

THE EXCAVATIONS OF THE  
ISTITUTO PAPIROLOGICO “G. VITELLI” OF FLORENCE  
AT ANTINOOPOLIS (2000-2007) – PRELIMINARY REPORT\*

From October 1993 to October 2000, security measures which involved closing off Middle Egypt, prevented the Istituto Papirologico “G. Vitelli” from Florence from continuing their archaeological activity at the site of Antinoopolis, which had first begun in the winter of 1935/36 and continued with a certain regularity during the last century<sup>1</sup>.

Between 5 and 14 October 2000 in the North Necropolis, in the so-called *Kôm 4*, in an area on the north-west side, next to the Chapel of Theodosia<sup>2</sup>, excavation recommenced on the second level of the quadrants (6m x 6m) D2, D3 and D4 of a division that dated back to the last campaign in 1993<sup>3</sup>.

The finds, due to the limited time available, were modest: fragments of ceramics and coroplastic art, some lamps, a few coins, and a few frustules of papyrus. Nor were building structures of any kind brought to light, and we merely made a hurried clean-up of some of those uncovered in previous campaigns.

However, albeit brief, the work offered a chance to perform inspections in various parts of the city, with a view to locating an excavation area outside the North Necropolis.

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\* In the reproductions (Tabs. I-XXV), the intention is to provide simple extemporaneous pictures illustrating the various phases of the dig.

The finds presented – papyri, fabrics, inscriptions and coins – will obviously be the subject of detailed study and publication if not dealt with here.

<sup>1</sup> In brief, cf. M. MANFREDI, *Gli scavi italiani ad Antinoe (1935-1993)*, in *Antinoe cent'anni dopo*, ed. L. DEL FRANCIA BAROCAS, Firenze 1998, pp. 23-28. The work recommenced, after the long interruption due to the war, in September 1965 thanks to the interest and dedication of V. Bartoletti, S. Bosticco, S. Donadoni and M. Manfredi.

<sup>2</sup> For this exceptional find, we obviously need to start with E. BRECCIA, *Le prime ricerche italiane ad Antinoe (Scavi dell'Istituto Papirologico Fiorentino negli anni 1936-1937)*, in *Aegyptus* 18 (1938), pp. 285-310, and M. SALMI, *I dipinti paleocristiani di Antinoe*, in *Scritti dedicati alla memoria di Ippolito Rosellini nel primo centenario della morte (4 giugno 1943)*, edited by the University of Florence, Firenze 1945, pp. 157-169, tabs. XXV-XXX, and conclude with M. MANFREDI, *Iscrizione funeraria da Antinoe*, in *Gedenkschrift Ulrike Horak (P.Horak)*, H. HARRAUER and R. PINTAUDI (eds.), Firenze 2004 (Pap.Flor. XXXIV), pp. 143-147, Tab. XXII, and G. MENCI, *Note su reperti antinoiti (I. Theudosia)*, in *Scrivere Leggere Interpretare. Studi di antichità in onore di S. Daris*, by F. CREVATIN and G. TEDESCHI (eds.), Trieste 2005 (in Franco Crevatin Homepage, <http://www.sslmit.univ.trieste.it/crevatin/Daris.htm>). A fine reproduction of the painting in the arcosolium can be found in *Antinoe cent'anni dopo* op. cit., pp. 29-31. Further information may be found in M. MANFREDI - G. MENCI - L. PESI, *La 'nuova' collezione archeologica dell'Istituto Papirologico "G. Vitelli": dallo scavo al museo*, in *Proceed. of the 24<sup>th</sup> Int. Congr. of Pap.*, Helsinki 2007, pp. 625-636.

<sup>3</sup> The excavation diaries of this campaign (September-October), as for previous ones, are conserved at the Istituto Papirologico “G. Vitelli”, with the lists of finds, and the reports presented to the Supreme Council of Antiquities in Egypt. The Institute's photo library has comprehensive and well-ordered photographic documentation.

A dump hill at the eastern end of the *decumanus* was chosen, a *kôm* next to the one in which S. Donadoni's excavation in September-October 1966 had brought to light a palaeo-Christian church<sup>4</sup>, next to the so-called Temple of Isis discovered by Albert Gayet<sup>5</sup>.

The choice was made after consulting the essential *Pro-memoria sui kimân di Antinoe*, which S. Donadoni had published in 1966<sup>6</sup>.

This *Kôm II A*, at least twenty metres high<sup>7</sup>, seemed intact, and untouched by clandestine digs, *sebbach* diggers or anyone/anything else. In actual fact it had been subject to trial excavations and discarded as unlikely to produce finds of papyri by J. de M. Johnson<sup>8</sup>.

The attention, however, which was given to it by P. Ballet and his assistants in the *prospection* performed in December 1987, where the *Kôm II A* was also recorded photographically<sup>9</sup>, convinced us to make it the subject of an excavation, not only in the (as it turned out, vain) hope of uncovering any residential or monumental structures preserved below, but certain that we could recover some testimonies of "industrial" activity<sup>10</sup>, or simply of everyday life, from the enormous quantity of materials accumulated over the centuries.

Our choice was also influenced by the ease of transporting the dump materials produced by the excavation, since we could use the same dump as the University of Rome Mission in 1966<sup>11</sup>.

2003

However this project could not be realised until 2003, when on 11 January the excavation site was reopened, precisely on *Kôm II A*.

