

MONIKA REKOWSKA

DANGEROUS LIAISONS? ARCHAEOLOGY IN LIBYA 1911–1943 AND ITS POLITICAL BACKGROUND

*The European civilisation is fighting the most formidable battle in Africa. Great European nations, by colonising the Dark Continent and giving its races and inhabitants access to the light and blessings of progress already since ancient, nearly prehistoric times, offer the most illustrious proof of their moral and material superiority and their true creative powers.*¹

Introduction

Liaisons between archaeology and politics are as old as the idea of using the past to build the image of a ruler, entire social groups or societies, and as close as the dependence of archaeological research on funding. They become dangerous when archaeology, while playing a leading role in reconstructing the past, is used as a propaganda tool, i.e., when it is expected to reach certain goals, and when the scientific value of the research is outweighed by more pressing tasks the state imposes upon it. It seems that in the face of ideological conditioning the attempt to give an answer to the question: “what was the past like?” ceases to be the main aim and, instead, selected aspects of the past become the prime concern. How history is understood, interpreted and presented is closely connected to ideological and political issues.²

One of the first masters at using archaeology as a propaganda tool was Napoleon Bonaparte. He demonstrated his proficiency when, upon setting out to conquer Egypt, he invited the group of scholars who later built the foundations of modern Egyptology. It was also Napoleon who turned Rome into a model example of a city in which politics affected the scope and scale of the conducted archaeological works. Although Rome remained in French hands for only a few years, many ambitious archaeological projects instrumental to the discovery, conservation and exhibition of the city’s monuments were launched thanks to the ruler’s ambitions and his desire to restore the glory of imperial Rome – the capital of a modern emperor, a successor of the Caesars.³

A prime example of particularly close ties between archaeology and politics was archaeological research conducted by European archaeologists overseas, in territories occupied as a result of military and diplomatic operations conducted by global powers.

In the early 19th c. European leaders “claimed” the remains of the ancient world for good – both in the literal and the metaphorical sense. In the former, as in this period a particularly large stream of artefacts began to flow to Europe from Asia Minor and North Africa, areas once inhabited by Greeks and Romans. In the latter, for scholars

¹ Foreword of Marechal Italo Balbo, (in:) R. FAJANS, *Wskrzeszone dzieło Cezarów* [Resurrected Work of the Caesars], Warszawa 1935, no page numbers.

² The subject has accumulated a substantial bibliography. A very good introduction to this topic is to be found in C. RENFREW, P. BAHN, *Archaeology. Theories, Methods and Practice*, London 2012⁶, 535–566 (especially chapter: *Who Owns the Past?*, 541–544). More on this subject in: M. DIAZ-ANDREU, T. CHAMPION (eds.), *Nationalism and Archaeology in Europe*, San Francisco 1996; P.L. KOHL, C. FAWCETT, *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology*, Cambridge 2000; cf. also recently: M. DIAZ-ANDREU, *A World History of Nineteenth-Century Archaeology. Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Past*, Oxford 2007. Some more detailed issues are discussed in several articles published in the volume: T. Murray, Ch. Evans (eds.), *Histories of Archaeology. A Reader in the History of Archaeology*, Oxford 2008 (i.a., D.D. FOWLER, *Uses of the Past: Archaeology in the Service of the State*, 93–119; B. ARNOLD, *The Past as Propaganda: Totalitarian Archaeology in Nazi Germany*, 120–144; M. DIETLER, *Our Ancestors the Gauls:*

Archaeology, Ethnic Nationalism, and the Manipulation of Celtic Identity in Modern Europe, 194–221). On the interaction between archaeology, culture and ideology, seen from the perspective of different nations – see B. GEDIGA, W. PIOTROWSKI (eds.), *Archeologia, kultura, ideologie / Archäologie, Kultur, Ideologien*, Biskupin – Wrocław 2004. These problems have also been discussed by Polish researchers – J. Axer, J. Olko (eds.), *Dawne kultury w ideologiach XIX i XX wieku* [Ancient Cultures in Ideologies of the 19th and 20th Century], Warszawa 2007 (i.a., Z. KURNATOWSKA, *Archeolodzy wobec politycznej wymowy swoich źródeł* [Archaeologists and the Political Significance of their Sources], 37–48; F.M. STĘPNIOWSKI, *Archeologia w “kolebce cywilizacji” – starożytne kultury we współczesnej ideologii i propagandzie Iraku*, [Archaeology in the “Cradle of Civilization” – Ancient Cultures in the Modern Ideology and Propaganda of Iraq], 87–104).

³ P. PINON, *La Rome de Napoléon: La théorie des deux villes*, (in:) P. Pinon et al., *Archéologie et projet urbain, Rome, Paris, Lille. Catalogue de l'exposition*, Paris – Rome 1985, 23–36.

from Europe completely dominated research activity in the Mediterranean region. Archaeology, combined with a higher level of learning and education, began to be used to legitimize the hegemony of Great Powers in countries incorporated into the Ottoman Empire and to justify colonial agendas. It was exploited to warrant military operations and explain permanent presence on the conquered territories. This strategy went hand in hand with a conviction of European superiority and the common belief that people inhabiting the lands in question were ignorant and passive descendants of barbarians. Frequent mentions of destroyed ancient monuments in travellers' and journalists' accounts were incorporated into discourse in which the desire to save the ancient heritage belonging to the Europeans was a constant point of reference.⁴ This coincided with new regulation that gave the state a monopoly for the carrying out of excavations. Archaeology after becoming institutionalized entered the public sphere and the total control over archaeological works let the state use it in its own propaganda. The idea to use the past became stronger than before after the French Revolution when the nation-state emerged. The nationalism influenced the infrastructure of archaeology and established the way in which the archaeological knowledge was organized.

In the 19th and early 20th c., the theory of archaeology's subordination to politics found full confirmation in the French and Italian expansion in North Africa where the Roman past was used to give right to intensified contemporary re-colonization of ancient Roman provinces. Building parallels between ancient and modern colonialism had diverse implications. On the one hand, arguments of an economic nature were put forward – the great influx of European immigrants to these lands was the driving force of regional prosperity both in the past and in modern times. On the other hand, there was the vital issue of protecting the “national” heritage and preventing the locals from mind-

lessly destroying the European legacy. The archaeology practiced in these regions allowed to select what was relevant and convenient from the past.⁵ In radical instances, common and rather one-sided references to the Roman legacy, which at the same time ignored the plenitude, plurality and diversity of other historical testimonies, led to a selective extraction of history's convenient elements.

The first to use these arguments on a large scale were the French during their expansion in the Maghreb. Until as late as 1830 the western part of North Africa was known only from accounts of travellers, mainly naturalists and geographers, who did not assign vital importance to historical monuments.⁶ The conquest of first Algeria and then Tunisia triggered an intensification of research, in which political interests went hand in hand with academic ones. Nonetheless, foundations for permanent and dynamic structures in which the interests of the ruler and the state played a vital role were lacking until the Second Empire.⁷

French colonisation was ennobled by comparison to Roman one from which it claimed a political and civilizing inheritance. Consequently, French activity in Algeria and Tunisia created an ideological framework for colonial archaeology. The model in which research, exploration and reconstruction of artefacts served state policy, was adopted by the Italians when in the 1880s they began efforts to gain control of Libya, which lay to the east of the Maghreb.⁸

Italian archaeological research in Libya 1911–1943

Modern Libya encompasses three historically and geographically distinct regions: Tripolitania in the west, Cyrenaica in the east, and Fezzan in the south – only the first two of which were settled by the Greeks and Romans. In the 7th c. BC, Cyrenaica was settled by Greek colonists

⁴ D. CHALLIS, *From the Harpy Tomb to the Wonders of Ephesus. British Archaeologists in the Ottoman Empire 1840–1880*, London 2008; R. ETIENNE (ed.), *Les politiques de l'archéologie du milieu du XIX^e siècle à l'orée du XXI^e siècle. Colloque organisé par l'École Française d'Athènes à l'occasion de la célébration du 150^e anniversaire de sa fondation. Discours prononcés à l'occasion du 150^e anniversaire de l'EEA*, Paris – Athènes 2000.

⁵ On such an understanding of culture-historical archaeology and manipulating the past in order to support “claimed” rights to occupy a given territory – cf. B. TRIGGER, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, Cambridge 2006², 211–312; also in Polish literature – H. MAMZER, *Archeologia i dyskurs [Archaeology and Discourse]*, Poznań 2004, 132–138 (chapter: *W służbie narodowego samouwierdzenia [In the Service of National Self-Affirmation]*).

⁶ P.A. FÉVRIER, *Approches du Maghreb Romain*, vol. 1, Aix-en-Provence 1989.

