

MARSA MATRUH I

THE EXCAVATION



Oric Bates

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## The Excavation

The University of Pennsylvania Museum  
of Archaeology and Anthropology's  
Excavations on Bates's Island, Marsa Matruh, Egypt  
1985–1989

Donald White

with contributions by

Rita Gardner and Linda Hulin

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*IN MEMORY OF*

LIDIANO BACCHIELI, CLAUDIO FRIGERO, AND JOHN LLOYD

*AND*

*IN RESPECTFUL HOMAGE TO*

ORIC BATES

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,  
Bears all its sons away.

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## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology's Expedition to Marsa Matruh, to give it its full title, came about as an indirect consequence of the abrupt and, as matters turned out, unplanned conclusion of the museum's work in 1981 in eastern Libya where several of the present authors had been previously engaged in archaeological research stretching over more than a decade.<sup>1</sup>

Searching for something that might enable the museum to build on its Cyrenaican experiences, my attention was drawn to the pioneering activities at the outbreak of World War I of Harvard University's Oric Bates, author of the classic study of the native eastern Libyan population,<sup>2</sup> at the site of Marsa Matruh on the northwest coast of Egypt.<sup>3</sup>

What was initially envisioned to be an extension of the University of Pennsylvania's earlier research on the historical Greeks along the northeast African littoral quickly turned into an effort to revive Bates's promising but largely neglected work on the pre-Greek, Late Bronze Age occupation of the Matruh area. Our attention soon came to rest in particular on the tiny island now bearing his name at the end of Matruh's first eastern lagoon.

A minutage of how the project unfolded between 1984 and 1989 is found in Chapter 2 and needs no further elaboration here. On the other hand, I am gratified to be able to express at long last my thanks to the many persons, some now deceased, for the project's conceptualization, its planning and organization in Egypt as well as back in Philadelphia, its financial support, and finally for its publication.

It is fitting to first take note of the representatives of the Egyptian Antiquities Organization or what is now the Supreme Council of Antiquities in Cairo and Marsa Matruh during the years in which the project ran. This includes the individual past chairmen of the SCA, Dr. Ahmed Kadry, Dr. M.A.H. Nur el-Din, Dr. Sayed Tawfik, Dr. Muhammad Ibrahim Bakr, and Dr. Ali Hassan. I also wish to give special thanks to Dr. Kamal Fahmy, then Director of Excavations for Lower Egypt, for his personal interventions and enlightened assistance throughout the project's duration, and Dr. Zahi Hawass who first implanted in me the idea of work in Egypt in the mid 1970s. In Marsa Matruh every representative of the SCA provided contributions that turned out to be indispensable to the success of our work, but I should like to mention in particular Messrs Feisal As-Mahwy, Ezzat Osman el-Hamhmy, Tarek Mohamed Farid, and Atif Abdel-Daym. The last two provided invaluable personal assistance during our final 1989 field season and in the study seasons that followed during the early 1990s.

It goes without saying that without the active sponsorship, collaboration, and encouragement of the American Research Center in Egypt, a project like ours would never have succeeded. I am, therefore, especially pleased to offer thanks to ARCE's US-based Executive Directors, Paul Walker and, more recently, Terence Waltz, and to the ARCE-Cairo directors, Richard Verdery, Robert Betts, Iliya Harik, and Mark Easton. And of course, as everyone knows who has ever been privileged to use ARCE's generous facilities, ARCE's Executive Secretary Madame Amira Khattab deserves our entire staff's warmest expressions of thanks.

Domestically, the project owes much to the University of Pennsylvania Museum and its directors. Robert Dyson generously aided the project during the years we were active in the field, and Jeremy Sabloff has continued to help by supplying us with all the essential research resources required to bring the project to publication. Many of the Museum's staff members have extended a wide variety of important services. I think in particular of Alan Waldt, its Associate Director for Finance, Stuart Fleming, Director of MASCA, Vincent Pigott, former MASCA Senior Research Scientist and contributor to Chapter seven, the Photographic Section's Fred Schoch and Francine Sarin, and lastly Bonnie Crosfield. Carl Beetz, who received his doctorate in Mesoamerican archaeology at the University of Pennsylvania, undertook the final reworking of most of Ken Schaar's and Jim Thorn's field drawings, while the remainder have been finished by Nicholas Griffith. Philip Betancourt, Consulting Scholar of the Museum's Mediterranean Section and INSTAP's Executive Director, and David O'Connor, the former Curator of the Museum's Egyptian Section, were both quick to provide me, a novice to Egypt as well as the general area of Aegean archaeology, with a helpful stream of information, help, and patient encouragement.