In the first two days, work concentrated on digging a trench (A) in the central section

<sup>4</sup> G. UGGERI, *La chiesa paleocristiana presso la porta orientale*, in *Antinoe (1965-1968). Missione archeologica in Egitto dell'Università di Roma*, Roma 1974, pp. 37-67.

<sup>5</sup> A series of enormous columns, architraves, bases in pink granite, excavated by Albert Gayet in winter 1896/97, which he reports in *Annales du Musée Guimet* XXVI, III, Paris 1897, pp. 55-56; Id., *Antinoë et les sépultures de Thais et Sérapion*, Paris 1902, the gravures on pp. 9, 11, 13; Id., in *Annales du Musée Guimet* XXX, II, Paris 1902, tab. XX (Plan des Fouilles d'Antinoë).

<sup>6</sup> *Oriens Antiquus* 5 (1966), pp. 276-293, Tabs. LXVII-LXXI.

<sup>7</sup> See its position with the level curves in the *Carta archeologica* (Sheet 3) edited by the topographer Angelo Pericoli, and distributed for free to the participants at the XXII Congresso Internazionale di Papirologia held in Florence from 23 to 29 August 1998; cf. D.M. BAILEY, *A ghost palaestra at Antinoopolis*, in *JEA* 85 (1999), pp. 235-239. A copy of the *Carta archeologica* is enclosed with this book.

<sup>8</sup> *Antinoë and its papyri. Excavation by the Graeco-Roman branch, 1913/14*, by J. DE M. JOHNSON, in *JEA* 1 (1914), pp. 168-181; listed under the letter O in his Plan of Mounds, p. 173; cf. p. 178 ("Meantime, as usual, gangs temporarily at liberty had sunk trial trenches in areas immediately adjoining (K, L, O) and these had been eliminated").

See also I. ANDORLINI, *Gli scavi di John de Monins Johnson ad Antinoe (1913-1914)*, in *Antinoe cent'anni dopo* op. cit., pp. 19-22; the entire photographic documentation of the Johnson campaign was recently acquired by the Istituto Papirologico "G. Vitelli" thanks to the help of the Griffith Institute in Oxford (I would like to thank my colleagues Harry Smith, Sue Davies and Jaromir Malek for their collaboration).

<sup>9</sup> P. BALLET, F. MAHMOUD, M. VICHY, M. PICON, *Artisanat de la céramique dans l'Égypte romaine tardive et byzantine. Prospections d'ateliers de potiers de Minia à Assouan*, in *CCE* 2 (1991), pp. 129-144, fig. 4.

<sup>10</sup> At the base of the *kôm* on the east side extensive traces of activities of kilns for ceramics are still clearly visible.

<sup>11</sup> R. PINTAUDI, *La ripresa degli scavi dell'Istituto Papirologico "G. Vitelli" ad Antinoe*, in *Comunicazioni* 5 (2003), pp. 85-86.

of the *kôm*, 7m long and 3m deep, in order to obtain information useful for the planning and development of the project.

A wide selection of ceramic material was found, in many cases decorated and painted according to a type extensively found in the previous excavations in the North Necropolis<sup>12</sup>, with spiral or geometric motifs, datable to the 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. Fragments of the local imitation of “sealed earth” ceramics, often with impressed decorations and very fine clay, were also worthy of note. Some modest fragments of papyrus with some lines of documentary text in Greek and Coptic also fuelled our optimism, as did the finds, albeit limited, of bronze coins.

Our activity then shifted to the summit of the *kôm* (in an area named B), which we sieved with extreme attention, noting the levels of the finds, as far as this was possible and justifiable in a dump hill formed by the highly irregular and inconsistent accumulation of materials. This irregularity was exemplified by a find which took place on 18 January, at a depth of less than one metre, of a lead coin, with the bust of a sovereign depicted as a pharaoh and the inscription (ἔτους) β on one side, and Euthenia lying down on the other: although datable to the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, it was found in a *kôm* which on the same level and in underlying layers continued to produce materials from the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>13</sup>

The frequency of regular layers of gypsum and building materials, especially baked bricks, gave further details of how the *kôm* had formed over the years.

Equally frequent and abundant were the finds of amphorae, many well preserved, and almost exclusively of the ‘Late Roman 7’ type, as well as of ‘Late Roman 1’ type amphorae necks or *spathia*. The latter frequently displayed various types of *tituli picti*, with numerical and metrological indications of content and ownership, of which a significant number were represented by the now well-known inscription θεοῦ χάρις κέρδος<sup>14</sup>.

A significant portion of the materials recovered was composed of objects in leather and hide, above all shoes, confirming what had already been evident in Johnson’s excavations<sup>15</sup>.

The finds of written material made in the excavation of this sector (B) of the *kôm* were also rather scarce: a few fragments of inscriptions on marble, which as far as could be seen were very probably funerary, and an equally small number of papyri palaeographically

<sup>12</sup> The work by M.C. GUIDOTTI and L. PESI, *La ceramica di Antinoe nell’Istituto Papirologico “G. Vitelli”*, Firenze 2004 (Studi e Testi di Papirologia, N.S. 6) is very useful; see also the specific study by M.C. Guidotti on the ceramics of the *Kôm*, *supra*, pp. 293-417.

<sup>13</sup> Published by G. NACHTERGAEL – R. PINTAUDI, *Documents de fouilles en provenance du nome Arsinoïte et d’Antinoé*, in An.Pap. XIV-XV (2002-2003), pp. 297-298.

