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THE ISEUM CAMPENSE  
FROM THE ROMAN EMPIRE TO THE MODERN AGE

TEMPLE – MONUMENT – *LIEU DE MÉMOIRE*

Proceedings of the international conference held in Rome  
at the *Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome (KNIR)*, the *Accademia di Danimarca*,  
and the *Accademia d'Egitto*, May 25-27 2016

Edited by  
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Edizioni Quasar



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CODA

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*Eva Mol*



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Initiated at Leiden within the framework of the NWO VIDI project *Cultural innovation in a globalising society: Egypt in the Roman world* (2010-2015) and “prepared” by means of two successful master classes on *Egypt in Rome* as well as an expert meeting entitled *Beyond Egyptomania* in Rome itself, all organised together with the *Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome* (KNIR) in 2012 and 2013, the Iseum Campense conference and its proceedings are the result of a fruitful cooperation between many different persons, institutions, and research traditions over a longer period of time.

First of all, we would like to thank the three academies along the *Via Omero* that welcomed us so generously: the *Accademia d’Egitto* and its director Dr. Gihane Zaki (May 25); the *Accademia di Danimarca* and its director Prof., dr. phil. Marianne Pade (May 26); and the *Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome* (KNIR) and its director Prof. dr. Harald Hendrix (May 27).

The *Royal Netherlands Institute’s* support with the organisation of the conference itself, the hosting of the conference dinners, and this publication has been crucial. We are most grateful to the KNIR staff and secretary for their help and enthusiasm; especially to dr. Jeremia Pelgrom and to Prof. dr. Harald Hendrix.

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We are grateful to the KNIR and the editors of the *Papers of the Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome* for accepting this volume as part of their distinguished series. This is indeed where our book belongs. All essays that were selected for publication have benefitted from a process of external peer review. Many thanks to our anonymous colleagues who have taken on this task so enthusiastically and seriously. Many thanks to our authors for their willingness to rethink and rewrite their papers while respecting our tight deadlines.

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We are grateful to the artist Menno Balm for sharing with us his particular impression of the Iseum Campense in a remarkable fine drawing and to dr. Eva Mol for instigating him to do so.