The project's field staff over three seasons was composed of Aala Shaheen, David Conwell, Eric Gieringer, Roy Green, Chris and Linda Hulin, Murray McClellan, Pamela Russell, Kenneth and Margaret Schaar, Stephanie Tyiska, James Thorn, and Arthur and Joan White. Murray McClellan ably served as the project's Assistant Director for the 1985 season, as did David Conwell in 1987. Working under circumstances that were seldom easy, and occasionally made even less so by the inexperience of the director, the entire team deserves the Museum's and my own personal thanks. In the same category I am happy to include all of the present co-authors, most of whom had to take time away from busy schedules to make special trips to Matruh in order to deal with their subject matter at first-hand. These include Don Bailey, Rita Gardner assisted by Martin Frost, Mohamed Nabil el-Hadidi, Linda Hulin, Murray McClellan, Vincent Pigott, David Reese, Pamela Russell, and Jim Thorn.

I am also gratified to be able to acknowledge here the many courtesies and services provided by Harvard University's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. It was of course the Peabody that originally sponsored Bates's 1913/14 expedition to Marsa Matruh. This has resulted in their more recent administration and staff becoming the target of a constant barrage of importunities from me since 1984. I particularly wish to thank its directors, Carl Lamberg-Karlovsky, David Tilbeam and Rubie Watson, its Collection Managers Una MacDowell, Katherine Skelly, and Gloria Greis, its Assistant Registrars Germaine

Juneau, Genevieve Fisher, and Kerstein Audette, its Photo Archivists Martha Labell and Barbara Isaac, and its Archivists Sarah Demb and Susan Hasskell for their help over the past decade and a half.

An excavation cannot survive on the contributions of just its participants in the field and lab. We have been especially fortunate in that the readiness of the Museum to provide seed money and research funds has been matched by many friends to whom, though their company has been sadly thinned by time, I owe an everlasting debt of gratitude. They are Mandon Bates, Mr. and Mrs. Woodruff Emlen, Mr. and Mrs. Willy Gorrissen, Mr. and Mrs. E. Gordon Keith, Catherine Lower, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Maxwell, Charles Saffer, and George Vaux. Of personal importance to me for reasons that transcend their repeated and substantial financial help are James and Natica Bates Satterthwaite. Tica, Oric Bates's daughter, and Jim, my long-suffering high school English teacher, have underwritten this work in ways too numerous and subtle to be adequately expressed here.

I have reserved for nearly the last my thanks to the Institute for Aegean Prehistory, which joined with the Museum at the project's outset to provide it with major financial support for our work in Egypt as well as help in defraying the costs of final publication. From his own scientific articles on the subject of Bronze Age archaeology to his generous sponsorship of museums and research stretching from New York to Crete, INSTAP's founder, Malcolm Wiener, has proven to be a remarkable benefactor and true friend to Classical archaeology and to this project. In addition, Philip Betancourt has undertaken an immense amount of work in helping to prepare this study for publication in his capacity as INSTAP's Executive Director and thus, once again, leaves me greatly in his debt.

Finally, I want here to express my love, gratitude and thanks to my wife Joan and my son Arthur, who after years of sharing the joys as well as the predictable vicissitudes of more than a decade of work in Libya, helped me initiate the Matruh project. Along with Tarek Mohamed and Atif Abdel-Daym, they set aside their own busy careers to bear the brunt of the actual digging during our final field season in 1989. Without their support and encouragement the Matruh project could never have taken the shape that it did.

*Donald White*

## Notes

i. Murray McClellan and James Thorn working at Cyrene, Donald Bailey at the Society for Libyan Studies project at Sidi Krebish, Benghazi. For the background to the conclusion of the Museum's work at Cyrene, see D. White, "Editorial Note," *The Extramural; Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone at Cyrene, Libya I: Background and Introduction to the Excavations* (Philadelphia 1984) before title page.

ii. *Eastern Libyans*.

iii. *African Studies*. For more on Bates's work at Matruh during the winter of 1913/14, see *Resurfacing of Paratonium*, passim and White, *Stranger*, 168, n. 36, as well as elsewhere throughout this study.

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This study adopts throughout the standard abbreviations used by the *American Journal of Archaeology* 95 (1991) 3–16 and *Lexicon der Ägyptologie* IV (Wiesbaden 1982) ix–xiii, with the former taking precedence over the latter in the case of overlapping titles. The works listed below are supplementary.

