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Benghazi

Through The Ages

The Present volume is the first of a series of three which treat the history and development of Benghazi from the earliest times to the present day.

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First Editlon

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INTRODUCTION

Although occupied since ancient times Benghazi's development has been slow and erratic. Almost certainly founded by Greek settlers moving down from the Jebel some time before 515 B.C. no certain reasons are yet known for what was then Euesperides. In the third century B.C. the city was re-founded and re-named Berenice, in honour of the Cyrenaican wife of the Egyptian king, Ptolemy III. (Probably the effectiveness of the original defensive site weakened with the silting up of the lagoon and a transfer became inevitable.)

The recorded history of both the old and new centres is extremely scanty: the remains of the site of Berenice, upon which modern Benghazi has developed, have been swallowed or overlaid by the Islamic city which has developed since the 15th century. Euesperides was mostly obliterated and what survives lies under the Muslim cemetery of Sidi Abeid. In neither of its phases did the city compete with other Greek or Roman centres on the Jebel. It never became capital of the Pentapolis, or the Five Cities of Cyrenaica.*

The Arab conquest in the seventh century brought a new mode of life to Cyrenaica. Berenice's city walls, dating from Ptolomaic times but reconstructed in the sixth century A.D., were no longer necessary, and with the fortified farms and military outposts fell into disuse. Agriculture on the plain and plateau was likewise unnecessary to nomads and city life lost

* At the time of the submission of Cyrenaica to Alexander the Great the Five Cities were Cyrene, Barca, Teuchira, Euesperides and Apollonia.

its support. Within two or three centuries of the invasion Berenice became one more ruined site and so remained until the middle-fifteenth century. The revival was eventually initiated by Tripolitanian merchants trading between Tripoli and the eastern parts of Cyrenaica.

However, the name **Bernik** from Berenice was still used by Arab geographers until the second half of the sixteenth century, when the name Marsa Ibn Ghazi appears. Ibn Ghazi was a Muslim saint but all that is known of him is that his grave lies somewhere in Benghazi's main cemetery, Sidi Kreibish. His name was perpetuated, and received surprising prominence, when the Turkish administration chose the settlement round his tomb as the seat for the provincial governors, but the town itself benefited very little and continued to depend upon the trading activities of Misuratans and Tripolitarians.

When the Italians took over the Cyrenaican littoral in 1911 Benghazi, though boasting a castle, a Great Mosque, a municipality and a prison, was still a small unplanned town, its mud buildings housing a population of under seventeen thousand. Its 'suburbs' were limited to a shanty town in the north and a few scattered agglomerations around the marabouts' tombs in the south-east. There were no metalled roads or railways of significance and land communications between Benghazi and what was to become Berka were only developed by the Turks in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Benghazi was merely a small isolated centre with no profound urban characteristics yet the Italians were surprisingly enthusiastic about the continuance of the political status of Turkish Benghazi. The harsh surrounding landscape with its almost continuous belt of salt-marshes backed by a semi-arid infertile plain did not deter them and so the classical European outlook of choosing a capital in the Jebel, was not revived. The African face of Benghazi was accordingly replaced by what was thought to be a characteristic face of the motherland.

Benghazi's spasmodic development now gained a little momentum, even though military and political circumstances showed that the Italians had underestimated the scale and stubbornness of native resistance. The new European Benghazi was not built as easily or as quickly as the Italians had envisaged: in fact, for the first time since the Byzantine period Benghazi had to be given a defensive wall. Early developments tended to be military in nature and this factor, combined with the disadvantages of available sites for planned urban development, tended to make for slow progress and a limited scale. Even so the Benghazi of today owes much to Italian planning and initiative. Its greatest handicap is that the old has remained along with the new and has inevitably hindered comprehensive development.

The Italian plans showed a generous, even extravagant expenditure of resources. They introduced a new civic concept in a determination to defeat the intimidating landscape. They had accordingly no option but to reduce the surrounding areas of salt-marsh and to create a harbour. Radical transformations in the Arab quarter were also essential but insufficient space was created to give the Italian 'Piazza' its conventional importance in the new town. When the Municipality Square was redeveloped it simply acted as a buffer between the Arab town and the new Benghazi. The square is now virtually closed to traffic from all but the western direction.

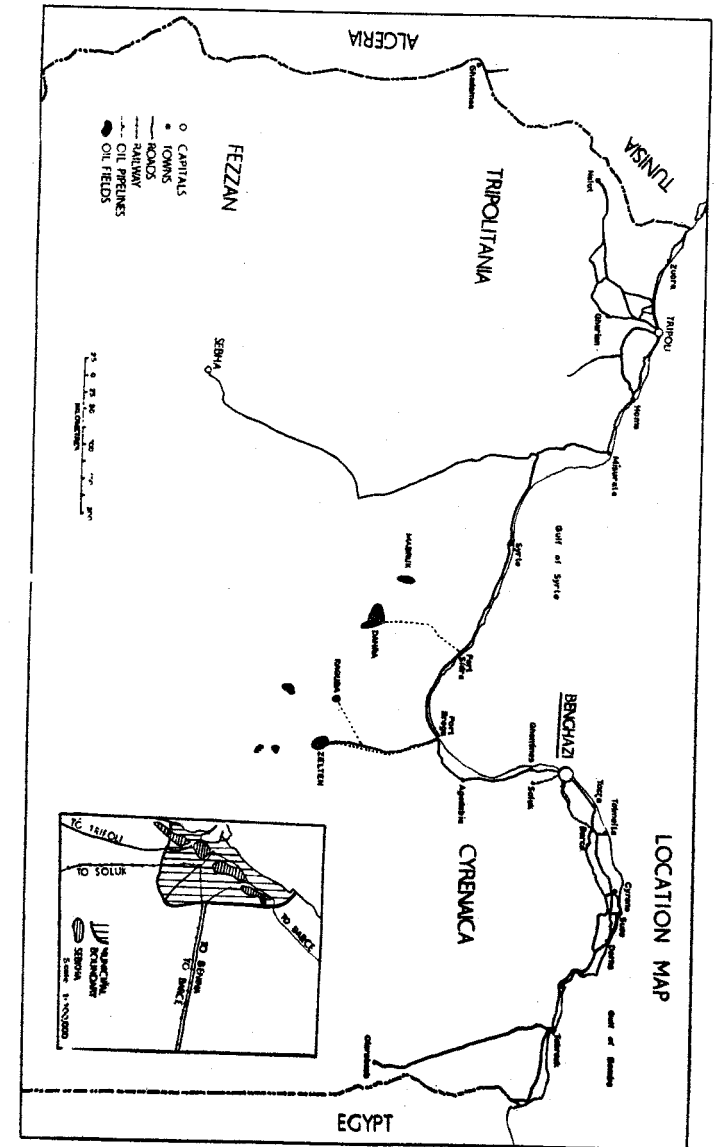
The Italian scheme made Benghazi the most important town in Cyrenaica and second only to Tripoli in the whole of Libya, but by the end of World War II much of Italian Benghazi had been devastated. Though independence fulfilled lost and long-fought-for aspirations, reconstruction and development required basic resources which unfortunately did not exist. It is true that Benghazi became the first national capital within ten years of the war's end, but it is equally true that the face of the city remained almost as ruined as it was when the last German vehicle drove off for the last time. Had it not been for the discovery of oilfields in the Syrtic area almost a decade after

independence the present condition of Benghazi would no doubt have been little different. Benghazi's location gave it a considerable share in the oil-companies' expenditure during the early years of exploration, thus initiating a second period of expansion. (See Figure 1.)

It has proved unfortunate that the Italians failed to see the African side to Benghazi and so allowed two adjacent but divergent cities to develop. The recent growth of the city has been in terms of a combination of sophisticated westernised villas and multiple storey buildings next to, if not interspersed with, Arab buildings and shanty towns. Airport and harbour developments have preceded drainage facilities and zoning has not yet been established. The city is a complex of extreme wealth and extreme poverty, resembling most other towns in the Arab world, like Khartoum, Baghdad and Marrakesh. However, of the towns along the Arab Mediterranean coast, Benghazi is unique for its unfavourable position and poor hinterland. Alexandria with Lake Mariut to its south alone compares. The population of Benghazi is fortunately only one-tenth that of Alexandria, one-eighth that of Algiers, one-sixth that of Tunis, one-fifth of Beirut and one-third of Tripoli.

The boundaries of the city were laid down by the Municipal Laws of 1953. From the coast to the north-east the boundary follows a line one hundred metres north of the track between the fort of el-Munastir and that of el-Nakhil on the main road to Barce. A straight line from this point south to the fort at Fuehat is the eastern boundary. One hundred metres south of the ring road between Fuehat and the sea is the southern boundary, while the Mediterranean naturally forms the western boundary. The approximate municipality area, therefore, is thirty square kilometres. The developed area covers about one half of this municipal area while salt-marsh accounts for about one tenth. The city proper is small — two square kilometres in all. The suburbs of Sabri, Sidi Hussein, Berka and Fuehat account for most of the developed area.

Despite its poorly documented history and its unfavourable position, despite its fluctuating role and its present awkwardness Benghazi is a phenomenon well-worth studying. It might be taken as a symbol of Libya's own history, and as a portent of promise.



CHAPTER ONE

POSITION AND SITE

Benghazi is located on the Mediterranean coast almost half way between Tripoli in the west and Alexandria in the east. The exact position of the city is $32^{\circ} 11'$ N. and $20^{\circ} 3'$ E. Its hinterland is made up of a semi-arid flat plain, known as the plain of Benghazi, which varies in width from north to south according to the divergence of the interior escarpment and the coast line.

Its siting, especially from the economic point of view, has been unfavourable throughout the history of the province, and this may help explain why its role, until recently, has been a relatively insignificant one. The nearby Jebel area has always played a more effective and decisive role in Cyrenaican history and capitals have tended to evolve there. The first capital was at Cyrene, which more or less held the distinction until A.D. 287 when the Romans transferred it to Ptolomais (Tolmeita). Later, in the sixth century Apollonia (Susa) became the capital. Subsequently Barca (el Merj) assumed the leadership under the Arabs but was later rivalled by the Fatamid Agedabia because it lay closer to the inland caravan route running from Egypt to the Maghreb. Benghazi seems to have become the Turkish capital simply because it was their first landing place and the Italians followed suit for political and military reasons. After a brief return to Agedabia in the 1920's and a further period in Benghazi the capital is now being transferred by the Libyans back to the Jebel at Beida.

The story of Benghazi then, from its earliest days, would seem to be no more than a series of politically determined factors operating without much economic support until very recently, when oil was discovered. (And even here there is the possibility that Benghazi may lie too far away from the major oil-fields.) Despite the fact that it supports one third of the provincial population Benghazi is still cursed with an unfortunate position. The main factors are her poor hinterland and difficulties of communication. Other negative factors, such as a poor harbour for large ships and a lack of central building land, have been recently counteracted, but it was not until the late thirties that Benghazi gained a bitumenised road and its (now former) railway.

The Plain of Benghazi

The Benghazi plain is roughly triangular in shape and widens towards the south as the escarpment and coastline diverge. The escarpment represents a post-miocene shoreline and the elevated area behind the scarp is known generally as the Jebel Akhdar. Any southern limit to the plain must be arbitrary as it mingles north of Agedabia with what is known to the Arabs as Barca el Beida, or 'White Cyrenaica', so called from the sandy nature of the soil. A line from Antellat to Zwetina on the coast is generally reckoned as the southernmost boundary of the plain.

The plain varies in width, therefore, from about four kilometres at Tocra to about twenty five kilometres in the Benghazi area. South of Benghazi the width increases rapidly until the plain is swallowed by the Syrtic area. The coast is bordered by a beach and wide dune area giving way to sea-level salt-flats on the inland side of the dunes. The plain in general rises from sea-level to four or five hundred feet at the piedmont and has been variously dissected by erosion. The resulting wadis scattered along its length are usually dry and although they flow in the rainy season, little of the run-off reaches the sea. The two largest wadis are Gattara and Ngar and the former,

which is also known as Hauari, can occasionally discharge serious flood-water into the flat lands surrounding Berka and Benghazi, since its catchment area covers a large part of the Jebel backing Benghazi. On the whole the plain is infertile because of the lack or poor quality of subterranean water. Except perhaps in the immediate surroundings of Benghazi the plain is best developed to the north.

The soils of the plain are variable in depth and character. Agriculture is therefore confined to the scattered tiny oases where both water and a reasonable depth of soil are found. Generally, as at Benina, Fuehat, Soluk and Sidi Khalifa the soil colour is reddish, but it can vary in colour between pink and reddish yellow. The physical composition of these soils is dominated by sand, which amounts to between twenty five and eighty percent of the total. Organic matter is rarely more than five percent. The reddish colour of the most important soils is due to the fact that they were transported, either by water run-off or by wind, from the Jebel, where there are formations with a high iron content. This iron content together with a Mediterranean climate produces the typical Cyrenaican **terra rossa**, which is chemically rich but, on the Benghazi plain, is lacking two essential ingredients for fertility — organic matter and moisture. The main distinction between the soils of the oases and wadis of the Benghazi plain, and the more famous **terra rossa** areas of the Jebel, such as the Barce plain, is that the latter are richer in humus and moisture.

Apart from the soils, the plain is mostly covered with a thin but compact sandy layer derived from wind-blown sand. There are also three other types of soil (using the term in its widest possible sense) — the **sebkha** soils, **croute** or calcrete, and pure sand. The sebkha soils are extremely saline and therefore support no vegetation; the croute is caused by capillary action and the precipitation of calcium carbonate after the moisture evaporates, and the dunes are made up of sand with a marine origin.

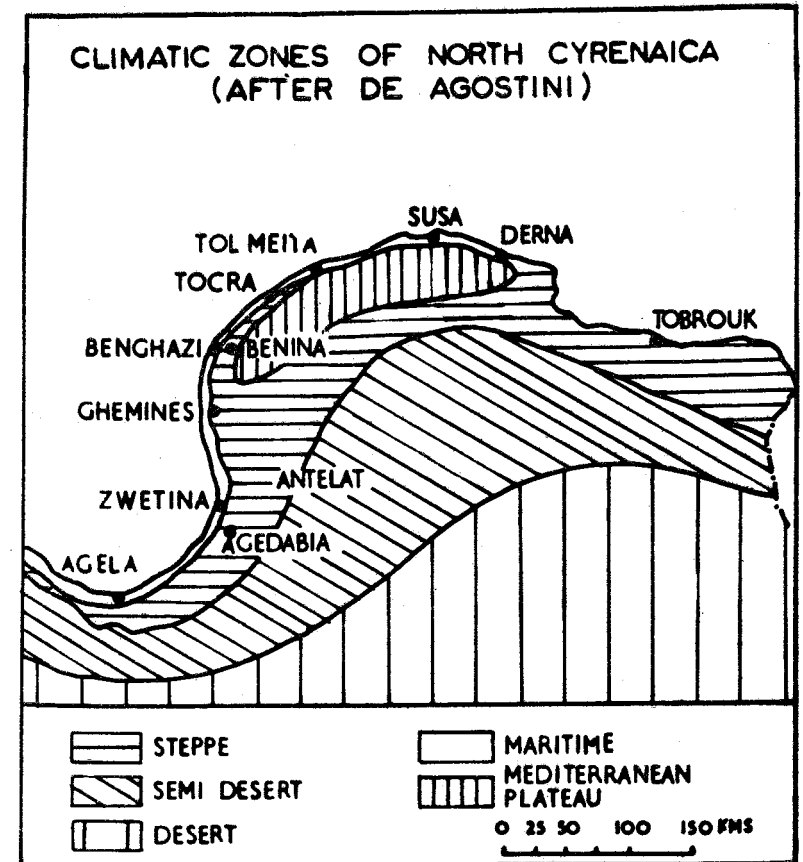
Climatically the plain of Benghazi is part of the semi-arid zone which is normally characterised by a rainfall of 100-200mm. (4 to 10 inches) a year. The total rainfall is not only unevenly distributed throughout the year but can vary considerably from one location to another and from year to year. Severe droughts, sometimes affecting the whole country, are reputed to have occurred in roughly ten-year cycles. As a rule the rainfall is seasonal and occurs in the winter months when it is least needed, leaving the spring, summer and autumn dry and hot. What rain does not soak into the soil usually evaporates; very little reaches the sea.

Despite all these erratic factors it is possible to subdivide the area into three rough zones, with Benghazi forming a distinct fourth, in terms of rainfall. (figure 2).

Prevailing winds over the plain are from north-west through north but there are infrequent hot south winds (ghibli) sometimes accompanied by thick dust and sand. The average monthly temperatures for January and August are as follows:

	Jan. (°C)	Aug. (°C)	Range
Tocra	13.9	25.5	11.6
Benghazi	13.0	25.6	12.6
Benina	12.1	26.7	14.6
Agedabia	12.6	26.7	14.1

From this brief description it is not difficult to see why the plain has little economic value. It is naturally poor. Hence settlements are limited to a few scattered oases where both underground water and soil are available to support sufficient population. The plain can offer grazing facilities and the opportunity for shifting cultivation of wheat and barley, but the success or failure of a crop is always a matter of considerable uncertainty. However, if the rainfall is distributed in a favourable manner throughout the season a crop may be harvested even though the total rainfall would not ordinarily be considered sufficient to support a crop.



Climatic zones of Northern Cyrenaica

Prior to the discovery of oil the Cyrenaican economy was a combination of livestock raising and cultivation which, because of natural obstacles and tribal traditions, was mostly shifting. Static agriculture was negligible and practised only where there were either suitable soils with sufficient precipitation or where underground water was available. The total irrigated area of the whole province is only 2,000 hectares and the plain of Benghazi has half of it. The main static farming areas are the oases of Koefia, Benina, Sidi Khalifa, Dariana, Tobra, Guarsha and Ghemines, which are divided into small holdings, called *sanja* in Arabic, each possessing its own well. The utilisation of subterranean water, however, is generally primitive and depends on animal power — donkeys, camels or cows — lifting the water in a small-capacity skin bag. The wells vary in depth from one place to another but most are between six and twelve metres. Once raised the water is either collected in a stone-built tank or fed to the irrigated unit (*gedula*).

The following two tables show the production of garden crops and the number and production of fruit trees for Benghazi plain and the province as a whole.

(a) Garden crops

Crop	Production in quintals		Plain production % of total
	Cyrenaica	Plain of Benghazi	
Maize	5,428	531	10
Potatoes	260	2	2.8
Onions	10,564	4,074	40
Beans	3,562	950	30
Dry Peas	147	15	10
Chick Peas	2,893	6	—
Tomatoes	36,527	11,723	33
Water Melons	22,028	8,761	36
Peppers	5,953	1,904	35
Cucumber	1,690	1,395	93
Lentils	102	96	97
Carrots	641	—	—

(b) Fruit trees

Tree	No. of Trees		Production in quintals	
	Cyrenaica	Plain of Benghazi	Cyrenaica	Plain of Benghazi
Orange	28,000*	736	2,859	2,706
Lemon	1,334	288	516	360
Apple	6,612	941	961	183
Pear	2,836	340	353	130
Apricot	7,889	1,964	1,989	238
Vines	924,488	13,993	41,241	9,051
Fig	72,791	32,470	15,048	3,406
Almond	21,507	7,833	1,947	1,200
Banana	87,457	1,357	3,554	540
Date Palm	117,586	26,534	14,453	4,224
Olive	114,871	33,555	8,893	7,426
Pear	7,806	1,095	1,042	502
Plum	4,960	270	2,608	180

The tables illustrate the types of farm production of garden crops and fruit trees, though the production figures for the whole province indicate the comparative insignificance of static farming in the provincial economy. The area of garden crops is about 2,400 hectares and that of trees is roughly 3,000 hectares. The striking phenomenon about static farming in Cyrenaica is that most of the production is intended to fill the farmer's own requirements. This results in acute shortages in the local market, the only exceptions being Jebel-produced tomatoes, water-melons, grapes and bananas. Benghazi markets very little local fruit and vegetables and is consequently almost entirely dependent upon Tripolitanian produce or, at certain seasons, produce brought in from overseas. Both sources mean high prices in the Benghazi markets; a situation which has been inflamed by the exploitation of oil in Cyrenaica and the lack of fixed prices. The demand from foreigners resident in Benghazi has more than trebled in the last six years.

* The number of orange trees and production are probably exaggerated. The official yearly figures show a big contrast each census. 350 quintals for the whole province would be a more reasonable estimate.

