



*This book is dedicated to the memory of Antonio Verde,  
Minister Counsellor at the Embassy of Italy in Cairo, who  
passed away on 11 May 2021 during his diplomatic  
mission to Egypt.*

*Without the intelligence, passion and care that he devoted  
to coordinating the various contributions, one of which  
was co-authored by him, this volume would not have seen  
the light.*



*Night view of the Citadel  
of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi in Cairo.*





*The Ruins of Cairo Castle, near Joseph's Hall.* The image comes from the collection of views by Luigi Mayer, "Views in Egypt" owned by Sir Robert Ainslie. The views were painted on the occasion of the latter's diplomatic mission to Constantinople; they were engraved by Thomas Milton and printed by T. Bensley for R. Bowyer in 1801. They became a real bestseller after Napoleon's invasion of Egypt.





*The Embassy of Italy in Egypt thanks Orascom Construction and Imagro Construction for generously supporting this publication.*



*Garden of the Residence.*

# THE EMBASSY OF ITALY IN EGYPT



*Atrium and grand staircase, Corniche El Nile side.*

ON THE 160<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE UNIFICATION OF ITALY



*Grand staircase leading to the Ambassador's apartment.*





*"Chiostrino" of the main hall, garden side.*

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EMBASSY OF ITALY – Brussels

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ITALIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL CENTRE – Cairo



Among the most famous masterpieces of mosaic art of the Hellenistic period, a prominent place is occupied by the *Nile Mosaic* of Palestrina. It was discovered between the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century inside the so-called apsidal hall of the Civil Forum of the ancient Praeneste, which at the time served as the cellar of the old Bishop's Palace, and since 1956 it is on display in the National Archaeological Museum of Palestrina, archive photo.

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## FOREWORD

BY GIAMPAOLO CANTINI  
AMBASSADOR OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC TO EGYPT

**T**he building that houses the Italian Embassy in Cairo since 1930 is one of the most significant examples of European architecture – and of Italian architecture in particular – in the Egyptian capital.

With its stern lines in late Renaissance style, the *palazzo* is clearly visible along the Corniche, one of Cairo's main arteries, on the north-south axis. But, beyond its size and prominence, over the decades the building of the Italian Embassy has become a familiar place both for the inhabitants of Cairo, and for tourists and visitors alike. By virtue of its long history and architectural features, it is a point of reference for anyone who, for various reasons, lives in or visits the city – as well as for scholars, of course.

Its large halls, the paintings, and the furnishings, to this day still make it one of the most beautiful and prestigious diplomatic venues in the Egyptian capital. The photographic documentation included in this volume gives a vivid and brilliant testimony of this.

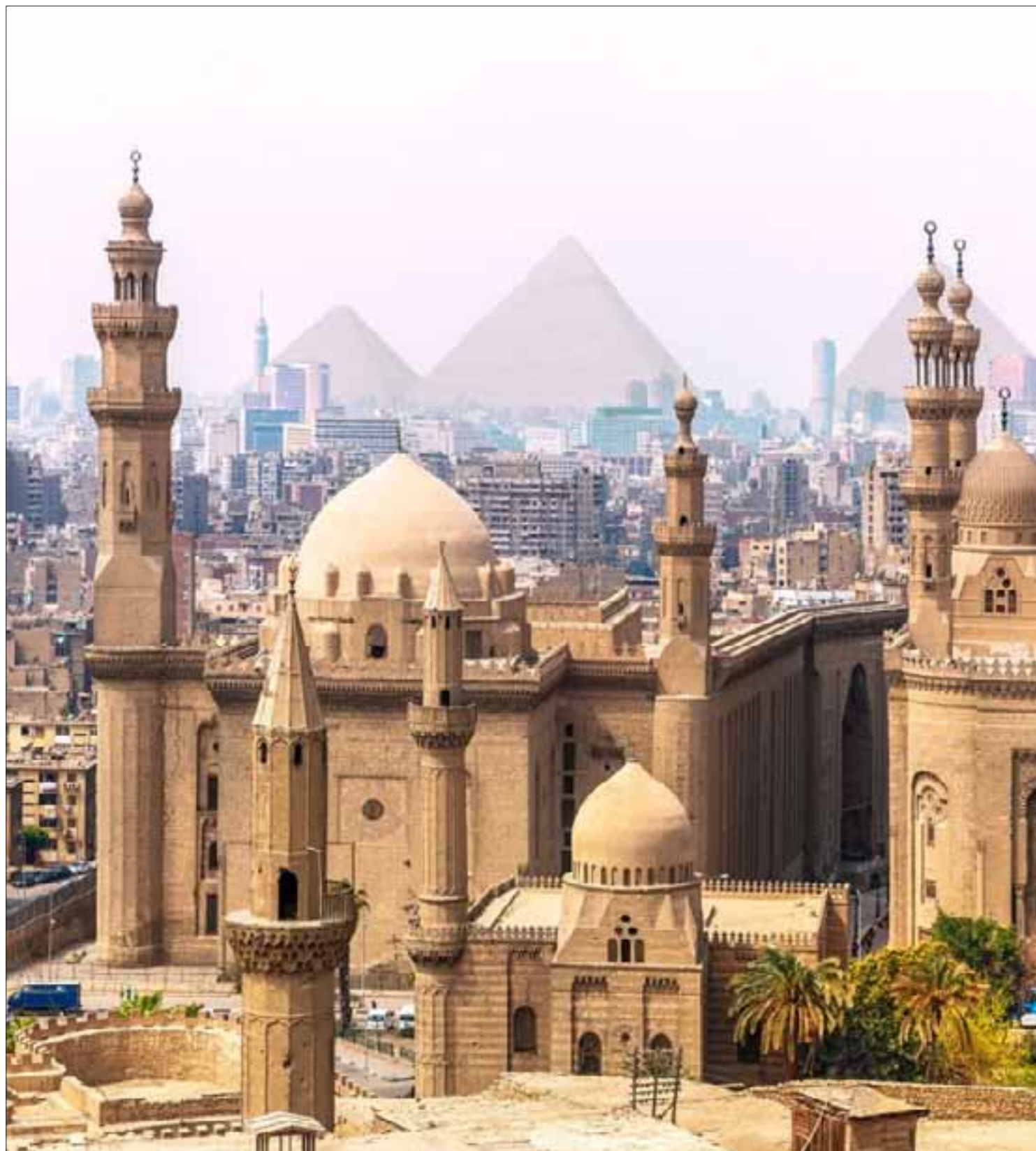
The book also retraces the history and the characteristics of the building in the extensive and well-documented essay by Architect Migliaccio, who recounts the long process that led to purchasing the property in the 1920s, and highlights the architectural choices and the taste that influenced the building's architect, Florestano Di Fausto, who at the time played a leading role in the enhancement of the real estate assets of our Embassies and in the building some of them, including the Cairo offices.

