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a cura di

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## 10

**New Light on a Greek City: Archaeology and History at Euesperides**

Andrew Wilson

Euesperides was the most westerly Greek settlement in Cyrenaica; situated near the so-called Gardens of the Hesperides, towards the western extremity of the Jebel Akhdar, it was the first port that ships coasting along the southern shore of the Mediterranean would encounter after the dangerous crossing of the Syrtic Gulf, halfway between Punic Tripolitania and Ptolemaic Egypt. Today the site presents a sorry aspect among the suburbs of modern Benghazi whose development encroaches on the site from all sides. The oldest nucleus of the site, the hill of Sidi Abeid, is covered by a modern cemetery, now deconsecrated and partly cleared; the lower city to the south of this, where traces of the Classical and Hellenistic street grid are still visible on the surface, is strewn with modern rubbish.

Despite its unattractive appearance, Euesperides is a site of capital importance for Classical archaeology, as it was abandoned around the middle of the third century B.C. and never reoccupied. The archaeological levels have not been destroyed or covered by later occupation, and there is thus the opportunity to investigate a city of the Archaic–Hellenistic periods without the obstacles presented by later overlying buildings.

Identified in 1948, the site was partly excavated by the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, in the 1950s, by Barri Jones in 1968–9, and by John Lloyd in the 1990s.<sup>1</sup> The present project was started in 1999, directed by myself, Paul Bennett of Canterbury Archaeological Trust, and Ahmed Buzaian of Gar Yunis University, Benghazi and Omar Mukhtar University, al-Beida. We thank the Society for Libyan Studies and the Craven Committee of the University of Oxford who have financed the work, and the Department of Antiquities of Libya for their cooperation and support and the provision of accommodation, as well as the numerous Libyans and Europeans who have worked on the project, often in difficult conditions.

Our project aims to investigate Greek urbanism in Cyrenaica, and in particular the economy of the city and the reasons for the abandonment of the site towards the middle of the third century B.C. Preliminary reports have appeared annually since 1999 in *Libyan*

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<sup>1</sup> Goodchild, R. G. 'Euesperides – a devastated city site,' *Antiquity* XXVI, 1952, pp. 208–12; Jones, G. D. B. 'Beginnings and endings in Cyrenaican cities,' in *Cyrenaica in antiquity*, edd. G. W. Barker, J. A. Lloyd and J. M. Reynolds, Oxford 1985, 27–41; Jones, G. D. B. 'Excavations at Tocra and Euesperides, Cyrenaica 1968–1969,' *LibStud* XIV, 1983, 109–21; Vickers, M., Gill, D. W. J. and Economou, M. 'Euesperides. The rescue of an excavation,' *LibStud* XXV, 1994, 125–36; Buzaian, A. M. and Lloyd, J. A. 'Early urbanism in Cyrenaica: new evidence from Euesperides (Benghazi),' *LibStud* XXVII, 1996, 129–52; Lloyd, J. A. *et al.*, 'Excavations at Euesperides (Benghazi): an interim report on the 1998 season,' *LibStud* XXIX, 1998, 145–68.

*Studies*,<sup>2</sup> and the final publication is planned as a Supplement to *Libya Antiqua*; here I wish only to explore how the excavations have revealed evidence to illuminate the circumstances of the city's abandonment, and the trading economy of the early Hellenistic world.

### **Cyrenaica and Euesperides in the mid-third century B.C.**

Before presenting the results of the excavation of the final phases of the site, it is necessary to sketch briefly the history of Cyrenaica in the early third century B.C. Magas, the governor of Cyrenaica from c. 300 B.C., revolted against Ptolemy II c. 282 B.C., but in c. 261 B.C. came to an agreement with Ptolemy under which Magas would be recognised as ruler in his lifetime but Cyrenaica would revert to the Egyptian crown after his death. The alliance was to be cemented by the marriage of Magas' daughter Berenike to Ptolemy III. Magas died in either 258 or 250 B.C., depending on how one interprets the relevant passage of Eusebius (*Chronica* I.237.18ff.);<sup>3</sup> but his widow Apama had other plans, and arranged for Berenike to marry the Seleucid Demetrios the Fair. This scheme fell apart when Demetrios began an affair with Apama, and Berenike, understandably upset, had Demetrios murdered. After a probable period of civil war, Berenike married Ptolemy III as planned; and Cyrenaica returned to Ptolemaic control.<sup>4</sup>

