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Introduction

Editors' Introduction

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Libyan Studies presents an eclectic range of articles and book reviews this year, reflecting many of our broad interests and reaching a wide chronological range. It is with particular pleasure that we publish two articles that were awarded BILNAS Research Grants, thus demonstrating the positive impact of our grant scheme on advancing new research. It is also encouraging to see many articles published as Open Access, with help from participating research institutes and Cambridge University Press's Open Equity scheme for low and middle-income countries. On the other hand, we still strongly support articles by independent scholars who are unable to finance Open Access and yet who continue to provide vital support to BILNAS's research endeavours.

We begin by paying our respects to John Hayes in an obituary written by John Riley. The importance and genius of his work on Roman pottery cannot be overstated. His ability to recognise, typologise and organise the vast range of forms circulating around the Mediterranean is legendary and his works will remain the key references for a long time to come.

The first article by C. Broodbank, G. Lucarini *et al.* looks at recent excavations at the prehistoric site of Oued Beht, Khémisset, Morocco. This work was in part funded by a BILNAS Research Grant. Thanks to this project and its abundant evidence of crops, animals and material culture, we are better able to interpret North African and the Mediterranean populations during the 4th and 3rd millennia BC.

Another grantee, D. McLean developed a project to use volcanic ash to synchronise and date archaeological and climate records in Northwest Africa. Her results demonstrate the value of tephrochronology to date key climatic and cultural transitions during the Palaeolithic and offer a framework for future investigations.

The spread of Libyan names is the topic of M. Karlsson's examination of Mesopotamian texts to suggest that names were meaningful and expressed identity in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia and that the ethnic term 'Libyan' already was recognised at this time.

A recent discovery by A. Elmayer brings to light a Romano-Punic tomb in Msallata. The small stone chests contained cremated human remains with names written in Latin or neo-Punic.

Next, we have three papers that deal with the site of Mustis (El Krib) in Tunisia. The first, by S. España-Chamorro investigates unpublished inscriptions from the Parisian archives, adding valuable data on the territory of the *res publica Mustitana*, the sacred life of the city and onomastic information about its inhabitants. S. Sánchez De La Parra-Pérez has chosen to examine the Mustis Arch and its dedication, which until recently had not been studied in its entirety. The final article in this group by K. Kłodziński *et al.* follows a new approach looking at stelae in the microregion of Musti combining iconographic and epigraphic analyses with eco-factual data, to further our understanding of the history and agriculture of the region and demonstrating the value of multi-disciplinary studies.

Moving to Malta, the study of late Punic to Roman pottery by E. Richard-Tremeau *et al.* adds important new information to the ever-growing database of pottery being generated by researchers on this island. They look at the composition of local pottery and techniques, which ultimately will also help distinguish between imported and exported pottery in future.

Our final two articles by Tunisian researchers start with M. Chetoui's summary of Christianism in the region of Djerid, reinforced by excavations by INP researchers which have helped them to date this to the 5th century; and M. Ellefi looks at the ecclesiastical landscape in Byzacena and Tripolitania and the conditions that favoured the Christianism of the region, but with its own particular character.

Our book reviews section is equally rich and varied in terms of the geographical and chronological framework it encompasses. K. Göransson opens the section with his review of *La città del Silfio* by E. Rosamilia and highlights the importance of this new study of Cyrene's epigraphic corpus, which provides a comprehensive overview of the local institutions, cults and economy in the Classical and Hellenistic eras.

Developed out of an exhibition held at Tripoli's Red Castle, the volume *Libia – Italia. Un'archeologia condivisa* edited by L. Musso and M. Turjman (reviewed by N. Mugnai) is a useful, bilingual Italian-Arabic encyclopaedia of past and current archaeological research in Libya undertaken as part of Libyan-Italian partnerships.

The study of ancient North Africa has witnessed a major advance with the recent publication of two volumes that will become milestones in this field, within and beyond the Anglophone world. The first, R.B. Hitchner's *A Companion to North Africa in Antiquity*, is reviewed here by M. Wittmann who carefully and critically engages with the contents of all the essays collected in it, looking at a very broad span of time from the 1st millennium BC to the Arab conquest of North Africa. J.C. Quinn provides a thorough assessment of D.J. Mattingly's *Between Sahara and Sea: Africa in the Roman Empire* – a book that offers a new, much-needed perspective on the African region by looking at how the local urban, rural and military communities experienced life under Rome's control.

Another important step in the progress of North African studies is the publication of *Les sculptures romaines du Musée National du Bardo. 1, Les portraits* by F. Baratte *et al.* In his review, B. Russell points out the significance of this corpus of sculptures from one of the richest collections in the world, which fills a gap in our knowledge and will hopefully be followed by more volumes on the other holdings of the Bardo Museum shortly.

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E. Gasparini comments on recent research around a much-debated category of Late Antique buildings, *Les « salles è auges »*, which is the title of an edited volume by E. Rocca *et al*. A typical feature of cityscapes in North Africa and the East during this period, the multiple uses and functions of these edifices are still controversial.

Finally, the section is concluded by A. Buzaian's review of J.A. Kashbour's study *Benghazi Barrack-Building 1890–2020* (in Arabic). Through a detailed architectural analysis, the book offers a valuable outline of the history of this building from its construction in the late Ottoman period to the present day.

This year is the last year that the journal will be published in print, until further notice. This difficult decision was reached by the BILNAS Council, with advice from Cambridge University Press, for several reasons: an online only journal keeps costs lower, enabling us to continue to offer a very competitive membership price; it is better for the environment; it offers a more flexible and clearer way of displaying images. We hope that members will continue to support all our initiatives and enjoy the superior quality of the online journal. Without member support it would be increasingly difficult for us to fund research, hold events and to host and disseminate our huge archival resources, so we thank you and look forward to seeing you next year.

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