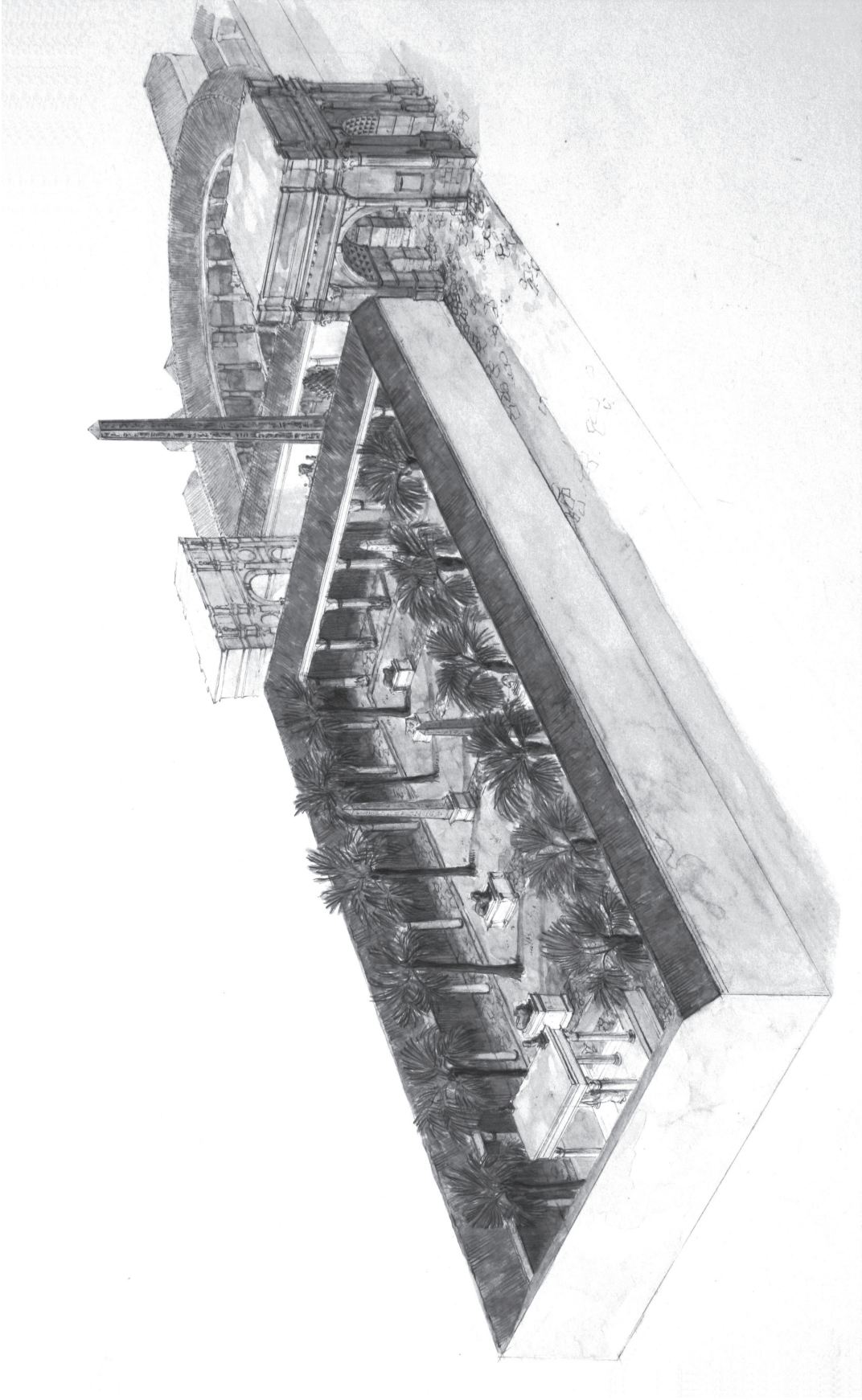
As the collection of papers in this book makes clear, the Iseum Campense has been attracting our attention for two millennia already – and it will probably continue to do so for a long time to come. We hope that this volume succeeds in presenting a state of the art overview of our current knowledge as well as in providing food for thought for further investigations concerning this key monument in the history of the *Urbs*.

*Lugdunum Batavorum*, March 2018

Miguel John Versluys (Leiden)

Kristine Bülow Clausen (Copenhagen)

Giuseppina Capriotti Vittozzi (Rome and Cairo)



Artist impression of the Iseum Campense by Menno Balm, pencil on paper, 2017. © mennobalm.nl

## List of participants

At the international conference ‘Temple - monument – *lieu de mémoire*. The Iseum Campense from the Roman Empire to the Modern Age: historical, archaeological, and historiographical perspectives’ held in Rome at the *Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome* (KNIR), the *Accademia di Danimarca*, and the *Accademia d’Egitto* between May 25 and 27 2016 communications were presented by:

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## Egyptian memorials in modern Rome: The Dogali obelisk and the altar of the fallen fascists

Arthur Weststeijn

*Abstract: This chapter explores the manifold meanings performed by 'Egyptian' monuments in modern Rome through a discussion of one of the most striking remnants of the Iseum Campense: the obelisk excavated by Rodolfo Lanciani in 1883, also known as the Dogali obelisk. It traces the convoluted public history of the obelisk since its excavation until today and explores the connection with another 'Egyptian' object: the pedestal of the Sallustian obelisk, which was turned into the altar of the fallen fascists on the Capitol in 1926. Describing the different phases in the modern biographies of the two memorials, the chapter shows the variety of symbolism attached to them as signifiers of regal dynasty, nationalist imperialism, fascist martyrdom and vindication, subaltern resistance and, ultimately, postcolonial oblivion. The resulting story reveals the continuous tension in the uses and meanings of the two monuments as both Roman and non-Roman objects, a tension that arguably defines aegyptiaca Romana throughout history.*

