

ETHEL ANN BURTON-BROWN WITH BONI IN THE FORUM, 1898–1904

by Susan M. Dixon

This essay has two objectives. First, it acknowledges and situates the contribution of Ethel Ann Burton-Brown (1868–1927) to the history of the archaeology of the Roman Forum as it was excavated between 1898 and 1905 under the direction of Giacomo Boni (1859–1925). Her English-language handbook on the discoveries, now overlooked in literature on Boni, showcased her education at Girton College, her experience with traditional cultures such as those of northern India, and her understanding of established and newly emerging methods of classical archaeology. Unlike Esther van Deman and Eugénie Sellers Strong, who embraced careers in archaeology just years after Burton-Brown’s publication, she did not pursue working in the discipline because of her personal situation. Secondly, it investigates the manner in which Burton-Brown received Boni’s presentation of the excavations. Trained as an architect and experienced in architectural restoration, Boni brought innovative scientific methods to the task of uncovering Rome’s archaic past. He did so while deliberately distancing himself from those scholars before him who applied traditional academic approaches, i.e., those reliant on classical literature, to archaeological practice. In large part, Burton-Brown’s handbook echoes the descriptions and analyses of Boni’s finds in the Roman Forum. However, a closer reading of her text reveals that her personal experiences shaped some of her explanations of the archaeological past in ways that differed from Boni’s. In addition, their respective nationalities, British versus Italian, shade how they each value Rome’s early history.

Questo saggio ha due obiettivi. In primo luogo, riconosce il contributo di Ethel Ann Burton-Brown (1868–1927) e lo colloca nella storia dell’archeologia del Foro Romano, scavato tra il 1898 e il 1905 sotto la direzione di Giacomo Boni (1859–1925). Il suo manuale in lingua inglese sulle scoperte, oggi trascurato dalla letteratura su Boni, mette in evidenza la sua formazione al Girton College, la sua esperienza con le culture tradizionali come quelle dell’India settentrionale e la sua comprensione dei metodi consolidati e di quelli emergenti dell’archeologia classica. A differenza di Esther van Deman e Eugénie Sellers Strong, che intrapresero la carriera archeologica pochi anni dopo la pubblicazione di Burton-Brown, ella non si dedicò alla disciplina a causa della sua situazione personale. In secondo luogo, si indaga sul modo in cui la studiosa accolse la presentazione degli scavi a cura di Boni. Formatosi come architetto ed esperto di restauro architettonico, Boni introdusse metodi scientifici innovativi nelle ricerche volte all’indagine della Roma arcaica. Lo fece prendendo deliberatamente le distanze da quegli studiosi che prima di lui avevano applicato alla pratica archeologica approcci accademici tradizionali, cioè basati sulla letteratura classica. In gran parte, il manuale di Burton-Brown riecheggia le descrizioni e le analisi dei ritrovamenti di Boni nel Foro Romano. Tuttavia, una lettura più attenta del suo testo rivela come le sue esperienze personali abbiano plasmato alcune delle sue spiegazioni del passato archeologico, distaccandosi dalle letture date da Boni. Inoltre, le loro rispettive nazionalità, britannica e italiana, costituiscono basi diverse, che influiscono sul modo in cui ciascuno di loro valuta le vicende della storia della prima Roma.

Ethel Ann Burton-Brown (1868–1927) ([Fig. 1](#)) is well known as the long-serving headmistress and educator at Prior’s Field School during the institution’s



Fig. 1 Ethel Ann Burton-Brown and children, Rome, May 1903, photograph by G. Cardilli. From a private collection. Courtesy of Micky Burton-Brown.

formative years (Halford, 2001: 1–2; Halford, 2019). Located in Surrey outside London, the school provided ground-breaking progressive training for girls, and is still renowned for its distinctive approach to education.¹ However, few are likely to be aware of Burton-Brown’s significant contribution to the history of the archaeology of ancient Rome in the early twentieth century. She published one of the first handbooks dedicated to guiding a tourist through the extraordinary archaeological discoveries in the Roman Forum undertaken at the direction of Giacomo Boni (1859–1925). He was the first archaeologist to employ innovative scientific methods of excavation and documentation in the Forum (Fortini, 2021; Capodiferro, Fortini, Taviani, 2003; Namer, 2019: 35–62). Many of his finds, including the famous Lapis Niger, exposed artefacts of a heretofore unseen pre-Republican Rome. Burton-Brown’s book was the first comprehensive English text on the subject. *Recent Excavations in the Roman Forum 1898–1904*, issued by John Murray, the noted publisher of travel literature, appeared in 1904, and it received praise from leading archaeologists of the day. A second revised edition of 1905 updated the reader with a few further significant finds.² This essay aims to recount and analyse the circumstances of Burton-Brown’s contribution to the field. Her work

¹ <https://www.priorsfieldschool.com/school/our-heritage/> (accessed 27/4/2023).

² Burton-Brown, 1904 and 1905. Edits in the 1905 edition include a four-page insert after Burton-Brown, 1904: 128, and the addition of Burton-Brown, 1905: 154–5 and a re-numbering of subsequent pages.

demonstrates that just a few years before Esther Boise Van Deman (1862–1937) issued her important publication on the House of the Vestal Virgins (1909),³ women scholars were participating in the discipline of archaeology. In addition, Burton-Brown's publication shines light on some of Boni's ways of thinking about ancient Rome, which were not always published or articulated clearly in these years. These include an adaptation of Sir James George Frazer's ideas about early cultures, as expressed in *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (1900), something which Burton-Brown's presence in the Forum facilitated. Furthermore, her text provides a filter through which to understand Boni's unanticipated finds, that at the time could have momentous bearing on the formation of Italy's national identity.

AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE

Burton-Brown's achievements have been overlooked in the history of the Forum's excavation in part because her publication was a singular attainment of its type in her curriculum vitae. Unlike Van Deman, Burton-Brown did not make a career of classical archaeology. Instead, her life circumstances did not allow for that opportunity, despite her exceptional educational training. She was a graduate of Girton College, Cambridge, the first residential institution that provided university-level education for women, teaching the same subjects at the same level as offered to male students.⁴ Entering in 1886, she had been chosen to be among the first cohorts of women scholars permitted to sit for examinations at Cambridge, even if the university did not grant degrees to women until more than a half century later.⁵ Her selection for College entrance was welcomed as her family valued advanced education.⁶ As a 'Girton Girl', Burton-Brown – then Ethel Marshall – studied History. She had wanted to study Classics; however, she had not been offered the opportunity in secondary school to acquire the prerequisite skills in ancient classical languages. She excelled in her studies at Girton and in her exams received a First in History, i.e., performing better than all students including the male students, and she graduated with honours in 1890.⁷

³ Van Deman had been in Rome by 1901, returned to the United States and travelled again to Rome in 1905. (I could find no documentation that suggests Van Deman met Burton-Brown in Rome.) See Welch, 2004 on Van Deman's career.

⁴ GirtCol Registry, 'Ethel Ann Burton-Brown'. I thank Hannah Westall, Archivist and Curator at Girton College, for this information. See also Stephen, 1933: 26–85 on the history of Girton College in Burton-Brown's time.

⁵ T. Burton-Brown, email of 9/27/23. Burton-Brown 'attended Highfield School in northwest London, which was founded and run by Fanny and Anna Sophia Metcalfe. The Metcalfe sisters were educational pioneers, who went on to help found Girton College. Clearly, they identified certain pupils whom they felt could benefit from a university education.'

⁶ Her father was headmaster at a public school for boys.

⁷ B. Burton-Brown, 1927: 5–6; Halford, 2001: unpaginated, citing *The Girton Review*, July 1889.

After graduation, at the desire of her family, who surely had her future financial stability in mind, she married the physician Frederick Hewlett Burton-Brown (1863–1922) (B. Burton-Brown 1927: 6; Halford 2019: 5). In 1896 or 1897, she moved to Rome, where her husband occupied a post as physician at the British Consulate. He held the position until 1904 when he was released without prospect of further employment.⁸ The couple judicially separated in that year, and Ethel Ann was left to be the breadwinner of a family of three young children.⁹ Soon thereafter she returned to England and began teaching at Prior's Field, but only after writing the handbook.

In the handful of years before moving to Rome, Ethel Ann travelled with her husband in his role as officer in the Royal Army Medical Service to Northern India, some of whose territory is now part of Pakistan. It required her to traverse difficult terrain in remote locations (B. Burton-Brown, 1927: 6; Halford, 2019: 5). She took advantage of the stay in this part of the world to acquaint herself with ancient Vedic culture and to study the customs and art of the Naga people (Burton-Brown, 1905: 14; B. Burton-Brown, 1927: 6; TrinCol Frazer, fol. 10v). In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the discipline of anthropology, then defined as the study of non-European societies and their customs, laws and art, was developed. The discipline fulfilled a curiosity about those in the British imperial domains, then nearing their largest in terms of territory, and was added to the university curriculum at Oxford in 1883.¹⁰ In this way, then, Burton-Brown's inquisitiveness about the Naga people was a symptom of her interest in a burgeoning academic field.

Family finances seemed to have been a problem before and immediately after the dissolution of Burton-Brown's marriage (Tea, 1932, 2: 168; Halford, 2001: 8). To procure income, by the winter of 1903, Ethel Ann was giving tours and lectures in Rome, including in the Roman Forum (NSL Murray, fol. 89–90). It was at this time that she conceived the idea of writing a guidebook as part of a strategy to support the family. She had befriended Giacomo Boni, the director of the excavations in the Forum since 1898, and had spent time listening to and taking many notes during his on-site lectures. Boni often met with visitors, including British visitors, on the site. He encouraged her writing project. Burton-Brown approached the publishing house of John Murray as early as October 1903 with a proposal (NLS Murray, fol. 86–7). Her correspondence indicates that she was attentive to the marketing of the book, which she hoped would be available for sale at the entrance of the Forum.¹¹

⁸ B. Burton-Brown, 1927: 6, places the couple in Rome by 1896; GirtCol Registry notes she lived in India from 1891–7 and in Rome from 1897–1905.

