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Jorge García Sánchez

*THE PROMOTION OF TOURISM IN CARTHAGE (TUNISIA)  
DURING THE AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS (1921-1925)*

*Abstract*

In the early 1920s, American archaeologist Byron Khun de Prorok, with private funding and the support of leading figures from the world of French archaeology, carried out excavations of a Roman domus on the hill of Juno and at the famous tophet or sanctuary of Tanit and Baal-Hammon, both located in Carthage. From the outset, one of his main objectives was to attract foreign tourists to the ancient Punic metropolis, interested in publicizing his archaeological activities; he therefore took care to musealise the sites brought to light and to preserve their material culture, as well as making film recordings to attract the attention of the general public and potential investors, whose donations enabled him to continue his research in Carthage. In particular, during the dissemination of the excavations of the tophet, he did not hesitate to publish sensationalist interpretations in the press that sidelined archaeological science in favour of the literary flights of fancy contained in Gustave Flaubert's historical novel *Salammbô* (1862).

KEYWORDS: BYRON KHUN DE PROROK; CARTHAGE;  
ARCHAEOLOGY; COLONIALISM; TUNISIA

*Introduction*

The amateur archaeologist Byron Khun de Prorok (1896-1954), also known as Francis Victor *Kuhn* or Count de Prorok, has transcended in the history of archaeology, albeit in a partial way, thanks to the different books he wrote about his experiences in his excavations and explorations in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, the Libyan desert and Ethiopia during the 1920s and 1930s (Fig. 1). He was born in Mexico during the presidential term of Porfirio Díaz, within a wealthy family of Polish origin and an American-nationalized father. Baptized as Francis Victor Kuhn, he supposedly obtained the title of Count when his uncle, Theophile Konerski Prorok, passed away. He dedicated his formative years to poetry, music, and painting in a cosmopolitan and itinerant education in England, France, and Italy. Without a specific profession, from the moment of his initiation into archaeological science in ancient Carthage in 1921 – precisely as a result of the interest aroused by its ruins during an artistic trip in 1920 – he aroused mixed reactions



Fig 1. Byron Khun de Prorok in Paris (The National Archives and Records Administration, College Park MD, Paris Bureau of *The New York Times*, RG. 306-NT. Box 169, courtesy of Michael Tarabulski).

among his contemporaries. His penchant for sensationalism, for distorting historical facts, and for deliberately muddling his biography in order to make his professional achievements more spectacular, made him a great success with ordinary people, who loved to read about his pseudo-scientific exploits, while most of his colleagues and close collaborators despised his tendency to excess. Undoubtedly, once he gave up an academic career, he preferred to be remembered by the public as a raider of lost worlds, a discoverer of archaeological utopias.

The researchers who have studied his figure, always in a tangential way, have not contributed to improving his image: Henri-Paul Eydoux, an early and terse biographer (who was unaware of any real biographical aspect of Prorok), called him “a tumultuous entertainer, indeed an adventurer of sorts”, as well as “a mythomaniac, also a rogue without great scruples”<sup>1</sup>. Serge Lancel and Clémentine Gutron dismissed him as a “colourful character” and a “cultured adventurer-

1. H.-P. Eydoux, *L'histoire arrachée à la terre*, Paris, Fayard, 1962, 72, 164.

er”, respectively<sup>2</sup>. These characterizations are not entirely divorced from the true personality of the American archaeologist, but are formulated as a cliché inherited from one publication to another, without a well-documented in-depth study of the Count. In addition to this, some pioneering achievements in archaeology that belong to Prorok in his own right have been denied to him, and attributed to other specialists of greater renown: Antoine Poidebard and Jean Baradez have been credited with being the first to document the remains of Carthage by aerial photography in 1948, although as early as 1922 Prorok pushed for the city to be photographed and recorded on film from an aeroplane<sup>3</sup>. In this vein, it has been written of University of Michigan professor Francis W. Kelsey – the University’s archaeology museum is named after him – that he engaged with the film culture of his time by employing the innovative method of introducing film cameras into his excavation in Karanis (El-Fayum, Egypt)<sup>4</sup>. Kelsey, who in 1925, thanks to the perseverance and organizational skills of his compatriot Prorok, led a Franco-American committee to investigate the sanctuary of Baal-Hammon and Tanit at Carthage, the famous tophet, simply transferred to his Egyptian site the technology that he had seen successfully used by the Count, almost 40 years younger than Kelsey. As early as 1921 Prorok had sensed the media and economic benefits that film projections could bring to his projects on the African continent (Fig. 2)<sup>5</sup>. Indeed, a contemporary, the Latinist Berthold Louis Ullman, praised the modernity of Prorok’s use of film recording at Carthage, and the opportunity it presented to show every step of the archaeological procedure anywhere in the world<sup>6</sup>. From that moment on, his travels were always accompanied by one or two cameramen or expert photographers who followed his steps, to make known to the Western public the people and the ruins of Africa and the East. His activities clearly exploited the ethnological side of archaeology, which Prorok knew added an enormous appeal to his narrations and his oral displays, in which he placed a special emphasis on the risky conditions under which his campaigns were developed. *The New York Times* reporters accompanied him on several occasions, contributing to glorify his deeds, and the world promptly received news of his excavations and even of his motorized journeys sent by wireless telegraph. This meant that at the time the Count was the model, or at least one of the models, to be followed in the use of live filming of excavations.

Among Khun de Prorok’s unacknowledged achievements was his ability to attract American tourism to Carthage and the French Protectorate of Tunisia

2. S. Lancel, *Cartago*, Barcelona, Crítica, 1994, 218; C. Gutron, *L’archéologie en Tunisie (XIX<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècles)*. *Jeux généalogiques sur l’Antiquité*, Paris, Karthala, 2010, 91.

3. J. García Sánchez, I. Fumadó Ortega, “Le esplorazioni aeree del conte de Prorok a Cartagine negli anni ’20”, *Archeologia Aerea: Studi di Aerotopografia Archeologica*, 10, 2016, 55-62.

4. J. Griffiths Pedley, *The Life and Work of Francis Willey Kelsey: Archaeology, Antiquity, and the Arts*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 2012, 386.

5. J. García Sánchez, *Byron Khun de Prorok y los orígenes de la documentación cinematográfica en arqueología*, Saarbrücken, Editorial Académica Española, 2017.

6. B.L. Ullman, “Archaeology and Motion Pictures”, *Art and Archaeology*, 15, 4, 1923, 178.



Fig. 2. Use of a cinematographic camera in the *Domus of the Wild Boar Hunting Mosaic* (London, Royal Geographical Society, Ref. 070079).

in general in the early 1920s, a pivotal decade in the consolidation of archaeological tourism. This article attempts to vindicate the importance that the Count of Prorok gave to the development of tourism in parallel to archaeological activity in the North African country. I will begin by briefly outlining the situation of tourism in Carthage in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a movement fuelled by an understanding of the site in literary and mythological terms, and then cite the key figures involved in the archaeological and heritage problems of the time, so that the reader can contextualize Prorok's subsequent actions. Throughout the text, I will also analyse the promotional policy that the latter carried out for the Carthaginian sites in which he operated between 1921 and 1925, by means of propaganda that reflected the nineteenth-century and earlier stereotypes that influenced travellers who visited Tunisia (the Salammbô depicted in Flaubert's novel of the same name, the Dido of Virgil's *Aeneid*, the child sacrifices to Moloch in the tophet, made known for the first time to ordinary people in the United States, and the figures of the Punic and Roman generals facing each other in the third century BC), but expressed through the advertizing vehicles of the Jazz Age, mass media, travelogues and cinema, as well as through traditional literary media. I will analyze how Prorok approached his

dissemination strategies initially with economic objectives in mind – the private funding of future work – a purpose in which he spared neither pseudo-historical speculations, nor unrealistic designs, thereby undermining his credibility in academic circles, as well as earning the suspicion of the French authorities. Independently of this, Prorok and his collaborators encouraged the musealization of his excavations and new areas of the ancient city in order to make them accessible to visitors, showcasing the role that the United States played in the conservation of Tunisian heritage; he obtained funds from American investors which he applied both to the monuments he personally investigated and to the restoration of the constructions that French scholars, such as the famous White Father Alfred-Louis Delattre (1850-1932), wished to perpetuate. This is the case of the city's Roman amphitheatre, which was essential in the recovery of the vestiges of the identity of North African Christianity.

Prorok was a great admirer of Father Delattre, to the extent that he would write that the Frenchman's reputation had prevailed as much as the name of Carthage when it came to spurring him to travel to Tunisia<sup>7</sup>. He considered Delattre the true driving force of the researches conducted in Carthage during the last fifty years, and imitated his excavation methodology using the destructive Decauville trucks, which extracted tons of earth from the sites, naturally without taking into account any stratigraphic rigor. On the opposite, Prorok judged the other archaeological interventions lacking systematic plans, precisely those carried out by the *Service des Antiquités* and those directed by other amateur antiquarians. This did not prevent his close collaboration with the *Service*, the directors of which dispensed official licenses for all of Prorok's archaeological campaigns. It is expressive enough that in 1925 the French Government decorated Prorok and several members and promoters of the aforementioned Franco-American committee with palms of gold and silver, in homage to the archaeological activity that he carried out in Carthage<sup>8</sup>.

