

# Preface: The Meninx Archaeological Project

*Stefan Ritter – Sami Ben Tahar*

This volume presents the results of a Tunisian-German archaeological project carried out at the site of Meninx, the most important city on the island of Djerba in Antiquity. As co-directors, we conducted this project in cooperation between the Institut National du Patrimoine, Tunis/INP and the Institut für Klassische Archäologie der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München/LMU between 2015 and 2019.

The two of us met for the first time in autumn 2013 on Djerba to evaluate the possibilities of initiating a joint project in one of the ancient cities of the island. Stefan Ritter, after just finishing the publication of a Tunisian-German project conducted in Thugga/Dougga some years ago, was motivated to return to Tunisia to begin a new project, while Sami Ben Tahar who had intensively been working on the exploration of the ancient history of Djerba for many years, was interested in continuing his research in the form of international cooperation. So we met, and during three days of driving around on the island, we came to notice that we not only have similar interests in archaeology but that, as is equally important, we share a similar view of the world and get along well in every respect.

Our reason for choosing Meninx was the striking contrast between the former importance of this city and the poor state of knowledge: Although Meninx was one of the largest metropolises in Roman North Africa and famous for being one of the main production centres of purple dye in the Mediterranean, it was poorly studied in its essential aspects, such as the urban layout, the localisation of the port, and the long history of the city in general.

We decided to start with a large-scale geophysical prospection to gain insights into the internal urban organisation of the city. After concluding a cooperation agreement between INP and LMU and then successfully applying to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft/DFG for financial support, we conducted a magnetometer survey in autumn 2015 (16–28 Oct 2015) which resulted in a large-scale plan of the city<sup>1</sup>. After a short interim period, the application to the DFG for funding a greater fieldwork project was successful, which allowed us to

conduct various closely interrelated investigations. During two six-week field campaigns in autumn 2017 (8 Sept–20 Oct 2017) and 2018 (7 Sept–19 Oct 2018), we carried out excavations at some selected places, extended our magnetometer survey to the city's peripheral quarters, and undertook targeted underwater exploration to obtain information on the harbour structures of Meninx<sup>2</sup>. These campaigns were each followed by a four-week campaign on Djerba to finish the documentation of the finds, which was completed in spring 2018 (28 Feb–28 Mar 2018) and 2019 (22 Mar–19 Apr 2019)<sup>3</sup>.

First of all, we wish to thank Faouzi Mahfoudh, the director general of the INP for his support.

We are very grateful to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for generously funding our project (project number 264557697), and to the Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften/BAdW (Munich) for substantially supplementing the financing support.

Our various activities required many forms of expertise and talent. We cordially thank all our colleagues and collaborators who were working with us on Djerba. In each of the fieldwork campaigns, up to 60 specialists and students were involved in the project who mainly came from Germany and Tunisia but from a dozen of other countries too. They are listed below, and all of them contributed to our results. What particularly fascinated us as the two co-directors was the highly motivated, cooperative, and good-humoured atmosphere within our team, which provided an ideal basis for conducting the project with success. We are particularly grateful to those of our team members who agreed to continue their work by preparing the various results for publication, and who appear as authors in this book.

Special thanks go to the numerous local workers who helped us with great commitment in conducting the excavations and in preparing the innumerable pottery finds in Houmt Souk.

We cordially thank several people on Djerba who made the life of our large team on site extremely comfortable and pleasant: our landlord Jamel Chendoul, whose ›Résidence‹ in Midoun was an ideal headquarter; Sadok Bourkhis who organised the food supply; our

<sup>1</sup> Preliminary report: Ritter et al. 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Preliminary report: Ritter – Ben Tahar 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Further information and numerous images are available on the project's website: <<https://www.klass-archaeologie.uni-muenchen.de/forschung/d-projekte-laufend/meninx/index.html>> (05/05/2021).

cooks Baia Moslah, Nadia ElJerou and Lamia Ben Mas-soud; and, first of all, Rhouma Abjlil (INP Djerba) who took care of all daily logistic matters in a most helpful and efficient way.

Then, we are very grateful to several colleagues from various institutions apart from the LMU, who helped us by providing the necessary specialists, their specialised equipment, and cartographical material: Peter Wasmeier (TU München, Lehrstuhl für Geodäsie), Manfred Schuller (TU München, Lehrstuhl für Baugeschichte, Historische Bauforschung und Denkmalpflege), Arne Weiser (Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft Berlin/HTW, Fachgebiet Grabungstechnik); and Simon Plank (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt/DLR, Deutsches Fernerkundungsdatenzentrum).