⁷ M. DONDIN-PAYRE, *L'armée d'Afrique face à l'Algérie romaine: enjeux idéologiques et contraintes pratiques d'une oeuvre scientifiques au XIX^e siècle*, (in:) M. Khanoussi, P. Ruggeri, C. Vismara (eds.), *Geografi, viaggiatori, militari nel Maghreb alle origini dell'archeologia nel Nord Africa*, L'Africa romana 13, Roma 2000, 725–745; see also E. GRAN AYMERICH, *Naissance de l'archéologie moderne 1798–1945*, Paris 1998, 123–127, 154–157; M. DIAZ-ANDREU, *A World History...*, 245–277 (chapter: *Classical versus Islamic Antiquities in Colonial Archaeology: The Russian Empire and French North Africa*).

⁸ Salomon Reinach, personally involved in the French excavations in “French” North Africa, was an avid supporter of the Italian occupation from the very beginning – cf., i.a., S. REINACH, *Courier de l'art antique*, “Gazette des Beaux Arts” 7, 1912, 59–60; idem, *Courier de l'art antique*, “Gazette des Beaux Arts” 9, 1913, 162; idem, *Courier de l'art antique*, “Gazette des Beaux Arts” 12, 1916, 273–279.

from Thera; after Alexander's death it was allotted to the rulers of Alexandria, and in 96 BC, in consequence of the will of Ptolemy Apion, it became part of the Roman Republic. It constituted a separate senatorial province, initially as a part of Egypt and from 20 BC together with Crete, until the end of the 3rd century AD and Diocletian's reform, which divided it into Libya Superior and Inferior. After the division of Imperium Romanum it was part of the Empire in the East until the 7th century AD, when the Arab invasion brought an end to the Classical civilisation.⁹ Greek language and culture dominated in Cyrenaica until the end of Roman rule. The situation was different in the west, in Tripolitania, where the Phoenicians, attested since the 9th c. BC, first founded Carthage and, at the time of Greek settlement of Cyrenaica, established subsequent trade emporia, i.e. Leptis Magna, Oea and Sabratha. It was from these three cities that the whole region eventually took its name. According to Sallustius (*De bello Iugurthino*, 19, 79), at the end of the 6th century BC the borderline between the zones of Greek and Phoenician influence was established at the Gulf of Sidra; at a later date, this border also became the boundary of the *Africa Vetus/Proconsularis* province, when in 146 BC, after the Third Punic War, Tripolitania and Carthage again passed to Rome. The reign of the Severan dynasty (192–235 AD) was the period of the greatest prosperity of the Tripolitanian cities and the heyday of their elites – Leptis Magna was the birthplace of the founder of the dynasty, Septimius Severus. In the 5th and 6th centuries AD Tripolitania became part of the Vandal kingdom (with its capital in Carthage), but during the reign of Justinian it returned to the empire, only to finally succumb to the Arab invasion in the 7th c. AD like its neighbour Cyrenaica.¹⁰ In 1517 both regions were incorporated into the Ottoman Empire and their territory was dominated by Arab settlement.

Since the 17th c. modern-day Libya was in the sphere of interests of European countries as a source of antiquities. From the end of 19th c. the colonial aspirations of the recently united Italy (1870) which desired to strengthen its political and economic position, radically changed this situation. A new Italy modelled after the Roman Empire needed new territories and Italians wanted to bring into fruition an idea of *Mare Nostrum*. Italian nationalists reclaimed the Latin term, which had been coined to designate the Mediterranean Sea after the Punic Wars wishing to justify the intention to occupy a part of North Africa. In 1880's the political dreams of building *Grande Italia* were initially pursued on the European diplomatic scene. At the same time the Italians introduced the policy of *penetrazione pacifica*, aimed primarily at making the entire region economically dependent on Italy.¹¹ In due time, as a result of Italian propaganda, the conquest of Libya began to be perceived as a remedy for all social and economic problems. From the very beginning *romanità* or romannes was employed to justify Italian colonialism and to remind the Italian people of their own legacy. As a result, the Italo-Turkish war (1911–1912), launched by the cabinet of Giovanni Giolitti, had the support of both the parliament and the public. The myth of *romanità* praised by artists and poets¹² as a key argument used to gain the acceptance of the Italian society and the international circles, gave the Italy, the direct heir to Roman Empire and a bearer of civilisation, the historical right to occupy these ancient Roman provinces. The ground for the military and political conquest was prepared by the early archaeological missions and the Italian propaganda from the outset of occupation made the archaeology one of the most important political tool. In consequence, politics exerted a profound influence on the character, form and scope of the conducted research, affecting the choice of sites, the research methods and the manner of presenting the monuments.¹³

⁹ On the history of Cyrenaica – cf. A. LARONDE, *Cyrène et la Libye hellénistique. Libykai historiai*, Paris 1987; idem, *La Cyrénaïque romaine, des origines à la fin des Sévères (96 av. J.-C. – 235 ap. J.-C.)*, (in:) W. Haase, H. Temporini (eds.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt, Teil II: Principat, Band 10.1, Politische Geschichte – Provinzen und Randvölker: Afrika und Ägypten*, Berlin – New York 1988, 1006–1064; on its archaeology – cf. also PH. KENRICK, *Cyrenaica*, Libya Archaeological Guides, London 2013.

¹⁰ On the history and archaeology of Tripolitania – cf. D. MATTINGLY, *Tripolitania*, Bath 1995; PH. KENRICK, *Tripolitania*, Libya Archaeological Guides, London 2009.

¹¹ M.-H. LARFAQUI, *L'occupation italienne de la Libye. Les préliminaires 1882–1911*, Paris 2010, 84, 103–136.

¹² M. MUNZI, *Italian Archaeology in Libya. From Colonial Romanità to Decolonization of the Past*, (in:) M.L. Galaty, Ch. Watkinson (eds.), *Archaeology under Dictatorship*, New York 2004, 73–107 (especially the chapter: *The Arts in the Service of Rome*, 88–95).

¹³ Italian colonial archaeology in Libya is still a subject of on-going research and the bibliography on the subject is extensive. The issues it addresses usually approach archaeology as a political tool (cf., e.g., M. PETRICIOLI, *Le missioni archeologiche italiane nei paesi del Mediterraneo: uno strumento alternativo di politica internazionale*, (in:) V. La Rosa (ed.), *L'archeologia italiana nel Mediterraneo: fino alla Seconda Guerra Mondiale*, Catania 1986, 9–31; eadem, *Archeologia e Mare Nostrum. Le missioni archeologiche nella politica mediterranea dell'Italia 1898/1943*, Roma 1990, 91–149; M. BARBANERA, *L'archeologia degli Italiani. Storia, metodi e orientamenti dell'archeologia classica in Italia*, Roma 1998, 77–80, 97–100, 129–130), as well as more detailed questions of limits and obligations it imposed. Recently on this subject, a comprehensive study by S. ALTENKAMP, *Rückkehr nach Afrika. Italienische Kolonialarchäologie in Libyen 1911–1943*, Böhlau – Köln 2000 (extensive bibliography therein, 256–286); summary of the state of research – S. ALTENKAMP, *Italian Colonial Archaeology in Libya 1912–1942*, (in:) M. Galaty, Ch. Watkinson (eds.), *Archaeology under Dictatorship...*, 55–71.



Fig. 1. Arch of Marcus Aurelius in Tripoli, Italian postcard, ca. 1912 (after A. LARONDE, *La Libye à travers les cartes postales 1900–1940*, Tripoli 1997, 17).

Ryc. 1. Łuk Marka Aureliusza w Trypolisie, włoska pocztówka z ok. 1912 r.

Simultaneously, political needs coincided with scientific ambitions of the archaeological milieu. In the period when other nations already had their bustling academic centres (archaeological schools) in Athens and Cairo and were busy launching new expeditions, Italian archaeologists conducted research at only one archaeological excavation site abroad: on Crete (since 1884).

The history of Italian archaeology in Libya began already in 1911 with the first scientific excavations undertaken in Tripolitania, but it was immediately after the formal end of the war and the ratification of the treaty of Lausanne in 1912 that the Italian archaeological monopoly began.¹⁴ Moreover, the archaeology mutated from a foreign politics issue, to a domestic one. As a result, the organisation of excavations, site maintenance and conservation was modelled on the system of archaeological supervision already in existence in Italy, though with some necessary and very significant adjustments. While in Italy the General Direction of Fine Arts and Antiquities (*Direzione generale per le antichità e belle arti*) was subordinated to the Ministry of Education (*Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione*), the control over antiquities in Libya was directly subjected to the Ministry of the Colonies (*Ministero delle Colonie*).

