

Egypt–Italy Archaeological Cooperation (1981–2011): a Study of Egyptian Newspapers

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Abstract: During the time of the former president, Hosni Mubarak (1981–2011), the Egyptian-Italian relations in general witnessed a great boom and real progress. This development is also reflected in the fruitful archaeological cooperation between the two sides. In this article, I am dealing with the Italian contributions to the development of Egyptian archaeological sites, and to the conservation and restoration activities, as well as the bilateral cooperation in recovering stolen Egyptian antiquities, together with the Egyptian archeological exhibitions hosted by Italy.

Keywords: Egypt-Italy; Archeology; exhibitions; stolen antiquities.

Cooperação Arqueológica Egito-Itália sob o Presidente Mubarak: um Estudo de Jornais Egípcios

Resumo: Durante o tempo do ex-presidente Hosni Mubarak (1981–2011), as relações entre o Egito e a Itália em geral testemunharam um grande boom e um progresso real. Este desenvolvimento também se reflete na frutífera cooperação arqueológica entre as duas partes. Neste artigo, estou lidando com as contribuições italianas para o desenvolvimento de sítios arqueológicos egípcios e para as atividades de conservação e restauração, bem como a cooperação bilateral na recuperação de antiguidades egípcias roubadas, juntamente com as exposições arqueológicas egípcias sediadas na Itália.

Palavras-chave: Egito-Itália; Arqueologia; exposições; antiguidades roubadas.

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Introduction

Archeology represents one of the links of civilized communication between nations, as it is a very important cultural crossing point that people use to establish relations with others. Italian archeology missions in Egypt have contributed effectively to discover the history of the Egyptian civilization and its magic past. According to the Italian Ambassador to Cairo, Maurizio Massari (2013–2016): „Italian passion with Egyptology dates back to the 19th century, to the discoveries of Ippolito Rosellini^{II} between 1828 and 1829.” During the time of the former president, Hosni Mubarak^{III} (1981–2011), the Egyptian-Italian relations in general witnessed a great boom and real progress. This development is also reflected in the fruitful archaeological cooperation between the two sides. In this article, I am dealing with the Italian contributions to the development of Egyptian archaeological sites, and to the conservation and restoration activities, as well as the bilateral cooperation in recovering stolen Egyptian antiquities, together with the Egyptian archeological exhibitions hosted by Italy. This study aims to portray the nature of the Egyptian-Italian cooperation concerning these three main points, which have not been investigated before.

The role of the printed media has progressively emerged in the past century since most of the people get information on the affairs at local and broader levels from the press.^{IV} Here, we focus on the picture of the archeological cooperation of Egypt and Italy as communicated in the Egyptian press: how Egyptian journalists and editors saw and reflected on the contemporary events during those three decades. The Egyptian press continually followed the news and published several interesting reports, opinions and topics (generally positive) on the Egypt-Italy archeological cooperation. It is worth analyzing how the Egyptian editors and journalists portrayed this era focusing on the most important events in this field and presenting the news in *al-Ahram*,^V *al-Ahram*,^{VI} *al-Badil*,^{VII} *al-Wafd*,^{VIII} *al-Gomhuria*,^{IX} *Akhbar al-Adab*,^X *Nahdat Misr*,^{XI} and *al-Qahira*. I chose these newspapers because each one of them has a long history, and international reputation. Their content and frequency of appearance are different, and they are the most well-known. They wrote the most news and investigations about our topic.

Most of the press articles and news used in compiling this paper were retrieved from the Egyptian Press Archive of CEDEJ,^{XII} presented online by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. The specialized and well-categorized Arabic-language articles available online are related to the period between the mid 1970's and 2010. It provided a great assistance and a quick free of charge source to gain more and more insight, information and data on different subjects. Otherwise, the researcher must go to the Archives of the Newspapers, and research the required articles manually, page by page. In the framework of the fruitful cooperation between CEDEJ and the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, „CEDEJ had formed a documentary wealth of 800,000 articles taken from 24 daily and weekly Egyptian and Arab paper journals and 11 digital ones. The articles were classified into 15 themes depending on their subject. Furthermore, each theme had been classified into sub-themes. Hence, this vast collection allows users to pursue the changing aspects of the modern Egyptian society.”^{XIII}

Despite the tremendous events Egypt faced during the focus period of this research, news and analyzes on the Egyptian-Italian relations were intensively present on the pages of all the newspapers. Whether governmental, oppositional or independent newspapers and magazines (of various orientations unusually including the political and literary ones), all were concerned with highlighting the bilateral archeological cooperation. Among the great events of Egypt in our research period, we can list the following: Egypt-Israeli Peace Treaty (1979) and its consequences resulted in the events of the 1980s, such as: Egypt was banished from the Arab League whose headquarter was moved from Cairo to Tunis, President Sadat assassination, and

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his succession by Hosni Mubarak (1981), the Egyptian conscripts riot of the Central Security Forces, classified as a coup in some Western sources (1986), the Egyptian-Israeli negotiations, Israel returned the last part of Sinai-Peninsula (1987) and Egypt rejoined the Arab League (1989). The massacre of tourists at Luxor (1997). Bomb attacks target Israeli tourists in Sinai, killing 34 (2004). For first time, they hold selective multi-party elections (2005). Barack Obama makes key speech at Cairo University to the entire world, confirming Egypt's important position in the region (2009), and finally the so-called Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt (2011).

It is also noted that during the first years of Mubarak's rule, the press news concerning our topic was few, because the entire country and its political leadership were focusing primarily on other events that were seemed to be more important. The real interest in highlighting this type of news accompanying the archaeological events began in 1987.

Italian contributions to the development of Egyptian archaeological sites, and to the conservation and *restoration* activities

The Egyptian press has extensively covered many news and analyses related to this subtitle, but this does not mean that all the activities, developments and news were covered, but rather what journalists saw, whatever their point of view was, and what was important to the readers in the first place. But in case we would like to have news on all the activities of the Italians on archeological missions and restoration, we have to leaf through the valuable book *Cento anni in Egitto – Percorsi dell'archeologia italiana* (Italian Archeological Paths – A hundred years in Egypt), published in occasion of the 100th anniversary of the activities of the Italian archeological missions and restoration activities.