⁹ In India, Ethel Ann gave birth to Beatrice in 1892 (d. 1976) and Margaret. Margaret did not survive infancy. Dennis was born circa 1900 and he, too, did not survive. His grave-marker in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome commemorates his life and that of his sister Margaret. Twins Christopher (d. 1975) and Theodore (d. 1988) were born in Rome in 1902.

¹⁰ www.anthro.ox.ac.uk/about-us (accessed 3/12/2023)

¹¹ NLS Murray, fol. 87–97. She writes thoughtfully about the content and organization, as well as the size, colour, pricing and distribution of the book.

Burton-Brown's handbook fulfilled a general desire for curious and educated English-language readers to learn about the new discoveries, which were not always reported consistently or in ways that catered to them. Her lucid text, which provided substantial descriptions and context for the monuments, emerged uniquely among other various types of written reports about the Forum excavations. Furthermore, it provided interpretations or motivations for the finds that were not specified in other writings, including in Boni's own publications. Specifically, her text reveals one of Boni's rationales for digging so deeply in the Forum, to expose the site's earliest inhabitants whose artefacts and remains he sought.

Ethel Ann had a friendly relationship with Boni (B. Burton-Brown, 1927: 7; Halford, 2019; TrinCol Frazer, fol. 10v, fol. 12r, fol. 15v, fol. 17r, fol. 17v, fol. 19r; Tea, 1932, 2:168). While in Rome, she and her husband were a central part of the community of British living there. According to family archives, the couple hosted many parties and outings in and around Rome.¹² Their stay in the city corresponded very closely with Boni's most active excavations in the Forum. She not only toured the Forum but also socialized with Boni in the company of other British people interested in the progress in the Roman Forum (Tea, 1932, 2: 168; TrinCol Frazer, fol. 12r, fol. 15v, fol. 17r, fol. 17v, fol. 19r).

Although the archaeologist's relationship with well-known British thinkers such as John Ruskin has commanded scholarly attention, it was his association with ardent British followers of his archaeological practice, and particularly with Welbore St Clair Baddeley (1856–1945), which enhanced Boni's reputation among English speakers in Rome.¹³ Boni led various tours of the Forum, often including those of the British community, during his years in the Forum, from 1898 to 1905. During this time, Baddeley was a near constant companion to Boni's excavations, and he acquired considerable knowledge of the finds. Baddeley was not trained in any of the disciplines then associated with the practice and theory of archaeology, i.e., classical literature, philology, or even geology or anthropology. But neither was Boni. The director of the excavations instead brought technical skills to his work from his experience in architectural restoration: innovative uses of stratigraphic analysis of the soil and comprehensive site documentation that included axonometric drawings and aerial photography (Fortini, 2021). From his exposure to Boni, Baddeley came to think of himself as an expert in the archaeology of the Forum. A great 'showman', Baddeley gave lectures about many of the archaeological finds in Rome to the British and American Archaeological Society in Rome (BAASR),

¹² B. Burton-Brown, 1927: 6–7. Additional reminiscences of Beatrice Burton-Brown, in the family archives, were supplied by Teresa Burton-Brown, 6/22. The Burton-Brown apartment at 3 Via Settembre, near the British Consulate and the British bookstore, served as a social hub for the expatriate community in Rome.

¹³ Wiseman, 1992 on Baddeley and Boni. On Boni's relationship with Ruskin, see Fancelli, 2008 and Pretelli, 2008.

an organization founded in 1882 for highly engaged amateurs and scholars (Smith, 2016: 219). He echoed not only Boni's information but also some of the archaeologist's personal resentments against the academic elites who were judging and interpreting the results of his labour. Boni himself also appeared before this society, but only about three times, and his lecture transcripts suggest rather lacklustre talks, in an English that was somewhat incomprehensible. H. Wickham Steed (1871–1956), the British journalist and historian, and a great admirer of Boni, said of his speaking skills that 'on occasion he talked freely, [but] he was ever inarticulate in the sense that his means of expression were inadequate to the expanse and to the depth of his thought' (Steed, 1925: 304). Instead, Baddeley, as the smart and articulate broadcaster of Boni's news, was a charming and therefore frequent visitor to the BAASR. Boni's strong camaraderie with individuals such as Baddeley, rather than with trained classical scholars such as Thomas Ashby Jr., was no doubt a symptom of the Italian archaeologist's self-consciousness around and resentment of an academic elite, including British as well as Italian and German scholars, who were wont to comment critically on his work.

The phenomenon of women as visitors to archaeological sites in Rome was not new in Boni's day. The archaeologist himself was noted for his following of 'English ladies' in the Forum.¹⁴ Indeed, archaeology as a discipline was of increasing interest to women in the early twentieth century.¹⁵ To Boni, however, women may have seemed an indiscriminating audience because the chances were that they did not have an extensive education in Classics. In any event, Ethel Burton-Brown's presence as a consumer of Boni's on-site tours was not an anomaly. However, what was unprecedented was her astute understanding of the significance of the finds, her ability to create a historical context for them and her precise and cognizant notetaking. Furthermore, a natural born teacher, by 1903 she made use of what she learned. She crafted 'two lectures in the winter season' delivered on site in the Forum,¹⁶ a fact that galled Baddeley, her rival in lecturing and publishing (Fig. 2).¹⁷

Furthermore, since 1871, a battle over who owned, curated and disseminated information regarding the Roman Forum raged within the cultural institutions of the newly unified nation of Italy. The national archaeological office, Boni's employer, had established the journal *Notizie degli scavi d'antichità*, as early as

¹⁴ Tea, 1932, 2: 46. She reports a comment from the Scottish historian of Venice, Horatio Brown (1854–1926); see also Namer, 2019: 71–6 on the interest of women in Boni's work.

¹⁵ Root, 2004; see also Beard, 2000, and Dyson, 2004. Miss Jane Hamilton (1850–1928) and Eugénie Sellers Strong (1860–1943) received their training in Classics and graduated just years before Burton-Brown. Hamilton, who travelled frequently, was in Rome at times; she was certainly there at the end of 1900 and into 1901, when she socialized with the Burton-Browns, Boni and the Frazers. Strong arrived in the city in 1909 as assistant director of the British School at Rome, i.e., after Burton-Brown had left the city.

¹⁶ NLS Murray, fol. 89. Burton-Brown also taught a six-week evening course on Ancient Roman Cults and History at her residence.

¹⁷ Wiseman, 1992: 142, citing Tea, 1932, as the source of this information.

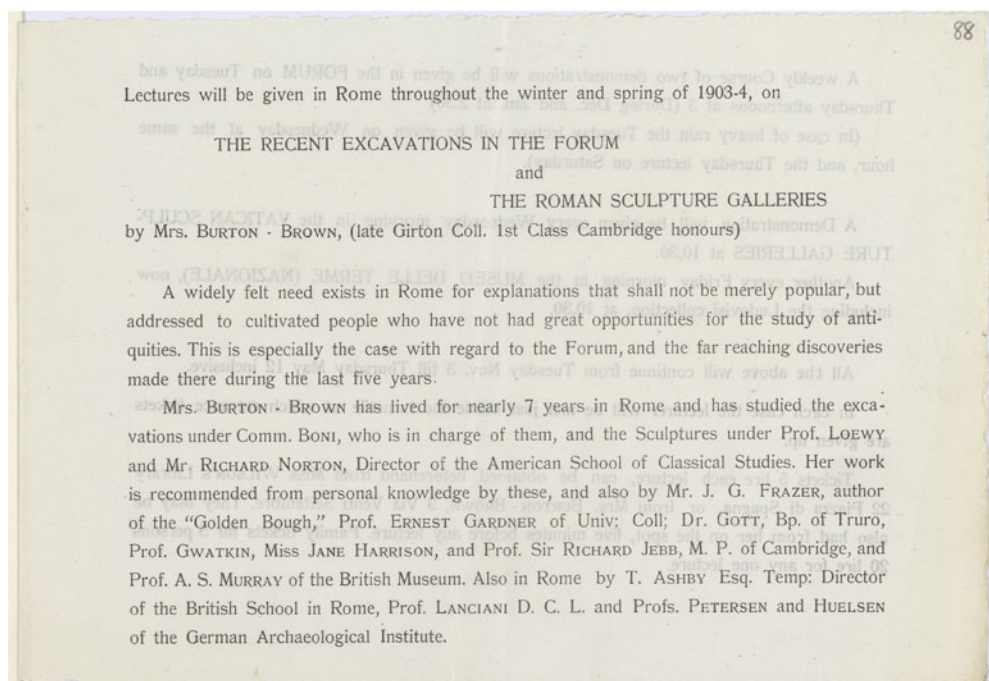


Fig. 2 Flyer announcing Burton-Brown's lectures and courses in Rome, December 1903. Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Archive and Manuscript Division. Archive of John Murray, publisher, MS. 40155, fol. 88.

1876, to record all finds in the nation; a substantial section was nearly always dedicated to Rome and the Roman Forum. However, as the official state record, Boni's entries were very scientific and highly detailed. In part because of the monthly issue and in part because of the accelerated pace of the excavations under Boni's direction, interpretations of the finds were rarely included. Furthermore, progressively during the course of the excavations, his entries were delayed or not submitted. Unlike his predecessor as director of excavations, Rodolfo Lanciani (1845–1929), Boni did not write frequently about his work in more popular venues while he was director of the excavations. In short, information about the new discoveries was not easily available to the casual and English-speaking reader, and what was issued was piecemeal or late.¹⁸

In addition, the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, since 1875 the organization of elite intellectuals who considered new knowledge in the service of the state, included a division on archaeology whose mission included assessing the recent discoveries (Morghen, 1972: 7–43). Boni's work was presented to the Lincean scholars for analysis; members included Italian classicists and philologists, and

¹⁸ Guidobaldi, 2016; Hurst, 2008: 76–7, citing Ashby; Namer, 2021; see also Namer, 2019: 118–20 for a list of Boni's publications from 1898 to 1905.

also some renowned German and other foreign academics. The Academy's published proceedings and essays provided fodder for scholars at the various foreign academies in Rome, such as those at the well-established Deutsches Archäologisches Institut in Rome, and even at the nascent British School at Rome and the American School of Classical Studies (a precursor to the American Academy in Rome). Boni's archaic artefacts, e.g., the ensemble surrounding the Lapis Niger, or within the Regia, often sparked debate within the academy about such culturally provocative issues as the existence of the ancient kings of Rome, including Romulus. And even though the debate animated the international academic community, Boni was mostly silent in these scholarly frays.¹⁹ Steed (1925: 304) summed up the problem of understanding Boni's extraordinary and ground-breaking finds when he questioned 'whether [Boni had] left written pages of outstanding value other than the reports in which he enumerated his discoveries, and even these are apt to be unintelligible to the profane, and at times, puzzling to the initiated'.

