

JULIEN POINSSOT ET SES DESCENDANTS. TROIS
GÉNÉRATIONS DE DÉCOUVERTES QUI ONT DÉMÊLÉ LES
ANCIENNES RELIGIONS DE L'AFRIQUE DU NORD

Julien Poinssot and his Descendants. Three Generations of Discoveries which Unravelled the Ancient Religions of North Africa*

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Fecha recepción 24/12/2020 | Fecha aceptación 31/05/2021

Abstract

This paper discusses the scientific lives of Julien, Louis and Claude Poinssot (grandfather, father and son) and their important contribution to the study of ancient religions in North Africa, especially in Tunisia, including their intense engagement with

Résumé

Cet article traite de la vie scientifique de Julien, Louis et Claude Poinssot (respectivement grand-père, père et fils) et de leur contribution significative aux études des religions anciennes en Afrique du Nord, en particulier en Tunisie, y compris un

* I cannot thank the editors of this volume enough for giving me the opportunity to write this chapter, which has been such a pleasure to research. In particular, I would like to thank Valentino Gasparini for his personal support and unlimited patience. I am also extremely grateful to Carmen Fernández Fisac and Javier Andreu Pintado, whose generosity and unconditional friendship made access to crucial documents possible, which would otherwise have been impossible to obtain due to the current global health crisis and the closure of libraries. Paul Scade has improved my English. Any remaining mistakes are my own.

the ancient *Thugga*. Julien, who had been trained as a notary, soon became a pioneering epigraphist of *Proconsularis*. As a result of the colonial context in which he worked and the bureaucratic problems he encountered, his archaeological career was brief, albeit intensive. Nevertheless, his vocation was inherited by his descendants, Louis and Claude, who eventually became Directors of Antiquities and of Museums. Their work left a remarkable legacy, including the Mahdia underwater excavations and the exploration of the Dougga Capitol.

Keywords

Poinssot, Julien, Louis, Claude, *Thugga*, Kef, Bernard Roy, *Mercurius Sobrius*, Tunisian Antiquities Service, INHA, Tissot

investissement intense avec l'ancienne *Thugga*. Julien, qui avait été formé pour devenir notaire, est rapidement devenu un épigraphiste pionnier de *Proconsularis*. Le contexte colonial dans lequel il a développé sa carrière archéologique et les problèmes bureaucratiques auxquels il a dû faire face l'ont rendu bref malgré son intensité, mais cette vocation a été héritée par ses descendants, Louis et Claude, qui deviendront par la suite Directeurs des Antiquités et des Musées, dont les travaux ont laissé un héritage remarquable, notamment les fouilles subaquatiques de Mahdia et l'exploration du Capitole de Dougga.

Mots-clés

Poinssot, Julien, Louis, Claude, *Thugga*, Le Kef, Bernard Roy, *Mercurius Sobrius*, Direction des antiquités de Tunisie, INHA, Tissot.

1. Julien Poinssot (1844-1900)

“*L’Orient m’enchanté; il me semble rêver un conte des mille et une nuits*”. When Julien Poinssot wrote these words, full of romantic and colonial nuances, from Algeria in a letter to his friend Valbert Chevillard in September 1870¹, he was just a 26-year-old recruit, caught up in the Franco-Prussian War. However, despite his young age, he was already showing some of the fascination that would eventually turn him into the brilliant epigraphist he was to become.

Julien Poinssot was born in Dijon in 1844, the son of a prominent notary of the city. As his mother had passed away shortly after his birth, he was sent to study at a dull and decrepit boarding school² for much of his childhood, an experience that would leave a profound mark upon both his character and his health. As a result of the physical and psychological effects this environment had on him, his maternal grandfather took him in and raised him at his country property at Plombières-lez-Dijon. Here, the young Julien was able to recover and carry out physical activities, and here too he discovered a deep love for nature that was to have a significant influence on his later passion for exploring. Eventually, the time came to resume his academic training, and he was sent to the prestigious Dominican school at Oullins. His time spent with the Dominicans allowed Julien to acquire a good academic education, and during this period he forged a number of lifelong friendships with both pupils and professors, including Fr. Captier, who was to be murdered in 1871 during the events of the Paris Commune³. After finishing the *baccalauréat*, and against his will, his authoritarian but concerned father sent him on to Paris to study law, so that, following his steps, he could develop a career as a respectable notary. Julien did not find his vocation in legal studies but, diligent as he was, he did his best to finish the work required of him and graduated in 1869⁴.

The following year, as he grappled with the uncertainties typical to any new graduate and considered various career options, historical circumstances intervened to decide matters

1. C. Pallu de Lessert, *Julien Poinssot. Souvenirs (1844-1900)*, Paris, 1905, 7-8.

2. A common institution in France from the 1730s onwards, a *pension* run by a *maître de pension*, in this case, *Monsieur Brion*. Brion was a very severe and old-fashioned master, as we know from Julien Poinssot’s biographer, C. Pallu de Lessert, *Julien Poinssot...*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 2.

3. C. Pallu de Lessert, *Julien Poinssot...*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 4.

4. *Ibid.*, 7.

for him. War with Prussia was declared in July 1870, and, soon after, he enrolled in the 8th Hussars Regiment, which was stationed in Algeria. As much as he wished that his regiment would be sent to fight the Prussians in France, his unit had to remain in place and put down the local revolts that had been sparked by the conflict⁵. At the time, Julien's letters expressed a great frustration on this account, but, in the long run, this historical accident was one of the major catalysts that drove forward his future work as a researcher of North African antiquity.

Upon his discharge, Julien returned to France, but he quickly realised how much he longed for Algeria and began to seek ways to return. It took him some time to achieve his objective, but on April 1st, 1873, he was appointed as the new secretary to the prefect of Constantine, *Monsieur Des Clozeaux*⁶. This was supposed to be a temporary position, something to occupy him while he waited for a promotion to a more worthy post, but his elevation did not come as promptly as he would have wished. While he waited, Julien spent several months accompanying a member of the Institute⁷, Charles Sainte-Claire Deville, on a geological exploration mission to the east of the Algerian Sahara⁸. This journey would have a double consequence for him. On the one hand, his promotion was further delayed – due to his absence, he failed to complete the necessary bureaucratic processes. But on the other, it led to him coming completely under the spell of Africa: “*L’Algérie m’a séduit*”, as he wrote to a friend shortly after⁹.

During the following five years, Julien managed to gain new appointments, prospering and frequently having the opportunity to try different positions. However, by 1878 he had become jaded with bureaucracy, so different to the fieldwork research he loved; thus, he decided to quit colonial administration, return to France, and marry Marie Charlotte Durand de Laur, with whom he settled in Paris¹⁰.

While in Algeria, Julien had met and become friends with Alexandre Poulle, a keen amateur archaeologist who was secretary of the *Recueil des notices et mémoires de la Société archéologique de la province de Constantine*. Once in Paris, and through this friendship – which was ultimately responsible for turning him into an archaeologist¹¹ – he was now

5. As is widely known, the Franco-Prussian war resulted in the fall of the Second French Empire and also led to the devastation of its army. Some units, especially cavalry regiments like the 8th Hussars, necessarily had to be left in Algeria. Their mobilisation would have made very little difference on the European front-line while contributing to greater losses overseas (cf. S. Shann and L. Delperier, *French Army 1870-71 Franco Prussian War (2): Republican Troops*, London, 1991, 5-6).

6. C. Pallu de Lessert, *Julien Poinssot...*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 11.

7. *L’Institute de France*, the organisation responsible for coordinating the Academies that were in charge of exploration.

8. This was probably not part of his duties as secretary. Before his appointment, Julien had already stood out for aiding Émile Isambert in writing a chapter of his *Guide de l’Orient*, so it is not surprising that he was chosen for this particular mission.

9. C. Pallu de Lessert, *Julien Poinssot...*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 12-13.

10. *Ibid.*, 15.

11. *Ibid.*, 17.

introduced to the orientalist Ernest Renan. Julien, who had always been interested in History and was familiar with Latin, decided to take Renan's courses at the *École pratique des Hautes-Études*, as well as those of Ernest Desjardins and Antoine Héron de Villefosse¹². Later on, trained and supported by Léon Renier, whom he had also met through Poulle, Julien felt ready to apply to lead an expedition of his own for the first time. In June 1880, the Ministry¹³ entrusted him with the following duties: “*de rechercher dans la petite Kabylie, la province de Constantine et la Tunisie, les restes antiques qui subsistent encore dans ces régions, de recueillir et d'estamper des inscriptions*”¹⁴. The central aim of the expedition was to collect inscriptions that were intended to complete Renier's volume¹⁵, which had been published more than twenty years earlier¹⁶. Julien embarked on his journey from Sète on September 8th.

After arriving in Algiers, Julien travelled through towns such as Cherchell, Affreville, Milianah, Ténès, and Orléansville, and toured the regions of Oran and Sétif¹⁷. As he went, he copied and stamped those of the inscriptions he encountered that he believed to be unpublished or to have problematic readings. His research was not focused specifically on religion – as is the case with every pioneer, the materials he gathered were varied and diverse – but a number of votive inscriptions can be identified amongst those he collected.

At Affreville (*Zuccabar*), he lamented how the ruins of the ancient city had been plundered to build the new one. He also mentioned two inscriptions that were, in his opinion, remarkable, dedicated to Victory and Mithras respectively¹⁸, and documented an unpublished inscription (*CIL VIII 21487*) dedicated to Serapis. Julien sets this latter in relation to the surrounding architectural fragments, and concludes that there must have been a temple at the ancient settlement, or a *sacellum* at least, dedicated to the god¹⁹. From Frenadah (Aïoun Sbiba) he retrieved an invocation to the *dii immortales* (*CIL VIII 21557*) in favour of the Emperor's welfare, and from Aghbal an inscription consecrated to Jupiter by the priest Aulus Felix²⁰. The contents of another inscription, discovered by him at Béjaïa (*Saldae*), attested to the existence of the tomb of Herennia, priestess of Ceres (*CIL VIII 20686*)²¹. However, Julien's comments

12. S. Saint-Amans, “Le voyage de Julien Poinssot en Tunisie (octobre 1882 – avril 1883)”, in M. Royo, M. Denoyelle, E. Hindy-Champion and D. Louyot (eds.), *Du voyage savant aux territoires de l'archéologie. Voyageurs, amateurs et savants à l'origine de l'archéologie moderne*, Paris, 2011, 316.

13. The institution responsible for the management of these missions, at the time, was the *Ministère de l'Instruction Publique*.

14. C. Pallu de Lessert, *Julien Poinssot...*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 18.

15. L. Renier, *Inscriptions romaines de l'Algérie, recueillies et publiées en 14 fascicules*, Paris, 1855-1858.

16. S. Saint-Amans, “Le voyage de Julien Poinssot en Tunisie...”, *op. cit.*, n. 12, 317.

17. C. Pallu de Lessert, *Julien Poinssot...*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 18-20.

18. J. Poinssot, “Inscriptions de la Maurétanie Césarienne”, *Bulletin Trimestriel des Antiquités Africaines*, 1, 1882-1883, 41. The one dedicated to Victory is possibly *CIL VIII 96729*.

19. *Ibid.*, 42.

20. *Ibid.*, 51-57.

21. J. Poinssot, “Inscriptions latines inédites de Sétif et de quelques autres localités”, *Recueil des Notices et Mémoires de la Société Archéologique du Département de Constantine*, 22, 1882, 210.

and analyses are more interested in prosopography and in the onomastic and administrative aspects of the evidence encountered, than in its religious dimensions.

While Julien's journey was supposed to take him into Tunisia as well, after a number of setbacks caused by extreme weather conditions he decided to return to France in January 1881. The trip had been far from fruitless, and he was able to publish most of his findings²², in addition to giving several lectures at the *Société nationale des antiquaires* in the months following his return²³. It was during this period that he began to pay serious attention to an idea that had been swirling around in his head for some time: the founding of an archaeological journal.

During his first Algerian experience, Julien had met with members of the *Société de Géographie et d'Archéologie d'Oran*, including its director, Louis Demaeght, who was particularly concerned with developing the group's archaeological component. The members of the society had classified and inventoried the collection held at the Museum of Oran, but they believed that it was not enough to simply preserve the artefacts. Rather, they thought that the contents of the museum should be explained and communicated. Julien, for his part, wished to create something that would not be limited to a particular province or town, but that would encompass the whole of North Africa. He also intended it to have a "living" structure that would protect it from rapidly becoming obsolete, as often happened with the large compilations published in expensive volumes that were so common at the time. The goal was to keep the public up to date on the latest archaeological discoveries within the African territories, and it was in pursuit of that goal that the *Bulletin Trimestriel des Antiquités Africaines* was born. The first issue appeared in July 1882²⁴.

It was probably during this period that Julien first met the diplomat and explorer Charles Tissot. Tissot, who was both as *dijonnais* and as passionate about Africa as Poinssot, became a contributor to the new *Bulletin*²⁵. Over the preceding decades, Tissot had been attempting to write a *Géographie comparée de l'Afrique romaine*, a monumental compendium of the epigraphy, archaeology and geography of Roman Africa. However, the work had been paused for a considerable period for personal reasons, and when Tissot was appointed as the new French ambassador to London in 1882, the final stagnation of the project became clear. Julien was eager for an opportunity to resume his voyage, and especially keen to cover the Tunisian ground that he had previously missed. Tissot, thus, suggested a project that would benefit both of them: he would serve as the scientific director of a new expedition, intended to gather new Tunisian materials to complete his book, and Julien would go and do the field-

22. Primarily in the form of a short memoir of the expedition (J. Poinssot, "Inscriptions latines inédites de Sétif...", *op. cit.*, n. 21, 195-213) and reports on a number of separate fragments (J. Poinssot, "Inscriptions de la Maurétanie...", *op. cit.*, n. 18, 31-62).

23. Cf. *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France pour l'année 1880*, 198, 295, 297.

24. C. Pallu de Lessert, *Julien Poinssot...*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 22.

25. S. Saint-Amans, "Le voyage de Julien Poinssot en Tunisie...", *op. cit.*, n. 12, 317.

work in his place, with a set program and precise itineraries, as well as Tissot's political and economic support²⁶.

