

BULLETIN
DE LA
SOCIÉTÉ DE GÉOGRAPHIE
DE L'EST

PUBLIÉ PAR LES SOINS ET SOUS LE CONTRÔLE

DU

COMITÉ DE RÉDACTION

TOME IV. — ANNÉE 1882

NANCY

BERGER-LEVRAULT & C^{ie}, LIBRAIRES-ÉDITEURS

11, RUE JEAN-LAMOURE, 11

MAISON A PARIS, 5, RUE DES BEAUX-ARTS

1882

1882 Basset

Bulletin, Volume 4

**Société de géographie de l'Est
(Geographical Society of the Orient)**

Volume IV, 1882

(p75-79)

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Djerbah, 2 March 1882.

On leaving Sousse (or more correctly Sousah) on February 25, we see better all that exists of the old Hadrumète (1); it quite accurately resembles the representations that the Moslem artists - if such exist - make of cities: for example, the paintings of Stamboul, etc, which are found in Constantine, in the palace of Ahmed-bey: a belt of crenelated walls encloses a confused mass of terraces and cupolas, from which rise, at some points, the minarets of the mosques and in particular that of the Qasr er Ribat and the Qasbah; everything is whitewashed: houses, ramparts, religious buildings, and resplendent in the light of the African sun.

p75 (1) Although opposed by Shaw, who placed Hadrumetum at Herglah (formerly Horrea celiac), this identification is now generally adopted. The name Hadrumetum that Mr. Guerin has brought to Adramytis, etc., Certainly has a Semitic origin and may be compared to that of Hadhramaut.

The sea is beautiful: *Valetta* sails well; at the end of an hour, we arrive at the other end of the gulf of Sousse, at Monastir, the ancient Ruspina - a name which still indicates a Phoenician origin. This is, as much as I can judge, a pretty little town, sitting at the end of a headland, in the middle of an African landscape where dominated by palm trees. To the south of the city, towards Mahadia, are some orchards with so many olive-trees that they resemble a forest. The port is rather distant from Monastir: we do not have time to go ashore; after a short halt, we set out again for Mahadia [76] perhaps built on the site of the old fort of Hannibal. Founded by Mahdi' Obaïd-Allah (300-308 hegira.), who wanted a new city as the capital of a new empire, taken by Roger of Sicily (543 hegira.), Mahadia singularly

lost its importance after Charles-Quint, having failed to keep it, demolished some of the fortifications (1551). The remainder of the walls still remains, along with Roman ruins, around the almost-island where the city is built. I have the leisure to contemplate them with my ease, without however being able to disembark, because the *Valetta*, in wanting to pass much too close to the shore, ran aground on a sand bank and was only able to free itself after five hours of efforts.

This delay prevented us from approaching in Sfax until the following day, around one o'clock. When arriving by sea, one sees this city like a group of houses and white buildings, in the middle of a long succession of orchards in which the many whitewashed dwellings stand out. The majority of the geographers identify it with Taphrura, which others place at Mansour, a small bordj located to the north of the city, in the direction of the Kerkennah islands. The east coast is very low: the ships are obliged to moor at a rather long distance, and the tide, which is significant in the Syrte, further increases the difficulties of disembarking. As the boats make a long stopover, I then go ashore to see M. Mattei the vice-consul, who hastens to place himself at my disposal for the little time that I have to pass in Sfax. This city, which presented a serious resistance to the French Army, still today shows traces of the bombardment: the majority of the houses are in ruins; the fort which protects Sfax and beside which one sees the guns of the ramparts which were used for defense, was repaired hastily; and promptly, during our short stay, an accident proved to the population that French shells are always dangerous. Two Arabs [77] who tried to open a shell that they had just unearthed, were killed by the explosion.

