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THE MUMMY PORTRAITS OF FAG EL-GAMOUS

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The necropolis of Fag el-Gamous has been under excavation by Brigham Young University for more than thirty years. In those thirty years, more than 1700 burials¹ have been excavated by Brigham Young University. In all of those years of excavation, not a single mummy portrait has been found, even though many of the mummies were interred during the era when some people from this area were having mummy portraits created for their burial. Despite this fact, our research has shown that Fag el-Gamous is the source of at least seven mummy portraits unearthed at the turn of the 20th century. Although only two of these portraits are explicitly said to come from Fag el-Gamous, the evidence from previous excavators and certain inferences allow us to assign at least five others to this site. While others have identified various individual portraits to this cemetery, the entire Fag el-Gamous collection has never been pulled together and described in one place. Doing so provides a more balanced view of the population that was buried at Fag el-Gamous by providing information about the wealthier part of the cemetery's population. Thus, identifying mummy portraits from the area and noting the characteristics of the total known collection is integral to understanding the cultural composition and history of the area.

There are some obstacles to properly identifying the portraits under study. One of these is that through the years, archaeologists have used a variety of labels to describe the area surrounding Fag el-Gamous, making it difficult to precisely determine the provenance of some specific objects. This labeling

1. Many of the burials were in such disarticulated condition that no good record of the burial could be made. We have good information for well over 1,000 burials, but the excavation director kept careful count each year of how many burials were discovered, and his count exceeds 1,700.

confusion is partially the result of a large cemetery providing burial grounds for multiple villages, including the settlements of Manishinshana and Seila.² To further complicate the issue, Manishinshana is sometimes referred to by the names of Tanis or Kom in excavation reports or artifact registries, as will be seen below. Thus, excavators would refer to an object found in the cemetery as coming from Fag el-Gamous, Seila, Manishinshana, Tanis, or Kom.³ In addition, some archaeologists were very imprecise when labeling the origins of their findings. Some excavators originally spoke of an object as coming from Manishinshana and then later referred to that same object as coming from the cemetery, or used a different name for the village. Furthermore, early excavators were not as careful as would have been ideal when they recorded provenances, while museum labels or registers, which can contain the only written provenance of some objects, were sometimes created years after the actual excavation.⁴

In addition to these naming complexities, many excavators report finding mummies in the villages and settlements surrounding the necropolis. Despite their reports, we assume that all mummies came from the cemetery, not the settlements, even if the reports say otherwise. The practice of burying the dead within village boundaries did not exist in this area at this time and we are not aware of any exceptions to this. It is more likely that the reports intend to indicate that the mummies were found from the necropolis of the village they mention.

All of these factors combine to make it difficult to determine which artifacts and mummies came from the Fag el-Gamous cemetery. Thus, in this study, we have made special efforts to make sense of the provenance labeling system used in early excavation reports and museum registries. In our efforts to identify Fag el-Gamous mummy portraits and fit them into the history of the region, we have attempted to understand and thus overcome these limitations.

The History of Mummy Portraits

In order to appreciate how mummy portraits cast light on the cultural history of the area around Fag el-Gamous, including their place in the midst of a

2. While one can never say with certainty that no other cemeteries exist for these settlements, to date neither archaeology nor texts have provided evidence for any other possible burial place. For more information about settlements in the Fayoum, see http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/2251.php?geo_id=2251.

3. For details, examples, and references for all of the concepts discussed in this introductory section, see the detailed descriptions of mummy portraits below.

4. For example, the Brussels mummy discussed below was received by the museum there in 1902 but registered in 1913.

larger culture that was experiencing a great amount of international cultural exchange, we must first understand what a mummy portrait is. Pietrodella Valle, an Italian traveler, discovered the first mummy portraits in 1615 at Saqqara. In the early 19th century, several more mummy portraits were discovered by British and French excavators, and by the end of the 19th century that number greatly expanded. In 1887, a major cemetery near er-Rubayat was discovered which contained dozens of mummy portraits. Around the same time, Flinders Petrie found a major Roman cemetery at Hawara containing further examples.⁵ Since that time, mummy portraits have been discovered throughout the majority of Egypt. Although these portraits are sometimes called the “Fayoum portraits,” they have been found in a variety of places, from Upper Egypt to the Mediterranean coast west of Alexandria.⁶ As such, they seem to be a widespread phenomenon in Graeco-Roman Egypt. Klaus Parlasca compiled a catalogue of all known mummy portraits in his work, *Ritratti di Mummie*, which records more than one thousand portraits which have been discovered.

