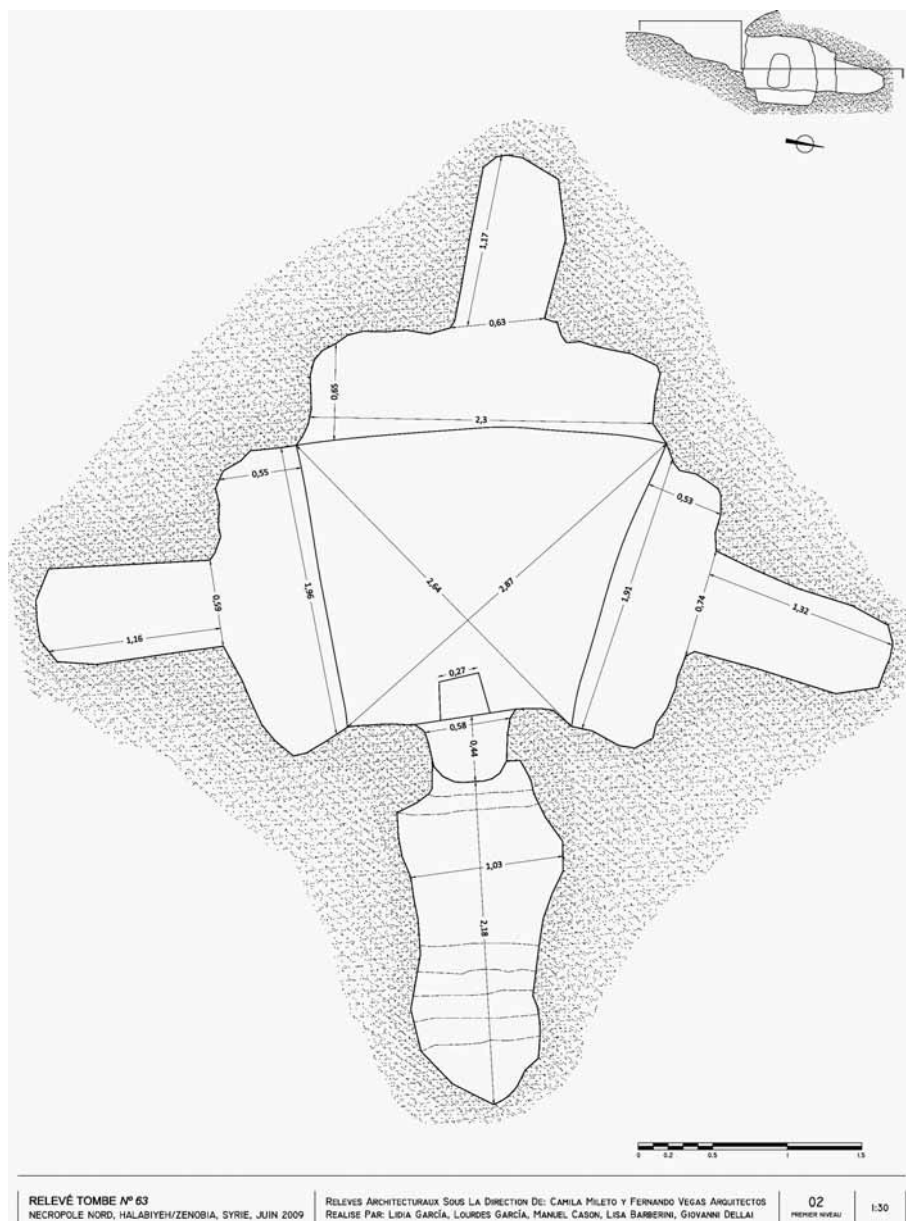


Fig. 17. Plan de l'hypogée 63.

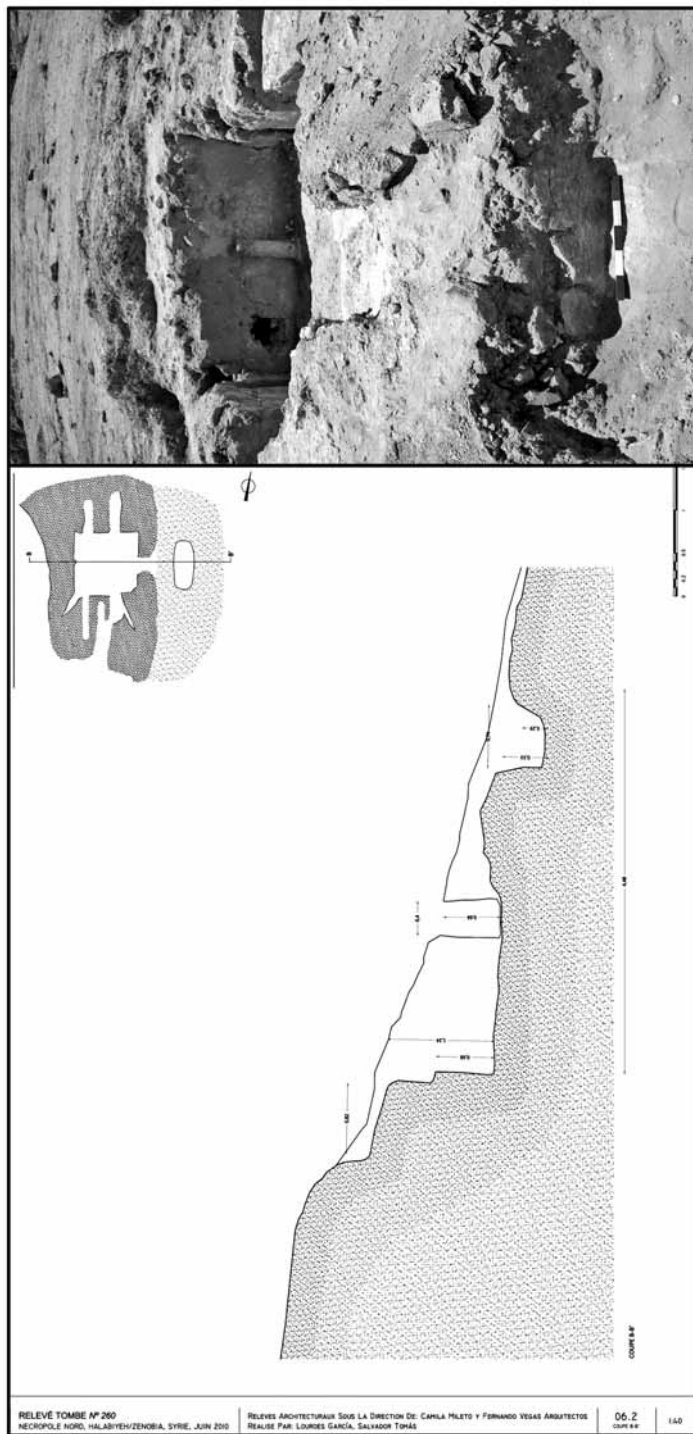


Fig. 18. Coupe et vue de la tombe 260.

# **The Citadel of Zalabiyeh on the Euphrates: placing the site in its historical context and a summary of the first archaeological field season (2010)**

Emma Loosley  
University of Manchester

The citadel of Zalabiyeh is perched on a cliff on the eastern bank of the Syrian Euphrates downstream of its twin foundation Halabiyeh. Halabiyeh (also known as Zenobia) is a much more significant foundation whose walls encircled a large town, whereas Zalabiyeh was a much smaller site that only ever appears to have supported a military garrison and the support staff necessary for the functioning of a Romano-Byzantine (and later an Umayyad) frontier fort. This diminutive size and more remote location on the eastern bank of the river could have been contributory factors to the literary confusion over the origins of the site. Zalabiyeh appears to have been first mentioned by Isidore of Charax in his first century CE/BCE work on the Roman-Parthian stations along the trade route between Antioch and India. Isidore refers to a “Royal Palace” that has in the past been associated with Zalabiyeh, but there has thus far (see below) been no evidence of pre-Byzantine occupation at the site. However this link to an imperial foundation does explain what seems to be one of the oldest names attached to the site: Basileia. Basileia has also been used in conjunction with the name Annoucas and both seem to have been applied to the cliff top now known as Zalabiyeh. If we accept this attribution then we can refer to Procopius for information on the building of the fortress:

«Beyond Circesium is an ancient fort, Annoucas by name, whose wall, which he found a ruin, the Emperor Justinian rebuilt in such magnificent style that thereafter it took second place in point of strength to no single one of those most notable cities.»

(Procopius, *Buildings* II. vi 12)

Traditionally the strategic location of this fortress has been attributed to the fact that Halabiyeh and Zalabiyeh were twin buttresses on the Romano-Byzantine frontier against the Sassanian Empire and the Euphrates acted as a monumental barrier between the two empires, but the clear continuation of the Roman *limes* east of the river and a series of Romano-Byzantine settlements over into Mesopotamia suggest that the situation was not as clearly defined as previously assumed. This area is becoming increasingly important to the growing field of Frontier Studies and Elizabeth Key Fowden's work on the cult of St. Sergius (Fowden, p. 133) suggests that often the defensive strengths of Zalabiyeh led to the fortress being bypassed altogether by Persian forces.

Procopius also describes the Iranian invasion led by Azarethes, which avoided the fortified northern route and, on the Lakhmid al-Mundhir's advice, cut across Syria-Mesopotamia further south, thereby catching the Roman forces by surprise. Belisarius was stationed in Mesopotamia, and before he was informed of their presence in Roman territory, the Iranians with their Arab (sic) allies were camped at Gaboulon, east of Chalcis. Again, in 540, Khusrau I invaded Syria, travelling from Circesium to Zenobia/Halabiya and Sura, and thence to Rusafa.

Later, Procopius describes how Khusrau I took the same route in 542, keeping the Euphrates on his right, and then immediately relates the story of Khusrau's siege of Rusafa. Procopius is not the only source for this use of the steppe routes. John of Epiphania records that in 573 the Iranian general Adarmaanes crossed through the desert from

Ambar, south of Circesium, with Iranian and nomad Arab forces. And Theophylact records that Adarmaanes made a surprise invasion through the steppe northwestward from Cirecsium as far as Antioch, taking Apamea on his way home (Fowden, 1999, p. 63).

This evidence suggests that to some extent the formidable strategic advantages offered by the high promontory above the river where Zalabiyeh was sited meant that hostile forces appear to have largely by-passed the site rather than attempt to engage the garrison in battle. This fact would seem at first sight seem to be supported by the standing archaeological evidence that suggests the natural erosion processes caused by the changing meander of the Euphrates, earth tremors and the natural weathering caused by wind and rain, rather than human intervention, have caused the decay of the citadel walls.



Figure 1: The northern extremity of the citadel wall looking south. Notice the weathering on the upper region compared with the comparatively good preservation of the more recently exposed area of wall (Joshua Bryant).

## **A brief survey of the standing architecture at Zalabiyeh**

The walls are in fact the only standing features still extant at the site and although they can be seen from the west bank of the Euphrates it is only on the approach from the east that the full extent of the surviving architecture can be appreciated. As mentioned above, Zalabiyeh has been a victim of the changing geography of the region. The cliff on which the citadel stands has an upper stratum of basalt above a gypsum level, which means that the base of the cliff has dissolved and collapsed as the Euphrates has cut eastwards over the centuries. This has ultimately led to the complete loss of the western and northern walls of the citadel and curtailed both the eastern and southern walls. As the site has never been excavated or architecturally surveyed before, it is impossible to say with any certainty how much has been lost in this manner. The only tangible measure of deterioration is comparing photographs taken by Gertrude Bell in 1905 with those taken more recently in order to evaluate how swiftly the changes have occurred.



Figure 2: View of the southern walls of Zalabiyeh facing south within the citadel, 1905  
(Image courtesy of the Gertrude Bell Archive, University of Newcastle).



Figure 3: The same view in April 2010 (Emma Loosley).

By comparing these two images it can be seen that the loss over one hundred years is only in the region of one or two metres, but unfortunately Bell did not take any similar views to the north of the site and so it is not possible to judge whether or not the rate of erosion at the north end equates to that of the south. One thing we can verify from Bell's images is that the main eastern gateway to the complex and the walls to either side of it have changed little in the intervening period. All this goes to illustrate that, from survey alone, the site appears to have suffered the majority of its depredations some centuries ago and that the majority of wear and tear has been caused by natural, rather than human, factors. However one anomaly thrown up by the surface survey was the total absence of standing architecture within the walls of the fortress. Whilst the tops of substantial basalt walls could be discerned during preliminary field walking, there were no buildings still above ground. The most likely explanation for this seems to be the fact that the location of the site at the meeting of the fertile river plain and the steppe on the higher ground means that the site is often enveloped in



dust storms and during excavations it became apparent that the sandy topsoil is always in movement and therefore the buildings had been buried in antiquity.

One element of the site that suggests that connecting Zalabiyeh with an earlier foundation is erroneous is the fact that the walls contain no evidence of *spolia*. The construction of the perimeter walls consists of a basalt rubble and concrete core faced on either side with well-dressed blocks of gypsum masonry. As figure 1 demonstrates, over time the two facing layers have eroded out from the central core and de-stabilised the wall further. Elsewhere in Syria the drums of Roman columns have been used to tie Byzantine or later walls built in this manner together. The general lack of *spolia* and in particular the absence of Roman material tying the walls suggests strongly from the outset that there was no Greco-Roman monument on the site before the construction of the current fortress.

### **The first season of excavation**

The fact that this is a salvage mission and the security constraints placed on the team by the Syrian authorities mean that it has not been possible to undertake field-walking and test trenches outside the perimeter of the citadel walls. Therefore from the start the major objective has been to record as much of the material that remains *in situ* as possible before the construction of a dam downstream accelerates the erosion of the cliff and ultimately destroys Zalabiyeh. To this end a strategy of widespread excavation has been employed with the rationale that it is extremely unlikely that a future mission will work at the site and that this will probably be the only academic study of this monument.

The initial plan to explore the region inside the fortress gates in order to try and ascertain when the two side arches on either side of the central gate were closed was abandoned after a team of geologists working in the region drilled a large hole in the region to a depth in

excess of 5 metres, thereby rendering that area of the site unsafe. All trenches were also kept at a distance of several metres from the edge of the cliff as it is clear that the site frequently experiences landslips. The final consideration was whether to dig in the vicinity of areas that had been disturbed by looters or to include these areas of disruption within our trenches. In the end we started away from the disrupted areas, but trench 2 ultimately spread into one of these damaged regions.

