

Reviving Carthage's Martyrs: Archaeology, Memory, and Catholic Devotion in the French Protectorate of Tunisia

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Abstract: In 1874, Alfred-Louis Delattre (d. 1932) joined the Société des missionnaires d'Afrique (White Fathers) in Algiers. From 1876, he received permission from Archbishop Lavigerie to dedicate his time to archaeological exploration in and near Carthage. Lavigerie was enthusiastic about the potential of the ancient city, with its wealth of martyrs, not only to advance research on early Christianity but to support the conversion of the Berber and Arab populations from Islam. Inspired by the example of Giovanni Battista de Rossi in the Roman catacombs, Lavigerie and Delattre believed that religiously grounded archaeological research would hasten the restoration of Christian Africa as it was in the time of Augustine of Hippo (d. 432). Focused on Delattre's excavation and modification of the Carthage amphitheater, this essay explores the place of faith-based research in the development of nineteenth-century archaeology in the French Protectorate of Tunisia (established in 1881). Delattre viewed the amphitheater not as a static archaeological monument but as a living and active *lieu de mémoire* which might be revived to promote conversion and popular religiosity. This activist paradigm, a faith-based approach, deeply influenced the development of Christian archaeology.

Key Words: Christian archaeology, conversion, martyrs, Roman monuments, Tunisia,

Soon after arriving in Algiers in the aftermath of a catastrophic famine and a cholera epidemic (1867-68) that claimed the lives of what is now thought to have been as

many as a third of the indigenous population of French Algeria, Archbishop Charles Lavigerie (d. 1891) founded the Société des missionnaires d'Afrique (1868) and the Soeurs missionnaires d'Afrique (1869) (SARI 1982). The primary role of these religious communities was to care for orphans and expand proselytization efforts among the Berbers and Arabs in French colonial Algeria and later the French Regency of Tunis. Their approach was facilitated by a considerable loosening of restrictions on clerical activity and missionary work in French-controlled North Africa, and built on the foundations laid by the Jesuits in the early 1860s (CEILLIER 2008). However, Lavigerie's insistence that Catholic conversion would lay the foundation for the future existence of the colony challenged the considerably anti-clerical stance of both the military regime and many European settlers (RENAULT 1994).¹

Lavigerie hoped, in particular, to make significant inroads among the region's Berbers, or Kabyles, as they were known by the French in Algeria. Familiar with Eugène Daumas' *Moeurs et coutumes de l'Algérie* (1858), the archbishop believed that they were ripe for conversion due to their alleged descent from the ancient Maures (DAUMAS 1988: chap. 13, p. 174; DIRECHE-SLIMANI 2004: 9-10; 24-26). The same Maures, whom Augustine of Hippo (d.432), had designated as the indigenous inhabitants of Mauretania who lived neither in the deserts nor the mountains (MODÉRAN 2008). French colonists in the nineteenth century often used the nomenclature of Maures and Berbers interchangeably, and sometimes their treatises referred to the indigenous people from the time of Augustine as Berbers.² Whereas the French described the Berbers as sedentary, industrious, and resistant to the Muslim religion of their Arab conquerors, they characterized the latter as foreign and fanatical nomadic invaders (DAUMAS 1988: chap.

13, p. 140-145; TOPINARD 1874a).

This classificatory scheme of the indigenous population of the Maghreb, known now as the Kabyle myth, digested and simplified social realities, thereby facilitating French colonial rule (LORCIN 1995; SCOTT 1998: 2-3). In reality, however, French hopes that the Berbers would be more easily assimilated than Arabs into colonial society were more theoretical than practical in their application.³ And, French mastery of Arabic was neither widespread nor expert (MESSAOUDI 2015). Even in the late 1860s, most French scholars and administrators acknowledged that they had not yet sufficiently familiarized themselves with local custom, dress, and language, to be adept at distinguishing between Arab and Kabyle residents (BOETSCH e FERRIE 1989). The Kabyles thus remained a particular puzzle and a subject of fascination to French Orientalists, since they were difficult to categorize either historically or linguistically. Their physical appearance, including traits that were thought to resemble Europeans, made them even more of an enigma. (PÉRIER 1873). Their origins were disputed as well (EFFROS 2017).