It is fairer to say that Cyrenaica is more noteworthy for its shifting cultivation. Barley and wheat form the main constituents of Libyan diet, even while newer food items, such as rice, macaroni, and a better balance of meat and vegetables, are gaining ground. Yet the production of wheat and barley, as has been mentioned, is extremely vulnerable to climatic variation, and taking into account such factors as the dominant winds and high evaporation rate which normally prevail, high output is unlikely. Actual crop failure can be caused by many things: the most important are the lack and ill-distribution of rain, and the severity and perseverance of the **ghibli** winds. If rain fails in November, then the earth is too hard for manual sowing, and if it does not rain in March, when crops are ripening then there is the danger of crops being scorched and burnt. Such facts help explain the wide variation in production noted in the following statistics

Year	Cyrenaica Production in Tons		Plain of Benghazi (in tons)			
	Wheat	Barley	Wheat	%	Barley	%
1954	9,470	42,610	2,000	c. 21%	9,700	c. 44%
1955	10,000	25,000	5,900	c. 51%	12,100	c. 50%
1956	8,400	18,200	2,000	c. 23%	8,900	c. 44%
1957	21,343	24,913	3,267	c. 14%	4,630	c. 16%
1958	13,592	23,113	4,019	c. 30%	10,239	c. 49%
1959	9,064	8,543	142	c. 1.7%	175	c. 2%

It will have been noted that, while there is a general fluctuation of production in both crops, the wheat production fluctuates less than that of barley. The reason is that most of the wheat is cultivated on the Barce plain, an area less affected by climatic variations, whilst the barley is grown in semi-arid areas. It can be seen that in bad years the plain suffers proportionately more than the rest of the province.

Figures for the livestock raised on the Benghazi plain and in the province can be seen below :

(a) **Cyrenaica** (figures in thousands)

Year	Sheep	Goats	Cows	Camels	Horses	Donkeys	Poultry
1954	904	709	85	73	—	—	—
1955	1,032	691	86	76	—	—	—
1956	815	586	60	76	—	—	—
1957	545	524	34	76	—	—	—
1958	795	669	60	81	24	55	—
1959	510	394	34	74	21	45	152

(b) **Plain of Benghazi**

1954	428	125	32	14	—	—	—
1955	468	129	34	15	—	—	—
1956	400	115	27	15	—	—	—
1957	235	105	10	15	—	—	—
1958	303	100	16	16	8	12	—
1959	190	83	15	16	6	8	46

Again, numbers fluctuate enormously from one year to another, due largely to drought and famine, but sheep and goats are numerically the most important animals reared. Though a major source of income livestock is reduced in value for Cyrenaica's economy because most of the livestock belongs to a few landlords, who thus enjoy the greater part of the provincial income. (This situation is further aggravated by the present communal system of land tenure.) Animal husbandry on the plain falls into two clear categories: first that carried out by the Bedouin on the open ranges, and that practised in the oases by farmers raising a few sheep and goats, perhaps a cow and some poultry. The scale and value of the latter type is far less than that of the first type.

In a rapidly developing country like Libya, and especially in Cyrenaica where statistics are a luxury, one faces an extremely difficult and delicate task in determining the values and issues of the facts under consideration. Inevitably, an assessment of the influence of Benghazi plain upon Benghazi city is both difficult and risky. In terms of food supplies Benghazi relies very little upon its plain. The majority of city dwellers are

wheat eating, while the Bedouin depend upon barley.* The wheat production of the plain is limited and Benghazi's requirements are in any case greater than the production of the whole province. Since the agricultural potential of the plain is limited no agricultural revolution can be expected which would change these circumstances, especially as changes in eating habits will tend to increase the discrepancy between the plain's wheat production and Benghazi's consumption.

Again, it is difficult to assess how much of the fruit and vegetables produced on the coastal plain actually find their way into the Benghazi markets. Separate statistics of livestock raised on the plain and sold in city markets also are unavailable, but sales of meat are believed to be an important item.

However, the plain does play three quite definite roles in the city's life. Benghazi depends almost entirely upon her plain for water requirements, for her airport and for building materials. The water, unfortunately, is not of high-class drinking quality but at least, contrary to early fears, future supplies will be adequate for any development. The site of the airport was first chosen by the Italians but much expense has been lavished to make it suitable for modern inter-continental aircraft and the necessary ancillary equipment. Building materials have been to hand since the earliest days, but Turkish, Italian needs and the demands of recent dynamic growth of buildings have all been met from local quarries. The huge harbour reconstruction programme was able to draw on materials ready to hand, and local sand was used to fill in the Sebkhah es-Selmani. The biggest stone quarry is found east of the town and north of the Benghazi-Benina road, but others have developed recently within similar range. The rocks of the plain supply not only stone for building purposes but also whitewash, which is used both for painting and for more important purposes. The white-

* Barley consumption in Benghazi is confined to poor people, in slum areas or used as animal fodder. Industries using barley as a raw material, such as breweries, do not exist.

wash, produced by burning calcrete, is mixed with concrete to give it a finer textured, non-cracking surface.

The plain also supplies salt from the many scattered salt-pans along its coastal length, but export potential is not developed. In most cases the salt is collected and marketed by individuals and the quality is rather poor. Even so, Benghazi, which once exported three thousand tons of salt every year, has little cause for recourse to imported foreign salt.

The plain's final service is in acting as a permanent reservoir of manual and sedentary workers. In recent years the flow of Bedouin and other agricultural workers from the plain, and other parts of Libya, has placed great strains on the suburbs, which have become clotted with unassimilated shanty-towns. At present both the town and the plain are suffering, but the plain will suffer most: it has fewer assets to waste.

Site

The surface geology of the coastal belt on which Benghazi was sited is an area mainly composed of limestones of the Helvetian group of Middle-Miocene, overlaid in places by a thin layer of quaternary clay. A narrow strip of recent sediments is also present along the coast, while south of Benghazi quaternary sediments overlay an outcrop of upper miocene rocks. Looking at the geological map of Cyrenaica, we can pick out a littoral bar of sand dunes, both simple and consolidated, replaced north of Dariana by a thin alluvial clay. The remainder of the plain is formed by Middle Miocene Helvetian deposits and is therefore a more or less homogeneous region. It was this apparent homogeneity which provoked early geologists to describe the geology of the area as simple, but studies by Desio and Marchetti, and more recently by other interested bodies, have considerably qualified the first estimate. In 1938 Marchetti reported three faults near Benghazi — at Fuehat, Ain Zainana (the 'Blue Lagoon') and at Jokh el Kebir (Lethe). Details of these complications need not concern us here but the surface deposits

are worth some consideration.

(a) **Miocene Deposits**

These represent the main body of materials forming the plain round Benghazi. Their maximum elevation is about ten metres above sea-level and though now comprising cemented-littoral fossiliferous sands they are of marine origin.

(b) **Lagoonal Deposits**

These deposits are a common feature along the western coast of Cyrenaica; the lagoons of el-kuz and Giarrar north of Benghazi are the largest whilst Benghazi itself lies between the sea and the now filled Sebkhah es-Selmani. South of the city is the Punta and beyond that the sebkhas where salt was formerly produced on a large scale. A large one stretches almost from Gar-Yunes to Suani Tika. About 12 km. north east of Benghazi lies perhaps the best known lagoon — that of el-Koefia or Ain Zaiana. Although possessing a sea-outlet this lagoon is fed by a spring of fresh water, which considerably reduces the salinity.

(c) **Sebkhah**

The Arabic word 'sebkhah' usually refers to the salty surface deposits found in desert areas, whether in lagoons or in closed interior depressions. The sebkhas of the Benghazi plain are mostly lagoonal, and form their salt as a result of sea infiltration.

(d) **Terra Rossa**

The distribution of this type of soil on the Benghazi plain is restricted to a few oases and sunken depressions. Its formation is generally associated with the erosion of limestone, bearing a distinct iron content, in a Mediterranean-type climate.

Its distribution in Benghazi itself covers only Fuehat and the area south.

(e) **Sand Dunes**

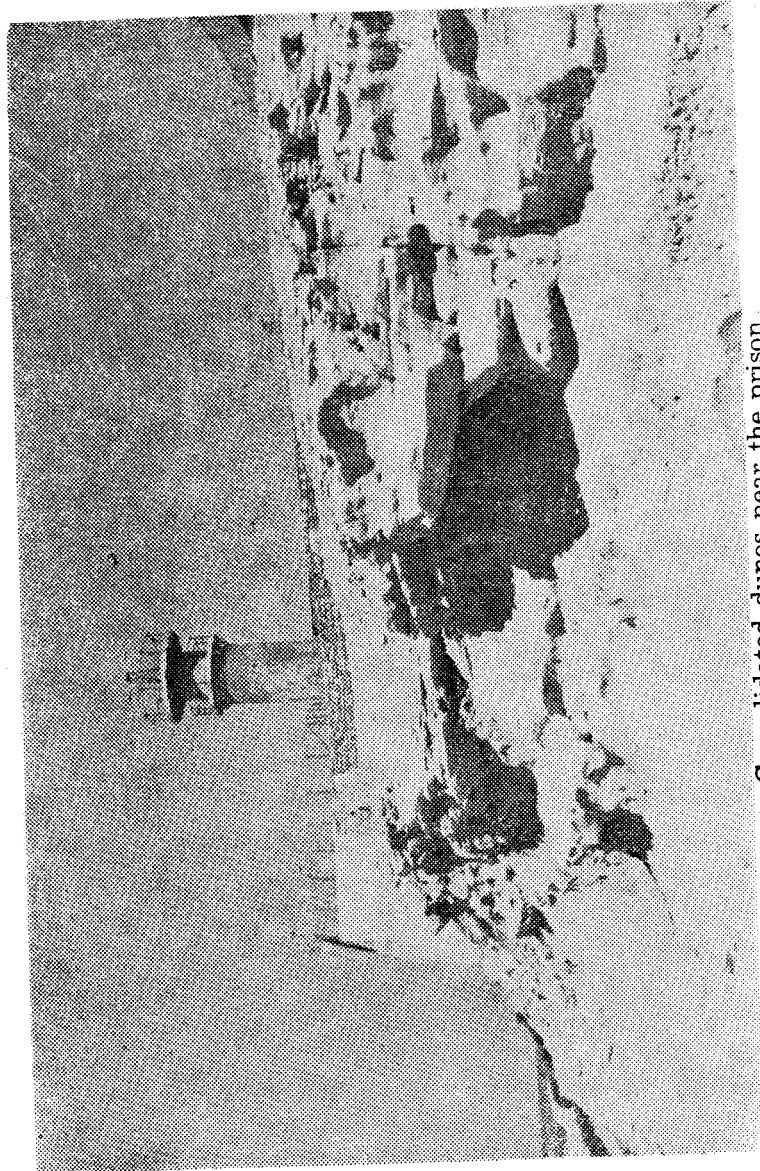
The shoreline immediately south and north of Benghazi is formed by a low belt of sand with dunes. The dunes are of marine origin and, in neutral light, of a whitish grey colour. The large dunes north of the city, from Munastir (or el-Thama) to Munjerr, were of particular importance because they were until recently one of the main sources of fresh water, despite the apparent fact that they support practically no vegetation. They are now important as a source of sea sand, widely used as a building material, and, with the beaches south of the city, form an important recreational facility in summer. Cemented or consolidated dunes are not widespread and the shore on which the prison was built is perhaps the only place where they appear on any scale. (see plate I).

Briefly then the site of Benghazi is formed by a thick layer of limestone of miocene age overlain by lagoons, sebkha, sand dunes and, in places, a thin layer of transported soil. Apart from the sea-front along the old northern promenade, where the rocks are still traceable, the coast is sandy.

The physical character of this surrounding site has, since the earliest days, determined the shape, size and direction of Benghazi's growth. The sebkha on the north-east, east and south prevented expansion in these directions, whilst the sandy nature of the coast deprived the city of any substantial natural harbour.* Early development was inevitably confined to a small area surrounded by sebkha, sea and sand dunes and later development had to challenge this physical situation.

The Turks' construction of the causeway between Benghazi

* The same sands and sebkha provided a rather salty supply of drinking water, however.



Consolidated dunes near the prison

and Berka in the nineteenth century was the first large-scale assault but the challenge which the prevailing landscape offered was taken up in earnest by the Italians, who set about reducing Sebkhah es-Selmani and the inner 'harbour' in size. Their urban plans were interrupted by the war and the sebkhahs remained undisturbed for fifteen years, until the reconstruction of the harbour forced the company responsible to build a direct road linking the Funduk and ring-road, across the Selmani Sebkhah. Two years later the sebkhah had been filled in, and the site of the classical Lake Tritonis disappeared.

One remarkable feature about Benghazi is that despite all the salt marshes and sand and the impression that the ground is always wet, the site has proved solid enough to support modern multiple-storey buildings. It has also proved fortunate that the coastal sea-beds are sufficiently solid to support the massive outer-basin wall of a modern artificial harbour.

Climate

Classification of the climate of Benghazi and the coastal plain seems to have provided a problem, perhaps because of the lack of abrupt changes and the diversity of the elements to be considered. Various authors have offered varying schemes but only two, Koppen and Fantoli, have actually included the coastal belt within the Mediterranean climatic belt. Most (De Martonne, Trewartha and Thornthwaite) have acknowledged a maritime region between 4 and 8 km. which is a transitional area between the lessening influence of the sea and the governing influence of the Sahara. Rainfall generally decreases from the coast inland, temperatures generally increase: rainfall and temperature are therefore a function of distance from the sea. Winds and other climatic features must be considered, however.

Rainfall

Despite its amount the rainfall on the city of Benghazi has undoubtedly less effect on the population there than it has

on the plains-people, for whom it means food, happiness, wealth and hope. The majority of city dwellers have no concern at all with the vicissitudes of shifting cultivation: a few prosperous landlords are the only people who are still indirectly engaged in such cultivation. They either supply seed and animals or loan their land to Bedouin on the understanding that they receive a certain proportion of the production.*

Rain in the city has always been a source of inconvenience. The Beechey brothers' 140 year-old description of Benghazi after rain still holds true. Main roads, as well as the non-bitumenised streets of the older Arab quarters, can still be impassable. Sabri reverts annually to a sea of mud and poorer houses often collapse. Flies alone welcome the standing ponds.

The average monthly rainfall in Benghazi is as follows:—

Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July
67	40	19	5	2	—	—
Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year	
—	3	17	46	66	265mm.	

The annual average is based on the monthly rainfall figures for the city going back to 1879, when the first regular readings were recorded. The figures show a simple unimodal distribution with a winter maximum, half the annual total falling in the two rainiest months December and January. It will be noticed that for the six months from April to September the rainfall is negligible — 10 mm. in all.

The annual figures for the plain would, if they existed, be appreciably lower. Accordingly there is little static farming inland from Benghazi and even vegetable cultivation, which could produce quick returns, tends to be neglected. The gardens of Fuehat, with the Ministry of Agriculture's Experimental Farm as the most developed, and the scattered plots south of the city all depend on underground water for irrigation. The De Martonne comparative aridity index for Benghazi and

* This system is known as "raay".

Tripoli, is as follows :—

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Benghazi	3.3	1.8	0.8	0.2	—	—	—
	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year	
	—	0.1	0.5	1.6	1.7	9.2	
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Tripoli	3.7	1.9	1.0	0.4	0.2	—	—
	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year	
	—	0.3	1.1	2.5	4.5	13.3	

These figures are for the city, which is more arid than Tripoli, but even so some idea of the difficulties facing the inhabitants of the Benghazi plain can be gained. Where underground water is non-existent shifting cultivation is very difficult and settled farming impossible. The popular assertion that Benghazi should support itself on the produce from its plain is really without realistic foundation.

Benghazi benefits directly from its rain in only two ways — its underground water supplies are replenished to some extent and in good years the markets thrive.

Temperatures

A wide range is a characteristic of temperature, as well as rainfall. August has the highest recorded maximum, 30.1°C., January the minimum, with 8.8°C.

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July
Mean Monthly	13.0	13.7	15.4	18.5	21.6	23.9	25.0
Temperatures	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Year	
	25.6	24.4	22.6	19.3	15.0	19.8	
Mean monthly max.	13.7	18.2	20.6	23.9	27.3	29.1	29.5
temperatures	30.1	29.6	27.9	24.3	14.3	24.8	
Mean monthly min.	8.8	9.2	10.2	13.0	15.9	18.7	20.6
temperatures	21.0	19.3	17.2	14.3	10.7	14.9	

The figures for the mean monthly temperatures indicate

that, after January, the coolest month, there is a gradual increase through February and March, followed by a steeper rise to an August maximum. The decline is gradual until October, after which there is a sharpening fall to January. The difference between the mean annual maximum and the mean annual minimum is 9.9°C. Compared with 7.7°C. in the case of Alexandria.

It is instructive at this point to compare Benghazi's mean monthly temperatures with those of Alexandria, Cairo and Tripoli:—

City	Months						Yearly Average
	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May.	June	
Benghazi	13.0	13.7	15.4	18.5	21.6	23.9	19.8
	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	
Alexandria	25.0	25.6	24.4	22.6	19.3	15.0	20.2
	13.7	14.1	15.8	18.1	21.0	23.6	
Cairo	25.4	26.2	25.3	23.3	19.9	15.7	20.8
	12.3	13.5	16.3	20.2	24.2	26.8	
Tripoli	27.7	27.6	25.3	22.7	18.7	14.0	19.1
	11.8	13.3	15.2	18.1	20.6	23.7	
	25.6	26.2	25.5	22.4	18.2	13.6	

These statistics show clearly the maritime influence on the temperatures of the three ports in contrast with Cairo. Although lying further north than Cairo two of the ports enjoy warmer winter temperatures; Tripoli suffers because the temperature of the Mediterranean surface water rises only as it moves eastwards. Conversely they enjoy cooler summer temperatures because of the water's moderating summer temperatures, which are lower than those of the land.

Generally speaking Benghazi has a favourable climate. Its rainfall is moderate, when compared with Tripoli's 370 mm., and fortunate when compared with Alexandria, which has only 184 mm. on an average. It is warmer than Tripoli in winter and cooler than Alexandria in summer and also enjoys a lower

level of humidity. The annual average relative humidity for Benghazi is 58% for Alexandria it is 72% and for Tripoli 65%. The following table, showing the mean temperatures and relative humidity for the months July and August in all three ports, is explicit enough:

City	Temperatures (°C)		Relative humidity (%)	
	July	August	July	August
Benghazi	25.0	25.6	67	66
Alexandria	25.4	26.2	77	75
Tripoli	25.6	26.2	69	69

In addition Benghazi suffers far less frequently from the hot southern winds, known locally as **ghibli**, which usually produce spectacular temperature rises and a consequent drop in humidity. A summer combination of high temperatures and high humidity can prove uncomfortable for city-dwellers, however, and has a noticeable effect upon activities. In summer most shops close at mid-day, the cafes and offices follow suit and the town sleeps away the hottest hours. Everyone perspires freely over the simplest tasks, appetites are reduced and tempers inevitably shorten. Fainting examination candidates are perhaps the most dramatic feature of summer in the city and almost everyone is glad to escape to the beaches or the nearby Jebel.

Winds

During summer Benghazi lies in the zone of rainless north-easterly and north winds. In winter their hold is disputed by the rain-bearing north-westerlies that dominate the Mediterranean's winter climate. Statistically the north-west and north-easterly winds are the most common, while the east wind is rare. In terms of importance the north-west is most vital, since it is responsible for precipitation, but it is also the most dangerous. The Italian built outer-mole was destroyed by a combination of air bombardment and 30 foot waves whipped up by these winds. With such a height and a regular period of 12 seconds, entering the present harbour can still be a hazardous task in

winter. The summer winds, though dry, help reduce excessive heat and are always welcome.

The south winds of **ghibli** — corresponding to the Egyptian **Khamasin** — reach their peak in summer. These movements of extremely hot desert air carry large quantities of dust and fine sand into the town itself, aggravating eyes and lungs and producing an atmosphere generally inimical to work. Luckily they have an average frequency of only three weeks every year.

Climatic features such as dew, fog, thunder and hail occur rarely. Frost and snow occur on the Jebel but almost never on the plain. In general the effects of climate are less noticeable in Benghazi than they are in centres on the Tripolitanian coast, where the majority of people are engaged in agriculture. Rain-fall and wind are the only two factors of concern and neither are lethal. For Europeans Benghazi's climate is probably more favourable than Tripoli's, where the higher summer humidity can make life most unpleasant. In any case, the fact that the sun shines on about three hundred days of the year is sufficient recommendation for most people, and Tegani's summary of the climate still holds, 'In generale come d'estate si vive sotto i trenta. L'inverno si passa i dieci. Ne troppo caldo, dunque, ne troppo freddo.'