In the event three trenches were opened, one to the north and two to the more southerly end of the site and the finds were remarkably similar across all three locations. The trenches all yielded evidence of barracks accommodation set in a rough grid pattern and consisting of square or slightly rectangular terraced rooms with doors opening onto straight alleys running roughly east-west across the fortress. The walls were all several courses wide and constructed, like the core of the fortress walls, with small basalt boulders. There was evidence in various locations of fine gypsum plaster on the floors and a few fragments (one painted) suggest that the walls were also plastered. In the alleys there was a street covering of rough gypsum gravel that showed evidence of being ground down into a coarse plaster and in places smoothly finished pieces of gypsum had been used as drains, thresholds or paving slabs. All building materials were therefore from the region with the exception of the wooden beams that supported the tiled roofs of these chambers, which had been presumably floated down the Euphrates from what was then the heavily wooded region of the Tur 'Abdin in contemporary Turkey.

Two of the three trenches possessed ovens (*tannour*) and trench 2 yielded three in relatively close proximity along with significant quantities of animal and chicken bones. This suggests that each of these chambers or perhaps every other chamber had the means to prepare food for the inhabitants of the dwelling, which at this stage we are assuming is barracks accommodation. Next season it is hoped that the main administrative buildings of the site will be discovered and that we may be able to understand the distinctions (if any) between barracks accommodation and areas utilized by support staff.

The mystery of why the site was abandoned was partially solved within ten days of the start of excavation. In the same context across the site there was widespread evidence of scorch marks and large pieces of carbon were discovered, often in conjunction with substantial pieces of burnt tile. A number of samples of carbon have been taken and will be sent for C14 dating in the future, but at present it can be confirmed that no objects from later than the Umayyad period have been discovered at the site giving us a strong indication that this is when the site was destroyed. What remains a mystery is the cause of the fire. Whether or not the fortress was attacked, deliberately fired as a defensive measure or simply burnt down by accident is unsure. So far the notable lack of human remains suggest that it is unlikely that the garrison perished in the fire.

With the exception of one Byzantine coin no finds have yet provided us with clear dating for the occupation of Zalabiyeh, but as mentioned above all ceramics, glass and metal objects fall squarely within the Byzantine-Umayyad period and point to a window of occupation spanning only approximately 250 years at the most. This hypothesis will be verified with the digging of test trenches next season to study definitively whether or not there was any Roman (or earlier) building at the site.



Figure 4: Detail of trench 2 showing a finely plastered threshold over a stone doorstep in the foreground and a piece of a gypsum drain at the rear. Note the large area of scorching in the centre (Emma Loosley).

## **Conclusion**

After an excellent start the plan is to continue expanding the three trenches opened in 2010 and record the standing architecture in our second season. We will also commence analysis of the finds and begin to build up a more detailed picture of the inhabitants' interaction with other settlements. The discovery of fragments of Cypriot and North African sigillata ware in 2010 suggests that there were some residents at Zalabiyeh who were either wealthy enough to afford expensive imported wares or who originated in provinces far from the Roman frontier. There was also an unexpectedly wide variation in the types of glassware discovered and this, in conjunction with the discovery of an unusual obsidian core will also be a focus of our next season.

Finally it is hoped that it will prove possible to locate some of the administrative buildings or the garrison church, but at this stage it

is still impossible to discern how much of the fortress now lies at the bottom of the Euphrates.

### **Acknowledgements**

The author would like to thank the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) and in particular to the Director of Excavations, Dr Michel Al-Maqdissi. Obviously many thanks must go to the head of the Syrian side of the British-Syrian mission, Mr. Yaarob Abdullah and to Dr. Jolene Debert of the University of Manchester and Joshua Bryant's assistance with photography was invaluable.

Finally this work would not have taken place without the financial assistance of the British Academy and an extremely generous bursary from the Osmane Aïdi Foundation, Damascus.

### **Bibliography**

BELL, Gertrude, *Amurath to Amurath: A Journey along the Banks of the Euphrates*, Gorgias Press, New Jersey, 2004.

ISIDORE OF CHARAX (trans. Schoff, Wilfred H.), *Parthian Stations*, Commercial Museum of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, 1914.

FOWDEN, Elizabeth Key, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius Between Rome and Iran*, University of California Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1999.

LAUFFRAY, J., *Halabiyya-Zenobia, place forte du limes orientale et la haute-mésopotamie au VIe siècle*, Paul Geuthner, Paris, 1983.

PROCOPIUS (trans. Dewing, H.B.), *Buildings*, Harvard, Cambridge, Mass., 1924.

# **The Works of the Syrian Mission in the Byzantine City (Tell Al Kasra) in Five Seasons (2006–2010)**

Yaarob Abdullah  
DGAM Deir ez-Zor

According to the works of the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums represented by the Directorate of Antiquities in Deir ez-Zor, and to the presented studies, it was consented in 2006 to establish a Syrian expedition to excavate in the archeological site in Tell al-Kasra.<sup>1</sup>

## **Location, denomination and history**

Tell al-Kasra is situated at the left bank of the Euphrates, to the north-west of Deir ez-Zor at about 40 km from the city (Figure 1). The al-Kasra area enjoys an important and unique locale as a very fast cross point of real desert-environment conditions. Eastward and south-eastward, there are flat areas with no definite boundaries; they make routes for Bedouins and their herds always seeking for grass and water. The historical record testifies that settlement in that region was very rare (Figure 2).

---

<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank Dr. Michel Maqdissi (Director of Excavation and Archeological Studies in the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums), Dr. Bassam Jamous (General Director in the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums in Syria), and Mr. Ahmad Haj Salih (Head of the Directorate of Antiquities in Deir ez-Zor) for their support to make successful of the project. Our special thanks to the researchers Mr. Shakir al-Shbib, to Dr. Justine Gaborit and her husband Christophe Benech, to Al-Jazeera Private University in Deir ez-Zor, represented by Dr. Ahmad Atia (Head of Architecture Section), to Dr. Elias Bakarji (Lab Director in Syrian Atomic Energy Organization), and to the members of the Syrian Archeological Team: Mr. Mustafa Kaddour (Directorate of Antiquities in Idleb), Eng. Nashwa Kaddour and Eng. Nadia al-Khalaf.

The ancient name of the site is still unknown, but A. Poidebard mentioned it by the name *Allan*. We hope that current researches would provide new information about the site's ancient name. The size of the city is 27 hectares, and the wall and civil construction of the site make us believe that it may be an ancient *polis*. It is possible that Tell al-Kasra acquired some importance due to the policies of Emperor Justinian, who shouldered the military restructuring and organization of the region and lending a major importance to the fortification of cities in Mesopotamia. Hence, the site must have included in its historical content many changes starting from the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE up to the Islamic Period.

### **Research history in the site**

The site was first discovered by the British Mission led by Chesney in 1849 in order to study the locales situated by the Euphrates. It was mentioned by him under the name *al-Humr Wall*.<sup>2</sup>

E. Sachau also surveyed and studied the site in 1879<sup>3</sup>. Mrs. Gertrude Bell<sup>4</sup> photographed the site as well and mentioned it as *Um Regaba*. During the French Mandate on Syria, the site was surveyed by A. Poidebard.<sup>5</sup>

The results that we reached during four excavation seasons testify the existence of a Byzantine settlement, whose importance increased in the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE, and witnessed a new architectural renaissance in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, in the light of the study of the two burials discovered in the North-West part of the site. The settlement in the city continued up to the Islamic times.

---

<sup>2</sup> Chesney, *Expedition for the survey of the Rivers Euphrates and Tigris*, New York, 1850, iv: «extensive mounds apparently the walls of an ancient city».

<sup>3</sup> Sachau, E., *Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien*, Leipzig, 1883, p. 260.

<sup>4</sup> Bell, G. L., *Amurath to Amurath. A Journey along the Banks of the Euphrates*, Piscataway, 2004, p. 70.

<sup>5</sup> Poidebard, A., *La trace de Rome dans le désert de Syrie. Le limes de Trajan a la conquête arabe, recherches aériennes (1925-1934)*, Paris, 1934, pl. XXXV, 1, al-Kasra.

## **Site description**

The *tell* is surrounded by a mud brick wall, which is evident in three sides but destroyed in the north-west side. The western one-third of the site was exposed to rainwater flow, as can be observed in the net of deep cracks sloping to meet the river plain, some 20 meters lower than the *tell*'s surface (Figure 3-A). On the *tell*'s surface, there is a new cemetery situated in its western part (Figure 3-B).

**1. The North wall** is about 500 meters long and 1.50 meters high on its entirety. It consists of two walls (A–B) on both sides of the north-western corner; their extension is clear in the photograph taken in 1930.

A. The Eastern Wall extends straightly at about 350 meters. It is destroyed near the north-western corner because of a modern asphalt road that passes downwards the plain below the hill. This destruction contributed to the acknowledgment of the construction of the *tell* later on. There are some troughs within this wall used as paths by commoners; they may be considered as ancient gates of the city.

B. The Western Wall extends at about 160 meters. This wall is complete with simple heights composed of one or two courses of mud built directly on the level of the site. Within the western side, bricks are completely unrecognizable. This wall slightly curves north-westwards at 70 meters from the valley's end; it may have been a tower.

**2. The East Wall** is about 250 meters long. A number of small *tells* can be noted, showing the localization of towers.

**3. The South Wall** also comprises two walls; the western wall extends south-westwards at about 250 meters long, until the corner



where the wall changes direction. It is evident that, despite river-erosion, the corner is protected by a rectangular tower.

#### **4. The West Wall is completely destroyed.<sup>6</sup>**

While discussing Tell al-Kasra, it is important to mention its similarities with Tell al-Sin<sup>7</sup>: in both sites, the fortifications present a pentagonal shape and attest occupation during the same period. This was revealed by the findings of the excavation works carried out by the joint Spanish-Syrian expedition in Tell al-Sin<sup>8</sup>. It showed the existence of a square-shaped mud brick wall, quite similar to that of Tell al-Kasra; it also exposed constructions of rectangular mud brick as those discovered in the constructions to the south of the northern gate. These evidences make us postulate that both sites were constructed by the same architect who followed the same design and the same construction method for both cities.

Thus, Tell al-Kasra is a site fortified by a wall of mud-bricks which is clearly evident in the topography of the *tell*. This defense wall configures a pentagonal city, supported by a front defense-line composed of a ditch excavated in the natural rocks, extending paralleled to the walls; this ditch can be recognized on the surface especially with old aerial photographs. The western part of these walls is missing, but the rest of the walls in the northern, north-eastern and eastern sides are well preserved. Topographical study allowed us to guess of the existence of three gates – one in each course of the fortification wall.

---

<sup>6</sup> Gaborit, J., *La géographie historique du Moyen-Euphrate de la conquête d'Alexandre à l'Islam*, Paris, 2007, site N F13.

<sup>7</sup> Montero Fenollós, J. L.; Shbib, S., "La mission archéologique syro-espagnole au Moyen Euphrate. Première campagne à Tall as-Sin (Deir er-Zor, Syrie)", *Orient-Express*, 2006/1, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Tell Al-Sin is situated to the north-east of Deir ez-Zor where Mr. Shakir Shbib (Director of the Syrian part in the joint Spanish-Syrian Mission) worked between 2005 and 2007.

## **The Most Important Discoveries**

**1. The Fortification's Gate:** A main gate was discovered in the North Wall through **probe /C/** in the season of 2006, where we found its basic stone-components and some iron pieces which affirmed that the site's gate was composed of two iron-made parts (Figure 4).

**2. The burials of Sector E:** Burial E2 was discovered in the 2008 season. This tomb is considered to be an important discovery regarding the architectural typology and the materials found inside (Figure 5).

### **Description of the Burial:**

- The burial has a quadrate shape with a total area of 20,75 m<sup>2</sup> and a perimeter of 18,23 m. It has an also quadrate internal yard (main chamber) with an area of 6,53 m<sup>2</sup> and a perimeter of 9,83 m;
- The gate of the tomb is 55 cm width and allows ascending from the floor of the internal yard of the burial;
- The gate is followed directly inward by a threshold;
- Next follows a wide threshold;
- On the sides of the threshold there are two embrasures;
- Next to this threshold, there is the internal room of the tomb which contains three *arcosolia* distributed in U shape. The western and northern *arcosolia* are within the construction mass of the walls and covered by an arch. They are plastered with a thin layer of gypsum (*djuss*). The third *arcosolium* is facing the gate. The Burial E2 is considered unique in the area, for its masonry and typology differ from the burials in Tell al-

Sin. In Tell al-Kasra the walls of this tomb are built of dipped-stones (basalt + brown gypsum) and plastered with a layer of white gypsum and there has no staircase (*dromos*) leading to the tomb's gate. Nevertheless, we notice a wall of mud-bricks surrounding the burial's perimeter with an opening over the gate's closing-stone. In addition, two fragments of a statue of a human figurine in gypsum were found (Figure 6), along with a statue-base.

### 3. The *hammam* (Bathroom) and the Mosaic Tableau:

During the season of 2009 in Tell al-Kasra, the national expedition discovered in the north-western area of the *tell* an architectural building identified as a bath or a *hammam*. There, the floor of the *frigidarium* presented a mosaic main pavement of 44.82 m<sup>2</sup>. A part of the panel measuring 11.88 m<sup>2</sup> is missing. The main panel is surrounded with a bordure of colored braiding (representing the water currents of the Euphrates) and animal scenes (fish + a duck + geometrical shapes)<sup>9</sup>. The main panel depicts several animals: the animals selected to be represented in this mosaic are very rare, and some, like the pony or the elephant, seem exceptional in the Byzantine artistic representation repertory known in Syria (Figure 7). This composition of the central scene is divided into two sections:

1. Depicting the pony in front of a predatory animal (hyena) taking the onslaught position; below is figured a water-bird (crane). Behind the pony appears a part of the elephant head with its trunk and tusks, while the rest is unfortunately destroyed. The depiction of the pony indicates its deep-rootedness in the Middle Euphrates region.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Balty, J., *Mosaïques Antiques de Syrie*, Bruxelles, 1977, p. 137.

<sup>10</sup> Zouhdi, B., *L'art des chefs-d'oeuvres en République arabe syrienne dans le Guide officiel. XXIIème Foire internationale de Damas*, Damas, 1975, pp. 21-32 (in Arabic).

2. Top wards of the first section to the south-west of the tableau, is represented a mythical animal created by the Byzantine artist: a body of a winged predatory animal with a beak of a bird of prey slaughtering a domestic animal with a bleeding neck. Beside the domestic animal, there is a plant facing a part of a donkey's head with its front legs, while the rest is destroyed. This tableau is considered a breakthrough in the central Euphrates region of Syria.

In the fifth season, in 2010, the works of the expedition concentrated on sector X, on squares X1, X2, X3; dust partitions between squares were removed and perseverant cleaning was done to expose complete architectural structures: consequently, a *hammam* with three halls (*caldarium–frigidarium–apodyterium*) in addition to its appendices (hypocaust)<sup>11</sup> with an area of 334.40 m<sup>2</sup>. It takes the shape of rectangle (North–South) and is built of different size bricks (Figure 8). It is similar in design to the *hammam* discovered in Halabiya (Zenobia).<sup>12</sup>

**Cold Hall (Outer Section):** It is situated in the south side of the *hammam*. Its walls are built of bricks, with some traces of white gypsum-plastered and white marble-covered bench for the *hammam*'s frequent clients to sit on. In the middle of the north wall there is a door to the middle section.

