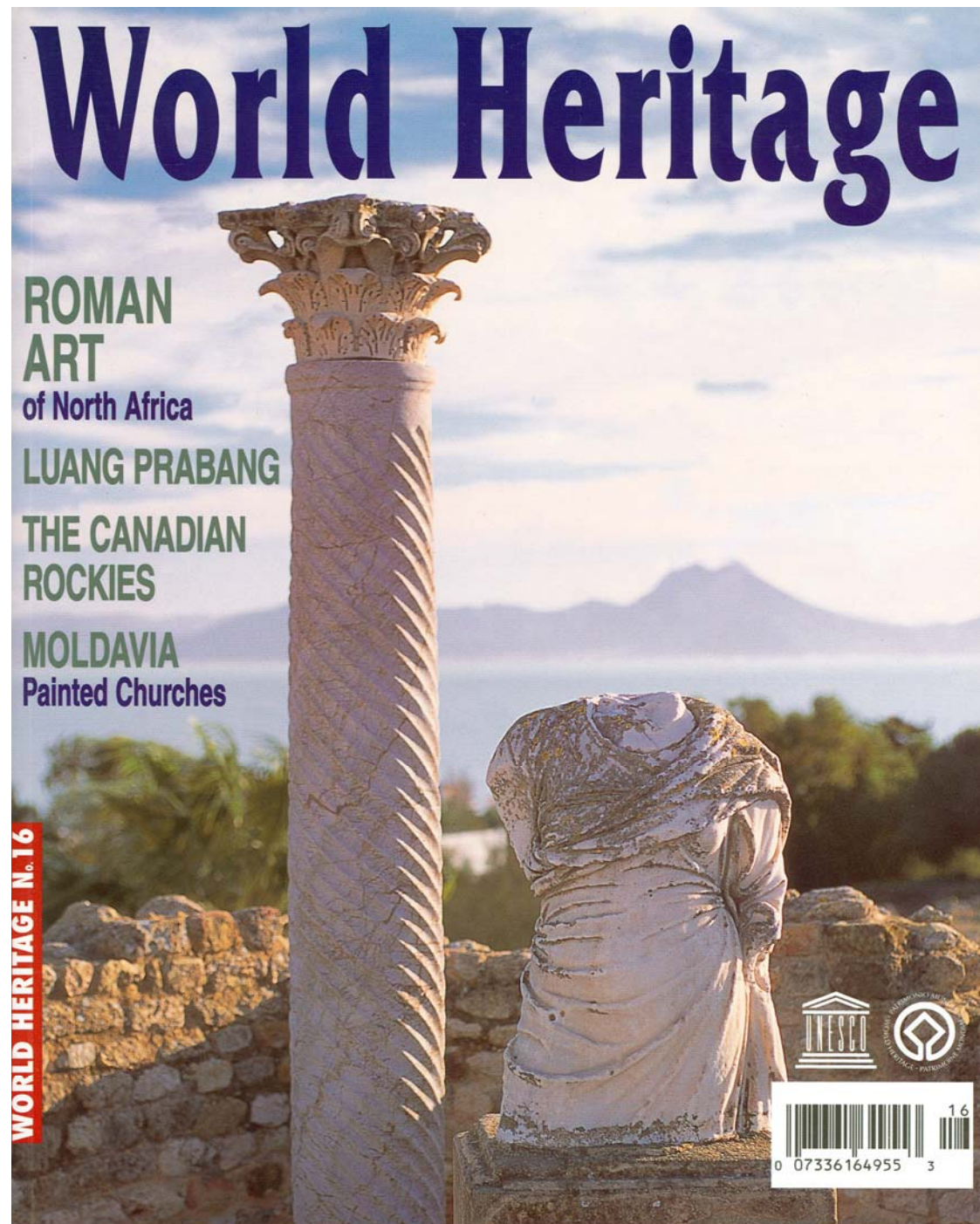


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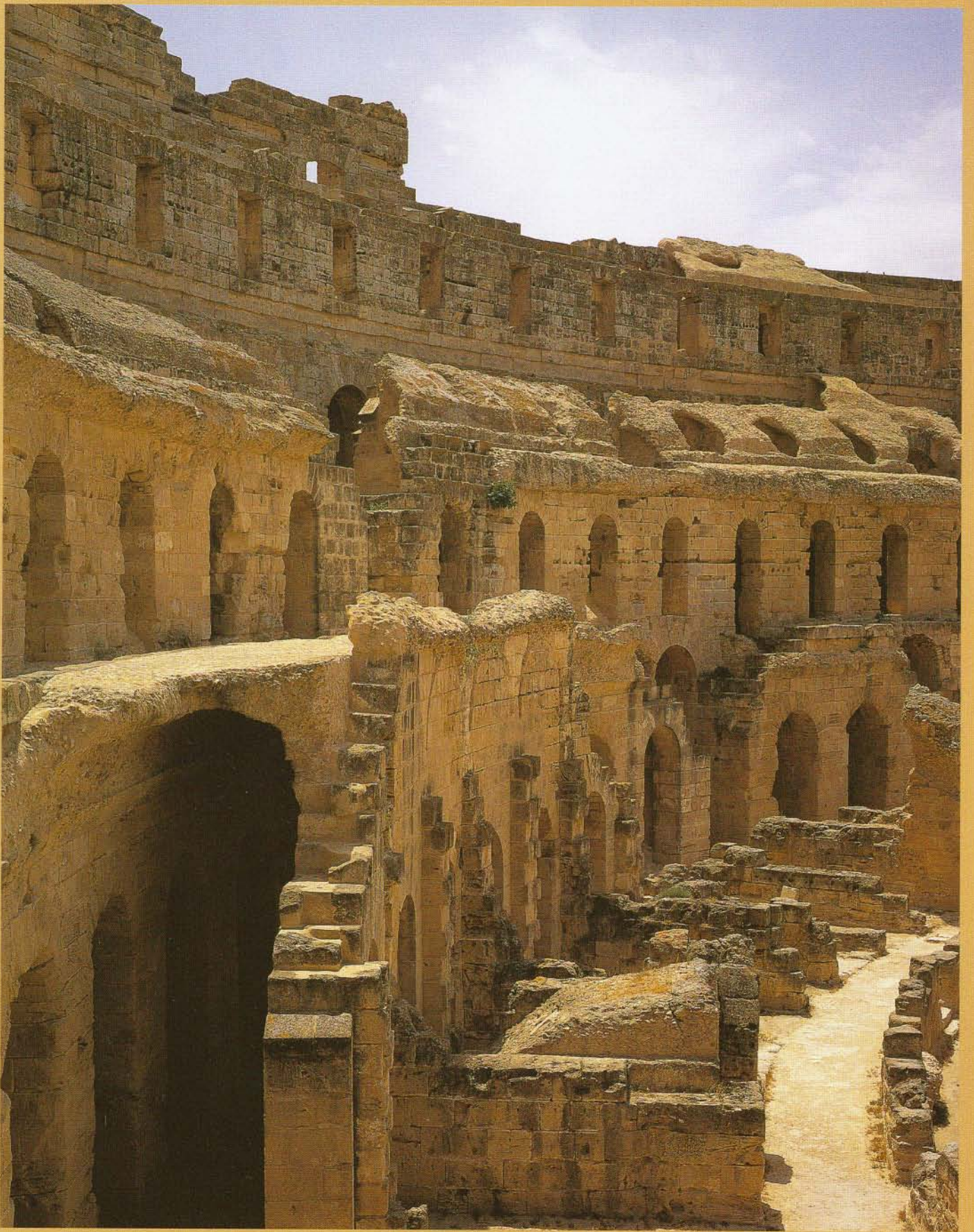
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NORTH AFRICA'S ROMAN ART

