

ARCHÆOLOGICAL AND EPIGRAPHIC NOTES ON
PALESTINE.

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25. *Platanos and Platanê*.—Polybius,¹ and later Josephus, independently tell us of a locality in Phœnicia which they call *Platanos* and *Platanê* respectively, whose identity and site no one has yet succeeded in determining; the only hint that results from their data is that it should be found in the neighbourhood of Sidon and to the north of it. In the first place, let us examine the facts of the problem, which, although they have been discussed several times,² have not yet received a solution, and let us begin with those which Josephus³ furnishes. They relate to one of the most tragic episodes in Jewish history. Herod, after he had executed Mariamne his wife, vented his hatred upon his two sons Alexander and Aristobulus. With the approval of Augustus he brought them before a high court of justice, constituted *ad hoc* at Beirût, under the auspices of the Roman authorities of Syria. It was a sinister comedy. Herod himself brought the charge, demanding capital punishment, and the two unfortunate princes were condemned without even being heard. Their father, who had brought them prisoners with him, left them under guard in a village of the Sidonians named *Platanê*, and near to the city,⁴ in case their presence was required. But this was not the case. Immediately after the sentence, Herod, after conveying them to Tyre and Cæsarea, finished by having them strangled in Samaria in 6 A.D.

It follows from this that the village of *Platanê* belonged to Sidonian territory, and ought probably to be found in the direction of Beirût, consequently north of Sidon, since in the phrase used by Josephus the word *πόλις* seems rather to refer to the first of these two places—Sidon only figures as an ethnic. We shall now see that the second information, that furnished by Polybius, agrees

¹ I can only recall in passing the mention of our *Platanos* by Stephen of Byzantium; it is evidently borrowed from the narrative of Polybius.

² See, among others, Robinson, *Palästina*, iii, pp. 713-715.

³ *Antiq.*, xvi, 11; *Bell. Jud.*, i, 27.

⁴ Ἐν κώμῃ τινι Σιδωνίων . . . Πλατάνῃ καλουμένῃ πλησίον τῆς πόλεως.

with this indication and fixes it with more precision. It is necessary for us now to go back more than two centuries.

The account of the campaign undertaken in 219-218 B.C. by Antiochus III against Ptolemy IV, master of the greater part of Phœnicia, is given in detail by Polybius (v, 68-70). Antiochus, operating both on land and sea, turned first to Marathus (Amrit), where the men of Arados rallied to his cause, having forgotten—thanks to his intervention—their ancient differences. Thence he came down south along the coast, having, as the narrative shows, Sidon as his aim. He approached the hostile territory from the side of *Theou Prosôpon* (Râs esh-Shakka), turning towards Beirût. Proceeding, he seized Botrys (Batrûn), after having burned Kalamos (Kalamûn) and Trieres (Enfeh).¹ His generals Nikarchos and Theodotos were sent ahead to occupy the defiles of the River Lykos (Nahr el-Kelb), which empties itself into the Mediterranean a little to the north of Beirût. Polybius does not say, however, that Antiochus took this town; on the other hand, it does not appear to have been in his power already. Perhaps he left it on one side in his hasty march. We see the king, in fact, at the head of his troops and convoyed by his fleet, which, under the command of the admiral Diognêtos, flanked his movements, pushing forward to the banks of the River Damouras (the Tamyras of Strabo), the Nahr ed-Dâmûr, which enters the sea to the south of Beirût, and also marks the northern limit of the Sidonian territory. Having arrived here, he pitched his camp, then taking with him the light troops of Theodotos and Nikarchos, he threw himself forward to reconnoitre the enemy's position. There it was that Nikolaos, the Egyptian commander, master of Sidon, which was his base of operations, and supported by a powerful fleet, awaited Antiochus in order to dispute the passage. Nikolaos had resolved to defend the approaches, thus barring the road to Tyre, which for some little time had been in the hands of Antiochus. Warned of his approach, he had made all his dispositions in advance. He had divided his troops into two bodies: the one occupied the defiles near Platanos (τὸ κατὰ Πλάτανον στενὸν), the other—under his

¹ The localities, owing, perhaps, to the somewhat involved construct, are not enumerated in their proper order, but their identity is beyond doubt. Nevertheless, one is surprised that there is no mention of Tripolis, which Antiochus would necessarily encounter on his route between Marathos and Kalamos.

personal command—the environs of Porphyreôn (*τὰ περὶ Πορφυρεῶνα πλάω*). In addition, his fleet was assembled close at hand, so as to support his action. Polybius minutely describes the position where Nikolaos was intrenched. Here, he says, the lesser chain of the Lebanon comes close to the seashore, and the space is cut up again by a steep and abrupt crest, leaving only a narrow and difficult passage along the sea front.

