

Henri Broise and Yvon Thébert, *Recherches archéologiques Franco-Tunisiennes à Bulla Regia, II, Les architectures, 1. Les thermes memmiens*, Institute National d'Archéologie et d'Art de Tunis, École Française de Rome (28/11, 1), Rome 1993, 443 pp, 386 figures.

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Bulla Regia, located inland from the coast of modern Tunis (ancient Africa Proconsularis), is a well-known site for the study of Roman North Africa. It has been attracting the attention of archaeologists since the last century. The ruins of the baths of Julia Memmia (identified as such from an inscription found in the excavations), forms, with the theater, the most imposing structure among the ruins, and was among the standard examples of Roman remains from North Africa photographed by the early explorers of the late nineteenth century. Serious digging at the bath site began in 1909 and continued through the early teens, culminating in restoration work by the Merlin, the great French Romanist for North Africa during the first half of this century. The French excavated between the wars and resumed their explorations in the late 1950's. Since 1978 work has concentrated on making a thorough and complete monograph for the bath remains, and the result is the volume under review.

Almost a century of excavations and a decade and a half of intense research have yielded a well constructed monograph, useful for the detailed descriptive information that it supplies on the bath itself, the overall history of the quarter of the city, and the thoughtful analyses of construction techniques, usage patterns, and significance for understanding Roman architectural development in North Africa.

The Memmian Bath is in the south west quadrant of the city, and is one of five bath complexes so far identified at the site. The entire ensemble is roughly square, ca. 60 m X 60 m. The core of the plan is that of an imperial bath such as was developed in Rome under Titus and later Trajan and carried out to the provinces during the decades of the High Empire. When it was in operation, the Memmian Bath must have been one of the largest structures in Bulla Regia.

Over its roughly five hundred years of use, the structure was altered, though for the most part it

presents a homogeneous masonry construction of small blocks forming panels set into a framework defined by larger blocks of stone, a technique normally called *opus Africanum*. The surviving traces of springing blocks indicates that several of the chambers were originally vaulted with cross groin or barrel vaults, though these have long since vanished.

The bath was probably erected by Julia Memmia, whose dedicatory inscription has been found in fragmented form in the frigidarium, about A.D. 230 on a spot with a much longer occupation history dating back perhaps four hundred years, at least based on the archaeological evidence. This quarter of the city had first developed in the Hellenistic period when the city apparently flourished under the rule of Numidian kings. Building in the region continued through the early Romanization stage when the area directly beneath the bath complex may have held houses. To the west of the domestic units there seems to have been a public sector defined by a plaza with associated buildings. At least one of the houses survived the creation of the bath, though only in partial state, to the east of the bath. There was one major Roman period alteration of the region, about A.D. 360, when some major changes were made to the public area west of the bath proper. The bath appears to have continued to function into the fifth century, surviving the Vandal invasion and operating in its aftermath. It may have been closed in the second half of the fifth century under Byzantine rule, though the quarter of the city in which it stood remained a flourishing part of the constricted city. The complex itself was modified to suit new uses.

The structure is built of local stone. Most commonly the blocks are laid in horizontal rows to form the walls. In some cases large blocks are used for lower walls and smaller blocks for the upper walls.

The use of *opus Africanum* is an interesting feature since this particular style of building dates back to the Phoenician settlement along the north coast of Africa.

Examples of this technique have been documented in the Phoenician heartland, though little of the Phoenician or Carthaginian material from North Africa shows it. It does occur in Phoenician Spain, which probably indicates that it was to be found in North Africa as well. Its presence here in Bulla Regia with a third century A.D. date can be paralleled by its presence in the Capitulum Temple at the not-to-distant Roman town of Dougga. Interestingly, the

technique is largely absent from the constructions of the early Roman period and only reappears in both North Africa and Spain in the second century A.D. first in Spain and later in North Africa.

The design for the bath is a modification of the standard imperial type. The first rooms present a symmetrical grouping arranged around the frigidarium.

Behind this sector, the plan breaks down and the heated rooms lack the symmetrical arrangement. Instead, these form a tight and compact unit of five interconnected spaces which feed into one another around the largest element, the caldarium. Surrounding the heated section are most of the service corridors. There is evidence for rich mosaic flooring in most of the spaces associate with the front portion of the building. These range from geometric, linear patterns to floral decorations, to mixed geometric and floral compositions. Most surviving fragments are from floors but there are some traces of wall mosaics in the spaces directly concerned with bathing itself. The exercise and gathering areas of the bath appear to have been painted rather than mosaicked.

The reconstruction of the chronology of this quarter of Bulla regia is heavily dependent on the interpretation of the excavated finds from the baths of Julia Memmia. The epigraphic and coin finds along with the pottery are catalogued and presented in this volume. The physical evidence of occupation for this region of Bulla Regia, from about 200 B.C. until the eleventh century A.D., provides a remarkable record of the changes over more than a 1000 years of North African history from the Numidian period until the Arab conquest and beyond. Moreover, the physical testimony of alterations to the fabric of the bath structure itself from A.D. 230 on, provide some insight into the Late Antique period which is not well understood for North Africa. The discovery of the remains of a monument, the construction of which can be compared to well-known Hellenistic forms, from levels below the bath itself, suggests that during the period of the Numidian kingdom, Hellenistic-Greek influences were penetrating into this region, an argument often put forward to explain stylistic elements of the tower tomb at Dougga. The evidence for specific Roman qualities in the urbanization pattern associated with the early Romanization phase is lacking. Surrounding Bulla Regia, the territory was heavily urbanized during the reign of Augustus, a pattern of development well documented elsewhere in

the West, but Bulla regia may have been spared any significant physical changes, though this seems rare considering what was happening in Lepcis Magna. However, traces of a structure built in *opus reticulatum*, a technique not commonly employed in North Africa, may indicate that some changes were indeed occurring.