The first known mummy portraits arose about 30–40 C.E. and lasted until the mid 3rd century.⁷ Due to the time period, the portraits are a blend of two traditions: Graeco-Roman portrait painting and the Egyptian mummification processes.⁸ One of the benefits of a mummy portrait was that it recorded how the deceased looked in life,⁹ which fit well with the Egyptian desire for the *ka* to be able to locate the body to which it was attached. The influence of Roman artistic culture is evident in these portraits. The clothing, hairstyles, and jewelry reflect styles that were the norm in the imperial court.¹⁰

Early History of Excavation at the Site

Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt excavated in Egypt for many years in the late 1800s and early 1900s. They first began working together in the 1895–1896 season investigating Graeco-Roman sites in the Fayoum.¹¹ Between the years 1895 and 1903, Grenfell and Hunt found many mummy portraits in the

5. Morris Bierbrier, “The Discovery of the Mummy Portraits,” in *Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt* (ed. Susan Walker; New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 32.

6. R. S. Bagnall, “The Fayoum and Its People,” in *Ancient Faces*, 26.

7. Susan Walker, “A Note on the Dating of the Mummy Portraits,” in *Ancient Faces*, 36.

8. Kurt Gschwantler, “Graeco-Roman Portraiture,” in *Ancient Faces*, 21.

9. Susan Walker, “Mummy Portraits and Roman Portraiture,” in *Ancient Faces*, 23.

10. Susan E. C. Walker, “Mummy Portraits in Their Roman Context,” in *Portraits and Masks: Burial Customs in Roman Egypt* (ed. M. L. Bierbrier; London: British Museum Press, 1997), 4.

11. J. G. Milne, “Bernard Pyne Grenfell: b. 16 Dec. 1869. d. 18 May 1926,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 12 (1926): 285.

Fayoum.¹² In 1902, they found some of these portraits at Fag el-Gamous. Many of their field notebooks have vanished over the years,¹³ and their publication of the finds leaves much to be desired. Thankfully, the Egypt Exploration Society has preserved some glass-plate negatives from their excavations. Morris Bierbrier, formerly the Assistant Keeper of the Department of Antiquities, British Museum, used these plates along with the Archaeological Reports of the Graeco-Roman Branch of the Egyptian Exploration Fund to determine that some of the mummy portraits featured in the photographs came from Fag el-Gamous. Three of the negatives depict mummy portraits from the 1901–1902 excavation season.¹⁴ In the 1900–1901 Archaeological Report, Grenfell and Hunt report finding a Ptolemaic cemetery at Manashinshana.¹⁵ The following season they reported that they excavated near Seila but didn't find anything, so they returned to "Manashinshana." This time Manashinshana was much more productive for them and they discovered several portraits.¹⁶ There is a lot of confusion about the names involved with this site; Tanis, Manashinshana, Fag el-Gamous, and Sela are all used in reference to the necropolis. The nature of the site and the reason for the confusion will be discussed below.

About the Site

Fag el-Gamous is a very large necropolis located on the eastern edge of the Fayoum. When Grenfell and Hunt excavated there, the site was referred to as Manashinshana, the necropolis of Tanis.¹⁷ "The site of the necropolis is by Fagg el Gamus, the name of the road leading from the Fayum across the desert to Riqqa in the Nile Valley."¹⁸ Later in the same source, they refer to Tanis as "probably identical with the ruins of an ancient village called Manashinshana about five miles south of Rubayyat, the cemetery of it being at Fagg el Gamus, where a desert road crosses over into the Nile valley."¹⁹ Looking at a map from

12. M. L. Bierbrier, "Fayoum Cemeteries and Their Portraits," in *Portraits and Masks*, 16.

13. Susan Walker, "Mummy Portraits," 24.

14. Bierbrier, "Fayoum Cemeteries and Their Portraits," 16.

15. Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, "Graeco-Roman Branch: Excavations in the Fayoum," in *Archaeological Report: 1900–1901* (ed. F. Ll. Griffith; London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1901), 6.

16. Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, "Graeco-Roman Branch: Excavations in the Fayoum and at El Hibeh," in *Archaeological Report: 1901–1902*, 3.

17. The Tanis they are referring to is located in the Eastern Fayoum. This is not the same Tanis that is located in the Nile Delta where Petrie worked.

18. Bernard P. Grenfell, Arthur S. Hunt, and Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Tebtunis Papyri: Part II*, vol. 52 of *Graeco-Roman Memoirs* (1907; repr., London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1970), 345.

19. Grenfell, Hunt, and Goodspeed, *The Tebtunis Papyri*, 403.

Grenfell and Hunt, we can see that the road to Riqqa runs through BYU's current excavation site. They also placed a few tomb locations on the map which are within the concession area. To be even more specific about identifying where they excavated within modern Fag el-Gamous, Grenfell and Hunt tell us that they excavated "at a cemetery in the Fayum on the edge of the desert about halfway between Manashinshana and the Sela railway station, somewhat south of the 'pyramid' of Sela (an Old Empire mastaba)."²⁰ The Seila pyramid is north of the Fag el-Gamous necropolis and is close enough to the cemetery that it is included in the same concession from the Supreme Council of Antiquities.

The site of Manashinshana has also been identified with Petrie's Kom 2.²¹ Kom 2 is a Roman village north of the railway. Petrie says that the mastaba is a major landmark in this area and his account gives an almost exact description of the Seila pyramid.²² Given this description, we can conclude that the mastaba indicated on his map is the pyramid of Seila. This also helps to further associate Kom 2 with Manashinshana due to their similar locations in relation to the pyramid.

The exact location of Manashinshana as found by Grenfell and Hunt is no longer known, which makes the exact location of the mummy portraits found there hard to determine, a problem that is exacerbated by their alternating between terms such as "Ptolemaic cemetery," "Manashinshana," "Tanis," and "Fagg el Gamus." While the village names sometimes refer to the villages themselves, all of these terms seem to sometimes refer to the Fag el-Gamous cemetery. The ruins of Tell Shinshana, a site located several hundred meters from the edge of the Fayoum, are likely to be the same location as Grenfell and Hunt's Manashinshana based on its location and name tradition. The ruins of the village are also identified as Kom 2.²³ Thus, when early reports speak of finding a mummy at either Manashinshana, Kom 2, or Tanis, they are referring to the Fag el-Gamous cemetery.

Seila is another site in the Fayoum that may be tied to the necropolis of Fag el-Gamous. Because Egyptian cemeteries were located outside of the settlement areas, and because the site of Seila is inside the cultivated land of the Fayoum, its cemetery would have to be in the desert on the outer edge of the Fayoum. Seila is southwest of Manashinshana and is close enough to be tied

20. Grenfell and Hunt, "Graeco-Roman Branch: Excavations in the Fayum and at El Hibeh," 2.

21. Paola Davoli, *L'archeologia urbana nel Fayyum di età ellenistica e romana* (Napoli: G. Procaccini, 1998), 165.

22. W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Illahun, Kahun, and Gurob* (1891; repr., Encino, CA: Joel L. Malter & CO, 1974), 31.

23. Paola Davoli, *L'archeologia*, 165.

to the same cemetery. Because of this and because of the lack of alternative cemeteries, the Grenfell and Hunt excavations at Seila and the funerary artifacts found there are quite probably from Fag el-Gamous. They may have used these differing labels according to where their camp was or to indicate differing parts of the huge cemetery (which covers hundreds of acres).

Artifacts

In the 1900–1901 excavation season, Grenfell and Hunt found a large Ptolemaic cemetery near Manashinshana. Here they found many mummies with papyrus cartonnage that were in good or fair condition. They also obtained a large quantity of Greek and Demotic papyri, most of which dates to the third century B.C.E.²⁴ Unfortunately, the report does not say how many mummies with papyrus cartonnage were found or whether those mummies had portraits or not.