The date for the abandonment of Euesperides is given by coin assemblages, collected over the years by surface collection, and also by the various excavation programmes.<sup>5</sup> These include numerous issues from 325 onwards, especially of Magas in Revolt (282-261 B.C.) and Magas Reconciled with Ptolemy; but no coinage after Magas (barring three much later coins which must be stray losses). Following the death of Magas an abundant issue showing Ptolemy Soter and Libya was minted, which is very common at other Cyrenaican sites. Its complete absence from Euesperides is strong evidence that the site was abandoned following the death of Magas; this is supported also by the absence of pottery of the second half of the third century B.C. We can therefore fix the abandonment of the site at c. 258 or 250 B.C., which gives a *terminus ante quem* for all stratified material at the site.

Two theories have been proposed to explain the city's abandonment: Bond and Swales, followed by Goodchild, thought that the lagoon which originally communicated

<sup>2</sup> Wilson *et al.*, A. I. 'Urbanism and economy at Euesperides (Benghazi): a preliminary report on the 1999 season,' *LibStud* XXX, 1999, 147-68; Bennett, P. *et al.*, 'Euesperides (Benghazi): Preliminary report on the Spring 2000 Season,' *LibStud* XXXI, 2000, 121-43; Wilson, A. I. *et al.*, 'Euesperides (Benghazi): Preliminary report on the Spring 2001 season,' *LibStud* XXXII, 2001, 155-77; Wilson, A. I. *et al.*, 'Euesperides (Benghazi): Preliminary report on the Spring 2002 season,' *LibStud* XXXIII, 2002, 85-123; Wilson, A. I. *et al.*, 'Euesperides (Benghazi): Preliminary report on the Spring 2003 season,' *LibStud* XXXIV, 2003, 191-228; Wilson, A. I. *et al.*, 'Euesperides (Benghazi): Preliminary report on the Spring 2004 season,' *LibStud* XXXV, 2004, 149-90.

<sup>3</sup> For arguments in support of 258 B.C., see Buttrey, T. V. 'Coins and Coinage at Euesperides,' *LibStud* XXV, 1994, 137-45; for a date of 250, see Laronde, A. *Cyrène et la Libye hellénistique*, Paris 1987, pp. 390-4 and 405-6.

<sup>4</sup> Laronde, *Cyrène*, pp. 380-1.

<sup>5</sup> Bond, R. C. and Swales, J. M. 'Surface finds of coins from the city of Euesperides,' *LibyaAnt* II, 1965, 91-101; Buttrey, 'Coins and Coinage'; Buttrey in Wilson *et al.* 'Euesperides 2002', p. 116.

with the sea and which served as the city's harbour, had already begun to silt up during the Hellenistic period, and this progressive silting caused a gradual abandonment in favour of a new site nearer the mouth of the lagoon, which took the name Berenike.<sup>6</sup> However, Laronde has proposed the hypothesis that the move was a political act, imposed perhaps to punish the population of Euesperides for backing the wrong side in the struggles following the death of Magas.<sup>7</sup> He cites in support of this argument an epigram of Callimachus, in which Menitas the Lyttian dedicates his bow and quiver to Sarapis, but says that the Alexandrians have his arrows; Laronde sees this as referring to a siege and capture of Euesperides by Berenike. These two hypotheses offer competing ways to interpret the archaeological data presented below; and the data may allow us to reject one hypothesis in favour of the other.

