

ROMANIZING THE BERBERS*

In the long and at times very tiresome debate on Romanization during the last quarter-century North Africa occupies a particular place. Nowhere has the equation of Rome with modern imperialism been more obviously applied, both by the colonial powers and by the colonized. The post-colonial perspective turned the earlier, benign view on its head, as the violence of the Algerian war placed the occupiers in stark contrast to the colonized, and what elements of acculturation could be found in the Algeria of the 1960s could be read as deliberate choices on the part of the Algerians, rather than the blessings of an enlightened imperialism.¹ The debate on the nature of Romanization could with some justice be said to have begun with a memorable exchange between the late Yvon Thébert and Marcel Bénabou and Philippe Leveau.² The subject was

* I am very grateful to Ali Aït Kaci, Josephine Crawley Quinn, R. Bruce Hitchner, Claude Lepelley and Chris Wickham for their generous comments on this text, and for references and corrections.

¹ For a detailed analysis of the historiography of the North African debate on Romanization, see D. Mattingly, 'From One Colonialism to Another: Imperialism and the Maghreb', in J. Webster and N. Cooper (eds.), *Roman Imperialism: Post-Colonial Perspectives* (Leicester, 1996); Massimiliano Munzi, *L'epica del ritorno: archeologia e politica nella Tripolitania italiana* (Rome, 2001).

² Yvon Thébert, 'Romanisation et déromanisation en Afrique: histoire décolonisée ou histoire inversée?', *Annales ESC*, xxxiii (1978); Marcel Bénabou, 'Les Romains ont-ils conquis l'Afrique?', *ibid.*; Philippe Leveau, 'La Situation coloniale de l'Afrique romaine', *ibid.* The bibliography on ancient North Africa is vast, fed by the now enormous annual L'Africa Romana conferences as well as by more traditional colloquia and the invaluable *Antiquités africaines*. I shall be referring to works here on the basis of strict relevance to the argument. For a general discussion of research between 1975 and 1995, see David Mattingly and R. Bruce Hitchner, 'Roman Africa: An Archaeological Review', *Jl Roman Studies*, lxxxv (1995). For fine recent general treatments of the Romanization of North Africa, see Claude Lepelley, 'L'Afrique', in Claude Lepelley (ed.), *Rome et l'intégration de l'Empire: 44 av. J.-C. – 260 apr. J.-C.*, ii (Paris, 1998), and R. MacMullen, *Romanization in the Time of Augustus* (New Haven, 2000). For Carthage and Punic North Africa in general, see Serge Lancel's excellent *Carthage* (Paris, 1992), as well as the ever-valuable Stéphane Gsell, *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord*, 8 vols. (Paris, 1927–30). Some of the points treated here are discussed at greater length in Michael Brett and Elizabeth Fentress, *The Berbers* (Oxford, 1996).

Bénabou's ground-breaking work *La Résistance africaine à la romanisation*,³ which provided a reading of resistance to acculturation by Rome from the point of view of the indigenous North Africans. Thébert, in rebuttal, argued that rather than looking to ethnic groups or geography as essential determinants of the division between Roman and non-Roman we should examine the social formation of North Africa in the Roman period. The class structure would give a better basis for predicting the results of Romanization than any supposed division between mountain and plain. Romanization was for Thébert a matter of choice, seized on by the elites and ignored, at least initially, by the peasants. Bénabou replied with some justice that such an equation leaves the Romans out of the picture, that they did after all conquer North Africa, centuriate it and set up an administration. Further, the strictly Marxist approach left culture out of the picture, thereby oversimplifying it.

The debate has continued in terms that have not varied much. In a recent series of conferences⁴ much has been made of the competition for status and power among the provincial elite as the principal motor of Romanization,⁵ answered by the occasional dissenting voice to remind us that, say, few Indians in the nineteenth century would have regarded the encroachments of the British Empire simply as a pretext for learning English and choosing better Bond Street tailors than their

³ Marcel Bénabou, *La Résistance africaine à la romanisation* (Paris, 1976).

⁴ David Mattingly (ed.), *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism: Power, Discourse, and Discrepant Experience in the Roman Empire* (Jl Roman Archaeol., suppl. ser., xxiii, Portsmouth, RI, 1997); Simon Keay and Nicola Terrenato (eds.), *Italy and the West: Comparative Issues in Romanization* (Oxford, 2001).

⁵ This is one of the central theses of two important — though very different — provincial studies: Martin Millett, *The Romanization of Britain: An Essay in Archaeological Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1990), and Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge, 1998). For a more dogmatic approach, see J. C. Barrett, 'Romanization: A Critical Comment', in Mattingly (ed.), *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism*, where he argues that 'we have abandoned the categories of "Roman" or "native" as having nothing to tell us' (p. 60), and most recently David Mattingly himself, who pleads that we cease to use the term 'Romanization' altogether: 'Vulgar and Weak "Romanization", or Time for a Paradigm Shift?', *Jl Roman Archaeol.*, xv (2002). With no apologies, I shall continue to use the term as a useful hold-all for the various modes of adoption of Roman cultural and economic forms, but empty of any political cargo that others might wish it to carry.

neighbours.⁶ More recently, the focus has switched to identity and its expression, allowing discussion of agency outside the (very) narrow circle of people who could be defined as the elite.⁷ New models have come from other cultures, particularly Webster's use of 'creolization' rather than a one-way process of acculturation, emphasizing the choices made by the colonized at all levels, rather than merely those of the elites.⁸ Domestic form and religion provide rich fields for this sort of analysis, as, to a lesser extent, does material culture as a whole.

In general, less attention has been paid to the economic factors at work in the conquest. What I intend to do here is to return to Thébert's recommendation, and give a brief outline of the social preconditions for the Romanization of North Africa, concentrating on the social and economic realities of Africa in the centuries just before and just after the Roman conquest. In this way I hope to situate the specific effects of the Roman occupation in the *longue durée* of North African history. I intend to avoid a simple opposition between the Numidian, or indigenous, Berber peoples, and the Punic settlers who had gradually colonized the coast since the seventh century BC, with their capital at Carthage. Such an opposition fails to grasp the much more complex linkages between the two societies which characterized pre-conquest North Africa. After examining the urban and rural landscapes of the pre-Roman period, concentrating on the zone of the Tell, the hilly, well-watered area near Carthage, I shall outline a few of the transformations effected by the Roman occupation on those landscapes, and on the economy of the countryside. Inevitably, this approach excludes to some extent the cultural — language, material culture and *mentalités* — in favour of the structural. It may, however, provide a firmer basis for such an analysis.

⁶ See, for example, Emmanuele Curti, 'Toynbee's Legacy: Discussing Aspects of the Romanization of Italy', in Keay and Terrenato (eds.), *Italy and the West*, who points out that we are in some danger of slipping into a sanitized political correctness in our perceptions of the Roman Empire (p. 24). To suppose that the only protagonists were the conquered removes all agency or intent from the conquerors, and makes one wonder how they managed to create an empire.

⁷ See most recently David Mattingly, 'Being Roman: Expressing Identity in a Provincial Setting', *Jl Roman Archaeol.*, xvii (2004), with ample bibliography.

⁸ J. Webster, 'Creolizing the Roman Provinces', *Amer. Jl Archaeol.*, cv (2001).

I

BEFORE ROME: AFRICA FROM THE MERCENARY WARS
TO THE ANNEXATION OF AFRICA NOVA

In 240 BC, so the second-century BC historian Polybius tells us, 'The Carthaginians had ever been accustomed to depend for their private supplies on the produce of the country; their public expenses for armaments and commissariat had been met by the revenue they derived from Libya'.⁹ Later on we learn that tax income from Libya — the lands farmed by the indigenous peoples — at this time amounted to fully half of the crop, double the 25 per cent extracted under normal circumstances.¹⁰ Now, this essential division between the private estates of the elite, which sustained the great families, and the public revenues from the African territories represents one of the most fundamental aspects of almost any period in North African history. Recent research on the archaeology of at least some of Africa Proconsularis allows us a somewhat clearer vision of how this division was played out on the ground.

Urbanization and the Elites

There is little doubt that the landscape around Carthage was farmed by the estates of the Carthaginian elite. A network of villas and farms was present as early as the early third century BC. An unpublished survey found as many as fifty rural sites in the third to second centuries BC,¹¹ while a passage from Diodorus Siculus describes the irrigated agriculture and luxurious houses of the territory of Megalopolis, somewhere near Carthage, at the end of the fourth century BC.¹² The northern coastal plain of Cap Bon, too, was given over to these estates,¹³ while on its southern shore there were towns such as Kerkouane, whose substantial houses suggest that it was occupied by a number of

⁹ Polybius, *Histories*, trans. W. R. Paton (London, 1922), i. 71.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹¹ Joseph Greene and Dennis P. Kehoe, 'Mago the Carthaginian', in M'hamed Hassine Fantar and Mansour Ghaki (eds.), *Actes du III^e Congrès international des études phéniciennes et puniques, Tunis, 11–16 novembre 1991* (Tunis, 1995).

¹² Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliothèque*, xx. 8. For Punic agriculture in general, see Lancel, *Carthage*, 290 ff.