During the following season (1901–1902), Grenfell and Hunt returned to “Manashinshana” after some unproductive excavations in the area around the Seila railway station. At “Manashinshana,” they found several “papyrus mummies.” The Roman and Byzantine tombs that they found contained well-preserved portraits on wood, glass vases, and many other small objects. A “handsomely decorated stucco mummy” was also found there, but it was retained by the Cairo Museum.²⁵ Interestingly, this mummy may be referred to in a catalogue from the Egypt Exploration Fund’s (EEF’s) annual exhibition in 1902, where its description is similar and is listed as coming from Seila.²⁶ Again, because funerary objects would not have come from the village of Seila, it is almost certain that the other items in the catalogue that are listed as coming from Seila are also from Fag el-Gamous. These other items include cartonnage of early Ptolemaic mummies (3rd–2nd centuries B.C.E) and “objects of the Roman and Byzantine periods . . . including three well-preserved mummy portraits.”²⁷ A difficulty arises when comparing the excavation notes and the catalogue items. Manashinshana is the only place that Grenfell and Hunt said they found portraits in 1902, but the catalogue describes Seila as the provenance of these mummies. This is likely the result of using these names

24. Grenfell and Hunt, “Graeco-Roman Branch: Excavations in the Fayum,” 7.

25. Grenfell and Hunt, “Graeco-Roman Branch: Excavations in the Fayum and at El Hibeh,” 3.

26. B. Grenfell and A. Hunt, “Graeco-Roman Branch,” in *Catalogue of Egyptian antiquities, found by Prof. Flinders Petrie at Abydos and Drs. Grenfell and Hunt in the Fayum (Egypt Exploration Fund) and drawings from the temple of the kings (Sety I), (Egyptian Research Account) 1902: exhibited at University College, Gower Street, London . . . July 1st to 26th*, by W. M. Petrie and Egypt Exploration Fund (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1902), 8.

27. Grenfell and Hunt, “Graeco-Roman Branch,” 8.

almost interchangeably when really referring to their common cemetery: Fag el-Gamous.

Distribution lists from the EEF record that portraits were sent to Boston, Chicago, Brussels, and Oxford in 1902 from Grenfell's 1901–1902 excavation.²⁸ The three portraits mentioned in the catalogue may be the portraits that are currently in Chicago, Boston, and Oxford,²⁹ each of which have portraits that have been attributed to Fag el-Gamous.

Other objects recorded with the portraits are not explicitly detailed, but it can be inferred that included with the portraits were glass vases, jewelry, beads, and other objects that are commonly found at Manashinshana.³⁰ These glass vases may help us to further solidify the location of the site. In the report of the 1901–1902 season, the only location that Grenfell and Hunt report where glass vases were found is Manashinshana. In a catalogue for the Cairo Museum about Graeco-Egyptian glass, there are several vases that come from Fag el-Gamous and one from Seila. In the introduction to the catalogue, some vases said to come from Seila in the catalogue introduction are later listed as coming from Fag el-Gamous. The vases that are listed in the contents of the catalogue from Fag el-Gamous were found by Grenfell and Hunt in 1902. This indicates that the vases found at Manashinshana in 1902 are actually from Fag el-Gamous. Given this information, the portraits found with the glass vases would be attributed to the same location—Fag el-Gamous. This further confirms the evidence that this is their true provenance as well as reinforcing the idea that funerary finds from Manashinshana and Seila really from Fag el-Gamous.³¹

Another catalogue of the Cairo Museum (Graeco-Egyptian Coffins) gives us the record of two mummy portraits in the museum. No(s) 33283 and 33284 are listed as coming from Fag el-Gamous after being found by Grenfell and Hunt.³² We cannot determine which excavation season yielded these finds. Both of these portraits are said to be in very poor condition, which is probably why they were not taken back to England with Grenfell and Hunt.

28. EEF Distribution Lists.

29. Bierbrier, "Fayum Cemeteries and their Portraits," 17.

30. Grenfell and Hunt, "Graeco-Roman Branch," 8–9.

31. M. C. C. Edgar, *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire 32401–32800, Graeco-Egyptian Glass* (1905; repr., Osnabrück, DE: Otto Zeller Verlag, 1974), iii.

