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International Conference

ITALIANS IN THE VALLEY OF THE NILE: A HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BOND OF CENTURIES

Catholic University of Milan
28-29 May, 2025

28 May 2025 h. 14.30–19.00 p.m.

Egyptian Society Through the Eyes of Italian Painters and Photographers

Prof. Badr Abdel-Aziz Badr
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This research examines Egyptian society through the lens of Italian painters and photographers who pioneered what can be termed “Orientalist Painting”. It explores how Italian artists portrayed Egyptian society and culture. Notably, Egypt captured the attention of Italian artists during the 19th century and the early 20th century, drawn by the allure of Eastern life in Cairo. Consequently, Italian painters became interested in ancient Egyptian civilization, Coptic culture, and Islamic heritage. Their artworks are rich with depictions of ancient Egyptian temples and tombs, Coptic churches, and Islamic mosques. Additionally, the paintings of these Italian artists provide valuable insights into the various communities and conditions of Egyptian society, including crafts and industries, the Nile River, the Egyptian countryside, as well as the city of Cairo with its streets, neighborhoods, markets, and various aspects of life in Egypt. Colors of the Paintings. These artworks reflect Egyptian life on one hand and the imagination of the Italian artists on the other. Their images and paintings are vibrant, predominantly featuring red and yellow hues, blending reality with fantasy. Among the most notable Italian artists are: Giulio Rosati (1858–1917), Giovanni Brandizzi (1873), Amadeo Preziosi (1816–1882), Federico Bartolini, Antonio Gargiulo, Umberto Cassiari, and Roberto Rimondi. This presentation includes an overview of the most significant works of Italian painters, structured around the following themes:

- The Science of Orientalist Painting.
- Reasons and Motivations for Italian Artists’ Visits to Egypt.
- Egyptian Society Through the Eyes of Italian Painters and Photographers.
- The Egyptian Countryside in the Works of Italian Artists.
- Women in the Works of Italian Artists and Photographers.
- Egyptian Fashion in the Works of Italian Artists.
- Commercial Centers in the Paintings of Italian Artists.

The Contribution of Italians to the Restoration of Islamic Antiquities in Cairo: The Case of the Italian Giuseppe Fanfoni

Prof. Haggag Ibrahim Ahmed
Professor of Islamic Antiquities, Faculty of Arts – Tanta University

The Italian antiquities restorer Giuseppe Fanfoni arrived in Egypt in 1977 with his wife, the archaeologist Luisa Nogarani. They initially worked together to save some of the submerged archaeological areas at the Abu Simbel Temple and sketched churches in the “Tameit” area, among others. However, Vannoni’s most significant contribution in Egypt was the restoration of an Islamic antiquity in Cairo known as the “Mawlawiya tekke”, located in the Khalifa district of Cairo. The people of Egypt nicknamed Giuseppe Fanfoni the “Michelangelo of the 21st Century” due to his important work in restoring this tekke. Luisa Nogarani also contributed to the restoration, for which she received the Cavaliere and Commendatore awards and an Italian national number. It is worth noting that the tekke is known by several other names, including “The Dervishes' Theater” and “The School of Sanqur al-Saadi”. When Vannoni arrived with the then Cultural Advisor of Italy, Carla Maria Bori, who spoke Arabic fluently, I was the accompanying inspector for the Italian mission. Fanfoni tasked me with procuring wood, which I brought on eight donkey carts. My relationship with Fanfoni continued until my retirement. Notably, Fanfoni succeeded in registering the theater or sabil in the antiquities list, and his excavations beneath the theater revealed the entire “School of Sanqur al-Saadi”, which some mistakenly believed was composed of four iwans. Fanfoni proved that it consists of only two iwans. He applied the concept of restoration as a means of treatment and maintenance for the antiquity without compromising its authenticity, avoiding the use of harmful materials over the long term, and followed up on the site after its restoration. The area he restored includes the sabil, the School of Sanqur al-Saadi, and the shrine of Sidi Hassan Sadqa, for which his grandson, Abdel Fattah Sadqa, the President of Tanta University, assisted me in every way. Previously, the Minister of Interior, Nabawi, and his wife, the Deputy of the region, Fayda Kamel, also provided support. Fanfoni organized an exhibition that encompassed every detail of the art and science of restoration. Initially, he worked for three months each year, but later settled in the area and established it as a permanent training center. It is noteworthy that Fanfoni and his wife taught my students in several Egyptian educational institutions, including the Institute of Restoration in Qena, the Faculty of Antiquities in Qena, the Department of Antiquities at the Faculty of Arts at Tanta University, the Department of Antiquities at the Faculty of Arts at Kafr El-Sheikh University, and the Faculty of Antiquities at Cairo University. Fanfoni educated many prominent restorers, including university professors and archaeologists from the Ministry of Antiquities in Egypt.

