

The idea of restoring the Hunting Baths in Lepcis Magna was conceived within the framework of the contributions of international universities, companies and institutions involved in and dedicated to the fields of education, culture, and heritage protection.

Restoration of archaeological monuments and sites forms a key part of these contributions and obligations. In this case the decision was taken to restore the Hunting Baths, an important archaeological site in Lepcis Magna, containing stunning frescoes and mosaics representing an important aspect of the daily life of this city during the third and fourth centuries A.D. The choice of this monument was a good one, given its poor state of conservation. Re-establishment of the Hunting Baths was urgently required if the monument was to be saved and preserved for future generations.

The joint initiative of the Università Roma Tre and **eni** in coordination with the Department of Archaeology came at just the right time. The building and in particular its mosaics and frescoes were thus saved from vanishing forever. At the same time these efforts have helped to preserve an important historic part of the monuments of Lepcis Magna and to rehabilitate a site worthy to be a cultural and educational destination for all categories of visitors.

On this occasion we would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to the Università Roma Tre and to the company **eni north africa** – Libya Branch for their initiative to save a monumental building from disappearing forever, for the heightened sense of responsibility they have shown towards our country's human heritage, and for their dedication in shouldering this task. We wish them every success in their efforts to save aspects of the civilizations developed by man through a long history. We also wish to continue this beneficial partnership with these institutions in order to protect the human heritage from the factors that concur to their damage and deterioration.

**Salah Agab**

*Chairman of the Department  
of Archaeology of Libya*

**Mustafa Turjman**

*Head of the Archaeological Researches  
Department of Archaeology of Libya*

Since 2006 the National Oil Corporation adopted an ambitious program whereby the international oil and gas companies operating in Libya are urged to contribute in support and carrying out social projects under the umbrella of the sustainable development programs targeting education and training and development of education facilities and schools, healthcare, environmental protection, and the recovery and promotion of the archaeological heritage. In the year of 2006 a sustainable development agreement was signed with **eni** for a period of 8 years, whereby **eni** in collaboration of NOC and various concerned parties participates in carrying out and supporting social development programs in various areas in Libya.

**eni** is one of the leading companies which undertook to carry out such programs, and with the efforts of all parties and under the sponsorship of **eni** many social programs and projects were realized.

This book in your hand now is the result of this fruitful collaboration.

**Mokhtar Abduldaem**

*Sustainable Development Manager – NOC*

*eni's commitment to the recovery and promotion  
of Libyan cultural heritage*

**eni** is an integrated energy company, operating in oil and natural gas, refining and marketing, power generation, petrochemicals, engineering and construction. It has global operations in 85 countries.

**eni** has been in Libya since 1959, when it obtained its first exploration license in area 82 located 500 km south-east of the city of Benghazi. Since then the company has consolidated its position in the country. Over time it has formed strategic partnerships and positive synergies with Libyan communities. In September 2006, **eni** inaugurated an investment program in Libya aimed at aiding the development of local communities. The program provided for the realization of projects in the field of education and training, environmental protection, health-care and the recovery and promotion of the archaeological heritage over 8 years (2006-2014). This is the context in which the fruitful collaboration between **eni**, the Libyan Department of Archaeology (DoA) and the Archaeological Mission in Libya of the Università Roma Tre has been developed.

Through this collaboration, it has been possible to restore the Museum of Sabratha, built by the architect Diego Vincifori in the 1930s, and carry out a program of measures aimed at the protection and conservation of the Hunting Baths, an important bath-building on the site of Lepcis Magna. Also at Lepcis, the restoration of the magnificent mosaics of the Roman villa of Lebda has been completed, and will be displayed in the new museum pavilion especially created by **eni**. These initiatives are a testament to **eni's** ongoing commitment to the sustainable development of the country in which it operates, a commitment that is also translated, as in the present case, to safeguard and promotion of the national cultural heritage.

Thanks to the contributions of leading experts and scholars in the field, the programs sponsored and funded by **eni** have enabled the revival of the ancient splendor of Libya's rich archaeological heritage which, in beauty and value, belongs by birthright to the whole of humanity.