Perhaps Prorok's predisposition towards Delattre, in addition to the White Father's own prestige, resulted from the Count's religious piety. Following his personal devotion, Prorok committed himself to the program of *Instauranda Cartago*, in other words, the resurrection of the Christian vestiges of Carthage as relics of the power, beauty and history of the early Church<sup>9</sup>. Cardinal Lavignerie (1825-1892) had been the ideologues of such program, and Father Delattre was the executive hand. Further on, the reader will read how Prorok promoted a modern pilgrimage of North American pilgrims to the land of St. Augustine and other emblematic places, aware of the message of devotion held by the Tunisian monuments.

7. B. Khun de Prorok, *Fouilles à Carthage*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1923, viii.

8. Anonymous, "De Prorok and Aids Honored for Research in Carthage", *The New York Times*, 20 September 1925, 1.

9. B. Khun de Prorok, "The Basilicas of Carthage", *Commonweal*, 3 December 1924, 96-98.

*The disappointment of Carthage for the contemporary traveller*

From the nineteenth century onwards, especially after the French colonial takeover in Algeria (1830) and the establishment of the Protectorate of Tunisia (1881), the journey to Tunisia and the obligatory visit to Carthage became a tradition for aristocrats, men of letters and the new emerging bourgeoisie, who followed the paths traced in the works written by ancient authors. They sought out the places where one of the cardinal conflicts that defined the history of the Mediterranean was settled: the Punic Wars.

Most of the protagonists of these nineteenth-century journeys had received a cultivated humanistic, classical education and carried in their intellectual baggage the city described by Virgil in his account of Aeneas' encounter with the Phoenician queen Elisa/Dido (in truth the reflection of the metropolis of the Augustan period). They were influenced to a greater degree by the exploits accomplished by Hamilcar Barca in Iberia and mainly by his son Hannibal Barca in his confrontation with Rome, or by Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, who was responsible for Hannibal's defeat at the battle of Zama (in 202 BC), and Scipio Emilianus, who conquered and destroyed Carthage in 146 BC. These tragic tales of love and death and their heroes and heroines, creating links between the past and the present, had found their way onto painters' canvases, into musical compositions, into drama – as they would later into cinema – and were perceived as vivid narratives in the minds of Western travellers through North Africa<sup>10</sup>.

The nostalgic quest for these ancient settings, however, was not matched by an archaeological materiality in which the visitor would recognise the descriptions in the sources, not even after excavation work was undertaken in the last quarter of the nineteenth century by the White Fathers who occupied the Catholic cathedral on Byrsa Hill, built in 1884 (Fig. 3)<sup>11</sup>. The only refuge that seemed to be open to the educated globetrotter was that of his own erudition, the embrace of historical conjecture<sup>12</sup>. The triad of French novelists who are inevitably cited in connection with the “rediscovery” of the ruins of Carthage – René de

10. M. Bergaoui, *Tourisme et voyages en Tunisie. Les années Régence*, Tunis, Simpact, 1996, 51-54; G. Goussaud-Falgas, “Les premiers touristes en Tunisie (1881-1931). Récits de voyages, guides touristiques et mémoires privées”, *Revue Tourisme*, 15, 2006 (Pour une histoire du tourisme au Maghreb XIX<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècles), 143; H. Jiménez Vialás, “Aníbal en la cultura europea. De Dante a Flaubert (ss. XIV-XIX)”, in S. Remedios, F. Prados, J. Bermejo, eds., *Aníbal de Cartago. Historia y Mito*, Madrid, Polifemo, 2012, 493-516; F. Prados, “La riscoperta”, in A. Russo, F. Guarneri, P. Xella, J. A. Zamora, eds., *Carthago. Il mito immortale*, Roma, Electa, 2019, 264-269; J.A. Zamora, “Cartagine nell’immaginario moderno e contemporaneo”, in Russo, Guarneri, Xella, Zamora, *Carthago*, 269-274.

11. J. Freed, “Le père Alfred-Louis Delattre (1850-1932) et les fouilles archéologiques de Carthage”, *Histoire, monde et culture religieuses*, 8, 2008, 67-100.

12. C. Zytnicki, “L’invention des sites touristiques dans la Tunisie pre-coloniale et coloniale (1860-1939)”, *Revue Tourisme*, 15, 2006 (Pour une histoire du tourisme au Maghreb XIX<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècles), 89-90.



Fig. 3. Carthage in an old postcard (Collection Jorge García Sánchez).

Chateaubriand, Alexandre Dumas and Gustave Flaubert – did not conceal their disappointment with the panorama offered by the distorted topography of the Mediterranean city, with its fragmented aqueduct between fields of crops, the Roman cisterns or the colossal scattered structures of the Baths of Antoninus. In 1807, in these precious relics, Chateaubriand attempted to catch glimpses of the greatness of Qart Hadhast, the old Punic city, but he only discovered “some Moorish huts, a Muslim hermitage at the end of a very protruding cape, and some sheep grazing among some ruins”<sup>13</sup>. This desolation was ideally manifested in romantic spirits when it came to awakening melancholic evocations, reflecting on the repercussions of time on men and their achievements, or resurrecting the old ghosts of Hannibal, the greatest general of all time, or Scipio, one of the most beloved names in history, in the words of Chateaubriand. What modern city, Dumas mused poetically in 1846, could boast that it was as populous as the wilderness of Carthage, that its silence was more audible than that of any voice<sup>14</sup>.

Nor did archaeological reality alone provide Flaubert with the visual support for the depth he sought during his 1858 trip to Tunisia, during the documentation phase of the novel *Salammbô* (1862). It is clear from his notes that he explored the Roman cisterns of La Malga, inhabited as dwellings by the local population. He also spent his time wandering around the two ports, the military port and the commercial port, without any trace of buildings that spoke to him of their distant

13. F.-R. de Chateaubriand, *De Paris a Jerusalén*, Barcelona, Laertes, 1982, 326.

14. P.-M. de Biasi, ed., *Voyages en Tunisie. Chateaubriand, Dumas, Flaubert, Maupassant*, Paris, CNRS, 2020, 229.

splendour. In addition, he sketched panoramic views, useful in his descriptions of the landscape, and also stopped to sketch the Baths of Antoninus, which in the novel appear transformed into the palace of Hamilcar Barca<sup>15</sup>. As for his inspection of the material culture of the Protectorate's museums, the clothes worn by the daughter of General Hamilcar during the torture of the rebel Matho copied the supposed attire of the priestesses of Tanit, known from the Punic stelae that have been conserved, and according to Flaubert himself, some ancient pieces seen on his itinerary through Tunisia had suggested other garments worn by the Carthaginian princess<sup>16</sup>. He confessed to his correspondents that none of this seemed sufficient, and that hardly any traces could be found of Hannibal's Carthage and his progenitor. The Rouen writer's research in situ, as has been repeatedly noted since it was brought to light by Edward Said, was more closely linked to his personal experience of the unusual, exotic and picturesque local atmosphere, which, in a dramatized version, he would imprint on the pages of his book, bypassing a few conventions typical of the morality of his time and at the same time allowing him to adopt a narrative full of sensuality and lasciviousness identified with the Orient, a common approach in the thinking of the Orientalists<sup>17</sup>. His vision of Phoenician-Punic decadence and cruelty in general, and the lack of civilization of the Carthaginians in particular, was soon intimately linked to the already existing prejudices towards Arab culture, towards the indigenous people who were "descendants" of those barbarians, helping to consolidate the negative stereotypes of Europeans towards the inhabitants of North Africa, and providing more robust pillars for France's colonialist aspirations.

The publication of *Salammô* marked a turning point in the Western conception of Carthage: most archaeologists were opposed to the reconstruction presented by the Frenchman, but the general public understood that the content of the fiction – strongly enhanced until the period between the wars by paintings, operas and films inspired by Flaubert's book<sup>18</sup> – was derived from a full historical reality and the "current" state of preservation of the city. Authors such as the poet Camille Mauclair discerned that the grandeur of *Salammô* stemmed from Gustave Flaubert's ability to resurrect a world that had vanished from practically nothing, from archaeological parsimony, which is why he felt that the recognition of Carthage was essential in order to appreciate the novelist's talent<sup>19</sup>. Less given to lyricism, most pre-World War II tourists were disappointed to witness the new restaurants and hotels open, the European-style houses, the cathedral crowning

15. De Biasi, *Voyages*, 309-337.

16. F. Castellani, "Flaubert e la suggestione dell'immagine", *Arte e Letteratura nella Francia dell'Ottocento, Ricerche di Storia dell'Arte*, 40, 1990, 29, 33.

17. E.W. Said, *Orientalism*, London, Penguin Books, 2003, 185-190.

18. V. Boschloos, "Images of Carthage in the 20th and 21st Centuries: Films, Comics and Games", in R. Docter, R. Boussoffara, P. ter Keurs, eds., *Carthage Fact and Myth*, Leiden, Sidestone Press, 2015, 130.

19. C. Mauclair, *Les douces beautés de la Tunisie*, Paris, Bernard Grasset, 1936, 72-73.



Fig. 4. View of Byrsa Hill with the Grand Hôtel Saint-Louis in the top left side. (Khun de Prorok, “Ancient Carthage in the Light of Modern Excavation”, *The National Geographic Magazine*, 45, 4, 1924).