Arab-Italian Literary Relations: Early Translations From Italian Into Arabic in the Modern Era

Prof. Ahmad Abdallah Elsheemi
Professor of English Literature, Ex-Dean of the Faculty of Languages – Beni-Suef University

The cultural relations between the Arabs and Italy have historical and geographical roots since ancient times. Italy lies on the opposite shore of the Mediterranean which has had a significant impact on strengthening cultural ties between them. The objective of this paper is to investigate the Arabic Italian literary relations since modern times with special reference to translation. The writer carries out a sort of review of literature on how these literary relations began, and what was / is the role of translation in fostering these relations. The paper considers translations of literary works from Italian into Arabic and vice versa since the 19th century until today, with special reference to Egypt and its special literary relations with Italy which began since antiquity when Egypt itself was part of Rome.

In the 19th century there were strong relations between Egypt and Italy because of the noticeable presence of the Italians in Egypt at that time especially in Alexandria. The real bases of Arabic translation from Italian in the 19th century date back to the Egyptian translator “Taha Fawzy” (b. 1896) who is the real pioneer of Italian studies and translation in Egypt by translating more than thirty works from Italian to Arabic, among which Luigi Rinaldi’s books as well as other. The paper highlights the efforts of this translator and others like Jordanian Essa el-Nao’ry (1918–1985), a prominent scholar translated and wrote extensively in Italian Studies.

My Research Experience in the History of Egyptian-Italian Relations Over Fifteen Years

Dr. Morsy Mokhtar Kotb

Assistant Professor of Modern and Contemporary History, Faculty of Arts – Port Said University

My research interests have led to three studies related to Egyptian-Italian relations. The first study was my Ph.D. thesis titled Egyptian-Italian Relations from 1919 to 1952. Preparing this thesis took six years (2007 to 2013) and marked the first academic study in Egyptian universities; it focuses on Egypt’s relations with Italy. The study spans 722 pages and is divided into a preliminary chapter and ten additional chapters. The study primarily relied on unpublished documents, including: Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs documents (111 files), Abdeen Palace documents (22 files), and Cabinet documents (35 files). Additionally, it included a substantial collection of published documents issued by the Egyptian government. The study is structured as follows:

- Preliminary Chapter, Egyptian-Italian Relations Before 1919: This chapter discusses Italy’s position on Egypt’s political and financial crisis during the reign of Khedive Ismail, its stance on the Orabi Revolution and the British occupation, and the orientations of Italian policy towards Egypt.
- Chapter One, Italy and the Egyptian Issue After World War I: This chapter covers the political situation in Italy post-war, Italy’s involvement in the 1919 Revolution, and Italy’s response to the February 28, 1922, declaration.
- Chapter Two, Diplomatic and Consular Relations (1919-1940): This chapter addresses the establishment of Egyptian diplomatic and consular representation in Italy and the development of Italian diplomatic and consular representation in Egypt.
- Chapter Three, Italy and the Egyptian Royal Family: This chapter discusses the relationship between Ahmad Fouad and Italy as Sultan and King, royal visits between Egypt and Italy that reaffirmed friendly relations, the evolution of Italy’s relationship with the new King of Egypt, Farouk, and the role of Italians in the Egyptian royal palace.
- Chapter Four, The Italian Community in Egypt: This chapter studies the growth in the number of Italians in Egypt, their geographical distribution, social composition, Italian employees, social activities within the community, and the political currents among them.
- Chapter Five, The Italian Occupation of Libya and Its Repercussions on Egyptian-Italian Relations.
- Chapter Six, The Italian Invasion of Ethiopia and Its Implications for Egyptian-Italian Relations.
- Chapter Seven, Egyptian-Italian Relations Between 1936 and 1938.
- Chapter Eight, World War II and Its Consequences for Egyptian-Italian Relations: This chapter culminates in the Italian attack on Egypt in September 1940.
- Chapter Nine, The Evolution of Egyptian-Italian Relations After World War II Until the July 1952 Revolution in Egypt: This chapter examines the resumption of relations between Egypt and Italy, the elevation of diplomatic representation, Egypt’s stance on the fate of Italian colonies, and Egypt’s hosting of the King of Italy, as well as Italy’s hosting of the King of Egypt after his abdication and Italy’s position on the Free Officers Movement.