Cento anni in Egitto – Percorsi dell'archeologia italiana. Illustrated edition. Publishing house: Mondadori Electa. Pages: 256. The book was supported by the Istituto italiano di cultura del Cairo

The Italian ambassador to Cairo, Mario Seca, pointed out: „Italy is ranked first in the world in restoring monuments and artifacts.”^{XIV} Due to the great capacities of the Italians in development and restoration work, as well as the distinguished bilateral relations, they earned the trust of the Egyptian side in many valuable works. Regarding this first main point, the Egyptian newspapers focused on 11 events or activities to be detailed in the following lines.

Upon the protocol between the Italian and Egyptian Governments signed officially on February 9, 1988, Italian-Egyptian Centre for Restoration and Archaeology (CIERA) based in the Mevlevi Tekiya Building (Historic Cairo) was opened on July 28, 1988. It is one of the most prominent institutions that supported mutual relations, especially in archeology and restoration. CIERA has accomplished the recovery of the Sama'khana, the restoration the Madrasa of

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Sunqur Sa'di, the Mausoleum of Sunqur Sa'di; the Cells of the Mevlevi Convent, in front of the Sama`khana; and the reception spaces in the Wing of the Convent along al-Suyufiyya Street. The Center was an extension of a long history of Italian archaeological work in Egypt. In the occasion of the inauguration, the restored Sama`khana Mevlevi Derwishes, cultic building with a theatre-like layout and characterized as specific architectural typology, was opened to the public. The restoration work carried out by the Italian side. Twenty years later,^{XV} and after long-term discussions and negotiations, Egypt and Italy agreed to institutionalize the *School for the conservation and restoration of buildings and monuments*, located in the complex of the Mevlevi Derwishes.^{XVI}



Sama`khana Mevlevi Derwishes after Italian restoration

Al-Ahram reported on March 3, 1989 that the Italian embassy in Cairo decided to present half a million US dollars as a non-refundable grant to the Egyptian Ministry of Culture to start immediately preparing the feasibility study to develop the Bab al-Azab historic area, the great lower gate of Cairo Citadel, located in front of the Sultan Hassan and al-Refaai Mosques, famous for its role in vanquishing the Mamelukes. Condotti, Italian company which had previously contributed to saving and moving the temple of Philae, assumed the project.^{XVII} The same newspaper witnessed in its issue of November 9, 1990, that the studies and designs for the long-awaited development and restoration of Bab al-Azab project were totally completed. The designs, study and preparation for implementation cost in total 1.700.000 US dollars, were granted by Italy in order to make this area the largest Islamic cultural and tourist place in Cairo.^{XVIII} The English version of *al-Ahram* completed the development story of Bab al-Azab: „In 1989, the Italian government offered to develop the Bab al-Azab area, but the plan came under fire when former culture minister Farouk Hosni intended to lease the land to a private company to build a hotel and shopping complex. [...] But as arguments raged between its opponents and supporters, the project was put on hold and the Bab al-Azab fell into disrepair.”

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Only thirty years later, I mean after the Italian studies and designs were officially submitted, the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) and the Sovereign Fund of Egypt (SFE) signed a contract to develop and manage the area, as a part of Historic Cairo's rehabilitation governmental efforts.^{XIX}



Bab al-Azab historic area

On August 15, 1991 *al-Ahram* said that Italy is restoring a collection of 745 rare paintings, dating back to the 19th century and located in the Gezira Museum.^{XX} These paintings belong to the leading artists of the Impressionism^{XXI} and constitute an enormous artistic wealth.^{XXII}

The International Congress of Egyptologists (ICE),^{XXIII} the biggest Congress on Egyptology in all over the world, was hosted by Italy twice.^{XXIV} Away from Cairo, and among all the countries, only Italy and France^{XXV} had hosted this great event twice. The other major countries^{XXVI} were only one-time hosts of the Congress. This event reflects the Italian interest and support as well as the passion towards the Egyptian antiquities. In this regard, *al-Ahram* published on September 1, 1991, that the Sixth International Congress of Egyptology '*Sesto Congresso internazionale di egittologia*' was being held in Turin between September 1–8, 1991, to discuss all issues and problems of restoring Egyptian antiquities, and new discoveries. More than 500 Egyptologists, archeologists and scholars and students, representing more than 35 countries, participated in the eight-day-long conference held at the Turin Museum and chaired by the famous American Egyptologist William Kelly Simpson^{XXVII, XXVIII}. The proceedings of the Congress was published in two volumes entitled *VI Congresso Internazionale di Egittologia – Atti*.

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VI Congresso Internazionale di Egittologia – Atti
Publisher: International Association of Egyptologists, Turin, Italy, 1992.

March 27, 1992 *al-Ahram* outlined that the Italian initial designs of the Grand Museum of Egypt arrived. The 18-member composed Authority of the Grand Museum, headed by Ibrahim Bakr, approved that Italy covers all the costs of the project implementation, except for one member, Prof. Ali Radwan,^{XXIX} who registered his objection. A sharp verbal altercation occurred between Ibrahim Bakr and Ali Radwan, when the head of the authority began to present the memorandum stating that Italy would bear full costs of establishing this museum, estimated at \$ 200 million. However, Dr. Radwan asked not to agree to that, saying that Egypt must address all the countries with its desire to establish this museum and not give the opportunity to Italy alone. Farouk Hosni, Minister of Culture, announced that he had already received the preliminary designs of the Grand Museum from the Italian side affirming that the Italian government allocated an amount equivalent to 5.3 million EGP to complete a feasibility study of the project. A group of Italian experts arrived to Cairo and discussed with their Egyptian partners to prepare the feasibility study and complete the preliminary steps of the project.^{XXX}

