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Sétif, Tébessa, Guelma: The French Army and the Destruction of Roman Monuments in Algeria

Summary

The antique landscape of Algeria – remains of towns, fortresses, villas – was radically altered by the French army, which invaded in 1830, and sought through its building activities to cater for a large number of troops and auxiliary services, and then colonists, recycling materials from Roman ruins for many of their buildings. The French officer-corps was often educated in the classics, as was the bureaucracy, so accounts of discoveries and destruction are often comprehensive. Alas, the requirements of technology, war and colonial settlement – roads, railways, hospitals, barracks – ensured the destruction of much of Roman Algeria. Without the guerilla war which plagued the country for decades, and the continuing need for forts, many of the remains would probably have remained intact.

Keywords: Archaeology; epigraphy; Algeria; Tunisia; Libya; history of science; spolia; re-use.

Die antike Landschaft Algeriens – Überreste von Städten, Festungen, Villen – war einer radikalen Veränderung durch die französische Armee ausgesetzt, als diese 1830 in das Land einfiel und eine große Anzahl von Truppen, Hilfskräften und später Kolonisten mit sich brachte und zu versorgen hatte. Für die nun nötigen Bautätigkeiten wurden Materialien aus Römischen Ruinen neu genutzt. Das französische Offizierskorps und ebenso die Beamten hatten oft eine klassische Ausbildung genossen, weshalb ihre Berichte über Entdeckungen und Zerstörungen der Altertümer sehr umfangreich ausfallen. Dennoch erforderten die Bedürfnisse der Kriegstechnik und der kolonialen Siedlungstätigkeit – Straßen, Schienen, Krankenhäuser, Kasernen – die Zerstörung eines großen Teils des römischen Algeriens. Ohne den Guerilla-Krieg, welcher das Land über Dekaden verwüstete und eine anhaltende Nutzung von Festungen erforderte, wären vermutlich viele Überreste der Römer unversehr geblieben.

Keywords: Archäologie; Epigraphie; Algerien; Tunesien; Libyen; Wissenschaftsgeschichte; Spolien; Wiederverwendung.

Stefan Altekamp, Carmen Marcks-Jacobs, Peter Seiler (eds.) | Perspektiven der Spolienforschung 2. Zentren und Konjunkturen der Spolierung | Berlin Studies of the Ancient World 40 (ISBN 978-3-9816384-3-1; URN urn:nbn:de:kobv:111-100239984) | www.edition-topoi.org

I Synopsis

The ancient landscape of Algeria was marvelled at by earlier travellers because of the ubiquity and quantity of standing Roman remains, and because nothing similar survived anywhere in Europe. Most of the Roman remains were disused, but some had their elements converted into fortresses, churches or mosques. But that antique-looking landscape – towns, fortresses, villas – was radically altered by the French army, which invaded in 1830, and sought through its building activities to cater for a large number of troops and auxiliary services. Importing materials from France was, generally, out of the question – so the Roman ruins of Algeria suffered greatly.

The French army had an officer-corps educated in the classics, and a bureaucratic chain of command back to Paris, where many ministers were similarly interested in the past (cf. Napoleon Bonaparte in earlier decades). All building activities required much paperwork, comments, signatures, arguments, sometimes plans, and finally approval or rejection. Plenty of paperwork survives, enabling us to chart (a) what was on the ground before the French started building; (b) the destructive nature of their building-work; and (c) the occasional activities of the military in recording or even saving antiquities. The paper will document the extent of French destruction by charting the degradation of the three centres of Guelma (Qālima) (from 1837), Sétif (Saṭīf) (from 1839) and Tébessa (Tibissa) (from 1851).

The conclusion will be that it is the requirements of technology, war and settlement allied to prejudice which ensured the destruction of many of the Roman remains of Algeria. Without war, many of the remains would probably have remained intact. Had the French not been concerned of the possibility of attack by Europeans with cannon, the repaired Roman forts of the first decade after the invasion would probably have survived. The big caesura for the survival or destruction of ancient monumental fortifications is the invention of gunpowder, with which it was soon demonstrated that most ancient fortifications had outlived their usefulness: no antique fortresses survived in use in post-gunpowder Europe without a substantial refurbishment which hid or destroyed antique walls. (Mehmet the Conqueror made this very point with his guns in 1453.) With the ‘success’ in Algeria came colonization. The French ‘colons’ (often described as ignorant, rapacious and low-grade) were still reusing (quite illegally) Roman blocks well into the twentieth century. All three trends might help explain the destruction of Roman antiquities in mediaeval Europe, where it is a truism that useful buildings (amphitheaters, tombs, theaters – all for protection and/or housing) survived whereas useless ones (temples, stadia) did not.

The archives used are the Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer (ANOM) in Aix-en-Provence, and the Service Historique de la Défense / Armée de Terre (SHD/T) in Vin-

cennes, especially the Engineers (Génie), who were responsible for building work, and sometimes the Artillery, who were their main clients.

2 Introduction

It is an unfortunate fact that many more monuments in Algeria would survive today had not the French invaded in 1830. The troops found themselves a long way from home, and in need of services – water, defensive protection, most foodstuffs – which could only be supplied locally. Sometimes this involved the reconstruction of ancient monuments, or their dismantling so that the materials could be re-used. For water-supply, ancient systems were refurbished. But destruction was also associated with the predatory behaviour of some French officers, who dismantled what they could take, including marble and sold it – a practice as old as the hills, but not to be expected from a disciplined army in the 1830s.¹ In this the soldiery no doubt simply adopted the attitudes of the Army itself, and especially the engineers, who destroyed monuments for building materials with the one hand, and collected inscriptions with the other.² Prompt documentation of new discoveries was the key, said Poujoulat, quoting Texier in the 1840s;³ but then, in the same breath, adopts a plenty-more-in-the-ground attitude

- 1 Pellissier 1836 I, 187–188 on dubious activities of some French officers in Algeria: “plus d’un militaire se mit dans la catégorie de ce qu’on appelait les banqueroutiers, et plus d’un spéculateur dans celle de Vandales. Plusieurs officiers achetèrent des maisons et des terres, et ne déployèrent pas dans leurs transactions plus de scrupules que les spéculateurs de profession, et un grand nombre de ceux-ci se mirent à dévaster leurs propres possessions, coupant les arbres, enlevant les boiseries, les marbres et les ferrements des maisons, enfin tout ce qui était enlevable; après avoir réalisé de cette manière quelques milliers de francs, ils se laissaient exproprier par leurs vendeurs maures pour faute de paiement de la rente qu’ils avaient consentie.”
- 2 Poujoulat 1847 II, 305–307: “Conservation des monuments historiques en Algérie: Dans la dernière séance de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, M. Charles Texier, inspecteur général des bâtiments civils en Algérie, et chargé en cette qualité de la conservation des monuments historiques, a lu la partie de son dernier rapport au ministre de la guerre où est exposé l’état de ces monuments dans plusieurs parties de l’Afrique française. C’est au mois d’août dernier que M. Texier a exploré la

plupart de ces lieux, en se joignant à M. le contre-amiral Rigodit, qui avait à inspecter tous les ports de l’ouest. Il a pu ainsi observer, avec les autres détails des bâtiments civils, les moyens de conserver les ruines, traces des anciennes civilisations ... Le corps du génie a puissamment contribué à la formation d’une collection des inscriptions antiques de l’Algérie. Mais cette collection ne peut s’accroître autant qu’elle en est susceptible que lorsque des moyens seront fournis par l’administration pour le transport des pierres épigraphiques dans le musée local le plus voisin, comme celui que le ministre de l’instruction publique a récemment visité à Cherchell. Bien des inscriptions anciennes gisent encore sur le bord des chemins, exposées à chaque instant à être brisées ou employées comme matériaux de construction. Tel a été l’emploi des restes de beaucoup de monuments à Philippeville, à Cherchell, à Guelma.”

- 3 Poujoulat 1847 II, 307: “Les instructions du ministre de la guerre s’opposent, en général, à la destruction des monuments antiques. Mais, pour prescrire des mesures précises, il serait nécessaire, dit M. Texier, que l’administration fût informée des découvertes faites par les fouilles et par les travaux des routes,

– sufficient to attract tourists from Europe even if some of the currently available crop had of necessity to go into new building.⁴ In what is unfortunately not a quip, he adds that “Les instructions du ministre de la guerre s’opposent, en général, à la destruction des monuments antiques” – but the general was evidently to be distinguished from the particular.

But it was also this same army discipline which, via its bureaucracy, provides us with the best interface between that army and the past, as we shall now discover, by means of the ample quotations from archival documents which follow, and which demonstrate very clearly how many antiquities were to be seen when the French arrived in Algeria – and how few were to survive.

3 Tracing monument histories through army documentation

This paper is the result of solid and exactly contemporary documentation and ensuing discussion provided by the French army on the ground in Algeria, who grappled day by day with the problems of security, housing and supply. The French army (not only in Algeria) was schooled in form-filling, and also in methodical reporting. Luckily, many officers also had an interest in the past: the weight of Rome often lay heavy on their shoulders, and they pursued these interests when time also lay heavy on their hands – as it does in many armies. Reconnaissance reports (cf. the series MR – *Mémoires et Reconnaissances* – in the SHD/T at Vincennes) are not all on printed forms for our period, but they display such consistency in what they report and how they report it that we can be sure that the appropriate techniques were drummed into the officers concerned.

These archives are extraordinary, for four reasons. The first is that they deal with all aspects of building, in response to a central administration, which expected the authors to be aware of the historical context, and therefore included space for it on their required

et pût envoyer sur-le-champ un dessinateur pour copier les monuments découverts, de manière à pouvoir statuer sur leur conservation. Les archives recevraient tous les documents recueillis, tant par les officiers du génie que par les agents des bâtiments civils et des ponts-et-chaussées, et chaque année ces documents seraient imprimés à la suite du tableau statistique. Alors si, par la force des choses, les monuments se trouvaient détruits, leur description serait au moins consignée dans un registre officiel, et ainsi conservée pour la science.”

4 Poujoulat 1847 II, 306: “Il faut sans doute faire la part de la nécessité qui commandait de construire au plus vite les édifices nécessaires aux principaux centres de population. Ces considérations-là passent avant toutes les autres. Mais, dit M. Texier, si l’on peut regretter ainsi quelques monuments détruits, il en est encore une multitude qui, convenablement dégagés de leurs décombres et restaurés seulement pour en arrêter la ruine, seront encore un des ornements de l’Algérie et un but d’excursion pour les voyageurs de l’Europe. Il est urgent pour cela que l’administration les prenne sous sa garde et qu’un crédit soit demandé pour les soutenir.”

forms. The second is that the authors were soldiers generally with a good classical education who grasped very well the Algerian context within which they were working. The third is that the Army was always short of money and manpower, so that they were often thrown back on re-using the Roman monuments in their work, as the bureaucrats kept trying to cut capital expenditure year after year. The result of this was that we learn of various ways in which the ancient remains would be mis-used, reused or ignored. The fourth is that nowhere else (except perhaps in the English Royal records) do we find such detailed information on the building/rebuilding cycle, and frequently come up against the dire necessity felt by soldiers who admired the remains they found, but were sometimes forced by circumstance to destroy them if they were to survive.

As a result, we can be sure to find in such documents accurate information on topography, but also on Roman roads, bridges, cisterns and forts. And where actual financial outlay was contemplated, record-keeping in terms of building-work was punctilious; and it was plentiful since annual requests by the Engineers and the Artillery for building starts or alterations on the settlements and forts by which the French presence in Algeria was to be secured had to go through a well-tried process. This involved a formal printed 'livret' with requirements for historical background, justification and estimates, submitted for comments to the Director of Fortifications at each centre.

The ledgers therefore allow us to trace the alterations, projected and completed, made to Roman monuments, especially walls, and the often very large costs involved, of which we have many details. At Bougie (Bijāya),⁵ for example, the building works required three forts, four observation posts, the Casbah (Qaşba) and 4.2 km of wall – that is, some 18 400 m³ of stone to repair the wall from the Casbah to Gouraya (Qūrāya), which alone would cost 920 000 francs (perhaps EUR 2 million). The total fit-out (not including any military buildings let alone the water supply) was estimated at over 3 million francs (perhaps EUR 6.5 million) – a considerable sum.⁶

It is because of the military need for immediately available fortifications, rather than for purely academic reasons, that we learn so much of their historical dimension. To take one example amongst many, when Chef du Génie Captain Antonin wrote a *Mémoire militaire sur la Place de Sétif* on 28 Feb 1857, this historical account was considered by a committee and then put in the archives of the Génie “ou il sera utilement consulté”

5 Génie 8.1 Bougie carton 1: 1833–1840, Vivien, Chef du Génie, Projets pour 1834, *Mémoire sur la place de Bougie*, 14–24 for good descriptions of the Casbah (Qaşba), walls and forts; *ibid.*, Capitaine de Génie en Chef Boutauli, *Notes sur Bougie*, 19 mai 1837, pp.11–12 for a description of the Roman city.

6 Génie 8.1 Bougie carton 1: 1833–1840, Dr L. Mercier, *Mémoire sur l'évacuation ou la conservation*

de Bougie, 3 mai 1835, p. 19; and *idem*. *Rapport sur la place de Bougie* 12 Nov 1833, 15. Price equivalence is difficult to determine, especially given the exceptional circumstances in Algeria; but in 1806 the lead for the Colonne Vendome (251 367 kg) cost 1975.417F (EUR 4.3 million), and in 1875 Courbet was charged 323 000F 6 centimes (EUR 710 000) as the cost of rebuilding it.

