

Chapter 2

Fascism in the Desert

A Microcosmic View of Archaeological Politics

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It is arguable whether or not the foreign policy of a dictatorship can be more extreme than that of democracies. Depending upon the nature of the particular dictatorship, foreign policy might be more volatile than consistent, subject to the whims of the individual ruler. While imperialism has certainly been supported by democracies, it can neatly suit the needs of a dictator: he can encourage popular support at home with a policy of imperialistic aggression while inflicting the effects on innocent neighbors, whom he need only conquer or suppress.

Archaeology is an especially useful tool for analyzing the phenomenon of dictatorial imperialism because its activities are more dependant than most other disciplines on supplementary funding, at least in the humanities, and the source of the funding can have a direct bearing on the results desired and achieved. Conversely, archaeology abroad as an example of imperialistic policies back home may reflect not only a dictator's foreign policy, but also the nature of its evolution over time. In the efforts of Italian archaeologists to see themselves in foreign countries, they fit Trigger's definition of imperial archaeologists (Trigger, 1984:363–368).

It is the purpose of this study to examine the effects of funding, as a reflection of fascist foreign policy, on one excavation in particular, that being the Graeco-Roman site of Tebtunis in the Egyptian desert south of the Fayyum basin south west of Cairo, directed by Carlo Anti of the University of Padua. Recently two sets of archives have come to light belonging to the field director of the excavations, Gilbert Bagnani, and these will be utilized to contextualize this new information within a framework of recently published records from the state archives, and to illustrate the relationship between excavations and state policy as manifested

through funding. In addition, other references in the Bagnani archives to fascist activities in Egypt will be included in the discussion.

In *Archeologia e Mare Nostrum*, Marta Petricioli contextualized Italian overseas activities within the framework of Italian foreign policy from 1900 to 1945. The Italian Foreign Ministry was not actively offering financial support for archaeological endeavors abroad, which had been started by various private individuals, until a concession granted to the Americans at Cyrene in 1910 spurred them to establish a fixed sum of 50,000 gold lire annually in support of archaeological missions, initially in territories in the disintegrating Ottoman Empire (Petricioli, 1990:409–413). In this context, archaeology was merely being used as one of the tools to implement the aims of Italian foreign policy, the so-called “peaceful penetration of the Mediterranean” (Petricioli, 1986:20).

New, however, were the energization, systemization, and centralization of such efforts by the fascists within a coherent policy. For example, the Dante Alighieri societies were fascistized in order to be a useful tool to empower the Italian schools and facilitate cultural excursions of Arab students to Italy (Quartararo, 1980:219). In 1933 an Italian Institute of Oriental Studies and an Arab Academy were instituted (Quartararo, 1980:224). Nonetheless, this activist approach still lacked specific goals, “intrigues without purpose” as the British Foreign Office concluded (Quartararo, 1980:42–45).

New, also, were the fascists’ emphasis on *Romanità*, and their pressing need for visible results. “During at least the first decade of the twentieth century aspects of classical Roman history were often used metaphorically for the propaganda of conservative and reactionary ideas in the press and political debates” (Visser, 1992:7), but the focus and emphasis on *Romanità* became a central tenet of fascist propaganda. In fascist mythology, the empire of Rome was native to Italy and was being reestablished by Mussolini, the modern counterpart of the first emperor Augustus. In both cases, the city of Rome became the capital of the whole peninsula only a few generations after wars had been fought to unite Italy. Moreover, it emphasized the ruling nature of Rome, both ancient and modern, over neighboring lands. As well, new forms of government (both covert dictatorships initially) had been instituted in Rome to administer the newly acquired imperial territories. So the concept of Rome could be used as a new unifying force to encourage support for the government and its policies.

While several writers have considered *Romanità* as a cult (Visser, 1992: 5–22), one demonstrable manifestation of dictatorship can be the cult of the ruler himself, and the historical coincidence of the two dictators enabled the concept of *Romanità* to be exploited as effectively as it was. The state propaganda of *Romanità* made explicit a connection between the ancient Roman Empire as set up by Augustus, and the new Empire being set up by Mussolini; it camouflaged the fact, easily forgotten today, that Mussolini was only the head of the government and

King Victor Emanuel remained the head of state with considerable constitutional powers.