In 1874, Alfred-Louis Delattre (d. 1932), a young recruit to Lavigerie's Société des missionnaires d'Afrique, arrived in Algiers (Figure 1). His initial responsibilities included aiding in the care of hundreds of the region's orphans adopted by the church following the famine of 1867-1868; he also participated in a fundraising and recruitment operation for the order in Quebec. Two years later, Lavigerie appointed him chaplain of the church of Saint-Louis on the Byrsa hill in Carthage, which was built by the French in 1841 in memory of King Louis IX (d.1270), who had died of dysentery while participating in the Eighth Crusade. At Lavigerie's direction, Delattre soon shifted his duties from the orphans to archaeological exploration in and near the ancient city to

reflect the archbishop's interest in the Christian ruins of the region (CEILLIER 2008: 231). Lavigerie himself had trained as both an ecclesiastical historian and a theologian (CEILLIER 2008: 15-16). He praised the youthful Delattre enthusiastically, recognizing him as being filled with "le feu sacré" (BAUNARD 1922, 2: 139-140). Although Delattre dug both Roman-era Christian sites and Carthage's Punic remains, he became most widely known in France and Rome for the former (FREED 2008; FREND 1996: 55-57).

It is important to note that the archaeological undertakings of Delattre in North Africa were considerably different than most of those that had transpired before the start of the Third Republic. Among the lay archaeological predecessors of Delattre at Carthage were Thomas Reade, Nathan Davis, and the Société archéologique pour l'exploration de Carthage, whose chief goals were the exportation of antiquities to Great Britain and France (BACHA 2009: 162-163). Subsequent archaeologists, such as Charles-Ernest Beulé, were more interested in context, and focused primarily on searching for Punic Carthage, which had been romanticized in François-René de Chateaubriand's *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* (1811) and novels such as Gustave Flaubert's *Salammbô* (1862). Both authors emphasized the exoticism of Punic culture, and Beulé similarly referred to his desire to unveil the mysterious features of this era through archaeological research (FANTAR 2000).

The most comprehensive publication that addressed Christian antiquities in North Africa was Stefano Antonio Morcelli's *Africa christiana* (1816), parts of which Bishop Antoine-Adolphe Dupuch updated and translated to French following his departure from Algiers (DUPUCH 1847). However, before 1870, few Christian sites had been excavated by Europeans anywhere in the Maghreb. Early efforts to draw attention to the Christian

past of the region were muted by the realities of the brutal campaigns of the French armée d’Afrique in Algeria from 1830, where archaeological objectives were predominantly trained by military officers on the Roman past (EFFROS 2018c). A rare exception to this tradition in Algeria included the excavation of ruins of a church uncovered at Henchir Guessaria in the Chemorra valley in 1847 (DUVAL e JANON 1985; FREND 1996: 58-61). In addition, exploration at the basilica of Tebessa began in 1856 (MOLL 1858-1859; SÉRIZIAT 1868; CLARINVAL 1870).

In Carthage itself, the collecting of François Bourgade (d. 1864), chaplain of the church of Saint-Louis, was intended to contribute to a future museum of antiquities. However, much of this collection, which was no doubt facilitated by purchases from local inhabitants, was dispersed upon his departure from North Africa (GUTRON 2005; GUTRON 2010: 110-113). We should not neglect here to mention Bishop Dupuch of Algiers’ successful negotiations in 1842, which authorized the transfer of some relics of the fifth-century bishop Augustine of Hippo from their resting place in Pavia back to North Africa (DUPUCH 1842).⁴ While one might not call this properly archaeological activity, the symbolically rich translation revealed early French ambitions to revive North Africa’s ancient Christian past, centered in Hippo, now modern day Annaba (called Bône by the French) (EFFROS 2018b).