However, Julien had linked himself to a mission director whose ambitions aroused worries in the Ministry. The Ministry had already entrusted René Cagnat and Henri Saladin with a very similar mission; it was only with great reluctance that they allowed the expedition of Tissot and Poinssot to go forward, and even then, they were unwilling to provide any funding²⁷. Eventually, Tissot's authoritarian and ruthless character was to put an end to the friendship between the two men. Julien had his own questions and theories; he wanted to explore sites of interest to him that lay beyond the officially established itinerary. Tissot, however, refused to condone any deviation from the agreed path²⁸. The programme was to take Julien from Sousse (*Hadrumentum*) to Sbeitla (*Sufetula*), from the valley of Medjerda to Thina (*Thaenae*), and, using Tunis as a base, on excursions to *Uthica*, Zaghouan, Testour, and the area surrounding Le Kef, among numerous other sites, all of them selected to serve the ends of Tissot's inquiries (one of the most important of these was the identification of *Zama Regia*)²⁹.

Like most explorers in this period, Julien suffered from the huge gaps in the cartographic record, having to make do with a combination of the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, the Antonine Itinerary, and an incomplete 1857 military map³⁰. Throughout the expedition, he also lacked a proper supply of some of the tools he needed for his work, and even, at certain points, an adequate supply of food and shelter. However, this did not prevent him from producing a great deal of high-quality data, using a new scientific approach which differed significantly from that of the earlier collectors of antiquities. This development is evident in his short article *Instructions pour la recherche des antiquités*, in which he states that “*ces précieux documents qui viennent combler les lacunes de l'histoire et nous révèlent l'organisation sociale des peuples civilisés de l'Afrique ancienne ne peuvent être utilisés que s'ils nous sont transmis accompagnés de tous les renseignements propres à faciliter leur interprétation*”³¹.

Julien departed from Paris on October 22nd, 1882, and arrived in Tunis on the 25th, just in time for the Bey's funeral³². This coincidence was very disturbing for him: French dominance over Tunisia was little more than a year old, and, as a former combatant, he was concerned about the misfortunes that an uprising could bring. While his fears did not materialise, the situation still had a negatively effect on the reception he received from the military authorities, who did not welcome the arrival of a civilian explorer under such circumstances. Julien spent the first days of November at Le Kef (*Sicca Veneria*), where he met the consular officer Bernard Roy, with whom he would share a lifelong friendship. Roy was essential to all the Tunisian

26. *Ibid.*, 318.

27. *Ibid.*, 322.

28. C. Pallu de Lessert, *Julien Poinssot...*, *op. cit.*, n.1, 25-26.

29. S. Saint-Amans, “Le voyage de Julien Poinssot en Tunisie...”, *op. cit.*, n. 12, 318-319.

30. *Ibid.*, 320.

31. J. Poinssot, “Instructions pour la recherche des antiquités”, *Bulletin Trimestriel des Antiquités Africaines*, 1, 1882-1883, v-viii.

32. C. Pallu de Lessert, *Julien Poinssot...*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 26.

missions at the time, serving as the link between civilians and the military authorities. In his key position, he provided missionaries and explorers with contacts, specific indications of what they might expect to find in particular locations (the testimonies of local inhabitants were crucial for archaeological discoveries), route recommendations, supplies, and mail³³. Julien could not have found a better supporter and companion for his explorations, and he and Roy went on to publish jointly the findings at Le Kef in the first issue of the *Bulletin*³⁴.

In addition to a dozen funerary monuments, the pair documented an inscription (*CIL* VIII 15881) which, according to Julien, was the first to mention the temple of Venus, “où les femmes de la ville venaient se prostituer pour gagner leur dot”, an assertion which reveals his knowledge of the classical texts, in this case, Valerius Maximus³⁵. Leaving aside the inaccuracy of what modern historians now see as groundless accusations³⁶, Julien suggested that this inscription attests that the temple had been in a condition of neglect for some time, and that it was restored around the 3rd century, when the commemorative inscription was engraved³⁷.

After this tour through Le Kef, Roy provided Poinssot with a horse³⁸ and left him to continue the exploration on his own (Fig. 1). Julien returned to Tunis, and from there he began to follow the route laid down by Tissot. Over the following six months, he would scrupulously follow the instructions of his mission director, travelling from one region to another, and documenting every unpublished inscription or monument he encountered. This labour produced more than 500 photographs, as well as countless sketches, notebooks, and imprints, which were to provide the embryo of the archives of the Poinssot Family, acquired by the INHA's Library in 2006³⁹. It is not easy to establish accurately the itinerary followed by Julien, since, due to the cartographic limitations of the era, his notes show estimated distances calculated by reference to the time that had been spent travelling. His biographer, Clément Pallu de Lessert, after studying his notebooks thoroughly, provided the most precise approximation of Poinssot's itinerary⁴⁰; however, for the purpose of the present paper, it will be more useful to focus on the route which corresponds to the published version of his religious finds.

33. S. Saint-Amans, “Le voyage de Julien Poinssot en Tunisie...”, *op. cit.*, n. 12, 319.

34. J. Poinssot and B. Roy, “Inscriptions du Kef”, *Bulletin Trimestriel des Antiquités Africaines*, 1, 1882-1883, 289-291.

35. Val. Max., II 6, 15: *Siccae enim fanum est Veneris, in quod se matronae conferebant atque inde procedentes ad quaestum, dotis corporis iniuria contrahebant, honesta nimirum tam inhonesto vinculo coniugia iuncturae.*

36. S. Budin, *The Myth of Sacred Prostitution in Antiquity*, Cambridge, 2007, 210-246.

37. J. Poinssot and B. Roy, “Inscriptions du Kef...”, *op. cit.*, n. 34, 290.

38. S. Saint-Amans, “Le voyage de Julien Poinssot en Tunisie...”, *op. cit.*, n. 12, 323.

39. *Ibid.*, 319-320.

40. C. Pallu de Lessert, *Julien Poinssot...*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 71-76.

At Bou Djelida (*Mizeoter*), in the area of the Siliana Governorate, Julien spotted a white marble sarcophagus⁴¹, profusely ornamented and bearing the monogram of Christ, which he actually made a sketch of. It was placed inside a house and was used as a tank to store oil; from the same town, he documented two votive inscriptions. The first, carved in limestone, was the consecration to Tellus and Ceres Augusta of an ornamented doorway (*CIL* VIII 12332)⁴². The association of these two goddesses was very common throughout North Africa, but this was the first actual example to come to light of them sharing an inscription⁴³. The second inscription was the funerary stele of Aemilia Amotmicar (*CIL* VIII 12335), a priestess of Ceres who died at the age of 75 after having been consecrated to the goddess for 35 years. Julien gives a detailed description of the stele's decoration, a bas-relief of a woman leaning on an altar, situated above the text. The name of the late priestess, clearly of Punic origin, means "servant of Melqart" (*MT MLQRT*)⁴⁴. It has been suggested, on the basis of the evidence of this inscription and several others, that the priestesses of this particular cult were women of humble social standing, coming from non-elite families of indigenous background, although popular within their own communities⁴⁵.

During his visit to Bijga (*Bisica Lucana*)⁴⁶, in the north of the fertile Fahs plain, Julien Poinssot documented an inscription consecrated to the Capitoline Triad – Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva (*CIL* VIII 12286)⁴⁷ – and dedicated to the welfare of the current emperor, Antoninus Pius. Without making any further comment on religious matters, Julien does attempt to recap the histories of the towns he visits through the study of the retrieved inscriptions, as in the case of *Bisica*, which, he notes, was just a *civitas* under Antoninus Pius, but had become a *municipium* by the time of Marcus Aurelius⁴⁸. The next stop on the itinerary was the village of Henchir M' Himès (also in the territory of *Bisica*), where he documented an epigraph (*CIL* VIII 12314) consecrated to Venus, although of an administrative nature. He points out that the inscription is useful in helping to show that the settlement was built upon the emperor's private domain⁴⁹.

Six kilometres east from the village lay Bou Ftis (*Avitta Bibba*), where Julien discovered an inscription (*CIL* VIII 12272) which revealed the existence of a *fanum* dedicated to Mercury in this

41. J. Poinssot, "Inscriptions inédites recueillies dans un voyage exécuté en 1882-1883, par ordre de S. E. le Ministre de l'Instruction publique", *Bulletin Trimestriel des Antiquités Africaines*, 1, 1882-1883, 294.

42. *Ibid.*, 294.

43. A. Cadotte, *La romanisation des dieux. L'interpretatio romana en Afrique du Nord sous le Haut-Empire*, Leiden and Boston, 2007, 494.

44. C.R. Krahmalkov, *A Phoenician-Punic Grammar*, Leiden and Boston, 2001, 125.

45. E.M. Hemelrijk, *Hidden Lives, Public Personae. Women and Civic Life in the Roman West*, Oxford, 2005, 61.

46. Featured as *Risca* in the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, according to J. Poinssot.

47. J. Poinssot, "Inscriptions inédites recueillies ...", *op. cit.*, n. 41, 297.

48. *Ibid.*, 298.

49. *Ibid.*, 313.

location. Julien found this inscription rather interesting, and as he points out, “[C’était un] temple qui au commencement du quatrième siècle de notre ère menaçait ruine et aurait été restauré”⁵⁰.

Within the Zaghouan Governorate, Poinssot visited Bir Mcherga (*Giufi*), where he was able to find only one unpublished inscription: *CIL* VIII 12381; a consecration to Pluto Augustus by two *aediles*, one of which was also *flamen perpetuus*⁵¹. He also documented a dedication to Caelestis Augusta which had been already published in *CIL* VIII 859, but which he considered worth noting, as the version available in the *Corpus* was missing the first line (*Leonti Dardani*), without which it was impossible to identify this *sodalitas*’ authorship⁵².

Further south, in the Kairouan Governorate, Julien reached Karachoun, the ancient *Muzuca*, where he found several inscriptions mentioning members of the *gens Clodia*. He suggested that these people may have been related to Clodius Albinus, the rival of Septimius Severus, whose hometown, *Hadrumentum*, was less than a day’s walk⁵³. One of these inscriptions was a consecration to Apollo, in whose honour three members of the family (a decurion, his brother, and their niece) had paid for a temple (*CIL* VIII 12058). Julien registered two other religious findings at this location: a dedication to the local Genius Augustus for the emperor’s welfare (*CIL* VIII 12059), and an inscription attesting that a certain Plautia, after having been made perpetual *flaminica* and according to a promise, built from scratch a small shrine for a certain divinity, complete with a cult statue (*CIL* VIII 12067). The devotion to Apollo was also evident at Julien’s next stop: from Sidi Amor Djedidi (*Sivalis*) he retrieved a pedestal, consecrated to the god with the epithet Augustus, which probably would have held his statue (*CIL* VIII 12017). Although the names of the dedicants were not well preserved, Julien managed to identify them (through two inscriptions from *Giufi*) as two *Maximiani*, a family which seemed particularly interested in this cult⁵⁴.

On arrival at Henchir Boudja, Julien spotted a large area in which several inscriptions had been reused in modern buildings. One of these mentioned a temple, possibly consecrated to Juno (*CIL* VIII 12037), while another was dedicated to Mercury (*CIL* VIII 12027)⁵⁵. He then turned south and explored the area adjacent to the Djebel Serj. From Henchir Sidi Amara (*Agger*) he retrieved a consecration to Venus Augusta (*CIL* VIII 12140), as well as numerous Christian funerary epitaphs bearing chi-ros⁵⁶.

At Kesra (*Chusira*), on the *Limes Tripolitanus*, he documented an inscription, embedded in the wall of a house, offered to Dominus Saturnus by a *duumvir* (*CIL* VIII 12126)⁵⁷. Not far from there, at El Ksour, lay the remains of the ancient *Uzappa*, where Julien consid-

50. *Ibid.*, 310.

51. *Ibid.*, 324.

52. J. Poinssot, “Inscriptions inédites recueillies ...”, *op. cit.*, n. 41, 325.

53. J. Poinssot, “Inscriptions inédites recueillies dans un voyage exécuté en 1882-1883, par ordre de S. E. le Ministre de l’Instruction publique”, *Bulletin Trimestriel des Antiquités Africaines*, 2, 1884, 72.

54. *Ibid.*, 80.

55. *Ibid.*, 84.

56. *Ibid.*, 97.

57. *Ibid.*, 226.

ered the identification of some ruins in the south of the town (a semi-porticoed, rectangular, fine-stone building) with a Byzantine-era basilica⁵⁸. He also documented a number of inscriptions. Two of these were consecrations to goddesses: one to Juno Augusta (*CIL* VIII 11925) and the other, an epigraph and bust, to Bellona (*CIL* VIII 11923), carved in bas-relief on a rock that dominated the ravine which opened to the north-west of the city⁵⁹. Another inscription, in the external face of one of the city's gates, which was also a triumphal arch, was consecrated to the Genius of *Uzappa* (*CIL* VIII 11924); it was adorned with two heads sporting horn-topped foreheads, to which a long beard and thick hair gave, in Julien's view, a barbarous appearance⁶⁰. He also retrieved several Punic inscriptions, one of them the epitaph of Batbaal, daughter of Aulus, a priest⁶¹.

Towards the southern slope of the Djebel Bargou mountain, Julien came to Henchir el Bez, which once was *Vazi Sarra*⁶², “*qui, si l'on en juge par l'étendue de ses ruines, le nombre et beauté des édifices dont elle a gardé les restes, devait être la ville principale de cette vallée*”⁶³. This location was particularly significant, as Julien acknowledged having identified no less than three temples among its ruins. The most relevant of these, since it was the chief source of the religious inscriptions that he documented at the site, was the temple of Mercury. Julien took some measurements and recorded a few details of the temple's architecture⁶⁴. Although it has never been properly excavated⁶⁵, René Cagnat and Paul Gauckler did dedicate a few pages to its description: a Corinthian order temple, prostyle, tetrastyle, preceded by an altar placed in the centre of a large, paved courtyard, which, surrounded by a rectangular precinct, opened in line with the axis of the shrine, through a ceremonial gateway⁶⁶.

