

This issue is dedicated in respectful memory to the late Sandro Stucchi.

Excavations at The Extramural Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone at Cyrene, 1969-1981



*Ceres, thou most bounteous lady, thy rich leas
Of wheat, rye, barley, vetches, oats, and pease;
Thy turfy mountains, where live nibbling sheep,
And flat meads thatched with stover, them to keep.*
The Tempest 4.1.60-63

A unexpected offer presented over 25 years ago by the then Antiquities Service director for Cyrenaica (Eastern Libya) gave the present writer a remarkable opportunity to excavate a site of astonishing richness and interest (see box on The Cyrene Project). The officer was the late Richard Goodchild and the site the Demeter and Persephone Sanctuary at Cyrene (Fig. 1) that forms the subject of this issue of *Expedition*. In 1965 Goodchild, an Oxford-trained ancient historian and archaeologist, was

at the height of his very considerable powers, holding down a job that required administering a formidable archaeological empire with little in the way of trained assistance. It was probably the sheer magnitude of his responsibilities that explains why he was willing to turn

Figure 1. The excavated Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone at Cyrene at the end of the final season of excavation in 1978.

The Cyrene Project

The project to excavate the Extramural Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone was begun in 1969 under the auspices of the Kelsey Museum of Ancient and Mediaeval Archaeology at the University of Michigan. When its director, Dr. Donald White, joined the University of Pennsylvania in 1973, the project's sponsorship was shifted to The University Museum of Archaeology/Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania. After seven seasons of excavation and two study seasons, the field work was halted in Libya in 1981 for reasons that

transcended purely archaeological considerations. Final publication of the project's work commenced, and the first volume in a series of Museum monographs was issued in 1985. The bibliography accompanying White's article on the history of the site lists the four volumes of the series already in print. The appearance of Volumes V and VI is imminent. All the authors of this issue of *Expedition* are active contributors to the series, which is being produced under the general editorship of Professor White.



Figure 2. Plan of the upper southeast corner of the Middle Sanctuary, showing nine fallen statues surrounded by toppled debris left from the great earthquake of A.D. 262.

over what was plainly a major site to a relatively untried excavator, and an American at that, attached to the University of Michigan. It was not until the summer of 1969, following Goodchild's unexpected death the year before, that the first pilot team of Michigan diggers broke ground on the hillside site that lies south of the Greek city's ramparts athwart the sharply rising southern slope of Wadi Bel Gadir ("ravine with pools of standing water").

The palmy days of that first season were exhilarating for everyone involved. On July 6, just two days into the excavation, Matthew Stolper, now Professor of Assyriology at the University of Chicago, scribbled into his journal: "Greatest part of day devoted to cleaning and beginning removal of two statues...chaos prevails at

first, as everyone throws himself on the finds with frenzied enthusiasm." A string of similar utterances came to fill Stolper's book in the days that followed (some occasionally verging on the mutinous, viz. p. 137: "Evidently, this is not to be made a find after all. What a shame. The boys worked so hard for this moment. Evil dig director has photographed it and cast it aside like so much garbage.")

By the summer's end half a dozen marble and limestone statues had been, one by one, awakened from their seventeen centuries of rest beneath a blanket of twisted, broken earthquake debris (Fig. 2). The stone figures were simply the largest and heaviest of the artifacts subsequently unearthed. To the group's growing astonishment, the same earthquake debris fill disgorged a



Figure 3. Plan of the later Imperial Sanctuary at its fullest stage of development between A.D. 115 and 262. The irregular hairlines within the walls trace the edges of the bedrock shelves on which the Sanctuary was built.

torrent of silver and bronze coins, amulets and jewelry, seals, faience, glass, terracotta, bronze and stone figurines, inscriptions, and pottery. Much of the pottery consisted of the often exquisitely refined painted wares shipped overseas by Athens, Corinth, Laconia, and East Greece during the 6th and 5th centuries B.C.

The first season established a pattern for what we came to expect over the next decade: collapsed rubble or cut-stone structures trapping discarded artifacts often numbering in the hundreds. Designed in response to the requirements of eight centuries of intense religious devotion, the various individual architectural elements were strung across the hillside in a complex web of rising construction borne by a system of terraces (Fig. 3).

More will be said about these matters in the articles to follow. In the meantime all that is left for me is to thank once again the two sponsoring institutions, the University of Michigan and the University of Pennsylvania, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the numerous corporate and private benefactors, the small army of people who have labored on various facets of the project to the present, my fellow contributors to this special issue of *Expedition*, and, above all, the Libyan Department of Antiquities for making these results possible.

Donald White
Issue Editor