As a continuation of the Italian fondness for restoring Egyptian archeology, *al-Wafd* biggest opposition newspaper mentioned on November 8, 1997, after longly presenting the well-known Italian restoration expert Giuseppe Fanfoni,^{XXXI} that he requested the restoration of the Sphinx via cutting the fragile layers in the lower region and replacing them with more stronger insulating layers that prevent the leakage of groundwater to the rest of the statue's body, similar to what happened in the Sama`khana Mevlevi. According to the Italian expert, this technique is very successful and guarantees the total protection of the antiquities completely, and it has proven effective before as all Egyptian monuments restored in the same way withstood the 1992 earthquake.^{XXXII} Two and a half month later, *al-Gomhuria* reported in its issue dated January 22, 1998 that the request was rejected by the SCA, as the Egyptian government had already carried out the complete restoration process with high quality, as well as the inaccuracy, illogicality and impossibility of implementing the Italian expert's plan.^{XXXIII}

On November 6, 2001, *al-Ahram* reported that Italian International Institute of Papyrus 'Istituto Internazionale del Papiro' of Syracuse, assumed restoration of 20 rare papyri in the Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria.^{XXXIV} The restoration process was implemented within the project submitted by the famous Italian archeologist Corrado Basile, director-general of the Italian Institute of Papyrus, and accepted by the SCA. The restored papyri will be displayed in public in the museum halls.^{XXXV}

The *Watani* provided details on January 20, 2002 on the activities of The Egyptian Museum in Turin 'Museo Egizio', which hosts a huge collection of Egyptian antiquities, about

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30,000 artefacts, and it considered one of the most visited museums in Europe. This archaeological museum started a project to restore Egyptian artifacts dating back to several different eras: Pharaonic, Ptolemaic and Roman. The cost of the project was about 1 billion Italian liras. Also, the Italian government decided to expand the museum building to accommodate a greater number of Egyptian artifacts. The new sections will be opened in 2003.^{XXXVI}

On December 12, 2006, the *al-Qahira* provided details on the restoration work of the Church of the Transfiguration (*Monastery of St. Catherine*) by the Italian *Centro di Conservazione Archeologica* (CCA). The Church, constructed by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian, suffered serious damage from an earthquake in 1995. The restoration included the apse mosaic of the Transfiguration, representing Christ, the Prophet Moses, the Prophet Elijah, and the disciples of Christ. This mosaic is considered one of the oldest and most beautiful mosaics of the East, which was built in the 6th century AD. It was agreed with the Italian side to complete the entire restoration process.^{XXXVII} For the conservation works, the Monastery received a donation of \$500,000 from Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa, the then Emir of Qatar, and a further sum of \$250,000 from the Getty Foundation. As for the missing parts of the mosaic, the Italians already completed it after making these parts in Venice using the same material of the original mosaic, such as lime based mortars and glass mosaic tiles.^{XXXVIII} It is worth mentioning, that the conservation of the mosaics was finished after ten-year work,^{XXXIX} and the CCA received the EU Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards in the category Conservation for the project of conservation of the apse mosaic of the Transfiguration.^{XL}



The apse mosaic as published in *al-Qahira* in 2006

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The apse mosaic after being restored in 2016

On July 18, 2007, *Nahdat Misr* published an article stating that Italy would implement a project to develop the Egyptian archaeological museums at a cost of 1.3 million euros. The signed Memorandum of Understanding included the implementation of a project to reformulate the presentation and exhibitions in Egyptian museums: Egyptian Museum in Tahrir, the Fustat Museum,^{XL1} and the Grand Egyptian Museum, as well as the creation of a single database in all museums, a comprehensive training program for restorers, establishing a laboratory for CT scans for mummies' analysis, and installing air conditioning equipments.^{XL2} The *al-Badil* newspaper in its issue of May 8, 2008 explained more about the project stating that the Italian government began disbursing the dedicated grant to develop first the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square via training museum curators and restorers. Claudio Pacifico,^{XL3} Italian ambassador to Cairo, stated during the opening of the training course:^{XL4} „This training is the first and most important stage to qualify the human cadres that will implement this project and transfer the Italian expertise in the field of museums and restoration to others.” According to Dr. Wafaa Al-Siddiq, Director of the Egyptian Museum: Italian experts are participating in training Egyptians on computer applications, theories of restoration and conservation, and practical training will be carried out on restoring some artifacts in the museum. Furthermore, the project includes developing the museum library, which includes the oldest literature on Egyptology in various foreign languages.^{XL5}

In his interview with the *al-Qahira* newspaper in its issue of August 7, 2007, Corrado Basile, founder of the Papyrus Museum confirmed, that papyrus was first manufactured in Egypt,^{XL6} which has the largest collection of papyri in the world. Italy knew the papyrus and its industry from the Egyptians.^{XL7} The cooperation between the Italian International Institute of Papyrus ‘*Istituto Internazionale del Papiro*’, the Papyrus Museum of Syracuse ‘*Museo del Papiro*’^{XL8} and the Egyptian side began in 1999 via concluding a cooperation agreement,^{XL9} which consisted in holding training courses for Egyptian restorers on papyrus restoration, and

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restoring original pieces in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and the Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria. Within the bilateral cooperation with the SCA 250 papyri were restored in the Greco-Roman Museum and a conservation-restoration papyrus laboratory was established in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, as well as a school for the manufacture, maintenance-restoration of papyrus was created through organizing several specialized courses^L for Egyptian restorers.^{LI}