- Chapter Ten, Economic Relations Between the Two Countries: Unlike the previous chapters, this chapter focuses on economic relations, analyzing trade movements and the trade balance, as well as qualitative and quantitative analyses of exports and imports between the two countries, including Italian investments in Egypt.

Second Study: Egyptian Emergency Procedures in 1956 and Italy's Response to Them. This study represents an important topic in the history of relations between the two countries from 1956 to 1967.

Third Study: The Italian Contribution to Modernizing Egypt in the 19th Century. This study highlights that Italians were among the earliest foreigners to flow into and settle in Egypt. After Italian cities lost their maritime centers and the Mediterranean Sea diminished in importance as a global trade route, relations between Egypt and Italian cities continued, along with the influx of Italians to Egypt. Many Italians migrated to Egypt for political and economic reasons, a phenomenon known as the Italian diaspora. As part of the Mediterranean, Egypt became a destination for these migrants. Italians arrived in Egypt through individual migration movements without assistance from their governments or economic, financial, or industrial institutions in Italian cities. The newcomers included not only merchants but also doctors, lawyers, scientists, and writers. Among the oldest Italian families in Egypt are the Rosetti, Beni, Colucci, Marburgo, Silva, Fithali Barfi, Lerdoni, Martucci, Gatelli, and Cocchini families. These individuals practiced various professions, arts, and industries, significantly contributing to the modernization of Egypt under the project of building a modern Egypt initiated by Muhammad Ali and continued by his successors in the 19th century.

Italian Orientalists and Their Impact on the Establishment and Development of the Egyptian University (Cairo University)

Dr. Ahmed Hasan Anwar Hasan

Associate Professor of Islamic Philosophy and Sufism, Faculty of Arts – Port Said University

Italy is one of the first European countries to have shown interest in studying Arab and Islamic heritage, due to its close ties with the Arabs, as well as the presence of the Vatican in Italy. Therefore, it is not surprising that some of the oldest Italian universities have been engaged in studying various branches of Islamic and Arab civilization for a long time. Historically, it is noteworthy that the first printed copy of the Qur'an (in Arabic) was printed in Venice, Italy, in 1537, before it was printed in any other Arab or Islamic country. Additionally, other Arabic books were printed in Italy, including *al-Qānūn fī l-ṭibb* (*The Canon of Medicine*) and *Kitāb al-Najāt* (*The Book of Salvation*) by Avicenna, and *Kitāb Gharā'ib al-funūn* (*The Book of Curiosities*) by al-Idrisi, which were published in 1593. When we delve into the history of Italian Orientalists, we find many who represented different generations, such as: Rampoldi (1761–1836), Michele Amari (1806–1889), Schiaparelli (1841–1919), Bonelli (1865–1947), Giorgio Levi Della Vida (1886–1967), Leone Caetani (1869–1935), Giuseppe Gabrieli (1870–1942), Michelangelo Guidi (1889–1949), Ettore Rossi (1894–1955), Francesco Gabrieli (1904–1996), Maria Nallino (1908–1974), Paolo Minganti (1925–1978), and others too numerous to mention. We will briefly highlight the most notable works of these figures, focusing on the relationship of some of them with Egypt, a relationship that often-contained intriguing details. In the early 20th century, Italian Orientalism played an important role in the cultural life of Egypt and significantly contributed to the establishment of the Egyptian University, now known as “Cairo University”, the oldest university in Egypt. Thus, Italian Orientalism transitioned from the phase of “discovering the Eastern Other” to another phase that we can call “assisting the Eastern Other in recognizing its cultural identity”. Some Italian Orientalists even taught Egyptian students various branches of knowledge related to Arab Islamic culture at Cairo University. Among these were Ignazio Guidi (1844–1935) and Carlo Alfonso Nallino (1872–1938), on whom we will focus particularly.

