New Potential from Old Archives

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I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me to contribute to this symposium on the potential of Tebtunis for future research. What follows is a preliminary report of some initial attempts to reassemble and analyse the pieces of a much larger puzzle scattered over three continents, and is subject to revision. This will be followed by a few observations on research possibilities. First, an overview of the old excavations presented year by year including the newly discovered evidence for Tebtunis from the Bagnani archives at Trent University, but beginning a century ago with Grenfell and Hunt, whose work we are commemorating today.

By the time that they arrived at Tebtunis for their third season in the Fayum, Grenfell and Hunt had already exposed mud brick temples at Bacchias and Euhemeria and a stone temple at Karanis; moreover, they had identified houses as being inside sanctuary enclosures at Karanis and Theadelphia, and had recognized physical stylistic differences among Fayumic cemeteries of various Ptolemaic and Roman periods, particularly at Karanis, Bacchias, and Theadelphia.

Thus experienced in Fayumic archaeology, on Sunday 3 December 1899 they began digging at the south end of the site because that was where Ptolemaic sherds were mingled with the Roman. That very first day they discovered Greek, demotic, and hieroglyphic papyrus fragments, a combination which suggested to them they were near a temple, and soon they were able to recognize the outlines of an enclosure 110 X 60 metres with walls three meters thick. In its northeast corner they identified a small brick building as the temple of Seknebtunis, which either produced no finds (Athenaeum, AF) or a hoard of Ptolemaic bronze coins (Grenfell's note in Milne). In the priests' houses along the enclosure wall they found a silver coin hoard of 80 BC as well as papyri.

They then moved on to dig in other houses of the Roman town, finding papyri and coin hoards of the Roman period. After spending one week exposing a frescoed Coptic church, presumably further to the north, they moved to the cemeteries immediately south of town on Friday 5 January 1900 for the next two and a half months. Here they found eight groups of burials or cemeteries. About 350 artifacts now in the Hearst Museum derived from the pharaonic cemeteries from Dyn XII to Dyn XXI - XXVI; the location of the settlement for these periods has not been discovered, although there would be subsequent reports of some pre-Ptolemaic remains below the sanctuary. Their discovery of papyri in crocodile mummies on Tuesday 16 January 1900 in a cemetery adjoining the Ptolemaic burials remains arguably the site's most distinctive and well-known feature.

For two weeks in March 1902 Otto Rubensohn of the Berlin Museum excavated a few houses in the east part of the mound, finding three iconographically important painted wooden panels.

In 1929 Evaristo Breccia, then Director of the Graeco-Roman Museum at Alexandria, began the Italian excavations at Tebtunis. In addition to the cemetery, he dug in some houses west of the dromos and sanctuary, finding demotic oracle texts. After a disappointing season, Breccia yielded the concession to Carlo Anti of Padua in 1930 in return for any Greek papyri being given to Vitelli and Norsa at Florence for publication.

Carlo Anti's excavation goals for the Royal Italian Archaeological Mission at Tebtunis were both laudable and ambitious: to excavate the town methodically in order to reveal its urban planning. Instead of digging in untouched mounds in hopes of finding papyri, Anti was prepared to excavate in places where others had preceded him in order to clarify and understand the town itself. In Anti's first season at Tebtunis in 1930, he uncovered several Graeco-Roman houses including one with a double peristyle court and a Greek frieze.* These houses were located on either side of a nucleus of older Egyptian houses as well as some intersecting streets. These were cleared and then drawn* by the architect Fausto Franco. But conclusions for urban planning were premature because they had not yet found the great processional dromos leading to the sanctuary, central to the town's existence.

In 1931 Anti was joined by Franco as well as by Gilbert Bagnani. Bagnani was born in Rome in 1900, the only child of a military attaché at the Italian embassy in London and a Canadian woman from Port Hope, Ontario. After attending schools in Rome and London, he received his baccalaureate from the University of Rome in 1921, and went on to study at the Royal Italian School of
Archaeology in Greece from 1921 to 1923. After participating in various excavations there, he returned to Italy where he became Inspector of Antiquities for Campagna from 1925 until 1929, the same year that he married Stewart Houston in Toronto.