The ramifications of this policy were tangible. In an age before electronic mass media, Mussolini spread his propaganda through journals (Mussolini had been a journalist himself), mass spectacles (Schnapp, 1996), and exhibitions, and for these media concrete symbols of ancient Rome were invaluable. For example, the Ara Pacis, an ancient propagandistic monument celebrating the peace brought by Augustus, was excavated in a great feat of fascist engineering and reconstructed, though surrounded by fascist symbols of war (Kostof, 1978:270–325). The Romanità policy was so culturally specific that it privileged one archaeological stratum to the detriment of any others, and classical archaeologists were in the forefront of those deriving benefits from its excavation, reconstruction and popular interest at exhibitions (Guidi, 1996:113).

The propagandistic need to display ancient monuments as soon as possible required hasty clearance (“topographical excavation” to use Carlo Anti’s phrase) to expose the predecessors of their modern counterparts, which they in turn inspired, both at home and abroad. Expositions like the 1938 bimillenary of Augustus, organized by the fascist Etruscologist, Giulio Quirino Giglioli, emphasized the continuity between the old and the new Roman empires, and revealed to the fascists the potential of Ostia, the ancient harbor and presumed visible image of Rome and a model for the new distinctively native Italian architecture; as a result, a great deal of this site was cleared in four years in preparation for a planned international exposition in 1942 (Gessert, 2003).

A brief background to the Italian presence in Egypt may be useful. The prevalence of Venetian and Genoese merchants had made Italian the lingua franca of the East before Napoleon’s expedition, and Italian was still the language of commerce in Alexandria and the Cairo stock exchange. The colony of about 60,000, second only to that of the Greeks, included bankers, professionals, engineers, and merchants; many of these were Masons who initially resisted being attracted into the “fasces” at Alexandria and Cairo (Crider, 1978:85). Fascist foreign policy was a continuation of their predecessors’ expansionist efforts, the so-called “peaceful penetration of the Mediterranean” through commercial or cultural means. The foreign minister, Dino Grandi, directed Italian ambassadors not to limit themselves to official functions but to “stay in close contact with the emigrant masses” (Segre, 1988:206). As the Cairo correspondent for *The Times* wrote on the occasion of the royal visit to Egypt in 1933:

Everywhere the Italian consuls are actively interesting themselves in the affairs of the countries in which they are posted, in order to miss no opportunity of making Italian influence felt; everywhere Italian agents and travelers are energetically pushing Italian business well supported by the Italian banks. The Italian Government is very liberal in its support of Italian schools, realizing,

as the British Government apparently does not, that if trade follows the flag that flag can be shown just as effectively in a classroom or over a school building as in a battleship. All through the countries of the Near East the Italian Government endeavours to attract students to Italy by offering them greatly reduced fares in Italian vessels, and the remission of their first year's fees at Italian schools and universities. ("Italy," 1933:13)

Thus Grandi was actively implementing the old policy of "peaceful penetration," and the establishment of Italian schools in Egypt open to all was not entirely altruistic, despite Anti's disingenuous claim to the contrary (Anti, 1933a:550).

Although an outstanding early collection of Egyptian antiquities assembled by Bernardino Drovetti had been acquired by King Victor Emmanuel I, forming the nucleus of the collection in the Turin Museum in 1824, Italian excavations in Egypt were not undertaken until 1903 when Ernesto Schiaparelli, the director of the Turin Museum, established the Italian Archaeological Mission financially supported personally by King Victor Emanuel III. Schiaparelli dug intermittently at many sites over the following two decades including in the Valley of the Queens, but most of his excavations were never published and no notes were ever found (Donadoni, Vurti, and Donadoni Roveri, 1990:234–264). Later financial support came from the General Directorate of *Antichità e Belle Arti*, a department of the Ministry of Education. Evaristo Breccia, the Italian director of the Graeco-Roman Museum at Alexandria from 1904 to 1931, explored several sites looking for papyri for the Florentine papyrologist Girolamo Vitelli, and these were supported by the *Accademia dei Lincei*.