In the area where the temple's *cella* once stood, Julien found one of the fragments of a large inscription (the other three pieces were among the debris of the walls): an imploration for the welfare of emperor Caracalla and his mother, Julia Domna, which can be dated to 212 CE (*CIL* VIII 12006)⁶⁷. The inscription was dedicated by Publius Opstorius Saturninus,

58. J. Poinssot, “Inscriptions inédites recueillies ...”, *op. cit.*, n. 53, 230.

59. *Ibid.*, 232.

60. *Ibid.*, 229.

61. *Ibid.*, 234-235.

62. Or perhaps *Vazi Sarara* (cf. N. Ferchiou, “Henchir Bez, l'antique *Vazi Sarara*”, *Antiquités Africaines*, 38-39, 2002, 415-421).

63. J. Poinssot, “Inscriptions inédites recueillies ...”, *op. cit.*, n. 53, 241.

64. “*Celui qui se trouve du côté de la vallée a environ 40 mètres de longueur sur 30 de large, il est divisé en trois nefes par deux murailles dont les fondations sont encore apparentes et se termine par une abside qui fait face à la porte ouverte dans la face occidentale et dont un des côtés subsiste*”.

65. A. Leone and D. Palombi, “Mercurio Sobrio tra Africa e Roma”, *Archeologia Classica*, 59, 2008, 410.

66. R. Cagnat and P. Gauckler, *Les temples païens*, Paris, 1898, 67. On this work see H. Ben Romdhane in this volume, 247-263.

67. [P]ro salute Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) divi Septimi Severi [P]ii Ara[b(ici)] Adiabe[nic]i Parthici maximi Brit[t]{[an]nici maximi fil(ii) divi M(arci) Antonini Pii Germanici Sarmatici nepot(is) divi Antonini Pii / pronepot(is) divi Hadriani abnep(otis) divi Traiani Parthici et divi Nervae adnepot(is) M(arci) Aureli Antonini Pii Felicis principis iuventutis Augusti / Parthici maximi Brit[t]{ann[i]ci max(imi) trib(unicia) potest(ate)

a perpetual *flamen*, priest of Mercury, in order to commemorate his generosity towards the city. As Julien explains, Opstorius Saturninus recalls that, on his elevation to the dignity of the priesthood, not only did he spend, as he had promised, a thousand sesterces to raise a temple to Mercury Sober (*Mercurius Sobrius*), the protective god of the city (*deus patrius*), but he went even further, adding a peristyle and an altar. Moreover, for the inauguration of the new temple, Saturninus paid for a public feast and a gymnastic complex. In addition, when he was appointed *undecimprimus*, he had a temple erected to Aesculapius, as he had vowed, and he freely increased the sum he had promised for this purpose⁶⁸. Apparently, Saturninus had commissioned two copies or two versions of the same text, as Julien also retrieved a smaller fragment of a seemingly identical inscription (*CIL VIII 12007*) in a different sector of the temple area⁶⁹.

Down the hillside, J. Poinssot managed to document a good number of inscriptions, most of which must have originally been located in the temple's precinct as well. The largest of these (*CIL VIII 12001*), although Julien's version of the text was not particularly precise⁷⁰, was a consecration to Mercury Augustus. It reported that the priests who had already paid for the *persona argentea*, *candelabra aerea* and *lucernae*, whose names had been written in the temple's *pronaos*, had now donated five thousand further sesterces to acquire and consecrate a statue to the god. The *persona argentea*, a silver mask, was a device used in the ornamentation of buildings, commonly as antefixes on the edges of roofs, although it is not possible to say in which part of the temple this particular one was located. Besides, the *candelabra aerea* were marble or metal pedestals in which the lamps (*lucernae*) were placed or from which they were suspended by chains⁷¹.

Another inscription from the environs was a simple consecration to Mercury Sober (*CIL VIII 12002*), a divinity devotion to whom is attested in three other locations throughout Africa: *Thuburnica*, *Cincari*, and *Cirta*. However, only in the first of these have religious buildings been discovered, although like those at *Vazi Sarra*, they have not yet been subject to in-depth archaeological studies⁷². Outside Africa, this epithet has only been documented in Rome: according to Festus, it was associated with a cult linked to libations of milk rather than

XV imp(eratoris) III co(n)s(ulis) III p(atris) p(atriciae) et Iuliae Domnae Augustae Piae Felicis matris Aug(usti) et castrorum et senatus totiusq(ue) domus divinae / P(ublius) Opstorius Saturninus fl(amen) p(erpetuus) sac(erdos) Merc(uri) cum patriae suae Vazitanae triplicata summa fl(amonii) p(erpetui) HS III m(ilia) n(ummum) aedem Mercurio Sobrio pollicitus fuisset ampliata liberalitate eandem aedem / cum pronaos et ara fecit et ob dedicat(ionem) {a}epulum et gymnasium ded[it lo]c(us) dat(us) d(ecreto) d(ecurionum) idem iam ant(e) hoc ob honorem XIpr(imatus) aedem Aesculapio deo promissam ba{s}sil(icae) coh(a)erent(em) multiplicata pec(unia) fecit.

68. J. Poinssot, "Inscriptions inédites recueillies ...", *op. cit.*, n. 53, 241-242.

69. *Ibid.*, 244.

70. *Ibid.*, 243.

71. R. Cagnat, "Rapport sur une mission en Tunisie", *Archives des Missions Scientifiques et Littéraires*, 14, 1888, 39.

72. A. Leone and D. Palombi, "Mercurio Sobrio...", *op. cit.*, n. 65, 410.

of wine (Fest., 382 L)⁷³. While early scholars thought that this cult had Italic origins, the fact that its distribution is much more widespread in Africa than in Rome suggests that its real origins may have been Punic and that it arrived in Rome after the Second Punic War⁷⁴. Other hypotheses include the suggestion that *sobrius* might be an epithet that was applied with the goal of dissociating the urban cult of Mercury, associated with trading, from the rural worship of the god, where he was linked to Silvanus⁷⁵. In any case, while Julien did not produce any analysis of this religious matter, his research and discoveries undoubtedly contributed to and provided unique materials for the study of the question.

Likewise, in the same area, Poinssot reported a curious inscription which attested to the existence of a bronze statue of 'the god' on horseback (*CIL VIII 11999*). The name of the divinity has not been preserved, but it may again be Mercury Sober who is referred to here, as he seems to have been the city's principal god, or perhaps, alternatively, it was an unknown local deity. Cagnat and Gauckler suggested that the divinity in question may have been one of the Dioscuri⁷⁶. According to the text of the inscription, the statue was taken from the old temple to the basilica of the municipal forum, a move that was authorized by Gaius Valerius Pudens, who was appointed proconsul of Africa around the years 210-212. The munificent was once again Publius Opstorius Saturninus, the same *flamen* (cf. *CIL VIII 12006* and *12007*) who had erected temples to both Mercury and Aesculapius. In the previous inscriptions, Saturninus also made mention of a basilica; possibly, the same one which is mentioned here, and also quite probably pre-existent to his act of euergetism⁷⁷.

In addition to the temple of Mercury, Julien documented the existence of another structure, a sacred area surrounded by a wall, in which he spotted an altar. Engraved on the altar he found various ornaments and a text containing a consecration to Hercules, addressed simply as *deus* (*CIL VIII 12000*)⁷⁸.

The next stop surveyed by Julien was less than eight kilometres distant, at Henchir Soudga (*Urusi*). Here, near the entrance of a small temple located in the upper part of the city, he found a large inscription consecrated to Juno Augusta (*CIL VIII 12014*), engraved on a frieze that was broken into three parts. The inscription, which had been offered in favour of emperor Commodus's welfare, showed that the temple was dedicated to Juno. However, as the text attested and Julien remarked, within the shrine "*un sanctuaire était réservé à son auguste époux*"⁷⁹ (*templum cum sanctuario Iovis*). Other than this inscription, what caught

73. *Sobrium vicum <dictum putant...> et Aelius, quod in eo nullus tabernae locus neque caup<onae fuerit:> ali, quod in eo M<ercurio lacte non> vino solitum <sit supplicari>* (after A. Leone and D. Palombi, "Mercurio Sobrio...", *op. cit.*, n. 65, 418).

74. A. Leone and D. Palombi, "Mercurio Sobrio...", *op. cit.*, n. 65, 433.

75. A. Cadotte, *La romanisation des dieux...*, *op. cit.*, n. 43, 142.

76. R. Cagnat and P. Gauckler, *Les temples...*, *op. cit.*, n. 66, 69.

77. B. Goffaux, *La vie publique des cités dans l'Occident romain*, Rennes, 2016, 91, n. 33.

78. J. Poinssot, "Inscriptions inédites recueillies ...", *op. cit.*, n. 53, 243.

79. J. Poinssot, "Inscriptions inédites recueillies ...", *op. cit.*, n. 53, 246.

Julien's attention at this site was its toponym, in particular the evocation of Quintianus Urcitanus, whose ethnonym revealed him to be bishop of *Urusi*. Urcitanus was one of the attendants at the Council of Carthage in the year 484, among other prelates of the *Proconsularis*, and Victor of Vita reports that he was murdered during the Vandal persecution at the *porta Fornitana* of *Urusi* (*Hist. persec. Vandalicae* 1-10). This story reminded Julien of an inscription he had found at Henchir Boudja that may have mentioned this gate⁸⁰.

At Sidi Marched, near Haffouz, Julien documented an inscription (*CIL* VIII 12209 = 23794) consecrated to Jupiter in his role as protector of the emperors (the whole Severan family)⁸¹. Further north, at Qasr al Hadid, he discovered a document (*CIL* VIII 11998) which he found particularly amusing: to celebrate his designation as perpetual *flamen*, an individual had offered presents to the members of the local Senate and had provided the whole town with a feast. This was followed by a festival with a varied and attractive programme, including gymnastic exercises, boxing matches, horse races, and dramatic performances. Julien thought this splendour contrasted remarkably with “*le peu d'étendue et l'aspect mesquin de ces ruines*”⁸².

Within the Kef Governorate, Julien had the chance to explore Henchir Zanfour (*Assuras*). The city, according to his description, was surrounded by a wall, and inside there were two mausoleums, the remains of plinths outlining the sites of several large buildings, a Byzantine citadel, and, finally, a temple, the *cella* of which (measuring 8.5 x 8 metres) still had two of its flanks almost intact. Its external facade was ornamented with four Corinthian columns and a frieze decorated with carved wreaths, bucrania, and masks⁸³. The local inscriptions had all been published already, either by Victor Guérin or in the *Corpus*, so Julien did not find it necessary to reproduce them.

At this point in his journey, Julien suffered a great deal due to the lack of resources and infrastructure. Temperatures fell as far as -15°C at night in his tent, and Roy had to send him wool so that he could protect himself from the cold. But the discomfort, the setbacks, and the loneliness undermined his morale less than did the disappointment he felt at his scientific results. In his view, the expedition was not achieving the results for which he had hoped⁸⁴. As previously mentioned, one of the main aims of the expedition was the identification of *Zama Regia*. There were, in fact, a number of ancient cities named *Zama* and Julien and Tissot disagreed over which should be explored. Julien ignored Tissot's orders and led the expedition to the site he thought was the most likely candidate. However, when Julien arrived at the site, he was deceived by the lack of correspondence between the geography he had been expecting – the great plain described by Sallust – and what he actually found. As a result, he concluded that he had been mistaken about the location of the city. However, his initial instinct

80. Cf. J. Poinssot, “Inscriptions inédites recueillies ...”, *op. cit.*, n. 53, 84.

81. *Iovi conservatori Augustorum*.

82. J. Poinssot, “Inscriptions inédites recueillies ...”, *op. cit.*, n. 53, 250.

83. *Ibid.*, 252.

84. S. Saint-Amans, “Le voyage de Julien Poinssot en Tunisie...”, *op. cit.*, n. 12, 326.

was, in fact, correct. The area he surveyed, near the military camp of Ellez, the present-day Djama, was the true *Zama Regia*, although it has only recently been possible to confirm this fact⁸⁵. Nonetheless, he still documented a few artefacts that were of interest for the study of religions: an inscription (*CIL VIII 16456*), consecrated to Juno Augusta and to Livia; a Punic stele including Tanit's crescent moon; and a bas-relief⁸⁶. The latter was a one-metre high limestone slab divided into three parts (Fig. 2), representing a *taurobolium*, which Julien described as both a sacrifice offered to Cybele and an expiation ceremony. The lower part of the slab depicted the partaker in the sacrifice, according to Julien, “*il s'apprête à recevoir le sang de la victime, sorte de baptême qui doit le purifier et le faire renaître à une vie nouvelle*”. Poinssot possessed a highly precise numismatic knowledge, evident here in his comparisons between the iconography of the Anguiped depicted in the lower part of the bas-relief and those that appear on Greek and Roman Republican coins.

One of the highpoints on this journey was Julien's visit to Makthar (*Mactaris*), a location in which, despite it having been recently explored by both Joseph Alphonse Letaille and V. Guérin, he was still able to document several unpublished monuments. Among these was a 15-metre-high mausoleum, “*un type presque complet des plus élégantes constructions funéraires de l'époque romaine en Tunisie*”. The lower part of the structure was decorated with Corinthian columns while beneath the architrave a partly destroyed bas-relief represented a sacrifice, with figures depicting at least three people as well as a ram and a second, unidentified animal. Above, topped with a pyramid, rose a square *cella*, which Julien thought would probably have held the statue of the person for whom the monument was erected. The neighbouring mausoleum of the *Iulii*, in a poorly preserved condition, may have been of the same typology and characteristics⁸⁷. In addition to the mausoleum, Poinssot also documented two epitaphs of local bishops, Rutilius and Germanus (*CIL VIII 11894* and *11893*, respectively), as well as the tombstone of Numisia Maxima, a priestess of Ceres (*CIL VIII 11826*), and a consecration to Bona Dea Augusta (*CIL VIII 11795*)⁸⁸.