Christian activity prior to the time of Delattre, whether archaeological or related to missions to Muslims, was thus quite modest. Impetus for more invigorated efforts in both stemmed directly from Archbishop Lavigerie (DELATTRE 1906: 8; FREND 1996: 68-70). In 1922, Mgr Louis Baunard recalled of Lavigerie: “His ideal was to restore ancient Christian Africa, from Mauretania, to Numidia and to Africa Proconsularis, with its

churches, its cult, its councils, its memories; and to this end he was ready to annex to Algiers the diocese of Constantine so that he could raise at Hippo once again the see of Augustine” (BAUNARD 1922, 1: iv). However, rather than investing their energy in Hippo, which had not yet yielded promising archaeological finds, Lavigerie and Delattre turned their attention to Carthage. They understood that the city’s wealth of ancient Christian monuments made it a key acquisition in the restoration of Catholicism in the Maghreb (EFFROS 2018). Indeed, both believed that archaeology there would serve the divine plan of restoring Christianity to the region.⁵

To this end, in 1875 and 1877, in what was then still the Ottoman Beylik of Tunis, Lavigerie began to purchase large tracts of land on the prominent acropolis of ancient Carthage, including the amphitheater, though some of this land would later be resold by the church in the 1890s for a profit (ALTEKAMP e KHECHEN 2013: 473-476; BAUNARD 1922, 2: 126-129). In 1875, when Delattre and a few other White Fathers took over care of the chapel of Saint-Louis, Lavigerie encouraged them to create an archaeological museum though the only remains from the days of Bourgade were a few antiquities scattered in the garden.⁶ Along the same lines, the archbishop composed a circular in March 1877 that established the Diocesan Commission of Archaeology to register all Christian archaeological and historical remains found in Algerian parishes (DELATTRE 1903b).⁷ While Muslim authorities voiced their opposition to these land acquisitions, due to the unrest they might occasion among the Arab and Berber population, the Church’s ownership of this property and French colonial presence in Algeria (and increasingly in Tunis) made it difficult for authorities of the Beylik of Tunis to contest their activities (ALEXANDROPOULOS 2009: 69-70).

It is clear, however, that archaeological undertakings were a feature of the growing French threat to Ottoman political and cultural autonomy. In 1876, Khereddine Pacha opened his own archaeological museum in Tunis, which he intended to be accessible to the public (which was dispersed after he left office in 1877, and only parts of which made their way to the Bardo Museum six years later) (JAÏDI 2017). Although undertaken with the tacit support of Delattre, this Ottoman project was inspired by, yet pushed back against, the European model being used to assert French imperial ambitions (BACHA 2013: 52-53).

In Carthage, Delattre's excavations focused on a mix of sites from the Punic period onward, but much of his interest was in exploring remains of the first centuries of Christianity (JANSEN 2008). In September 1878, he began to collect fragments of Christian epitaphs at the site at which he would later excavate the late antique basilica and baptistery of Damous El-Karita (DELATTRE 1892: 5). That same month, Delattre noted in a letter to Lavigerie "In this state of things, it would be good, I believe, that our Society [of the Missionaries of Africa] take on the honor of publishing all that might interest the faith of Christians on the glorious past of the church of Carthage and on the work of Saint Louis."⁸ The claims of Christian archaeology to be reviving and restoring the region's ancient religious past invalidated and erased more than a millennium of Arab and Berber history in the region (MCCARTY 2018).

Like many clerics and their supporters under the Third Republic and in Rome, Delattre's activities as an archaeologist were a response to what he viewed as the threat posed by secularization and anti-clericalism (EFFROS, in press). As a missionary and a devout Christian, Delattre identified personally with the sacrifices made by orthodox

Christians in North Africa during the Great Persecutions, the heretical controversies of the Donatists and Manichees, in addition to the later Arian Vandal hostilities. Carthage was particularly important to that vision. It was a prized location, second only to Rome because of its wealth of martyrs, councils, and bishops, with remains of as many as twenty churches (DELATTRE 1892: 3). Inspired by Giovanni Battista de Rossi in the Roman catacombs, Lavignerie “determined with reason that, on the ruins of a city [Carthage] that has played such a great role in history, in particular during the first centuries of the Church, religion had to encourage research” (DELATTRE 1892: 8; FÉVRIER 1991: 341-342).

