

The project aims to explore the domestic life in the post-Roman (4th - 6th centuries CE) Eastern Desert port through a multidisciplinary study of the households in Berenike which was one of the key ports of the Red Sea branch of the Indian Ocean trade for approximately 800 years. So far excavations in Berenike revealed three periods of its relative prosperity. The first one started with its foundation in about 275 BC by Ptolemy II Philadelphus. The second one was during the early Roman period. During the course of the third century the *praesidia* lining the Eastern Desert routes were abandoned, Myos Hormos (the twin port of Berenike) ceased to operate and activities at Berenike reached low ebb. The third and final phase of economic vibrancy begun in the middle of the fourth century, it is in the post-Roman times, when the town was most probably controlled by the Blemmyes.

The project is inspired by anthropology and sees a household as an essential unit of analysis, being a social construct and the fundamental element of human society. It intends to combine methods of inquiry used in disciplines such as history, archaeology, ethnography, and chemistry to obtain a multifaceted, cross-disciplinary perspective on the complexity and diversity of the roles of households. During its implementation, various aspects of domestic life will be elucidated through the study of domestic architecture, the use of domestic space, and the wide spectrum of domestic material culture. The research questions the project aims to answer are related to the building techniques, house components, status, wealth, social background and geographical origin of the household members, the relation between the private and public space, the functional and social organization of domestic space, the dweller's perception of space within houses as well as rituals and symbolism in household behaviours.

During the project implementation the data will be collected and generated using various methods of archaeological fieldwork, recording and analysing. The research will be carried out in three main stages. For each year of the duration of the project, five-week-long excavations in Berenike are planned. Finds such as pottery, textiles, beads and ivory objects, wooden fragments, glass fragments, metal objects, and animal bones will be documented and analysed. The macrobotanical remains will be also studied. The geochemical investigation of the archaeological sediments will constitute an important component of research, providing an insight into the functions of spaces by linking human activities to specific chemical signatures. Since Berenike was abandoned by its inhabitant many artefacts might have been taken with them. Therefore, the view of a house from the perspective of activities performed in it is crucial for understanding the use and functions of rooms and buildings, providing information about the activities not confirmed by the presence of artefacts.

Although excavations at the site have uncovered more of post-Roman Berenike than of any other phase in the town's history our knowledge about the daily life in the residential areas dated to that period is still very limited. The project is to be the first comprehensive study of the domestic architecture and households of the post-Roman Eastern Desert settlement, which also functioned as port, providing further depth and texture to our understanding of social and economic practices in this region, as well as in the Indian Ocean world. The research questions regarding the site are linked to the broader historical narratives about cross-cultural relations. The specific nature of ports and their connection with places across water meant that they might have attracted different peoples living in the same town as a result of the function and role of ports. The analysis of households can shed a new light on various aspects of their life ways and their cultural interactions.