The Antinoupolis Oracle

The Newsletter of the Antinoupolis Foundation

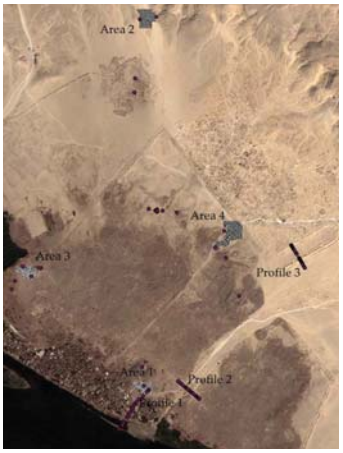
Number 1 — Privately Circulated — Summer 2012

President's Note

Welcome to the first newsletter of the Antinoupolis Foundation, Inc. TAF is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to revealing and preserving the ancient City of Antinous through archaeology, conservation and education. The Foundation fulfils this goal by funding specific targeted archaeological field projects at Antinoupolis under the umbrella of the Istituto Papirologico "G. Vitelli" of the University of Florence, Italy. All TAF and Istituto projects are conducted under the direction of Dr. Rosario Pintaudi of the Istituto Papirologico and with the cooperation of the Egyptian government's Ministry of State for Antiquities Affairs. TAF has two periods of fieldwork annually, and the aim of this twice-yearly newsletter is to keep friends and contributors abreast of our projects, of our goals, and of the results of our work. If you wish, you may receive 'The Oracle' automatically in electronic or paper form. Simply send us your email or address; our coordinates are at the end of this newsletter. Thank you for your interest!

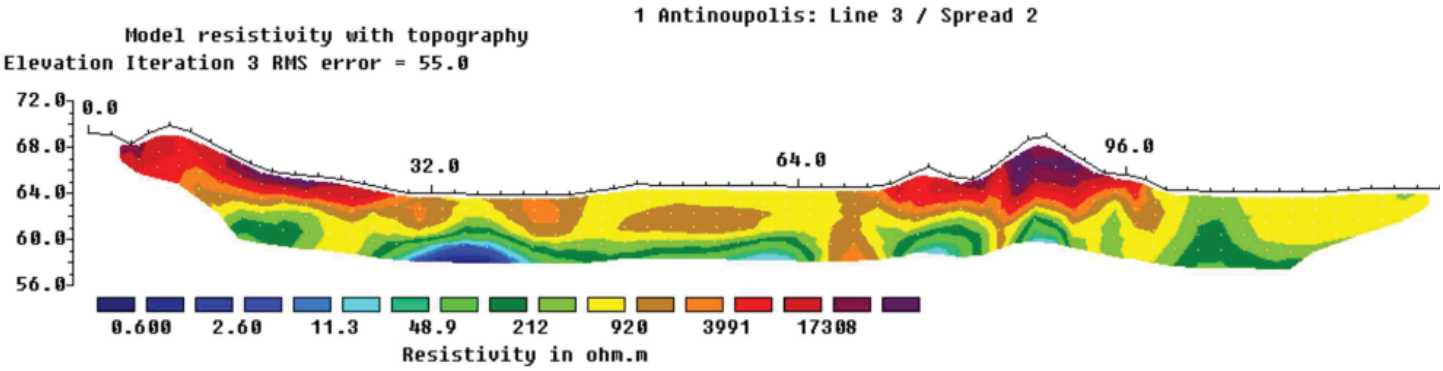
James B. Heidel, President
The Antinoupolis Foundation, Inc.

The Geophysical Survey



In January of 2012 TAF launched its first funded project at Antinoupolis: a thorough geophysical survey aimed at revealing the urban plan of the city in the 130's CE at the time of its foundation during the reign of Hadrian. This foundation level is, in almost every location, obscured by desert sands and overtopping Christian and Byzantine-period remains. The non-invasive techniques of geophysical survey - magnetometry, electrical resistivity tomography (ERT), and ground penetrating radar - allow the team to look below the current surface of the site to see buried archaeological remains without any digging. Once a multi-year geophysical survey has taken place covering as much of the site as possible, priorities can be determined for which areas require more traditional archaeological investigation. These priorities will be based on two factors: the indication by the geophysical survey that subsurface architectural features are indeed present, and the level of threat a given area is under