<sup>14</sup> T. DERDA, *Inscriptions with the Formula θεοῦ χάρις κέρδος on Late Roman Amphorae*, in ZPE 94 (1992), pp. 135-152.

For an edition of the hundreds and hundreds of *tituli*, and also of the stoppers in unbaked clay or gesso with decorations, monograms or names, by J.-L. Fournet, A. Menchetti, D. Minutoli, G. Nachtergael, D. Piéri and R. Pintaudi, see *supra*, pp. 175-216 in the presentation by J.-L. Fournet and D. Pieri.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. the aforementioned article by J. DE M. JOHNSON in JEA 1 (1914), p. 180; and by I. ANDORLINI in *Antinoe cent’anni dopo* cit., p. 21. But above all, S. RUSSO, *Δέρμα e scarpe di pelle*, in *Gedenkschrift Ulrike Horak* cit., pp. 437-447, Farbabb. XXXVIII-LI; and in the paper included in this publication: pp. 439-470.

Recently, *Une sandale inscrite d’Antinoé*, by G. NACHTERGAEL and S. RUSSO in Chr.d’Ég. 80 (2005), pp. 308-314.

datable to the period between the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century AD, which had been dumped.

2004

In January 2004 work recommenced at *Kôm II A* with the widening of the excavation surface area and a descent from the upper sector (B) almost as far as the central area (A), which in the meantime had been widened and increasingly extended towards the interior of the *kôm*. At the base, meanwhile, a further trial excavation (C) was made, with the aim of checking for possible structures upon which the hillock could have been formed, although as said, our search proved to be fruitless.

Despite this lack of building structures, the excavation produced a great quantity of ceramics in a variety of types and decoration, more shoes, and fragments of worked leather and decorated fabrics. In terms of quantity and quality, these finds were unfortunately inferior to those to which we had been accustomed by the excavations conducted at Antinoopolis above all in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>16</sup>.

There was a very small number of papyrus fragments with scraps of Greek and Coptic, but even amidst such scarcity we were pleasantly surprised to find a splendid illustrated papyrus, which was recovered from a shapeless lump<sup>17</sup> found in sector B of the *kôm* on 14 January, and which is published in this book.

On 20 January this sector also gave us a piece of rolled up lead, which, when opened, revealed a surface which despite being in a very poor condition was clearly inscribed with traces of magical formulae<sup>18</sup>.

The head of a faience *ushabti*, which probably dates back to the Saitic Period<sup>19</sup>, confirmed the random and thus not particularly “stratigraphic” nature of the *kôm* we were excavating. At the end of January 2004 we in fact left the *kôm* with three large ‘wounds’ consequent to the sieving of three work levels: the upper level (B), an area 17.00m long, 11.00m wide and 3.30m deep; the middle level (A) at 17.00m x 3.70m x 4.20m; and the base level (C) at 8.70m x 3.00m x 2.50m.

As far as could be seen, the material recovered confirmed the view of Johnson, who discarded the *kôm* as of no interest for the recovery of the papyri. It however seemed that P. Ballet and his assistants had rightly judged its importance in the work of locating the *ateliers de potiers*<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> In op. cit. *Antinoe cent'anni dopo*, see *Sezione Quarta, La produzione tessile da Antinoe*, pp. 143-232; examples of the materials recovered from the excavations of the Istituto Papirologico “G. Vitelli” by S. DONADONI, *Stoffe decorate da Antinoe*, in *Scritti dedicati alla memoria di Ippolito Rosellini* cit., pp. 109-155, tabs. XIX-XXIV.

<sup>17</sup> Due to the professionalism of the papyrologist D. Minutoli, who accompanied us in all these missions. Not only did she significantly contribute to their success; she was also unfailingly dedicated and generous with her time.

<sup>18</sup> These are difficult to read, given the poor state of preservation. They are at present being studied together with F. Maltomini, who was present at the moment of their discovery.

<sup>19</sup> See the paper here by G. Rosati: pp. 471-472.

<sup>20</sup> The article by M.C. Guidotti exempts me from the need to make further observations: pp. 293-417.

The mission went back to work in early January 2005, widening the various excavation areas (A, B, C), but encountering increasingly barren layers of gypsum and sand alternated with poor and extremely fragmented pottery. The finds became increasingly modest: ceramic and coroplastic fragments, some lamps and bronze coins<sup>21</sup>. The latter were represented above all by small specimens minted in the late 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century AD, although there were sporadic finds of examples from a previous period, all highly worn due to the long period of circulation and the poor conditions of conservation.

The papyrus fragments were increasingly scarce and datable to the period 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century AD.

Particularly interesting was the find, on the first day of work, no less (9 January), of a plate fragment painted in tempera showing a central figure of Christ and the Virgin Mary represented as soul/naked baby girl on his arm. This was an unfortunately mutilated part of a sort of icon representing the *dormitio Virginis*, as we shall see in more detail below<sup>22</sup>.

The increasing barrenness of the *kôm* and the fact that we had by now completed the analysis of various levels and a wide range of depths, comparing and cross-referencing the finds and data with those of the 2003 and 2004 campaigns, led us to close the excavation site on *Kôm II A* on 18 January. We recommenced work on 21 January in the North Necropolis, the site of all the previous excavation campaigns at Antinopolis conducted by the Istituto Papirologico "G. Vitelli".

While the extensive archaeological attention given to this vast area on one hand promised encouraging finds from the point of view above all of written materials (inscriptions, papyri, ostraca), on the other it limited our choice of an excavation area which had not been touched by previous full-scale excavations or fleeting trials.