### The final phases in Area P

Recent excavations on the mound of Sidi Abeid, in Trench P have revealed structures of the third century B.C. The final phase survives as a group of rooms with pebble mosaic floors which we have left *in situ*, but next to these, where the floors had either been destroyed or had been in beaten earth, we were able to investigate the underlying levels and reveal the penultimate occupation phase (Fig. 1). The remains exposed of this phase belong to parts of two adjoining houses sharing a party wall; both houses probably consisted of rooms grouped around a courtyard. The walls were originally in mud brick on a stone base, but had collapsed and many of the foundation stones had been subsequently recuperated, thus destroying evidence for the placing of doorways.

One of the rooms of the penultimate phase is paved with a plain mosaic in white and grey pebbles; we interpret the room as an *andron*, or reception and dining room. Towards the north-east corner a circular depression in the mosaic, lined with terracotta sherds set in mortar, probably held a jar or amphora – shattered fragments of a Corinthian B amphora were found on the floor of this part of the room. Next to the depression, a fragmentary inscription (damaged by modern burials which had cut through the surface of the mosaic at this point) picked out in blue-black pebbles is to be restored as EUK[AIRIA] ERG[OIS] – ‘Good fortune in your affairs’ (Fig. 2). The orientation of the inscription, which is placed so as to be read from outside the room, indicates that this was a welcoming inscription set in the doorway.

Next to this room, to the north, a large room with a beaten earth floor yielded an assemblage of artefacts, broken in situ on the floor when the building collapsed. They included fragments of a pithos (repaired in antiquity), a mortar and a casserole, and a concentration of 70 circular loomweights. The loomweights were all in unfired clay, and required careful excavation to distinguish them from the earth floor on which they lay and the mud brick collapse which covered them.<sup>8</sup> They lay in a roughly linear spread, with a

<sup>6</sup> Bond and Swales, ‘Surface finds’; Goodchild, R. G. *Benghazi. The story of a city*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Benghazi 1962, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Laronde, *Cyrène*, pp. 395-6.

<sup>8</sup> The recovery of this assemblage owes much to the careful excavation skills of Kerry Harris.

noticeable clustering at either end, and must indicate the emplacement of a loom. This, together with an Attic black-glaze bowl containing a red powder, possibly for make-up, suggest the interpretation of this room as a *gynaikon*, or women's quarters.

The ceramic assemblage consisted of complete or completely reconstructable vessels lying on the mosaic floor of the andron and the earthen floors of the other rooms, sealed by the mud brick collapse of the walls. This, and the other objects found *in situ*, such as the loomweights, implies that the collapse or destruction of this phase was a sudden and unforeseen event, and may well have been caused by an earthquake. The destruction is closely dated by coins of Magas Reconciled lying on the floor of the *gynaikon* and covered by the destruction layer (Fig. 3). We therefore have a very narrow dating bracket, between 261 B.C. (*terminus post quem* provided by the coins) and 258 or 250 at the latest (*terminus ante quem*, given by the abandonment of the city after the death of Magas).

But reconstruction followed swiftly. A new building was constructed, with more elaborate mosaics, of which one was discovered by John Lloyd in 1998, with a wave-crest border.<sup>9</sup> Next to this was an antechamber floored in plain small pebbles, giving onto another room which had had a mosaic floor which had been completely destroyed by modern graves and robber trenches (Fig. 4). Numerous fragments of this floor were found in the backfill of the graves and robber trenches. All these mosaics, of course, are also to be dated between 261 and 250 B.C. The mosaic published by Lloyd is in mixed technique, with pebbles and irregular tesserae – small whole pebbles for the border, split blue-black pebbles for the rectangular frame and the wave-crest, and irregular white limestone tesserae for the central panel. This decorative schema may serve as a model to assist with the reconstruction of the decoration of the mosaic which has been completely destroyed.

