

The Yasmina necropolis at Carthage, 1992

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In the summer of 1992 the University of Georgia began excavating an early Roman necropolis located in the modern community of Yasmina. The cemetery lies in the SW quadrant of the ancient city, just outside the south gate.¹ The area was first recognized as an archaeological site in 1981 during bulldozing operations for a road which was intended to mark the boundaries of the archaeological zone. At that time the bulldozer churned up several ashlar blocks from a substantial rectangular tomb, as well as a magnificent, early 3rd-c. A.D. marble portrait statue of a charioteer.² Subsequent rescue work in the area, conducted by M. K. Annabi, revealed the foundations of the ashlar monument and four adjacent stucco tombs.³ At the conclusion of Annabi's brief campaign, the area around the stucco structures was backfilled with sand and covered with a thin concrete cap to preserve the monuments from the elements and clandestine activity. In the intervening years, although the area was given protected archaeological status, suburban development around it accelerated. As a result, the site was virtually buried beneath a huge pile of débris, and a large animal pen was established in the original cut of the bulldozer.

The location of this necropolis⁴ and the fact that the statue depicted a charioteer⁵ were of interest to the University of Georgia team which had excavated the Roman circus of Carthage from 1982 to 1990.⁶ With the generous support of A. Ennabli and the gracious cooperation of M. K. Annabi, the University of Georgia agreed to initiate a full-scale campaign in the necropolis.⁷ The new campaign began with a

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- 1 Naomi J. Norman of the University of Georgia directed the project; Anne Haeckl served as the Field Director, Roberta Tomber as the pottery specialist, and Dan Ritsema as architect. Pedar Foss, Janet Jones, Joann McDaniel and Laurette Wharton were the square supervisors; GERALYN LEDERMAN, ably assisted by Chris Gregg, was Registrar. Excavators were Greta Anderson, Trina Arpin, William Beck, Susan Carl, Leslie Flo, Maria Glod, Randy Hixenbaugh, Megen Karakelian, Larry Larsen, Chris Neighbours, Katherine Smith, Erika Thorgerson, and an excellent crew of Tunisian workmen. We are grateful to the staff and excavators for their hard work and for permission to cite their conclusions in this preliminary report.
 - 2 A brief announcement of the discovery was published later that year by M. K. Annabi, "Découverte d'un édifice et d'une sculpture près du cirque romain," *CEDAC* 4 (1981) 1, 3.
 - 3 M. K. Annabi, "Deux nécropoles au sud de la ville," in A. Ennabli (ed.), *Pour sauver Carthage: exploration et conservation de la cité punique, romaine et byzantine* (UNESCO/INAA 1992) 183-85.
 - 4 The Yasmina necropolis is located c.100 m from the S cavea of the Roman circus; it surely would have been a prominent topographical feature as people entered the city through the south gate on racing days.
 - 5 The tunic represented on the statue lacks the distinctive criss-cross lacing so characteristic of sculptural representations of Roman charioteers; but the short tunic, the thick padding at the waist, the bandage on the leg, and the whip in his left hand all attest that the figure was a member of a circus faction, and clearly an important member.
 - 6 For the circus campaign, see J. H. Humphrey (ed.), *The Circus and a Byzantine cemetery at Carthage* 1 (Ann Arbor 1988); volumes 2 and 3 are currently being prepared by the present authors. For preliminary reports, see N. J. Norman, "Excavations in the circus at Carthage," *Cahiers des études anciennes* 18 (1986) 81-100; "Recent excavations in Carthage," *Archaeological News* 15 (1990) 7-23; "The American excavations in the Roman circus at Carthage," *Old World Archaeology Newsletter* (= OWAN) 9 (1985) 23-5; "The Carthage circus excavations, 1985," OWAN 10 (1986) 18-21; "Excavation in the Circus at Carthage," *Archaeology* (May/June 1987) 46-51; "The 1987 season of the University of Georgia excavations at Carthage," OWAN 12 (1988) 18-22; "The 1990 season in the Roman circus at Carthage," OWAN 14 (1990) 16-18; "Le cirque romain" in A. Ennabli (supra n.3) 161-65; and "The lead curse tablets from the Carthage circus," with Lisa Pintozzi, forthcoming in *Archaeological News* 17 (1992).
 - 7 We would like to acknowledge the support of the Institut National d'Archéologie et d'Art (INAA) and, in particular, of Abelmajid Ennabli, Conservateur du Site de Carthage, without whose abiding spirit of cooperation this project would not have been possible. We are also grateful to M. K. Annabi who generously allowed us to copy the photographs he took while making his *sondage* and described in detail to us the results of that excavation.