It is a story closely intertwined with the circumstances of the Italian community in Egypt – a long-established community, whose numbers soared in the first half of the 20th century, and which even in its current limited size, has maintained a strong link with Italy, a perfect mastery of our language and culture, and a strong vitality in terms of social institutions (notably the Italian Hospital in Cairo) and economic dynamism.

In the following pages, you will find a concise but accurate reconstruction of the historical depth of the Italian presence in Egypt.

The richness of the Italian community's initiatives and its participation in the economic, social, and cultural life of modern Egypt is also demonstrated by the vast – though currently undergoing rationalization – real estate assets of the Italian State in the country, to which some pages of this volume are also dedicated.

The history of the Cairo Embassy is therefore closely linked to the history of the Italian community in Egypt and the contribution it has made, over almost two centuries, to the development of this Country.



*Bird's-eye view of Cairo, with its magical and thrilling dialogue between Pharaonic and Islamic treasures with, at the centre, the proud skyscrapers of the present.*





# INTRODUCTION

*by Ambassador Gaetano Cortese*

**I**t is with great pleasure that we address our special thanks to ambassador Giampaolo Cantini for supporting the project of a publication about our diplomatic delegation in Cairo, entrusting its creation to the Carlo Colombo publishing house in Rome, as part of their prestigious book series – founded and edited by me – on the Italian diplomatic seats abroad.

The making of this publication began a few years ago and has involved numerous public and private institutions such as libraries, museums, Italian and foreign academies and art galleries, study centres, as well as important figures and colleagues of the diplomatic corps who perceived the need to consolidate the historical memory of such a symbolic and significant building in Italian-Egyptian relations, as the Embassy of Italy in Cairo.

Egypt, a country that for millennia was at the centre of the world, where our civilisations originally developed sparking fantasy and legends, and whose historical reality has often been shaded in myth. Over time, every era has thus been able to build “*its own fantastic Egypt – often a pure intellectual reconstruction – or to see its aspirations (or its territories) embodied in it, and at the same time use its most flashy elements by inserting them into its own culture,*” as Anna Maria Donadoni Roveri wrote.

We express our deep gratitude to Ketty Migliaccio, an architect for whom architecture – besides being a science and an art – is also action, and adventure of the spirit. With great passion and commitment, she has long devoted herself to studying our diplomatic seat in Egypt, contributing with her analytical and interpretative talent to enrich this volume with her contribution on “*The seat of the Italian Embassy: the story of an ambi-*



*Inauguration of the Suez Canal, The Royal tribune, by Gustave Nicole and Edouard Riou.*



