

PREFACE

This book originated in an invitation from Christian Witschel to deliver a series of Margarete-Häcker Lectures in Heidelberg in 2010. These were subsequently published in German.¹ I repeat here my thanks to those who made my stay in Heidelberg so pleasant and who helped to see the German edition through to publication: Joachim Friedrich Quack, Andrea Jördens, Alexander Puk, Rodney Ast, and Julia Lougovaya. Because the format of that volume restricted both its size and the amount of illustration, it was my intention from the beginning to produce a more extensive English version with richer illustration, and I am grateful to Franz Steiner Verlag for their willingness to permit this.

The larger scale also made it important for the relevant sections to be written by the members of the Amheida team responsible for particular domains, and this has therefore become a six-author book. The authorship of particular sections is clearly indicated, and the pronoun “I” throughout is specific to the section authors, as are the views expressed by them individually. I am deeply grateful to all of them for their punctuality in producing their contributions and revising them. And especially I thank them, along with the other team members, for helping to build a lively intellectual community both during our field season and beyond. My parts of this book have all benefited from numerous conversations with all of them.

Our excavations at Amheida are now a decade old. They have barely scratched the surface of a large and complex site with a long history, of which

1. Bagnall 2013.

only some glimpses are visible so far. This book is thus in one sense being written far too early. But from another point of view, it is never too early to synthesize. The task is often put off too long, and sometimes never happens. As importantly, the work of synthesis helps frame questions for the continuing excavations and makes us confront issues we might have avoided. Because the book is being published electronically as well as in print form, it will be possible to update it regularly.

The electronic version is extensively linked to the project's database (www.amheida.com). We owe this database to the remarkable work of Bruno Bazzani, who has also served as our principal photographer. Except as noted, the project photographs in this book are almost entirely his work.

The excavations at Amheida began as a project of Columbia University when I was a faculty member there, and I am grateful for the support that enabled the fieldwork to begin. Those university administrators who made the undertaking possible are thanked in the preface to *Amheida I: Ostraka from Trimithis* (*O.Trim. 1*). I am deeply indebted also to David W. McLaughlin, the provost of New York University, for his support since I came to NYU in 2007, and to the staff of the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World for their help in many ways. Elizabeth Bulls, the project coordinator during almost all of the first ten years, made many contributions towards keeping it on track; Eliana Katsiaouni has supported the most recent seasons. Ashraf Barakat and Gaber Mahmoud Murad continue to be the mainstays of our operations in Dakhla each year; they have kept us on the road and out of ditches with great constancy and devotion.

Our two press readers have made a number of helpful suggestions for improving the presentation. We owe a great debt to our copy-editor, Sue Philpott, for her work in turning the contributions of six authors into a more unified text and saving us from obscurity in many passages.

In the process of mapping, Amheida has been artificially divided into Areas for convenience in reference, numbered from 1 to 11, frequently referred to in the course of the book. Streets are numbered and designated S1 and so on; buildings are also numbered, B1 being the house of Serenos, and so forth.

Roger Bagnall