■ I T S F U T U R E ■





NOST NORTH AFRICAN towns listed as part of the World Heritage predate the Roman Conquest. They nonetheless display a strong Roman imprint that can be seen in the remarkable remains found in so many places today. Most of these towns were abandoned in favour of other sites at the end of Antiquity, but this actually helped preserve the Afro-Roman urban and

and Mauritania when Rome's empire extended across all of the territories bordering the Mediterranean.

Rome imposed its own image of the city, which was to be administered quite independently following the example of the capital of the Empire. Governing administrations recruited from among the leading citizens exercised prerogatives and attributes within an urban framework

veying, storing and distributing water, public squares, triumphal arches, paved roads and an underground sewage system.

These sites, whose diversity resulted from their geographical and topographical situations, were all modelled on the city *par excellence* that was Rome. This is apparent in the town planning, the diversity of buildings, the architectural techniques, the frequent use of marble and mosaics, the lavish decoration with statues and the common use of inscriptions commemorating the generosity of the donors and the majesty of the emperors who presided over the peace and prosperity of the inhabitants.

The excavations revealed the extraordinary wealth of the site of Carthage as well as the density of the levels of occupation over the centuries in spite of destruction

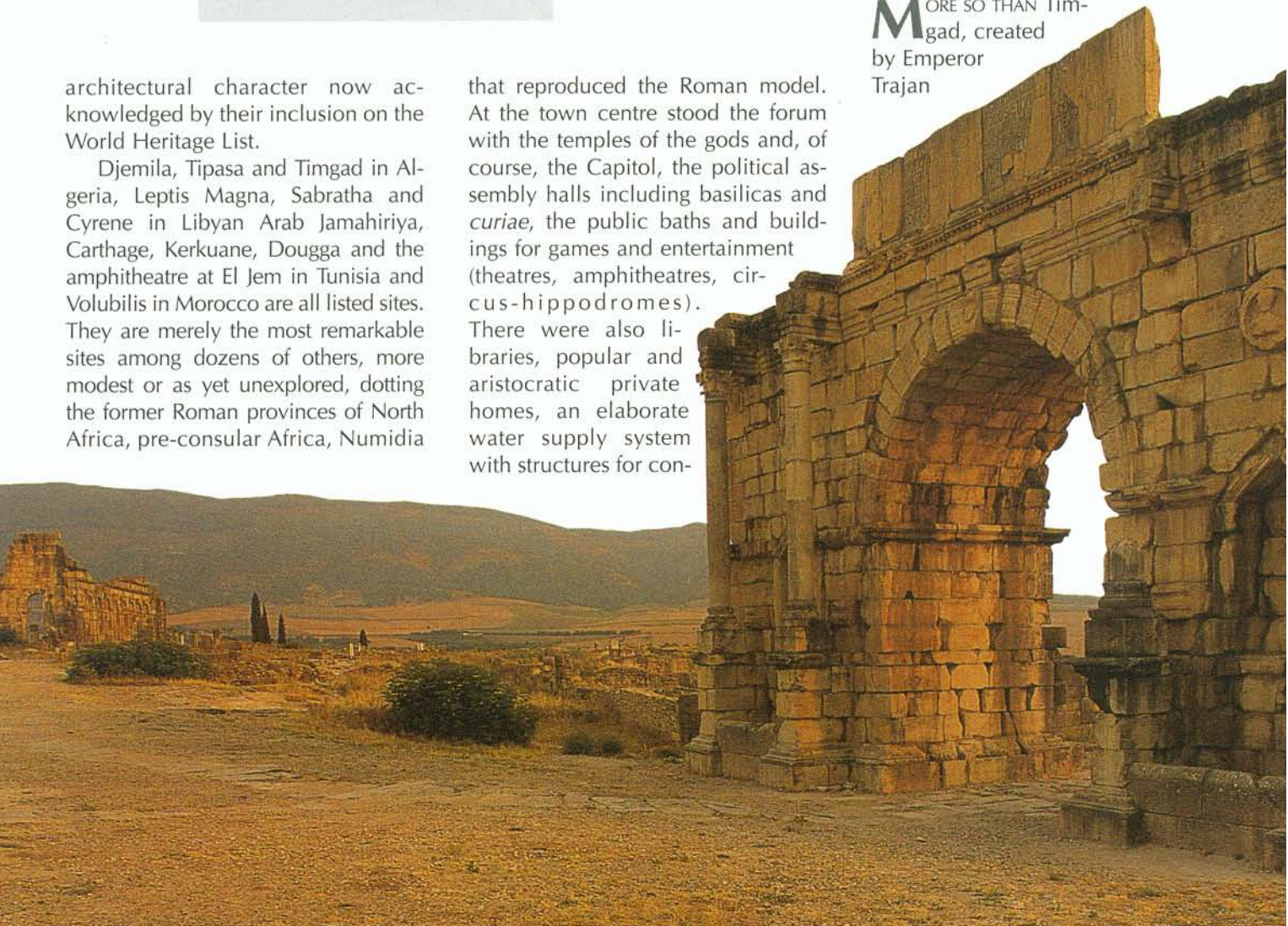
**CARTHAGE,
THE IDEAL MODEL**

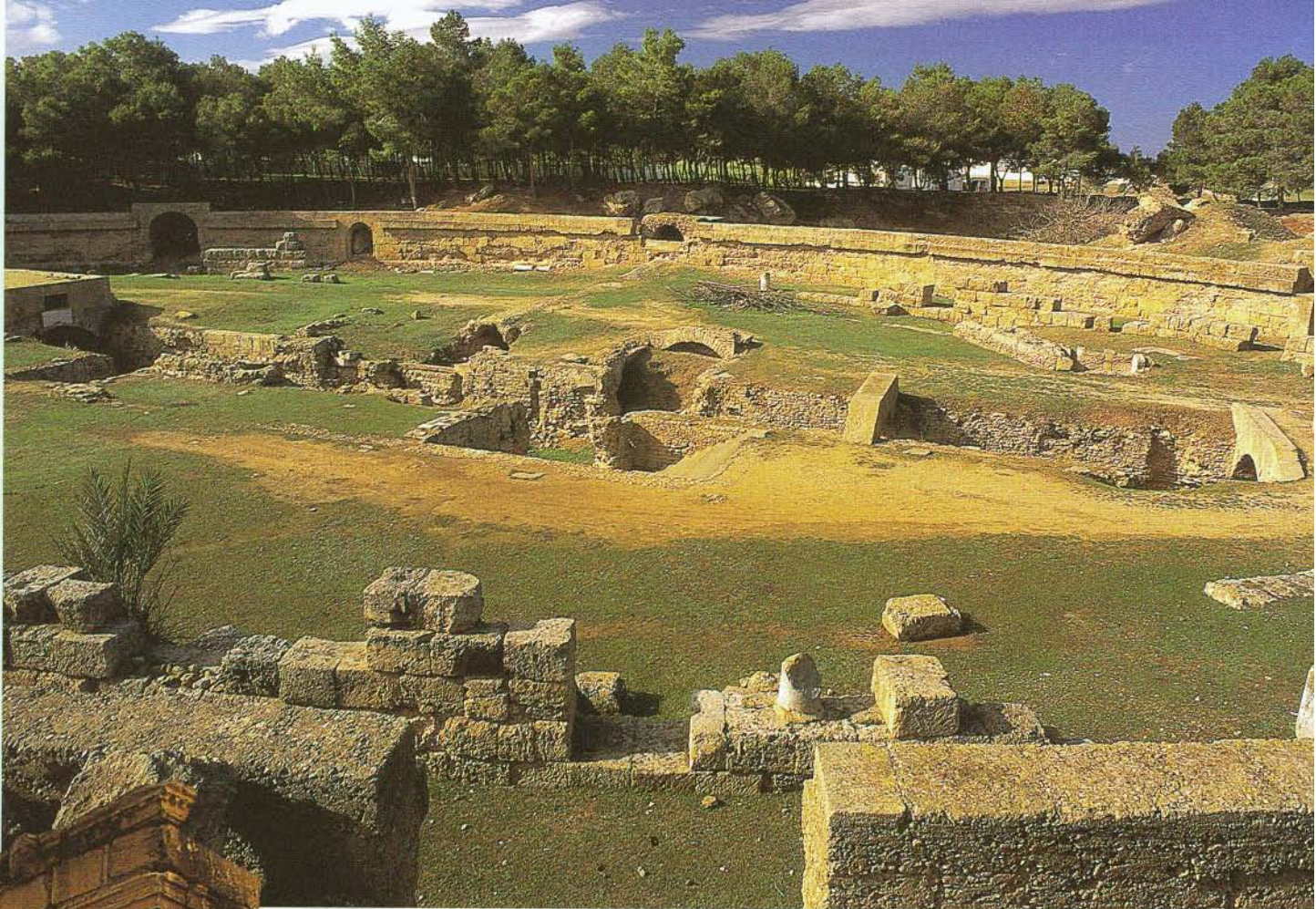
architectural character now acknowledged by their inclusion on the World Heritage List.