– by most for its military information, but by us for what it reveals of the reuse and maltreatment of the ancient monuments.⁷

Reports and submissions (which will be studied for three Roman sites in Algeria) make it abundantly clear that the Army officers – often artillery or engineers – concerned with re-using the ancient monuments were well aware of the glories of Roman Algeria, if not through education, then because of bureaucracy. For some of the forms they had to complete annually when requesting funds for construction work required an overview of the historical context to be written. The accounts of many soldiers detail the various wonders of this huge country. Between 1837 and 1839, for example, Commandant Niel visits Djemilah (Jīmīlā), near Sétif, the ruins of which

... présentent plus d'intérêt que toutes celles qu'on a trouvé en Afrique jusqu'à ce jour. Aucune occupation barbare n'a succédé sur ce point à celle des Romains. Le temps seul a détruit les monuments. Aussi on peut admirer leur belle architecture et retrouver toutes leurs formes en réunissant les pierres éparses autour d'eux.⁸

He sees the same date and typology at Milah (Mīla),⁹ and also at Guelma where, remarking on the large quantity of columns of red marble, beautiful cornices, etc., he describes¹⁰ the citadel as “une reconstruction faite avec des pierres prises dans les édifices déjà ruinées” – and occupied by the first expedition from Constantine (Qusanṭīna) in 1836.

4 Colonies and their historical context

The French concern with colonizing the country within a decade of the invasion gave her officers a further interest in destruction – namely the demise of Roman settlements of which walls incorporating antiquities were often a good indication. In this sense there is a dialogue between the antique strategy that could be read in the ruins and what might be learned from it for current purposes – an interest well seen in Charon's

7 Génie 1H910: Place de Sétif, 1839–1903: recommendation of 4 Jan 1861, the copy-document is signed by Charon, Général de Division; Genet, secretary and Lieut-Col de Génie; Charrier, Chef de Bataillon, Chef d'Etat Major du Génie en Algérie; and Randon, Secretary of State for War.

8 Génie H227, Niel, *Reconnaissances faites dans le Province de Constantine en 1837, 1838 et 1839*, 29.

9 Génie H227 Niel, *Reconnaissances*, 27: “une piscine romaine assez bien conservée, qui s'appuie sur l'enceinte. Elle est défendue par une enceinte romaine, ou du moins construite avec les pierres de l'ancienne cite romaine, qui était beaucoup plus étendue, si l'on en juge par les ruines éparses qu'on trouve en dehors des remparts actuels.”

10 Génie H227 Niel, *Reconnaissances*, 34.

Mémoire militaire sur l'Algérie of 1848.¹¹ It should be underlined that colonization was at this date a military matter – perhaps the crux of whether the French could make a success of the conquest – and that here, as with the re-use of Roman monuments, history was of vital practical use. This is well illustrated by the commissioning by the Minister of War in the 1840s of a survey of the history of colonization.¹² The report was of 63pp. in-folio, and there were three volumes projected for publication. But were they ever published?

5 Case study 1: Sétif

At Sétif (Saṭīf) (Fig. 1) we can trace, sometimes year by year, the depredations of the French on the Roman monuments. Immediately after the capture of the town by the French in 1839, Commandant de Génie Niel reported on the magnificent enceinte of the citadel,¹³ which was 10 m high in parts, but with gaps where it was “écroulée et d’énormes pierres de taille recouvertes de terres ou de décombres donnent un acces facile dans l’intérieure” (Fig. 2).

He underlined the “richesse de matériaux”, but admitted that this presented a problem, since “on aurait à déplacer et à remonter sur le mur de pierres de dimensions énormes et qui exigeraient des chèvres sur des bigues et beaucoup de pinces de grandes dimensions”. The work would require 900 men, and although most of the work of making good could be done in 2–3 weeks, a battalion would be needed to finish the task within 2–3 months. He looked at the problem with a practical eye, because he had to determine what work would be needed to put the defences in order for a batallion of 600 men. Noting that stone for making lime was plentiful (was he referring to antiquities –

11 Génie H229 Algérie: *Mémoires divers* 1844–1859: Général Charon, *Mémoire militaire sur l'Algérie*, 1848, 370 pages. He is well aware of Roman strategy, and keeps comparing it (i.e. in effect paralleling it) with current requirements (e.g. 335 on Sétif & Djemilah). This well-written and legible account covers the whole country.

12 ANOM f80 1733, undated but 1840s, “Note sur le travail confié à M. F. Lacroix: un travail historique ayant pour objet d’étudier le système de colonisation adopté par les Romains en Afrique, et plus particulièrement, de rechercher comment ils organisèrent ce pays, quels furent leurs procédés en matière agricole, financière, administrative, judiciaire, politique, religieuse, militaire etc.; quels furent les résultats économiques de leur domination sur cette contrée; quelle influence elle exerça sur la population indigène, enfin pour quelle cause elle cassa.

Il s’agit en d’autres termes de faire la philosophie de la colonisation Romaine en Afrique et de signaler les enseignements qui purent en résulter pour la domination française.”

13 Génie 8.1 Sétif Carton 1, 1839–1844, Commandant de Génie Niel, *Rapport sur la citadelle de Sétif*, 30 mai 1839, 1. This he recognizes as late antique: these walls are from “une seconde occupation ... Des pierres tumulaires, des chapiteaux, et des fûts de colonnes, forment parement dans les murs des deux enceintes” – and the very size of the ruin field indicates the importance of the Roman city (pp. 31–32). Cf. also Carton H227 Niel, *Reconnaisances*, wherein the enceinte at Sétif is described 31–32: “Les matériaux sont sur place mais il faudrait les engins nécessaires pour remuer les énormes pierres de taille des Romains.”

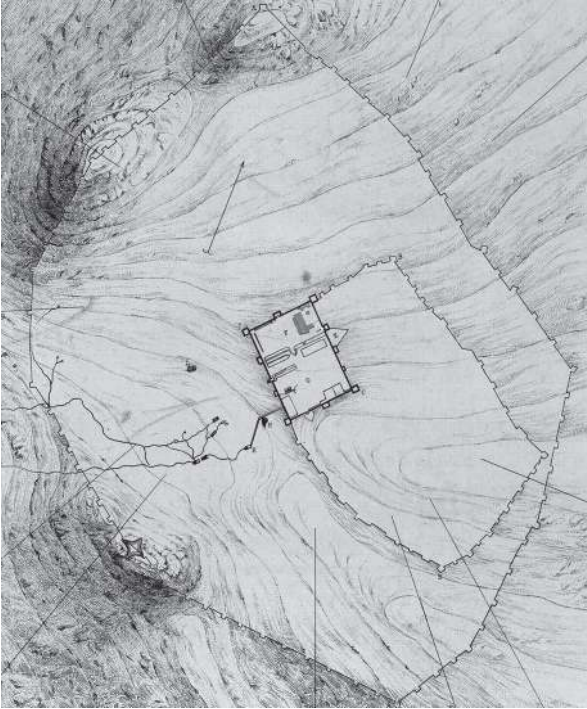


Fig. 1 Sétif: map of the area, with the various encampments.

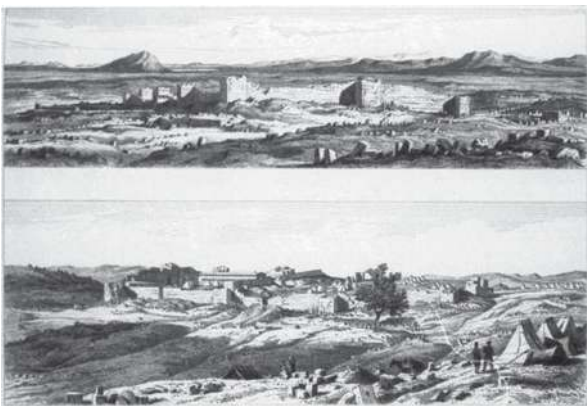


Fig. 2 Sétif: view of the central Byzantine fort, with French soldiers living in tents.

if so, to marble antiquities?), he pointed out that the lack of wood was a severe problem. The suggested building work was not undertaken, for the wall was in the same state two years later.¹⁴

Sétif provides an early example of the large expenditures in men and money to make-and-mend the Roman walls, with the degradation of the ancient remains increasing in line with the population as greater constructional robustness was required. When the French arrived at Sétif in 1839, their forces were so small that they took possession of the later Byzantine enceinte, rather than the much larger Roman one.¹⁵ A plan of 1844 (by which date there were 3160 men there) shows the relationship between the two enceintes¹⁶; and another of 28 May 1846 shows the French also camped outside the Byzantine enceinte and inside the larger, earlier Roman one, less of which was now visible. It was clearly fast disappearing: and although a *Mémoire* of 1844 noted the work needed to “empêcher la dégradation du mur romain”,¹⁷ the fact was that the French settlement soon outgrew early projections.¹⁸ Another *Mémoire* by the Chef du Génie of 28 Feb 1857, Captain Antonin, notes that “Les ruines de sa première enceinte dont les fondations étaient encore visibles à notre arrivée” – but no longer.¹⁹ In spite of the fact that this enceinte was some 460 m west to east, and 310 m north to south, with walls standing to between 1.5 m and 2 m in height, little now remained. For sixteen years, writes the engineer, Sétif had been exploited as a quarry, and was still far from exhausted. But then, he also noted that in 1857 there were 178 masons and stone-cutters at Sétif. With the population rising from 3164 in 1856, to 9257 in 1876, the thirst for building materials is easily understood even if, as early as 1844, the apparently inevitable

14 Génie 1H910 Sétif Art 1: Sétif Projets pour 1841 “restaurer et organiser l’enceinte de la citadelle ... relever la portion de l’enceinte ... et la rattacher à la Citadelle”. Plan of 20 March 1841 shows Citadel with NS wall cutting it two-thirds to the West and one-third to the East. And in the Apostilles du Directeur des Fortifications for 1841 it is noted that in parts the Citadel “est en mauvais état, elle n’a que deux ou trois hauteurs d’assises”.

15 MR H229, Général Charon, *Mémoire militaire sur l’Algérie*, 1848, 336.

16 Génie 1H910: Place de Sétif, 1839–1903, *Plan d’ensemble des environs de Sétif*, 31 July 1844.

17 Génie 1H910: Place de Sétif, 1839–1903; *Mémoire sur les Projets pour 1844*, 1 May 1844, Apostilles du Chef de Génie.

18 Génie 1H910 Sétif Art 1: Plan of Sétif 31 July 1844 clearly shows the large Roman enceinte with the fort within it. By throwing a wall north from the fort to the Roman walls, the French restricted the

defensible area in Byzantine fashion! As for building materials, “on a dans son enceinte même une immense quantité de pierres de taille romaines qui a coup sur ne seront pas épuisés avant la fin des constructions militaires de Sétif. Les débris de ces pierres servent pour faire de la chaux”. But the enceinte was too small within a decade: cf. *Mémoire Militaire sur la place de Sétif*, 26 Feb 1857, Capitaine de Génie Antonin: he begins with a “Historique de la Place”, then reviews fortifications by date: 1841: “On s’est borné à faire quelques réparations à l’enceinte romaine”; 1842: masonry courtines built; 1843–1845: completion of (erstwhile Roman?) towers; 1847: expansion of graeco-roman enceinte, including crenellations, demolition of antique bastions, and courtines; 1855: military enceinte too small, and is therefore expanded.

19 Génie 1H910: Place de Sétif, 1839–1903, Captain Antonin, *Mémoire militaire sur la Place de Sétif*, 5.

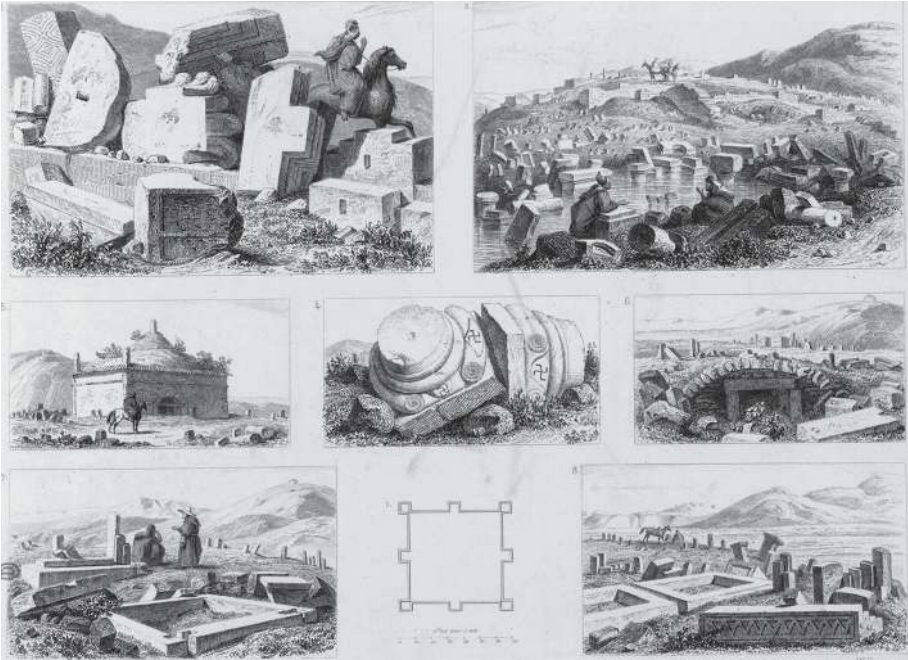


Fig. 3 Sétif: antiquities – temples and tombs – around the site.

destruction of the Byzantine enceinte was a matter for regret.²⁰ Not that regrets, even when expressed in official documents, prevented action on what was really a field of ruins (Fig. 1–2).²¹

The smaller Byzantine enceinte was also quickly destroyed. An account of 1848 describes it as rectangular, with ten large towers; this “existait encore il y a quelques années”.²² Niel’s answer to the fortification possibilities might have been the same as that in the letter of 11 June 1839 from Général Galbois to Maréchal de la Vallée, namely that 15 days of work would see the fort unattackable by Arabs. But this was obviously a rush job, and perhaps not well done, since in 1842 it is proposed to reduce the village enceinte, and cut it back to follow the trace of the Roman enceinte, with a height of 3 m,²³ and it is clear that the old walls were used to build the new. Thus “La forme adoptée

20 The *Mémoire Militaire de Sétif* 31 July 1844 by Capitaine en Chef du Génie Champanhet mentions “les ruines immenses que nous découvrons” (i.e. in arranging their own defensive constructions) and also the latest enceinte “après l’expulsion des Vandales” made with reused materials. But “malheureusement les ruines que les siècles ont entassées les unes sur les autres ne sont mises à jour que par les fouilles

nécessaires pour les constructions nouvelles, ce qui n’a fait faire encore que peu de découvertes” – i.e. the new destroys the old.