In January 1928 the minister of public instruction, Pietro Fedele, initiated the creation of a new standing committee to oversee and coordinate Italian archaeological missions and institutes abroad. This suggestion was welcomed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, which since 1910 had maintained close contacts with the archaeologists working abroad but which only now would begin to demonstrate leadership in directions intended to further its own aims (Petricoli, 1990:289–290). Its undersecretary Dino Grandi was a young lawyer, journalist and leading fascist who was not afraid to have philosophical differences with Mussolini, and who would eventually vote to oust him at the Grand Council meeting of July 1943. As undersecretary since 1925, his decision-making was limited as Mussolini himself was the foreign minister (De Felice, 1982:254–260). Grandi nominated as his Ministry's representative on the new committee the director of political affairs for Europe, Levant, and Africa, Raffaele Guariglia, a career diplomat and radical advocate of aggression in Africa. The other members were the archaeologists Ernesto Schiaparelli, Federico Halbherr, Alessandro Della Seta, Biagio Pace, and Roberto Paribeni, who chaired it from his position as Director General of *Antichità e Belle Arti*. The new committee first met at the Directorate on February 11, 1928. They proposed an allocation of 500,000 lire of which 100,000 was to be split

between Egypt and Transjordan, but the total would require a contribution of 150,000 from Finance which, despite Mussolini's support, it subsequently refused (Petricioli, 1990:290–292).

Upon Schiaparelli's death on February 17, 1928, a new Egyptian mission under the leadership of Carlo Anti was set up to reexamine Schiaparelli's excavations in order to publish them. Anti, however, was a lecturer in classical archaeology at the University of Padua who had excavated at the Greek site of Cyrene in Libya. He was interested in the then fashionable subject of urban planning at a time when the fascists were planning their new towns in Libya and the reclaimed marshes south of Rome. He also explicitly believed that ruins had a political value (Anti, 1933b:315).

By May 1929, the committee was still seeking the 500,000 but this time 250,000 was intended for Egypt alone. In September 1929, Mussolini transferred his portfolio of Foreign Affairs to Grandi, who attempted to attain fascist goals through more diplomatic means than his predecessor. As the new foreign minister Grandi then granted 500,000 from his own cabinet over Finance's opposition (Petricioli, 1990:301), in line with his pro-active foreign policy of peaceful penetration of the Mediterranean, which now included archaeology.

Anti wanted to excavate at Tebtunis, which he believed would reveal a typical agricultural town of the Graeco-Roman period in Egypt, like that of Karanis in the north of the Fayyum then being excavated by the University of Michigan. The site had first been explored for papyri by Grenfell and Hunt in 1899 and then allowed to be plundered for seabakh and papyri until excavations were resumed by Breccia in 1929 for the Florentine papyrologists Girolamo Vitelli and Medea Norsa. Finding disappointingly little that season, Breccia agreed to turn over the concession to Anti on the condition that any papyri permitted to leave Egypt would still go to Florence.

Anti's mission began late because the 100,000 lire of the ordinary allocation was completely insufficient but in January 1930 at Anti's request the ministry had Paribeni send 250,000 in extraordinary funds for the mission, of which Anti received at once another 100,000 lire. This permitted him "to confront two digs, a pharaonic and a Graeco-Roman," respectively at Ghebelein in Upper Egypt and at Umm el Breighat, the ancient Tebtunis in the Fayyum. The pharaonic excavation at Ghebelein was entrusted to Giulio Farina (Petricioli, 1990:380–381) and ran from February until April 1930. In his first season at Tebtunis, from February 15 until May 10, 1930, instead of probing inside all the houses for papyri Anti intentionally had an architect on the site, Fausto Franco, who cleared the streets around the houses to ascertain the town plan. Anti called this method topographical, not stratigraphical, excavation (Anti, 1996:34–38).

By July 1930 he had asked Gilbert Bagnani to assist him at Tebtunis. He had known Bagnani for a decade and the two had worked separately at Cyrene. Bagnani had independent means and never held a salaried position in fascist

Italy. As an academic outsider, he was free to pursue whatever unfashionable or politically incorrect field interested him, such as Egyptology and Coptic monasteries. Indeed, he was to spend much of the following year studying hieroglyphs with Alan Gardiner and examining Egyptian collections in museums. Anti told Bagnani: "What I appreciate in you is your excellent understanding of the needs and conditions of a life in common, not only during the work, but also out of office hours. Also you have excellent organizing gifts and are wonderfully reliable and can foresee almost any eventuality" (11 March 1931).

