

## **Archaeological News**

Author:  
Karl Lehmann

Source:  
American Journal of Archaeology,  
Vol. 54, No. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1950), pp. 128-132

Published by:  
Archaeological Institute of America

continued to clear the underground passages of the great ravelin. The clearing of these passages has revealed the damage caused by the Turks in the siege of 1570-71. When they had captured the city, they filled in the place to a height of about 60 feet.

The area to the east of the citadel (the so-called Othello's Tower), upon excavation revealed corbelled outer defences. The space between these outer defences and the inner had been filled in to a height of about 40 feet, the upper half of which is attributed to the remodeling of the Venetians in the sixteenth century.

At the Cathedral Church of the Island, where the Apostle Barnabas is reputed to have been buried, Mr. Mogabgab outside the present apses, uncovered several floors older than that connected with the reliquary containing the Apostle's bones. These await further study.

#### TUNISIA (1947)<sup>5</sup>

BY GILBERT-CHARLES PICARD,  
Director of Antiquities

#### PLATES XXIII, B-XXIV

CARTHAGE. The excavation of the *tophet* has been completed by P. Cintas.<sup>6</sup> At the lowest archaeological level, there were found walls belonging to a small cult installation which consisted of a niche some 40 m. on the side fronted by a small chamber and by a court with an altar. Around the whole structure is a sort of labyrinth. The niche contained votive pottery, in particular a dove-shaped askos, a gourd-shaped sprinkler of some kind, three oenochoes, two cylices, and some vases of lesser importance. In addition, Cintas found a foundation deposit under one of the walls, consisting of an amphora with twisted handles and a lamp with a single spout. Clay and decoration both prove these objects to be of Aegean provenance. They date from Subgeometric to Protocorinthian, and the sanctuary is the oldest establishment yet discovered in North Africa. It is certainly the work of the first

<sup>5</sup> The translation of M. Picard's manuscript, of which the following represents a slight abridgment, was made by H. and S. Immerwahr.

<sup>6</sup> *Revue Tunisienne*, 3rd ser., i (1948), pp. 1 ff.

<sup>7</sup> In order to clarify the problem of the first colonization of the Phoenicians in Africa, the *Académie des*

Phoenician sailors to touch Carthage.<sup>7</sup> This old chapel probably determined the location of the historical sanctuary; at any rate it was covered by more recent votive deposits—some of which had even penetrated the hollow which served as the "Holy of Holies."

In the upper layers of the *tophet*, Cintas found a small Mithraic tauroctone, 50 cm. long. It comes apparently from a Mithraeum near the harbor.

The excavations of the Baths of Antoninus have been continued under the direction of G. L. Feuille, from May through December; the northeastern portion has turned out to be symmetrical to the northwest wing, uncovered last year.

ODUNA. The exploration of the Baths has been carried out by German prisoners of war, by command of General Duval, commander-in-chief of the French army in Tunisia, and under the direction of Colonel Reyniers. The building seems closely related to the Baths of Antoninus, and is of the same period according to the brick stamps. The sculptural decoration consisted of numerous statues and heads which will be published by P. Quoniam, a member of the French School in Rome, in the *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire*. Most of them are mediocre pieces of the Antonine period; most important are a herm of black marble like those found in the Baths at Carthage and likewise representing an African barbarian, and a small head of white marble from the statue of an Oriental goddess.

MACTAR AND VICINITY. The gymnasium has been completely cleared, and a partial restoration carried out. The building had its entrance on the west side on a *cardo*. Here a dedication to Caracalla was found of A.D. 202 with the title *princeps juventutis* listed first; probably the *ordo* of Mactar, the authors of the dedication, wanted to honor the princeps on the spot where the *juvenes* of the colony assembled. On the north side, the gymnasium was originally flanked by a *decumanus* which was invaded by constructions of Byzantine date; the floor of one of these late

*Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* has decided to entrust Cintas with the systematic excavation of the site of Utica, which was according to tradition the oldest Phoenician foundation in Africa. The project was begun in 1948 and will continue for several years.

houses has a fine mosaic with animals which are unfortunately much destroyed.

Toward the end of the campaign we located the Forum. It is in the western part of the ruins and had as its entrance gate the arch of Trajan. Its excavation was reserved for 1948.

South of Mactar, the Roman town of Thigibba (Hamman-Zouakra) has been the site of excavations by Colonel Reyniers who has located the Forum without being able to remove the 2 m. of earth which cover it. The Forum was entered by an arch similar to that at Mactar; on one of the right bases there is the inscription: *si qui(s) hic urinam fecerit habebit martem iratum*. A large number of tombs of the second and third centuries have been excavated together with new epitaphs.

Still further south, on the road to Sbiba (Sufes), we found at Rohia an inscription from a place called Henchir el Left. It appears to be the dedication of an aqueduct serving a *nymphaeum*; compare the inscription from Aïn Mdoudja north of Mactar (*CIL*, vii, IV, 23673), which relates in a Vergilian cento the regulation of a spring by one Florentius.

At the same place a strange funerary stele represents symbolically the superimposed "spheres" (air, water) which the soul traverses before finding rest in the subastral regions, under Olympus where Caelestis reigns.

North of Mactar, the site of Ksar Toual, where Ch. Saumagne had thought to locate Zama Regia, has been explored by Louis Deroche, a member of the French School of Rome. An account of this campaign will be given in the next report.