Italian Actors in Egyptian Cinema: From Art to Cultural and Social Dimensions

Dr. Shaimaa Mohamed Hassanin

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Translation, Horus University – Egypt (HUE)

The intersection of Italian actors in Egyptian cinema presents a rich tapestry of artistic collaboration and cultural exchange that transcends mere performance. This phenomenon, particularly prominent from the mid-20th century onwards, reflects broader social dynamics and the evolving landscape of the film industry in Egypt. Italian actors, drawn by the allure of Egypt's vibrant cinematic scene, contributed significantly to Egyptian films' aesthetic and narrative depth, infusing them with unique stylistic elements and diverse thematic explorations. This study examines the multifaceted roles played by Italian actors, highlighting their impact on film production, directing styles, and audience reception. By analyzing key films featuring Italian talent, we uncover how these actors navigated the complexities of cultural representation and identity within a predominantly Arab context. The presence of Italian actors in Egyptian cinema serves as a lens through which to explore the socio-political landscape of the time. The collaboration between Egyptian filmmakers and Italian artists can be viewed as a response to the cultural shifts of the post-colonial era, where cinema became a platform for dialogue and negotiation of identity. It is worth noting that Youssef Wahbi (1898–1982) was one of the pioneers in cinema and theater in Egypt and the Arab world. He received his education in cinema and theater from Italians when he traveled to Italy after World War I to study under the Italian actor (Renato Chiantoni). He later sent many Egyptian artists to study in Italy. Notably, some Italian actors began using words and phrases (Egyptian colloquial expressions) that have continued to be used in social contexts among various social classes until the present. This is particularly evident with the catchphrases of the Italian-Egyptian actor (Stephen Rosti). Moreover, another Egyptian actor named Fouad Rateb (1930–1986) imitated the Italian character in all his films, which he referred to as *El Khawaga Bego*. Throughout his artistic career, he did not portray any other character, to the extent that he became widely known among Egyptians as *El Khawaga Bego*, and some even believe to this day that he was Italian. This interaction enriched the narrative fabric of Egyptian films and fostered a sense of shared cultural heritage, bridging gaps between diverse communities. The research draws on interviews, archival materials, and film analyses to illustrate the significance of these cross-cultural exchanges. It posits that the contributions of Italian actors were instrumental in shaping the evolution of Egyptian cinema, making it a vital component of the global film narrative. Ultimately, this exploration reveals the enduring legacy of Italian actors in Egyptian cinema, highlighting their role in fostering cultural dialogue and advancing artistic innovation within the Arab film industry.

The Italian Community in Egypt in the 19th and 20th Centuries

Anna Antonyan

PhD Researcher at Yerevan Slavic University

and former lecturer at Brusov State University in Yerevan, Armenia

This paper attempts to shed light on the Italian community in Egypt, its formation, with an emphasis on the Italian community in Egypt during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as their influence in Egypt's life. The study will also focus on Italians who were born in Egypt and played a major role in both Italy and Egypt's social and cultural lives, as well as Italians who moved from Italy to Egypt for various reasons and continued their activities in this country. The Italian community in Egypt has evolved over time, beginning in the first century BC when Egypt became part of the Roman Empire.

This circumstance contributed to the migration of a large number of Italians to Egypt. The formed Egyptian community which was later supplemented by Italians who moved to Egypt in the Middle Ages, mainly from Venice and engaged in trade. However, the Italian community in Egypt flourished from the early 19th to the mid-20th century, and Italians were the second largest Christian minority in Egypt after the Greeks. According to different data, 60,000 Italians lived in Egypt before the World War II. The significant presence of Italians in the mentioned historical period was actually due to several circumstances, for example, with the spread of European influence in the Middle East, a period of renovation and modernization began in Egypt, which in turn created favorable economic conditions for foreign investment and labor. The flow of Italians to Egypt intensified particularly after the establishment of the Suez Canal Company (SCC), when a large number of Italians began to work in this company occupying various positions. It should be noted that the further dilution of the Italian community in Egypt is partly due to the future fate of the same company (SCC), that is, the policy of nationalization of the canal by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser and Nasser's attitude towards the West and westerners. Italians have been involved in the cultural and educational life of Egypt at various stages of community's historical existence. Having both secular and Catholic religious schools, they were able to provide Italian and Egyptian students with a comprehensive education, contributing to the increase of the educational level in the country. It's no accident that prominent personalities like Giuseppe Ungaretti, Filippo Marinetti, and others emerged from the Egyptian Italian community. It should be emphasized that the Italian population still exists in Egypt today, particularly in the city of Alexandria, which, while modest, adds an intriguing and distinct color to Egypt's inner life. Italians were instrumental in shaping modern districts of Cairo and Alexandria, introducing Art Deco, Baroque and Neoclassical designs. High-quality architectural structures erected by Italians, such as the Egyptian National Museum, still astonish visitors and tourists.

