Studies on the Urban History of Meninx (Djerba)

The Meninx Archaeological Project 2015-2019

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DESCRIPTION:

Meninx was the eponymous capital of the island of Djerba in Antiquity. The spacious seaport, situated on a protected gulf, was famous as one of the main production centres of purple dye in the Mediterranean and developed into one of the largest metropolises in Roman North Africa. In 2015, an archaeological research project was initiated in cooperation between the Institute of Classical Archaeology at the University of Munich and the Institut National du Patrimoine, Tunisia, in order to explore the urban development of this previously little-known ancient site. First, the internal urban structure was clarified by means of a large-scale geophysical prospection. Then, during two field research campaigns in 2017 and 2018, targeted excavations were carried out, which, together with their rich and diverse finds, provided exemplary insight into various spheres of urban life in all periods of the city's history, from Punic times to Late Antiquity (4th century B.C. to 7th century A.D.). In addition, underwater archaeological investigations have for the first time shed light on the harbour facilities of Meninx.

The present volume offers a synthesis of the multifaceted results of these investigations. It has become clear that Meninx, with its regional and supra-regional economic contacts, played a central role for the island, which functioned as a hub between Mediterranean maritime trade networks and the nearby mainland with its trading routes leading into the Sahara. In its role as a centre of production and trade, Meninx was strikingly different from the other Tripolitan coastal metropolises, Sabratha and Lepcis Magna, in that urban life was entirely focused on the sea and its resources.