21 MR1317 item 69, Tacot, *Notice sur la subdivision de Sétif*, 20 August 1848.

22 Ibid.

23 Génie 8.1 Sétif Carton 1, 1839–1844, Projets pour 1842, Apostilles du Directeur, 13.

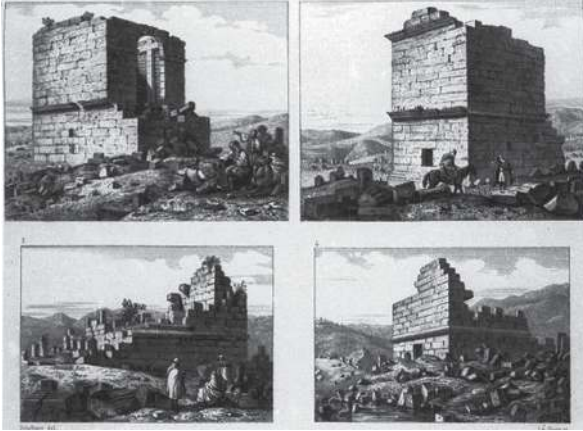


Fig. 4 Sétif: tomb monuments in the environs.

pour la nouvelle enceinte est une conséquence de ce qui existait déjà” (Apostilles du Directeur des fortifications, Projets pour 1842) – and crenellations are to be added for the riflemen, and a couple of the towers strengthened for mortars. Much building work is required to house the soldiers, and the accounts show a lot of dry stone walls. An 1842 survey²⁴ shows the extensive Roman walls, which the French clearly recognized (“Enceinte de la ville romaine à la première époque”) and, smaller, the Byzantine enceinte (“Enceinte de la 2ème époque”) with the Roman citadel and its ten square towers toward the middle. The Byzantine walls link to the east wall of the citadel, move north then west, south and east, linking up with the southwest tower of the citadel. The *Etat des Lieux* for 1843 shows just how much building work was in progress: the Byzantine walls have in part been fortified to the west, a barracks for soldiers erected to the north, and four large barracks for colons to the south of the fortress. And in a *Vue d’Ensemble* for 1843 (including works projected as well as completed) the outline of the fortress has almost gone, in favour of roads, squares, barracks, bullock lines, and new “ouvrages à cornes” for the artillery. The liasse for 1843 includes no fewer than 13 sets of drawings for constructions, as well as for improvements and additions to the fortifications, and “un mur en pierres de taille provenant des ruines Romaines et posées sans mortier”.²⁵ The army continued to use antique materials: as the Apostilles du Chef du Génie for 1845 remark on the readying of the towers and the courtine.

Push turned to shove in 1844, when the final decision was taken to settle colons at Sétif, and safety and speed required that this be done “en conservant ainsi une plus

24 Génie 8.1 Sétif Carton 1, 1839–1844, *Etat des Lieux du camp de Sétif*, in *Projets pour 1842*.

25 Génie 8.1 Sétif Carton 1, 1839–1844, *Mémoire sur les projets pour 1843*, Apostilles du Chef du Génie, Sétif, 5: ... and there are plenty of walls in “pierres sèches” mentioned throughout this document.

grande partie de l'ancienne enceinte Romaine,²⁶ with the towers of the Roman enceinte used as grain silos. This expansion of colons and the military to protect them (a projected garrison of 3000 men) had consequences for the antiquities, since inconvenient stretches of the (much smaller) Byzantine enceinte were torn down and used as building materials.²⁷ Thus the 1844 *Plan d'alignement de la Ville de Sétif* – note it is no longer just a military camp – drawn up by Chef de Génie Champanhet shows no remaining traces of the fortress or Byzantine walls as such – everything is neat, with roads bordered by trees. By contrast, Tébessa in 1857²⁸ still is just the square fort, with the French extension to the N (with its own 'ouvrages à cornes'): but it is at this date – matters will change radically in time – obviously a much smaller operation, because the army/infantry quarter occupies only the NW quarter of the fort).

Still not secure by 1845, the 'cité nouvelle' already had 500 inhabitants, and the completion of the 'enceinte de la ville' was recognized as being urgent;²⁹ so masons were employed to re-lay (and rework?) Roman blocks, which had to be carted into place, and to make good antique structures as foodstores.³⁰ But part of the courtine must go on top of the "ruines bien conservées de la citadelle justinienne (La position de ce rempart est parfaitement choisie)". Rushed work set up on top of unstable infill ("On ne peut s'appuyer sur les ruines qui sont en mortier de terre et fondées sur des remblais") will have to be taken down, as well as several provisional buildings no longer needed. Luckily, "de beaux blocs à tailler restent à pied-d'œuvre."³¹ As for the gates, money is too tight for monumentality.³² But saving money by using soldiers to build walls sometimes didn't work, as at Bougie, where the Chef du Génie thought the dry-stone-wall work in 1833 very poor, and in need of a rebuild using ancient foundations.³³ Şalāḥ ad-Dīn could have told him this: he took professional masons on campaign with him, to deal with both construction and destruction of walls.

26 Génie 8.1 Sétif Carton 1, 1839–1844, *Projets pour 1844*, Apostilles du Directeur, Sétif 5.

27 Génie 8.1 Sétif Carton 1, 1839–1844, *Projets pour 1844*, *Ville de Sétif*, for plans.

28 Génie 1H879 Tébessa, *Plan d'Ensemble*.

29 Génie 8.1 Sétif Carton 2, 1845–1847, *Mémoire sur les projets de 1845*, 3, 13.

30 Génie 8.1 Sétif Carton 2, 1845–1847, *Etat estimatif pour 1845*, 1: quotes for "maçonnerie en pierres romaines prises sur la place et remplissage", under the heading "Bardage des Pierres Romaines" – bardage meaning carting or barrowing. 20 for the Bâtiment for foodstuffs, which must have been built into a Roman structure, hence items for the "rejointement des maçonneries Romaines".

31 Génie 8.1 Sétif Carton 2, 1845–1847, *Mémoire sur les projets de 1846*, Apostilles du Chef du Génie, 17.

32 *Ibid.*, 23: "... l'inconvénient signalé par le comité de donner aux portes un aspect trop monumental en égard à celui du mur d'enceinte a déterminé la suppression de la voûte" (cf. designs on feuille no. 3).

33 Génie 8.1 Bougie carton 1: 1833–1840, Apostilles du Chef de Génie sur les articles d'ouvrages à faire en 1834 – "pour rétablir l'ancienne muraille de la Ville", Casbah upwards. Built up by soldats "non maçons en pierres sèches" and hence hopeless. He wants a rebuild, "à profiter des fondations de l'ancienne", the wall to be 8 m by 1 m thick. Further arguments in favour of re-establishing the whole of the old enceinte are in the Apostilles du Directeur, *Projets généraux pour 1834*, 1–4.

Perhaps as a result of their practical needs, the army's commitment to the Roman past at Sétif was a good deal more tenuous in artistic terms than had been that of the Middle Ages in Europe, who displayed their Roman heritage (found locally, or imported) with pride. Algeria in the decades after the initial landings was often too dangerous to cultivate the arts of peace, but it is easy to believe that (as has already been suggested) some prime opportunities were missed, apparently through a lack of heroic élan or arrogant confidence – or the inclination or resources further to embellish their settlement. Vast quantities of Roman remains in relatively good condition are still to be found at Djemila, only some 40 km north-east of Sétif, but the French were evidently content with the pedestrian re-usable material they found at Sétif for their purposes, and were in any case probably unable to drag more blocks over such a distance.

6 Case study 2: Tébessa³⁴

6.1 Tébessa's prestigious antiquities

The importance of Tébessa's (Tibissa's) Roman remains was recognized long before the French invasion, for example by Marmol Carvajal (travelling in 1571), who connected them typologically with Rome herself, for

... veense en la placa y en otros lugares de esta ciudad grandes antiguallas y buetos d epiedra marmol, y tablos con letras latinas, como las que vemos en Roma y en otras partes de Europa.³⁵

As Diehl remarked generally at the end of the 19th century,³⁶ “L'Arabe, qui ne bâtit guère, n'avait trouve nul profit à démolir ces édifices”. But this is more than the French did, and the costs involved in destroying Rome in Algeria are itemized nowhere better than at Tébessa (ancient Theveste, Département of Constantine), which is in a mountain valley close to the Tunisian border, and some 180 km from the sea as the crow flies. The Roman triumphal Arch of Caracalla (AD 214) is still the jewel of the city, and forms part

34 Tébessa is far from the only site where documentation allows us to study the destruction of the monuments. Cf. Génie 8.1 for the following sites: Ammi-Moussa ('Ammī Mūsā); Blidah (Bulayda), Bone ('Annāba), Bougie (“reconstruction de l'ancienne muraille”), Cherchell (Shirshāl), Constantine, Djidjelli (Jijal), Guelma, Mascara (Mu'askar) (“plan de la vieille enceinte de Mascara”), Medeah (Midiya), Mostagenem (Mustaghānam) (“perfectionnements

de l'enceinte de M”), Nemours (al-Ghazuwāt) (“reporter la ville militaire sur la rive gauche de Ghazouana, relier son enceinte avec l'ancienne”), Philippeville (Sukaikida) (“enceinte de la ville ... réparations des voûtes romaines situées au pied du ravin des citernes”), Sétif (“restauration du mur romain” as late as 1861–1874).

35 Marmol 1593, fol 237v.

36 Diehl 1892.

of Belisarius' Byzantine walls (the Roman city was far more extensive). The Turks had a small detachment of janissaries here until the site was occupied by the French in 1851.

The army documentation for Tébessa provides a blow-by-blow example of how plums such as the Arch survived at the expense of the not-so-interesting remainder. We still have the Arch, but the tale of the destruction of its context is plotted in the meticulous projects and reports of the engineers. Mis-use degraded some monuments: the small temple in the citadel was used as a soap factory, then prison, canteen, parish church and eventually museum. Military necessity provided the impetus for rebuilding and repointing sections of the ancient walls and reusing other antique elements, and the officers involved were well aware what they were doing. One difficulty at Tébessa, as elsewhere in Algeria, was a changing horizon for troop establishments and, therefore, no consistent planning of the refurbishment of antiquities because the numbers and hence the military needs kept changing, with requests for expansion in 1845.³⁷

The monuments of Tébessa were noted by the French well before the city was garrisoned. Out on patrol during 1842 in what was as-yet unconquered territory, and far from safety, time was taken to record the city's antiquities. Still occupied by Arabs, Tébessa was first sketched by Lieut-Général de Négrier's column, whilst encamped under the city's walls, probably in order to show what needed doing in order to repair the fortifications for occupation.³⁸ The environs of Tébessa were also explored; and eventually the Commandant du Génie at Constantine wrote a three-page letter to Charon, Colonel de Génie at Algiers, detailing the finds and reproducing the two inscriptions; obviously from friend to friend (signed "mille amitiés"). This letter demonstrates the antiquarian interests of two officers, for most of it is taken up with a description of the Tébessa remains, including the "arc de triomphe, debout et bien conservé. La pûreté de cette architecture de l'ordre Corinthien et la richesse des dessins rappellent les beaux temps de Rome."³⁹ Perhaps with a view to publication, Général de Négrier himself wrote five pages of description of the Roman city, with measurements of wall-heights and tower dimensions. Sure enough, an annexed undated note in a different hand says they should be published "même lithographiés au Dépôt de la Guerre, en nombre d'exemplaires suffisant pour pouvoir être répandues et insérées avec les plans au Moniteur."⁴⁰ Indeed,

37 Cf. the letter of 16 September 1854 (Génie 8.1 Tébessa, *Projets pour 1854–1855*, from the Colonel du Génie at Tébessa, disputing the assessment of Général de Division Noizet, who believed that the garrison there should be much extended.

38 Cf. the very careful pen and wash drawing *Plan de Tébessa levé le 1er et le 2 juin 1842, pendant que la colonne mobile du Lieut. Gen. NEGRIER était campé sous les murs de la ville*. This shows that the walls

and towers were generally in a remarkably good condition.

39 Génie 1H402, *Reconnaissances et expéditions, 1840–1843, Expédition de Constantine à Tébessa du 4 mai au 17 juin 1842*.

40 MR1317 items 19–20, Général de Négrier, *Quelques notes sur Tébessa*, undated, but "1842?" in pencil on page 1. By this date, lithography was much used not just for 'pencil sketches', but for the duplication of military orders and reports.

de Négrier's description did appear in the *Moniteur* (29 June 1842), noting inside the town near the El-Kedim Gate (Bāb al-Qadīm) a “petit temple conservé tout entier dont la forme et les détails d'architecture rappellent la Maison Carrée de Nîmes”, with monolithic columns in red marble. Négrier also notes⁴¹ the 1370 m of walls built in “belles pierre de taille”, the triumphal arch (for which he gives the inscriptions), and the antiquities to be found at every step within the ancient city, not forgetting the springs used by the Romans, the water of which still reaches the town through a Roman aqueduct. The enceinte is Byzantine, built AD 539,⁴² and the city was on a caravan route.⁴³ Strategically, Tébessa is on the route Constantine-Tunis, so that any European attack from Tunisia (and this was agreed to be the only feasible route) might be halted here, and the city plays an important part in defending French Algeria.⁴⁴ Not only this but, as the Chef du Génie observes, the road to Constantine is good for vehicles for most of the year, and the Roman road to Tunis “est également presque toujours en plaine et des travaux de campagne de faible importance suffiraient pour la rendre praticable aux voitures”.