Djemila, Tipasa and Timgad in Algeria, Leptis Magna, Sabratha and Cyrene in Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Carthage, Kerkuane, Dougga and the amphitheatre at El Jem in Tunisia and Volubilis in Morocco are all listed sites. They are merely the most remarkable sites among dozens of others, more modest or as yet unexplored, dotting the former Roman provinces of North Africa, pre-consular Africa, Numidia

that reproduced the Roman model. At the town centre stood the forum with the temples of the gods and, of course, the Capitol, the political assembly halls including basilicas and *curiae*, the public baths and buildings for games and entertainment (theatres, amphitheatres, circus-hippodromes). There were also libraries, popular and aristocratic private homes, an elaborate water supply system with structures for con-

MORE SO THAN Timgad, created by Emperor Trajan





for his veterans with all the austerity of a military camp, Carthage offers the ideal model of a Roman city. Established on the ruins of the razed Punic city, this colony was a new capital conceived by imperial architects in accordance with Hellenistic and Middle Eastern theories. The so-called Upper City comprised a vast forum at the intersection of the Decumanus Maximus and Kardo Maximus on the summit of Byrsa Hill, which had been reshaped at tremendous cost in labour. The four major divisions were arranged around it and these were divided into small city blocks. All religious and political monuments, buildings conceived for games and entertainment along with public and private baths found their place in this network and, according to their importance, they formed part of a single *insula* or covered several blocks.