Over time, however, it became clear that initiatives by the Société des missionnaires d’Afrique to convert the Kabyles and Arabs of the Maghreb to Catholicism were not making significant headway. They did not succeed in converting many of the Indigenous population beyond the modest number of orphans taken in by the Church who accepted baptism when they came of age (COLONNA 1992). Although they maintained their headquarters in Carthage and Algiers, the missionary work of the White Fathers increasingly focused on more successful initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa. The novelist Louis Bertrand, a member of the Académie française and a strong supporter of French colonialism in North Africa, preferred to envision the region revived by an influx of Europeans rather than by the assimilation of Arabs and Berbers to French Christianity (DRIDI e MEZZOLANI ANDREOSE 2012: 11). Whatever his personal view on the immediate success of the mission in the Maghreb, Delattre did not waver in his objective of excavating the remains of Augustine’s North Africa. Archaeology continued to offer the means by which to salvage hopes for the restoration of Christianity to the region. Even if

it could not support the conversion of the Indigenous inhabitants, Lavigerie and Delattre foresaw the ancient past as a means of fostering the growing European, Catholic colonial population.

From 1881, the same year as the French founded the Protectorate of Tunisia by force, Delattre moved his growing archaeological collection from the chapel to a new structure on Byrsa hill that was intended first as a school and later a seminary, but had space for exhibiting antiquities (DELATTRE 1899; FREED 2008: 75-79). (Figure 2)

Lavigerie and Delattre envisioned the museum not only as a showcase for the Christian finds in both Tunisia and Algeria, but also a pilgrimage site in the city made famous among Christians by the martyrdoms of Perpetua and Felicity in 203 CE.⁹ The museum would house finds from the excavations conducted throughout Delattre's career (FREED 1996: 69-72; BACHA 2009).

In 1881, Lavigerie's agents took initial steps to acquire the land on which the ancient amphitheater of Carthage was situated.¹⁰ In the same year, excavations undertaken by Hercule Morel, a member of the Société de géographie de Paris, proved fruitful at the Carthage amphitheater. He located what he believed to be the prison beneath it but had to break off work due the lack of necessary funds to excavate the site more fully (*Carthage autrefois* 1927: 23). While Muslim authorities were opposed to the alienation of *habous*, publicly-held land used for charitable purposes and inalienable under Muslim law, the landing of French troops in May 1881 and the military transition to the French Protectorate smoothed the way for the Church's purchase of this property.¹¹ In fact, after the Bey passed a decree forbidding excavations or purchases of antiquities in late 1882, Delattre asked French authorities to mediate with the Bey, who subsequently

granted him an exception to continue his work as conducted earlier.¹² And, shortly after the establishment of the French Protectorate in Tunisia, Delattre was awarded a state position as the director of a museum based in the Bardo Palace with collections drawn from the Bey's collection.¹³

In 1883, a year after Lavigerie was named cardinal, Delattre discovered what he believed to have been the Basilica Majorum, thought from ancient sources to contain the relics of Perpetua and Felicity. All of these developments must have seemed positive augurs for Lavigerie's successful petition in 1884 to create a second diocese in Carthage (FRIEND 1996: 70-72). However, while Delattre enjoyed significant success in carrying out his excavations over the course of six decades, he nonetheless faced periods of severe shortfalls in funding. To finance his these undertakings as well as a museum to showcase his finds, Delattre resorted to the sale of antiquities, a practice not uncommon in the period.¹⁴ In the mid-1880s, Delattre received annual grants from the Ministry of Public Instruction and was officially subject to the authority of the director of the Service des Antiquités, Beaux-Arts, et Monuments historiques, René Coudray de La Blanchère, and the antiquities law of 1886 (BACHA 2006; OULEBSIR 2004). However, the power of Catholic authorities in France and Algiers meant that he managed to hold onto significant autonomy in his archaeological undertakings.¹⁵ Despite de La Blanchère's evident resentment at Delattre's relative independence from the Service des Antiquités, Delattre collaborated with leading archaeological authorities like Salomon Reinach and Paul Gauckler and served as a correspondent of the Ministry of Public Instruction and later the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres (BACHA 2017; FREED 2008: 41-43).

