



HAL
open science

The Eastern Desert in Late Antiquity

Jean-Luc Fournet

► **To cite this version:**

Jean-Luc Fournet. The Eastern Desert in Late Antiquity. Jean-Pierre Brun. The Eastern Desert of Egypt during the Greco-Roman Period: Archaeological Reports, Collège de France, 2018, 10.4000/books.cdf.5242 . hal-01991148

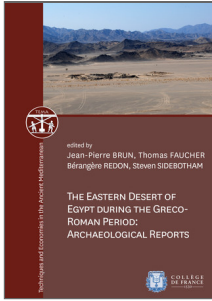
HAL Id: hal-01991148

<https://hal.science/hal-01991148>

Submitted on 23 Jan 2019

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Jean-Pierre Brun, Thomas Faucher, Bérangère Redon and Steven Sidebotham (dir.)

The Eastern Desert of Egypt during the Greco-Roman Period: Archaeological Reports

Collège de France

The Eastern Desert in Late Antiquity

Jean-Luc Fournet

DOI: 10.4000/books.cdf.5242
Publisher: Collège de France
Place of publication: Paris
Year of publication: 2018
Published on OpenEdition Books: 14 September 2018
Serie: Institut des civilisations
Electronic ISBN: 9782722604889



<http://books.openedition.org>

Brought to you by Collège de France



Electronic reference

FOURNET, Jean-Luc. *The Eastern Desert in Late Antiquity* In: *The Eastern Desert of Egypt during the Greco-Roman Period: Archaeological Reports* [online]. Paris: Collège de France, 2018 (generated 22 octobre 2018). Available on the Internet: <<http://books.openedition.org/cdf/5242>>. ISBN: 9782722604889. DOI: 10.4000/books.cdf.5242.

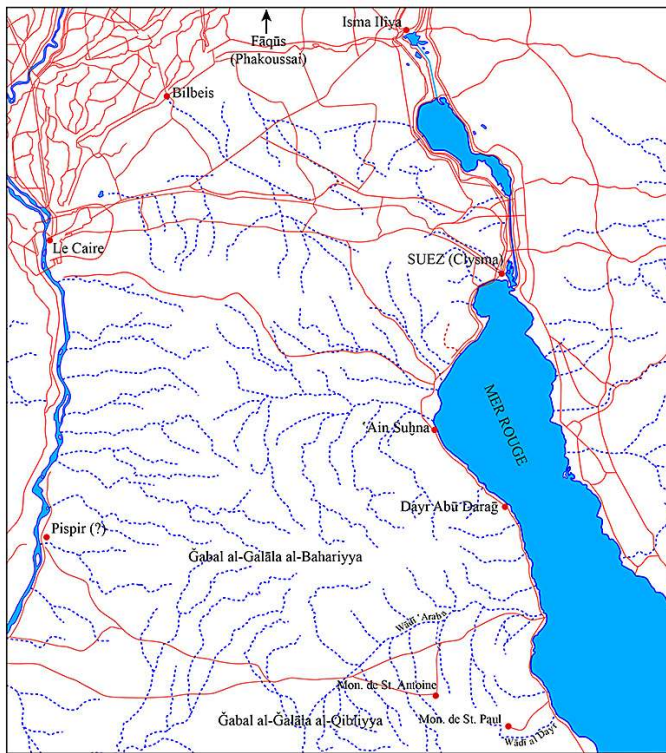
This text was automatically generated on 22 October 2018.

The Eastern Desert in Late Antiquity

Jean-Luc Fournet

- 1 During this two day conference, devoted primarily to Hellenistic and Roman periods, the organizer requested that I present a paper dealing with late antiquity and reporting on documentation relevant to the Eastern Desert during this period. Unfortunately, papyrological evidence is virtually nonexistent after the 3rd century AD in the Eastern Desert. So, I will use epigraphic and literary sources and archaeological data. The Eastern Desert is vast (Fig. 1 and 2). I shall exclude cities situated on the Nile as well as on the Red Sea coast, focusing on the desert area, strictly speaking. As a specialist of written sources, this considerably reduces the scope of my paper. I do not promise any discovery or revelation (I no longer have the chance to work in this region), but I will close this conference by reviewing the centuries that followed the great epoch of the Eastern Desert that recent archaeological excavations have brilliantly rediscovered.

Fig. 1



Map of the northern part of the Eastern Desert.

© All rights reserved

Fig. 2



Map of the southern part of the Eastern desert (after D. Meredith, *Tabula Imperii Romani*, sheet N.G. 36, "Coptos", Oxford 1958).

© All rights reserved

1. Eremitic monasticism

- 2 The desert, in late antiquity, was very closely related to monasticism, especially eremitic. This consubstantial link between space and form of Christian ascetic life is well summarized by the multiple meanings of the Greek word ὄρος which means both "desert/mountain" (in the sense of *ǧabal*) but also "monastery" —as indeed the Coptic equivalent $\tau\omicron\omicron\upsilon\gamma$.¹ Egyptian Christianity is, thus, characterized, among other things, by the installation of monastic settlements away from inhabited areas, in the arid and silent desert depths to the point that the deserts of Egypt became inhabited by monks and hermits, as a city to quote the famous words of the *Life of Anthony* attributed to Athanasius (§ 14)² and that "there were as many monks in the desert as lays in the rest of the world," as said by Abba Apollo in the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* (8, 20).³ The Eastern Desert was no exception. I will not dwell a great deal on this aspect of the history of this region because eremitic monasticism is not unique to the Eastern Desert; the Western Desert, from the margins of the Delta until Nubia, offers even more evidence of monastic desert settlements.
- 3 I will not teach you anything by saying that the most important monastic centres of the Eastern Desert are the monasteries of St. Paul (Dayr Anbā Būlā) and St. Anthony (Dayr Anbā Anṭūniyūs) (Fig. 1 and 3)⁴ and several hermitages around them. The *Life of Anthony* (§ 49) tells us that Anthony, the founder of Egyptian monasticism (c. 251-356), wanting to