The construction of the Julia Memmia Bath offers a couple of interesting points for contemplation. It is one example of the large body of private benefactions, the remains of which provide the bulk of the ruins visible throughout the Mediterranean. It was via these private benefactions that Roman cities created their own image. While the first private benefaction in North Africa go back to the time of Augustus, it is during the late second and the third century that the private wealth of North African families really flowed freely to create great urban ensembles like these baths. Julia Memmia herself joins an illustrious line of high ranking women who commissioned important monuments, many of these were baths, especially in Asia Minor. When in full operation, the Baths of Julia Memmia must have been an impressive sight with large vaulted interior spaces richly ornamented with mosaics and wall paintings. No doubt there was sculpture too, now missing. This was a public bath, perhaps admission and oil were also subsidized, as was the practice in many other such gifts, which would have allowed even the lowly the opportunity to escape from the urban dust and grim to the comfort of the heated and gracious bathing rooms. The redesign of the area and the continued function of the bath in the mid-fourth century, a century after it was built, belies the notion that hard times had totally sapped Roman North Africa of its private resources. In a similar way, the survival of the complex as an operating, albeit somewhat constricted bath, into the second half of the fifth century after the Vandal invasion, throws into question the seriousness of the disruption of urban life often argued to have happened with this little understood event. While the bath itself ceased to operate during the Byzantine period, there is evidence of continued monumental construction in this corner of the city, and suggests that Byzantine control may have been less detrimental to parts of North Africa than is often postulated.

This new study of an important, single monument at Bulla Regia has much to commend it to the serious student of Roman North Africa. The authors provide

a carefully documented presentation of the archaeological material related to the Julia Memmia Bath. They analyze the structure from the archaeological and architectural perspectives. They reconsider the findings in light of what they can tell us about the larger issues of pre-Roman, Roman, and post-Roman history of the region.

The only weakness lies in the limited study of comparable bathing establishments. There is a short discussion of other baths in North Africa which puts this complex into some type of architectural context. Krencker's work on the imperial bath at Trier is employed to bring in some material from Europe. However, one finds it odd that none of Yegül's important work on baths of Asia Minor or Roman baths in general makes it into the discussion, or for that matter into the bibliography. Considering the connections known to have existed between North Africa and Asia Minor during the High Empire, it does seem an oversight not to have any discussion of the architectural and stylistic relations between the development of the imperial bath type in places like Ephesus and Sardis and the North African cities. By limiting the analysis almost exclusively to North

Africa, Broise and Thébert reinforce the notion that the Roman world and Roman architectural developments should be treated as groupings of discrete territorial and cultural units with little real interaction. That these divisions and provincial associations did indeed exist and did influence cultural history and artistic forms is certainly true, but it is also the case that the unity of this worlds was strong and was still quite intact in the early third century. The unity played an equally important role in determining the formation of Roman Culture through the Empire.

The volume is well illustrated with good black-and-white photographs. The line drawings have been well chosen and combined with the photographic views, do a fine job of illustrating points made in the text. The arrangement of the volume is clear and well conceived. This is a welcome addition to the field reports and monographs on Roman North Africa.

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**J.B. Ward-Perkins, *The Several Buildings of Lepcis Magna: An Architectural Survey with Contributions by Barri Jones and Roger Ling*, edited Philip Kenrick, architectural drawings prepared and edited by R. Krinenburg, general editor Barri Jones. Society for Libyan Studies. Monograph n. 2 (Manchester 1993) 109 pp., 45 line drawings, 48 plates, appendix with 7 page summary in Arabic, 40.**

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John Ward-Perkins first saw the magnificent ruins of Lepcis Magna, the great provincial city of Septimius Severus on the North African coast of modern Libya, during his North African service in the Second World War. The site had been under excavation by the Italian colonial authorities since the 1920's. Following the war, Ward-Perkins had the chance to follow up his interests in Roman North Africa with excavations at Sabratha and architectural studies at Lepcis which led in turn to the writing of his important 1948 article on

Severan building at Lepcis that appeared in the *JRS*. However, Ward-Perkins' interest did not wane, and his concern with and knowledge of the North African material informed much of his scholarly work in later years and continued to occupy his thoughts as can be seen in the volume under review. Here are collected and published for the first time typewritten manuscripts for several architectural and building studies which Ward-Perkins began producing in the 1950's and returned to again in the 1970's. These manuscripts were found among his papers which were being sorted after his death in 1981. While he may have intended that these would all be published as a collected study, the works were all in various draft states and had not been culled for repetitions or inconsistencies. There were also holes in the discussions. This newest volume of Ward-Perkins' is then a posthumous work, the result of the diligent and caring labor of several editors who have sought to fill the lacunae, smooth out the textual rough spots, and eliminate the glaring inconsistencies and unneeded repetitions. The result is a contribution of uneven value. There is no substitute for Ward-Perkins' descriptive style. He had an eye for architecture and a