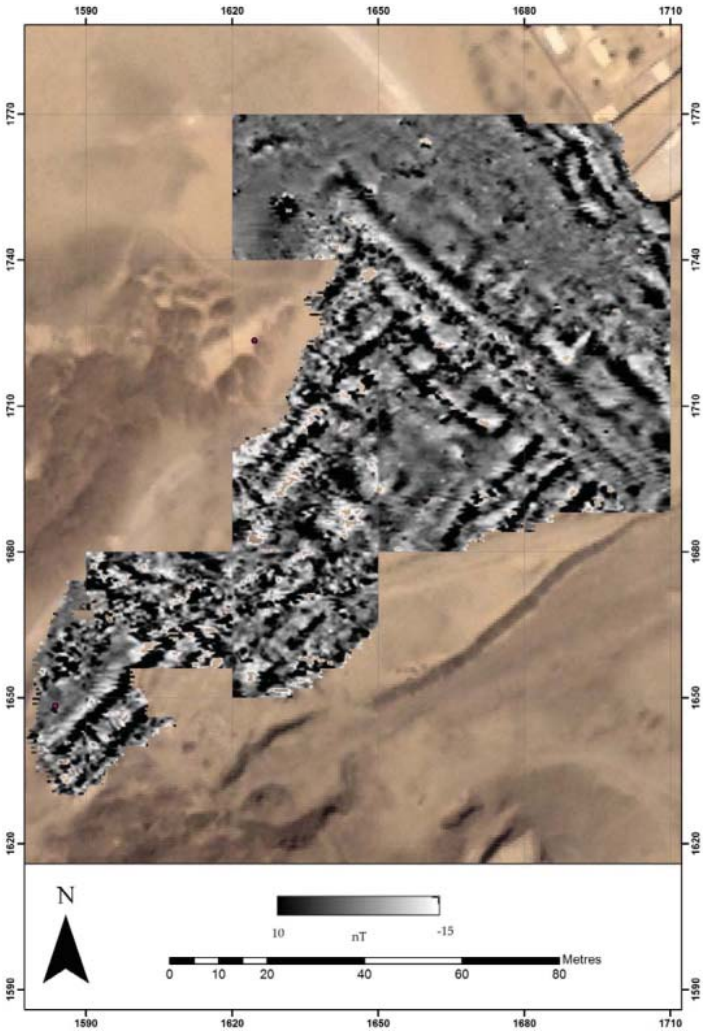
Above: Antinoupolis in the 1790's, view from the Description de l'Egypte, Top: Geophysical survey test areas.



from encroachment by modern houses, tombs, and agriculture. In all such subsequent work the first priority is to protect and preserve the site, and the second is to understand and publish its architectural features.

Thanks to a gift from Lewis and Misty Gruber our first season of geophysical survey was a one-week test season carried out in January of 2012, and it produced impressive results. We laid three lines of ERT in areas of the city where we hoped to reveal underlying foundations of Roman urban infrastructure, and in the first area we discovered that the apparent Nile quayside revealed in a pit next to the dig house in the 1990's (and approximately 140 meters from the current Nile edge) was indeed the ancient stone-lined Nile quay since ERT revealed no further architectural features to the west of it. The second ERT line was laid along the city's cardo - its main north south street - at the point where it crosses the wadi to determine whether there are subsurface foundations for a bridge emplacement. In addition to

The Hippodrome. From top: View from east, ERT results, satellite image with modern cemetery at north (top) and city wall at west. Inset: our Geophys. Team, L to R, Kris Strutt, Angus Graham & Omar Farouk.



subsurface areas of high resistivity indicating architecture to either side of the wadi, we found an area of high resistivity centered at the bottom of the wadi likely indicating foundations for supporting a bridge pier. This supposition may be tested by more traditional archaeological techniques in the future. In the third ERT line we discovered that the hippodrome (whose superstructure stone seating and walls were robbed out in the nineteenth century) likely has its foundations intact underneath which still support the mounds of rubble on which the seating was built.