escape the crowds that filled more of his hermitage at Pispir, which was easily accessible to visitors,⁵ asked Saracens who were living in the Arabian Desert to guide him deeper into the wilderness. After three days of camel travel, he stopped in a place that he found suitable for asceticism in the Wādī ‘Araba, at the foot of the Ġabal al-Ġalāla al-Qibliyya. After his death, the place attracted other hermits to the point that a monastery was built, perhaps under Julian the Apostate. In any case Sulpicius Severus visited the monastery in about AD 400 as he tells us in his *Dialogues on St. Martin “Virtues”*, I 17, 1: “I went to two monasteries (*monasteria*) of the blessed Anthony, which are still today inhabited by his disciples. I even went as far as the place where the most blessed Paul, the first hermit stayed”.⁶ This text shows that the monastery of St. Paul was already associated with that of St. Anthony. Paul would be the first hermit according to Jerome (*Life of Paul*, written in the 370s): “[...] it was then the 103rd year since the blessed Paul was leading on earth a heavenly life; Anthony, then nonagenarian, stayed in another solitude—he himself often recalled it— when it occurred to him that no one but himself had settled in the desert. But one night, while sleeping, he had the revelation that, deeper inside the desert, there was another man much better than he and that he should hasten to visit him” (§ 7).⁷ This is how Anthony went to visit his elder. It has been demonstrated that this story is apocryphal and that the monastery of St. Paul, located in the narrow Wādī al-Dayr southeast of the Wādī ‘Araba, had been founded later.⁸ Nevertheless, the monastery of St. Paul has been very popular over the years due to the popularity of this saint. However mythical the story may be, St. Paul’s Monastery has attracted many pilgrims and appears sometimes more famous than St. Anthony’s. During the 6th century, the traveller called Anonymous of Piacenza records that, from Clysma, he “went through the wilderness, to the cave of Paul, that is to say *syracumba*. The source continues to give water until now. Then again through the desert, we reached the cataracts of the Nile” (*Itinerary*, 43).⁹ The Anonymous did not visit the monastery of St. Anthony. On the other hand, the Eastern Desert was a place for tourist excursions, if we believe the author—but a journey from Wādī al-Dayr to the cataracts of the Nile, without passing through the valley, seems improbable enough to cast some doubt on the reliability of this text. It is, nonetheless, true that these monasteries, despite their remote location, attracted both ascetics and also pilgrims. Some hermits settled in the wādīs, which coming from Ġabal al-Ġalāla al-Qibliyya, open onto the Wādī ‘Araba via the Wādī Hannaba and Wādī Nitfa (or Natfa) where ‘Ayn Barda and Bi’r Baḥīt (sometimes called Abū ḥīt) have been identified as hermitages.¹⁰

Fig. 3



Entrance of the monastery of St. Anthony's.

© J.-L. Bovot

- 4 Further north, 68 km south of Suez and 28 km from 'Ayn Suḥna, another monastic site is located at Dayr Abū Daraġ ("the monastery of the father of the steps", Fig. 1); it was dedicated to St. John Climacus (a monk in the Sinai who died in 649; author of *The Holy Scale*) from whom the Arabic name is derived (*daraġ* = κλίμαξ).¹¹ Stefan Timm¹² nevertheless rejects any connection with the Sinai saint, who was unrelated to the eastern shore of the Red Sea; he prefers to identify the eponymous figure as John Kolobos or John the Small (monk living during the 4th-5th century) who left Scete for the region of Suez. The mountains surrounding the monastery are dotted with hermitages described by the Father Sicard in his *Edifying Letters*, and rediscovered by the Father Maurice Martin (Fig. 4a-b).¹³ Hermitages seem to indicate an occupation lasting from the 8th to the 10th century perhaps preceding the construction of the monastery.

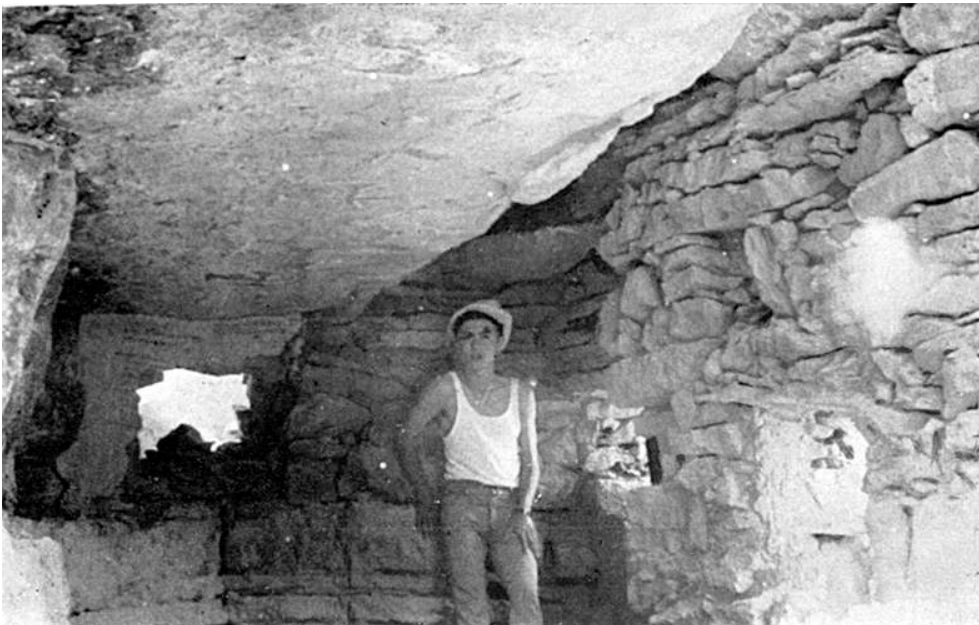
Fig. 4a



The hermitage of Dayr Abū Daraġ rediscovered by Maurice Martin: entrance (*BSAC* 18, 1965-1966, p. 139-145, pl. II).