Antiochus, having reconnoitred the places, decided to attack on the following day. He left the heavy infantry to guard the camp, under the command of Nikarchos, and divided his troops into three bodies: the first, under Theodotos, being instructed to attack and, if possible, to carry the buttress of Lebanon; the second, under Menedemôs, to attempt the passage by the crest; the third, under Diocles, to operate along the sea front. Antiochus, with his guard, placed himself in the centre, in order to conduct operations and to proceed where needed. The two hostile fleets drew near to the land, and prepared to co-operate in the action. When the signal was given, they engaged all along the line. In spite of the resistance offered by Nikolaos, who had the advantage of the ground, Theodotos, on the extreme left, succeeded in dislodging the enemy entrenched upon the spur of Lebanon, and from this dominating position overwhelmed the Egyptians, who fled with a loss of 2,000 killed and as many wounded. The remains of the Egyptian army reoccupied Sidon, and the fleet, seeing that the day was lost, retired. Antiochus then pursued his march and camped under the walls of Sidon, but, feeling that his forces were insufficient, he did not attempt to besiege it, and pursued his way into the interior in the direction of Lake Tiberias. With his subsequent movements we need not trouble ourselves.

There can scarcely be any doubt but that the Platanos of Polybius and the Platanê of Josephus are the same. The general position and the identity of the names (differing only in the termination) is sufficient proof. We have seen that the Sidonian Platanê ought to lie north of Sidon, by the side of Beirût, and the same conclusion as regards Platanos appears with more clearness in the account of Polybius. It is evident that the strategic position occupied by Nikolaos commanded the approach to Sidon from the north, and covered it against the attack of Antiochus on the banks of the Dâmûr. Accordingly, Platanos (Platanê) must be sought between the mouth of the Nahr Dâmûr and Şaida. But the

question can be handled more closely when we view the district in the light of the precise details with which Polybius has furnished us. Nikolaos, as we have seen, had also occupied a second strategic point in the neighbourhood of Porphyreôn, and, as has long been recognised,¹ the place, mentioned also in the Periplus of the pseudo-Seylax and in the Itinerary of the Bordeaux Pilgrim, ought to be placed towards Jiyeh and Khân en-Neby Yûnus, upon the coast to the south of the mouth of the Dâmûr. Leaving this locality, the mountainous range of Kharrûb, or Kharnûb, comes close to the sea, leaving only a very narrow strip, which the road follows to the south in the direction of Sidon, and here and there is cut into buttresses. This pass, bordered on the west by the mountain, on the east by the sea, stretches southwards to the mouth of the Nahr el-'Awali, after which opens the relatively large plain extending to Sidon. This is the pass where Nikolaos took up his position in his attempt to stop the march of Antiochus. He had occupied the northern entrance towards Porphyreôn, and another point which Polybius calls the defiles of Platanos.

Robinson rather vaguely supposes that Platanos was a small fortress commanding this entrance, but there is no name or site in the district which would meet this conjecture. Menke, in his *Bibel-atlas*, adopts this view and exaggerates it. He does not hesitate to mark the names *Platanum* (f. iv) and *Platane* (f. v.) at the very mouth of the Dâmûr upon the southern bank—an arbitrary hypothesis which has nothing to justify it. Personally, I believe that Platanos was further from Porphyreôn than is generally supposed, and this seems to follow from a careful reading of the statements of Polybius. Nikolaos had disposed his troops in two bodies, of which one was to occupy the entrance of the pass towards Porphyreôn on the north, the other the outlet at the south towards Platanos. He himself had taken the command of the force which, as it defended the northern entrance, was exposed to the first hostile attack. We have seen how the enemy succeeded in carrying this position and in forcing the passage. This success and the panic that followed among the Egyptians rendered useless the precaution he had taken to guard the outlet of the defile. If this view is just, Platanos must be sought for far from Porphyreôn, towards the mouth of the Nahr el-'Awali.

¹ Pococke, *Description of the East*, II, pp. 89 *sqq.*; Robinson, *l.c.*

This being granted, it only remains to see if we can find in these quarters a locality whose name corresponds to *Platanos*. But what is this name? Obviously it is no Hellenic transcription of any Semitic name. Πλάτανος is purely Greek, denoting platane, a feminine noun which perhaps explains the hybrid formation Πλατάνη which Josephus may have found in popular use. It can only be, therefore, a translation of one of the Semitic names of the plane-tree. The case is similar with *Porphyreôn*, which, though Greek, doubtless conceals some Semitic name for purple.¹

If the required name has been preserved, two hypotheses are possible: either it appears in the Arabic form, *dulb*,² which is the present name of the plane-tree, or it is in the form ‘*armōn*,³ which is the Hebrew, and probably also the Phœnician, name of this tree. In the latter eventuality, the primitive form may have been more or less altered in accordance with the custom of vulgar Arabic phonetics.