At the same time, almost anyone who had access to the site and the information it yielded – including photographs – could publish in whichever venue they chose. This included someone like Thomas Ashby, Jr. (1874–1931), Associate Director of the British School in Rome from 1903, and Director from 1906, who was a constant, if not always welcomed, presence on the site (Martinelli, 1989: 13; Le Pera Buranelli and Turchetti, 1989). His articles in the *Classical Review* are thorough scholarly evaluations of the finds for the English-language reader, delivered as they emerged, about every four months (Ashby, 1899–1908). Lanciani as well was a near-ubiquitous and – to Boni – irritating presence in the Forum. At times, Lanciani wrote about the finds in popular English-language venues such as the London journal *The Athenaeum*; however, because his work as the previous director of excavations was often criticized for missing what Boni had then found, Lanciani's tone was sometimes defensive (Cubberley, 1988: 246–410). And Baddeley published and lectured on the Forum extensively and in varied venues, although he often personalized the information.²⁰

Thus, in this environment of patchwork information, Burton-Brown's book was a great contribution, as it provided all in one place both the basic and the more scientific information and, in many cases, a cultural context for understanding the discovery. Her efforts were rewarded with a forward from Boni in her 1904 edition, even if it was only a translation of an abridgement from two of his previous texts.²¹ One reviewer pointed out some minor flaws in the book, but in the main it was well received, and she proposed to revise the

¹⁹ Palombi, 2021: 126–9; Ammerman, 2016a: 267. See Freyberger, 2008: 50–4, on some scholars urging Boni to be silent until more information was recovered and evaluated.

²⁰ Baddeley was one who praised Boni's achievements in the Forum while disparaging the results of Lanciani's earlier work there. See Cubberley, 1988: 240–6 (Norton); 262–3 (Baddeley); 298–303 (Norton).

²¹ Burton-Brown, 1905: vi–viii. The preface is abridged from passages in Boni, 1901a and 1903.

text in a second issue (Anonymous, 1904; Blakiston, 1904; NLS Murray, fol. 98–100). The publisher had already agreed to this new issue, because it would be expanded with exciting, newly released information. However, before the second edition emerged, some disgruntled chatter about her accomplishment had already begun in Boni's circle and Burton-Brown was not able to secure the archaeologist's approbation for this edition. If Burton-Brown knew who was undermining her scholarship in this manner, she did not reveal it to her publisher.²² It could have been anyone among the various groups who were invested in some way in controlling or profiting from the presentation of the Forum's history.

Such a slight, however, did not negate the quality of her guidebook, and in late 1905 she was asked to lecture on the material to the Classical Society in London (UCLSP, UC SOC.45.1, 23).²³ Her text was a far richer source of information than the English-language guide then available for sale at the entrance to the Forum. This guide was essentially a list of monuments, presented alphabetically, with a brief explanatory paragraph or two for each entry.²⁴ However, her handbook was praised by the leading American and British archaeologists in Rome, most likely Richard Norton (1872–1918), the director of the American School of Classical Studies in Rome and a strong supporter of Boni, and Thomas Ashby, Jr., then in leadership at the British School at Rome.²⁵ Indeed, Ashby distinguished her book as one of three enriching resources on the subject, which could be used 'on the spot' (Ashby, 1905 (Feb.): 78). One of those three was the work of renowned German scholar Christian Hülsen (1858–1935), a leading expert on ancient Rome's typography. His German-language publication considered the entirety of the Forum; the monuments were presented in the major chronological phases of Roman history in which they were constructed. An English translation of his text, however, was not issued until 1909.²⁶ The second was Baddeley's, which like Burton-Brown's, was a text in English focused primarily on Boni's recent discoveries.²⁷ Ashby was

²² NLS Murray, fol. 101–2. She credits 'enemies of Boni's work' for the trouble she had in securing a preface for the second edition.

²³ She delivered lectures on 25 October, 1 November and 8 November 1905. I thank Jacqueline Cox, Keeper of University Archives, for her assistance in obtaining this information.

²⁴ Borsari and Artioli, 1906. Luigi Borsari (1804–87) was a well-respected functionary of the state's archaeological service; a young Romolo Artioli (1879–1958), one of Boni's excavation assistants, revised Borsari's text to include Boni's discoveries, but the formulaic presentation of the monuments was not changed.

²⁵ NLS Murray, fol. 101v. Norton was the director from 1899 to 1906. On his connections to Boni, see Huemer, 2008: 59.

²⁶ Hülsen, 1904. Jesse Benedict Carter (1872–1917) was the translator of the English-language text.

²⁷ Baddeley, 1904; also Hare and Baddeley, 1903. After Hare's death in 1903, Baddeley revised and added to the section on the Roman Forum; this text remained the same in the 17th through to the 22nd editions, issued 1905–25.

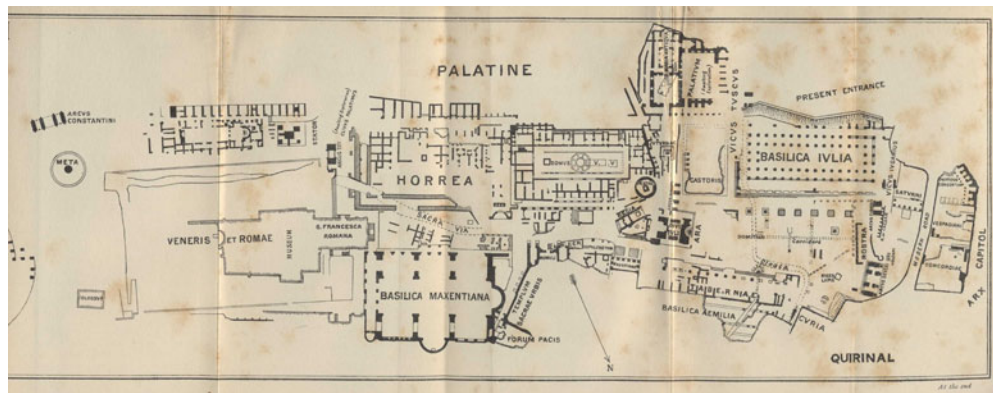


Fig. 3 Plan of Forum Romanum, 1904, fold-out plan. From E. Burton-Brown (1905) *Recent Excavations in the Roman Forum, 1898–1905: A Handbook*. London, John Murray.

judicious in not ranking the three books by quality, although he did admire Burton-Brown's map as easily legible (Fig. 3).²⁸ In the mid-1980s, the classicist T.P. Wiseman stated that hers bested Baddeley's hastily written text, which was of a tone that Burton-Brown eschewed (Wiseman, 1992: 142). His was full of anecdotes and insertions of personal feelings; in short, it was a rather Victorian method of travel writing.

Burton-Brown carefully considered the audiences for her book. She lamented to the publisher that it should be advertised more aggressively in the city of Rome, something that was not easy for foreign publishers to accomplish at this time. She informed them that she was told that scholars from the University of Exeter, Oxford University and Cambridge University, including Trinity College, carried her book around 'under their arm[s]', thus suggesting that the publisher should advertise to this demographic (NLS Murray, fol. 100–2). She also encouraged the distribution of the handbook to teachers at various British secondary schools, both schools for boys and schools for girls.²⁹ While increasing her profit from book sales was surely on her mind, these suggestions imply that she understood her efforts could enhance the study of ancient Rome in the British educational system, and especially by young women interested in the field of classical archaeology (Root, 2004).

²⁸ Boni had supplied Baddeley with the plan for his book.

²⁹ NLS Murray, fols. 95–6. The list, received in London in November 1904, includes: The Rev. W. Earle, The Old House, Batchwork School, St. Albans; E.R. Rooper, Esq, The Lodge, Tiverton; H. Awdry Esq, Wellington College, Crowthorne; The Head Master, Repton School, Burton-on-Trent; G. Eardley Tidmarsh Esq., Harrow School, Harrow on the Hill; Miss Metcalf, Highfields, Herndon (this was Burton-Brown's school); and Miss [Frances] Dove, Wycombe Abbey, High Wycombe.

THE EXTRAORDINARY BOOK

Burton-Brown's book provided an extensive presentation of the monuments in the Forum, in a manner that facilitated the viewer's movements through the space, i.e., 'to take visitors over the Forum without covering the same ground twice' (NLS Murray, fol. 86v). Her text supplied extensive information about Boni's new finds of 1898 to 1905, only cursorily acknowledging well-known monuments such as the Basilica Julia or the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina, whose remains had been exposed before Boni's time. The schematic plan of the area oriented the visitors as they toured (Fig. 3).

In the main, the text describes the monuments in a scientific manner, detailing their size and shape, their materials and any attendant artefacts, while also elaborating on their cultural significance. It begins with an explanation of the changing size and function of the Forum in ancient times, from a market-place to a religious and political centre. Likewise, the Forum's topographic shifts are framed in terms of the historical tension between patricians and plebeians during the Republic. This information is used to clarify why the early shrines of the state are located in the southeastern portion of the Forum – the spring of Juturna, the hearth of Vesta and the Regia – while those structures housing operations of the government – the Curia, and the Comitium with the Rostra – were relegated to the northwest. This somewhat reductive portrayal of the complicated site was useful to anyone trying to make sense of the nearly incomprehensible terrain of the early twentieth-century Roman Forum, with its outcrops of nonsensical architectural elements, vast piles of marble fragments and newly dug pits.

