

J. A. Lloyd (ed.), *Excavations at Sidi Khrebish, Benghazi (Berenice) 1. Supplement to Libya Antiqua V. Tripoli 1977*. 311 pages of English text, 71 figures, 32 plates, Arabic summary.

J. A. Lloyd (ed.), *Excavations at Sidi Khrebish, Benghazi (Berenice) 2. Supplement to Libya Antiqua V. Tripoli 1979*. 467 pages of English text, 144 figures, 43 plates, Arabic summary.

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Until recently, Berenice was one of the least known of ancient Cyrenaican cities. Most of the site is covered by modern Benghazi, whose buildings employed (and thereby destroyed) the old city's extant remains. A relatively small part of Berenice was, as we now know, safely concealed under the Sidi Khrebish cemetery, in use from the time of the Turkish administration to the 1930s. In the early 1970s, when the municipality of Benghazi proceeded to urbanize the Sidi Khrebish area, the Department of Antiquities at Tripoli and Professor J. B. Ward-Perkins recognized the imminent threat to the hidden remains of Berenice. The Society for Libyan Studies in London was invited to join the Department of Antiquities in a rescue campaign, which was to become a full-time excavation in 1972–1973. The operation was a major event at the time. At its zenith, it employed over one hundred persons, investigating an area of over 18 000 square metres. It brought to light long-span sequences and an immense wealth of artifactual and immobile find data.

Similar energy was applied to the publication scheme, which includes four bulky volumes. The first of these was already completed in 1977, the second less than two years later. Unfortunately, the publishing process does not advance at an even speed. Volumes I and II, despite the respective years of publication cited on the Arabic title-page, were not available until quite recently. Volume III is reported to be delayed. Nevertheless, the two available volumes, admirably edited by the Department of Antiquities at Tripoli, do ample justice to the significance of the Sidi Khrebish project. Without these (to use J. A. Lloyd's phrase in vol. I, p. 15), 'the archaeology of Eastern Libya would be much the poorer today'.

The greater part of volume I is written by J. A. Lloyd, who is also the general editor of the excavation reports. After the customary introductory notes, which summarize the geographical background, the writ-

ten sources concerning Berenice, and the excavation's history, he describes (pp. 25–33) the urban development as revealed by the Sidi Khrebish site. According to ancient tradition, Berenice was founded in c. 246 B. C. The location was more favourably exposed to the sea than that of Euesperides, Berenice's predecessor, which became inaccessible by the silting-up of its lagoon. There is evidence that the transfer was much more gradual than the attested foundation year would suggest. It turned out that the Sidi Khrebish cemetery had covered part of the northern edge of Berenice. Remains of the Hellenistic and late-Roman/Byzantine defences happened to cross the excavation zone. Berenice's nucleus, however, must have lain more to the southwest, nearer to the harbour. From the 2nd century B. C. on, the excavated section of the town was primarily a residential quarter, laid out in an orthogonal grid. The street-pattern and residential character were to remain virtually unaltered. The 1st century A. D., and, particularly, the 2nd were Berenice's best years, as is shown for instance by the moderate luxury of her buildings. The 3rd century A. D. evidently was a time of hardship. By the middle of that century, hardly a house in the Sidi Khrebish area remained inhabited. The late-Roman defence wall drastically reduced the town's perimeter. However, city life at Berenice had not yet come to an end. Under the reign of Justinian I, repairs were made to the city wall and a church was built within the otherwise largely deserted area. Life certainly continued after the Arab conquest (c. A. D. 645). The latest coins from the church excavation are dated to the late-10th century and they probably mark the end of city life in Berenice.

Long-range sequences are no exception in North-African archaeology. Carthage is the obvious example here, and it offers an even wider time-span. The recent UNESCO-project excavations at Carthage cover a period from the 8th/7th centuries B. C. to the late 7th century A. D. But, there, the sequence 'leaps' from one excavated zone to another and there are substantial gaps in the Roman period. The Sidi Khrebish case is exceptional for its near-unbroken sequence within one single excavation area. This sheds a very special light on the history of Berenice.