Let us first of all dismiss one specious identification. To the immediate east-south-east of *Şaida* is ‘*Ain el-Dilb*,⁴ “spring of the

¹ Whether Greek or Semitic, the name *Porphyreôn* appears to have left no trace of its existence where one would expect to find it, unless, perhaps, it is to be recognised in the name *Barjâ*, a small village forming a group along with *El-Jiyé* and *Khân en-Neby Yûnus*. It must then be allowed that *Barjâ* is composed of *B* + *arjâ* (*arjâ*): *B*, a contraction of *Beit*, as is common in the Lebanon district, and *arjâ* = *arjâ*, for *arjawân*, أرجوان, “purple,” from the Aramaic ܐܪܓܘܢ (as on the Palmyrene Tariff inscription), i.e., Heb. אַרְגָּמָן, one of the words for “purple” in the Bible. On the connection between אַרְגָּמָן and אַרְגָּמָן, which the Rabbins found (cf. *Levy, Neuheb. W.B., s.vv.*), I should add that the name, written برجا in Robinson’s lists (iii, p. 945, col. 1), is given as برجة by the Arabian historian *Sâleh ben Yahîâ* in his *Histoire de Beyrouth et des Émirs Bohtor* (Arab. ed. P. Cheikho, pp. 72, 88).

² The vulgar pronunciation is *dilb*, *dilbé*. The word is borrowed from the Aramaic, and should have found a place in *Fränkel’s Aram. Fremdwörter in Arabischen*.

³ אַרְמֹן. The original meaning appears to be the denudation, stripping, which characterises this tree; cf. Arab. عرّم “to strike a tree of its bark.”

⁴ The name is wrongly registered under the form ‘*Ain ed-Dhaheb*, “the well of gold,” in the *Map of Palestine* ($\frac{1}{3}$ inch to the mile). The Rev. Ford, director of the American School of *Şaida*, who is well acquainted with the region, has confirmed the view. I would add that I have found ‘*Ain ed-Dilb* mentioned in an official document of the Sultan Mohammed, son of *Kelâân*, of the year 1332, cited by *Sâleh b. Yahia* (*op. cit.*, p. 208): lot ascribed to one of the emirs *Bohtor*, the sixth of ‘*Ain ed-Dilb*, dependent upon *Şaida*.

plane tree," which would very well answer the onomastic conditions. Strictly, one could locate there the Platanê of Josephus, but it is impossible if one is to take account of the topographical indications of Polybius respecting Platanos.

On the other hand, the topography of Lebanon often offers us 'Aramûn or 'Arâmûn, which marvellously fits the name but not the site. One would hardly think for one moment of seeking our Platanos either at 'Arâmûn of lower Gharb in the mountains between Beirût and the Dâmûr, or at 'Aramûn of Kesruân near Ghazîr, to the north-east of Beirût. We may rather see that these are homonyms, and a sure indication that this place-name, "The planes," must have been widespread throughout the Lebanon.¹ This, in turn, seems to be confirmed by the comparative frequency of the Arabic equivalent *Dilb, Dilbé*, in Syrian nomenclature, and it is all the more reason why, if we do not wish to be misled, we must tenaciously cling to the topographical conditions imposed upon us by the narrative in Polybius.

On referring to the district, I find to the north of Nahr el-'Awali, upon a height commanding the southern extremity of the defile, whose strategic importance we have already seen, a name which merits consideration. It is that which appears in the forms *Almoun* on the map of Lebanon surveyed by the French staff, 'Almûn on that of Van de Velde, and *Almûn* on that of the Palestine Exploration Fund.² Renan mentions it under the name *Eulmane*. The correct form is 'Eulmân³ as I am assured by Mr. Ford, who has passed a number of years at Şaida and is thoroughly acquainted with the country. I may add, moreover, that when I passed through the district in 1886 I received on the spot, and noted in my note-book,

¹ Not to speak of the rest of Syria. Cf., for example, the *Mansio Platanus* between Antioch and Latakia, according to the Antonine itinerary and that of the Bordeaux Pilgrim. The formerly accepted identification of this Platanus with the Balâtunus of Arab historians and geographers enters into the question if, with M. Hartmann (*Z.D.P.V.*, xiv, p. 180) and Van Berchem (*Rech. Archéol. en Syrie*, 1895, p. 27), we place Balâtunus at Kal'at el-Mehêlebe, to the east-south-east of Latakia. If Balâtunus is really a transcription of Πλάτανος, it must be another place of the same name.

² The spelling المون given by P. Cheikho in the map accompanying his edition of Sâleh ben Yahiâ (*op. cit.*) is faulty; the initial 'ain is certain.