The four test areas chosen for magnetometry also yielded impressive results. Areas 1, 3, and 4 all revealed walls which are oriented to the city grid from the period of the city's foundation in the 130's CE. This indicates that the foundation layer in these locations is less than 2 meters below the current surface since magnetometry only penetrates about one to two meters below ground. Of these areas just mentioned, Test Area 4 was the most exciting. The area of the magnetometry test itself was approximately 90 by 130 meters and it revealed part of an extremely large series of monumental courts and gates at the east entrance to the city. This is very significant for the city's urban plan since, in addition to being the primary cult center of Osiris-Antinous Antinoupolis was designed to function as a trading entrepôt with goods arriving from the far east over the Via Hadriana and by necessity trans-shipped - and taxed - as they made their way to the Nile and ultimately to Rome. The complex partly revealed by Test Area 4 seems to be not only a grandiose entryway to the city from the east, but also a secure zone where these arriving goods could be inventoried and where customs could be collected before the goods were allowed to enter the city and go on their way.

Test Area 2 is located in a wadi north of the city and was chosen because surface finds - large numbers of second-third century amphorae and pottery along with about a dozen despoiled tombs of a similar date - indicated this area may contain the earliest cemetery yet discovered on the site as well the field of offering jars which were mentioned over 100 years ago by Albert Gayet in his excavation reports. These vessels would be in association with veneration of Osiris following tradition well-established at Abydos thousands of years before. Both of these features - the cemetery and the offering field - would be from the era of the city's foundation. The results of the magnetometry in Test Area 2 revealed a tight collection of haphazardly organized rectangular chambers immediately below the surface - almost certainly a dense second-third century cemetery as suggested by the surface finds nearby.

Magnetometry Test Area 4. Top: Data set results on satellite photo, Above: Column bases in Area 4.

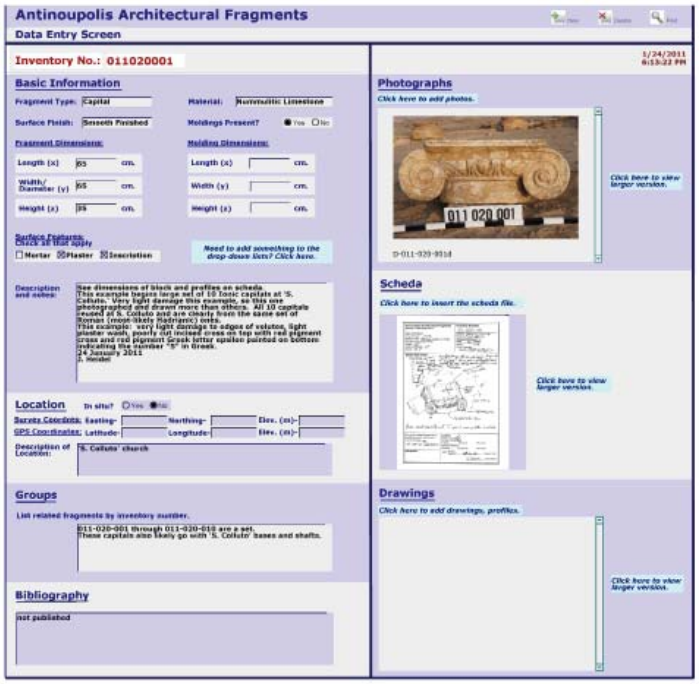
After our successful one-week test season, TAF is currently raising funds to conduct a full-month of geophysical survey at the site during January-February 2013, and we hope to continue one-month seasons of geophysical survey for three to five winters to develop a much fuller picture of the features of the city's urban ensemble. All features disclosed by the geophysical survey will also be shared with Prof. Marcello Spanu of the University of Viterbo, Italy who is the site's topographer and who is creating a master plan of the site in AutoCAD combining and reflecting each new discovery on the site made by the various teams working there, thus creating a continuously altering image of our understanding of the city's urban form. The results of the geophysical survey will also allow us to plan protection measures for the site around its edges which are currently under threat from all sides by encroaching agriculture, modern cemeteries, gravel and sand mining, and new - illegal - houses.