© M. Martin

Fig. 4b



The hermitage of Dayr Abū Daraġ rediscovered by Maurice Martin: interior of the second room (*BSAC* 18, 1965-1966, p. 139-145, pl. II).

© M. Martin

- 5 The area located south of St. Anthony and St. Paul housed other monastic settlements, mainly at Mons Porphyrites (Fig. 2),¹⁴ whose monks often appear in literary sources such as Palladius' *Lausiaca History* (34, 3; 36, 1-3), John Cassian's *Institutes* (10, 24), the *Apophthegmata patrum* (N 371, coll. anon.) or John Moschus' *Pratum spirituale* (*Spiritual Meadow*, 124).¹⁵ That part of the Eastern Desert from Porphyrites to Berenike has been the subject of numerous archaeological investigations in recent years by specialists most of whom are involved in this conference.¹⁶ Therefore, a synthesis of the Late Roman/early Christian history of the region is still premature.
- 6 As said before, this new population which arrived in certain areas of the Eastern Desert following the expansion of Christianity and the vogue for asceticism in a desert environment was not a phenomenon peculiar to this area. Nevertheless, another population, nomads specific of this region, caught the attention of the ancients and, therefore, deserves comment. These nomads, who crisscrossed the Eastern Desert and sometimes settled there, did not always cohabit peacefully with the hermits as many accounts suggest. For example, an apophthegm of the Desert Fathers tells us that the monastery of St. Anthony was attacked by Saracens while under the direction of Apa Sisoës who lived there for 72 years just after the death of Antony.¹⁷

2. Saracens, Blemmyes and other travellers

- 7 The presence of non-Greco-Egyptian populations in the desert, their nomadism and their various origins, as witnessed by a wide range of ethnic group names in Greek, marked the ancients and sometimes stimulated their imagination. Understanding which groups the names may designate is not straightforward,¹⁸ often Hellenocentrism prevented any curiosity about these peoples, who were grouped in the convenient category of "barbarians".¹⁹ This generic term is a common epithet for these nomadic populations in ostraka discovered in forts on the route between Coptos and Myos Hormos, in which they are sometimes mentioned when clashes occurred with Roman soldiers.²⁰
- 8 Moreover, what we call the Eastern Desert covers different areas, which have been occupied by various ethnic groups over the millennia. Recent work by Timothy Power²¹ has shown that there were, from an ethnic point of view, several Eastern Deserts. The area north of the road to Myos Hormos was inhabited by nomads or semi-sedentary occupants of Arab origin. Since the Bronze Age, they wandered in the Sinai, the eastern Delta and the northern part of the Eastern Desert. Our sources refer to them as "Arabs" or "Saracens" —remember that Anthony made his way through the desert occupied by Saracens. In the late 4th century, Ammianus Marcellinus, XIV 4, 3, evokes the Saracens, calling them also *Arabes scenitae* ("Arabs living in tents") and saying that "among these people who are living in an area beginning with Assyria and extending as far as the Cataracts of the Nile and the frontiers of the Blemmyes, all are warriors, half-naked, wrapped up to the girdle in short coloured coats; they move with fast horses and meagre camels in opposite directions, both in peace and wartime".²² It is not certain that this description does not encompass various ethnic groups, but we note that Ammianus locates the Saracens north of the Blemmyes. At about the same time (towards AD 380), when Egeria travelled from Clysma (Suez) to Phakoussa(i) (now Fāqūs, Fig. 1), she journeyed through the "land of the Saracens".²³ The presence of these Arab tribes seems to be attested in Abū Ša'ar in late antiquity according to certain texts of the 4th-6th

century found in the church during the 1987-1993 excavations and edited by Roger Bagnall and Jenifer Sheridan:²⁴ they contain anthroponyms of Arab origin such as Salamanis (or Salaman, a name attested in *P. Nessana*) found in an inscription of the 4th-6th century,²⁵ or Slamo (a name also attested in the form Salamo, closer to the previous one) that appears in a letter of the 5th-6th century²⁶ They were probably members of a semi-sedentarised Saracen population.

- 9 South of Wādī Hammāmāt, that is to say from the route to Myos Hormos (Fig. 2), references to the Arabs become rarer. According to Timothy Power, “the regions of the Eastern Desert, broadly from the Sinai Peninsula to Wadi Hammamat, can therefore be interpreted as the ancestral territory of Arab nomads, a situation further found on the ground today with the Arab Ma’aza Bedouin of the Gallala Plateau. At the same time, it is noteworthy that neither the historically attested pattern of Blemmye raiding, nor the sites with Eastern Desert Ware extend north of Wadi Hammamat. The medieval and contemporary northern limits of the territory of the Beja tribes respect this valley, suggesting that this boundary is perhaps of some antiquity”.²⁷ Power thinks it possible that the border between the Saracens and the Blemmyes could be the axis from Coptos to Myos Hormos with the forts and towers that marked it.
- 10 Toward the south, the term Saracens scarcely appears in the sources and gives way to other populations, the most prominent of which is the Blemmyes. Here again the term Blemmyes seems to be often used in ancient sources to designate various populations of southern origin ranging from pure nomads to more sedentary groups. It is not the only group to be mentioned: our sources also record the Megabaroï, the Trog(l)odytes (that Scholia to Theocritus assimilated to Blemmyes),²⁸ not counting, of course, the No(u)badēs or Nobatai.²⁹ The sources are numerous on these populations, often partial and contradictory. We also have documents that emanate directly from them, such as the “Blemmye papyri” from Gebelein or the inscriptions found in Philae and at other sites in southern Egypt. My purpose here is not to make an assessment on the history of Blemmyes and Noubades³⁰ –this is beyond the scope of this communication– and this history is still to be written, if indeed the subject allows it, taking into account that we are dealing with nomadic populations that have left little written or archaeological traces in areas not systematically excavated. I will confine myself to what concerns the Eastern Desert, recalling that a great change in the geopolitics of these populations occurred in late antiquity. It is during the 4th century that the Blemmyes and the Noubades become increasingly visible in our sources. They appear as either rising from the desert to plunder and terrorize the population of the Nile Valley or as interlocutors of Roman-Byzantine power in diplomatic negotiations. According to Procopius, *De Bellis*, I 19, 27-37,³¹ Diocletian was the first who negotiated with them: he gave to the Noubades territories in the Nile Valley around Elephantine and paid tribute to them in order to stop their raids and to counter the thrust of the Blemmyes. He also gave the Noubades and the Blemmyes possession of the temple of Philae. This story, written in the 6th century, seemed very suspicious to moderns who imagine a contamination from what Procopius knew about Justinianic policy. It remains true that other sources attest diplomatic relations between the Blemmyes and the Romans: Eusebius of Caesarea, in his *Life of Constantine*, 4, 7, describes the Blemmyes waiting in an antechamber at Constantinople to be received by the emperor while the famous *P. Abinnaeus* 1, a Latin petition to the emperors Constantius II and Constans (340 to 342), found at Dionysias, indicates that the officer Abinnaeus was mandated to conduct Blemmye refugees to Constantinople, and then to escort them back