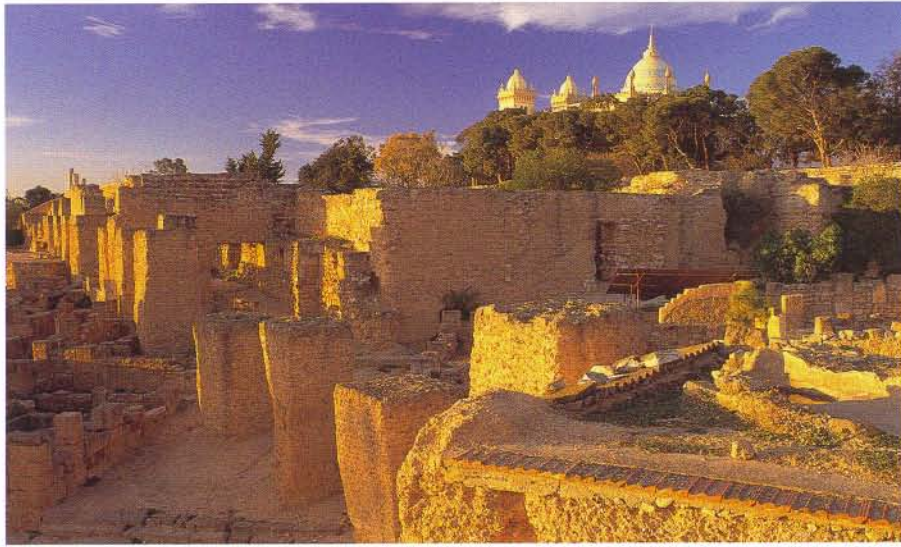
This strict application of the principles of town planning is apparent

On the preceding double page, a Roman road at the Carthage archaeological site, and an impressive view of the amphitheatre at El Jem, both in Tunisia.

Above, the ruins of the amphitheatre at Carthage.

Left, the Triumphal Arch of Caracalla at the site of Volubilis (Morocco).

in Carthage since there was a complete break between the original Punic city and the later Roman city – a break spanning a full century (146–44 BC) during which the site was closed to any form of human occupation.



THE CAPITAL OF IFRIKIYA

ALTHOUGH THE ARAB conquest did not follow this identical pattern, there was nonetheless a break between old and new. The establishment of the new civilization in the former Romano-Byzantine province did not occur in a context of continuity. Through transformation in the Arab empire – Omayyad and later Abbassyd – the cities adopted another religion and a different political system, which resulted in a new social organization and a different kind of economy.

The entire system of small cities dependent on agriculture gradually declined and the towns eventually disappeared. Only a few cities survived, but at the cost of total transformation; they were also well situated geographically, it should be noted. Sousse, Gabes, Béja, Le Kef, Gafsa, for example, survived because they continued to function as places of passage and refuge. But other towns such as Al Qal'a of Beni Hammad and Mahdia came into being only to disappear later along with their short-lived dynasties.

Conquered and abandoned at the end of Antiquity, Carthage gave way

In the other sites, Romanization was a continuous process. In Leptis Magna and Sabratha, El Jem and Dougga, Djemila and Tipasa, Volubilis and all the Phoenician trading posts along the coast, where the Numidian and Libyan cities and localities had been subject to Carthaginian influence, the Roman model was imposed on the inhabitants who aspired to citizenship. In order to become citizens of the empire, they had to create an urban landscape in the image of Rome. *Fora* were built, along with their Capitols, *curiae* and specific monuments embodying the ideal of a city and its comforts. The cities, thanks

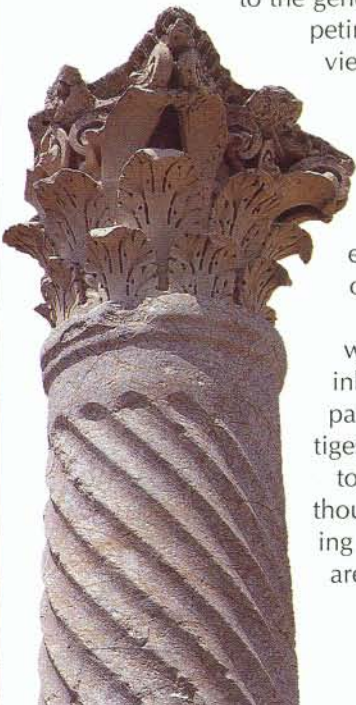
to the generosity of competing benefactors, vied with one another in constructing buildings and decorating public areas. This model of a civilization devoted to the well-being of its inhabitants is apparent in the vestiges of the Roman towns which, although less imposing than Carthage, are more remark-

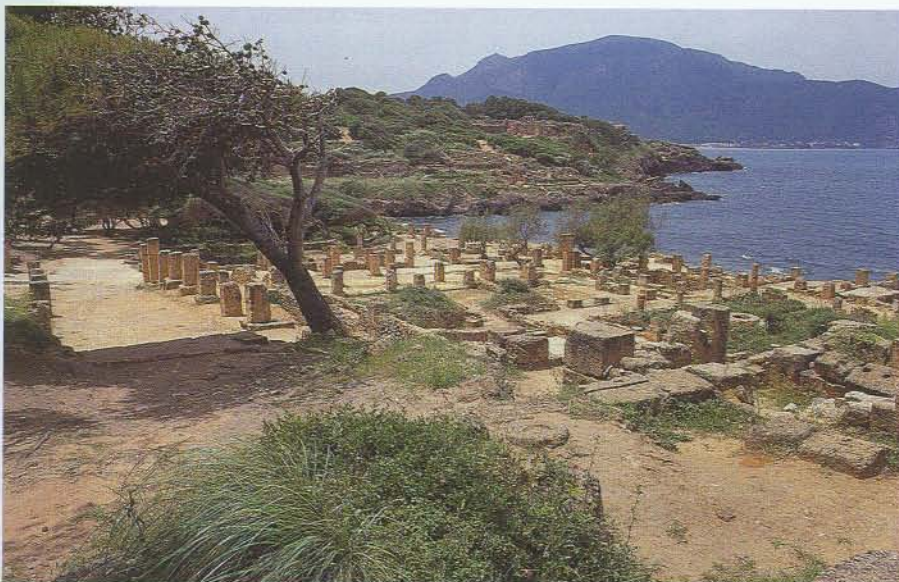
able for the exceptional state of conservation of their monuments. They are generally found further inland. In El Jem, Tipasa, Djemila and Volubilis, the monuments strike one by the scope of their conception, the quality of their architecture and the beauty of their decoration.

In most cases, this model did not appear suddenly but developed gradually during the second and third centuries as the cities grew and their status rose from *civitas* to that of municipality or colony – making them even more like Rome, which always remained the model of the city. With the growth of the empire and the triumph of Christianity, the urban layout was continually changing, expanding or contracting as the monuments were restored or renovated and put to a variety of uses. New architectural forms appeared such as the Christian basilicas, the architecture of which was derived from the judicial basilicas, though they were occasionally installed in pagan temples or even in former public baths. Many monuments whose functions had become obsolete disappeared. The Christian city gradually replaced the pagan, transforming the monuments while at the same time conserving the urban structure, which gradually deteriorated and lost its former splendour.

