

CHRISTIAN MONUMENTS OF CYRENAICA

BY J.B. WARD-PERKINS AND R.G. GOODCHILD, WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY R.M. HARRISON, H.M. DODGE, S. GIBSON, J. LLOYD, J. REYNOLDS, AND S. WALKER, EDITED BY J. REYNOLDS. PP. XXXVII + 462, FIGS. 378, MAPS 2. SOCIETY FOR LIBYAN STUDIES, LONDON 2003. ISBN 1-900-97101-1 (CLOTH).

This remarkable volume is the result of a long collaboration, stretching beyond the grave, and a testament to the perseverance of a small group of dedicated and devoted scholars. Its beginnings go back to the early 1950s and the first collaborations of R.G. Goodchild and J.B. Ward-Perkins on Christian archaeology in Tripolitania, which led the pair to initiate a study of comparable monuments in Cyrenaica. Goodchild, recently appointed the controller of antiquities of Cyrenaica, organized the work of many of the department's archaeologists with an eye to the project, and the expectation that Ward-Perkins would be able to oversee the collation of material, manage the photography of the finds, arrange for architectural drawings, and provide the written descriptions of the sites and their buildings. For his part, Goodchild had agreed to provide a historical introduction and overview of Libyan archaeology and Christianity in antiquity.

Despite an ambitious schedule and the additional help of teams of scholars that included Joyce Reynolds (on inscriptions) and Elisabeth Alföldi-Rosenbaum (on mosaics), the project was stymied at first by the burdens and distractions of administrative work and other pressing projects, and then nearly shut down by the death of Goodchild in 1968. Ward-Perkins carried on with the work, however, publishing or delivering parts of it in related volumes such as *Justinianic Mosaics Pavements in Cyrenaican Churches* (by Alföldi-Rosenbaum and Ward-Perkins [Rome 1980]). In the meantime, continuing discoveries in the region of Cyrenaica opened the field to other scholars' publications, which required Ward-Perkins' attention and critical review. Finally, Ward-Perkins' own death in 1981 might have meant

the end of the project but for the dedication of Martin Harrison, Hazel Dodge, and Sheila Gibson (at first) and Reynolds (subsequently and finally), who gathered his typescripts, field notes, manuscript drafts, drawings, and photographs and managed at last to produce an extensively edited and updated volume.

The final product presents 44 monuments (35 of them churches) that were known prior to Ward-Perkins' death, supplemented by architectural plans and photographs (many of them Ward-Perkins' own work) that were prepared or drawn by Gibson, who unfortunately died shortly before the book was at last published. The book is a composite of Ward-Perkins' well-written (and somewhat edited) descriptions of the monuments (presented in larger typeface), supplemented by updated bibliographies, additional notations of certain architectural features, historical and topographical contexts, details regarding building techniques, and lists of inscriptions added by Reynolds and others (in smaller typeface). Ward-Perkins' narrative is further amplified by subsequently added footnotes acknowledging the dissenting perspectives of more recent researchers, which brings the whole volume into dialogue with contemporary scholarship.

Although some of the writing is now nearly a half-century old, there is great value to these arguably dated entries because so many of the sites have since deteriorated. This is also true for the photographs, which are now an important record and resource. Moreover, in an effort to make the book even more useful, monuments that were unknown to Ward-Perkins are also included, especially if they exist on sites that he had actually visited. The last sections of the book give evidence for additional sites

known only through documentary materials. A general bibliography and two maps add to the value of the volume as a whole.

In her preface, Reynolds acknowledges that the editorial team did not know how Ward-Perkins had meant to arrange the sites. Although advantages to trying to organize the sections in order to show the relationships of one site to another were obvious, such a task was too daunting, and a more straightforward scheme was followed that divided the evidence into four geographical (provincial) areas and then placed the monuments in alphabetical order (according to ancient place-names) within each section. Thus, the first section covers the major cities of the Pentapolis, including one (Berenike) with a church left undescribed by Ward-Perkins (although, according to Reynolds, he must have intended to produce a description). The second section covers the rural sites on the Gebel Akhdar that were visited by Ward-Perkins. The final two sections cover other rural sites on the Gebel Akhdar (sec. 3) or in the Syrtica and Marmarica (sec. 4) that are either known but were not visited by Ward-Perkins or whose existence can be deduced so far only through literary evidence.

Reynolds wrote the introduction, once intended to have been provided by Goodchild. Here she offers an overview of the geography, political history, and people of ancient Libya as well as a short history of Christianity in the region (which is otherwise not often discussed). This is followed by a longer introduction to the archaeological monuments (churches and monasteries), inscriptions, building techniques, problems of dating, sites, and architectural details and subdivisions (apses, floor

pavements, doors, interior walls). She further considers certain features of special interest to particular readers, including baptisteries and martyria and such furnishings as altars, ambos, chancel screens, and reliquaries. This introduction gives the reader a good sense of the historical context and summarizes pertinent scholarly problems or debates. It also elaborates the physical attributes as well as the function of Cyrenaican churches.

This volume is far more than an at-long-last gathering of significant archaeological data. The lapse of decades from its start to finish actually adds to its value since it functions both as a chronicle of discovery and interpretation and as an updated and revised retrospective of the same. It comprises knowledge of the subject from the vantage of both past and present, and also provides directions for future research and scholarship. Although Ward-Perkins' voice very much dominates this work, the supplementary material and amplification added by Reynolds make it an invaluable reference tool, filling a significant gap in the study of North African Christian archaeology. The photographs, plans, and drawings alone are worth the price. This long-awaited outcome is a model of collaboration through time and generations and sets a standard for how to make the best possible use of previously unpublished (but important) research.

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