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A MENTION OF *CONCILIABVLA* IN THE IMPERIAL REGULATION  
FROM LELLA DREBBLIA (*AE*, 2001, 2083), DOUGGA, TUNISIA\*.

Long abstract of the presentation<sup>1</sup>

A new edition of the imperial regulation from the Lella Drebblia site has been recently published<sup>2</sup>. Found in the vicinity north of Dougga in 1999 by M. De Vos<sup>3</sup>, this inscription of Hadrian times makes part of the Great Agrarian Inscriptions of Africa. The 6 other published until now are also known by the name of the find spot<sup>4</sup>. Two of them, Aïn Wassel and Aïn Jammala, contain, together with Lella Drebblia, the *sermo procuratorum*, which is an application document of the *Lex Hadriana de rudibus agris*. While Aïn Wassel bears a consecration to the Severian family and the announce of the setting of the inscription only followed by the *sermo procuratorum*, Aïn Jammala and Lella Drebblia present many different documents before it<sup>5</sup>. The nature of one of them has recently been discovered: this is the instructions for displaying an *epistula* in the principal *ciuitates* and *conciliabula*.

The text of the second face of Lella Drebblia (l. 6-10) goes : *et hanc epistulam | [---] utique primo quoque | tempore {RE} ciuitatibus et concilia|bulis XII primis proponi tabu|lis scriptam iubeas* (fig. 1).<sup>6</sup>



Fig. 1: Screenshot of Lella Drebblia MRM model by Hugo Pires © (face II, upper part).

\* This presentation is one of the results of the Rus Africa project, directed by Jérôme France and financed by the LabEx, Sciences archéologiques de Bordeaux.

<sup>1</sup> The full text will be published shortly.

<sup>2</sup> González Bordas, H. & J. France, “A new edition of the imperial regulation from the Lella Drebblia site near Dougga (*AE* 2001, 2083), *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 30, 2017, 407-428.

<sup>3</sup> M. de Vos (ed.), *Rus Africum, Terra aqua olio nell’Africa settentrionale. Scavo e ricognizione nei dintorni di Dougga (Alto Tell tunisino)*, Trento, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Souk el Khmis (*CIL*, VIII, 10570); Gasr Mezouar (*CIL*, VIII, 14428); Aïn Zaga (*CIL*, VIII, 14451); Aïn Wassel (*CIL*, VIII, 26416); Henchir Mettich (*CIL*, VIII, 25902); Aïn Jammala (*CIL*, VIII, 25943).

<sup>5</sup> For the organization of the different texts contained in these fragmentary inscriptions, see González Bordas, H. : “Le dossier épigraphique du *sermo procuratorum* : Aïn el Jammala et Aïn Wassel à la lumière de la nouvelle édition de Lella Drebblia”, *Cahiers du Centre Glotz* 28, 2017 (to be published).

<sup>6</sup> H. Pires, J. Fonte, L. Gonçalves-Seco, M. J. Correia Santos, O. Sousa. « Morphological Residual Model – A tool for enhancing epigraphic redings of highly eroded surfaces », *Information Technologies for Epigraphy and Cultural Heritage*, 2014. Proceedings of the First EAGLE International Conference. Sapienza Università Editrice, Roma, Itàlia, pp.133-144.

It's the first time that the word *conciliabulum* is found in the epigraphy outside Italy and also the first time after the Republic. How does this word have to be understood in the region around Dougga in Hadrian times?

In latin, *conciliabulum* can be understood with a common sense as a “meeting place” but it has also an institutional sense, which is most to be found in Italian epigraphy of the second and first century BC<sup>7</sup>, and of what we only have a general, somewhat vague idea: a place in rural context, in which edicts were displayed. Beyond this, a number of historians have arrived to different conclusions. Without being extensive, we would like to show some important examples: Schulten believed they might have possessed a territory, a council, and magistrates with very limited power<sup>8</sup>; Humbert stated that a *conciliabulum* is an administration centre and maybe the head of a *praefectura*<sup>9</sup>; more recently Sisani has pointed out that in the *conciliabula*, magistrates didn't acquire the *imperium*. Instead of it, they were merely “preferred” by their people<sup>10</sup>. Beyond the fact that there isn't a clear definition of this concept in Republican times in Italy, we have to admit the possibility of the evolution of the term in Hadrian times in North-Africa.

In the vicinities of Dougga, as can be seen in the map (fig. 2), public epigraphy shows mainly two kinds of urban places: the *pagi*, of Roman citizens belonging to the *pertica* of Carthage, and the *ciuitates* with peregrine population mainly. Some of them, as double communities, share the same or contiguous territories: *pagus et ciuitates Thuggensis, Thibarensis* etc. In our sequence, on the one hand, the word *ciuitates* is placed before the *conciliabula*, clearly showing that the first are more or equally important than the second. On the other hand, these *ciuitates* and *conciliabula* are necessarily separated places : we can hardly imagine that display can be made twice in a same double community. For these reasons, we think that it is not possible to make an equivalence between the *ciuitates* and the *conciliabula* of our sequence with the *ciuitates* and the *pagi* mentioned in the public epigraphy of the region.