In addition to uncovering ecclesiastical evidence from the architecture of a once-

thriving Christian community, Delattre was instinctively drawn to the locations at which late antique Christians were martyred. Since at least the eighteenth century, the martyrs had been the subject of scholarly discussion in France; clerics like Thierry Ruinart, a member of the Benedictine Congregation of Saint Maur and author of the *Les véritables actes des martyrs* (1708), brought their deeds to life in a work that was reissued in the early nineteenth century (RUINART 1818). However, this work had overlooked many martyrs in North Africa, and the missing stories were subsequently collected by clerical groups such as the Bollandists, diocesan clerics like the abbé Albert Pillet, and lay historians and epigraphers such as Edmond Le Blant (PILLET 1885; LE BLANT 1893).

Delattre's archaeological contributions bolstered contemporary accounts by bringing attention to the shrines and relics of the victims of the Great Persecutions, believed to have been preserved at sites both inside Carthage, such as the Basilica Majorum and the Basilica Saint-Cyprien, and outside of the ancient city (GUTRON 2010: 114-115). At a hill known as Koudiat Tsalli, near the village of Sid-Daoud, Delattre argued for its identification as the resting place of the twelve second-century Scillitain martyrs (d. 180), who were subsequently transferred to Rome in the fifth century, as well as that of Félix of Thibiuca, who had died in Carthage in 303. Not distant from this location was the basilica of Célerina near the monastery of Bigua where Delattre venerated the bodies of the seven monks of Gafsa martyred in Carthage in 482 (DELATTRE 1906: 10). Public-facing initiatives of the White Fathers thus included the composition of devotional guides for Christian pilgrims visiting the ruins. These pamphlets contained hymns and texts to commemorate the events that had transpired, among other places, in the amphitheater, Basilica Majorum, and the chapel dedicated to

Monica's tears (*Petit manuel* 1887).

Both Delattre and Lavigerie firmly believed in the deep connection that existed between the Christian sites being elevated from obscurity in Carthage and the revival of Christianity (DELATTRE 1892: 3; MCCARTY 2018: 368). In the case of the amphitheater of Carthage, Roman authorities had condemned Vibia Perpetua and her companions, a group of recent Christian converts and catachumens, to suffer death in a public spectacle in 203 (HEFFERNAN 2012; BREMMER e FORMISANO 2012). Perpetua's punishment in a spectacle involving wild beasts was certainly well known to Delattre and his contemporaries, since the passion composed by Perpetua while imprisoned and completed by one of her followers soon after her martyrdom circulated widely. Among other versions, it had been the subject of a detailed study by the abbé Pillet published in 1885 (PILLET 1885).

With the encouragement of Lavigerie who erected a cross on site in 1887, one of Delattre's first interventions at the amphitheater was to transform a vault from the amphitheater into a subterranean shrine, paved with white marble, in the location where he believed the condemned Christian captives had awaited their fate. He constructed the altar in the shrine from yellow marble taken from the nearby temple of Asclepius; green marble columns that served as supports for the altar came from the ancient Christian basilica of Damous-el-Karita (*Carthage autrefois* 1927: 22-25). In 1895, Delattre formally dedicated the shrine to Perpetua and Felicity, opening the site to pilgrims (DELATTRE 1906; MCCARTY 2018: 368-370). (Figure 3) In 1896 and 1897, Delattre excavated the entirety of the arena, an enormous task that required clearing the area of thousands of cubic meters of earth and stone. A new wall for the arena followed

afterward. (Figure 4) Besides uncovering numerous architectural elements from the structure, Delattre found hundreds of pieces of inscribed stone, Roman coins, oil lamps, and a variety of other objects, some of which he moved to his museum and others of which he used to decorate the on-site chapel (DELATTRE 1897; DELATTRE 1898).

Rather than treating the monumental remains of Carthage as static archaeological sites or museums in the modern sense, Delattre viewed them as living and active *lieux de mémoire*. To help operationalize the sacred space, Delattre coopted numerous architectural elements from the structure as well as borrowing *spolia* from other ancient monuments. Of the hundreds of sarophagi, pieces of inscribed stone, Roman coins, oil lamps, and a variety of other objects, he moved some to his museum for display. He likewise sold some to tourists and supporters of his chronically underfunded archaeological enterprise; others served to decorate the walls of the on-site chapel at the Carthage amphitheatre. In anticipation of 7 March 1903, on the 1700th anniversary of the deaths of Perpetua and her companions in the arena, he expanded the chapel dedicated to them, including the creation of a terrace abutting the shrine, the introduction of a stone altar, the piercing of some of the ancient stone walls of the shrine to allow in more light, and the covering of these new openings with iron grills decorated with chi-rho monograms. He also directed the embedding of a number of inscriptions found on site into its newly plastered walls, and moved two large stone dolphins, that had originally been located at the main entrance of the amphitheater, to mark the stairs that now led to the chapel (DELATTRE 1903a).