Each of the subsequent chapters deals with one of Boni's major discoveries that prove the achievements of pre-imperial Romans. These include the Fons Juturnae, the Temple and Atrium of the Vestal Virgins, the Comitium including the Lapis Niger and the area of the primitive tombs near the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina. Burton-Brown acknowledges occasionally that not all information she recounts is universally held to be true, a nod to the ongoing academic disputes about the finds. The reader of this article is reminded that this information from 1905 does not reflect current scholarship on the archaeology of the Roman Forum.

In her handbook, Burton-Brown curated the monuments of the Roman Forum in a manner that not only reflects Boni's excavations well, but also highlights this point: there was now definitive proof of the existence of the ancient kings, and of Romulus himself. This was earth-shattering news for Italy. In Boni's time, many in the international scholarly community known as the hypercritical school considered that the ancient kings were mythical rather than historical figures. Boni's discovery was especially useful in the decades after Unification, when the nation was in the process of crafting a common national identity for citizens from the various regions of Italy to embrace. Certainly, for Burton-Brown, a non-Italian, the finds were also astounding, as they brought new knowledge to

the historical Roman past. However, her delivery is clear and objective, without nationalistic rhetoric. She produces a convincing and scholarly description of the history of the Forum as demonstrated by its archaeological remains, using all the scholarly tools at her disposal. Thus, beyond merely describing what Boni uncovered, she demonstrates the extent of her academic training and her travel experience. This is most evident when she provides context for the finds: cogent explanations of Greek and Roman history and literature; and acute information about ancient Vedic beliefs and rituals.

THE MONUMENTS AROUND THE FONS JUTURNAE (CH. 2)

The Lacus Juturnae and its surrounding monuments were revealed after the demolition of Santa Maria Liberatrice, the Baroque church that had been built over earlier monuments in the southeastern section of the Forum. The nearly square pool commemorated Juturna, the water nymph who aided the earliest of the inhabitants of Rome (Fig. 4). The Severan *Forma Urbis* had already indicated the location of the imperial rebuilding of the earlier Lacus Juturnae in the vicinity of the Temple of the Dioscuri, and Boni discovered the pool in addition to sculptural works adorning it: the fragmented remains of a near life-size marble group representing Castor and Pollux's horses and an early imperial altar whose relief sculpture illustrated the story of Juturna (Burton-Brown, 1905: 10–15). Boni then determined that the ancient spring, or Fons, which fed the pool lay some thirty feet to the southwest. Its location was indicated by a later shrine, as well as some monuments in front of it, including a well-head dated to the first century BC (Burton-Brown, 1905: 17–19) (Fig. 5).³⁰

Burton-Brown relates that these monuments attest to the early Roman inhabitants' strong connection to the origins of the city. Tradition held that after helping Republican Romans defeat King Tarquin at Lake Regillus, the Dioscuri stopped to rest and refresh their horses at the pool on this site. The memorialization of this act spoke of the inhabitants' strong devotion to the liberty of the city (Burton-Brown, 1905: 12–13). Similarly, enshrining the spring of Juturna attests to the city's dependence on nourishing and healing waters for their sustenance (Burton-Brown, 1905: 11–12, 24).

THE BUILDINGS OF THE VESTALS (CHS 3 AND 4)

The visitors are then guided to the Temple and House of the Vestal Virgins, buildings of significance to the ancient city's origins.³¹ One of the first institutional organizations of Rome, the Vestals were tasked with tending to the hearth fires and, as such, with ensuring the survival of the state, which was organized in the manner of a family household (Burton-Brown, 1905: 26–9).

³⁰ These sculptures are in the Museo Nuovo del Foro.

³¹ See Burton-Brown, 1905: 29–30 for her definition of the term *Aedes Vestae*.

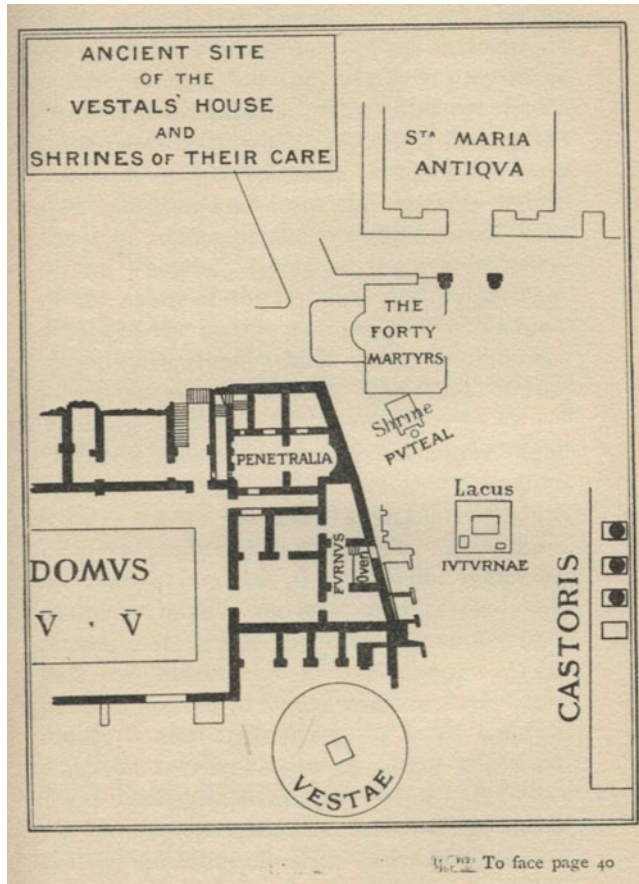


Fig. 4 Plan of ‘Ancient Site of the Vestals’ House and Shrines of their care’. From E. Burton-Brown (1905) *Recent Excavations in the Roman Forum, 1898–1905: A Handbook*. London, John Murray, facing page 40.

Although the site had been excavated just two decades earlier, Boni subjected it to re-examination (Lanciani, 1884). The high plinth of the round Temple of Vesta was probed and a chamber below a floor grate was revealed. Boni postulates that the chamber was designed to provide ventilation for the sacred fire above and to serve as a repository for the ashes which were collected and removed ceremonially once a year (Burton-Brown, 1905: 29–33). This pronouncement contradicted what had been held to be true about the temple base, i.e., that it served as the *Penetralia*, or the secure location of the *Sacra Fotalia*, sacred items symbolic of the foundation of Rome and placed in the care of the Vestals.

The demolition of the church of Santa Maria Liberatrice also exposed a wing of the *Aedes Vestae*, or House of the Vestal Virgins, specifically two separate sequences of small rooms on the western side of the rectangular courtyard (Fig. 4). One sequence of rooms contained a stove, evidence of very ancient ceramic cookware and various foodstuffs. According to Boni, here the Vestal Virgins performed their sacred duty of preparing corn, or grain, from the first

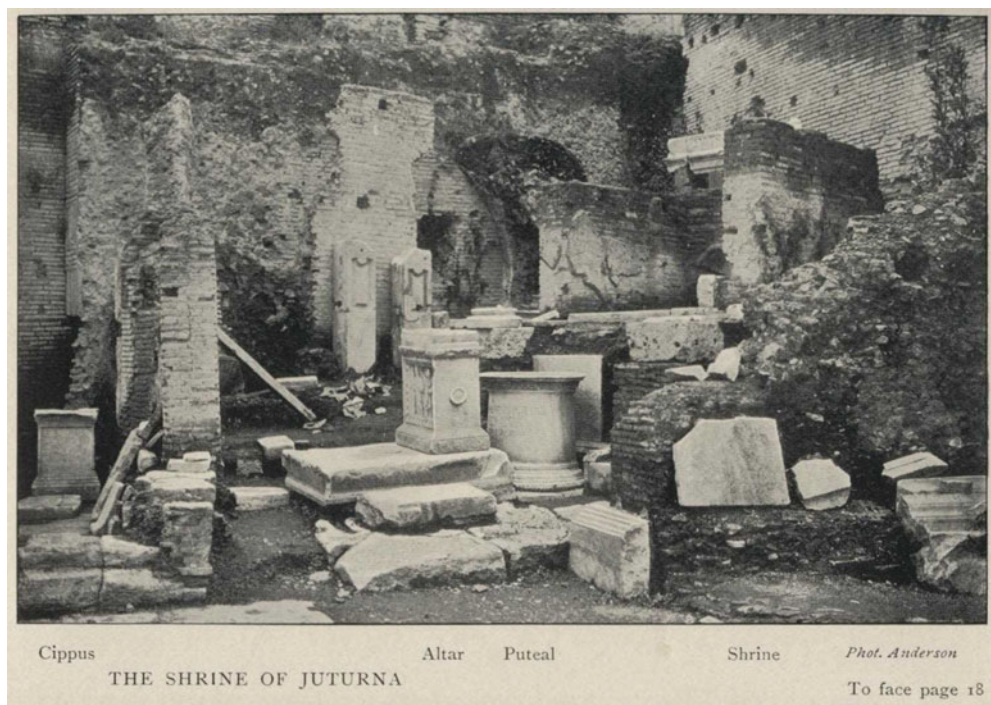


Fig. 5 'The Shrine of Juturna', photograph by Domenico Anderson. From E. Burton-Brown (1905) *Recent Excavations in the Roman Forum, 1898–1905: A Handbook*. London, John Murray facing page 18.

harvest, to create food offerings for early Roman rituals (Burton-Brown, 1905: 40–3, 50). An adjacent but unconnected series of small rooms in the southwestern corner, then, held the Vestals' treasure, and it was at this place that Boni believed the *Penetralia* would have been sheltered (Burton-Brown, 1905: 47–9).