**Naser Ramadan**  
*eni north africa General Manager*

## Preface

The landscape of the coastal strip of Lepcis Magna, along which the city's western periphery was developed, is characterized by fine sand and a ridge of dunes, ever changing in configuration according to the direction and intensity of the winds and dotted here and there by maritime narcissus (*pancratium maritimum*). The stability of the dunes is ensured only by the roots of the sporadic wild vegetation found here, such as *carpobrotus*, a genus of widely ramifying succulent plants found in desert environments such as that of coastal Libya. Yet these natural defences have had little effect in curbing the growing and rapid phenomenon of the accumulation of wind-borne sand: over the last few decades the sand had literally engulfed the northern rooms of the Hunting Baths, the road and the building uncovered immediately to the west of the bath-building by the excavations in the 1930s, with its consequent inaccessibility from the two northern corridors. The fact that the complex was inundated by sand, and no longer accessible to the public, led the Department of Archaeology of Libya (DoA) to begin a rescue operation in 2008. Formulated in concert with the **eni** oil and gas company, it was aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of the monument. It entailed removing the sand that was threatening to bury the monument and boarding up its windows to stop further wind-blown sand from being deposited inside it. At the same time, the need was felt not only to formulate a long-term programme of building maintenance, but also to gain an updated understanding of the building in terms of the excavations and studies so far carried out, its architectural type, its decorations in fresco, stucco, marble and mosaic, and the factors that had concurred to their gradual deterioration. The present publication should indeed be seen in the context of future restoration measures aimed at the maintenance and refurbishment of the monument, the resumption of excavations to further elucidate its building phases, its architectural characteristics, its collocation in the urban context, and not least the reclamation of the whole area, and its accessibility to the public. It's an area of the ancient city that now seems peripheral to the routes normally followed by visitors and tourists. Separated from the rest of the settlement area by the massive late-antique walls, it is scattered by a sparser conglomeration of ruins where the solid paving blocks of the streets of Lepcis give way to a thick stratum of sand.

These, then, are the motivations that led to the present volume on the Hunting Baths. It does not claim to be an exhaustive study. Rather, its aim is to offer an

updated review of the evidence as the basis for tackling the two most urgent problems posed by the monument: first, that of the restoration of its interior decoration, in particular that of the *frigidarium*, where painted plasters, mosaics, stuccoes and marble decorations concur to furnish a unique context in terms of compositional variety and originality, and second that of the recuperation of the entire monument within a segment of the city scarcely explored, still less published, and neglected as an accessible archaeological site. Deliberately built around the specially realized photographic and archival documentation, the publication is completed by a survey of the *frigidarium* based on the application of 3D laser scanning.

We are conscious that a lot still remains to be done, not least in terms of a detailed analysis of the structures and their stability, and a thorough study and reassessment of the various building phases of the bath-building, as a fundamental premise for the resumption of archaeological investigation of the area. In this sense the present publication can, I believe, offer a sound point of departure.

This book would not have been possible without the support and contribution of many, too many to be separately acknowledged here. But I would like in particular to mention the role played on behalf of **eni** by Luca Cosentino and Angelo Madera, and more recently also by Simonetta Sandri, for having so whole-heartedly supported the initiative and for the commitment that made it possible. I would also like to acknowledge the indispensable role played by the Department of Archaeology of Lepcis Magna at Jabar Matug, which, thanks to its unrivalled knowledge of the archaeology of Lepcis, assumed the task of supervising the fieldwork on site. I would also like to thank the members of the Roma Tre Archaeological Mission, and Andrea Giannantoni who, although not among the authors of this book, did so much to ensure its realization.

The publication was made possible thanks to the support of the administration of Libya's Department of Archaeology, with whom the book's aims and format were discussed and shared. The authors and members of the Archaeological Mission also wish to express their gratitude to the Department of Archaeology of Lepcis Magna, its Supervisor, and its entire staff: to all of them we are attached by a close bond of common interest, common aims, joint involvement in the field, shared experiences and projects, and above all friendship.

**Luisa Musso**  
*Archaeological Mission*  
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BUILDING  
EXCAVATION  
ARCHITECTURE

Hunting Baths, north elevation.



Fig. 1 - The site of the Hunting Baths at the start of the excavation.