**BULLA REGIA.** In the course of clearing and restoration a fine statue of white marble was discovered, representing a nymph; so also a column bearing the following inscription: *C. Helvius Bargibal suo et filiorum suor(um) nomine colum(nam) tribul(ibus) suis prom(isit) itemq(ue) donavit*. From this text it appears that the people of the colonia of Bulla Regia were divided not into curiae, as is the rule in Africa, but into tribes.

**ACHOLLA (BOTRIA).** Excavations undertaken on the site of Botria on the coast 45 km. north of Sfax have showed its exceptional importance. The ruins cover an area of about 200 hectares close to the coast, which at this point forms a small cape sheltering a harbor which today is

submerged, but whose pier remains intact under water. Several important buildings, among them an amphitheater, are clearly visible. Wilmanns had suggested identifying the place with Acholla, one of the *civitates liberae* included in the province of Africa in 146 B.C., an identification now proved correct by the discovery of an inscription. From the identification of Acholla follows that of Ruspe which is recognizable on the coast about ten kilometers further south near Sidi Mzarra, where ruins have kept the name Koudiat el Rosfa.

In Acholla trial excavations have made it possible to recognize a large number of buildings, mostly villas, paved with mosaics of exceptional quality. The most important of these monuments is the Bath from which comes the inscription of the *Populus Achollitanus*. In addition, there was found here a fragment of a marble plaque seemingly bearing the number of the thirteenth acclamation of the Emperor Trajan (A.D. 116), perhaps the dedication of the building. The main interest lies in the mosaics of the *frigidarium*. The floor of the large rectangular room was longitudinally divided into three sections. In the eastern one, in a square emblema, Dionysus is shown advancing in a chariot drawn by two centaurs (pl. xxiv); in medallions to the north and south, Spring and Summer flank the triumphant god; in the remainder of the strip are displayed gods and marine monsters. The center of the room is subdivided by axial and diagonal lines into eight triangular sections, each representing a nymph and satyr at play, while all around runs a frieze with centaurs fighting wild animals.

In the center of the room with the double apse to the north, a hexagonal medallion, partially destroyed, contained a nude and a draped figure, one leaning against the other. On either side toward east and west the decoration consisted of an imaginary architecture corresponding to the Pompeian wall decoration of the fourth style. Under an arch a Victory advances in her chariot between winged masks of winds joined with Tritons blowing their trumpets. Beneath the Victory, in an elongated space corresponding to the plinth of the wall, a sacred grove populated by peasants gathering fruit encircles a large trophy with chapels in which one sees statues of Dionysus and Corybantes.

There can be no doubt that the whole ensemble derives directly from Alexandrian prototypes. Such an origin is rendered certain by the general theme, devoted to the triumph of Dionysus Cosmocrator, which could serve as an illustration to the text of Callixenus of Rhodes (Ath., *Deipn.*, v, 196a-200a), by many details (sphinxes, lotus flowers, radiate gorgoneia, gilt figures mixed with scrolls), and the picturesque motifs, such as that of the sacred grove, reminiscent of the Nilotic landscapes so common in the decorative paintings of the end of the first and the beginning of the second centuries.

In addition to the Baths of Trajan the excavations have brought to light another bath with a room with double apse, the pavement of which represented a magnificent group of marine centaurs. The private houses were decorated no less lavishly. One of them could be excavated completely, and gives a good idea of what Punic houses must have been like, a mass of small rooms juxtaposed without order; at a date subsequent to the first construction an attempt seems to have been made to give the ground plan greater regularity by making it closer to the Hellenistic type. However, the peristyle is reduced to a narrow court with stuccoed columns painted red, and with basket capitals which seem to derive from a debased lotiform order. The walls were constructed of mudbrick, as are still the houses of the Sahel, upon a socle of small stones. But they were covered with pictures of Pompeian type, of which some fragments have been recovered. The floor was covered with magnificent mosaics, the best of which represents the busts of the Four Seasons grouped around a basket of flowers (pl. XXIII, B). Other houses have yielded further mosaics and fragments of paintings.

Still closer to the sea we found traces of a Christian shrine with a double baptistry as well as tombs, some with mosaics.

It is possible to recover in outline the history of Acholla, a *civitas libera* since 146 B.C., adhering to the party of Caesar before Thapsus because of the importance of the emporium of Cercina, occupied shortly before by the dictator. The greatest prosperity of the town must be placed in the first and the beginning of the second centuries. A coin found in the excavations with an illegible Punic legend and the head of a god covered with a plumed tiara, must doubtless be compared with pieces bearing a legend in Latin, of the Augustan period, which L. Müller attributes to this town. It seems that the name of Acholla is concealed in that of the *municipium Ailium Hadrianum Augustum Chlulitanum* or *Chullitanum* in the inscription of Q Aradius Proculus (*CIL*, vi, 1684).<sup>8</sup>

THAENAE (THINA). The ruins, extensive but much effaced, lying 10 km. south of Sfax, have been explored under the direction of Professor Frindel of the College at Sfax. The most interesting discovery is that of a gate of the fortification in which the base of an equestrian statue was used as lintel; it bears an honorary inscription of the centurion Q. Aemilius Pudens, brother of Q. Aemilius Laetus, the famous praetorian prefect of Commodus, and his murderer: the cause also of the fall of Pertinax, finally put to death by Didius Julianus. Hitherto the origin of this high-born schemer had been unknown. His influence may no doubt explain the appearance of Africans in the high echelons of the administration at the end of the second century.

<sup>8</sup> A preliminary report of these discoveries has appeared in *CRAI*, 1947, pp. 557-562.