The small and sleepy town of Locorotondo, tucked away deep in the heel of Italy's boot, is not a likely showground for grandiose statements. Houses with closed shutters line up along empty streets, a church and a bar compete for the few local customers: in Locorotondo, just like in any other village in Apulia, serenity reigns. But on one of the town's whitewashed walls, a remarkable plaque lifts the veil of silence. The plaque was placed here by the municipal government in 1887, in commemoration of the Italian soldiers who had fallen that same year at Dogali, Eritrea, in the first colonial campaign of the new Italian nation-state. "They fell as heroes", the plaque says, "*romanamente* devoted to the honour of the fatherland". *Romanly*: that is how the soldiers fought and died. About two millennia after the establishment of Roman rule in Africa with the conquest of Carthage, the spirit of ancient imperialism supposedly revived in the troops of Italy. They were heralded as the new Romans, and even though their campaign failed miserably (for the battle of Dogali was a crushing defeat for Italy's military), at least the classical Roman temper was said to be rejuvenated. Devotion to the fatherland, honour, personal sacrifice: these were the virtues that the Italian nation projected on its soldiers and projected back on ancient Rome. This rhetoric of *romanità*, "romanness", would steer the construction of Italian national identity for decades to come before reaching a climax in 1936, when Benito Mussolini declared that, with the eventual conquest of Ethiopia, Italy "finally" had its Roman empire back.<sup>1</sup>

The plaque in Locorotondo, some 500 kilometres from Rome, is a typical pre-fascist example of this rhetoric of *romanità* used for commemorating Italy's colonial casualties.<sup>2</sup> All through Italy, the battle of Dogali, where a regiment of over 500 Italian soldiers was annihilated by local forces in early 1887, was commemorated with comparable expressions of "romanly" heroism. The most important of these commemorations, unsurprisingly, took place in

<sup>1</sup> See Mussolini's famous speech of 9 May 1936 in which he declared: "L'Italia ha finalmente il suo impero". There is an extensive literature on the rhetoric of *romanità* under fascism, e.g. Visser 1992; Stone 1999;

Nelis 2011; id. 2014. For the pre-fascist roots of this rhetoric, cf. De Francesco 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. for the wider context Von Henneberg 2004.



Rome itself. After 1870, when the troops of the Italian Kingdom had conquered Rome from the Pope, Rome had been declared the capital of the nation, and the rhetoric of *romanità* permeated the plans that were developed to turn the city into a fitting national centre.<sup>3</sup> One of the most appropriate locations for showing that centrality was the site that also practically had become the centre of the country: Rome's train station, *Stazione Termini*. In June 1887, on the square in front of the station, the most important commemorative monument for the fallen of Dogali was inaugurated. It was the first memorial to be unveiled in the city since Rome had become Italy's capital, and hence it carried large symbolic potential: in a city with so many monuments, plaques, and other markers of memory from Antiquity to the Papacy, the Dogali monument offered the new government a remarkable opportunity to leave a novel, nationalist imprint on the urban texture.

But Rome's Dogali memorial is not a clear-cut monument of *romanità*. Instead, it has a rather ambiguous significance as a marker of both Roman identity and non-Roman alterity: the Dogali monument is an obelisk, originally from Heliopolis and dedicated to Pharaoh Ramses II. Rediscovered and excavated in 1883, the obelisk is the largest and most important remnant of the Iseum Campense to be unearthed in modern Rome. Turned into a cenotaph at the entrance of the Eternal City, it has performed a variety of meanings and uses as a memorial signifier of dynasty, martyrdom, sacrifice and revenge, fusing political with religious symbolism. In performing these roles, the obelisk shows a remarkable connection with a related 'Egyptian' object, the pedestal of the Sallustian obelisk, which was turned in 1926 into the "altar of the fallen fascists". As this essay shows, the biographies of these two memorials are intrinsically linked through a continuous process of appropriation that reveals the manifold ways in which *aegyptiaca Romana* in modern Rome represent self and other, identity and alterity, colonizer and colonized.<sup>4</sup>