<sup>7</sup> For the analysis of the references see Jacques, F. : « Statut et fonction des *conciliabula* d'après les sources latines » dans Brunaux (éd.), *Les sanctuaires celtiques et leurs rapports avec le monde méditerranéen*, Paris, 1992, 58-65.

<sup>8</sup> Schulten, A.: s. u. *conciliabulum* in: Pauly, A. F. et al., *Paulys Real Encyclopaedie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, 1893-1972, Stuttgart.

<sup>9</sup> Humbert, G.: *Municipium et ciuitas sine suffragio. L'organisation de la conquête jusqu'à la guerre sociale*. Collection de l'École française de Rome, p. 239-240.

<sup>10</sup> Sisani, S.: « Dalla *praefectura* al *municipium*: lo sviluppo delle strutture amministrative romane in area medio-italica tra il I sec. a.C. e l'età imperiale », *Atti dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Rendiconti. Classe di Scienze Morali Storiche e Filologiche*, ser. IX, vol. 21, 2010, 173-226, p. 179.

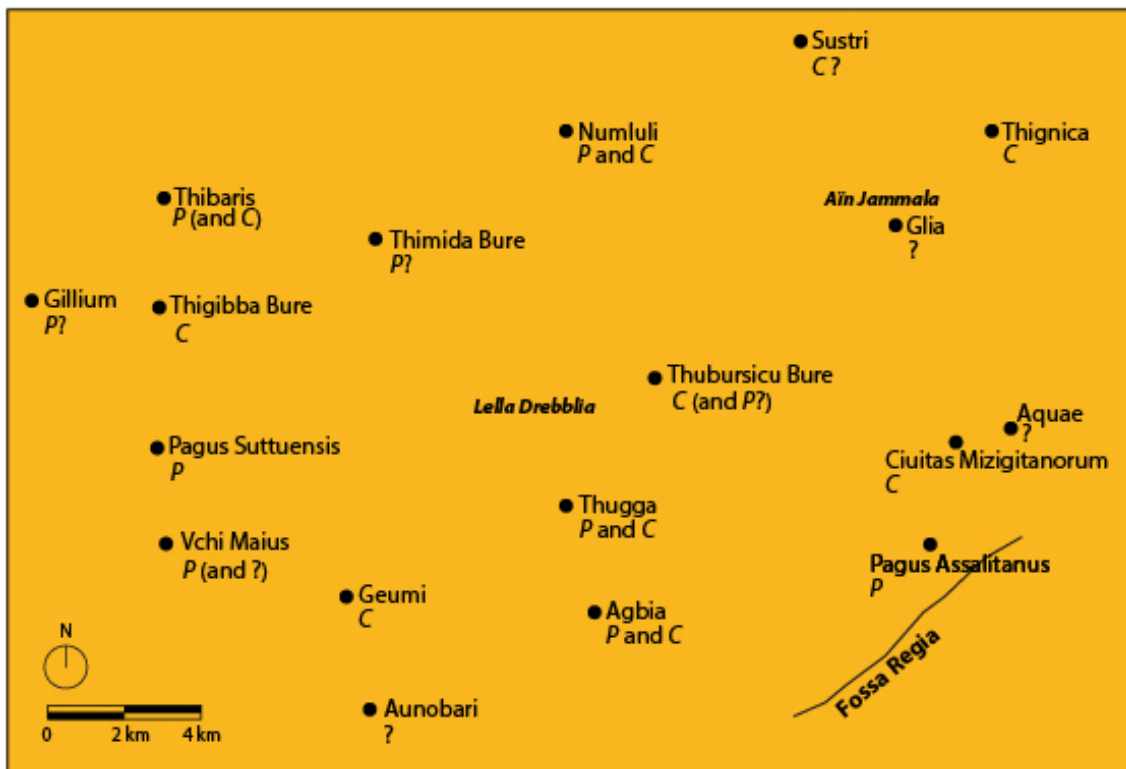


Fig. 2: *Pagi* (P) and *Ciuitates* (C) in the region around Lella Drebblia and Aïn Jammala.

Instead of it, we think that *conciabula* are related with rural settlements of the region. Very probably they formed plurifamiliar settlements in or next to the Imperial Estates. We have little evidence, as most of them must have been destroyed, remain unidentified or undiscovered. Some are to be found in Mariette de Vos surveys<sup>11</sup> : Aïn Wassel (number 25), Hr. Soussa (n. 5, 26 and 27) or the anonymous n. 192<sup>12</sup>. Thus, in the Lella Drebblia inscription, as in Aïn Jammala, the sense of *ciuitates* is not the same as the one, juridically more precise, of the public epigraphy. *Ciuitates* here have to be understood as any urban settlement in the region, be it a *pagus* or a *ciuitas* in the juridical sense, in opposition to those *conciabula* which are more rural-like settlements.

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<sup>11</sup> De Vos, M. & R. Attoui, *Rus Africum – Vol. 1, Le paysage rural antique autour de Dougga et Téboursouk*, Bari, 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Identified in the *Atlas Archéologique de la Tunisie* (Téboursouk) as number 123.