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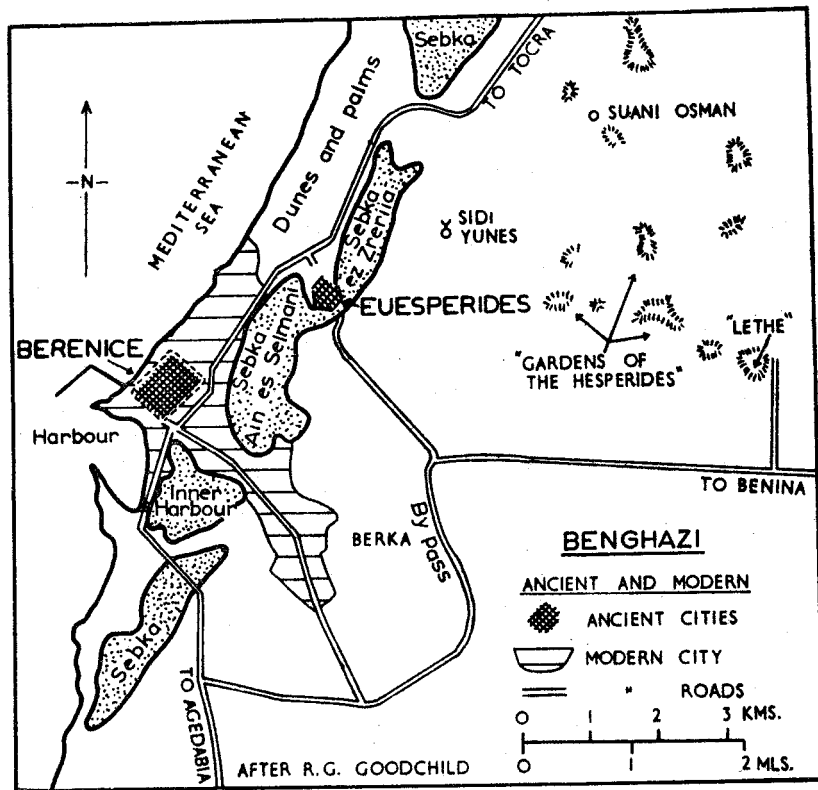
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CHAPTER II THE EVOLUTION OF BENGHAZI

Any study of the evolution of Benghazi, as the capital of Cyrenaica and the second town in size and population in Libya, must involve some consideration of the early nuclei about which the town has grown. The only reliable evidence for the two earliest phases of growth, as Euesperides and Berenice, is archaeological evidence and this, for various reasons, is rather scanty.

There is no evidence as yet for the actual foundation of Euesperides. There is no doubt that the name is Greek and the surviving remnants of its buildings and streets suggest an orthodox Greek lay-out. It was founded some time before 515 B.C., for in that year a Persian expeditionary force operating from Egypt penetrated Cyrenaica as far as Euesperides', thus establishing the existence of what was then the most westerly Greek town in Libya.

The site of Euesperides now lies south of the main road to Barce, divided by the ring-road link to Fuehat and half-hidden by the Moslem cemetery of Sidi Abeid. Until quite recently it was possible to trace out its western street plan on the edge of Sebkhah es-Selmani but the heavy traffic involved in filling in Euesperides' former harbour, has obliterated almost all trace. Any new evidence about the site must come from the part still buried in Sidi Abeid. Since Moslems are concerned about the continuity of their cemeteries it is unlikely that there will be any further evidence from this source. (see fig 3)



Benghazi : Ancient and Modern

Various archaeologists have compensated for these sour grapes by suggesting that remaining evidence would inevitably be fragmentary. It is known, for example, that Euesperides was an easy prey for the nomadic Libyan tribesmen: in 414 B.C. the town was barely saved from annihilation by the fortunate arrival of a Greek fleet which had been blown off its course for Syracuse. It is a more certain fact that much of the site was used as a quarry by the Turks,* who were engaged in building their usual administrative and military blocks, and there are signs of recent lime-slaking activity.

Consolidating these disparate factors is the consideration that the attitude towards the site has, for a dozen or more centuries, been one of apathy. From the orthodox Moslems viewpoint the antiquities would have been regarded as the works of **Kuffar** or heathen people, and therefore not worth preservation. It is ironical that the surviving section of Euesperides still exists because it once provided a ready source of stone for graves.

Throughout its existence — and coins suggest it was abandoned about the time Berenice was being developed — Euesperides seems to have been entirely Greek. Its plan was basically a grid; intersecting streets linking rectangular blocks of buildings on the 'Hippodamian'** principle. The later buildings were nearer the sebkha and were, rather surprisingly, made of brick. Less surprisingly, the floors were made of mud and the number of coins and pieces of pottery found in successive layers of trampled earth suggest that then, as now, homes were liable to flooding.

Euesperides' foundation at this particular point raises considerations of the landscape and lagoonal topography at that time. It is fairly certain that the only sea entrance was through

* 1835 — 1911

**Hippodamus was a Greek architect of the 5th century, B.C. He planned Piraeus, the harbour town of Athens.

what is now called the inner harbour, at a point somewhere south-west of the present gap. The walls of Euesperides, to judge from aerial photographs taken by the R.A.F. in the early fifties, ran along the northern boundary of Sebhka es-Selmani some three kilometres from this entrance. Since the recently filled-in Sebhka was nowhere more than two metres in depth it has been assumed that the sebhka — then known as Tritonis — must have been considerably deeper in classical times. It has been suggested that silting-up of the lagoon, which acted as a channel of calm for traffic between Euesperides and the sea, may have been a factor in the evacuation of this site. The inconvenience of winter flooding must also have given an added incentive, for many of the remaining foundations are saturated in winter.

No precise reason is known for the actual siting of Euesperides so far away from the Greek cities of the Jebel. There seems to have been contact with Cyrene and there is evidence that at least one Cyrenean king considered it (unfortunately, since he was murdered there) sufficiently remote to act as a refuge if Jebel squabbles became too violent. Some historians have suggested that it was a convenient port for the export of agricultural produce and the debatable silphium by-products. Since there is no evidence for any considerable climatic changes in historical time it is unlikely that conditions then were any more favourable or dependable than they are now and that if Euesperides was noted for its fertility it was in a very local and restricted sense. The local depressions or 'sunken gardens' may have produced early varieties of several fruits, but it is unlikely that cereals were produced on any scale.

Euesperides, then, was probably founded for a variety of reasons rather than for one outstanding one: it acted as a fortified frontier for remote Cyrene, as a refuge, a port and as a settlement able to tap the agricultural possibilities of protected depressions. At no time did it have more than 2,000 people, even though it was rebuilt again and again, and not once did it become capital.

Since the geographer 'Scylaz'* refers to the town and port of Euesperides as though they were distinct, it is possible that the Berenice site was in use as a port some time before the official shift and renaming took place. There is no precise evidence of the date when most of the population of Euesperides abandoned the sheltered sebhka site and moved to the area which now lies under Benghazi's civic centre. No documents hint at how daily routine could be transferred without interrupting the economic life of many people. The only certain date is that in 249 B.C. Ptolemy III of Egypt succeeded in subjecting Cyrenaica to Egyptian rule and in marrying the 24 year-old heiress to the Cyrenean kingdom, Berenice. To mark their wedding the new settlement on the promontory Pseudopenias was provided with fortifications and the name Berenice (pronounced **Bereniki**).

At its maximum extent the city occupied the area within the parallelogram formed by the present port, the lighthouse, the former Italian stadium and the Funduk. There were scattered sectors — probably cemeteries — at Sidi Hussein and to the north of Sabri. The sites best preserved, although inaccessible, are under the cemeteries of Sidi Kreibish and Sidi Hussein, and from the mosaic-floored villas found here and from the records of discoveries, it seems that Berenice had much the same character as other Graeco-Roman cities in Cyrenaica. It is known that it eventually became a Bishopric and attained an estimated maximum population of 4-5 thousand.

No separation can be made in terms of Greek and Roman. The original Greek alignment (which was north-south in contrast to the present north-east-south-west) was adhered to and if additions were made by the Romans they were not extensive and certainly not made at the expense of the surrounding lagoon and sebkhas. For, in the sixth century A.D. the Byzantine emperor Justinian, making good damage brought about by the

* No one knows who he was, but the sailor's handbook attributed to him was written about 350 B.C.

Vandals, found that the city was adequately refortified if the original Ptolomaic walls were repaired.

In 643 Omar Ibn el Aas overran Cyrenaica and history gave way to obscurity. The new invaders were little interested in Berenice's marginal resources and the main traffic route across Cyrenaica shifted south, crossing from Egypt south of the Jebel to Agedabia and on to the favoured Maghreb regions. Berenice probably lingered on as a 'coptic' community under Arab rule, gradually surrendering to pressures which made a nomadic and tribalised way of life imperative, until in the eleventh century it ceased to exist as a town at all.

From the Arab Conquest to the Karamanli Era (643-1711 A.D.)

The gradual decline of Berenice is not marked by any historical records. Its name is not even mentioned until El Idrisi, an Arab geographer, recorded in the first half of the twelfth century that the area between Agedabia and El Merj was locally referred to as **Bernik**.^{*} Perhaps it should be mentioned that El Bakri, who visited the area a century before El Idrisi, did not bother to record **Bernik** at all; as far as his informants were concerned, it had no existence. El Merj and Agedabia were then the two most important caravan centres of Cyrenaica, presumably because they offered better watering and were nearer the main trans-African camel route.

Local tradition claims that it was in the middle of the fifteenth century that Benghazi's port facilities and value as a trading site were once more recognised by Tripolitanian merchants — mainly men from Tajiura, Zliten and Mesellata and later, in larger numbers, from Misurata. The story goes that the township was rapidly split into two rival factions, the Fakrun and the Doghaim, who maintained intermittent strife for the next two hundred years. But piety was recognised; a

^{*} This use of a former Greek city name for a larger region was common among the Arabs; cf. the use of Barca for Cyrenaica.

marabut or holy man died in the town and his tomb passed on his name to the cluster of houses surrounding its site in the cemetery of Sidi Kreibish. Bernik became Ibn Ghazi. The full name, **Marsa (harbour) Ibn Ghazi**, appeared in 1579 on a map of the world compiled by Ali Ibn Ahmed Esh-Sherafi of Sfax. It is presumed, however, that this was the name registered by the Turks when they assumed power over Cyrenaica upon the capture of Tripoli in 1551.

However, the Turks did not advance upon Cyrenaica until 1638, when a military mission consisting of a few ships was blown by an ill wind into the inadequate harbour of Marsa Ibn Ghazi. The commander set three hundred Christian galley-slaves to work building a castle adjoining the harbour and shortly afterwards Youssef Bey possessed facilities for garrisoning his forces and self defence: his rôle was that of tax-gatherer and from this time onwards Benghazi became a place of fear and hatred in the minds of the surrounding nomadic people. By 1640 the commander Osman felt secure enough to advance on Aujila for his punitive expedition into the oases.^{*} This was followed by forays into the Jebel and the cleavage between townsmen and Bedouin became irreparable. Only for the few merchants traveling between Derna in the east and Tripolitania in the west was Benghazi a place of sanctuary.

The most significant detail perhaps in 17th century Benghazi was the fact that the castle's nine guns were all directed at or over the town while the seaward aspect was left entirely undefended. Like the Greeks and Romans before and the Italians after, the Turks discovered that the interior offered continuous hostility to occupying forces. The interior has never been blessed with plenty but it has always proved Libya's strongest ally and constant incentive towards independence.

^{*} He set off with 3,500 horses, 2,500 horsemen and the surviving 200 Christian slaves.

Benghazi under the Karamanlis

The Ottoman regime in Libya, with its capital in Tripoli, was interrupted by the Karamanli takeover in 1711. The Karamanlis continued to operate from Tripoli and showed as little interest in developing Cyrenaica as their predecessors, insisting only on voracious taxes from Bedouin and haddur (townsmen) alike.

The only highspots in the Karamanli period were provided by European travellers, and it is upon their descriptions of Benghazi that we depend for our picture of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century town.

The Scotsman James Bruce, who visited Benghazi in 1767, wrote bitterly of the serious shortages of grain, milk and meat, in a town temporarily over-populated. A local tribal war had just ended with the flight of the rejected tribe into the town.

The Italian, Paolo della Cella, in 1817, commented rather more grimly on the relations between the town administration and the surrounding population. He described in detail the governor's treacherous slaughter of the leaders of the Juazi tribe and his pursuit and pillaging of the defenceless families.

Della Cella calculated that Benghazi had a population of about 5,000 inhabitants, of whom half were Jews. In his estimation the town had virtually no economic value: "Alcune palme e qualche tratto seminato con orzo." He was impressed only by the number of flies to be seen.

Flies figured in the account of the famous Beechey brothers, who visited Benghazi in the early winter of 1828, but their assessment of Benghazi's potential is probably more reliable. They described the aspect thus: "The state of the town during this period (of early winter) may truly be said to have been miserable; the houses being chiefly put together with mud and were continually giving way and falling down and we were frequently apprized of occurrences of this nature in our imme-

diate neighbourhood, by the shrieks and cries of women whose families had been sufferers on some of these occasions. The streets during part of the time were literally converted into rivers, the market was without supplies owing to the impossibility of driving cattle into town."

The buildings were mostly constructed with stones pillaged from the ancient city, which were broken up and cemented with mud. The common houses were simple structures, rather like the present Arab *hoosh*. Their roofs were made from seaweed laid over mats, or vegetable rubbish, and covered with mud.

The Beecheys considered Della Cella's figure of 5,000 inhabitants a gross over-estimate, and calculated that 2,000 would be nearer the mark. They remarked upon the number of Jews and Negro slaves and admitted — "The population of Benghazi is continually changing, owing to circumstances of persons removing to the country whenever the weather permits, where they establish themselves in tents or huts made of palm-trees."

Della Cella's scathing reference to barren land was countered by the Beecheys' more precise — "There are a great many palm-trees in the neighbourhood of Benghazi, on both sides of the harbour, and a great proportion of cultivated land." The drawing which they made of Benghazi and its environs provides us with our first accurate town-plan (Fig. 4). It will be noted that the site coincides almost exactly with Goodchild's estimate of the site of Berenice.

The Second Ottoman Occupation of Benghazi

Shortly after the Beecheys' visit the Karamanli family was defeated and Turkish rule returned once more to Libya and Benghazi. The new regime, beginning in 1835, remained until 1911, when it was swept away by the invading Italian army.

During what is usually called the Second Ottoman Occupation Benghazi fared rather better than it had under the first



Benghazi : After the Beecheys

occupation or Karamanli rule. Our main source is again a Scotsman, this time James Hamilton, who visited the town in 1850.

Hamilton calculated that Benghazi had grown to a township of 1,500 houses with a population approaching ten thousand. Most of the houses were as the Beecheys had described them but a few now had upper storeys and paved courtyards. The castle had been rebuilt in 1842 but the most novel feature was a permanent director of hygiene, a German doctor who was responsible for every aspect of urban sanitation, and conducted vigorous street-cleaning campaigns.

Hamilton mentions the ever-present fears of the plague — fears which were justified by the visitations of 1858 and 1874, when large numbers were wiped out. But, by and large, Benghazi had improved enormously. There was no great wealth to be had, but there was no apparent poverty either and Hamilton never once saw a beggar. He considered Benghazi the healthiest town in North Africa — no small compliment to a more rigorous Ottoman regime.

Between James Hamilton's visit and the Turks' final expulsion there were many changes. The most noticeable was the expansion of the town and the construction of the suburb of Berka. This was made possible by the causeway which was thrown across the inlet between the inner-harbour and the Selmani salt-marsh. The suburb was designed as a Turkish residential area and contained a new governor's palace, a large garden, military hospital and large army barracks. The barracks alone keep up their original function and **Gasr Turkia**, now houses the Libyan army.

Benghazi itself was divided into twelve administrative quarters and given a new Baladya or town-hall. A Senusi Zawya was endowed and, at the same time, the quarries at Sidi Dawud were linked with the harbour by the country's first railway line. The harbour itself was improved by the addition of a small mole and a lighthouse.

These modifications, aided by the fact that the Ottoman governors were able to maintain peace in the area, resulted in an increase in the Benghazi population. By the decade 1880-90 it had grown to 20,000. New villages sprang up round the tombs of Sidi Hussein and Sidi Dawud and Benghazi began to take on an air of mildly prosperous stability.

Since these modifications and enlargements were due to changes in the Ottoman administration it is worth pausing to examine the administrative structure at that time. Cyrenaica had been a **Kaimmakamia**, or district subordinate to the Pasha of Tripoli, but in 1863 it became a **Mutasarrifia**, ruled by a **Mutassarif** or commissioner. It was later ruled directly by a **Wali** or governor who was responsible only to Istanbul (Constantinople). The changes resulted not only in a less unwieldy form of administration but in a more active, positive policy.

By the time of the drastic and costly Italian takeover Benghazi had gained 25 mosques, 4 synagogues, a Catholic and a Greek Orthodox church. (The number of synagogues is suspect, since Goodchild mentions only one.) The old city mosques were very simple, few having minarets, and the best surviving one is the Jamih el-Kebir in the Baladya Square. This one was built in the early 16th Century and rebuilt at the close of the 19th Century. It was damaged by the Italian bombardment but again restored after the occupation.

There were small European minorities, as it seen by the existence of churches representing their faiths. The Italian group was the largest, with just over 100 personnel. The French numbered almost 100, with 50 Spaniards, 43 Greeks, a number of British subjects (nearly all Maltese) and nine Austrian families. Most of these lived in the western portion of the town, along the sea front on what is now Sharia El-Bahar. This was also the Consular area, and the Catholic church and convent formed the pivot about which the various foreign missions congregated.

Benghazi under Italian Occupation

The capitulation of Benghazi to the Italian Navy, then made up of seven cruisers and twenty transports under the command of Admiral Orbi, was the only possible solution if the destruction of the city was to be avoided. When the Italian fleet finally appeared, on October 18th 1911, the available Turkish forces were negligible in both numbers and firepower: 200 infantry, 80 cavalry and 18 guns.

The Italian ultimatum to surrender the city was taken as a military insult by the Turkish force which, to preserve its military honour, concentrated on the beach at Sabri. This they considered the only possible place for an enemy landing and so settled down to wait. The period of the Italian ultimatum ran out at 8 p.m. on October 19th, and the Navy accordingly opened up with a strong, persistent bombardment. The Great Mosque in the Baladya Square was damaged, losing its minaret; the British and Italian Consulates were partly destroyed and numerous native houses wrecked. A number of people were killed. Inevitably, the Turks were caught completely off-balance by the Italian landing at Juliana. Having withdrawn their forces from the barracks at Berka in order to concentrate on Sabri the Turks found any defence of Benghazi impossible.

The brief fighting soon made it clear that the Turkish Force, despite support from local tribesmen, were getting the worst of it. To save the town from any further destruction the Mayor of Benghazi wisely capitulated. The Catholic Brother Cristoforo, of the Franciscan Mission, was sent as the Mayor's envoy to admiral Orbi. The bombardment ceased, and while the Italians took over control of the city the Turco-Arab force withdrew eastwards to Benina, where they remained until the April of the following year.

Though Benghazi, along with other coastal centres in Cyrenaica, became an Italian base Italy did not gain control of the province proper until some 20 years later. The ensuing war

between Italy and the Arabs of Cyrenaica, under the leadership of the Senussi order has played an important part in shaping the history of both Cyrenaica and Libya as a whole. However, from the point of view of this book a war, which was, in the eyes of all Arabs and Muslims a religious war, did nothing to help the growth of Benghazi, since it kept the town confined to purely military functions. The war, coupled with the heavy expenditure required to cope with vigorous and extensive fighting over a large semi-desert area, was a real obstacle to the agricultural settlements schemes which were to prove the indirect key to Benghazi's growth. By contrast the rapid expansion of Tripoli, following Italian town-planning, was due essentially to the prevailing peaceful conditions in the hinterland of that city.

The early changes and modifications of Turkish Benghazi by the Italians were almost entirely of a military character. Defence requirements necessitated the immediate construction of a strong city wall, a full account of which is given by U. Tigani (P. 27-'Questo....')