At the start of the 1931 season Anti and Bagnani immediately found the first of a series of Roman structures they eventually identified as deipneteria or dining halls on both sides of a paved court and an altar with a Greek inscription to the god Sekneptunis (sic) dedicated by the strategos Noumenios in 5 BC. Bagnani's sketch of this south end of the Processional Way clarifies in which deipneterion cellar some 40 inscribed ostraka were discovered.

Although the limestone temple itself had been demolished, Franco's unpublished 1931 plan shows the then well-preserved mudbrick temenos wall and the surrounding dependant annexes. Many private houses had been built around the courtyard inside the sanctuary walls, including those of bakers, linenworkers, and an enamelist. Some of the inlays from the latter's workshop portrayed a Ptolemy and his queen adoring Isis and Harpokrates. One of Stewart's later watercolours depicts the bust of the goddess. The enamel fragments are now divided between Cairo and Turin. The oblong structure resembling the deipneteria inside the temenos at Karanis was similarly identified by Anti, making a total of five so identified that season at Tebtunis and assigned prematurely by Anti to the five tribes of priests. A mud brick, plastered and painted with the image of a king or a god (?!), now in Turin, might be the one referred to on Franco's plan from the sanctuary but, thanks to Robin Meador-Woodruff at the Kelsey Museum, I have now discovered that there were at least two other painted bricks from Tebtunis whose photographs survive in the Kelsey, conceivably from the same scene. A hieratic inscription written in ink on stone was found in the sanctuary and sent to Italy but is now lost; good photographs in the Bagnani archives taken of the stone after its cleaning initially indicate that it describes the local rituals of Soknebtunis at Tebtunis, although a definitive reading will take some time. I owe this information to my colleague, Vincent Rondot of the CNRS, who is publishing the sanctuary. Perhaps most visually stunning is the wooden panel painted with two gods, identified by Rondot as Sobek-Geb/Kronos and Min of Akhmim; the former is seen through Greek eyes enthroned and holding an Egyptian crocodile as his Greek-style attribute while his head is surrounded with a nimbus, a precursor of Byzantine icons. This scene in itself encapsulates the artistic trends of a millennium at Tebtunis.

The external entrance court or proastion was lined with sculpted walls which were assigned to Bagnani to publish. His report, “The Reliefs of the Sanctuary of Souchos at Tebtunis,” was presented to the 2nd International Congress at Leiden in September 1931, but has not yet been discovered. There are copies, however, of some of the hieroglyphic inscriptions accompanying these reliefs in the archives. From his abstract and letters, we know that the reliefs represented various deities receiving the crocodile god being carried around in his litter on priests' shoulders, similar to the well-known painting from Theadelphia. Although the upper part of the scenes had disappeared, Bagnani was able to identify the headless creatures. Today the frieze has virtually vanished except for its foundations but photographs discovered by Claudio Gallazzi in Anti’s archives at Padua have enabled Rondot to reconstruct and analyze the iconography of the entire complex.

Finally, as their funds were running low, on March 10 in one of the priest's houses inside the sanctuary they found the cellar “filled practically to the top with papyri” including intact scrolls in Greek, hieroglyphic, hieratic, and demotic. Bagnani's letter of 11 March provides a detailed eyewitness account of their removal and treatment. Although much of this material might once have belonged to a sanctuary library, the context of their final resting place as described by Bagnani indicates that they had been heaped together as refuse when their usage was no longer required. The precise location of the find is marked on the plan in Padua as room 36A, according to Rondot, but Botti reported in 1935 that it came from “Cantina F” in the sanctuary; since neither of these designations corresponds to the numbers on the plan in the Bagnani archives, there were at least three sets of identification systems for the rooms inside and outside the temenos which need to be analysed in conjunction with the phorographs.