to their country where he spent three years. A text written in about AD 423 confirms the thrust of the Blemmyes towards the north, which explains these negotiations. This brings us back to the heart of the Eastern Desert. The Theban Olympiodorus, at once poet, diplomat, historian and explorer, apparently dwelt among them. I quote the passage as transmitted by Photios in the codex 80 of its *Library* (62a):³² “The historian said that during his trip to survey the neighbourhood of Thebes and Syene, leaders and ‘Prophets’ of the neighbouring Barbarians of Talmis, the Blemmyes, expressed the desire to meet him. They were attracted by his reputation. They took me, he said, as far as Talmis, so that I could explore even those regions which are five days from Philae, as far as a town called Prima which formerly was the first city of Thebaid on the Barbarian side. For this reason, the Romans called it ‘Prima’ in Latin, that is to say the first; even now, the city keeps that name, although it has long been owned by the Barbarians with four other cities: Phoinikon, Chiris, Thapis and Talmis”.³³ Thapis (Ṭafā) and Talmis (Kalabša) are located to the south, beyond Philae. Prima was identified with *Primis* (Qaṣr Ibrim),³⁴ but recently, the editors of the *Fontes Historiae Nubiorum* preferred to identify another city, further north Cortia (Qurta), as the first Roman settlement when entering the Dodecaschoenus.³⁵ But Phoinikon, now al-Laḳayta, is situated, on the other hand, on the road to Myos Hormos at the junction of the road leading to Berenike (Fig. 2). The site of Chiris has not yet been located, although it may have been on the road to Myos Hormos (without any convincing argument). The Blemmyes would, therefore, have occupied very advanced positions in the north. As this series of places are located in the southern part of Egypt, it seems surprising that at least one toponym concerns a northern place (especially as Phoinikon is a toponym rather unspecific since it means “palm plantation”). D. Meredith does not accept that the Phoinikon of Olympiodorus is Laḳayta³⁶ while J. Desanges identifies it with the latter.³⁷ Note that a later text confirms that the Blemmyes were at Coptos: a passage from the *Martyrium Arethae and sociorum* (*Acta Sanctorum*, Oct. X, 743 p. 743)³⁸ indicates that Justin 1st (518-527) asked Timothy, bishop of Alexandria, to push the king of Ethiopia Elesbaas to declare war on the threatening Homerites (Ḥimyarites) and to eliminate them: “His piety (= the bishop of Alexandria) wrote to King Elesbaas, who loves Christ, in these words: ‘(...) If thy holiness hesitates to do so, God, from heaven, will be angry with him and his kingdom, while we shall send from Coptos and Berenike a great army of Blemmyes and Noubades, and our contingents, making their way through your territory, will destroy everything and precipitate the Homerite and his country in the most complete annihilation and anathema’”.³⁹ This text also shows that Byzantine power used the Blemmyes and the Noubades probably as part of the *foederati* system.

- 11 From the second half of the 5th and especially during the 6th century the Blemmyes become less visible in our sources: they settled at Gebelein according to a batch of papyri from the early 6th century,⁴⁰ but they are no longer attested as looting tribes (if not in the form of a rhetorical *topos* in documentary and literary texts).⁴¹ It seems that the organization of the Noubades in Lower Nubia in the second half of the 5th century caused the marginalization of the Blemmyes and, thus, their omission from our sources.⁴²
- 12 The Blemmyes appear in the sources not only as a potential danger to be neutralized, but also as a population involved into economic activities specific to this region as we will see.

3. Exploitation of natural resources

- 13 Since the Pharaonic period, the vast mountain areas of the Eastern Desert have been known for their natural resources, mainly minerals, and have been the object of continuous exploitation since that time. There were some novelties during late antiquity.
- 14 The sources return several times to the extraction of emeralds in the Ġabal Zabara, called the Smaragdus / ἡ Σμάρραδος (Fig. 5).⁴³ During late antiquity, the Blemmyes took possession of the Smaragdus, probably after the Roman withdrawal, under Diocletian if we follow Desanges' view.⁴⁴ According to Epiphanius of Salamis in his *De Gemmis XII* (19-21) written around AD 394 "the [Blemmyes] exploit the mines [= the Smaragdus] and there are other mines in the barbarian territory of the Blemmyes; they are located in the mountains near Talmis where the barbarians are now digging to extract emeralds".⁴⁵ This text brings a new fact: that of the presence of other emerald mines near Talmis, unless the Bishop of Salamis is mistaken. Commentators usually think that Epiphanius conflated these mines near Talmis with those of Smaragdus. I would be inclined to follow H el ene Cuvigny⁴⁶ who wonders if the text of Epiphanius does not rather reflect a confusion with the St. John Island which was the richest source of peridots in the ancient world. These peridots, which were called topaz by the ancients, were extracted from the Β αζιον, later called by the Crusaders the Island of St. John and now Zabarġad, southwest of Ra's Ban as (Fig. 6).⁴⁷ It is, therefore, possible that Epiphanius might have conflated the places because the greenish reflections of this stone (Fig. 7) might be confused with emeralds (hence the name of "  meraudes du soir" given in French to this stone) and because this island has the characteristics of a mountain. Moreover, as H el ene Cuvigny remarked, when the explorer Bruce asked to visit the Smaragdus, he was taken to the Island of St. John. If this explanation is correct, we could conclude from Epiphanius' text that, in addition to the emeralds of Smaragdus, the Blemmyes also exploited the peridots of Topazos island. In the following century, Olympiodorus, in the account of his stay with the Blemmyes reported by Photius confirms that the Blemmyes exploited emeralds. In the 6th century Cosmas Indicopleustes tells us in his *Christian Topography* (XI 21) that the Blemmyes provided the "Ethiopians" (= Nubians) emeralds for the trade with India;⁴⁸ we can trust Cosmas, who was not only Egyptian but was himself a merchant.