A decade later, much had disappeared. An 1856 plan⁴⁵ shows the Roman enceinte with its towers, and the smaller French one projecting from it. Outside these, nothing was indicated but gardens, and the ruins of the Basilique to the north. Nothing more shows up on the plan of 1867, except that the old and new enceintes now appear fully occupied with military buildings. But by the 1896 plan the new enceinte has been extended to the southwest, there are houses along the roads out of the fort, and a railway line and station to the north. The legend states it has a population of 6613 souls, of whom 572 French, 245 Jews, 1867 Arabs, and 3924 “étrangers à la commune (européens, tunisiens, marocains, mozabites)”. Many of the destructions since the French arrival are detailed in the ledgers of the army.

6.2 Destruction by ledger

With a classicist's eye on the riches provided by the Roman ruins and Byzantine rebuilds, Général Charon suggested in 1848 that the French army occupy Tébessa, one of his

41 Génie 8.1: Tébessa: *Description de la ville de Tébessa, extraite du Moniteur du 20 Juin 1842.*

42 Delair 1875, 129–130 for the enceinte of Tébessa.

43 Bekri 1913, MS finished 1068; cf. 278: Tébessa is “une grande et ancienne ville, batie en pierres de

taille” – caravans shelter here, and one of the vaulted rooms will hold more than 2000 pack-animals.

44 Génie 8.1 Tébessa 1842–1875, overview in Apostilles du Directeur, Projets pour 1862–1863.

45 Génie 8.2, *Tébessa: Plan d'ensemble de la Place*, 22 October 1856.

arguments being exactly the easy availability of building materials to reuse.⁴⁶ What happened can be followed in the army's ledgers.

The state of Tébessa, described as we have seen by de Négrier in 1842, shows that the Byzantine enceinte, built by Justinian's general Belisarius, was in a remarkably good condition. But an auxiliary fort, projecting from its late Roman predecessor, was soon planned and, by 1852, Belisarius' work could be described by Général d'Artois in his summary of Engineers' work throughout Algeria as in a poor state. Yet nevertheless the site was important: "il est indispensable de mettre en état le réduit, en attendant qu'on puisse exécuter l'enceinte telle qu'elle est projetée". And he implies that the walls as they are can be used – "malgré son mauvais état, peut être conservée longtemps avec quelque entretien, grace aux fortes dimensions des matériaux superposés les uns sur les autres, presque partout sans mortier".⁴⁷ This is confirmed by the *Mémoire pour les projets de 1860–1861*, dated 31 March 1860, p. 16, where it is pointed out that some of the 5–6 m³ blocks "recourant ces vides ne se soutiennent que par un miracle d'équilibre". This is an important observation, since the French seem usually to have lacked heavy lifting equipment suitable for shifting such blocks, which were much heavier and larger than the artillery pieces they needed to manoeuvre every day.

Tébessa was not occupied in the very early years after the French conquest, but this did not save all her antiquities, and the chance to preserve an ancient city semi-intact fell before the needs of the army which, after an initial make-and-mend of the Byzantine enceinte,⁴⁸ needed large quantities of stone,⁴⁹ the estimates distinguishing "pierre de

46 Génie H229, Général Charon, *Mémoire militaire sur l'Algérie*, 1848, 324, 327–329: "... dont les communications avec le littoral traversera les territoires des Maractas et des Mannenchas, et laissera ainsi Guelma à l'Ouest": Soukaras (Sûq Ahrâs), on the Bone-Tébessa road, 25 leagues from Bone, has good water, and "les matériaux propres aux constructions, tels que pierres à chaux, moellons à bâtir, pierres de taille, y sont abondants ... On trouve à M'da-Ouzonch (Madâwrûsh) qui est l'ancienne Madaure des ruines considérables et les matériaux de construction sont fort abondants à l'exception toutefois des longues pièces de bois ... L'emplacement de l'ancienne cité serait très propre pour une ville nouvelle que l'on pouvait faire très régulière" ... At Guelma "l'enceinte du poste est formée d'une muraille crenelée flanquée de tours; elle est construite avec les matériaux trouvées sur place. Le poste militaire offre une surface de 5 hectares environ... Plusieurs voies romaines aboutissaient autrefois à Kalama ... en parcourant le pays on retrouve quelques vestiges de ces anciennes voies qui peuvent faciliter l'étude de voies nouvelles carrossables."

47 Génie 8.1 Tébessa 1842–1875: *Extrait du Rapport d'ensemble de M. le Général d'Artois sur l'inspection des trois directions du Génie en Algérie, 1852, Tébessa; and Installer une poste militaire à Tébessa*. Projet du Commandant Supérieure de Génie, 6 Dec 1852. The project mentioned is in fact the auxiliary fort which projects from the Byzantine walls – shown in the document *Installer une poste militaire à Tébessa*. Projet du Commandant Supérieure de Génie, 6 Dec 1852.

48 Génie 8.1 Tébessa 1842–1875, *Etat sommaire for 1871*, 2: "A partir de 1865 on s'est contenté de mettre l'enceinte byzantine à l'abri de l'escalade en y fermant de nombreuses brèches et en lui donnant partout une hauteur minimum de 6 metres au dessus du chemin de ronde extérieur."

49 The work seemed never-ending: Génie 8.1 Tébessa 1842–1875, *Etat estimatif, Projets pour 1864–1865*, 2: "Pour l'escarpe du bastion 9, Pierre de taille de ruines: 380 cubic metres; ditto escarpe de la courtine 9–10–11" 730 cubic metres; ditto "pour l'escarpe de l'ouvrage en cornes 11" – 570 cubic metres – in all,

taille de ruines” from “pierre de taille à l’Etat”, which is freshly quarried, as we see from the 1872–1873 estimates for recutting the “vieilles pierres” and reusing the “pierres de ruines”.⁵⁰ This ruins-and-quarry approach was used elsewhere, for example at Sétif in the mid-1840s,⁵¹ and might have to do with the difficulties of manoeuvring the enormous Roman blocks (see below), and certainly with costs and the lack of skilled quarrying manpower. The Commandant du Génie, wishing in April 1872 to work on Towers 9 and 12 by lowering them to courtine level because they were in any case overlooked, notes perhaps nervously that “ces tours, souvenirs de l’occupation romaine, sont jusqu’à un certain point de véritables monuments historiques, qu’il convient de ne pas dénaturer plus qu’il n’est absolument nécessaire” – fine words which did not cancel the need for totals of 2045, 1275 and 103 m³ for unspecified ‘parements’. Some of this stone might have been freshly cut, but this work nevertheless required the “démolition de l’ancien mur de la courtine 9–10–11 jusqu’à l’ouvrage en cours”. And that in its turn entailed the “démolition et bardage de maçonnerie de pierres de taille”, to the tune of 700 m³, and another 140 for the “ouvrage à cornes”. As with the courtine, so with the towers, which had already been modified to take cannon embrasures.

6.3 Rationale for destruction

The above account may be glossed by reviewing several recurrent problems the French army faced with Roman and Byzantine enceintes, all exemplified at Tébessa. The first is that much of the stonework, especially in the towers of Tébessa’s enceinte, was too unsteady to take artillery;⁵² and this required both demolition and the scavenging of Roman blocks. Presumably there is a difference between what looks solid to an archaeologist, and to an artillery officer. Thus the assessment by Moll in 1862 that the ma-

1680 cubic metres of “pierres de taille de ruines”! And compare the *Etat Estimatif* for 1855 (loc. cit.) where various sections of the enceinte need 100, 124, 416, 765, 455 and 65 cubic metres of masonry (variously for the foundations, the courtines and the towers – and this is separate from ‘pierre de taille’; and also from the 450 cubic metres demolished ‘à bras d’hommes’ to rebuild the top of the courtine).

50 Génie 8.1 Tébessa 1842–1875. This contains plenty of wash drawings of the site and of its Arch of Caracalla, and its walls. *Etat estimatif des dépenses à faire aux fortifications de la place de Tébessa, projets pour 1872–1873*, 1, shows estimated cost for “a couper de vieilles pierres” – 15 days worth of work projected! Also listed are “Disposer des étais pour soutenir la maçonnerie lors de la démolition” – 15 days of second class masons, 15 days of native workmen. p.2:

for a tower, and its topping, “Parement nu de pierres de ruines, rustique pour surfaces planes”

51 Génie 8.1 Sétif Carton 2, 1845–1847, *Etat estimatif des dépenses à faire aux fortifications de Sétif 1847* 9:

“Maçonnerie en pierres romaines prises sur place et mortier ordinaire”, noted for “une partie de l’enceinte”. But they’re also getting a lot of ‘pierre de taille’ cut at the adjacent quarry.

52 Génie 8.1 Tébessa, For a description of the original state of the walls, cf. *Mémoire pour les projets de 1860–1861*, dated 31 March 1860, 16, where it is pointed out that some of the 5–6 cubic-metre blocks “recourant ces vides ne se soutiennent que par un miracle d’équilibre” – and that the Byzantine walls were in fact in a much worse state than had been believed when Tébessa was first occupied.

sonry, especially of the towers, was “dans un état de conservation remarquable, et il est facile de voir que l’ingénieur a mis beaucoup de soin à leur construction”⁵³ would not necessarily have impressed either the Artillery or the Engineers, who wished to solidify fortifications to face modern European artillery pieces.

The second problem was the need to deploy firearms right around the courtine, rather than just ballistae from the towers, as the Romans had done. This necessitated protection for the soldiers – that is, crenellations. How were these to be provided? In 1858, it was proposed to dismantle completely stretches of the Byzantine walls, and re-lay them more firmly; this was reckoned too expensive, so “jointoyer avec soin le parement extérieur de ces murs” – that is, pointing – was substituted! As for a proposal to lower the height of the walls for the soldiers to deploy their weapons over it,

... la véritable force de la place de Tébessa doit consister dans son réduit, dont les maçonneries anciennes sont fort élevées et coûteux de percer des créneaux dans des murs de pierre de taille de cette épaisseur; et leur usage serait incommode. Il serait préférable de déraser les murs actuels à la hauteur des terre pleins, et de faire les murs au dessus en maçonnerie de moëllons.⁵⁴

The soldier writes, then, not of an historical monument, but of an active fortification, and how it must be improved.

The third problem concerned weighing up the possibility that an attacker might approach the defences with cannon, in which case the stronger the defences were the better. Tébessa’s position near to the Tunisian border caused anxieties, and it is perhaps these which provoked the plan for 1852–1853 to throw the Arabs out of the Casbah (i.e. the old Byzantine fortress), to remake the Roman wall there with antique blocks to a height of 4 m, and to establish a European colony outside the fort with water drawn through existing Roman pipes. All this would be easy:

L’ancienne muraille bien qu’en assez mauvais état de conservation, peut encore présenter un obstacle suffisant dans le cas d’une attaque faite par une troupe indigène généralement sur les lieux; de la pierre de taille en abondance et pouvant être mise immédiatement en oeuvre presque sans le secours des tailleurs de pierre.⁵⁵

This accords with Lieut de Génie Masson’s *Mémoire Militaire sur l’Expédition de Tébessa en 1846*, where he describes the Byzantine enceinte at Tébessa, offers sketches of what

53 Delair 1875, 129–130, citing Moll, *Mémoire historique et archéologique sur Tébessa*, Société Archéologique de Constantine 1862, 77.

54 Tébessa, 30 May 1858, *Projets, Apostilles du Commandant Supérieure*.

55 Génie 1H878: *Tébessa: Projets pour 1852–1853, and Mémoire sur le projet d’un établissement français à Tébessa: agrandissement en dehors de la ville actuelle*.

would need to be done to repair it, and suggests using the Casbah for troupes, as well as refurbishing the water conduit, etc.⁵⁶ Several water projects were undertaken, and involved the refurbishment of Roman aqueducts and fountains and leading the water into the new parts of the settlement.⁵⁷ Reworking the ancient fortifications was expensive. Thus the *Etat estimatif des dépenses à faire aux fortifications, projets pour 1862–1863*, quotes, p. 1, for 230 m³ of “reworking of stones from the ruins” (i.e. “ébauchage de pierres de ruines”) for the demolition and rebuilding of a tower, plus another 150 m³ of “pierres de ruines” for the courtine.

Work began on the wall in 1862, when courtines 7–8 and 8–9 were demolished, and “on s’occupa à cette partie de la vieille enceinte un mur complètement neuf”; following a ministerial decision of 9 March 1868 to strengthen the fortifications. Indeed, just how seriously the ‘three problems’ listed above were taken may have been something of a moveable feast, depending on local circumstances. Thus when heavy rains provoked a landslide which brought down a 14.5 m stretch of Byzantine wall (courtine sections 11–12) at Tébessa on 4 March 1880, the ancient blocks were put back exactly as they were – suggesting either that funds were very short, or that Byzantine walls still provided an adequate defence. The second is the more likely, because the Byzantine enceinte was improved by the addition of a “chemin de ronde” on top in 1878⁵⁸ – an addition the Engineers had been requesting for twenty years. A document emanating from the Commandant du Génie in Algeria and entitled *Marches pour l’exécution des travaux*,⁵⁹ is useful here, because it is enthusiastic both about cut stones and about saving money:

C’est surtout par le volume énorme des blocs employés et par l’extrême précision que l’on apportait à la juxtaposition des pierres les unes sur les autres, que les constructions obtenaient des résultats qui excitent notre admiration autant par la durée que par la beauté du travail ... On doit bien penser que de tels procédés devaient donc lier à d’énormes dépenses et ne seraient guères applicables de nos jours qu’à des constructions monumentales proprement dites ... [For military work] nous devons chercher à obtenir pour les maçonneries en pierre de taille, la plus grande durée au meilleur marché possible.

There was sometimes a fourth problem, namely that French-built masonry (‘pierre de taille’) could not stand up to the local conditions, and fell away when it was penetrated by rain and subjected to frost. The Chef du Génie underlines the problem in the Aposittiles for 1858–1859 (*Mémoire sur les projets pour 1858–1890*), and “On a supposé l’emploi

56 Génie 1H 403: *Reconnaitances, Expéditions, 1844–1847*; op. cit. 11–12.

57 Génie 1H879, Tébessa 1888–1921: *Projet Supplémentaire* for 1857.

58 Génie 1H878: Tébessa: various.

59 Génie 1H448 Affaires Générales, Commandant du Génie en Algérie, *Marches pour l’exécution des travaux* Art 4 1807–1940: 116 note 92; undated, printed in-folio, but c. 1840?

de l'appareil dit opus incertum, rejointoyé en serrant le mortier qui reflue par la jointe." Thus, the French are intent on reusing Roman building techniques, and not just materials, because they discovered from bitter and expensive experience that ancient techniques (no doubt developed after much trial and error) suited the often harsh conditions.