¹³ Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, i. 29. 7, speaks of the luxuriously furnished dwellings in the countryside of Aspis. See also Appian, *Punica*, 117, for the estates around Megara in the mid third century BC.

well-off families, who probably farmed the hinterland.¹⁴ Other favoured sites along the coast, such as Hadrumetum (Sousse), may well have experienced similar development.

Outside the area directly controlled by Carthage were numerous other towns which seem to have had urban status, and independent city-territories:¹⁵ certainly the Numidian king Micipsa's capital at Cirta,¹⁶ but also four cities qualified as 'Regia' — Thimida, Bulla, Hippo and Zama — as well as Simitthu and Capsa. Theveste (Tebessa) may be identified with Hecatompylos, which is said to have given up three thousand hostages in the middle of the third century BC.¹⁷ There were a number of other towns further afield, such as Volubilis and Siga in Mauretania to the west, or the 'Libyphoenician' towns of Tripolitania, which passed out of the control of Carthage in the second century BC.¹⁸ These towns, too, had urban elites who may have owned private estates: pre-Roman oil presses have been found at Cirta, along with Punic-style houses,¹⁹ although the fact that the oil presses were within the town may suggest that there were as yet no permanent buildings on the estates. Elsewhere we have firm evidence for villas and farms during the two centuries before the Roman occupation. Survey on the island of Jerba in southern Tunisia has shown a dense network of large villas dating from the second century BC, interspersed with smaller sites that may have housed local cultivators.²⁰ This agricultural landscape was clearly linked to the two substantial towns on the island, Meninx and the large town site at Bourgou, where an impressive mausoleum of the second century BC confirms an aristocratic presence.²¹ At Tacape,

¹⁴ M'hamed Fantar, *Kerkouane: cité punique du Cap Bon, Tunisie*, 3 vols. (Tunis, 1984–6).

¹⁵ See Gabriel Camps, 'Réflexions sur l'origine protohistorique des cités en Afrique du Nord', in Luigi Serra (ed.), *La città mediterranea: eredità antica e apporto arabo-islamico sulle rive del Mediterraneo occidentale e in particolare nel Maghreb (Atti del Congresso internazionale di Bari, 4–7 maggio 1988)* (Naples, 1993).

¹⁶ Although for the fluid nature of the Numidian capitals, see Michèle Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le Royaume de Maurétanie sous Juba II et Ptolémée* (Paris, 1997), 78.

¹⁷ Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliothèque*, xxiv.

¹⁸ Livy, *Historia*, xxxiv. 62.

¹⁹ André Berthier, 'Un habitat punique à Constantine', *Antiquités africaines*, xvi (1980).

²⁰ Elizabeth Fentress, 'Villas, Wine and Kilns: The Landscape of Jerba in the Late Hellenistic Period', *Jl Roman Archaeol.*, xiv (2001).

²¹ Naïdé Ferchiou, 'Recherches sur le mausolée hellénistique d'Henchir Bürgü (Jerba)', forthcoming in A. Drine, E. Fentress and R. Holod, *Jerba Studies*.

Pliny marvelled at the fertility of the irrigated oasis, and the high sale-price of the land within it.²²

Variouly, these towns will have owed allegiance, and perhaps taxes, to the Numidian or Mauretanian monarchies. But otherwise they may be seen as rather ordinary Mediterranean towns with their own territory and town centres. A glimpse of what these centres might have been like in the second century BC is now visible in the Mauretanian towns of Volubilis or Siga, or closer to Carthage at Thugga and at Bourgou on Jerba. Impressive temple foundations and city walls have been found at Volubilis²³ and Thugga,²⁴ while at all these sites a monumental tomb is found just on the outskirts of the settlement, in the classic position of a heroon. The occupant of the tomb might be royal, as at Siga, or simply noble, as, probably, at Thugga, Sabratha and Bourgou.²⁵ The towns were ruled by magistrates known as *suffetes*, in the Punic tradition,²⁶ although the Thugga bilingual dedication to Masinissa, written in Libyan and Punic, shows that there was a certain indigenous development of other civil institutions, as well as a move towards the transformation of the Libyan language and script into a formal epigraphic language, suitable for urban display.²⁷

Africa at the beginning of the second century BC was thus occupied by a series of towns and their territories, with internal

²² Pliny, *Historia naturalis* (hereafter *HN*), xviii. 51. 1.

²³ M. Behel, 'Fortifications préromaines au Maroc. Lixus et Volubilis: essai de comparaison', in *Lixus: Actes du Colloque organisé par l'Institut des sciences de l'archéologie et du patrimoine de Rabat* (Collection de l'École française de Rome, clxvi, Rome, 1992); M. Behel, 'Un temple punique à Volubilis', *Bulletin archéologique du CTHS*, fasc. B, new ser., xxiii (1993–5); A. Jodin, *Volubilis Regia Iubae: contribution à l'étude des civilisations du Maroc antique préclaudien* (Paris, 1987). On African urbanism in general, see A. Mahjoubi, 'L'Urbanisme de l'Afrique antique à l'époque préromaine', *L'Africa romana*, ii (1985); M. Fantar, 'La Cité punique en Afrique du Nord', *L'Africa romana*, x (1994).

²⁴ Mohammed Khanoussi, *Dougga* (Tunis, 1996).

²⁵ On this group of tombs, see Friedrich Rakob, 'Numidische Königsarchitektur in Nordafrika', in Heinz Günter Horn and Christoph B. Rüger (eds.), *Die Numider: Reiter und Könige nördlich der Sahara* (Bonn, 1979).

²⁶ Gilbert-Charles Picard, 'Une survivance du droit public punique en Afrique romaine: les cités *suffétales*', in *I diritti locali nelle province romane* (Rome, 1974); most recently Sadok Belkahlia and Ginette Di Vita-Évrard, 'Magistratures autochtones dans les cités pérégrines de l'Afrique proconsulaire', in Pol Troussset (ed.), *Monuments funéraires, institutions autochtones: l'Afrique du Nord antique et médiévale* (Paris, 1995), with full bibliography.

²⁷ J.-B. Chabot (ed.), *Recueil des inscriptions libyques*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1940–1), no. 2; James Février, 'L'Organisation municipale de Dougga', in *Mélanges de Carthage* (= *Cahiers de Byrsa*, x) (Paris, 1965).

structures not apparently very different from those of the rest of the Mediterranean world.²⁸ Most of these were Punic in origin, but some were certainly Numidian or Mauretanian. The indigenous towns show some development of artisan specialization: Banasa in Mauretania had a flourishing pottery industry,²⁹ while the elaborate architecture of the great tomb of the Medracen or the later sanctuary at Simitthu show that competent stonemasons could be found well outside Punic territory. Trade was developed, as black-glazed pottery in the city centres seems to show.³⁰ The Italian merchants from Italy killed at Cirta by Jugurtha in 111 BC may have had counterparts in a number of other towns,³¹ probably dealing in the grain for which Africa was already famous. Indeed, this grain was becoming vital to Rome's corn supply, explaining her continuing political interest in Africa.

At most of the coastal towns such as Lixus or Kerkouane the elites were probably largely Punic.³² Further inland they were Berbers — Libyans, Numidians or Mauri — whose Punic culture had some Hellenistic overlay.³³ They occur in our sources as *nobiles*, *illustriores* and *primores*.³⁴ In their interaction with others, the Berber elites of North Africa spoke more than one language: their own Libyan, Punic, and occasionally Greek or, later, Latin.

²⁸ Roman authors had no particular contact with the inland cities: Volubilis, for instance, where we know from inscriptions that the first suffetes date from the third century BC, only became interesting to Rome during the revolt of Aedemon, which is when the elder Pliny records it for the first time (*HN*, v. 5); the observation is that of Coltelloni-Trannoy, *Le Royaume de Maurétanie*, 83. At Thamusida, recent excavations have revealed a settlement of the late fourth century BC: Abdelaziz El Khayari, pers. com.

²⁹ Suzanne Girard, 'Banasa préromaine: un état de la question', *Antiquités africaines*, xx (1984). For artisan production at Carthage and in its region, see Lancel, *Carthage*, 333 ff.

³⁰ At Cirta (Berthier, 'Un habitat punique à Constantine'), on Jerba, in large quantities (Fentress, 'Villas, Wine and Kilns'), and as far afield as Ichoukane, near Timgad (personal observation).

³¹ Sallust, *Bellum iugurthinum*, XXI. 2; on *negotiatores*, see *ibid.*, XXVI. 1–3. See also the *negotiatores* in Livy's account of the governor C. Fabius Hadrianus: *Historia*, LXXXVI.

³² Although see the observation of Paul-Albert Février that many of the *comptoirs* could have had African origins: 'Origines de l'habitat urbain en Maurétanie césarienne', *Journal des savants* (1967).

³³ The elder Pliny defines the inhabitants of Byzacium as 'Libyphonicians' (*HN*, v. 24), by which he clearly means the products of the intermarriage of Carthaginians and Africans. By the use of the term 'Berber' I mean the Berber-speaking indigenous peoples of North Africa (Amazigh), or rather anyone who would so define themselves.

³⁴ Gsell, *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord*, v, 72.