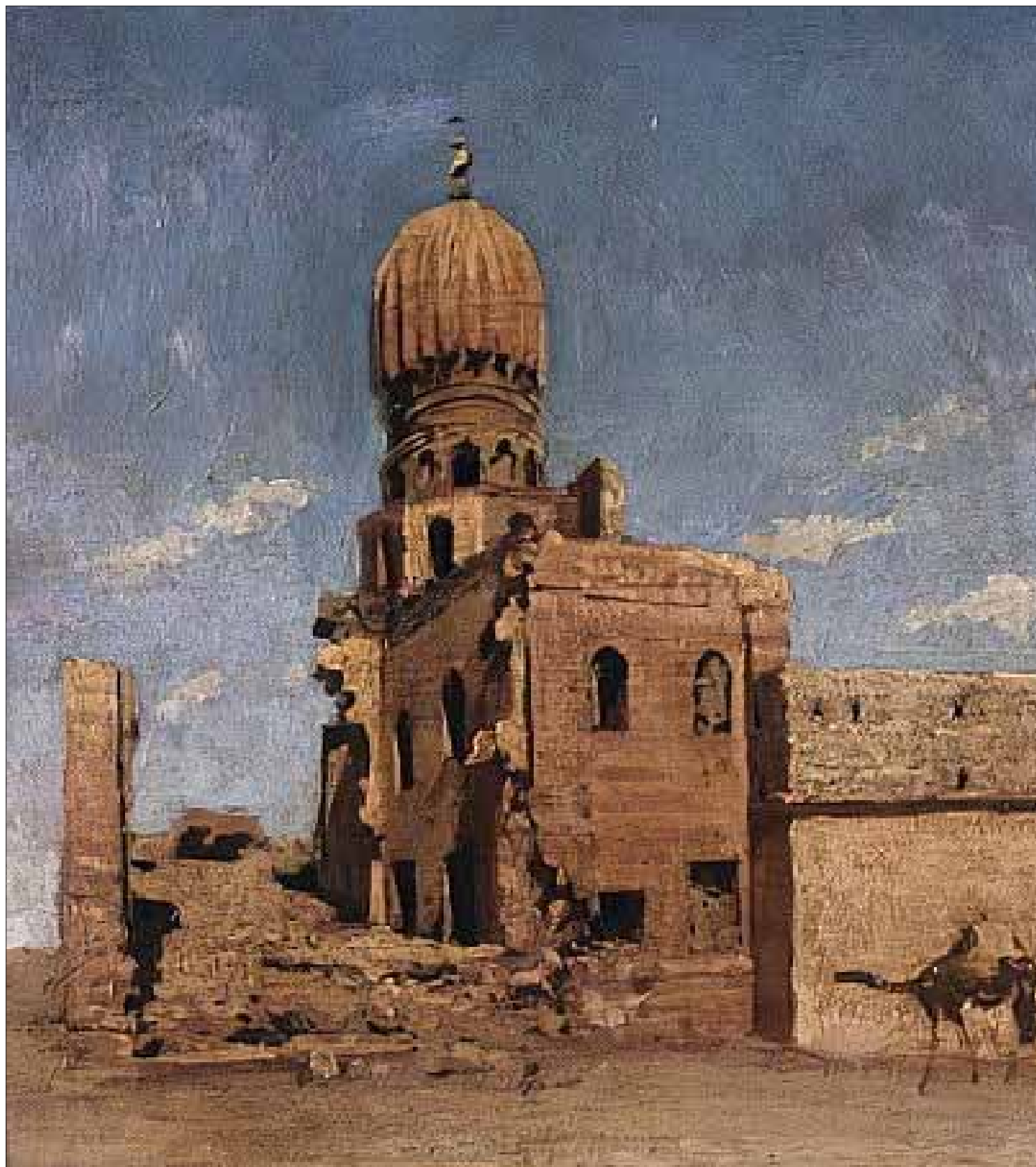


*tious project*", the result of very arduous work pursued in a truly exemplary way.

Her research was conducted with the dedication of someone who aims to provide the most comprehensive vision possible of a scenery that also encompasses cultural and spiritual dimensions, making both real and current what at first sight might seem like a remote narrative.

I especially appreciated her ability to interweave and pull the strings of her historical reconstruction, bringing together the results of her research into a synthesis that gives them meaning and coherence. Then again, Ketty Migliaccio's academic credentials are top-class, as co-author of the Catalogue (edited by Ezio Godoli) of the 2007 exhibition "*Architetti italiani in Egitto dal Diciannovesimo al Ventunesimo secolo*" (Italian Architects in Egypt from the 19th to the 21th Century) held in Alexandria from 24 October to 25 November, and promoted by the Directorate General for Cultural Promotion and Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with the University of Florence. Besides, in 2006 Migliaccio was the winner of the National Award conferred by the National Archives of Contemporary Architecture Association (AAA/Italia) and by DARC (Ministry of Heritage and Culture), in the archive sorting and inventorying category, for her work titled "*Florestano Di Fausto, Architetto per il Ministero degli Affari Esteri: il Fondo Disegni dell'Archivio Storico Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri*" (Florestano Di Fausto architect for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: the Drawings Fund of the Diplomatic Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

On this occasion, I am very pleased to announce that the results of this effort, to bring to light and safeguard a collection of great interest for the buildings and furnishings of the Italian diplomatic network in the first half of the twentieth century, will be included in the forthcoming volume of the series "*Rappresentanze Diplomatiche Italiane all'Esteri*", published by Colombo.



Cesare Biseo, *Impressions of Cairo*. Archive image.





Our special thanks also go to the Minister Counsellor Antonio Verde, Deputy Head of Mission of the Italian Embassy in Cairo, who has co-authored a valuable contribution on *“History of the Italian Community in Cairo”* together with the First Secretary Marco Cardoni, Head of the Embassy’s Press Office. The Italian community was the earliest European community in Egypt. It has well integrated and contributed significantly to the development of modern Egypt.

Our gratitude is extended to Professor Camillo Giorgi, Head of Education at the Italian Embassy in Cairo and to the First Secretary Chiara Saulle, Head of the Consular Chancery of the Embassy, for their assistance with the *“Historical Notes on the Italian Communities of Alexandria and Port Said”*.

Our recognition also goes to the Director of the Italian Cultural Institute in Cairo, Professor Davide Scalmani, for editing the section on the Italian Cultural Institute, whose original purpose was the enhancement of the Arab heritage in Italy and Europe, with a focus on the translation of literary works from Arabic and to the issue of interreligious dialogue.

This appreciation is also for Professor Giuseppina Capriotti Vittozzi, Director of the Italian Archaeological Centre in Cairo, for contributing the chapters on the history of the Centre, which serves the many Italian archaeological missions in Egypt, whose research and study work takes place in a significant area of cultural relations. We also wish to express our gratitude to the late Carla Maria Burri, to whom we owe the creation of an organization for Italian archaeology in Egypt.

Heartfelt thanks to our dear friend and colleague Ugo Colombo Sacco di Albiano, who served for several years as Commercial Counsellor within the diplomatic mission in Egypt under the Ambassadors Elio Giuffrida and Giovanni Migliuolo, receiving from the latter also political, cultural, archaeological, and press assignments. He provided us with a wealth of precious advice, suggestions, and anecdotes, that were particularly useful for the making of this work.



Cesare Biseo, *Cairo Citadel*. Archive image.





The exquisite photography has been provided by the Egyptian photographer Nesrine El Khatib. She is aware – as few exponents of her art do – that photography is a game of lights, shadows, contrasts, small nuances, instants, passages; and that architecture is, in turn, a challenge for photography, that must render in two dimensions what in reality has its own depth.

This knowledge enables Nesrine El Khatib to capture the unique atmosphere of every façade and interior of the Italian diplomatic residence in Cairo, almost managing to caress every detail of its most precious volumes, by working as much as possible with natural light.

As a result, she leads us by the hand into the spiritually therapeutic peace of the atmosphere of High Representation, far from the chaotic turmoil of the city of Cairo.

The spaces we see are dominated by a unique – almost muffled – silence, that encourages our fantasy to placidly imagine the successive generations of Italian diplomatic personalities who over the course of a century have practiced the quintessence of the “Italian way of life” with intelligence, style, and elegance.

As Gozzano would say, we are naturally driven to ask our dreams to fulfil a wish impossible to all, except to dreams themselves: resurrecting the past.

And here the Italian Embassy, sensibly led by Ambassador Cantini, disappears. I find myself in a time when both Italy and Egypt were ruled by royal houses.

The halls of the Residence glow with an unreal sun: the sun that illuminates with the cosy and warm light that we find in Gozzano’s poems, the old prints and the things that speak their story.

I come across the best names of the Italian and Egyptian aristocracy, upper middle class, industry, and finance. The ones that today survive only in the canvases hanging on the walls of some public and private mansions, or in the photo collections of the State Archives and/or of their descendants.