For 1931 Anti hoped to be able to dig at Ghebelein, Tebtunis and the Valley of the Queens in the following season but the extraordinary grant was not renewed and Farina's work at Ghebelein was postponed. According to Bagnani's letters, the 1931 season was a struggle financially: Paribeni would have held back 60,000 lire if Anti had not already committed to bring out Bagnani. "When I come back I shall have to go up to Turin since Anti has given me some of the material of last season to publish. It is rather a wheeze and will make Farina furious. He is already taking it rather badly that he is not out here this year. [Giulio Farina 1889–1947 succeeded Schiaparelli as director of Turin Museum in 1923.] It is only by luck that I am since at the very last moment Paribeni tried to do Anti out of 60,000 lire and had I not been already about to come out, I might have been stopped. Anti used me on the contrary as a lever with which to get the money back" (19 December 1930). "We are in a very bad way financially, and if we can't get any more money we are going to close the dig on the 20th. . . . Anti hopes to be able to get special funds for the [Valley of the] Queens and keep on Tebtunis on the ordinary funds. In that case I expect we should dig at Tebtunis during December and go up to Luxor in January and start there. In any case we can't do much at Luxor next year since quite half the available cash will go into the house and the Decauville. At Tebtunis next year I have proposed that we build ourselves a couple of big rooms. Tents are not bad just to sleep in but are the devil to live in. We could have one big room as mess and where Anti and I could work and another for Franco who poor devil needs space for his drawings and plans. . . . PS. Paribeni has sent us another 27,000 lire. If you go and see him tell him that it isn't nearly enough and we want another 20,000 as well to finish everything nicely. But we'd accept 10,000 gratefully. In fact we won't sneeze at any sum!" (4 March 1931).

Archaeologically, however, the season was successful beyond their expectations, revealing not only an enormous sanctuary of the oracular crocodile god, but also the remnants of the temple archives. The immediate response to the discovery of the papyri was that "Paribeni, having heard of our discovery of papyri, has sent another 20,000 lire and Anti has got another 10,000 from the University of Padua, with Vitelli's, we have an extra 50,000 lire and are in clover" (20 March 1931). With only 170,000 lire he had increased the equipment of the mission, built a house for the guards, and "carried out a work of enormous excavation, employing in a more intense manner for 85 days an average force of 160 men, so as to be able

to transport about 20,000 cubic meters of sand" (Petricioli, 1990:382). It is significant for us that, although Graeco-Roman in date, the remains of the sanctuary were substantially Egyptian in character.

Throughout the summer of 1931 Anti argued for the resumption of activity in the Valley of the Queens. Schiaparelli's work was unfinished leaving the site resembling a battle field, and the possibilities of important discoveries were great, and Italy was the only country granted a concession there, which would be lost if not acted upon. Using Anti's arguments Guariglia tried in vain to persuade Grandi to give funds for the Valley project; there even were anonymous articles in the *Popolo d'Italia* employing Anti's arguments trying to rouse popular support for their cause, but all the ministries refused (Petricioli, 1990:383–385).

At this time the search was on for a successor to Breccia as the director of the Graeco-Roman Museum at Alexandria. Anti, an active fascist (Isnenghi, 1992:223–239; Manacorda, 1982:451–452) proposed Bagnani but Breccia rejected him because he believed that he was "a snob who affected to speak English, married to a Canadian, presumptuous and antifascist." Another candidate, Doro Levi, was rejected because he was "Jewish, married to a Greek and therefore considered not suitable to hold a position of defense of Italianità" (Petricioli, 1990:390). Bagnani's own comments are enlightening: "Della Seta proposed Levi, but his serious fault is not the Jew but the Greek wife in a place like Alex. . . . I am in a strong position. . . . I think that my not being a fascist, and being half English with an English wife, will count against me" (26 January 1932).