Fig. 5



MINES OF THE SMARAGDUS.

© A. Bülow-Jacobsen

Fig. 6



SAINT JOHN ISLAND CALLED NOWADAYS ZABARĀD.

© K. Aleš

Fig. 7

**PERIDOT**

© P. GERY, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

- 15 Another major centre resource exploitation in the Eastern Desert was Mons Porphyrites (Ġabal Abū Duḥān) (Fig. 2 and 8).⁴⁹ Exploitation of the porphyry quarries peaked precisely in the 4th century because of the enthusiasm for this stone by the protobyzantine emperors. The dedicatory inscription of the Church of Melitios reflects this increasing activity since it recalled the restoration of this building by the *eparchikos* (the head of the quarrymen) and the local workers.⁵⁰ The excavations carried out at Mons Porphyrites by David Peacock and Valerie Maxfield in the 1990s have greatly improved our knowledge of this quarry. I will not insist on referring you to their work, especially as Valerie Maxfield has already reported on this topic during the conference.

Fig. 8



Porphyrites.

© A. Bülow-Jacobsen

- 16 Another novelty in this area during late antiquity was the exploitation of gold at Bi'r Umm Fawāḥir on the Coptos-Myos Hormos route (Fig. 2 and 9). Excavations by Carol Meyer and the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago revealed that mining operations restarted during the 5th century on a site previously abandoned; they were carried on during the 6th century.⁵¹ Bi'r Umm Fawāḥir was of great interest for the Byzantine state, which was always seeking gold, especially in the 6th century. It experienced gold supply problems aggravated by Justinian's reconquest policy at a time when the pressure from the Barbarians was hindering the exploitation of the Balkan mines –the other region mined at the time for its gold deposits. It is probably not a coincidence that precisely in the 6th century, in the days of Justinian, the miners' village at Bi'r Umm Fawāḥir reached its maximum extent with 250 houses and about a thousand residents (Fig. 9). It is the reason why I hypothesized that mining revival should be linked with the change of the name of the nearest city, Coptos.⁵² We know by Georges of Cyprus' *Description* (772) that Coptos was also called Justinianopolis: Κοπτὼ (l. Κοπτῶ) ἦτοι Ἰουστινιανούπολις “Coptos or Justinianopolis”.⁵³ It may seem surprising that this information is not found anywhere else, not even in the papyri. The silence of the papyrological documentation could be due to the scarcity of the Greek papyri referencing Coptos after the 5th century⁵⁴ and because the traditional name continued to compete with the new imperial one, as in other cases of imperial eponymy.⁵⁵ It is, therefore, probable that the name Justinianopolis, promoted by the authorities, was not currently used or that it soon fell into disuse in favour of the traditional name of Coptos. George of Cyprus mentions Justinianopolis precisely because its *description* is based on official records. It is tempting to think that Justinian wanted to distinguish Coptos by giving his name because this city was sending gold and prospered from the intense activity of the Bi'r Umm Fawāḥir mining site. I am aware, however, of the uncertain character of this hypothesis, until now unverifiable.

Fig. 9



The miners' village of Bi'r Umm Fawāḥir during the excavations conducted by Carol Meyer in 1999.
© H. Cowherd

- 17 I would like to conclude by saying that the Eastern Desert has experienced research activities so far unmatched for the last thirty years –as this conference testifies– and their results have improved our knowledge of this region. Investigations recently carried out or now under way as well as future publications will continue to improve our knowledge. I therefore hope that my presentation will be obsolete as soon as possible!

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bagnall R.S. and Sheridan J.A. 1994. "Greek and Latin Documents from 'Abu Sha'ar, 1990-1991". *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 31, pp. 159-168.
- Barnard H. 2007. "Additional Remarks on Blemmyes, Beja and Eastern Desert Ware". *Ägypten und Levante* 17, pp. 23-31.
- Cadell H. and Rémondon R. 1967. "Sens et emplois de τὸ ὄρος dans les documents papyrologiques". *Revue des Études Grecques* 80, pp. 343-349.
- Coquin R.-G. & Martin M. 1991. "Region of Dayr Anbā Anṭūniyūs". *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, New York, III, pp. 728-729.