The festivities on the anniversary of the martyrdoms of Perpetua, Felicity and their companions, which were orchestrated annually by the White Fathers, seem to have

grown more elaborate each year. This was especially true after 1907, when Delattre uncovered an inscription that mentioned Perpetua, Felicity, and other martyrs, news that was announced at the Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres in Paris (*Les fouilles de Carthage* 1907). (Figure 5) In celebrations in 1908, according to Delattre, the appearance of the chapel was heightened by the addition of palms and red drapes. In addition to masses celebrated in the shrine by the archbishop on the first day of the celebration, Delattre described the music and crosses that accompanied processions of the faithful to the amphitheater and the well-attended masses on the second day of the festivities despite inclement weather. The holy martyrs' intervention was so successful that services on the second day of the feast had to be held in the cathedral so that worshippers would have the protection of a roof over their heads during a deluge of rain. Delattre's highest praise this year went to the choir of the White Fathers for having performed the liturgy so beautifully on the occasion. *Les martyrs aux arènes* conjured for the priest a vision of the martyrs facing down their oppressors (DELATTRE 1908: 19).

In Delattre's celebratory account of 1908, the veneration of the shrine had come to symbolize the successful revitalization of Christianity in French North Africa. Pope Pius X soon followed with a decree of 25 August 1909, which extended the feast day of Perpetua and Felicity on 6 March (originally 7 March) to the entire Church (*Carthage autrefois* 1927: 25). Ironically, however, while Delattre and his contemporaries among the White Fathers claimed to be reinvigorating the legacy of Augustine of Hippo, they were in fact reviving a cult at the amphitheatre about which the fifth-century bishop had deep reservations. Augustine had cautioned against those who adhered to the powerful visions claimed made by the third-century female martyr Perpetua and her followers

(SHAW 1993).

Although Delattre did not give much detail as to who was among the faithful aiding in the celebration of the early third-century martyrs of Carthage, photographic evidence suggests that these crowds typically consisted largely of French and other European colonists residing in and near the city of Tunis (CLANCY-SMITH 2011). Instead of recently converted Berbers, as envisioned twenty years earlier, the audience in attendance was mainly European Christian colonists and pilgrims. However, Delattre was eager to mention that it was not just Christians but also Muslims who were well disposed to the ancient martyrs; he claimed: “The Arabs always see the feast of Saint Perpetua arrive with joy, because, they say she brings them rain and one knows how, in Africa, how beneficial the rain is for farmers. Anyway, there are also Christians who invoke the martyrs to bring about the end of drought” (DELATTRE 1908: 19).

Over time, construction on the ancient amphitheater steadily transformed the site. This effort to encourage popular devotion at ancient sites reached its apogee in May 1930 after Carthage was selected by the pope as the location for the thirtieth bi-annual International Eucharistic Congress (*XXX^{ème} Congrès Eucharistique* 1930: 8-9). Under the oversight of the archbishop of Carthage and primate of Africa, Alexis Lemaître, the Roman amphitheater figured large in a series of devotional events attended by not only the papal legate but by thousands of Catholics from across Europe (ALEXANDROPOULOS 2018). This wildly popular Catholic celebration in North Africa, for which thousands of faithful heeded the call to participate in the events presided over by the papal legate, offered participants a menu of indulgences as a reflection of the depth of their commitment to the undertaking (*XXX^{ème} Congrès Eucharistique* 1930: 10-11). Early in

the Eucharistic Congress, a procession of 5,000 children dressed as virgins and crusaders marched into the reconstructed ancient amphitheater holding palms (ALEXANDROPOULOS 2009: 58-59). (Figure 6) The first verse of the official canticle of the congress, written by the Jesuit Father Boubé, proclaimed “Christians of every country, of every rank, of every age, We run to salute you, O powerful God: On the blessed soil of Carthage, Where in the past the martyrs bathed in their blood” (*XXX^{ème} Congrès Eucharistique* 1930: 82). The work of Louis Bertrand, whose vision of the revival of a Latin Church in North Africa was popular among French colonists, was certainly an inspiration of the undertaking. He served as a keynote speaker at the event (*XXX^{ème} Congrès Eucharistique* 1930: 53; 61).