On January 1, 2008, the *al-Qahira* reported that the Italian side, in collaboration and co-financed with Egypt, developed and restored the Medinat Madi ‘*City of the Past*’^{LII} in Fayoum region at a cost of 8 million Egyptian pounds. Medinat Madi enjoyed great historical importance in the Roman era, as it was the route of commercial caravans to transport supplies and consumables to Alexandria and back to Rome. Fayoum was an essential supplier for the Roman Empire. The Middle Kingdom temple of Medinat Madi was dedicated to worship the God Sobek or Sebek, a crocodile-headed man with a feathered crown, Patron of the strength of the pharaoh, who was the official God of Fayoum. In the Roman and Ptolemaic period, other structures and compartments were added to the Temple. In addition, the project will also include the establishment of a visitor center, museum exhibition hall and tourist service bazaars. Medinat Madi will also be connected to Wadi al-Rayyan^{LIII} by a road that facilitates movement to different tourist places.^{LIV}



Overview of ruins of Medinat Madi

Bilateral cooperation in recovering stolen Egyptian antiquities

Just as the Egyptian-Italian cooperation was constructive and fruitful in all fields, the bilateral coordination concerning recovering the stolen artifacts was also positive. The Italian side spared no effort to provide assistance to Egypt in this regard. It is for the first time in the contemporary history that a head of state personally declared his support for Egypt in order to recover its stolen antiquities. The Italian president Carlo Ciampi,^{LV} after his visit to Cairo and in an exceptional and unusual message to the Egyptian minister of culture, affirmed his country's readiness to provide more support for the cultural work in Egypt, as well as to support Egypt in its efforts to recover its artifacts from anywhere in the world.^{LVI}

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Here, we have three sub-points portrayed by the Egyptian press: the presence of the Egyptian obelisks in Italy, the auction of 64 ancient Pharaonic pieces in Florence, and the recovering of 42 artifacts from the Archeological Museum of Como ‘*Museo Giovio*’.^{LVII}

The Egyptian Press articles, the statements by officials, the strong relations between the two countries that no one would like to disturb, in addition to the real Italian interest in the Egyptian obelisks in Italy prove that the Egyptian side was satisfied with the presence of the obelisks on Italian soil. The press several times even praised and glorified the Italian interest in the Egyptian obelisks. Abdel-Halim Abdel-Galil, well-known Egyptian journalist provided details in his long article published in *al-Gomhuria* on March 8, 1989 on the pharaonic obelisks in the eternal city (Rome) and the Italian interest in them: „The modern history has not witnessed that a country with its great history and glory has been interested in the antiquities of another country as Italy did, where we can find *more than 18 Egyptian obelisks*, some of them were sent to Rome as a gift, and others we do not know how they moved from Egypt. *Thirteen obelisks* standing in prominent positions throughout the different squares of Rome [...] Italy harnessed all the artistic capabilities to beautify the obelisks, and underneath some of them were placed large beautiful fountains [...] The Romans said that the Pharaonic obelisks wanted to be immortalized, so they came to Rome! Otherwise, their fate would be like their poor companions in warehouses or under the sand! Egypt and Italy have a common long history. [...] These obelisks are the appetizers of Rome's tourists ... and an honorable introduction to the Egyptian History.” Then the newspaper listed the pharaonic obelisks of Rome, their locations and brief description of their history, giving more details on the eight obelisks^{LVIII} taken from Egypt after the Roman conquest and brought to Rome.^{LIX}

For a long time, the presence of the Egyptian obelisks in Italy simply can be summarized as they are in their second home. And we find many articles that explicitly mention this. Ethiopia's recovering of its only obelisk from Italy was a big shock to the Egyptian cultural, press and archaeological circles, as there are many Egyptian obelisks in Italy and the Egyptian government has not been able to recover even one of them, despite the distinguished relations between the two sides at all levels. Ethiopia was able to regain its only obelisk, and its relations with Italy were not up to the level of the Egyptian-Italian relations. What happened? Italy's handling of the issue was a great surprise to Egypt.

The *Akhbar al-Adab*, literary magazine, is unexpectedly wondering in a long and investigative feature article, if Egypt can regain its unique obelisks from Italy, especially after recovering the only Ethiopian obelisk, seized and taken by Mussolini during the occupation of Ethiopia, although international treaties do not oblige it to do so. According to the Paris Convention of 1970,^{LX} antiquities that were exited illegally from a country after 1970 can be recovered. Dr. Zahi Hawass, former Secretary-General of the SCA, confirmed that he focuses primarily on recovering the stolen antiquities from the Egyptian museums in the first place, which number 6000 artifacts. As for the „recovery of major artifacts such as the obelisks, Nefertiti's head and the Rosetta Stone is a major issue and may lead to an unexpected international reaction. But this does not prevent it from being on the list of priorities after recovering the other stolen pieces.”^{LXI}

In its issue of October 10, 1999, *al-Ahram* detailed on the auction supervised by the Italian Gandolfini Foundation and organized in Florence which ended with the sale of 462 artifacts, including 64 ancient Pharaonic pieces, most of them colored ceramic statues previously found in the cemeteries of Thebes, in addition to the sale of the mummy of an Egyptian falcon dating back to the 7th century. The falcon's ownership belongs to one of the travelers returning from Cairo in the thirties. The governmental newspaper wondered when Egypt would recover its stolen artifacts from abroad?^{LXII}

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During this research period, Egypt did not submit any formal request to restore its obelisks, or the 64 ancient Pharaonic pieces of the auction and thus this issue was not discussed at all, despite the Italian side was ready to discuss the issue, in case of submitting a formal request. This fact was also confirmed by the former Italian ambassador to Cairo, Mario Seca, in his statement to *al-Ahram* on December 19, 2001.^{LXIII} The Italian readiness and its positive reaction to discuss such issue can be demonstrated through our third sub-point.