A fifth problem was a result of building on an old site, and was the mirror-image of the convenience of reusing existing structures – namely that establishing foundations was often difficult. The Chef de Génie (Apostilles, *Mémoire sur les projets pour 1858–1859*), notes the problems of building a barracks:

En effet la nature du terrain, forçait à descendre toujours à 4 ou 5 mètres. Souvent même de grands silos, creusés dans la terre vierge, sous des mosaïques romaines, amenaient, soit à jeter des arceaux, soit à descendre des piliers, jusqu'à 3 ou 4 mètres en contre-bas. De plus, la grande quantité de débris et de matériaux de toute nature auraient forcé, à faire des fondations plus larges qu'on ne pouvait le prévoir.

Nor did the various parties necessarily always agree about what needed doing to the fortifications. The Commandant Supérieur (Apostilles, 30 March 1858) notes a dispute over whether the redoubt and the annex wall should stay at 5 m or be raised to 6 (a considerable outlay of materials); and again whether the courtine 5–6–7 (section a) should be taken down to the very foundations and completely rebuilt, or (as he believes) be left alone.

Entries for the labour associated with the extraction of "pierres de ruines" are common, as in the Etat Estimatif for 1860–1861, where under the heading "taille" are listed "ébauchage de pierres de ruines", followed immediately by "taille de parement rustique", so perhaps it is the reused materials that got rusticated? Getting at the reusable blocks was also expensive: accounts for 1858–1859 show "à arracher des pierres de ruines" mainly done by natives, with a sprinkling of Europeans, overseen by an NCO. Rebuilding work could itself throw up usable pieces, as in the project for the reconstruction of courtines 7–8 and 8–9 (Apostilles du Directeur, Projets pour 1860–1861), the result of which would be "de fournir une notable quantité de pierres de taille pour la construction des parties non achevées de l'annexe et du réduit et permettre sans doute de réaliser encore quelques économies sur cette construction".

6.4 The Arch of Caracalla

If ancient walls could be rebuilt (and often destroyed in the process), then more prestigious monuments were a headache for the army. Civil funding had already allowed

the base of the Arch of Caracalla, the most prominent and prestigious monument of the Roman city, to be cleared down to the Roman level, and a small surrounding area; but to reintegrate the monument within the line of the walls (where of course it belonged) would be much more expensive.⁶⁰ The Director of Engineers suggested in 1862 incorporating its south facade in the enceinte, “et que sur les trois autres faces il serait dégagé et débarrassée des constructions byzantines qui obstruent les arceaux latéraux.”⁶¹ But the Commandant Supérieur in the following year notes that any alterations are for conservation of this historic monument. Read: nothing to do with the army, hence not to be paid for by the army – “le déplacement de cette partie de l’enceinte intéressent particulièrement la conservation d’un monument historique et de l’espace réservé aux constructions civiles étant très reserré a Tébessa”. Hence it follows in this classic – not to say monumental – piece of bureaucracy that “c’est au service civile à provoquer la modification ou le déplacement de la partie 9–12 de l’enceinte et à en supporter les frais (sic!)”⁶²

One plan in 1864–1865 was to isolate the Arch within a triangular bastion⁶³ and, as we see from a contemporary sketch,⁶⁴ that bastion made the Arch invisible from outside the walls. It was also proposed to site riflemen on top of the Arch. If this was bluff to prove that such work was militarily necessary, it seems to have worked, for funds were found to isolate the Arch:

Depuis cette époque d’importantes travaux de consolidation et de déblais exécutés sur les fonds des budgets civils ont permis de dégager complètement le pied du monument, de raccorder l’ancien sol romain avec la ville, la rue de rempart et le terrain extérieur ... Nous ferons remarquer en outre, qu’en appuyant l’enceinte au monument, on avait à démolir, dans un avenir peut être peu éloigné, les extrémités des deux courtines neuves à construire, que le prix des terrains va chaque jour en s’élevant à Tébessa.

60 Génie 8.1 Tébessa 1842–1875, 8: “Nous ferons remarquer en outre, qu’en appuyant l’enceinte au monument, on avait à démolir, dans un avenir peut être peu éloigné, les extrémités des deux courtines neuves à construire, que le prix des terrains va chaque jour en s’élevant à Tébessa.”

61 Génie 8.1 Tébessa 1842–1875: Apostilles du Directeur, 30 December 1863, 5.

62 Génie 8.1 Tébessa 1842–1875: Apostilles du Commandant Supérieur, Projets pour 1864–1865, 5–7. The same note observes that “Nul doute que si les restes des fortifications byzantines de Tébessa n’eus-

sent pas existé, on n’eut pas entouré la ville civile d’un mur crénelé.”

63 Génie 8.1 Tébessa 1842–1875, *Mémoire sur les projets pour 1864–1865*, 6: proposal to deal with the “massif de la tour 11 (i. e. the Arch of Caracalla) pour isoler l’arc de triomphe de Caracalla et l’envelopper d’un ouvrage à cornes”.

64 Génie 8.1 Tébessa 1842–1875, pen and wash drawing, done by Capitaine de Génie Carrière, dated 19 December 1863, shows the arch clear in its own area, with the “ouvrage à cornes” around it.

So the proposition was evidently ‘sold’ because it was the cheaper option.⁶⁵ In the estimates for 1862, however, the Commandant Supérieur du Génie in an ‘avis’⁶⁶ had reminded his readers that isolating the arch would be satisfactory “au double point de vue de l’économie et du respect qu’on doit aux oeuvres d’antiquité”.

Nevertheless, the suspicious amongst us must wonder whether (given his track-record) he was just as interested in the building materials to derive from such isolation – on which compare the same liasse, Etat Estimatif, for the “démolition des maçonneries de remplissage et de pierre de taille du mur d’enceinte, dépose de pierres de taille avec machines et engins” – all coming from the Byzantine blocking up of the arch, and the adjacent wall sections.

By the 1880s, it at first appears that the wind has changed in favour of preserving all the significant monuments at Tébessa, and not just the Arch of Caracalla. But this is probably just a cost-saving measure – witness the notes of the Chef du Génie in 1887, regarding the Byzantine infill to the Roman theater, using column-shafts some 1 m in diameter. This, he avers,

constitue sans contredit une des parties les plus pittoresques de l’enceinte et présente, au point de vue archéologique, un spécimen des plus intéressants des procédés expéditifs de construction employés par Solomon [m. 544] pour se retrancher dans Tébessa.

He continues:

Les piliers du théâtre sont en mauvais état. A ce titre, ils sont à conserver précieusement, conformément à toutes les instructions laissées dans la place par les Inspecteurs généraux du Génie, qui ont toujours recommandé de ne pas enlever à l’enceinte son caractère actuel. C’est pour nous conformer à l’esprit de ces instructions que nous avons laissé subsister non seulement les filières du théâtre, mais encore les colonnes accumulées par les byzantins. Du reste, ces colonnes pèsent environ 5 à 6000 kilogrammes chacune et leur enlèvement entraînerait une dépense assez considérable.⁶⁷

Given the history of the defences at Tébessa, recounted above, this officer’s piety is touching, but it might also have been genuine, for appreciation of Byzantine remains at this period was rare indeed.

65 Génie 8.1 Tébessa 1842–1875: *Mémoire sur les projets pour 1864–1865*, 8.

66 Génie 1H879, Tébessa 1888–1921, *Etat Estimatif* for 1862.

67 Génie 1H878: *Tébessa, Projets pour 1887*, 12 avril 1887, Apostilles du Chef de Génie.

But in spite of any desire on the part of Inspectors Général to retain the monuments (which is not reflected in the archives), much was lost. The Arch of Caracalla, the Temple of Minerva on the old Forum, and Solomon's Byzantine citadel (with some of the later additions removed), survive today – sentinels to the change in attitude to conservation in France, and to a civil administration in 1870, with a museums and collecting policy, rather than to any change of heart on the part of the French army. The Arch was still a problem in 1898, when Capitaine de Génie Rousseaux sent a report⁶⁸ saying it was dangerous, and should be demolished “si l'on ne veut pas s'exposer à voir certaines parties de détacher et tomber en occasionnant des accidents dont le Département de la Guerre serait rendu responsable”. Is this military-civilian bureaucratic skirmishing, vandalism, concern for public safety, or a continuing thirst for cut stone? The arch survived, and still forms part of the walls, and a lot of traffic is carried through it. In 1900, Capitaine de Génie Roblot sent another report, instancing the damage (including water penetration and frost damage), and saying its repair needs a specialist sculptor, probably from Paris, as well as first-class masons.

6.5 The increased pace of building

But the Arch bulked small in the minds of an army needing to house increasing numbers of troops. In the 1870s, the pace of engineering work increased, although the Chef du Génie lists out the increasing works bill 1854–1861 and tries to explain it.⁶⁹ Whereas from

... 1865, on s'est contenté de mettre l'enceinte byzantine à l'abri de l'escalade en y fermant de nombreuses brèches et en lui donnant partout une hauteur minimum de 6 mètres au dessus du chemin de ronde extérieur,⁷⁰

much more extensive work was required, in order (for example) to lower the Roman Towers 9 and 12 to courtine level, because they were in any case overlooked. But this was projected with some trepidation, because “ces tours, souvenirs de l'occupation romaine, sont jusqu'à un certain point de véritables monuments historiques, qu'il convient de ne pas dénaturer plus qu'il n'est absolument nécessaire”. Included in the plans are pen and wash plans and elevations of both these towers, both of which have already been modified for canon embrasures, and the note that the stonework to be used as “parement nu de pierres de ruines, rustique pour surfaces planes.”⁷¹ But by the Etats Estimatifs

68 Génie 1H879 Tébessa 1888–1921.

69 Génie 8.1 Tébessa 1842–1875: *Mémoire sur les projets pour 1860–1861*, apostilles du Chef de Génie.

70 Génie 8.1 Tébessa 1842–1875: *Etat sommaire for 1871*, 2.

71 Génie 8.1 Tébessa 1842–1875: *Etat estimatif des dépenses à faire aux fortifications de la place de Tébessa, projets pour 1872–1873*, 2.

of the 1880s, it looks as if “pierre des ruines” has been exhausted by so much building work, and is no longer an option.⁷² The need to deploy modern fortress artillery dictated the refurbishment and strengthening of the towers, which, in their antique state, were too unsteady to house guns. Repairs were made with antique blocks, often recut; and accounts from the early 1860s show the reuse of several 100 m³ of them.⁷³ But this is just one of the rebuilding campaigns of this period: the scale of rebuilding in the 1860s and 1870s is reflected in the actual accounts. In 1872–1873, 15 days of work are projected “à couper de vieilles pierres”; but in 1864–1865, for repairing the enceinte, we have cited here just one example⁷⁴ of which there are many echoes in succeeding years. It was also cost which dictated the reuse of ancient blocks, as this bill from the same period demonstrates (with the livre worth slightly less than the franc):

Maçonnerie de pierres de taille a l'Etat	Livres 141.5
Maçonnerie de pierres de taille de ruines	3048.44
Taille plane, rustique	2013.78
Transport of pierre de ruines	1429.83
Total	6633.20

Tab. 1 Account from the 1860s showing the reuse of antique blocks for measures of re-building.

When we put such costs together with the 400 m³ of antique blocks reworked and reused in 1862–1863 alone (see above), the continuing scale of destruction, year after year, is obviously gigantic. And these figures are only for military reuse: equally high figures would probably be generated by the buildings erected to service the needs of the ‘colons;’ were accounts such as these to survive. The large cost of ‘maçonnerie’ indicates reworking of Roman blocks, while the large cost of transport suggests that these did not come from Tébessa itself. A good candidate for a source of large Roman blocks is Kalaa (Qal‘a) (i.e. ‘the fortress’ – a standard North African term for ‘ruins’), some 37 miles to the north-west, where in 1852 “les pentes jusqu’à la plaine sont couvertes de ruines Romaines,”

72 Génie 1H879 Tébessa 1888–1921: the *Mémoire sur les projets pour 1888* includes “la pierre de taille, extraite à la carrière, taillée avec parement vu rustiquée, et transportée à pied d’œuvre”.

73 E. g. Génie 8.1 Tébessa 1842–1875, *Etat estimatif des dépenses à faire aux fortifications, projets pour 1862–*

1863, quotes, 1, for “ébauchage pierres de ruines”, 230 cubic metres; 4: quotes for demolition of a tower, plus another 150 cubic metres of “pierres de ruine” for the courtine.

74 Génie 8.1 Tébessa 1842–1875: *Etat estimatif, Projets pour 1864–1865*, 23.

there are the ruins of a late Roman fort, and between Kalaa and Ain Ksiba (‘Ain Qaṣība) a Roman monument with walls still 2 to 3 m in height and, nearby, a Marabout “au milieu de vastes ruines Romaines, qui ont servi à le construire.”⁷⁵

7 Case study 3: Guelma

As we shall see, destruction at Guelma (Qālīma) follows much the same lines as we have seen at Sétif and Tébessa so, from what we have already learned from Sétif and Tébessa, the pace and extent of deprecation at Guelma is easily understood as a chronological listing:

1837: it seems likely that the site was chosen precisely because the Roman enceinte was in good enough condition to occupy immediately⁷⁶ – although to this it was objected that the ambush-ready ruins made the site dangerous.⁷⁷ The French camp was in the citadel, and large parts of its walls remained (Fig. 5), while antiquities carpeted the walled town outside to a depth of some 1.5 m.⁷⁸ (Nor was Guelma exceptional: compare the Duc d’Orléans’ description of Cuicul as another Herculaneum.)