Near the edges of the room with the destroyed mosaic were found some fragments of *opus signinum*, one of them *in situ*, which served as a cement border to the room. Some fragments have a curved moulding, and may derive from a low bench around the sides of the room. Next to the *opus signinum* moulding was a rectangular border, in split blue-black pebbles, and then a line of wave-crest motifs, thinner than in the other mosaic. This wave-crest border surrounded a white central panel, which also contained figured motifs – some are too badly fragmented to be recognisable, but seem not to be simple geometric designs. A pair of dolphins facing each other can be reconstructed with some confidence. The dolphins are done in split blue-black pebbles with an eye made of a red terracotta tessera (Fig. 5).<sup>10</sup>

The importance of these mosaics is that they are in mixed technique – whole pebbles, split pebbles and irregular tesserae all within the same floor – and they are well dated to the middle of the third century B.C. Examples of Hellenistic mixed technique mosaics known from elsewhere are generally not closely dated.<sup>11</sup> Other mosaic floors are

<sup>9</sup> Lloyd, J. A. *et al.*, 'Excavations', pp. 150-7.

<sup>10</sup> The mosaics are being studied by William Wootton, who provides a fuller account of their decoration and technique in Wilson *et al.* 'Preliminary report 2003', pp. 197-200 and Wilson *et al.* 'Preliminary report 2004', pp. 155-8.

<sup>11</sup> Dunbabin, K. M. D., *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World*, Cambridge 1999, pp. 18-22.

known from Euesperides, discovered by Barri Jones,<sup>12</sup> but they are in irregular tesserae, without pebbles and without decoration, except for a border of grey-black terracotta tesserae from vessels fired in a reducing atmosphere. The mixed technique mosaics stand halfway, chronologically and technically, between mosaics entirely in pebbles, and the tessellated mosaics of the second century B.C. The origin of tessellation is a matter for debate between those who would see it as an evolutionary development from Classical pebble mosaics towards a medium better suited to detailed representation, and those who would see it occurring under the influence of the Punic world, where white tesserae set into cement and *opus siginimum* floors were used a century or two before the appearance of the first irregular tesserae in the Greek world.<sup>13</sup> Our mixed technique mosaics suggest that these two views are not necessarily mutually exclusive and might be reconciled to some extent; the Euesperides mosaics could be seen as a transitional phase in an evolution from pebbles to tessellation, with influence also from the Punic world (either directly, or via the intermediary of Sicily), as shown by the use of *opus siginimum* for the border at the edge of the room.

#### **The circumstances of the abandonment of the site**

This final phase must also date *c.* 261-258/250 B.C., so the building with the mixed technique mosaic floors was built at most 11 years before the city's abandonment, and perhaps much less. Evidence from other parts of the site also suggests that a rebuilding after the probable earthquake which destroyed the final phase was widespread across the city – coins of Magas Reconciled were found beneath the final phase of the Ashmolean excavations on the south side of the Sidi Abeid mound. It does not look like the population at this stage was expecting to leave, which rather argues against a gradual abandonment and drift to Berenike as the port silted up, and in favour of a sudden and unexpected transfer.

Further evidence in favour of a sudden change of site imposed on the population of Euesperides comes from the infrastructure for the city's water supply. Eight wells and one cistern have now been excavated by our excavations and by John Lloyd's; one well had been re-excavated and filled again in modern times but the remainder of the wells contained sealed ancient assemblages of vessels broken in use; and then in each case a deliberately dumped fill on top. The usage deposits were all fairly homogeneous, and the datable material goes down to the mid third century B.C., suggesting that it belongs to the final phase of the city's life. All the wells had been deliberately filled in, rather than simply abandoned and left to fill up with wind-blown sand, although the cistern was not deliberately filled. In one case (a well in Area Q Extension), an altar and a fragment of another altar had been thrown down a well. In another, in Area H (excavated as part of Lloyd's project), one well with a usage deposit at the bottom of the first half or the middle of the third century B.C. was filled with a dumped fill containing fifth-century B.C. pottery, and thus clearly redeposited. It looks as if there was a deliberate and systematic attempt to destroy the city's water supply in order to discourage the population, whom we believe

<sup>12</sup> Jones, 'Beginnings', p. 32; Jones, 'Excavations', pp. 112-4.

<sup>13</sup> Dunbabin, *Mosaics*, pp. 18-22.



were resettled at Berenike, from returning to Euesperides. The archaeological evidence thus points in favour of Laronde's hypothesis of forced resettlement, and the choice of the new city's name, Berenike, is of course significant in this political context.