The *al-Wafd* published on August 22, 2002 on the Egyptian-Italian contacts to recover 7 Ushabati^{LXIV} statues and 35 artifacts from Italy from the Archaeological Museum of Como. According to Sabry Abdel Aziz, head of the Egyptian Antiquities Sector, the statues range between seven and fourteen centimeters long, dating back to the late Pharaonic eras, and there are writings on them in the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. Their function was to assist the deceased in the other world. Dr. Zahi Hawass confirmed that the Italian authorities agreed to hand over antiquities to Egypt through the ministries of justice in both countries in accordance with the legal and judicial agreement signed between the two countries, indicating that the handover process would take place as soon as these procedures were completed.^{LXV} On the same day, the *al-Gomhuria* gave more details about these stolen artifacts, stating that this issue came to the surface by pure accident: car accident was suddenly happened, and consequently the Italian police arrived to investigate. One of the procedures followed was that they searched the car of the Italian woman, where they found the 7 Ushabti statues, then suspicion about the Italian woman increased more, so an order was issued to search her home where they found the rest of the pieces. The total of stolen artifacts was 42.^{LXVI} *Al-Ahram* noted on September 30, 2003, that Egypt had recovered these artifacts from Como, in the Lombardy region. The recovered pieces were deposited in the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square. The process was a result of close cooperation between the Ministry of Culture, Foreign Affairs and Justice in Egypt and the Italian authorities.^{LXVII}

Egyptian exhibitions of archeology

The intention of cooperation in holding Egyptian exhibitions in Italy was serious and fruitful as well. During the thirty years of cooperation, several Egyptian exhibitions were organized, but the focus of the Egyptian press was mainly on four of them.

On February 7, 1989 the *al-Ahram* reported that Egypt agreed to dispatch 70 Pharaonic artifacts from the collection of the Egyptian Museum to Rimini city to participate in the Meeting for Friendship Among Peoples '*Il Meeting per l'amicizia fra i popoli di Rimini*', starting from next September. The exhibition displayed 70 masterpieces, including collections of statues of kings and princes, and another set of statues of princesses and women and their decorative tools, in addition to other antiques highlighting the role of ancient Egyptian women in society. The exhibition continued for a period of 3 months. In exchange, the Egyptian party received half a million of USD dollars, and the Italian Foreign Ministry covered the various shipping, exhibition and insurance expenses.^{LXVIII}

On March 1, 1997 the *al-Ahram* reported that in Bari's Norman-Swabian Castle '*Castello Normanno-Svevo*', an Egyptian exhibition entitled "The Lights of Egypt" is presented. The exhibition included archaeological models and reproductions of Queen Nefertari, and it continued until May 4.^{LXIX}

On February 20, 1999 the *al-Ahram* mentioned that an exhibition of Egyptian antiquities would be held at *Palazzo Strozzi* in Florence under the patronage of Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro^{LXX} and would be inaugurated by the culture ministers of the two countries,

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Farouk Hosni and Giovanna Melandri,^{LXXI} on March 6. The exhibition would last for 4 months. The exhibition included about 60 pieces of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.^{LXXII} On March 6, 1999 we receive another news issued by the same newspaper officially declaring that the Italian Minister of Culture, the Governor of Florence and Egypt's Ambassador to Italy Nihad Abdel-Latif inaugurated *the largest historical exhibition of Egyptian antiquities to achieve the biggest cultural event in Italy*. The official opening would be preceded by an international press conference. The conference was organized with the participation of the Egyptian Ambassador to Rome, General Director of Egyptian Museums Ahmed Nawar, and director-general of the Egyptian Museum Mohamed Saleh.^{LXXIII} On April, 18, 1999, *Akhbar al-Adab* published news of the Egyptian exhibition being organized in Italy stating that, unusually, the artifacts were selected and traveled in complete secrecy, and despite the objection of some archeologists to the exit of these important pieces, the question was already decided and was referred to the approval of the Minister. The pieces participating in the exhibition are unique and among the most important and rare pieces of the Egyptian Museum and others, including two statues of Menkaure, a granite statue of Userkaf, first king of the Fifth Dynasty, one of the paintings of Hesy-Ra, known for the colorful wall paintings discovered inside and outside his tomb, a sandstone bust of Akhenaten and Nefertiti's head. The magazine concluded its investigation with a condemning and inflammatory statements, saying: „And since we are not specialists, we ask archeologists to judge the legality of transporting of these rare items abroad.”^{LXXIV}

On September 4, 2002 the *al-Ahram* reported that Zahi Hawass would open an exhibition of Egyptian antiquities to be held at *Grazia Palazzo* in Venice, Italy, on September 8 and will continue until May 25. The exhibition displayed 140 distinct artifacts representing various ancient historical periods, selected from the collections of the Egyptian Museum, such as Akhenaten's bust, from the 18th Dynasty, and a statue of King Amenhotep III wearing the blue crown or *the khepresh*, the king's preferred royal headdress.^{LXXV} In its issue of August 23, 2002, the *al-Wafd* stated that Prime Minister of Egypt Atef Ebeid^{LXXVI} approved displaying Egyptian artifacts at the Exhibition of Venice, from September 8 to May 25. The SCA would directly supervise the artifacts to start preparing for the International exhibition.^{LXXVII} The *al-Ahram* wrote on July 17, 2003 that the exhibition had been concluded, achieving a financial return of half a million euros within six months. The selected and displayed artifacts focused on the 18th–19th dynasties, and reflected the high level of sculpture in the ancient Egyptian civilization. At the request of the Italian side, the exhibition was extended for an additional two months due to its success.^{LXXVIII}

Conclusion

As a conclusion, we have to say that all the Egyptian newspapers and magazines of various orientations (whether governmental, oppositional or independent), were concerned with highlighting the bilateral archeological cooperation. We find that the Egyptian newspaper which showed the greatest interest and published the most news on our topic was *al-Ahram*, and among the opposition newspapers was *al-Wafd*. As for the independent newspapers, it was the weekly newspaper *al-Badil* that topped the scene. We noted an unique phenomenon that *Akhbar al-Adab*, a state-owned literary magazine with no interest in antiquities became the magazine that severely criticized the bilateral archeological cooperation and wrote articles and investigations opposing it, despite the state-owned ones that did not support this kind of criticism or opposition. It is sufficient demonstrating the two inflammatory articles of *Akhbar al-Adab* on the Egyptian obelisks in Italy (September 1, 2002), and the second article on the exhibition of the rare Egyptian artefacts in Italy (April 18, 1999). Throughout this research I

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tried to show how the Egyptian press has covered the activities and news of the Italians concerning the development and restoration work in Egypt. Overmore, I dealt with the bilateral coordination concerning recovering the stolen artifacts which was also positive and constructive, as the Italian side spared no effort to provide assistance to Egypt in this regard. And finally, I proved that the intention of cooperation in holding Egyptian exhibitions in Italy was serious and fruitful as well, as several Egyptian exhibitions were organized.