### Lanciani's discovery & design

On Monday 11 June 1883, the famous archaeologist Rodolfo Lanciani, professor at 'La Sapienza' University and tireless documenter of all things Roman in Italy's rapidly modernising capital, started an excavation in downtown Rome. The location was the Via del Beato Angelico, the small dead-end street that leads from the apsis of the church Santa Maria sopra Minerva to the Via di Sant'Ignazio, around the corner of the Biblioteca Casanatense.<sup>5</sup> Lanciani led the excavation in his capacity as secretary of Rome's municipal archaeological commission, and while the neighbours watched "like vultures ready to fall on their victim", the efforts of Lanciani's team proved very successful within a few days.<sup>6</sup> Six meters below ground level, numerous artefacts were unearthed that could be connected to the Iseum Campense, including the sphinx of Pharaoh Amasis II in dark brown basanite (now in the Capitoline Museums) and, most significantly, an entirely intact obelisk in red granite, measuring some 6 metres and inscribed with hieroglyphs on all 4 sides.

<sup>3</sup> See Bosworth 2011, 107-59.

<sup>4</sup> My analysis is indebted to the interpretation of Versluis 2015.

<sup>5</sup> On Lanciani, see Palombi 2006. The June 1883 exca-

vation is discussed in Lanciani (ed. A.L. Cubberley) 1988, 135-44.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

Upon realising the importance of these findings, Lanciani immediately contacted Ernesto Schiaparelli, at that moment still a young but rapidly rising expert in Egyptology who had recently been appointed director of the Egyptian museum in Florence. Schiaparelli quickly joined the team to study the obelisk on site. While the workers continued the excavation, Schiaparelli analysed and translated the hieroglyphs on the obelisk, which revealed it was not a Roman imitation but an original Egyptian work, dedicated to Ramses II. Meanwhile, other experts also arrived on the scene to share in the excitement and to share their knowledge. They included the archaeologist Orazio Marucchi, specialist in Christian archaeology and later director of the Egyptian collection in the Vatican Museums, and Giovanni Barracco, member of the Italian parliament and proud owner of one of the most important private collections of ancient art in the city (now the Museo Barracco). Lanciani, Schiaparelli, Marucchi and Barracco joined forces and quickly published their findings.<sup>7</sup> They all agreed not only on the immense scholarly value of the discovery, but also on its political potential for the new Italian nation. As Marucchi claimed, the obelisk was a witness of the miraculous rise of ancient Rome and a promising signal “for the late successors of the masters of the world”, i.e. for modern Italy. Schiaparelli added that the obelisk had never really fitted the Iseum Campense as it had been brought to Rome “either by the *capriccio* of an emperor who did not understand its symbolical meaning, or by degenerated Egyptians who had reduced the grand concepts of ancient religion to a depraved and vulgar mysticism”. To compensate for that misdemeanour of the past, Schiaparelli argued, the obelisk should soon be erected on “one of the most beautiful sites of the city” to show that modern, refined Rome fully appreciated its value and significance for the present and future.<sup>8</sup>

After a month of hard work, the obelisk was excavated in its entirety on 5 July (fig. 1). The excavation triggered Lanciani’s immense scholarly curiosity, which he sought to quench by recollecting all the data on the dispersal of ‘Egyptian’ artefacts from the area. Such positivist reconstructionism easily merged with romantic nostalgia: Lanciani expressed his “desire of seeing reunited all the remains of the Iseum Campense in an incomparable assemblage”, but he had to admit that such a desire would never be fulfilled. “No human enthusiasm or will, however determined, is enough to reunite all the limbs and the ashes of that colossus, dispersed and thrown to the four winds”, Lanciani sighed.<sup>9</sup> Since a musealised reconstruction of the Iseum was therefore impossible, the recently unearthed obelisk would become available for other purposes. Here, Lanciani substituted his scholarly desire for reconstruction and romantic nostalgia with his equally typical nationalist political commitment, using the past for purposes of the present.<sup>10</sup> The obelisk, he suggested, capitalising on the artefact’s time-honoured symbolism of power, would make a wonderful monument to celebrate Italy’s ruling regal dynasty.