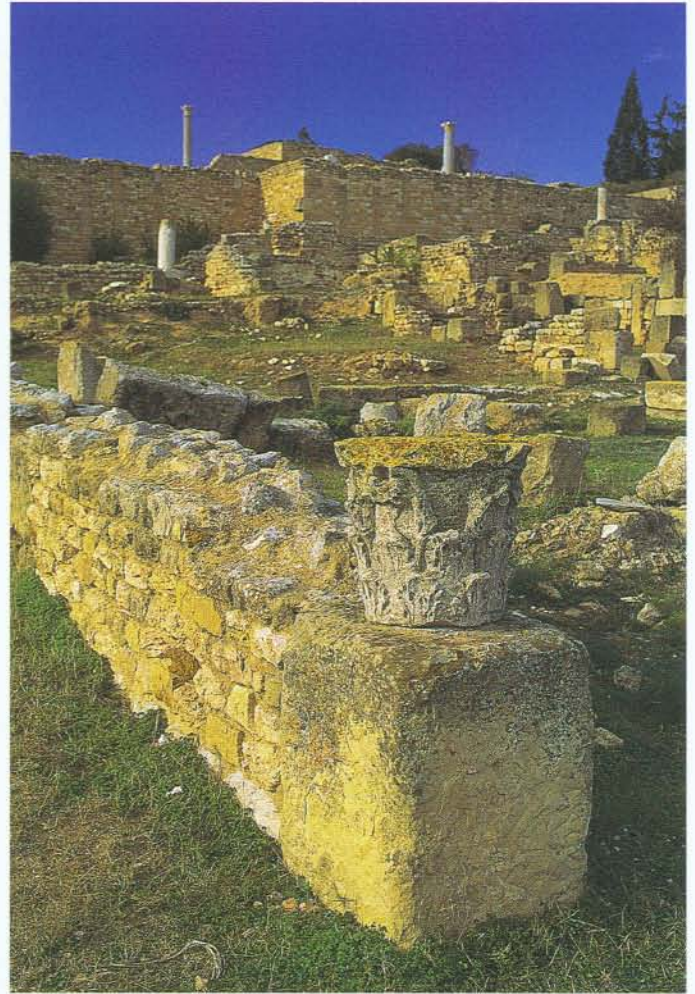
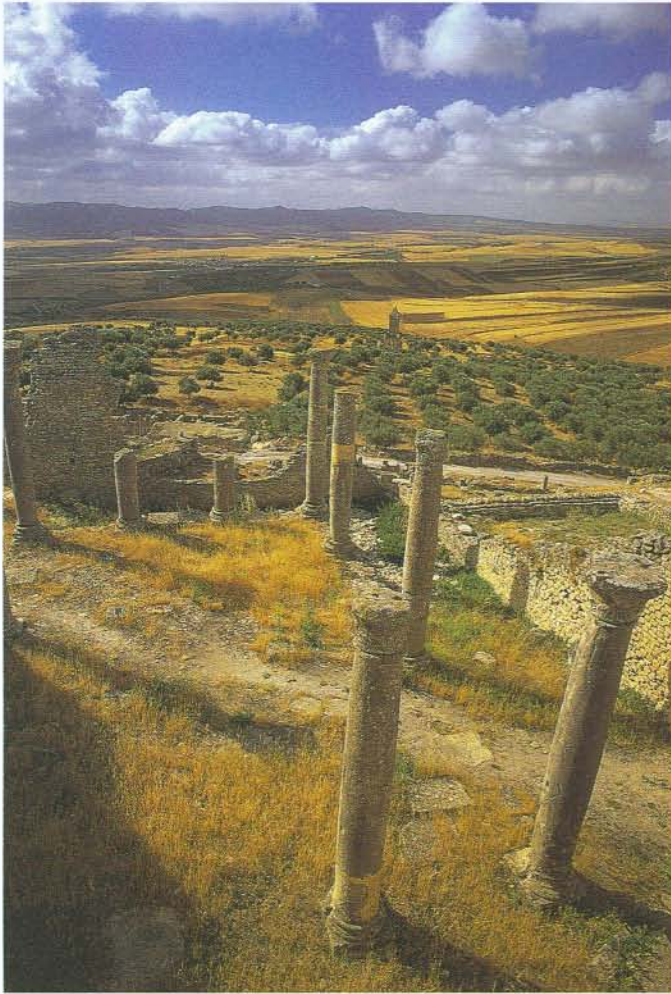
Above, the Punic ruins on Birsa Hill at the archaeological site of Carthage and, left, a magnificent column excavated at the site.

Above right, the great row of columns of the Temple of Apollo in Cyrene (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), and below, an overall view of the coastal city of Tipasa (Algeria).





to Tunis, the chosen Muslim Arab stronghold destined to become the capital of Ifrikiya, the successor to the ancient province of Africa. Building materials were used from the rubble of the former metropolis to construct and fortify the new city. Famous for the quantity and quality of its materials, Carthage was exploited for centuries by Tunis and other towns around the Mediterranean; pillars were torn down, blocks broken up, flagstones ripped out: everything was carried away



Above, the baths at the archaeological site of Dougga (Tunisia), and the remains of a Roman villa in Carthage.

Right, the Temple of Liber Pater dedicated to the god Bacchus on the north-western flank of the Forum Vetus at the archaeological site of Leptis Magna (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), and a mosaic at Volubilis.

and the levelled ground was given over to agriculture.