³ *Mission de Phénicie*, p. 506. Moreover, he only speaks from hearsay, and it is not even certain that the archæological data given by him upon the subject would fit this locality alone and not a neighbouring.

a variant form “*Ain ‘Oûn*,” which the natives, rightly or wrongly, claim to be the primitive name. I have observed that whenever a variant of this kind appears in the traditions of the fellahîn, it is generally an indication that the place is an ancient one, even when the pretended name is not in fact the most antique. I did not attach any importance to this at the time, not having had occasion, so far, to interest myself in the problem of Platanos, and I neglected to turn aside to examine the situation of ‘Eulmân. This I now regret, and I expressly mention it for future travellers. I am inclined to believe that it is here that our Platanos must be sought. From the point of view of topography the site is entirely suitable. From the point of view of onomatology, علمان is sufficiently close to the name ‘*Armôn*, “plane tree.” The change from *-ôn* to *-ân* is common in the passage of names from Hebrew or Phœnician to vulgar Arabic; equally common also is the interchange of the liquids *r* and *l*.

It is interesting to recall that after intervening centuries this very pass, Porphyreôn–Platanos, was the scene of another military feat which, however insignificant it may have been compared with the victory of Antiochus, was a counterpart of it, and clearly shows the strategic importance of the place. In 1283, Hugues III, king of Cyprus, having disembarked at Beirût, proceeded to Tyre to have himself crowned king of Jerusalem.¹ The majority of his troops, who were to join him at Tyre by land, were attacked by the Muslims between Beirût and Sidon, and lost a great number of men and animals. The attack took place “entre Chastelet et flun d’amour en I mauvais pas,” says the chronicler of the *Gestes des Chiprois* (p. 215); “in passu Daugiæ prope Sidonem,” says Marino Sanuto.² The river “d’amour” is no other than the Nahr Dâmâr, and in the *passus Daugiæ* I do not hesitate to recognise, with Rey,³

¹ Röhricht, *Gesch. des Königreichs Jerusalem*, p. 986.

² Röhricht rightly combines the narratives of the Western chroniclers with that of Makrizî (Quatremère, *Mamlouks*, ii A, p. 63), who places the episode in the neighbourhood of Beirût, near the Gebel el-Kharrûb. Kharrûb is still the name of the district where the various localities are to be found with which we have been dealing; it is the region contained between the Rivers Dâmâr and Aualé, where the Lebanon strikes the Mediterranean and confines the coast so as to leave only the narrow passage which I have several times mentioned. The name Kharrûb comes from the abundance of carob-trees in this region (cf. Edrisi ed. Gildemeister, Arab., p. 16).

³ *Colonies Franques*, p. 519.

the name Jiyeh, which marks more clearly the site of Porphyreón and the entrance to the dangerous pass.¹ As for Chastelet, the name is too vague to permit of our fixing the site with precision, but the meaning shows that it should represent some fort or fortlet commanding a certain point in the pass, and situated, in my opinion, more to the south than to the north of El-Jiyeh.

THE IMMOVABLE EAST.

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(Continued from p. 344.)

(c) THE money-changer is our old acquaintance the *ṣarráf*,² who with his small table and wire-net-covered box full of coins of all sorts can be seen sitting at a corner of the street on a low chair in the busy thoroughfares of the bigger towns. Change in the Orient is worth more than gold, when you have workers to pay, or must do your own marketing and require small sums. The money-changers often receive from 2 to 4 per cent. for the simple act of giving you silver for your gold; even the shopkeepers retain a few coppers sometimes when changing a pound. There is no consistent rate of exchange, not even between the Turkish silver and gold. The only money which fits into other systems is the mejîdi, with its halves and quarters; but 5 mejîdis, though, strictly speaking, equal to 20 piastres, are not reckoned to be the fifth of a pound, which is 100 piastres, nor are 20 silver francs equal to a 20-franc piece in gold. In the towns money is generally called *maṣṣary* (from Egypt), or *flûs* (فلوس). Among the country people *dirâhem*, the plural form of *dirhem* (from the Greek *drachma* ?), is used; the dirhem is also the $\frac{1}{400}$ th part of an *okka* (about 2 lbs. 13 ozs.). Change is called *'umlet* or *ferâtet*. The base of the present monetary standard is the piastre, called *ghirsh asûdi*, "the lion piastre," made up of 40 paras, *bârat*, *kaṭ'at*, *fad'at*, or *maṣṣriyet*. *Fad'at* means silver, and the Hebrews similarly used the synonymous *késeph*—like the French "argent"—for money in general.

¹ The form *Daugiæ* may be explained if we proceed from a primitive form in old French: "le pas d'Algie." *Al* being phonetically equivalent to *au*, we obtain naturally: *Daugiæ* = *d'augiæ* = *d'algiæ* = *d'El-Jiyé*.

² See *Quarterly Statement*, 1903, p. 168.