By the end of Bagnani’s first season in 1931, the sanctuary at Tebtunis was seen as noteworthy in the extent of the preservation of its annexes; the processional street leading to it was also unique in the kinds of distinctive buildings lining it; and the discovery of ritual Egyptian and Greek papyri in one of the priests' houses provided a singular archaeological context for the rituals and healing treatments themselves.
For the 1932 season, Arrigo Orioli was the draughtsman and Gilbert was joined by his wife Stewart. Most of the this season was spent clearing the central part of the sanctuary, where they discovered a small round precinct they believed was once occupied by the sacred crocodile near a tree. Although the limestone temple itself, once covered with reliefs and paintings, was almost all destroyed, soundings around the temple foundations down to virgin sand enabled the chronology of the buildings in the sanctuary to be determined. From this sequence of constructions and Bagnani's study of Egyptian brickwork, he established that for Tebtunis at least the dimensions of the bricks were reliable chronological indicators with the bricks diminishing in thickness and size through time.

Combining various reports, the highlights of Anti's conclusions can be summarized thus: During the reign of Ptolemy I Soter were built the grand limestone temple with some priests’ houses in the inner enclosure and the house of the high priest with its reception hall, the house of the artokopoi and ovens in the outer enclosure, the brick peribolos with its missing limestone doorway, the slabbed dromos bordered with lions and sphinxes, and the southern limestone kiosk. In the last decades of the second century BC, priests' houses were built along the east wall and simple pastophoria along the west wall in the inner enclosure, and later the proastion in front of the first portal was constructed and decorated with reliefs. From 55 to 5 BC the dromos was embellished with altars and bases.

In the first century AD, many idiotai were built around the court of the outer enclosure, including the enamelist's workshop. In the inner enclosure, repairs and restorations were made to the pastophoria including a new series along the south side; Anti inferred that the number of priests increased at the same time that the cult of the synnaoi theoi was introduced. Anti assigned to the early second century AD the transformation for processions of the dromos lined by elevated paroda, together with four deipneteria and the conversion of a building in the outer enclosure of the sanctuary to become a fifth. These conclusions are being reexamined.

In October 1932 Anti accepted a promotion to become the Rector of the University of Padua, and thereafter he was no longer actively involved in the field. As a result, Bagnani was the effective field director for the remaining four seasons 1933-36, accompanied by Stewart. 1933 was a memorable and unusual season, most of the beginning of which was spent preparing for the visits by the Italian royal family in March. Bagnani finished clearing the sanctuary, discovering the east side entrance and a workshop producing moulded Roman coins. He tried to ascertain the length of the dromos by digging a trench 200 m north of the sanctuary and found that the dromos still continued beyond a Roman kiosk. But, because of the unrelenting activities of the sebakhin in the northeast of the site, Bagnani decided to dig there where he discovered a then fairly well preserved frescoed church with its surrounding monastic annexes. The excavation notebook describes in detail the monastic buildings. There are sketches of measured plans and also of painted coptic inscriptions. It was in this church that the fresco of Adam and Eve before and after the Fall was discovered. Stewart painted watercolours of some of the fragmentary frescoes from the various walls of this church, like St Peter and the cock and Samuel son of St Stephen. Of at least four known excavated churches in this area at Tebtunis, almost nothing remains today, and even their precise locations are not certain in what now resembles a lunar landscape.

In 1934 Bagnani began digging at the north end of the Processional Way near the Roman kiosk where he immediately found the westward turn toward the desert and a near by water conduit. He spent the next two weeks clearing both the Processional Way southward to open it through to the previous seasons’ exposure, and the westward dromos and adjacent deipneteria. By this time, they had uncovered some 17 deipneteria, including one with a Greek inscription of Neronian date telling us it was used by a synodos. At the same time, however, he was also digging in the later named Insula of the Papyri west of the Processional Way, finding a small silver bowl in a sottoscala.

On 28 February they were joined by Professor Achille Vogliano from the University of Milan. He had been invited by Anti to participate as a guest at Tebtunis while awaiting formal approval of his own site at Medinet Madi, a few miles west of Tebtunis.