The context in which Lanciani came up with this suggestion was the protracted dispute over the planned memorial for king Victor Emmanuel II, the first king of Italy who had died

<sup>7</sup> See the excavation report by Lanciani and the analyses by Schiaparelli, Barracco and Marucchi in Lanciani *et al.* 1883, 33-131.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 103: “o dal capriccio di un imperatore, che non ne conosceva il significato simbolico, o da Egiziani degeneri, che i grandiosi concetti dell’antica religione avevano ridotto a un misticismo depravato e volgare [...] si faccia sorgere invece in uno dei punti più belli

della città” (Schiaparelli); 129: “ai tardi successori dei padroni del mondo” (Marucchi).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 59: “desiderio di vedere riunite in un gruppo incomparabile tutte le spoglie dell’Iseo campense. Ma non v’è entusiasmo umano, nè volontà per quanto tenace che valga a riunire le membra e le ceneri di quel colosso sparse e gittate ai quattro venti.”

<sup>10</sup> See Palombi 2008.

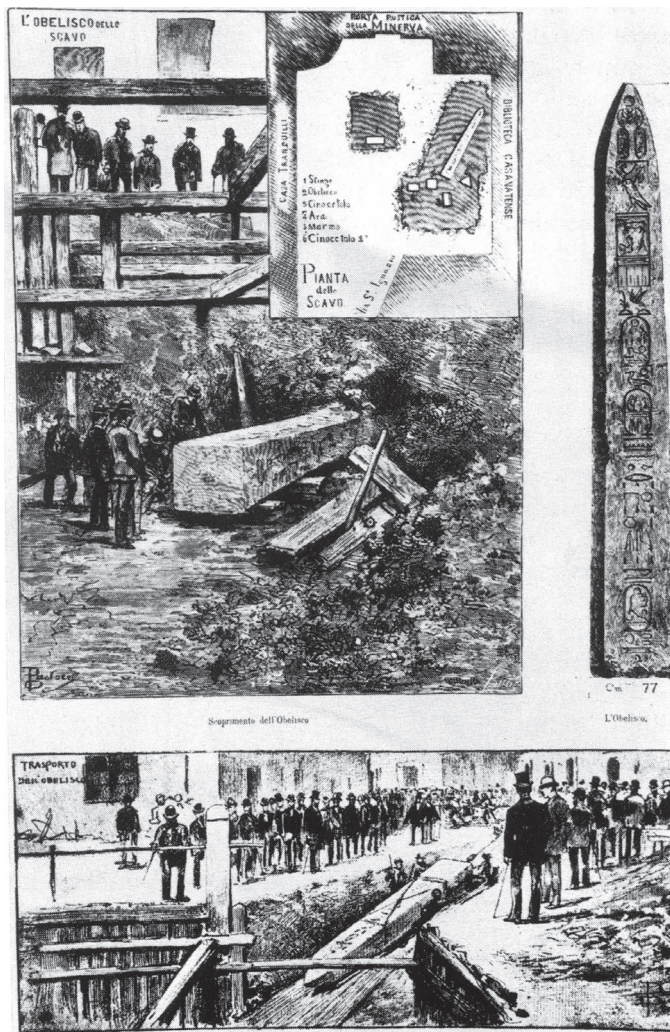


Fig. 1. The excavation of the Iseum Campense obelisk, from *L'Illustrazione Italiana*, 1883.

encroached upon the Eternal City, was selected for representing “in a certain sense the unifying ring of the old and the new Rome”.<sup>12</sup> Subsequently the adjacent Piazza Esedra was chosen, the semi-circular square in front of Santa Maria degli Angeli e dei Martiri (the present-day Piazza della Repubblica). With a classicising design of a central column topped with a statue of the king and a surrounding portico that culminated in a triumphal arch, the French architect Henri-Paul Nénot won the competition. Yet political manoeuvring impeded the execution of his design, staid by the idea that Italy’s national monument ought not be entrusted to a Frenchman. A second competition followed in 1882 on a national level, resulting in the choice for a wholly different monument on a location with much more symbolical value: the northern slope of the Capitol, the *Vittoriano* of today, initiated in 1885, inaugurated in 1911, completed in 1935.<sup>13</sup>

in 1878. Immediately after the king’s death, a discussion had started regarding the location of the interment of the royal remains. The Pantheon was selected as the most opportune setting, but in a newspaper article, Lanciani suggested the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli e dei Martiri, which carried a strong connotation of martyrdom and was moreover fittingly situated at the top end of the Via Nazionale. Victor Emmanuel II was eventually buried in the Pantheon, but the debate intensified further when, only two days after Lanciani’s newspaper article, the municipal government of Rome opted for a competition for a national monument for the late king.