The year 1913 witnessed the establishment of the *Ispettorato archeologico*, soon renamed *Soprintendenza ai*

monumenti e scavi della Tripolitania. Consistently with the division of Libya into two parts, parallel structures for the supervision of antiquities were automatically created in Cyrenaica (with headquarters in Benghazi). It was not until 1936, after the union of the colonies, that the two institutions were combined into one under the direction of Giacomo Caputo, who remained in office until 1943.¹⁵

The period of colonial archaeology in Libya can be divided into two phases: the early phase (1911–1922) and the Fascist phase (1923–1943), although a certain turning point was the year 1936, when the two provinces (Tripolitania and Cyrenaica) were joined to form one colony (Libya).

In the first phase two basic issues that needed to be addressed were the drafting of legislation concerning the protection and control of antiquities, as well as the introduction of the stratigraphic method at the investigated sites. Importantly, an Italian regulation of 20 June 1909 imposed the obligation to document all historical layers on the sites¹⁶ and a legislative act of 1914 (*Decreto del Regno d'Italia sulla antichità, 24 settembre 1914*), written with Tripolitania and Cyrenaica in mind, established the means of control and the funding of excavations.¹⁷ The scope and funding of the archaeological works depended on the newly-founded colonial ministry, but that were the regional

¹⁴ The work of foreign archaeological missions in the new colonies was interrupted – the Americans were made to leave Cyrene (where they had been excavating the acropolis since 1911 on the basis of a permit received from the authorities in Constantinople).

¹⁵ Full list of names of *soprintendenti*: M. BALICE, *Libia. Gli scavi italiani 1922–1937: restauro, ricostruzione o propaganda?*,

Roma 2010, 255.

¹⁶ P. ROMANELLI, *La nostra legislazione coloniale in materia di antichità e le legislazioni similari degli altri stati dell'Africa Settentrionale*, "Athena. Rivista di Legislazione e di Giuridprudenza in Materia di Antichità e Belle Arti" 2, 1923, 185–198.

¹⁷ "Gazetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia," 26 Novembre 1914.



Fig. 2. Arch of Marcus Aurelius in Tripoli in 2010 (Photo M. Rekowska).

Ryc. 2. Łuk Marka Aureliusza w Trypolisie w 2010 r.

governors, the archaeologists as state officials were directly subordinated to, who controlled the undertakings.

The degree of dependence of research on domestic policy can be measured by analysing the funding it received. The financial situation of the archaeological service in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica mirrors the involvement in the works. In other words, differences and fluctuations in the funds allotted to excavations and conservation works in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica accurately reflect the changing objectives and, consequently, the authorities' demand for specific results.¹⁸ In the early period (before 1922), when the excavations were still in their organisational phase, there were no clear differences in the level of permanent funding allotted for research in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, but no large scale archaeological campaigns have been conducted. Additionally, due to the precarious political situation, in this phase the activity of the Italian archaeologists was somewhat erratic. The factors that played a key role in

decisions concerning archaeological excavations were non-academic. In Tripolitania the domestic situation permitted systematic research work, while order in Cyrenaica was continuously disrupted by powerful resistance forces led by Omar Mukhtar. The works therefore concentrated primarily on the western colony – and initially only two cities – Leptis Magna (modern Lebda) since 1911 and Oea (modern Tripoli) since 1912.¹⁹

One of the first achievements was the restoration of the arch of Marcus Aurelius in Tripoli, where despite many centuries of Roman presence almost all ancient buildings were demolished, disassembled to reclaim material, or built over as a result of uninterrupted settlement (**Figs. 1, 2**). The arch of Marcus Aurelius was the only preserved monument. Although it was a ruin, built-over and adapted by the Arabs for the needs of storage, workshops and finally a cinema, the arch was an important symbol of Roman rule, which had brought prosperity and peace to the region.

¹⁸ Full list of expenditures on archaeology in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica – M. BALICE, *Libia. Gli scavi italiani...*, 260.

¹⁹ M. MUNZI, *Italian Archaeologists in Colonial Tripolitania*, "Libyan Studies" 43, 2012, 81–110.

Since the beginning of the occupation absolute priority was given to work on the reconstruction, excavation and exhibition of this meaningful symbol of domination and proof of a certain continuity of traditions: Roman and Italian.²⁰

From an academic point of view, according to the Hellenocentric focus of classical archaeology in 19th c., of much greater interest were to be the excavations in Cyrenaica. The region had attracted the attention of archaeologists long before the occupation of the region itself. A direct impulse was provided by excavations Federico Halbherr launched in 1884 on Crete, which was part of the same Roman province as Cyrenaica. In this context, of particular importance was the issue of relations between these two parts of the province. In addition, such were the assumptions of Halbherr during his expedition of 1910, which helped forge the plan of archaeological research in Cyrenaica.²¹ However, the realisation of this strategy encountered considerable problems from the very beginning. The first obstacle arose from the difficulty in conquering the entire region and subjecting it to Italian administration – the first twenty years of occupation were dominated by clashes with guerrilla units. The second one was a consequence of the

preceding, since the beginning of the occupation the headquarters of the troops stationed in Cyrenaica were located in Cyrene (modern Shahhat); individual units were also dispatched to other cities of the Pentapolis. The constant presence of the army and the construction of military buildings (often re-using material from intentionally destroyed ancient structures) caused major losses on ancient sites. Attempts to limit the damage, undertaken by the *soprintendente* in Benghazi, were largely ineffective because keeping the peace in the region was considered a priority. Additionally (and paradoxically), due to its deep Greek roots, which determined its research value, Cyrenaica did not present a Romano-centric perspective. Briefly, in opposition to the expectations of the authorities – “Greek Cyrenaica” had less propagandistic significance than “Roman Tripolitania”. As a result, the scope of the works in the former was more modest, the funds were limited and the research was restricted to the ancient capital of the region. Structures erected in the ruins seriously hindered and indeed sometimes impeded archaeological research work, i.a. military storerooms occupied the most interesting area from the archaeological point of view – the famous sanctuary of Apollo.



Fig. 3. Cyrene, military store-rooms in the area of sanctuary of Apollo (on the left), access road partly covering Roman baths (on the right) in 1913 (after E. GHISLANZONI, *Gli scavi delle terme romane a Cirene*, “Notiziario Archeologico del Ministero delle Colonie” 2, 1916, 8).

Ryc. 3. Kyrene, wojskowe magazyny na terenie sanktuarium Apollina (po lewej), droga częściowo zakrywająca rzymskie termy (po prawej) w 1913 r.

²⁰ L.V. BERTARELLI, *Guida d'Italia del Touring Club Italiano. Possedimenti e Colonie*, Milano 1929, 289; R. MICACCHI, *L'Arco di Marco Aurelio in Tripoli e la sistemazione di zona adiacente*, “Rivista delle colonie italiane” 7, 1934, 824–839; S. AURIGEMMA, *L'Arco di Marco Aurelio e Lucio Vero in Tripoli*, Roma 1938; G. CAPUTO, *Il consolidamento dell'Arco di Marco Aurelio*, “Africa Italiana” 7, 1940, 46–66; A. DE VITA, *L'Arco quadrifonte di Marco Aurelio e di Lucio Vero in Tripoli*, Supplements to Libya Antiqua III, Tripoli 1970.

²¹ S. AURIGEMMA, *Federico Halbherr e la Missione archeologica italiana in Cirenaica e in Tripolitania*, “Africa Italiana” 3, 1930, 237–250; G. OLIVERIO, *Federico Halbherr in Cirenaica (Luglio 1910 – Aprile 1911)*, “Africa Italiana” 4, 1931, 229–290. Cf. also A. DI VITA, *Tripolitania e Cirenaica nel carteggio Halbherr: fra politica e archeologia*, (in:) V. La Rosa (ed.), *L'Archeologia italiana...*, 73–92.



Fig. 4. Sanctuary of Apollo and Roman baths in 1932 (on the right, Polish traveller Kazimierz Nowak and local guide) (Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe [National Digital Archive], inv. 1-E-9421).

Ryc. 4. Sanktuarium Apollina i rzymskie termy w 1932 r. (po prawej polski podróżnik Kazimierz Nowak z lokalnym przewodnikiem).