Anti's budget for the 1932 season was half of the previous year's, "in total 98,600 lire between the residue and new allotments. Notwithstanding this, he succeeded in conducting a digging campaign of two months at Tebtunis, built a house for the mission and for twenty days sent Bagnani to the Valley of the Queens, with the objective of obtaining the renewal of that concession also for the following year" (Petricioli, 1990:385). At Tebtunis Anti and Bagnani finished clearing the large sanctuary of sand but found that the limestone temple had been dismantled in antiquity.

Of greater significance for the future of the dig, however, was the fact that they knew that Anti was going to be promoted to being the rector of the University of Padua in October 1932, remaining as director of the dig in name only and leaving Bagnani as acting or field director; not having a formal position in Italy, Bagnani was not qualified to be the actual director. While extensively expanding his university over the next decade, Anti lost interest in pursuing Egyptian excavations.

In July 1932 on the eve of the new financial year, Paribeni renewed his appeals to Grandi to grant another extraordinary contribution to maintain what had been started, as there remained only 133,817.70 lire. In the meantime, feeling increasingly isolated diplomatically, Mussolini became his own foreign minister again in July 1932, sending Grandi as Ambassador to London and, subsequently,

Guariglia to Madrid (Robertson, 1977:21). Guariglia was replaced on the committee by Gino Buti. In September Guariglia asked Mussolini for his opinion about a second extraordinary grant. His memo received a "favorable" margin note by Mussolini himself although Foreign Undersecretary Suvich added a note to economize, which effectively halved the hoped for contribution to 500,000. Of this, 80,000 was allocated for Anti though there was a possibility of reducing this figure because Anti was to be replaced by his assistant Bagnani. Even so, Foreign Undersecretary Suvich was reluctant to release any funds and it is not clear just how much Bagnani did receive for the 1933 season. Also, there was the possibility of some additional funding to cover the costs attendant upon the anticipated visit to Tebtunis by the Italian royal family (Petricioli, 1990:302–303).

The 1933 season began with preparations for the royal visits which primarily involved the construction of a road through the desert to the site and arranging for large ceremonial tents to be set up in place. While there were political reasons for the trip to Egypt as well as promoting further "penetration" with more schools for Egyptians (Quartararo, 1980:216), the visit to the site might reflect a genuine interest on the part of the king, who had personally supported Italian archaeological activity in Egypt during the first years of his reign. Bagnani himself was assigned to escort the lesser royals like Princess Mafalda and her husband, Prince Philip of Hesse, whom he already knew. (As one of the German royals who supported the Nazis, Hitler would use him to communicate Mussolini's acceptance of the Anschluss of Austria in 1938; Mafalda would be captured by the Germans and die at Buchenwald after an allied air raid in 1944.) On board the royal ship at Luxor, while Bagnani was talking with the King, Hesse came in with a telegram about the bombing of the Reichstag in Berlin and said that "nothing could be better for us" (letter from Gilbert Bagnani, Tuesday, 28 February 1933).

After the royal visits to Tebtunis on March 6 and 29, Bagnani decided to excavate the Coptic monastery northeast of the ancient town because it was being dismantled by *sebakhin*. Although one church was covered with wall paintings displayed today in the Coptic museum in Cairo, it elicited no more interest generally than did the demolished houses above Trajan's Forum in Rome; the cult of Romanità could be explicitly anti-oriental (Visser, 1992:20, n. 23). The opposite reaction occurred when Italian newspapers made so much of the evidence for imperial Rome from Jacopi's discoveries at Aphrodisias in Turkey in 1937 that the Turks refused to renew the permit (Petricioli, 1990:354–357).

In regard to missions in the "Levant," Mussolini wrote in the margin of a note of 4 September 1933 "Do not ask for new funds" (Petricioli, 1990:306). The lack of secure funding and the absence of Anti's constant political influence became painfully apparent in the 1934 season. At a meeting of the committee on 2 February 1934, Paribeni announced that the Anti-Bagnani mission in Egypt was financially suspended because as before the annual ordinary contribution had not yet been deposited (Petricioli, 1990:307). To Bagnani's rescue came a

papyrologist bringing privately raised funds from Milan, Achille Vogliano; he had had no previous archaeological or Egyptian experience and arrived at Tebtunis 28 February awaiting the approval of a permit to dig at the nearby site of Medinet Madi. Bagnani had begun the excavation of two large rectangular structures in February but Anti told him to put himself at Vogliano's disposal. So on 4 March 1934 Bagnani resumed digging but started a new excavation notebook which he entitled "Campagna di scavo della R. Università di Milano." Anti had not thought through the ramifications of Vogliano's status as a visitor at Tebtunis, and one can only imagine his chagrin and embarrassment to learn that within the month Bagnani had discovered one of the largest hoards of papyri ever excavated in Egypt, which Vogliano claimed as his own, to the consternation of the Florentine papyrologists Vitelli and Norsa.

