



Conservation work on the Cyrene amphitheatre. Photo by John Hurd

# Cyrene, Libya

## Africa's Largest Ancient Greek Site

### Site Significance

Cyrene, a colony of the Greeks of Thera founded in 631 BC, was one of the principal cities in the ancient Greek world. Its temples, tombs, agora, gymnasium, and theater were originally modeled on those at Delphi, home to the most famous oracle in the ancient world. Romanized in 74 BC, Cyrene remained a great city, with over 1000 years of rich history. Only the earthquake of AD 365 and, in particular, the growing aridity of the region brought about a partial decline. Cyrene is considered one of the most important Classical Greek sites outside of Greece as well as in Libya. Yet today, Cyrene is one of the most neglected and endangered UNESCO World Heritage sites in the Mediterranean Basin.

### Project Goals

The program at Cyrene is being developed and implemented through a GHF-led partnership between the Second University of Naples (Italy), the Libyan Department of Antiquities and the Libyan Ministry of Culture. This program is the first integrated project involving Libyans,

Italians and Americans working together and aims to implement the conservation work within a structured training program for site conservators, archaeologists, and site maintenance and park services personnel of the Libyan Department of Antiquities in Cyrenaica.

### Preservation by Design®

#### Planning

GHF has drawn together a team of renowned experts in conservation and heritage management to work with the Libyan Department of Antiquities and observers from the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO, to assemble a management plan for the World Heritage Site of Cyrene. There is presently a need for Classical sites in North Africa to develop good management plans, and it is hoped that this document, when completed, will provide an exemplar for the creation of management plans for heritage sites across the region.



#### Threats

- Lack of formal protection and security
- Lack of funding and expertise
- Looting
- Improper restoration

#### Start Date

2005

## Project Partnerships

- Second University of Naples
- The Government of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
- The Libyan Department of Archaeology
- The Green Mountain Conservation & Development Agency

## Conservation Science

GHF is working with the Italian Archaeological Mission to Cyrene (MAIC) of Second University of Naples (SUN) to carry out emergency conservation of the Greek/Roman Theatre within the ancient centre of Cyrene, the Sanctuary of Apollo. Using the highest standards of technical and exploratory expertise and equipment, this team has successfully carried out the investigatory, feasibility and documentation phases for the restoration by anastylosis of this exceptional structure.

## Community

GHF's partnership with the Libyan Department of Antiquities and the University of Naples creates a 20-30 person Conservation Team comprising Libyan and Italian conservators, architects, planners, engineers and archaeologists to bring Cyrene World Heritage Site up to international standards in conservation, staffing, funding and park services. During the course of the project, Libyan nationals from Cyrene's surrounding area have been employed as both skilled and unskilled labor on site, while university groups from Benghazi and Baida will study the project as a unique case study in both African archaeology and heritage management.

## Recent Accomplishments

- Consolidating nearly 100 damaged stone construction blocks for restoration purposes.
- Cleaning the Sanctuary of Apollo, the amphitheatre and their environs.
- Continued topographic, photogrammetric and CAD-based surveys for the completion of planimetry.
- Digitized cataloguing of architectural elements of the cavea.
- Ongoing training of local workforce in excavation and restoration techniques.



Sanctuary of Apollo. Photo by Stefaan Poortman



World-class Classic Greek and Roman statues.  
Photo by © Global Heritage Fund

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