Preliminary research led us to select and then choose an area, on the north-west side, adjacent to the excavation carried out in January 1938 by S. Donadoni, which had led to the recovery of a series of interesting funerary chambers bringing to light funerary accoutrements, small objects, papyri and even wooden tablets painted on a light layer of stucco<sup>23</sup>.

We initially marked off, in what we called the *East Kôm*, a rectangular space of 14m x 14m, which was further divided into squares (7m x 7m, A, B, C, D) according to procedures and conventions that had always been adopted and rigidly respected in previous campaigns in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the area of the North Necropolis, so that

<sup>21</sup> We could finally count on the academic contribution of D. Castrizio, who from then on became the Mission's full-time numismatist.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *supra*, pp. 279-292.

<sup>23</sup> S. DONADONI, *Gli scavi del 1938*, in E. BRECCIA, *Le prime ricerche italiane ad Antinoe* cit., in *Aegyptus* 18 (1938), pp. 310-318, in particular p. 316; ID., *Notizia sugli scavi della Missione fiorentina ad Antinoe*, in *ASAE* 38 (1938), pp. 493-501, in particular p. 499 and Pl. XCIII.

The original of the *Giornale di scavo della Missione della Società Papirologica Italiana ad Antinoe* (16.1.38 – 27.1.38), has been reproduced by R. PINTAUDI (ed.) in *Annibale Evaristo Breccia in Egitto – Mostra documentaria*, A. ABDEL FATTAH, E. BRESCIANI, S. DONADONI, D. MINUTOLI, R. PINTAUDI, F. SILVANO (eds.) (Biblioteca Archeologica I), Cairo 2003, pp. 61-72.

Among the papyri, worthy of note are the codex of the *Iliad* PSI XIII 1298. The reproduction of couple of these painted tablets is found in *Antinoe cent'anni dopo*, op. cit., pp. 97-99, plates and introduction by M.C. GUIDOTTI.

we could collocate the finds that emerged in a well-known and documented context.

At the same time we opened a trial excavation (Trial E) on the eastern side of the part of the necropolis excavated in 1938 by S. Donadoni, on a small dump hill, which appeared not to have been touched previously. From this trial we immediately recovered abundant papyrus material, which, although mainly composed of unwritten fragments, led us to hope for more interesting future finds.

The excavation of the quadrants A, B, C and D (further subdivided into four sections) was performed to a depth of at least one metre over the whole area and revealed the presence of a funerary chamber – perhaps reused as a dwelling in the Arabian period, as coins and ceramics testify –, with burials at various levels.

Notable among the finds was a conspicuous number of glass lamps (over eighty), fragmented but easily reassembled, all found together in a niche in a wall, perhaps of another funerary chamber which had since disappeared, or of some Church or building of worship destroyed and no longer identifiable<sup>24</sup>.

Beautiful bronze coins, Byzantine *dodecanummi* and early Arabian issues accompanied us in the albeit brief period of resumed excavation in a place so rich in memory and tradition.

The site, which was closed on 30 January, was then reopened on 10 October 2005 with the aim of continuing to explore the north-west quadrant of the *East Kôm* of the North Necropolis and of the so-called Trial E, the small dump hill which had produced so many papyri, albeit without writing.

The excavation took into consideration the four previous subdivisions (A, B, C, D), paying particular attention to the funerary chamber right next to, and almost specular to, the last area excavated by S. Donadoni in the mission conducted for the Istituto Papirologico “G. Vitelli” in 1938<sup>25</sup>.

Given the disorder of the filling materials, we did what we could in this area to preserve and record anything which could help us establish its use (or reuse) and consequent date.

The ceramics, but above all the bronze coins found on the various levels<sup>26</sup> allowed us to trace the area’s use, or rather reuse, from the beginning of Arab occupation (first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD), back until the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, a period to which some burials in the sand beneath the unbaked brick floor date. The floor itself had almost completely disappeared, but remained in the form of joints with the walls in some points. This was clear evidence of the late-Roman and proto-Byzantine necropolis excavated by Albert Gayet, which occupies a long section from east to west of the space below the *gebel* outside the north walls of Antinoopolis.

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<sup>24</sup> (C 3 I, 27 January 2005) now being studied and published by F. Silvano, together with a precious cup of back-painted glass unearthed in the campaign of 1992.

<sup>25</sup> The plan, albeit superficial, may be found in the aforementioned reports in ASAE 38 (1938), p. 500, Fig. 70 and in *Aegyptus* 18 (1938), p. 315, Fig. 15.

<sup>26</sup> The coins were recorded, measured, weighed, identified and referenced to the days and levels of the excavation, so that we could obtain as comprehensive and exact a chronology as possible. From A1-2 III (17 October), found under a body placed on the lowest level, a bronze coin (1.8 g, 20mm) of Diocletian.

These burials, as already noted by S. Donadoni in the aforementioned reports of Egyptus and ASAE in 1938<sup>27</sup>, were layered in the sand, with the corpses positioned west-east, covered in bandages and clothes. The bodies had been laid on mats of long reeds or palm branches incorporated in the wrappings, and dried using rock salt, that has remained until the present day in large blocks, in particular between their legs. Alongside these burials beneath the floor, there were vases, amphorae with long-necks and small handles attached to the lip, almost by way of unpretentious funerary monuments, or as a simple and effective system for dividing layers of bodies.

