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ARCHIVIO ISTITUZIONALE DELLA RICERCA

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Marichal's African Archive (1964-1992) and a New Ostrakon from Vandal Gafsa

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Giulio IOVINE

Università degli Studi di Napoli 'Federico II'
Progetto PLATINUM

The first documented findings of *ostraka* in Latin-speaking North Africa date back to the very beginning of twentieth century;¹ archaeological expeditions have since then uncovered further remnants of this kind of writing material. From the very beginning of their history, these *ostraka* have proved considerably difficult to read, because of both their preservation status, often less than optimal, and their Latin, full of abbreviations, *hapax legomena* and peculiar scripts.² These two issues seem specifically to require a palaeographer, and have made Robert Marichal a pivotal figure in the history of the interpretation of Latin *ostraka*. This paper will elucidate Marichal's long-standing dealings with several *corpora* of *ostraka* from Roman Africa.

1. MARICHAL IN LIBYA

According to his own Archive, the first documented contact between Robert Marichal and the *ostraka* from Roman North Africa takes place in 1964. In the first issue of *Libya Antiqua*, Antonino De Vita informed scholarship that he had found a number of Latin *ostraka* at the excavation site of Assenammat, 4 km S-W of *Sirtis Minor*. The site had been a Roman farm and the texts written on the *ostraka*, in De Vita's opinion, were mainly accounts.³ This particular passage of the article must have caught Marichal's notice, as he copies it in the beginning of the folder devoted to Assenammat.⁴

From a letter dated 1 April 1965, one learns that Marichal was now fully involved in Libyan *ostraka*.⁵ Pierre Boyancé, director of the *École Française* in Rome, sends to Marichal, at De Vita's behest, four photos of *ostraka* (this time from Sabratha, as the folder is devoted to that site), and says that De Vita would be glad to have him in Tripoli in July-August of the same year. One is not sure whether Marichal himself contacted De Vita out of an

* I am truly grateful to R. Ast (Heidelberg) for showing me his draft edition of an *ostrakon* from Sbeitla, as well as a photo; to him, D. Internullo (Napoli 'Federico II') and M. C. Scappaticcio (Napoli 'Federico II') I am indebted for pivotal suggestions in reading the *ostrakon* here presented. I owe to T. Dorandi (Paris, CNR) the decipherment of a signature in one of the letters here mentioned.

¹ One may mention the eleven *ostraka* discovered by Captain Don Farges in 1895, and subsequently brought to the Musée du Louvre: see AST, *Ostraca*, p. 7. Very close to them, moreover, were the *ostraka* found from south of Cirta, as documented by R. Cagnat and H. Omont's report in CAGNAT, *Afrique*, p. CCXLVII-CCXLIX. See also CAGNAT-MERLIN, *Ostraca*, p. 514: 'On sait que, si les ostraca grecs se rencontrent fréquemment, surtout en Égypte, les ostraca latins constituent encore une rareté épigraphique. L'Afrique, cependant, a déjà fourni quelques-uns. Ils proviennent pour la plupart du Sud de la province de Constantine' (italics are mine). The same contribution features a full account of *ostraka* found in Carthage. A re-edition of all Carthage material will be found in PEÑA, *Papers*.

² See for instance CAGNAT-MERLIN, *Ostraca*, p. 514: 'le déchiffrement de ces ostraca est assez malaisé à cause de la mauvaise conservation de l'écriture; leur interprétation offre des grosses difficultés et bien d'incertitude'.

³ DE VITA, *Archaeological News*, p. 140.

⁴ That is, '4MAR_378' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_9'), image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00248'.

⁵ See '4MAR_375' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_7_9'), image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00225'.

interest in those *ostraka*, or was asked by De Vita to decipher them; Boyancé's intervention seems to point out that the two were not – at least, at that stage – directly in contact.⁶

Be that as it may, this was the beginning of a collaboration that lasted well beyond the sixties. As mentioned above, not only Assenamat, but also the excavations in Roman Sabratha (which were ongoing at least from 1963 to 1969⁷) provided archaeologists and Marichal with new *ostraka*. All of them were then preserved in the Tripoli Museum, the destination of five visits by Marichal through the seventies (two of which are documented in the archive).⁸ The first visit must have been particularly important, since at the end of it Marichal produced a type-written statement, where he declared that – between 25 September and 2 October 1971 – 69 *ostraka* from the Tripoli Museum 'ont été examinés et photographiés en vue d'un déchiffrement ultérieur'.⁹ One can see among the collections of *ostraka* in the document the abovementioned pieces from Assenamat (14, same number in the corresponding folder) and Sabratha (only 5 instead of the 9 in the corresponding folder). Marichal also attempts a division by content: Latin correspondence (16 pieces), accounts (24), contracts (5), graffiti (2), a multiplication table (Sabratha 777 [5]¹⁰), unidentified pieces (20) and a Greek *ostrakon* (1). From this statement, one may gather the regularity and the depth of Marichal's collaboration with Libyan authorities and archaeological expeditions in Libya, who rely on his scholarly authority and assessment.