The access road for heavy military equipment also created additional difficulties (Fig. 3). Pure chance influenced the decision to move the units stationed on the lower terrace – in December 1913 heavy rains caused a landslide, which led to the spectacular discovery of the statue of Aphrodite – allowing exploration of the sanctuary and the nearby baths dating from the reign of Hadrian²² (Fig. 4). Such sweeping research programmes required enormous funds. Particularly intensive works were conducted in years 1919–1922, when the funds for research in Cyrenaica exceeded those allotted to the works in Tripolitania.²³

With time, in the years following the Fascists came to power (1922) the funding ratio dramatically changed. Even, if the official budget for both *soprintendenze* which included the salaries of the permanent staff was similar employed, Tripolitania received more additional funds for the excavations and restorations which matched the demands for the larger works. It remained in relation to new Fascist nationalism when the political use of archaeology has in-

tensified. Historical and cultural references to ancient Rome were among the most important elements of the Italian cultural policy of the “Fascist Era” (which Benito Mussolini used in place of AD). Benito Mussolini’s idea of making *romanità* a key component of the fascist state and ideology was enforcing by resurrecting the Roman past through various archaeological projects.

Having come to power, he became a eulogist of the glorious past and an initiator of grand investment programmes in the *Urbs*, which, as it happened, often caused irreversible damage. For Mussolini, the benefits of the excavations in Rome and emphasis on exposing the glory of ancient Rome were threefold: it offered the Italian nation a consolidating element, it provided the Fascists with a reference point to ancient grandeur, and it gave him an opportunity for self-identification with Caesar Augustus. This archaeological and political plan gained the full support of the archaeological circles. Archaeologists (i.e., Antonio Muñoz) found many reasons to justify Mussolini’s

²² E. GHISLANZONI, *Gli scavi delle Terme Romane a Cirene*, “Notiziario archeologico del Ministero delle Colonie” 2, 1916, 5–126; G. GUASTINI, *Prime note sulla struttura ed architettura delle Terme di Cirene*, “Notiziario archeologico del Ministero delle Colonie” 2, 1916, 127–151.

²³ The imbalance in expenditure is evident from 1918 onwards, but the climax occurred in years 1921–1922 (in Tripolitania: ca. 70 000 lire, in Cyrenaica: 121 000 lire) – cf. M. BALICE, *Libia. Gli scavi italiani...*, 260.

actions; faced with the scope of the conducted excavations, they turned a blind eye on the lack of documentation and the abandonment of the stratigraphic method of exploration (i.a., on the Largo Argentina, or Palatine and Capitoline Hills).²⁴

Fascism inherited historicized argument for the legitimacy of the involvement in North Africa, so obviously the ideology of *romanità* strongly influenced the colonial archaeology in the period after 1922. As a result the funds for research saw exponential growth, but in 1920s and 1930s much more money went to Roman Tripolitania.²⁵ The large sums of money were poured into the archaeological work and the main emphasis was on giving public access to the sites as quickly as possible. It was in close connection with the conviction that only a past visualized could be sold to the masses. This called for an intensification of excavations, as well as acceleration of reconstruction works. Such activity did not remain without influence on the methodology of research.

While in the initial phase the *soprintendenti* in Tripolitania, Salvatore Aurigemma (1913–1919) and Pietro Romanelli (1919–1923), devoted equal attention to Punic and Islamic monuments (dated to before and after the Roman rule), in a later time buildings from these periods were dismantled without regret for the sake of exhibiting the *romanità*. Haste in uncovering the antiquities also led to the abandonment of the stratigraphic method, which had been used in Italian archaeology since the 1860s and had become an essential part of fieldwork at the beginning of the 20th century.²⁶ Its precursor in Cyrenaica was the American scholar Richard Norton, who in 1910–1911 directed the excavations on the acropolis in Cyrene.²⁷

Ideological influence and the direct dependence of archaeologists on the provincial authorities made the researchers increasingly prone to becoming enforcers of cul-

tural policy. It happened that the personal and business interests of the local governors were a key factor in making decisions concerning research activity. Thus, the decisions of Giuseppe Volpi, the governor of Tripolitania in years 1921–1925, gave impetus to the progress of excavations at Sabratha. His personal commitment was commemorated by naming a small Italian settlement, built in 1923 next to the ancient town, Sabratha Volpia in his honour.²⁸

In Sabratha particular attention was paid to the largest theatre in North Africa. Discovered in 1926, it was in a much worse state of preservation (fallen columns, *frons scenae* preserved only to a third part of the first floor). Nonetheless, a large number of preserved architectural fragments permitted to launch complex reconstruction works, completed in 1937 and celebrated by staging Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*; the play was attended by a special guest, Benito Mussolini. The theatre is an iconic landmark of Sabratha even today.²⁹

However, a true archaeological and political challenge was the imperial city of Leptis Magna, located to the east of Tripoli. Its founding is attributed to the Phoenicians, but the earliest architectural remains discernible today date from the 1st c. BC. The city's golden age is associated with the reign of the Severan dynasty when thanks to the euergetism of its founder, Septimius Severus, it became monumental. Even when the city was abandoned completely, the memory of it survived in oral tradition. As a result, already in 17th c. clandestine excavations were conducted in the ruins and some elements (mostly lavish marble columns) were removed by diplomats wishing to adorn royal residences (e.g. Versailles) and parks (such as Virginia Water in Great Britain).³⁰ The extant buildings were eventually concealed by windblown sand, so in the early 20th c. only outlines of structures and protruding columns were visible above ground.

²⁴ S.L. DYSON, *In Pursuit of Ancient Pasts. A History of Classical Archaeology in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, New Haven – London 2006, 177–182. On archaeology and urbanism in Rome of the Fascist period – cf., i.a., A. CEDERNA, *Mussolini urbanista. Lo sventramento di Roma negli anni del consenso*, Roma – Bari 1981; I. INSOLERA, *Roma fascista*, Roma 2001.

²⁵ In years 1924–1925 the funds spent on research in Tripolitania was more than ten times greater than in Cyrenaica – respectively 921 530 and 83 565 lire (cf. M. BALICE, *Libia. Gli scavi italiani...*, 260).

²⁶ G. BONI, *Il metodo negli scavi archeologici*, “Nuova antologia” 36, 1901, 312–322.

²⁷ R. NORTON, *The Excavations at Cyrene: First Campaign, 1910–I*, “Bulletin of the Archaeological Institute of America” 2, 1911, 141–163.

²⁸ R. PARIBENI, *La ricerca archeologica*, (in:) A. Piccioli (ed.), *La Rinascita della Tripolitania. Memorie e studi sui quattro anni di governo del Conte Giuseppe Volpi di Misurata*, Milano 1926, 337–349. Recently on the history of excavations in Sabratha – M. MUNZI, *Quaranta anni di archeologia coloniale a Sabratha, 1911–1951*, (in:) L. Musso, L. Buccino (eds.), *Il museo di Sabratha nei disegni di Diego Vincifori: architettura e archeologia nella Libia degli anni Trenta*, Firenze 2013, 203–213.

²⁹ G. GUIDI, *Il teatro romano di Sabratha*, “Africa Italiana” 3, 1930, 1–52; G. CAPUTO, *Il teatro di Sabratha e l'architettura teatrale africana*, Monografie di archeologia libica VII, Roma 1959, 5–61.

³⁰ A. LANE, *The Ruins at Virginia Water (Part 1)*, “Libyan Studies” 35, 2004, 67–94; idem, *Emperor's Dream to King's Folly: The Provenance of the Antiquities from Lepcis Magna Incorporated into the 'Ruins' at Virginia Water (Part 2)*, “Libyan Studies” 43, 2012, 67–80.



Fig. 5. Leptis Magna, Severan forum in 2009 (Photo M. Rekowska).

Ryc. 5. Leptis Magna, Forum seweriańskie w 2009 r.

In the course of merely ten-odd years practically the entire city was unearthed. One of the first reconstructed monuments was the imperial symbol of power, the arch of Septimius Severus.³¹ Subsequently the Hadrianic Baths, the Severan basilica and Forum, the Market were uncovered and restored³² (Figs. 5, 6).

At this point it is worth to point out that the archaeology found its meaningful expression in iconographic propaganda. All these unearthed and reconstructed monuments were made immediately available to the large auditorium because the images of the monumental buildings and sculptures brought back to light were widely disseminated in postcards and postage stamps. From the beginning of occupation, they were among the most common media of

state propaganda. The first series of stamps with representations of antiquities were circulated already in 1921, and since the 1930s the number of issues increased multifold. They not only bore representations of individual objects (Aphrodite Anadyomene, Artemis and Apollo from Leptis Magna, etc.) and restored buildings of Tripoli, Sabratha, Leptis Magna and Cyrene but had also additional symbolic propaganda. A stamp series issues on the ten-year anniversary of the march on Rome (1932) is showing a modern settler who plants a spade in the side of a Roman paved road next to a milestone inscribed SPQR. The stamp bore a corresponding text: *Ritornando dove già fonno* [We return where we were already].³³ The plenitude of postcards which recorded the progress of archaeological works, were also

³¹ R. BARTOCCINI, *L'arco quadrifronte dei Severi a Lepcis*, "Africa Italiana" 4, 1931, 32–152.