THE REGIA (CH. 5)

The tour leads to the Regia, which, as home to early kings and later as administrative centre for the religious rituals of the state, merits attention as one of the three sacred shrines of the early Romans. Many others before Boni had explored the site, but it had been reburied after their attempts (Carnabuci, 2008: 213–21). In 1899, Boni probed it more deeply than earlier excavators. He exposed and identified the *Hastae Martis*, or shrine to the Spears of Mars, which ancient literary sources had indicated would be there (Burton-Brown, 1905: 53–44, 60–2) (Fig. 6). After describing what was discovered, Burton-Brown relates the myths regarding Mars as one of the three major gods of early Rome (the others being Jupiter and Quirinus, or the deified Romulus), and the rituals designed to worship him, including the *Equus October* (horse sacrifice). Boni also exposed the shrine of the goddess *Ops Consiva*, or 'stored plenty'.

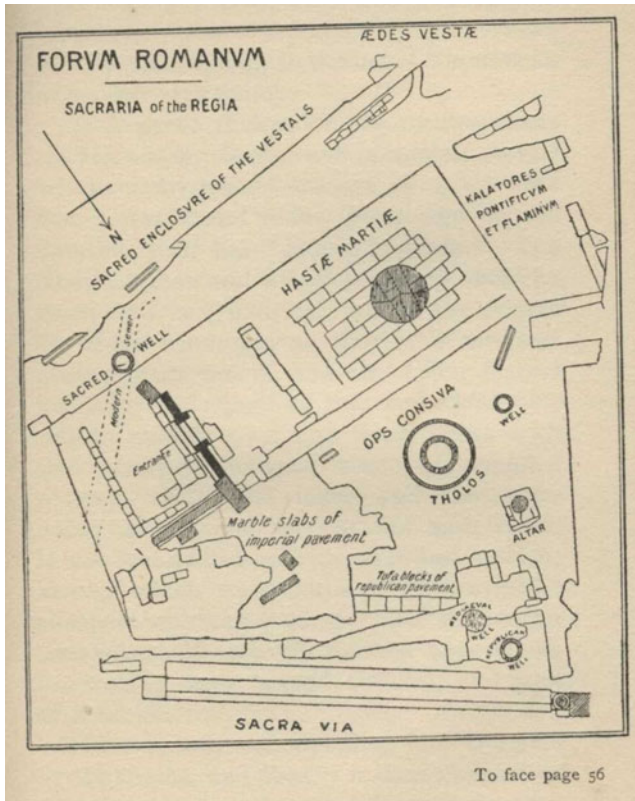


Fig. 6 Plan of ‘Sacra Via of the Regia’. From E. Burton-Brown (1905) *Recent Excavations in the Roman Forum, 1898–1905: A Handbook*. London, John Murray, facing page 56.

(Burton-Brown, 1905: 57–8). In addition, he examined how the Regia, a regularly shaped polygonal building with inner courtyards, fitted among the Forum’s other early monuments in the area, including the House of the Vestal Virgins and the *Domus Publica*, the house of Rome’s regal representatives after the dissolution of the kingship (Burton-Brown, 1905: 63–8).³²

LAPIS NIGER IN THE COMITIUM (CHS 7 AND 8)

Moving westward, Burton-Brown takes visitors past the Vulcanal, or open-air altar to the god of fire, Vulcan, which was a place of assembly during the kingship. From there, they move quickly past the imperial structures, by the Arch of Septimus Severus and Temple of Concord, and then along the road skirting the Temples of Saturn and Vespasian (Burton-Brown, 1905: 69–80). They eventually arrive at the Comitium, the location reserved for the functions

³² Boni’s notes remained unpublished until Carnabuci, 2012. See *ibid.*, 2012: 11 n.1.

of governance in ancient Rome. This was the area which provided the backdrop for some of the most historically important moments in Roman history, especially regarding the outcome of clashes between patricians and plebeians (Burton-Brown, 1905: 81). It was also the area in which Boni made one of his most spectacular discoveries, the Lapis Niger.

Boni first attempted to identify the location of the remains of the most ancient Comitium, the state's place of congregation, and of the two major buildings that framed it: the Rostra, and the Curia Hostilia, which bears the name of its creator, the early king Tullius Hostilius. Julius Caesar had built a larger Curia that encroached upon the space of the Comitium, whose tamped earth surface was then paved over. In Boni's day, it was known that the Curia Julia sat well beneath the church of Sant'Adriano. In search of the earliest remains, the archaeologist removed the steep stairs leading to the church door so that it 'now opens into mid-air' (Burton-Brown, 1905: 82). Despite his efforts, Boni was not permitted to clear the entire area, and instead he penetrated the site with shafts, piercing through 23 layers, or 4.4 metres of accumulation (Burton-Brown, 1905: 88–9). In this way, he discovered the Lapis Niger, the unusual black stone pavement under which lay some partial structures (Burton-Brown, 1905: 97–104) (Figs 7–8). One such structure was a tomb chamber, although no body was found there; it included an altar and two plinths, one of which was decorated with a sculptural lion. Another was a compartment with a broken cippus, inscribed with a very primitive Latin alphabet. The oddity of the combination of objects and their puzzling locations thwarted any easy understanding of their function as well as of their antiquity. In other words, they were not found in the stratigraphic layer that one expected, i.e., with more recent artefacts closer to the earth's surface and the more ancient, deeper. Thus, it was assumed that the chambers and their seemingly random contents, including ceramic vessels, votive figurines, bronze ornaments, bones and ash, were assembled, disassembled and reassembled at disparate moments in time. Burton-Brown describes the Lapis Niger, the term for the entire assemblage under the black stone pavement, and posits the questions that Boni, and indeed most scholars of the day, formed: what was put in place when and by whom? She provides no resolution (Burton-Brown, 1905: 109), and indeed the assemblage remains a puzzle even today. However, Burton-Brown suggests that the burial chamber was strong evidence that the Tomb of Romulus, or at least of someone from Romulus' epoch, had been present in the Forum; additionally, the cippus suggested the existence of the kingship (Burton-Brown, 1905: 96, 100–1).³³ The Lapis Niger find, then, seemed to proffer evidence subverting the

³³ To this list of monuments that indicated Rome in the regal period, Burton-Brown added the artefacts supposedly dating from the time of King Numa that were found in the base of the Column of Domitian (Burton-Brown, 1905: 129–30) and the site of the Lacus Curtius, the pit into which, according to some ancient sources, Curtius threw himself in an act of self-sacrifice that saved Rome from its enemies (Burton-Brown, 1905: 131).

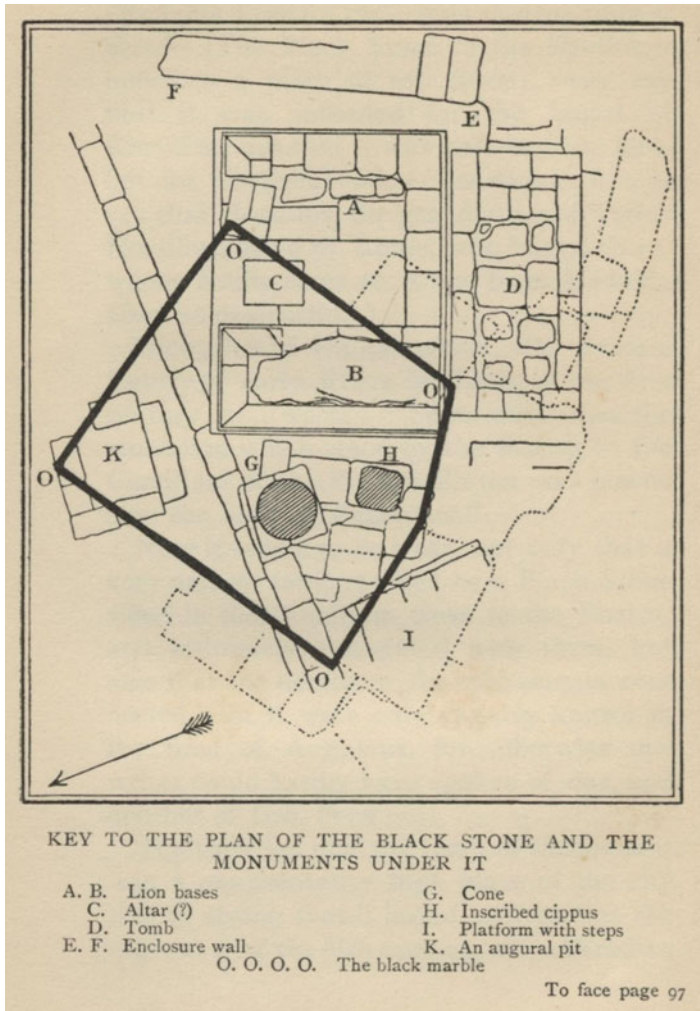


Fig. 7 Plan and 'Key to the Plan of the Black Stone and the Monuments under it'. From E. Burton-Brown (1905) *Recent Excavations in the Roman Forum, 1898–1905: A Handbook*. London, John Murray, facing page 97.

arguments of the hypercritical school across Europe, which denied the actuality of the characters of Rome's foundation stories. For her part, Burton-Brown outlined passages from ancient literature, including those from Festus, which underpinned an interpretation of the finds as evidence of a historical kingship (Burton-Brown, 1905: 93–6).