We learn from Strabo that Micipsa installed a Greek colony in his capital at Cirta.³⁵ Here a group of inscriptions from the El Hofra sanctuary of the second century BC shows dedicants with Greek, Punic and Roman names inscribing in all three languages.³⁶ This bi- and trilingual culture is characteristic of Berber elites in all periods, who moved ably between the hegemonic culture and their own. They were linked to each other and to the Carthaginians by family ties as well as by stratagems of allegiance. Thus in the account of the Mercenary War of 240 BC, which pitched Carthage against its unpaid mercenary troops, we find the young Numidian noble Navaras, who presents himself to the Carthaginian general Hamilcar with protestations of his family's traditional attachment to the Carthaginians. Hamilcar, impressed by the young man as well as by the two thousand Numidian cavalry he commands, offers him his daughter's hand in return for his allegiance.³⁷ That Navaras, by siding with Carthage, was simultaneously betraying the large body of his countrymen who had united against the Punic forces does not seem to have disturbed the young opportunist, just as Jugurtha, in future years, would attempt to manipulate both his own family and Roman senators. The Berber elite communicated using the languages and cultural forms of their peers.

The Berber Kingdoms

In this discussion of the Berber elites I have deliberately left out the monarchies, not because they are unimportant, but because they have too often been perceived by modern authors as the only agents in the African landscape, supported by a faceless mass of tribesmen. The urban and aristocratic dimension of the Numidian and Mauretanian kingdoms is largely missing in this

³⁵ Strabo, *Geographica*, xvii. 3. 13; Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliothèque*, xxxiv–xxxv.

³⁶ Although typically Punic was used, even by Greeks and Romans: François Bertrand, 'La Communauté gréco-latine de Cirta (Constantine), capitale du royaume de Numidie pendant le II^e siècle et la première moitié du I^{er} siècle avant J.-C.', *Latomus*, xlv (1985). During the Mercenary War the soldiers in revolt struck coins with the legend 'ΑΙΒΥΩΝ', the Greek text contrasting with the language of Carthage and serving as the language of subversion: see J. Alexandropoulos, 'L'Usage du grec en Afrique du Nord d'après les documents monétaires (III^e s. av. J.-C. – I^{er} s. ap. J.-C.)', *Antiquités africaines*, xxxviii–xxxix (2002–3), 289–96.

³⁷ Polybius, *Histories*, trans. Paton, i. 78. On the revolt in general, see Luigi Loreto, *La grande insurrezione libica contro Cartagine del 241–237 A.C.: una storia politica e militare* (Rome, 1995).

picture, or viewed as a Punic epiphenomenon. In one sense, of course, the behaviour of the Numidian and Mauretanian kings is simply that of the Berber elites writ large. Syphax, king of the Masaesyli in Numidia, married the daughter of Hamilcar, Sophonisba. Rather than opt for a single cultural alliance, Syphax's rival Masinissa exploited all his cultures to the hilt, dressing and fighting like a Roman, speaking like a Carthaginian and sending his sons to Greece like a Hellenistic monarch.³⁸ His coinage portrays him in this latter role. If the formation of large territorial entities by the Berbers was a logical answer to the growing territorial consolidations of Carthage, the forms of the Numidian kingship clearly reflect those of the Hellenistic monarchies elsewhere in the Mediterranean. The most obvious example of this Numidian use of the dominant Mediterranean cultures within the setting of local tradition is the late third-century royal tomb of the Medracen.³⁹ This is a huge stone monument, with a drum ornamented with Ionic columns, sited in a vast cemetery north of the Aurès mountains in southern Numidia. The tumuli of the cemetery are similar to all the proto-historic tombs in the area. However, although the Medracen itself can be seen as a gigantic tumulus, its cultural reference is far more likely to have been the tomb of Alexander at Alexandria: it may, indeed, have been created by an architect from the Greek east.⁴⁰ The tomb speaks in terms of emulation, but it

³⁸ See Jehan Desanges, 'L'Hellénisme dans le royaume protégé de Maurétanie', *Bulletin archéologique du CTHS*, fasc. B, new ser., xx–xxi (1984–5); Gabriel Camps, 'Modèle hellénistique ou modèle punique? Les Destinées culturelles de la Numidie', in Fantar and Ghaki (eds.), *Actes du III^e Congrès international des études phéniciennes et puniques*.

³⁹ On the Medracen, see Gabriel Camps, *Monuments et rites funéraires protohistoriques: aux origines de la Berbérie* (Paris, 1961), 201, with extensive previous bibliography. Radiocarbon dates give 320 and 220 BC (uncalibrated) with a standard deviation of 110 and 155 years respectively (Gif 1671: 2270; Alg. 21: 2170): Gabriel Camps, 'Nouvelles observations sur l'architecture et l'âge du Medracen, mausolée royal de Numidie', *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* (1973); Friedrich Rakob, 'Architecture royale numide', in *Architecture et société: de l'archaïsme grec à la fin de la République romaine* (Collection de l'École française de Rome, lxvi, Rome, 1983).

⁴⁰ Filippo Coarelli and Yvon Thébert, 'Architecture funéraire et pouvoir: réflexions sur l'hellénisme numide', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome*, c (1988). Their argument is supported by the late Paolo Donati's observation (pers. com.) that the tomb was topped by a pyramidal spire, in the fashion of the Sabratha tombs. However, we should note that Camps, *Monuments et rites funéraires protohistoriques*, felt that the cultural reference of the tomb is largely Punic.

also speaks of power over resources and labour, for both the thousands of blocks of dressed stone and the 29 tonnes of lead used in its construction were extracted locally. Further, its vast size and numinous presence in the landscape speak of the religious aspect of the relationship between the king (whoever he was) and his subjects. Although we have no evidence that they were deified in life, after death the Numidian kings were certainly sanctified: the kings Gulussa, Hiemsal and Juba, and perhaps Masinissa, were the object of dedications in the Roman period.⁴¹ It was in this divine capacity that they could command tribute, armies and labour from their subjects. However, they also controlled property directly. Masinissa had large private estates, leaving each of his hundred sons 10,000 *plethra* of land.⁴² Who actually worked these estates, and how, remains obscure.

The role of the kings in encouraging the acculturation of their subjects must thus have been much the same as that of the elite, although the principal object of this acculturation was probably the elites themselves. In order to present himself as the perfect Hellenistic monarch a king would require a court, and an aristocracy to organize the nascent state and its armies. This need would have occasioned the transformation from local chieftains — of the sort we see commemorated on steles such as that naming Abizar, which may date from the third or early second century BC⁴³ — to ‘princes’ such as Navaras. Indeed, it is probable that these two figures had exactly the

⁴¹ *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (hereafter *CIL*), VIII, 18752; Stéphane Gsell, *Inscriptions latines de l'Algérie*, i (Paris, 1922), 1, 242; *CIL* VIII, 8834, 20627.

⁴² Varro, *De re rustica*, i. 10, gives 10,000 square Roman feet (about 870 square metres) to a *plethron*, although the term *myrioplethros* used by Diodorus Siculus (*Bibliothèque*, xxxii. 16. 4) may simply have meant ‘very large’: see H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th edn (Oxford, 1940), *s.v.*

⁴³ This dating is suggested by Jean-Pierre Laporte, ‘Datation des stèles libyques figurées de la Grande Kabylie’, *L’Africa romana*, ix (1992), 417, based among other things on the word GLDMSK, a magistrature known from the Dougga inscription: see Chabot (ed.), *Recueil des inscriptions libyques*, no. 2, on the stele of Kerfala, whose iconography is a variant of that of Abizar. This is very convincingly argued, although the date is much debated: Gabriel Camps suggested that the work is as early as the fifth century BC (*Encyclopédie berbère*, 8 vols. (Aix-en-Provence, 1984–90), i, *s.v.* ‘Abizar’), while Paul-Albert Février argues that it is late antique: see his ‘L’Art funéraire et l’image des chefs indigènes dans la Kabylie antique’, in Michelline Galley (ed.), *Actes du premier Congrès d’études des cultures méditerranéennes d’influence arabo-berbère* (Algiers, 1973).

same roles: local potentates at home, and aristocratic leaders in the context of the monarchy. The stele of Abizar, with its crude outline of a rider, shows such a man as represented by or for his tribesmen, while the account of Navaras shows how the same sort of figure would be perceived by a Greek historian.

