

## Re-Contextualizing Female Commemoration from the Sanctuary of Apollo at Cyrene

The region of Cyrenaica, located in the easternmost part of modern Libya, is separated from the rest of Africa by desert and from Crete and mainland Greece by the sea. While this did not prevent Cyrenaica from being connected to, and very much a part of, the ancient Mediterranean, the region has been left out of recent scholarship on the commemoration of elite women in North Africa (for recent work on the Latin-speaking parts of North Africa, see Hemelrijk 2015 and Murer 2017). From the second century BCE through the third century CE, monuments by and for women were erected in the civic and religious spaces of Cyrenaica's major cities. As the result of many years of extensive excavation and study, Cyrene is notable among these cities for containing most of the published evidence for elite female commemoration (see Smith and Porcher 1864, Oliverio 1932, and Stucchi 1975). In Cyrene, inscriptions and portrait statues acted as physical representations of local, elite women and served as reminders of their contributions and activities – particularly while holding priesthoods – long after they had occurred.

Within the city of Cyrene, the sanctuary of Apollo was utilized frequently as a space for female representation from a relatively early time in the city's history. The sanctuary went through dramatic architectural and functional changes throughout antiquity. This consideration combined with the less-than-rigorous (or just haphazard) methods of early archaeological investigations in the sanctuary, means that many monuments have been removed from their original locations (for examples, see the findspots of statues recorded by Rosenbaum 1960). Monuments connected to women are no exception and have been further de-contextualized by the research and publication practices of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The aim of this paper is to examine the

collected evidence for female commemorations, both written and sculpted, from this sanctuary and analyze the interplay between these monuments and the surrounding structures.

A major component of this builds upon Silvia Maria Marengo's work in 2007, which securely identified a group of epigraphically attested priestesses from Cyrene as priestesses serving the goddess, Artemis. My analysis begins to re-contextualize these inscriptions not only physically within the sanctuary but also within their social environment. This is particularly pressing as Marengo argues that these priestesses of Artemis served jointly with the eponymous priests of Apollo but does not compare the commemorative habits of the two groups (2007). Furthermore, while research on the sanctuary has acknowledged how these priests of Apollo helped to shape the sanctuary's ever-evolving landscape, no attempts have been made to discuss the monuments by and for women in the same way (Ensoli 2000).

I argue that we can understand more about individual monuments by considering them in the context of the commemorative practices of the community, which in this case means the other benefactions found within the sanctuary of Apollo. This research demonstrates that women's monuments and contributions could echo those commemorations made by and for men within the sanctuary (e.g. through the dedication or receiving of statues, the location/citing of such monuments, and/or the wording of their inscriptions). My examination reveals that from the second century BCE to the third century CE, female commemorative monuments demonstrate the strength of tradition and reflect a sense of belonging among those represented within the sanctuary of Apollo at Cyrene.

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