We considered it an integral part of our project to make the results available to a wider public in an appropriate way. Parallel to our research activities, we were offered by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit/GIZ the generous financing of an Archaeological Park at Meninx<sup>4</sup>. We started this project in February 2018 with a team of local and international experts, and managed to construct two information points (»Pavillon d'information« and »Plateforme d'information«, see the plan Suppl. 1) where large display panels offer information on the most important results of our research. The park was inaugurated in a well-attended ceremony on 8 April 2019. We would like to thank the GIZ, and in particular Anja Weckwert, for their support which also enabled us to organise three summer schools on different aspects of museology and cultural tourism in 2018, with participants from several countries<sup>5</sup>. We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all the people who helped us to make the GIZ project a success: Nicolas Lamare (Paris, Project Manager), Karin Mansel (München, Education Supervisor), Robert C. Arndt (Buochs, CH, Excavation Supervisor), Bechir Mazigh (Agence de Mise en Valeur du Patrimoine et de Promotion Culturelle, Tunis, Architect), Anouar Ben Maïz (Houmt Souk, Executive architect), Raoudha Hamdani (Houmt Souk, Technical coordinator), Paul Scheduling (LMU, Junior Director), Tobias Busen and Miriam Knechtel (TU München, Concept Supervisors), and Bartlin Schöpflin (LMU, Junior Assistant).

Then, we would like to thank our numerous cooperating colleagues from around the world, who followed

our invitation to join the International colloquium »Perspectives from the Field: Recent Research on the Archaeology of Ancient North Africa«, held in Munich from 13 to 15 June 2019<sup>6</sup>. This colloquium, which was inspired by our results at Meninx and initiated by the two of us together with Paul Scheduling, fully served its purpose: to bring together archaeologists who are conducting field-work projects at different North African sites, in order to compare questions, methods, and results, and to stimulate discussion on future perspectives.

Our particular gratitude goes to Claudia Herkommer, secretary at the Institute of Classical Archaeology of the LMU, who helped us over the years with her expertise and much energy by dealing with the highly complex accounting and other bureaucratic issues.

We are very grateful to our colleagues at the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut/DAI (Berlin) for inviting us to publish this monograph with them, and for their wonderful cooperation in the process of editing. Special thanks go to Philipp von Rummel, Reinhard Förtsch and his team in the IT Department, Peter Baumeister, and Jana Beutler.

Finally, we would like to express our thanks to all the people who helped us in the final phase of preparing the manuscript: Kilian Wolf (TU München) for producing the phase plans; Maria Rüegg (LMU) for taking charge of the digitalisation of the find drawings; Jonathan Griffiths (University College London) for proofreading the English texts written by non-native contributors; and Lena Gabler (München) for unifying the numerous individual texts, illustrations, and bibliographies.

Team members in the Field campaigns 2015–2018:

2015: Jörg Fassbinder (LMU and Bayerisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege/BLfD), Lena Kühne (BLfD), Dennis Beck (LMU), Sebastian Graf, Julian Pimpi (TU München/TUM, Lehrstuhl für Geodäsie), Mekki Aoudi (Université de Sfax), Marwen Ben Brahim, Riadh Ben Brahim (Université de Tunis), Olfa Souissi (Djerba), Rhouma Abdjlil (INP).

2017: Geophysical prospection: Jörg Fassbinder (LMU and BLfD), Marion Scheiblecker (LMU). Trench directors: Nicolas Lamare (Paris), Christoph Lehnert, Robert Peitsch (Universität Bonn), Nichole Sheldrick (Oxford). Engineering Geodesy: Agnes Weinhuber, Max Hofacker (TUM, Lehrstuhl für Geodäsie). Excavation techniques: Tobias Prange, Karl Wachsmann (Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft/HTW Berlin,

4 For further information on the Archaeological Park see <<https://www.klass-archaeologie.uni-muenchen.de/forschung/d-projekte-laufend/meninx/giz/index.html>> (05/05/2021).

5 See <<https://www.klass-archaeologie.uni-muenchen.de/forschung/d-projekte-laufend/meninx/sonstige-aktivitaeten/index.html>> (05/05/2021).

6 See <<https://www.klass-archaeologie.uni-muenchen.de/forschung/d-projekte-laufend/meninx/kolloquium/index.html>> (05/05/2021).