³² R. BARTOCCINI, *Le terme di Lepcis (Leptis Magna)*, Bergamo 1929; idem, *Il Foro Imperiale di Lepcis*, "Africa Italiana" 1, 1927,

53–74; idem, *Il Foro Imperiale di Lepcis. Scavi 1927–1928*, "Africa Italiana" 2, 1928, 30–49; B.M. APOLLONU, *Foro e basilica Severiana di Leptis Magna*, I Monumenti Italiani 8–9, Roma 1936.

³³ M. MUNZI, *Italian Archaeology...*, 89–95.



Fig. 6. Leptis Magna, the Roman theatre in 2009 (Photo M. Rekowska).

Ryc. 6. Leptis Magna, rzymski teatr w 2009 r.

an excellent source of information on the uncovered antiquities. As souvenirs from a trip to Libya they also served as a medium attracting tourists to the region from Italy and beyond.³⁴

In the 1930s, the antiquities of Libya became more familiar to the public thanks to the fast development of tourism in the region. For reasons both propagandistic and economic the government strived to facilitate travel and

sightseeing in order to promote *turismo archeologico*. Among its goals was the building of infrastructure, especially a road network. Particularly intensive works were conducted in the first half of the 1930s. Benito Mussolini attended the opening of a coastal road linking Tripolitania and Cyrenaica (*strada litoranea*) – “the resurrected North-African route of the Roman Caesars”³⁵ and took the opportunity to visit the most important archaeological sites.³⁶

³⁴ The most frequently commemorated were the monuments of Sabratha and Leptis Magna, buildings of Cyrene were much less common, and the excavations in Ptolemais began at too late a date (1936) to be recorded on postcards. Cf. A. LARONDE, *La Libye à travers les cartes postales 1900–1940*, Tripoli 1997 (especially 64–77).

³⁵ R. FAJANS, *Wskrzeszone dzieło...*, 61. *Arco dei Fileni*, a monument modelled on Roman triumphal arches, which was to serve as a symbol of Roman and Italian colonisation of Libya, was erected in 1937 on the route also known as Via Balba, at the level of the town of El Gaus on the coast of the Gulf of Sidra. The decoration of the monument was very complex and referred to times both

ancient (bronze statues of the Philaeni, legendary brothers from Carthage, reliefs depicting the Capitoline wolf, legionary sigils) and modern (a relief showing the meeting of Benito Mussolini and King Victor Emmanuel III). The arch, as a symbol of foreign domination, was torn down and the decoration dismantled in 1973 upon the order of Muammar Gaddafi.

³⁶ Mussolini visited Libya twice before the war and each time devoted a lot of attention to archaeological works. In April 1926 he visited Sabratha and Leptis Magna. During the visit in March 1937 he also came to Cyrene – cf. M. MUNZI, *Italian Archaeology...*, 85–86.

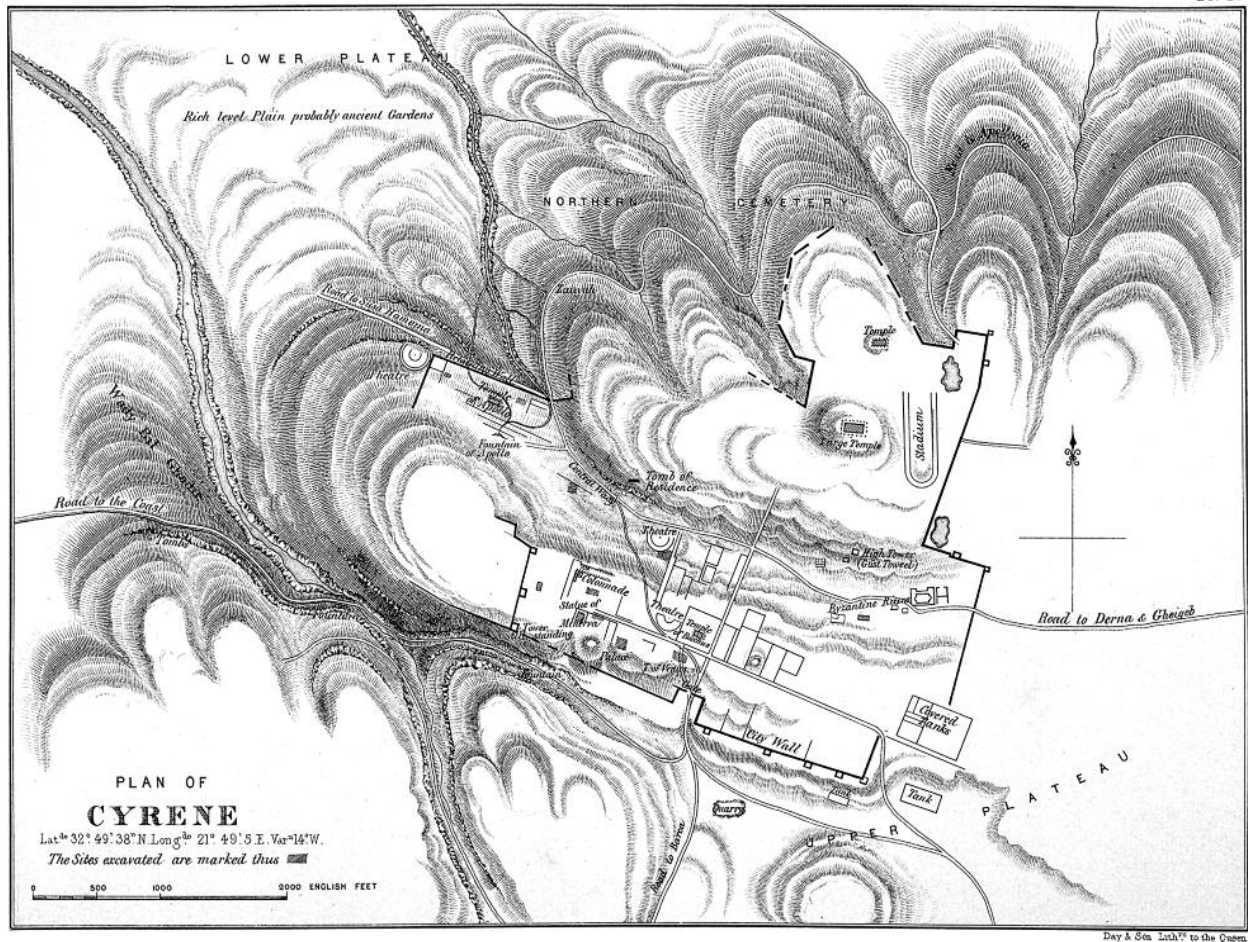


Fig. 7. Plan of Cyrene from 1861 (after R.M. SMITH, E.A. PORCHER, *History of the Recent Discoveries at Cyrene: Made during an Expedition to the Cyrenaica in 1860–61, under the Auspices of Her Majesty's Government*, London 1864, pl. 40).

Ryc. 7. Plan Kyrene z 1861 r.

The need of visual representation of the past in order to attract masses unprepared for contact with high culture led to the organization of the archaeological parks. To the main sites in Tripolitania (Sabratha and Leptis Magna) have been joined two sites in Cyrenaica (Cyrene and Ptolemais). The activities in other centers were suspended, while large teams worked all year round in these four major locations.

Suffice it to compare the plans of Cyrene from the 1860s and from the 1930s (Figs. 7, 8) to see the scope of activity and the massive scale of the work. After twenty five years of intermittent excavations, the most important parts of the city – the sanctuary of Apollo, the Greek agora and the Roman forum – were almost entirely uncovered and many monuments underwent conservation and (at least initial) reconstruction.³⁷

In Ptolemais, despite the delayed start of the works, the availability of huge funds allowed for spectacular progress in few years only: the unearthing of a representative fragment of the main east-west oriented street (Via Monumentale, Fig. 9), as well as reconstruction work at the Mausoleum, the Tocra Gate, Palazzo delle Colonne (Fig. 10), Square of the Cisterns and an early Christian basilica.³⁸

Over the course of only thirty years the Italians did an enormous amount of work. Many monuments were unearthed, but the focus was above all on the restoration of splendid architectural complexes, mainly public buildings that testified to the glory of Rome and confirmed the economically beneficial role of the Romans, of whom the Italians claimed to be direct successors. At the same time the works, whose aim was to make the reconstructed monuments accessible to the general public, legitimised their

³⁷ G. OLIVERIO, *Gli scavi di Cirene*, Bergamo 1931.