Towards the north, at Henchir Bent el-Ariane, Julien noticed the remains of a temple that crowned a hillock between the wadi Aziz and Guelaàt el Bil. Among the ruins (columns, Corinthian capitals and ashlar), he documented an inscription, engraved on a fragmented architrave, which consecrated the building to Fortuna Augusta (*CIL VIII 15494*)⁸⁹. Just 20 kilometres from there, at Henchir Douemis (*Uchi Maius*), he retrieved two consecrations to health-related deities: one to Aesculapius Augustus (*CIL VIII 15446*), dedicated by Lucius

85. As Saint-Amans (*op. cit.*, n. 12, 327, n. 23) points out, it was the discovery of an inscription (AE 2002, 1608) at this location mentioning the *Zamen[ses] Reg[ii]* that put an end to the controversy.

86. J. Poinssot, “Inscriptions inédites recueillies ...”, *op. cit.*, n. 53, 254-255.

87. J. Poinssot, “Inscriptions inédites recueillies ...”, *op. cit.*, n. 53, 363-364.

88. *Ibid.*, 365-366.

89. J. Poinssot, “Inscriptions inédites recueillies dans un voyage exécuté en 1882-1883, par ordre de S. E. le Ministre de l'Instruction publique”, *Bulletin Trimestriel des Antiquités Africaines*, 3, 1885, 29.

Sollonius Lupus, a veteran of Marius according to Julien, and another to Salus Augusta, offered by the dedicant in his and his wife's name (*CIL VIII 15448*)⁹⁰.

Further on, near the south of the Nebeur forest, Julien reached Henchir Kaoussat (*Ucubi*). At this settlement, he documented the upper part of an altar with the acclamation *Deo Soli Honori et Virtuti* (*CIL VIII 15665*) as well as a consecration to Mars Augustus engraved on another altar (*CIL VIII 15664*)⁹¹.

Subsequently, on the ridge above a valley which led to a gorge that opened behind Kasbat es Souar, Julien documented the ruins of what he thought must have been a prominent town. It was in fact *Abthungi*, a settlement of moderate dimensions, but which had considerable relevance for the origins of the Donatist controversy⁹². Here he was able to identify the remains of three temples, one adorned with pilasters and still standing (Fig. 3), the other two with their perimeters perfectly defined but only the plinths remaining. Julien lamented that he was able to stop for just a few hours at this location, but he judged that the ruins he discovered “*mériterait une étude spéciale et où des fouilles pratiquées à l'est des temples pourraient amener d'intéressantes découvertes*”⁹³.

Finally, he approached *Thuburbo Maius* before traveling back to Tunis. From here he returned home to Paris in the Spring of 1883, just in time for the birth of his fourth son, Charles⁹⁴.

Having completed the mission with which he had been entrusted by Tissot, Julien was eager to travel to Britain to present his results there. However, on his arrival, he did not receive the welcome he expected from the French ambassador to London. Tissot was suffering from a disease which had diminished both his health and his spirits, and he was unhappy with the outcome of the expedition. According to him, had Julien focused less on distractions – such as the documentation of every inscription, monument, and road – and more on the key questions (namely the identification of *Zama Regia* and the *Fossa regia*), Tissot would be closer to completing his volume. But at that point, due to his illness and what he judged as Julien's lack of cooperation with his aims, he saw his goal as now being unreachable. Julien, on the other hand, was satisfied with his achievements, especially given the precarious situation in which he had to work. These contrasting assessments, and the disagreements that followed from them, ultimately put an end to the friendship between the two men⁹⁵.

Julien, then, opted to work full-time for the *Bulletin*. He processed his findings, the results of his extensive research and fieldwork, and subsequently published them all in the first three issues (1882-1883, 1884 and 1885) of the periodical, while also sharing much of his materials with the editors of the new *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. While the journal worked well for the first three years, gaining both prestige and subscribers, the *Société de*

90. *Ibid.*, 38-39.

91. *Ibid.*, 178.

92. T.D. Barnes, “The Beginnings of Donatism”, *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 26.1, 1975, 13.

93. J. Poinssot, “Inscriptions inédites recueillies ...”, *op. cit.*, n. 89, 268.

94. C. Pallu de Lessert, *Julien Poinssot...*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 50.

95. *Ibid.*, 55. However, when Tissot died in the following year, the *Bulletin* did not fail to reproduce his eulogy in full.

Géographie et d'Archéologie d'Oran withdrew from their co-editing commitment for financial reasons, and the *Bulletin*, suddenly deprived of funding, could not be sustained any longer. The journal was transformed, in 1886, into the *Revue de l'Afrique Française*, in which Julien finally published the very last part of his account of the expedition⁹⁶. However, this new journal no longer had an archaeological soul: in order to survive, it was forced to broaden its thematic horizons and to turn its focus towards agriculture, husbandry, and viticulture, subjects of much greater relevance to the colonial society⁹⁷. Gradually losing its *raison d'être*, the journal disappeared completely in 1888. Resigned to the idea that his time with archaeology had ended, and convinced that he would not be entrusted with a new mission or with running another journal, Julien came to terms with the fact that his archaeological ventures had ended. A plan developed in collaboration with B. Roy to set up a farm in Tunisia came to nothing; much as he loved those lands, he would never return to Africa⁹⁸.

The last years of Julien's life were dedicated entirely to the education of his three surviving children⁹⁹, especially his eldest son, Louis (Fig. 4). Julien travelled with him through Greece and Asia Minor, where he taught him the study of inscriptions and antiquities. As quoted by his biographer, "*Je n'ai plus rien à faire pour moi, je ne vis plus que dans mes enfants; j'ai placé sur leur tête tout ce que j'ai d'ambition*"¹⁰⁰. Julien expected to inculcate in his children the same love for the study of the past that he himself felt, and fervently hoped they would take the torch from his hands. This period did not last as long as all concerned might have wished. In 1899, he fell sick, and less than a year later, in 1900, at the age of 56, Julien Poinssot passed away.

While he was not an expert on the study of religions, Julien's findings and work made vital contributions to this field and provided exceptional insights into North Africa, especially with regard to epigraphy, but also with respect to the reconstruction of the ancient religious landscape. He proved to have a strong zeal for documenting absolutely everything he could, even if it lay outside his fixed itinerary, and even, in some cases, when almost nothing remained of the monuments and shrines in question. The result of his fieldwork is a set of documents which constitute a first-hand testimony of a new scientific rigour in the approach to the study of Antiquity, in general, and the study of Tunisia, in particular¹⁰¹. He realised, as few others did at the time, the crucial importance of archaeology and epigraphy for unravelling the history of the province, and the need to question the surviving literary sources. His commitment to this view is proved most clearly by the enormous amount of photographs he took, and by the fact that his primary concern was not a deep historical analysis of each

96. J. Poinssot, "Inscriptions inédites recueillies dans un voyage exécuté en 1882-1883, par ordre de S. E. le Ministre de l'Instruction publique", *Revue de l'Afrique Française*, 4, 1886, 5-9.

97. S. Saint-Amans, "Le voyage de Julien Poinssot en Tunisie...", *op. cit.*, n. 12, 329.

98. *Ibid.*, 331.

99. His second son, Paul, had died in an accident in 1884, at the age of two.

100. C. Pallu de Lessert, *Julien Poinssot...*, *op. cit.*, n. 1, 64.

101. S. Saint-Amans, "Le voyage de Julien Poinssot en Tunisie...", *op. cit.*, n. 12, 321.

and every artifact, but simply their documentation and diffusion among the general public. His efforts did not bring him great scholarly fortune, but had he lived just one year more, he would have watched with satisfaction as his son Louis took up his first role within the *Direction des Antiquités de Tunisie*.

2. Louis Poinssot (1879-1967)

Like his father, Louis Poinssot was the recipient of a rather atypical and eclectic education, but this instruction was to provide the foundation for a career that was a paradigm of versatility. In 1901, after finishing his studies in Law and Literature, and thanks to the intercession of the family's dear friend B. Roy¹⁰², a 22-year-old Louis was appointed as an apprentice archaeologist under the supervision of Paul Gauckler, taking part in the excavations of Dougga. After completing his practical training, he went straight into research in 1902, carrying out his thesis at the *École Pratique des Hautes Études*, which was supposed to open the doors for him to the *École française de Rome*. However, he was not, in fact, appointed until 1903, and then only as a non-executive member (that is, without salary). As a result, he left the Farnese Palace after only a few months¹⁰³. This upset did not alter the young man's vocation, and he soon returned to Tunis where he re-joined the *Direction des Antiquités* as the new supervisor of the Douggan excavations, a position he would hold for almost three decades. In 1907, with a promotion to Inspector of the *Service des Antiquités*¹⁰⁴, Louis became the principal collaborator of Alfred Merlin, the new Director, and dedicated himself full-time to a variety of archaeological projects, such as the Mahdia subaquatic investigations, which he and Merlin conducted jointly until 1913¹⁰⁵.

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 brought a halt to all scientific activities. Louis was mobilised at the outset of the war and assigned to the forces stationed in Tunisia, where he was deployed to a unit located near the Bardo Museum. Despite being quite unsuited for the military life (as one of his former orderlies remembered: “*Je n'ai jamais réussi à lui faire exécuter un salut militaire ni à porter sa chéchia correctement*”), Louis was sent to the Eastern Front in 1916, where he served, for a brief period, as tutor to the Serbian king's children. After the signing of the armistice on the 11th of November 1918, while waiting to be demobilised, Louis was sent to occupied Bulgaria and was appointed, in virtue of his background as a student of

102. S. Saint-Amans, “Stratigraphie d'un fonds: histoire des archives Poinssot. I”, in H. Jaïdi, S. Saint-Amans, M. Sebaï and M. Dondin-Payre (eds.), *Autour du fonds Poinssot*, Paris, 2017, 16.

103. A. Schnapp, “Préface”, in H. Jaïdi, S. Saint-Amans, M. Sebaï, M. Dondin-Payre (eds.), *Autour du fonds Poinssot*, *op. cit.*, n. 102, 3.

104. *Ibid.*

105. F. Baratte, “La trouvaille de Mahdia et la circulation des œuvres d'art en Méditerranée”, *Carthage, l'histoire, sa trace et son écho*, Tunis, 1995, 210.

Law, as a public defender for those who were to be tried by court-martial there¹⁰⁶. Finally, in 1920, he was allowed to return to Tunisia, and he did so with much improved prospects, for Louis had been appointed as the new Director of the *Service des Antiquités de Tunisie*¹⁰⁷. He was to hold this position until 1942¹⁰⁸, and in the course of his long tenure was able to imprint his unique character on the bureau. As Noël Duval acknowledged, the style in accordance with which Poinssot conducted himself in this role was very different to that of his predecessors. His approach was opposed equally to the fiery and innovative temperament of Gauckler and to the conscientious and meticulous work of Merlin. Louis' spirit – an inheritance from his father – was both eclectic and scrupulous, and it left a deep mark on the archaeological research carried out in Tunisia between the two World Wars¹⁰⁹. During his time in charge, he pursued the exploration of all the large sites, such as Carthage and *Thububo Maius*, where he gave a new impetus to the protection and curation of the monuments¹¹⁰. Louis was also concerned with the improving the Bardo Museum's collections, gave importance to the Islamic objects there, and developed its first formal catalogue with Merlin¹¹¹.

Research at *Thugga*, a city closely linked to the entire Poinssot family, and which he took over from Merlin in 1903, owes an insurmountable debt to Louis. However, and despite his unquestionable labour as both an archaeologist and an epigraphist, it is true that the *Direction des Antiquités* preferred to focus at the time on the restoration and preservation of the finds that had already been made, rather than on opening new digs¹¹². Louis carried out studies and consolidated the temple of Tellus, dedicated significant resources to the restoration of the sanctuary of Caelestis and the Capitol, and also undertook some timely conservation work on the temple of Saturn, working on the site until 1932, when the excavations were officially interrupted¹¹³. Throughout the thirty-year long period during which he was in charge of the research carried out at the ancient city, he published more than fifteen papers and reports, covering all sorts of topics. Many of these publications dealt with religious issues,

106. All of Louis's war anecdotes were collected by L. Foucher and J.-P. Laporte, "Louis Poinssot". Online at: <https://tabbourt.pagesperso-orange.fr/maghreb/PoinssotLouis.doc> (accessed: 25.08.20).

107. K. Marmouri, "D'une rive à l'autre: la correspondance de Louis Poinssot avec ses 'amis' italiens", in H. Jaïdi, S. Saint-Amans, M. Sebaï, M. Dondin-Payre (eds.), *Autour du fonds Poinssot, op. cit.*, n. 102, 159.

108. A. Parrot, "Louis Poinssot (1879-1967)", *Syria*, 45, 1968, 431.

109. N. Duval, "Louis Poinssot (1879-1967)", *Antiquités Africaines*, 3, 1969, 9.

110. E. Gran-Aymerich, *Les chercheurs du passé 1798-1945: Aux sources de l'archéologie*, Paris, 2007, 1071.

111. L. Poinssot and A. Merlin, *Guide du musée Alaoui (Musée du Bardo)*, Tunis, 1950.

112. S. Saint-Amans, *Topographie religieuse de Thugga (Dougga). Ville romaine d'Afrique proconsulaire (Tunisie)*, Bordeaux, 2004, 17-32.

113. *Ibid.*

from Latin funerary inscriptions¹¹⁴ to Punic steles¹¹⁵, as well as extending to more general archaeological interventions¹¹⁶, and studies on local Christianity¹¹⁷.