The Villages

So far we have examined one aspect of the landscape from which we began: the world of the towns, both Punic and Berber, in which an urban elite controlled estates and resources, communicated and competed with each other, and, while considering themselves equally 'African', dealt with the growing power of Rome.⁴⁴ What is missing from this picture is the part of society from which tribute was extracted, both by Carthage and by the kings. This second productive sphere lay outside the urban purview, for we cannot imagine North Africa in European terms as an assembly of city-states with contiguous territories. Outside the immediate limits of a city's territory we find the world of the village, whose links with the urban society were reduced to the payment of tribute or service in the army. Their own social and economic structures were certainly very different, far less transparent in terms of ownership of land, or connections to an obvious elite. It is here that Romanization would be potentially more disruptive, and it is thus important to understand the nature of the villages that occur so densely in this landscape. Our knowledge of these is derived from two sources: the field surveys of the last quarter-century and epigraphy, which, although later than the period examined here, is both rich and well studied. Because the subject is vast, I shall concentrate on a relatively small and exceptionally well-studied area extending for around 100 km to the west and south of Carthage, within the territory controlled by that city which became in 146 BC the Roman province of Africa. This area has been the subject of a long-term study by Jean Peyras, published

⁴⁴A nice example of the expression of the sense of community between the Carthaginians and the Berbers is Livy's account of Sophonisba's plea to Masinissa that she not be given up to the Romans: 'I should have preferred to trust the word of a Numidian, born in Africa like myself, to that of a foreigner' (Livy, *Historia*, xxx. 12. 15).

in his monograph *Le Tell nord-est tunisien dans l'Antiquité*,⁴⁵ and of an important series of articles by Naïdé Ferchiou.⁴⁶ The two authors share an exhaustive knowledge of the region's landscape and epigraphy. However, the studies can hardly be considered complete. No stratigraphic excavation has ever taken place in the area, while Peyras has never recorded surface pottery on his sites. This gap is occasionally filled by Ferchiou, but in general we could say that modern field survey has yet to take place in this area.⁴⁷ Yet even so the area still has much to tell us.

The landscape is one of rolling hills, with some higher relief.⁴⁸ To the north it is still wooded, although deforestation in most of the region has been complete, probably since Antiquity. It is cut through by the fertile Mejerda valley, as well as by the tributary valleys of the Siliana and the Miliane. The bulk of the settlements are located on the hills above the valleys, sometimes extraordinarily close to one another, and rarely more than 4 km from their nearest neighbours. Fourteen settlements are found within a radius of 13 km around Thugga.⁴⁹ Few of these can have qualified as a city in the second century BC: certainly Thugga⁵⁰ and Vaga,⁵¹ probably Thizika and Mactar,

⁴⁵ Jean Peyras, *Le Tell nord-est tunisien dans l'Antiquité: essai de monographie régionale* (Paris, 1991); Jean Peyras, 'Le *Fundus aufidianus*: étude d'un grand domaine romain de la région de Mactar (Tunisie du Nord)', *Antiquités africaines*, ix (1975); Jean Peyras, 'Paysages agraires et centuriations dans le bassin de l'Oued Tine (Tunisie du Nord)', *Antiquités africaines*, xix (1983), as well as a long series of articles written with Louis Maurin, of which one of the most important is 'Uzalitana, la région de l'Ansarine dans l'Antiquité', *Cahiers de Tunisie*, xix (1971).

⁴⁶ Principally Naïdé Ferchiou, 'Le Paysage funéraire pré-romain dans deux régions céréalières de Tunisie antique (Fahs-Boiu Arada et Tébourba-Mateur): les tombeaux monumentaux', *Antiquités africaines*, xxiii (1987); Naïdé Ferchiou, 'Habitats fortifiés pré-impériaux en Tunisie antique', *Antiquités africaines*, xxvi (1990); Naïdé Ferchiou, 'Le Paysage protohistorique et pré-impérial à l'est et au sud de Zaghwan (Tunisie)', *Antiquités africaines*, xxx (1994).

⁴⁷ The exception is the extensive and well-published Segermes survey: Søren Dietz, Laila Ladjimi Sebaï and Habib Ben Hassen (eds.), *Africa Proconsularis: Regional Studies in the Segermes Valley of Northern Tunisia* (Copenhagen, 1995). However, this lies just south-east of the area discussed here.

⁴⁸ The best map of the region is now R. Bruce Hitchner, map sheet 'Carthage', in Richard J. A. Talbert (ed.), *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* (Princeton, 2000).

⁴⁹ The point is made by Gilbert-Charles Picard, *La Civilisation de l'Afrique romaine* (1959; Paris, 1990), 340.

⁵⁰ If it can be identified with the 'Tokae' of Diodorus Siculus (*Bibliothèque*, xx. 57), it was mentioned as a substantial city at the end of the fourth century BC.

⁵¹ Vaga, an important grain market, was certainly a town in 111 BC: Sallust, *Bellum iugurthinum*, LXIX. 1; Gsell, *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord*, v, 196.

which are mentioned by Pliny as *oppida libera*,⁵² and possibly Uzali Sar. Indeed, even in the relatively slow juridical urbanization of Roman Africa they cut poor figures, with municipal institutions emerging only towards the end of the second century AD. Almost all the toponyms are Berber in origin.⁵³ How many of them actually existed as settlements in the pre-Roman period is, of course, open to question, because of the lack of pottery from the sites. However, Ferchiou's survey of the fortified hill-top sites in the region to the south showed that black-glazed pottery dating from the last two centuries BC could be found on seventeen out of twenty-two sites.⁵⁴ Peyras, too, gives convincing descriptions of small, probably walled, settlements occupying the highest point of the site. Of these, Sua is an excellent example. Its name certainly derives from the Berber word for spring. On the top of the hill was found a necropolis of indigenous tomb types, dolmens and hypogea. On a lower ridge, fortified at an early period, was a walled acropolis, which probably represents the original settlement. By the second century AD, however, this area was occupied by the cemetery, and the forum, with its triumphal arches, developed on the shoulder below.⁵⁵ At Uzali Sar the same pattern is found, with a fortified height and Roman urban development on the slopes below.⁵⁶ However, here the fortified height is sufficiently ample to suggest that it was already a substantial village, and may possibly have been a town.

These, then, are the fortified settlements that Appian describes as numerous in the *chora* of Carthage.⁵⁷ Beyond the names, whose reference is either topographical (as in Sua, or Alma, a pan-Berber word for field or enclosed pasture) or personal (Uccula should refer to the sons of KL, Ucles to the sons of KRS), we know something about the early inhabitants,

⁵² *HN*, v. 30.

⁵³ Camps, 'Réflexions sur l'origine protohistorique des cités en Afrique du Nord'; A. Pellegrin, *Essai sur les noms de lieux d'Algérie et de Tunisie: étymologie, signification* (Tunis, 1949). I am grateful to Ali Aït Kaci for a further analysis of the toponyms in the area. The exceptions to the rule that the toponyms all originate in the Libyan language are Abbir Maius, whose first element is probably Punic, and Russuma, with the Punic root *rus*, which should signify the hill of Cuma.

⁵⁴ Ferchiou, 'Habitats fortifiés pré-impériaux', 86. For the area around Zagouan, see also Ferchiou, 'Le Paysage protohistorique et pré-impérial'.

⁵⁵ Peyras, *Le Tell nord-est tunisien dans l'Antiquité*, 134-9.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 118.

⁵⁷ Appian, *Punica*, 101.

because from several of these towns come inscriptions referring to the tribe of the 'Afri'. Although all of these date from the imperial period, the tribe is certainly earlier.⁵⁸ At Uccula a statue was erected 'decreto Afrorum', while at Sua the Afri are mentioned together with the 'cives Romani Suenses'.⁵⁹ No individuals emerge from our texts; rather it is the community as a whole that is seen in the later inscriptions.

More information comes from the work of Ferchiou on the funerary landscape.⁶⁰ Systematically visiting each of these sites, she found that almost all were characterized by a single tumulus, visible from the site and within one or two kilometres of it. These tumuli were isolated, without surrounding cemeteries, and generally dated by finds of black-glaze pottery nearby, which puts them before 50 BC. There is some evidence that they might have been the subjects of a cult, for pottery of later periods is often found on them. Ferchiou suggests that they may have been the tombs of the owners of the estates, whose workforce would be found in the *oppida*. The tombs would have been, in effect, heroa, with a particular cult devoted to the founder or owner. This is the model of social organization we find with Vitruvius' friend C. Julius, 'Masinissae filius', a Numidian who owned the *oppidum* of Ismuc.⁶¹ C. R. Whittaker has argued that while property may have been undifferentiated within any given *oppidum*, nobles such as C. Julius exercised complex rights over them. In many cases, he suggests, the villages may have come under the direct control of nomadic groups, who acted as overlords to the sedentary farmers.⁶²

⁵⁸ On the Afri, see Pliny, *Histoire naturelle*, ed. and trans. Jehan Desanges (Paris, 1980), 75–6; J. Peyras in *Encyclopédie berbère*, ii, 211–15, *s.v.* Desanges speculates that the name was already generic at this date, but it seems more likely that it became a generic term for Africans later on. Orosius' reference to the massacre of 12,000 Afri by Manlius in 146 BC (*Historium adversum paganos*, iv. 22. 8) is suspect because elsewhere he uses the term to refer to Africans in general.

⁵⁹ *CIL* VIII, 14364, 25850 = H. Dessau (ed.), *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* (Berlin, 1892–1916) (hereafter *ILS*), 6776.

⁶⁰ Ferchiou, 'Le Paysage funéraire pré-romain'.

⁶¹ *De architectura*, vii. 3. 24: 'cuius erant totius oppidi agrorum possessiones'.