- Cuvigny H. (ed.). 2006. *La route de Myos Hormos. L'armée dans le désert Oriental d'Égypte*. FIFAO 48, Cairo 2003, 2nd ed. 2006.
- Cuvigny H. 2018. "A Survey of Place-Names in the Egyptian Eastern Desert during the Principate according to the Ostraca and the Inscriptions". In *The Eastern Desert of Egypt during the Greco-Roman Period: Archaeological Reports*. J.-P. Brun, T. Faucher, B. Redon and S. Sidebotham (ed.). On line: <https://books.openedition.org/cdf/5231>.
- Desanges J. 1978. *Recherches sur l'activité des Méditerranéens aux confins de l'Afrique (VI^e siècle av. J.-C. - IV^e siècle apr. J.-C.)*. Publications de l'École française de Rome, 38, Rome.
- Desanges J. 1984. "Rome et les riverains de la mer Rouge au III^e s. de notre ère. Aperçus récents et nouveaux problèmes". *Ktèma* 9, pp. 249-260.
- Dijkstra J.H.F. 2012. "Blemmyes, Noubades and the Eastern Desert in Late Antiquity: Reassessing the Written Sources". In *The History of the Peoples of the Eastern Desert*. H. Barnard and K. Duistermaat (ed.), University of California. Cotsen Institute of Archaeology. Monograph 73, Los Angeles, pp. 238-247.
- Fournet J.-L. 1999. *Hellénisme dans l'Égypte du VI^e siècle. La bibliothèque et l'œuvre de Dioscore d'Aphrodité*. MIFAO 115, Cairo.
- Fournet J.-L. 2002. "Coptos gréco-romaine à travers ses noms". *Autour de Coptos. Actes du Colloque organisé au Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon (17-18 mars 2000)*. *Topoi*, supp. 3, pp. 47-60.
- Harrell J.A. 2014. "Discovery of the Red Sea source of Topazos (ancient gem peridot) on Zabargad Island, Egypt". In *Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual Sinkankas Symposium: Peridot and Uncommon Green Gem Minerals (April 5, 2014)*. L. Thoresen (ed.), Fallbrook, pp. 16-30.
- Harrell J.A. and Bloxam E. 2010. "Egypt's evening emeralds –Peridot mining on Zabargad Island", *Minerva* 21/6, pp. 18-22.
- Honigsmann E. 1939. *Le Synekdèmos d'Hiéroklos et l'Opuscule géographique de Georges de Chypre*. Corpus Bruxellense Historiae Byzantinae, Forma Imperii Byzantini, fasc. 1, Bruxelles.
- Ide T., Hägg T., Pierce R.H. and Török L. 1998. *Fontes Historiae Nubiorum. Textual Sources for the History of the Middle Nile Region between the Eighth Century BC and the Sixth Century AD., III: From the First to the Sixth Century AD.*, Bergen.
- Martin M. 1965-1966. "Les ermitages d'Abû Darağ". *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 18, pp. 139-145.
- Meredith D. 1973. "The Roman Remains in the Eastern Desert of Egypt". *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 39, pp. 95-106.
- Lassányi G. 2011. "On the Archaeology of the Native Population of the Eastern Desert in the First-Seventh Centuries CE.". In *Le Proche-Orient de Justinien aux Abbassides. Peuplement et dynamiques spatiales. Actes du colloque : Continuités de l'occupation entre les périodes byzantine et abbasside au Proche-Orient, VII^e-IX^e siècle, Paris, 18-20 octobre 2007*. A. Borrut, M. Debié, A. Papaconstantinou, D. Pieri and J.-P. Sodini (ed.), Bibliothèque de l'Antiquité Tardive 19, Turnhout, pp. 248-269.
- Maxfield V.A. and Peacock D.P.S. 2001. *Survey and Excavation at Mons Porphyrites 1994-1998. I. Topography & Quarries*, London.
- Meinardus O.F.A. 1965. *Christian Egypt Ancient and Modern*, Cairo.
- Meinardus O.F.A. 1989. *Monks and Monasteries of the Egyptian Deserts*, 2nd ed., Cairo.

- Meinardus O.F.A. 1991a. "Dayr Anbā Anṭūniyūs". *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, III, New York pp. 720-728.
- Meinardus O.F.A. 1991b. "Dayr Anbā Būlā". *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, III, New York pp. 741-744.
- Meyer C. 1995. "A Byzantine Gold-mining Town in the Eastern Desert: Bir Umm Fawakhir, 1992-93". *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 8, pp. 192-224.
- Meyer C., Heidorn L., Kaegi W. and Wilfong T. 2000. *Bir Umm Fawakhir Survey Project 1993: A Byzantine Gold-mining Town in Egypt*. Oriental Institute Communications 28, Chicago.
- Meyer C. 2011. *Bir Umm Fawakhir 2: Report on the 1996-1997 Survey Seasons*. Oriental Institute Communications 30, Chicago.
- Meyer C. 2014. *Bir Umm Fawakhir 3: Excavations 1999-2001 Survey Seasons*. Oriental Institute Publications 141, Chicago.
- Murray G.W. 1955. "The Christian Settlement at Qattar". *Bulletin de la Société royale de Géographie d'Égypte* 24, p. 107-114.
- Peacock, D.P.S. 1997. "Wādī Umm Diqal". In *Survey and Excavation at Mons Claudianus 1987-1993*, I. Topography & Quarries. D.P.S. Peacock and V.A. Maxfield (ed.), FIFAO 37, Cairo, pp. 151-162.
- Pierce R.H. 2012. "A Blemmye by Any Other Name... A Study in Greek Ethnography". In *The History of the Peoples of the Eastern Desert*. H. Barnard & K. Duistermaat (ed.), University of California. Cotsen Institute of Archaeology. Monograph 73, Los Angeles, pp. 227-237.
- Power T. 2011. "The Material Culture and Economic Rationale of Saracen Settlement in the Eastern Desert of Egypt". In *Le Proche-Orient de Justinien aux Abbassides. Peuplement et dynamiques spatiales. Actes du colloque : Continuités de l'occupation entre les périodes byzantine et abbasside au Proche-Orient, VII^e-IX^e siècle, Paris, 18-20 octobre 2007*. A. Borrut, M. Debié, A. Papaconstantinou, D. Pieri and J.-P. Sodini (ed.), Bibliothèque de l'Antiquité Tardive 19, Turnhout, pp. 331-344
- Power T. 2012. "You Shall Not See the Tribes of the Blemmyes or of the Saracens': On the Other 'Barbarians' of the Late Roman Eastern Desert of Egypt". In *The History of the Peoples of the Eastern Desert*. H. Barnard and K. Duistermaat (ed.), University of California. Cotsen Institute of Archaeology. Monograph 73, Los Angeles, pp. 282-297.
- Sidebotham S.E., Barnard H. and Pyke G. 2002. "Five Enigmatic Late Roman Settlements in the Eastern Desert". *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 88, pp. 187-225.
- Sidebotham S.E., Nouwens H.M., Hense A.M. and Harrell J.A. 2004. "Preliminary Report on Archaeological Fieldwork at Sikait (Eastern Desert of Egypt), and Environs: 2002-2003". *Sahara* 15, pp. 7-30.
- Sidebotham S.E., Zitterkopf R.E. and Riley J.A. 1991. "Survey of the 'Abu Sha'ar-Nile Road". *American Journal of Archaeology* 95, pp. 571-622.
- Timm St. 1984-1985. *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit. Eine Sammlung christlicher Stätten in Ägypten in arabischer Zeit, unter Ausschluss von Alexandria, Kairo, des Apa-Mena-Klosters (Der Abu Mina), der Sketis (Wādī n-Natrun) und der Sinai-Region*. Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Reihe B 41, II. Wiesbaden; III. Wiesbaden.
- Wipszycka E. 2009. *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IV^e-VIII^e siècles)*. The Journal of Juristic Papyrology Supplements 40, Warsaw.