**Snuggery (Middle Section):** From a door in the middle of the north wall, the cold hall leads to a square-shaped hall with a brick-paved and gypsum plastered floor. In the west side appears a half-circular water reservoir of which the interior is covered with a thin layer; below, there is a brick sluice to the other halls. At its eastern side, there is a

---

<sup>11</sup> Fournet, T; Redon, B. (éds.), *Le Bain Collectif en Egypt, Origine, evolution et Actualité. Actes du Colloque Balnéorient d'Alexandrie, Déc. 2006*, Le Caire, 2009, p. 113-137.

<sup>12</sup> Fournet, T., "The ancient Baths of Southern Syria in their Near Eastern Context", international conference «*Sanitas Per Aquam, Internationales Frontinus-Symposium zur Technik und Kulturgeschichte der antiken Thermen*», Aachen 18-22 March 2009 (forthcoming).

door leading to a small rectangular room of 320 cm × 220 cm and a brick-paved floor, with bricks of the 40 × 40 × 5 cm size, and covered with a thick layer of gypsum.

A bench on the southern wall was available for the *hammam's* frequent clients. Alongside the eastern wall, a small sluice passes coming from the middle section to the *hammam's* outside where a 16-centimeters wide sluice was found under the eastern wall. At the north-east end of this room, there is a rectangular basalt threshold leading to a big hall to the north of the previously mentioned room; it is a rectangular hall in the eastern end of which there is a brick-built arch; this part of the hall ascends from the main hall's floor and it is paved with bricks and covered, above the bricks, with large pieces of rosy marble; on the right side of the arch there were noticed benches; the whole floor is loaded on brick-columns because there is a hollow under the floor for hot air to pass and heat up the hall; there are terraces to the north and east sides through which hot air passes, in addition to a sluice at the south-east corner leading to the previously mentioned sluice to drive water outside. In the eastern wall there is an arch below which there is a hole in the form of a small door leading to the interior of the empty hall below the warm hall. It was compared to Andarin Hammam discovered in Hama where there was an arch in the eastern side used as a sluice, but in this *hammam* there is no clue about its usage. A study of this hollow might be done well very soon.

**The Hot Hall (Interior Section):** In the middle of the north wall of the snugery, a door was discovered. It has a basalt threshold covered with gypsum, leading to the hot hall (Interior Section). In the threshold there seems to be a sluice; this threshold leads to a square hall which has terraces on the interior of its walls for the frequent clients of the *hammam* to sit on. After the cleaning of the hall there appeared to be huge damage in the floor of this hall; it was noticed that the floor of the hall is loaded on brick-columns; these columns carry 60 × 60 × 7 cm bricks plastered from top with a layer of gypsum for rosy marble slabs to anchor and add beauty to the hall; all terraces

are plastered with white gypsum; brick-columns loading the floor are paved with  $40 \times 40 \times 5$  brick slabs.

**The Boiler Hall:** To the north of the hot hall, a boiler hall was discovered. On top of it, there is a water basin in the form of an arch, in its west side. It is equipped with an inner terrace in the form of a tub, plastered with a layer of gypsum. It is built of bricks measuring  $40 \times 40 \times 5$  cm. The floor is loaded on 20 columns composed of  $40 \times 40 \times 5$  cm square bricks, taking into consideration that the basin's floor is missing in the eastern side. A part of its western floor is preserved and it is paved with  $60 \times 60 \times 7$  cm large bricks. All the columns are anchored in  $40 \times 40 \times 5$  cm bricks floor.

Beneath the previously mentioned floor of the basin there are fire apertures which in turn distributes hot air to the *hammam* parts, shaped like triangles built on top of one another; they are built in two brick columns of three apertures each (*hypocaust*). There were found small stores to the north of the boiler hall. A large quantity of coal – coaled wood remains and animal droppings – which were used to ignite the boiler.

**Water-system of the *hammam* (bath):** A water-channel was discovered in the east side of the *hammam*, situated outside the eastern wall and running southwards from the north. It is built of gypsum in U-shape. On top it is covered with brick slabs. It supplied water to the basin discovered in the small eastern hall in the middle section, leading to the cold hall as well. The architectural rising of the *hammam* was carried out by al-Jazeera Private University – Architecture Department represented by Dr. Ahmad Atiah (Head of Architecture Department), Dr. Ayman Sulaiman and Eng. Bashar Heneidi (Figure 9).

The pottery discovered inside the *hammam* during the season of 2010 was dated by thermal radiation, conducted by Dr. Elias Bakarji (Antiquities Lab Director in the Syrian Atomic Energy Organization). It belongs to the Byzantine era, 6<sup>th</sup> century.

The archeological works executed by the national Syrian expedition from 2006 to 2010 in the Byzantine Level of Tell al-Kasra site attested the existence of a fortified city. The settlement of this locale increased, turning it into a real city. The site is bordered from the north by a navigation channel called *Semiramis* (a name given to it by Isidore of Charax, which was used for navigation between the Euphrates and the Al-Khabur river, near the site of Halabyia.

The path of the Euphrates played a major role in the defense system of the eastern borders of the Roman Empire, and later on during the Byzantine rule. Tell al-Kasra is part of the *limes* defenses, i.e. the eastern border-line of those two empires. These borders included a number of border-forts intended to fight off against erupting and continuing assaults of the Persians and Sassanians. Emperor Diocletian (284-305) applied great efforts for constructing a chain of forts within this frontier region which witnessed later on the re-supporting and re-enhancement by the Emperor Justinian in the face of the fierce attacks of the Persians. In fact, the history of the frontier provinces in the Euphrates region during the 6<sup>th</sup> century was characterized by the clashes between the Byzantines and the Persians up to the beginning of the Islamic-Arab conquest of the region.

In 532, a peace pact (known as the *Eternal Peace*) was signed by the Byzantines and the Persians after the procession of the Persian troops in 531 to pervade the region near *Circesium* (al-Basra) and then to go up the Middle Euphrates valley. But the breach of this pact by Khosrau I in 540 pushed the Emperor Justinian to apply great efforts to reform the military organization and to enhance the defensive systems on the eastern frontiers of the Empire. This gigantic project echoed to us via such ancient historians as Procopius of Caesarea at the beginning of his masterwork *De Aedificiis*. In addition to historical texts, we have archeological researches that provided us with important indications of several sites with military purposes, such as Halabiya, Zalabia, Tabus and al-Kasra. All these sites resulted from the policies applied by Emperor Justinian to the military reorganization of the frontier provinces in Middle Euphrates Valley.

The historical development of the Byzantine city in Tell al-Kasra can be grasped with the historical content of the eastern frontier regions of the Byzantine Empire from the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE up to the Islamic conquest. The nature of the site and the results of the excavation's work reveals it as an unique example for the knowledge of defensive systems, life style, socio-economic organization, and religious beliefs of a group of Christians in the Syrian Middle Euphrates Valley.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Montero Fenollós, J. L.; Shbib, S., *La Necropolis Bizantina de Tall As-Sin (Deir ez-Zor, Siria): Memorias del Proyecto Arqueológico Medio Éufrates Sirio I*, (Biblioteca del Próximo Oriente Antiguo 4), CSIC, Madrid, 2008, S. al-Shbib, XIV, p. 329.



**Figures**

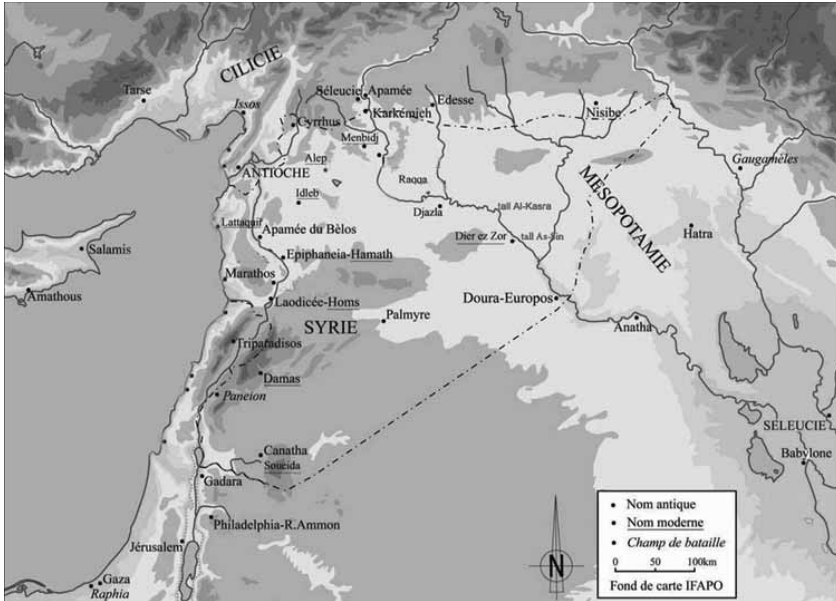


Figure 1: Map of Syria.



Figure 2: An aerial view shows the location of Tel Kasra on the Euphrates River.



Site de Um Rejeba (G. Bell)

1 - Al-Kasra. (A. Poidebard 1934)

*Aéro Levant*

Figure 3-A: Tall Al-Kasra (A. Poidebard 1934).



Figure 3-B: Tall Al- Kasra aerial photograph (*Google Earth*).



Figure 4: North Gate (2006).

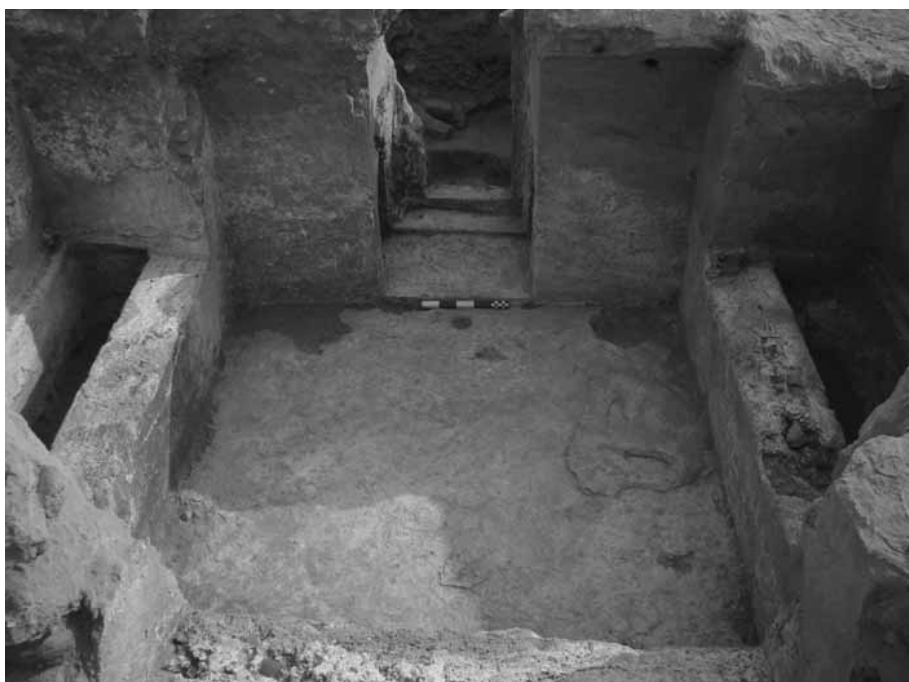


Figure 5: Tomb E2 (2008).



Figure 6: plaster statue discovered in the tomb - E2 (2008).

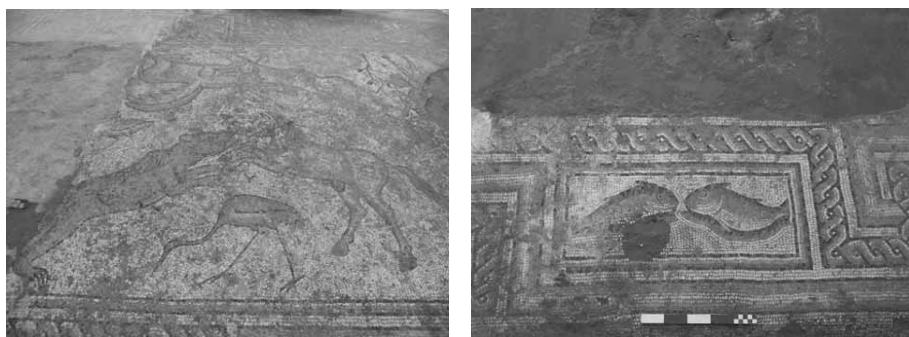
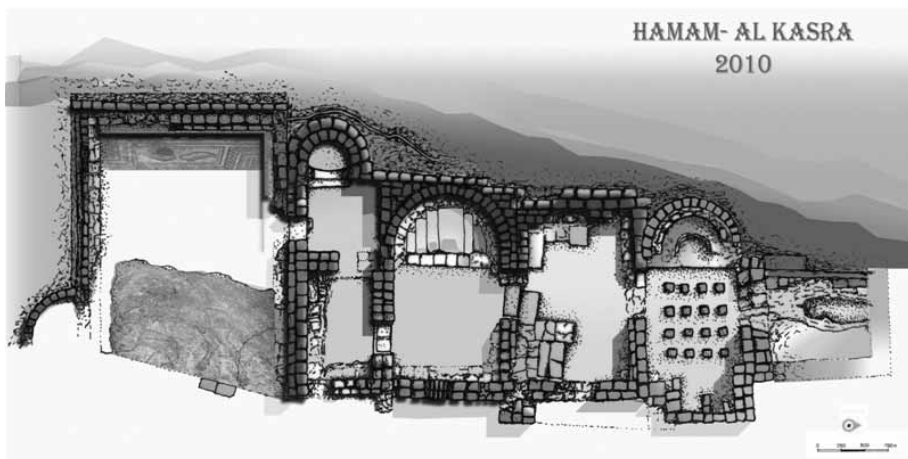


Figure 7: mosaic discovered in the bathroom (2009).



Figure 8: Bathroom (2010).



(Figure-9): plan of Bath Al-Kasra.

