
Revue africaine

Revue africaine.
Journal of the work
of the Algerian Historical Society.
TENTH VOLUME
1866

PRINCIPAL THEATRES OF OPERATION OF THE AFRICAN WAR.
(pp.37-42)

COASTAL AREA. – The coasts of the principal theatre of operations of the African War, extend from Herk'la [Hergla] in the North, to the South of Sfax's [Sfax], in Tunisia.

I had to follow them from two charts of captain W.H. Smyth, the only ones which we still have with scales large enough the titles of which are:

1° *The Coast of Tunis from Mahedîa [Mahdia] to Fratelli*, by captain W. Henry Smyth, assisted by Misters Elson and Slater. London, October 1827. Corrected in 1852. Scale: $\frac{1}{503.974}$

2° *The Gulf of K'abès [Gabes] or the Little Syrte*, by captain W. Henry Smyth, assisted by Misters Elson and Slater. London, June 1827. Additions and corrections in 1860. Scale: $\frac{1}{756.957}$

Captain Falbe, in his Research on Carthage, already showed the discrepancy between, in their principal positions, the first of these two charts and two other charts also of captain Smyth.

One sees by table he gave for this purpose that the positions of Herk'la, Sousa [Sousse] and Monastir, present differences in latitude of up to as much as 2½ minutes (5 kilom.), while the variations in longitude as as much as 4⅓ minutes, a little more than 7 kilometers.

The two maps of which I have made use, this same n° 1, cited by Falbe and my n°2, have only two positions in common; these two positions do not offer as many discrepancies as there were before the corrections made in 1852 and 1860, but there remained a trace of them as one can judge by the bringing together some of the figures.

No 1.

	Latitude	Longitude
Ras Dîmas (<i>Thapsus</i>)	35°36' 15"	11° 5' 0"
Mahedîa (<i>Zella</i>)	35° 30' 45"	11° 6' 30"

N°2.

Ras- Dîmas	35°36' 30"	11° 5' 00"
Mahedîa	35° 30' 30"	11° 7' 00"

[38]

As it was impossible to go back to the causes which could justify these differences, I solved the difficulty by the simplest means, by strictly adhering to the volume published in 1854 by captain (later Rear-admiral) Smyth which I have already quoted: *The Mediterranean, a Memoir physical, historical and Nautical*, in which we find the table of the positions determined astronomically by him, and which were used as a basis for his work. Obviously, we have there the last expression of his calculations and his corrections. I thus extracted the following positions, the only ones which belong to the coastline with which I was concerned:

	Latitude	Longitude
Sfak's, head of the mole	34°43' 56"	8°19' 41"
Sidi Mansour, tower.	34°48' 21"	8°26' 51"
Râs Khadidja, the tower	35°09' 58"	8°49' 51"
Grande K'erk'ena, the Dazak tower.	34°48' 10"	8°55' 21"
Petite K'erk'ena, the tower.... ..	34°38' 00"	8°34' 07"
Mahedîa, le chateau	35°30' 26"	8°46' 42"
Leptis Parva, the ruins	35°39' 43"	8°31' 31"
Monastîr, Fort Ak'dîr	35°45' 23"	8°28' 44"
Iles k'ourîat, the most northerly.....	35°47' 20"	8°43' 21"
Sousa, mast of the flag of the Kasba	35°50' 00"	8°15' 47"
Herk'la, the minaret	35°59' 10"	8°09' 51"

It is to these eleven positions that I have attached the various lines which were useful here and there while making there some modifications justified by precise indications of the most recent travellers and my personal research.

It is for this reason that I could not accept the latitude of Herk'la, because it is obviously too low, since it would put *Horrea Caelia* at 19 kilometers from

Hadrumetum, even though it was not 26 or XVIII thousand paces, as the Itinerary of Antonin says, but quite 23 or XVI thousand steps. It is thus necessary to read, in the table above, 36°01' 00" instead of 35°59' 10" , and leaving the longitude as it is. [39]

The layouts of the coasts that I had to draw, taken as a whole, are limited by the sea, the area on which our studies are carried out, and are marked out, from one end to the other, by the various coastal positions which are in question in the accounts of the African War: *Hadrumetum* (Sousa), *Ruspina* and its port (Monastîr), *Leptis Minor* (Lemt'a), the anonymous islands, which are *Tarikhiat* in Strabon and the Djezâir and K'ourîat for the Arabs; *Thapsus* (Râs Dîmâs), *Zella* (Mahedîa), *Acholla* (El A'liîa), *Usula Civilas* (Inchilla), *Taphrura* (Sfak's) and *Thaenae* (Henchîr T'iné), which is in my view, as I have observed several times, the Thabena d' Hirtius.

Edrisi and Mr. Victor Guerin provided me with the data necessary to determine the distances from Acholla to Sullectum (Salek'ta), and Thapsus, distances which are missing on the Table of Peutinger, although the route connecting these three cities is shown there. It is to the French traveller [Guerin] that I owe having been able to place Usula and T'ine exactly precisely.

The plan of Hadrumetum, which belongs to the first series of operations in the African War, is based on the general draft of the plan of Sousa which we owe to captain Falbe and which I reproduced so that one can appreciate my own work.

There remain to me some quite important observations to make on the two charts of captain Smyth.

The first was the object of corrections in 1852, which related to the shore extending from Wadi Hamdoun to Cape Dîmâs.

These corrections in general do not appear to me to have been very fortunate, mainly around Monastir and I had to refer to the first edition whose drawing appears to me sometimes in conformity to the actual fact.