Vogliano took over the excavation of the Insula of the Papyri while Bagnani began excavating behind the deipneteria in the insula of the shops to the north. His notebook describes in detail the four shops including a thermopolion, only some of whose walls are still standing. The shops were covered after their destruction with an ash stratum full of Greek literary papyri which the notebook identifies.
Bagnani's typed manuscript entitled "Excavations at Tebtunis" gives a vivid eyewitness description of the major discovery of the season. On March 14 in the Insula of the Papyri a thick layer of Greek papyri was discovered in the cellar or "cantina" of a room adjoining the entrance of a house. This was next to a building that he identified, based on its more impressive architecture, as the local Grapheion or Public Records Office. The papyri which he sent back to Vogliano at the dig house included legal documents and receipts of the second century A.D. as well as a summary of the poems of Callimachos. Claudio Gallazzi has analysed the mass of papyri attributed to the "cantina". His conclusion, that the "grapheion" papyri were finally intended for refuse, is supported by Bagnani's reports.

There are two dozen aerial photographs taken by the Egyptian Air Force in 1934 of Tebtunis, covering the entire site from the inhabited cultivated area from the canal in the north over to the desert in the south and west. It was one of these that Bagnani published in his report. The sanctuary, processional dromos and surrounding buildings and houses are clearly visible. Needless to say, the site is no longer in the state of preservation that it was when these photos were taken after its excavation in 1934. It is hoped that eventually photographic or computerized enhancement of their details will enable both a focused analysis of individual structures* for further examination as well as a reconstruction of the site and of some of the individual buildings as they were then.

In November 1934, for reasons still unknown, Anti terminated his agreement to give the papyri to Vitelli and Norsa of Florence, and Anti would keep the papyri for himself and his own university at Padua. The excavations resumed earlier than usual in December 1934. Gilbert's mother in Rome died suddenly in January 1935 and Stewart's mother later that spring, leaving them both without any immediate family (they had no children).

The 1934-35 season received only a brief publication. To the east of the north end of the processional avenue, not far from the previously discovered water conduit was discovered a Roman "fullonica",* with papyri. Further exploration of the sector west of the dromos clarified that the insula with the shops was once a covered market or warehouse "horrea"* including "remarkably well preserved baths" built over Ptolemaic remains in its southwest corner. It would appear then that the ash stratum containing the literary papyri which covered the shops and adjoining "streets" derived from the collapsed roof or upper floor of this Roman building. A fine bronze mirror was found in the house to the west.

Northwest of the temenos wall of the sanctuary, they discovered a building containing a peristyle courtyard* with a small shrine on its south colonnade,* and along its north side a range of at least ten vault-roofed magazines,* of which one seemed to have served as a depot for old cartonnages of mummies and papyri. Another structure west of the peristyle building was almost square, with walls of an exceptional thickness suggesting a tower,* enclosing basement compartments containing a considerable number of papyri.

In the necropolis south of town many ostraka preserving receipts were found in a tomb adapted to domestic use by the family of Petesuchos. At the end of the season and west of the site Bagnani discovered a large Roman tomb with well-preserved frescoes of scenes from Greek mythology but it was reburied to protect it until they could return the following year.

After the end of the season at Tebtunis, Anti joined Vogliano during the month of April in establishing the excavation at Medinet Madi,* where Bagnani recognized that a long sinking in the mound might indicate a processional dromos and by digging discovered it with its pilasters incised with hymns to Isis. Bagnani's report on Medinet Madi is useful for Tebtunis because he repeatedly makes comparisons between the two similar dromoi.

Since Anti himself kept the papyri and ostraka together with some utensils and domestic objects found during the 1935 season, this material was rediscovered in 1977 in the Museum of Science Archaeology and Art at the University of Padua. The remaining material sent by Bagnani was consigned to the Museo delle Terme in Rome where part was displayed and part placed in storage until 1970 when it was all transferred to the Museo Egizio in Turin.

At the IV International Congress of Papyrology at Florence held in 1935, Anti summarized the results of the 1930-1935 excavations, providing a list of brick sizes by periods. At the end of his paper in April 1935, he stated: “The excavations of Tebtunis will continue
through the exploration of the quarters of habitation surrounding the sanctuary and through the hoped for discovery of the Souchieion."