This visit in 1971, as I stated below, and as Marichal himself declares¹¹, was the first of five surveys; and the Libyan *ostraka* kept being investigated. In a letter dated 28 July 1972,¹³ Jean Vezin informs Marichal of a new Wood lamp: 'il nous semble que cet appareil est l'idéal pour des photographies en Lybie [*sic*]' (italics are mine). In late autumn of 1973, another trip to Tripoli took place (see fn. 8), during which he signed a *reçu* for some *tessons*. One also finds in the Archive a hand-written document of five pages devoted to the Bu Njem *ostraka*¹⁴, which Marichal had been investigating since 1971, when René

⁶ In the letter, Boyancé provides Marichal with an *extrait* from De Vita's letter, whose intended recipient was Mr Euzennat. Although De Vita clearly mentions Marichal ('[...] vous trouverez quatre photos [...] des *ostraka* en cursive latine du type qui pourra intéresser M. Marichal', 'je serais particulièrement content que M. Marichal puisse venir au mois d'avril ou pendant les mois de juillet-août, quand je pense être en Libye'), he has not written directly to him.

⁷ In folders '4MAR_375' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_7_9'), image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00231', and '4MAR_375' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_7_10'), image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00234', it is clearly stated that the two Sabratha *ostraka* 'Vano 12' and 'Vano 34' come from the 1963 and 1969 excavations.

⁸ According to his own words in the 'Preface' to the Bu Njem volume (MARICHAL, *Bu Njem*), Robert Marichal was in Tripoli in 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, and 1979. In his archive, there is a record for the 1971 visit between 25 September and 2 October 1971, as he declares in a type-written statement (folder '4MAR_381' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_12_1'), image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00730', 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00731') which will be discussed below. There is record also for 1973. A document dated 25 June 1973, in the same folder, shows that Marichal was asking the French Ministry of Education for funds, in order to organize another trip to Tripoli. Whether this was the first time he asked the Ministry for financial assistance, or this was the norm, cannot be ascertained by Marichal's documents; nor is one able to understand why either Marichal or somebody else corrected the proposed period abroad (30 September to 30 October) by drawing strokes of pen on the dates, and changing the former into 28 November. However, the trip did take place. Marichal preserved the receipt of the hotel as well as the document in which he declared he had received some *tessons* (fragments), probably from the Museum; both of these documents are partially in Arabic.

⁹ See '4MAR_381' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_12_1'), image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00730'.

¹⁰ See '4MAR_375' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_7_6'), from image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00207' to 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00215'.

¹¹ See fn. 8.

¹³ See '4MAR_381' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_12_1'), image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00726'.

¹⁴ In the folder 'Musée de Tripoli', which will be discussed below.

Rebuffat (who was excavating in Gholiaia since 1967) showed him the first *ostrakon* from there. These inquiries, according to the Bu Njem folder¹⁵ and Marichal's own words in the 'Preface' to his edition,¹⁶ stretched 1971 to 1979; the Bu Njem *corpus* is the only North African collection of *ostraka* he himself was to publish.

The final chapter of Marichal's involvement in Libyan documents, as far as can be reconstructed from his Archive, dates back to 1984. David Mattingly, who was then working in the UNESCO excavations of Libyan valleys, mentions eight *ostraka* in Latin cursive, found in a Roman farm from 1st century AD Libya (the site is now Oued el-Amoud¹⁷). After three years, Marichal receives a letter from Mattingly (now in Oxford), dated 19 May 1987, where he states his difficulty in reading the *ostraka* and asks Marichal for help, promising a quick publication in *Libyan Studies* (Mattingly was then the editor) if publication in *Libya Antiqua*¹⁸ should have been too slow.¹⁹ Photos of the eight *ostraka* are included. Mattingly also mentions the Bu Njem *ostraka* as a possible parallel ('peut-etre il y a des semblances entre celeur et les *ostraka* du Bu Njem, malgré la difference de context?'), implicitly stating that Marichal's work on that *corpus*, announced by Rebuffat and himself in the seventies,²⁰ was by then common knowledge.

Marichal's answer is not extant; but he answered shortly thereafter (as he notes with his own hand on Mattingly's letter: 'repondu 26 Juillet!'), and one can guess the content of this answer from Mattingly's second letter, dated 11 August 1987. Marichal was able to tell Mattingly that the Oued el-Amoud *ostraka* were, in fact, bilingual (Latin and Punic); he probably also suggested assistance or cooperation with Semitists and/or scholars of the Berber language (Mattingly agrees). The letter ends with a double offer for Marichal: either he can bring the *ostraka* to him in Paris for direct inspection, or Marichal can come to Manchester, where the *ostraka* were then located.²¹ There are no further documents on this transaction in Marichal's archive.

2. THE LIBYAN FOLDERS

The Libyan section of Marichal's archive, from which the aforementioned documents have been taken, comprises six folders devoted to *ostraka*: 'Caractères libyques',²² 'Sabratha',²³ 'Assenammat',²⁴ 'Oued el-Amoud',²⁵ 'Bu Njem'²⁶ and 'Musée de Tripoli'.²⁷ Four

¹⁵ See '4MAR_380' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_11').

¹⁶ See again MARICHAL, *Bu Njem*.

¹⁷ The mention occurs in BARKER – JONES, *Farm*, p. 18. A thorough description of Oued el-Amoud (also *wadi* El-Amud) as an archaeological site is to be found in the same contribution from Barker and Jones. Suffice it to say, that the El-Amud is an intermittent stream located along the road from modern Mizda to Gheriat esh-Shergia; the Romano-Libyan farm rose at the confluence between the El-Amud and a 'subsidiary watercourse' (BARKER – JONES, *Farm*, p. 18), the *wadi* Umm El-Bagel. The *ostraka* have been found in a later 1st century AD building, which hosted an olive press.

¹⁸ Which was then the intended recipient for contributions on Oued el-Amoud.