Notes:

^I Historian, researcher, visitor lecturer. The original workplace of the researcher is: Academy of Scientific Research & Technology, Egypt. His current Research Institution is: Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), and African Research Institute (Doctoral School for Safety and Security Sciences, University of Óbuda), Hungary. Member of the Scientific Committee of the *Mediterrán Tanulmányok* Journal issued by the University of Szeged. E-mail: Abdallah.alnagggar@gmail.com. This paper was supported by Tempus Public Foundation.

^{II} Ippolito Baldassarre Rosellini (1800–1843) is the founder of Egyptology in Italy. His most famous work is *I Monumenti dell'Egitto e della Nubia*, composed of 3,300 text pages.

^{III} Mohamed Hosni Mubarak (1928–2020), president of the Arab Republic of Egypt (1981–2011). Mubarak graduated from the Military Academy in 1949 and from the Air Academy in 1950. He was the director general of the Air Academy from 1966 to 1969. In 1972, he was appointed as chief commander of the Egyptian air force. In 1975 he was named as vice president. Immediately after Sadat's assassination on October 6, 1981, he became the 4th Egyptian President. His years in the presidential office were marked by an improvement in the relations with the Arab countries, USA and Europe. During the Gulf Crisis and war (1990–1991), Mubarak supported the Saudi decision to invite a U.S.-led military coalition to recover the occupied Kuwait. In 2011, millions of civil protesters against repression, economically deteriorated circumstances and corruption took to the streets, and Mubarak had stepped down on 11 February, authorizing the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to govern the state. For more info, visit: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hosni-Mubarak> (Retrieved: 29th November, 2020)

^{IV} MOHAMED, Abdallah Abdel-Ati Abdel-Salam. *Az Egyiptomi-magyar kapcsolatok a két világháború közötti időszakban*. JATEPress, 2015, p. 107.

^V *Al-Ahram*: Founded in Alexandria in 1875 by two Lebanese brothers, Beshara Takla and Saleem Takla. It began as a weekly newspaper published every Saturday. Its first issue appeared on August 5, 1876. The paper was relaunched as a daily newspaper in January 1881. In addition to the main edition published in Egypt, the paper publishes two other Arabic-language editions, one geared to the Arab world and the other aimed at an international audience, as well as editions in English and French.

^{VI} *Al-Ahrrar* means *The Liberalists*, and it was the official paper of the Liberal Party, and one of the major opposition publications in Egypt. It was an Arabic weekly newspaper published in Cairo starting from 1977 and ceased in 2013. After being governmentally banned, the *al-Shaab* pro-Islamic biweekly (the official newspaper of the Egyptian Islamic Labour Party) in 1997, *al-Ahrrar* run a page for it in its third page.

^{VII} The highly respected *al-Badil* Egyptian independent weekly newspaper was launched first on July 16, 2007. In October 2007, *al-Badil* participated along with another 22 independent and opposition newspapers in Egypt in a one-day strike against jail sentences handed down to journalists by not publishing its issue. Between 2009 and 2010, the newspaper was suspended as per financial reasons, and from 2015 it became only electronic, and its printed version was ended.

^{VIII} *Al-Wafd* or *The Mission* is the Arabic daily newspaper of *al-Wafd* Egyptian opposition party. It is considered one of the highest circulated papers owned by political parties in Egypt. Its online version is *al-Wafd Gate*.

^{IX} *Al-Gomhuria*: a state-owned Egyptian daily newspaper established in 1954. Upon its appearing, it became the new regime's leading media outlet. The most influential publication of *Dar al-Tahrir*, founded upon the 1952 Egyptian revolution. *Dar al-Tahrir* publishing house also owns: *Al-Ray Le Shaab* (weekly newspaper), *al-Messa* (evening newspaper), *al-Kora wal-Malaeb* (sports), *Shashaty* (entertainment), *Aqidaty* (Islamic), as well as the English-language daily *Egyptian Gazette* and the French *Le Progrès Egyptien*.

^X The well-known *Akhbar al-Adab* or *Cultural News* literary weekly magazine was established in 1993 to be a platform for Arab literary production (articles on literary works and interviews). It is owned and published by *Akhbar Al-Youm*, state-run Egyptian publishing house.

^{XI} *Nahdat Misr* is an Egyptian weekly newspaper launched in Cairo in 2007. It is concentrated first for cultural and literal articles, interviews.