32. M. C. C. Edgar, *Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire 33101–33285, Graeco-Egyptian Coffins* (1905; repr., Osnabrück, DE: Otto Zeller Verlag, 1977), 131.

Catalogue Portraits and Descriptions

We have some details for the two Cairo Museum mummies. Grenfell and Hunt describe no. 33283 as a portrait of a young man, the angle of the painting showing more of the right side of his face. The man has a short beard and moustache similar in style to many other portraits. He also has a gilded wreath in his hair. The background of the painting was white when first painted, but it was gilded after the portrait was fixed in place. Wax colors were used to paint the portrait. At the time the catalogue was put together, the portrait was said to be in “very bad condition,” and the coloring and detail were unrecognizable. The wood was broken and eaten “all round,” the preserved portion was full of holes, the surface was badly damaged and discolored, and the back was coated with cloth and pitch.³³

No. 33284 is also described as being in “very bad condition.” It was broken “all round,” and most of the left side of the face was broken off. There is an impression of cloth on the surface, the back is coated with cloth and pitch, and the item is very fragile. The portrait features the head of a bearded man straight on, but shows slightly more of the right side. “There is a strip of white with a lilac border across the front of the neck” which may be the top of a chiton. The man has thick, wavy hair that covers much of his forehead. His beard is also thick and wavy. He has “rather Jewish features,” a “fair, ruddy complexion, dark hair, and brown eyes.” The forehead is wrinkled; there are “vertical lines above the nose and a strongly marked line below the inner corner of the eye.” His eyebrows are thick and arched. He has a hooked nose and his lips curve downward in the middle. The portrait is painted on a white background. It was painted with wax colors and there are marks of a hard point (especially on the forehead). There is “strong light on the nose, forehead, and cheek, shading on the left side of the nose” (the deeper shading is a yellowish brown color); his “hair was rendered by curving black strokes on a brown ground; brown strokes round the outside.”³⁴ It is impressive that we can get such a detailed description of a very badly damaged portrait. The pictures that we have been able to locate of these portraits are indeed in poor condition, but the portions that survive depict very detailed paintings.

Brussels

One portrait from Fag el-Gamous is in the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels, Belgium. E 4859 was sent to Brussels by the Egypt

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., 131–32.

Exploration Fund in 1902 but wasn't registered until 1913.³⁵ While the records in Brussels and the EEF give no indication of its provenance, Adolphe Reinach reported in 1914 that at least one portrait that went to Brussels was from Manashinshana.³⁶ There seems to be a great deal of disagreement about the origin of the portrait; one source argues that the portrait is from Tanis, another from Manashinshana, and another from Fag el-Gamous.³⁷ Given that these places are all roughly the same location, the portrait is probably from the same site as the other portraits listed as coming from any of these areas: Fag el-Gamous. Distribution lists show that this portrait was found at the same time as a few other portraits attributed to Fag el-Gamous.³⁸ This fragmentary portrait depicts a middle-aged man that is slightly turned to the right. The right half of his head is broken off. He wears a short beard on his chin and cheeks and has a short moustache. He has dark curly hair and dark eyes. He is wearing a white tunic with a dark trim around his wide neck. The portrait is painted on a white background.³⁹

Oxford

Located in the Ashmolean Museum, E 3755 has been attributed to Fag el-Gamous by Morris Bierbrier. The portrait was registered in 1908 with no surviving contemporary note of its provenance. When it was registered later, it was said to come from Tanis (Manashinshana).⁴⁰ This portrait was photographed by Hunt during the 1901–1902 excavations. Hunt no. 126 is a photograph of a portrait of a young man. The young man has dark, seemingly straight hair; dark, thick eyebrows; dark eyes; and a long, thin nose. He has a short, thin beard on his cheeks and chin and a thin moustache. He appears to be wearing a red and yellow garment. The background of the portrait is white. This portrait went on display in the Ashmolean Museum in October 2011.