*Italian-Egyptian Commercial, Diplomatic and Cultural Relations:
A Contemporary Perspective*

Dr. Sinanudin Tatarević

Diplomat at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina
and former professor at the Department of Oriental Philology of Sarajevo University

The history of modern relations between Egypt and Italy dates back to the beginning of the 20th century and Egyptian independence from the British Empire. Today, Italy is Egypt's largest trade partner in Europe and is the third largest internationally, following the United States and China. This research aims to present contemporary relations between two countries in the fields of economy, diplomacy and culture. This paper is intended to be an introductory presentation at the conference, since it will present the establishment of diplomatic relations between two countries, discuss its historic development, and cover some contemporary diplomatic and political issues between official Rome and Cairo. Also, we will focus on the international organizations that both countries participate in as members, such as the United Nations and the Union for Mediterranean and Southern Neighborhoods. Further, we will introduce the most important challenges in the security cooperation between the two states. In the field of economy, we will present the volume of bilateral trade, Italian investments in Egypt and vice versa and some other indicators. In the field of culture, we will discuss the most important cultural institutions and bilateral projects, as well as give a brief introduction of the contributions of Italian orientalists in the field of Egyptology and Arabic studies.

*The Influence of the Italian Orientalist Carlo Alfonso Nallino
on Modern Intellectual Trends in Egypt: The Case of Taha Hussein*

Mohamed Elnakep
Mansoura University

The Italian orientalist Carlo Alfonso Nallino is one of the most interested European scholars in studying Arabic literature and sciences, some of which are lectures in Arabic that he gave at the Egyptian University, the most important of which are: the history of Arabic literature, the history of astronomy among the Arabs in the Middle Ages, in addition to many books and articles, perhaps the most important of which are: Selections from the Qur'an, the formation of Arab tribes, the rules and vocabulary of colloquial Arabic in Egypt, popular astrology among the Arabs, the poetry of Ibn al-Farid and Islamic Sufism, a study of Arabic vocabulary and movements, and the Eastern philosophy of Ibn Sina, etc. Here, this research paper takes the contribution of the Italian orientalist Carlo Nallino as a model to clarify the Western intellectual influence (the Italian as a model) on modern intellectual trends in Egypt (Taha Hussein as a model); It presents a reading of his book, History of Arabic Literature, based on its activation of new historical perspectives that emphasize the importance of the roles of interpretation and explanation in formulating the orientations of literary historians. Accordingly, the article places Nallino's contribution within the framework of the cultural contexts with which it intersects, and reveals the manifestations of modernity in his theoretical premises and his practical practice; which shows the specificity of his additions to the history of Arabic literature, and contributes to revealing the role of Italian Orientalists represented by Nallino on the Egyptian university, and also connects the sons of Egyptian culture with modern trends in the study of the history of literature. Nallino played a major role in teaching Taha Hussein how to deduce facts from historical texts, and this is evident in his writing style in his works: "On the Margins of the Biography", "Pre-Islamic Poetry", "Pre-Islamic Literature", "The Days", "Chapters in Literature and Criticism", "The Voice of Abu Al-Ala", "The Two Sheikhs". Taha Hussein is considered one of the ancient and well-established historians in historical criticism, as his style and approach distinguished him, he chose the literary life in Islam because it attracted him, so he added many important ideas to the Islamic historical period. The influence of the Italian orientalist Carlo Nallino on Taha Hussein can be traced in many aspects that Taha Hussein himself presented in the introduction he wrote for the first edition of the book (History of Arabic Literature from the Pre-Islamic Era to the Umayyad Era) by his professor Nallino, which is the text of the lectures he gave at the Egyptian University during the two academic seasons (1910/1911) AD and (1911/1912) AD. The first edition of this book was published in 1955, and Professor Maria or Maryam, Carlo Nallino's daughter, collected her father's legacy and published it in several volumes about that history. The article presented the first stages of Taha Hussein's critical career, the most important of which is (the historical-critical stage); I tried to stop at the stage of the book (In Pre-Islamic Literature), which is considered one of the most important critical stations for Taha Hussein during his academic and modern critical stages. One of the most important results that I reached in this article is that Taha Hussein is credited with establishing the foundations of this method (the historical-critical method) in modern Arabic literary studies, and most of the scholars who came after him are considered his students in this method in the contemporary Arabic literary arena. The article also discussed Taha Hussein's intellectual and critical sources, which are of two types: an Arab heritage source, and a modern Western source in which he relied in particular on his orientalist teacher (Carlo Nallino).