Byrsa Hill, modern elements forming a pendant with dozens of broken and abandoned columns on wire-fenced plots, the cisterns mentioned above, the Punic necropolis, the theatre and the *odeum* (Fig. 4). Perhaps that of the renowned ports, described in great detail by Apianus (*Lybica*, 96), was the location that most disappointed the visitor: travel writer E. Alexander Powell wrote that it took a great deal of imagination to see the docks, shipyards, workshops, walls and watch-towers of the most magnificent naval base of antiquity in these two “ponds”<sup>20</sup>. His professional colleague, Georges de la Fouchardière, appealed to everyone’s memories of Roman history in order to experience some degree of emotion in the ruins of the city<sup>21</sup>, and for the playwright Eugène Brieux, the famous Carthage of Dido, Hannibal, Cato and of course *Salammô* was no more than a joke, and around 1912 he was convinced that the specialists must have been mistaken in situating it there, when its location must surely have been elsewhere<sup>22</sup>. The *Guide Bleu* of Algeria and Tunisia itself warned in 1923 that the existing buildings did not sufficiently depict the grandeur of the Roman and Punic enclave, but recommended the novel *Salammô*, which was enough to bring Punic Carthage back

20. E.A. Powell, *In Barbary: Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and the Sahara*, New York-London, The Century Co., 1926, 89.

21. G. de la Fouchardière, *Au pays des chameaux*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1925, 27.

22. E. Brieux, *Tunisie*, Vincennes, Les Arts Graphiques, 1912, 58.

to life for the reader. One day was more than enough for the visit, continued the *Guide*, combining the excursion with the Goulette, the Marsa and Sidi Bou Saïd, stopping for lunch in one of the many restaurants in the historic town<sup>23</sup>.

*The promotion of the site until the 1920s: Dr Louis Carton*

By the time Byron Khun de Prorok was active in Carthage in 1920-1925, the infrastructure of an embryonic tourism industry was already in place in the country. The process had begun in the final decade of the nineteenth century, when institutions with French roots, such as the Touring Club de France (founded in 1891), not only had delegates in Tunisia, but also set up new societies (including the *Comité des Sites et des Monuments Pittoresques*, of 1904, or the *Comité du Tourisme pour l'Algérie et de la Tunisie*, better known as the *Comité algéro-tunisien*, of 1910) that facilitated the touring of Tunisian localities, the opening of new tourist routes, and promoted the preservation and visitation of monumental areas and natural spaces<sup>24</sup>. Moreover, from the start of the twentieth century, the arrival of foreigners in areas further to the south (such as Sousse, Sfax, Gabès, and El-Djem) had been assured thanks to a gradually improved network of roads, stations, garages, and tyre repair points and outlets, essential for the growth of automobile and sports tourism, and in general of the leisure culture, which was practised both by the political class and the local aristocracy and by the curious and well-travelled bourgeoisie from outside the country<sup>25</sup>.

Some of the artistic, scientific and scholarly committees and associations inaugurated in the twentieth century were set up to protect the historic monuments of Carthage, whether or not that was their specific function, because of the direction in which they were steered by Louis Carton (1861-1924), a military doctor and self-made archaeologist in the excavations of Bulla Regia, Susa, Dougga and Carthage, among others<sup>26</sup>. Carton held the presidency of the Tunisian section of the *Comité des sites et monuments pittoresques* (attached to the *Touring Club de*

23. P. Ricard, J. Dalbanne, L. Drappier, M. Larnaude, *Les Guides Bleus. Algérie et Tunisie*, Paris, Hachette, 1923, 347-349.

24. M. Bacha, *Patrimoine et monuments en Tunisie 1881-1920*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013, 297-302; A. Manai, "The Origins of Tunisian Tourism", *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 27, 1 2018, 52-54; A. Manai, "North Africa in the Tourist Guidebooks of the 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries", *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 11, 3, 2020, 63-70.

25. L. Dandani, "Les origines du tourisme automobile dans la Tunisie coloniale de la fin du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle du XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle", *Revue Tourisme*, 15, 2006 (Pour une histoire du tourisme au Maghreb XIX<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècles), 75-83.

26. C. Gutron, "Archéologie et tourisme: visiter les ruines de Tunisie avec le Docteur Carton", *Revue Tourisme*, 15, 2006 (Pour une histoire du tourisme au Maghreb XIX<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècles), 111-122; J.-P. Laporte, "Un archéologue en Tunisie, Louis Carton (1861-1924)", *Bulletin archéologique du Comité des travaux historiques*, 35, 2009, 239-264; J.-L. Podvin, ed., *Louis Carton, de Saint-Omer à Tunis*, Aachen, Shaker Verlag, 2017.

France), of the *Institut de Carthage*, a body that promoted the cultural and heritage affairs of the Protectorate<sup>27</sup>, and instigated the creation in 1920 of the *Comité des Dames Amies de Cathage*, composed of members of Tunisian high society, including the court of the Bey, and of members of the military, aristocrats, scholars and lovers of antiquity from all over Europe, headed by Carton's own wife Marie Thélou<sup>28</sup>. This Committee, whose programme was based on the maintenance and presentation of the city's historic remains, had an important channel of expression in its *Bulletin*. Carton used extensively this magazine – and in general, the press in Tunisia, Algeria and France – to criticise the *Service des antiquités et des arts*. The *Service* was the body created by the colonial administration in 1885, at the same time as the Bardo Museum, in order to promote the preservation of heritage, scientific research and archaeological excavations within a legal framework<sup>29</sup>.

The first quarter of the twentieth century was characterized by this struggle between the privately funded dilettante archaeologists, who kept much of the material culture that they found and expressed their own ideas about what policies should govern the great Carthaginian site, and the *Service*, which was subject to budgetary restrictions, was obliged to discuss with the present-day owners of the many plots of land in Carthage, and which legislated the deposition of the objects discovered in the museums. In particular Carton, who kept his archaeological collection privately at the Villa Stella, his residence in Khéreddine, as well as Alfred-Louis Delattre, who exhibited his discoveries at the Lavigerie Museum, founded by the White Fathers in 1875, represent this side of the constitution of collections of Carthaginian material culture in parallel to the control of the *Service*. Byron Khun of Prorok could also be included among the group of individuals whose actions wavered on a razor's edge, sometimes slipping on the side of legality, and other times veering towards illegality.

A decree *sur les Antiquités antérieures à la Conquête Arabe*, from 1920, had sanctioned these aspects, and in the following ten years the *Service*, in agreement with the Resident-General of Tunis and several ministries in France, tried to implement a number of measures linked to the tourism sector and the protection of monuments, although most of them did not come to fruition. An example of this

27. M. Bacha, "Promouvoir le tourisme archéologique dans la Tunisie coloniale. Le rôle du Touring Club de France et des Sociétés archéologiques de Sousse et de Sfax", in C. Isnart, Ch. Mus-Jelidi, C. Zytnicki, eds., *Fabriques du tourisme et expériences patrimoniales au Maghreb, XIX<sup>e</sup>-XXI<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Rabat, Centre Jacques-Berque, 2018, 36-38.

28. S. Altekamp, M. Khechen, "Third Carthage: Struggles and Contestations Over Archaeological Space", *Archaeologies: Journal of the World Archaeological Congress*, 9, 3, 2013, 476; A. Mezzolani Andreose, "Regards de femmes sur la ville de Didon: le Comité des Dames Amies de Carthage (1920-1924)", in Isnart, Mus-Jelidi, Zytnicki *Fabriques*, 47-68.

29. H. Jaïdi, "La création du Service des Antiquités de Tunisie: contexte et particularités", in M. Dondin Payre, H. Jaïdi, S. Saint-Amans, M. Sebaï, *Autour du fonds Poinssot*, Paris, INHA, 2017. Conference Proceedings, published online, October 24, 2017, URL: <http://inha.revues.org/7157> (accessed 3 March 2021).

was the project to fence off the entire group of scattered sites that comprised the remains of Punic and Roman Carthage, creating a series of protected archaeological zones, or to sell tickets to visit the settlement, which Louis Poinssot (1879-1967), the director of the *Service des antiquités* at the time, rejected, regardless of whether the chosen guardians were from the region or Europeans: from his point of view the former, in addition to being illiterate, had no moral guarantees to charge entrance fees to tourists, and in the case of the latter, the institution he directed did not have sufficient resources to meet their future wage demands<sup>30</sup>. Consequently, only one French official guarded the antiquities of Carthage, and as he combined this work with his job at the town hall, he refused to supervise them on a bicycle and with the badges of his authority, making his mission significantly less effective<sup>31</sup>.

Regardless of the partisan use of the *Bulletin* by Louis Carton, today the publication helps researchers to understand the level of conservation of the Carthaginian monuments at the beginning of the 1920s and the tourist initiatives that were taking place in the town through the work of the *Comité des Dames Amies de Cathage*. It channelled the financial donations it received into the maintenance of the town's monumental sites (sometimes in collaboration with the aforementioned Father Delattre), such as the necropolis of Byrsa or the islet of the Admiralty, as well as preparing the ruins for visitors, laying out paths between the points of interest, putting up explanatory signs and maps, posts to guide walkers, a kiosk for the sale of maps and souvenirs, etc. Together with the Committee, the French doctor was involved in promoting the ancient city at all levels, as evidenced by the tourist guides he wrote<sup>32</sup>, his role as a guide for groups of visitors who wished to have the ruins explained to them, both individuals and institutions (representatives of the *Société de Géographie de Tunis*, the *Institut de Carthage*, *L'École Normale d'Institutrices*, or the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique*), and even the performance of plays in the Roman theatre. As early as 1907, he promoted the performances of *La prêtresse de Tanit* and *La mort de Carthage* in Carthage, which were very well received by the public, and in 1921 he staged *Tamyris*, a play starring the famous actress Madeleine Roch as a Phoenician queen (Fig. 5)<sup>33</sup>.