## **Bibliography**

- BALTY, J., *Mosaïques antiques de Syrie*, Bruxelles, 1977.
- BELL, Gertrude L., *Amurath to Amurath. A Journey Along the Banks of the Euphrates*, Piscataway, 2004.
- BLANKE, L., “The Central Baths in Gerasa in Context” in M.F. Boussac; J.-F. Salles, *Bains d’outre Jourdain. Actes du colloque Balnéorient de Amman, mai 2008*, IFPO (forthcoming).
- CHESNEY, F. R. S., *Expedition for the survey of the Rivers Euphrates and Tigris*, New York, 1850.
- FOURNET, T.; REDON, B. (éds.), *Le Bain Collectif en Egypte: Origine, Évolution et Actualité. Actes du Colloque Balnéorient d’Alexandrie, Déc. 2006*, IFAO, Le Caire, 2009.
- FOURNET, T., “The ancient Baths of Southern Syria in their Near Eastern Context” (Extract from the proceedings of the *International Frontinus-Symposium on Technical and Cultural History of Ancient Thermal Springs*, Aachen, March 18-22, 2009, forthcoming).
- GABORIT, J., *Géographie Historique du Moyen-Euphrate de la Conquête d’Alexandre à l’Islam*, Diss. Université de Paris-I, Paris, 2007.
- MONTERO FENOLLÓS, J.L. ; SHBIB, S., *La Necropolis Bizantina de Tall As-Sin (Deir ez-Zor, Siria): Memorias del Proyecto Arqueológico Medio Éufrates Sirio I*, (Biblioteca del Próximo Oriente Antiguo 4), CSIC, Madrid, 2008.
- MONTERO FENOLLÓS, J.L.; SHBIB, S., “La mission archéologique syro-espagnole au Moyen Euphrate. Première campagne à Tall as-Sin (Deir er-Zor, Syrie)”, *Orient-Express*, 2006/1, pp. 3-5.
- POIDEBARD, A., *La trace de Rome dans le désert de Syrie. Le limes de Trajan a la conquête arabe, recherches aériennes (1925-1934)*, Paris, 1934.
- SACHAU, E., *Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien*, Leipzig, 1883.
- ZOUHDI, B., *L’art des chefs-d’oeuvres en République arabe syrienne dans le Guide officiel. XXII Foire internationale de Damas*, Damas, 1975 (in Arabic).

**Toby WILKINSON:**

***The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt: The History of a Civilisation from 3000 BC to Cleopatra***

**London, Bloomsbury, 2010**

**xxii + 646 pp. ISBN: 9780747599494**

André de Campos Silva

As the title indicates, this recent book by renowned Egyptologist Toby Wilkinson<sup>1</sup> is a complete account of the history of ancient Egypt from its outset in prehistory to its demise upon its integration into the Roman Empire in 30 BCE. While the date 3000 BCE as a chronological point of reference to the beginning of Egyptian civilisation proper is acceptable (the author acknowledges in the first part of the book that the set of circumstances which enabled Egypt to become a unified state developed much earlier, at least since 5000 BCE), when one should place its end is debatable. Contrary to Toby Wilkinson, other authors regard Roman domination of Egypt as part of the history of ancient Egypt<sup>2</sup>. But the author justifies his choice with the criterion of dynastic continuity maintained until the last Ptolemaic ruler (p. 39).

As it would be expected of a book of this sort, the author presents a systematised account of political developments, focusing on *e.g.*, the

---

<sup>1</sup> Other important books by this author are: *Early Dynastic Egypt* (New York, Routledge, 1999), and *Royal Annals of Ancient Egypt. The Palermo Stone and its Associated Fragments* (London – New York, Kegan Paul International, 2000). For reviews of these two volumes see Ikram, Salima, review of *Early Dynastic Egypt*, by Toby A. H. Wilkinson, *American Anthropologist* 103 (September 2001), p. 845, and Michel Baud, review of *Royal Annals of Ancient Egypt. The Palermo Stone and its Associated Fragments*, by Toby A. H. Wilkinson, *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 57e Année, (May – June 2002), pp. 683-684, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> See *e.g.*, Peacock, David, “The Roman Period (30 BC–AD 395),” in Ian Shaw (ed.), *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 414-436.

royal ideology created to keep the population – particularly the ruling elite – from contesting the accumulation of so much power on only one individual; the sometimes peaceful and other times belligerent relations with Egypt's neighbours – especially Nubia, the cities of Syria-Palestine, the great empires of Mitanni, the Kingdom of the Hittites, Assyria, Persia, Macedonia, and Rome –; the structure of the state administration, and the internecine conflicts within the Egyptian court and within the country itself – mainly during the intermediate periods. Apart from these political topics, the author also introduces and discusses other related topics including religious developments, such as the association of the non-royal elite with Osiris during the First Intermediate Period, and the living conditions of the different social strata. Regarding the latter topic, Toby Wilkinson is particularly sensible to the discrepancy between the ruling elite and the average Egyptian. The author elaborates on this social disparity especially in the beginning of chapter 18 where he discusses the living conditions of the peasantry and the hardships of corvée duty. On p. 365 Wilkinson makes an important observation which is valid not only to students of ancient Egypt but also to students of other human cultures: pharaonic civilisation was built by the toil of peasants. Certainly the monumental achievements which are still admirable today were due to the planning and genius of kings and their architects, but complex cultural investments require an economic system where the majority of the population sustains a literate elite, free from manual labour, which engages in those cultural enterprises.

This book is one more introduction to the Egyptian history, but it might differ from other volumes in one important aspect: at some points it morally appraises the history of ancient Egypt. As Toby Wilkinson states in the prologue, he intends to provide a more realistic account of Egyptian history exposing its darker side rather than focusing on its flashy achievements alone<sup>3</sup>. As the author also states in the prologue, he

---

<sup>3</sup> The book by Pascal Vernus (trans. David Lorton), *Affairs and Scandals in Ancient Egypt*, Ithaca – New York, Cornell University Press, 2003, shares a similar purpose.



has become increasingly uncomfortable with the study of ancient Egypt since instead of being a morally advanced civilisation concerned above all with everyone's well being, it was a country where the peasants and other workers of low social stratum were brutally repressed and made to work in unforgiving conditions in order to satisfy their masters' megalomania. Twenty years earlier John Baines wrote about this kind of discomfort that people might feel in relation to Egyptian society:

«[p]eople model their object of study to some extent after what they would like a society to be, or they react against that approach and say that society was brutal and repressive. The latter approach involves some rejection of what originally attracted people to their subject, and in intellectual – as against psychological – terms it is legitimized chiefly by placing Egypt in the wider context of other complex societies. Both views imply moral positions.»<sup>4</sup>

There are however instances where one is compelled to agree with Toby Wilkinson. Examples are: the condition of the skeletons of some of the workers of the pyramids of Giza which show that they sustained frequent injuries (as mentioned by Wilkinson on p. 86); the extremely high loss of life in gold-mining expeditions during the New Kingdom (pp. 367-368); and the humiliation and brutal repression meted out to rebels and foreign peoples (examples on pp. 257-258, 309-310, 381, and 423-424).

These features are characteristic not only of ancient Egypt, but also of other human societies including modern ones. However, applying our moral viewpoint to human cultures, especially ancient ones which cannot be inquired directly and which can only be known through extant sources, might inevitably lead to a narrow perception of those cultures. On the contrary, if one seeks to adopt the attitude suggested by the French historian Marc Bloch, of understanding instead of

---

<sup>4</sup> Baines, John, "Restricted Knowledge Hierarchy and Decorum: Modern Perceptions and Ancient Institutions", *Journal of American Research Center in Egypt* 27 (1990), p. 5.

judging<sup>5</sup>, one might get a clearer and less biased insight into the dynamics of human societies. Nonetheless, Wilkinson's approach remains a valid wakeup call to alert scholars and non-specialists alike to not idealise their study subjects; one must simply beware of not falling into the opposite extreme.

Having briefly reviewed the subject matter of the book, let us now focus on its formal aspects. The book is composed of a chronology, five parts – each comprising several chapters – preceded by a prologue and succeeded by an epilogue, footnotes, further notes, bibliography, and an index.

The chronology presented at the beginning of the book is extremely useful. It dates not only the several dynasties and their kings, but also important events occurring in Egypt and in other parts of the world. Examples include the «rise of the Osiris Cult» during the Ninth and Tenth Dynasties (c. 2125-1775 BCE), and the «height of the Olmec civilisation in Mexico» during the reign of Nineteenth Dynasty King Horemheb (c. 1319-1292 BCE).

Each part of the book opens with a brief outline of what will be detailed and with a map of Egypt in the period under discussion (Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, *etc.*) which encompasses, when pertinent, other areas such as the Near East and the Aegean. Other more specific maps of cities and regions, such as Thebes and the Memphite necropolis, are provided in the relevant chapters. The subject matter of the book was summarised above and hence, in the opinion of the present reviewer, it would be redundant to detail here each part of the book.

Pictures are also included in the form of black and white and coloured photographs; black and white pictures occur alongside the text, whereas coloured photographs are provided in separate and unnumbered pages.

In what regards names of people and of places, the author has given preference to the forms closer to the original instead of its classical

---

<sup>5</sup> Bloch, Marc, "Judging or Understanding?" in Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (translated by Peter Putnam), New York, Vintage Books, 1964 (1949 reprint), pp. 138-44.

forms. Thus Edfu, for example, is referred to as Djeba, and its classical form is presented only once on p. 70. This city is featured in the index, but only as Djeba making it difficult for a reader only acquainted with the classical form of the name to look it up. The same is true of names of people. The first reference to Nakhthorheb occurs on p. 39 and the second on p. 459. This Egyptian king is disclosed as being Nectanebo only on the first occurrence which creates a considerable hiatus between both occurrences; by the time a reader, who might be only familiarised with the form *Nectanebo*, reaches p. 459, he might have forgotten the original form of the name and, in this case, resorting to the index in order to return to p. 39 seems to be a practical solution. However, a concordance of names of places and people would have solved this potential hurdle to the non-specialist reader more conveniently. Nonetheless, the usage of Egyptian names will certainly contribute to forge future generations of students of ancient Egypt more acquainted with the source material.

In his description of Egyptian history, Toby Wilkinson often supports his interpretations with references to coeval texts and to modern discussions which benefits both the average reader as well as the scholar. While the cited Egyptian texts are referenced in the footnotes to each chapter, modern works are mentioned in the section «Further Notes» where the author presents bibliography – usually readable volumes, but occasionally also books and articles aimed at experts – to the several subjects presented in the corresponding chapters, as well as to divergent theories proposed by other authors. Different interpretations are often discussed in this section rather than in the main text.

The final bibliography is copious and conveniently divided into «Ancient Sources» and «Modern Works». The inclusion of a glossary would have been useful particularly to the non-Egyptologist reader. However, important concepts such as the *ba*, and the *ka*, and titles like «God's Wife of Amun» are explained in the text, and one way to circumvent the absence of a glossary is to resort once more to the index.

In sum, this book is a convenient introduction to the history of ancient Egypt, useful both to the average reader and to scholars from other fields within the social sciences such as Assyriology, Classical Studies, Biblical Studies, and Anthropology. Besides providing a valuable synthesis to the Egyptian history, it may also prompt the reader to question to what extent are persons from the past different from us and to what extent should we apply our standards to them.

**Aline TENU:**

***L'expansion médio-assyrienne. Approche archéologique***

**BAR International Series 1906, Oxford, Archaeopress, 2009  
426 pp. ISBN 978 1 4073 0243 0**

Miguel Valério

The 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE has until recently been neglected or even excluded from discussions on Mesopotamian expansionist phenomena. For that reason, the Middle Assyrian (henceforth MA) period is still poorly known and even its chronological limits are an unsettled issue among Assyriologists. What has been written on the subject was often extrapolated from the more “popular” Neo-Assyrian (NA) period. The present book is the publication (with augmented bibliography and some additional data) of Aline Tenu’s doctoral thesis, defended at the University of Paris 1 in 2003. The challenge embraced by this archaeologist and researcher at the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* (CNRS) of France consists of a collection of data from archaeological excavations, namely recent ones, producing a fresh approach to Assyrian expansionism in the MA period, whose limits are here set between the reign of Puzur-Aššur III and *ca.* 1000 BCE, *i.e.* roughly the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE.

In the Introduction, Tenu proposes three axes of analysis of expansionist phenomena: 1) the degree of organization of invading and conquered States; 2) their impact on both sides and relationships established anew; 3) causes or motivations of expansion. At the end of the first chapter, however, the reader will notice that the author has opted to describe Assyrian territorial conquest based on only two aspects: 1) occupation and domination of the territory and 2) border

and limits of the conquest. These two points outline the second and the third chapters of the book, respectively.

The first chapter (“Les enjeux et les perspectives de la recherche sur l’expansion Médio-Assyrienne d’un point de vue archéologique”) is chiefly introductory. It includes an unavoidable discussion on the ever problematic concept of “Empire” and the definition of “Middle Assyrian Empire” (pp. 25-26), whereby Tenu concludes that such term «est satisfaisant pour caractériser la forme politique d’exercice du pouvoir des Assyriens dans la seconde moitié du II<sup>e</sup> millénaire.» Here belongs also the discussion on the triggers of MA expansion, with an entire section of the chapter devoted to the explicative models of the Assyrian expansion: Tenu presents the “old paradigm” (a theorization of the 1920’s), the “new paradigm” of M. Liverani<sup>1</sup>, which opposed the former and, finally, the recent model of J. N. Postgate<sup>2</sup>, a critic of Liverani. The old paradigm defended alternating phases of expansion and decline of the Assyrian Empire and a repeated progression (*tache d’huile*) wherein the defeated territories were looted, paid tribute and, finally, were integrated in the provincial system. Liverani’s system presented the Assyrian “Empire” as a network of communications whose westernmost frontier was the Euphrates. On the contrary, the model of Postgate envisioned two forms of imperial domination. The setting of the first is the “country of Aššur”<sup>3</sup> which from the 13<sup>th</sup> cent. BCE onwards included the Jazirah. It was naturally applied to the provinces that became part of Assyria and were forced to pay tribute (in agricultural commodities) to the temple of Aššur in the capital. The capitals of these provinces are old local settlements governed by members of great Assyrian families who oversaw the economic and political administration of their territories. The second form of imperial domination is that of the “client-kingdoms” whose monarch

---

<sup>1</sup> Liverani, Mario, “The Growth of the Assyrian Empire in the Habur/Middle Euphrates Area: a New Paradigm”, *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin* 2 (1984), pp. 81-98.

<sup>2</sup> Postgate, J. N., “The Land of Assur and the Yoke of Assur”, *World Archaeology* 23 (1992), pp. 247-263.

<sup>3</sup> The expression *mât* <sup>d</sup>*Aššur* begins to be used in the MA period.

(whether the defeated ruler or a new one installed in the throne by the Assyrians) remains king over his country, which does not become an Assyrian province, and issues a yearly tribute of high-value goods which are directed to the palace rather than to the temple of Aššur. These two most recent models are extrapolated mostly from the state of affairs in the NA period, and are only attested from the reign of Tiglat-Pilešar I onwards, apart from referring only scantily to archaeological data. Hence Tenu sets out to structure a new model to surmount these lacunae. Throughout the book, the Assyrian Empire appears as an “imperial system” with centralized administration and military, but also with well-rooted ideological foundations and expressions that were key-factors for the expansion: Aššur, the eponym god, becomes no more no less than the deified Assyrian capital and it is him that commands the Assyrian king to expand the borders of his kingdom. This is well visible in a text found at the capital (possibly dated to the reign of Tukultī-Ninurta I) and royal titles bore by the monarchs of this period.