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## MINOR ABBREVIATIONS

a.s.l.	above sea level	not ill.	not illustrated
b.s.l.	below sea level	not inv.	not inventoried
BR	Base Ring Ware	NW	northwest
c.	century	pol.	pollen
ca.	circa	pres.	preserved
cm.	centimeter	rest.	Restored
d.	diameter	RL	Red Lustrous Ware
E	east	S	south
el.	elevation	SE	southeast
frag.	fragment	sq.	square
h.	height	SW	southwest
max.	maximum	th.	thickness
m.	meter	uncat.	uncataloged
mm.	millimeter	veg.	vegetational
mod.	modern	W	west
N	north	WS	White Slip Ware
NE	northeast	w.	width

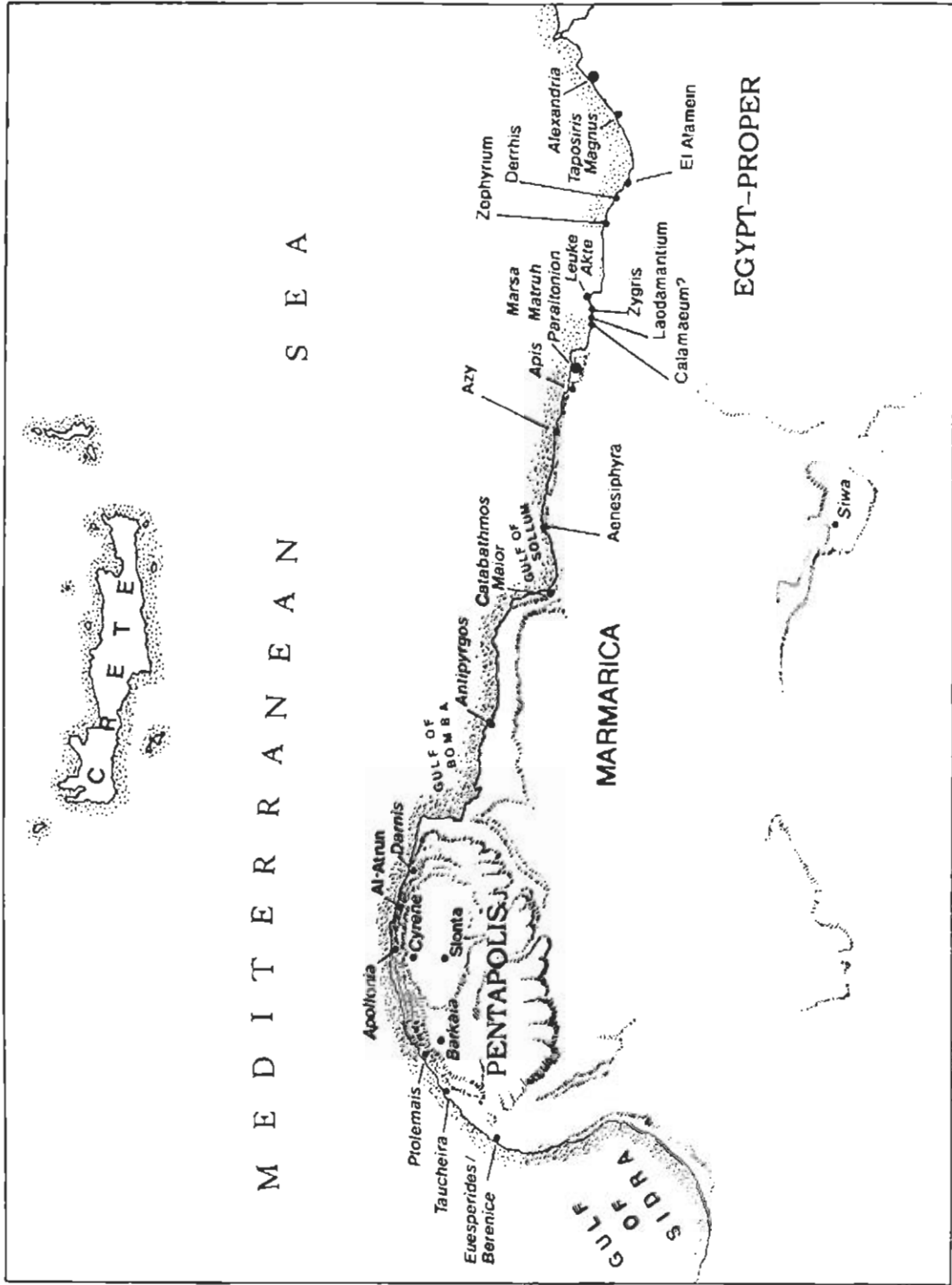


Fig. 1.1. Map of the principal ancient coastal sites between Alexandria and the Libyan Plateau indicating the extent of the Marmarica.