The only evidence discovered so far, however, of the excavations at Tebtunis in 1936 is in the Bagnani Archives. It lasted for only two weeks from April 26 to May 8, and included clearing the area around the peristyle court northwest of the sanctuary.* (As an example of the synergistic results obtainable by combining archival resources, I have been able to identify the distinguished looking man in the photo as Sir Miles Lampson, the British plenipotentiary ambassador to Egypt in 1936, by combining references in both the archives at Trent and the Kelsey Museum.) Another two dozen aerial photos were taken probably in 1936 at about 1400' and clearly indicate all the insulae and structures exposed at the end of this unpublished season. Immediately afterward, the Bagnanis left Egypt for an extensive sojourn through Greece and Yugoslavia, stopping briefly in Italy before moving permanently to Ontario in 1937.

Gilbert bought a farm near his mother's home at Port Hope, Ontario, adding a large addition to their country house* to store and display their collections of books and heirlooms. He was invited to teach at the University of Toronto in 1945 and upon his retirement in 1965 he and his wife contributed to the creation of the Classics Department at Trent University near their home by teaching various courses in Classics and art history. They left their house and its contents to Trent University after their deaths in 1985 and 1996 respectively.

Stewart's papers arrived in the Trent University Archives in 1994, and Gilbert's in 1997; I remain grateful to the Trent Archivist, Dr. Bernadine Dodge for permission to publish. Among the archaeological documents, there are daily diaries for their Egyptian sojourns of 1931, 1932, and 1933 in addition to weekly correspondence. There are Italian notebooks for the excavations at Tebtunis* for 1931, 1933, and 1934. The architect's plan at the end of his two years at the site in 1931 survives and room numbers have been added to it. There are several typed manuscripts summarizing aspects of the very productive 1934 season. A guestbook used at the site preserves in chronological order the list of their visitors, sometimes with dates, from 1933 to 1936. An album of Stewart's contains about a dozen watercolours of fragments of frescoes from the church excavated in 1933. There are also scores of black and white photographs from many sites, unfortunately not all labelled; of these the most outstanding are of course the aerial photographs* taken of Tebtunis in both 1934 and 1936, as I now believe.

Claudio Gallazzi, Professor of Greek Palaeography at the Institute of Papyrology, University of Milan, together with the Institut français d'archéologie orientale, resumed excavations at Tebtunis in 1988. Among Anti's archives at Padua he has discovered many photographs and reports sent by Bagnani and a typewritten manuscript for the 1935 season, of which he has kindly sent me copies. His own excavations have added substantially to our knowledge of the religious life and its evolution at Tebtunis but the current state plan* of the site indicates the areas in which much archaeological evidence has been lost since the aerial photos of 1934 and 36.*

To summarize the evolution of the site chronologically and geographically:

- during Soter's reign the sanctuary and dromos and south pavilion were built
- the proastion was added in the early first century BC with its reliefs by c 55 BC
- the dromos was raised and adorned with altars by Augustus' 24th year
- Roman deipneteria were added along the dromoi by Nero's time
- dates for the Roman horrea and structures within the Insula of the Papyri are not yet clear
- the sanctuary may have been abandoned by the later third century AD but one near by house was still producing coins in the
  fourth century

- ceramic evidence for the following centuries is becoming apparent from recent analyses

- a Coptic monastery with several churches was built and occupied at the northern edge of the present site

- the Arab houses further north had been demolished before excavators arrived at the site

In the evolving Greek, Roman and Coptic community at Tebtunis, old buildings were adapted to new uses (south insula) and new
buildings replaced old ones (north insula). The centre of the settlement itself may well have moved northward, following the
retreating cultivation, as first observed by Grenfell and Hunt a century ago.

In response to the organizers' request to suggest a range of topics for future research on Tebtunis, as an archaeologist I offer the
following for the sake of discussion.

So, what is unusual about Tebtunis and its documentation?

- Anti repeatedly emphasized the uniqueness of the sanctuary itself with all its peripheral dependencies preserved, facilitating
  economic studies.

- there is growing textual evidence for the use of the sanctuary as an oracular shrine consulted by both Egyptians and Greeks.
  Together with the ink inscription and the reliefs, it may prove possible to localize the rituals in relation to the sanctuary and its
dromos.

- its use as a healing sanctuary like the Greek Asklepieia would be an entire study in itself, considering the medical papyri
  discovered there.