A first proposal suggested to erect a monument on Piazza di Termini, the square in front of Rome’s first train station inaugurated in 1874.<sup>11</sup> Very much in the spirit of Lanciani, that site, where modernity entered and

<sup>11</sup> On the history of Roma Termini, see Weststeijn and Whiting 2017. The following pages are based on material from chapter 3.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Berggren and Sjöstedt 1996, 55: “in cer-

to modo l’anello di unione della vecchia colla nuova Roma.”

<sup>13</sup> On the long-winding history of the various competitions for the *Vittoriano*, see *ibid.*, 54-63; and Tobia



According to Lanciani, the design of the new monument on that central and symbolical site was “a national calamity” because it would result in immense destructions in the heart of the ancient city.<sup>14</sup> As a last resort attempt to change the course of the deliberations, he therefore made, together with Giovanni Baracco, an alternative proposal for a royal monument in July 1883, for which his own discovery of the previous month at the Iseum Campense came in handy. Indeed, the obelisk of Ramses II offered Lanciani a very welcome alternative to the grandiose memorial next to the Capitol because of the obelisk’s strong historical connotation of power and dynasty. The history of Rome had witnessed emperors and popes erecting and re-erecting obelisks all-over the city, but the ‘Third Rome’, the capital of a unified Italian nation-state, thus far lacked a clear manifestation of power that could continue that time-honoured tradition: the last occasion an ancient obelisk had been erected in Rome dated back to 1822, when Pope Pius VII inaugurated the obelisk on the Pincio. To make clear that the Italian Kingdom could outdo the papacy not only militarily but also culturally, in terms of creating symbolic memorials, it would be very fitting, Lanciani argued, to commemorate Italy’s first king with the obelisk from the Iseum Campense.<sup>15</sup>

In line with the obelisk’s significance as a symbol of *translatio imperii*, Lanciani proposed a monument for the late king that consisted of the obelisk surrounded by four sphinxes, very much following the model of Giuseppe Valadier’s decoration of the obelisk on Piazza del Popolo (fig. 2).<sup>16</sup> Significantly, Lanciani’s design places the obelisk on the granite pedestal that used to belong to the Sallustian obelisk, a Roman imperial imitation (made after the one on Piazza del Popolo) that had been erected on top of the Spanish Steps in 1789. The pedestal had been recovered only recently, in 1843, and as Lanciani complained, 40 years later it still lay “idle and despised” in the gardens of the Villa Ludovisi, the estate soon to be engulfed by the urbanisation of Rome. Integrating the obelisk from the Iseum Campense with the granite pedestal embellished by four sphinxes, Lanciani sought to increase the aesthetical impact and the symbolical potential of the obelisk as a signifier of regal power and dynasty by intensifying its ‘Egyptian’ characteristics. This alternative Royal monument was to be situated on the small Piazza di San Bernardo alle Terme, opposite Domenico Fontana’s fountain of Moses next to Piazza Esedra. With this alternative, Lanciani hoped, the Capitol could be saved from its pending monumental destruction.<sup>17</sup>