¹⁹ See '4MAR_379' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_10'), image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00456'.

²⁰ See MARICHAL – REBUFFAT, *Ostraca*.

²¹ They are mentioned again in MATTINGLY, *Tripolitania*, p. 144, 163 and 165 (still unpublished).

²² See '4MAR_373' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_6').

²³ See '4MAR_375' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_7').

²⁴ See '4MAR_378' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_9').

²⁵ See '4MAR_379' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_10').

²⁶ See '4MAR_380' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_11').

²⁷ See '4MAR_381' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_12').

of them are devoted to specific collections; the remaining two seem to have a more general focus.²⁸

The 'Assenamat' folder contains fourteen minor folders: each of them features one of the fourteen pieces originally described by De Vita,²⁹ and whose catalogue number is 63/4499^a to 63/4499^p. The 'Sabratha' folder consists of ten minor folders, the first of which is devoted to photos of Sabrathan graffiti, whereas the other nine contain the photos of seven *ostraka* with inventory number 'Sabratha 777' (nos 1 to 7 are added) and two *ostraka* from 'Vano 12' (excavations of 1963) and 'Vano 34' (excavations of 1969). According to the dates written in the opening sheets, all this material was *achevé* or *vu* between 1973 and 1975; one may reasonably think, however, that Marichal had been working on these photos from the very beginning of his involvement with the African material. The 'Oued el-Amoud' folder is quite thin compared to the others, and contains only the photos of the eight *ostraka* mentioned by Mattingly in his letters. On the contrary, the 'Bu Njem' folder is the largest of all the Libyan, containing thirty-two smaller folders and a huge amount of material.

These four folders are devoted to specific collections; their common feature seems to be that they are *not* the result of direct inspection. Whatever work Marichal did on the originals he was able to see in Libya, in his archive he keeps only the photos he received, and a record of the work he did on those very photos: nothing more. In most cases, what we find is a collection of dossiers, each related to a single photo. In the single dossier, one usually finds one or more photos of the single *ostrakon* to which the dossier is devoted; some bibliography on issues related to that *ostrakon*; one or more transcriptions done on the photo, and several annotations on physical (length, width and height) or historical aspects concerning the piece. Transcriptions usually fit the Leiden criteria, with dots, underdots and square brackets. As a palaeographer, Marichal is naturally interested in the peculiar alphabets one can find in these African *corpora*, and he often draws samples of letters from a particular *ostrakon*;³⁰ a palaeographic comment, where Marichal discusses different interpretations of the sequences and other attestations of a particular writing, is to be found in several cases.³¹ In one instance, he also acquires photos from graffiti; his interest must have been focused on the form of the letters.³²

All the *ostraka* within the Libyan folders are for the moment unpublished. Although the 'Bu Njem' folder may represent an exception, as most of the Gholiaia *ostraka* have been actually published by Marichal, it is not a real one: all the *ostraka* whose photos are collected in the 'Bu Njem' folder – that is, *within* the archive – are in fact unpublished.

²⁸ Other Libyan folders, such as '4MAR_374', '4MAR_376' and '4MAR_377', focus on inscriptions and will not be discussed there.

²⁹ See DE VITA, *Archaeological News*, p. 140.

³⁰ See for instance '4MAR_378' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_9_1'), image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00271'; '4MAR_375' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_7_4'), image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00189', and so on.

³¹ See for instance '4MAR_375' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_7_4'), image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00195', 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00196'. A lexical note: Marichal calls the sequence of strokes which are employed to draw a single letter, with a term currently used by French palaeographers i.e. *ductus*. Among other scholarly environments (such as Italy), the employed term would be *tratteggio*, and *ductus* would point to the pace of the hand (quick or slow).

³² See '4MAR_375' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_7_1'), from image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00157' to 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00169'.

A reason for Marichal's choice not to publish them may lie in the fact that most of them are rather small and offer but little information.³³

Sometimes Marichal must have thought that the photo was not enough: one may find annotations such as 'elle sont inutilisable',³⁴ and the occasional lack of a transcription may be due to the fact that the photo was useless, or to the bad condition of the *ostrakon*.³⁵ These dossiers are in fact likely to be a preliminary study to the direct inspection.³⁶ In some instances, he also tries to determine the kind of document he is looking at: 'relevé d'imports',³⁷ 'table de multiplication'.³⁸ One can occasionally witness actual offprints whose topic is particularly relevant to the dossier they are preserved in. Some of them, for instance Barker and Jones'³⁹ or Le Bohec's contribution,⁴⁰ were clearly given to Marichal by the author or co-author, while others (such as Troussel's and Reynolds' contributions⁴¹) may have been independently collected.

Two folders are not specifically devoted to collections. The first, 'Musée de Tripoli', contains two smaller folders, devoted to Marichal's two documented travels to Tripoli (25 September to 2 October 1971 and Autumn 1973); they mainly preserve written catalogues of inspected items, letters and receipts. The second folder, whose title is 'Caractères libyques', seems to be a general inspection of many kinds of writing attested in Roman Libya and elsewhere: alphabets are drawn not only from *ostraka* and papyri, but also from inscriptions;⁴² not just the Latin language and letters, but also Punic alphabets are covered.⁴³ Some photos of inscriptions were covered with (now extant) transparent slides, so that Marichal could draw on them the letters he saw beneath them, and then try to reconstruct the sequence of strokes. Marichal probably prepared these folders during the years he was investigating Libyan material, as both a support for his current research and a useful album for future inquiries.