Before Bagnani began his next regular season at Tebtunis, there were funds available from Giglioli, who was in charge of the preparations for the upcoming exhibition to commemorate the bimillennium of Augustus, to send Bagnani to make preparations to have a cast made of a relief sculpture at Dendera. The Temple of Hathor had a sculpted relief at the back of Cleopatra and her son by Julius Caesar, Caesarion. In November 1934 Bagnani "went off to Dendera by car with Michel and spent the day there measuring the reliefs and choosing the scenes that are worth reproducing for the Mostra Augustea. I think it will be better if they don't try and get too much but simply one or two really surprising pieces like the Cleopatra and Caesarion which stands over 6 metres high and about 10 in length. Where they will put it God only knows but it would make a wonderful effect in the main hall of the Palazzo dell'Esposizione which is apparently the place they are going to have it. . . . I am sending G.Q. [Giglioli] a long report on the visit together with a collection of photographs. When they decide I suppose they will let me know" (Letter of Friday, 23 November 1934). At the time when the temple was built, Cleopatra was the Pharaoh of Egypt and enemy of Rome, and her son was eventually killed by Augustus as a dangerous rival but, two millennia later, their significance for Rome had changed dramatically: the relief sculpture was now symbolic of the extent of Rome's ancient empire. For this purpose at the fascist exhibition, there were funds available.

Bagnani's selection of this particular relief highlights the political awkwardness of fascist excavations in Egypt: they could never have produced serious visible evidence of Romanità from a civilization that had preceded the Roman Empire by three thousand years. Even if they had discovered standing Roman monuments, like those in their Libyan colonies (Terrenato, 2001:80), these would not have been clearly superior to those of the Egyptians themselves.

Another, though smaller, extraordinary grant totaling 331,000 lire allowed an allocation by Paribeni in November 1934 of 60,000 lire to Bagnani for Tebtunis in the coming season, which was placed in Ambassador Pagliano's account in December (Friday, 7 December 1934). The season lasted from 6 December until

10 April and Bagnani was finally able to construct a Decauville railway to remove the sand to the fringes of the mound and, accordingly, to clear more of the public buildings along the processional avenue leading to the sanctuary. For the rest of the month of April Bagnani organized and began the excavations at Medinet Madi for Vogliano.

At a committee meeting on 22 February, 1935, only 30,000 lire was allocated for Egypt to be split among three excavations for 1936—Farina, Bagnani, and Vogliano (Petricioli, 1990:392). At this same time, however, there was a growing emphasis in Italy on *Italianità* and *Romanità*, visible architecturally (MacDonald, 1982:298–320), as Mussolini and Italy felt increasingly threatened by sanctions from the League of Nations for sending Italian troops to invade Ethiopia. In September Ciano, Mussolini's son-in-law and minister of propaganda, set up the Agency for Egypt and the Orient as a propaganda and spy vehicle with offices in Alexandria and Cairo (Quartararo, 1980:228). By 30 December 1935 Paribeni was able to propose 100,000 for all four missions in Egypt—Monneret, Anti, Vogliano, Farina (Petricioli, 1990:309) and encouraged Anti to return to Tebtunis to deal with some problems that had arisen with Vogliano and his dig at Medinet Madi, and so that the mission to Tebtunis, for which 30,000 lire was allocated, not appear abandoned (Petricioli, 1990:392). Bagnani and his wife had gone to Canada in 1935 because both their mothers (Canadian) had died that year. They returned, however, for one final, brief season, which ran from 26 April to 8 May 1936, as evidenced by the pay sheets receipted with thumb prints. They excavated immediately northwest of the sanctuary and had a second series of aerial photographs taken. The Bagnanis then left Egypt for good, sailing for Greece and moving to Canada.