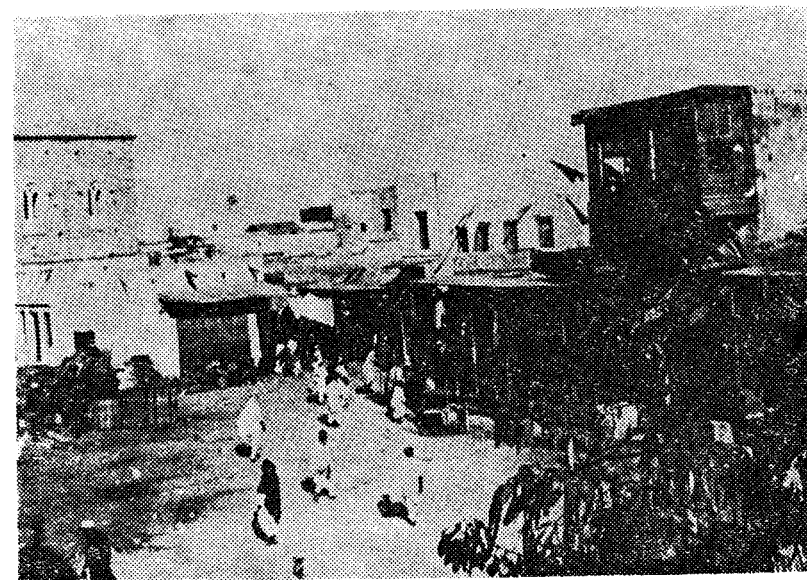
This stone-built, wall, 3ft thick, 15ft high and $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length was sufficient to run round the perimeter of the town as it then was. It was pierced by five gates, controlling the thirteen machine-gun ports. As an additional measure of defence passage of the civilian population in and out of the city, and the Italians built military forts and block-houses beyond the walled perimeter.

Within the wall the oriental architecture of the Governor's Palace disposed the Italians to pull it down. The only changes within 'Old Benghazi' were the development of the Baladya Square and Sharia Omar el Mukhtar, then known as the Via Roma. Italian planning tended to leave the old town as it was, a policy which has produced the present sharp physical contrast between Italian and Arab architectural endeavours.

In 1914 the Italians completed, after two years, their memo-

rial to their fallen. Built on Juliana beach and measuring 25 metres in height it was intended to complement the War Cemetery. However, when Libya gained her independence it was destroyed, and a conspicuous landmark erased.

Under the Turks Juliana had been one of the best salt-producing areas and the Italians, after a thorough survey of alternative areas, decided to continue production both there and at Gar Yunis, situated to the south west. The estimated output from both was in the order of 30,000 tons a year. In 1911 as much as 3000 tons of crude salt could have been found gathered on the Piazza del Sale, formerly occupying the garden area opposite the present Berenice Cinema, (See plate 2). In later years sufficient salt was produced to allow exports on a large scale, though no exact figures are available.



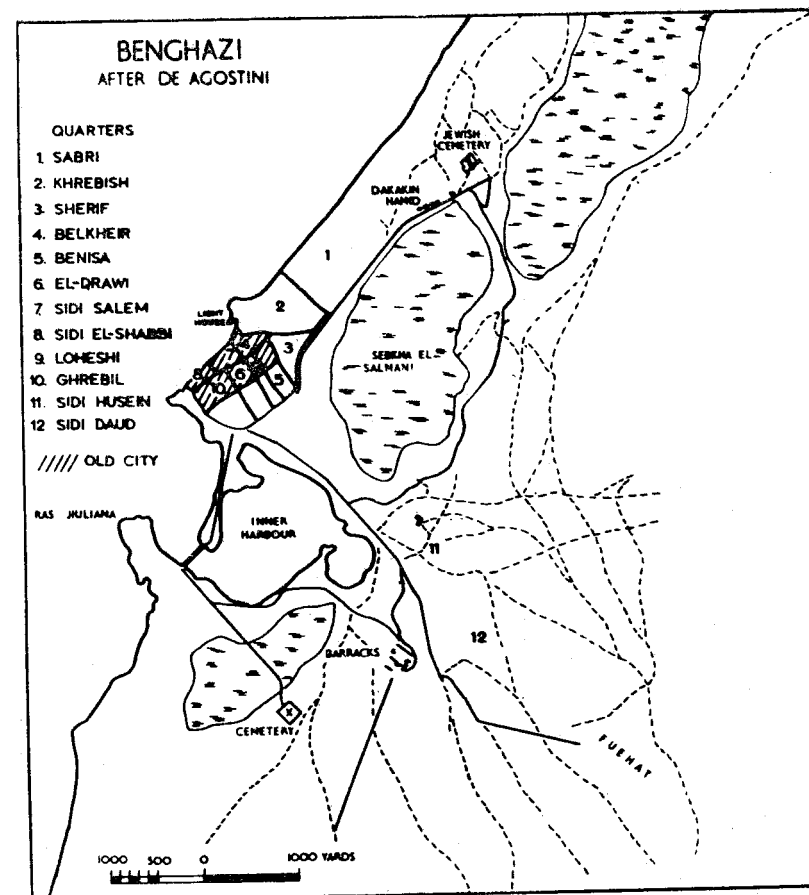
Thus, though early development was piece-meal the following schemes had been completed before the end of the Italo-Libyan war: the Palazzo Nobile (since replaced, in 1952, by the Green Mountain Building,) a city General Post Office, (replaced by the present fine building,) civilian and military hospitals, closed markets for fish and vegetables and a railway station.

The first Italian plan of Benghazi was the map which accompanied De Agostini's work on the population of Cyrenaica in 1922 (see Figure 5). Because of the limited changes at this time the map gives a fair indication of the extent of Benghazi under Turkish rule. Benghazi under the Italian régime is better represented by maps from the 1930's.

In 1914, according to contemporary estimates, Benghazi occupied approximately 700,000 square metres. The districts of Sabri, Sidi Hussein and Sidi Dawud were not included, however. The two latter were included in an estimate of door numbers and developed roads as shown in the following table:-

Quarters	No. of Doors	Road area (sq. metres)
Ghrebil	1461	4981
El-Drawi	779	2745
El-Shabbi	337	848
Belkheir	283	589
Loheshi	515	1959
Ben Isa	477	1742
El-Sherif	510	2058
Sidi Salem	303	507
Sidi Khrebish	725	3092
Sidi Husein	200	—
Sidi Daud	500	—
Sabri	—	—
Grand Total	6090	18522

Benghazi, then, comprised 100 streets and 45 lanes, lighted by 42 petrol and 450 paraffin lamps. Most of them made up the now very minor streets spreading from Suk-ed-Dlam and



Benghazi : After De Agostini

Suk-el-Jerid. There were in addition five squares — the Piazza del Re, Municipality Square, Piazza Ferrari (now 9th of August Square), Piazza del Erba (now Maidan Suk-el-Hashish), and the Funduk.

It must be pointed out that the Italian's slow progress in pacifying the interior of the province made them unduly pre-occupied with military objectives rather than planned development. The end of Libyan resistance was not signalled until 1931, when the patriot Omar el Mukhtar was finally captured. The agricultural schemes put forward in 1923 were now rapidly implemented, for the success of these schemes meant the realisation of the Italian policy of establishing a 'quarta sponda' or fourth shore, for mother Italy. Financial aid to Cyrenaica increased enormously as Italian leaders did their utmost to incorporate Libya within Italy in restoration of their ancient historical claims.

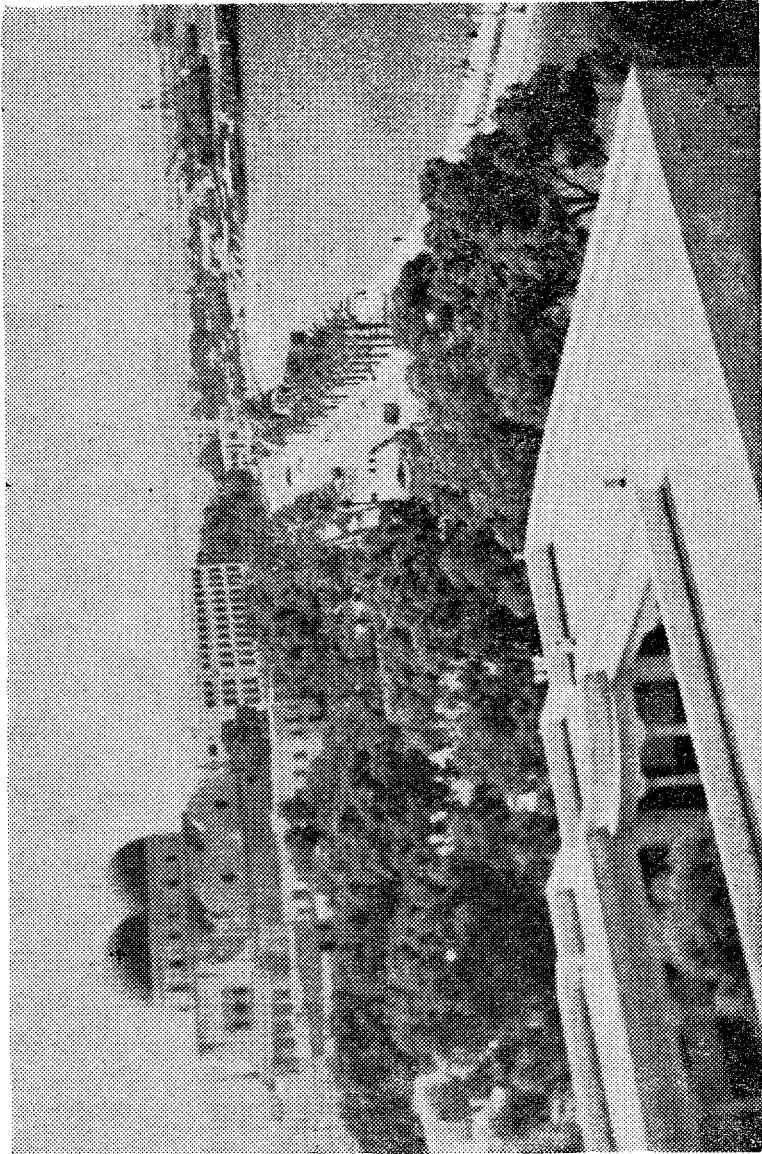
Their agricultural programme called for a mass redistribution of population, widespread land confiscation and intensive surveys prefiguring a widespread search for underground water supplies and road and railway construction. To realise these aims the Benghazi-based Italian authorities began work on a large scale. Benghazi's harbour came in for extensive improvement, since every imported item would have to come by her sea-door, using funds set aside (200,000,000 lire) in 1929 for a new outer-basin.

The city wall, which was erected for defensive purposes, was then pulled down to allow further expansion: "The old perimeter-wall was demolished where it obstructed new town-planning projects, which where the ground had not previously been built on. Old Benghazi still remains very little changed from Turkish days". (19a) The idea of building only on unbuilt-up areas gave priority to those empty lands laying along the sea-shore from the customs house as far as Juliana Bridge, the area between Sharia Omar Ibn el-Ass in the west and the cemetery of Sidi Husein in the east, the inner harbour in the south

and the Sebkha in the north, the area along the northern half of Sharia Omar Ibn el-Ass and the Sebkha which included the stadium, the Fonduk and the houses of government personnel. On the other side of the same street, opposite the houses of the government personnel, the general hospital was constructed. On the same northern edge of the town and along side the sea the Torelli Barracks were founded, and the main slaughterhouse was built to the north of these barracks. Along the seashore west of the Arab town and not far from the old prison the Italians built the Navy headquarters, at present the Faculty of Law of the Libyan University. The last major developed area, although for military purposes, was the barracks between Sharia Saint Lot (the name of the head delegate of Haiti to the U.N. whose vote gave Libya her independence, and Sharia el-Saghesli in the Berka suburb, which is now known as REME Barracks. Other military installations included D'Aosta Barracks and the barracks of Ras Abeida.

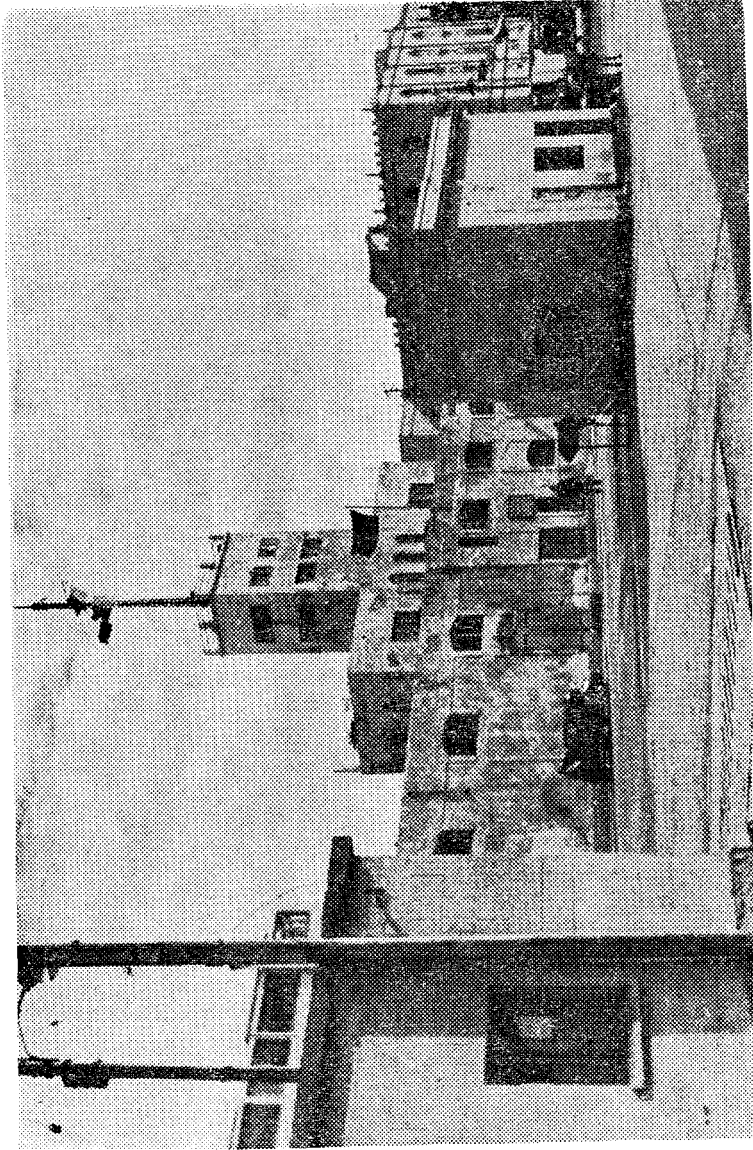
The most striking phenomenon of Benghazi's growth under the Italians was a growth in population from about 16,500 in 1911 to about 50,000 in 1937, of whom one third were civilian Italians. The civilian distribution of the city's population by quarters, at the time, may be classified into two distinct quarters: the Italians occupying the new premises of modern Benghazi with a few wealthy Jews, and the rest of the town dominated by the natives, with the exception of a high Jewish concentration at and near the Baladya Square, near which their synagogue is located in a back street. The construction of entirely new and impressive quarters along the promenade of the old harbour was to show to local people and the world that the city was no longer part of Africa but an integral part of Italy.

The Italians succeeded in making the new Benghazi a city resembling many Italian coastal towns. The facilities which brought this sudden change included a twin-domed cathedral, described by G.R. Goodchild as the town's most prominent landmark (see Plate III); a public theatre, now used only as a



picture-house; and two first-class hotels, of which one, named "The Berenice", is still one of the city's first hotels, but the other, "Italia", was damaged in World War II. The site of this hotel together with that was called the Palazzo Nobile is now occupied by the Green Mountain Building. Other prominent buildings were the elegant governor's residence, now occupied by the Faculties of Commerce and Arts of the Libyan University a Moorish type parliament building later used as the Fascist headquarters then later occupied by the Senate and House of Representatives which now serves partly as the Administration of the Libyan University, and a huge general hospital. The Italians also provided modern communications by the construction of an efficient harbour, a first-class highway linking the Italians also provided modern communications by the construction of an efficient harbour, a first-class highway linking the city with Egypt and Tunisia in 1937, and the railways to Soluk and El-Marj in 1926 and 1927 respectively. Apart from these facilities, which existed for the first time in the history of the town, the Italians also provided Benghazi with electricity and piped water systems, although these were mostly confined to the modern part of the city. In other words, Benghazi became a place in which modern city life began to function properly.

Modern Benghazi was undoubtedly a mirror which reflected Italian architecture, planning and administration. On the other hand, the Italians failed to change and hide the local town featured by narrow and tortuous streets, single-storey buildings constructed of cheap materials, absence of open spaces and gardens, high population density and widespread poverty. The Italians were in a better position to eliminate the Turkish landmarks left in the city. The radical transformation of the Baladya Square and Sharia Omar-el-Mukhtar leading to it from the port, which included the demolition of the governor's palace, played a leading role in diminishing the Turkish form and style of architecture. The Prison of Benghazi, the customs office and the present headquarters of the Berka Libyan army barracks, known as **Gasr Turkia**, are the only remnants of Turkish buildings to be found in the city (see Plate IV).



The Customs office

Despite the extensive enlargements which occurred in Benghazi under the Italian domination, the city's civil growth was somewhat delayed by the lack of security and stability during the first twenty years after the Italians' arrival. The city had an important military status and little planned expansion took place apart from the defensive installations. The general Italian policy during the 1930's and the dreams of a Roman Mediterranean Empire greatly influenced development in the whole of Libya, the result of which was that the country became dotted with military installations. Benghazi alone had five huge military barracks of which two are still in the hands of the British forces who will finally vacate them before the end of March 1968.

The gradual disappearance of African Benghazi and the turn to Europe gave the city a new but temporary visual appearance. At the same time, large-scale agricultural and military operations launched by the Italian government in Cyrenaica gave Benghazi four fundamental functions, the last three of which were new phenomena:

- a) The status of being the official capital for Cyrenaica gave Benghazi the benefits usually enjoyed by main administrative centres elsewhere in the world.
- b) A first-class military base with modern facilities to accommodate at least 30,000 troops. The opening of Benina airport strengthened this function.
- c) A first-class harbour meant that Benghazi became the provincial doorway to the rest of the world, and communications with the rest of the province as well as with Tripolitania were maintained by regular steamers until 1937 when the bitumenised road across the country was finally opened.
- d) The completion of this highway made Benghazi the key of land communications as well as other means of transport.

Accordingly, the influence of the city on the rest of Cyre-

naica increased year after year until its name came to mean the whole of the province. The reasons behind this phenomenon were, in my opinion, the new status of the city and to a certain extent the rigid method of Italian administration. The Kufra desert with its nomadic tribes who were never subject to any authority became affected by any issue from Benghazi. Trade and commerce were constantly influenced by Benghazi's markets. In other words, the influence of the city was not only felt in towns along the coastal areas but also very deep in the heart of the Libyan desert.

BENGHAZI UNDER THE BRITISH ADMINISTRATION

Benghazi in the late 1930's was sharply divided into two distinct large quarters: the Arab town with the Baladya Square at its centre and the other quarter composed of (a) the new areas built for civil purposes, which in fact forms the modern part of the city, or what is occasionally called the European quarter, and (b) the peripheral military installations scattered all over the outskirts of the city of the 1930's.

Italy's unfortunate entry into World War II on the side of Germany against the Allies on the 10th June 1940 proved to be Italy's undoing. As far as Benghazi was concerned the British air raids against the port and the other military targets began in September of the same year and continued night after night until the Australian mechanized units under the command of Brigadier Robertson entered the city on the 16th February 1941. The British takeover of Benghazi, which became possible only after almost six months of non-stop air bombardment, did not last for more than two months, after which the British forces had to withdraw because of the pressure brought by the German forces from the South via Agedabia. The British evacuation of Benghazi brought further destruction at least from the point of view of the military installations. The Axis forces' occupation of the city lasted from April until December 1941, a period during which further R.A.F. air raids continued intense and persistent. The Christmas of 1941 brought a temporary British

return to Benghazi, after which Rommel's forces were in a position to regain a foothold in the city. The Germans managed, this time, to maintain the city under their control for nearly a year, after which they were forced to withdraw, for the last time, in face of General Montgomery's Eighth Army, who finally liberated Benghazi on the 20th November 1942.

Of all cities in North Africa, Benghazi suffered most during the Second World War. The severe devastation of the city is perhaps the first of its kind in the whole of North Africa in modern times. The ruin of Berlin, although more extensive, is perhaps the only comparable degree of destruction in recent decades.