³³ A notable exception consists in two partially preserved alphabets, which still wait for a critical edition, but have been recently studied and mentioned in SCAPPATICCIO, *Artes Grammaticae*, p. 69-70. The reader must also know that within Marichal's archive one can find other mentions of Bu Njem *ostraka*: '4MAR_74', '4MAR_Diapositives_9', '4MAR_Épreuve photographiques (albums) 8' to '10'.

³⁴ See '4MAR_378' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_9_14'), image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00454'.

³⁵ See the *ostrakon* from Assenammat bearing inventory number 63/4499^o, in '4MAR_378' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_9_13'), from image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00443' to 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00448'.

³⁶ One must point out, however, that at least once he thought the photo was good enough: 'la photo suffit' ('4MAR_375' [*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_7_3'], image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00182'). In fact, the ink in 'Sabratha 777 (2)', to which the dossier is devoted, is remarkably well preserved and clearly visible even in the photo.

³⁷ See '4MAR_381' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_12_1'), image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00735'.

³⁸ See '4MAR_375' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_7_6'), image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00213'.

³⁹ BARKER – JONES, *Farm*. To be found in '4MAR_379' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_10'), from image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00478' to 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00499'.

⁴⁰ LE BOHEC, *Unité*. To be found in '4MAR_380' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_11_31'), from image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00678' to 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00687' and from image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00688' to 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00694' (a reprint).

⁴¹ TROUSSET, *Limes* p. 98-102 in '4MAR_380' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_11_30'), from image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00673' to 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00677' and REYNOLDS, *Inscriptions* in '4MAR_380' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_11_31'), from image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00708' to 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00710'.

⁴² Among the sources for this collection, one can find letters from *ChLA* IV 259, VI 319, VII 353, VIII 355, *P.Oxy.* IV 735, Carthage *ostraka* (CAGNAT – MERLIN, *Ostraca*, p. 519), and so on.

⁴³ In addition to drawings of several Punic letters (such as *šin* and *sādē*: see MARICHAL, *Bu Njem*, p. 36-38 and RADICIOTTI, *Ostraka*, p. 118), one can find transcriptions of Romano-Libyan inscriptions and an offprint on the same topic (SZNYCER, *Inscriptions*).

A final remark on the Libyan folders must be made about three letters by Béatrice Meyer (20 May 1992), Pierre Flobert (23 May) and Lionel Galand (28 May), who had received a signed copy of the 'Bu Njem' volume, and are warm with gratitude and praise.⁴⁴

3. MARICHAL IN TUNISIA

The very day (11 August 1987) on which D. Mattingly wrote his letter concerning the Oued el-Amud *ostraka*, Hamed Fantar, general director of the Institut National d'Archéologie et d'Art in Tunisia, writes another letter to Marichal.⁴⁵ The letter is allegedly an answer to a preceding, non-extant letter by Marichal himself, where he had proposed to come to Tunis 'le début du mois de Novembre'. The purpose of this trip appears to be the personal inspection of a *corpus* of sixty-nine *ostraka* found in Sidi Aïch, near the ruins of the Roman town of Capsa, now Gafsa. To these *ostraka* Fantar adds a single *ostrakon* 'trouvé il ya plusieurs années déjà, à Carthage', so that seventy would be the total number of pieces to be examined by Marichal. One cannot determine whether Marichal was invited by the Tunisian government to assess the value of a collection they could not make heads and tails of, or Marichal himself knew of the Gafsan *ostraka*, and therefore asked to see them. Be it as it may, Fantar guarantees Marichal a full set of photos at the moment of his arrival; except for some of them, 'quelques unes', which he is able to attach to the letter itself. These photos may well be the photos of four *ostraka*, three from Gafsa and one from Carthage, preserved in the Tunisian folder.

Whether Marichal did or did not make his trip to Tunis cannot be gathered from the documents in the folder. We only know that in mid December 1987 (14 to 15) a meeting of the *Commission Mixte de Coopération Archéologique et Historique franco-tunisienne* takes place in Tunis, and the Gafsan *ostraka* are spoken of. An extract from the proceedings is sent by Philippe Guillemin to Marichal on 8 January 1988, concerning, in Guillemin's own words, 'votre coopération avec la Tunisie': '2.3.8. L'expertise des Ostraca découverte près de Gafsa sera effectuée au début de l'année 1988'.⁴⁶ From this short note one may suspect that either Marichal came to Tunis but was not able to make a full survey of the *ostraka* in November; or, that he did not come to Tunis at all: otherwise, the Committee would not be discussing a time-table for an 'expertise' which could not be expected from anybody else but Marichal ('votre coopération'). We do not have any further clue concerning Marichal's dealings with the Tunisian government.

4. THE TUNISIAN FOLDERS

Two folders from Marichal's archive are devoted to Tunisian - or rather, to North African *ostraka*, specifically *not* from Libya. The first, 'Ostraca de Carthage et Gafsa. Inscriptions grecque et latin Sbeitla',⁴⁷ is also clearly connected with Marichal's intended travel to Tunis, and to a specific collection (the sixty-nine *ostraka* from Gafsa). The second,

⁴⁴ See '4MAR_380' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_11_26'), from image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00634' to 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00640'.

⁴⁵ See '4MAR_371' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_4'), image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00011'.

⁴⁶ See '4MAR_371' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_4'), from image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00009' to 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00010'.