In the first chapter one finds also an enjoyable outline of the research on MA pottery (pp. 45-46) with a summary of the work of P. Pfälzner, whose doctoral thesis (*Mittanische und mittelassyrische Keramik – Eine chronologische, funktionale und produktionsökonomische Analyse*) was published in 1995 and remains the main reference on the subject. Emphasis is laid on the so-called “administrative” or *Standard* MA pottery, whose typological homogeneity and technical features point to a mass-production system. Although Tenu already includes in her bibliography K. Duistermaat’s doctoral thesis – *The Pots and Potters of Assyria: Technology and organization of production, ceramic sequence, and vessel function at Late Bronze Age Tell Sabi Abyad, Syria* – in its unpublished version (2007), she did not discuss the important new input of this work (published in 2008) to our knowledge of several aspects MA “official” pottery. The question is raised: did this pottery represent an Empire culture? Current investigation indicates so: the presence of this class of this very homogeneous pottery in a given site is intrinsically associated with MA administration, as proved by findings of official texts.

The second chapter, on the occupation and dominance of the territory, contains an initial section on the organization of the Empire: it consists of a synthesis of the Assyrian administrative territorial divisions (based on the 2003 work of S. Jakob, *Mittelassyrische Verwaltung un Sozialstruktur: Untersuchungen*), the provincial administrative personnel, and the State officials, and culminates on a discussion of the role of the great families and high-officials in the central power. Here the private ambitions of the former appear further stimulus for the expansion. One could say this is yet another groundwork chapter of the book, presenting but also discussing concepts and evidence that are essential to the general subject. In I.II.3 (p. 52) the office of *hassihlu* is addressed (one instance of “*hassihlu*” in the book is to be amended). Apart from Tell Billa, Alalakh and the el-Amarna letters, which Tenu mentions, the word is also attested at Nuzi and has been identified in the recently published letter Kt 90/k 360 from Old Assyrian Kültepe/Kaneš in Anatolia, possibly sent from the Upper Tigris<sup>4</sup>. The word was created by adding the Hurrian *nomina agentis* suffix *-uhlu* to Akkadian *halšu* “fortified district”, thus meaning “commander of the *h*.” (see CAD, vol. H: 57)<sup>5</sup>. The appearance of this word in an early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE document now assures its early genesis within the Hurrian language, adding even more substance to P. Machinist’s hypothesis: this scholar, cited by Tenu<sup>6</sup>, argued that *hassihlu* was a local Hurrian office adopted by Assyrians after the take-over of Mitanni, a scenario which then explains its absence from records of Aššur. That, as suggested by S. Jakob, *hassihlu* was synonymous with *bēl pāhete* (“governor of the district/province”) and was gradually replaced by the latter in MA administration is, in my opinion, not immediately clear and requires further investigation. Textual evidence ambiguously

---

<sup>4</sup> See Michel, Cécile, “Deux textes atypiques découverts à Kültepe”, *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 62 (2010), pp. 71-72, 74.

<sup>5</sup> Other variant spellings of this word are *hassuhlu*, *halzuhlu*, *halzuhuli* (gen.).

<sup>6</sup> See Machinist, P., “Provincial Governance in Middle Assyrian and Some New Texts from Yale”, in M. A. Morrison; D. I. Owen (eds.), *Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians I*, Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 1982, p. 24.



suggests a military officer responsible for a fortress or a functionary in charge of measuring the limits of immobile properties, whose duties sometimes overlapped those of a judge.

The second section of this chapter (“La documentation archéologique”) compiles the archaeological evidence on which research on the MA expansion is based, hence occupying nearly one hundred pages of the book. It begins at the heart of Assyria, discussing the so-called Assyrian “renewal”, and concludes with a settlement-by-settlement presentation of the panorama outside the Assyrian core (with special emphasis on Tell Šēḫ Ḥamad, on whose pottery Pfälzner’s typology was based). The outcome is an overview of MA archaeological sites which undoubtedly will in the near future become a reference for anyone taking the first steps in learning about this period. The first take is on the two capitals of Assyria during the historical period in question, Aššur and Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta. On p. 57 one comes across another minor typographical error: «...des niveeaux médio-assyriennes...» where one should read «niveaux». Tenu addresses the architectural changes in Aššur during this period: citing J. M. Munn-Rankin, she suitably points out (p. 73) that the construction of a new palace in the city of Aššur by Tukultī-Ninurta I (who also erected the new capital of Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta in his reign) was a direct consequence of the Assyrian territorial expansion. The assimilation of new provinces by the Empire led to the construction of a new facility, larger than the old palace, which could not accommodate all the services related to the new administration.

The third chapter is entitled “Frontières et étendue de l’Empire”. Tenu stresses that frontiers of this period were perceived not as well-defined dividing lines that established the limits of political dominion – one can hardly disagree with the author’s opinion that doing so would be an anachronism – but as regions of strategic importance and political influence, if not transitional areas (pp. 151-153). In any case, there are examples of materialized Assyrian frontiers, such as a line of fortresses that stretched from the foot of the Kašiyari Mountains to Harran in the 13<sup>th</sup> cent. BCE, as Tenu rightly points out. The Euphrates

is presented as an important physical and psychological frontier for the Assyrians, who evoked its crossing by Sargon of Akkad. Here, the role of massive water-bodies (*i.e.* seas and lakes) as frontiers is discussed, as well as evidence from administrative texts on the limits of the Assyrian authority. It becomes clear once more how blurry our knowledge of provincial organization and taxation still is, namely which provinces paid taxes to the temple of Aššur in the capital (p. 162). On p. 163 one should read «son absence» and not «ison absence». A propos of the Middle Euphrates area (pp. 182-195), Tenu concludes that «apparemment, la région du moyen Euphrate passa sous le contrôle au moins formel des Assyriens sous le règne de Tukultī-Ninurta I<sup>er</sup>...» (p. 194). At the site of Tall Qabr Abū al-‘Atīq (Qabar Abu al-‘Atiq in the book), in the gorge of Khānūqah (Deir ez-Zor)<sup>7</sup>, archaeological excavations were recently conducted (2008-2010). These have unearthed pottery typologically comparable to – at least – Pfälzner’s MA I phase (*i.e.* the reigns of Šalmānašar I and Tukultī-Ninurta I) from the layers marking the building’s destruction<sup>8</sup>. Although the Middle Euphrates may have been under Assyrian influence already under Šalmānašar I or even Adad-nērārī I, it is Tukultī-Ninurta I who states his dominion over a number of countries in this area: Māri, Hana, Rapiqu and the «mountains of the *Ahlamu*» (*RIMA* 1, A.0.78.23, 69-84).

The fourth and final chapter (“Un point de vue sur l’expansion médio-assyrienne”) contains the conclusive points and remarks. Tenu revisits two aprioristic economic explications put forward by previous authors as causes of the MA expansion: a tradition of long-distance trade and the constant farming preoccupations. The former is based on the suggestion that the Old Assyrian trading tradition – which in the 20<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE saw the establishment of *kārū* (commercial emporia) in Anatolia – survived throughout the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium till the MA period. This idea is maintained by the author.

<sup>7</sup> See chart n.° 2 on p. 348.

<sup>8</sup> Montero Fenollós, J. L. *et al.*, “Informe de la quinta campaña del Proyecto Arqueológico Medio Éufrates Sirio (2009). Tall Qabr Abu al-‘Atiq: de ciudad circular protodinástica a bastión asirio”, *Aula Orientalis* 28 (2010), pp. 73-84.

She reiterates that Postgate's two-phase model (according to which the chief purpose of military conquest was initially the attainment of farming areas and, in a second phase, the take-over of regions meant to supply high-value raw materials) is simplistic and falls before the archaeological and epigraphic data. Providing individual examples, she rather sees the MA expansion as a more complex phenomenon which combined the two aforementioned causes plus other factors. She finally comes to underline the role of the "great" Assyrian families: the expansionist process meant their enrichment but this simultaneously generated new needs. The interest of the great families in the conquest of new land justified their investment on the imperial enterprise and assured its success, though one may perhaps find Tenu's assertion that these investments allowed relaunching the "économie nationale" in the years after Mitannian domination anachronistic to some extent.

This last chapter also discusses the role of the nomads in the Assyrian expansion and their integration in the Empire, as well as the presence of foreign populations/cultures in the latter. Tenu returns to the issue of frontiers and presents a series of recent proposals on the extension of the Assyrian Empire by other scholars, each accompanied by a map. These maps are collected at the end of the book which, incidentally, also includes a valuable appendix of figures. Both greatly facilitate the task of the reader, who is confronted with a massive but priceless amount of geographical (both ancient and modern toponyms) and archaeological data.

The endeavor of Aline Tenu is to be praised, as it is not an easy task to treat and expose such a complex and intricate topic the way she has. Necessarily, several issues had to be revisited throughout the book, which may sometimes give the impression of repeated narrative. But this should not in any manner discourage potential readers. As emphasized along these lines, the outcome of Tenu's work is not only an invaluable contribution for research on the MA expansion, but also a very welcome overview for anyone with an interest on any topic in some way connected to the Syro-Mesopotamian region in that particular period.

**Brigitte LION; Cécile MICHEL (éds.):**  
*Histoires de déchiffrements. Les écritures*  
*du Proche-Orient à l'Egée*

Nanterre – Paris, Maison René Ginouvès – Éd. Errance, 2009  
206 pp. ISBN 978-2-87772-383-1

Katia M. P. Pozzer

Le livre *Histoire de déchiffrements: Les écritures du Proche-Orient à l'Egée*, dirigé par Brigitte Lion et Cécile Michel présente l'histoire de trouvailles archéologiques et du long processus de déchiffrement de plusieurs langues ayant été noté par l'écriture cunéiforme, ainsi que les écritures du monde égéen, de l'Égypte, de la région du Levant et de l'Asie Mineure. Pour bien accomplir cette énorme tâche, elles ont invité plusieurs importants spécialistes, appartenants à des divers institutions et groupes de recherche en France.

Ce livre est le résultat de plusieurs activités scientifiques qui ont eu lieu à Nanterre, à Paris et à Lyon, dans le cadre de la célébration du 150<sup>ème</sup> anniversaire du déchiffrement de la langue akkadienne, écrite en caractères cunéiformes. Les organisatrices du livre ont voulu élargir l'horizon, en incluant les différentes écritures utilisées par les civilisations du Proche-Orient, au sens large. Et c'est là, justement, qui réside un des atouts de cette superbe ouvrage: rassembler les domaines archéologiques, l'histoire de sites, les biographies de premiers experts et leurs contributions aux progrès de la science.

L'ouvrage est composée de quatre parties: la première présente l'histoire de découvertes archéologiques par les voyageurs et les diplomates européens dès le XII<sup>ème</sup> siècle, bien après les Grecs, qui nous ont parlé de la Mésopotamie au VI<sup>ème</sup> siècle av. J.-C. et les sources arabes que nous décrivent des villes antiques, comme Babylone.

La deuxième partie est consacrée à l'histoire des déchiffrements du monde cunéiforme, où chacune des langues du bas-relief de Behistun y est présentée, ainsi que l'intéressante histoire de ces déchiffrements, la contribution française, anglaise et allemande à cet immense défi.

L'histoire des écritures de l'Asie Mineure et du monde égéen est discutée dans la troisième partie, avec beaucoup de propriété, dans l'étude de la difficile langue hittite et des inscriptions de l'île de Crète.

La dernière partie est dédiée à l'étude des deux grands savants qui ont été responsables par les déchiffrements des écritures des régions du Levant et de l'Égypte: Jean-Jacques Barthélemy (l'abbé Barthélemy), responsable pour la mise au point d'une méthode scientifique que permet de déchiffrer des écritures et des langues inconnues et Jean-François Champollion, celui qui a donné une connotation scientifique à l'histoire de l'Égypte ancien et a compris le système d'écriture hiéroglyphique.

Le livre s'achève par une bibliographie divisé en tranches chronologiques, auteurs classiques et récits des voyages, ainsi que quelques sites internet des universités américaines et anglaises que mettent en ligne des textes cunéiformes, aussi bien que la Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Nous remarquons la présentation des images, quelques unes inédites, (des gravures, des photos, des dessins et des cartes) qui s'avèrent d'une extrême richesse, même pour les lecteurs initiés.

*Histoire de déchiffrements* devient un livre fondamentale pour tous ceux qui veulent comprendre le monde ancien, leurs écritures et les savants qui en ont déchiffré. Sa lecture est agréable et précise. Ce livre reflète ses organisatrices, Brigitte Lion et Cécile Michel: simples et sages, très sages.

## Web Review

### **SAAo (State Archives of Assyria online)**

<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/saao> (April 25th 2011)



Marcel L. Paiva do Monte

It is certainly a wish of any scholar or student of Assyriology to have the possibility to search within large numbers of cuneiform documents for any Sumerian or Akkadian words or expressions in a fast and easy way. This necessity is particularly felt not only in literary and linguistic studies but also when there is the purpose to confront different texts in order to establish documental series or to isolate different textual *corpora*.

In contrast to the challenges posed to epigraphists and anyone “brave” enough to engage the hard task of deciphering the cuneiform characters inscribed in original documents in clay or stone, the databases held by Oracc (*The Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus*), derived originally from CDLI (*The Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative*), provide a way to make easier and more accessible the process of edition of those documents. We can thank Steve Tinney (University of Pennsylvania), Eleanor Robson (University of Cambridge) and Niek Veldhuis (University of California, Berkeley) and all their collaborators for this initiative, which enables the fulfilment of the dreams of many

students and scholars of Assyriology. Together, these three founders comprise the Oracc Steering Committee.

Specifically, Oracc is a tool designed to make cuneiform texts available and free and to provide a digital platform for this purpose. Its assistance and overture allowed for the creation of several text edition projects. I can cite here a few, such as *Amarna*, which consists of 380 cuneiform tablets, comprising letters and scholarly works in Akkadian from the famous site of Tell el-Amarna, Egypt, or the DCCMT (*Digital Corpus of Cuneiform Mathematical Texts*), a database containing close to 1.000 tablets concerning Mesopotamian Mathematical scholarship and teaching. The projects' list can be found at

<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/projects-list.html>

One of the projects hosted by Oracc is called SAAo – *State Archives of Assyria Online*. It can be considered as the digital version of the *State Archives of Assyria* (SAA), a text edition series belonging to the much successful long-term international project based at the University of Helsinki, *The Neo-Assyrian Texts Corpus Project*. Hence, the SAAo owes its origin and development to the data collection that forms the SAA, accomplished by Simo Parpola and Robert Whiting, among others.