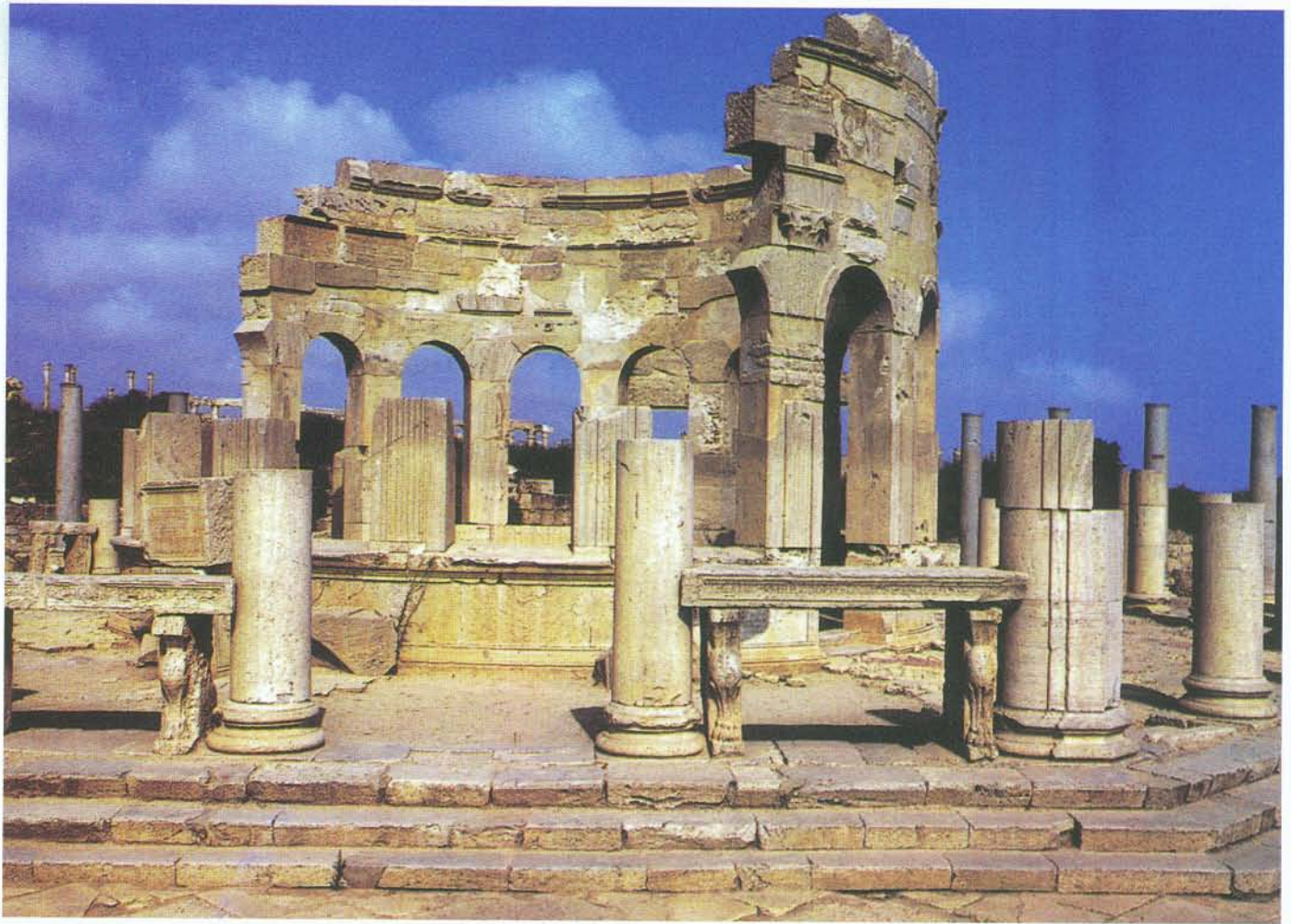
CARTHAGE RESUSCITATED

UNDER THE FRENCH protectorate, Cardinal Lavigerie's ambition was to revive Carthage. The railway line laid down across the site did the rest. Archaeological digs turned up remains and objects, but land development gained ground and the few conservation measures taken were insufficient, if not altogether inappropriate. With the return of independence, urbanization spread and the ancient site was rapidly threatened with suffocation underneath suburban residences.

The government came to the rescue following a large-scale interna-

tional protection campaign sponsored by UNESCO (1972–1992). Teams of archaeologists and historians from a number of countries took part in the campaign. The excavations revealed the extraordinary wealth of the site as well as the density of the levels of occupation over the centuries in spite of destruction. Since 1979 Carthage has been included on the World Heritage List and in 1985, the Tunisian government passed a decree officially listing the site and declaring it a National Park.

In 1991, the decision to create the park was finalized. This was an eminently humanist choice by which the country opposed the inexorable tendency to urbanization and made a cultural decision to reclaim its history – its *entire* history – reaching back



to the origins of the foundation of the city at the end of the ninth century BC. That act of reclamation and identification of Tunisia today with its ancient past stands as a new sign of awareness.

In actual fact, it expressed Tunisia's commitment to protect, preserve and enhance the historical territory of Carthage, to undertake digs and research and to restore and exhibit the remains to its own people and to foreign visitors. The park includes all the stages of a complex process. The protection and improvement plan that has been drafted will have to become the legal and regulatory tools for protecting and managing the site in view of three basic goals: cultural and educational, environmental and social, and economic and touristic.