⁶² C. R. Whittaker, 'Land and Labour in North Africa', *Klio*, lx (1978). This important article is one of the first recent works to have drawn attention to the apparent similarities between early modern Berber villages and those of the Roman period. However, the work of Stéphane Gsell on pre-Roman African society, where the comparison was first made between Berber villages and the ancient period,

While Ferchiou's case is convincingly argued, there are some problems with it. As we have seen, members of the Berber elite were indeed honoured with elaborate tombs, but these tended to be the tower tombs of the urban environment. In our area only three such tower tombs were found. Of these, one lay just outside the possible urban settlement at Uzali Sar, while the other two were found far from any settlement, and seem indeed to mark estates.⁶³ Now, a mausoleum can be erected during the life of the person commemorated or by members of his family after his death, the body entering the tomb through a door in the monument. However, the construction of a tumulus is a collective act that may only take place after the death of the person so honoured, as his body and any tomb chamber would necessarily be covered by the rubble. Tumuli, as we have seen, are deeply rooted in the indigenous tradition, and have no relationship to the highly Punicized customs of the Numidian upper classes. Further, the suggestion of continuous cults at the tumuli may speak to the very close ties between the fortified villages of the *oppida* and the person commemorated, ties that suggest identification rather than domination. Could we be looking at another sort of relationship altogether?

An examination of the pre-modern and contemporary Kabylie offers more than one parallel for the arrangements described here. Clearly I am arguing by analogy, but both the settlement pattern and the evidence for social structures give clear parallels to the village habitat of the Roman period. Of course, such comparisons of historically different realities must be taken with a grain of salt, but they offer us an interpretative framework. In the Kabylie, almost every village has one or two tombs on its outskirts that are monumentalized and particularly venerated by the villagers. Although in many instances these are associated with a marabout, or saint,⁶⁴ in others, such as at

(n. 62 cont.)

remains fundamental: *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord*, v, 206 ff. The role of nomads postulated by Whittaker is, however, without any particular support in the ancient evidence. For a more subtle and detailed treatment of the changes in pastoralism between the pre-Roman and Roman periods, see R. Bruce Hitchner, 'Image and Reality: The Changing Face of Pastoralism in the Tunisian High Steppe', in Jesper Carlsen, Peter Ørsted and Jens Erik Skydsgaard (eds.), *Landuse in the Roman Empire* (Rome, 1994).

⁶³ Ferchiou, 'Le Paysage funéraire pré-romain', 57.

⁶⁴ For the 'saints' in the Maghreb, see Brett and Fentress, *Berbers*, 142–53; Ernest Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas* (London, 1969).

Taurirt Aït Menguellet, the tomb commemorates a particularly revered ancestor of the dominant (and eponymous) family of the village, while in other villages the tomb may simply contain an ancestor of one of the families, without any sense that the commemorated person was the founder of the village, or had exercised property rights over it.⁶⁵ The tombs constitute a marked element in the identity of the village itself, and are periodically restored and repainted.

The structure of the early modern Kabylie landscape differs from the picture painted by Whittaker, in which the villages house the workforce of the aristocratic estates. In the Kabylie the villages are independent of any direct control by outside individuals, nomadic or other. Villages generally comprise a number of agnatic clans, or *thakharrubth*. The land of the clan (though not of the village) was held in common until the middle of the nineteenth century; indeed, even today, women have rights during their lifetimes to the land of their own family rather than to that of their husbands, but their property is not alienable and does not leave their own agnatic family after their deaths. This, together with the shame attached to the sale of property, leads to substantial continuity between a given agnatic clan and its land. The villages are in any case characterized by a high level of reciprocity, and until recently barter was still common: thus, a coarseware pot would be traded for its contents in pulses.⁶⁶

Village identity is reinforced in its collective institutions, which still survive in some areas of the Kabylie. Representatives of each family in the community meet (or met) periodically in assembly, the *tajmāth*. Although all men could take part in the meetings, in practice only the elders participated in the decisions. The *tajmāth* chooses (or chose) a leader, who serves as chief of the village; although this is an apparently democratic process, it is hardly a coincidence that the leader is generally the head of a dominant family, and is often succeeded by his son. The village itself is considered to be part of a tribe, or *taqbilt*, whose definition is strictly territorial: there is no assumption of

⁶⁵ Ali Aït Kaci, pers. com. I am indebted to him for much of what follows. For an introduction to the political structure of the Kabylie, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Sociologie de l'Algérie* (Paris, 1980).

⁶⁶ Brett and Fentress, *Berbers*, 257–8.

kinship in the definition of the tribe (as, indeed, in the definition of the village itself, in spite of the fact that villages are often given apparently anthroponymic names). A tribe generally comprises between two and five villages. In turn a tribe belongs to a confederation, or *ʿarsh*, which is a much looser grouping. In times of stress each tribe will send representatives to a meeting of the confederation,⁶⁷ which is dominated by the leaders of the most powerful families. If, for instance, war were to be decided upon, all tribesmen able to bear arms would be obliged to participate, under the banner of one of these leaders.⁶⁸ Since the time of Stéphane Gsell, the great historian of the colonial period, the same hierarchical structure has been recognized in ancient North Africa, confirmed more recently by the discovery of the Tabula Banasitana, which details treaties between Rome and an indigenous group, described in terms of nested *domus*, *familia*, *gens*, and *gentes*.⁶⁹

Now, although the Ottoman government of Algiers never entirely succeeded in taxing the Kabylie, it is clear that, under the circumstances, the taxes would have been paid by the village community rather than by individuals. This is precisely the situation that we must imagine for the villages of the confederation, or tribe, of the Afri, in the pre-Roman period, or for the numerous *civitates stipendiarii* of the early Roman province, such as the 'civitates LXIII pagi Thuscae et Gunzi' which we know of from an inscription, and must interpret as sixty-three villages in one of the circumscriptions of Roman Carthage.⁷⁰ The administration of these settlements by a council of elders, similar to those found in early modern villages, is suggested by the numerous references to *seniores* and *principes*, who certainly

⁶⁷ This was the case in the Kabylie during the last few years. Effective government was in the hands of the *ʿarsh*, composed of representatives of the tribes opposed to the central government of Algiers.

⁶⁸ See Mouloud Mammeri, *Poèmes kabyles anciens* (Algiers, 1988), 51 n. 43, who lists the leaders of each contingent who took part in the defence of Algiers in 1830.

⁶⁹ *Année épigraphique* (1961), 142; Brent D. Shaw, 'Autonomy and Tribute: Mountain and Plain in Mauretania Tingitana', in *Désert et montagne au Maghreb: hommage à Jean Dresch* (Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée, xli-xlii, Aix-en-Provence, 1987); Bénabou, *La Résistance africaine à la romanisation*, 448; Whittaker, 'Land and Labour in North Africa', 343.

⁷⁰ *Année épigraphique* (1963), 96. The point is well argued by Whittaker, 'Land and Labour in North Africa', 342.

represent the leading citizens of each village or tribe.⁷¹ The subsistence economy of the villages was likely to comprise elements of both pastoralism and agriculture, with the herds moving locally between higher pasture in the summer, stubble grazing in the autumn and the plains in the winter. As we have seen, a substantial percentage of their produce was taxed by Carthage. However, although the villages were not entirely outside the market — for some of their income probably derived from the pay that the men could earn as mercenaries for Carthage — we must assume that the economy was basically one of subsistence, with taxes paid in kind.

How this world of the village, isolated in its reciprocity, segmentary structure and kinship obligations, connected to the elites of the nascent urban society remains unclear. We know that the villages of this area paid taxes or tribute, to Carthage or to the kings. But where is the link to Navaras, and his two thousand horsemen? Here we must imagine that the confederations were headed in some way by the more powerful families, who could move between the urban environment, in which they held private estates, and the background of the tribal confederations. This is, of course, the picture that emerges so clearly in the later Roman Empire. It is the case, for example, with the sons of Nubel — Firmus, Gildo, Mascazel and Sammac — whose fluency in Roman culture and participation in its military and administrative structures was combined with their personal power over their tribesmen.⁷² This relationship, however, does not imply ownership of the tribal lands, any more than the leaders of the west highland kindreds of Scotland owned the clan lands during the Middle Ages.⁷³ What it does clearly resemble is

⁷¹ For discussions of the magistrates, see Belkahlia and Di Vita-Évrard, 'Magistratures autochtones'; Jerzy Kolendo, 'Les Institutions autochtones dans les domaines africaines', in Troussset (ed.), *Monuments funéraires, institutions autochtones*. The *undecimprimi* were long thought to be a sort of *ordo* for peregrine communities: Brent D. Shaw, 'The *undecimprimi* in Roman Africa', *Museum Africum*, ii (1973). However, see now Jacques Gascoü, 'Remarques sur les *undecimprimi*', *Antiquités africaines*, xxxiv (1998), with a full dossier and previous bibliography, who demonstrates that they formed a religious group similar to the flaminiate, probably deriving from Punic rather than African tradition.

⁷² On this story, see John Matthews, 'Mauretania in Ammianus and the Notitia', in Roger Goodburn and Philip Bartholomew (eds.), *Aspects of the Notitia Dignitatum* (BAR, suppl. ser., xv, Oxford, 1976); Yves Modéran, 'Gildon, les Maures et l'Afrique', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome*, ci (1989).

⁷³ See, for example, the entry 'Clans of the Highlands and Islands', in Michael Lynch (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Scottish History* (Oxford, 2001), 93–6.