³⁸ G. CAPUTO, *La protezione dei monumenti di Tolemaide negli*

anni 1935–1942, “Quaderni di Archeologia della Libia” 3, 1954, 33–66.

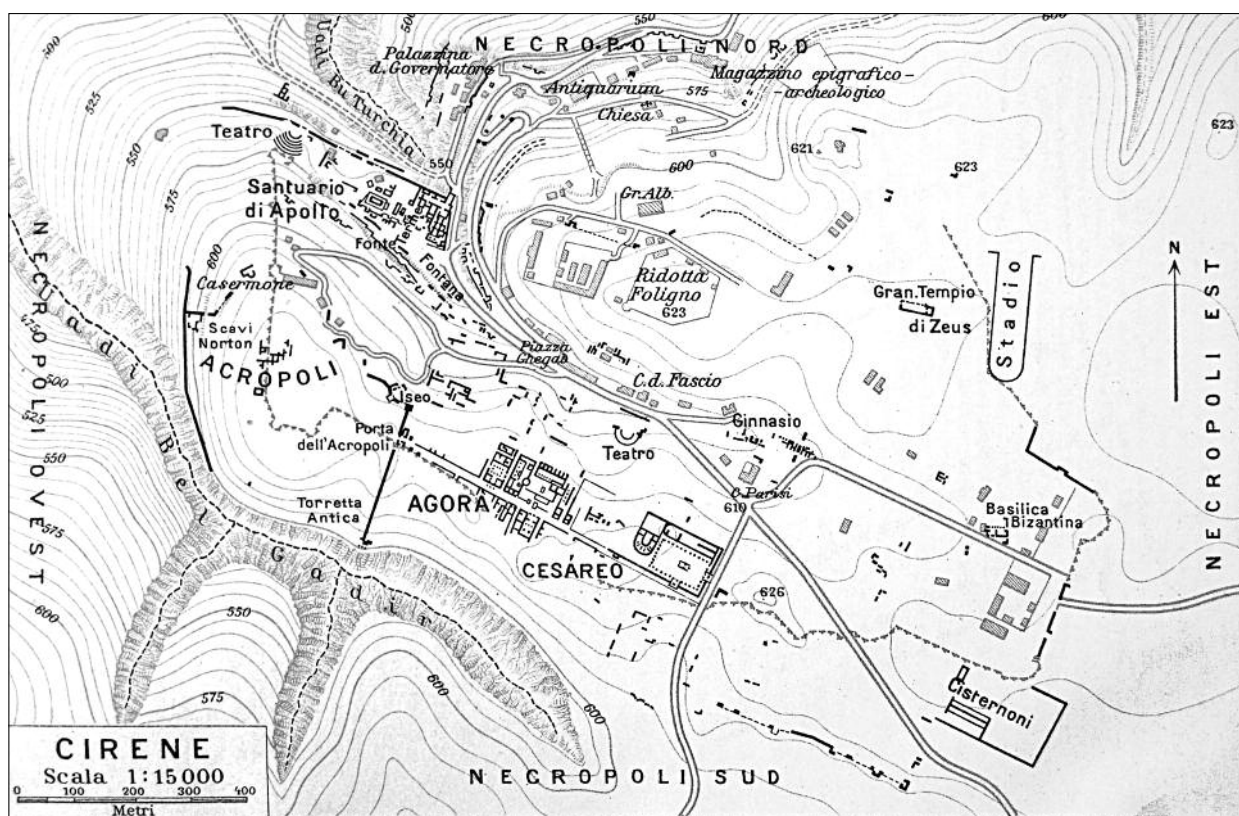


Fig. 8. Plan of Cyrene from 1936 (after L.V. BERTARELLI, *Libia*, Guida d'Italia del Touring Club Italiano, Milano 1937).

Ryc. 8. Plan Kyrene z 1936 r.

presence in Libya in the eyes of both the academic circles and the tourists who came in large numbers not only from Italy, but from all of Europe. In response to the growing mass-scale tourism in Libya, the guidebooks with special focus on antiquities were written.³⁹ The first guidebook was published already in 1923, and the subsequent editions were revised to reflect progress in the research and contained updated descriptions of archaeological sites together with plans.⁴⁰

The significance of the conducted archaeological works is indicated by the fact that during official visits to

Libya politicians and rulers graced the excavations with their presence, an example being the visit of Queen Elena of Savoy and King Victor Emmanuel III to Leptis Magna in 1928.⁴¹ The visit on the main archaeological sites was also an important point of two trips made by Benito Mussolini to Libya (in 1926 and 1937). These visits were the symbolic expression of a prominent role that archaeology played in the Italian policy.

In order to give publicity and add academic prestige to the conducted works, in 1925 an International Congress of Classical Archaeology was organised in Tripoli.⁴²

³⁹ Separate archaeological guides were published for only two cities in Tripolitania: R. BARTOCCINI, *Guida di Leptis*, Roma – Milano 1927; idem, *Guida di Sabratha*, Roma – Milano 1927.

⁴⁰ A. FANTOLI, *Guida della Libia del Touring Club Italiano. Parte prima. Tripolitania*, Milano 1923; idem, *Guida della Libia del Touring Club Italiano. Parte seconda. Cirenaica*, Milano 1923; L.V. BERTARELLI, *Possidimenti e Colonie*, Guida d'Italia del Touring Club Italiano, Milano 1929; idem, *Libia*, Guida d'Italia del Touring Club Italiano, Milano 1937. These guides were published by the Touring Club Italiano, the major national tourist organisation

in Italy. It was founded in the end of the 19th c. to promote tourism and from the very beginning it was financed by the state; its editorial activity realised the state policy.

⁴¹ <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/with-the-king-of-italy-in-tripolitania/query/ARCHAEOLOGY> (access on 2 June 2014).

⁴² *Convegno di Archeologia Romana, Tripoli I-V maggio MCMXXV*, Tripoli 1925; *Il convegno archeologico di Tripoli*, "Rivista della Tripolitania" I.6, maggio–giugno 1925, 417–423 (after M. MUNZI, *L'epica del ritorno. Archeologia e politica nella Tripolitania italiana*, Roma 2001, 147).



Fig. 9. Ptolemais, Via Monumentale in 2009 (Photo M. Bogacki).

Ryc. 9. Ptolemais, Via Monumentale w 2009 r.



Fig. 10. Ptolemais, Palazzo delle Colonne in 2009 (Photo M. Bogacki).

Ryc. 10. Ptolemais, Palazzo delle Colonne w 2009 r.



Fig. 11. Ptolemais, Tocra Gate in 2008 (Photo M. Bogacki).

Ryc. 11. Ptolemais, Brama Tokry w 2008 r.

Also, the most renowned European scholars were invited to come to the sites, where they were expected to make statements yet again confirming the need to protect antiquities in Libya. Gaspare Oliverio used his personal contacts to convince Ulrich von Willamowitz-Moellendorff to come to Cyrene; a result of this visit was a brochure on the Italian archaeological work on the site, published first in German and later in Italian.⁴³

To attract more tourist traffic to Libya, invitations were also extended to journalists; their task was to praise the work of the Italian archaeologists and corroborate the statement of Italo Balbo, the most renowned governor of Libya, regarding the Italians' civilisational role (cf. introductory quote). One of the invited guests was the Polish journalist Roman Fajans, the author of the book *Wskreszone*

dzieło Cezarów [*Resurrected work of the Caesars*] (Warszawa 1935).⁴⁴

Dangerous liaisons? – an evaluation

An analysis of the results achieved by Italian colonial archaeology in Libya in the course of over three decades of occupation leaves one awestruck by the massive scale of the works, which returned virtually entire ancient cities to their former glory.⁴⁵ Although the excavations were conducted in response to political demands and were made possible by the immense funds allotted for this purpose, they seem to confirm the belief, supported especially by the recent turn of events, in the need to protect the European

⁴³ U. VON WILLAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF, *Kyrene*, Berlin 1928 (Italian translation: *Cirene*, Bergamo 1930).