The Architectural Fragment Survey

An ongoing, open-ended project of TAF is an attempt to survey and collect information about the literally thousands of architectural fragments scattered across the site. Many are damaged, moved, or stolen every year, and most have never been photographed or measured. The aim is to create a comprehensive database with information about each fragment including material, dimensions, photographs, and drawings of any moldings or features. Each fragments is also given a positive location on the map with the use of a hand-held gps, so that even if the fragment is moved or stolen, a permanent record of what was where is available for the use of scholars. The ultimate aim of the project is not merely a database, but also to reconstruct fragments which join - in many cases joins are apparent by size, material, and / or proximity - into building assemblies of colonnades and entablatures to begin to

Top: L to R, Omar, Khaled, Waleed & Kris laying out 30-meter grid squares for magnetometry. Bottom: Kris taking measurements with magnetometer in Test Area 4.

make strides toward understanding the architectural vocabulary of the city even in its fragmentary state. As progress is made with the archaeology of the city, these assemblages may find permanent homes for re-erection on stylobates or podia revealed by future excavation. In addition, the locations of the fragments are supplied to the master electronic map - being prepared by Prof. Spanu - and the statistical distribution of fragments, their size, etc. will allow the team to begin to posit the locations of monumental building precincts versus residential quarters around the city.



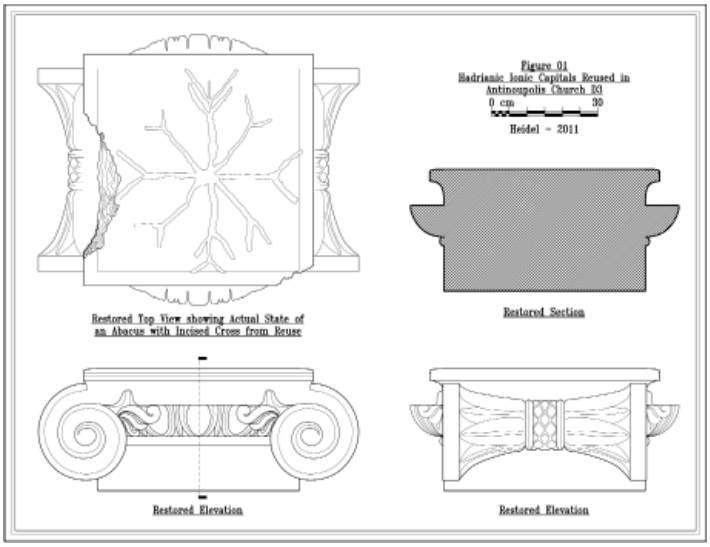
A Brief History of the Site

Unlike many ancient cities, the city of Antinoupolis has a firm foundation date: it was founded by the Roman Emperor Hadrian on his imperial tour of Egypt in October of 130 CE. There are very few earlier remains on the site, but they include a temple of about 1250 BCE from the reign of Ramses II. The city which Hadrian built incorporated this already ancient temple and celebrates the apotheosis of a young Greek man in Hadrian's entourage named Antinous who drowned in the Nile nearby. Following established Egyptian custom, by drowning in the Nile Antinous became joined with Osiris, the Egyptian god of the dead, who still had an active cult in Egypt at that time. The city

Top to bottom: Architectural fragment 011-020-001 reused in Church D3, the same fragment's database page & the same fragment's architectural drawing.