Without question, one of Louis's most celebrated actions concerning Dougga was the restoration of the Libyan-Punic mausoleum from the ancient city. It had been famously destroyed in 1842, after the British consul at Tunis, Sir Thomas Reade, had ordered the removal of its unique bilingual inscription, demolishing the walls in the process before subsequently taking the inscription to London¹¹⁸. The text, written in both Punic and Old Libyan, played a significant role in the deciphering of the latter¹¹⁹. A mention in the inscription of one Atban, son of Yfinet, son of Palou, led to the monument being frequently referred to as the "Tomb of Atban". However, it actually happened to be an account of the constructors' names, which had Numidian, puniced roots¹²⁰. The monument itself is commonly regarded as having been built in honour of, or as a tomb, for Massinissa (238-148 BC), first king of Numidia, on account of a second bilingual inscription found later in the surrounding area, which explicitly mentioned the monarch and defined the cultic nature of the location¹²¹. In 1908, during his time as Inspector of Antiquities, Louis was entrusted by Merlin with the commission to restore the monument. The work lasted for two years, not being completed until 1910. The length of the process was a result of the difficulty posed by the large size of the pieces that needed to be reassembled, and by their scattering across a wide area. As Louis noted, "*ce monument n'apparaissait guère que comme un amoncellement chaotique de pierres énormes*"¹²². The only parts that were more or less intact were the foundations and the five steps which served as the pedestal for the monument. The workers thus began by clearing and consolidating these elements, before carrying out excavations in the core of the central part of the base. Digging down to the ground on which the monument stood, they discovered that there was no underground chamber, at least within the perimeter of the building¹²³. They

114. L. Poinssot, "Inscriptions de Dougga", *Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques*, 1902, 395-404; L. Poinssot, "Inscriptions et stèles romaines provenant de Dougga", *Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques*, 1927, 84-97.

115. L. Poinssot, "Inscriptions puniques et fouilles de Dougga", *Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques*, 1910, 199-228.

116. L. Poinssot, "Les fouilles de Dougga", *Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques*, 1906, 183-185; 219-222; L. Poinssot, "Note sur les fouilles de Dougga en 1911", *Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques*, 1912, 132-137.

117. L. Poinssot, "L'église de Thugga", *Revue Archéologique*, 1925 T. 2, 228-247.

118. P. Gauckler, *L'archéologie de la Tunisie*, 1896, 13.

119. F. Catherwood, "Account of the Punico-Libyan monument at Dougga, and the remains of an ancient structure at Bless", *Transactions of the American Ethnological Society*, 1845, 474.

120. F. Prados, *Arquitectura púnica: los monumentos funerarios*. Anejos de AEspA 44, Madrid, 2008, 205-206.

121. J. Ferron, "L'inscription du Mausolée de Dougga", *Africa*, 3-4, 1972, 83-109.

122. L. Poinssot, "La restauration du mausolée de Dougga", *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 9, 1910, 781.

123. *Ibid.*

then proceeded to raise the eastern facade of the lower level, where they found fragments of a large false window, proving that the decoration here was the same as that on the south and west walls. The restoration process respected the division of the floor into three rooms; however, pillars were erected on the inside to facilitate the installation of iron beams, intended to support the base of the second level as a substitute for the large slabs that had previously fulfilled that function, of which only debris remained¹²⁴. As the second floor of the monument had not been destroyed until the 19th century, it was fairly straightforward to reconstruct it by following earlier descriptions and sketches. These proved to be a great help¹²⁵, especially those made by the explorer Bruce of Kinnaird¹²⁶. The floor, supported by three steps, was eloquently described by Louis: “*se compose de trois assises, d’une sorte d’architrave, puis d’une gorge égyptienne très saillante, d’un fort bel effet*”¹²⁷. It had a colonnade of Ionic order, which shaped it to look like a shrine in the manner of a *naiskos*, and there remained enough original materials to rebuild most of the columns¹²⁸. The third and final floor of the monument was the greatest challenge for Louis and his team, as it had already been destroyed before the time of the explorers and there were no sketches that could serve as a guide. Nevertheless, they successfully managed to complete the reunification of its large blocks. This upper storey is covered with decorations of lotus flowers and quadrigas, and topped by a small pyramid flanked by winged female figures at the corners and a seated lion crowning the whole¹²⁹. After the completion of this meticulous and rigorous restoration work, Louis concluded the project by sharing his particular vision of the monument as being the result of a singular mixture of Hellenic shapes and oriental motifs, “*un des rares monuments qui puissent donner une idée un peu précise des transformations qu’avait fait subir à l’art grec le goût africain*”¹³⁰. Louis does not seem to have shown much interest in the religious or funerary significance of the mausoleum, but he was very concerned about its ethnic adscription. More specifically, he was concerned with the question of the precise moment at which this Hellenic influence had spread through Africa, for, as he pointed out, it embodied a style which could only be found in Greece around 500-400 BC and thus must have been transmitted prior to the Hellenistic period: “*mais il est bien probable que jusqu’au moment où avec la domination romaine se répandit partout l’art gréco-romain, elle n’évolua guère*”¹³¹.

Another pre-war project that had a striking impact on Louis’ career was his collaboration with Merlin in the archaeological mission at Mahdia. In 1907, the Tunisian coastal city

124. *Ibid.*, 782.

125. *Ibid.*, 783.

126. James Bruce of Kinnaird (1730-1794), Scottish explorer, landowner, and wine trader, who spent a decade travelling through North Africa and Ethiopia (cf. L. Playfair, *Travels in the Footsteps of Bruce in Algeria and Tunis*, London, 1877, 221).

127. L. Poinssot, “La restauration du mausolée...”, *op. cit.*, n. 122, 784.

128. *Ibid.*

129. *Ibid.*, 785-786.

130. *Ibid.*, 786.

131. *Ibid.*, 787.

had witnessed the fortuitous discovery by Greek sponge fishermen of a massive ancient shipwreck whose cargo consisted of a large quantity of works of art and furniture which were being transported from Greece to Italy¹³². The ship, which can be dated to 80-70 BCE¹³³, is alleged to have been transporting part of the spoils of Sulla's plundering of Greece (following the siege of Athens in the context of the Mithridatic Wars) back to the Italian peninsula to be sold in Rome. But having drifted from its course¹³⁴, it ultimately sank near the coast of Mahdia, unsurprisingly, according to Merlin, on account of it being heavily loaded¹³⁵. Regardless of the verifiability of this speculative hypothesis, the subaquatic archaeological labours immediately produced stunning results. There was a considerable variety amongst the extraordinary volume of goods unearthed: architectural elements, such as a collection of almost seventy marble columns¹³⁶; items of furniture, including cauldrons, craters, and dozens of lamps and chandeliers, which were studied in great detail by Merlin and Louis more than twenty years later¹³⁷; steles bearing inscriptions, some of which mentioned *Paralos*, the Athenian sacred trireme, apparently indicating that they had been taken from its shrine in the Piraeus¹³⁸, while the others included epitaphs and a dedication to Ammon¹³⁹; and a few marble reliefs – with representations of Asclepius and Hygieia, Cybele, and Ammon – which have been regarded by as ex-votos by most scholars, and which Poinssot and Merlin thought may have come from the Asklepion in Piraeus¹⁴⁰. But the most distinctive feature of this wreck, and that which received the greatest attention from Louis, was the multitude of statues that were found in strikingly good condition, most of them with religious themes. Having managed to buy them from the Greek fishermen after an intense negotiation, Louis and Merlin cleaned them and prepared them for exhibition in the Bardo Museum¹⁴¹. The sunk boat contained numerous representations of gods, goddesses, and various mythological creatures. These included bronze statuettes of satyrs,¹⁴² mar-

132. A. Merlin and L. Poinssot, *Cratères et candélabres de marbre trouvés en mer près de Mahdia*, Paris, 1930, 1.

133. F. Baratte, “La trouvaille de Mahdia et la circulation des œuvres d’art...”, *op. cit.*, n. 105, 213.

134. N. Ouertani, “Remarques à propos de la collection en marbre”, in G. Hellenkemper Salies, H. von Prittwitz, G. Bauchen and G. Bauchen (eds.), *Das Wrack. Der antike Schiffsfund von Mahdia*, Köln, 1994, 299.

135. A. Merlin, “Les recherches sous-marines de Mahdia (Tunisie) en 1909”, *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 10, 1909, 669.

136. F. Baratte, “La trouvaille de Mahdia et la circulation des œuvres d’art...”, *op. cit.*, n. 105, 210.

137. A. Merlin and L. Poinssot, *Cratères et candélabres de marbre...*, *op. cit.*, n. 132.

138. *Ibid.*, 13.

139. *Ibid.*, 14.

140. *Ibid.*

141. A. Merlin and L. Poinssot, “Note sur les bronzes de Mahdia”, *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 6, 1908, 386-388.

142. A. Merlin and L. Poinssot, “Bronzes trouvés en mer près de Mahdia”, *Monuments et Mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot*, 17.1, 1909, 30.

ble depictions of Pan¹⁴³, Artemis¹⁴⁴, Hercules, and Niobe and the Niobids, as well as remarkable busts of a helmeted Athena, a crowned Nike¹⁴⁵, and an Aphrodite (Fig. 5) in Paros marble wearing her hair in a bun¹⁴⁶, to mention just a few. There were also a couple of bronze busts of Dionysus and Ariadne, which were interpreted by Poinssot and Merlin as figureheads from an Athenian trireme, probably a ceremonial ship which must have been related, in their view, to those eponymic sanctuaries connected to sacred galleys attested to by the epigraphic steles¹⁴⁷. There were also two sculptures of Eros. The first, measuring 1.40 metres, had both its wings and legs separated from the body, and bore a vegetal crown, which the authors remarked was not of Aphrodite's myrtle, but rather the olive tree leaves awarded to victorious athletes¹⁴⁸. The other was an androgenous portrayal of the god which was paired with a statuette depicting Hermaphrodite, both of them being candleholders¹⁴⁹. One of the most noteworthy of all the bronze items – unquestionably so in the view of Louis and Merlin – was the one-metre tall herm of Dionysus. It was found in an extraordinary state of preservation and depicted, in archaic style, the heavily ornamented head of the god with ivy leaves, a turban, and a beard. The herm also bore an inscription identifying its creator as the Hellenistic sculptor Boethus of Chalcedon¹⁵⁰. Despite the evident grandeur of this discovery, in 1913 ongoing research had to be suspended due to a lack of financial resources, an interruption that was later reinforced by the imposed stoppage of the war years¹⁵¹.

Before the war, Louis Poinssot's focus had been on the history of art, even when analysing items with a religious dimension. However, the 1920s and 1930s were marked by a notable shift on his part towards the cultic sphere¹⁵², as can be seen by the publication, in 1923, now as Director of Antiquities, and alongside R. Lantier, *Inspecteur des Antiquités* et

143. A. Merlin and L. Poinssot, *Cratères et candélabres de marbre...*, *op. cit.*, n. 132, 12.

144. *Ibid.*, 13.

145. *Ibid.*, 11.

146. *Ibid.*, 12.

147. A. Merlin and L. Poinssot, "Bronzes de Mahdia ayant décoré une trière athénienne", *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 55.2, 1911, 206-210.

148. A. Merlin and L. Poinssot, "Bronzes trouvés en mer près de...", *op. cit.*, n. 142, 31-42.

149. *Ibid.*, 52-55.

150. *Ibid.*, 45.

151. It was finally resumed in 1948, thanks to the collaborative work of an interdisciplinary team led by Gilbert-Charles Picard and Jacques-Yves Cousteau, among others. Further research was carried out throughout the second half of the 20th century, and the final results were presented in the *Trésors de la Méditerranée* exhibition inaugurated at the Bardo Museum in 2000.

152. An exception to this is his monograph on the *Gens Augusta* altar of Carthage (now at the Bardo Museum), in which the debatable religious elements relating to Imperial cult were overlooked in favour of an iconographical and artistic analysis of the monument and each of its panels (dedicated to the flight of Aeneas, the personification of Rome, the god Apollo, and a sacrificial scene, respectively). Nevertheless, his book continues to be a reference work on the matter (cf. L. Poinssot, *L'autel de la Gens Augusta à Carthage*, Tunis and Paris, 1929).

the time¹⁵³, of their paper *Un sanctuaire de Tanit à Carthage*¹⁵⁴, which happened to be the discovery of no other but the very Tophet of Carthage. Indeed, back in 1921, Paul Gielly, a tax official who was stationed in Tunisia, had been presented with the opportunity to purchase a rare Punic stele¹⁵⁵. Intrigued by this extraordinary piece, he decided to share the find with his colleague François Icard, a police inspector who was also stationed in Tunisia¹⁵⁶. Together, the two men, both amateur antiques dealers with some knowledge of the black market, tracked down the supplier, a Tunisian worker. When questioned on the origin of the item, he directed the pair towards an inaccurate location, in the Ariana Hills West of Carthage. Here they spent two futile weeks searching while the worker continued his lucrative business of selling Punic antiques to tourists and art aficionados¹⁵⁷. Finally, having been placed under surveillance, he was caught red-handed, eagerly trying to extract a set of votive inscriptions from a well he had dug in a plot north of the town of Le Kram, near the western bank of the commercial port¹⁵⁸. Gielly and Icard thenceforth acquired the parcel of land, which was known as Salammbô, and began to excavate. The digging quickly showed results, and it was not long before news of the site reached Louis Poinssot¹⁵⁹. The Director of Antiquities immediately informed the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*¹⁶⁰ and the *Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques* of the discovery of what was described as a sanctuary devoted to Tanit. In reporting the events, he labelled Gielly and Icard as “*dévoués auxiliaires*” of the *Service des antiquités*¹⁶¹, clear evidence of his worry¹⁶² about his lack of ability to control and supervise the actions of the semi-clandestine amateur archaeologists, who were

153. F. Gracia Alonso, “La diffusion de la recherche archéologique espagnole en France. Raymond Lantier et les cours à l’École du Louvre, 1939-1943”, in A. Fenet and N. Lubchansky, *Pour une histoire de l’archéologie XVIII^e siècle - 1945 : Hommage de ses collègues et amis à Ève Gran-Aymerich*, Bordeaux, 2015, 301-319.

154. L. Poinssot and R. Lantier, “Un sanctuaire de Tanit à Carthage”, *Revue de l’Histoire des Religions*, 1, 1923, 32-68.

155. Despite the common belief, this was not the famous stele of a priest holding a child that is now preserved in the Bardo Museum. That stele was found later on, during the archaeological excavations.