SAA's objective was – and still is – to publish the thousands of archival documents unearthed in the ancient capitals of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, especially Nineveh. By archival documents I mean a broad definition of texts that exclude the royal inscriptions and other celebratory texts. The documentation that befit this broad definition belonged to genres such as administrative and bureaucratic documents produced in military, political or economical contexts, oracles and prophecies reflecting the written level of divinatory phenomena, and also letters and reports sent to the Assyrian kings by all sorts of officials stationed in peripheral areas or in Assyria proper, among others. It must be said that this task is still on-going, with a few other volumes scheduled to be made available in 2011 and 2012, including

one dedicated to ritual and cultic texts. The volumes in preparation are listed at

<http://www.helsinki.fi/science/saa/saa.html>

The organization of SAAo follows that of the printed series, subdividing the texts according to criteria such as textual genres, reigns of Assyrian kings and geography. Thus, the entire universe of texts compiled by SAAo is also divided by volume, chapter and document number. This makes the search for documents in the online platform easier to all those familiarized with the consultation of its printed counterparts. Moreover, just like the SAA series, all documents are transliterated and translated into English, allowing all those studying them to have the possibility to propose other translations, if necessary.

There is, however, a new possibility opened by SAAo, which is to search for words and expressions in the entire series with just a mouse click. This can be done in various ways, including with the help of the “Glossary”: in here we can browse for Akkadian words and search for names of persons, places, months, or gods, instantly accessing the list of their occurrences in the entire *corpus*. Thus, to recognize words and expressions along with their grammatical variations in their proper contexts and semantic variations becomes a much faster process.

Beside the “Glossary” we can, of course, use the search engine, either by typing English translated words in “Translation”, or by typing transliterated Akkadian words and Sumerian logograms in the option “Texts”. However, one must be familiar not only with the typing rules for expressions in the search engine but with the rules of syllabification of words in Akkadian as well. For example, when looking for the word “king”, *šarru*, one must type “szar-ru” (sz standing for a *š*). In this case, one must be aware that in Akkadian language no syllable can begin with two consonants. Another example is when looking for a Sumerian logogram, conventionally written in capital letters. Take, for instance, the Sumerian logogram that stands for “son”, DUMU: one



must type “I:DUMU” to obtain all the occurrences of this logogram in the texts.

There is another and most interesting way of searching inside SAAo and other Oracc projects, although only a few volumes are available so far, that deal with the royal correspondence of Sargon II (vols. I, V and XV). Within these volumes, the texts had been “lemmatised” – we can left-click over any word or expression in the transliteration column of any of these documents to obtain an entry that opens in a new window. From this we can obtain: a) the primary meaning of the word; b) the number of its instances in the whole *corpus*; c) the written forms in which the word appears in its instances and their normalized forms; and finally, we obtain also d) the percentage of the various semantical variations in which the word is translated in the documents. Let me give a simple demonstration.

Within the volumes in which this feature is available, I chose the document SAA V<sup>1</sup>, 14 (ABL 1193), a letter written to the king by one of its officials to which the editors gave the title «Chaldeans in Bit-Zamani». I was interested in finding out more about a word employed conventionally in letters to greet the sovereign, *šulmu* (l. 3), translated here as «health». I left-clicked this word, transliterated in this case by the form DI-*mu*, and there appeared instantly a new window with information about it: that its primary semantic base is related to the concept of “completeness”<sup>2</sup>; that it appears 849 times in the whole SAA *corpus*, assuming at least 10 possible written grammatical forms (DI; DI-*me*; DI-*me-ia*; DI-*mu*; *i*-DI-*me*; *šu-lam-šu*<sub>2</sub>; *šu-lum*; *šu-lum-gu*; *šul-me*; *šul-mu*). Besides, there was more information about how those written forms could be normalized and also the various possible meanings of the word, according to the different contexts in which

---

<sup>1</sup> Lanfranchi, G.; Parpola, Simo (eds.), *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part II: Letters from the Northern and Northeastern Provinces* (State Archives of Assyria V), Helsinki, The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary*, vol. 17 – Š (part III), Chicago - Glückstadt, 1992, s.v. «šulmu», pp. 247-256.

its 849 instances occurred: among them the word is translated for 24 times as «salutation» (3% of total); 819 times as «health» (96%), and finally as «peace» for 6 times (1%).

There is no need for further demonstrations of the usefulness and enormous potential of this tool for learning, for historiographic research and textual analysis. This simple inquiry is enough. Given all the practical advantages involved, I'm sure that everybody looks forward for the rest of the series' volumes to be made available in SAAo.

Beyond this, it is also possible to limit our searches for specific words within one or more volumes of SAA using the "Catalogue" option. In alternative, this option allows one to search for documents by genre, museum catalogue number and even look for joins and collations available for a specific document. It is worth noticing that the more a researcher is familiar with provenances and locations (museums and editions) of the original documents, the easier it is to search using this option. Nevertheless, it is crucial to assimilate the few rules for correct search expressions in all Oracc databases, including SAAo. These rules can be found at

<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/doc/user/searching>

I feel important to highlight one most interesting and innovative feature developed by Steve Tinney, which is the option available in each document entry to present the text in its "cuneified" form. That is, the possibility to have access to the document, not only transliterated into latin characters but also into cuneiform, its original writing and graphic system. For this it is necessary to install fonts specially created for this purpose: check "Characters, Fonts and Keyboards" at

<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/doc/user/>

This is an enormously useful tool for teaching cuneiform to today's students besides being a good help to epigraphists and scholars

concerned with having access to the original texts in order to check the transliterations and text editions themselves. However, I suspect that this option may not satisfy entirely those concerned with palaeographic problems, *i.e.*, with the variation and evolution of the ways in which words are written through time, not to mention the identification of individual scribes by their calligraphy, as it is sometimes possible in some coherent archives containing documents produced in a more limited time span. Moreover, to designate this option I would prefer the words “retrograph” and “retrography”, to the slightly more awkward “cuneify” and “cuneiformization”.

There is also another observation, this time a technical one, due perhaps to the inability of some users (including myself) to surpass some problems dealing with the internet. Personally, I could not access the “Cuneify” option in SAAo using *Internet Explorer*, although I had the special fonts installed. I could only do this with *Mozilla Firefox*. Nevertheless, these technical details do not obscure the excellence of this tool. SAAo is a wonderful instrument for all those working on historical, literary and linguistic subjects related to the Neo-Assyrian Empire. It perfectly complies with the purpose of a database, which is to rationally organize information while at the same time making it quickly accessible and searchable. SAAo allows its users to spare much time and effort that can be used for the more interesting and challenging work of *interpreting* the data – a job that even today still cannot be done by computers and machines.

## Web Review

### **The Institute for the Preservation of Medical Traditions, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.**

<http://medicaltraditions.org/institute>



Paula Veiga

Last summer I found this website by accident, as my filters for internet content on ancient plants and ancient medicine produced a form from the Smithsonian regarding some new videos on YouTube asking users to give opinions about the website. The videos were aimed at the visitors of the museum, which I am not yet, but one thing leads to another, and I saw some reference to this institute's newsletter, to which I subscribed. Not much later I got the newsletter on my email and another email from Dr. Appetiti regarding my field of research, which focuses now on plants associated with the god Osiris in ancient Egypt. And so on and so forth... Being an Egyptologist and focusing my research on medicine of ancient Egypt, I have to dwell among the world of medical knowledge, both ancient and contemporary. As plants were the basic ingredients for medicines, along with minerals, animal and human substances, the study of plants in Antiquity is crucial. The profusion of information online, while searching for out-of-print, early and rare books now digitized online, led me to search deeper into this website's menus, and this made me find real jewels for researchers.

An introduction to the website in question must be written, as it is of an innovative vision, both from the researcher's viewpoint, and the

institute's own work. The capacity to store information from ancient times, now enabled by technology, is a powerful tool. Put in good use, as we can see when we browse this website, may be of significant role in the world of medical and historical research. The idea of one person may be the completion of a dream for many. I am thinking of hundreds of researchers all over the world, who search continuously for ancient sources, and find it difficult to have the time and funds to approach them. In this institute's website researchers and students of History of Medicine, ancient pharmacology, plants in Antiquity, Botanists, Historians in general, researchers for ancient civilizations' patterns of daily life, and so many other subjects, can find organized media to develop their work. Otherwise inaccessible sources might be easy to find here, as the specialists working in this institute do their best to upload and update the various menus and sub-menus of the website.

Last September, 2010, some news appeared about a shipwreck identified as the Relitto del Pozzino, which sank off the coast of Gela, Sicilia, in 130 BC, the wreckage being found some 20 years ago. After all this time and after different people studying different parts of the cargo, archaeobotanists from the institute were able to examine and analyse pills that were prepared by the physicians of ancient Greece, that were found in a doctor's box, this one found in 1989 among the wreckage (news):

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn19436-2000yearold-pills-found-in-greek-shipwreck.html>.

The medicine was completely dried and DNA analyses show that each millennia-old tablet is a mixture of more than 10 different plant extracts. «For the first time, we have physical evidence of what we have in writing from the ancient Greek physicians Dioscorides and Galen» says Dr. Alain Touwaide from the institute (video):

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-13190376>

The title *Institute for the Preservation of Medical Traditions* with the underlined Preservation reflects not only the care for the manuscripts and other materials, but also the service provided to human culture as this knowledge will be available for more time than if left to its own circumstances of natural preservation. Preservation here must be understood as the “making these sources eternal”, either we speak about textual information or visual images from Antiquity. The medical traditions in question, theoretically started with Greek and Roman, will be extended to more different traditions; more in quantity and different in their geographical and timeline presence. A detailed description of the menus follows this introduction.

At the home page, clicking “The Institute”, you are confronted with the Institute’s mission, as well as a donation button, as all research needs funding and this is no exception, although it is housed in a facility under the “wing” of the famous and wealthy Smithsonian in Washington, D. C.

The souls behind this Institute are Drs. Alain Touwaide and Emanuela Appetiti (<http://medicaltraditions.org/story>), who started this and continue to develop the scope of the research and the activities held. It is a pleasure to read the life path of Dr. Touwaide’s story, as I find myself wondering about my own goals and troubles along the way of my research career. No doubt you need to invest in yourself when choosing a research career, and you need to be able and willing to travel, a lot, if not, all the time.

You have also a “Reading Room” button, showing the latest achievements of the Institute, from the more recent to the oldest.

There is always a beautiful image, and then “Resource Links”. All we need. When you click “Show All” in Resource Links, another page opens and you have “Resource Links” and “Libraries”. When you click “Resource Links”, you have several links to important Societies and Institutes, also excellent repositories of information, mainly concerned with Medicine, Pharmacy and Plants.

If you choose “Libraries” you have also a list of sites with information on the same subjects. Clicking “Research” at the home page, you have a descriptive text about the contextual information, the personnel involved in the research, both inside the institute itself and out and about in another place, but still connected. You also have information about the focus of research being, for now, on the Mediterranean tradition, but open to future focuses stretching up to other traditions, who knows, maybe the Native Americans’ and the Chinese’s.

Clicking “Collections at the home page, you get “Library”, “Images”, “Digital Texts” and “Databases”. This is the result of collecting sources of information and this is done by all the researchers involved with the Institute. When you click “Library”, The *Historia Plantarum* Collection is explained. A botany collection, from Antiquity to the Renaissance, opens to researchers the possibility of finding rare sources at the institute. A sub-menu includes “Holdings”, paper and non-paper sources are housed in the Department of Botany and a digital catalogue of it is a work-in-progress. Going back to the sub-menu, and choosing “Special Collections”, you can see how donations are sometimes more valuable than money, as some people have donated their personal libraries, being themselves specialists, and this way they have contributed to enrich the institute’s assets. You can contribute yourself by clicking “donating books”. Going back and clicking “Microfilm Collections”, you can see how this institute has a diversified access to information. Going back and choosing “Consultation”, you have all the rules for browsing the collection; not to be “loaned”, and we can understand why. Books keeps disappearing from libraries every day, students and researchers simply don’t return them; move to another location, and the book is forever lost. This cannot happen with such an extraordinary collection. Going back and reading about “Handling of items of the Collections”, you can see why pens are not allowed and this is not a surprise as rare books are prone to be “highlighted” and “underlined” just as new editions, as we see when we retrieve a copy from a library that a not-so-concerned person has used before... Also, the rules about copies and “leave-it-for-tomorrow” are stated clearly. Going back, you still have “Policy”,

and “Location and Contacts”. For those who are really curious, here it is: Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of Natural History, Department of Botany, 10th Street and Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, D.C., 20560, U.S.A., [collections@medicaltraditions.org](mailto:collections@medicaltraditions.org), +1-202-633-0967.

In the main menu you have a “Support Us” button telling you how can you help the institute by donating financially or in book-form, as to contribute to a bigger and valuable collection for posterity.

Also in the main menu you have a “Contacts” button with an email form to fill in, in case you want to get in touch. Next to it, on the main menu, you have another button “Our Story”, that goes back to Drs. Touwaide and Appetiti and their passion for the subject, and how they imagined this institute, along with their path in professional, sometimes personal, lives.

A “Membership” button is also found at the main menu, and, from as little as 20 American Dollars you can be a member yourself. Being a member of societies or institutes, who are dedicated to research and the collection of rare and valuable materials like these, who deal with medicine in Antiquity, is a gift in itself.

Options on the right side of the page are distributed in main themes such as science, medicine, and humanities, as we all remember that, in Antiquity, learning was not divided into compartments, giving us the image of a train with different cabins... Ancient civilizations believed that knowledge was a whole; everything was intertwined. Magic, religion and medicine were in the same field of action. Nothing was prescribed without a religious background, a magic setting and the practitioner was gifted with natural and supernatural powers, for those believing. As an example of this concept we can say that in ancient Egypt there was no word for medicine, but there was one for magic, *heka*, and another for health, *seneb*. You can sign up to receive information and I assure you this is very useful if your field of research touches, even slightly, the themes developed by this institute.

Clicking on “Science plants and people”, you have “Programs” “Publications” and “Services”. The “Science Programs” are: “Flora of



Antiquity” where plant remains are tested, and complemented with textual evidence; a kind of theory and practice put together. Lucky those who have plant remains for their research, from excavation sites (like me), which are pertinent to their theme, and are able to be tested in a laboratory. Next you find “Peoples of the Mediterranean”, a source of all data on Mediterranean peoples, their food habits, agriculture and so forth. Next you have “Plants and Peoples”, where the dynamics between these peoples and plants are studied. In the same menu “Science”, you have “Publications”, where the publications done by researchers at the institute are listed. In “Science” you also have “Services”, where you can ask for a specific group of data. The knowledgeable researchers at the institute will gather the information for your project according to your specifications and budget.