Two subsequent chapters discuss the Rostra Vetera and the Forum of Julius Caesar (Chs 9 and 10, respectively). The Rostra Vetera, so called because it was the most ancient of its kind, was a marble stage often associated with the plebeians' strife for political power. The platform was thought to have been destroyed when Julius Caesar built above it. However, Boni believed its location was marked by a row of low arched cells to the southwest of the Forum

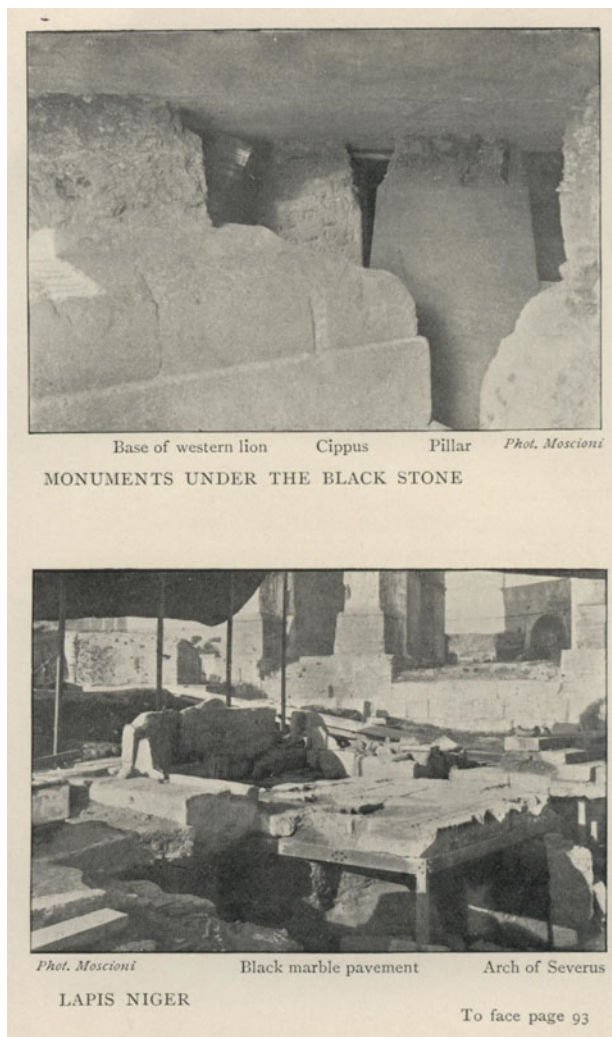


Fig. 8 ‘Monuments under the Black Stone’, and ‘Lapis Niger’, photographs by Romualdo Moscioni. From E. Burton-Brown (1905) *Recent Excavations in the Roman Forum, 1898–1905: A Handbook*. London, John Murray, facing page 93.

(Fig. 9), although as Burton-Brown reveals, this was not a universally accepted opinion (Burton-Brown, 1905: 111–15). She then describes Boni’s stratigraphic probes in Julius Caesar’s Forum. They revealed the location of a network of underground tunnels created to cater for a great number of games and theatrical events enacted in that political space (Burton-Brown, 1905: 127–9). The back-to-back chapters on these two monuments – the Rostra Vetera and Caesar’s Forum with its underground tunnels – highlighted the alteration in the use of the Forum, from the serious business of governance during the Republic to the frivolous pursuit of entertainment that was instituted at the dawn of the Empire.

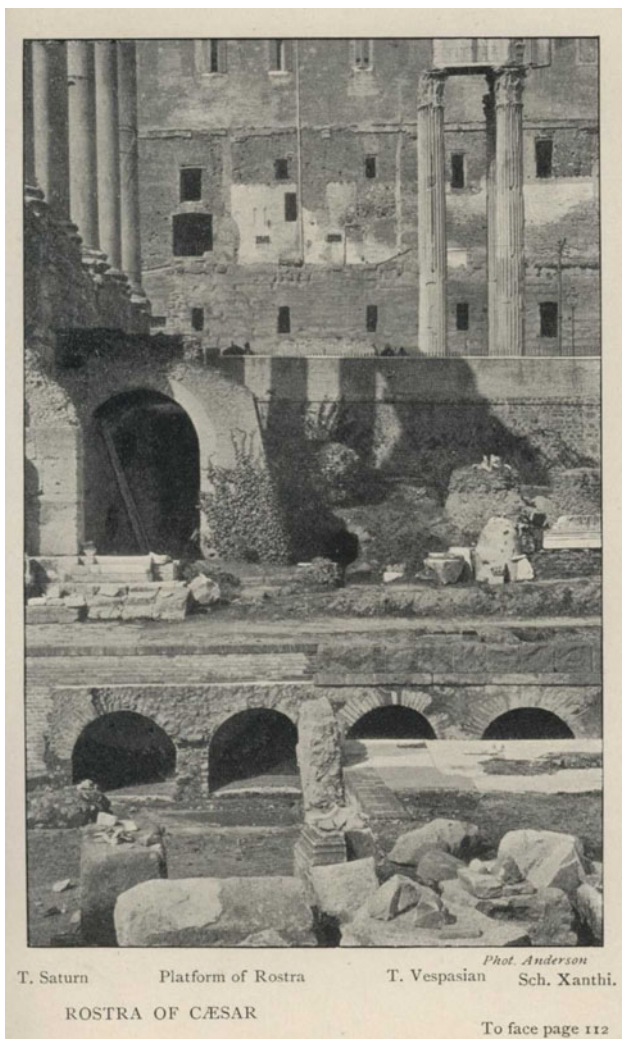


Fig. 9 ‘Rostra of Caesar’, photograph by Domenico Anderson. From E. Burton-Brown (1905) *Recent Excavations in the Roman Forum, 1898–1905: A Handbook*. London, John Murray, facing page 112.

THE NECROPOLIS, OR THE PRIMITIVE TOMBS (CH. 11)

The excavation of dozens of very ancient tombs found in the area to the east of the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina was begun in late 1902 and completed by January 1905. Boni was delayed in publishing the lengthy results; when he did give Burton-Brown a complete set of notes, she issued the second edition of the handbook with revelations about the great number of the discovered graves (Burton-Brown, 1905: 154, 159–60). She provides scientific descriptions of the highly diverse tombs – cremations and inhumations, in pit tombs and in hut urns, under stones and in coffins of hollowed oak-tree trunks. About ten of the

tombs were dated from the thirteenth through to the seventh century BC, and an equal number were dated later; they occupied different stratigraphic layers (Burton-Brown, 1905: 149–52). Like Boni, Burton-Brown did not attempt to derive any larger understanding from the disparate types of burials there; in fact, Boni did not fully publish on these tombs himself, leaving the task to Burton-Brown (Ammerman, 2016a: 300 n. 23, 302–4; Ammerman, 2016b: 148).

Burton-Brown reveals that Boni's impetus to dig deeply at this site was not based on any literary clues, as was the search in the area of the Lapis Niger, but rather on an intuition derived in part from anthropological speculations. He and Luigi Pignorini (1842–1927) advocated exploring this area. Pignorini was an archaeologist who combined various emerging disciplines of the day – anthropology, geology, palaeontology – to pioneer research of Bronze-Age Italy (Burton-Brown, 1905: 149; Pizzato, 2015; Consolato, 2022: 232–6). Already before 1890, some evidence had been found that proved that prehistoric settlements had been established in the hills around the Forum. It was likely that the early settlers, like their descendants the Latins, would have buried their dead along roads that led down from the hill villages. Boni and Pignorini reasoned that prehistoric tombs might be found where such roads existed, i.e., where the spurs of the Quirinal, Viminal, Cespian and Esquiline descend to a lower area. This was at the north edge of the Roman Forum, close to the site where the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina was subsequently constructed (Burton-Brown, 1905: 149–51). No evidence of the roads, which may have helped make sense of the necropolis, was discovered.

Burton-Brown's final chapters include one on the Via Sacra (ch. 11), which Boni exposed to an earlier level. He traced its path eastward then southward towards the slope of the Palatine Hill (Burton-Brown, 1905: 163–80). Various structures were found in the process, although their identification as a prison or as Republican houses and shops was not fully accepted by scholars. Burton-Brown finally returns the visitor to the tour's starting point, near the Byzantine Church of Santa Maria Antiqua with its stunning frescoes which were revealed beneath the demolished Santa Maria Liberatrice (Burton-Brown, 1905: 181–210). It is the one anomaly in a book dedicated in the main to Boni's excavations of early Roman monuments.

EXPOSING THE EARLY ROMANS AND REVEALING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BURTON-BROWN AND BONI

A recurrent theme of the book is that the monuments of Rome dating from the prehistoric through most of the Republican age manifest the character of the city's early inhabitants. At various points throughout the text, Burton-Brown refers to the classical literature that relates these early people's actions – e.g., the kings' creation of lasting state institutions, the Vestal Virgins' or Flamines' performance of their sacred state duties, the Republican soldiers' military battle against the tyrannical monarchy at Lake of Regillus and the plebeians' demand

for power from the patricians – while the reader encounters material evidence in the Roman Forum evocative of these actions. She states that the inhabitants were rough, and sometimes cruel, but they were also strong and self-disciplined, more so than other ancient peoples, such as the Greeks. Their sustained ability to deny the self for the survival of the whole was at the root of the Romans' lasting political greatness (Burton-Brown, 1905: 7–8). In this, Burton-Brown displays an anthropological viewpoint, one progressively adopted among some scholars in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and one recently occupying Boni's thoughts.

Sir James George Frazer was no doubt a source for many ideas about the religious beliefs and rituals of prehistoric people that appear in Burton-Brown's handbook. Frazer (1854–1941) was a pioneering Scottish thinker, and since 1879 a Fellow of Classics at Cambridge University.³⁴ He was among those who shaped the discipline of anthropology and most intensely the study of comparative religions. Burton-Brown acknowledged her reliance on Frazer as a point of pride in the advertisements for her lectures in the Forum (Fig. 2).³⁵ Frazer and his wife were in Rome in late December 1900 to late February 1901, where he met both Boni and Burton-Brown.³⁶ Boni gave them various tours of the Forum, and Frazer listened to Boni lecture on the Fons Juturnae at the American School. Boni, the Frazers and the Burton-Browns were gathered together several times at dinners and social events in early 1901.³⁷

Frazer's research of the religious beliefs and rituals of early peoples was published in his now-famous *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. Issued just before his visit to Rome, the book was an expanded edition of an earlier ground-breaking text of 1890 of a similar title.³⁸ In it, he noted how many early cultures responded to their natural environment, and specifically how they venerated the forces and cycles of nature in their rituals. Burton-Brown's sympathy with Frazer's ideas was fuelled by her travels in Northern India where she encountered the legacy of Vedic myths and rituals and she developed a sustained interest in Naga culture. In fact, she discussed

³⁴ For a biography of Frazer, with analyses of his various editions of *The Golden Bough*, see Ackerman, 1987.