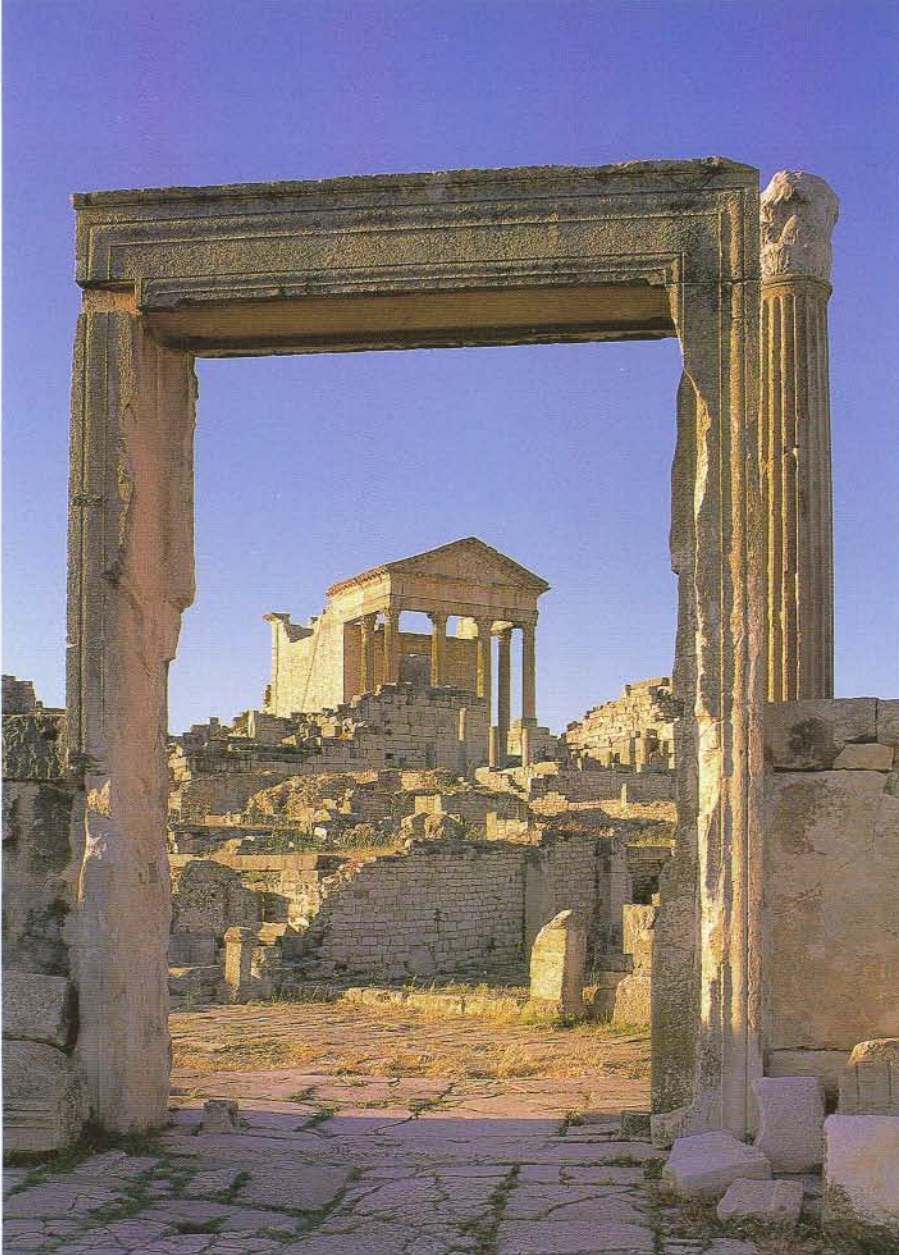
This is an undeniably ambitious project in light of the stakes involved, but it marks a political choice that makes the ancient territory of Carthage a place of memory, chosen as a symbol for contemporary Tunisia. This represents a major choice that will make Tunis one of the few capitals to offer inhabitants and visitors a huge park embracing science, culture and nature.

Until recently the park area was located near the suburbs, but today, due to the city's expansion, it stands as a

conservation zone in the heart of a large conurbation. The northern suburbs of Tunis have been overrun by planned and unplanned structures with only around 300 hectares of the Carthaginian site remaining as an artificially green island, saved not by agriculture, but by archaeology and the state's decision to respect the great historical interest it represents if transformed into an area for culture and relaxation.

It goes without saying that undertaking such a project is difficult and involves risks.





Right, the impressive theatre of Sabratha (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya); the front of its exceptional stage consists of three floors of Corinthian columns. Left, the Capitol, seen from behind the door of the Anonymous Temple in the city of Dougga, and (below) a general view of the Algerian city of Djemila.



The population, in its pursuit of ever more buildings, cannot readily accept that prime land should be protected from urbanization. Speculators covet the site as well, and have submitted plans for ‘cultural tourism’ projects that would allow them to acquire land whose value has been heightened. The state’s decision to create a park requires funding and makes completion a priority.

The case of Carthage should not prevent one from taking a look at the current situation of other archaeological sites on the World Heritage List. Although their situation is not as complex or urgent, they are just as much a cause for concern. In this changing world, no site is safe from real or hidden threats and conservation measures may prove to be insufficient. It is also essential to guard against threats by anticipating events and proposing alternatives.

There can no longer be any absolute safeguards as such. Agricultural improvements, widespread land development and land planning projects devised by central or regional governments have led to a blurring of distinctions between archaeological digs and deep-ploughing the land for planting, building developments or large-scale public amenities. There is a pressing need to stake out the limits of archaeological sites and to remove them from development areas.



For the nationally and internationally important World Heritage sites, such measures do not suffice, since opinion now demands that the part of the public domain with scientific and cultural vocation be improved and made available to society – in other words, that it also serve a useful purpose.

Like other sectors drafting land-use plans and programmes for land development, archaeological sites must be governed by plans ensuring their protection and enhancement. Only the process set in motion by actions thus recommended will ensure the survival of the sites by promoting their conversion. Such actions may include excavations and land clearance, studies and publications, consolidation and restoration work, not to mention the exhibition of remains and objects so that the public may appreciate the sites and, by developing awareness, defend and preserve them.

AT RISK OF LOSING THEIR SOULS

ACTUALLY GETTING these operations and actions under way requires more than expert studies: funds invested must return a profit. Herein lies the crux of the problem inherent in site enhancement funding.

In theory, archaeological sites are public assets and thus come under the responsibility of the state. But since the state is primarily engaged in crucial investment programmes aimed at satisfying the basic needs of the population, site enhancement is not the sole priority – far from it – and the sites may even be threatened by official large-scale infrastructure programmes. So they cannot be left as they are. Only enhancement can provide a counterbalance in this situation. All the more so since improvements in local living conditions and the

tourism boom inevitably imply more visits to the sites.

The problem of state financing must not obscure the potential of funding by international financial bodies and multinationals concerned with the heritage recognized by state governments and often by UNESCO as well.

But if heritage falls merely into the financial domain, it will be subject to the same constraints and methods as other sectors and will have to function in accordance with the principle that a project must be profitable to be 'bankable'. There is indeed cause to fear that the financial criteria applied in this realm may be those that capitalism has already imposed elsewhere on natural resources.