To understand how far Benghazi was damaged during those 30 months of severe fighting in which the city changed hands five times, we may consider the following account given by Alan Moorehead, a war correspondent of the *Times* and an eye-witness of the war operations which took place in Benghazi. "Benghazi was no longer a city any more. The plague of high explosives had burst on the place and left it empty, apathetic and cold. The shops were shuttered, the markets closed and ruin succeeded ruin as we drove along" (21). This description of Benghazi was written one year before the final liberation of the city took place; twelve months of constant bombardment were still to come. Later, R.G. Goodchild wrote "Benghazi had suffered every violence and humiliation that modern warfare can provide. It had been shelled from the sea, pounded incessantly from the air and had changed hands five times, each change involving demolitions of installations which, whilst of military importance, were no less vital to the civil life of the town. During the peak of air bombardment large numbers of the citizens had moved out to the surrounding countryside, leaving an empty desolate city with its doors walled up and its municipal services at a standstill" (22). A year later, John Gunther wrote "Benghazi suffered no fewer than 1680 air raids." The description of the city by the same author reads: "Benghazi is a miserable city. I think the most miserable we saw in Africa

It was half destroyed by bombing ... here we are in Africa, not Europe and a slatternly Africa at that" (23).

The devastation of Benghazi was a real problem facing the new British Military Administration, and the lack of capital and the limited resources available were basic disadvantages for coping with any significant reconstruction programme. The urgent need for many public utilities was satisfied from the start, but the uncertain future of the former Italian properties handicapped any major undertaking of repairs by those who occupied these properties until the question of legal ownership was settled. The British authorities were also unwilling to undertake any major reconstruction programmes because of the uncertain future of the country as a whole. The prosperous city merchants and other wealthy people hesitated to buy these private properties until after 1957 when a Libyan-Italian treaty was signed in this respect. The picture of Benghazi, therefore, changed little during the period (1942-49) of the British Administration. On the other hand, the seven years of British rule played a vital role in the late phase of Benghazi's growth. The participation of the Libyan army, headed by the then Amir el-Said Idris el-Senusi, with the Allied forces in the last war gave the Senusi family of Cyrenaica a definite promise by the British Government that they, the Senusi, would not come again under Italian domination. Together with the way in which the question of the future status of the whole of Libya was conducted, this resulted in acknowledgement of the special status of Benghazi by its recognition as co-capital, with Tripoli, of the United Kingdom of Libya. Benghazi became the focus for political affairs in regard to the settlement of the whole Libyan question. This fact has played a major role in the delay of reconstruction and expansion of the city, as the people of Benghazi were more interested in the political future of their country than anything else.

The defeat of the Axis forces in World War II, although fulfilling the national aspirations of the Libyan people, meant the disappearance of factors which had caused the pre-war

prosperity of the city. The paralytic city lost its economic position because of the end of the mass agricultural schemes and the repatriation of the whole Italian population. The introduction of ration cards soon after the British occupation was indicative of the economic stagnation of the city and illustrates the miserable living conditions of the town, which is believed to have had only one quarter of its former native population.

The announcement of the first Cyrenaican government resident in Benghazi in 1949 and the later recognition of the city as the eastern capital of Libya gave the city a special status and consequently a limited reconstruction programme was introduced. The idea was to provide enough administrative offices and headquarters for both provincial and federal requirements. The transfer of hundreds of federal government employees from Tripoli meant that enough houses had to be provided. The Provincial Government, which occupied most if not all the residential areas of the city, was in no position to offer any official accommodation to the federal personnel. A private reconstruction scheme was then initiated to fulfil the demand for more houses either by government employees or craftsmen and manual workers. The introduction of many schemes under foreign aid agencies also helped to some extent to provide better accommodation for those in charge.

However, the evolution of Benghazi since independence in 1951 can be sharply classified into two main phases of growth. The first (1951-56) is a phase characterized by very limited expansion. The features of this phase are mainly reconstruction of damaged houses and government departments for residential and administrative requirements, or to a very limited extent the reconstruction of a few public buildings such as schools, dispensaries and the present power station.

The second phase (1956 onwards) is the one which is associated with the exploitation of oil in the Syrtic area. The search for oil and the early hopes of oil findings gave Libya an international interest in this field. Tripoli and Benghazi

were the only two places where facilities required by oil companies could be provided. The result of this need made Benghazi, in particular, a favourable place for oil companies because of her comparative proximity to the first oil discovery in the Syrtic area.

In discussing the city's growth from 1951 onwards, four factors must be carefully examined in order to follow the stages which finally gave Benghazi its present level of evolution. First, immediately after independence Benghazi became a city of two administrative functions; the first was as local capital for the provincial authorities; and the second was as the seat of the Federal Government transferred from Tripoli. Nevertheless, the city grew little from these functions. The economic difficulties facing the Federal Government at the time were an obstacle to any construction schemes needed to fulfil the administrative requirements. The reconstruction of some of the former Italian government buildings was the only solution. A compact use of premises ready to hand was another idea for solving Benghazi's new administrative difficulties.

In my opinion, the early transfer of the federal government from Tripoli, where enough and suitable administrative quarters were already in existence, was a major mistake, especially if we take into consideration the cost in money, time and effort of such an operation. Yet the transfer was vitally important from a Cyrenaican point of view, where economic revival was an urgent necessity to the ruined city.

The second factor assisting growth was the arrival of many exiled Senusi families to stay in Benghazi. The first growth of Ferhat suburb was undoubtedly due to the establishment of some of these royal families in the area in the early 1950's. Because of their special status these families are now indispensable to the economy of the city. The growth of Benghazi, especially after the oil discoveries, was carried out on a big scale by their financial investments.

The third and most important of all factors in recent growth is the presence of many foreign oil companies in Cyrenaica and the discovery of quantities of commercial oil in the Syrtic area, as early as 1959, and subsequent successes in the area, have helped to create a new era for Benghazi. The impact of oil operations upon the life of the city developed enormously until it became the backbone of its economy. In contrast, Tripoli's growth, although more intensive, was characterized by more diverse factors, and there oil is less instrumental in growth than in the case of Benghazi, where both agricultural productivity and traditional industry are of no major importance. Without the oil discoveries Benghazi's growth would have been very slow indeed, especially after the decision of the Federal Government to create Beida as the main administrative centre for the whole of Libya.

The large numbers of foreigners employed by oil companies revived the need for better accommodation to satisfy the daily increase in demand for modern houses and villas who can afford to offer very high rents. The limited vacant accommodation in the town was very soon taken over and expansion outside the former residential areas rapidly became a necessity.

The Fuehat area is one of the best in the surroundings of Benghazi from a residential point of view, as it is comparatively higher in altitude, far away from the Sebkha and from city noise. The result was that a new modern suburb emerged in less than six years.

Expansion inside the city was progressing too, but vertically because of the limited ground space. New buildings, some of them seven storeys high, are now a common feature of most of the city's main streets. The vertical expansion has taken place either on those limited empty spaces on the road to Berka or as superimposition on old buildings in the previously built-up areas.

The final factor assisting Benghazi's growth was the estab-

lishment of some important federal projects, such as the foundation of the Libyan University (Arts, Commerce and Law faculties), the Royal Military Academy, the Health Centre, the Libyan Army Headquarters and the reconstruction schemes for the Harbour and Benina Airport.

Nevertheless, it is essential to realise that Benghazi's growth over the last five years would not have been so fast or effective if it had been left to governmental expansion. Oil reserves for the government budget are still very limited, and it is therefore unwise to embark on expansion schemes. Moreover, the Federal Government decided to create what is now officially known as the Federal Administrative Centre of Beida. The idea aimed at eliminating the unhappy feelings between the two largest provinces, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, who according to the constitution should each have a capital for the Federal Authorities in Tripoli and Benghazi respectively. Another influence upon the creation of Beida was His Majesty's desire to commemorate his father's birthplace at Beida. The completion of Beida, now highly accelerated, will almost certainly have a serious effect upon Benghazi's present prosperity which will inevitably decrease to some extent when oil explorations cease. Another serious factor affecting the future of the city was the tendency to abolish Provincial Authorities, which meant that Benghazi would lose not only her status as a Federal Capital but also that as a Provincial Capital for Cyrenaica.

Benghazi has doubled in size since independence and has expanded to the north-east, north and east. Its economic influence is now greater than ever before owing to the concentration of the major oil companies, and to some extent to the reconstruction scheme aiming at giving the city its pre-war size of harbour, including the outer basin which was specially designed for military purposes.

The city's Libyan population increased enormously from about 30,000 in 1942 to over 81,000 in 1962. The number of foreigners also increased from about 1,800 in 1954 to about 6,000

in 1962. Health services, although greatly increased and modified, are still unfortunately inadequate. Schools, on the other hand, are probably the only service which seems to be expanding fast enough to fulfil the demand. Houses, transport, entertainment, water and electrical facilities are in short supply. Some of these are serious problems facing the present phase of Benghazi's prosperity, and the shift to Beida may delay a proper solution to them. The present trend in the distribution of oil revenues has already produced a prominent capitalist class which unfortunately may be the only class to receive substantial benefits. The benefits gained by the majority of the local population from oil revenues are still far from producing a sharp increase in standards of living. The people gaining most from oil operations so far are contractors, merchants who were able to satisfy the requirements of oil companies, the landowners and the owners of entertainment facilities such as restaurants, hotels and cabarets. The total number of these people is insignificantly small.

The impact of oil on Benghazi and the rapid growth of the city which followed, has produced a distinct segregation of the different income groups. The Americans, British and other Europeans occupy most of the new area of Fuehat and elsewhere in the city where new buildings are to be found. The rich capitalists are also to be found in this area. High government personnel occupy the houses of Adrian Pelt Street; the other high officials are almost all concentrated in the Scabl area. The middle class is scattered all over the Arab town and most parts of Berka while the lower income class is mainly in Sabri, Ras Abeida, Dar el-Kish and in the newly developed area in the eastern part of the city, Ard bin Junes.

In conclusion, although Benghazi is still growing, it is true to say that there has been no proper planning. This has resulted in an obvious lack of harmony between the pre-war and the present types of architecture. The city also still lacks fundamental services. Because of this Benghazi will remain a city which neither belongs to Europe nor to Africa, a city in which at

least one quarter of its total population still lives in the shanty town of Sabri alone, a city still famous indeed for its flies, first mentioned a century and a half ago.

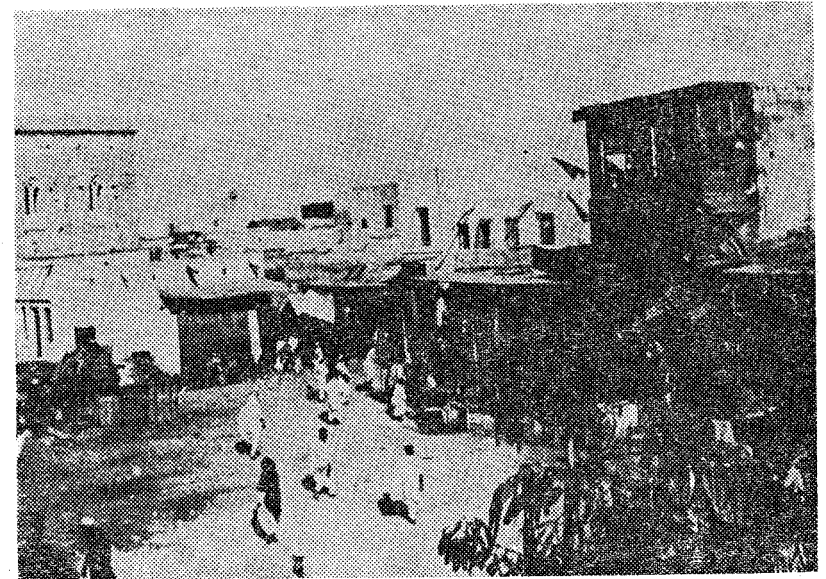
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CHAPTER III

BENGHAZI TODAY NATURE AND DIRECTION OF GROWTH

Since the initiation of oil exploitation the City of Benghazi has come to face the second revolutionary phase in its growth. The Italians were the pioneers of the first phase of the development of Benghazi. Italian expansion introduced a European style of planning and architecture; a feature entirely new to this part of Africa in modern times at least (see plate V).



19th Century Municipality Square, photograph
Benghazi municipality

On the other hand, especially after the rise of the Fascists, Italian political aspirations were, unfortunately, not confined purely to colonization. The results were of great value at least in creating a separate modern section of the city. The contrast between Italian Benghazi and the Arab quarter — Madine — was a matter which the Italians seemed to ignore and which in the end happened to reflect the superficiality of the Italian scheme for developing the city. "Mussolini, however, was busy making Benghazi an Italian town with its native quarter a mere appendage." (1)

The devastation during the World War II and the economic difficulties facing the newly born Libyan State presented great problems for urban renewal despite the administrative functions which the city began to enjoy soon after independence.

The backbone of Benghazi's modern expansion is undoubtedly of Italian origin. The long-term Italian schemes for Benghazi's development, although now completely missing, involved a complete survey of the old town including a new road plan. The main proposed road, according to reliable sources, was to start from the 9th of August Square opposite the Libyan University and across the Arab town to the general hospital. Other roads were to cross the Arab quarter from east to west in order to facilitate traffic and give proper opportunities for new and better planning. However, whether the Italians really meant to implement such a scheme or not, they are hardly to blame for not doing so because they were not sure of the permanency of their sojourn. The blame should be placed instead on the Libyan government and in particular on the Provincial Authorities, with the Municipality as the proper authority. The expansion following oil exploitation and discoveries was left to private interest, although according to the Italian planning regulations of 1936 which are still in force, the Municipality must agree, in theory, beforehand to any repair or construction project. The total of 6472 building licences approved during the last eight years could hardly have been

technically examined by the Municipality's one engineer.*

The present phase of Benghazi's modern growth, as mentioned before, followed two patterns. The first was of a vertical nature in the modern Italian part of the city. The Arab town began to join the new development only in the last three years when superimposition of new buildings became a necessity due to the increased demand for more houses, offices and shops inside the city. The second pattern has a general horizontal nature and may be residential, as in Fuehat, or comprise large offices and bases for the oil companies. The ring road between Fuehat and the main road to Tripoli provides a good example of such expansion.

The architecture of recent Benghazi has a general similarity to the Italian types of buildings, with perhaps three major differences

- (a) Under the Italians separate garden villas were very rare, but now they are the dominant feature of the European extensions of the city.
- (b) The appearance of commercial buildings is new. A recently built multiple-storey building and one of Italian origin differ in the thickness of walls and in the raw materials. The Italian constructions have foundations twice as deep and walls twice as thick compared with recent buildings, which often require maintenance two years after their completion. The Italians, taking into consideration the warm summer conditions, always preferred high ceiled rooms, whereas in recent buildings the height is sometimes only half that of the old ones. Balconies are also reduced in size, and in most cases it is hard for two persons to pass on them. The tallest Italian building in the town is the so-called Silos or the grain store. Other buildings have from two to four storeys and because of this lifts did not

* A New Master Plan has been put in force at the beginning of this year, and the Municipality technical staff has been greatly increased.

come into use until very recently, when they became indispensable parts of most of the modern buildings.

- (c) The third difference lies in the disappearance of the arch system first introduced by the Italians. In recent years when much superimposition of new buildings has taken place along the main city streets, owners in one way or another seem to have ignored the general pattern of previous architecture, and the result is that the arch system has disappeared in different places, leaving the general pattern unbalanced, despite the great value of such a system. Arches protect the public from the excessive heat of summer, provide a good shelter from the torrential winter rains and are also used as extension space for cafes. In brief, Benghazi is still a growing city which has neither any fixed future plans nor seems to worry about the way in which the present expansion is conducted. It is a growth brought about by oil and is carried out by individuals whose only concern seems to be high and quick profits. It is a growth which for many years will be restricted to serving only a small section of the city's inhabitants, either foreign oil employees or a few wealthy native families.

North and east of the city another type of growth has been going on for the last few years. The general increase in the living standards of the lower and middle classes after oil discoveries is the indirect reason for this northerly expansion. The Arab quarter with its high population concentration cannot be expanded vertically due to the general poverty of most residents. Horizontal expansion is also impracticable because of the unsuitable sites nearby. The shanty-town of Sabri to the north of the Arab town was one of the new sites for such expansion. The Municipality land along the main road to Barce and immediately beyond the city entrance was the developed area in this district. The buildings of the area, although high in number, are still far from providing suitable dwellings for even 5% of the total population, who still live in a shocking and

miserable condition, with no modern facilities of any kind. Such conditions, though less intensive, also apply to the other local developed areas in Ard bin Junes, Berka and the south-eastern edges of the Selmani Sebkha and in Ras Abeida. The architecture in these areas is of local Arab pattern with the exception that more use is made of stones and cement. In these areas there is no proper road system, no electricity or piped water systems and no public transport.

The recent unplanned growth of Benghazi has further illustrated the diversity and contrast between the oriental parts of the city and those so-called European or modern parts. It is a contrast between poor mud-built houses, wooden huts or tents and American designed vilas, fascinating multiple-storey buildings and in some cases Gasur-Arabian Nights mansions.

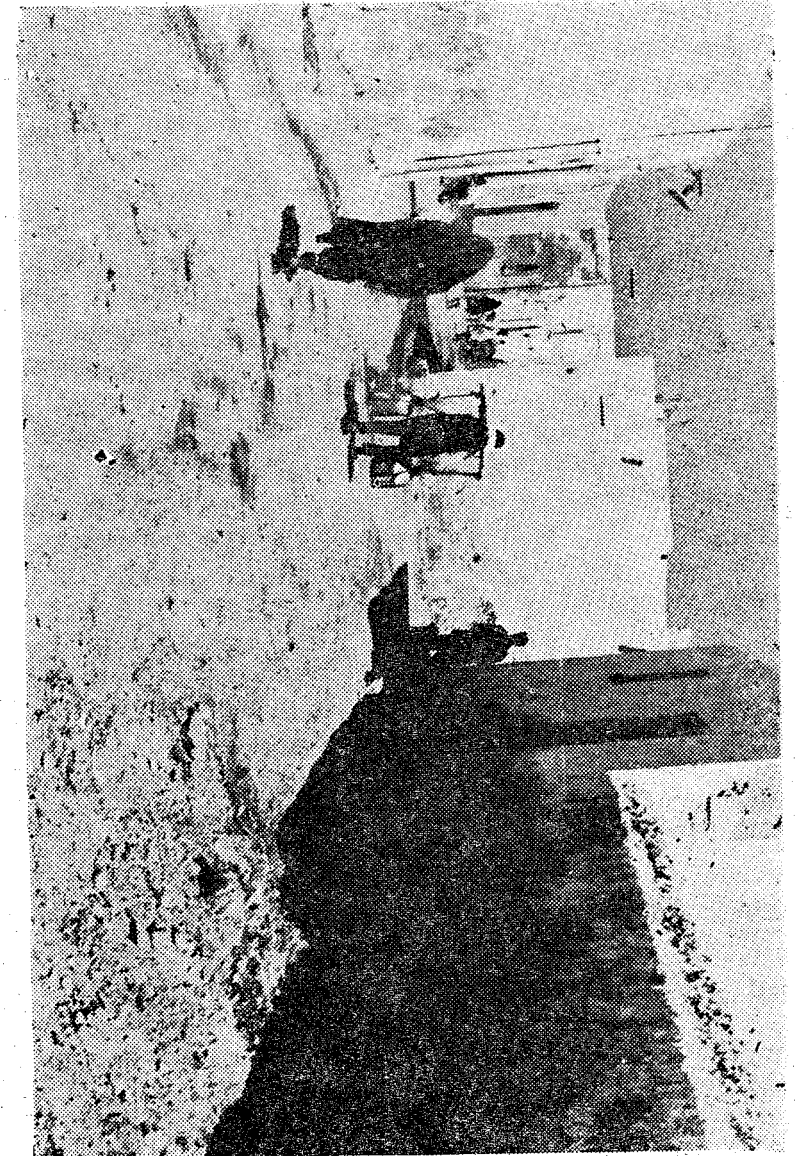
In conclusion, Benghazi's evolution necessitated by oil discoveries has a similar character to that expansion introduced by the Italians in the sense that both were imposed from outside and consequently both failed to provide any local significant response except perhaps that both have succeeded in attracting thousands of daily manual workers.

