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Editor's introduction

By Victoria Leitch*

The year 2019/20 has been remarkable and traumatic for many reasons, but it has been particularly successful for the Society for Libyan Studies. We celebrated our 50th anniversary last year and, with the strong direction of our previous editor, Professor Anna Leone, the journal has broadened its remit and is reaching out to a wider network of researchers working on subjects connected to Libya, North Africa and the Mediterranean. A new extended title reflects this remit: *Libyan Studies: a Journal of North African and Mediterranean Cultures*.

We begin this issue by saying goodbye to two good friends of the Society, Oliver Miles and Harry Thirlwall Norris. The first section opens with two papers on inscriptions – a longstanding research tradition within the society: Caroline Barron's study of the Latinisation of Punic titles and Abdulhafid Fadil Elmayer's important contribution to our knowledge of funerary inscriptions in Roman Tripolitania. Anis Mkacher then takes us to Arabic sources to trace the history of ancient monuments, a complex but vital area of study for piecing together the history of North Africa. For our readers with musical interests, there is a fascinating little history of the flute in ancient Libya by Paraskevas-Marios Tourtounis. Moving forwards in history, Isabelle Vella Gregory presents a frank and modern look at Henry Wellcome's life and work, with some excellent images from his archives. The final paper takes us to the present, as Richard Pennell discusses the phenomenon of digital sources and the recording of history, using the case of the recent Libyan revolution.

The second section of the journal focuses on Islamic pottery, with a study of Palermitan productions by Viva Sacco, technological influences in al-Andalus by Elena Salinas and Trinitat Pradell, and western Mediterranean pottery traditions in the first Islamic period analysed by Victoria Amorós Ruiz and Sonia Gutiérrez Lloret. These themes reinforce the journal's key role as an outlet for this kind of research.

Part three, fieldwork reports, is a section of the journal that we hope will become more extensive as excavation teams are better able to work in Libya and surrounding regions. Training programmes have been carried out by several international teams across North Africa, and particularly in Tunisia, increasing the potential for really thorough and modern excavations to be carried out in future. The first report, by Michael Brass and his team, follows an excavation sponsored by the Society and outlines the second season at Jebel Moya in south-central Sudan (see LS49 for the first season). The next report focuses on the Training in Action project, directed by teams from the University of Durham, King's College London and University College London. It offers a detailed account of the aims, techniques and outcomes of these new programmes that not only serve to protect the culture heritage of important sites in North Africa but also seek to train and educate local professionals in the heritage sector. Finally, these projects include outreach programmes that aim to increase local public awareness of their past, while publicising these initiatives internationally.

Book reviews include Mftah A. M. Ahmed's study of production in the Tarhuna plateau during the Roman period (published by the Society and available Open Access on our website). There is also a colourful report on two exhibition catalogues which, in the age of COVID-19, are the best way to get around museums. Michael Mackensen's masterly volume on African red slip wares is explained excellently by Philip Kenrick. Finally, a translation of the history of the Nestorians and Eutychians is reviewed.

We end as usual with the Council's reports. Paul Bennett's invaluable record of the situation in Libya over the last year offers good and bad news. He covers the developing military situation, the rather depressing picture of a ruined Benghazi, but also relates the successes by our Libyan friends and of major new research projects. Over many years his exceptional network of friends and colleagues has enabled the Society to anticipate and adapt to new and developing situations, and his information and insight allowed the research endeavours of the Society to continue, often uninterrupted, despite frequently challenging circumstances. Finally, David Atkinson's Chairman's report outlines our strategy to develop a broader geographical remit for our journal and to reach a wider potential membership from across different academic disciplines and via the Libyan diaspora.

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