It is, again, J. A. Lloyd who reports on the architectural remains of the site. In a long and elaborate chapter (pp. 35–227), he describes the buildings, one by one, in chronological order. Every single description includes, as far as possible (bulldozing work in 1971 and the general lack of time throughout the excavation precluded thorough investigations in some zones), a discussion of building material, methods of construction, decorative elements, dating evidence, and the building's function. The author's style is narrative and informative. It is certainly a relief to find the text unencumbered by an excess of centimetres and ancient metrology. However, in the absence of these, a uniform set of detailed groundplans of all described buildings would perhaps have been useful. The writer unfolds a very vivid picture of the dynamism of building and living in this section of Berenice. It enables us to analyse, within each *insula*, the sequence of building, use, abandonment, rebuilding, and so on from the 2nd century B. C. well into the 7th century A. D. A discussion of light industrial installations encountered on the site (pp. 211–214) increases the vividness of the picture. Furthermore, it indicates the coexistence of neighbouring inhabited and abandoned houses, of courtyard- and peristyle houses, of poor and rich dwellings. And it elucidates – to mention just one instance – the progression of decay. Evidence concerning the mid-3rd-century A. D. crisis is often amorphous, and difficult to seize chronologically. In Berenice, however, it appears to be singularly well articulated and comprises a period of more than one decade. The period runs from a plague in the early-3rd century (pp. 99–101; see also vol. II, p. 37) to a late example of the abandonment of a house in A. D. 250/270 (pp. 149–153). Here, as in other cases, the author provides the relevant information and suggestions for future discussions in which he, quite understandably, is reluctant to enter.

R. Reece reports on the coins (pp. 229–232). His contribution is really a list in its most rudimentary state of over 500 coins. Inevitably, it has its deficiencies, of which the writer seems to be well aware. However, when he argues that the coins are available in Berenice for inspection (p. 229), one cannot help objecting that inspection is precisely what publications are supposed to avoid as much as possible.

The inscriptions on stone, mosaic, and plaster are being dealt with by J. M. Reynolds (pp. 233–254). She presents all inscriptions from the Sidi Khrebish site (nos. 1–13) and from other parts of Berenice (nos. 14–31) so far known. The more important items from Sidi Khrebish have already been published by the author; most of the older inscriptions are known from CIG and SEG. Yet, it is enlightening to find the inscriptions from Berenice all together – and commented upon by an outstanding epigraphist.

The subsequent section, by F. Sear, is on the architectural decorations in stone (pp. 255–287). The objects are catalogued according to the building in which they were encountered. This enables the writer to propose a few architectural reconstructions. Dated objects range from the 1st century B. C. to the 3rd century A. D. More recent stone carvings are extremely rare; most of the objects from the Byzantine church (about one third of the catalogue entries) were spoils from earlier buildings. The bulk of architectural decorations were found in a state too fragmentary for illustration. Comparison with material from other Cyrenaican cities reveals that the Sidi Khrebish stone carving was simple. It is thought that the friable sandstone frequently used in Berenice did not allow sharp moulding.

On pages 289–311 P. M. Kenrick presents a reasoned list of nearly 200 dated deposits. The datings are based on the briefly explained evidence from coins, fine wares, lamps, coarse wares (mainly amphoras), and glass. Its place at the end of volume I suggests that the list is just a catalogue. In fact, it really is the basis of all Sidi Khrebish chronology, and as such the paramount instrument for most of the sections in the excavation reports. The relevant dating finds have manifestly been chosen with care. The author stresses 'the provisional nature of this list' (p. 289). However, divergencies, if any, do not occur in volume II.

Volume II contains sections by G. Barker, A. Bonanno, and J. A. Riley. Barker (pp. 1–49) comments upon economic life at Berenice, as evidenced by the archaeozoological finds in stratified contexts from the site. There are contributions on fish and plant remains by A. Wheeler and D. Webly respectively. At Sidi Khrebish over 14 000 fragments of animal and bird bones were encountered. The sample is in a way incomplete: accurate sieving, which reduces the bias in favour of large bone fragments, was apparently practiced during the 1975 campaign only. Yet, the paper is an excellent piece of work, and not only because of the penetrating remarks it presents on such items as breeding policy, wool production, camels and the incidence of commercial fishing.

In the concluding paragraph (pp. 32–38) G. Barker proposes an interesting model to explain the relationship between Berenice and the hinterland. Much weight in this discussion is laid on ovicaprids: goats, and, as the writer supposes, to a lesser extent, sheep. Their importance should not be overrated: in terms of meat supply, ovicaprid and cattle figures are in balance in most periods. Yet, goat/sheep frequencies at Berenice, as the writer explains, represent the contribution of native pastoralism to the economic life of the city. Here, the Sidi Khrebish finds reveal a catastrophic breakdown in the 3rd century A. D. To my knowledge, the writer is the first to have introduced this element in the debate. The breakdown becomes particularly striking when the numbers of stock animal bones and stratified pottery finds are compared (the figures are collated from Barker's table 2 and Riley's fig. 3, in the same volume; the interpretations are mine – J. H. v. d. W). In 2nd-century B. C. to early-3rd-century A. D. deposits (unfortunately, Barker's periodization is less refined than Riley's), the proportion of pottery sherds (rims, bases, handles) to the number of goat/sheep bones is approximately 9 to 1. In the mid-3rd-century deposits, the proportion elongates to roughly 50 to 1. I would suggest that it was population pressure (the writer does not insist on this point) in the early-3rd century A. D. which eventually forced the Romans to grow cereals on marginal land, thereby drastically reducing the possibility of native goat-keeping. Once the population figure had fallen (4th–7th centuries), pastoralism resumed its place in the economy of Berenice; the pottery/bone proportion is more or less re-established on a precarious 22 to 1 level.