But let’s go back to the present – to the brilliant diplomats currently serving in Cairo, and to their creative and



Ippolito Caffi, *Egypt and the Isthmus of Suez*, 1844. © Photographic Archive. Fondazione Musei Civici, Venice.





dynamically updated behaviour in line with the requirements of the post-globalization world. They are more than aware that, looking at the future, we – Italians of the second twenty-year period of the 21st century – must contribute to the building of a cultural, economic, and social reality that is a permanent sign of the most valid expressions of our contemporary civilization and creativity.

The Residence of Italy in Cairo obviously cannot act as a museum of the past, but it must continue to live and be enriched by excellent contributions of today's thought and creativity, without neglecting, but rather feeding on the spiritual and cultural values of its diplomatic tradition.

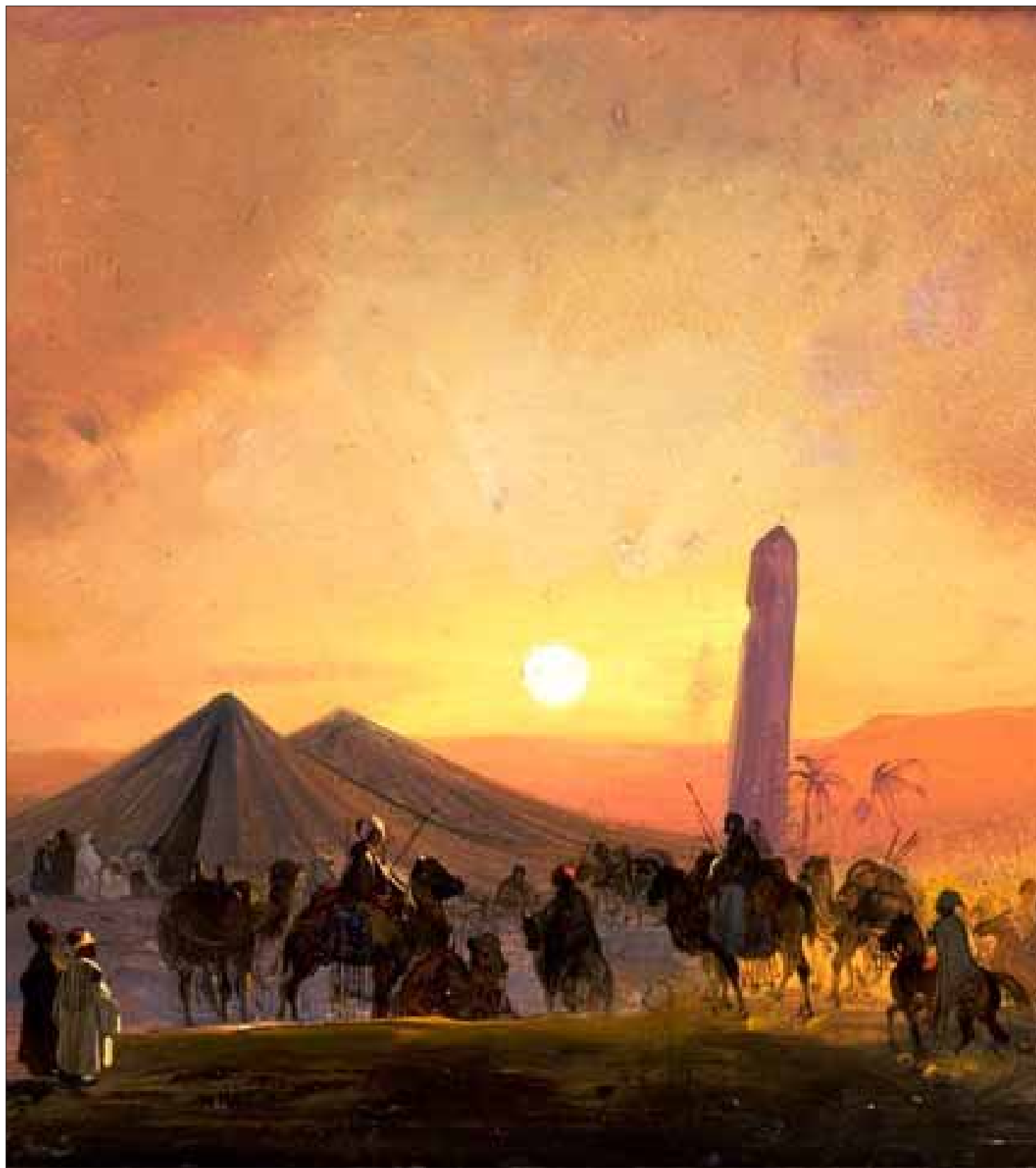
This further explains my tribute to the Nesrine El Khatib's artist's eye, capable of transferring through a simple shot the feelings that the place conveys, and how it is experienced. As well as the soft colours – well-calibrated with pastel hues – and shots designed almost as a tribute to geometry in all its facets, and often in its relationship with light and shadow.

I wrap up my thoughts with a personal, heartfelt conviction of my own. Nesrine El Khatib has probably put her talents at the service of this volume also as a token of gratitude for the great Italian photographic studios in Egypt in the 19th and 20th centuries: Antonio Beato, Aziz & Dorés, Giovanni Fasani, Luigi Fiorillo, Teodoro Kofler, Enrico Leichter, Giuseppe Selim.

All these personalities contributed to spreading across the world the eternal beauty of the land of the Pharaohs and its people.

We have been prompted in this initiative also by the desire to pay a fitting tribute to all the Heads of Mission and their collaborators who, with great commitment and spirit of service, have played a very important role in preserving throughout the long diplomatic history between Italy and Egypt a diplomatic seat worthy of the architectural and artistic heritage of our country.

Above all, we shall be glad if the narrative and the images of this volume will manage to express our admi-



Ippolito Caffi, *Egypt, Caravan in the Desert*, 1843. © Photographic Archive. Fondazione Musei Civici, Venice.



ration for the energies spent, without reserve, by all those who followed one another in the Residence – clients, architects, artists, Italian Ambassadors, Egyptian Authorities – and who have contributed to preserve the Italian Embassy in Egypt from taking a downward parabola, despite the passing of time and the changes in customs.