⁴⁷ See '4MAR_371' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_4').

which bears the title 'Afrique du Nord. Ostraca',⁴⁸ contains sixteen smaller folders and is less easily understandable from a chronological point of view.

The first noteworthy feature of the former folder is that it contains four photos, three from Gafsan *ostraka*, and one (the last) from Carthage; however, it is not divided in dossiers. As he does for the Libyan material, Marichal produces preliminary transcriptions from these four photos: interestingly enough, Leiden criteria are this time only partially applied, Marichal contenting himself with transcribing only the letters he is fully certain of and leaving full rows unwritten, whereas in transcribing the photos from Assenammat he had been more demanding. One may recall that from the moment he received the photos until his proposed trip to Tunis (when he planned to inspect the original pieces) only a handful of months should have elapsed; an overscrupolous inspection of the photos would have been soon obsolete. Probably due to a similar reason, the second *ostrakon*, which appears to be particularly difficult to decipher, is provided with no transcription at all. As usual, a remarkable amount of bibliography is noted, presumably to be later collected and perused; the topics are several, from Roman Carthage to Punic and Berber languages to the *Limes Tripolitanus*, a part of which lay in what is now Tunisia.

More than for the Libyan material, he seems interested in inscriptions (allegedly from Sbeitla, Tunisia): we have four photos and three transcriptions. The first, which praises a local *uir clarissimus* who built an aqueduct for his town, comes from Ammaedara (now Haïdra, Tunisia), and is carefully reproduced, transcribed and edited.⁴⁹ The second is a Greek inscription from Thapsus (*SEG* LIV 1017). Marichal's notes on the transcription may disclose a reason for his interest in this kind of material: that is, that it might have been conducive (in a way we cannot fully grasp now) to the decipherment of the *ostraka* he was dealing with. He focuses on particular ligatures (ητην, ρι and νι, ηκ), which might have recurred in Latin material, and to the sequence KYIP, which may have been the Greek spelling of QVIR, an abbreviation for *tribus Quirina* (Κύρεια, Κούρεια, Κύρινα, Κούρινα in Greek). A third inscription⁵⁰ is not transcribed or commented upon. The last inscription (*CLEAfr* II 18), a metrical epitaph from Carthage, is carefully edited; again, one does not fully understand the reasons for Marichal's interest, which may have been roused by the *hederae distinguentes* at the right margin of the inscription, as well as by the oblique stroke protruding from the top of *s* at l. 2 (*Maronis*).

Unlike the other African folders, the 'Afrique du Nord. Ostraca' contains photos and transcriptions of already edited *ostraka*: several pieces previously edited in *Bulletin du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques* (1902-1915) are discussed and occasionally re-transcribed, their provenance being exclusively Roman Tunisia and Algeria (*ostraka* from Henchir el-Abiod, Gigthi, Maknassy, Ksar Koutine, Bir Trouch, Carthage...). Marichal may have thought of a re-edition, or simply investigated the very material he was to inspect, by the perusal of previous works. In addition to that, one finds a huge amount of bibliography on African (*ostraka* from Carthage⁵¹ and *Casae Nigrae*⁵²), but more often non-African collections of *ostraka*: *O.Amsterdam*, *O.Douch*, *O.Florida*, *O.Latopolis*, *O.Mons*

⁴⁸ See '4MAR_372' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_5').

⁴⁹ The inscription (TM 199061) has been published by André Chastagnol in *AE* 1988, 1119.

⁵⁰ This is a metrical inscription (a *laudatio funebris* for a *Felix*) to be found in *CLEAfr* II 137. It has been re-edited in *AE* 2006, 1774.

⁵¹ These are the very *ostraka* mentioned by CAGNAT – MERLIN, *Ostraca*.

⁵² Published in ALBERTINI, *Négrine*.

Claudianus, O.Wilcken.⁵³ Three contributions by J. F. Gilliam from *BASP* are collected, even if only one is specifically devoted to the *Latopolis ostraka*, the others being focused on Latin papyri.⁵⁴ One can also find two hand-written sheets on conservation and restoration of *ostraka*, and a hand-written draft list of the *ostraka* preserved in the Tripoli Museum.⁵⁵ The miscellaneous nature of this folder prevents one from locating it in Marichal's chronology; its contents may have been gradually accumulated along with the deepening of Marichal's interest in the African pieces, and he may have meant this particular folder to be a recipient for, generally speaking, Africa-centric material.

5. A CASE STUDY: AN OSTRAKON FROM VANDAL GAFSA

The modern town of Gafsa lies deep in the Tunisian desert, being its most northern oasis. It appeared very soon in Roman history during Marius' African campaigns, an *oppidum magnum atque ualens*, and presumably very ancient.⁵⁶ Though close to the imperial Southern border, it enjoyed commercial prosperity, probably earned the title of *municipium*, and displayed even Roman-style baths.⁵⁷ One finds no clue of a dramatic decline during Vandal and Byzantine hegemony, and the town survived the Muslim conquest. The *ostrakon* considered here most probably belongs to the Vandal period; according to Hamed Fantar's account, it comes from Gafsa, and while the original piece remained (perhaps) at the Bardo Museum in Tunis⁵⁸, a photo was given to Marichal [Tab. 13a], who used it to perform a preliminary transcription of the *ostrakon* [Tab. 13b].

⁵³ See '4MAR_372' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_5_1'), from image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00031' to 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00052'. As he did with Libyan pieces, he now notes length and height of most of these *ostraka*: interestingly enough, he seems particularly focus on comparing the figures of the Florida *ostraka* with the figures he had from the Bu Njem *ostraka*. This may be a clue to date this particular section after 1970.