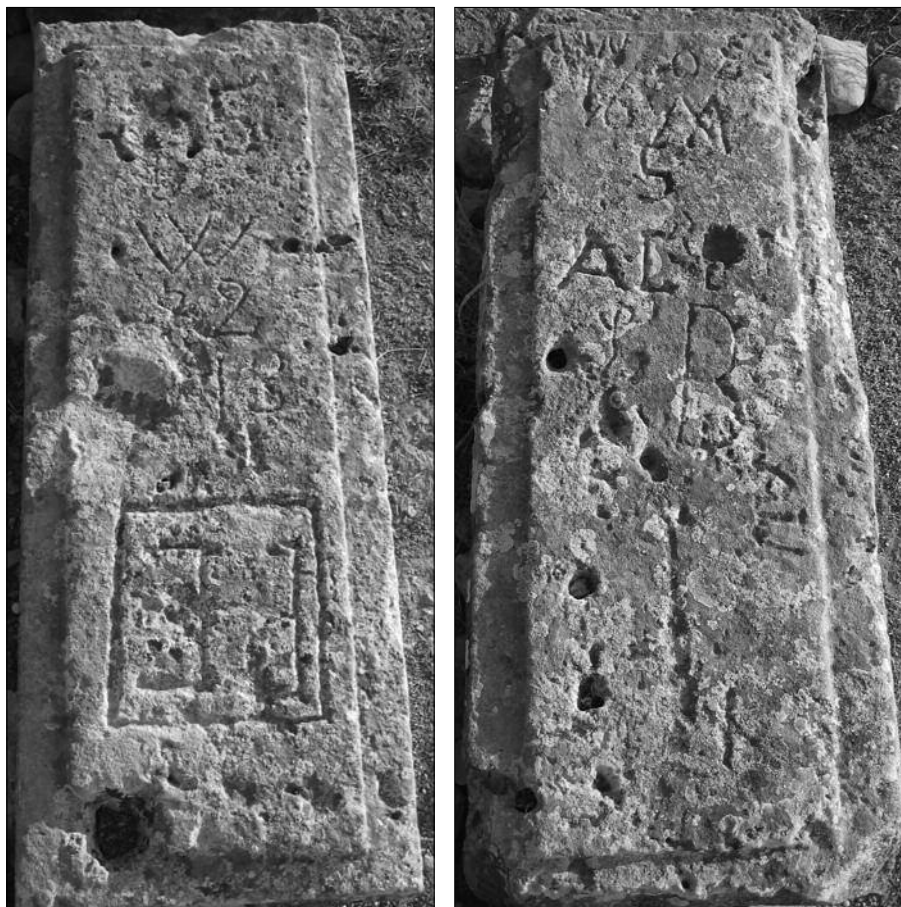
⁴⁴ On other Polish travellers in Libya see: K. JARECKA-STĘPIEŃ, *Polish Travellers in Libya*, "Maghreb Review" 31, 2006, 231–244.

⁴⁵ On early archaeological research in Cyrenaica – M. REKOWSKA,

W poszukiwaniu antycznej Cyrenajki... 200 lat badań na tle rozwoju zainteresowań archeologią w Europie (1706–1911) [*In Pursuit of Ancient Cyrenaica... Two Hundred Years of Exploration Against the History of Archaeology in Europe (1706–1911)*], Światowit Supplement Series A: Antiquity XII, Warsaw 2013 (the summary on the colonial archaeology: 347–352).

Fig. 12. Italian inscriptions on stone blocks removed from the Tocrá Gate (Photo M. Bogacki).

Ryc. 12. Włoskie napisy na kamiennych blokach zdjętych z Bramy Tokry.



heritage from impending destruction.⁴⁶ Yet, the results of these activities were ambiguous.

Thus, is it (and why is it) a valid statement that the liaisons between archaeology and politics were at times dangerous?

1. Military activity brought about by the invasion of Libya caused irreversible damage. Ancient structures were damaged as a result of military actions in their vicinity.⁴⁷ In addition, the behaviour of the troops, which in theory were to proceed in a fashion similar to the educated French officers in countries of the Maghreb, was in reality far from the ideal. The military goals, which were considered priority, caused heavy damage that could never be repaired. Often

enough the destruction was caused by soldiers stationed near ancient cities or even in the ruins. In Ptolemais, they, bored at their posts in the vicinity of the Tocrá Gate, one of the monumental city gates dating back to the Hellenistic period, carved inscriptions on blocks scattered in the monument's vicinity, leaving lasting souvenirs of their presence (Figs. 11, 12).

2. Ancient monumental tombs, fortified farms and block-houses were often re-used for military purposes, in consequence a lot of monuments were destroyed or damaged. The buildings were often dismantled in order to reclaim construction material or filled with new structures. Excavation of trenches, works for fortifications, roads and quartering

⁴⁶ As a result of the revolution in Libya, since 2011 the archaeological works are not conducted. The obvious consequence of the violence was the devastation of numerous monuments and sporadic destruction of museum collections. Even after the fighting has come to a halt, archaeological supervision is sometimes ineffective in the face of construction works, as a result of which entire architectural complexes are torn down, for instance the

southern necropolis at Cyrene (*Ancient Libyan Necropolis Threatened by Real Estate Speculators*, <http://observers.france24.com/content/20130823-ancient-libyan-necropolis-threatened-cyrene>, access on 24 March 2015).

⁴⁷ M. MUNZI, F. FELICI, A. ZOCCHI, E. CIRELLI, *Combattere a Leptis Magna: archeologia della Guerra di Libia*, "Archeologia Postmedievale" 14 (2010), 2013, 11–40.



Fig. 13. Aphrodite Anadyomene found in Cyrene, on an Italian stamp from 1934 (<http://libyan-stamps.blogspot.com/2014/02/aphrodite-from-cyrene-in-libya-stamps.html>).

Ryc. 13. Afrodyta Anadyomene znaleziona w Kyrene, na włoskim znaczku pocztowym z 1934 r.

caused vandalism. Several edifices at Leptis Magna suffered damage as a result of removal of blocks for re-use in military buildings;⁴⁸ in Cyrene forts were built in the ruins of ancient temples. One of the most drastic example of destruction in the name of higher causes was the construction of a road connecting Cyrene with its port. The road builders followed an ancient route and caused major damage to a part of the tombs in the necropolis and forts that had stretched alongside it. The tombs were razed to the ground, blocked as a result of levelling works,⁴⁹ freestanding structures were built-over, new Italian military forts covered the remains of ancient buildings⁵⁰ and finally all was covered with asphalt.

3. Intensified colonisation drastically changed the landscape, which had remained untouched since antiquity. Most

often no archaeological investigations were conducted in areas designated as construction sites, thus, a part of the data was irrevocably lost.

4. Promoting *romanità* affected the scope and manner of conducting excavations. The archaeology was far from the professional standards practised in the field. Modern prospection methods that had been developing at the time were implemented on a relatively small scale. Methodological standards called for full documentation of architectural changes on the site, recording each of the construction phases and – if possible – preserving all of them. However, the objectives of Italian archaeology restricted to the Roman period led to destruction of important evidence from other periods. As a result of very polemical interpretation of Punic history all Punic relics were dismantled. The scale of Late Antique and Early Islamic settlement was also downgraded – all later modifications and refurbishments, were considered to be deformations of earlier structures. Thus, all post-classical strata were removed, very often without any documentation. In this way the Arabic appearance of the country was minimized and in consequence the archaeological heritage of the sites was conveyed in a very simplified way, which was conformed to the policy of the state.

5. The haste in conducting the excavations, primarily aimed at giving visitors access to the sites, caused irredeemable losses in the material. Excavations were conducted with no stratigraphic method which was discarded in favour of comprehensive area excavations covering vast sectors of the cities. Especially during Fascist era, the obligation for the archaeological investigations to be conducted according to scholarly principles, was removed.

6. Lastly, a part of the information was lost forever due to the lack of proper documentation or publications. The speed of the digging up meant also that all of the archaeological features were poorly recorded (Roman ones included!). Sometimes, even if the records were taken, they vanished among the disorder of war or were never properly published. A reliable academic periodical, “Notiziario archeologico,” was released only in the first ten-odd years of occupation.⁵¹ Later it was replaced by the journal “Africa Italiana,”⁵² which had an open formula intended for a more general readership and therefore rejected more specialised texts.

⁴⁸ This often led to unexpected discoveries; unfortunately only some of them were registered, properly documented and preserved, as in the case of Villa del Nilo in Leptis Magna – G. GUIDI, *La Villa del Nilo*, “Africa Italiana” 5, 1933, 1–56.

⁴⁹ E.g. tombs N. 66, N. 84 – cf. D.M. THORN, J. THORN, *A Gazetteer of the Cyrene Necropolis from the Original Notebooks of John Cassel, Richard Tomlinson and James and Dorothy Thorn*, *Studia Archeologica* 161, Roma 2009, 45, 51.

⁵⁰ D. WHITE, *The City Defenses of Apollonia*, (in:) R.G. Goodchild et al., *Apollonia, the Port of Cyrene. Excavations by the University of Michigan 1965–1967*, *Libya Antiqua Supplements* 4, Tripoli 1976, 134.

