

Agathe, an ephemeral island of the Languedoc coast? (Agde Hérault, France)

Benoît DEVILLERS^{1,2,3}, Guénaëlle BONY^{1,3}, Jean-Philippe DEGEAI^{1,3}, Jean GASCO¹, Hamza OUESLATI^{1,2}, Morgane SUTRA¹, Florian YUNG¹

¹ Archéologie des sociétés méditerranéennes, UMR CNRS, Lattes, FRANCE

² Université Paul Valéry- Montpellier 3, Département de Géographie, Montpellier, FRANCE

³ Labex ARCHIMEDE, ANR-11-LABX-0032-01, Montpellier, FRANCE

* [Email: guena.bony@gmail.com](mailto:guena.bony@gmail.com)

The ancient city of Agde, located between the Herault River and the lagoon of Thau, was installed northwest of the volcanic complex of Mont Saint-Loup. This promontory rock was bordered to the northwest by the Herault River and its current alluvial plain and to the east by Bagnas lagoons, relic of a palaeo-Gulf transformed into a lagoon due to the edification of beach ridges (Oueslati 2014). Many historical sources suggest the possibility that the rocky promontory of Agde was an island at one time. For example, Ptolemy (90-168 AD), in his draft of geography, clearly evokes the island character of Agde: "The islands below the *Narbonésie* are *Agathe* with a town of the same name ...". In the DYELITAG II project (B. Devillers dir.) granted by the Labex ARCHIMEDE, a series of core drilling was carried out in Bagnas lagoons, the "Sept Fonds" lowlands (situated between Agde and Bagnas lagoons; Yung 2013), the archaeological site of "La Motte" (located north of Agde in the present fluvial bed of the Herault river; J. Gasco dir.) and in the lower alluvial plain of Herault River. All these data tend to prove that from the maximum marine ingression, the palaeo Herault River quickly turned into a lagoon due to the association of the rocky Agde Cape and the northeast/southwest longshore drift. Bagnas lagoons which were a large palaeo-Gulf has gradually transformed into a lagoon (Oueslati 2014). The lower alluvial plain and the "Sept Fonds" lowlands corresponded to a brackish environment to protohistoric and ancient times. This ephemeral island in a marine-lagoonal context also raises the issue of ancient installations of city of Agathe. The establishment of these attractive lagoonal environments for human societies may have facilitated the setting up of Harbour (s) area(s) in Agde. These new palaeoenvironmental data allow to complete knowledge of the geography of the ancient city. Finally, these results illustrate the specific characteristics of coastline changes in a landscape dotted of ancient volcanic edifice.