- the burial of hundreds of crocodiles in family groups remains distinctive.

- the dromos as excavated is the best preserved in the Fayum, is unique with all its deipneteria, and is unusually closely datable.

- a new aspect of the archival documentation is the potential for what I call archaeolography, part of the growing field of
  Wissenschaftsgeschichte, the study of the discipline itself. For example, an examination of Grenfell and Hunt's prior experience
  excavating burials in the Fayum lends credence to their interpretation of the chronologically distinctive cemeteries at Tebtunis as
  having separately existed in fact. Anti's interest in urban analysis needs to be understood in the context of the 1920s and 30s,
since it significantly influenced his excavation procedures and analyses. What were Grenfell and Hunt's interests as revealed in their
publications and how did they affect the outcome of their excavations and subsequent analyses? Thus information about archaeologists
and papyrologists can inform us about their interpretation of the evidence. Archaeolography can be applied in both directions to their mutual benefit.

- the possibility that Tebtunis may have been occupied for over a millennium offers rare opportunities for archaeological and
  papyrological analysis; e.g., the apparent continuity from Egyptian to Coptic of religious art (painted panel), architecture (walled
temenos with (arguably) pyrgos/qasr), and practices (priests'/monks' cells) demonstrable at the site.

- what really makes Tebtunis unique is that it has both enormous amounts of Greek and demotic papyri as well as extensive, well-
  preserved and well-dated material remains from the Greek and Roman periods. It has already been possible to identify some
buildings with their owners or users, and may be possible to an extent to recontextualize groups of papyri within their
archaeological provenance; indeed, the integration of the evidence when fully studied will provide probably the most detailed insight into life in Greek and Roman Egypt available from any one site.

Examples of integrated questions remaining:

- was the sanctuary a Ptolemaic bank and how did it perform this function?

- is there a correspondence between the archaeological and papyrological evidence for the changing nature of the town over the centuries, i.e. public/state architecture of Ptolemaic religious buildings and then Roman secular buildings?

- are there specific synchronic correspondences with other Fayum towns like Karanis or for public works?

- a comparison of integrated evidence for the oracular sanctuary towns of Socnopaiou Nesos and Tebtunis might prove rewarding.

- close comparison of the artifacts from the Roman town with those from Karanis might indicate the extent of local as opposed to regional manufacture, i.e., intra-Fayumic trade patterns; similarly, contextual comparisons with the rich archival material from Karanis might help to elucidate the usage of some of the Tebtunis material at Berkeley.

- integration of architectural and papyrological evidence: e.g., Husson’s work on the Greek vocabulary for houses could usefully be expanded to include demotic texts and other structures in order to clarify and “control” both the meanings of words in the papyri and the use of material remains - an evolving visual vocabulary which might facilitate cultural socio-economic analyses.

To quote Edgar Goodspeed after his visit to Tebtunis: “It should be a source of satisfaction to Americans that this, the finest collection known of Greek papyri of the Ptolemaic period, is to belong to an American university.” And this does not take into account all the demotic and Greek papyri and artifacts from other periods. At the same time, Americans are also blest with the unparalleled contextual information preserved for the Roman town of Karanis, on the other side of the Fayum from Tebtunis. Including the evidence for the frescoed Coptic monastery in the Trent archives, the Berkeley collections could be considered part of a larger enterprise examining life in the Fayum through fifteen centuries of transition and continuity. There is enormous and exciting potential for future research on Tebtunis and I have tried to suggest just a few possible directions for discussion. There are undoubtedly many more possibilities precisely because Tebtunis is so rich in potential information.

Apart from the papyri, even the archaeological evidence is scattered from North America (Berkeley, Michigan and Trent) to England and Italy (Padua, Milan and Turin) and to Egypt (Alexandria, Cairo and Tebtunis itself). This seems appropriate for a Canadian interest in an old Italian excavation of a Greek and Roman town in Egypt now being excavated by the French one century after the British, sponsored by an American. Thus it requires the cooperative collaboration of scholars in a coordinated effort internationally to reassemble and integrate the evidence first brought to light by Grenfell and Hunt, thanks to the public-spirited Mrs Hearst.

Thank you for your attention.