Delattre’s lifework was at thus at the core of the ceremonies that transpired in the amphitheater of Carthage, the site he had literally raised from the ruins and boldly transformed into a site of memory of congress participants. The undertaking grew out of a lifetime’s career of archaeological endeavors in Carthage, first encouraged fifty years earlier by Archbishop Lavigerie. Through engagement with the ancient amphitheater and neighboring churches, the White Fathers helped fulfill the dream that Christianity was being revived rather than newly implanted in North Africa. Rebuilding the ancient monuments of Carthage, whether churches or the sites that had seen the martyrdom of courageous souls, represented an integral part of their campaign.

In French imperial possessions, archaeological knowledge-making was not easily separated from religious and political ambitions. Prior to 1870 this objective was focused largely on the Roman (pagan) imperial past (EFFROS 2018c). In the Ottoman Beylik of Tunis and then the French Protectorate of Tunisia from the mid-1870s, Lavigerie and Delattre were able to marshal ancient monuments in Carthage in support of a now

Christian colonialist experiment. In their hands, stone structures were not silent witnesses of the past but active living spaces that shaped contemporary understanding of the past and confirmed the legitimacy of modern actions. Awareness of this dynamic process allows us to interrupt the triumphal retelling of the history of archaeology and the revival of the cult of saints, and see these archaeological developments properly in their political and ideological context in French colonial North Africa.

FIGURES

Figure 1 – Alfred-Louis Delattre as a young White Father. A.G.M.Afr. Photothèque, Alfred-Louis Delattre Envelope 2. Reproduced here by permission of the Société des Missionnaires d’Afrique.

Figure 2 – Christian lamps and baptismal vessels in the Musée Lavigerie (earlier known as the Musée Saint-Louis) in Carthage. A.G.M.Afr. Photothèque, Carthage Fouilles Musée. Reproduced here by permission of the Société des Missionnaires d’Afrique.

Figure 3 – Celebration of the Feast of Saints Perpetua and Felicity in 1897. A.G.M.Afr. Photothèque, Carthage Fouilles Musée. Reproduced here by permission of the Société des Missionnaires d’Afrique.

Figure 4 – This undated photograph of the amphitheater postdates the construction of the containing wall. A.G.M.Afr. Photothèque, Carthage Fouilles Musée. Reproduced here by permission of the Société des Missionnaires d’Afrique.

Figure 5 – A devotional postcard published in 1912 with illustrations by E. Blondel that displays the reconstructed inscription to Perpetua and Felicity, discovered by Delattre in the Basilica majorum. A.G.M.Afr. Photothèque, Carthage Fouilles Musée. Reproduced here by permission of the Société des Missionnaires d’Afrique.

Figure 6 – In May 1930, as many as 5,000 children dressed as martyrs and crusaders joined a procession celebrating the martyrs of the Carthage amphitheater as part of the Thirtieth Eucharistic Congress. A.G.M.Afr. Photothèque, Carthage Basilique Congrès Eucharistique. Reproduced here by permission of the Société des Missionnaires d’Afrique.

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² This is the case, for instance, in one White Father's unpublished study of the history of the Berbers: "Une conclusion sur laquelle ce n'et past le moment d'insister, mais qu'il est bon de noter en passant, c'est que, d'après Pline, la grande masse des cités et de la

population est restée, même sous les Romains, phénicienne et berbère par les coutumes, les moeurs et le langage.” (MESNAGE 1902, p. 32).

³ Some scholars like the physical anthropologist Paul Topinard denied these subtleties and argued that any visitor to Algeria could distinguish Arabs from Berbers from nearly the first impression. (TOPINARD 1874b).