The landscape surrounding old Benghazi conditioned the way in which the Italians expanded the city. Modern growth has to some extent failed to challenge the Sebkha simply because it has no basic planning. The result has been that the city has expanded toward the south-east for modern residential areas and to the south beyond the Punta Sebkha for oil offices and bases. North of the old town and east of Berka were the main areas for the native pattern of expansion.

THE GROWTH OF BENGHAZI IN REGARD TO WATER SUPPLY

Because of the complete absence of surface water, the city's water supply has always been dependent on underground resources. Specific information about how the city water requirements were fulfilled in the old times is unfortunately lacking. The Greek system of digging wells in public places and houses in the old city of Eusperides was in all probability the method later adopted in Berenice and in Marsa Ibn Ghazi. Prior to the Italian occupation there were two major ways for providing water for domestic requirements. The first was that most houses had their own well which ranged in depth between three to six metres. The water quality was so poor for drinking purposes that many people, especially those of comparatively high social standards, constructed cisterns in their houses where rain water was collected in the winter and used for drinking and washing clothes during the rest of the year. The second method was the use of the few public wells such as those of the Sabri sand dunes and those of the present site of Fuehat Water Works. These public wells were widely utilized by el-warradin — water sellers who sell their water either to those people who have no private wells or to those who look for better water quality, especially that of Fuehat. Such a system is still in common use in the Arab town and the outskirts of the town, with the difference of using metal barrels fitted upon carts pulled by donkeys and that the water is collected from the public fountains and not from wells. At present the city needs great efforts to expand the original Italian water pipe system. The old Arab quarter and the new Arab areas are still lacking a piped water system. The warradin are still indispensable to

* An interesting departure from this, however, was the beginning in 1965 of the drainage of a large part of the Juliana Sebkhah adjacent to the main road between Benghazi and Berka. This has given a level and advantageous site for the ambitious project of a Sports City which is already building. It will house the Pan-Arab Games when Libya plays host in 1969.



the Sabri and Ras Abeida areas as well as in the centre of the Arab town. (see plate VI)

It is not surprising, therefore, that water supply limited the evolution of the city before the Italians. They laid the foundation for the city's expansion simply because they located enough water resources beyond the Turkish city walls without which the destiny of Benghazi might well have been different.

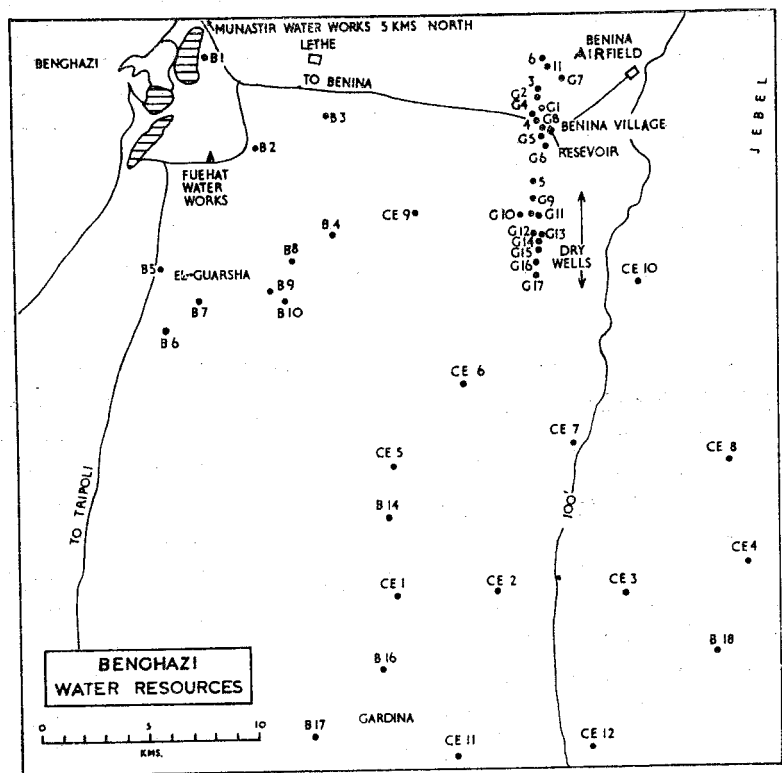
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The Italian attempts to locate a city water supply began a few years after their takeover. The results of their numerous test borings were tabulated by Romano (1933) and were commented on by Marchetti (1938). They indicated that a zone of saturation, whose water table was slightly above sea level, was present and that wells could be developed which would produce moderate amounts of usable water (2). The former studies provided the city with major water supply areas outside the Turkish limits of the city. The first source was a system of galleries and wells at Fuehat. The Italian Fuehat Waterworks consisted mainly of five deep wells ranging in depth from 130 to 330 feet, a series of shallow collection galleries, a pumping station and an elevated storage tank. All were destroyed or damaged during the Second World War. The second source was a collecting gallery at Munastir, on the coast five kilometres north of the city. The Munastir Water Works consisted only of two infiltration galleries in the sand-dunes with a total daily yield of 75,000 gallons of water containing 1,800 parts per million of sodium chloride. The total yield derived from both sources was just less than one million gallons a day and the water, in general, contained approximately 1,000 parts per million of sodium chloride.

The Italian hydrological surveys and the construction of the water works which followed gave Benghazi the first proper chance of expansion not only because they were able to supply a permanent yield of approximately one million gallons a day, but also because they gave hope for further exploitation and consequently more yield for future expansion development.

The defeat of the Axis forces and the arrival of the British Military Administration brought the second phase of large-scale water exploitation. To start with, some of the collecting galleries at Fuehat were cleared and four extra wells were drilled. The yield of this particular water works averaged 925,000 gallons a day of water with 900 parts per million of sodium chloride. "The water from all sources is pumped into a ground-storage tank reservoir of one million gallons capacity. In addition, an elevated concrete water storage tank has been constructed and put into service." (3) —

The war damage to Munastir Water Works on one hand and the high sodium chloride content on the other hand brought this water supply to an end, but Italian preliminary surveys of the Benina area encouraged the British Military Administration to employ a British firm to undertake further geophysical studies of the area. The final results were promising and work took place soon after 1949. The Public Works Department with the help of the British firm began a series of 23 test drilling wells in a north-south line near the 100 metre contour. The location of these wells as well as other works in the region are shown in (Figure 6). The wells ranged in depth below the surface from 260 feet in well G. 3 to 370 feet in well G. 16. Water levels on the other hand ranged from 3.4 feet above sea level in well G. 2 and 16 feet in well G. 16. The sodium chloride content is less than that of Fuehat. Three of the wells gave outputs of 20,000 gallons per hour, eleven wells yielded an output ranging from a few hundred to about 10,000 gallons per hour. The other nine most southerly wells gave so little water that they are listed as dry holes. The wells G. 3, G. 1 and G. 8 have been used since 1958 to provide some of Benghazi's water



Water resources of Benghazi

supply. A reservoir of one million gallons capacity was built in the area and a 12 inch main was connected with Fuehat Water Works.

The present phase of urban expansion has meant demands in excess of the limited supply of two million gallons per day. In 1962, water consumption rose to 4.5 million gallons a day during the summer months compared with only 2.5 millions in the summer of 1960. The system followed to cope with such a tremendous increase was to increase the total yield of Benina by drilling extra wells and to construct a supplementary pumping station nearby.

Further improvements to the water supply of Benghazi are in need of urgent consideration in order to fulfil the necessary obligations towards the city's increasing population. The following suggestions may help to improve the present situation:—

- (a) The construction of a higher storage tank. The height of the present Fuehat tank (120 feet) is not enough to give sufficient pressure to the Sidi Khrebish reservoir, which in return fails to supply sufficient water quantities to the medium height multiple-storey buildings.
- (b) The construction of a second distributing water reservoir in the city in order to reduce the demand on the single reservoir of Sidi Khrebish.
- (c) The provision of more permanent water yields. Regular water shortages, which in some cases last several days, occur particular in the summer months.
- (d) The replacement of old pipes. Most of the present pipe system dates back to the early years of the Italian occupation.
- (e) The extension of the piped water system to the newly developed areas especially north and south-west of the

city where the majority of the population lives at present.

- (f) Adequate governmental aid with proper supervision of the department in charge which at present is short of qualified staff and proper means of transport.
- (g) The abolition of the scheme for providing the city with better quality water from Ain Mara on the Jebel. The terrific cost of the project together with the fact that this scheme would provide a maximum of only three million gallons a day would not justify its construction in the present economic situation. Alternatively, the drilling of more wells in the Benina area would, according to reliable official resources, certainly produce enough water for future urban expansion without any great cost. It is estimated that one quarter of the Ain Mara project would be sufficient to modernize the whole city water works.

The future water supply of Benghazi is now assured. Political and economic factors are certainly the two creative factors behind the city's recent evolution. The question of the future status of Benghazi would therefore depend on how these two factors behave in the coming years.

MORPHOLOGY AND GROWTH

Examining the morphology of the City of Benghazi in detail is almost impracticable for many reasons. First, there is a lack of contemporary maps showing the different stages of the city's growth. In all, there are only four reliable maps covering a period of the last 135 years. The first map of Benghazi is the drawing left by the Beechey brothers in 1828. The Italians produced two major maps in 1922 and 1938. In 1958 the Libyan authorities published their first map, which was largely based on the latest Italian work. The British Petroleum Company published in 1961 a general map of the city with the intention of showing the location of their offices, bases and petrol stations.

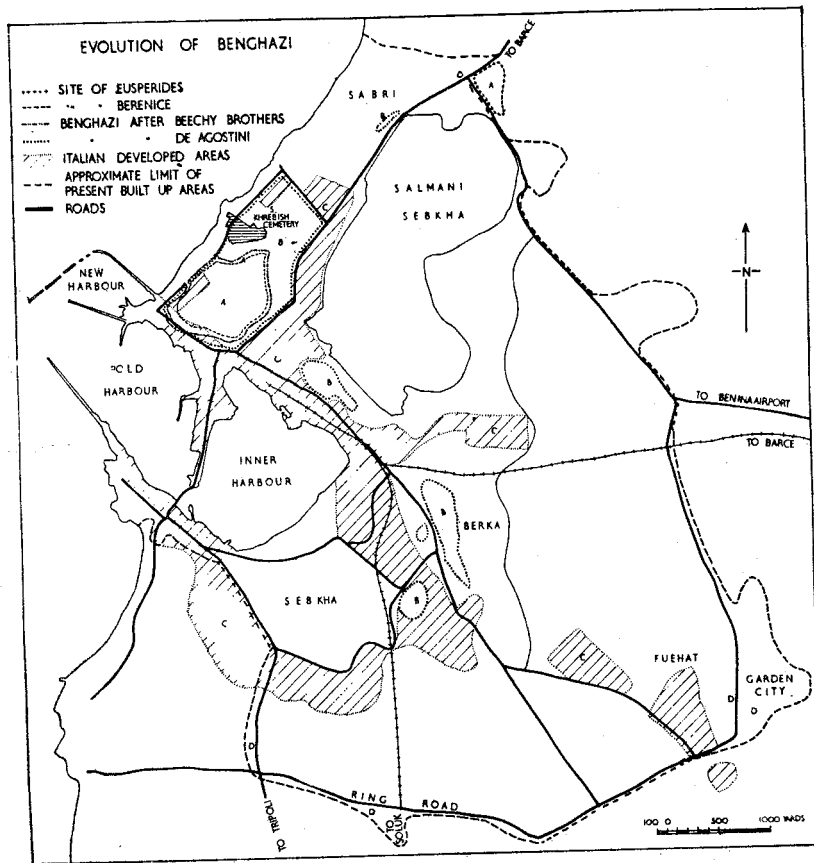
Air photographs are also very rare and publication is not allowed for military reasons.

A second difficulty is that, apart from the Italian quarter, the military installations and the recently developed areas, the ages of buildings are not apparent, especially in the Arab town where building systems have changed little over the ages.

A third difficulty is the poverty of historical records of Benghazi in comparison, for example, with Tripoli.

Because of these unfortunate difficulties no precise growth map can be constructed. On the other hand, (Figure 7) is derived from the four above mentioned maps, and therefore presents the following four general different stages of growth:

- (a) Prior to 1828
 - (b) Between 1828 and 1922
 - (c) Between 1922 and 1958
 - (d) After 1958
- (a) No traces of Benghazi before 1828 remain. The buildings of the early city are either included in the Italian area of radical transformation or were built of mud and other simple raw materials and not of durable materials and stone like ancient Berenice. In other words the map of Benghazi of 1828 presents the built-up area and not the age of buildings of that time. The present buildings found on the former site can be classified into two groups : Italian buildings ranging in age from immediately after 1911 to 1940, and, less dominant, those of Arab character. The exact age of the different buildings in this particular area is impossible to forecast. The simple raw materials of these buildings and their response to the dampness of the ground indicates that their construction could not have been earlier than the end of the last century. In other words, they present a probable superimposition on those buildings described by the Beechey brothers.
- (b) Between 1828-1922 no maps of the city are available, but



Evolution of Benghazi

the size of the city could hardly have extended beyond the limits of 1828, because of the lack of stability and security. Limited expansion may have begun to take place in the late Turkish period when economic and political conditions were reasonably well under control. At this time more new features were added to Benghazi's topography. Of these the most important was the creation of the Berka suburb. Before 1881 villages began to spring up around the tombs of Sidi Hussein and Sidi Dawud to house the increasing population, and the Turkish governor had a garden in Berka. In the extreme north, not far from the old site of Eusperides, a nucleus of a few shops and houses was developing. The site was and is still called Dakakin Hamid.

The shanty town of Sabri not only existed but was also considered as one of the city's quarters. Besides these enlargements limit of the cemetery of Sidi Krebish, which according to the Beechey brothers formed the extreme northern part of the city. To the east expansion was confined to the present Omar Ibn el-Ass Street. Apart from the later Italian modifications, either by new establishments on empty lands or by fundamental changes to the previous morphology of the city, the map of 1922 may be considered as the actual map of Benghazi when it was taken over by the Italians in 1911. Buildings of local design which are now found on the map of 1922 were difficult to classify as pre-or post-Italian occupation because of their regular repair. Sidi Hussein and Sidi Dawud were at the time included as two quarters of the city.

- (c) The Italian stage undoubtedly was the most important phase of the city's evolution. During the thirty years which cover this stage Benghazi was almost completely changed in size, in layout and in architectural style. The Italians, accelerating their agricultural schemes for granaries after gaining absolute security, were able to devote more efforts to the development of the city. The creation of modern Benghazi was an Italian initiative. On the other hand,

World War II ruined most of the city — expansion was arrested for almost fifteen years until oil discoveries initiated a new phase of growth after 1958. Because of this we may regard the map of 1958 as the map of Italian Benghazi.

- (d) Benghazi after 1958 began to respond quickly to the sudden wealth which followed the discovery of oil in 1959. The lack of proper planning for Benghazi's recent growth has made it impossible to draw an accurate map showing the extent of this growth. A large proportion of it has taken place on the old sites, and new modern apartment blocks, which follow the configuration of the old narrow alleys, jostle Arab structures and the early Italian buildings.

QUARTERS

The idea of dividing the city of Benghazi into twelve separate administrative quarters was put forward by the Turkish governor Khalil Pasha who reigned between 1863 and 1868. The new development was a great advantage not only because it organized city administration, but also and more important because it decreased tribal influence, which had been the basis of administration for many centuries. "It is perhaps the demolition of the tribe as the social and racial unit in late 1860s which will be remembered as the best thing the Turks did".(4) The Italians, although keeping the system of quarters (Mahalla) functioning on the Turkish basis, were for military and political purposes tempted to revive the tribal influence for many years after their occupation. In the 1930's the Italians were able to control the whole province, an event which brought heavy restrictions to any sort of tribalism not only in Benghazi but all over the Country. The revival of tribalism in Benghazi is now believed to be an action of the British, who during their administration were considered to support the few Kologlis families against the rest of the city dwellers. Since independence tribalism has developed enormously. The practice of political rights in a country where illiteracy dominates and where no

political parties are well organised helps the electors to turn to the original tribe as their chief supporter. This is a phenomenon which has long since disappeared from the city of Tripoli.

The number of quarters remained unchanged until a few years ago when they increased from twelve to seventeen. The first additional change occurred when the Italians considered the Fuehat suburb as a separate quarter. The second change followed the division of both Sabri and Sidi Dawud into three sub-quarters each. The boundaries of the quarters are well defined except in the cases of the sub-quarters of Sidi Dawud and Sabri where no reliable official boundaries could be fixed and consequently these sub-quarters will be regarded as if no changes have occurred. Each quarter has its Mukhtar corresponding to the Sheikh of the tribe and also its Imam. The Mukhtar is a paid government official who in fact has less authority in the Mahalla than a Sheikh in a tribe. The Imam who is also a government paid official is the Mukhtar's assistant whose responsibility concerns religious affairs including marriage and divorce. The Mukhtar's main functions concern registration of births and deaths, recommendations for commercial and driving licences, distribution of government aid to poor families and official consultation in respect of the needs of his quarter's development.

1. **Sabri** is the extreme northern quarter of the city. The name Sabri is believed to be the name of one of the oldest families to reside in the city. During the Turkish rule the area was more often known as Zreria or Dakakin Hamid. Today the name Sabri generally means the area of the shanty town, but in fact the Sabri quarter is the whole region beyond Sharia el-Mustashfa. According to local sources, the Italians in their early years deliberately set fire to the shanty town which was mainly inhabited by Sudanese Negroes. The total disappearance of the domed straw huts, which were common types of dwellings before the Italians, is believed to be the result of this destructive action, which, in all probability, aimed at creating a better and cleaner suburb.

The construction of the general hospital in 1933 was the first real effort for modern development in the Sabri area. The increased demand for local manual workers during the Italian regime made the area a focus of attraction for those workers who came to reside in the city. The devastation of Benghazi during World War II also encouraged the local inhabitants who had lost their houses to live in the area where they could build a cheap hut or pitch a tent. After 1958 the area became one of the most populated parts in the city, because of the continuous flood of migrants to the city. Between 1922 and 1962 the quarter's official population estimate has sharply risen from 899 persons in 1922, to 17,000 in 1962, an increase which officially gives the area about 24 per cent of the whole city population. Sabri with its high population concentration has been entirely neglected in official development plans. Unofficially the estimates of the Sabri population exceed 25 thousand, of which only an estimated 10 to 15% live in Arab-built houses. The rest live in wooden or tin huts, zariba or in tents. The shanty town of Sabri which covers most of the quarter gives a clear picture of a primitive and miserable society living on the lowest margins of human subsistence. In winter the people suffer from dirt, mud and rain. Summer conditions are better than those of winter but millions of flies live on the dirt and sewage found all over the place. (See plate VII). In brief, it is undoubtedly the poorest living area in the whole of Libya. Neither modern dwellings nor medical, service, sanitation, hygiene, piped water and electricity services are yet known despite the fact that the eastern part of the area lies along the main northern entrance to the city. The Municipality's decision to sell its lands lying between the main road and shanty town was regarded by many people of the area as a decision which aimed in the first place at hiding the shanty town from the eyes of foreigners and tourists. In my view, the decision was also intended to cope with the increased demand for more premises for commerce and trade, and this explains the design of most of the new buildings in the area.

The Sabri quarter, which now extends as far north as the



A cafe in the shanty town

Jewish cemetery, still lacks public transport. There is no bus service to link the quarter with the town. Public buildings in the quarter besides the general hospital include the former Torelli barracks, the slaughterhouse, a sporting club and three mosques, one of which is still under construction by the Municipality.

Since the war, the shanty town, because of its extreme poverty and high population density, has become a moral problem especially since the official prohibition of alcoholic liquor and licenced brothels immediately after independence.