Gellner's model of social relationships in agrarian societies, with members of an elite in close communication with their peers and with strongly marked cultural differentiation from the agrarian society to which they were tied by bonds of kinship. In contrast to the strong horizontal bonds of the elites, the isolation of these small, enclosed communities was increased by the lack of effective markets or communications.⁷⁴ The one exception to this rule must have been the service of the men as mercenaries or recruits into the Numidian armies, which represented their sole direct link to the outside world.

How the transformation of a few of these villages into urban centres came about between the fourth and the second centuries BC we can only imagine, but it is very likely that there were a number of factors at work: royal involvement, in the creation of either an administrative centre (the Regia towns) or a capital; an increasing involvement in external trade; and the dislocation caused by veterans returning with a substantial capital composed of their salaries and booty. It is striking that the larger towns of the interior are all in important wheat-growing areas. The emergence of families that were not only powerful but controlled important resources may have been one of the effects of the Italian *negotiatores* in their search for wheat; again, one thinks of the foreign community installed by Micipsa at Cirta. Between them, then, successful Numidian soldiers and acquisitive merchants would have begun to move the society away from its economic isolation.

In the more isolated villages the growth of periodic local markets would also have created a dynamic interplay between the villages and the outside world. In the modern Kabylie and the High Atlas, markets are regularly found outside the village, thus avoiding the penetration of outsiders into its confines. They are usually held near a rural shrine, which serves to guarantee the transactions. This might suggest a second role for the tumuli found near the villages of the Afri, and an explanation for the later pottery found there. Study of these markets has shown that those who control them tend to assume elite status within the village and tribe, and their development could have been a significant step towards the growth of hierarchies within

⁷⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalisms* (London, 1983).

the village systems.⁷⁵ They might also have stimulated production: the market at the (admittedly semi-urban) site at Banasa in Mauretania Tingitana may have given birth to the pottery production found there.⁷⁶

II

THE ROMANIZATION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

In so far as many areas of North Africa already presented the characteristics of Mediterranean city-territories, the transition towards a Roman market-based economy will hardly have made much difference to them. Indeed, survey shows that on Jerba there is no sign of any effect of the creation of Africa Nova on the settlement of the countryside, with the exception, perhaps, of the extinction of some of the small farms of the Republican period. It is only towards the end of the second century AD that we can see the exceptional growth of the town of Meninx, devoted to the production of murex dye.⁷⁷ Elsewhere the Numidian and Mauretanian tribal elites moved smoothly into roles as decurions in their towns, like M. Valerius Severus and his wife Flavia Bira at Volubilis,⁷⁸ whose local prestige was probably increased by their support for Rome during the revolt of Aedemon. The long survival of towns whose magistrates were *suffetes*, in the Punic tradition, only shows the degree to which the Roman administration left the towns to select their own administrative forms.⁷⁹ Indeed, there is general agreement that the Roman administration simply adopted *en bloc* the Carthaginian systems within the area of Africa Vetus, and left the administrative structures of the region pretty much alone. The *civitates* continued to pay their tribute, probably in kind. Only the names of the tax collectors had changed. What we do see in the early phases, apart from the Augustan colonies themselves, is the introduction of groups of

⁷⁵ F. Benet, 'Explosive Markets: The Berber Highlands', in Karl Polanyi, Conrad M. Arensberg and Harry W. Pearson (eds.), *Trade and Market in the Early Empires: Economies in History and Theory* (Glencoe, Ill., 1956).

⁷⁶ Christine Hamdoune, 'Les Points de ralliement des *gentes*', *Antiquités africaines*, xxxvii (2001).

⁷⁷ Fentress, 'Villas, Wine and Kilns'.

⁷⁸ *Inscriptions antiques du Maroc*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1966–82), nos. 439, 448, 449.

⁷⁹ Belkahlia and Di Vita-Évrard, 'Magistratures autochtones'.

veterans and other Roman citizens into the communities of the territory of Carthage.⁸⁰ MacMullen puts the total number of immigrants as high as 50,000, counting the population of Carthage itself.⁸¹ With no kinship ties to their new homes, the new settlers owned land individually, in standard Roman fashion. This land would have been expropriated from its owners. Along with these settlements came the survey into regular centuries of much of northern Tunisia. The survey measured and defined the areas for taxation, distribution and acquisition. Peyras has pointed out that the orderly 'northern' centuriation seems to have covered the immediate areas of the villages, concentrating on the light soils of the hillsides that they would have farmed already.⁸² In contrast, more irregular patterns are found on the heavy soils of the flood plains, to which the centuriation was extended as these areas were brought into cultivation. It is here that the new, dispersed farms would begin to emerge as the commonly held pasture of the clans began to give way to Roman law in the centuries that followed the survey. Archaeological research confirms this picture. Field surveys of the last two decades show without a doubt that, outside areas such as Carthage, Cap Bon, Jerba and the Tripolitanian towns, there was no dispersed settlement in the countryside under Carthaginian rule. In the region of Segermes, just south of Carthage, only twenty-three sites were settled in the first century AD, and most of these are dated to the last decades of the century by early African Red Slipwares (ARS). Indeed, because most of the pottery forms run through the second century the authors are very uncertain as to whether the sites should be dated to the first century at all. Italian sigillata, dating from 50 BC through the first century AD, is conspicuously absent, recovered from only four sites. Thus no open settlement took place for at least a century after the establishment of Africa Proconsularis. Even then, most of the new sites are classified as 'agglomérations rurales', suggesting that the earliest settlement was heavily nucleated, with a marked preference for the village form.⁸³

⁸⁰ Thus the 'oppidum civium Romanorum' at the little town of Chiniavi (Pliny, *HN*, v. 29), or the *pagus* of Roman citizens at Thugga ('Pagus et civitas Thuggensis': *CIL* VIII, 26466 etc.).

⁸¹ MacMullen, *Romanization in the Time of Augustus*, 55.

⁸² Peyras, *Le Tell nord-est tunisien dans l'Antiquité*, 462 ff.

⁸³ Dietz, Sebaï and Ben Hassen (eds.), *Africa Proconsularis*, 790 ff.

Only four villas and one small farm are known from the first century. The real boom took place in the second century, with numerous villas and small farms emerging on the centuriated land. The area of Cillium (Kasserine), surveyed by R. Bruce Hitchner, shows a similar picture, although it made an even slower start.⁸⁴ First-century ARS is recovered largely in the area of the Musuni Regiani tribe, around Cillium. In the mountainous Djebel Selloum area nearby, first-century ARS is found at only two complex sites, a farm and a fortified site in the mountains, which probably represents an earlier village. ARS and one piece of Gallic sigillata were recovered at the major agrotown, Ksar el Guellal, between Cillium and Sufetula. In this area a very substantial growth in settlement started in the second century, heaviest in the low piedmont area dominated by small farms to the west of Cillium, and lighter elsewhere, with some smaller farms emerging against the backdrop of the larger production centres first established in the first century.

This, then, is what Mattingly has called the African 'landscape of opportunity', which he sees as stimulated by the infinite possibilities for producing and selling grain and, particularly, oil that were created by the *pax romana* and the immense, Mediterranean-wide market which it engendered.⁸⁵ On the one hand, Roman taxation would have created a need to grow a surplus, either to pay in kind or to sell for cash taxation.⁸⁶ On the other, by the second and third centuries AD individuals such as the *conductor* of the Fundus Aufidianus, or T. Flavius Secundus of Cillium, whose epitaphs detail the large number of trees they planted,⁸⁷ could take advantage of the opportunities provided by the market by investing in the

⁸⁴ R. Bruce Hitchner, 'The Kasserine Archaeological Survey, 1982–1986', *Antiquités africaines*, xxiv (1988); R. Bruce Hitchner, 'The Kasserine Archaeological Survey, 1987', *Antiquités africaines*, xxvi (1990).

⁸⁵ David J. Mattingly, 'Africa: A Landscape of Opportunity?', in Mattingly (ed.), *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism*. However, for his strictures on the effects of this on the local community, see *ibid.*, 129.

⁸⁶ For the effects of tax pressure, see K. Hopkins, 'Taxes and Trade in the Roman Empire, 200 BC–AD 400', *Jl Roman Studies*, lxx (1980), a position he largely restated in 'Rents, Taxes, Trade and the City of Rome', in Elio Lo Cascio (ed.), *Mercati permanenti e mercati periodici nel mondo romano: atti degli Incontri capresi di storia dell'economia antica, Capri, 13–15 ottobre 1997* (Bari, 2000).

⁸⁷ For the 'Fundus Aufidianus', see Peyras, 'Le *Fundus aufidianus*', and *Année épigraphique* (1975), 833; for T. Flavius Secundus, see *CIL* VIII, 212, 213.

improvements needed for intensive agriculture. Irrigation systems, largely indigenous in origin, could be harnessed to arboriculture and market gardening, while the insatiable desire for grain at Rome created an infrastructure that favoured trade in other commodities, from olive oil to pottery. As the market extended, we may easily imagine that the earlier elites, both Punic and African, took full advantage of the situation. But there are also figures like the 'harvester of Mactar' known from another epitaph, who bragged that he managed to accumulate enough as a migrant labourer to acquire an estate, ending his life as a decurion and censor at Mactar.⁸⁸ Like him, many individuals with humble origins may have managed to acquire property, build a farm and pass on the estate to their families. How many of these Horatio Alger stories could be told in Roman Africa remains a mystery.