In line with the colonial ideology whereby France appropriated the civilizing role in North Africa as a legitimate and ancestral inheritance received from the Roman Empire, the recovery of the original uses of historical monumental spaces became a sign of identity in Algeria and Tunisia, particularly encouraged by the proponents of the philosophy of Latin Africa, of Christian religion and of Roman roots, as opposed to Islamic Africa. Doctor Carton, or his intellectual ally, the

30. Archive of the Institut Supérieur de l'Histoire de la Tunisie contemporaine (Université de La Manouba). Dossier n° 1. 2080. Fonds de la Residence.

31. P. Mille, "Au jour le jour. Pour sauver Carthage", *Le Temps*, 4 November 1922, 3.

32. For instance, L. Carton, *Pour visiter Carthage*, Tunis, Laporte, 1935.

33. R. Rochevillars, "Au théâtre Antique de Carthage. Tamyris", *La Tunisie Illustrée*, 202, 1 April 1921, 7-13.



Fig. 5. *Tamyris*. (René Rochevillars, “Au théâtre antique de Carthage”, *La Tunisie Illustrée*, 202, 1 April 1921).

writer Louis Bertrand, in order to attract mass tourism, as we would call it today, to the colonies, praised in their writings the “resurrection” of the theatres as venues for mass festivities, but also promoted the idea of using the Roman baths as a modern therapeutic spa and the late ancient basilicas as new churches of worship<sup>34</sup>. Since the mid-1870s, this religious strategy, at the service of political interests, had already been adopted by Cardinal Lavignerie and Father Delattre in an attempt to transform archaeological buildings, such as the amphitheatre, into active places of memory, open to pilgrimage, bringing the community together around a new Catholic Carthage<sup>35</sup>.

Carton’s position on tourism is best summed up by his casting himself in the role of a tourist as a narrator in a peculiar publication of his, dated 1921, in which he anticipated how Tunisian reality would evolve in the future, in the year

34. L. Bertrand, *Les Villes d’Or. Algérie et Tunisie romaines*, Paris, Arthème Fayard & Cie, 1921, 6-9; H. Dridi, A. Mezzolani Andreose, “‘Reanimer les ruines’: l’archéologie dans l’Afrique latine de Louis Bertrand”, *Les nouvelles de l’archéologie*, 128, 2012, 10-16.

35. B. Effros, “Reviving Carthage’s Martyrs: Archaeology, Memory, and Catholic Devotion in the French Protectorate of Tunisia”, *Archeologia Medievale*, 46, 2019, 65-73.

2000, if he were allowed to implement his proposals for the national heritage. On a broader, national level, the military doctor advocated increasing the use of publicity, the development of transportation and expanding the choice of hotels; but Carthage was already well supplied with all of these elements, as it had an electric train line with five stations passing through the town, which connected it to Tunis in 43 minutes, as well as various hotels and restaurants (such as the *Carthaginois*, *Saint-Louis*, *Brigitte*, or *Des Cisternes*)<sup>36</sup>. It was in the field of conservation of the remains, abandoned in a chaos of unhealthy swamps, modern villas and stone quarries, that progress had to be made. So, in his imagination, Carton designed the Carthage that would be perfectly suited to the needs of tourism: a small, elegant city lined with long avenues (even with roads reserved for horse riders), with the convenience of its harbours as moorings for pleasure boats, and with croquet and tennis courts for sports fans. This idyllic destination would feature the archaeological park of the Baths of Antoninus, the Punic necropolises – with replicas of the grave goods displayed in a few tombs – and other antiquities, spread out on archaeological “islets” accessible by a ticket sold in the capital’s hotels and train stations in Carthage; here the visitor would be greeted by official guides, well-dressed and polite, as opposed to the insolent beggars and *ciceroni* of the 1920s<sup>37</sup>.

In its tourist aspect, Carton’s text, written in the form of letters addressed to a friend, tried to promote the arrival of both occasional travellers, who stayed only a few days in Tunisia, and *hiverneurs*, foreign visitors – obviously Europeans and French from the motherland – who stayed during the coldest months of the year in the coastal towns of the Mediterranean, to enjoy their gentler climate. With this and the other initiatives mentioned above, Carton aimed to create awareness of the site’s needs and a groundswell of opinion that would put pressure on the authorities of the Protectorate to increase their measures to protect the remains of the immortal metropolis.

### *Byron Khun de Prorok, tourism and the “Americans” in Carthage*

Except in its essential aspects, it is not the purpose of this article to consider the archaeological scope or the discoveries made by Byron Khun de Prorok’s excavations at the Tunisian site, a subject that has already been discussed in other works<sup>38</sup>. The information I need to provide in brief, in order to contextualize the

36. Ricard, Dalbanne, Drappier, Larnaude, *Les Guides Bleus*, 347-348.

37. L. Carton, *La Tunisie en l’an 2000 (Lettres d’un touriste)*, Tunis, Namura & Bonici, 1921, 52-73.

38. J. García Sánchez, “Las excavaciones del conde Byron Khun de Prorok en Cartago (1920-1925) I: la colina de Juno y la difusión cinematográfica de la arqueología cartaginesa”, *Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arqueología*, 80, 2014, 129-163; J. García Sánchez, “Las excavaciones del conde Byron Khun de Prorok en Cartago (1920-1925) II: la formación del comité franco-amer-

American intervention in the Protectorate, can be divided into two fundamental actions: from 1921 to 1925, the Count of Prorok obtained the necessary permits from the *Service des antiquités* to carry out archaeological work on a site located on the north-eastern slope of the hill of Juno, in what turned out to be a Roman *domus* richly decorated with mosaics, one of which, the only one with a scene, gave its name to the dwelling: the House of the Boar Hunt Mosaic.

Prorok had begun his research under the supervision of the architect Jules Renault, “a modest French scientist”, who Khun de Prorok described as sick, living an impoverished life in an old and unsanitary Roman cistern. With him, he shared a life of extreme poverty and intense work “on a mound which, the Professor’s calculations indicated, might cover an important ruin”<sup>39</sup>. This mound was the same sector of the hill of Juno that Professor Renault purchased few years before. Despite this discovery, Prorok did not hide that instead of the Roman Carthage that he had revealed, his goal had always been to investigate the topography of the Punic city. Unlike the French archaeologists of the nineteenth century, accused of Punic-phobia for focusing on learning about Roman and Christian Carthage – which, on the other hand, in some cases emerged from the subsoil with a naked eye – the Count was interested in the history and archaeology of the time of Hannibal Barca and his predecessors. He considered that the development of deeper researches would end up revealing the urban planning of both the original Phoenician colony and the Punic metropolis. Even his wish to leave a mark on the knowledge of the topography of Punic Carthage, and to stand out from European scholars, led him to make risky hypotheses, too distant from reality, such as that the Byrsa hill was of Roman origin, and that the oldest city had to be found to the north, in Cap Gammarth and the Sukhra Marshes<sup>40</sup>.

Although a number of French scholars such as Father Delattre, Stéphane Gsell, Alfred Merlin and Abbé Jean-Baptiste Chabot supported Prorok’s archaeological project, especially in its early years, he carried out the fieldwork with a group of amateurs. In the eyes of the colonial authorities, *Service* officials and French archaeologists, the Count – who was of Polish, English and Austro-Hungarian descent but a naturalized American – and his team passed for Americans, although in truth they were a diverse group of nobles, sportsmen and diplomats of various nationalities belonging to the colony of foreigners settled in Paris, where Prorok had one of his regular residences. Their support for Prorok’s adventure is explained by the ties of friendship, and even family bonds, that he had with several of them, and the comfortable life they led, which allowed them to approach archaeological operations in Tunisia as mere hobby.

icano y los trabajos arqueológicos en el Tofet”, *Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arqueología*, 81, 2015, 203-243.

39. B. Khun de Prorok, *Digging for Lost African Gods: Five Years Archaeological Excavation in North Africa*, Santa Barbara CA, The Narrative Press, 2004, 7-13.

40. B. Khun de Prorok, “Recent Researches on the Peninsula of Carthage”, *The Geographical Journal*, 63, 3, 1924, 177-187.



Fig. 6. The Tophet in 1925 (F. W. Kelsey, "Carthage Ancient and Modern", *Art and Archaeology*, 21, 2, 1926).

Fig. 7. The Roman domus in the Hill of Juno (Khun de Prorok, "The Excavations of Carthage, 1921-1922", *Art and Archaeology*, 15, 1, 1923).

In combination with the excavations at the *domus*, the second of the Count's excavations took place between 1924 and 1925 at the tophet, the famous sanctuary of Baal Hammon and Tanit, which brought the issue of child sacrifice, as reflected in the works of the Greco-Roman authors, to the forefront of religious research in the Punic world<sup>41</sup>. Discovered by chance at the end of 1921 by two civil servants who were archaeology enthusiasts, François Icard and Paul Gielly<sup>42</sup>, Prorok took charge of the excavation of the tophet in 1924, in a brief campaign led together with the epigrapher of the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* Jean-Baptiste Chabot, and again as part of an university expedition, which was designated the "Franco-American Committee", in 1925. The Count kept his amateur collaborators at his side, but this occasion is remarkable for leading to the introduction to the colony of Dido of prestigious institutions such as the Archaeological Institute of America, the Washington Archaeological Society, the Carnegie Institute, the universities of Rochester, Princeton, Harvard, Oxford, Cambridge, McGill, Johns Hopkins, the British Museum, the Royal Ontario Museum and the University of Michigan. The latter directed the archaeological expedition with Professor Francis Willey Kelsey (1858-1927) as General Director and Khun de Prorok as Associate Director, as already mentioned in the introduction (Fig. 6)<sup>43</sup>.