2. **Sidi Sherif**, this quarter is called after the marabout Sidi Sherif who is believed to have come from el-Maghreb about three and a half centuries ago. The marabout is buried in the cemetery which bears his name, but which has long been out of use. This fact together with its central position necessitates its removal and replacement by a public garden or children's playing ground. This suggestion is based on the fact that the cemetery is located almost in the centre of the populous Arab quarter which lacks space for children's playgrounds. The quarter is practically divided into two different sections east and west of Sharia Omar ibn el-Ass. The eastern part is an Italian creation. It includes the old city stadium and the new Fonduk. East of the hospital and north of the Fonduk the quarter includes the houses of government personnel and the new extension of the hospital including the nurses living quarters. In the south-east of this Italian part of the quarter are the premises of the Ministry of Education. The new memorial tomb of the patriot Omar el-Mukhtar is one of the most elaborate buildings in this section,

The western part, on the other hand, is a typical part of the Arab town except for the girls' intermediate school and the nearby petrol station. The area west of the former school with Sharia Bin Isa as its centre is an area of traditional blacksmiths which is often sarcastically called the Manchester of Benghazi. The extreme western end of this quarter enjoys a share of the

busiest local trade and shopping centre of Suk el-Gerid and Sharia Bughala which is a northern extension of the former Suk. Generally speaking, most of the quarter, especially its Arab part, is a residential area, with the exception of the shops along the western side of Sharia Omar Ibn el-Ass north of the girls' school where, since the Second World War, these shops have specialized in selling motor spares. Between the stadium and the Fonduk lies the only textile factory in the whole of Benghazi. Besides these functions the quarter, because of the Fonduk, represents the most important wholesale market in the city. The quarter's population has risen from 1670 persons in 1922 to 3,499 in 1962 which is an insignificant increase compared with Sabri.

3. **Sidi Khrebish** is the largest quarter inside the Arab town. The quarter's name was derived from the marabout who is buried in the cemetery which still bears the name Khrebish. According to Agostini, Sidi Khrebish left two sons — Sidi Said, whose tomb is still to be found in Belkheir quarter, and Sidi Junes whose tomb is found in the Sabri area. There are seven mosques in the quarter, five of which are believed to be founded by Tripolitarians from Misurata. The other two are known to have been erected by people from the Maghreb. The tomb of Sidi Ibn Ghazi, the saint after whom the city of Benghazi was named, is laid somewhere in the former cemetery. Sidi Ibn Ghazi was a marabout who, most Arab historians agree, was a son of one of the prophet's followers, despite the fact that nothing definite is yet known about his life.

The quarter is largely an Arab residential area except in the extreme west where the Italians built their marine headquarters, (now the Faculty of Law in the Libyan University) and reconstructed the Turkish city prison. The south-west part of the quarter is occupied by the huge old Khrebish cemetery. The transfer of this cemetery will benefit the city's future expansion, where its site can be successfully used as a council house area due to its central location or as the main public garden, a feature which the city lacks and needs badly. This

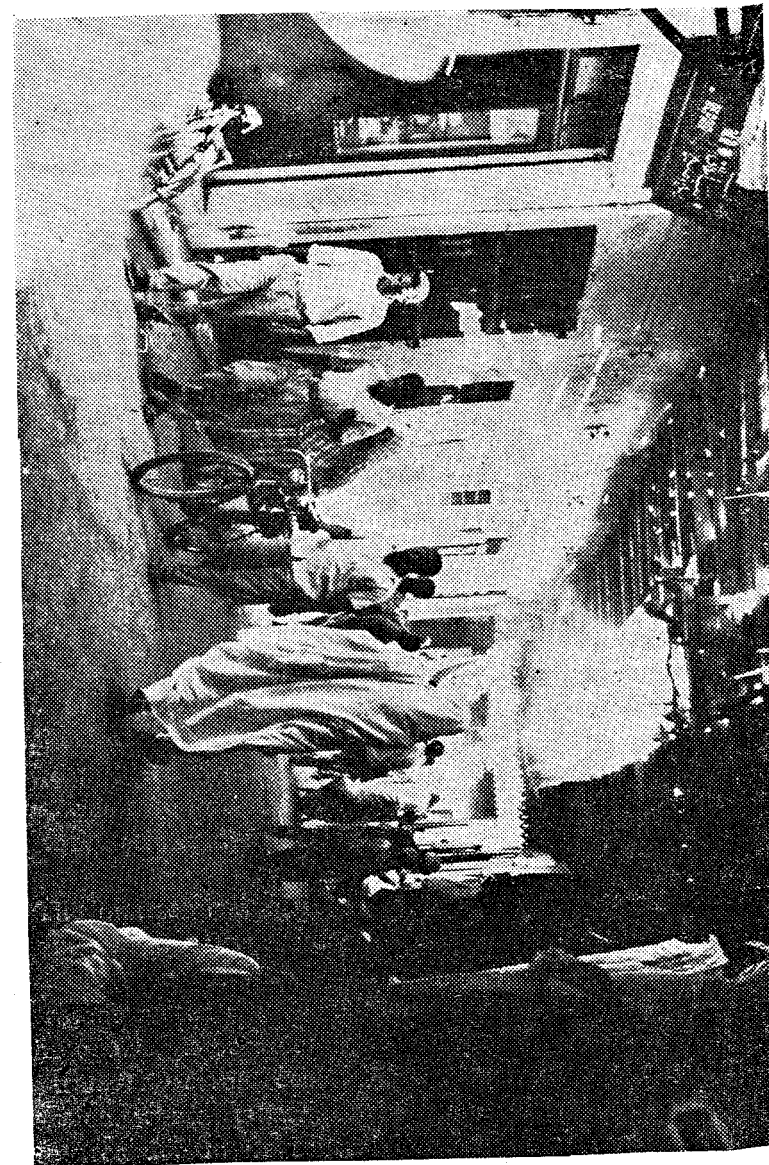
is beside the fact that the cemetery as it now is spoils the scenery of the old promenade and affects the whole morphology of this part of the Arab town. The quarter's population has practically doubled itself over the last forty years; it increased from 4,214 persons in 1922 to 7,993 persons in 1962. The impossibility of horizontal expansion and of vertical modern growth has kept the population from the same rapid increase as Sabri.

4. **Belkheir** — This is a small quarter which is also named after a local marabout whose tomb is still found at Suk el-Jerid. The quarter's eastern part is the important shopping centre of Suk el-Dalam and the southern part of Suk el-Jerid (See plate VIII). The rest of the quarter is a typical Arab residential area. The quarter's population rose from 571 persons in 1922 to 1,170 persons in 1962.

5. **Sidi Salam** is the smallest quarter in the city, with a population of only 789 persons in 1962 compared with less than two hundred in 1922. The name of Sidi Salem was derived from a local marabout. Despite its small size, the quarter has five mosques, the most important of which is the great mosque was the city located in the Municipality Square. This mosque was founded by Abdul Samiah el-Ghadi 400 years ago. Apart from these mosques, the Municipality building and square, the quarter is mainly a residential area.

6. **El-Shabbi** — The quarter is one of the few which have lost their pre-Italian character because of the radical changes introduced by the Italian development scheme for Benghazi. The quarter is therefore one of the most important areas in the city because of its almost complete modernization. It includes the Provincial and Federal government headquarters, the Federal High Court, the National Bank, the central police headquarters, the court's compound and the modern shopping centre of Sharia Omar el-Mukhtar, which besides its first class shops has four of the six banks operating in the city. In addition, the whole harbour is included in this quarter. In other words, the quarters fulfils the main political, financial and commercial

Suk El-Gerid



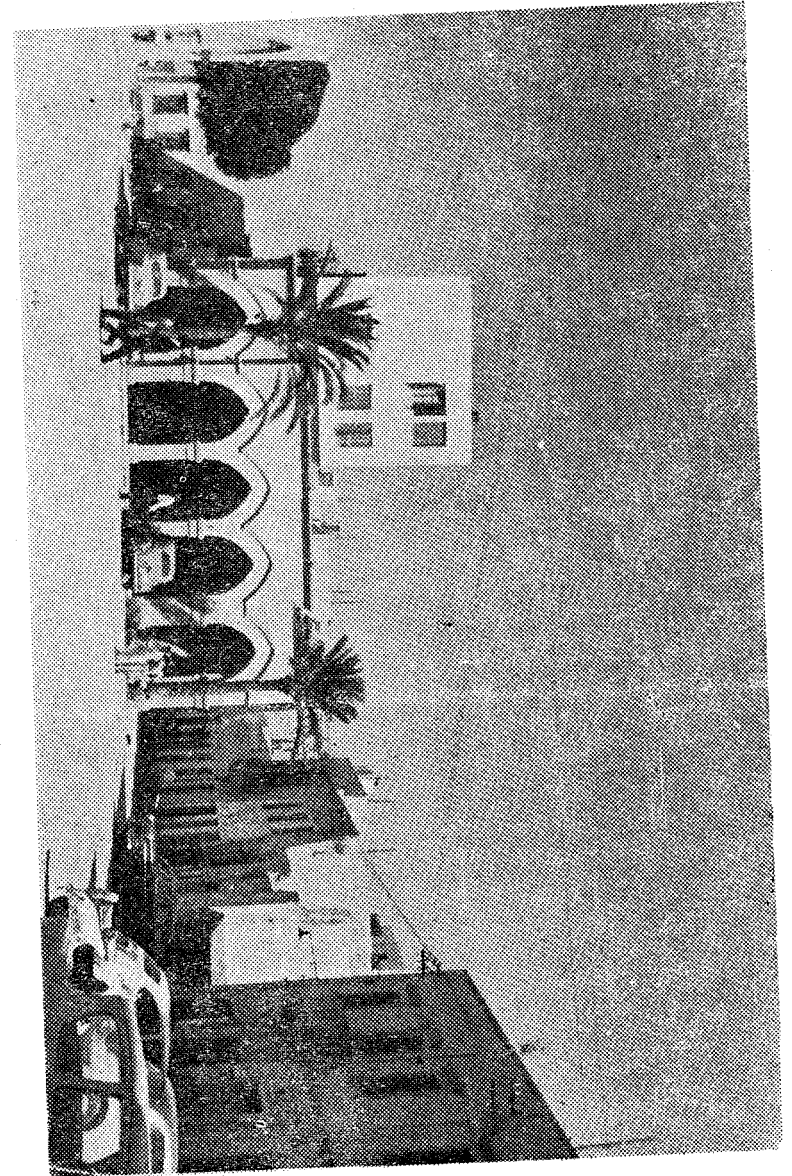
functions of the city. Moreover, the quarter includes part of the first class residential area, especially for Jewish merchants. The Arab residential area is limited and confined to the area west of the modern buildings found along the northern half of Sharia Omar el-Mukhtar. Consequently, the quarter's population is very small. Figures for 1962 gave a total population of 1,101 persons compared with 564 persons in 1922. The name Shabbi is also after a local marabout .

7. **Ghrebil** is also known after a local marabout. The southern half of this quarter was one of the Italian developed areas of the city. The peninsula development of Sharia Adrian Pelt is completely an Italian creation, mainly designed as a residential quarter for high officials. The Catholic Cathedral and the city's first class hotel are also found in this area. The Cyrenaican broadcasting station was recently built opposite the sailing club, the latter being the biggest and most efficient club in the city. The British and U.A.R. embassies are also found in this southern part. Moreover there are two second class hotels, the Fiat garage and showrooms, and the Clinic of Benghazi. Between the railway gauge and Sharia el-Istiklal-Independence Street — lies another Italian developed area. The main features of this second Italian area include the Parliament, the Federal police headquarters, the Libyan University and the squares of the 9th of August and Omar Tosoun. Other public buildings include the fruit and fish markets. (See plate IX).

The Arab section of this quarter has been greatly modified especially in the last few years where new buildings have been constructed on old sites.

Victory (Nassar) Street which runs from the harbour main gate to the sailing club built on the so-called cathedral mole provides the largest single road in the city, besides being the city's promenade. Independence Street, on the other hand, is one of the few streets in the Italian part of the city where superimposition of huge multiple storey buildings has taken place after oil discoveries.

Fish Market



In 1961 there were seven of these buildings under construction. The street is one of the best shopping centres with a high concentration of company offices besides being the busiest road for traffic. Generally speaking Ghrebil quarter is one of the most important quarters in the town especially when the Juliana zone is brought into consideration as the extreme southern extension of the quarter.*

This area is noted for its first-class beaches, clubs, the installation of many petroleum, storage tanks and the formerly productive salt pans. The quarter's population is rather small if compared with the actual size of the quarter; the figure for 1962 was 6,188 persons compared with 2,000 in 1922.

8. **El-Drawi** — This is a comparatively small quarter, the name of which was derived from the founder of the mosque of el-Drawi. The quarter west of Sharia Omar Ibn el-Ass has still preserved its Arab character. In Suk el-Khaddara in the extreme west lies the area which specializes in the retail trade of vegetables and fruit and where a concentration of butchers' shops is also found. The Jewish synagogue was built near this western end. The rest of the Arab quarter is primarily residential. East of Sharia Omar Ibn el-Ass the buildings are mostly of Italian origin, and the foundations are based on the filled-in southern edge of the Sebkhah. Most are residential, but over the last few years quite a number have been turned into showrooms and offices. In Agostini's time the quarter, which was mainly Arab was the second most important quarter after Sidi Khrebish for trade and commerce. At present the importance of the area is small compared with most of the previous quarters. Its population increased from 2,300 persons in 1922 to 5,269 persons in 1962.

9. **Loheshi** — a small quarter known after a local marabout whose grave is believed to be at el-Drawi mosque; the quarter is also divided into two parts, west and east of Sharia Omar Ibn el-Ass. West of the former street the section is a typical part of the Arab town. This part besides being a residential area is known for its two Arusia zawya and two other mosques. East

of Sharia Omar Ibn el-Ass the quarter was founded by the Italians, like the southern and northern quarters of el-Drawi and Bin Isa. The 1962 population was 2,491 persons compared with only 600 persons in 1922.

10. **Bin Isa** — The name Bin Isa was derived from its Isawia zawya. Its population rose from 140 persons in 1922 to 2,810 persons in 1962. The western part of the quarter contains part of Suk el-Jerid. The eastern end, on the other hand, is one of the main administrative areas of the city; it includes the offices of the Ministries of Social Affairs, Health and Public Transport.

The Arab part of the quarter as well as the similar parts of the former two quarters are among the poorest areas in the Arab town, where buildings damaged during the last war are still widespread. Before the Italians the quarter was famous because it included the Old Fonduk and the Municipal Hotel.

11. **Sidi Hussein** — The creation of the quarter of Sidi Hussein, which is again called after a local marabout buried in the cemetery of the same name, dates back to the late decades of the last century. The area is now believed to be one of the main cemeteries of ancient Berenice. The construction of the Turkish causeway between Benghazi and Berka through the Salmani Sebkhah was undoubtedly the first seed of the area's later development. The growth of the quarter before the Italians was insignificant and was merely confined to the eastern and southern edges of the cemetery. The Italians efforts to reduce the size of the Sebkhah gave the quarter a real chance of enlargement, and so the quarter is largely an Italian creation especially in the west and north-west in the Scabli residential area. Other important Italian achievements in the quarter included the railway station and the present Royal Diwan. In 1952 the Libyan authorities constructed the power station. After the discovery of oil, the eastern side of the main street of St. Lot, which is an extension of Istiklal Street, became one of the most modern parts of Benghazi, owing to the construction of the most up-to-date multiple-storey buildings. The population

of the quarter increased from 513 persons in 1922 to about 2,500 in 1962.

12. **Sidi Dawud** — The quarter of Sidi Dawud, which is now better known as Berka, is called after the marabout Sidi Dawud whose tomb is still found in the area. According to Agostini, this marabout was a relative of the famous Sidi Ghazi. The quarter at present has the biggest population: 24,635 in 1962 which gives it about 29% of the official population of the whole city. The quarter is now divided into three sub-quarters, each with a Mukhtar and an Imam who, unfortunately, are not all aware of their administrative boundaries. Before the Turks established their military barracks — Gasar Turkia — almost 110 years ago, Berka was an area of no significance, apart from a few scattered Arab gardens most of which have now disappeared because of the tremendous growth, especially after the Italians had made it their first military zone. The population figure of only 1,317 persons in 1922 may illustrate that Berka — pool, in Arabic — was at the time far less important than most other quarters of the Arab town. Berka is also important for its many military camps, which are all in use either by the Libyan or the British army. It is also important as a local shopping area having many new industries such as sweet and shoe factories. In addition, Berka has the city stadium and other sporting facilities, but it is mainly a residential area for lower and middle classes and was the first area where council houses were built.

13. **Fuehat** — This suburb was first included as a quarter of the city by the Italians towards the end of the 1920s. Before 1950, it was like Berka before the Italians, an area of scattered gardens around a small nucleus of Arab houses called Hiash bin Ismail. Fuehat is still growing rapidly around the main nucleus of Garden City on the eastern side of the ring road and Bin Aun south of the farm former road. During Italian times Fuehat was important for its huge barracks, which was the main British base and the headquarters for the whole province. Also important are the installations of the main city

water works on the site of what was known previously as the garden of el-Usta Mhemid. Moreover, Fuehat was also chosen for the establishment of both the main Agricultural Experimental Farm and the Zoo in 1936. Besides, these functions the area was also used as one of the main quarries, and quarrying is still one of the main occupations for local people and for those who live nearby in Berka. The old centre of Fuehat contrasts with the modern parts of the quarter. South and west of bin Ismail houses, near the newly built Senusi mosque and market, most of the local people still live in a typical small shanty town. Water is collected from a public well and electricity is rarely used.

NATURE OF HOUSING

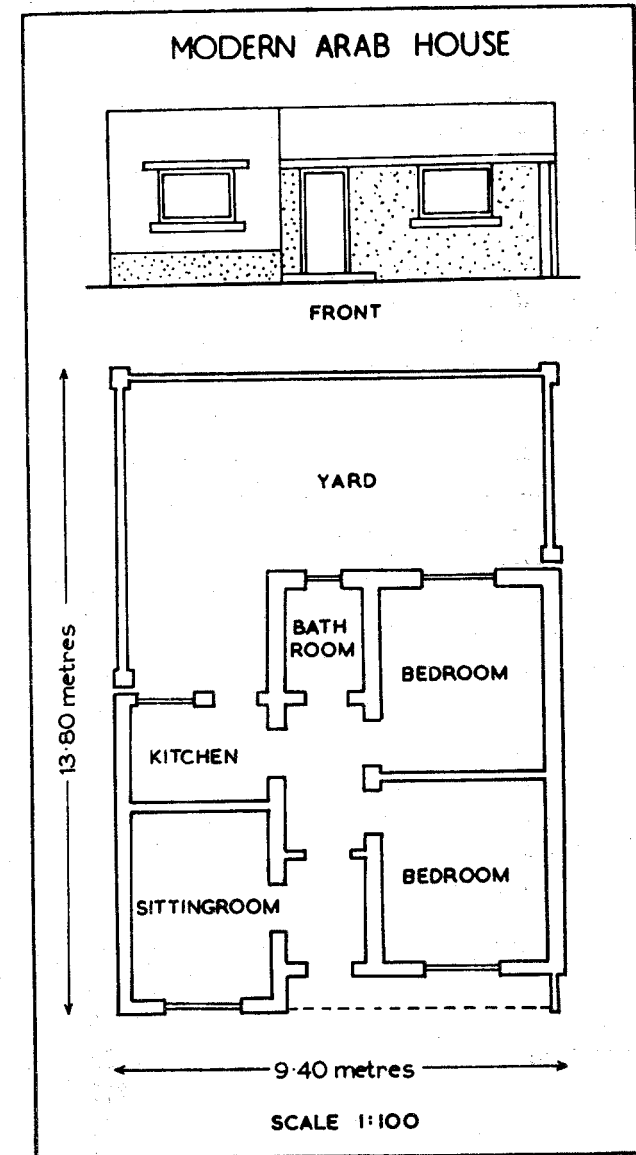
A detailed study of house types in the city of Benghazi can be more easily achieved if housing is classified into two main forms of dwellings, (a) the traditional Arab dwelling and (b) the modern form of dwelling. Each of these groups is subdivided into a few different categories.

(a) Traditional Arab Dwellings

Before the Italian takeover and the introduction of their scheme for city development, Benghazi was a typical Arab centre, which, due to the superficiality of the Turkish regime, remained almost unaffected by Turkish architecture and design. This phenomenon differentiates Benghazi completely from the old city of Tripoli which still reflects Turkish design. The Turks in Benghazi were few in number and lived either in military camps or in the castle itself. The rest of the inhabitants had three house types: the typical Arab house or hoosh, the straw hut or zariba, and the tent. The hoosh was and still is the most common dwelling for both Arabs and Jews. The zariba was confined to the northern edges of the city. Tents must have been well known at least in the outskirts, where Bedouin camped. After World War II a fourth type of Arab

dwelling began to dominate the outskirts: the scrap metal or wooden hut.