### **The economy of Euesperides**

If the abandonment of the site is an instance of archaeology being able to contribute to the political history of Cyrenaica – *histoire événementielle* – the city's economy is an area where archaeology provides a perspective of the *longue durée*. The numerous bronze coins – small change – discovered in our excavations and those of previous projects suggest that, following the introduction of bronze coinage into Cyrenaica c. 325 B.C., the economy rapidly became highly monetised; such low-value bronze was used for everyday transactions. The discovery of coins of Thibron (323-321 B.C.) in assemblages which also contained coins of Magas Reconciled shows that coins of the last quarter of the fourth century B.C. continued to circulate in Cyrenaica down to the middle of the third century. The excavations have also produced two fragments of clay moulds for coin blanks, one of which contained microscopic traces of silver and was probably for casting obols. Both finds were in contexts that had been disturbed in modern times, but they do confirm the existence of a mint at Euesperides.

The coins, however, give little indication of the city's trading relations, and to study the extent to which Euesperides was integrated into long-distance trading networks we initiated a programme of ceramic quantification and provenancing. The local geology of Cyrenaica is limestone with abundant microfossils; it lacks any volcanic elements, gold mica, or ferric inclusions, so any pottery with these inclusions must be imported. It is therefore relatively easy to distinguish between local wares and imports. The study of the pottery, whose preliminary results are presented here, is being conducted by Dr Eleni Zimi (finewares), Kristian Göransson (transport amphorae), and Keith Swift (coarse pottery).<sup>14</sup>

Most of the levels excavated since 1999 belong to the late fourth and third centuries B.C. The fine pottery includes Attic black figure pottery from the earlier levels, and Attic Red Figure vases, and some West Slope and Gnathia ware. But the bulk is Attic black glazed wares, either plain or stamped and rouletted. Taking all periods together, imports account for c. 90% of the total finewares, with 80% of the total being Attic. Local fineware production was of minor significance, accounting for less than 10% of the total finewares.

Such a high proportion of imports suggests that imported pottery was so readily available – i.e. arriving in sufficient quantity – that the inferior local productions were not able to make much inroad into the local market for fine tableware. There has been, of course, long debate over the value of Greek painted pottery,<sup>15</sup> but none of this has really

<sup>14</sup> See also their preliminary reports on each excavation season, in the preliminary reports listed in n. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Boardman, J. 'Trade in Greek Decorated Pottery', *OJA* VII.1, 1988, pp. 27-33; Gill, D. 'Trade in Greek decorated pottery': some corrections', *OJA* VII.3, 1988, pp. 369-70; Boardman, J. 'The trade figures', *OJA* VII.3, 1988, pp. 371-3; Gill, D. 'Pots and Trade: spacefillers or objets d'art', *JHS* CXI, 1991, pp. 29-47; Gill, D. and Vickers, M. 'They were expendable: Greek vases in the Etruscan tomb', *REA* LXXXVII, 1995, pp. 225-49; Gill, D. 'A Greek price inscription from Euesperides, Cyrenaica', *LibStud* XXIX, 1998, pp. 83-88.

looked at the wider context of Greek trade, and trade in other pottery generally, to explain the long-distance movement of fine pottery.

As one might expect, transport amphorae are present in quantity, and are imported from all over the Aegean – especially wine amphorae from Mende, Thasos, Samos, and Rhodes, and olive oil amphorae from Corinth (Corinthian A) – but there are also a significant quantity of Punic amphorae, from Tripolitania and Tunisia, and even the Straits of Gibraltar.<sup>16</sup> Some of the Punic amphorae, especially the hole-mouthed jars, must have contained salted fish or possibly even salted meat; others seem to be forms for wine. Until now, Punic imports had been identified in the eastern Mediterranean only at Athens, Corinth, Olympia and Halicarnassus. This situation, however, may be the result of the relative neglect of amphora studies in the classical archaeology tradition, where attention has been paid to amphorae largely if their handles are stamped, and thus become of epigraphic interest.