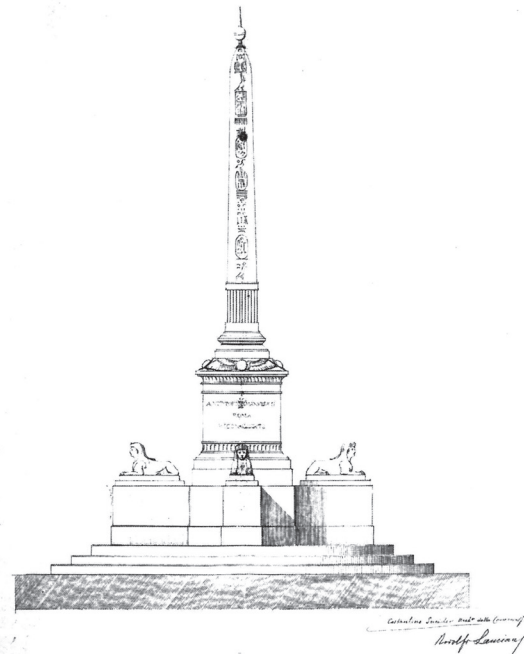


Fig. 2. Rodolfo Lanciani, Design for an alternative monument in the memory of king Victor Emmanuel II.

2011. See also Atkinson and Cosgrove 1998; and Brice 1998.

<sup>14</sup> Lanciani 1988, 127.

<sup>15</sup> See Berggren and Sjöstedt 1996, 62; and Palombi 2008, 134-35.

<sup>16</sup> For which see Iversen 1968, 65-75.

<sup>17</sup> Lanciani 1988, 144. On the pedestal of the Sallustian obelisk, see the contemporary description in Schreiber 1880, 144; and the historical overview in D’Onofrio 1967, 276-79.



### Out of Africa: a monument from “the soil rinsed with Italian blood”

Lanciani’s attempt to prevent the eventual erection of the *Vittoriano* was to no avail, yet his idea for a monument using the obelisk materialised a few years later on another spot, a stone’s throw from the one he originally selected, for a different purpose: to honour the fallen of Dogali in front of Termini station. The occasion to reuse the obelisk in this context had arrived rather abruptly, when, in late January 1887, the Italian colonial campaign in Eritrea encountered its first serious setback. In the aftermath of the Congress of Berlin, in which Africa was divided among the European powers, Italy, eager to prove its place as a nation among nations, sought to acquire colonial possessions in the one corner of the continent that was as yet unclaimed, the Horn of Africa. Having occupied a series of settlements along the Red Sea coast between Massawa and Assab in 1885, the Italian troops subsequently moved inland and penetrated territory claimed by local rulers loyal to the Emperor of Ethiopia. One of these rulers was Ras Alula, a formidable warlord who the Italians likened to their own national hero: they called him “the Garibaldi of Abyssinia”.<sup>18</sup> In January 1887, Ras Alula gathered his troops and attacked the inland Italian fort at Sahati; repulsed, he subsequently intercepted the Italian relief column, which consisted of 548 men. Ambushed near the settlement of Dogali by a large majority of Ethiopian fighters, 430 of the Italians were killed, including their commander Tommaso de Cristofori.<sup>19</sup>

Once news of the defeat reached Italy, it sent shockwaves through the country. In a climate of widespread anxiety and anger, fierce political debate erupted between supporters and opponents of the colonial campaign. National and local authorities from Locorotondo to Rome decided to erect official memorials to turn the humiliating defeat into an act of heroism. Presenting “the 500” of Dogali as martyrs who sacrificed their lives “for the honour of the fatherland”, they attempted to use the colonial defeat for instilling a sense of redemption in the young nation. In Rome, in particular the city’s mayor, duke Leopoldo Torlonia (from the affluent Torlonia family, which at its Roman estate boasted two modern obelisks) played an important role in exploiting the defeat for a nationalist political agenda. He also knew which object could be used to pursue that aim. Already in July 1883, Lanciani had approached Torlonia to discuss his plans with the obelisk he had excavated, and now Torlonia seized the occasion: the obelisk was to be turned into a monument in remembrance of the fallen at Dogali. After all, as Torlonia argued, the obelisk from Heliopolis, dedicated to Ramses II, originated from “the soil rinsed with Italian blood”.<sup>20</sup>

Torlonia’s remark is highly telling since it shows how the obelisk, which for Lanciani had primarily a symbolical potential as a signifier of regal power in Rome and hence of Italy’s royal dynasty, could also be appropriated as a general geographical marker of non-Roman (and hence non-Italian) otherness – in particular, of Africa. The Italian troops had died that year in Eritrea, the obelisk was from Lower Egypt, but the thousand kilometres in between made no difference to Torlonia: for him, the essence of the obelisk was that it came from the African continent, and that was the territory where the Italian troops had been killed. By making this claim, Torlonia’s phrasing also bears the (unconscious?) suggestion that the obelisk was somehow resuscitated because

<sup>18</sup> Wylde 1901, 29.