The invaluable work of constant vigilance of all the Heads of Mission in ordinary and extraordinary maintenance, and the constant restoration over the years of many furnishings and paintings in the Palace, has made it possible for the reception rooms of the Residence to continue to be, for all purposes, lively and pulsating spaces suitable for exalting every type of event aimed at enhancing the image of Italy, promoting its potential, and increasing its prestige.

The energies lavished by our diplomatic representatives in Cairo have ensured the continued vitality of the Embassy as a centre of exchange of ideas and sharing of projects, at the service of both countries.

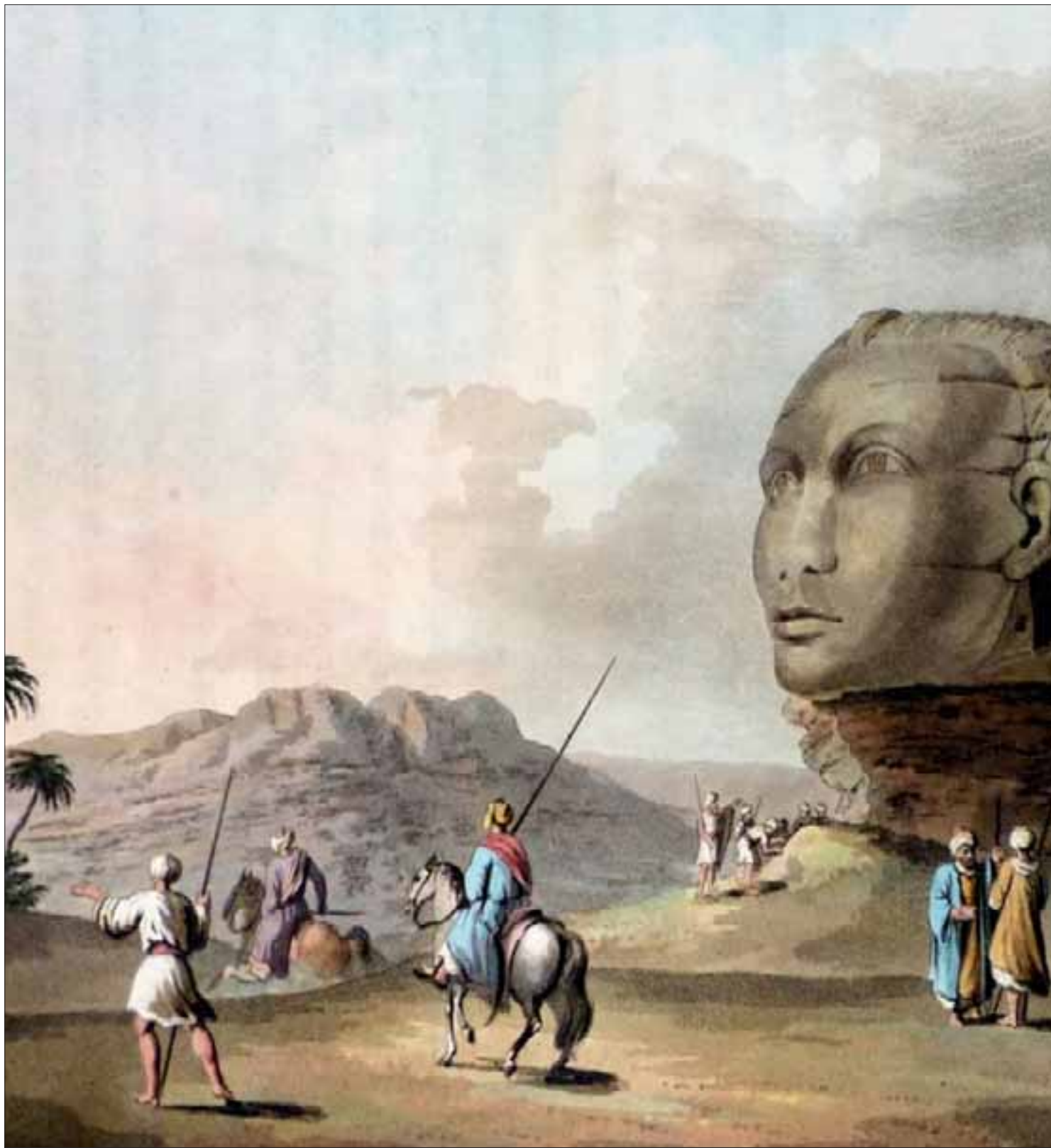
As Ambassador Pietro Quaroni pointed out fifty years ago, the Embassy is in fact a “framework which, today, certainly cannot deceive on the power of the country... but it is a framework that, if intelligently used, can facilitate many relationships”.

At this point in my considerations, I feel the pressing need to dwell on a notable Italian who “inhabits” with his intensely symbolic bronze bust a room of the Residence, appropriately named after him: Giuseppe Ungaretti (1888 - 1970).

A key fact in his life was that he lived in Egypt for an uninterrupted stretch of twenty-four years.

To the river overlooking the Residence, he dedicated these five dry yet memorable lines:

This is the Nile  
Who saw me  
Being born and growing up  
And burning with unawareness  
In the vast plains



*The head of the colossal Sphinx.* The image comes from the collection of views by Louis Mayer, "*Views in Egypt*" owned by Sir Robert Ainslie and made on the occasion of the latter's diplomatic mission to Constantinople; they were engraved by Thomas Milton and printed by T. Bensley for R. Bowyer in 1801. They became a real bestseller after Napoleon's invasion of Egypt.





He was born and raised on the outskirts of the city of Alexandria in Egypt, in the poor Moharram Bey neighbourhood, far from the sea and inhabited by Arabs, Jews and Tuscans, in a house just steps away from the tents of the Bedouins.

While working at the excavation of the Suez Canal, his father Antonio Ungaretti was the victim of a serious accident that prevented him from going back to his job. He therefore built a bakery in Alexandria, and shortly thereafter – in 1878 – he was joined by his fiancée from Lucca. In 1880 they had their firstborn, Costantino (1880 - 1937), and then their second son, Giuseppe.