The most common class of transport amphorae in the fourth- and third-century B.C. levels at Euesperides is the so-called ‘Corinthian B’. As Whitbread has shown, this amphorae was produced at more than one site, certainly at Corcyra but not necessarily even at Corinth;<sup>17</sup> the majority of our examples are certainly imported. The variety and nature of the imported Corinthian B fabrics may suggest other sources too, including perhaps Southern Italy or Sicily on the basis of similarities with Greco-Italic fabrics. But there is also evidence of local production of this form – one kiln waster is clearly a Corinthian B neck shape, and a complete Corinthian B neck in local fabric was found in 1996, externally treated with a saline slip or wash to create an appearance similar to the light yellow clay of the imported versions.<sup>18</sup>

The most surprising results, however, came from the study of the coarse pottery. Two main groups of locally-produced pottery are recognised: a reddish lime-rich fabric (Local Limestone Ware), which represents over 20% of the total coarse pottery; and a greysih, shell-rich fabric (Local Shell Ware), accounting for 13-17% of material from the contexts analysed. In both these groups the most common form is the *chytra*, of rounded form, with thumb impressions at base of handles, and finger-smoothed rims.

However, some 35% of the coarsewares are imported, an astonishingly high figure for such cheap material.<sup>19</sup> Corinthian pottery, in a yellowish fabric, accounts for some 10% of the coarsewares, mainly jugs, small bowls, *louteria* and particularly mortaria (Fig. 6). The mortars are mould-made, with a groove made by the string with which the mortarium was lifted out of its mould, and the use of moulds here seems to be an indication of mass production for an export market. There are also a large number of imports from volcanic regions, identifiable by their inclusions; most of these are as yet unprovenanced, except for a group from somewhere in the Cycladic arc, perhaps Aigina.

<sup>16</sup> See Wilson, A. I. *et al.*, ‘Euesperides 2002’, pp. 108-13, and Göransson in Wilson, A. I. *et al.*, ‘Euesperides 2004’, pp. 175-8.

<sup>17</sup> Whitbread, I., *Greek Transport Amphorae: a petrological and archaeological study*, Athens 1995.

<sup>18</sup> Göransson, in Wilson *et al.* ‘Euesperides 2003’, pp. 221-2.

<sup>19</sup> For the coarsewares, see Swift in Wilson *et al.* ‘Euesperides 2003’, pp. 214-21; and in Wilson *et al.* ‘Euesperides 2004’, p. 175.

The two largest groups of coarsewares are in Punic fabrics, one oxidised – reddish (Fig. 7) – and the other reduced during firing, to give a greyish surface effect (Fig. 8). They are certainly of North African origin, but they are not local to Cyrenaica; they exhibit similar fabrics and surface firing effects to those of known Punic amphorae, and the forms compare closely with some Punic fabrics known from sites in Tripolitania (notably Sabratha) and Fazzan. Together these two groups account for *c.* 15% of the total coarsewares at Euesperides. They include *chytrai*, *lopadia*, bowls and *askoi*. It is not yet clear whether the oxidised and reduced groups come from different regions of the Punic world; their fabric is very similar but the firing conditions differ.

The shapes of the Punic tradition stand in strong contrast to the rounded, finger-smoothed local Greek forms; the knife-trimmed forms and angular junctions show that the Punic potters were making much greater use of tools than their Greek counterparts. They were also firing at much higher temperatures, and their products are technically of very high quality. Some of their techniques and tool use again suggests rapid production *en masse*, in part for an export market. If Euesperides received Punic material in such quantity, we might expect to recognise it too at other Greek sites, if the excavators analysed and published their Greek-period coarsewares, something which happens all too rarely in the classical archaeology of the Eastern Mediterranean.

If Euesperides received so many imports, what products did it export in return? Silphium is an obvious one, attested on the coinage, and known to have been grown in the steppe to the south of the city. A locally made stamped amphora handle may depict a silphium plant. Salted fish is another possibility. But we now have good evidence also that the city was engaged in the production of purple dye on a considerable scale.