Changing to another menu: ‘Medicine’, you have two sub-menus, “Medicine Programs” and “Medicine Publications”. In “Medicine Programs” you find “Diseases of the ancient World”, where the institute relates to other institutions regarding the collection of data assessing the diseases affecting ancient populations. You also find “Epidemiology of Antiquity”, where the contribution focuses on the establishment of patterns of disease across the globe in ancient times, giving the researcher the ability to map a disease or a group of diseases in a specific or larger period of time. In “Medicine” you have also “Publications” where all the publications of researchers from this institute are listed once again.

In the “Humanities” menu you find “Humanities Programs” and “Humanities Publications”. Under “Humanities Programs” there are three options: “Ancient Medical Library”, “Art of Healing Collection”, and “*Materia Medica* Database”. In the first, a virtual library is created online, having handwritten and early printed books available. The virtual library link opens into an “Images” page where the texts are condensed into a “Digital Texts list. Here you find “Byzantium”, “Early Middle Ages”, “Post Salernitan Middle Ages”, and “Renaissance”. This is still a work in progress, as so many texts need to be digitized and uploaded. The ‘Digital Texts’ sub-menu opens several pdf documents containing some famous books, mostly in Latin. An “Antiquity” list is in

order, as most of my favourite are all there: Hippocrates, Dioscorides, Galen, and Theophrastus.

Next to “Digital Texts” you have also “Databases” on the therapeutic uses of plants; you find “Greek Medical Manuscripts”, “Printed Herbals”, and “Medicinal Plants of Antiquity”. The database lists all the codices mentioned in Diels’ catalogue reproduced and searchable by author, work, city, or library, according to the website. The “Printed Herbals” links you again to the digital images of the texts. The “Medicinal Plants of Antiquity” deals with therapeutic uses of natural substances and stores them in sets of computerized tables. This is again linked to the “Digital Texts”.

As a reference to the above cited menus and sub-menus, I may add that Greeks were not the fathers of medicine, as already published my dear colleague and friend Dr. Campbell (<http://www.manchester.ac.uk/aboutus/news/archive/list/item/?id=2777&year=2007&month=05>), although the institute’s collection has not got any Egyptian Medical texts yet, the Egyptians were in fact the pioneers of medicine. As we remember, the Library of Alexandria was destroyed in the fire caused by Romans, so, many of the medical knowledge from Antiquity in the Mediterranean world is lost forever. But besides Egyptian texts, which have survived from different sources in Egypt, we may also think that Arab practitioners of medicine in Antiquity, even before Islam, were already proficient in these sciences of healing. Many of the Arab knowledge transpired to Egyptian and Jewish doctors who studied abroad, in Persian and other Middle Eastern schools. Most of Greek and Roman physicians have for sure acquired some parts of Jewish and Arab skills. Melting this with ancient Egyptian influences on Greek and Roman cultures, both present as dominant authorities in Egypt from the fourth century BC to the fourth century AD, in a roughly way, we have a Mediterranean “world of knowledge” than transpired into the Iberian Peninsula, through Arabs and Jews who lived there for centuries. Also the North African countries occupied by Arabs and later by the Arabs and Jews expelled from the catholic kingdoms of Portugal and Spain, have inherited this Mediterranean knowledge.

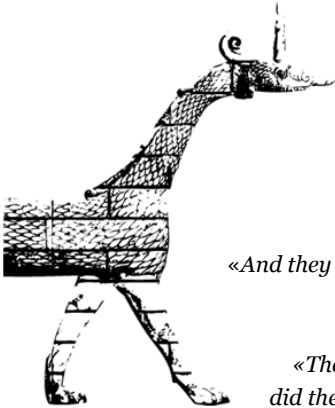
The quest for rare manuscripts and the collection of early printed materials and special editions is indeed a task that fulfils the dreams of people like me, passionate about Antiquity and the origins of all medical knowledge. The contribution of the specialists working for this institute to world information is priceless. Many would not be aware of this website, but I hope that, after this article, many of you out there, who search for originals, ancient and specific prescriptions, and more details about plants, can feel fortunate to have found this website. Many other institutions in different languages are available online, but I find this to be excellent both in its contents, and the easily “browsable” menus, giving us the feeling of light anxiety while waiting for more sources to be uploaded. The mastering of ancient languages is essential but, as different specialists specializes (passing on the pleonasm) in different subjects, there is always a colleague available to help you with the translation, and then you are free to use your own interpretation and proceed with your work. Again, the need to have Arabic and Jewish items in this collection is a must, as well as Egyptian materials, but I am sure Dr. Touwaide has this on his priorities’ list, and of course, knowing that the funds available for the institute to function are limited. We can just hope that, in the near future, governments have the intelligence to vehicle material funds, spaces and people for research, especially in the field of the History of Medicine and its thousands of sub-subjects... An example can be found in Germany:

<http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/news-events/news/detail/m/interview-with-leibniz-price-awardee-joachim-quack.html>

Prof. Dr. Joachim Friedrich Quack, the Director of the Institute of Egyptology at Heidelberg University has been awarded the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize 2011 – the highest scholarly award in Germany. The funds will be used in the research projects C1 “Medical Systems”. The struggle for ignorance and the open mind are two characteristics of a good researcher, so, if you are not bound by the fear of learning how to work online, use a computer, and you are sufficiently aware

of different perspectives in life, either by religious differences or geographical conditions, you are destined to have a safe and enjoyable trip browsing this website, and your fate is to find beautiful things like Howard Carter in 1922, when peeping through the hole of the door at Tutankhamun's tomb.

**Exhibition: *Torre de Babel – Historia y Mito*  
Museo Arqueológico de Murcia (Spain)  
9th December 2010 – 20th March 2011**



Isabel Almeida, Luís Duque  
and Maria de Fátima Rosa

*«And they said, Come, let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top  
may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name...»*

*«Therefore was the name of it called Babel; because Jehovah  
did there confound the language of all the earth....» (Gn 11: 4,7)*

Etemenanki, «House of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth», was the Akkadian name of Babylon's ziggurat, mainly known as the Tower of Babel. The myth, the religious beliefs and simple curiosity have drawn people towards its study over the centuries.

Since December 9<sup>th</sup> 2010, an exhibition focused on the History and the Myth behind the Babel Tower was held in the Museo Arqueológico de Murcia, Spain. Its commissary, professor Juan Luis Montero Fenollós, is responsible for a ten year old project about this ancient subject. This exhibition was one of the visible aspects of the project. Planned to be displayed until March 20<sup>th</sup> 2011, the exhibition's closure had to be postponed until the first of May, due to its success.

The main goal of this exhibition was to introduce the history of Babylon to the general public, displaying emblematic artifacts for the first time in Spain, mostly from the Berlin Vorderasiatisches Museum, along with computerized models and pictures of the city and its tower.

At the same time, it aimed to present old and new approaches to the Babel Tower puzzle.

The exhibition was divided in four main thematic blocks, three dedicated to the history of Babylon and its Tower, and the last one focused on the myth around the Etemenanki. Each block started with a small video-show which introduced the visitor to the different subjects and artifacts displayed in the following rooms.

The first video was dedicated to general Mesopotamian history and the first archaeological surveys held on the Babylonian territory, especially those made by the German team led by Robert Koldewey, which brought to light the ancient ruins of the city of Babylon. The following room held a timeline displaying the main periods and reigns of the Babylonian history, starting with the first dynasty, from *circa* the 19<sup>th</sup> century BC, and finishing around 330 BC, with Alexander the Great's domain of the territory. In this same room, three outstanding artifacts helped to illustrate the video and the timeline.

The first one was a fragmentary statuette representing the god Enki/Ea with a sprinkling water vase on his hands, dated from the 18<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, *i.e.* contemporary to Hammurabi. It was the oldest piece displayed. The second one was a clay cylinder with a votive inscription by Nebuchadnezzar II. It was found near Sippar and describes the king's actions as a (re)builder. The third piece was a Neo-Babylonian clay tablet with an architectural plan for a building.

The second block consisted in a description of the city itself. Juan Luis Montero Fenollós underlined how difficult it is to study this famous *urbs*, because the remaining structures are dated from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II until the Persian period. This leads to two main problems: on one hand, the short timeline between both periods makes it hard to distinguish the materials; on the other hand, the Old Babylonian and the Kassite cities remain unknown under the more modern structures.

The video explained the city built by Nebuchadnezzar II, presenting some amazing data: more than 80 thousand inhabitants in an 8 kilometer wall perimeter, with several doors, the most emblematic one being

the Ištar Gate. This one had an important role in the cultic festivities, mainly in the *Akītu* festival, because it was here that the royal procession entered the city and made its processional way towards the Esagila, the temple of Marduk. The Ištar Gate and its processional avenue are displayed in the Berlin Vorderasiatisches Museum. The video also showed pictures of the site, some dated from the first archaeological surveys and others from nowadays. It is important to stress out the magnificent three-dimensional animated models of Babylon that all videos shared.

The next room contained the major pieces of the exhibition: coming directly from the Ištar Gate and its processional avenue the visitor could behold two brick glazed panels in a blue background, one showing a mythical animal, a *mušhuššu*, and the other a lion. The first one was held in one of the tower's façade, at the Gate. The second one is part of a long series of lions that followed the path through the processional avenue (which had a total of 60 lion figures). These are large pieces, weighing each one a ton, with the approximate height of 120 cm and between 170 cm and 230 cm of length. The visitor could still observe a technical drawing of one of the lions, made in 1899 by Walter Andrae, the Berlin Museum's architect. This piece is very interesting, because it shows the different data used, at the time, to reconstruct the panels.

The third part was the core of the exhibition, dedicated to the architectural aspects of the Etemenanki. The introducing video presented the visitors with the story and the theories around the Babel Tower since its discovery in 1913. In that year the foundations of the building were found and since then scholars have tried to find answers to three main questions: how high was it? What shape did it had? How could it be accessed? The video also contained images of other ziggurats, like the one from Borsippa, that were used as parallels and/or starting points for the different theories proposed. The different theses also based themselves in the Neo-Babylonian cuneiform documents, such as a clay tablet from the Esagila or the Oslo stele. The textual *corpora* were completed with the information transmitted by Herodotus and, of course, by the Old Testament.

The following room presented two models of how the Etemenanki should look like, according to the Universidad de Coruña team, led by Juan Luis Montero Fenollós. This proposal bases itself in a critical analysis of the ancient documents but also on materials engineering data. Considering all this, the Spanish team proposes new measures for the building: it should have been approximately 60 meters high, on a 90 meters perimeter base, with six levels, and a last floor where the temple should be. The models are made in a scale of 1 cm:1 m, having both a blue painted temple displayed on the top (blue bricks were found on the archaeological site of the Tower). The main difference between them is the access from the first floor to the temple: one, following Herodotus' information, is made by climbing a spiral form stairs, around the building; the other is made by ascending to the top following a path built in just one of the Tower's side. Professor Fenollós stressed out how the temple was the central structure and not the Tower *per se*. This one was just the physical support that held the divine house, and linked Heaven and Earth.

Again it is noticed the concern on presenting a chronological framework to the visitor, displaying a timeline with the different periods that the Iberian Peninsula, Greece, Rome and Egypt were crossing at the time the Etemenanki was finished.

Two brick sets were shown in this same room. The first one was composed by three fragmentary clay bricks, which belonged to the temple of the top of the ziggurat, containing votive inscriptions mainly dedicated to Marduk. The second set, loaned by the Museu Bíblic de Montserrat, Barcelona, presented two adobe bricks, with celebrative inscriptions by Nebuchadnezzar II. These objects, from other archaeological sites, are relevant to show the standard measures of Neo-Babylonian bricks (usually around 33 x 33 x 9 cm), used on the construction of the Etemenanki.

The last block was dedicated to the myth that surrounded the Babel Tower through the centuries. The video-show focused on this, presenting the different artistic representations of the Tower, from the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD up to today, all based in the biblical narrative,



which stresses the destruction of the building. It is pointed out it was in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II that the kingdom of Judah and the Jerusalem's Temple were destroyed, having its religious and political elite been deported to Babylon, where they began to write their sacred texts.

Interesting enough, the visitor could see a clay tablet from Nebuchadnezzar II, containing an oil ration distribution list, where Jehoiachin, king of Judah, is mentioned. In this last room some of the artistic representations shown in the video were also displayed. The magnificent manuscript from the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD, where the Babel Tower is on flames could also be seen. This is the most ancient artistic representation of the Etemenanki known until now. There was also a painting from the 16/17<sup>th</sup> century, by Frans Francken II, that follows the spiral shape created by Jan Bruegel. The visitor could also see other paintings from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and, finally, a 21<sup>st</sup> century representation of the Tower made by an Iraqi painter, Hanoos, that lives in Madrid nowadays. Hanoos was born and had lived near Babylon, and his vision closed the exhibition, showing that the myth is still alive.

It is important to mention how the younger ones were not forgotten. Several pedagogical activities took place during the time the exhibition was held. Moreover, this exhibition planned for the general public offered much more than simple disclosure. Even those who dedicate themselves to the study of Mesopotamian history could learn with it. And this happens also because the Catalogue includes eleven articles by known scholars from the field, at the same time that presents a good description of all the pieces displayed. During what was planned to be the last week of the exhibition, a series of conferences that gathered in Murcia some of the most important names linked to the Archaeology and History of Mesopotamia took place.





# Perception of India in the Heart of Europe. Transition through Centuries

Stanislava Vavroušková

## Abstract

This article deals with the relationship and cultural exchange between the Czech lands and India in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. It focuses on the role that the India studies played during the Czech national revival and also on the impact of the mutual relations between Czech and Indian scholars, politicians and artists in the interwar years.

Keywords: India; Czech lands; linguistic studies; national revival.

## Resumo

Este artigo trata das relações e intercâmbios culturais entre a Checoslováquia e a Índia ao longo dos séculos XIX e XX. Em concreto, foca-se no papel exercido pelos estudos sobre a Índia durante o ressurgimento nacional checo e no impacto das relações entre estudiosos, políticos e artistas checos e indianos no período entre guerras.

Palavras-chave: Índia; Checoslováquia; estudos linguísticos; ressurgimento nacional.

## **The Tower of Babel before archaeology. The Ziggurat of Babylon according to European travellers (XII-XVII centuries)**

Juan Luis Montero Fenollós

### **Abstract**

Until the excavation of the ziggurat of Babylon, universally known as the “Tower of Babel”, by German archaeologists in 1913, many were the European travelers, between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, that thought they have found the famous biblical monument. In this article are collected the reports of some of these travelers, who had mistaken the Tower of Babel with other Mesopotamian buildings.

Keywords: Babylonia; Tower of Babel; Birs Nimrud; Aqar Quf; Tell Babil; European travellers.

### **Resumo**

Até 1913, ano em que a arqueologia alemã levou a cabo a escavação da zigurate da Babilónia, universalmente conhecida como “Torre de Babel”, muitos foram os viajantes europeus, entre os séculos XII e XVII, que acreditaram ter encontrado o famoso monumento bíblico. Neste artigo recolhem-se os relatos de alguns destes viajantes, que confundiram a Torre de Babel com outros edifícios da Mesopotâmia.