From very early on, Prorok was determined to facilitate tourist visits to the *domus* he was excavating on the hill of Juno, as well as to the adjoining vaulted rooms, probably baths from a later period: between 1922 and 1923, he installed stairs to climb the steep slopes, laid out access paths lined with geraniums and other flowers, organized the electricity supply to illuminate the ruins, and immediately took the necessary steps to musealize the excavated site (Fig. 7)<sup>44</sup>. Around 1922, the material culture collected ranged from the Punic period to the Arab conquest; objects such as coins, including a treasure trove, jewellery, terracotta figurines, oil lamps (many of them Christian), ceramic and glass remains, metal objects, fragments of frescoes from the old house itself, filled a Roman room. This one had been converted into a storeroom, which the Count reserved for a new use as an exhibition room showing the historical evolution of the hill over the centuries. Prorok dedicated the little museum to the memory of his friend and collaborator in the excavation, Edgar Xavier de Waldeck, who died in 1923, and to the architect Jules Renault, his mentor, who died in 1921. The press praised his initiative as "the only American museum in Africa"<sup>45</sup>, which featured a flagpole

41. L. A. Ruiz Cabrero, *El sacrificio molk entre los fenicio-púnicos: cuestiones demográficas y ecológicas*, PhD Thesis, Madrid, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2007, 239-298; B. D'Andrea, *Bambini nel «limbo». Dati e proposte interpretative sui tofet fenici e punici*, Rome, École Française de Rome, 2018, 135-139.

42. J.-P. Laporte, "François Icard, un disciple et émule de Louis Carton", in Podvin, *Louis Carton*, 135-170.

43. F. W. Kelsey, *Excavations at Carthage. A preliminary report*, New York-London, The MacMillan Company, 1926, 10-13.

44. B. Khun de Prorok, *Digging*, 84.

45. A. Reed, "Science Ferrets out Carthage's Secrets", *The New York Times*, 26 October 1924, 5.



Fig. 8. Roman vault in the tophet (Photography by Jorge Garcia Sánchez).

on which the Stars and Stripes, the French tricolour and the *beycal* were flown together. A second museum project of which Prorok was a part took place during the Franco-American Committee's mission.

In the course of the excavation of the tophet, in 1925, Kelsey and his team came across some Roman substructures, which, once excavated, revealed the interior of a vault inside which, in the Imperial period, the stelae and cinerary urns of the final phase of the Punic sacred area had been preserved. Kelsey made the decision not to explore further and closed off the vaulted space – he covered the opening with a window and installed a door – with the stelae in view, reserving it for visitors; the light filtering through the large skylight, in the words of the professor from Michigan, gave the “museum” an unearthly aura of mystery (Fig. 8)<sup>46</sup>

Prorok initially exhibited the seven mosaics in the *domus* and wanted them to remain in situ. Both during his excavation campaigns and during his time in Paris, his correspondence with the director of the *Service des antiquités*, Louis Poinssot (1879-1967), emphasized the renovations that the museum and the *domus* needed, in particular the restoration of the mosaic pavements and their

46. Kelsey, *Excavations at Carthage*, 34-36, 42-43.

consolidation on a cement bed. Poinssot did not share the Count's ideas and finally, between 1923 and 1924, he ordered Bertrand Pradère, curator of the Museum of the Bardo – or Alaoui – to transfer the mosaics to that institution: article 24 of the 1920 decree gave him that right, so he did not take Prorok's opinion into account<sup>47</sup>. By this time the American archaeologist had already embarked on his research at the tophet and was slowly detaching himself from the remains of the hill of Juno, which, with the loss of the mosaics, had lost practically all their attraction.

### *Tourist cruises and religious pilgrimages*

However, in the early years of the excavation, Prorok noticed a considerable increase in the number of visitors to the House of the boar hunt mosaic: in the period of previous research with Renault, the site had hardly aroused any curiosity; according to Prorok's own calculations, around 1,000 visitors toured Carthage in 1922, a figure which the Count underestimated, as ocean liners such as the *Homéric* alone disembarked 1,000 passengers when calling at Tunis; and in 1923, again according to the American archaeologist's calculations, this time somewhat excessive, up to 300 people a day were visiting the *domus*<sup>48</sup>. The figure, considered on a daily basis, is excessive, but not if it is estimated as intermittent visits: a ship such as the German *Monte Cervantes*, which carried around 1,500 cruise passengers, could distribute 300 to the Tunisian medina and around 500 to the ruins of Carthage and its museum.

The start of the university archaeological project at the sanctuary of Baal Hammon and Tanit marked another peak of visits, that of the American and British tourists on board the *Samaria* and the *Orbita* who visited Carthage at the beginning of March 1925<sup>49</sup>. The number of travellers of both nationalities had been increasing since 1881 thanks to the facilities offered by the Cook & Son's agency, although cruise tourism became particularly fashionable after the end of the Great War; the French, or subjects of any nation starting their voyage in France, were offered weekly services by the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique*<sup>50</sup>. Visits by American tourists through the site under the Count's control, of course, did not bring in any type of revenue, but it did mean that his communication work was being effective, and that his public lectures were proving to be the best means of financing the excavations. In the eyes of the Protectorate Administration and

47. Direction des antiquités et arts de Tunisie, *Décret du 8 janvier 1920 sur les Antiquités antérieures à la Conquête Arabe*, Tunis, Société Anonyme de l'Imprimerie Rapide, 1920, 9.

48. Khun de Prorok, *Fouilles*, viii.

49. Anonymous, "Americans ready to dig at Carthage", *The New York Times*, 6 March 1925, 13.

50. Manai, "The Origins", 56-57; Résidence Générale de la République Française, *Notice générale sur la Tunisie (1881-1921)*, Toulouse, Imprimerie du Centre, 1922, 456-457.

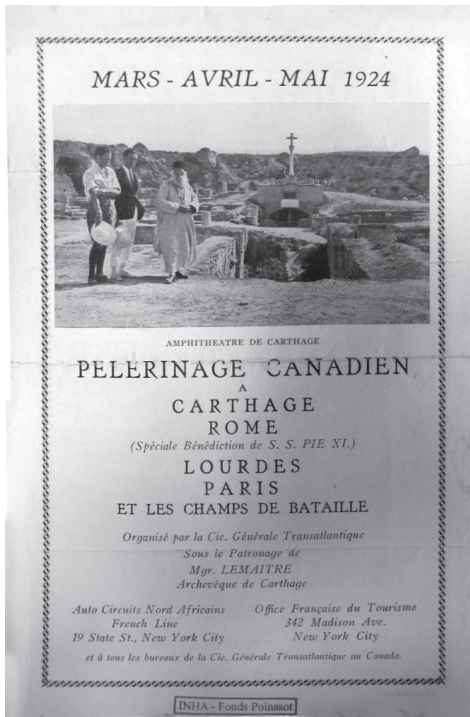


Fig. 9. Propaganda of the pilgrimage to Carthage, Rome, Lourdes and Paris (Paris, Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art. Fondo Poinssot).

French academic institutions, the influx of foreign visitors proved that Prorok's archaeological project was scientifically sound.

In the order of his priorities, tourism was at the forefront of the American Count's intentions, who did not limit himself to managing the land he was excavating, but was concerned about the future and survival of Carthage, with concerns similar to those expressed by Louis Carton – who, following Prorok's archaeological successes, had begun to show open opposition to him – and the *Service des antiquités*. Some of the measures he took in this regard was to arrange with shipping companies for their transatlantic lines to make an obligatory stop in Tunisia, where well-chosen guides led archaeological tours among the remains of Carthage<sup>51</sup>. The rapport on tourism between Prorok, the Tunisian religious and scientific authorities and the delegates of the *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique* is evident from an initiative that took place between the end of March and May 1924. With the *Compagnie* as the organizing institution, and the blessings of Pope Pius XI and the Archbishop of Carthage, Prorok transported a crowd of American and Canadian

51. The *Homeric*, weighing 40,000 tons, was one of the first ships to call at Tunis thanks to Byron. Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art (from now on, INHA), Paris, Archives, 106, 033, 07. Correspondance Louis Poinssot, Dossier 41, Prorok, Byron Kuhn baron de, Letter to Louis Poinssot by Khun de Prorok, July 30, 1923 (?).



Fig. 10. Inauguration of the excavations in the 'Agora' of Carthage, in 1925 (Ann Arbor, Kelsey Museum, University of Michigan, courtesy of Michael Tarabulski).

pilgrims through France, Italy, Tunisia and Algeria (Fig. 9). The aim was to visit important centres of Christianity such as Rome, Lourdes, Hippo and Carthage; in the latter, the pilgrims would evoke the charisma of North African Christianity by visiting the episcopal see of St. Augustine, the scenes of the martyrdom of Saints Felicity and Perpetua or the numerous basilicas that dotted the Carthaginian landscape, an experience accompanied by the appropriate historical and archaeological explanations of Father Delattre, Abbé Chabot and Prorok<sup>52</sup>. Even Alice de Prorok, the Count's wife, arranged for the pilgrims to perform the Shakespearean drama *Julius Caesar* in the theatre of the Phoenician Qart Hadhast, making their arrival coincide with the anniversary of the English playwright's birth, while appropriating both a monument and a propagandistic mechanism that had been previously exploited with great success by Louis Carton<sup>53</sup>.

