

## Book Review

### LA CITTÀ DEL SILFIO. ISTITUZIONI, CULTI ED ECONOMIA DI CIRENE CLASSICA ED ELLENISTICA ATTRAVERSO LE FONTI EPIGRAFICHE

By Emilio Rosamilia. *Edizioni della Normale, Pisa, 2023. ISBN 9788876427367, pp. 453, 14 colour plates. Price: €40.00 (paperback)*

Kristian Göransson 

University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden  
Email: [kristian.goransson@gu.se](mailto:kristian.goransson@gu.se)

This book aims at presenting the institutions, cults and economy of Cyrene in the Classical and Hellenistic periods through the epigraphic sources from the city. After a brief introduction, the book is divided into four chapters followed by a conclusion. An appendix includes a collection (or *sylloge*) of official epigraphic documents from Cyrene dealing with the economy, the lists of priests which have been securely identified as coming from the city, as well as other texts referred to in the book.

In chapter 1, ‘Cirene, la città del silfio’ (13–40), Rosamilia provides the reader with a brief history of research in Cyrenaica, followed by a very good overview of the history of Cyrene from the traditional foundation date of 631 BC to the end of the Ptolemaic period and its annexation as a Roman province (74 BC). It ends with a useful chronologic summary of the history of Cyrenaica. This chapter thus sets the scene for the subsequent chapters which constitute the bulk of the book. Rosamilia’s work inserts itself in a long study tradition of the epigraphy of Greek Cyrene, which includes the fundamental works by Laronde (1987) and Dobias-Lalou (2000) and the recent online publication of Greek inscriptions from Cyrenaica (*IGCyr*). Since the history of Cyrene is interwoven with the history of the other Greek cities in Cyrenaica, it would have been useful if this introduction had been slightly broader in scope, discussing not only Cyrene but also the other cities. The archaeological excavations at Apollonia by the French mission are mentioned (but not those of the University of Michigan expedition: Goodchild *et al.* 1976), while there is no discussion of the work undertaken at other important Cyrenaican sites such as Taucheira (see Boardman and Hayes 1966) and Euesperides/Berenice, where several teams have excavated over the years, including, most recently, the Society for Libyan Studies Euesperides excavations 1999–2006 directed by P. Bennett, A.I. Wilson and A. Buzaian (see summary in Wilson 2016). Naturally, a full presentation of excavations in the whole of Cyrenaica from the Archaic to the Roman period would have been too long a digression, but a few more examples of larger field projects outside of Cyrene would have been beneficial, especially for readers who are not familiar with the research history of ancient Cyrenaica.

Chapter 2, ‘Epigraphic habit nella Cirenaica greca’ (41–90), introduces the characteristics of the epigraphic habit of the Cyreneans to the reader. The author presents the evolution of the local alphabet and how it was succeeded by the Milesian alphabet in the late fifth or early fourth century BC, before outlining the major classes of inscriptions found at Cyrene. These include decrees, lists of militaries, lists of ephebes and public as well as private votive dedications. Here it is worth noting, as Rosamilia rightly does, that there are no decrees from the two centuries of Battiad monarchy at Cyrene, and from the fourth

century BC we have only the so-called *Stele dei Fondatori* (*IGCyr* 011000). In that respect Cyrene, to a large extent, is a city without decrees despite the extensive excavations of the site’s central quarters and its major sanctuaries that have been undertaken since the 1860s. The chapter also gives an outline of how Cyrene was governed from the fourth to the first centuries BC based on what little evidence there is. This the author does admirably, also discussing inscriptions from neighbouring cities such as Taucheira and Euesperides to illustrate the situation at Cyrene better.

Chapter 3, ‘Culti e sacerdoti a Cirene’ (91–134), is devoted to cults and priests at Cyrene. Rosamilia has compiled a list of the eponymous priests of Apollo from the Classical and Hellenistic periods, numbering almost 100. The inscriptions are carefully examined, and a suggested date is provided for each one. This is indeed very useful for anyone studying the history of Cyrene and will be much appreciated by scholars. He also presents lists of priests from the sanctuaries discovered outside the city at Wadi Bel Gadir, such as the extramural sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone and the more recently excavated sanctuary on the south side of the wadi, where the Italian mission from the University of Urbino has unearthed several buildings including a peripteral temple (see, for instance, Luni 2011).

The final chapter, ‘Iscrizioni ed economia a Cirene’ (135–216), deals with the economic life of Cyrene and its institutions. The bulk of the chapter is devoted to the accounts of the demiurges of the city, which are discussed in detail with a proposed new chronology and a new internal ordering of the inscriptions. Other magistrates and offices dealing with public or sacred spending are also discussed. It is interesting to follow Rosamilia’s discussion of what may have been the main sources of income for the sanctuary of Apollo, with taxes and private sponsoring being suggested as two important options.

After the conclusion (217–222), which constitutes a concise and clear overview of the results of the author’s research, follows the aforementioned appendix which is a collection of epigraphic documents relating to Cyrene: ‘*Delectus Inscriptionum Cyrenaicarum*’ (223–392). With around 170 pages, this *sylloge* makes up a large part of the book and, although these inscriptions are available elsewhere, it is indeed useful for the reader to have them all gathered in the same volume. For all the inscriptions a detailed description of the text is given including measurements of the epigraphic support and of the letters, previous scholarship and interpretations and a translation into Italian.

The book ends with a bibliography, indices, a concordance list for the inscriptions, a map of Cyrene (plate 1) and another 13 plates with photographs and drawings of selected inscriptions discussed in the book. The map and illustrations are of good quality

and are useful to the reader. One could perhaps have wished for more illustrations, such as photos of the excavated sectors of Cyrene and more photos/drawings of the inscriptions discussed. But with the book being in quarto format and the pages already numbering over 400, it is understandable why illustrations have been kept to a minimum. For anyone not familiar with Cyrene, the bibliography contains numerous titles which deal more specifically with the archaeology and architecture of the site, so it will be easy for readers to explore these avenues further.

In summary this book is a very valuable contribution to the scholarship on the history of ancient Cyrene. Anyone wishing to get a grasp of the religious and economic activities of the city, as reflected in the epigraphic material evidence, will find here a wealth of information presented in a clear and concise way. The author has evidently put a lot of effort into the research on which the book is built, and he is to be congratulated for presenting such a fine result to the scholarly community.

## References

- Boardman, J. and Hayes, J.W. 1966. *Excavations at Tocra 1963–1965. The Archaic Deposits, I*. British School at Athens, London.
- Dobias-Lalou, C. 2000. *Le dialecte des inscriptions grecques de Cyrène*. C.E.A.M., Paris.
- Goodchild, R.G., Pedley, J.G. and White, D. 1976. *Apollonia, the Port of Cyrene. Excavations by the University of Michigan 1965–1967*. Department of Antiquities, Tripoli.
- IGCyr = Dobias-Lalou, C. and others 2017. *Inscriptions of Greek Cyrenaica*. Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna, Bologna: <http://doi.org/10.6092/UNIBO/IGCYRGVCYR>.
- Laronde, A. 1987. *Cyrène et la Libye hellénistique. Libykai Historiai*. Éditions du CNRS, Paris.
- Luni, M. 2011. Le nouveau sanctuaire de Déméter et la ‘ceinture sacrée’ à Cyrène à l’époque royale. *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 155.1: 221–47.
- Wilson, A.I. 2016. Euesperides (Benghazi): summary of excavations 1999–2006. *Libya Antiqua* n.s. 6: 131–33.