Palavras-chave: Babilónia; Torre de Babel; Birs Nimrud; Aqar Quf; Tell Babil; viajantes europeus.

## The Indian journeys of a Spanish ambassador: Don García de Silva y Figueroa and his *Comentarios* (1614-1624)

Rui Manuel Loureiro

### Abstract

In 1614, Don García de Silva y Figueroa sailed from Lisbon, bound for India, in charge of a diplomatic mission to Persia. This was the beginning of a long journey, that would last for a decade, till the return voyage to Europe. The Iberian crown had been trying to maintain a diplomatic dialogue with Shah 'Abbas, through the regular exchange of envoys and ambassadors. Its aim was to maintain at all costs a solid Portuguese position in the Persian Gulf area. The Spanish ambassador was a scholarly man, who had studied at Salamanca, and certainly with many later readings. He was fluent in Latin and was well acquainted with classical literature. As a modern traveler, he carefully prepared his journey to Persia, reading numerous historical and geographical works then available in Europe. Like many educated men of his time, he was interested in a wide range of themes and issues, crossing several disciplines, ranging from geography to the art of navigation, from ethnography and zoology to botany, from classic literature to archeology and history. He was also a compulsive diarist, who throughout his lengthy eastern pilgrimages wrote a voluminous travelogue. This paper aims to present briefly Don Garcia and his *Comentarios*, the title of his voluminous manuscript of about a thousand pages, which describes the journey from Lisbon to Persia.

Keywords: García de Silva y Figueroa; travel accounts; Persia; *Comentarios*; Shah Abbas.

### Resumo

Em 1614 largava de Lisboa, a caminho da Índia, Don García de Silva y Figueroa, encarregado de uma missão diplomática à Pérsia. Iniciava-se então um longo périplo, que apenas viria a terminar uma década mais tarde, durante

## Abstract

a viagem de regresso à Europa. A coroa ibérica tentava, de forma continuada, estabelecer um diálogo diplomático com o Xá 'Abbas, através de uma regular troca de emissários e embaixadores. Tratava-se de manter a todo o custo uma posição portuguesa sólida na área do Golfo Pérsico. O embaixador espanhol era um homem cultíssimo, com estudos feitos em Salamanca, e decerto com muitas leituras posteriores. Era fluente em latim e conhecia bem a literatura clássica. Como um viajante moderno, preparou minuciosamente a sua viagem à Pérsia, nomeadamente através da consulta de numerosas obras histórico-geográficas então disponíveis na Europa. Como muitos homens cultos do seu tempo, interessava-se por uma vasta gama de temas e de assuntos, que cruzavam diversas áreas do saber, que iam da geografia à arte de navegar, da etnografia à botânica e à zoologia, da literatura clássica à arqueologia e à história. Era, além disso, um diarista compulsivo, que ao longo das suas demoradas peregrinações orientais escreveu um volumoso diário de viagem. O presente texto visa apresentar sumariamente Don García e os seus *Comentarios*, nome por que ficou conhecido o seu manuscrito de cerca de mil páginas, que descreve detalhadamente a jornada de Lisboa até à Pérsia.

Palavras-chave: García de Silva y Figueroa; literatura de viagens; Pérsia; *Comentarios*; Xá Abbas.

## **The Household Religion in Ancient Egypt: problems and constraints**

Susana Mota

### **Abstract**

Being essential for a more complete image of the Egyptian Religion, the Household Religion has been, however, relegated to second plan by scholars. This is justified by a set of problems and constraints that are apparently impeditive of a complete and systematic study on the issue. These problems

are related to the difficulties to classify this practice, namely, the clarification of its scope of action and also to the characteristics of the available sources for its study. It seems crucial to start by understanding these problems and constraints in order to afterwards have the ability to overcome them, and initiate the essential investigation on the Household Religion in Ancient Egypt.

Keywords: Ancient Egypt; Household Religion; Religious practices; Sources.

### **Resumo**

Essencial para uma imagem mais completa da Religião Egípcia, o Culto Doméstico tem sido, contudo, relegado para segundo plano pelos estudiosos. Esta situação é justificada por um conjunto de problemáticas e condicionalismos que são aparentemente impeditivos de um estudo completo e sistemático deste tema. Estes problemas estão relacionados, por um lado, com as dificuldades em classificar esta prática, nomeadamente a definição do seu campo de acção, e por outro com as características das fontes disponíveis para o seu estudo. É crucial começar por entender estas problemáticas e condicionalismos de modo a termos a capacidade de os superar e assim dar início à necessária investigação sobre Culto Doméstico no Egito Antigo.

Palavras-chave: Antigo Egito; Culto Doméstico; Práticas religiosas; fontes.

## **Eroticism and Sensuality in *Papyrus Westcar***

Telo Ferreira Canhão

### **Abstract**

The *Papyrus Westcar*, or *Papyrus Berlin 3033*, includes five tales, only three of which are complete. They are, in general terms, called *Khufu and the*



*Magicians*. They are presented by his sons to Khufu, the king, so that he might fight away boredom by listening to fantastic tales, where magic is the main subject. A strong feeling of eroticism and sensuality emerges from the second tale, named «The tale of the deceived husband» (G. Lefebvre), «Punishment for adulterous lovers» (P. Vernus) or «The wax crocodile» (P. Grandet), as well as from the third, referred to as «The Boating Party» (M. Lichteim), «The oarswomen tale» (G. Lefebvre), «The water folded in two» (P. Grandet) or «The amusements of pharaoh Snéfrou» (P. Vernus). In the second tale, the future king Khafre tells that when the reader head priest Ubainer accompanied Nebka, also known as Sanakht, the founder of the third dynasty, to the temple of Ptah, in Memphis, his wife committed adultery. In the third tale prince Bauefre narrates how the reader head priest Djadjaemankh tried to amuse king Sneferu, founder of the fourth dynasty, and suggested a boating party in de lake of the palace, the oarswomen being the most beautiful girls of the surroundings, who did their task in a way that they attracted all the king's attention.

Keywords: *Papyrus Westcar*; Egyptian tales; magic; eroticism; sensuality.

## Resumo

O *Papiro Westcar*, ou *Papiro de Berlim 3033*, inclui cinco contos, dos quais só três estão completos. São genericamente chamados de *Khufu e os Mágicos*. Apresentados por diferentes filhos a Khufu, o rei combate o tédio ouvindo contos fantásticos onde a magia é a personagem principal. No segundo conto, referenciado por «O conto do marido enganado» (G. Lefebvre), «Punição de amores adúlteros» (P. Vernus) ou «O crocodilo de cera» (P. Grandet), e no terceiro, designado por «O passeio de barco» (M. Lichteim), «O conto das remadoras» (Lefebvre), «A água dobrada ao meio» (P. Grandet) ou «As distrações do faraó Seneferu» (P. Vernus), sobressai uma forte carga de erotismo e sensualidade. No primeiro caso, o futuro soberano Khafré, conta que quando o sacerdote leitor chefe Ubainer acompanhou o fundador da III dinastia, Nebka, mais conhecido por Sanakht, ao templo de Ptah, em Mênfis, a sua mulher cometeu adultério. O segundo caso é relatado pelo príncipe

Bauefré que conta como Djadjaemankh, sacerdote leitor chefe, procurando ocupar o tempo do rei Seneferu, fundador da IV dinastia, lhe propõe um passeio pelo lago do palácio, numa barca conduzida pelas mais belas raparigas aí residentes, que executam a tarefa despertando toda a atenção ao rei.

Palavras-chave: *Papiro Westcar*; contos egípcios; magia, erotismo; sensualidade.

## **Greek *Nomos* and Egyptian Religion: cultural identity in Hellenistic Egypt**

Ronaldo Guilherme Gurgel Pereira

### **Abstract**

This paper approaches the historical context of social and cultural interactions between Greeks and Egyptians from the Macedonian conquest to the Roman rule over Egypt. It aims to understand the formation of cultural Greek and Egyptian self-perceptions during that period, as well as the symbolic relations between their counterparts in that society. For that purpose, the Greek concept of *nomos* is proposed here in articulation to Egyptian religiousness as key makers to better understand the complex matter of cultural identity in Hellenistic Egypt.

Keywords: Egyptian religion; Greek *nomos*; cultural identity; Hellenization.

### **Resumo**

Este artigo propõe uma abordagem ao contexto histórico e social das interações entre Gregos e Egípcios, da conquista macedónia ao governo romano. Buscamos compreender o processo de formação das identidades grega e egípcia durante o período em questão, uma vez que ambos os grupos se

definiam como o antónimo de sua contraparte. Para entender o significado do “ser Grego ou Egípcio no Egípcio” cabe aqui explorar como o ancestral conceito grego de *nomos* se articulou com as dimensões sociais da tradição religiosa egípcia. Esse relacionamento entre religião à Egípcia e comportamento à Grega, sendo explicado pelo viés do *nomos*, permite-nos lançar uma nova luz sobre uma questão antiga e aparentemente insolúvel: como (re)definir a identidade cultural no Egípcio Helenístico e Greco-Romano?

Palavras-chave: Religião egípcia; *nomos* grego; identidade cultural; Helenização.

## **La monnaie des Ptolémées – Les séries de Ptolémée I**

José das Candeias Sales

### **Abstract**

In Ptolemaic Egypt, the coinage of Ptolemy, the Ptolemaic dynasty’s founder, is an example of a personal political project. He was the creator of a new, original and permanent coinage system and also the responsible for the change of the types of coinage to celebrate the qualities of the new dynasty. The gradual process of rupture with the past shown through his coinage is absolutely peculiar.

Keywords: Coinage; Ptolemaic Egypt; Ptolemy I; Royal Portrait; Ideology; Politics.

### **Resumo**

No Egípcio ptolomaico, a cunhagem de Ptolomeu, o fundador da dinastia, é um exemplo de um projecto político pessoal. Ele foi o criador de um novo, original e permanente sistema de emissão, ao mesmo tempo que transformou os tipos

monetários com o objectivo de celebrar os méritos da nova dinastia. Estas emissões monetárias ilustram um processo muito característico de ruptura gradual com o passado.

Palavras-chave: Cunhagem; Egípto Ptolomaico; Ptolomeu I; Retrato real; Ideologia; Política.

## **The Sintashta cultural particulars and the origin of the war chariot**

Elias Pinheiro

### **Abstract**

Two opposing hypothesis regarding the origin of the war chariot exist today. One places its origins in the steppe, while the other considers the vehicle a Middle Eastern development. Since the publishing of *Sintashta* in 1992, the former has gained considering support, due to the finding of spoked wheel imprints in steppe burials, the earliest evidence of its kind. However, it has been argued that the war-chariot is a superfluous artefact in the steppe, partially due to terrain limitations, partially due to the existence of a better alternative, the horse itself. In contrast, in the urban societies of the Middle East, the necessity for fast and reliable means of transportation between different urban centres, and the lack of a proper mount, made the development of new and better vehicles paramount. However, this argument stems from a simplistic approach to the problem. After 2500 B.C., the decrease in overall temperature and an increase in aridity, led to significant change in climate zones. In the steppes east of the Urals, naturally colder and more arid than its western counterpart, this change led to a decrease in marshland, used by pastoralists as winter refuge. This situation prompted groups of pastoralists to settle in key locations in order to preserve access to such resources. The competition for such locations led to a state of endemic conflict. Simultaneously, contact

with BMAC urban populations, coupled with the appearance of steppe-like cultures in the Zaravshan river region, led to the development of long range metal trade, which provided the Sintashta settlements with a steady flow of wealth. This state of affairs provided both the stimulus and the means to the development of the war-chariot, thus rendering the argument of its uselessness in the steppe, void.

Keywords: Steppe; Sintashta; war chariot; warfare; metal trade.

### **Resumo**

Duas hipóteses em relação à origem do carro de guerra existem hoje em dia. Uma coloca as suas origens na estepe, enquanto a segunda o considera um desenvolvimento próprio do Médio Oriente. Desde a publicação de *Sintashta*, em 1992, que a primeira tem vindo a ganhar um apoio significativo, devido a marcas de rodas com raios encontradas em sepulturas na estepe, os primeiros indícios da sua existência. Contudo, um argumento contra reside na aparente inutilidade do carro de guerra na estepe, devido a limitações do terreno e à existência de uma melhor alternativa, o cavalo. Em contraste, nas sociedades urbanas do Médio Oriente, a necessidade de um meio de transporte rápido e fiável entre diferentes centros urbanos e a falta de uma montada apropriada, fez com que o desenvolvimento de novos e melhores veículos fosse uma prioridade. Contudo, este argumento deriva de uma visão simplista do problema. Após 2500 a.C., a diminuição das temperaturas médias, em conjunto com um aumento de aridez, provocou uma alteração significativa das zonas climáticas. Nas estepes a este dos Urais, naturalmente mais frias e áridas, esta alteração provocou uma diminuição das zonas pantanosas, utilizadas por pastoralistas como refúgios de inverno. Esta situação levou a que grupos de pastoralistas ocupassem determinadas localizações, de forma a garantirem o acesso a tais recursos. A competição por tais localizações levou a um estado de conflito endémico. Simultaneamente, contacto com sociedades urbanas do Complexo Arqueológico Bactrio-Margiano, em conjunto com o surgimento de culturas de estepe na região do rio Zaravshan, levou ao desenvolvimento de comércio de longa distância, que por sua vez providenciou aos povoados de Sintashta um

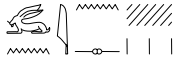
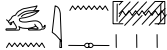
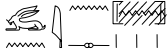


## Resumo

influxo constante de riqueza. Esta conjuntura providenciou quer o estímulo, quer os meios, para o desenvolvimento do carro de guerra, anulando dessa forma o argumento da sua inutilidade na estepe.

Palavras-chave: Estepe; Sintashta; carro de guerra; guerra; comércio de metais.

# ERRATA

*In volume 2 of Res Antiquitatis (2011), the article of Telo Ferreira Canhão, "Eroticism and Sensuality in Papyrus Westcar", suffered a printing mistake on page 92, where a few hieroglyphic characters were not printed adequately. Therefore, here we present clear prints of the hieroglyphs, included in a quotation of the paragraphs concerned.*

«Erman read this passage keeping the missing character, , and Blackman for the missing character gave a suggestion to which there is no alternative: in that flaw, it would be the G. N35 character (  ), reading  <sup>16</sup>. Apparently the only chance of restoring seems to be the suffix pronoun in the third person plural, common to both masculine and feminine, in a verbal construction of the gender *sdm.in.f* that describes an accomplished action, corresponding therefore to a past: *wn.in.sn* . To be a suffix pronoun in the third person feminine singular, that could be the character G. O34 (  ), which was exactly the best suited, what was the justification that we could give to the presence of a mark of plurality, the character G. Z2 (  ), immediately after the restored space and two spaces after the G. O34 character?»