1838: Colonel Duvivier⁷⁹ marvels at the amount of building materials lying around:

Une immense amas de pierres de fortes dimensions toutes taillées, ne demandant plus qu’à être mises en place; elles représenteraient une valeur de plusieurs millions dans un pays à routes et à voitures.⁸⁰

75 MR882.2: Lieutenant Warnet, Mémoire sur la subdivision de Bone en 1852, 35–37.

76 Génie 1H891, Capt. de Génie Boutault, Mémoire militaire sur Bougie, 25 January 1837, 1; Correspondance du Maréchal Clauzel, cit. His eye is clearly on the reuse of materials for fortification, at II 299, writing to the Minister on 1st December 1836 about Guelma: “Il reste à Guelma de nombreuses ruines de construction romaine, et notamment l’enceinte de l’ancienne citadelle est assez bien conservé pour permettre d’y établir en toute sûreté contre les Arabes un poste militaire.”

77 Génie 8.1, Guelma, Carton 1, 1837–1847: Capitaine Niel, Reconnaissances du Camp de Guelma, prefers Drea to Guelma, because “Il eut donc bien mieux valu s’établir sur la route même que d’aller chercher au loin des ruines qui d’ailleurs sont difficiles à défendre à cause de l’immense carrière qui est auprès et des tas de pierres derrière lesquels on peut s’embusquer à demi portée de fusil.”

78 Camp de Guelma, capitaine Niel, n. d., perhaps March 1837 like a similar document in same carton (Génie 8.1 Guelma Carton 1, 1837–1847): the French camp is in the old citadel, “dont l’enceinte est en partie restée debout. La ville était beaucoup plus grande ... son emplacement est recouverte d’une masse de pierres et d’encombres qui en indiquent à peu près le contour. On remarque sur plusieurs endroits des débris de colonnes en marbre rouge, des chapiteaux et d’énormes pierres de taille qui appartenaient sans doute à des monuments publics. Les décombres ayant relevé le sol actuel d’environ 1m50.” Niel includes sketches of the arènes, of inscriptions, and showing the walls (with the corner towers standing highest, the courtyard lowest) substantially intact.

79 Colonel Farriadis Fleurus de Duvivier, born 1794, who was to go on to write *Solution de la question de l’Algérie*, 1841 (pp. 344) and *Les inscriptions phéniciennes*, 1845.

80 Génie H226 Mémoires divers 1835–1838, Colonel Duvivier, Rapport sur l’établissement actuel de

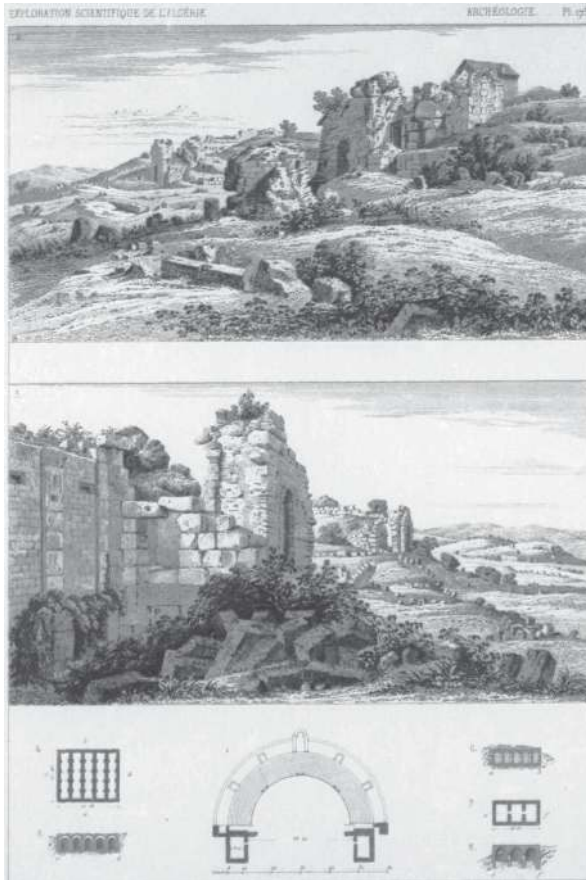


Fig. 5 Guelma: views of the defences, built from very large blocks.

He also has plans to repair the “camp supérieur” – not with the “pierres de taille énormes” lying all around, “mais avec des petits pour aller plus vite”⁸¹ The French continued, indeed, to experience great difficulties in shifting large antique blocks, so Duvivier might well be implying the impossibility of the task if large blocks were tackled. Duvivier liked rebuilding, and recommended it elsewhere, with the defences stiffened with cannon.⁸²

In view of such riches, the 1844 projects hope simply to reuse the ancient masonry:

Guelma, 1838, 36 (unnumbered) pages. Cf. note 13.

81 Ibid., 6–7.

82 Génie 8.1 Constantine carton 1: 1836–1840, Colonel Duvivier, Sur les moyens d’employer pour maintenir la communication avec Constantine, 26 March 1838, 12: at Announa (‘Annūna) “on trouve

des pierres de taille en quantité considérable, une source excellente est à côté. On pouvait donc y créer facilement un bon poste militaire... Relever le fort romain situé à 3700 mètres de Guelma, l’organiser pour recevoir une garnison de 40 hommes, avec une pièce de canon à affut marin sur sa plate forme..”

on rejouera l'ancienne maçonnerie, et remplacera avec mortier les assises en pierres sèches ... on pourra creuser les fosses de manière à arriver jusqu'au niveau des anciennes fondations, et à rendre plus difficile l'escalade.⁸³

At the same date, they are reusing Roman ruins (unspecified) on the site of Batiment C, to make good the wall; and they dug down to see how extensive the ruins were – no doubt to determine how much material they could extract.⁸⁴ But an 1843 exploratory dig had determined that the ancient masonry was in worse state than had been supposed.⁸⁵ This was because of earthquake damage, which had moved the blocks.⁸⁶ It is rather pathetic that the French could not produce sufficient technology to right earthquake-disturbed blocks; and also that the 1838 plan for refurbishing the citadel was projected to use “petit appareil” for the same reason. Were the Génie undertrained or perhaps undermanned? If they could shift cannon, why not antique blocks, at least up to the capacity of their gear?

1845: The Inspecteur Général recommends reusing the foundations of the Roman enceinte (“dont les fondations au moins serviront, et produiront une économie en donnant plus de solidité aux nouvelles constructions”), and making silos out of the towers.⁸⁷ Similarly, Roman water arrangements are more than adequate: “les anciens bassins restaurés l'année dernière sont plus que suffisants pour un grand établissement” – and they will go ahead and restore more “anciens bassins dans le voisinage des Sources” – so the French are clearly using Roman springs and water receptacles (Fig. 6).⁸⁸

1846: As elsewhere, it was planned expansion which helped destroy the ruins. By now the enceinte was considered too small, and huge amounts of materials were estimated for the extensions, required for a tripling of the garrison. The new walls are to be 4 m high and 0.5 m thick.⁸⁹ And once again, the high cost of restoring the wall is attributed to the use of civilian labour.⁹⁰

83 Génie 8.1 Guelma Carton 1, 1837–1847, Mémoire pour les projets pour 1844, Apostilles du Chef du Génie, 3.

84 Génie 8.1 Guelma Carton 1, 1837–1847, Projets pour 1844, Apostilles du Directeur.

85 Mémoire pour les projets pour 1844, Apostilles du Chef du Génie, 3.

86 H226 Mémoires divers 1835-8, Colonel Duvivier, Rapport sur l'établissement actuel de Guelma, 1838, 36 (unnumbered) pages. Cf. 5–6: “dans plusieurs endroits en fouillant jusqu'au fond des fondations, nous avons trouvé celles si dérangées et déviées. Quelques angles élevés, de tours qui montent encore comme des aiguilles, présentent des pierres tout isolées qui ont tournée les unes sur les autres, en laissant les joints verticaux à jour, comme seraient

quelques dominos, placés de champ les uns sur les autres par des enfans.”

87 Génie 8.1 Guelma Carton 1, 1837–1847, Mémoire sur les projets pour 1845, Place de Guelma, 5. Ibid. 2 confirms that use of the foundations is to save money on civilian labour.

88 Ibid., Apostilles du Directeur Projets pour 1845, cf. the plan in Article 5, “Etablissement provisoire de bains à Hamman-Meskoulina”, with a hospital erected near the “anciens bassins restaurés”, these by a hot water spring.

89 Génie 8.1 Guelma Carton 1, 1837–1847.

90 Apostilles du Directeur, 1846 Projets; cf. the water-colour plans in the Projets for 1846 showing what was intended.

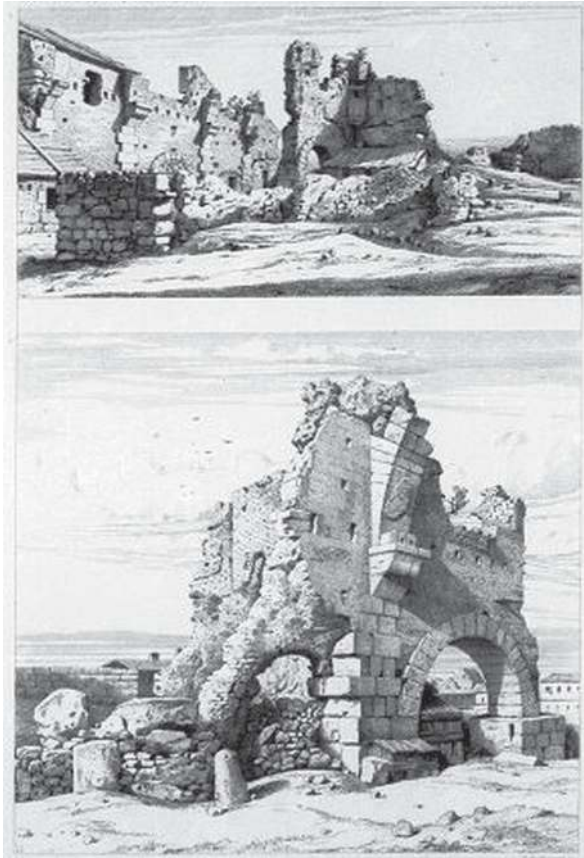


Fig. 6 Guelma: views of vaulted Roman buildings.

1847: Second thoughts arrive, when a submission wonders whether Guelma actually needs an enceinte, although “une enceinte quoque tardive sera toujours utile parce qu’elle servira au moins pour l’octroi”. And, in any case, there are new sections of wall already building – because “on n’a pas pu se servir d’aucune partie des fondations pour les portions d’enceinte qui ont été nouvellement reconstruites”.⁹¹ And since storage is always at a premium, the same year sees plans for casting covetous eyes on the ruins of the Roman Baths. These were large and extensive, and had been proposed as protection for the French camp in 1838⁹² and probably fortified under the Romans.⁹³ They were

91 Génie 8.1 Guelma Carton 1, 1837–1847, Projets pour 1847, Apostilles du Directeur, 5, 9–11.

92 Génie H226 Mémoires divers 1835–1838, Colonel Duvivier, Rapport sur l’établissement actuel de Guelma, 1838, 36 (unnumbered) pages. Cf. 5: “D’immenses thermes tres anciens, formant un vaste

bâtiment dont il n’existe maintenant que quelques murailles, étaient enclavées dans le périmètre des remparts, et comme une vaste tour ou petite citadelle faisaient partie de ceux-ci.”

93 Durliat 1981, 38 dedication inscriptions. Cat 3: Guelma (pp. 539–544) includes the line *Posticuis /*



Fig. 7 Guelma: the defences, with re-used antiquities in upper courses.

now proposed for use as cellerage, or by building over some of the bath foundations for “des Magasins d’Orge”⁹⁴

1847: Whether an enceinte was needed or not, the main interest groups evidently squabbled over who got what, both recognizing the value of the antique blocks.⁹⁵ The documents record one volley in a dispute between the chiefs of the Génie and Artillery, item 3: “les matériaux provenant des murs de l’ancienne courtine (4-3) et (3-2) resteront à la disposition du Génie”.

1848: the Chef de Génie⁹⁶ countermands building on the ancient foundations between towers 11 and 18, but

... toutefois on aura l’avantage de tirer des fondations des pierres de taille qui serviront à la construction de la partie supérieure du mur, et on ne regrettera probablement point de les y avoir laissées enfouis, car elles deviendront tres couteuses si l’on se trouve obligé d’aller les extraire à la carrière.

Later in 1848: all change! It is now decided⁹⁷ that Guelma will house only 390 men and 9 horses. So the task is to close the enceinte “le plus tôt et les plus économiquement possible” – reckon 12 years to finish the Quartier Militaire. So proposes a “courtine en terre”.

1850–1851: The Chef du Génie⁹⁸ was certainly not against safe re-use of the monuments: in from of the south gate of the antique enceinte are cisterns with a capacity of 675 000 l, and well preserved: “les murs sont parfaitement intacts et les voutes seules

sub terras balteo concluditur ferro – suggesting closing and protecting the baths with an iron postern gate was part of the idea.

94 Génie 8.1 Guelma Carton 1, 1837–1847, Apostilles du Commandant Supérieur, Génie, Place de Guelma, Projets pour 1847, 33.

95 Ibid., Procès verbal 1847.

96 Génie 8.1 Guelma Carton 2: 1848–1855 Projets pour 1848, Apostilles du Chef de Génie, 4.

97 Ibid., Apostilles du Directeur, 3.

98 Génie 8.1 Guelma Carton 2: 1848–55, Projets pour 1850 & 1851, Apostilles du Chef de Génie, 5–7:

auraient besoin de quelques reparations”. But to open a new gate in the SE corner of the enceinte, writes the Directeur, “il faut raser les restes de constructions romaines qui se trouvent sur cet emplacement et dont une partie mérite d’être conservé à titre d’ouvrages d’art, et comme pouvant d’ailleurs être utilisée...” So they’ll take another route, and demolish Roman cellars instead.⁹⁹ The Commandant Supérieur does not agree, noting¹⁰⁰ that the ruins are “assez considérables ... Ces ruines ne présentent aucun caractère ... il vaut mieux les raser complètement que d’adopter pour en conserver quelques restes, la disposition proposée par le Directeur...” – although nobody says exactly what these ruins are.