⁵⁴ See '4MAR_372' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_5_3'), from image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00053' to 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00058'. The three contributions are GILLIAM, *Canaliclarius, P.Oxy. I 32*, and *Ostraka*.

⁵⁵ See '4MAR_372' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_5_1'), from image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00048' to 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00049', and from image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00069' to 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00071'; the final version of the draft list will be found in '4MAR_381' (*olim* '4MAR_15_2_7_12_1'), from image n° 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00730' to 'EPHE_PLATINUM_15_00731'.

⁵⁶ SALL. *Iug.* 89, 4 *erat inter ingentis solitudines oppidum magnum atque ualens nomine Capsa, quouis conditor Hercules Libys memorabatur. Eius ciues [...] muniti aduersum hostis non moenibus modo et armis atque uiris, uerum etiam multo magis locorum asperitate. Nam praeter oppido propinqua alia omnia uasta, inculta, egentia aquae, infesta serpentibus, quarum uis sicuti omnium ferarum inopia cibi acrior.*

⁵⁷ On the archaeological excavations in Gafsa, see BEN BAAZIZ, *Gafsa*. Information on the economic and political standing of Roman Gafsa, particularly its crucial position within the net of commercial routes in southern *Africa Proconsularis*, will be found in KHANOUSSI, *Vestiges épigraphique*, p. 1351-1352: 'dès les premiers temps de l'Empire, cette oasis avait occupé une position clé dans le réseau des voies romaines de la partie centrale du sud de la Proconsulaire. Traversée depuis le début du règne de Tibère par la route stratégique qui reliait les *castra hiberna* de la 3e légion Auguste installés à Ammaedara (Haïdra), au port de Tacape (Gabès) dans la petite Syrte, Capsa a vu son rôle de carrefour routier se renforcer, sous le règne de Trajan, avec l'ouverture de voies qui la reliaient à Tusuros (Tozeur) à 90 km au sud, et à Turrus Tamalleni (Telmine), la cité des Nybgenii située à 85 km au sud/sud est. D'autres routes reliaient Capsa à Ad Turrus (Tameghza) au sud-ouest, Thanae (Thina) au nord-est et à Cululus (Aïn Jeloula) au nord. Ce dense réseau de communications a fait de notre oasis un nœud routier d'une importance considérable et a dû très certainement favoriser les échanges et contribuer à l'essor du commerce'.

⁵⁸ I assume the Tunisian *ostraka* were preserved at the Bardo in Tunis, because according to the letters in his Archive, Marichal was supposed to come to Tunis to inspect the potsherds; but no further clue is given from the Archive in this respect. I have been unable to determine the current location of the *ostrakon* here considered.

Marichal writes this transcript in cursive style, with pencil and on a ruled sheet; erasures can be seen at ll. 1-2, 14-15. He apparently contents himself with assessing the essentials, leaving the most difficult or particular spots to be evaluated in the next stage, (presumably, the direct inspection). L. 5 is quite damaged because of the physical decay of the *ostrakon*, and the ink on l. 10 is almost completely faded, so Marichal does not even try to transcribe them. The same reason may be given for the gaps in ll. 7, 9, 11, apparently too puzzling for a safe assessment. The photo itself is not in colour and may have been thought insufficient to proceed further with the edition. The reader will find below a modern edition of this *ostrakon*,⁵⁹ with palaeographic and critic apparatus, where Marichal's readings and conjectures, when relevant, will be noted.

Lucianus [

quando [

quindecim [

em . tria [

5 -dis cori . . . [

sunt qui . u [

qui eieces . inn [

ann(o) secundo dom[ini

. . . ct . . inobos l(-) b(-) u[

10 uini o(-) uno f. XV o[

dedisti michi quod . ob[

uini urci unu

III

1 lower part of a circular letter, not fully closed at the bottom: perhaps *d*[, less likely *o*[2 in *eisthesis*
3 perhaps *u*[4 in *eisthesis* | after *m*, an upright in ligature with *t* from the bottom: perhaps *i*, less likely *u* | *a* [the bottom of a stroke 5 *ob* or *ab* are likely; almost all subsequent traces seem vanished 6 perhaps *unu*, but *n* is hardly likely | [bottom of a circular stroke 7 . ligature (*ti*) or single letter (perhaps *t*) | [bottom of an upright 9 first letters in *ekthesis* | *ex* or *cl*/ | *o* or *p*: a dot over the letter, perhaps a speck of ink | also *q*[, if the vertical stroke is vanished 10 after *f*, a short upright 11 *h* or *b* 13 over the first *i* of *iiii* a speck of ink

3 quindecimu[*Marichal* quindecimu[s *uel sim. possis* 4 (-)emi[*possis* 5 discors *Marichal*
6 sunt di *Marichal* | *unu . uel apud possis* 7 quie . eces . inn[*Marichal* | *eiecesti* (*pro*
eiecesti) *possis* 8 dom[ini nostri regis *uel sim.* 9 *ex p(arte) uel c(a)l(endas) (pro k(a)l(-) Oct(obres)*
possis | *no*bos (*pro novos*)? | *l(i)brae*)? | *pro bos l(-), hord(ei) Ast per litteras* | *b(il)brae*)? 10 o(rca) *Ast per*
litteras | *fi(unt) uel f(-) Ast per litteras: et f(olles) possis* 11 *bo*b[is (*pro vob[is*)?