Numerous large spreads of broken *Murex* shells, used to make purple dye, litter the lower city. Some of the spreads are redeposited, used as street surfacing (itself a testimony to the quantity of waste generated); but others are discrete and associated with indications of heating or burning.

The excavation of one of these heaps, in Area R, revealed superimposed layers of ash and broken murex, over two phases of large open-air mud brick hearths, placed in the courtyard of what had been a courtyard house until its conversion for industrial purposes. Combining the archaeological evidence for hearth platforms, and ash and shell deposits, but no vats or tanks, with the ancient literary sources on purple dye production, we believe that the shellfish were crushed and heated in portable vessels on tripods or stands over fires in the courtyard; wool would have been dipped in the purple dyestuff when it was ready; and then the contents were dumped among the embers of the fire, periodically being removed to surface the streets. Quantification of a single deposit of crushed *Murex* by Estíbaliz Tébar Megias established the minimum number of individuals of *Murex trunculus* as 15,491 (by counting the apices of the shells); they weighed 87.165 kg. They had been deliberately crushed, perhaps individually; clearly not only the collection of these molluscs, but also their processing, was a labour-intensive task, reflected in the high price that purple fetched in antiquity. Of course, we cannot say for certain whether the city exported skeins of purple wool, or finished textiles with purple designs woven into them. There is abundant evidence for weaving, in the form of loomweights, spindle whorls and sword-beaters, across the site;

and the size of spindlewhorls and the weights of the loomweights recovered from Area P suggest the production of particularly fine cloth. However, as much textile production in the Classical and Hellenistic periods was domestic, it is not certain that finished textiles were exported in quantity from Euesperides.<sup>20</sup>

This brief economic analysis may also help explain why the ancient historical accounts mentioning the city so frequently mention hostilities with the local Libyan tribes. The Nasamones, who inhabited the coastal plain and the steppe to the south and west of the city, were semi-nomadic pastoralists; and if the economy of the city was heavily reliant on the export of silphium and wool, there would doubtless have been competition for grazing territory between the Euesperitans and the local tribes.<sup>21</sup>

### Conclusions

Despite the unspectacular appearance of the site, the archaeology of Euesperides is of great importance, both for shedding light on the dark corners of Cyrenaican history, and also for illuminating the importance of long-distance trade in the early Hellenistic period. Hitherto unsuspected amounts of imported coarsewares have come to light, and if cooking pots, mortaria, water jugs and other plain wares were being imported in such quantities, they should represent only a small fraction of the total imports, much of which must have been in perishable goods, that must have arrived on the same ships. Contact between Cyrenaica and the Punic world, despite the intervening treacherous Gulf of Syrte, seems to have been much stronger than previously thought, and is reflected not only in the coarseware and transport amphora assemblages, but also in the influence on mosaic technique.

The pottery analysis is of course still ongoing, and excavations are expected to continue until 2006. But already that the project is showing that a systematic analysis of the pottery assemblages from Greek sites can help fundamentally to alter our perceptions of the interconnectedness of early Hellenistic economies. It highlights the need for excavations of Greek sites to pay attention to pottery quantification and fabric analysis, especially of coarse pottery, in order to provide basic data to address still unsolved questions about the ancient economy.

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<sup>20</sup> For *Murex* dye and textiles at Euesperides, see especially Wilson *et al.* 'Euesperides 1999', pp. 152-3, 166; Tébar in Wilson *et al.* 'Euesperides 2004', pp. 168-9 and 180-4.

<sup>21</sup> Wilson *et al.* 'Euesperides 1999', pp. 166; *cf.* Thucydides VII.50, and Pausanias IV.26.2.