Around forty bodies of men, women and children were found in this funeral chamber, both in the part above the unbaked brick floor, and in the underlying part, which had already been a necropolis in a more ancient period. Those in the layers above the floor, amidst the filling material resulting from the area's collapse and subsequent residential reuse in the Arab period, were in a worse condition and showed evidence of tomb robbery, with the original burials disturbed. The burials in the sand below the floor, meanwhile, were found to be almost intact, and we were able to recover abundant textile material, both patterned and plain, in line with the style of the famous fabrics from Antinoopolis, of which so many museums and collections are full. This material was simply collected on the basis of an initial selection and requires further assessment and restoration.

We did not recover written material from this funeral chamber, although such material, above all papyri, came in abundance not only from Trial E, kept open until 15 October and then closed, but also from the other quadrants in their further four subdivisions. I am referring in particular to the many (some large) fragments of a Coptic papyrus code from C 1 I, which also conserves two parchment *lacinae*, written in a round, clear "Alexandrine upper case", datable to the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century AD. There was also found a small yet perhaps complete Arabic papyrus, in contrast to the significant quantity of Arabic papyri found in the campaigns in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from the North Necropolis.

Numerous coins, also datable to the period between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, together with many oil lamps, emerged with a certain regularity from the various quadrants, in some of which we found, recorded and photographed beaten earth floors with a thin layer of lime.

With the closure of Trial E, which apart from the many Coptic papyri also gave us a fragment in Greek probably from a liturgical text, we slightly shifted the site north-east, in the direction of the east walls of the Necropolis, on what was found to be the summit of a small rise<sup>28</sup>. Below its upper section, which was composed of an ancient dump, there were clearly remains of walls in unbaked bricks.

Initially we restricted ourselves to an area of 10m x 14m, and then extended our work to a square of 20m x 20m, moving down from the top on a number of fronts, carefully sieving the upper section of the dump, until we reached the level of the underlying walls.

This careful excavation work immediately produced excellent results. The surface lay-

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<sup>27</sup> Respectively, pp. 314-317 and 494.

<sup>28</sup> Localised on Sheet 1 of the cited *Carta archeologica di Antinoupolis*, to the north-east of the excavations of 1938, and defined by the levels 77,1-75.

ers were found to be suitable for the conservation of written material, producing both Greek and Coptic papyri and parchments, the latter in a good state of conservation even if fairly dried up, curled, contorted and, in one case, partly damaged by fire.

Restoration work allowed us to recover and render fully legible dozens of oracular questions in Coptic addressed to St. Collutus<sup>29</sup>, most of which were open and thus had already been read by the worshipper who had addressed his supplication to the saint. There were also phylacteries, small squares or rectangles of folded papyrus, sometimes fastened with a lace, containing a succession of different types of crosses (between three and five), or invocations to Jesus Christ, Son of God.

There were noteworthy texts in Coptic, some in good condition after restoration, but it was the parchments which were most essential to the excavation and worthy of note. These included remains of beautifully written codices in Coptic and Greek written in the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century AD, containing biblical and liturgical/sacred texts in general. Examples are analysed critically below, but without doubt the subsequent work of identification, study and publication will allow us to fully assess these exceptional finds of written material.

Whilst on the subject of the texts found in this sector of the *East Kôm*, a large room 3.25m wide and 3.80m long with remains of its vaults and walls in unbaked brick (45cm thick and 2.70m high), provided hundreds of well-preserved amphora stoppers among its filling material. These bore fascinating illustrations and inscriptions (names, monograms, symbols, figures of animals [gazelles, elephants, eagles] and of saints [Saint Menas], etc.). It also produced an exceptional ostrakon of 14cm x 20cm, made from the belly of a 'Late Roman 7' amphora, with a hymn to John the Baptist of extreme interest, as shown in the edition presented here<sup>30</sup>.

There were numerous fragments of funerary epigraphs in Greek and Coptic, recovered at various times and in various areas of the dig<sup>31</sup>.

Apart from the finds of written materials, as we dug deeper, the excavation brought to light some interesting building structures in unbaked bricks, although in this campaign we only had the time and opportunity to partially free them from sand and detritus.

Apart from the already mentioned room with remains of the vault, in which we recovered the large ostrakon, another particularly interesting feature was the part of semicircular superstructure built partly on dump/filling material, and partly on older underlying walls. Under its floor (in stone slabs, only partially conserved) we found, although not in its origi-

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<sup>29</sup> S. DONADONI, *Una domanda oracolare cristiana da Antinoe*, in *Rivista di Studi Orientali* 29 (1954), pp. 183-186; ID., *Due testi oracolari copti*, in *Syntelesia V. Arangio Ruiz*, Napoli 1964, pp. 286-289 (reproduced in *Cultura dell'Antico Egitto. Scritti di Sergio F. Donadoni*, Roma 1986, pp. 473-476; 531-534); L. PAPINI, *Struttura e prassi delle domande oracolari in greco su papiro*, in *An.Pap.* II (1990), pp. 11-20; EAD., *Domande oracolari: elenco delle attestazioni in greco ed in copto*, in *An.Pap.* IV (1992), pp. 21-27. A summary can be found in *Antinoe cent'anni dopo* cit., pp. 100-101, with images of oracular requests and ex-votos.

The material (papyri, ostraca, ex-votos) relative to the worship of St. Collutus is at present being studied and published. Its point of reference is the "monasterial" complex, with an adjacent small Church, discovered in the North Necropolis during the campaign of September-November 1966, cf. the cited *Antinoe cent'anni dopo*, pp. 25-26, figs. 3, 4 and *supra*, pp. 47-59.