⁵¹ “Notiziario archeologico del Ministero delle Colonie,” 1915–1927 (4 vols.).

⁵² “Africa Italiana,” 1927–1941 (8 vols.)

The symbolic end of the period of colonial archaeology came fairly recently. During Silvio Berlusconi's visit in August 2008 – in addition to a promise of 200 million dollars paid annually for the subsequent 25 years as compensation for the Italian occupation of the country – Venus Anadyomene was returned to Libya. The statue (**Fig. 13**), found in the baths in Cyrene in 1913 (at the start of the events described in this paper) was brought back as a result of diplomatic talks conducted between the Italian and Libyan governments since 1989. As we now know, history

took a turn that neither of the two leaders had foreseen and, for political reasons, Berlusconi was unable to keep his promise; nevertheless, after 95 years of absence the statue returned to the museum in Tripoli, where it still stands today.

Translated by Dorota Dzierzbicka

Dr hab. Monika Rekowska
Institute of Archaeology
University of Warsaw
mrekowska@uw.edu.pl

MONIKA REKOWSKA

NIEBEZPIECZNE ZWIĄZKI? ARCHEOLOGIA W LIBII W LATACH 1911–1943 I JEJ TŁO POLITYCZNE

Wpływ polityki na archeologię można obserwować na różnych płaszczyznach. Zbierane dzięki wykopaliskom przedmioty mogły służyć legitymizacji władzy, teorie archeologiczne o powstawaniu i rozwoju określonych kultur wykorzystywane były w sporach o przynależność etniczną, chęć uratowania dziedzictwa archeologicznego bywała przykrywką dla działań o charakterze ekspansjonistycznym. Szczególnym, ze względu na złożoność, przykładem jest tzw. archeologia kolonialna. Tym pojęciem określić należy działania podejmowane przez włoskich archeologów w trakcie trzydziestoletniej okupacji Libii (1911–1943).

W związku z tym, że u podłoża imperialistycznych aspiracji Włoch leżał mit *romanità*, nie dziwi fakt, że od początku okupacji archeologia została zaprzęgnięta w machinę propagandy, a Włosi uczynili z niej jedno z najważniejszych narzędzi legitymizujących kolonizację. W konsekwencji, polityka wywierała ogromny wpływ na charakter, formę i zakres prowadzonych badań: wybór stanowisk, metod badawczych i sposobu ekspozycji zabytków. Analizując zatem działania włoskich archeologów w owym okresie, można łatwo potwierdzić tezę o ścisłych związkach, jakie łączyły archeologię z polityką. Pytanie postawione w tytule ma skłonić do refleksji, czy i dlaczego te związki bywały niebezpieczne.

Archeologię kolonialną w Libii można podzielić na dwie fazy: wczesną (1911–1922) oraz faszystowską (1923–1943), przy czym dodatkową cezurę stanowił rok 1936, gdy obie prowincje (Trypolitania i Cyrenajka) zostały połączone w jedną kolonię (Libia).

W pierwszej fazie archeolodzy, będący jednocześnie urzędnikami państwowymi, mieli przede wszystkim za

zadanie stworzenie jasnych reguł zabezpieczenia wszystkich zabytków – zarówno grecko-rzymskich, jak i tych sprzed czasów dominacji Greków i Rzymian, a także islamskich, powstałych już po upadku cywilizacji klasycznej. Pierwszoplanowym i najważniejszym zadaniem było bowiem stworzenie kulturalno-politycznego uzasadnienia dla okupacji kraju, w co wpisywała się realizacja planu ochrony zabytków, które pozostawały zaniedbane, opuszczone oraz były rozgrabiane podczas tureckiej dominacji (1517–1911). Te cele miał realizować urząd założony na wzór tych istniejących już we Włoszech – *Soprintendenza ai monumenti e scavi* – z siedzibami w Trypolisie i Bengazi, a także ustawa z 1914 r. (*Decreto del Regno d'Italia sulla antichità, 24 settembre 1914*), w której oprócz kwestii merytorycznych, szczególną uwagę poświęcono sposobowi kontroli i finansowania wykopalisk. Mimo że o finansowaniu badań decydowało Ministerstwo Kolonii w Rzymie, oddanie urzędu *soprintendente* pod nadzór władz prowincji czyniło archeologię jeszcze bardziej podatną na wpływy polityczne i ideologiczne, a dodatkowo jej rozwój pozostawał w bezpośredniej zależności od osobistego zaangażowania i zainteresowań gubernatorów (jak np. Giuseppe Volpi czy Italo Balbo).

Z akademickiego punktu widzenia wykopaliska w miastach Cyrenajki wydawały się bardziej interesujące niż badania w innych regionach. Paradoksalnie to, co decydowało o naukowym walorze Cyrenajki, czyli jej „greckość”, stała w opozycji do oczekiwań władzy, dla której większą wartość propagandową miała „rzymska” Trypolitania. W początkowym okresie na aktywność archeologiczną wpływały także względy pozamerytoryczne. O ile w Trypolitanii sytuacja wewnętrzna pozwalała na systematyczne prowadzenie badań, to w Cyrenajce sytuację destabilizowała silna

partyzantka. W konsekwencji, w pierwszej fazie prace koncentrowały się w trzech rzymskich miastach zachodniej kolonii – w Leptis Magna (wsp. Lebda), Oea (wsp. Trypolis) i Sabratha, natomiast we wschodniej ograniczone badania prowadzono jedynie w Kyrene (wsp. Shahhat).

Po dojściu do władzy Benito Mussoliniego (1922), który podnosił w ideologii faszystowskiej wagę identyfikacji państwa włoskiego ze starożytnym Rzymem dla zbudowania własnego imperium, skokowo zwiększyły się nakłady na badania w Trypolitanii (wcześniej finansowanie pozostawało zrównoważone w odniesieniu do obu prowincji). Główny nacisk położono na szybkie udostępnianie stanowisk. To oznaczało intensyfikację badań wykopaliskowych, a tego typu działania nie pozostawały bez wpływu na metodykę badań. O ile w pierwszej fazie Salvatore Aurigemma i Pietro Romanelli z równą atencją traktowali zabytki punickie i islamskie (czyli sprzed i po rzymskiej okupacji), o tyle na potrzeby wyeksponowania *romanità* budowle z tych okresów bez żalu burzono. Pośpiech w odsłanianiu spowodował także całkowite zarzucenie metody stratygraficznej, którą w archeologii włoskiej stosowano już od lat 60. XIX wieku. W latach 30. XX wieku polityka państwowa za cel obrała szybki wzrost turystyki w regionie, temu zaś miały służyć tworzone parki archeologiczne (w Leptis Magna, Sabratha, Kyrene, a od 1936 r. także w Ptolemais). Nastąpił wówczas ogromny postęp w pracach rekonstrukcyjnych – nie tylko pojedynczych budowli, ale całych kompleksów. Warto jednak zauważyć, że szczególny nacisk kładziono na

pozostałości osadnictwa rzymskiego, a największą wagę przywiązywano do monumentalnych budowli publicznych.

Zwiedzanie stanowisk archeologicznych, na których prowadzono wykopaliska, stało się jednym z obowiązkowych elementów programu oficjalnych wizyt polityków w Libii (m.in. króla Wiktora Emanuela, Benito Mussoliniego), a dla nadania im rozgłosu na arenie międzynarodowej zapraszano na nie także europejskich badaczy i dziennikarzy.

Rezultaty prowadzonych przez zaledwie trzy dekady prac nawet dziś oszałamiają swoją skalą. Przywrócone do świetności niemal całe starożytne miasta wydają się potwierdzać tezę o potrzebie ochrony dziedzictwa kulturowego przed nieodwracalnym zniszczeniem, aktualną zwłaszcza w kontekście politycznych wydarzeń z ostatnich lat. A jednak pytanie o potencjalne niebezpieczeństwa wynikające ze związków archeologii i polityki nie jest bezzasadne, a odpowiedź na nie pozostaje złożona. Wśród najbardziej drażliwych kwestii należy wymienić zniszczenia powstałe w wyniku działań militarnych i intensywnej akcji osadniczej oraz zaniedbania w dokumentacji i metodyce, a także utracenie wielu znalezisk – wynik pośpiechu, w jakim prowadzono prace wykopaliskowe. Nie mniej istotne były również: określony sposób interpretacji przeszłości oraz wybiórcza prezentacja jej świadectw, które, obok wyżej prezentowanych kwestii, są ważnymi dowodami na to, jak ściśle a zarazem niebezpieczne bywały związki archeologii z polityką.