

THE ROMAN CAMPITO OF TANGIER

The Roman campito was a vacant lot covering almost a city block in the upper part of the city. Large Spartan boulders rested there among wild bushes. An abandoned place, it was on the way to several schools, and it was also a meeting place, a place of encounters and disagreements. Disputes that arose during school breaks were resolved there, in dialectic and pugilistic parleys. It was also a place to wait, to rest and to reflect in solitude.

We passed through it four times a day: in the morning on our way to class, at midday, on our way home for lunch, at lunchtime, on our way back to the afternoon classes and on our way out at the end of the day. On each occasion, the gaze focused on the particular texture of the stones, quadrangular prisms worn down by the passage of time, witnesses to the vicissitudes of the city over more than two thousand years.

A crossroads of cultures that watches the Atlantic Ocean flow into the Mediterranean Sea, whether gently or violently. The adventurous winds have left a record, in historical and legendary accounts, of the characters who have visited it. Homer mentions it in the Odyssey, and Plato in his stories about the giant Antaeus, son of Poseidon, who dominated the region where the garden of the Hesperides was located. Greek mythology and Roman rule permeate the huge stone pieces of the Roman campito with mystery.

When I left the country to study abroad, I saw these archaeological remains for the last time. The living, eroded surfaces of these blocks were a language of weft, structure and touch. Visual surfaces in which multiple histories were interwoven. A web of sensitive magnitude that has remained engraved in my emotional memory.

An inert ground that has been the spectator and actor of many lives. I have searched, in vain, for information about this forgotten site. It has been buried under the magnificent Mohamed V mosque, and I can find no proof of its existence.

Jim Lorena

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