<sup>30</sup> Ed. A. Delattre, *supra*, pp. 149-151, Pl. VIII.

<sup>31</sup> An example of this is also provided here by G. Nachtergaele and R. Pintaudi, *supra*, pp. 163-173.

nal position, one of the funerary inscriptions mentioned above, mentioning the burial of a certain Gornelios.

On the west side of a thick wall running south-north we found a wooden architrave, on monolithic jambs in limestone, with a Coptic cross carefully engraved in the centre. This was clearly the entrance to a funerary-religious complex, the tops of whose surviving walls have been uncovered.

There are fine remains of tempera painting on plaster which depict parts of what is perhaps a lawn (certainly something green), and two feet wearing shoes which look very similar to those worn by St. Collutus on the arcosolium of the chapel of Theodosia. Probably also here, on a wall which has unfortunately collapsed, there were depictions of this saint, whose worship in the North Necropolis is confirmed by the many testimonies recovered during the campaigns of the Istituto Papirologico.

The time available however did not allow us to uncover the entire structure, a job that was postponed until the mission of January-February 2006.

On 17 January 2006, with the usual group of over 50 workers, the excavation site was reopened with the aim of continuing to explore the complex of religious-funerary buildings which had been partially uncovered in the previous campaign and which had given us a great deal of written material: papyri, parchments and ostraca.

2006

The workers were divided into a number of teams, according to the usual excavation technique based on the use of sieves, trowels and small tools, and were instructed to follow the masonry structures already identified in October 2005.

Fragments of papyri and parchments were immediately recovered, and together with other tomb furnishings convinced us that we had made a fortunate choice of excavation site.

The door into the funerary chapel, whose architrave and jambs had been glimpsed in October 2005, was freed from detritus, and we thus entered a hall leading into a room with plastered walls, unfortunately in white, but with an extremely well preserved floor in limestone slabs.

As the excavation moved gradually deeper, the finds of materials in the various areas grew in quantity and quality, including a fragment of a limestone column with engobe coating and delicate tempera paintings of birds, capitals with painted crosses, and another fragment of a column with an inscription which clearly shows the moment of the consecration (*encenia*) of the place where it was found<sup>32</sup>.

Alongside the door, whose jamb was intact, we found the space for the lock and hinge, and on the north side, leaning against the great wall to the south, a staircase with steps partly in baked bricks. This would have led to an upper floor which no longer survives, but whose

<sup>32</sup> The ἐγκαίνια, the inauguration, the consecration, defined by the graffito inscription on the white slip: Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς βοή(θει)

IC	XC
B	οη

collapse left hundreds of fragments of painted plaster in vivid colours, giving us cause for regret at their ruin.

The materials recovered from the various excavation levels and quadrants offered us a precise picture of the structure and constitution of the small dump hill under which lay the structures which slowly came to light.

These included painted ceramics in the usual forms (basins, pots, jugs, plates etc.) and decorations ranging from the geometric to highly elaborate animal and vegetable motifs; ceramics with polished red slip, the local imitation of the *terra sigillata* technique; oil lamps, many undamaged and some even brand new, never used; dishes and common containers.

Leather shoes, often elegantly made, were found alongside fabrics – some with beautiful illustrated motifs, others with extremely interesting weaves –, shawls and carpets.

There were also small objects in bronze, such as tweezers, rings and ex-voto plates. These are of extreme interest if related to the small Church dedicated to St. Collutus unearthed during the excavations of the 1960s on the far north-west side of the walls of the Necropolis.

Other finds included precious “millefiori” vitreous pastes, probably what remains of wall decorations in the funerary complex which we have begun to excavate<sup>33</sup>, and remains of funerary inscriptions in Coptic, unfortunately fragmentary and thrown into the dump, and thus unable to provide more detailed indications as to the purpose of the rooms uncovered.

Unexpected was the find of a marble canopus, whose edition can be found *supra*, pp. 472-477.

But above all, it was fortunately the papyri and coins which gave us the most information and satisfaction.

There were a dozen good Greek and Coptic parchments, remains of codes with biblical texts, a fragment of a bilingual code with the text of the Psalms, a fragment of a code with the third canto of the *Odyssey*, the final part of a code which contained Ezekiel<sup>34</sup>; hundreds of papyri with oracular requests addressed to St. Collutus, often still closed, with phylacteries, and even an exorcism, a fine fragment of a contract in Greek from the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century AD, and an ostrakon with people's names, specifying their trade as vine-dressers.

This written documentation covers the 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries and perfectly complements what was found in the previous excavation campaigns conducted by the Istituto Papirologico.

The study of this documentation will allow us to understand, date and place in its historical context not only the funerary complex still in part to be excavated, but also the entire area of the North Necropolis with the interesting complex and Church of St. Collutus.

The papyrological data is supplemented by the precious numismatic documentation, consisting of around 130 bronze coins. All the specimens found can be dated to between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century AD, providing evidence of all the series in circulation in the various periods of the archaeological layers uncovered.

Their study, performed in order to produce a general catalogue of all the numismatic material from the excavations of the Istituto G. Vitelli in Antinoopolis, will allow us to hypothesise a “law of coin circulation” for the town between late antiquity and the conquest of the Arabs, up until the abandonment of the city.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. the paper by F. Silvano, pp. 419-437.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *supra*, pp. 41-46.