Press releases and photographs deposited in archives<sup>54</sup> testify to the visibility and the exhibitionist spirit with which the Count, a champion of archaeology-showmanship, impregnated his field operations, in which there was never

52. INHA, 106, 033, 07. Correspondance Louis Poinssot, Dossier 41, Prorok, Byron Kuhn baron de, "Pelerinage canadien a Carthage, Rome, Loures, Paris et les champs de Bataille".

53. INHA, 106, 033, 07. Correspondance Louis Poinssot, Dossier 41, Prorok, Byron Kuhn baron de, Letter to Louis Poinssot by Khun de Prorok, May 13, 1923.

54. For instance, in Royal Geographical Society, London (from now on, RGS), Ref. 070078 and 070081; The National Archives and Records Administration, College Park MD, Paris Bureau of The New York Times, RG. 306-NT. Box 169; Kelsey Museum, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 71868-71871.

a shortage of tourists who were hooked as spectators of the opening of new digs, or important figures – the Tunisian governor, the bey's family, American diplomats, French noblemen – who presided over the extraction of precious pieces (Fig. 10)<sup>55</sup>. The newspapers reported that the hill of Juno, usually deserted and gloomy, had been given an unexpected new lease of life by the arrival of the American archaeologists, who acted as attentive guides for the many tourist groups that came to visit, mainly Americans interested in having their compatriot the Count present his work and projects<sup>56</sup>. Prorok recorded a number of anecdotes about the presence of tourists at the sites he was in charge of, almost always stemming from their lack of general knowledge of ancient history. Some, on seeing the oil lamps, asked him whether the Carthaginians had not had electricity in ancient times; others were left with the impression that Publius Cornelius Scipio had used dynamite when he razed the Punic city to the ground.

Apart from the obvious anecdotal content of the passage of excursionists, a more serious matter in terms of heritage was the theft of small objects, souvenirs of their visit to Carthage: Prorok reported to Poinssot the disappearance of two relics, a Punic piece and a Byzantine gold jewel, after the visit of a group of tourists, and sometimes even large-scale architectural fragments, such as the capitals of the basilicas<sup>57</sup>. The plundering of monuments and the sale of antiquities was an endemic problem in the city of Hannibal. On public holidays, legions of excursionists who went there were not content to pick up tesserae, coins and marble fragments from the ground, but even brought with them the necessary tools to strip the colourful figural medallions from the mosaic pavements and tear the acanthus leaves from the classical capitals<sup>58</sup>. Apart from this usual tendency, tourists and Sunday visitors could always hand over some small change to the children and Bedouins who, already from the train station, “by the hundreds”, insistently harassed Western visitors to buy pieces of pottery, Roman coins (often fake) and oil lamps, a recurring topic in travel literature<sup>59</sup>. The same texts also report that the monks who guarded the museum founded by the White Fathers, the Musée Lavigerie, sold old lamps and cameos to foreigners, that Father Delattre casually gave away coins to anyone who asked for them, and that the official guides were no strangers to illicit trade activities either, as related by the writer Edgar Fletcher-Allen, a friend and literary collaborator of Prorok, who on an organised visit to the sanctuary of Tanit witnessed his Arab

55. Anonymous, “Forum of Carthage is being excavated”, *The New York Times*, 31 March 1925, 23.

56. Anonymous, “Film américain à Carthage”, *La Dépêche Tunisienne*, 17 March 1923.

57. Khun de Prorok, *Fouilles*, ix; Khun de Prorok, *Digging*, 32, 55-56.

58. J. Jaubert de Bénac, “Delenda Carthago. Les ruines de Carthage au pillage”, *L'Illustration*, 4197, 11 August 1923, 119-121.

59. H. Vivian, *Tunisia and the Modern Barbary Pirates*, London, Pearson, 1899, 169, 180; Powell, *In Barbary*, 97-98; De la Fouchardière, *Au pays*, 33; E.F. Allen, *A Wayfarer in North Africa. Tunisia and Algeria*, London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1931, 38.

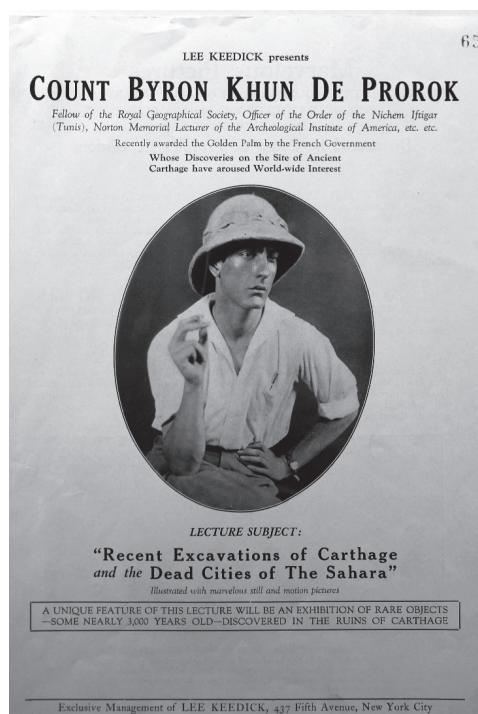


Fig. 11. Lecture film *Recent Excavations of Carthage and the Dead Cities of The Sahara* (Centre des Archives diplomatiques de La Courneuve. Ministère des Relations Extérieures. Tunisie. 210qua).

guide handing out phallic relics to the members of his group<sup>60</sup>. In the eyes of the locals, the situation was quite different. The extraction of ancient stones as building materials had been a common activity, beginning with the abandonment of Carthage itself in the early Middle Ages, and in the twentieth century they still considered themselves entitled to follow this centuries-old tradition. Quite a few of the local inhabitants lived among the ruins of the past, growing crops and grazing their cattle among the crumbling structures, and even living inside them, as was the case with the population of the village of La Malga, many of whose houses were located under the vaults of the old Roman cisterns.

### *Archaeological travelogues*

The year 1922 was pivotal in the process of determining the strategies that Khun de Prorok outlined in relation to the sources of funding for his archaeological campaigns and the dissemination and publicity of the results, not only among specialist circles, but also among the general public. In that year, the Count documented the work on the hill of Juno using film cameras, a technique he also applied with

60. E.F. Allen, *Ports and Happy Havens*, London, Frederick Muller Ltd., 1947, 79.

aerial footage, recording views of the Gulf of Tunis and the ruins from an aeroplane piloted by World War I ace Georges Pelletier-Doisy. In line with the young American's conviction that archaeological science had to be "democratized", he made these films available to the ordinary citizen, the man in the street, anywhere in the world, projecting them in scientific societies, universities, museums, but also in clubs, theatres, hotels, and schools in Europe and North America. This allowed him to achieve two objectives: to attract attention to his enterprises, and to popularize North African archaeology in a country that was largely unaware of it, the United States<sup>61</sup>.

Prorok's chosen method was the lecture-film or travelogue, in which the lecture given by the speaker was synchronized with the showing of a film, a technique that originated in the nineteenth century and reached its peak in the early twentieth century, which was soon adopted by explorers, adventurers, travellers, sportsmen and archaeologists (Fig. 11). Jeffrey Ruoff and Robert Dixon have explained this genre that dominated at the dawn of cinema, back in 1895, in which traditional entertainment resources converged, with an announcer or narrator, musical accompaniment and sound effects, the projection of transparencies in magic lanterns, the exhibition of curious objects and photographs, with more recent media, the silent film<sup>62</sup>. Depending on the venue used, the organization of these conferences could involve quite complicated preparations: a presentation by Prorok at the Royal Geographical Society in London (RGS) on 27 November 1923 began to be organized in May 1923. The Society asked the speaker for detailed descriptions of the footage – and suggested slight alterations – and of the minutes dedicated to each scene on film; it rejected the possibility of having an Arabian folk band perform in the interludes, a rather extravagant idea that the Count had proposed; and it gave him instructions on the correct dress code. The RGS took care of every aspect of the meeting, from the compliance of a camera operator of the Gaumont Co. Ltd. with the conditions of the room and the request to a fire brigade to be alert, because of the dangerously flammable nature of the Count's rolls of film, to the sending of the invitations, which included names such as Delattre, Poinssot, Robert Lansing, Henry Fairfield Osborn, Flinders Petrie, Arthur Evans, and his mother Lady Evans<sup>63</sup>.

It is clear from the immediate reactions to his lecture film series that Prorok's lectures were a huge success in all respects: financially, in terms of popularising science, and in terms of tourism. A member of the RGS, Arthur Franklin, immediately became interested in the Roman, Phoenician and Muslim antiquities of

61. Khun de Prorok, *Digging*, 31; García Sánchez, "Las excavaciones", I, 148-157.

62. J. Ruoff, "The Filmic Fourth Dimension: Cinema as Audiovisual Vehicle", in J. Ruoff, ed., *Virtual Voyages: Cinema and Travel*, Durham-London, Duke University Press, 2006, 2-3; R. Dixon, *Photography, Early Cinema and Colonial Modernity: Frank Hurley's Synchronized Lecture Entertainments*, London-New York, Anthem Press, 2013, 2-10.