NOTES

1. See the classic study of H. Cadell & R. Rémondon, 1967.
2. Καὶ οὕτω λοιπὸν γέγονε καὶ ἐν τοῖς ὄρεσι μοναστήρια, καὶ ἡ ἔρημος ἐπολίσθη μοναχῶν, ἐξεληθόντων ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων καὶ ἀπογραψαμένων τὴν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς πολιτείαν, ed. G.J.M. Bartelink (Sources chrétiennes 400, Paris 2004).
3. Ὅσοι γὰρ ἐνταῦθα λαοί, τοσοῦτοι ἐν ταῖς ἐρήμοις μοναχοί, ed. A.-J. Festugière, Bruxelles 1961.
4. The available sources on these two monasteries were gathered by Timm, 1987, pp. 1287-1330 ("Kloster des Apa Antonius") and pp. 1359-1373 ("Kloster des Apa Paulus (I)"). For an overview on these two monasteries, cf. Meinardus 1965, pp. 349-363, 1989, pp. 5-47 and 1991a and b.
5. On the location of Pispir, see Wipszycka 2009, pp. 258-261.
6. Sulpicius Severus, *Gallus. Dialogues sur les "Vertus" de saint Martin*, ed. J. Fontaine (Sources chrétiennes 510, Paris 2006), pp. 168-170: *Duo beati Antoni monasteria adii, quae hodieque ab eius discipulis incoluntur. Ad eum etiam locum in quo beatissimus Paulus primus eremita est deuersatus accessi.*
7. *Trois vies de moines*, A. de Vogüé, E. Martín Morales, P. Leclerc (ed.), Sources chrétiennes 508, Paris 2007, pp. 157-159: *Sed ut ad it redeam unde digressus sum, cum iam centesimo tertio decimo aetatis suae anno beatus Paulus coelestem uitam ageret in terries, et nonagenarius in alia solitudine Antonius moraretur, ut ipse adserere solebat, haec in mentem eius cogitation incidit, nullum ultra se monachorum in eremo consedissee. Atque illi per noctem quiescenti reuelatum est, esse alium interius multo se meliorem, ad quem uisendum properare deberet.*
8. See Wipszycka 2009, pp. 22 and 198-199.
9. Ed. C. Milani, *Itinerarium Antonini Placentini. Un viaggio in Terra Santa dal 560-570 d.C.*, Milan 1977, p. 222: 43.1 *Exinde uenimus per heremum ad speluncam Pauli, hoc est syracumba, qui fons usque actenus rigat. 2. Exinde iterum per heremum uenimus ad cataractas Nili; ubi ascendit aqua ad signum (recensio prior of the Rhenaugiensis [nunc Turicensis] 73).*
10. See, among others, Coquin & Martin 1991.
11. See Timm 1984, pp. 569-572.
12. *Op. cit.*, pp. 569-570.
13. Martin 1965-1966.
14. About this toponym, see below.
15. Wipszycka 2009, pp. 200-206.
16. For Mons Porphyrites, see Sidebotham, Zitterkopf and Riley 1991, p. 576; Maxfield and Peacock 2001, p. 6. Not far from this site, see also Wādī Nagat: Murray 1955; Sidebotham, Zitterkopf and Riley 1991, pp. 583-584. Close to Mons Claudianus, see Peacock 1997. See also Sidebotham, Barnard and Pyke 2002 (even if the monastic nature of these sites is far from being sure; see pp. 223-225).
17. *Apophthegmata patrum (collectio alphabetica)*, Apa Sisoês, 21 (= PG LXV, col. 401, 38).
18. Pierce 2012.
19. On the hellenocentrism, see my lectures at the Collège de France 3rd and 10th February 2016 (<http://www.college-de-france.fr/site/jean-luc-fournet/course-2016-02-03-11h00.htm> and <http://www.college-de-france.fr/site/jean-luc-fournet/course-2016-02-10-11h00.htm>).
20. See the already famous "amphore of the barbarians" found at Krokodilô and published by H. Cuvigny in *O.Krok. I n° 87*.
21. Power, 2011 and 2012.
22. *Apud has gentes, quarum exordiens initium ab Assyriis ad Nili cataractas porrigitur et confinia Blemmyarum, omnes pari sorte sunt bellatores seminudi coloratis sagulis pube tenus amicti, equorum adiumento pernicium graciliumque camelorum per diversa se raptantes, in tranquillibus vel turbidis rebus.*