The writing seems to agree with what we know of new Roman cursive; in particular, one may notice letters such as *a* (l. 4), *r*, *s* (ll. 5-6), *t* (ll. 4, 6) and *u* (l. 10) to be very similar to sample letters given by Armando Petrucci.⁶⁰ The Albertini tablets and an *ostrakon* from Sbeitla⁶¹ provide further comparisons: ligatures such as *ct* (*T.Alb.* 1; 7), *em* (*Sbeitla ostrakon*

⁵⁹ The source for this edition is the same photo Marichal had in his archive. As I stated, I have been unable to request a better photo or personally to inspect the *ostrakon*.

⁶⁰ PETRUCCI, *Scrittura*, p. 61-62.

⁶¹ AST, *Ostraca*, n°17, p. 29-31.

l. 3), *ob* (T.Alb. 11), *st* (T.Alb. 3; 4; 8), and the frequency of *qu* with overwritten *u* (ll. 1, 3, 6, 11 in our *ostrakon*; Sbeitla *ostrakon* l. 3 and *passim* in the tablets), which ‘se retrouvent d’ailleurs dans les papyrus du IV^e siècle et dans d’autres documents à l’époque mérovingienne’⁶². Abbreviations are apparently marked by long oblique strokes, pointing upwards.

This piece features a personal name at l. 1 (*Lucianus*) and is apparently a receipt or a record (l. 11: *dedisti michi*) written in letter form: a close parallel being a Vandal *ostrakon*⁶³ where *Petrus* (whose name appears at l. 1: *Petre bicarius*) declares that *Cerbus* has given the due money (ll. 3-4: *pariasti me agra | ria*). Whether this receipt recorded the payment of a tax, or a purchase, one cannot safely determine: the items that appear on the *ostrakon* may be bought or sold as well as taxed.⁶⁴

1 The name ‘*Lucianus*’ is not attested in the *Index onomastique*, but appears often in the Albertini tablets as *Lucianus magister*, and Tebessa, where those tablets have been found, is about 32 km from Gafsa. However, he is identified there as a scribe, and the absence of *qu* with overwritten *u* in his peculiar style⁶⁵ hardly qualifies him for having written this particular *ostrakon*.

4 If one could be safe in reading *emi*, one would have here a clue to understand this document as the record of a purchase. The subject may or may not be *Lucianus*, who seems too much removed from the verb to be his direct subject.

5 Within the sequence *discori . . .* [, despite the general uncertainty due to the poor conservation of the letters after *i*, one is tempted to separate *dis* from *cori*,⁶⁶ and suspect the presence of *corium*, ‘leather’. This kind of good is attested in other regions of Roman world,⁶⁷ and may have constituted a disposable item in these circumstances too. After *cori*, one might read *ob* (as Marichal did), and thus divide: *corio b . . .* [. Evidence of phonetic developments in African Latin suggests that *corio* stands here as an ablative (less likely an accusative), its syntactical function being unfathomable.⁶⁸ It must be noticed, however, that in the mentioned documents concerning leather one finds only the plural

⁶² See *T.Alb.*, p. 39.

⁶³ That is, n°9 in *AST, Ostraca*, p. 17-19.

⁶⁴ Alternatively, if this *ostrakon* were the receipt of a purchase, a close parallel would be the already mentioned n°17 in *AST, Ostraca*. Here one can find a proper name in l. 1 (*Nimmirre*), a purchase-related verb (l. 3 *eminu*) and some goods and figures (ll. 6-7 *pro porcellu . . . foll(es) septuaginta quinque*).

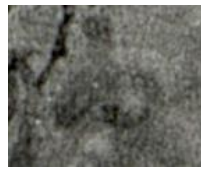


⁶⁵ See *T.Alb.*, p. 52.

⁶⁶ Since the scribes of African *ostraka* do not hesitate to split words while changing line, *-dis* may well have been the final part of a word from the preceding line. See *AST, Ostraca*, n°1, ll. 2-3 (p. 9-11): *por | tione* and n°9 ll. 3-4: *agra | ria*, as well as *O.Negrini*, ll. 2-4: *in | peratori exti | matus fuit* (in ALBERTINI, *Négrine*, p. 54) and so on.

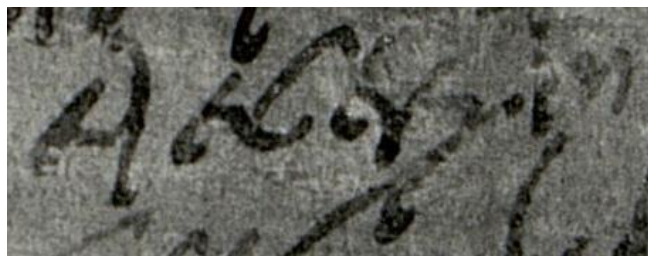
⁶⁷ See *T.Vindol.* II 343, l. 15 (*coria que scribis*), ll. 24-25 (*coria | CLXX*), 30-33 (*desiderabat coria ei ad | signarem et ita (denarios) datururus erat dixi ei coria in | tra k(alendas) martias daturum*), 37 (*cum haberet coria*) and probably *P.Brook.* 24, col. III l. 8 (*caene ad coriasc . . .*).