There is every reason to fear that those with the capital will call the shots, selecting sites in terms of profitability and turning them into cultural products merchandised by means of powerful communication and dis-



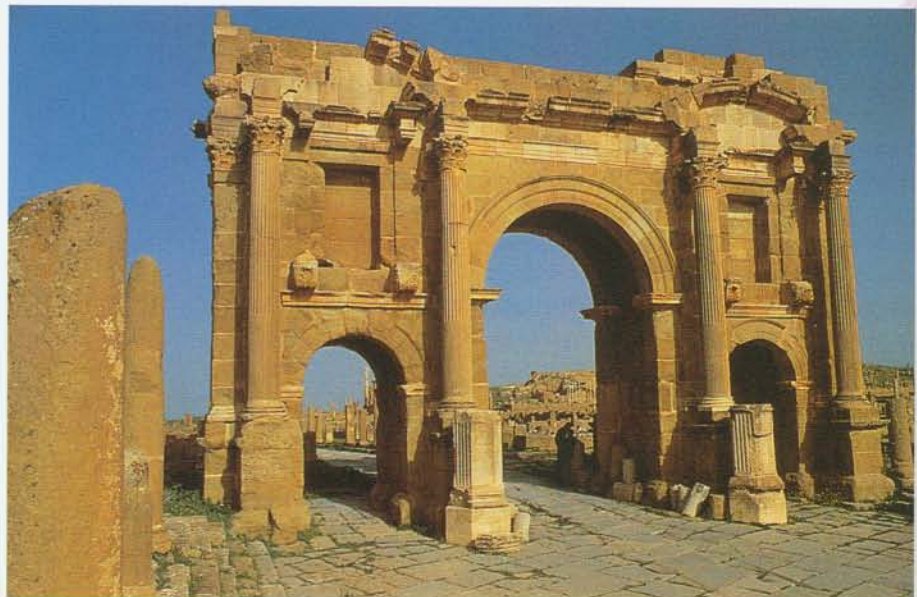
IN ADDITION TO **CARTHAGE**, ten other archaeological sites from North Africa's ancient past appear on the World Heritage List.

In terms of origins, **Kerkuane** is an exclusively Punic site that is consequently pre-Roman. It is the only Phoenician-Punic town whose remains have been unearthed. Before becoming part of the Roman empire,

Leptis Magna and **Sabratha** were Phoenician towns, while **Dougga**, before being Roman, was a Numidian town subject to Punic influence.

The same is probably true of **Djemila**, **Tipasa**, **Volubilis** and **El Jem**, which must have been modest localities, traces of which are found in the names that survived Romanization. Only **Timgad** was a Roman creation ex

The monumental Triumphal Arch with three spans constructed in Timgad (Algeria) during the reign of Septimus Severus, where inscriptions dedicated to his son and successor Caracalla may still be seen, and Punic ruins at the archaeological site of Carthage.



nihilo, originally military, subsequently civilian. **Cyrene** was more clearly within the Greek field of influence under the Empire and El Jem's listing involves no more than an amphitheatre.

Sabratha and Leptis Magna were among the Empire's great maritime cities whose hinterland was rich in olive groves. Leptis Magna, home town of Emperor Severus, benefited from imperial generosity that endowed it with imposing architectural decoration. Buried beneath the sands, it escaped pillage; having been gradually cleared, the city's remains are being restored and enhanced.

El Jem (the Thysdrus of Antiquity) owes its reputation to a great amphitheatre that still stands forty metres above the surrounding town. This is the most striking sign of the prosperity of a town whose archaeological riches, particularly the mosaics, are still being uncovered. It owed its prosperity to a location in the centre of an olive-growing region, and it was endowed with a network of roads reaching out to many different ports on the coast of the Sahel whence oil was exported.

Dougga (formerly Thugga), on a steep hillside slope, is not built according to an orthogonal plan; instead it is adapted to the nature of the terrain with traffic flows smoothly channelled and with the monuments arranged to enhance the Capitol. The four grooved pillars supporting the pediment of this monument still dominate the site,



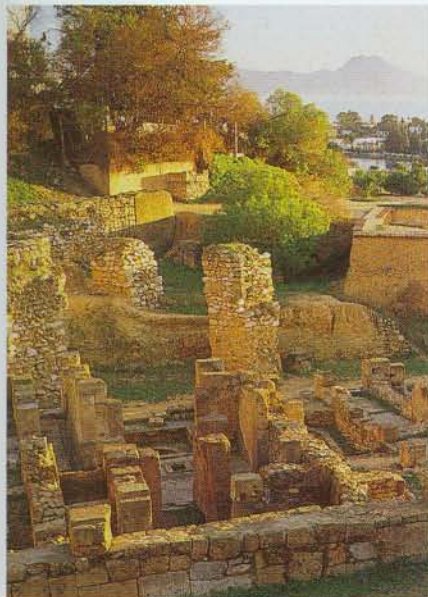
while the Temple of Caelestis can be seen as one strolls through the olive groves. The famous royal Libyan-Nu-midian mausoleum is a reminder of the city's antiquity.

Like Dougga, Jemila (formerly Cuicul) is set in the mountains. It is another example of how Roman town planning was adapted to the location of the sites. Excavated and restored, it offers a beautiful example of an urban plan that adjusted thoroughness of conception to the lay of the land. The great variety of monuments allows visitors to discover the life of a provincial city of the empire.

Timgad (formerly Thamugadi), excavated at the end of the nineteenth century, is the prototype of a city built on a grid pattern. Originally covering about ten hectares, it was later increased to sixty hectares. Although it was a complete town from the start, it continued to grow, acquiring some extraordinary constructions such as the library and streets lined with porticoes.

Tipasa, a magnificent site overlooking the sea, was long surrounded by walls. An entire district of villas has been cleared. Founded in Punic times, it survived until the end of Antiquity.

Volubilis, the most important city of the Mauritanian Kingdom, is noteworthy for its triumphal arch, and, above all, for houses paved with mosaics and for statues.



tribution networks – to the exclusion of all other considerations, as is already the case with other products.

Sites on the World Heritage List already represent an attractive, high quality and extremely varied selection of 'quality-controlled products' that need only to be taken in hand. This sort of management threatens to turn into an actual domination of heritage which, once it becomes a commercial product, is in danger of losing its soul. Heritage is not merchandise. It embodies the identity of a country and a people and remains a vehicle for precious values whose ideological and emotional content is both potent and diffuse. It is obvious that between the scant interest heri-

tage survival arouses at the moment and the excess of zeal that one day threatens to become out-and-out exploitation, the future of world cultural heritage remains uncertain. Today, things are moving at an ever-faster pace. This is more than sufficient reason for UNESCO and the World Heritage Committee, guided by the principles commanding their foundation, to remain attentive to the fate of the only area that has not yet been absorbed into the world economic system.

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