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- ^{xii} Centre d'études et de documentation économiques, juridiques et sociales or *Centre for Social, Judicial and Economic Documentation and Study* is a Multidisciplinary Research Center based in Cairo, which was launched as a part of the 1968 Franco-Egyptian cooperation agreement. The Centre covers Egypt and Sudan.
- ^{xiii} For more info, visit: <http://cedej.bibalex.org/Main.aspx?lang=en> (Retrieved: 28th November, 2020)
- ^{xiv} Inas Nour (December 19, 2001). Egyptian pharaonic exhibition in Italy includes rare artifacts from three international museums. *Al-Ahram*.
- ^{xv} Namely on October 26, 2008.
- ^{xvi} <https://www.light-dark.net/t176598/البعثات-الأثرية-الإيطالية-في-مصر-بالصور..-البعثات-الأثرية-الإيطالية-في-مصر-بالصور/index.html> (Retrieved: 7th December, 2020)
- ^{xvii} Half million US dollars from Italy to develop the Bab al-Azab area. (March 3, 1989). *Al-Ahram*.
- ^{xviii} The Bab al-Azab designs were completed, with an Italian grant amounted 1.7 million dollars. (November 9, 1990). *Al-Ahram*.
- ^{xix} <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/50/1207/372327/AIAhram-Weekly/Heritage/Developing-Bab-AlAzab.aspx> (Retrieved: 4th December, 2020)
- ^{xx} Also known as the Egyptian Museum of Modern Art. A museum to exhibit modern Egyptian art masterpieces and now it displays more than 10,000 paintings and sculptures of the art movement from modern and contemporary art trends.
- ^{xxi} An art movement originated first by a group of Paris-based artists and „characterized by small, thin, yet visible brush strokes, open composition”.
- ^{xxii} Moustafa al-Naggar (August 15, 1991). Italy would like to participate in implementing the Grand Egyptian Museum. *Al-Ahram*.
- ^{xxiii} After being separated from the International Conference of Orientalists in Paris in 1973, the International Congress of Egyptologists (ICE) was held at intervals of three and five years, respectively. For more details, see the official site of the International Association of Egyptologists: http://www.iae-egyptology.org/services.php?site=list_of_ices (Retrieved: 2nd December, 2020)
- ^{xxiv} (6th ICE in 1991, Turin, and 11th ICE in 2015, Florence)
- ^{xxv} (2nd ICE in 1979, Grenoble and 9th ICE in 2004, same city)
- ^{xxvi} (3rd ICE in 1982, Toronto/Canada; 4th ICE, 1985, Munich/Germany; 7th ICE, 1995, Cambridge/United Kingdom; 10th ICE, 2008, Rhodes/Greece)
- ^{xxvii} William Kelly Simpson (1928–2017) was an American professor of Egyptology and one of several co-directors of the University of Pennsylvania Museum Yale University Expedition to Egypt.
- ^{xxviii} Moustafa al-Naggar (September 1, 1991). Problems of restoring Egyptian archeology and new discoveries to be discussed at an international Congress in Italy. *Al-Ahram*.
- ^{xxix} Ali Radwan (1941–2020) was the Dean of Arab Archaeologists, the Dean of the Faculty of Archeology at Cairo University, and one of the most eminent Egyptian Egyptologists.
- ^{xxx} The implementation of the Grand Museum has begun after the arrival of the initial designs from Italy. (March 27, 1992). *Al-Ahram*.
- ^{xxxi} According to the same article, G. Fonfoni is the head of CIERA and merit prize winner of the General Union of the Arab Archeology in 2007, and who works with his wife in restoring Sama`khana Mevlevi and the antiquities of the king Najm al-Din Ayyub.
- ^{xxxii} An Italian engineer requests restoring an strengthening the Sphinx to be protected from the groundwater. (November 8, 1997). *Al-Wafd*.
- ^{xxxiii} Essam Omran (January 22, 1998). An Italian restoration expert asks for restoring the Sphinx. *Al-Gomhuria*.
- ^{xxxiv} Also known in Italy as *Museo greco-romano di Alessandria d'Egitto*.
- ^{xxxv} Amal al-Gayyar (November 6, 2001). Egypt-Italy cooperation: restoration of 20 rare papyrus pieces in the Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria. *Al-Ahram*.
- ^{xxxvi} Restoration of Egyptian artifacts at the Egyptian Museum of Turin. (January 20, 2002). *Watani*.
- ^{xxxvii} For more information on this conservation work, visit the official website of the Europa Nostra/EU Heritage Awards: <https://www.europeanheritageawards.eu/winners/collaborative-conservation-apse-mosaic-transfiguration-basilica-st-catherines-monastery/> (Retrieved: 7th December, 2020)
- ^{xxxviii} Mohamed Shabaan (December 12, 2006.) The Italian mission restores the Church of the Transfiguration, Monastery of St. Catherine. *Al-Qahira*.
- ^{xxxix} The restoration was completed in 2016, but due to political reasons, the opening happened only in 2017. The CCA received the EU prize in 2018.
- ^{xl} For more information, please visit the official website of the CCA: <https://ccaroma.org/eu-prize-for-cultural-heritage-europa-nostra-awards-2018/> (Retrieved: 7th December, 2020)
- ^{xli} The National Museum of Egyptian Civilization located in the ancient city of Fustat, part of Cairo.
- ^{xlii} Fatma al-Araby (July 18, 2007). 1.3 million euros from Italy to develop the Egyptian archeological museums.

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Nahdat Misr.

^{XLIII} He is an Italian diplomat, who served in the United States, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. He was posted to Cairo in 2007 to serve as Italian ambassador to Egypt and Italy's Representative at the Arab League.

^{XLIV} Italy carried out several professional and educational courses and programs in Egypt, among them I can list: *The vocational training course in restoration and archaeology* for the SCA staff (1984–88), *The Applied Technologies for Restoration and Conservation of monuments* (1996–2000), *Program for the Professional Training for Restoration and Archaeology* (2002–2008).

^{XLV} Mohamed Mandour (May 8, 2008). 1.3 million Euros Italian grant to Egyptian Museum's restorers. *Al-Badil*.

^{XLVI} The earliest archaeological evidence of papyrus was excavated in 2012 and 2013 at Wadi al-Jarf, Red Sea coast.

^{XLVII} Corrado Basile in his interview added that such distinguished industry continued in Italy until the 18th century AD, exactly until 1781 and papyrus press machines are still found in the Papyrus Museum in Syracuse classified in 1995 as the best European museum. The Egyptians introduced the papyrus industry to Italy for the first time when Ptolemy II Philadelphus sent some papyri to Italy in 250 BC.

^{XLVIII} The Papyrus Museum was established and still managed by the International Institute of Papyrus. The museum was founded by Anna Di Natale and Corrado Basile. The Museum deals with the study, preservation and dissemination of evidence of the culture of papyrus. The museum is the promoter of the project Conservative Restoration of the Papyri in Egypt directed by Corrado Basile, under which various activities are carried out: the missions of restoration of the papyri of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, the Alexandrine Bibliotheca and the Greek - Roman Museum of Alexandria.