1852–1853: The Roman enceinte is still not completed, and work proceeds to refurbish the Roman baths near the Roman ruins, where they discovered in 1851 yet more antique “bassins à côté des bassins actuellement en service”. To save money, the antique basins would be restored, and the accompanying cisterns as well.¹⁰¹ These springs delivered nearly 1000 m³ of water per day, and were certainly curative.

8 Roman hydrology survives the French army

The reuse of ancient monuments to help in containing expenditure continued throughout the 19th century across all of French North Africa and, with many monuments above-ground mangled or completely destroyed, the ancient water system (aqueducts, barrages, cisterns etc) survived. At the end of the century, Paul Gauckler’s work on hydraulics,¹⁰² based on surveys carried out by the French army, gave monument by monument “des indications nécessaires sur l’état actuel de la ruine et son utilisation possible.”¹⁰³ Presenting a summary of urban hydrology for 19 Roman cities, he concluded (I 128) that

La réfection de ces travaux urbains, ou même la captation à nouveau des sources que les Romains avaient utilisées, ne pourra être tentée avec quelques chances de succès que le jour où la population se sera suffisamment développée pour en nécessiter l’exécution, et où l’élément français cherchera à restaurer méthodiquement les centres de la colonisation romaine, ce qui n’a eu lieu jusqu’ici que dans une très faible proportion et sur des points peu éloignés de la côte.

99 Ibid., Apostilles du Directeur 3.

100 Ibid., Apostilles du Commandant Supérieur, 3.

101 Génie 8.1 Guelma Carton 2: 1848–1855, Projets pour 1852 et 1853, Apostilles du Directeur, 19; Apostilles du Commandant Supérieur, 15.

102 Gauckler 1897–1912.

103 Gauckler 1897–1912 I, 5.

This is indeed archaeology as the servant of colonial survival. In Algeria in 1964, French archaeologists were still fascinated by Roman hydrology, and still for reasons of colonial settlement spliced with the advantage of low cost. Jean Lassus, in his preface to Birebent's *Aquae Romanae*, focussed on the interest of semi-desert areas:

Comment avaient-ils alimenté ces villages et des fermes, irrigué cette plaine, aménagé ces pentes? Ce qu'ils ont fait, on peut le refaire.

And again:

L'examen attentif, la recherche systématique des aménagements romains facilitait donc la tâche du chercheur d'eau. Parfois même il était possible de réemployer les puits, les captages ou les canalisations antiques, moyennant un effort bien moindre que celui qui eut été nécessaire pour construire de toutes pièces un nouveau réseau.

That this is not mere archaeology is clear from Birebent's position: his boss, the Directeur de l'Hydraulique en Algérie, gave him permission to undertake a systematic search "des vestiges anciens pour savoir si cela pouvait éventuellement permettre de découvrir les ressources dont s'alimentaient les agglomérations romaines".

The result is an interesting, detailed and highly practical manual – but containing no hint that the French army was doing the same thing a century previously.

9 Fingers in the dyke: saving Algerian monuments

Until late in the 19th century, there seems to have been no official brake upon military and colonizing requirements in Algeria, but only the small backwash of the growing popularity of museums in Europe, and minimal funding to preserve and house Algeria's Roman antiquities. There were expeditions and explorations, commissions and reports, but these were piecemeal, there being apparently no overarching policy for Algeria. This is perhaps similar to the situation in France where, likewise, much Roman material (especially *late* Roman, despised as decadent, or ignored completely) was destroyed in the cleaning-up of towns and the destruction of city walls and military fortifications (the relicts to be seen in for example the museums of Narbonne, Saintes and Langres).

The problem in Algeria was on an altogether larger scale because, as stated at the beginning of this paper, only a very small percentage of the antiquities appear to have gone between the end of the Byzantine and the beginning of the French occupation. Many were incorporated in later buildings, as can be seen in Delamare's views of Constantine (Figs. 8–11).



Fig. 8 Constantine: walls incorporating column shafts, altars and inscriptions.

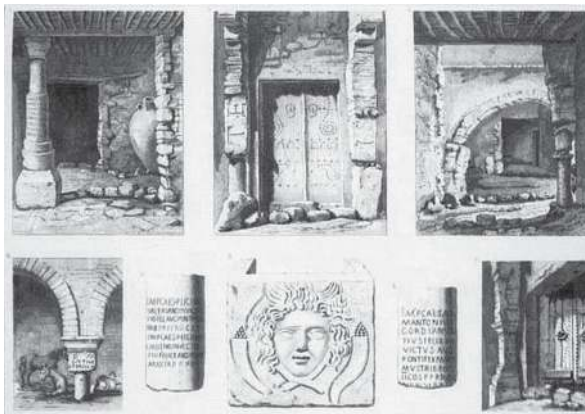


Fig. 9 Constantine: antiquities, including milestones, built into much later houses.

Perhaps there was simply too much material discovered and underground to be coped with comprehensively in the early, dangerous years. Texier notes the great riches of the Province of Constantine, and relays from Lambaesa (Tāzūlt) the commandant's observation that there are “dans les environs un grand nombre de villes antique remplies de monumens et d'inscriptions”; which he was prevented by bad weather from examin-



Fig. 10 Constantine: reworked Roman walls, with inscribed blocks (altars, honorific bases) for interior support.

ing.¹⁰⁴ With monuments such as mosaics, should they be left in place or lifted? When a large Christian mosaic was discovered at Orléansville (ash-Shlaf), A. de Saint Arnaud, the Colonel in charge, made the interesting suggestion of 15 October 1846 building a church on top of it, for which he provided a plan. The plan was shelved, being too costly at 20 000F.¹⁰⁵ Such projects were competing for funds against absolute necessities – such as repairing the aqueducts at Cherchel (Shirshāl), for 45 871F (over EUR 100 000).¹⁰⁶

The Ministry of War evidently wanted to be seen to be doing something, and had planned for Prosper Mérimée and the Comte de Laborde to visit Algeria, “pour visiter les antiquités romains qui s’y trouvent et vous adresser un rapport sur les moyens d’en

104 2N75 Texier to Minister of War 10 Dec 1847.

105 ANOM and DOM-TOM. 2N75: Texier to Minister of War 24 Jan 1848, following the Colonel’s sugges-

tion dated 15 Oct 1846; Texier recommends against implementation in his letter of 13 Jun 1848.

106 2N75, Texier to Minister of War 21 Jan 1848.

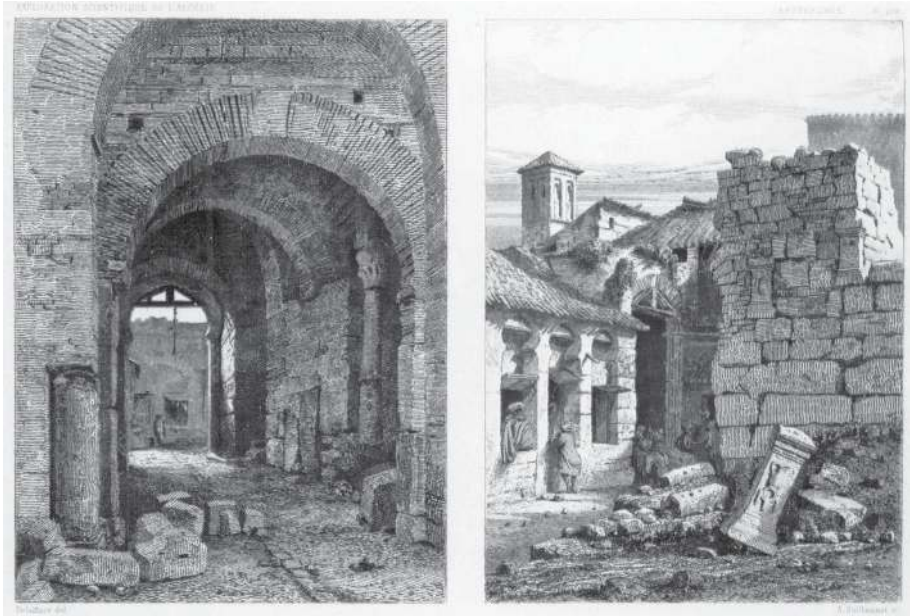


Fig. 11 Constantine: antiquities incorporated into the fabric of the Moslem town.

assurer la conservation” – and the 15 000F (EUR 33 000) mentioned “pour la restauration, l’entretien et la conservation des monuments historiques de l’Algérie” was surely a proposal for some part of an annual vote.¹⁰⁷ The reason for the visit is given by de Laborde: Algeria was to be treated like metropolitan France, and “notre seul but était d’appeler sur les ruines de l’Algérie l’intérêt que la Commission des Monuments historiques est parvenu à obtenir pour les monuments de la France.”¹⁰⁸ The irony – once again – is that at the very same time that strenuous efforts were afoot in metropolitan France to preserve and restore monuments, the agents of the state were destroying them in Algeria, leaving scholars to pick up and document the ever-sparsier pieces.

Clearly, Algeria needed its own volumes in the series *Inventaire général des richesses d’art de la France*. And, indeed, a *Commission départementale d’Alger* was set up, deriving from a proposal of 1856 of Congrès des Sociétés Savantes to do an inventory, but the lines of guidance seem designed for Christian countries with churches and paintings, not for places like Algeria with Arab, Roman and Byzantine monuments.¹⁰⁹ The context

107 2N75 Letter from Minister of War dated Sept 1847.

108 2N75, Letter from Comte de Laborde 14 Sept 1847.

109 ANOM 54.S.1–2 Minute book, *Inventaire Général des richesses d’art de la France*, Commission, Séance du 19 avril 1878 etc. But they do not meet very of-

ten, and do not decide much either except at the strategic level. No great lines of principle seem to be laid out. This liasse contains examples of submissions, presumably for use as models.

for this is perhaps the *Exploration scientifique de l'Algérie* which, from surveys made in 1840–1842, produced from 1845 to 1870 volumes in various disciplines. At the same time, help was sought from amateurs, by the tried-and-tested method of fill-in questionnaires accompanied by advice. Léon Renier's sixteen-page *Instructions pour la recherche des antiquités en Algérie* (Paris 1859)¹¹⁰ gives locations on which to concentrate, how to copy inscriptions, and measures to be taken to preserve antiquities. The lack of any Algeria-wide regulations is obvious, and the research is to be done on the cheap:

Il serait, du moins, possible de se procurer, sans frais, les monuments que le hasard, les progrès de la colonisation, les travaux publics et particuliers font tous les jours découvrir. Il suffirait pour cela que les commandants militaires et les fonctionnaires civils de l'Algérie voulussent bien faire recueillir toutes les inscriptions découvertes actuellement.

By analogy with similar developments in metropolitan France, the heritage of Algeria was therefore to be treated to the *Commission des monuments historiques*, and to be preserved in museums, which were sometimes to be sited in interesting buildings. Thus Texier, the Inspecteur Général des Batiments Civils, writes¹¹¹ to the Minister of War (14 February 1848) on his proposal to make the Praetorium at Lambaesa into a museum: the ruins of the town “passent pour les plus importants de toute l'Algérie”, and this 27 m by 19 m space “pourrait recevoir un appropriation utile en le consacrant à abriter tous les petits monumens, toutes les inscriptions qui se comptent par centaines, et tous les fragmens de sculpture que l'on pouvait découvrir par la suite dans les ruines de Lambaesa”.

Were no such secure shelter to be provided, the monuments “épars par le sol, sont exposés à toutes les causes de destruction”.

Costs – estimated at 7 710F12c (EUR 17 000), which could be kept down by using troops for the work. But this project was never executed.

Large monuments required restoration and often digging out. The theater at Tipasa (Tibāsa) (the town was admired by Ibn Ḥauqal in the 10th century¹¹²) and the Temple of Aesculapius at Lambaesa would cost 15 000F (EUR 33 000), and the former required the excavation of some 1550 m³ of earth – work which would allow the study of the whole, “mettrait à découvert des parties de sculptures qui sont certainement enfouis sous terre”. Although far from any inhabited town or village, Texier argued that “la possibilité de

110 ANOM F80 1733, extracted from the *Revue Algérienne et Coloniale* Nov. 1859, 3.

111 DOM-TOM 2N75.

112 Ibn Ḥauqal (travelling 943–969) 1842, 225 Tipasa: “une ville d'une très-haute antiquité. Elle est entourée d'une ancienne muraille construite de pierre et de chaux”.

communiquer par mer rend les travaux d'une exécution facile"¹¹³ – some indication of the problems of moving heavy weights by land.

The main problem for the surviving monuments continued to be the wilful or careless destruction of the past, as Delamare pointed out in the early 1840s. Delamare's biography is one of frustration with authority, and of disappointment at the early recall. He had to struggle to remain in Algeria after 1842, but finally left on 15 May 1845.¹¹⁴ Too much bureaucracy to fight, too many monuments to protect? In fact, his volume of the *Exploration Scientifique de l'Algérie* (Archéologie: vol 1)¹¹⁵ was fragmentary, covering only those eastern sections already conquered – Bône, Sétif, Constantine, Guelma, Philippeville – so his withdrawal was a loss to scholarship. But the drawings he left, some of which illustrate this paper, provide an important record of French outposts in Algeria before the army destroyed most of them.

Beyond the scholars, Paris was perhaps not much interested in the antiquities of Algeria. Diehl notes¹¹⁶ the 1845 opening of the Musée Algérien at the Louvre. He retails the story of 12 marble statues, acquired by a French consul in the South, which were shipped to Toulon for the Louvre, on a French warship. They languished in the Arsenal for 35 years, and only got to their destination “à la suite d'une réclamation formelle”.