Where does that leave the villages of the previous period? What we seem to see happening there is a gradual shift from commonly held property towards the individual accumulation of landed property. As Peyras has shown, municipal status for these towns came late, if at all. In fact, it is hardly surprising that the first appearance of individual patrons and municipal promotion coincides with the development of rural estates at the end of the second century. In some cases we can even catch a glimpse of the transition from the collective behaviour of the group to acts of individual euergetism: the erection of a statue to a patron by the Afri and the *cives Romani* of Sua is a case in point.⁸⁹ Exactly how any individual moved from the collective holdings of his family to a private estate is something we cannot know about, although individual grants, marriage to an heir of someone with a grant, straightforward appropriation of collective property and purchase with money earned from military service are all possibilities.

A different picture of the passage from the collective clan territories of the villages to individual ownership is provided by the great estates, many of which were senatorial and imperial. On the imperial estates which occupied large areas of the

⁸⁸ *CIL* VIII, 11824.

⁸⁹ *CIL* VIII, 25850 = *ILS* 6776. See Christine Hamdoune, 'Un aspect particulier des relations entre les Romains et les *gentes*: le patronat', *Antiquités africaines*, xxxvii (2001).

Roman province from an early date, the imperial administration replaced directly that of Carthage or the Numidian kings, acting as an 'upper level' of direct ownership which superseded and conditioned the earlier village territories. Exhaustively studied, the imperial estates of the Mejerda with the *lex Manciana* and *lex Hadriana*⁹⁰ show the relationships between the *coloni* of these estates, who probably continued to live in their original villages, and the property of the emperor. The Mancian law specified that tenure over individual parcels could be acquired by peasants who planted uncultivated land with olives or vines: these are known as 'Mancian' tenures, and seem to have been unique to North Africa. These properties were made alienable by sale or inheritance by the *lex Hadriana*, while tenants were at all times encouraged to invest in the development of the estates by the grant of rights of possession over the trees which they planted. After the rent-free period for new plantations they still had to pay a proportion of the crop to the *conductor*, who was responsible for the marketing of the imperial share of the crop. The peasants themselves would have sold any remaining surplus on the local periodic market,⁹¹ or in the towns, where they would have bought anything they could not produce themselves. It should be noted that these markets are in themselves evidence of the gradual untying of the kinship networks, in which consumption would have been entirely outside the realm of the market.

Outside the area of the great estates of the Mejerda valley we can imagine that similar processes were at work, for the amount of land under direct imperial control was initially vast, including, perhaps, much of southern Numidia.⁹² Here the existing settlement was more limited, and, south of Cirta and west of

⁹⁰ For a comprehensive study of these with previous bibliography, see Dennis P. Kehoe, *The Economics of Agriculture on Roman Imperial Estates in North Africa* (Göttingen, 1988).

⁹¹ On periodic markets, see Brent D. Shaw, 'Rural Markets in North Africa and the Political Economy of the Roman Empire', *Antiquités africaines*, xvii (1981), who points out how closely they are integrated into the general taxation system (pp. 59 ff.).

⁹² E. W. B. Fentress, *Numidia and the Roman Army: Social, Military and Economic Aspects of the Frontier Zone* (BAR, internat. ser., liii, Oxford, 1979), 134 ff., developed by François Jacques, 'Propriétés impériales et cités en Numidie méridionale', *Cahiers du Centre G. Glotz*, iii (1992).

Theveste, cities were apparently all but absent.⁹³ It is likely that in the absence of developed systems of private property the land passed directly into imperial hands, to be dispersed at a later date as veteran settlements or land grants.

As long as peasants were in short supply their conditions were not particularly arduous. The Mancian system, by encouraging the plantation of new tree crops, created an increasing surplus of olive oil, reflected in the wide distribution of African oil amphorae from the second century onwards, and a category of small *possessores* whose own holdings linked them to the estates but drew them away from any property which might have been held in common by a kinship group. The field surveys point increasingly to the loosening of the strength of tribal groups, showing the gradual development of independent peasant farmsteads both in the areas settled from Punic times and in the more marginal lands of the pre-desert, where intensive labour on irrigation was required to make farming possible.⁹⁴ The great boom in settlement in the pre-desert areas such as Kasserine dates from the third and fourth centuries rather than from the second, showing a gradual spread by individual farmers onto more marginal areas, away from the earlier centres of tribal concentration.⁹⁵

The Market and its Discontents

This sort of 'soft' transformation of the economy, intensified by the need to raise taxes on the one hand and the opportunities of the market on the other, leaves aside many factors that

⁹³ An exception might be the settlement at Ichoukane, with elaborate defensive walls and visible streets, situated a few kilometres to the south of Timgad: Elizabeth Fentress, map sheet 'Numidia', in Talbert (ed.), *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World*.

⁹⁴ However, sporadic references to tribal groups inside the Roman province continue into the late empire: there is no doubt that tribal identification continued to function at some level. For a similar dualism in Roman Spain, and modern comparisons, see Mary Downs, 'Refiguring Colonial Categories on the Roman Frontier in Southern Spain', in Elizabeth Fentress (ed.), *Romanization and the City: Creation, Transformations, and Failures* (Jl Roman Archaeol., suppl. ser., xxxviii, Portsmouth, RI, 2000).

⁹⁵ For a comparison of the chronology of settlement in the areas covered by modern survey, see Elizabeth Fentress *et al.*, 'Accounting for ARS: Fineware and Sites in Sicily and Africa', in Susan E. Alcock and John F. Cherry (eds.), *Side-by-Side Survey: Comparative Regional Studies in the Mediterranean World* (Oxford, 2004).

nuance the rosy picture of happy and industrious peasants moving onto their farms and into the municipal elite of their local towns, while the towns themselves were changing from the fortified villages of the previous period into prosperous civic centres ornamented with appropriate public buildings. The expropriation of land for transfer to the new, immigrant, settlers can hardly have been painless, and is likely to have caused lasting enmity between the new settlers and the villages. The intromission into the towns of veterans, or other groups of Roman citizens, who sometimes had an entirely separate administration (the *pagi civium romanorum*), must have had serious effects on their social structures, and the co-operation between newcomers and tribal groups that we see in the case of the Afri at Sua must have been more the exception than the rule. This was true at the level of the cities as well as at that of the villages. At Thugga and other sites we find the indigenous community (the *civitas*) flanked by Roman citizens, each with quite different rights. The difference in juridical status must have been a long-running grievance, for the members of the *civitas* did not achieve Roman citizenship until the reign of Septimius Severus. In the context of the much smaller town of Chiniava, the *oppidum civium romanorum* will have been even more unwelcome.⁹⁶

Occasionally these expropriations, or the surveys and centuriation that preceded them, provoked outright revolt, as was the case with the Musulamii in AD 17–24,⁹⁷ joined by the Gaetulians and the Cinithians from the coast near Gigthis — certainly an established town at that date. Led by Tacfarinas, a veteran of the Roman auxilia, the rebels demanded a land grant (*sedes* and *concessio agrorum*), showing the degree to which they felt threatened by the encroachments of large private estates in the area of their settlements. It should be noted that Tacfarinas' service in the Roman army had already removed him from the sphere of the village and pulled him into that of the market, at least for his military service. He thus gives us an example of the disjunction between an experience in the Roman army and that of a tribal leader. He fought, and negotiated, from the Roman point of view, rather than from that of an oppressed and savage tribesman whose migration route was

⁹⁶ Pliny, *HN*, v. 29.

⁹⁷ Tacitus, *Annales*, II. 52; III. 20–1, 73–4; IV. 23.

endangered.⁹⁸ The remark of the fifth-century historian Orosius that ‘Musulamios et Gaetulos latius vagantes Cossus dux Caesaris artatis finibus cohercuit atque a Romanis limitibus abstinere metu conpulit’⁹⁹ suggests rather that they were simply being pushed off territory appropriated by Rome. The demands of the Musulamii were finally accepted two generations after the revolt, when Trajanic boundary stones delimited a very large area reserved for them around Theveste.¹⁰⁰ At this time, *latifundia* in private ownership were already established in the area, and the *limitatio* itself would constitute a legitimization of an expropriation that had already taken place, although placing a limit on further expropriation. This creation of a tribal reservation must be seen in the context of the survey and organization of the whole of the Tebessa mountains, begun with the deduction of veteran settlements to the towns of Madauros and Ammaedara, the latter the site of an earlier army camp.

The traditional mixed economies of the villages were also probable victims of the new regime. As taxation and the market brought increasing amounts of land into intensive cultivation, common pasture, particularly in the valley bottoms, disappeared. One of the most significant economic shifts can be seen in the move towards intensive wheat and olive cultivation for the Mediterranean market. As these cultures intensified, the pastoral element of the economy was transformed as well, as some groups moved towards specialized nomadic pastoralism.¹⁰¹ Far from settling the pastoralists, the intensive nature of the agriculture of the Roman period may have driven them further afield, towards a more intensive approach to stock-raising, itself closely linked to

⁹⁸ For the older view, see T. R. S. Broughton, *The Romanization of Africa Proconsularis* (Baltimore, 1929), 89; *contra* Brent D. Shaw, ‘Fear and Loathing, the Nomad Menace and Roman Africa’, in Colin M. Wells (ed.), *L’Afrique romaine/Roman Africa* (Ottawa, 1982).