63. All these matters are dealt in the correspondence maintained by Khun de Prorok with Arthur R. Hinks, the secretary of the Royal Geographical Society. RGS, CB9/600.

the Protectorate after listening to Prorok, and spent a month in Tunisia in 1924<sup>64</sup>. The widow of a New York judge, William H. Moore, was inspired by Prorok's words to cross the Atlantic and embark on a Mediterranean cruise, handing Father Delattre a cheque for 100,000 francs for the preservation of the basilicas of Carthage<sup>65</sup>. A group of Harvard University alumni, led by Robert Woods Bliss, future founder of Dumbarton Oaks, in Washington D.C., offered to invest \$25,000 a year for five to ten years in the excavations at Carthage, and the University itself planned its possible participation with researchers and resources, an aspiration that did not come to fruition, but from which at least Prorok extracted an unspecified amount of money<sup>66</sup>. Work at the *domus*, at the tophet, at other nearby sites such as Utica, as well as the restoration of the Punic capital's endangered monuments, benefited from major financial injections from politicians, patrons and wealthy Americans, largely through the mediation of Prorok's father-in-law, the real estate entrepreneur William Francis Kenny, himself a major investor. Khun de Prorok regularly sent cheques for thousands of francs to Louis Poinssot and Alfred Delattre to pay for the preservation of the Roman remains in the colony of Dido; for example, with donations from Marymount College, Tarrytown (NY), and the sum of 25,000 francs from Kenny, the French missionary completed his restoration work on the amphitheatre, which was urgently needed, as both Delattre and Prorok expected to attract crowds of pilgrims and tourists to the events taking place on the day dedicated to the martyrdom of Saints Felicity and Perpetua. On 7 March 1925, 6,000 people, including 40 devout Americans on their way to Rome, attended the Mass celebrated in the building by the Vicar General of Carthage and the procession of the White Fathers<sup>67</sup>.

*Barbarian treasures, child sacrifice, and Punic curses  
in the dissemination of the excavations*

From the beginning of the twentieth century, both the trips to discover the past civilisations of the Mediterranean and the phenomenon of aristocratic tourism involving long winter seasons in the Levant were completely linked to the development of colonial archaeology and its popularization in newspapers, fiction novels and specialized literature. Newspapers and illustrated magazines soon realized that publishing contemporary archaeological chronicles would be a good

64. INHA, 106, 033, 07, Correspondance Louis Poinssot, Dossier 41, Prorok, Byron Kuhn baron de, Letter to Louis Poinssot by Arthur Franklin, 6 February 1924.

65. Anonymous, "Mrs. Moore Provides Funds to Excavate an Early Christian Basilica at Carthage", *The New York Times*, 13 March 1925, 21.

66. Centre des Archives diplomatiques de La Courneuve, Ministère des Relations Extérieures, Tunisie, 210bis, Letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs by the Minister of Public Instruction, 12 December 1922.

67. Anonymous, "Martyrs honored in Carthage Arena", *The New York Times*, 10 March 1925, 3.

editorial strategy, and so Western readers were informed “in real time” of the discoveries of John Garstang at Meroe, of Arthur Evans at the Cretan palace of Knossos, of Leonard Woolley at Ur, or of John Pendlebury at Tell el-Amarna<sup>68</sup>; many archaeologists arranged with the newspapers to transmit the news exclusively to them: a well-known case is the famous contract signed by Howard Carter with *The Times* – and the consequent controversy – in the context of the most high-profile archaeological find of the interwar period, that of Tutankhamun’s tomb<sup>69</sup>. What was sold as “the most sensational Egyptological Discovery of the century”, coupled with reporting in *The Times*, the death in then unexplained circumstances of Lord Carnarvon on 5 April 1923, and immediate speculation about a curse of the Pharaohs, was a golden period for Egypt’s business and tourist industry in the 1920s; in the first three months of the 1926 tourist season alone, 12,300 visitors came to see the tomb of Tutankhamun, fascinated by the mystery that surrounded it<sup>70</sup>.

In 1922, Carthage was benefiting from the comings and goings across the Mediterranean of reporters covering developments at Howard Carter’s excavation in the Valley of the Kings; Prorok realized the benefits to his archaeological mission of maintaining a dynamic media coverage, imitating Lord Carnarvon’s protégé, and putting the name of Carthage in the headlines. He did not need anyone to spur him on, but Lee Keedick, a famous agent for writers and lecturers, including Howard Carter, who recommended that he fan the flame of the legend of the Carthaginian metropolis, reaffirmed the advantage of embellishing the archaeological reality with tales and fantasies that would generate suggestive articles in the newspapers, potential investors, the attention of ordinary people, and an influx of tourism. His statements to the press, causing the scandal of the academic world and the French colonial authorities, were peppered with wild fantasies, including his aim to unearth the treasures – or the “palace” – of Dido, the riches of the pillaging of Rome by two kings, the Vandal Genseric, and before that by the Visigoth Alaric, who never set foot on the coast of Africa; of locating the famous library of Carthage, or the tomb of the Carthaginian general Hannibal Barca, who had in fact committed suicide on the shores of the Sea of Marmara.

He did not hesitate to assert that the buildings attached to the House of the wild boar hunting mosaic were the Baths of Gargilius, a building with philological and Christian echoes, as the confrontation between Donatist and Catholic bishops had taken place there in 411 AD<sup>71</sup>, nor in taking possession of the epitaph

68. To delve into this topic it is essential to read A. Thornton, *Archaeologists in Print: Publishing for the People*, London, UCL Press, 2018.

69. T. Garnet Henry James, *Howard Carter: The Path to Tutankhamun*, London, Tauris Parke, 2001; J. Hankey, *A Passion for Egypt. Arthur Weigall, Tutankhamun and the “Curse of the Pharaohs”*, London-New York, Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2001.

70. A. Sattin, *Lifting the Veil: Two Centuries of Travellers, Traders and Tourist in Egypt*, London-New York, Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2011, 237-239.

71. B. Khun de Prorok, “The Excavations of Carthage, 1921-1922”, *Art and Archaeology*, 15, 1923, 43.

of the tomb of Hannibal's son, a relic which he shrouded in a veil of enigmas and showed to those attending his lectures<sup>72</sup>. One of the most controversial stories that Prorok reported to the press, which caused the greatest media impact and was echoed in newspapers in several countries, was the claim that he had discovered the stables of Hannibal's war elephants, as evidenced by the alleged recovery of tusks and bones from these pachyderms, which later turned out to be camel bones (some time later the Count justified himself about the controversy by blaming the headline on an overly zealous correspondent, who although obviously mistaken about the identity of the remains, and seeing his enthusiasm, had not bothered to contradict him)<sup>73</sup>.

In the same year of 1922, Pierre Mille defended in an article aimed at the preservation of the ruins of Carthage the ease of exploiting them for tourism, since Chateaubriand and Flaubert had already done a great deal of "publicity" work<sup>74</sup>. Mille, a journalist specializing in colonial affairs, understood, like any other Frenchman in Tunisia, that in the 1920s, the spirit of the novel *Salammbô* still served as bait to attract visitors to the Protectorate, while depicting the lesser-known aspects of the archaeology of the site. Prorok was perfectly able to infiltrate this French sensitivity towards its identity, this channel of cultural communication between the colonial institutions responsible for heritage and tourism and the general public, and to use the work of the Norman author for his purposes, with particular intelligence concerning the sanctuary of Baal-Hammon and Tanit.

In 1924, Prorok took charge of the excavations at the tophet, but initially, as the work was being directed by François Icard and Paul Gielly, Khun de Prorok offered himself as a mere transmitter to the United States of the progress of the two French officials' research; American readers, through press releases dictated by the Count, reports and conferences, received information riddled with fantasy, pseudo-archaeological speculation and sensationalism, with interpretations that eluded scientific supervision by the *Service des antiquités*. In 1922, he even organised two exhibitions of Phoenician-Punic cinerary urns, bones and relics in two New York galleries, the Kipps Gallery and the Museum of French Art (Fig. 12). Flaubert had spared no rawness in portraying the child sacrifice in the flames of the altar consecrated to Moloch – a deity believed to be worshipped by the Canaanites – the bull-headed god whose colossal bronze image presided over the slaughter<sup>75</sup>. The Count, in view of the discovery since 1922 of hundreds of votive stelae and funerary urns containing the remains of cremated newborns in the tophet, accepted Flaubert's account as

72. Anonymous, "French Army Chief here on a Mission", *The New York Times*, 11 June 1922, 14.

73. Anonymous, "Spades Probe Old Carthage", *Detroit Free Press*, 22 April 1923, 30; Anonymous, "Ancient Carthage", *Muncie Post-Democrat*, 27 April 1923, 3; Anonymous, "Carthage Romance", *The Mercury*, 4 June 1923, 8; Anonymous, "Hannibal's Stables at Carthage Found", *The Washington Post*, 19 March 1923.

74. P. Mille, "Pour sauver Carthage", *Le Temps*, 4 November 1922, 3.

75. G. Flaubert, *Salambo*, Madrid, Sarpe, 1984, 102-103.



Figure 12. Khun de Prorok's excavation at the Tophet (Khun de Prorok, "The Excavations of the Sanctuary of Tanit at Carthage", *Art and Archaeology* 19, 1, 1925).

if it were a historical chronicle, which starkly described the Punic tradition of incinerating newborns and infants in public ceremonies during state emergencies. He peppered this with inventions of his own, including that other common sacrificial victims were young maidens sentenced to become the "betrothed of Baal", and that in order to sanction the union they were abandoned in the lap of the statue of the god, surrounded by lions who would kill them, if they were not consumed by flames or starvation first<sup>76</sup>. Several of the objectives he set for his campaigns suggested the use of the fictional account of *Salammô* as a guide offering the archaeologist the most authentic keys to the reconstruction of the Carthaginian civilization. At the tophet, Prorok hoped to locate traces of a monumental temple dedicated to Tanit similar to the one imagined by Flaubert – archaeology has shown that tophets were open-air areas, perhaps with small chapels. He also did not rule out the possibility of discovering the bronze statue of the god whom he indistinctly called Moloch, Baal or Baal-Moloch, nor of unearthing the palace and tomb of Hamilcar, father of the priestess Salammô, or the *zaimph*, the jewelled veil of Tanit that Matho, the book's male protagonist, took from her sanctuary<sup>77</sup>.