The poet's father died two years after his birth, leaving his mother alone to run the bakery while taking care of the household.

Ungaretti left us (I quote the following passages from Samah Shams Ibrahim Abdo's "L'Egitto nella poesia di Ungaretti", Ain Shams University, 2014) a poignant testimony to the gratitude he felt for the Egyptian land, which fits perfectly in this volume on the Residency:

"I am made in such a way that I know nothing about repugnance for another race or for other peoples, and this perhaps is also due to my being from Alexandria, where people of the most different origins and provenances were constantly converging. But it could also be a consequence of the fact that I was fed on the black milk of Bahita", my Sudanese nurse. "I know that milk is not blood, but I believe that it contributes to the stimulus in the blood for certain fantasies, certain magics, certain desperations, certain impulses. And moreover, black milk perhaps gives to those who feed on it almost a state of innocence in their relations with others [...]. Could my poetry not be indebted to these dear people, for something that I believe is fundamental for it?"

He also acknowledged his debt to what he calls «Eastern teaching»: «*Arabic poetry has left a trace, and without my even wanting or knowing it, in my poetry*».

I look one last time with a grateful smile at the beautiful bronze bust that portrays Ungaretti in the Residence, and I remember a few passages from a very



Ippolito Caffi. *Egypt, View of Cairo*, 1844. Photographic Archive.



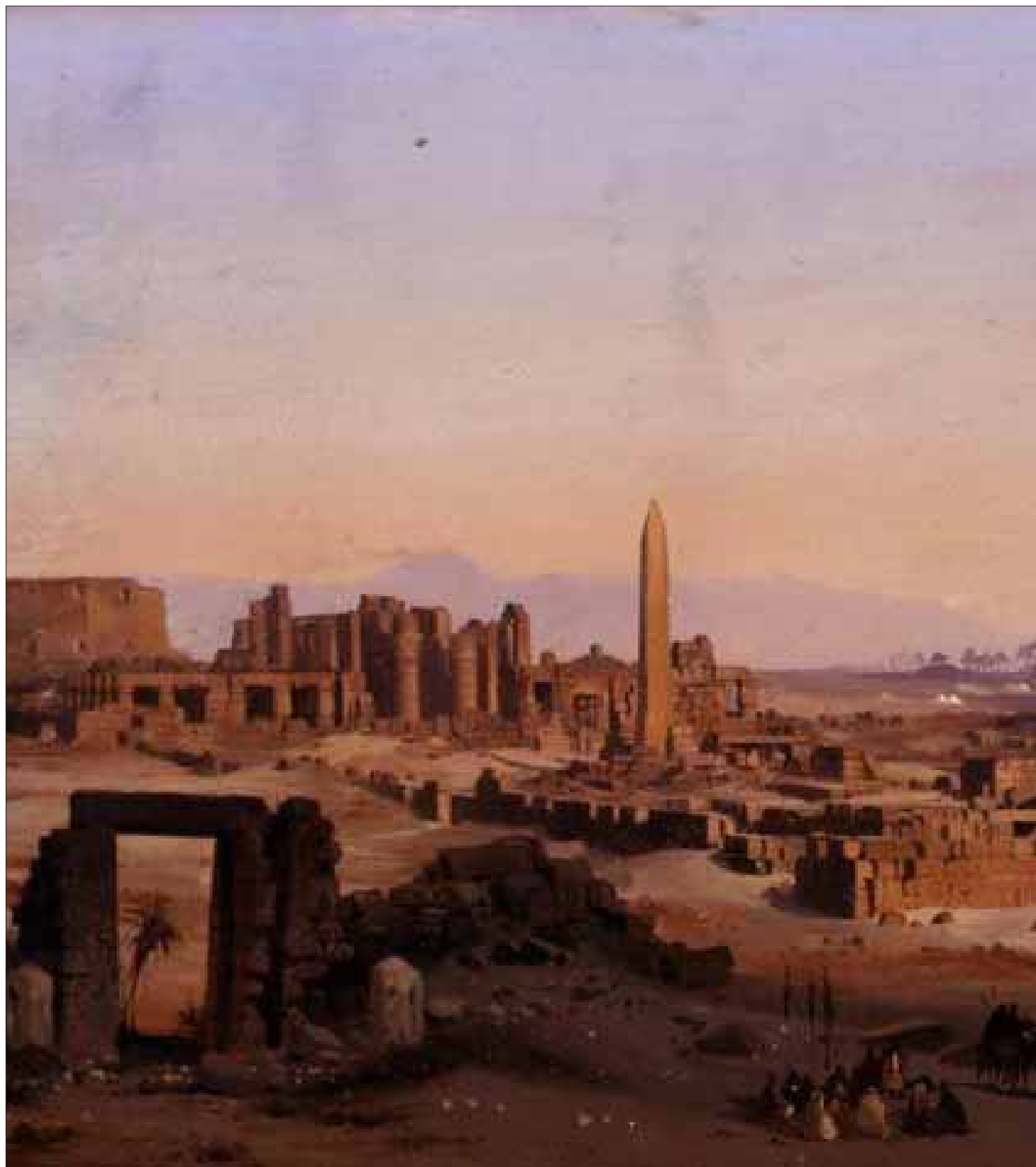
evocative piece of journalistic writing by Leonardo Sinisgalli, “Ungaretti alle piramidi”, published on 19 May 1959:

“It was about thirty years since Ungaretti had last been to Egypt. All it took was a phone call the day before yesterday to make him gasp and shout, ‘Let’s go tonight!’.... It was his first flight. He didn’t notice that we had already taken off and pierced through the clouds; he freed himself from the seat belt, rummaged in his pocket, read all the brochures, looked at the papers. Finally, he dozed off, hugging himself inside his great-coat. He tightened his eyelids, flared his nostrils, closed his mouth. That night Ungaretti slept beside me, serene. At one point he shook himself, suddenly, and wrapped his arms around my neck, afraid that I had disappeared. ‘Patria mia’, Ungaretti murmured at dawn, when we set foot on the runway in the desert. Then there was the gesture of a scribe who marked our papers by moving the tip of his pen from right to left, and the blood-red blossom of the Judas tree above the boundary wall of a villa in Heliopolis. In Cairo, Ungaretti spoke uninterrupted for three or four days, for the whole length of his vacation. We slept for about ten hours altogether; we did not want to waste a single minute. We would stay up late in the evening, on the Nile, in Sahara City or at the Royal Gardens; early in the morning, we would run to the Exhibition or Kankalili or visit the mosques or Saqqara...”.