Sculpture and terracottas are reviewed by A. Bonanno (pp. 51–64 and 65–90, respectively). Given the long occupation period of the site, the Sidi Khrebish sculpture is somewhat disappointing. The great majority of catalogued finds (40 objects) are small fragments; datings, either on stylistic or stratigraphical grounds, are rare. Large marble sculpture did exist at Berenice; most of it, however, probably disappeared into lime-kilns after A. D. 250. The terracottas from Sidi Khrebish are more attractive. The dated finds (about half of the 159 objects catalogued, all in a fragmentary state) range from the late-3rd century B. C. to the 3rd century A. D. Although the majority of terracotta objects were made locally in Cyrenaica, they reveal an influence from Asia Minor (as, for example, the locally made Tanagra style figurines) which is absent in other Sidi Khrebish finds.

By far the largest part of volume II is taken by J. A. Riley's report on the coarse pottery from the site (pp. 91–467). The text is a revised and partly abridged version of the author's PhD thesis (University of Manchester 1978). The overwhelming quantity of coarse pottery from the site, along with its chronological potential, called for accurate and efficient processing. To this effect, the pottery is regarded from basically

four aspects, and quantified accordingly. (1) *Type series*: a division of coarse wares into four main groups (amphoras, cooking wares, plain wares, and jugs), each of these being subdivided into types (over 150 in number!). The plain wares series may seem to be overloaded, as it includes such miscellaneous items as bread moulds, tiles, and loom weights. – (2) *Fabric*: Fabrics of local and imported wares have been identified in many cases. – (3) *Chronology*: The pottery has been taken from well-dated deposits; these are amalgamated into 12 successive periods (Hellenistic to late-Byzantine). The sample contains over 16 000 fragments of rims, bases, and handles ('RBH'), weighing in total some 1.000 kg. Not all dated deposits from Kenrick's list in vol. I have been used. Most probably, time was the limiting factor. – (4) *Proportional frequencies*: Type frequencies are expressed in relative proportions (in terms of %) per deposit and per amalgamated period, rather than in absolute numbers. The above criteria are clearly explained and convincingly argued. For instance, the author's remarks on the problems involved in quantifying pottery, too often neglected in Mediterranean archaeology, deserve wide attention. Further details are given in the discussion of a great number of types. The discussions, amply supplemented by histograms to show relative proportions, distribution maps, and 100 full-page illustrations, reveal a singular mastery of diverging branches of Mediterranean pottery research. This multivariable scheme enables the author (and the reader!) to trace numerous relations (both synchronic and diachronic) between, for instance, local and imported wares, between local and imported amphoras and cooking wares. It shows the proportional increase of jugs and amphoras during late Antiquity, the changing patterns of cultural influences, of subsidiary food supplies shipped in amphoras, and so on. In fact, Riley's scheme reveals the entire dynamism of coarse pottery evolution at the Sidi Khrebish site from the 2nd century B. C. to the 7th century A. D. – and beyond: Islamic pottery from the latest deposits is included as well. In the concluding paragraph the author integrates the evidence from pottery and other sources (archaeological and literary) into a picture of Berenice's economic history. If this outlook is perhaps not entirely satisfactory (the question as to what a 'pot' means in actual economic life remaining still unsolved in current Mediterranean archaeology), it is nevertheless the best that could be written at present.

Until recently, Cyrenaica represented a notorious blank zone in the study of ancient coarse wares. It falls to Riley's credit to have turned that position into a leading one. The impact of his work, though, goes far beyond the geographical limits of Cyrenaica. The 'Coarse Pottery from Berenice' is a standard reference work for specialists on amphoras and specialists on many other types of pottery, it stimulates research in ancient history, and proposes standards for sound methods in future publications of pottery ensembles.

There can be little doubt that the Sidi Khrebish volumes so far published rank among the best achievements in reports on Mediterranean excavations of the past few years. One cannot but express admiration for all those who joined together in their efforts to make this possible.