³⁵ NLS Murray, fol. 88. She may have known him from Cambridge, where their tenures overlapped. He had entered his fourth five-year term as a Title A, or teaching, Fellow of Classics the year before she arrived at university.

³⁶ TrinCol Frazer, fol. 1r, fol. 2r, fol. 2v, fol. 3r, fol. 3v, fol. 4r, fol. 7r., fols 7v–8r, fol. 11r, fol. 12r, fol. 13r, fol. 14v, fol. 15v, fol. 17r, fol. 18r, fol. 18v, 19v. In short, the Frazers met Boni eighteen times during their stay in Rome. I thank Rebecca Hughes, Assistant Archivist, for her assistance in locating these documents.

³⁷ TrinCol Frazer, fol. 12r (also in attendance were Baddeley and the Nortons, Steed and Madame Rose); fol. 15v (only the Burton-Browns, the Frazers and Boni); fol. 17r, including the Nortons; fol. 19r, including Miss Harrison, Steed and Madame Rose.

³⁸ In December 1900, when Frazer was in Rome, he had just issued Frazer, 1900; it was a revised version of the first edition, which had been issued with a different title, as *The Golden Bough: A Study of Comparative Religion*, 2 vols., 1890. Thereafter, Frazer issued an expanded third volume, which appeared in twelve volumes from 1906–15.

Naga burial customs with Frazer, who was eager to learn about them (TrinCol Frazer, fol. 10v). Boni's interest in Frazer's ideas seems to have developed after the scholar's visit to Rome. Frazer had given Boni a copy of the book in January 1901, and the archaeologist soon thereafter cited it in his notes on the Regia and the *Hastae Martis*, and specifically in a passage about the *Equus October*, the archaic Roman ritual of horse sacrifice (TrinCol Frazer, fol. 5v; Carnabuci, 2012: 52). The annual sacrifice was performed at the altar of Mars in gratitude for the previous agricultural season.

Thus, Burton-Brown was conversant with Frazer's broad understanding of early cultures, something she shared with Boni. In her handbook, she applies some of these ideas to the early inhabitants of Rome. She noted that they embodied the worship of the powers of nature – water, fire, earth – in their religious rituals. The early shrines in the Forum, e.g., the Fons Juturnae, the hearth in the *Aedes Vestae* and the shrine to *Ops Consiva* in the Regia, are evidence of this. Another testimony to the archaic Romans' worship of nature, according to Burton-Brown, is the manner in which they orientated their buildings in the Forum. The structures are positioned so that the perimeter outline is aligned to the cardinal directions. This orientation acknowledged the movement of the sun in the heavens. Examples include the spring of Juturna (distinct from the later Fons, which was built in the early Empire), the old *Aedes Vestae*, the Regia and even some of the chambers under the Lapis Niger. Attesting to the antiquity of such a practice in Italy, Burton-Brown relates that, in assessing the early manifestation of the Fons Juturnae, Pignornini noted that he had seen similar arrangements in the prehistoric Terramare settlements in northern Italy, whose excavations he was overseeing (Burton-Brown, 1905: 22). Overall, the early buildings in the Forum sit at a near 30-degree shift from the orientation implemented in late-Republican and Imperial times.³⁹ These later builders responded to the topographic features that defined the Forum's boundaries (Burton-Brown, 1905: 45–56, 124–5). Thus, she implies that the early Romans' embodiment of nature's forces in the Forum's design was rejected by later Romans for the purpose of convenience and practicality. Instead, late-Republican and Imperial builders positioned new structures with efficiency of construction and ease of access in mind.

Furthermore, Burton-Brown notes that there were not any simulacra of Juturna, *Ops Consiva* or even Quirinus, and there was probably none of Vesta, adorning the early shrines in the Forum (Burton-Brown, 1905: 38). Frazer had noted that this was a feature of early religions. Thus, Burton-Brown highlighted the fact that sacred beings honoured and commemorated in early Rome, who were essentially manifestations of nature's powers, had no figural representation. The Romans only later adopted the practice of representing deities in human form after their association with the ancient Greeks.

³⁹ The sole exception of a pre-Imperial building that was not constructed to respond to the celestial heavens is the Tabularium, which was built into the Capitoline Hill.

With Frazer's notion of the uncomplicated practices of traditional cultures in mind, Boni considered the early Romans, those of Latin origins. Searching for their ancestors, he sought an early people who were comparable to them. He found them in the Aryans, who had been identified by scholars in the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century as originating from Northern India and flourishing during the transformative Vedic period. They were understood to live by pure and rigorous moral codes and to engage in simple forms of religious worship. Burton-Brown points to the striking similarities between the religious beliefs of the Aryans and those of the early Romans. An adoration of the oak was a commonality, since the tree was associated with the divine powers of the sky and of thunder. She notes that such trees were planted near the chambers of the *Aedes Vestae* that held the state's relics, along a path that ascended to the Palatine Hill (Burton-Brown, 1905: 38, 150). Notably, she recalls that Romulus was linked to Quirinus in early Rome; the etymology of the Italian word for oak tree is found in the name of this god. Significantly, she does not express an idea that Boni would embrace in his published and unpublished writings post 1901, i.e., that the Aryans were distant relatives of the early Romans.⁴⁰ Believing in the Aryan ancestry of the Italic people was not unique to Boni. For example, Pignorini also ascribed to this idea and hoped to prove that the Terramare villagers were the ancestral link between the Aryan migrants in Europe and the early Latin settlers in Rome (Tea, 1932, 2: 138–40; Consolato, 2022: 232–4).

As is well known, claims of Aryan ancestry evolved in tandem with racist ideas about the superiority or purity of a blood line. Scholars have noted that identification of common racial roots served the same function as nationalism, i.e., to flatten out differences among a people, and thus to enforce cultural conformity. This indeed was the aim of the Nazi embrace of Aryanism in the early 1930s (Gillette, 2002: 3–7). At the turn of the century, however, many European thinkers were claiming Aryans as ancestors, with various implications to their arguments (Gillette, 2002: 18–31). In Italy, no one point of view emerged from the varied and heated opinions, and hence there was no concerted shaping of a national attachment to an Aryan ancestry. Instead, in the first decade of the twentieth century, the discussion highlighted differences between those of Northern Italy and their fellow citizens in the South. In the 1920s and 1930s, Aryanism was not a major factor in crafting racist policies in Italy.⁴¹ However, in light of the archaeologist's embrace of Fascist ideologies by 1923, Boni's fascination with the Aryans garnered some wary attention in the literature soon after his death in 1926 (Consolato, 2022: 2–26).

⁴⁰ Boni, 1901b: 43, likens the Aryans to the early Romans, and posits the theory that Roman aristocratic families are derived from the Aryan race; see Alteri, 2021: 71–2. See also Consolato, 2022: 227–36, 263–5. Boni suggested that the ancient Britons were Aryan (Consolato, 2022: 263) on the evidence of sacred cults related to the oak; Burton-Brown does not engage with this idea.

⁴¹ Gillette, 2002: 13–31. By 1936, having ceded to Nazi demonization of the non-Aryan Jew, the Fascist government implemented plans to persecute the Jews in Italy.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Boni's desire to have clarity on the early Romans' character, beliefs and rituals fuelled his attraction to the concept of Italians' Aryan ancestry. This search for early Romans' progenitors spurred him on to excavate their visual evidence in the face of slim, contradictory, and – among the hypercritical school – discredited ancient textual sources. In addition, Boni's line of inquiry into the Aryan people was in sync with his predilection to explore the mystical practices of other cultures, such as the Celts, whom he also believed were descendants of Aryans (Consolato, 2022: 236–9; Tomassetti, 2008: 244–5). His fascination with the arcane and the irrational is something which many Boni scholars have noted as an aspect of his personality seemingly at odds with his dedication to scientific innovation in archaeology (De Cristofaro, 2023). By 1923, with Mussolini's ascent to power, Boni had reframed his focus on early Romans, the *Prisci Latini*, de-emphasizing any Aryan ancestry and instead embracing the general idea that modern Italians descended from an Italic culture that was pure and robust.⁴² He advocated that the state institute neopagan Italic rituals such as the *Lupercalia*, an ancient ceremony of purification, in order for Italians to reconnect with these roots and thus transform their culture and unify their nation (Consolato, 2022: 340; Salvatori, 2021: 102–4).

For Burton-Brown's part, she did not declare the Aryan roots of the early Romans; she would not have had the same cultural engagement with the claim as had Boni. Nonetheless, she elaborated on the similarities between the two ancient peoples (Burton-Brown, 1905: 38). With her interest in anthropology, she surely was aware of recent British studies on the Aryans which regarded the subject very differently from the Italians. For example, some scholars sought evidence of Aryan ancestry among groups of people in the British colonies, including those inhabiting Northern India, and the Irish, the descendants of the Celts (Ballantyne, 2001; Mantena, 2010; Tomassetti, 2008: 244). This literature elaborated upon the Aryan's stellar characteristics, which, as moral turpitude set in over time, devolved into less stellar ones (Ballantyne, 2001: 41–55; Mantena, 2010: 54–6). With this understanding of the Aryan, then, some British thinkers justified cultural dominance over the descendants of such admirable yet situationally flawed groups of people. Thus, the academic study of Aryanism underwrote and supported British colonial policy. As the twentieth century progressed, however, scholarly discussion about the Aryan became so varied as to be of limited value in shaping Imperial British ideology (Ballantyne, 2001: 54–5, 62–8).