⁴ “Procès-verbal de la visite et inspection de la châsse de cristal, contenant les sacrées dépouilles du corps de Saint-Augustin. Pavia, 12 avril 1842. Archives de la Société des Missionnaires d’Afrique, Rome (henceforth A.G.M.Afr.) A16 251.

⁵ Letter from Alfred-Louis Delattre to Charles Lavigerie dated 26 December 1887: “Pussions-nous voir bientôt, grâce à l’action providentielle de Votre Eminence, le règne de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ s’étendre de toutes parts en Afrique et en Orient, le Souverain Pontife recouvrer son pouvoir temporel et Carthage ressusciter glorieux! Et un mot, Eminence, que Dieu bénisse toutes les grandes oeuvres que votre charité sans bornes a entreprises pour sa gloire, le salut des âmes et le triomphe de l’Eglise. Aussi avec quels sentiments de joie et de reconnaissance, chanterons-nous dans quelques mois sous les voûtes de la Primatiale de Carthage, lors de votre jubilé épiscopale, le Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat, comme l’écho des nombreuses victoires remportées en Afrique sur le démon.” A.G.M.Afr. B.3/631-77.

⁶ Handwritten manuscript likely by Alfred-Louis Delattre titled *Le Musée Lavigerie (Saint-Louis avant 1875)*. A.G.M.Afr. B4-152.

⁷ “Lettre circulaire de Monseigneur l’archevêque d’Alger au clergé de son diocèse relativement aux recherches archéologiques recommandés par le Concile Provincial d’Alger et Ordonnance portant création d’une commission diocésaine d’archéologie” Dated 19 March 1877. A.G.M.Afr. B4-1.

⁸ Letter dated 2 September 1878 from Alfred-Louis Delattre to Charles Lavigerie. A.G.M.Afr. B.3/631-3.

⁹ Letter dated 27 December 1875 from Alfred-Louis Delattre to Charles Lavigerie. A.G.M.Afr. B.3/631-1.

¹⁰ “Le propriétaire de l’amphithéâtre demande à Si Mustapha de lui prêter 2,500 piastres pour payer des oliviers qu’il vient d’acheter, et promet, en échange de ce service, de faire aboutir avant un mois la vente définitive du terrain de l’amphithéâtre. Si Mustapha m’a prie de communiquer à Votre Grandeur cette proposition.” Letter from Alfred-Louis Delattre to Charles Lavigerie dated 22 March 1881. A.G.M.Afr. B.3/631-43. (BAUNARD 1922, 2: 126-129).

¹¹ Letter from Alfred-Louis Delattre to Charles Lavigerie dated 17 December 1881. A.G.M.Afr. B.3/631-52 (ALEXANDROPOULOS 2009: 69-70).

¹² Exchange of letters dated 27 December 1882 and 12 January 1883 between Alfred-Louis Delattre and Paul Cambon at the French Residence in Tunis over an exception to the recent beylical decree. A.G.M.Afr. B4-4bis; B4-5.

¹³ Letter dated 4 May 1883 from Paul Cambon of the French Residence to Alfred-Louis Delattre, informing him that he would be the first director of the museum to be established in the Bardo Palace. A.G.M.Afr. B4-11.

¹⁴ All manner of schemes to raise money were proposed by Félix Charmant, a founding member of the White Fathers based in Paris. These included destroying multiples of archaeological artifacts so that they would be more valuable, finding sponsors of the

excavations by promising them finds (even if they did not actually come from the site), and giving tours. It is unclear how seriously Delattre took any of these suggestions. Letter from Félix Charmatant to Alfred-Louis Delattre dated 7 February 1879. A.G.M.Afr. B.3/723.

¹⁵ Letter from Alfred-Louis Delattre to Charles Lavigerie dated 15 March 1885 expressing frustration with La Blanchère's attempts to gain jurisdiction of his museum in the chapel of Saint-Louis of Carthage and asking the archbishop for his advice. A.G.M.Afr. B.3/631-62. On 5 April 1886, he wrote to Lavigerie again to say that the new antiquities law would impede his ability to conduct excavations under the authority of La Blanchère. A.G.M.Afr. B.3/631-67.