35. Bierbrier, "Fayum Cemeteries and Their Portraits," 17.

36. Adolphe Reinach, "Les portraits gréco-égyptiens," *Revue archéologique*, 4th ser., XXIV (1914): 32.

37. Harco Willems and Willy Clarysse, *Keizersaan de Nijl* (Leuven, BE: Peeters, 1999), 209.; Musée d'archéologie méditerranéenne (Marseille, FR), *Egypte romaine: l'autre Egypte* (Marseille, FR: Musées de Marseille, 1997), 156; *The Global Egyptian Museum* (International Committee for Egyptology), s.v. "Mummy portrait," accessed March 12, 2012, <http://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/detail.aspx?id=711>.

38. EES distribution list.

39. Willems and Clarysse, *Keizersaan de Nijl*, 209.; Musée d'archéologie méditerranéenne (Marseille, FR), *Egypte romaine: l'autre Egypte*, 156.

40. Bierbrier, "Fayum Cemeteries and Their Portraits," 17.

Stucco Mummy

The Stucco Mummy was found at Manashinshana in the 1901–1902 excavation season.⁴¹ In a later exhibition catalogue, another stucco mummy is included in the exhibition but was said to come from Seila.⁴² The descriptions of the two items are so similar that they are most likely the same mummy whose location label was confused, rather than two different mummies. Two photographs from the EES archives are from Grenfell and Hunt's expedition in 1901–1902. Hunt no(s). 128 and 129 are photographs of a stucco mummy from Seila. The coffin is currently being housed in the Egyptian Museum (Cairo Inv. 17|10/16|1). The provenance of the mummy was unknown until Bierbrier brought to light the photographs that showed that this was, in fact, the piece found in 1902 from Fag el-Gamous.⁴³

Lorelei Corcoran discussed this mummy in her catalogue of portrait mummies in Egyptian museums. The portrait probably dates from 330–350 C.E. The mummy is covered in a layer of stucco around the head, along the front, and around the footcase. Where actual feet would be on the mummy, there are feet modeled at the bottom of the wrappings. Above the feet are three sections on the front of the body that depict mythological scenes. The first scene is a depiction of the purification of the deceased by Thoth and another deity. The second scene depicts the ram of Mendes above the body of a female mummy, a scene of procreative power and revivification. The top scene is a depiction of the conception of Horus, child of Osiris. The upper torso of the mummy is a portrait of the deceased, an adult woman. Parts of the portrait are modeled in stucco giving a three-dimensional appearance. These elements include a crown of leaves inlaid with “gems” and a star medallion, a medallion necklace, the breasts, and a small vessel in the right hand. She appears to be wearing a red chiton with black clavi. She is also wearing many bracelets and rings. The portrait is painted directly onto the linen and is surrounded by a stucco frame inlaid with stucco “gems.”⁴⁴

41. Grenfell and Hunt, “Graeco-Roman Branch: Excavations in the Fayum and at El Hibeh,” 3.

42. Grenfell and Hunt, “Graeco-Roman Branch,” 8.

43. Bierbrier, “Fayum Cemeteries and Their Portraits,” 17.

44. Lorelei H. Corcoran, “Stucco Mummy No. 22,” in *Portrait Mummies from Roman Egypt (I–IV Centuries A.D.) with a Catalog of Portrait Mummies in Egyptian Museums*, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 56 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1995), 194–202.

Boston/Chicago

Two other portraits have been attributed to Fag el-Gamous through a series of inductions. Since Hunt no(s). 126 and 128–129, photographs from the excavations, depict mummy portraits that came from Fag el-Gamous, it is highly likely that no. 127 (from Seila) is also from Fag el-Gamous, yet again reconfirming the idea that funerary objects from Seila are really from its cemetery, Fag el-Gamous. Hunt no. 127, a photograph, depicts two mummy portraits. One of these portraits is in the Museum of Fine Arts Boston (02.825). This portrait was acquired from the EEF in 1902 and is said to come from er-Rubayat.⁴⁵ The museum currently lists the portrait's provenance as el-Rubayat in 1902 and says that it was excavated by W.F. Petrie for the Egypt Exploration Fund.⁴⁶ However, this cannot be correct. Petrie never excavated in el-Rubayat and in 1902 he was in Abydos, where he worked from 1899 to 1904.⁴⁷ The portrait depicts a middle-aged man with a short beard and moustache. He has dark hair that hangs over his ears and forehead. The eyebrows are thick and dark and come together above the bridge of the nose. The man is wearing a white chiton and a gray mantle over his left shoulder. The background of the portrait is gray.⁴⁸

