

Acknowledgments

In May 2011, the Royal Library of the Kingdom of Morocco (Bibliothèque Nationale du Royaume du Maroc; BNRM) organized a daylong seminar in honor of Ron Messier's lifelong dedication to the history and archaeology of Morocco. The "Homage à Ronald Messier" day was planned by four friends and colleagues who have worked with Ron for over twenty years—Abdallah Fili, Lahcen Taouchikht, Saïd Ennahid, and me, James Miller. In the splendid setting of the BNRM, a day of presentations and personal memories recreated for an intimate public the road that led Ron from graduate school at the University of Michigan and the classroom at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) to the Tafilalt oasis in Morocco and the site of Sijilmasa. It is a long story, and here we wish to thank those who have worked with us, debated with us, assisted us financially and morally, and discovered, like us, the world in which Sijilmasa existed over its long career as a place and as a people connecting worlds nearly forgotten across the strata of time.

Thanks, first, like that fine May day, to our closest colleagues and friends, those who have worked with us in the field and who have accompanied us on our intellectual journey. Our long relationship with INSAP (the Institut National des Sciences d'Archéologie et du Patrimoine; National Institute of Archaeology and Heritage), in Rabat, began with the signing of an agreement with the Ministry of Culture for the archaeological exploration of the Sijilmasa site in 1988. Mohammed Ben Aissa, then minister of culture, was among the first to recognize the significance of Morocco's medieval heritage and the need for archaeological exploration. We thank him deeply for his encouragement and support. At INSAP, our deepest thanks go to Mme. Joudia Hassar-Benslimane, the institute's director and a signatory of the agreement with Ron Messier and MTSU that established the Moroccan-American Project at Sijilmasa (MAPS). Mme. Benslimane's lifelong dedication to archae-

ology in Morocco is unparalleled. At the Ministry of Culture, we thank Abdulaziz Touri for his wisdom and advice through the years, from Ron's first exploratory visit in 1986 through the completion of our field work in 1998. His support has been indispensable.

From the faculty at INSAP, Elarbi Erbaty served as our Moroccan counterpart. We thank a special group of INSAP students who worked under our direction and whose development as professionals has given us great joy. There were dozens; we name in particular Mohammed Choukri, Saïd Ennahid, Khadija Bourchouk, Naima Keddane, Choukri Heddouchi, and especially Abdallah Fili, who has continued to share his deep knowledge of archaeology, Moroccan history, and Moroccan ceramics and who has contributed to several of our *Sijilmasa* articles. The newest recruit to the MAPS team is Chloé Capel, a PhD student at the Sorbonne, Paris I, whose dissertation is largely focused on *Sijilmasa*. In addition to her many thoughtful comments, Chloé provided invaluable service in fine-tuning many of our illustrations.

In Rissani, our gratitude goes to the directors at the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Alaouites, which provided us with laboratory and office facilities. We first met Lahcen Taouchikht in 1988 as a PhD student (in Aix-en-Provence) working on his native Tafilalt before he became director of the center in Rissani, where he worked with us side by side in our first two seasons, 1988 and 1992. Rissani itself, our second home during the six seasons of excavations, is forever sealed in our hearts and minds. We are grateful to many people in Rissani and the Tafilalt in different ways, but over the years, some individuals were especially helpful. Abdelsellam Taouchikht was our purchaser, the person we could rely on to find a way through what was for us sometimes the unknown. He provided solutions that kept our operation running each season. And that operation was big, with over thirty people in the field. At the heart of our excavations were our local workers, whose hands and eyes took on the expertise that dedicated archaeologists develop. We thank especially the eldest among them, Bel-'Aïd Ben Barek, and remember them all for their dedication and their sense of what to do next at the surface of the site or the bottom of a trench.

The dig, the lab, the students, the Earthwatchers, and others: a cast of several hundred people joined us at *Sijilmasa* over the years. In the core team, Neal Mackenzie, our field director, was with us for ten years and in every season. His direction of the excavations was key to our project in every way. Jim Knudstadt was with us during the 1992 season, bringing his extraordinary skills as an archaeologist and his worldwide reputation earned during a long career all over the Middle East.

Complementing the staff of MAPS, Stephen W. Brown and John Runkle

translated their skills in historic preservation and architecture into maps and delicate drafts of our excavation units. Mohamed Alilou, a conservator at the archaeological site of Volubilis, provided superb drawings of the mosque-madrasa complex and elite residences west of the mosque. Nancy Benco of George Washington University was with us in 1993, and her comparative approach, based on her field excavations at al-Basra, proved extremely useful. Julie Coco, Ron's capable graduate assistant, focused her attention on the Ben Akla site, unveiling the dimensions of that immense market space and transforming her findings into a brilliant master's thesis. Samantha Messier came with a biologist's sense of purpose and worked long lab hours to reveal the nature of the archaeobotanical materials found at the site.

In the broader reconnaissance of the Sijilmasa site, MAPS is grateful for the expertise of Dale Lightfoot, from Oklahoma State University, and Tony Wilkinson and Eleanor Barbanes Wilkinson, now at the University of Durham, who worked with us to determine the nature of the site, the surrounding oasis, and the human redesigning of the Tafilalet over time. My field research assistants, who led me through the exploration of the Tafilalet oasis, merit high recognition: Addi and Youssef Ouadderou, Youssef Qaroui, Rachid Ismaili.

Miller's work in the archives and with the personnel of the regional office of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Office Régional de Mise en Valeur Agricole du Tafilalet in Errachidia, was facilitated by its director, Driss Jellouli. We also thank the several local administrators of Rissani, the *caids* and *gendarmes* of the Ministry of the Interior, who not only looked out for us but also took our work seriously and offered generous assistance when we needed it. In Rabat, 550 kilometers (342 miles) from Sijilmasa and a world away, we want to mention our university colleague Abdelhay Moudden and his wife, Farah Cherifa d'Ouezzane, always welcoming and eager to discuss the dig and bring us up to date on what was happening in the Morocco of the present. Abdelhay's guidance and encouragement when the project was still in its incubation stage was indispensable in getting it off the ground.

Our work at Sijilmasa would not have been possible without our colleagues at home. At Clemson University, I wish to thank the Department of History and Geography for its support, and the special interest that James Barker, the former dean of the College of Architecture, Art and Humanities and a past president of the university, took in our work in Morocco.

Both of us were awarded Senior Fulbright grants for our work at Sijilmasa, which leads us to thank the administrative support offered by the director, Edward Thomas, of the Moroccan-American Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange, and his able program assistant, Saadia Maski.

At Middle Tennessee State, I, Ron, thank President James E. Walker and

Provost James Hindman for their endorsement of the project. On every occasion that an extraordinary need arose, they typically responded, "We'll find a way to do that." I owe special recognition to Myra Norman, director of Special Programs, who worked hand in hand with us in administering the many grants that have supported this project, including eight grants from MTSU, four from Earthwatch, three from National Geographic, and one each from the American Institute for Maghrib Studies, the Social Science Research Council, and the Max van Berchem Foundation. We extend our sincere appreciation to all of these granting institutions.

At the University of Texas Press, Jim Burr's patience with us has been extraordinary, and without his calm persistence, this book might not have seen the light of day. Thanks, Jim.

Finally, a word about time. More than twenty-five years have passed since Ron Messier's first exploratory mission to Sijilmasa, in 1986. Ron and James have spent twenty years together engaged in Sijilmasa and other pursuits. It has been a partnership with many highs and some lows. We thank each other for the mutual support that we have shown each other, and we underline that projects like this take time, a commodity we live with, cannot live without, but find increasingly hard to find.

The Last Civilized Place

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