(1) **Hoosh** — The traditional Arab house is a square uncovered courtyard surrounded by rooms. There is a well in the court, except in a few cases where the well is located in a separate section near the kitchen. In houses of the higher income groups there is usually a cistern for collecting the rain water used for drinking and washing purposes. A few decades ago most Arab houses inside the city changed to the use of the piped water system; it is now estimated that only 8 to 15 per cent of the Arab houses are still dependent on water from wells and cisterns. The hoosh has normally a flat roof of wood, dried palm trunks or of stones and concrete. The social position of the owners decides the materials used in this respect. The number of rooms varies from two to six according to family size and social standard. The room nearest to the entrance is usually used as the sitting room. Most Moslem women are not allowed to meet strangers and so an extra inside door separates the sitting room from the main courtyard. The design of the hoosh has the advantage of providing enough air and sunshine for women, some of whom scarcely leave their houses. During winter time, especially where the courtyards are not paved or where there is no proper drainage system, the courtyards turn into heaps of dirt and slush, causing many diseases. Other disadvantages of the hoosh design remove it from future consideration as the dominant dwelling type in any growing city or town. The size is, in most cases, no less than 10 x 15 metres which means that every house requires a space of about 150 square metres. This would result in too much land waste, especially in a city like Benghazi where the site suitable for expansion is still limited by natural obstacles. Furthermore these houses are only one storey high. The above description of the hoosh applies mainly to the Arab houses in the old town, but new houses built in Sabri and Berka are practically the same in their main features, except that they are often smaller in size with paved courtyards and are built of more resistant building materials such as stones and cement (see Fig. 8).



Plan of a modern Arab house

(2) **Zariba and huts** — Straw huts (zariba) are less common in the poor suburbs than in similar areas around the city of Tripoli. The scarcity of the usual building materials of palm leaves (jerid) in the Benghazi area may be the reason for this. However, it is quite certain that the zariba was more common before the Italians left, particularly in the Sabri area. It can still be found in Sabri and Berka, but is much less common than the scrap metal or wooden hut. The Sabri shanty town is the main area for this sort of habitation. East of Berka and Dar el-Kish huts are also frequent. The zariba or the hut are, in most cases, built to provide one single room for the whole family. A straw fence, to hide the inside and to shelter the women, is often found surrounding these types of poor dwellings.

(3) **Tents** — The tent is socially and economically associated with the Bedouin on the open ranges, but in recent years it has become a common dwelling around the city, especially east of Berka and north of the railway line and on the southern and eastern edges of Fuehat. The constant influx of Bedouin seeking manual work is responsible for the appearance of this unusual form of habitation in an urban settlement.

According to the general census of 1954, the former four types of housing represented almost 98% of the total dwellings in the city of Benghazi, or 14,067 dwelling units out of the grand total of 14,879. The classification of these types as well as the other types included in the second category, the modern dwellings, is as shown below:

All forms of dwellings	14,879
Hoosh	11,400
Zariba or huts	2,336
Villa or apartment	329
Tent	311
Hotels	31
Camps and Prisons	5
Troglodyte	4
Others	443

These statistics show that the hoosh type alone accounts for about 79% of the grand total; Zariba and huts only 17%. Number of tents nearly equalled villas and apartments together. Troglodyte housing is very insignificant indeed and is totally confined to the old quarrying areas in eastern Berka and Fuehat. Families residing in hotels were mostly foreigners who could not find suitable housing and did not intend a long stay. The 443 units which were classified under the term 'others' were mostly local families who were resident temporarily. Their dwellings were mostly of the Arab traditional type except in three cases only where the habitation was on boats.

(b) **Modern types of dwellings**

In 1954, at the time of the last official census, Benghazi hardly provided any modern housing, as only 329 housing units could be described as modern. The reason was the extensive damage to the Italian quarter. In recent years modern dwellings have increased enormously and can be classified into three main categories.

(1) **Villas** — The villa was regarded as a luxury form of housing during the Italian regime, when only high officials could enjoy such a privilege. From 1956 onwards, the economic wheel of the city of Benghazi began to accelerate due to the indirect incomes of oil exploitation. The result was 70 villas in a period of two and a half years. The new villas have, in most cases, a typically elaborate American design. Some of these villas are two storeys high and all have separate gardens, and practically all have walled surrounds. The construction of this sort of housing has taken place mainly in Fuehat.

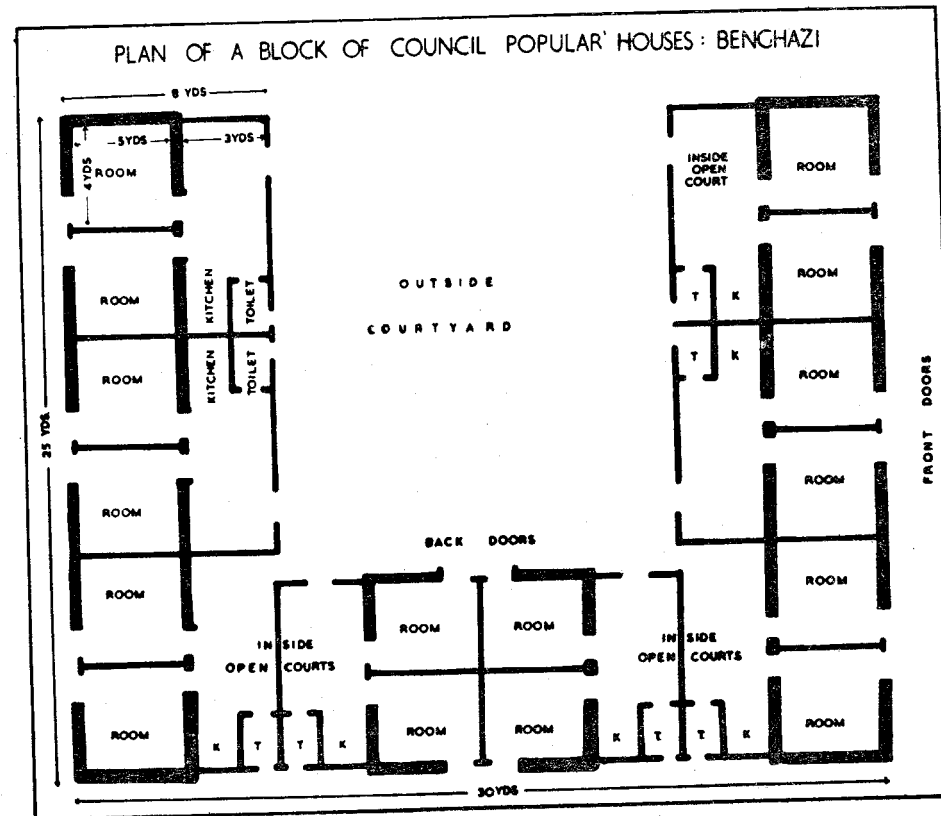
(2) **Apartments** — Before the Italian occupation, the Arab town had very few buildings with two or more storeys. The construction of Italian public buildings and residential buildings, either governmental or private, was the turning point in the evolution of the general pattern of urban development. However, although the Italians were able to produce a complete

modern quarter, the old town remained practically unchanged. Apartments before the war were mostly occupied by Italians and the wealthy Jews.

Oil discoveries, as previously mentioned, have accelerated the repair of most of the ruined parts of the city and in particular those of Italian origin. The demand for modern housing was higher than could be fulfilled with such a reconstruction programme, and so some wealthy Libyan people quickly started building multi-storey buildings either for living purposes or for offices and showrooms. Exact statistics of apartments — flats — and villas and other types of housing are not available, but it is believed that they have more than trebled during the last eight years.

Villas are almost completely restricted to foreign oil employees, foreign diplomats and a few prosperous Libyans. Apartments, on the other hand, are shared among high officials of the Provincial Government who largely occupy the Italian residential areas, oil company staff, Libyan University staff, British military families, Jewish families, Greek traders, and other professionals such as doctors and engineers.

(3) **Council houses** — The recent introduction of the council house scheme by the Provincial Government was forced on them by the constant pressure for better housing for the lower classes. The scheme is not yet a success by any means simply because it has provided only 350 housing units since it was introduced four years ago. The main area chosen for this scheme was at Ras Abeida where 250 units were completed and where work is going on for another 150 units (see fig. 9). At Dar el-Kish work is proceeding on about 30 units. Near to the Royal Military Academy a compound of 40 houses was also finished to accommodate the junior married staff of the academy. According to official announcements, Sabri is another area for such houses, which are rented according to the income of the occupier. Most of these houses have two rooms, a courtyard with separate kitchen and toilet, and all are provided with piped water and electricity. The extension of the scheme espe-



Plan of a block of Council houses

cially in an area like Sabri is an urgent necessity to eliminate the present unbearable living conditions.

ROAD PLAN

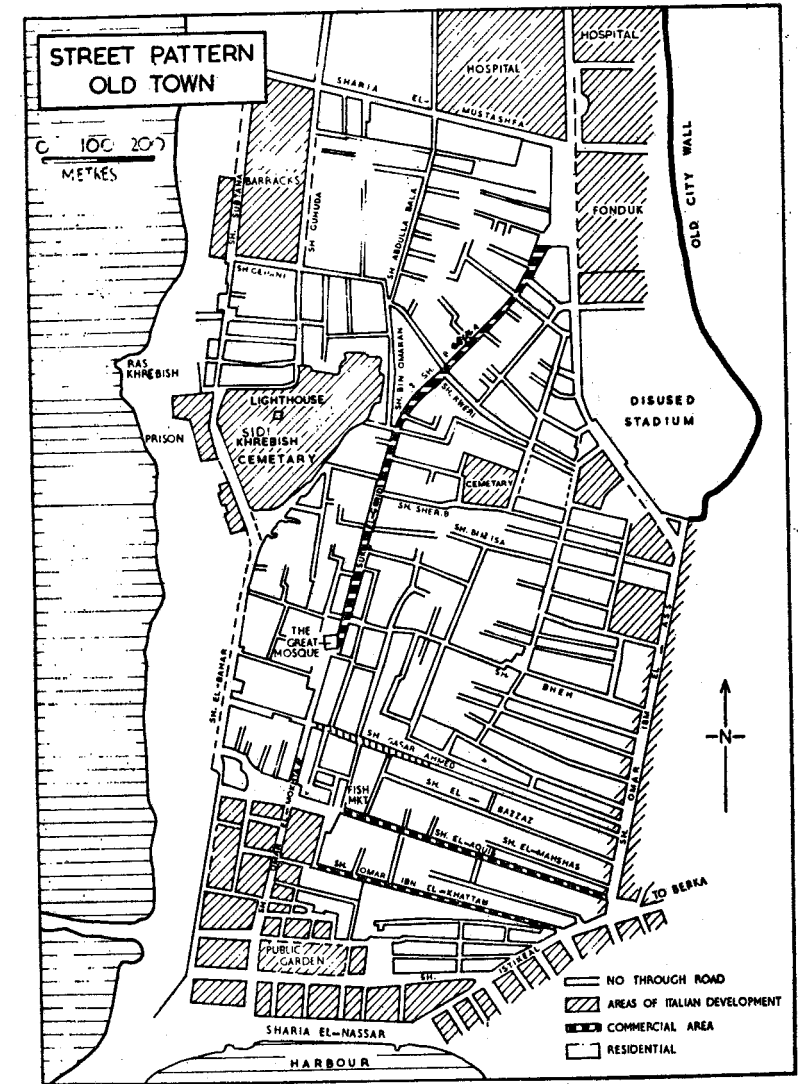
The term modern road plan can hardly be applied to the present road system in Benghazi even if we use the term in its widest sense. Several reasons contribute to this. The gradual growth of the Arab quarter in an isolated site necessitates the consideration of proper areas for expansion. This fact, together with other cultural, social and security reasons has amplified the impact of the existing land use. The result, therefore, was a dense use of the available land without any plans for future evolution. Roads and streets were, as a consequence, regarded as amenities which have no significance for daily life. Therefore all streets in this section of the city, especially where the Italian planning schemes have failed to penetrate, are still unsuitable for modern traffic. Most are too narrow to accommodate modern vehicles or even cabs and are also unpaved, while many are cul-de-sacs. (See Fig. 10).

The Italian scheme for city development also made difficult the evolution of a road plan.

First, the Italians ignored the fact that the Arab town is an indispensable part of modern Benghazi. The new developments created two separate quarters each with distinct road systems.

The Italians also greatly underestimated the future of Benghazi. The differences in the pattern and nature of their development schemes for both Benghazi and Tripoli underline this fact. The result is that even the Italian section of Benghazi is seriously affected by the density of modern traffic.

The reasons which explain this contrast between Benghazi and Tripoli are:



Street Pattern : Old Town

- (i) The width of the main streets is not enough to cope with the continuous increase in vehicles.
- (ii) The lack of permanent parking places .
- (iii) The failure to provide suitable roads anywhere around the city except where military purposes have necessitated them.

Another factor affecting the present road system in the city is the ignorance of the problem by the local authorities. Most of the roads and streets were greatly damaged during the Second World War, a feature which, unfortunately, still characterizes every single road in the city. Moreover the Libyan authorities have paid little attention to developing new roads. Consequently, the tremendous increase in vehicles has posed a serious traffic problem.

Instrumental in the growing road and traffic problem is the fact that the harbour is the only outlet for exports and imports. Owing to oil discoveries, the latter needs heavy equipment, which has to be transported by heavy trucks through the main streets causing damage to the streets and delays to traffic. The constructions of the outer harbour and the use of similar heavy trucks from the quarry site near the Royal Military Academy has almost completely ruined part of the route between the city and the airport.

Moreover, the fact that the city has only two bus routes has made numerous dwellers, especially those of Sabri and eastern Berka, depend on the use of horse drawn carriages as their main means of transport. The use of these carriages delays traffic and increases dirt in the city. The same applies to the use of the smaller carriages drawn by donkeys, which are advantageous in the narrow streets of the Arab quarter. Licences for these carriages totalled 1351 in 1962. The carriages are classified into two main categories;

- (a) 773 horse drawn carriages which are in turn subdivided into two groups: the **carro** is mainly used for transporting goods from the harbour to the town and vice-versa, or as means of public transport especially between the Fonduk and Berka, and the **arabia** or cab is used only for passenger transport. The total number of these cabs is 110, of which only 99 were in use in 1962.
- (b) 448 **Carrusa** have a similar character to the **carro** but are smaller in most cases and drawn by a donkey. Carriages account for almost 10 per cent of the vehicle licences in the city.

Other difficulties arise from the present system of road repairs where public contractor's proceed without any real governmental supervision and fail to conform to the official plans. Moreover, conflicts between different departments — for example the Water Works who dig up a road without the co-operation of the Public Transport Department which is the body responsible for road fitness — mean that many streets are out of use for days or weeks. Considerable changes in attitude are required if Benghazi is to cope with its present rate of growth.

There are three main entrances to Benghazi: to the north the city is linked with the Jebel via Sharia Omar Ibn el-Ass; to the east the city is linked through the ring road with Benina village; to the south the link is between the city and Tripolitania via Agedabia. As far as the city road plan itself is concerned the former entrances all lead to the square of Omar Tosoun — the Christmas tree square — known to the Italians as Piazza Cane. The main square is not by any means the city centre, as in Tripoli and Alexandria.

The road system north of the former square is served by four main streets. The first and most important of these streets is Sharia Omar Ibn el-Ass. The street is comparatively wide (4 ms.) especially in the part north of the memorial tomb of

Omar el-Mukhtar. Sharia el-Giazair, also known as Via Fiume, links Sharia St. Lot with Sharia Omar Ibn el-Ass after following the edge of the Salmani Sebkhah where they meet immediately beyond the old town entrance. On the other side of the old quarter two streets link Sharia el-Istiklal with Sharia el-Mustashfa, the widest street in the northern edge of the Arab town which joins Sharia Omar Ibn el-Ass at the cross road near the hospital. These are Sharia Omar el-Mukhtar and Sharia el-Mehdawi. Because of its junction with Suk el-Dalam and Suk el-Jerid the former is closed to traffic. The other, although partly of Italian origin, is also practically unused because of its poor condition, especially north of Sidi Khrebish cemetery. This street should be immediately repaired and widened in its northern part in order to alleviate the traffic problem, within and outside the Arab quarter, and to divert heavy trucks from the main streets. Other minor streets in this part include Sharia Gasr Hamed, Sharia el-Aguib, Sharia Omar Ibn el-Khattab which all link Sharia Omar Ibn el-Ass with Sharia Omar el-Mukhtar.

During the Italian domination private motor vehicles were very rare indeed and were mostly restricted to Italian citizens. The Second World War brought thousands of abandoned military vehicles into public use in all parts of Cyrenaica. These vehicles have done a useful job as one of the main means of public and private transport all over the province. In Benghazi these khaki painted vehicles were widely used until a very few years ago. The oil industry accelerated their disappearance. Precise statistics of the number of vehicles, garages and mechanical shops — repair shops — in Benghazi are lacking for the last decade, but the following figures obtained from reliable public sources are illuminating. In 1947 the city had 8 car repair shops and the vehicles numbered about 4,000, mostly of military character and origin. In July 1956 the official number of vehicles was 7,080. In 1962 the number of repair shops rose to 40, the number of garages to 12 (cf. 2 in 1956) and the number of private vehicles to 13,800. It is now (1967) about 33,000.

Moreover another 1,000 vehicles were believed to be in use by the government, oil companies and as taxis. These figures indicate an increase of over one thousand vehicles every year, or about three vehicles every day for the last six years. This figure, although high for the city road system to cope with is small compared with that of Tripoli where the daily increase in cars is believed to be about 13 vehicles a day.

The simple methods of issuing driving licences and other factors account for the higher car insurance rates charged in Benghazi; they are always higher by 60% to 70% than in Tripoli where accidents are far more frequent.

Benghazi's road system and traffic problems need close examination on the following suggestions:

- (i) Work should immediately start to find a solution to the complex traffic problems in the Arab town. This can be done in three ways: by finding means for an east to west modern road through this part of the city, by cutting a similar road through this part of the city from north to south, and finally by using parts of the two cemeteries as car parks.
- (ii) Two new roads should be constructed to link the city with the ring road in the east. One of these roads should cross the Salmani Sebkhah opposite the northern end of Via Fiume. The other road should join the ring road via Ras Abeida near Silos.
- (iii) Road maintenance should be carried out by the Roads Department itself and not by individual contractors.
- (iv) A modern driving licence board should be created as a branch of the Traffic Police Department. Some individuals can get their driving licence by paying the required fees without taking any driving test. It is not surprising that some 15 to 25 per cent of the people who at present own

tons of dried sewage sludge, which could be utilized as fertilizers. Above all, the scheme will certainly help any further expansion in the city.

ADMINISTRATIVE QUARTERS

During the long Turkish domination, Benghazi was never regarded as an important administrative, commercial or trade post. The Turkish governors resided in the city castle surrounded by their guards to protect them and to accompany their envoys to the interior for tax collection. Things remained much the same even during the second Ottoman occupation when the province became directly governed from Constantinople after the fall of the Karemanli family. It was during this period when a few administrative improvements were introduced for the first time. One of these improvements was the recognition of the Municipality as the main administrative body. The division of the city into its twelve quarters was the first step in the direction. However, although these changes seemed to reduce the centralization of the Wali's power, they were never practically applied; in other words, the Wali remained the only authority who ran everything according to his own wishes. After the Italian takeover administrative measures were in the hands of the military commander for many years. The progressive restoration of peaceful conditions brought the introduction of separate administrative bodies to control the city and the province. The defeat of the Axis forces in the Western Desert radically changed the destiny of the whole of Libya by the arrival of the British Military Administration which, because of the prevailing standard of education and the tremendous lack of trained Libyan personnel, ran the country in a similar centralized way. There was only one major difference: the introduction of training schemes for Libyan future staff, especially in Cyrenaica, where all Italian citizens left with the last German withdrawal from Benghazi.

Independence was undoubtedly the first step towards bringing national administration to Benghazi. Cyrenaica being one

of the three federal states or provinces which form the United Kingdom of Libya, gave Benghazi the status of being the Provincial Capital. Two important difficulties were soon faced with the new development, apart from the urgent need for administrative personnel, which to some extent has been justified by the British efforts in this field during their transitional period of rule. The first of these difficulties was the shortage of premises to accommodate the different Nazirates — provincial ministries. The second major difficulty was the widespread damage to the Italian designed premises suitable as administrative quarters. Further difficulties were encountered when the Federal Government moved to Benghazi. The demands of the new expanding administrative functions in Benghazi after independence were met by the use of every single suitable building in the different parts of the city. The gradual transfer of the Federal Government to Tripoli for the second time and eventually to Beida has alleviated the accommodation problem in Benghazi, and has given room for expansion to the Provincial Government.

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