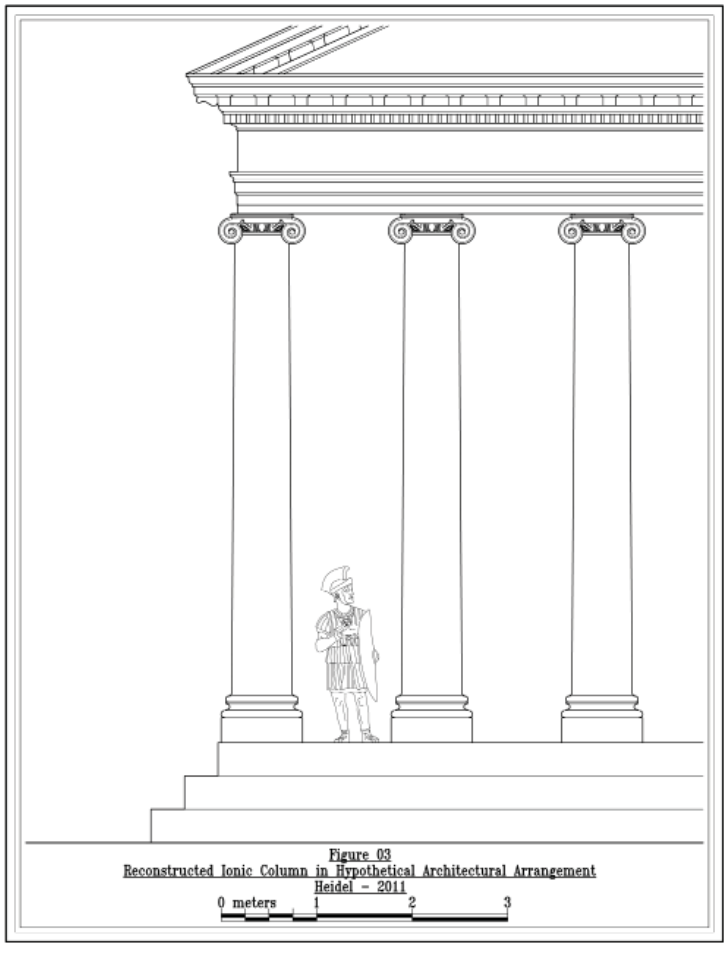
of Antinoupolis was created to be the new god's (the compound deity Osir-Antinous's) cult center, and the city was lavishly endowed with elaborate monuments in both Egyptian and classical architectural styles to celebrate the new god, some of which were still extant at the turn of the eighteenth century, were documented by the French at that time, and were published by them in the *Description de l'Egypte*. As it turned out, Osir-Antinous may well have been the last god to be added to the ancient Egyptian pantheon, and indeed to the Greco-Roman pantheon, before Egypt and the rest of the Roman Empire was Christianized, largely in the fourth century.

Antinoupolis continued to be the cult center of Osir-Antinous into at least the middle of the third century CE since the Megala Antinoeia, the Olympic-style games in honor of the god are attested until that date. Subsequently the city did not vanish, but became an active Christian center continuing well into the medieval period comprising dozens of churches and monasteries, many still visitable on the site. Early travellers' accounts from this time detail the features of the city including scores of monasteries and churches and



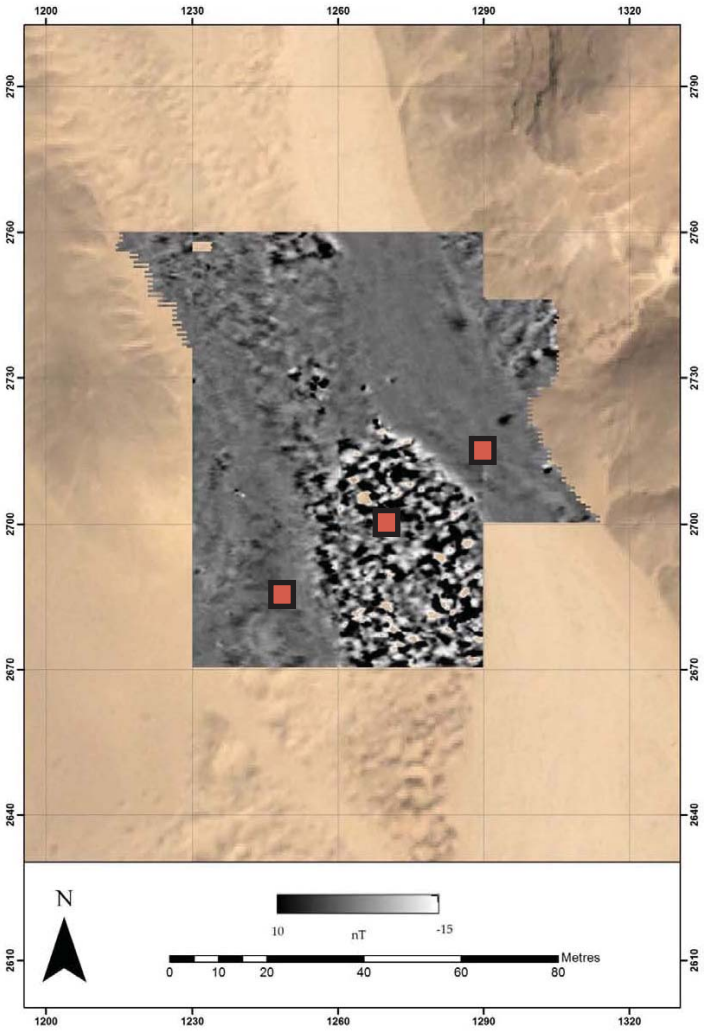
many impressive Roman monuments from the era of the city's foundation, some remaining in use. The city's population finally suffered a severe decline at some time in the late medieval period, and dwindled to the small Moslem village on the riverbank which exists today. Most of the ancient city has no current occupation on top of it, and travellers' accounts continue to tell of the impressive ruins visible above ground until the early nineteenth century, just after the moment of the French documentation, when all of the major limestone monuments above ground were burned in lime kilns to produce quicklime (calcium oxide) for mortar to build sugar factories as Egypt joined the industrial revolution.