In practice at the personal level, these were intelligent men prepared to work together despite their political differences. Anti embraced the ideals of fascist ideology wholeheartedly, later becoming the director of the *Antichità e Belle Arti* in the Republic of Salò, but he was unusual if not remarkable in his willingness to promote non-fascists like Bagnani. He also hired the painter Massimo Campigli, well known as Jewish, to create the murals in the faculty of letters building, the Liviano, and promoted the Latinist Concetto Marchesi, although known to the police as anti-fascist (Barbanera, 1998:150). To become the official director of the excavations after Anti's withdrawal, Bagnani would have had to obtain an official position in the Italian administration. Despite his known opposition to fascist policies, he was prepared to sign the fascist oath in 1933 in preparation for this, and subsequently had a fascist card. Nonetheless, he immigrated to Canada in 1936 in order to protect his Canadian assets, which by a decree of December 1934 had to be declared to the Exchange Institute, with conversion into lire obligatory on demand.

Their respective political beliefs may have unconsciously affected their interpretations of what they were finding. When Anti analyzed the urban planning

of Tebtunis, he prioritized the imposition of a Graeco-Roman grid plan on an older Egyptian nucleus, without any archaeological or stratigraphic evidence for his analysis (Anti, 1930:104–106). On the other hand, when Bagnani discovered what he interpreted as a public market building akin to those in Rome, he noted its similarity to the market buildings in old Cairo (Bagnani, 1935:3).¹

This survey of only one of the Egyptian projects undertaken during the Ventennio reveals clearly the pivotal roles played by Grandi and Paribeni. It was Grandi's position as foreign minister that enabled him to include archaeology in his implementation of the policy of peaceful penetration. Within the budgetary constraints imposed by financial considerations Paribeni, as head of *Antichità e Belle Arti* and president of the committee, made the decisions as to which appeals and missions were to receive financial support. As coordinator of the Italian missions abroad from 1919 until 1943, he "outlined the course to be followed based on local and general political conditions, suggested new initiatives, requested and distributed financings, presented budget estimates and final budgets of expenses" all the while enjoying the full support of the Foreign Office (Petricioli, 1990:417). As the proposer of the individual allocations, he had considerable room to maneuver in the actual distribution of the funds, responding with generosity to major discoveries or willing to suspend missions already initiated. His priorities manifested the fascist policy of *Romanità* and, for his many years of devoted work on behalf of the fascist cause, he was dismissed from the *Accademia dei Lincei* in 1945 (Manacorda, 1982:453–454).

So in summary, Anti's excavations at Tebtunis were financed primarily and substantially through the Foreign Ministry, especially under Grandi's leadership ("peaceful penetration"), while the fortuitous discovery of masses of papyri elicited further private funding. Indeed, Tebtunis has provided the greatest number of papyri after Oxyrhynchus (which does not have the excavated archaeological remains to provide a physical context), and the bulk of these papyri belong to the Roman period. Without the discovery of visibly Roman monuments, however, not to mention tangible results of "peaceful penetration," fascist interest and funding in Egypt disappeared. Thus the state had an interest in specific archaeological results (*Romanità*) even beyond its national boundaries, which in turn affected the excavations through declining support. There was a brief resurgence of funding when they still hoped that there would be some propaganda value in demonstrating an Italian presence in Egypt during the Ethiopian crisis, but as this did not seem sufficiently precise or effective for their immediate political purposes, the allocations were allowed to wither away.

The excavations of this very important site ceased without publication for several reasons: the fascist director lost interest in Egypt; the anti-fascist field director held no official position; the site was not demonstrably Roman, but Egyptian; other sites offered more hope of displaying *Romanità*; *Romanità* took on an added significance from 1935; the deepening economic crisis threatened a

governmental takeover of overseas assets, and thus the financial independence, of the field director.

As a note of caution, it should be pointed out that the conclusions of this examination of the relationship of the history of the excavations and the funding and its motivations are inferences based on circumstantial, not explicit, evidence: it was imperialistic Italian foreign policy like “peaceful penetration” that enabled Anti to start the excavation in Egypt, Anti’s fascist interest in town planning that selected the site, and fascist propaganda like *Romanità* that contributed to its demise.

Note

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