



Front Cover Image: Porte de Chella à Rabat (Maroc), 1925, Georges-Louis Arland

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De Sella Necropole



from the
Descriptio Africae
by

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Edited by Hugh McElroy

Sella -ae f.	The Chellah, a monumental tomb complex (necropolis) of the Marinid Sultanate
oppidulum -ī n.	small town
Būragragum -ī n.	The Bou Regreg river, which flows into the Atlantic Ocean near Rabat, Morocco
Rōmānus -a -um	Roman
exstruō -ere -strūxī -strūctus	to build up; erect; raise
Ōceanus -ī m.	Oceanus
mīliārium (mīll-) -ī n.	a mile-stone
Rabātum -ī n.	Rabat, now the capital of Morocco
quis quid after sī nisī ne or num	anyone/thing, someone/thing
Ōceanus -ī m.	Oceanus
peragō peragere perēgī perāctum	to finish
dēleō dēlēre dēlēvī dēlētus	to destroy
haereticus, a, um	of or belonging to heretical religious doctrines, heretical (eccl. Lat.)
ēvādō ēvādere ēvāsī ēvāsus	to go out, evade
Mansor -ōris m.	The Almohad caliph Abu Yusuf Ya'qub al-Mansur
xenodochīum -i n.	a public building for the reception of strangers
palātium -ī n.	palace, royal residence
magnificus -a -um	grand, splendid, magnificent

Hōc sequūtī omnēs eiusdem familiae magnātēs, in eādem aulā sepultūram sibi dēlēgērunt. Idem ā Marīnīs factitātum lēgimus, cum illōrum adhūc flōrēret Rēspūblica. Ego eandem aulam aliquandō ingressus, trīginta ibi prōcērū sepulchra numerāvī, omniaque sēdulō epitaphia excerpsī: id autem annō ēvenit Hegirae nōningentēsīmō decimō quīntō.

Bibliography

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Vocabulary lists compiled using the [Bridge](#) Lemmatizer
Macrons added with Johan Winge's [Latin Macronizer](#)
Any errors in lemmatization or macronization are mine

magnas magnatis m.	important person; nobleman
aula –ae f.	forecourt, palace
sepultūra –ae f.	a burial, interment
dēligō –ere –lēgī –lēctus	to choose from; choose
Marīnī –ōrum	the Marinid dynasty, which ruled much of Morocco and NW Africa in the 13th-15th centuries CE
factitō (1)	to do frequently
flōreō flōrēre flōruī	to bloom, flourish
rēs publica, reī publicae f.	republic, state
trīgintā	30
procer –eris m.	a nobleman, aristocrat
numerō (1)	to count
sēdulus –a –um	careful, cautious
epitaphium –ī n.	epitaph, funerary inscription
excerpō exceperē excerpō	to select for removal, take away
excerptum	
ēveniō ēvenīre ēvenī eventus	to come out, happen
Hegira -ae f.	the <i>Hijra</i> : the migration of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE, the year from which the Muslim dating system (Lat. <i>Anno Hegirae</i>) begins
nongentēsimus –a –um	900th
decimus –a –um	10th
quīntus –a –um	5th

Sella¹

Oppidulum hoc nōn procul ā flūmine Buragragō ā Rōmānīs exstrūctum, ab Ōceanō duōbus mīliāribus, ā Rabātō autem ūnō tantum mīliārī situm est: per quod, sī quis Ōceanum adīre velit, iter sit peragendum. Iisdem quoque temporibus dēlētum est quibus, ut ante dīximus, haereticī² īferiōrēs ēvāsēre. Postea vērō Mānsor novīs illud cingī moenibus cūrāvit, ac in eō xenodochīum³ ēgregium cum palātiō magnificō exstrūxit, in quō sē⁴ eius mīlitēs ubi vidērētur recipere possent.

¹ This description of the Sella necropolis was written by Leo Africanus, who lived from the late 15th to the mid 16th century CE. He was born into a Muslim family and named al-Hasan Muhammad al-Wazzan. He converted to Christianity as an adult after being captured by Spanish privateers and brought to Rome. He took the name Johannes Leo de Medicis (from his Medici patron Pope Leo X) though in Arabic referred to himself as Yuhanna l-Asad al-Gharnati (John, the Lion of Granada).

² *haereticī* - perhaps the Barghawata Amazigh who had allied with the Sufri Kharijite rebellion

³ *xenodochīum* translates the Arabic *ribat*, which can describe short-term military lodgings or a military hospital, a Sufi lodge, or an outpost for supporting and protecting overground trade. The term underlies the name of the city of Rabat

⁴ *sē ... recipere possent* - "his soldiers could retire when they pleased"

locō (1)	to place, put
aula –ae f.	forecourt, palace
vermiculor, -ārī, ātus sum	to be full of worms, wormy
fenestra –ae f.	window
ēlēgō ēlēgāre	to bequeath away
cōstruō –ere –strūxī –	to pile together
strūctus	
iniungō –iungere –iūnxī –	to fasten, join
iūctum	
sepliō sepelīre	to bury
sepliī/sepelīvī sepultum	
marmoreus –a –um	of marble
tabula tabulae f.	plank, (game) board; painting; writing tablet
dēscrībō dēscrībēre dēscrīpsī	to describe, transcribe
dēscrīptus	
epitaphium –ī n.	epitaph, funeral speech or inscription

Amplissimum item hīc templum locāvit, in quō aulam opere vermiculātō⁵ fenestrisque undique ēlegantissimīs superbam cōstruī voluit, atque ubi sē mortī proximum vīdit, suīs⁶ iniūnxit ut corpus in eā aulā sepelīrent. Quod, ubi sīc factum esset, marmoream tabulam illī ad caput, ūnam item ad pedēs posuērunt, in quibus varia sunt dēscrīpta epitaphia.

⁵ *opus vermiculatum* here likely refers to *zellij* mosaic of Morocco's Muslim cultures rather than the Roman *opus vermiculatum* mosaics found in Volubilis (near Moulay Idriss Zerhoun in Morocco)

⁶ *suīs* - "his subjects"