Boni and Burton-Brown were not alone in their attempt to articulate a clear characterization of the early Romans, or *Prisci Latini*; indeed, the search for their nature was a handful of decades old, fed by information from the developing disciplines of prehistoric archaeology and anthropology (Guidi,

⁴² Gillette, 2002: 24. In Italy in general, the idea of the Aryan was on the wane. Also see Steed, 1925: 308; the British journalist made light of the idea that Boni would believe in the existence of the Aryan.

2010). However, for Boni and Burton-Brown, the task required distinguishing the material culture of the early Romans in the Forum from that of their descendants, those of the late Republic and the Empire. Later Roman religious beliefs and customs were modified over time as imperial troops encountered and conquered other cultures, and Burton-Brown notes that this was something that was a factor in the Empire's moral decline. She articulates this idea as she analyses some monuments in the Forum, characterizing some first-century BC buildings as more frivolous in terms of their function than those of earlier centuries. Unserious structures intended to distract the citizenry from the business of governance include the tunnels for stage machinery beneath the new Comitium. In a similar vein, the new structures were designed to erase the memory of the old. The new Rostra of Julius Caesar, and even the Temple of Divus Julius, were situated to obliterate a view of the Regia and the Temple of Vesta, buildings of an old regime that embodied sacred beliefs.

Boni felt the structures of the Imperial period in the Forum evoked a vision of a decrepit and romantic Rome that was in opposition to the idea of Italy's modernity (Namer, 2019: 57). More pragmatically, he wanted to remove them, if warranted, so that he could explore beneath them. For example, while exposing early historical layers in the inner chambers of the Regia, Boni determined to take the adjacent Via Sacra down to a level that he believed was its original path (Fortini and Taviani, 2014). He undertook this destruction even as his superiors in the government expressed their disapproval of his action (Ammerman, 2016a: 299). Despite the fame that this excavation campaign generated when the archaic necropolis was found nearby, Boni faced repercussions. Soon after 1905, he was removed from his duties in the Forum and redirected towards the well-worn Palatine Hill excavations; this explains the *terminus ante quem* of Burton-Brown's handbook. However, his brilliance in advancing the technological aspect of archaeology buoyed his reputation, after his work for the state, into the early years of Fascist Italy. In 1923, Boni's larger motivation to foreground archaic over Imperial Rome, was made clear. As a newly appointed Senator of the State, he spoke of the purity of the symbols and the rituals of the early Romans and advocated their adaptation in modern times. These, he felt, would renew and galvanize Italian culture and transform the state; this was a goal he shared with the Fascists (Consolato, 2022: 196–212).⁴³

According to Burton-Brown, the alterations of the Forum's built environment at the end of the Republic and into the Empire were clearly a symptom of an unwelcome cultural shift. She noted that as the Empire eventually became 'riddled with foreign importations', it 'went slowly to pieces' (Burton-Brown, 1905: 7–8). The Roman people, lacking uniformity in their beliefs because of the diversity in the population, were 'not interested in fighting for principles of

⁴³ Boni died in 1925 and did not face the disappointment that those who were advocates of neopaganism as a part of Fascist state policy did in 1929, when Mussolini signed the Lateran Treaty with the Vatican, thus restoring connections with the Catholic Church.

law and rule' (Burton-Brown, 1905: 120). Here she echoes current scholarship on the decline of the Roman Empire. Pointing to the influx of foreign influences as a culprit for the fall of Rome was a scholarly exercise that long predated Boni and Burton-Brown (Malik, 2019: 40–3). Indeed, even some ancient Roman authors indicated this as the reason for the decline in the Empire. The seminal scholarly work in Britain on the topic was Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–89). Gibbon noted one of the contributions to the deterioration of the state was the entrance of barbarians into Roman society, and specifically through their service in the military. Another was the infiltration of Christianity, brought to the centre of the Empire from the provinces; its moral codes were not in alliance with those of the Roman state (Jordan, 1971: 213–30).

To this well-established idea about the ruined state of late Rome, Burton-Brown adds one more comment. She claims that the Empire admirably persisted for so long because it had strong foundational institutions (Burton-Brown, 1905: 8–9). This contradicts part of Gibbon's thesis, that the Roman Empire was flawed from its beginnings. Her statement about enduring foundations is certainly in keeping with Boni's ideas. However, her nod to the persistence of the Roman state into the Imperial period, even as it was enfeebled by its successes, is noteworthy. It suggests Burton-Brown's awareness of current scholarship about the Empire. Such ideas were just then being advanced by Francis Haverfield (1860–1919), a disciple of Gibbon's ideas, the architect of the discipline of the archaeology of ancient Britain and, by 1907, a professor of ancient history at Oxford University (Hingley, 2000: 12–14).

Haverfield was in Rome in April 1898 to witness the recent Lapis Niger discovery (Hodges, 2000: 23–4). Haverfield met Boni in the Forum, and perhaps he also made the acquaintance of Burton-Brown at this time. He certainly knew Thomas Ashby Jr., who was his pupil and to whom he introduced Boni. He was himself a pupil of the renowned German historian Theodor Mommsen (1817–1903), Boni's ally in acknowledging the historicity of archaic Rome (Smith, 2012: 304–5; Consolato, 2022: 95). In 1905, as Burton-Brown's second edition of the handbook was issued, Haverfield published his famous text *The Romanisation of Roman Britain*, based on an earlier lecture (Haverfield, 1905). It elaborates on the way the Roman Empire governed and acculturated the ancient Britons to their benefit. In addition to this pioneering claim, he suggested certain affinities between the ancient Roman Empire and modern-day Britain. Haverfield's focus on the ancient Roman Empire developed at a moment when Britain was concerned about the diminishing of its own Empire. In the early twentieth century, the British Empire was near its largest in terms of territory, was stretched broadly across the globe and encompassed a great diversity of peoples; also at this time, other European powers had emergent and competing imperial aspirations (Rogers and Hingley, 2020: 201–3). In this climate, Haverfield related how the Roman Empire could serve as a model for Britain, not in all matters, but particularly in the way it governed the 'foreigners' in its imperial lands (Rogers and Hingley, 2020: 206–7; Ellis, 2023).

In Haverfield's way of thinking, British imperial control was not only justified but conscionable. With enduring political institutions, themselves inherited from the ancient Romans, the British were responsibly caring for those in its territories. Otherwise, society in the provinces, such as in India, would devolve to anarchy. His thesis had great sway in Britain at the time. Unlike Gibbon, then, Haverfield offered early twentieth-century scholars a reason to investigate the strengths of the ancient empire. Indeed, the study of Classics, including Roman history, was encouraged as part of the larger British nationalist project (Hingley, 2000, 52–3; Mantena, 2010; Ellis, 2023). Burton-Brown does not articulate any of these ideas in her handbook. However, her encouragement to the publisher to distribute the handbook to schools in Britain, then growing in number, is a symptom of this timely cultural attitude. Her handbook not only described the recent discoveries of ancient Rome but placed them within a rich historical context, and thus was a solid contribution to classical learning in Britain.

CONCLUSION

Burton-Brown's handbook on Boni's excavations offered a highly readable and detailed explanation of the finds from a scientific point of view while also providing a substantial historical context replete with relevant references to classical literature and anthropological studies. The circumstances of the creation of her handbook are noteworthy, given her biography. She was a late nineteenth-century, middle-class British woman whose passion for academic learning earned her an education from Girton College. Her personal fortunes provided her with the opportunity to travel through Northern India, then part of the British Empire, a situation that introduced her to the newly developing academic disciplines of the day, specifically anthropology. Life circumstances also placed her in the Forum with Boni from 1898 to 1904, as an eyewitness to extraordinary archaeological excavations that revealed evidence of early Rome. They also thereafter required her return to Britain where she engaged in a career in education and thus ended further professional engagement with the archaeology of Rome.

Burton-Brown's handbook exposes Boni's attitudes about the finds, especially his beliefs regarding the praiseworthy quality of the early Romans as evident in their remains in the Forum, as distinct from those of the less desirable later Romans. In that sense, Burton-Brown provides us with a cogent and holistic view of Boni's beliefs that cannot be found elsewhere in print at this time. But she is not a mere mouthpiece of Boni's ideas. On issues such as the Aryan ancestry of the earliest inhabitants of the Roman Forum, and the value of studying and learning from the history of Imperial Rome, the two diverge. In the divergence lie their differing life circumstances, personal motivations and ideological leanings. Burton-Brown showcased her scholarly and educational prowess, well-earned in late nineteenth-century Britain. Her text reveals the British ideology which she inherited as part of an Imperial culture, i.e., that

modern-day Britain had much to learn from the ancient Roman Empire. This is in contradistinction to Boni.

Boni was an outsider to the community of classical archaeologists whose work in the Forum he inherited, and whose scrutiny he begrudgingly tolerated during his tenure as director in the Forum. In his excavations, he employed new scientific methods of stratigraphic analysis, rather than the traditional skill of philology, privileging knowledge of the sciences over Classics. His focus was to find the material remains of the early Romans, a people murkily described in ancient texts, and thus to reveal a history of Rome which the classical archaeologists to date could not.

To Boni, the most ancient Romans were admirable in their beliefs and behaviour. As a man with a penchant for a belief in the mystical, Boni settled on the idea that if the Italian state revitalized some of the neopagan rituals of the early ancient Romans, it would transform Italy into a culturally pure and strongly unified nation. In short, Boni's archaeological activity of 1898 to 1905 led to his ideation of a new Italian nationalism that, although it had some affinity to early Fascist ideology, was uniquely his own. Burton-Brown's text provides some insight into how this came to be.

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Abbreviations/primary Sources

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| GirtCol Registry | = Cambridge, Girton College Printed Register. |
| NLS Murray | = Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Archive and Manuscript Division. Archive of John Murray, publisher, correspondence with Ethel Ann Burton-Brown, MS. 40155. |
| TrinCol Frazer | = Cambridge, University of Cambridge, Trinity College Library. Papers of Sir James Frazer Archives, <i>Journey of Stay in Rome</i> , FRAZ 34/12. |
| UCLSP | = Cambridge, University of Cambridge Library, Special Collections. |

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