On the second chart, the shore beyond the Cape Khradidja goes westwards for nearly 23 kilometers, a direction that one does not find indicated on any the charts published since and which comes, partly, from a poor position of the village of Mellounech, which is easy to identify by the explorations of staff captain Pricot Sainte-Marie and Mr. Guerin, but on another side as [40] the study of the neighboring sea beds was made with some detail by captain Smyth and which seems to tally with this layout, I had to let it appear in some of my charts, so as to attract the attention of future hydrographs to this point.

Ultimately, I truly believe that this shore has that East-West direction, but that it does not have it over a distance as large that on the English chart.

These remarks and those which I previously made on the work of Smyth show sufficiently that it is quite necessary for the coasts of Tunisia to be surveyed at large scales by our skilful hydrographic engineers.

INTERIOR. — The principal positions which, in the interior of this part of Tunisia, are relevant for the operations of Caesar are: *Uzita*, *Agar*, *Tegea*, *Zeta*, *Sassura* and *Thysdrus*, then as secondary points *Vacca* and *Uscela*.

Uzita, in my plans, results from the same account of the operations of the Dictator around Ruspina, and more particularly, from a distance to Leptis given by Hirtius; *Agar* (Bou H'adjar) from personal experience; *Tegea* (Djemâl) and *Zeta* from distances provided by the Commentaries; *Sassura* from that given by the *Table of Peutinger* for Thysdrus, XII thousand paces or 17,772 meters. As for *Thysdrus*, I explained in the *Lexicon of Comparative Geography*, that it was impossible to accept the geodetic figures of Falbe and that it was necessary to substitute them with those which I obtained by combining the old itineraries with the statements of captain Pricot Sainte-Marie. It is to him that I owe the details of the road between Sousa and Thysdrus and amongst others the position of Bou Merdes which represents *Sassura*. Djemâl, which is for Dr. Shaw as for me, *Tegea*, was borrowed from captain Falbe, and critiqued by information which I owe to the kindness of Mr. Devoulx, senior, who, in 1830 accompanied Mr. Jules de Lesseps to Thysdrus and who collected all the details of the routes traversed by these gentlemen from Sousa to Mahedîa, from Mahedîa to El-Djemm (*Thysdrus*) and from El-Djemm to Sousa, by way of Djemâl, a route located to the east of that of captain Pricot. Sainte-Marie and that captain Falbe followed later.

My ideas on the subject of *Zeta* have varied, because I [41] did not want to interpret rigorously one of the expressions of the text of Hirtius which places it, with regard to the camp of César, behind of that of Scipion. I had at first identified it with *Msâken*, and then I had adopted the opinion of Mr. Pellissier who saw it in the ruins located between Feraïat and Ksîba of Sousa; it must inevitably be *Eleven* kilometers to the south south west of Menzel-Kâmel and *Twelve* kilometers to the North-West of Bou-Merdes (*Sassura*), at 35°31' North latitude and 8°13' East. — *Vacca* which, according to Hirtius was close to *Zeta*, must be Menzel-Kâmel as M. Pricot Sainte-Marie places it, and *Uscela*, Sah'alîl cited by almost all the travellers since Shaw.

I return for the remained to longer details on the reasons which have directed me in the determination of these positions in the *Lexicon of Comparative Geography*.

The detailed charts which I have attached to this General Comment and which are relevant to the first series of the operations of César, are extracted from a chart at a scale of 1:200,000 based on another chart at 1:100,000, on which I performed all my research.

The shape of the land, on these charts, is the result of an attentive study of the sketches of captain Pricot Sainte-Marie, the outline traced by Falbe in the general chart and from my own data. It is not and could not be rigorously precise, but it is not far from the truth, at least in its general expression.

The general maps, those which embrace most of Tunisia or considerable parts of Algeria, are drawn up after the long reconnaissances of captain Pricot Sainte-Marie, coordinated with the chart at 1:400,000 of the War Department and from good work of the topographic brigade of the staff officers of the army of Africa, to which the geographical sciences are already indebted for so many important services.

SECONDARY OPERATIONS.

The secondary operations of the African war, include [42] the march of Caesar, from Thapsus to Utica, from Utica to Zama and back, from the lines of the routes followed by its lieutenants to go to occupy *Vaga*, *Thisica*, *Thala*, and *Capsa*, operations which were revealed to us by Strabon.

I have indicated the layout of these various operations on general charts at the scale of 1:2,000,000 whose origin is the same as that of the general charts of the first series.

They are in general quite sufficient, since we know only the points of arrival of these operations; the points of departure of some of these are even hypothetical. I have strongly insisted on several occasions on the subject of *Zama*, on this mistake which had made it wander in so strange a manner relative to its position, whereas we have an old document which determines it almost mathematically. It must be at 35°58' and 6°49', a t 180 kilometers from Utica and 204 from Thapsus.

— As for the plan of Utica, the only one which belongs to this second series, this is a study which one will appreciate the value of by reading the long article that I devoted to this famous city in the *Lexicon of Comparative Geography* which completes this work.

There, one will also find the reasons explained which I used to place *Parada*, *Zama*, *Vaca*, *Thisica*, *Thala*, *Capsa* and *Zella*, as I did.

O. MACCARTHY.

Retrieved on October 4, 2010 from <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5689128v>

Note: The African War was Caesar's campaign against other Roman armies during the Civil War. His campaign to destroy the allies of Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus began after his landing at Hadrumentum (Sousse) on December 28, 47 BC. It was concluded in a battle against troops led by Scipio at Thapsus (Cape Dimas, 10 miles north of Mahdia) on April 6, 46 BC. It also signaled the end of the Roman Republic.