76. Anonymous, "Offered to Idol", *The Kingston Daily Freeman*, 22 September 1922, 5; Anonymous, "Offered to Idol", *The Liberal Democrat*, 7 September 1922, 4; Anonymous, "Unearthing the Infamous Temple where Maidens Were Sacrificed to Baal", *The Tennessean*, 13 August 1922, 25; Anonymous, "Offered to Idol", *The United Opinion*, 20 October 1922, 6.

77. Reed, "Science", 5; B. Khun de Prorok, "Ancient Carthage in the Light of Modern Excavation", *The National Geographic Magazine*, 45, 4, 1924, 400-408; B. Khun de Prorok, "Seeking Africa's Lost Glories", *The New York Times*, 8 March 1925, 1-2.

Hardly anyone of Prorok's knowledge, otherwise a first-hand connoisseur of material culture drawn from the tophet, could really believe that the picks and shovels would reveal buildings forged in the mind of a novelist, a metal image of Baal-Hammon, or a sacred veil covered with precious stones. But as propaganda material for an American clientele, special emphasis was given to the participation of a compatriot in archaeology in an exotic country, and above all, a dark and bloody ritual, ideal for speculative manipulation, was rescued from the pages of fiction, as well as from those that had been embellished by Greco-Roman historians. The name of Carthage had never made so many headlines as it did at that time. In 1924 Prorok also had the complicity of a reporter sent by *The New York Times* to cover the Carthage expedition, the Californian Alma Reed<sup>78</sup>. Reed immediately hit it off with Prorok, and thanks to his historical overview of the ancient Phoenician colony, his picture of the American expeditionaries travelling through the desert on camelback and his Orientalist reminiscences, he stamped the ticket to the adventure that Prorok's archaeology in Tunisia sought to promote, with such striking titles as "Science ferrets out Carthage's secrets", "Explorers seek traces of African Joan of Arc" and "Science Hunts for the Lost Atlantis". The young American, adept at spicing up his literary output with tomb robbers, antiquities dealers, fanatical sects, primitive liturgies and greedy natives, only lacked a definite touch of romance and mystery which, like Lord Carnarvon's sudden death in the case of the archaeology of the Valley of the Kings, would inspire tourists to travel to Carthage.

And so, in 1924, with the curse of the opening of Tutankhamen's tomb as a model, he invented not one but two ancient curses, and sought out the victims who had suffered them: former excavators such as Count Camillo Borgia (who died in 1817 of malaria contracted in Utica), Christian Tulxen Falbe (who died of natural causes in his native Denmark in 1849) and one of Prorok's own colleagues, the Prince of Waldeck (who was killed in a car accident in 1923), were said to have suffered the curse of Publius Cornelius Scipio Emilianus, a later tradition, taken from a fourth century AD Roman text by Macrobius (*Saturnalia*, III, 9), which spoke of the invocation made by the Roman general to provoke the protective divinities of his Punic rivals to abandon the city, accompanied by curses once it had been reduced to ashes<sup>79</sup>. The second curse concerned the unveiling of one of the customary stelae consecrated to Baal-Hammon and Tanit at the tophet, which concluded with the usual curses against those who disturbed its position. With a growing sense of drama, a series of accidents followed one after the other in Prorok's writings: a huge boulder that nearly took the Count's life, a bust of Tanit falling on the head of the manager of the museum on the hill of Juno, or his collapsing in a trench in the tophet; the strike instigated by the

78. About Reed, A. May, *The Extraordinary Life of Alma Reed: Passionate Pilgrim*, St. Paul MN, Paragon House Publishers, 1993.

79. R. T. Ridley, "To Be Taken with a Pinch of Salt: The Destruction of Carthage", *Classical Philology*, 81, 2, 1986, 140-146.

Arab workers, terrified by the text of the inscription, and again the tragic death of Waldeck, this time caused by the vengeance of the Punic deities rather than by the curse of Scipio (Fig. 13)<sup>80</sup>. Of course, Alma Reed transmitted the fascinating tales of Prorok in the USA<sup>81</sup>. Prorok and Reed's version reflected a dark, arcane sanctuary, forged against the backdrop of a barbaric civilization, populated by ferocious deities, insatiable to the point of demanding human victims; and so a whole repertoire of orientalist clichés about Carthage, both the present and the centuries of antiquity, was transmitted to the West, making its geography a place that was both terrible and tempting, a must-see for anyone wishing to experience the hedonism and pleasures revived in Gustave Flaubert's *Salammbô*.

Needless to say, the embellishing of reality with brushstrokes of archaeological daydreams, both in the hill of Juno and in the tophet, brought Prorok admirers and column space in the newspapers, but the colonial offices considered it scandalous that the Count aired such fantasies with interviews, articles and photographs in the newspapers of his homeland. His youth, combined with the controversial topics that Prorok brandished, aroused resentment and the scrutiny of all his activities by the authorities of Paris and the Protectorate, French diplomats stationed in the United States, and members of the *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*. But his half-truths and sensationalist writings were allowed to pass without any unpleasant fallout, as a slight blemish on his youth, so that the dilettante archaeologist was able to progress in the field of Roman and Punic archaeology in Carthage.

### *Final notes*

From the early twentieth century, the *Service des antiquités et des arts* had postulated that any funds invested in the upkeep of Tunisia's monuments had a positive impact on the local economy, as antiquities were a magnet for capital from tourism<sup>82</sup>. However, the archaeological attention and care given to these monuments differed according to the historical-political rhetoric applied to them: Christian and imperial constructions, which maintained a cultural dialogue of continuity between the Roman past and French colonialism, were the focus of the *Service's* attention, while Punic archaeology, the result of many chance finds, and subject to both the discourse of Roman history and the Flaubertian imaginary – determined, according to some authors, by the 'Punic-phobia' of the archaeologists of the Protectorate – did not begin to acquire its own idiosyncrasy until December 1921, when the ensemble of the tophet appeared on the scene<sup>83</sup>. The

80. Khun de Prorok, *Digging*, 72-73.

81. A. Reed, "'Curse' still Hovers over Carthage", *The New York Times*, 9 November 1924, 4-5.

82. Bacha, *Patrimoine et monuments*, 226.

83. M.M. McCarty, "French Archaeology and History in the Colonial Maghreb: Inheritance, Presence, and Absence", in B. Effros, G. Lai, eds., *Unmasking Ideology: Colonialism and Archaeology*, Los Angeles CA, Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press, 2018, 368, 371-372.



Fig. 13. “The Arab Workmen Strike Upon Learning That the ‘Punic Curse Stone’ Had Been Found, Placing a Malediction Upon the Excavators” (Academy Film Archive, Ref. 70303198).

Franco-Tunisian population, in the shadow of the reality of the French colonial Protectorate, always recognized the Romans as their predecessors; but a Phoenician spiritual and even ethnic heritage was not even felt in Lebanon until the years of the Great War, and in Tunisia the adoption of the Carthaginian past as an identity would have to wait until the time of decolonisation<sup>84</sup>.

If anything characterized Khun de Prorok’s actions in Carthage, it was certainly his desire to bring the history of the Tunisian city to the present and to familiarize his contemporaries with its archaeological coordinates, whether through his direct contact with the ancient remains on the ground and the promotion of tourism, or through the pulpit of his many publications. He never hid the fact that his real interest lay in reviving the Punic population, that of Dido, Hamilcar and Hannibal, the queen of the Mediterranean he believed to be more spectacular than Rome, so his excavations, far from being limited to the tophet, also included Punic necropolises and the search for the original agora at the foot of Byrsa Hill<sup>85</sup>. If “Punic-pobia” actually existed, the Count was certainly not a representative figure of it, because on the contrary, he embodied the perfect ambassador of the discoveries in the tophet and their dissemination in every corner of the United

84. J. Quinn, *In Search of the Phoenicians*, Princeton-Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2018, 3-14.

85. Anonymous, “Forum of Carthage Is Being Excavated”, *The New York Times*, 31 March 1925, 23.

States. It is true that his methods sometimes suffered from a lack of scientific accuracy, and that he resorted too much to subterfuge trying to get people to commit themselves to the preservation of the city and its ruins to marvel at them enough to cross the Atlantic and visit them. Actually, being aware of the enormous attraction of the Nile country in the 1920s, in an attempt to equate Carthage with the good numbers of Egypt's tourist "industry" he held the theory that 500 years before the settlement of the Phoenician colony at Byrsa a settlement of Egyptian emigrants flourished. Regardless of this, we have to thank his intervention, today virtually ignored, for the improvement and maintenance of a series of important monuments in Carthage, such as the amphitheatre, the sanctuary of Tanit, or several of its basilicas<sup>86</sup>.

86. This work was supported by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades) within the framework of the Project *North African Identities in Transformation: Libyan-Berber Ethnics and Romanitas through the Funerary Imaginary* (PID2019-107176 GB-I00).