Today the circuit of the city walls (visible as linear hills) enclose about 279 acres or about 113 hectares (They form a rough trapezoid about 1.5 km by 0.75 km.), and this area is largely covered with tumbled architectural fragments and enormous mounds of pottery and debris. In addition to the central city within these walls, the outlying associated features are extensive and include cemeteries, monasteries, quarries, and other ancient remains. Throughout the first decades of the twentieth century the city's surface was well turned and pitted both by locals looking for treasure and fertilizer from the silt-rich mud brick and by early excavators, such as Albert Gayet and J. de M. Johnson, looking for inscribed papyrus fragments and mummies. These early efforts were neither scientific, nor archaeology in the modern sense, and though some interesting bits of papyrus were recovered, the work recorded little information about the city's inhabitants or urban form.



Top: Ramses II temple incorporated into the Hadrianic buildings of Antinoupolis. Bottom: Hypothetical reconstuction of Hadrianic fragments reused in D3 Church.

The site's longtime archaeological expedition from the Istituto Papirologico "G. Vitelli" from the University of Florence, with support from the Antinoupolis Foundation for certain specific projects, seeks to redress this imbalance and to create a complete archaeological picture of the ancient city and its inhabitants from its Hadrianic foundation to its abandonment in the medieval period.



Additional Upcoming Work

In addition to the upcoming Geophysical Survey and the ongoing Fragment Survey, TAF will be conducting archaeological investigation in October / November 2012 in magnetometry Area 2 of the geophysical test season outlined above. This project will be jointly funded by TAF and the Istituto Papirologico and will focus in the geophysical test area where the second - third century cemetery seems to be. This "ground-truthing" will allow us not only to verify the existence and extent of the cemetery, but will also allow us to determine if the "Field of Offerings" mentioned above is present at a deeper level than magnetometry was able to capture.

Top to bottom: Magnetometry Test Area 2 with proposed work indicated, Second-third century amphora from surface of Area 2 & the Description de l'Egypte's engraving of Antinoupolis Theater Gate, approx. 18.5m tall.

Above: the 18.75m tall triumphal arch from the Description de l'Egypte. Inset: Buried Hadrianic capital reused in D3 Church. Below: the Description de l'Egypte's engraving of one of the city's tetrapylon columns.

Contacting the Antinoupolis Foundation

We would love to hear from you. Our projects are conducted in coordination with the Istituto Papirologico of the University of Florence, Italy and with the kind permission of the Egyptian Ministry of State for Antiquities Affairs for one month each January / February with a shorter follow-up season in October / November of each year. But you can always reach us by email or regular mail as shown below. And please let us know if you would like to receive future newsletters by email or regular mail.

Find us on the internet –
http://antinoupolis.org/

Or by email –
info@antinoupolis.org

Or by mail –
The Antinoupolis Foundation, Inc.
4522 S. McDowell Ave.
Chicago, IL 60609

The Antinoupolis Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) public charity; all donations are tax deductable on your US federal tax return.
The Antinoupolis Foundation: seeking to create a complete archaeological picture of the ancient city from its founding by Hadrian as the cult center for Osir-Antinous to its abandonment in the medieval period.