The other portrait in this photograph is now in the Oriental Institute in Chicago (2053). This portrait is said to have been acquired in 1897 from Hawara. Given the fact that this portrait is in the same picture as the previous portrait, it is not possible that they were found at two different times in two different locations—especially since the picture (Hunt no. 127) is labeled as coming from Seila.⁴⁹ Another problem is that there were not excavations in Hawara in 1897. The closest time period was in 1892 when three portraits were found, none of which match in description of this portrait.⁵⁰ This portrait depicts a young man. He has dark, curly hair, a short, curly beard, and a moustache. He has a very Greek looking nose and dark, thick eyebrows. He is

45. Bierbrier, "Fayum Cemeteries and Their Portraits," 17.

46. "Funerary portrait of a man," Museum of Fine Arts Boston, accessed March 20, 2012, <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/funerary-portrait-of-a-man-131643>.

47. "The Archaeological Record: Flinders Petrie in Egypt," Digital Egypt for Universities, accessed March 12, 2012, last modified 2002, <http://www.digitalegypt.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/petriedigsindex.html>.

48. "Funerary portrait of a man," Museum of Fine Arts Boston, accessed March 20, 2012, <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/funerary-portrait-of-a-man-131643>.

49. Bierbrier, "Fayum Cemeteries and Their Portraits," 17.

50. A. L. Frothingham Jr., "Archaeological News: Summary of Recent Discoveries and Investigations," *American Journal of Archaeology and the History of the Fine Arts* 8, no. 1 (January-February 1893): 103.

wearing a red garment with what appears to be white trim or a white undergarment around the neck. The background is beige.

Additional Portraits

In Parlasca's *Ritratti di Mummie*, Parlasca attributes nine other portraits to Fag el-Gamous that currently reside in the Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology in Berkeley, California. These portraits are actually from Tebtunis. The Berkeley association with their provenance is very clear on this point.⁵¹ The Egypt Exploration Fund reports that in the 1899–1900 season, Grenfell and Hunt were working for the University of California excavating at Umm-el-Baragat, the site of ancient Tebtunis. While there, they worked with several groups of tombs, including a Ptolemaic cemetery. While the report from the EEF does not say whether any portraits were found here, it does say that they found “mummy-cases constructed of papyrus in the same manner as those discovered by Petrie in Gurob.”⁵² The fact that these portraits are in Berkeley and the fact that Parlasca says they were discovered in 1899–1900⁵³ indicates that these portraits must have come from the excavations at Tebtunis. As previously stated, Grenfell and Hunt did not find portraits in Fag el-Gamous until 1902.

The Place of the Portraits within the Excavation Project

While other mummy portraits may have been found at Fag el-Gamous, these are all that we are able to ascertain currently. Tracking down these portraits has been an important part of our excavation research, because one of our aims as a research team is to try to understand more about the culture and society of the people who are represented in the cemetery. There are some obstacles to this goal. One of the largest is that we find little in the way of elite burials. We have been able to uncover the remains of a few elite persons.⁵⁴ However, most of these were excavated a century ago. Consequently, we have a large data set for the average citizens in the cemetery, yet we know little of the more wealthy and prestigious. Since the mummy portraits represent a wealthy part of the population, studying them affords us the opportunity to learn more concerning a part of the demographic about which we have little informa-

51. Bierbrier, “Fayum Cemeteries and Their Portraits,” 16.

52. F. G. Kenyon, “Graeco-Roman Egypt,” in *Archaeological Report 1899–1900* (ed. F. Ll. Griffith; London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1900), 44.

53. Parlasca, *Ritratti di Mummie*, 76.

54. See, for example, Wilfred Griggs, “General Archaeological and Historical Report of 1987 and 1988 Seasons at Fag el Gamous,” in *Actes du IV^e Congrès Copte: Louvain-la-Neuve, 5–10 septembre 1988* (ed. Marguerite Rassart-Debergh and Julien Ries; Vol. I. Publications de l’Institut Orientaliste de Louvain 40 Louvain-la-Neuve: Peeters Press, 1992), 195–202.

tion from elsewhere in our excavation. This allows us to develop a more well-rounded picture of this specific regional society.