⁶⁸ The Albertini tablets, very close to this *ostrakon* in time, place and language, appear to preserve final *u* after the loss of *m*, a phonetic peculiarity already seen in the Bu Njem *ostraka*: see VÄÄNÄNEN, *Tablettes*, p. 30, 37 (no change of timbre except from *omnem pretio* in *T.Alb.* 26, l. 10); ADAMS, *Latin and Punic*, p. 94 fn. 50; and *Regional diversification*, p. 644-646. Final *-o* is not likely to be explained as *-um > -u > -o* in late African Latin. More frequent is the case of final *-u* where one should expect *-o*: however, evidence like *a Secundianu* (*T.Alb.* 30, l. 4) or *annu nonu cartaginis* (*O.Bir Trough* 1, l. 1) should be understood, according to VÄÄNÄNEN, *Tablettes*, p. 30, as instances of ‘confusion de l’accusativ et de l’ablative’; while case boundaries become vague, word endings remain distinct.

coria, 'hides'. This may prompt one to provide an alternative, and read an *a* after *cori* (-*dis coria* b . []), on account of a similar *a* in other contemporary *ostraka*, where the vertical stroke of the letter, which closes the cup-like circle of *a*, is peculiarly higher than its left part:⁶⁹

l. 5	
<i>O.Bir Trough 2</i> , l. 4	
<i>O.Bir Trough 1</i> , l. 1	

7 Within the sequence *ieices*, clearly readable, one may gather the presence of the verb *icio*. What seems difficult to understand is what lies between *ieices* and *in*.



This seems to consist in two distinct objects. The first, departing from *s*, is a short horizontal stroke which falls down to an oblique stroke, with a cane-like bottom, facing up. The second looks like a diagonal stroke of abbreviation that crosses the cane-like stroke, and whose top is close to the *i* of *in*. This may be tentatively interpreted as either a (yet unattested) ligature of *t* and *i*, or as indicating an abbreviation: *ieices*(-). Perhaps, taking into account the other second person verb in the *ostrakon* (l. 11: *dedisti michi*), one may think of *qui eiecesti* or *qui eieces(ti) = qui eiecisti*, 'you who threw out/discarded', with short *i* becoming *e*.⁷⁰ The following sequence (*in n*[]) might then preserve what is left of the name of a place towards which the action is aimed.

⁶⁹ A (later) instance of such an *a* is also in TjÄDER, *Lateinischen Papyri*, p. 99.

⁷⁰ This happened in Late Latin in both open and closed syllables: see GRANDGENT, *Vulgar Latin*, p. 84-85.

8 The dating formula *anno domini*, probably followed by (*nostris*) *regis* and the king's name, is peculiarly Vandal.⁷¹ One only gathers that the regnal year is the second, but without the name of the Vandal king, one must resort to a number of possible dates.⁷²

9 This line and the following, though badly preserved, may be understood as focusing on items, quantities and prices. Wine is the only good whose presence on this *ostrakon* (here and at l. 12) is certain.

11 The form *michi* instead of *mihi* is a feature of 'late' Latin.⁷³ Attested in epigraphic sources,⁷⁴ it will be widespread in Medieval Latin.⁷⁵ It is not clear whether *michi* stands here as a written overcompensation for the loss of intervocalic *h*, or does reveal a phonetic peculiarity. If the presence of *nichil* (*T.Alb.* 4, l. 15) and *nicil* (*T.Alb.* 2, l. 11) in the Albertini tablets is meant to recreate a correct pronunciation (*T.Alb.*, p. 71), this may be the reason for the presence of *michi* here.

12 Apparently, *urcius* instead of standard Latin *urceus*.⁷⁶ For the juxtaposition of a genitive (?) to a numeral, see also *olibi | unu tantum*.⁷⁷ One could also construe *uini urci: unu* (jars of wine: one).

⁷¹ See AST, *Ostraca*, nn°1 (ll. 1-2: *anno xiii fructus d(omi)ni n(ostris) regis | Trasamundi*) and 17 (ll. 4-5: *quarto [anno?]| Carthag(inis) d(omi)ni n(ostris) reg(is) Hilderici*), and also O.Bir Trough 1, ll. 1-3: *annu nonu Cartaginis | domni nostri regis Gunta | mundi* in BONNAL – FÉVRIER, *Bir Trough*, p. 240.

⁷² It may be the second year of Genseric (AD 437), Huneric (AD 479), Gunthamund (AD 486), Thrasamund (AD 498), Hilderic (AD 525) or Gelimer (AD 532). No Vandal king can be excluded, as Vandal rule (and consequently, their dating system) was soon accepted by Romans in Africa (see CONANT, *Staying Roman*, p. 151-153).

⁷³ See GRANDGENT, *Vulgar Latin*, p. 1073; LÖFSTEDT, *Kommentar*, p. 97.

⁷⁴ See for instance ICUR IV 12566, l. 6: *vale michi kara im pace*; CIL VIII 18742 (Numidia): *quia michi fa | ciat homo*; IRT 174 (= TM 202476, Sabratha, 2nd half of 4th century AD): *concessit fort[una] | michi tam gra[to]*, and so on. See also *et dix(it) mici* from the Visigothic tablet n° 40.11, l. 6 in VELAZQUEZ-SORIANO, *Pizarras visigodas*.

⁷⁵ See for instance the prayer preserved by *P.Sangallensis* MS 226 front-paper (= ChLA II 174 = XLVIII 174), l. 1: *domine probicius stu michi pektorem*, perhaps from 8th AD

⁷⁶ See also *T.Alb.*, p. 64 for this phonetic development.

⁷⁷ In AST, *Ostraca*, n°1, ll. 4-5.