29 May 2025 h. 9.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.

The Arabic Translation of Fénelon's Les Aventures de Télémaque

Paolo Branca – Catholic University

The pioneer of the *Nahda* (“Arab Awakening”) Rifa‘a al-Tahtawi (1801–1873), exiled in Sudan by Abbas I (r. 1848–1854) in 1850, devoted himself to the translation of a classic of the French Enlightenment, *Les Aventures de Thélémaque* by Fénelon. The work was not successful, but is highly significant for the theme it deals with: a harsh indictment of despotism, yet full of references to ancient Greek deities and far from the taste and knowledge of his fellow citizens then as now.

For an Ethics of Intercultural Interaction in Multilingual Classes

Andrea Campisano – Talk at Work

The intervention addresses the need to integrate the intercultural dimension into Italian school curricula, highlighting how often curricular content is not sufficiently open to developing the skills necessary for a broad and inclusive understanding of other cultures and global dynamics. It is also essential to ensure that students from migrant backgrounds have a school environment where they can recognize themselves and feel like active participants. In particular, NAI (New Arrivals in Italy) students require specific welcome plans that include intensive Italian L2 courses and support for social integration. It is crucial to adopt organizational practices, such as the establishment of welcome committees and the use of linguistic-cultural mediators, to facilitate their entry into school. Furthermore, education for multilingualism must be promoted, recognizing and valuing the languages spoken by children and activating linguistic exchange processes. Strategies such as peer mentoring can also be effective, allowing students to support one another in their learning journeys and fostering a sense of community. It is essential to move beyond folkloric views of cultural diversity, adopting constructivist approaches that consider identities as dynamic and socially constructed. Finally, it is necessary to train teachers to manage intercultural complexities, promoting critical reflection on educational practices and fostering genuine interaction between cultures. To this end, a Questionnaire on Intercultural Practices in Schools has been developed, specifically aimed at gathering information on teachers' experiences with a focus on students of Egyptian origin, in order to improve integration and support practices. The questionnaire includes a targeted focus on non-verbal communication and activities that promote multilingualism, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of how these elements contribute to effective intercultural education.

Italian Jurists and Egypt

Roberta Aluffi – Turin University

In Egypt, Italian jurists were active as judges, professors and legal advisors. This contribution takes into consideration two outstanding figures: Eduardo Piola Caselli (1868–1943), Mixed Courts judge and advisor for legal reform, and Vincenzo Arangio Ruiz (1884–1964), professor at the Law Faculty of the Cairo University from 1929 to 1940.

Eugenio Griffini: An Italian Orientalist at the Royal Library of Abdeen Palace

Ali Faraj – Milano-Bicocca University

This paper aims to present the period spent in Egypt by the Italian Orientalist Eugenio Griffini, which began in 1920, when he accepted the invitation of the Sultan, later King of Egypt, Aḥmad Fu'ād I to work as court librarian and archivist at the Royal Library of Abdeen Palace, and ended in 1925, the year of his early death. The source of information about Griffini's stay in Cairo is mainly the account of his cousin Luca Beltrami, with whom he has always had an intense exchange of letters, but also other documents such as the epistle, preserved in the Sormani Library in Milan, recently published, addressed by Griffini to his student Angela Codazzi in 1922. However, given the reserved nature of Griffini, we do not know the most secret details of his activities, commitments and life at Abdeen Palace. The study of his unedited notes and correspondence preserved in the Sormani Library in Milan could bring to light interesting new aspects.