^{XLIX} It was concluded with the SCA, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and the universities of Alexandria, Cairo and Ain Shams.

^L The courses were hosted by the Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria, the Egyptian Museum, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and the Papyrus Studies and Inscriptions Center at Ain Shams University, the Faculty of Archeology at Cairo University, the Faculty of Arts of Ain Shams University, and the UNESCO Cairo Office.

^{LI} Mohamed Abdel-Aziz (August 7, 2007). Director of the Papyrus Museum in Italy: The Egyptians introduced papyrus to Italy in the 3rd century BC. *Al-Qahira*.

^{LII} „It was first recorded in modern times by Napoleon's expedition to Egypt. [...] Early in the 20th century, Jouguet investigated the site and he was the first to suggest that it consisted of two distinct towns [...] German archaeologists began work there in 1910, but the war interrupted those efforts and the concession was later taken over by the University of Milan. During the first season of excavation under the Milan team directed by A. Vogliano, the remains of a temple dedicated to Isis Hermouthis, the Greek version of Renenutet was unearthed. [...] That now famous temple was later unearthed in the second excavation campaign. Also uncovered from the sand was a second Ptolemaic temple, back to back with the Middle Kingdom one. However, this series of excavations only lasted for two additional seasons. Afterwards, it was not until 1966, under the direction of Dr. Edda Bresciani that excavations resumed. Very recently in 1995, the Italian team from Pisa and Messina University [...] discovered a Ptolemaic gate to the east of the temple and on further investigation another temple dedicated to Sobek was discovered beneath the rubble.” For more info, see:

<http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/medinetmadi.htm> (Retrieved: 5th December, 2020)

^{LIII} It is a unique nature protectorate situated in the middle of the Fayoum desert.

^{LIV} Egyptian-Italian project to develop Medinat Madi. (January 1, 2008). *Al-Qahira*.

^{LV} Carlo Azeglio Ciampi (1920–2016) was the Prime Minister of Italy (1993–1994) and was the President of Italy (1999–2006).

^{LVI} After his three-day visit to Cairo fulfilled between February 15–17, 2000, he sent a message to Farouk Hosni, Minister of Culture, expressing his admiration for the restoration of the famous tomb of Nefertari, the Great Wife of Pharaoh Ramesses II, in the Valley of the Kings in Luxor that he visited during his tour of the most important tourist and archaeological attractions in Egypt. He was accompanied by the Minister of Culture. The details of the message can be read in *al-Ahram* of March 25, 2000.

^{LVII} It is located in Palazzo Giovia, and it displays the history of Como, from Prehistory to the Middle Ages, also it contains a Collectibles section with Egyptian, Greek, and Magna Grecia findings, bronze statuettes and gems.

^{LVIII} Lateranense (Tuthmosis III / Tuthmosis IV), Vaticano (unknown), Flaminio (Seti I / Ramses II), Solare (Psammetichus II), Macuteo (Ramses II), Minerveo (Apries), Dogali (Ramses II), Matteiano (Ramses II).

^{LIX} Abdel-Halim Abdel-Galil (March 8, 1989). 18 pharaonic obelisks in Rome open air museum. *Al-Gomhuria*.

^{LX} Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property 1970 concluded in Paris on November 14, 1970.

^{LXI} Ihab al-Hadary (September 1, 2002). Can Egypt recover its unique artifacts? *Akhbar al-Adab*.

^{LXII} Ihab al-Hadary (September 10, 1999). 64 pharaonic artifacts at auction in Italy. *Al-Ahram*.

^{LXIII} Inas Nour (December 19, 2001). Egyptian pharaonic exhibition in Italy includes rare artifacts from three

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international museums. *Al-Ahram*.

LXIV The ushabti or shabti or shawabti: funerary figurine used in ancient Egyptian funerary practices. Ushabtis were deposited in tombs in order to act as servants to do manual labor in the afterlife.

LXV Abdel-Aziz al-Nahas (August 22, 2002). Contacts to recover 7 Ushabati statues and 35 other artifacts. *Al-Wafd*.

LXVI Essam Omran (August 22, 2002). The Egyptian Stolen artifacts. *Al-Gomhuria*.

LXVII Taha Abdel-Rahman (September 30, 2003). Egypt recovers rare monumental statues from Italy and Germany. *Al-Ahram*.

LXVIII Osama Abdel-Aziz (February 7, 1989). The Egyptian pharaonic artifacts to be displayed in Italy. *Al-Ahram*.

LXIX Gamal Nafee (March 1, 1997). "The Lights of Egypt" Exhibition in an Italian city. *Al-Ahram*.

LXX Oscar Luigi Scalfaro (1918–2012) was the President of Italy between 1992 and 1999, and subsequently a senator for life.

LXXI Giovanna Melandri (1962–) was the Minister of Culture (1998–2001) and Minister of Youth and Sport (2006–2008). She is the President the National Museum of the 21st Century Arts of Rome.

LXXII Moustafa Mahmoud Abdallah (February 20, 1999). Egyptian Archeology Exhibition in Italy. *Al-Ahram*.

LXXIII Middle East News Agency (March 6, 1999). The biggest Egyptian Archeological exhibition to be inaugurated today in Italy. *Al-ahram*.

LXXIV Ihab al-Hadary (April 18, 1999). Kings of Egypt on a forced trip to Europe, despite the Antiquities Protection Act. *Akhbar al-Adab*.

LXXV The statue dates back to the same Dynasty, and it was discovered in 1905 in the Karnak cache.

LXXVI Atef Muhamed Ebeid (1932–2014) was Prime Minister of Egypt from 1999 to 2004.

LXXVII Fattouh al-Shazly (August 23, 2002). 87 artifacts to be displayed in Venice. *Al-Wafd*.

LXXVIII Taha Abdel-Rahman (July 17, 2003). The Egyptian artifacts says goodbye to Venice. *Al-Ahram*.

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