Sfax is divided into a European town and Arab town, the first being on the edge of the sea. We enter the second through the Gate of the Divan ('porte du Divan', [*Bab Diwan*]) and penetrate the amazing maze of Arab streets, the narrowness of which is still encumbered with repugnant heaps of mud and the remains of houses. Mr. Mattei shows me the place, close to the Gate of the Divan, where midshipman Léonnec of the navy was killed by a shot from a musket fired, says one, by an Arab woman. The repression was severe; and perhaps not enough, since on the day of our arrival, we learned that Mahres, located between Sfax and Gabes, was attacked and the camels carrying the posts and wire for the telegraph were removed.

On the Gate of the Divan are found some Arab inscriptions, partly covered in lime. In just a short time, the native industry of Sfax has recovered a little of its importance: they begin again the manufacture of powder horns carved out of wood of the apricot tree or of the jujube tree and decorated with filali (Morocco leather).

However, the majority of the shops of the souqs (markets), covered as those of Tunis, are still closed. As for the European trade, it began some time ago, in spite of the exaggerated complaints of some Italian or other nationals, who claimed to have lost, in consequence of the plundering, a fortune that they had never had. The temporary occupation of the city by the insurrectionists, led by Ali-Sherif, and the fires that they lit while withdrawing, destroyed a very curious Arab manuscript, the *Daïrat Mogdich*, in the Bedouin dialect (nomadic Arab), a collection of love songs or ballads composed by the popular poet Taleb Mallak. Some dealt with the famous insurrection of 1864, which erupted in Tunisia at the same time as the Algerian revolt. Of the two hundred and fifty songs of which this Couch was composed, one will possibly be able [78] to find perhaps a dozen in the mouths of the *meddahs* or singers, who go from café to café, or rather who went, because they have almost all disappeared since the bombardment.

We regain the boat before the tide and, in the night, we set out again for the oasis of Gabes, the old Tacapé. The coast, low like all of Southern Tunisia, takes shape little by little through the morning and, around eight o'clock, we begin to distinguish the dark lines of the palm trees which interrupt the red color of the sand. One sees finally a group of white buildings, tents and a bordj, forming the camp of wadi Gabès which gave its name to the oasis. Gabès appears to be only an Arab derivation of the old name Tacape: the Berber prefix **ta**, having separated from the radical **gap** or **qap**, according to the local pronunciation; this radical is found, furthermore, in a few names of nomadic or Berber origin; I will mention, for example, Gafsa, the old Capsa. Today still, one meets, in the population of the oasis, families of negros who differ from the blacks brought from the Sudan. Should we see in them the remainders of an indigenous population, like the Ethiopian Daratites (O. Dra' a) of southern Morocco, and prior to Berber immigration? This is what only succeeding anthropological studies could prove; for now, I give this opinion only as a simple assumption.

The coast is as inaccessible as in Sousse: we are not able to reach the mouth of the river which is used as a port, until after having endured very strong waves; I go ashore to under-midshipman M. Bréchin, but when, after lunching, my eyes look for the steamer which had brought me, it has disappeared, carrying to Tripoli my luggage and my effects, and leaving me in Gabès with only the clothing which I wear on my back. Officers of the camp hasten at once to make me forget my mishap, and, assured of [79] shelter, I think of profiting from my enforced stay in the oasis.

A dreadful sirocco blew today; ten steps in front of me, I could see nothing, in the swirls of sand which the south-west wind brought us. Under the tents, in the wooden huts, a layer of thin dust like flour, covered everything: one felt it squeek under the teeth, it penetrated through closed eyelids; finally you end up bathing in the sand. In the village, protected by the palm trees of the oasis, the wind was less violent; I then, this same day, explore Djarah in detail.

Gabès, which our charts mark as a city, is an oasis containing two villages: Djarah and Menzel, both located on the right Bank of the Ouadi [Wadi] Gabès. The chief town of the Outhan (district) of Arad is in Djarah; this preference is the cause of long arguments between the inhabitants of the two villages; today peace will have to be restored, because the Tunisian governor will establish himself in the bordj, at the edge of the sea, as soon as it is rebuilt.