Fig. 1 Area P, aerial view of the penultimate and final phases. The mosaics of the final phase are in the foreground and middle right. The 1 m scale lies in the middle of the *gynaikon* of the penultimate phase; the pebble-floored *andron* is behind it. To the right, these two rooms are divided from an adjacent property by a party wall, robbed out to its rubble foundations. Numerous twentieth-century graves cut through both phase. (Photo: A. Wilson)

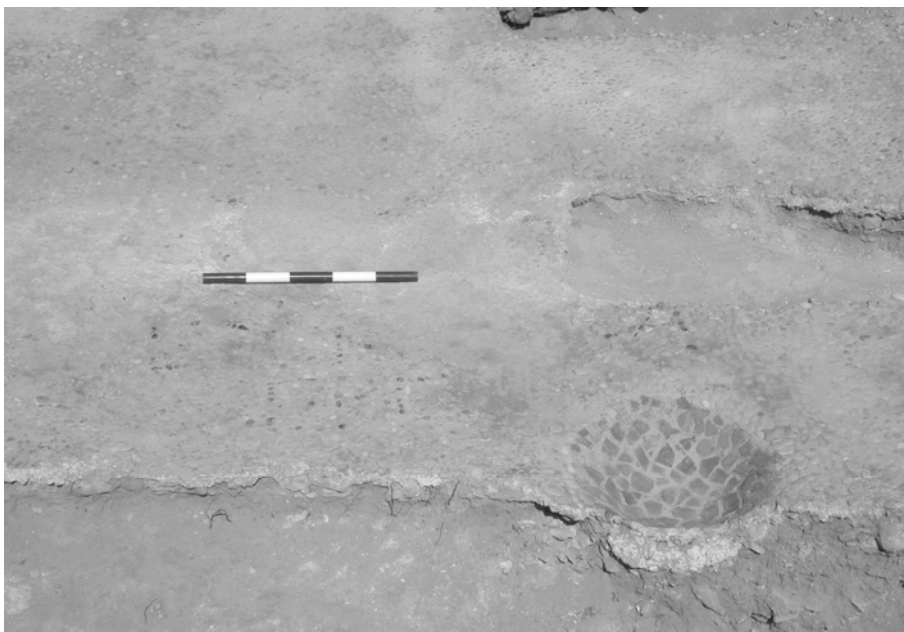


Fig.2 Area P, pot pit and threshold inscription in the pebble mosaic of the *andron* of the penultimate phase. (Photo: A. Wilson).



Fig. 3 Coins of Magas reconciled with Ptolemy II (261-258/250 B.C.), from the assemblage on the floor of the penultimate phase of Area P. The three coins were found corroded together. Top: obverse. Bottom: reverse. (Photo: V. Fell)



Fig. 4 Area P, overview of the mosaic floors of the final phase. The wave-crest mosaic lies behind the 1 m scale, and in front and to the lower right is the fine pebble floor of an anteroom. (Photo: A. Wilson).

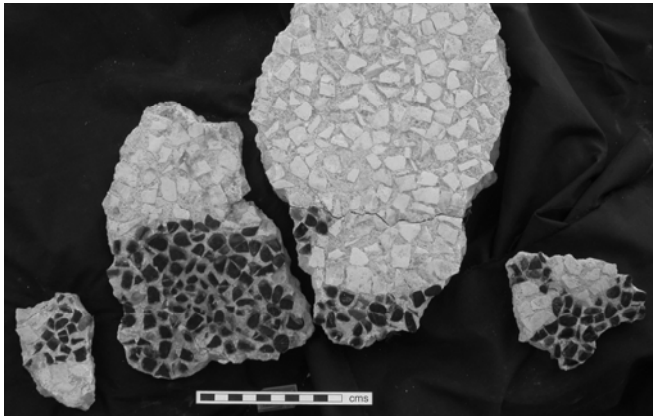


Fig. 5 Area P, dolphin motif from the destroyed mosaic floor of the final phase. The tail in fact probably should be upturned, and belongs to a second dolphin facing the other way. (Photo: W. Wootton).



Fig. 6 Mould-made Corinthian mortaria. (Photo: K. Swift)



Fig. 7 Punic coarseware forms with a reddish surface from firing in an oxidising atmosphere. The rims are angular and show signs of tool-trimming. (Photo: K. Swift).



Fig. 8 Punic coarseware forms with a grey surface from reduced firing. Again, note the angular rims and signs of tool-trimming. (Photo: K. Swift).