156. C. Gutron, *L’archéologie en Tunisie (XIX^e – XX^e siècles). Jeux généalogiques sur l’Antiquité*, Paris, 2010, 74.

157. J. García Sánchez, “Las excavaciones del conde Byron Khun de Prorok en Cartago (1920-1925), II. La formación del comité franco-americano y los trabajos arqueológicos en el Tofet”, *BSAA Arqueología*, 81, 2015, 205.

158. L. Poinssot and R. Lantier, “Un sanctuaire de Tanit...”, *op. cit.*, n. 154, 34.

159. J. García Sánchez, “Las excavaciones del conde Byron Khun de Prorok...”, *op. cit.*, n. 157, 209.

160. L. Poinssot and R. Lantier, “Un sanctuaire de Tanit récemment trouvé à Carthage”, *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 66, 4, 1922, 281-282.

161. M. Babelon (présidence), “14 février 1922, Séance de la commission de l’Afrique du nord”, *Bulletin Archéologique du Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques*, 1922, xlii.

162. Eusèbe Vassel, however, judged this “control” over the amateurs to be insufficient, and criticised Poinssot’s management. In his view, “*A envisager la question sans besicles bureaucratiques et au simple point de vue du sens commun, il n’y avait là ni auxiliaire, ni principal, mais une association, où ce n’était certes point l’administration qui fournissait le plus*” (E. Vassel, “Les enseignements du sanctuaire punique de Carthage”, *Revue Archéologique*, 20, 1924, 234).

conducting their excavations within his jurisdiction but without consulting him¹⁶³. Louis also underlined, in his notification, the crucial importance of Gielly and Icard's discovery: "*pour la première fois nous est rendu un sanctuaire punique intact, et, par un hasard inespéré, il sera possible de suivre, pour ainsi dire pas à pas, l'évolution pendant toute la période carthaginoise non seulement des rites et coutumes religieuses, mais aussi de l'industrie de la métropole*"¹⁶⁴.

Poinssot's eagerness to impose his scientific control over the archaeological works, and a personal conflict with Icard, in particular, led to a gradual and growing escalation of tensions between the two parties. This eventually resulted in the amateurs selling the parcel of land and leaving the project¹⁶⁵, which was subsequently picked up by the controversial American Hungarian adventurer and dandy Byron Khun de Prorok, who bought the parcel in 1924 and was keen to collaborate closely with Louis and the *Service des antiquités*¹⁶⁶. Louis did not carry out in-depth scientific studies on the matter, although, despite being more concerned with the formal and bureaucratic oversight of the site, he did make certain observations in his paper with Lantier¹⁶⁷. First, they meticulously described the cippi and stelae discovered, as well as the symbols engraved on them, which were the main reason the site was labelled as a "sanctuary of Tanit". But in addition, they also made their position quite clear regarding the human remains found; by then, analyses had already determined that, as well as animal bones, a significant part of the ashes found corresponded to children between 0 and 3 years old. This fact, together with the iconography of some of the stelae and the inscriptions in which votive offerings were explicitly documented, left the authors in little doubt that they should interpret these finds as the remains of infant sacrifices¹⁶⁸.

During this period, Louis also became involved in a number of minor investigations into late antique and Christian topics. In 1926 he published the surprise discovery, while hydraulic works were being carried out in Henchir-Aïn-Fourna, of an inscription (AE 1927, 23) that mentioned Simeon, *episcopus plebis Furnitanae*¹⁶⁹. As Louis argued, of all the churches that the Catholics had the opportunity to build as a result of the tolerant policy of the Vandal king Hilderic, only one is mentioned by the ecclesiastical texts, that of *Furnos* and its bishop Simeon, consecrated in 528¹⁷⁰. However, it was not known whether the ancient city in question was *Furnos Minus* or *Furnos Maius*, and the discovery of the marble inscription (possibly

163. J. García Sánchez, "Las excavaciones del conde Byron Khun de Prorok...", *op. cit.*, n. 157, 210.

164. M. Babelon (présidence), "14 février 1922, Séance...", *op. cit.*, n. 161, xlv.

165. C. Gutron, *L'archéologie en Tunisie...*, *op. cit.*, n. 156, 75-76.

166. Later on, the works would be reinforced by the Franco-American mission, under the leadership of Kelsey and Harden from 1925, followed by the White Father Lapeyre, Cintas, etc.

167. L. Poinssot and R. Lantier, "Un sanctuaire de Tanit...", *op. cit.*, 32-68.

168. R. Dussaud, "Louis Poinssot et Raymond Lantier – *Un sanctuaire de Tanit à Carthage*. *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 1923, I, p. 32-68", *Syria*, 5 (1), 1924, 76-77. On this topic, see B. D'Andrea in this volume, 149-175.

169. L. Poinssot, "Siméon, évêque de Furnus Majus", *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 70.4, 1926, 304-307.

170. *Ibid.*, 304-305.

part of a reliquary) at the latter finally clarified the mystery, ultimately serving to identify the location where Simeon had exercised his ministry. Louis emphasised the need to carry out excavations that could reveal further data about the location, and, hopefully, also the actual church building¹⁷¹. In this vein, he also studied a sixth-century inscription (AE 1935, 95) from *Ammaedara*, discovered during Dolcemascolo's excavations of the local basilica, to the west of present-day Haïdra, that mentioned the relics of Saint Cyprian¹⁷². Louis claimed that it was only from this period onwards that the word "relic" took on the meaning it has in this inscription: the subject of unambiguous veneration. He also observed how extraordinary it was that, while Cyprian of Carthage had been regarded for centuries as the patron saint of the African Church, and what is more, "*on célébrait l'anniversaire du martyr de saint Cyprien dans les communautés hérétiques comme chez les catholiques*", so far, the African epigraphy had provided only a single testimony of the cultic activities that were devoted to him¹⁷³.

That same year, Louis Poinssot conducted, alongside a retired Merlin, a remarkable study of two mosaics that had been unearthed in 1927 at a Roman villa not far from the Bordj-Djedid cisterns¹⁷⁴. According to the pair, the mosaics had an intentional prophylactic iconological programme, which grouped together racehorses, plants of the seasons, garlands with florets, craters with flowery scrolls, and peacocks, in whose tail Juno had placed the one hundred eyes of Argus. All of these had supposedly been collected together on account of their apotropaic value, "*pour répondre au désir d'un propriétaire soucieux de multiplier en sa faveur les moyens de défense contre les démons malfaisants*"¹⁷⁵.

After his retirement as Director, Louis continued to carry out research work for another fifteen years, and provided invaluable support to his successor, Gilbert-Charles Picard¹⁷⁶. Louis Poinssot's scientific output was huge: hundreds of publications written across almost fifty years and on all kind of topics, from Latin epigraphy to Islamic textiles. However, he was never a man of large books and syntheses, and the majority of his works lie scattered in the local Tunisian and French journals that carried archaeological reports¹⁷⁷. Given the huge volume of results generated over such a lengthy career, it is understandable why Louis's work has received much greater attention than that of his father or son. Nevertheless, it is important to reflect on him as a person in the context of the lineage of this historiographical family, as well as to consider the particular historical circumstances against the backdrop of which

171. *Ibid.*, 306-307.

172. L. Poinssot, "Une inscription mentionnant des reliques de saint Cyprien", *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 78.3, 1934, 249-254.

173. *Ibid.*, 252.

174. A. Merlin and L. Poinssot, "Deux mosaïques de Tunisie à sujets prophylactiques (Musée du Bardo)", *Monuments et Mémoires de la Fondation Eugène Piot*, 34 (1-2), 1934, 129-176.

175. *Ibid.*, 134.

176. E. Gran-Aymerich, *Les chercheurs de passé...*, *op. cit.*, n. 110, 1072. On Picard, see J.C. López-Gómez in this volume, 265-288.

177. N. Duval, "Louis Poinssot ...", *op. cit.*, 9.

his career developed. Just as was the case with his father, Louis was no historian of religions, yet his discoveries and labour contributed a great deal to the study of this field of Antiquity.

3. Claude Poinssot (1928-2002)

Claude Poinssot, the representative of the third generation in this family saga, was born in Tunis while his father, Louis, was the Director of Antiquities. Claude's childhood and youth were, unsurprisingly, greatly influenced by the archaeological and epigraphic vocation of both his father and grandfather, a vocation which he ended sharing as well. Shortly after completing his studies in 1952, Claude was appointed Inspector of the *Service des Antiquités*¹⁷⁸, the same position Louis had held some forty-five years earlier. He was later assigned the position of *Secrétaire général de la mission archéologique française*, which he would hold until the early 1960s. It was during this period that he took over the role of curator of the site of Dougga¹⁷⁹ and, in 1958, became a member of the CNRS. Most of his scientific production was concentrated in the period stretching from the mid-'50s until towards the end of the '60s. His greatest contribution, however, was not his record of publications but his special dedication to documentary and archival work, which produced more than 300 maps and an enormous volume of photographs. Having obtained a post in France, he lived there from 1962 onwards, first taking part in the initial phase of renovations at the Museum of National Antiquities of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, and later as Inspector at the *Direction des Musées*, where he was in charge of the French archaeological museums¹⁸⁰.

Claude's first published work was an architectural study of the Benedictine Abbey of Saint-Bénigne de Dijon, a staunch defence of the preservation of the cultural heritage of his grandfather's homeland¹⁸¹. However, it was not long before he became interested in North African religious matters. In Autumn 1954, he became involved in a survey at the Temple of Saturn at Dougga (*Thugga*), which had been previously excavated by Carton (1893) and, later, by his father, Louis (1927). This work led to the publication in the following year of a study of the temple's statues in *Karthago*¹⁸², a paper that was to be one of the milestones of his career. In it, he identified several fragments of a monumental white marble statue –lo-

178. S. Saint-Amans, "Stratigraphie d'un fonds : histoire des archives Poinssot. III", in H. Jaïdi, S. Saint-Amans, M. Sebaï, M. Dondin-Payre (eds.), *Autour du fonds Poinssot, op. cit.*, n. 102, 38.

179. M. Dondin-Payre, "Une bibliothèque et une famille : le fonds Poinssot à la bibliothèque Germet-Glotz", in H. Jaïdi, S. Saint-Amans, M. Sebaï, M. Dondin-Payre (eds.), *Autour du fonds Poinssot, op. cit.*, n. 102, 62-63.

180. Le Monde, "Claude Poinssot conservateur en chef des Musées nationaux". Online at: https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/2002/04/16/claude-poinssot-conservateur-en-chef-des-musees-nationaux_4241226_1819218.html (accessed: 28.09.20).

181. Cl. Poinssot, "Le bâtiment du dortoir de l'abbaye de Saint-Bénigne de Dijon", *Bulletin Monumental*, 112.4, 1954, 303-330.

182. Cl. Poinssot, "Statues du Temple de Saturne (Thugga)", *Karthago*, 6, 1955, 30-76, pl. I-VII.

cated at the bottom of one of the cisterns under the floor of the *area* – as the cult statue of Saturn, portrayed as a seated god. The veiled head and bearded appearance of the divinity showed, according to Claude, a majestic air which recalled the Pergamene School. He believed that the poor condition of the statue's face must have been due to its destruction on the part of Christian iconoclasm, which would have seen in this statue a special “*puissance maléfique*”¹⁸³. Although modern scholarship tends to be more sceptical on this matter – as there is also proof of Christian positive attitudes towards pagan monuments¹⁸⁴ –, Claude justifies his statement, supported by the studies of Leclercq and Cabrol¹⁸⁵, by comparing this statue with the others that had been found in a better condition, and which corresponded, according to him, to individuals; consequently, representing mortals rather than gods. For this reason, the early Christians would not have interpreted them as objects that harboured demonic forces¹⁸⁶. These other sculptures were (aside from a few bas-reliefs featured in stelae) a fragmentary bust of a *togatus*, a hand holding a *pyxis*, the portrait of a bearded man, and another *togatus* wearing a mural crown¹⁸⁷. The latter was thoroughly studied by Claude, primarily due to the rarity of finding a male in such attire. He offered three possible explanations for the unusual feature: first, that it had been a military decoration; second, that it was the insignia of a *sacerdos Genii Thuggae*; and third, which he believed to be more likely, that it was the attribute of a polyadic deity that had been awarded to a heroic benefactor of the city¹⁸⁸. Claude complemented all of these iconographical and archaeological considerations with an in-depth explanation of what he considered to be the evolution of the god's cult. As he pointed out, “*on sait que sous le vocable de Saturnus les Africains continuèrent à vénérer, à l'époque romaine, le grand dieu du Panthéon punique, Ba'al, divinité suprême et universelle à la fois céleste, chthonienne et dispensatrice des récoltes*”¹⁸⁹. On his view, the romanisation of the cult of Ba'al, which was not completed until the end of the 2nd century, can be linked to the proliferation of votive steles, “*les meilleurs témoins de la dévotion populaire*”. Unsurprisingly,

183. *Ibid.*, 35, n. 6.

184. H. Saradi-Mendelovici, “Christian Attitudes toward Pagan Monuments in Late Antiquity and Their Legacy in Later Byzantine Centuries”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 44, 1990, 47-61.

185. H. Leclercq, “Images (culte et querelle des)”, in F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, Paris, 1908, 7.1, 211-213.

186. The association between the Roman gods and evil or demonic powers seems clear already in the early Christian sources on the topic. This passage from Lactantius's *Institutiones Divinae* (IV 27, 14), in which he explains that, if a priest of Apollo and a man possessed by a demon meet, both the demon and Apollo will leave the place when the name of God is pronounced, illustrates this situation and may serve as an example: *quae ratio est, ut Christum timeant, Iovem autem non timeant, nisi quod iidem sunt daemones, quos vulgus deos esse opinatur? Denique si constituitur in medio et is, quem constat incursum daemonis perpeti, et Delphici Apollinis vates, eodem modo Dei nomen horrebunt; et tam celeriter excedet de vate suo Apollo, quam ex homine spiritus ille daemoniacus, et adiurato fugatoque de suo, vates in perpetuum conticescet. Ergo iidem sunt daemones, quos fatentur execrandos esse, iidem dii, quibus supplicent.*

187. Cl. Poinssot, “Statues du Temple de Saturne ...”, *op. cit.*, n. 182, 41-76.

188. *Ibid.*, 74.