Societies were certainly established in Algeria for the study and protection of the monuments, but it was often their mournful task to document destruction. Thus cognoscenti at Constantine defined their task as to “recueillir, conserver, décrire”, although much had already gone¹¹⁷ – forming the kernel of a museum. Stéphane Gsell¹¹⁸ lists (p. III) the disputes at Philippeville over whether antiquities should go into a local museum, or back to France. In the long correspondance between Delamare (the discoverer of Lambessa: see below) and the Ponts & Chaussées engineer Laborie, Gsell found an annotation, probably by Governor-Général Bugeaud himself: “ces savants mettent le désordre partout avec leurs exigences, dans l'intérêt de leurs grands travaux, qu'ils ne publient jamais” – a palpable hit! But a large number of the entries in Gsell's text illustrate what happened without preservation; for there is an abundance of phrases such as

113 2N75 Restauration du théâtre de Tipasa, letters from Texier to Minister of War 17 & 19 Nov 1849.

114 Dondin-Payre 1994, Dondin-Payre 1995.

115 Delamare 1850.

116 Diehl 1892, 7–8: Commandant Delamare in 1844 announces discovery of Lambessa. He and others began (“restée malheureusement inachevée”) L'exploration archéologique de l'Algérie. 8: Commission Scientifique attached to the military from 1840, which allowed Ravoisié to publish Monuments Antiques et Modernes de l'Algérie in

1846. Also Commandant Delamare, *Exploration archéologique de l'Algérie*, Paris 1850.

117 *Annuaire* 1853, 13, 15: “Constantine ... renfermait encore au moment de la conquête française, un grand nombre de ruines romaines, dont la plupart ont disparu dans les travaux de construction de notre établissement ... quelques morceaux d'architecture et de sculpture ont été recueillis et attendant, exposés aux intempéries de l'air, que l'administration leur procure des abris.”

118 Gsell 1912, Texte explicatif des planches de A-H & A. Delamare, Chef d'Escadron d'Artillerie, Membre de la Commission Scientifique de l'Algérie.

“dont il ne subsiste que quelques vestiges ... on n'en voit plus que la trace ... qui était située...”

The gap between intention and achievement is seen nowhere better than in the *Bulletin Officiel de l'Algérie et des Colonies contenant les Actes officiels relatifs à l'Algérie et aux autres colonies* (publiés du 24 juin au 31 décembre 1858, Paris 1859, pp. 259–260). An *Envoi* signed Napoleon (Jérôme), offers hands-on advice and instructions from Renier to the various public functionaries of Algeria: the French need to investigate and protect the past, and Public Works could do this at little cost, and then gather the finds into local museums.¹¹⁹ Again, topographical officers with the army could help with charting Roman remains, especially roads¹²⁰, as indeed they had done since the Conquest. Nevertheless, in spite of such efforts, depredations continued, and conceivably increased with the increased rate of colonization and modernization of the country and new towns, roads and railways. Thus Diehl notes in 1892¹²¹ in disgust that “tous, maçons, entrepreneurs, colons, ingénieurs des ponts et chaussées, officiers du Génie, et jusqu'aux administrateurs eux-mêmes, ont rivalisé de zèle destructeur”. As an example he instances Lambessa: intact in 1844, in 1848 a prison was built here, precisely because of the building materials: “Le plus ancien des deux camps a disparu complètement; l'enceinte de l'autre est fort endommagée, et le pénitencier avec son vaste jardin en couvre d'ailleurs la meilleure part” – and it is the same sad story with the amphitheater. Nor did important buildings escape:

119 Envoi d'instructions relatives aux recherches archéologiques, dated 31 December 1858: “L'Algérie à gardé de nombreux vestiges de la domination romaine; malheureusement ces curieux débris disparaissent chaque jour, et les notions précises qu'ils pouvaient fournir sur l'organisation politique et administrative des colonies romaines s'anéantissent avec eux. Je m'intéresse particulièrement aux études qui ont pour objet de reconstituer l'histoire du passé de notre colonie... Les travaux d'utilité publique et privée qui s'exécutent ou vont s'exécuter en Algérie permettront, sans dépense spéciale, de faire de nombreuses fouilles et de retrouver beaucoup d'inscriptions précieuses pour l'historien et le géographe ... Quant aux monuments eux-mêmes, lorsqu'ils ne seront pas, comme les bornes milliaires, de nature à rester en place, ils devront être transportés dans le centre de population le plus voisin [hitherto, most had gone to the Musée d'Alger, which was costly, and damaged them – this must cease]. Chaque localité doit conserver les monuments relatifs à son histoire particulière. Les municipalités devront assurer la conservation des

débris historiques recueillis sur leur territoire, et en former de collections publiques. Lorsque ces collections sont assez considérables, comme elle le sont déjà ou le seront immédiatement à Constantine, à Philippeville, à Guelma, à Souk-Harras (Sūq Ahrās), à Sétif, à Cherchell et à Aumale, la garde en devra être confiée à un conservateur spécial, lequel sera en même temps chargé de veiller à la conservation des monuments d'architecture subsistant encore dans la ville ou dans les environs. La formation et l'entretien de ces collections devront, en tout état de cause, rester à la charge des municipalités.” In other words, a triple cost: 1) of forgoing reusable antiquities; and 2) quarrying new stock in their place; and 3) paying for a museum to house the antiquities they are not allowed to plunder.

120 Ibid.: “Je recommande aux officiers des bureaux topographiques de noter avec soin, sur les cartes et plans de leurs subdivisions, la direction des voies romaines, l'emplacement des ruines, des bornes milliaires, et de tous les monuments que l'on pourra découvrir.”

121 Diehl 1892, 14.

On a scié les marbres du temple d'Esculape; on a démoli le Nymphaeum si curieuse pour élever un bâtiment communal, on a martelé et brisé les inscriptions: plus de la moitié des textes épigraphiques jadis recueillis par Léon Renier a aujourd'hui disparu.¹²²

In the 20th century, attacks on the monuments did not cease, but came from one rather than the previous two directions. With the building of railroads and roads, and developments in fortification, and with the institution of civil government, the Army lost interest in the ancient monuments. Now the greatest threat to the survival of the monuments was the colons, "en utilisant des pierres romaines pour l'édification de constructions", and sometimes supported by commercial interests in the face of continuing official disapproval.¹²³ Such disapproval was eloquently if fruitlessly stated as a still-valid principle by the Architecte en Chef des Monuments Historiques in 1920:

Ces pierres peuvent ne pas offrir cet intérêt si elles sont posés isolément; mais ce qui est intéressant et à conserver, c'est leur groupement, ce qui constitue le plan d'une construction antique ... Il est abominable que de pareils vandalismes puissent encore avoir lieu à notre époque et l'indemnité à faire payer aux colon vandale doit être très forte si l'on veut que d'autres ne suivent son exemple.¹²⁴

Nor was officialdom unequivocally on the side of the monuments. For unfortunately, it can be clearly read in official documents that the civil administration connived at destruction: as a reason for re-using stone, the phrase "aucune valeur au point de vue archéologique" is a frequent refrain, even as late as 1899¹²⁵ – the museum equivalent is de-accessioning. As for restoration (largely necessary because of the depredations of the Army), an index of how much work remained to be done is the releasing in November/December 1914 (!) of 60 000F (EUR 38 000) for digs at Tipasa and Cherchel to give work to the unemployed (some of which might have destroyed inscriptions, as Gsell discovered in 1916¹²⁶), with digs at Timgad and Guelma already on the wish-list.¹²⁷

122 Diehl 1892, 14–15.

123 ANOM 55.S.1 Letter from Prefet of Constantine to Governor Général, 29 July 1920, in reply to a previous letter of 15 May 1920 from l'Administrateur de la Commerce Mixte à M. le Préfet (Cabinet) Constantine claiming the stones, which the colon got by digging a trench, "n'ont aucune valeur au point de vue archéologique". This annotated inexact on the letter.

124 ANOM 55S1 Draft reply from Gov. General of Algeria to prefect of Constantine, undated, and incorporating the Avis de l'Architecte en Chef des Monuments Historiques, Paris 4 juin 1920.

125 E.g. ANOM 55S1: depredations at Bouililet 7 oct. 1899: the Administrateur de la Commune mixte reports to the Prefect at Constantine that "Il n'y a eu enlèvement de colonne ou pierre avec inscriptions", and what has been taken "n'ont aucune valeur au point de vue archéologique".

126 Gsell 1922, 177 Tipasa: "En 1916 je n'ai pu retrouver à Tifech [Tifash] que sept pierres portant des inscriptions. On m'a dit que plusieurs autres ont été réduites en moellons pour la construction d'une ferme et celle d'un barrage."

127 ANOM Liasse 9860 nov./dec. 1914; letter to Minister of Interior dated 29 August 1914 from C.B. Lистраud

Diehl had already demonstrated in 1892¹²⁸ that archaeology continued to fight a running battle against the ignorance and self-interest of the colons. Conceding that re-use of monuments in the earlier stages of the conquest was dictated by force majeure. But when he was writing, the colons seemed especially interested in decorated blocks, perhaps because of the high quality of the stone employed. So that when a law was promulgated resiling to the State monuments and inscriptions, they simply went around and “se hâtaient d’effacer sur les pierres tout signe d’antiquité, afin de conserver des matériaux utiles dont ils se jugeaient les propriétaires légitimes.” There is also evidence of continuing official re-use of the remains in Algeria as well as in France.

So over the course of a half-century there is little difference between an 1842 document regarding the use of material from ruins in Toulon¹²⁹ and a similar document of 1905 for Algeria,¹³⁰ wherein “la taille des vieilles pierres à l’Etat sera fait avec les mêmes soins et aux mêmes conditions que la taille des pierres neuves ... à l’exception toutefois de celles qui pouvaient être mises en oeuvre en rafraichissant seulement le parement ainsi que les lits et joints” – which suggests to the suspicious mind that contractors were simply digging up antique blocks and laying them without so much as tidying up the faces; or perhaps that the State was ashamed of depredating the monuments, and expected contractors to hide the evidence by ‘refreshing’ the visible surfaces with a chisel?

10 Conclusion

One moral of this story is that it is the requirements of technology, war and settlement allied to prejudice, which ensured the destruction of many of the Roman remains of Algeria. We cannot know how many, because we lack coherent and detailed catalogues of what was to be seen before the French arrived. Without war, many of the remains would probably have remained intact; and had the French not been concerned of the possibility of attack by Europeans with cannon, the repaired Roman forts of the first decade after the invasion would probably have survived.

Some of the French despised the Arabs precisely because they had not adopted a sedentary way of life and therefore had left the ancient ruins alone. But not everywhere: The Arabs of Tunis, for example, enthusiastically reused many of the marbles

(Direction de l’Agriculture) has already suggested work at Timgad and Guelma.

128 Diehl 1892, 15–16.

129 1H448 Affaires Générales, Commandant du Génie en Algérie: “Bordereau Général des prix de différents espèces de matériaux et ouvrages à fournir ou à faire pour les travaux des Fortifications et des Batiments Militaires de la place de Toulon ..” 1 Jan

1842, which includes pierre à bâtir provenant des déblais.

130 Génie 1H448 Affaires Générales, Commandant du Génie en Algérie: Cahier de prescriptions générales des travaux militaires en Algérie 28 Jan 1905, printed, Algiers 1896 with MS additions, Art 64.

at Carthage; and the French might have wondered where the marble came from for the magnificent mosques of Cairo. The French ‘colons’ were still reusing (quite illegally) Roman blocks well into the 20th century. All three trends might help explain the destruction of Roman antiquities in mediaeval Europe, where it is a truism that useful buildings (amphitheaters, tombs, theaters – all for protection and/or housing) survived whereas useless ones (temples, stadia) did not.

In the broader picture, the big caesura for the survival or destruction of ancient monumental fortifications is the invention of gunpowder, with which it was soon demonstrated that most ancient fortifications had outlived their usefulness. Mehmet the Conqueror made this very point with his guns in 1453 – although the French still considered the walls of Constantinople an obstacle in the time of Napoleon. But because of developing gunpowder technology and ballistics, no antique fortresses survived in use in post-gunpowder Europe without a substantial refurbishment, which hid or destroyed antique walls.

A second moral is that the classically-inclined French officer corps should have paid more attention to their Roman history – and seen, as later scholars did, that the Roman conquest of Algeria was precarious and relatively short-lived. Instead, sensitive souls were made melancholy and waxed lyrical because of the contrast between near-perfect Roman monuments and the makeshift constructions built for the French army. In this sense the Roman example did a disservice to the French. The Duc d’Orleans, for example, marvelled at what remained. On 19 Oct 1839 at Mahalla (Maḥalla), he wrote:

Nous suivons presque partout la voie romaine tracée militairement en dominant les crêtes; tous les postes sont parfaitement marqués, leur enceinte existe encore et pas une pierre ne manque. La domination romaine est morte ici, mais son squelette est entier et, en l’étudiant, on voit ce que fut pendant sa vie ce colosse que rien n’a pu faire oublier depuis le temps où il a disparu du monde et que nous tentons vainement de parodier ici.

From which observation he concluded that the Roman system of occupation should be studied, “car ce n’est qu’en marchant sur leurs traces que nous tirerons parti de l’Algérie”.

A few days later at Mons he wondered at the perfectly preserved grand appareil, and intimates that success comes down to monuments: “Que nous sommes loin d’eux, et si le souvenir d’un peuple ne survit pas à ses monuments, quel pauvre avenir nous préparent nos huttes de torchis!”

The final moral is that aesthetic prejudice against ‘decadent’ styles (clearly stated in military assessments and, for puritanical travelers, to be applied to all the Roman architecture of North Africa) helped prevent the preservation of monuments as symbols of French triumph in the Napoleonic manner, while transport difficulties ensured that

few Algerian monuments were carted back to France. The Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile – an excursion as vulgar as the Altare della Patria – had been completed only in the early 1830s, but perhaps the immense casualty lists and mud and snow of Algeria helped infect artistic horizons with the radicalism of Courbet, who had his own ideas about what should happen to victory monuments. So the display of Roman antiquities in the manner of Constantinople or Aachen or Damascus or Cairo was defeated in Algeria by attitude, rather than by lack of opportunity.

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