Ungaretti’s enthusiasm for the Egyptian capital gives me the cue to reflect on the similar sentiment felt by many generations of young diplomats, for whom the Corniche El Nil building was the first experience of a foreign office. They did not “learn in Cairo”, but “learnt from Cairo”: because Cairo is a big book, where a centuries-old history of art and culture is written.

“From 1736 to 1820, the only diplomatic representatives in the country were two Italians: Bernardino Drovetti and Carlo de Rossetti.

They were entrusted with the interests of England, Austria, France, Prussia, and Venice.



Ippolito Caffi. *Egypt, Karnak at Thebes*, 1844. © Photographic Archive. Fondazione Musei Civici, Venice.





The official language was Italian: the registry, statistics office, land registry, customs and post office had, and still have, an Italian imprint in their structure. The first postage stamps bore «Poste Egiziane» in Italian, and all the official acts written in an European language during Mohammad Ali's reign, were also in Italian. In the cadet Academy founded by the great Pasha many instructors were Italian, and the languages taught were Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Italian. Mohammad Ali's fleet, which was a good fleet, was headed by Italians, and the language that ran among the sailors was Italian.

On this occasion I would like to dedicate a few lines to an Italian female character, a true hero, who has left her mark on the history of Italian archaeology and, I would even say, on the history of Egypt: Edda Bresciani, who left us in November 2020 and who collected with great lustre the legacy of Ippolito Rosellini, who was the first in Europe to hold an official teaching post in Egyptology in Pisa in 1826. Edda was the first graduate in Egyptology in Italy, and the first woman to hold a professorship on the subject.

As I did for Ungaretti when I mentioned his first airplane trip to Cairo, I like to affectionately remember her by quoting a polite and good-natured personal confidence of hers, recounted by Marcella Matelli:

"I remember with amusement that at that time in the Arabic of the Fayum there was no word for 'female director' – only 'director', in the masculine form. The title 'mudira', from the masculine 'mudir', was created just for me – created by the daily lexical practice of my team of workers, despite their strictly male-centric culture."

The "mudira" Edda Bresciani was active as an archaeologist for decades in Nubia, in Aswan, in Saqqara, in Thebes. She was still "the mudira" when in 2011 at the inauguration of Gia-Medinet Madi-Narmouthis (the ancient city whose history can be followed during four thousand years) the first archaeological park in Egypt realized thanks to the Italian Agency for Development



The archaeologist and Egyptologist Edda Bresciani, Professor at the University of Pisa, pictured at Medinet Madi.



Bernardino Drovetti with Antonio Lebolo and Count De Forbin, 1818.



*Ippolito Rosellini* (1800 - 1848), by A. Formilli, marble copy, 1948, Florence Archaeological Museum, archive image. The original bust, modelled on the occasion of the first centenary of the death of the illustrious scholar, is in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo at the tomb of its founder, Auguste Mariette, along with the portraits of other important Egyptologists.



G. Angelelli, *The Franco-Tuscan Expedition*, 1829 oil on canvas, Florence, Archaeological Museum, archive image. Against the background of the temple of Luxor the painting features the Pisan Ippolito Rosellini (centre, standing), the founder of Italian Egyptology, next to Jean-François Champollion (seated), the decipherer of hieroglyphics in 1822.













Ippolito Caffi. *Egypt, Shawl Bazaar (in Alexandria)*, 1843/44. © Photographic Archive. Fondazione Musei Civici, Venice.



Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

Created by men in a constant effort to achieve truth, beauty, and harmony between the individual and society, Cairo attracts foreigners from every country, and they all show unconditional love for it, as if drawn by a mysterious force. Cairo seems to speak to everyone, believers and atheists, artists and uncultured people, gifting everyone with a sense of beauty, a new creative impulse, and above all, the awareness of history.

Specifically, I am thinking of the long-term potential of the rising presence on the Cairo scene, of women in diplomatic careers, all of them with great personalities. The level of diplomatic management can only benefit from it: women get down to business, they simplify debates, they don't act up at work, and they are sensible in everyday life... without wearing a tie!

Our gratitude goes also to Mariacristina Gribaudo, President of the Fondazione Musei Civici, Venice, for allowing the publication of some paintings by the most modern and original scenic painter of the time, Ippolito Caffi, who is unsurpassed in portraying with his art full of light the soul of the places and peoples he encountered in his many journeys through Italy, Europe and the Mediterranean basin.

But, above all, it is a treasure that is finally coming to light: a set of 150 works that Caffi's widow, Virginia Missana, donated to Venice in 1889, preserved at the Ca' Pesaro International Gallery of Modern Art, part of the Fondazione Musei Civici, Venice.

As Annalisa Scarpa well pointed out in the "Ippolito Caffi 1809 - 1866. Tra Venezia e l'Oriente", exhibition held at the Correr Museum in Venice from 28 May 2016 to 8 January 2017, "Caffi's paintings – usually kept in the Ca' Pesaro seat, and whose first critical catalogue is being published by Marsilio – provide evidence of all the cities and regions he visited, and remain the most complete existing collection of the artistic career of a 19th-century painter who was a tireless traveller, both





Ippolito Caffi, *Egypt, Cairo, Pasha's Palace*, 1844. Claudio Franzini. © Photographic Archive. Fondazione Musei Civici, Venice.



out of personal restlessness, and for his insatiable cultural curiosity.”