One area of particular interest is the cross-cultural interaction in this area. Because the cemetery's use extended at least into the 6th century C.E., it witnessed the conversion of much of its population to Christianity, which is attested in finds such as jewelry in the form of crosses. As we attempt to understand the social factors that led to this conversion, and also more about the timing of the conversion, learning more about the Roman-influenced population is important. For example, as we attempt to gain a clearer picture of the conversion to Christianity, one portrait is of particular interest because of the apparent Jewish features represented on the mummy. While the accuracy of this description is far from certain, the possible presence of a wealthy Jew at Fag el-Gamous is a single datum that adds to a larger picture of a Jewish presence in the area.⁵⁵ Knowing more about the local Jewish population, such as the fact that at least one (possible) Jew was prominent in the area, and that there was a sizable Jewish population,⁵⁶ is important because Christianity was first preached among Jewish populations and then spread to the Gentile (non-Jewish) inhabitants of the same area.⁵⁷

Another value has been added to our research as we have attempted to find the mummy portraits that come from Fag el-Gamous. One of the research questions we have long been trying to answer is this: Where did the people who are buried at Fag el-Gamous live? The size and burial density of the cemetery suggests a larger population than is readily apparent today. Fortunately, the process of identifying which mummy portraits came from our site has also helped us to identify some of the villages that the portraits came from. It has also helped steer us towards the pertinent, earlier excavation reports. Some of these reports are crucial because earlier archaeologists excavated in places we no longer can since current residents have expanded onto ancient settlement sites. Modern real estate conditions prevent excavation, but fortunately our knowledge from early excavation reports gives us increased understanding of the ancient settlements and their inhabitants now buried in Fag el-Gamous.

Another boon that comes from identifying the mummy portraits that came from Fag el-Gamous is that knowing which portraits come from there helps us understand the larger cultural phenomenon of Roman portraiture in Egyptian embalming practice in general. This cross-cultural interaction is

55. See Kerry Muhlestein and Courtney Innes, "Synagogues and Cemeteries: Evidence for a Jewish presence in the Fayum," in *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 4, no. 2 (2012): 53–59.

56. *Ibid.*

57. See Acts 3:26; 13:14–52; 19:8–10; Romans 1:16; 2:9.

a fascinating area of study, and all researchers can be more accurate in their analysis of this practice since we now know more about which mummies come from what area of the country. Publishing these findings enables others to make more accurate assessments as well. A fuller picture allows the entire academic community to be more well-rounded in its research.

An exciting development from this research is that, as we learned which Fayoum Portrait Mummies came from our site, we also learned more about where in our site some of them came from, based on maps and excavation descriptions. They seem to have been found in an area south of where we have spent most of our excavation efforts. Thus, we now know that we should do some exploratory surveys in this southern area to see if there are more remains from upper class citizens awaiting discovery. We expect that this research will have a domino effect. Not only will it help us understand our current finds better, but that enhanced understanding will serve as a better guide to finding more significant information and informative artifacts.

The discovery that these portraits belong to Fag el-Gamous is an exciting development that enriches the history of the necropolis. Clearly the villages around Fag el-Gamous were inhabited by people that were experiencing a number of influences from Mediterranean culture. Particularly, Roman influences, and perhaps a Jewish presence, are evident in the portraits. At this same time, Christianity was spreading throughout the village populations, as witnessed by the cemetery. The artifacts from Fag el-Gamous also evidence that even though these were small villages that were out of the way, they were becoming part of a larger culture centered around the Mediterranean Sea. After millennia of being more of a cultural donor than borrower, Fayoum residents were finding their roles reversed. While the pottery assemblage has suggested Roman influence in the surrounding communities, the presence of so many Roman mummy portraits has shown us that Rome was having more of a cultural impact than was previously demonstrated. In the light of these discoveries, we will be better guided in our interpretation of existing artifacts and in our discovery of more.