“Education is a matter of heart”: The Presence of the Salesians in Egypt Through Educational Work

Antonio Cuciniello – Catholic University

Don Bosco, as he was known, was a 19th century Italian priest who dedicated his life to the education of young people, particularly those living in poverty. As a young priest, he founded the world order of Salesian priests and brothers to serve the poor boys of Turin in an industrializing Italy. This paper aims to illustrate in particular the presence of the Salesians in Egypt. Arriving in 1926, they immediately dedicated themselves to teaching and training the younger generations, first for the Italian community present in Egypt, then for the local youngsters who, year by year, became the majority to now be the totality.

Linguistic and Cultural Knowledge in Classes With Egyptian Students: Rediscovering Oneself Through the Other

Chiara Purgato – Talk at Work

How can we transform our classrooms into spaces of intercultural encounter and dialogue, where diversity becomes a resource rather than an obstacle? The integration of Egyptian students in Italian classrooms represents a valuable opportunity to enrich the cultural and linguistic landscape, promoting authentic intercultural education, which is fundamental in an era of increasing globalization. This process, inspired by a vision that values the 'normality' of diversity and recognizes 'fragility' as a constitutive element of human experience, allows us to build educational contexts where each student contributes to a rich and stimulating environment, overcoming the logic of exclusion. This intervention explores how mutual knowledge between students of different origins fosters the rediscovery of oneself through comparison with the other, valuing multilingualism. We will analyze challenges and strategies to promote an inclusive environment and develop intercultural competence that overcomes stereotypes and builds positive relationships. The research will use a qualitative approach that will allow us to analyze successful experiences and understand the intercultural dynamics in the classroom, providing a comprehensive and in-depth framework.

Christianity in Egypt

Alberto Elli – Independent Researcher

Although Egypt has left us a wealth of information, not only about the Pharaonic period but also about the period that followed, the origins of evangelization in Egypt remain shrouded in irritating obscurity, in part because Egypt was not the mission site of Paul of Tarsus. The “legend” made up for the lack of written sources. The Coptic Church made its first official appearance in history only at the end of the second century A.D., with the bishop of Alexandria Demetrius. In this period an institution appeared that was a pride of Alexandrian Christianity: the Didaskaleion, with its famous masters Panthenus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen. Between the third and fourth centuries, the monastic phenomenon appeared in Egypt, in its various forms. It will not take long to spread to the West as well. Also in the third century the Coptic language and script appeared, which would later have a fundamental weight in the rediscovery of Pharaonic Egypt, with the deciphering of the hieroglyphic writing. Many, and of extreme interest, are therefore the gifts that Coptic Christianity has offered to the universal Church and to our civilisation.

The Holy Family Trail. A Meeting Point and Dialogue: The Case of Farama, Port Said

Jolit Shaker – Catholic University

The “Holy Family” project stands as a significant cultural and religious cooperation initiative between Egypt and Italy, combining spiritual heritage, historical depth and sustainable development. The city of Farama (also known as Pelusium) represents the Holy Family’s first entry point into Egypt and therefore serves as a symbolic and strategic gateway. Historically, it is a crossroads between East and West, a passage from Sinai to the Nile Valley. Italian scholars showed a growing interest in Pelusium from the mid-19th century, with the first contributions of Italian travellers and orientalist, such as Giovanni Battista Belzoni (1778–1823) and Giovanni Battista De Rossi (1822–1894), who provided preliminary field observations and geographical notes on the region. These early efforts, together with studies and research conducted by the University of Rome La Sapienza and the National Research Council (CNR), paved the way for subsequent systematic archaeological missions, including those that brought to light architectural remains and Byzantine churches, strengthening the theory of the passage of the Holy Family through the site. This project is a model of successful cultural diplomacy, interweaving Italy's academic heritage with Egypt's efforts to revive the route and obtain UNESCO recognition. The collaboration is not only between the Italian Universal Catholic Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt, but is an international project of inter-religious, academic, civil and cultural dialogue.