We are particularly delighted to be able to enjoy some images of Ippolito Caffi’s Egyptian paintings: *Egypt, Caravan in the Desert*, 1843; *Egypt, Resting Caravan*, 1844; *Egypt, View of Cairo*, 1844; *Egypt, Cairo, Sultan Hassan Mosque*, 1844; *Main street of Cairo*, 1844; *Egypt, Shawl Bazaar (in Alexandria)*, 1843/1844; *Egypt and the Isthmus of Suez*, 1844; and *Egypt, Karnak at Thebes*, 1844 and *Egypt, Cairo, Pasha’s Palace*, 1844.



*Great Cairo’s main square with Murad Bey’s Palace.* The image comes from the collection of views by Luigi Mayer, “*Views in Egypt*” owned by Sir Robert Ainslie. The views were painted on the occasion of the latter’s diplomatic mission to Constantinople; they were engraved by Thomas Milton and printed by T. Bensley for R. Bowyer in 1801. They became a real bestseller after Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt.





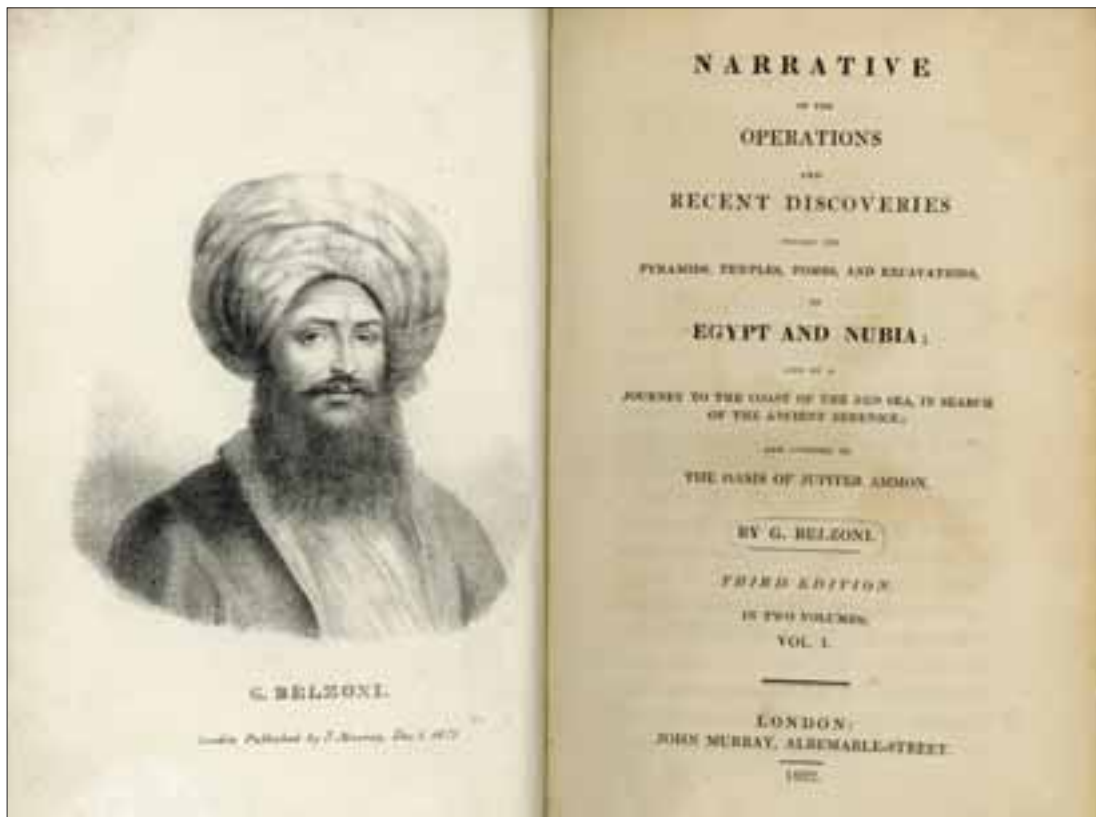
Ippolito Caffi, Cairo, *Main Street*, 1844. © Photographic Archive. Fondazione Musei Civici, Venice.



The Paduan Giovanni Battista Belzoni (1778 - 1823), after organizing the transport from Thebes of the colossal bust of Ramses II, now in the British Museum, discovered five tombs including that of Seti I in the Valley of the Kings, and later called "Belzoni's Tomb". He carried out the reconnaissance of the main temple of Abú-Simbel, which at the time was totally buried in sand, and, above all, he discovered the burial chamber of the pyramid of Chephren, which was believed to be solid.

An exhibition of Belzoni's artifacts was held in London in 1820, and then in Paris. Ancient Egypt became the fashion of the moment.

In addition to the finds he collected, Belzoni must also be credited with the significant first steps in promoting archaeological excavations for the purpose of research and recovery, in such a manner that would respect the site and the monument. Belzoni inspired Indiana Jones, the daring archaeologist adventurer of Steven Spielberg's films.



Cover of Belzoni's report of his travels and archaeological wanderings in Egypt and Nubia, printed in London, with an atlas and 44 plates, by the publisher J. Murray at the end of 1820. The narrative met with considerable success (2<sup>nd</sup> edition in 1821; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition in 1822) and soon other editions in French and Italian (Milan, 1825 and 1826; Livorno, 1827) were published, as well as popular adaptations by the writer S. Atkins.





*The cutting of the Isthmus of Suez*, sculptural group by Pietro Magni, Palazzo Revoltella. Archive image.

The entrepreneur and financier Pasquale Revoltella put great effort into supporting the opening of the Suez Canal, which he considered crucial for the development of Trieste's maritime-based economy. In 1858, he went to Paris to negotiate with Ferdinand de Lesseps Trieste's willingness to participate in the great enterprise.

In February 1859, Lesseps came to Trieste and met the city representatives in the halls of the new Revoltella Palace, together with another illustrious guest, Archduke Maximilian of Habsburg, who at that time was governor of the Lombardo-Venetian kingdom but was closely supervising the construction of Miramare Castle on the Grignano promontory. Thanks to his commitment, Revoltella was appointed vice president of the Universal Company of the Suez Canal, and in 1861 he made a long trip to Egypt to visit the area of works. He came back with many memories and with a travel diary that is still kept in his library.



Paolo Pannini, *Roman ruins with the Pyramid of Cestius in Rome*. Archive image.