The 2007 excavation campaign began on 23 January with 60 people, composed of workers (56) and support staff: donkey drivers, guardians and others. 2007

We enlarged the site westwards, moving the excavation area towards the boundary wall of the North Necropolis, freeing the area from a large quantity of detritus and uncovering the columns, with their bases and a pilaster, of a peristyle. According to the report and plan drawn up by the mission architect Peter Grossmann (which follows below), this would have been the common meeting area for those families celebrating the festival of the dead in a place specially reserved for this purpose. The peristyle was readapted at a later date and the spaces recovered used for the construction of monumental funeral chapels.

In this area<sup>35</sup>, below the level of the floor, we uncovered numerous burials, many of which were in disorder and had been broken into in antiquity and perhaps also more recently (probably remains of trial excavations made by Albert Gayet).

Some were fortunately intact, often with their tombstone, and the corpses offered a sample selection of hundreds and hundreds of Coptic fabrics of extremely high quality and in quantities such as to make their organisation absolutely necessary, as can be seen in the few photographs which follow. This conservation and restoration work was scheduled to start in the following mission in October 2007.

From sieving the great quantity of detritus we found written materials of extreme interest: Coptic and Greek parchments, oracular requests, Coptic, Greek and bilingual (Greek-Arabic) papyri. The material, after Diletta Minutoli's<sup>36</sup> careful and impeccable restoration, was catalogued and transcribed by Alain Delattre. There were identified extensive fragments of Isaiah, the Psalms, and other Old and New Testament texts. But what most excited us was the large number of oracular and phylactery requests: a hundred or so new specimens, including over sixty oracular requests addressed to St. Collutus.

If we add to this the recovery and restoration work that the architect Peter Grossmann began to do on the Church of St. Collutus, already excavated in the campaigns in the 1960s, with the repositioning of the moved architectural elements (some had even ended up in the dump of the previous excavation), we realise how fruitful the work of this first part of the 2007 campaign was.

The coins found have contributed to dating the excavations in the 'peristyle'. Coins from the early Arabian age and Byzantine coins from the 7<sup>th</sup> century were found in the dump material in the upper section of the Kôm, while the layers relative to the construction and use of the complex provided late-antique and Byzantine coins from the 6<sup>th</sup> century, and burials situated below the floors and walls contained coins from the late 3<sup>rd</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. A small store of coins from the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century AD was also found, enveloped in the smelting residues of its container.

<sup>35</sup> The GPS coordinates provided by our geologist colleagues M. Coli and G.Pini are as follows:

GPS points:	WGS84UTM Time z. 36N Y	WGS84UTM Time z. 36N X	Latitude WGS84	Longitude WGS84
SE corner	3078793.87790949000	290992.35301330600	27.81751000000	30.87810500000
SW corner	3078777.52237395000	290965.95297206000	27.81735833330	30.87784000000
NW corner	3078799.42386397000	290949.41300502600	27.81755333330	30.87766833330
NE corner	3078815.15997815000	290979.58027188800	27.81770000000	30.87797166670.

<sup>36</sup> See *supra* pp. 75-99.

The ceramic material belongs to the usual categories:

- painted ceramics, in the usual forms (basins, pots, jugs, etc.) with geometric decorations, scallops, spirals, plaits, or vegetable and animal motifs; there are numerous fragments of the characteristic ridged dishes produced in Antinoopolis. We should also note various fragments of the characteristic “cup” dishes;

- ceramics with polished red slip, a local imitation of the *terra sigillata* technique, often using an extremely fine-grained clay, with impressed decorations; many small dishes were found intact;

- a series of fragments in a marly clay, with an engraved “fish scales” decoration was particularly interesting: these included the top part of a jug;

- undecorated ceramics for everyday use in the usual forms, including dishes, jugs, cooking pots, lids, noria water holders, etc. We should also mention an almost complete incense burner with a characteristic shape;

- we also found parts of large earthenware jars and basins used for storing foodstuffs.

Lastly, we found some oil lamps, which were almost or completely intact.

With the colleagues Jean-Luc Fournet and Dominique Pieri we catalogued hundreds of paintings on the necks and shoulders of amphoras, the majority imported from Cilicia, Palestine and North Africa. The resulting wealth of data laid the foundation for original and ground-breaking socio-economic research.

With the work performed in October the 2007 excavations came to an end.

Work was once more conducted in the area of the peristilium, by widening the excavation sectors up to the east wall of the necropolis, which in fact turned out to be the oldest wall we had so far encountered. Much of the white plaster is conserved on the interior side, against which in a later period a wall was built, probably at the same time as the main structures which altered the original layout of the peristilium<sup>37</sup>. On the west side, partly below a funeral chapel, excavated in January-February, the structures of an underground room with a vault were brought to light, along with a niche on the south wall, probably preceded by a wide corridor which so far has not been freed from the enormous quantity of debris blocking it. On the east side we found the floor of a circular room, surmounted by a collapsed dome. This was built next to the original wall of the necropolis, and the wall subsequently built against this partly cuts through it. The walls were plastered and probably painted, as shown by the large quantity of bricks and fragments of plaster with remains of figures. The pieces recovered include parts of faces, one of which could be that of a saint, possibly Collutus.

Whilst conducting the excavations in the peristilium we also restored the north side of the left nave of the church of St. Collutus, removing the wall which surrounded the necropolis in more recent times and cut through this section of the church when it was probably no longer in use. The results were excellent, with the recovery of the church’s original proportions, the uncovering of the mastaba which runs along the nave, still paved with its terracotta tiles, and the exceptional discovery of a tank probably used to hold holy and healing water,

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<sup>37</sup> The architect P. Grossmann will illustrate all the work carried out in this area in a forthcoming study; here a preview of some photographs is presented.

of which the small church, home to the oracle of Collutus, made extensive use, as testified by the hundreds of oracular requests and ex-votos<sup>38</sup>.