⁹⁹ ‘Cossus, the emperor’s commander, confined the far-ranging Musulamii and Gaetuli with narrow boundaries and compelled them by fear to stay away from the Roman boundaries’ (Orosius, *Historium adversum paganos*, vi. 21. 18). Orosius’ characterization of the tribes is of course a topos used several centuries after the fact, and tells us nothing about the real economic conditions of the tribes themselves.

¹⁰⁰ For a map of these, see Fentress, *Numidia and the Roman Army*, 63, 72–7; Paul-Albert Février, *Approches du Maghreb romain: pouvoirs, différences et conflits*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1989–90), ii, 42.

¹⁰¹ Argued at greater length in Fentress, *Numidia and the Roman Army*, 183 ff., and in Hitchner, ‘Image and Reality’, who presents evidence for the substantial investment by Roman landowners in stock-raising in the high steppe, and for stock-yards outside Thelepte.

the market for woollen goods.¹⁰² In time, these fully nomadic groups would appear as the sting in the tail of Africa's Romanization, powerful elements created by the intensification inherent in the Roman occupation, but beyond their direct control.

Even within areas in which expropriation was not a major issue, the agrarian regime which tended to transform collectively held land into individual property created at the same time the sort of rural proletariat that the harvester of Mactar and his *turma* (work gang) represent. For each of the members of this group that succeeded, we can imagine many more that lived on the edge of society in extreme poverty, a reserve of cheap labour detached from the embedded exchange of the kin groups that protected their weaker members during bad years or after unexpected disasters. As the population grew, the little territories of the villages will have proved incapable of sustaining their people, causing more and more of their inhabitants to join the army or seek employment on the great estates or in the towns. The army, like the towns, would have given another frame of reference to the individual, outside his tribal and family loyalties. Land itself may have changed its significance. Bourdieu writes of the transformation of land into a commodity in the colonial period:

Or cette terre, on la voit se rétrécir au moment où l'on en découvre le prix. Aux anciennes valeurs de prestige et d'honneur, se substitue la valeur monétaire, impersonnelle et abstraite. Dans ce monde renversé, chacun s'adapte comme il peut, ou succombe: la tentation de convertir le lopin misérable en monnaie et en pouvoir d'achat est forte, et ceux qui lui cèdent vont grossir le prolétariat rural, déraciné et désorienté. Les plus habiles usent des techniques juridiques pour bâtir leur fortune ou constituer de grands domaines.¹⁰³

[Now, this [inherited] land seems to shrink from the moment one discovers its price. Monetary value, impersonal and abstract, takes the place of the former values of prestige and honour. In this world turned upside down everyone adapts as best they can, or succumbs. The temptation to convert the miserable parcels into cash and buying-power is strong. Those who give in to it swell the ranks of the rural proletariat, rootless and disoriented. The most able use the law to make their fortunes or to found great estates.]

Without wishing to take the anachronism too literally, it would be fair to argue that something of the same alienation followed the Romanization of the economy: the replacement of traditional embedded exchange networks with the large-scale

¹⁰² Thus the customs tariff of Zarai: *CIL VIII*, 4508.

¹⁰³ Bourdieu, *Sociologie de l'Algérie*, 119.

markets of the empire, and traditional systems of military and social prestige with the transparent, but socially impoverished, criterion of wealth. If we compare the African cities of, say, the fourth century AD with those of the first century BC there can be little doubt that many more people lived far more comfortably under Rome. That there was some collateral damage is equally obvious. As Lepelley has noted, the price paid by the peasants for the opulence of the cities was a high one.¹⁰⁴

To what extent the entry of the rural communities into the market and the dislocations that ensued were the direct result of the Roman appropriation of North Africa, and hence a form of 'Romanization', is of course open to question. As we have seen, Africa's urbanization had already been under way for at least a couple of centuries, and was accompanied by the capillary penetration of the Mediterranean market economy both through taxes and through trade (although of course the latter was already dominated by Rome, at least in the western Mediterranean). But to claim that Rome made no essential changes to the process, or provided only an apparent cultural veneer, is simplistic. The creation of the Augustan colonies, the intromission of consistent numbers of colonists in many of the indigenous communities, the expropriation of a large — if unquantifiable — amount of land, the application of Roman law, and the demarcation of the Roman cadastral arrangements, all accelerated the process. To the economic penetration of the market caused by taxation and trade were added the political structures of Roman government, with all land controlled, eventually, by the *municipia*. Roman rule transformed a loosely bonded and heterogeneous landscape and its people into a remarkably uniform series of towns, whose urban furniture was as predictable as their social structures. Berber languages all but disappeared in the process: there is no trace of Libyan epigraphy after the third century. The mechanisms of these transformations were complex, but hardly dependent on the choices of the local elites alone.

The Preconditions of Identity

The process of Romanization is perceived here as a progressive disembedding of the economy and, eventually, the individual.

¹⁰⁴ Claude Lepelley, *Les Cités de l'Afrique romaine au Bas-Empire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1979–81), i, 411.

The loss of reciprocity within the village was for many made up for by the growth of the market outside it. Control of the market was a route to power, and, eventually, to the creation of class structures within the community. As family and clan ties loosened, the individual was more able to choose to change his dress, name and language. The process was probably less than uniform within any given family: Berber women are today far more likely than men to speak a Berber language (Tamazight) or to frequent local shrines, while we can see numerous instances of the conservation of indigenous names for the woman of the family (Augustine's mother Monica is a case in point).¹⁰⁵ Indeed, as Mary Downs has argued, any individual could probably play more than one role, relating to his fellow tribesmen according to traditional usage and to Roman neighbours according to Roman usage.¹⁰⁶ The pull of the latter would eventually entail displacement from the former: we can see this process at work in the increasing dispersion of settlement in the countryside, the new farms shaking loose from the older villages, while the villages themselves were transformed into cities, with their own more complex hierarchies.

The concept of the embedded economy is, of course, that of Polanyi, and is best known to Roman historians through the work of Moses Finley, who used it extensively in his description of the ancient economy.¹⁰⁷ Bashing Finley's primitivism has been a cottage industry for archaeologists for the last quarter-century,¹⁰⁸ especially as regards Rome, and by now few of us

¹⁰⁵ Brett and Fentress, *Berbers*, 166.

¹⁰⁶ Downs, 'Refiguring Colonial Categories on the Roman Frontier in Southern Spain'.

¹⁰⁷ See K. Polanyi, 'The Economy as Instituted Process', in Polanyi, Arensberg and Pearson (eds.), *Trade and Market in the Early Empires*, and K. Polanyi, *The Livelihood of Man*, ed. Harry W. Pearson (New York, 1977), and subsequently M. Granovetter, 'Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness', *Amer. J. Sociol.*, xci (1985). For the application of the concept to the ancient economy, see M. I. Finley, *The Ancient Economy*, updated edn (Berkeley, 1999), and Ian Morris's foreword, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ For example Andrea Carandini, 'Columella's Vineyard and the Rationality of the Roman Economy', *Opus*, ii (1983); most recently Andrew Wilson, 'Urban Production in the Roman World: The View from North Africa', *Papers of the British School at Rome*, lxx (2002). For (more muted) criticism from historians, see Dominic Rathbone, *Economic Rationalism and Rural Society in Third-Century AD Egypt: The Heroninos Archive and the Appianus Estate* (Cambridge, 1991); Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford, 2000), 105–22.

have any doubt about the essential commercial modernity of the Mediterranean economy under the Empire: indeed, globalization has replaced primitivism as the definition of choice for the economic processes attendant on Roman imperialism.¹⁰⁹ However, we tend to forget that most of the economies and peoples with whom the empire came into contact were initially in large part embedded, and that the process of disembedding was social as well as economic. This would have been as true for Britain and Gaul as it was in North Africa. Where the process was already well under way, as in the cities of the coast, Romanization might indeed be a question of selected identity, of language and style, the paradigm reduced to a fashion statement. Elsewhere, the economic component was far more important in determining an individual's response to the new world of the Roman Empire.

In choosing to examine the economic and social effects of the Roman conquest of North Africa rather than the cultural changes brought about by the empire I have, in a sense, avoided what is currently understood as the central issue of Romanization: acculturation. Such an approach may appear prosaic, concentrating on changes in law and economic forms and leaving aside questions of identity and representation along with almost all of material culture. But such an analysis is a necessary precondition to understanding the choices made by all the members of the society, however we wish to envisage them — whether we see the 'natives' as victimized peasants or opportunistic elites, or perceive the Romans as rapacious colonizers or worthy and well-meaning administrators. The ability of Berber society to adapt to changing circumstances while retaining a solid core of traditional cultural forms has been shown many times in its history — not least in its conversion to Islam,¹¹⁰ or in the bi- and trilingualism as common today as it was in the Roman period. But I hope to have shown that it is worth returning to an economic evaluation of the effects of imperialism in order to understand its cultural consequences.

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¹⁰⁹ For example R. Bruce Hitchner, *The First Globalization: The Roman Empire and its Legacy in the Twenty-First Century*, forthcoming.

¹¹⁰ See Brett and Fentress, *Berbers*, 81–119.