189. *Ibid.*, 36.

he disregards any connection between this process and the movement, and patterns of recruitment, of the army¹⁹⁰.

Throughout his career, Claude continued to show an interest in *Thugga*¹⁹¹, which led him, in 1958, to publish a monograph entitled *Les ruines de Dougga*¹⁹², a short but exhaustive and meticulous volume, in which he set out and analysed all the archaeological and scientific data available on the ancient town. His aim in writing this work was to be able to place it in the hands of the potential visitor as a practical guide. However, an important secondary consideration was that it provided a way to make visible all the publications that had appeared in relation to the excavation of the site, including many of his father's, which were scattered across specialised journals and were therefore inaccessible to the general public¹⁹³. The book was divided into two main sections, one devoted to the history of the *urbs* and another entitled "*Description des ruines*". In the latter, he divided the archaeological spots into two suggested "itineraries", in each of which he considered the monuments and structures one by one, explaining their urban history, their archaeological features, and the research to which they had been subjected. Because of the richness of *Thugga* in this regard, as well as the remarkable state of preservation of most of its ruins, a significant proportion of the text was dedicated to the site's religious locations: the temples of the *Pietas Augusta*¹⁹⁴, of Mercury¹⁹⁵, of *Caelestis*¹⁹⁶, of *Tellus*¹⁹⁷, of *Liber Pater*¹⁹⁸, of *Pluto*¹⁹⁹, of *Saturn*²⁰⁰, the *Nymphaeum*²⁰¹, *Juno Regina's exedra*²⁰², and, of course, the *Capitol*²⁰³, among other minor temples or sanctuaries, took over the protagonist role in the volume. To these were added edifices from other religions, such as the renowned Libyan-Punic mausoleum²⁰⁴, the fourth-century church of *Victoria*²⁰⁵, and

190. The French colonialist scholarship has typically regarded this cult as primarily non-military (cf. M. McCarty, "Soldiers and Stelae: Votive Cult and the Roman Army in North Africa", *Bolletino di Archeologia Online*, 1, 2010, 1-10).

191. Claude undertook some excavations at Dougga during the 1950s, including studies on minor temples, but it is unclear to what extent, or what the results of the excavations were, if any, since most of this work was never published. Cf. S. Saint-Amans, *Topographie religieuse de Thugga (Dougga)...*, *op. cit.*, n. 112, 17-32.

192. Cl. Poinssot, *Les ruines de Dougga*, Tunis, 1958.

193. *Ibid.*, 7.

194. *Ibid.*, 32.

195. *Ibid.*, 33.

196. *Ibid.*, 41.

197. *Ibid.*, 45.

198. *Ibid.*, 52.

199. *Ibid.*, 62.

200. *Ibid.*, 63.

201. *Ibid.*, 73.

202. *Ibid.*, 72.

203. *Ibid.*, 34.

204. *Ibid.*, 58.

205. *Ibid.*, 67.

some domestic mosaics²⁰⁶ containing religious and mythological themes, including those of the Cyclops and Ulysses²⁰⁷. It is no surprise, then, that Poinssot branded the *Thuggenses* as “extremely religious”: “*La population de Thugga était très religieuse. Nulle part en Afrique, on ne rencontre de série épigraphique, où il y ait une telle proportion de dédicaces aux dieux et des cités bien plus importantes sont loin de présenter une pareille abondance d’édifices cultuels. [...] En outre, la diversité des cultes est singulière*”²⁰⁸. This last assertion is particularly noteworthy, because it offers a deeper insight into the historian’s conception of religious diversity and cult identity. Claude explicitly stated how he believed the Imperial cult and “*des grands dieux de Rome*” had a significant and deep impact on the religious behaviour of the *Thuggenses*, who would have demonstrated this fact by constructing impressive shrines, such as the Capitol, and by regarding the imperial *flaminatus* as the highest honour to which a citizen could aspire. However, he thought that these religious manifestations were not entirely spiritual but had, rather, to do with a need to show loyalty to the Empire. He contrasted this “Roman” religiosity with what in his opinion was the continuity of ancestral African religions, the classic cases of the cults of Ba’al and Tanit. We can thus see that Claude Poinssot conformed to the historiographic trend that distinguishes between a more convenient religiosity in a person’s public life and a more “authentic” religiosity derived from ethnic elements, which, as has been shown, did not always have their origin in the actual locale. This duality would have softened, according to him, as the “Roman” gods underwent the process of assimilation to the “indigenous gods”, “*sous le prétexte de quelques analogies qui nous paraissent parfois bien arbitraires*”. This religious policy, Claude thought, made it possible to avoid the brutal conversion of the annexed populations while ensuring the fusion of cults to such an extent that the religions of the Eastern Mediterranean, which, in his view, made up for the insufficiencies of the “official religion”, finally occupied a primordial place in Rome itself²⁰⁹. This interpretation also opens up the possibility of analysing Claude’s religious-historical thought: it seems that he followed a literal reading of the processes of religious change, which, in his discourse, have a political rather than a sociological explanation, and that he sought to identify hierarchical distinctions among the diverse cults by reference to their ethnic ascriptions.

Leaving aside Claude’s Douggan interests, back in 1953, among the ruins of the so-called Church of the priest Felix, in Kelibia (Cap Bon peninsula, Tunisia), a sumptuous baptismal font, covered in profusely decorated mosaics, had been found²¹⁰. This 6th century mon-

206. To which he would dedicate a more specific study a few years later: Cl. Poinssot, “Quelques remarques sur les mosaïques de la maison de Dionysos et d’Ulysse à Thugga (Tunisie)”, in H. Stern, G.-Ch. Picard and M. Le Glay (eds.), *La Mosaïque Gréco-Romaine. Actes du colloque international (Paris, 24 août – 3 septembre 1963)*, Paris, 1965, 219-232.

207. *Ibid.*, 46, 56.

208. *Ibid.*, 24.

209. *Ibid.*, 24-26.

210. F. Baratte, F. Béjaoui, N. Duval, S. Berraho, I. Gui and H. Jacquest, *Basiliques chrétiennes d’Afrique du Nord. II: Inventaire des monuments de la Tunisie*, Bordeaux, 2014, 164.

ument was first studied by Christian Courtois²¹¹, but his untimely death made necessary a complementary study which could be able to reveal the iconological data that had initially been overlooked. It was Claude, along with Paul-Albert Février, who assumed that task in 1959²¹². The baptistery, built into the floor, was quadrilobate, and each of the lobes were preceded by a few steps by which it was possible to descend into the water. On the upper edge of the tank was a short inscription (AE 1957, 120) with the names of the donors (Aquinius, Juliana, and their children), and those in whose honour they made the dedication (the bishop Cyprian and the priest Adelfius). Poinssot and Février described the motifs which decorated the steps of the baptistery, each of which was separated from the next by a depiction of a lit candle: a cross placed under a ciborium flanked by two birds; a golden cup, again between two birds; a wooden chest (identified by the authors as Noah's ark) being approached by a dove holding an olive branch; and, finally, two crosses with the monogram of Christ. Other motifs identified on the monument included dolphins and trees of various species (fig, olive, palm, and apple). The floors of three of the cells were decorated with a fish, and the fourth with a bee. A large chi-ro cross was inscribed at the base of the tank²¹³. All of these decorations, according to the authors, reflected the idea of Christ as the world's salvation. Indeed, the absence of Noah in the ark, was, in the view of Poinssot and Février, not incidental; on the contrary, it stressed the importance of the instrument of salvation rather than of the saved individual. As the authors explained, the catechumen had to descend into the water until he had before him the great cross at the bottom. This element was not decorative but served, rather, to emphasise that those who were to receive the Baptism were baptized in the death of Christ: from an iconological perspective, it was to be understood as a prophylactic element that was also closely connected to the blessing of the water²¹⁴. Following this interpretation, the authors argue that the candles should not be associated with those carried in processions before ecclesiastical elites, as Courtois had claimed²¹⁵. Rather, it was a reference to the Paschal candle, which played a major role within the baptismal liturgy and was lit for the first time each year during the Easter Vigil: “*s’il est une liturgie qui est centrée sur la lumière du Christ et qui s’attache à glorifier le cierge, c’est bien celle du Samedi saint*”²¹⁶. In the *Exsultet*, known since the 4th century and proclaimed at the start of this nocturnal celebration, both wax candles and bees are praised²¹⁷; according to Poinssot and Février, this explained the presence of the

211. C. Courtois, “Sur un baptistère découvert dans la région de Kélibia (Cap Bon)”, *Karthago*, 6, 1955, 98-127.

212. P.-A. Février and Cl. Poinssot, “Les cierges et l’abeille, notes sur l’iconographie du baptistère découvert dans la région de Kélibia (Tunisie)”, *Cahiers Archéologiques*, 10, 1959, 149-156.

213. *Ibid.*, 152.

214. *Ibid.*, 153.

215. C. Courtois, “Sur un baptistère découvert...”, *op. cit.*, n. 210, 117.

216. P.-A. Février and Cl. Poinssot, “Les cierges et l’abeille...”, *op. cit.*, n. 211, 154.

217. *In huius igitur noctis gratia, suscipe, sancte Pater laudis huius sacrificium vespertinum, quod tibi in haec cerei oblatione sollemni, per ministrorum manus de operibus apum, sacrosancta reddit ecclesia. / Sed iam columnae huius praeconia novimus, quam in honorem Dei rutilans ignis accendit. Qui, licet sit divisus in par-*

bee within the iconological programme which, in combination with the candle, symbolised virginity and also represented Christ as the bearer of light²¹⁸.

In the same year that he carried out the study in Kelibia, Claude published two further pieces of research which bear historical connections to the work of both his father and his grandfather. The first, co-authored with Jan Willem Salomonson²¹⁹, was a study of the same Libyan-Punic mausoleum at Dougga that Louis Poinssot had famously rebuilt five decades before. However, despite Louis's commendable restoration work, which had drawn on the numerous architectural elements found *in situ*, as well as on documents created prior to its almost complete destruction, there were still large gaps that needed to be filled in the understanding of the monument. Filling in these blanks was the goal of Claude's research. Thanks to the discovery of the papers of Count Camillo Borgia (Velletri, 1774), the authors were able to identify the floor plans of three interior rooms and, more importantly, the original location of the celebrated bilingual epigraph²²⁰, now held at the British Museum, as well as a second inscription that had been lost entirely.

The other study published in 1959 was an in-depth analysis of the various ruins located on the Fahs plain (Bou Arada region)²²¹, to which Julien Poinssot had already drawn attention²²². There, Claude documented an inscription which testified to the dedication of a portico at the temple of Pluto in *Sucubi* (AE 1962, 182). He thought that this cult must have been linked to that of the *Cereres*, or “*que Pluton ait pris la place du Ba'al de la cité qui, le plus souvent ailleurs, prend le nom de Saturne*”²²³. Moreover, he retrieved from the ruins the remains of an *aedicula* that was decorated with agrarian-themed imagery, although in a very poor condition²²⁴. This, he suspected, might have been an *ex-voto* placed within the larger sanctuary of Pluto, a supposition that would be consistent with the nearby anepigraphic cippus he described in the same area, which, in his view, depicted the typical decoration of the funerary monuments of the priestesses of the *Cereres*. In this same region, but in the part identified with the neighbouring ancient *Suo*, he found a small, seated statuette of Saturn. Only the legs of the figure remained, but these were accompanied by an inscription consecrating the object to the god. Claude thought that this might have been a copy of a larger cult statue²²⁵.

tes, mutuati tamen luminis detrimenta non novit. Alitur enim liquantibus ceris, quas in substantiam pretiosae huius lampadis apis mater eduxit.

218. P.-A. Février and Cl. Poinssot, “Les cierges et l’abeille...”, *op. cit.*, n. 211, 155.

219. Cl. Poinssot and J.-W. Salomonson, “Le mausolée libyco-punique de Dougga et les papiers du comte Borgia”, *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 103.2, 1959, 141-149.

220. *Ibid.*, 146.

221. Cl. Poinssot, “Suo et Sucubi”, *Karthago*, 10, 1959, 93-129.

222. J. Poinssot, “Inscriptions inédites recueillies ...”, *op. cit.*, n. 41, 327.

223. Cl. Poinssot, “Suo et ...”, *op. cit.*, n. 220, 96.

224. *Ibid.*, 107.

225. *Ibid.*, 113.

In the following years Claude continued to be involved with the region. The combination of his work here and his interest in the cult of Saturn resulted in his famous 1962 study on *Saturnus Achaiae*²²⁶. At Bou Djelida, and close to the ancient *Mizeoter*, there was a settlement occupied by the *Gens Bacchuiana*, a name of unclear nature that has variously been regarded as a toponym²²⁷, a tribal name²²⁸, or as the designation of a mystical group²²⁹. In any case, the settlement was administered by *undeciprimi* under Antoninus Pius (138-161 CE)²³⁰. This community dedicated a temple to the above mentioned onomastic sequence of the deity – its dedication had been materialised in an inscription (*CIL VIII 12331*) that was first published by Cagnat and Reinach²³¹ – which Claude described as “*parmi les nombreuses divinités dont le nom nous a été révélé par l'épigraphie africaine, une des plus énigmatiques*”²³². An unparalleled case in the entire African territory, this version of the god had generally been recognised as merely a local *interpretatio* of the Greek god Kronos²³³, with Picard attributing it to the presence of the Greek colony in Carthage²³⁴. However, this hypothesis did not satisfy Claude, who could not see how a Hellenised Ba'al from Carthage could have survived the process by which the Punic god was assimilated with Saturn. Besides, the toponymic epithet required a justification²³⁵. According to Claude, the explanation was to be sought in what he calls the “African syncretism”, which was, in his opinion, unparalleled due to the succession of gods and peoples that had made their home in that land. But this was not, by itself, sufficient to resolve the issue, for, as he understood it, “*la seule constante du syncrétisme c'est la recherche d'une divinité unique dans laquelle viennent se fondre les dieux les plus divers*”²³⁶, which in this case would be Saturn. What he calls syncretism, then, must have had its limits, since by dint of renaming divinities from one land using the names of another, a certain confusion would emerge. It was as a means to resolve such confusions that epithets came into play. These, in Claude's view, would serve to define the particular functions or to point to a geographical origin of the divinity, and for this reason he argues that the epithet is the only significant component of *Saturnus Achaiae*. It is what gives the god his Greek identity,

226. Cl. Poinssot, “*Saturnus Achaiae (CIL VIII 12331 = ILS 4440)*”, in M. Renard (ed.), *Hommages à Albert Grenier*, Collection Latomus 58, Bruxelles, 1962, 1276-1281.