Lehrstuhl für Baugeschichte). Building research: Kilian Wolf (TUM, Lehrstuhl für Baugeschichte, Historische Bauforschung und Denkmalpflege). Information technology: Paul Scheduling (LMU). Survey of the quarries: Dennis Beck (Freie Universität/FU Berlin). Director of the finds department: Karin Mansel (München). Ceramics: Francesca Assirelli, Bianca Maria Mancini (Università di Bologna), Tomoo Mukai (CNRS, Aix-en-Provence). Small finds: Katharina Berz (LMU). Archaeozoology: Joris Peters, Simon Trixl (LMU). Photography: Stefanie Holzem (Universität Bonn). Restoration of finds: Elisabeth Lehr-Stempel (München). Students and other members of staff: Rosa Galusic, Marisol Lang Navarro, Marko Runjajić, Ernst Bartlin Schöpflin (LMU), Linda Stoeßel (Universität Tübingen), Annika Kirscheneder, Tobias Krug, Nathalie Weilbacher (FU Berlin), Salwa Abidi, Yousra Bouabid, Riadh Ben Brahim, Marwen Ben Brahim (Université de Tunis), Mekki Aoudi, Houda Ben Hamida, Khoulood Ghram, Thabet Ghabri (Université de Sfax), Hasna Ben Hadada, Imen Askri, Rym Jrad (INP, Djerba), Olfa Souissi (Association pour la Sauvegarde de l'île de Djerba), Lassad Boumellassa (INP, Gigthis), Hajer Zaghdoud (Musée de Zarzis). Architectural studies: Johannes Lipps, Elisabeth Kammerer, Daniel Richter, Julien Vogel (Universität Tübingen), Katharina Sahm (Technische Universität Berlin). Geology: Vilma Ruppiene (Universität Würzburg). Underwater Archaeology: Tobias Pflederer (Bayerische Gesellschaft für Unterwasserarchäologie/BGfU, Kempten), Max Fiederling, Maximilian Ahl, Michael Heinzlmeier (LMU), Mladen Pešić (International Centre for Underwater Archaeology, Zadar), Abdallah Mateur, Hamza Chouikhi (Ajim, Djerba). Logistics and transport: Rhouma Abjlil (INP Djerba).

2018: Geophysical prospection: Jörg Fassbinder (LMU and BLfD). Trench directors: Marina Apatsidis (Universität Köln), Robert C. Arndt (Buochs/Switzerland), Nicolas Lamare (Paris), Christoph Lehnert (Bonn), Nichole Sheldrick (Oxford), Linda Stoeßel (Uni-

versität Tübingen). Engineering Geodesy: Agnes Weinhuber, Beatrice Waldner (TUM). Excavation techniques: Julian Schierenbeck (HTW Berlin). Information technology: Paul Scheduling (LMU). Director of the finds department: Karin Mansel (München). Ceramics: Francesca Assirelli, Bianca Maria Mancini (Università di Bologna), Tomoo Mukai (CNRS, Aix-en-Provence). Coins: Saskia Kerschbaum (Kommission für Alte Geschichte und Epigraphik, München). Small finds: Salvatore Ortisi, Katharina Berz (LMU). Archaeozoology: Joris Peters, Simon Trixl, Lisa Bauer (LMU). Archaeobotany: Michèle Dinies (DAI, Berlin). Restoration of finds: Elisabeth Lehr-Stempel (München). Photography: Björn Schumann (HTW Berlin). Students and other members of staff: Armin Bektic, Lorenzo Canals, Lena Gabler, Alexander Köppe, Sebastian Kranz, Marco Rossini, Maria Rüegg, Stephanie Schmittner, Ernst Bartlin Schöpflin, Julia Thoïs (LMU); Fatma M'Barek (TUM); Annika Kirscheneder, Tobias Krug (FU Berlin); Ferdinand Wulfmeier (Universität Bonn); Saloua Abidi, Yousra Bouabid, Riadh Ben Brahim, Siwar Esseghir (Université de Tunis); Mekki Aoudi, Samir Ben Hmouda, Thabet Ghabri, Omar Saddoud (Université de Sfax); Imen Askri, Rym Jrad (INP, Djerba); Ali Mansouri (INP, Medenine); Lassad Boumellassa (INP, Gigthis); Zied Msellem (INP, Tunis); Hajer Zaghdoud (Musée de Zarzis); Khaoula Farhani, Fathia Oueriemmi, Marwen Ben Brahim; Olfa Souissi. Architectural studies: Johannes Lipps, Dennis Joch, Elisabeth Kammerer, Daniel Richter, Annika Skolik (Universität Tübingen). Underwater Archaeology: Tobias Pflederer (BGfU), Max Fiederling, Maximilian Ahl, Michael Heinzlmeier, Eric Kreßner, Marko Runjajić (LMU and BGfU), Abdallah Mateur, Hamza Chouikhi (Ajim, Djerba). Logistics and transport: Rhouma Abjlil (INP Djerba).



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