The crypt below the central nave was also reopened and subjected to an architectural survey.

Thanks to the presence of Pascale Ballet and Maria Cristina Guidotti, an initial mapping of the 'industrial' ateliers distributed around the city was organised, and their activities identified. We finally performed a detailed analysis of the many industrial and domestic tips which are the most immediately perceivable feature of the city we are left with<sup>39</sup>.

Among the written materials recovered this time, papyri and parchments were few and far between (only two oracular requests on papyrus, somewhat mutilated, were found), while the pride of place went to funerary inscriptions in Coptic and in Greek. One in particular, in alabaster and no less than 9 cm thick, was broken into a number of fragments but nevertheless provided us with an inscription in Greek in the form of a *tabula ansata* and with an articulated and unusual formula<sup>40</sup>.

Among the foundation stones for the walls, resting on the original wall of the necropolis on the north-east side of the peristilium, we found a block of limestone with its original plaster, with red writing in Greek, and the remains of a doxology.

Notable in terms of quantity and quality were the fabrics recovered from the bodies collected from the dump of the peristilium and the still intact burials below its floor on the north-east side. These are joined by the thousands of fragments of various sizes recovered in the January-February campaign, on which restoration work began in October. This was conducted by the Egyptian restorers Nasr Ahmed Mohammed and Karem Mahmud El Said, and gave truly exceptional results<sup>41</sup>.

With this campaign our excavations in the North Necropolis have come to a temporary conclusion, as we wait to move to the area on south side of the city, where the architect Peter Grossmann identified a large basilica with five naves and the bishop's palace, of which a plan has been made. This will be subject to a trial excavation in the next mission in January-February 2008 with a view to a detailed study. These are the first localisations of monuments inside the urban area, so far neglected by the excavations of the Istituto Vitelli.

The work of the Egyptologists G. Rosati and S. Bosticco on the temple of Rameses II, on the Amarnian *talatat* found there and on those kept in the warehouse of El Ashmunein<sup>42</sup>, and that of the topographer D. Zaccaria on the hippodrome and various other parts of the city, not to mention M. Coli and G. Pini's work on the relief measurements and mapping of

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<sup>38</sup> The material recovered from this specific area includes the reconstructable remains of at least five glass flasks and fragments of decorated *gargoulette*.

<sup>39</sup> This work, which led to the identification of furnaces for glass and ceramics, including those of a domestic nature, will be carried out by the two scholars in a forthcoming article in this series.

<sup>40</sup> We will publish an edition of this with our colleague G. Nachtergaeel.

<sup>41</sup> I would like to thank Dr. Badawi Ismail for organising this work, which will lead to the delivery of the fabrics recovered during our excavations to the National Egyptian Museum for Civilization in Cairo.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. G. ROSATI, *The Temple of Ramesses II at El-Sheikh Ibada*, in *Egyptian Archaeology* 28 (2006), pp. 39-41; EAD., *supra*, pp. 479-483.

the quarries on the *gebel* to the east of Antinoopolis, will be illustrated in this publication by those directly involved<sup>43</sup>.

I have the honour and pleasure of listing at the end of this short report those whose enthusiasm, expertise, sacrifice, and in many cases self-denial have contributed to the missions that the Istituto Papirologico “G. Vitelli” is continuing to organise in this new century. I hope to have them alongside me for many years to come in the goldmine of truths and promise that is the Ἀντινοέων πόλις τῆς Θηβαίδος.

PASCALE BALLEZ, ceramics expert  
 MARIA CRISTINA GUIDOTTI, ceramics expert  
 GIOVANNA MENCI, papyrologist  
 DILETTA MINUTOLI, papyrologist  
 LAVINIA PESI, ceramics expert  
 GLORIA ROSATI, Egyptologist  
 FLORA SILVANO, Egyptologist  
 SERGIO BOSTICCO, Egyptologist  
 PIERO CASTELLUCCI, geologist  
 DANIELE CASTRIZIO, numismatist  
 MASSIMO COLI, geologist  
 DANIELE CORCIULO, photographer  
 ALAIN DELATTRE, Coptologist  
 JEAN-LUC FOURNET, papyrologist

HARALD FROSCHAUER, Coptologist  
 PETER GROSSMANN, architect  
 HERMANN HARRAUER, papyrologist  
 KAREM MAHMUD EL SAID, restorer  
 ROBERTO MAGAZZINI, photographer  
 FRANCO MALTOMINI, papyrologist  
 MANFREDO MANFREDI, papyrologist  
 ANGIOLO MENCHETTI, Egyptologist  
 MOHAMMED SALEH AHMED, restorer  
 NASR AHMED MOHAMMED, restorer  
 DOMINIQUE PIERI, ceramics expert  
 GABRIELE PINI, geologist  
 DOMENICO ZACCARIA, topographer

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 ALI MOHAMMED MUSTAFA EL BAKRI, Inspector of Antiquities  
 FATHY AWAD RYAD, Inspector of Antiquities  
 HELAL HENES HENDY, Inspector of Antiquities

ROSARIO PINTAUDI  
 (Traduzione di SIMON TANNER)

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *supra*, pp. 495; 509-532; 533-537.







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