227. R.J.A. Talbert (ed.), *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World*, Princeton, 2000, 507.

228. N. Ferchiou, “*Sur la frange de la pertica de Carthage. La gens Bacchviana et le municipium Miz(eoter)*”, *Cahiers de Tunisie*, 27, 107-108, 17-33.

229. J. Desanges, “*Bacchuiana*”, *Encyclopédie Berbère*, 9, Paris, 1991, 1298-1299.

230. W. Huß, “*Gens Bacchuiana*”, in H. Cancik and H. Schneider, *Brill's New Pauly*. Online at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e421660 (accessed: 27.10.2020).

231. R. Cagnat and S. Reinach, “*Découvertes de villes nouvelles en Tunisie*”, *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 1885, 260.

232. Cl. Poinssot, “*Saturnus Achaiae...*”, *op. cit.*, n. 225, 1276.

233. Even by Claude himself a few years earlier: Cl. Poinssot, “*Statues du Temple de Saturne ...*”, *op. cit.*, n. 182, 37, n. 16.

234. G.-Ch. Picard, *Les religions de l'Afrique antique*, 1954, Paris, 123.

235. Cl. Poinssot, “*Saturnus Achaiae...*”, *op. cit.*, n. 225, 1277.

236. *Ibid.*, 1278.

and so Claude's argument followed the subsequent deduction: if what North Africa most often received from Greece were the *Cereres*, and with them, Hades, then this Saturn must be understood as Pluto²³⁷.

His interest in the agrarian goddesses persisted during the following year, when, in addition to revealing the existence of a Punic monument in Henchir Djaouf (again with Salomonson and through Borgia's papers)²³⁸, he discussed the existence of a temple of Ceres attached to the theatre of *Thugga*²³⁹. The shrine in question, which allegedly dominated the theatre's *summa cavea*, had been mentioned incidentally by Giacomo Caputo during the International Congress of Classical Archaeology of 1958, in which Claude took part as a chairman. The theory of Caputo, referred to by Claude as the "discoverer" of the temple, would have already aroused the scepticism of Edmond Frézouls and Picard. As Claude explained, Caputo was right when he claimed the existence of a relationship between the cult of Ceres and theatres, as could be seen in the case at *Leptis Magna*²⁴⁰, but his justification in the case of the Douggan shrine was supported by epigraphical and archaeological evidence which Claude countered with argumentation that was rooted in direct evidence to a truly remarkable extent. The inscription-based argument dealt with *CIL VIII 26464*, a text which testified to the consecration of a *cella cum porticibus et columnas* to *Ceres Augusta*. This text featured three individuals: the *liberti* Marcus Licinius Tyrannus and Licinia Prisca, and their former patron, Marcus Licinius Rufus. Both Tyrannus and Rufus were documented in another Douggan inscription (*CIL VIII 26518*), dated with precision to the 1st century²⁴¹. The *editio princeps* of the inscription of Ceres had been published by Carton²⁴², its discoverer, who unfortunately was not able to fit together the four fragments into which the lintel was divided. He thus missed the last lines, which were key to the dating of the text. Given the unavailability of this critical information, it is understandable that Carton considered the inscription to be contemporary with the theatre. This mistake was corrected two years later by Louis Poinssot, who published the complete inscription and whose version was followed by the editors of the *CIL*, as was his dating to the 1st century²⁴³. As Claude pointed out, this dating completely undermines the possibility that the shrine could be contemporary with the

237. *Ibid.*, 1279.

238. Cl. Poinssot and J.-W. Salomonson, "Un monument punique inconnu: le mausolée d' Henchir Djaouf, d'après les papiers inédits du Comte C. Borgia", *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen*, 44, 1963, 57-88.

239. Cl. Poinssot, "Y eut-il un temple de Cérès atenant au théâtre de *Thugga*?", *Revue Archéologique*, 2, 1963, 49-53.

240. *Ibid.*, 49.

241. L. Poinssot had considered it to be dated to AD 36-37, that is, contemporary with the final years of Tiberius's reign. Claude, however, was sure (*ibid.*, 50) that it belonged to the early part of Claudius's emperorship. In any case, it was very far from the late construction date of the theatre.

242. L. Carton, "Le théâtre romain de Dougga", *Mémoires présentés par divers savants à l'Académie*, 11.2, 1904, Paris, 122, n. 12.

243. L. Poinssot, "Les inscriptions de *Thugga*", *Nouvelles Archives des Missions Scientifiques et Littéraires*, 13, 1906, 128-129.

theatre, which was built in the time of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, during the second half of the 2nd century. Caputo and his supporters conveniently avoided quoting the *CIL* in establishing their theory, but it seems clear that the inscription was transferred to the theatre after its construction²⁴⁴. The archaeological evidence provided by Claude was concerned with two buttresses that had been mistaken for the supposed foundations of the shrine. In reality, these had supported a pair of staircases that led to a covered gallery that ran above the portico of the *summa cavea*. According to Claude, once it had been proven that only functional and non-religious elements remained, it would no longer be possible to consider the existence of a *sacellum* in the centre of the gallery²⁴⁵.

Claude's fascination with *Thugga* never ceased, and during the second half of the 1960s he continued to dedicate research work to this city and its religious expressions, such as an inscription consecrated to the *Di Augusti* (AE 1966, 509)²⁴⁶ or an ensemble of “*punicisants*” architectural fragments that included sphinxes galore, as well as stelae²⁴⁷. The key milestone during this period of his career was the publication of a study he had carried out in 1955: the ground survey of Dougga's Capitol, which was, in his own words, “*le plus célèbre des monuments antiques de Tunisie*”²⁴⁸. The aim of this project was to determine whether there existed a crypt beneath the temple's *cella*. This architectural element, which is typically found in other capitols, had been overlooked at first, because it had been assumed that the rock formation that cut the extension of the forum to the east had been used to establish the foundations of the temple. In fact, as Claude pointed out, the topography of the place must have influenced its choice of the setting in which the sanctuary was erected, since it dominates the entire city. However, he realised that it was a mistake to assume that the podium was not hollow; indeed, it is not very high in the east, but the wall that borders it to the west rises to a height of approximately 5 meters over the forum, which allowed him to conclude that the building must have had a crypt²⁴⁹. After having verified this hypothesis, Claude was able to carry out a minor archaeological intervention in a small area of the *cella*, which brought immediate results. He documented a gallery the upper part of which was half a metre below the present ground. This gallery had been constructed from reused materials – many of which were epigraphic blocks, among them a possible dedication to Minerva – which had now fallen in to occupy the space of the original clay-floored crypt²⁵⁰. Claude could not determine whether this was a late construction, corresponding to the period in which Christianity moved into

244. Cl. Poinssot, “Y eut-il un temple...”, *op. cit.*, n. 238, 50.

245. *Ibid.*, 52.

246. Cl. Poinssot, “*Sufes maior et princeps civitatis Thuggae*” in R. Chevallier (ed.), *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire offerts à André Piganiol*, III, Paris, 1966, 1267-1270.

247. Cl. Poinssot, “Éléments architecturaux punიცisants de *Thugga*”, *Revue Archéologique*, 1, 1967, 113-126.

248. Cl. Poinssot, “Sondage dans le sous-sol du Capitole de *Thugga* (1955)”, *Cahiers de Tunisie*, 15, 1967, 169-181.

249. *Ibid.*, 169.

250. *Ibid.*, 171.

the ascendant and stemming from the conversion of the temple into a church, or whether, as seemed more likely, it was the result of the reuse of the building during the Byzantine period, when the entire forum enclosure was transformed into a fortress²⁵¹. However, the most relevant outcome of the investigation was the discovery, one metre below the surface, of the head of Jupiter's monumental cult statue, which would once have stood in the central niche of the Capitol. The statue, originally some six metres tall, was thought by Claude to be contemporary with the temple (c. 166-169), and possibly from the same workshop as its counterpart from the Capitol of *Thuburbo Maius*. It was in a dreadful state of preservation, with very damaged facial features and parts of the hair missing, and no other body parts were retrieved, although Claude suspected that a monumental foot wearing an ornate sandal, found by his father Louis while excavating an area of the forum near the Capitol, may have belonged to the same statue. Unfortunately, he was not able to locate it in the warehouses of the Bardo Museum, where it had been deposited after its discovery in 1913²⁵².

Claude concluded his study with a note of longing for a proper excavation of the religious enclosure²⁵³, which would have the potential to shed some more light on the suggestive findings there. As he asserted, “*les résultats que l'on peut escompter à coup sûr récompenseront de sa peine l'archéologue qui pourra entreprendre ce travail*”. This attitude exemplifies his constant concern²⁵⁴ for the protection of the archaeological heritage, to which he dedicated the rest of his life. A good example of this concern is provided by his last published work, written while Director of Museums together with his colleague Guy Barruol. In this article, he explains the fundamental role played by the musealisation of archaeological sites, the need for their didactic treatment, and their relevance as sources of knowledge *in situ*²⁵⁵.

Claude Poinssot's death in 2002 marked the end of a cycle that unfolded across three different centuries, the story of a family whose archaeological journey began with the rise of colonialist exploration and ended with the modern conception of museums as not only custodians of heritage assets, but also as tools of public engagement.

251. *Ibid.*, 172.

252. Cf. L. Poinssot, “Inscriptions de *Thugga* découvertes en 1910-1913”, *Nouvelles Archives des Missions Scientifiques et Littéraires*, 21.8, 1913, 1-227.

253. The last interventions and surveys, carried out between 1994 and 1996 by the INP, remain unpublished: see S. Saint-Amans, *Topographie religieuse de Thugga (Dougga)...*, *op. cit.*, n. 112, 273-376).

254. Cl. Poinssot, “Sondage dans le sous-sol...”, *op. cit.*, n. 247, 180-181.

255. G. Barruol and Cl. Poinssot, “Le musée de site archéologique”, *Les Nouvelles de l'Archéologie*, 27, 1987, 106-113.

Images



Fig. 1: Julien on horseback during his 1882-1883 archaeological mission (Bibliothèque de l'INHA).



Fig. 2: Julien's photo of the *taurobolium* bas-relief, surrounded by architectural fragments and an inscription (BTAA, 1884, pl. XIII).



Fig. 3: Julien Poinssot, *Monument d'Hr Kasbat es Souar*, photography (Fonds Poinssot, 106, 098, 03, 5).

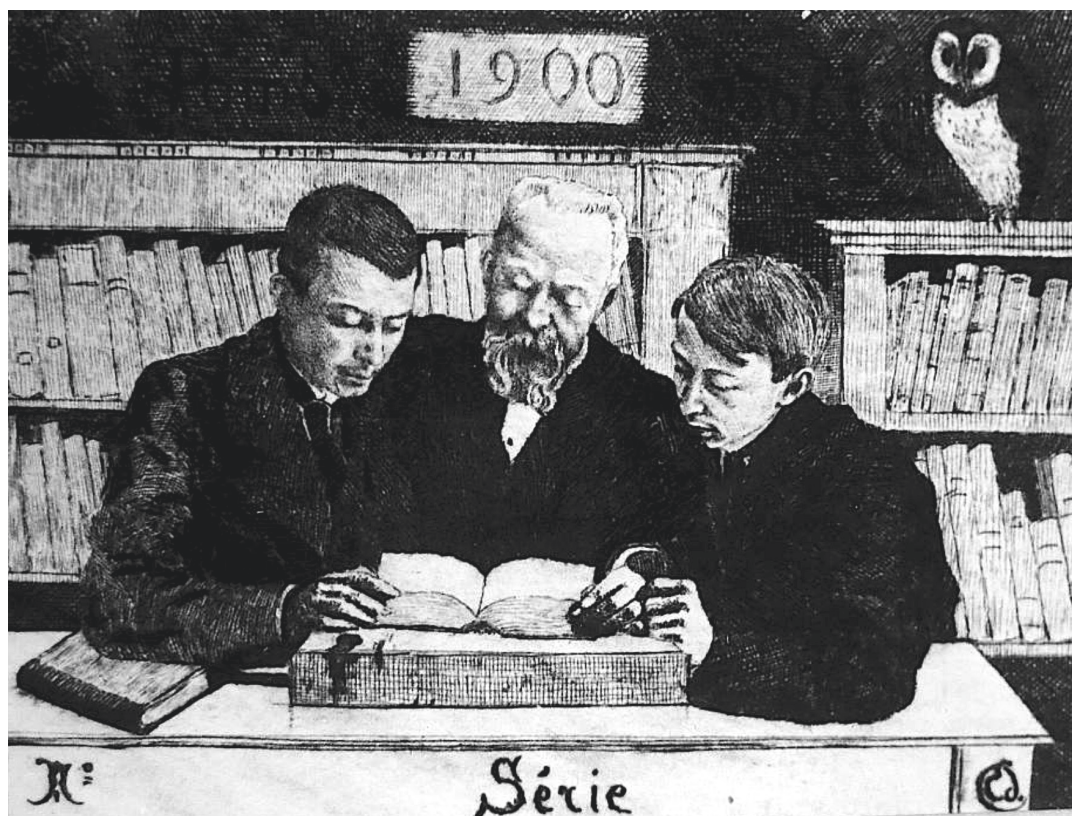


Fig. 4: Ex-libris from 1900 depicting Julien Poinssot between his two sons, Louis on his right and Charles on his left (Gernet-Glotz Library. CNRS-AnHiMA).



Fig. 5: Aphrodite from the Mahdia shipwreck, showing marine wearing (E. Leroux, *Catalogue du Musée Alaoui*, Paris, 1897-1922).