23. Egeria, *Journal de voyage (Itinéraire)*, VII 1-IX 7, ed. P. Maraval, Sources chrétiennes 296, Paris 1982.
24. Bagnall and Sheridan 1994.
25. SB XX 15481.
26. SB XX 15482.
27. Power 2012, pp. 286-287.
28. *Scholia in Theocritum vetera* (ed. K. Wendel, Leipzig 1914): VII 114a, line 2: Βλέμυες ἔθνος Αἰθιοπικὸν μελανόχρουν·οἱ αὐτοὶ δὲ τοῖς Τρωγλοδύταις. For the study of these ethnics, cf. Pierce 2012.
29. Cf. Pierce 2012.
30. The sources are conveniently collected and discussed in Ide, Hägg, Pierce and Török 1998 (= *FHN III*). Among the recent literature, see: Dijkstra 2012; see also: Power 2011 and Pierce 2012. From an archaeological point of view, see: Lassányi 2011; Barnard 2007.
31. = *FHN III* 328.
32. = *FHN III* 309.
33. Ὅτι ὁ ἱστορικός φησι διάγοντος αὐτοῦ κατὰ τὰς Θήβας καὶ τὴν Σοήνην ἱστορίας ἔνεκα, ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ γενέσθαι τοὺς φυλάρχους καὶ προφήτας τῶν κατὰ τὴν Τάλμιν βαρβάρων, ἦτοι τῶν Βλεμμύων, τῆς ἐντυχίας αὐτοῦ· ἐκίνει γὰρ αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ τοῦτο ἡ φήμη. Καὶ ἔλαβόν με, φησί, μέχρι αὐτῆς τῆς Τάλμειως, ὥστε κάκείνους τοὺς χώρους ἱστορήσαι διέχοντας ἀπὸ τῶν Φιλῶν διάστημα ἡμερῶν πέντε, μέχρι πόλεως τῆς λεγομένης Πρῖμα, ἥτις τὸ παλαιὸν πρώτη πόλις τῆς Θηβαΐδος ἀπὸ τοῦ βαρβαρικοῦ ἐτύγχανε· διὸ παρὰ τῶν Ῥωμαίων Ῥωμαίᾳ φωνῆ Πρῖμα ἦτοι πρώτη ὠνομάσθη, καὶ νῦν οὕτω καλεῖται καίτοι ἐκ πολλοῦ οἰκειωθεῖσα τοῖς βαρβάροις μεθ' ἑτέρων τεσσάρων πόλεων, Φοινικῶνος, Χίριδος, Θάπιδος, Τάλμιδος, ed. R. Henry (CUF 1959).
34. Cf. Desanges 1978, p. 340.
35. *FHN III*, p. 1128.
36. Meredith 1953, p. 105.
37. Cf. Desanges 1978, p. 350, n. 263.
38. = *FHN III* 327.
39. Γεγράφηκε δὲ καὶ ἡ αὐτοῦ εὐσέβεια τῷ φιλοχρίστῳ βασιλεῖ Ἐλεσβαῶ τάδε· “(...) Εἰ γὰρ τοῦτο ὀκνήσει ποιῆσαι ἡ σὴ ὀσιότης, οὐρανόθεν μὲν ὀργίζεται αὐτῇ ὁ θεὸς καὶ τῇ αὐτῆς πολιτείᾳ· ἡμεῖς δὲ διὰ Κόπτου καὶ Βερονίκης τῶν λεγομένων Βλεμμύων καὶ Νοβάδων πλήθος στρατευμάτων ἐκπέμψαντες, παρόδῳ χρῆσάμενα τὰ στρατόπεδα ἡμῶν διὰ τῆς γῆς σου, πᾶσαν συντρίψωσι, τὸν δὲ Ὀμηρίτην καὶ τὴν χώραν αὐτοῦ εἰς τέλειον ἀφανισμόν καὶ ἀνάθεμα καταστήσωσιν”.
40. *FHN III* 331-343 (with extended bibliography).
41. Cf. Fournet 1999, p. 511.
42. Dijkstra 2012, p. 247.
43. On the ancient names and the impropriety of the modern form *Mons Smaragdus*, cf. H. Cuvigny, “La toponymie du désert Oriental sous le Haut-Empire d’après les ostraca et les inscriptions” (in this volume). See also Sidebotham, Nouwens, Hense and Harrell 2004.
44. Desanges 1984, p. 257.
45. “Corruerunt autem montis huius metalla suntque metalla alia in ipsorum barbarie Blemiyorum iuxta Telmeos in montibus constituta, quae nunc effodientes barbari smaragdos incident”, ed. O. Günther 1898 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 35, 2) = *FHN III* 305.
46. Cf. Cuvigny 2003, 2nd ed. 2006, II, p. 348, n. 143.
47. See : Cuvigny 2018; Harrell 2014, pp. 16-30; Harrell and Bloxam 2010, pp. 18-22.
48. Οὗτοι καὶ τὸν σμάραγον λίθον ἀγαπῶσι καὶ εἰς τὸν στέφανον αὐτῶν φοροῦσιν. Εἰσφέρουσι γὰρ οἱ Αἰθίοπες συναλλαγὰς ποιοῦντες μετὰ τῶν Βλεμμύων ἐν τῇ Αἰθιοπίᾳ τὸν αὐτὸν λίθον

ἕως εἰς τὴν Ἰνδίαν· καὶ αὐτοὶ τὰ καλλιστεύοντα ἀγοράζουσι, éd. W. Wolska-Conus (Sources chrétiennes 197, Paris 1973).

49. Cuvigny 2018, showed that the Latin form *Mons Porphyritès* and its Greek equivalent Πορφυρίτης Ὄρος are incorrect and that the correct forms (those used in the papyri and inscriptions) were: *Porphyritès* / Πορφυρίτης.

50. SB V 8162 = SEG XIII 604.

51. Meyer 1995, pp. 192-224. For more information, see: Meyer, Heidorn, Kaegi and Wilfong 2000; Meyer 2011; 2014.

52. Fournet 2002, pp. 57-60, which I resume here the conclusions.

53. Honigmann 1939, p. 61.

54. To the two or three examples I mentioned in 2002 (see Fournet 2002, p. 57, n. 34), now add four ostraka from Aphrodité (SB XX 14559, 4; 14563, 6; 14564, 4; 14568, 4-5 [6th century]).

55. See, for example, the case of d'Apollinopolis Parva/Dioclétianopolis: the traditional name is more used from the 4th century than the imperial name (cf. Fournet 2002, p. 55, n. 29).

AUTHOR

JEAN-LUC FOURNET

Professor at Collège de France, Chair of “Written Culture in Late Antiquity and Byzantine Papyrology”, UMR 8167