<sup>19</sup> On the context of the Dogali battle, see Battaglia 1958; and Beyene, Tamrat, and Pankhurst 1988.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Berggren and Sjöstedt 1996, 139: “appunto dal suolo che fu bagnato del sangue italiano.”

it came out of a soil supposedly fertilised with the blood of Italy's military. Torlonia thus used the obelisk as a marker of African alterity, while at the same time alluding to it as an offspring of Roman and Italian identity.

This double-edged rhetoric took centre stage in the speech Torlonia gave at the official inauguration of the Dogali monument in the presence of the King and Queen of Italy. In the morning of 5 June 1887, a large crowd gathered to see the obelisk unveiled in front of Termini station. The design of the monument, adapted after Lanciani by the Roman architect Francesco Azzurri, had been executed swiftly in a few months.<sup>21</sup> Azzurri had discarded Lanciani's sphinxes and the granite pedestal of the Sallustian obelisk. Instead of being further 'Egyptianized', the obelisk was now infused with more overtly 'Roman' symbolism. It was placed on a cruciform pedestal consisting of four altars, ordained with bronze laurels and plaques mentioning, beneath the Roman imperial sign of the eagle, the names of the 500 soldiers fallen *pro patria*. The base of the obelisk, inscribed with Rome's ancient acronym SPQR, dedicated the monument AGLI EROI DI DOGALI, "to the heroes of Dogali". Atop the obelisk, a star represented Italy's armed forces. For mayor Torlonia, its overall message was obvious:

That this trophy of ancient victories, this Egyptian granite, which symbolises the strength of the soldiers at Dogali, may be a perennial remembrance of unfortunate valour and that it may consecrate in the glory of the army the religion of duty, heroically accomplished for the greatness of the Italian name.<sup>22</sup>

The significant changes of the monument's design, from Lanciani's 'Egyptianizing' approach to Azzurri's 'Roman' adornment, echoed in the words of Torlonia. He explicitly identified the obelisk as a trophy of war, a symbol of victory, to conceal the humiliating Italian defeat at Dogali under the cover of ancient Roman imperial success. The elements of the monument that referred to ancient Rome, from the eagle to the SPQR acronym, strengthened this immaterial association between classical and modern imperialism, mobilising ancient Rome in the service of "the greatness of the Italian name". At the same time, the specific *material* characteristics of the obelisk, its granite robustness and indestructibility, were used by Torlonia as signifiers of "the strength of the soldiers" and of the "perennial remembrance" of their valour. For Torlonia, the obelisk served as an appropriate colonial memorial not just because it originated from non-Roman Africa, but also because its very materiality represented the Roman virtue of strength and created an everlasting memory of military sacrifice. Indeed, the obelisk obtained a sacral function as a kind of altar where "the religion of duty" could be consecrated, a secular sacralisation represented by the star of Italy's armed forces, instead of a Christian cross, atop the obelisk. In Torlonia's speech, then, the obelisk performed three roles: it embodied Africa, the land of the colonized; it embodied Rome, the city of the victorious; and it embodied a timeless civil religion that linked ancient imperialism with modern nationalism, connecting past, present and future.

Torlonia explicated this message in the climax of his speech. Addressing the large crowd gathered that summer morning at Piazza Termini, he reiterated his bloodthirsty rhetoric, claiming the Dogali monument was a "remembrance of generous italic blood" spilled for Rome as the

<sup>21</sup> For the execution and inauguration of the monument, see *ibid.*, 138-42, and D'Onofrio, 1967, 304-5.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Berggren and Sjöstedt 1996, 142: "Questo trofeo di antiche vittorie, questo granite egizio, che

simboleggia la saldezza dei combattenti a Dogali, sia perenne ricordo al valore sventurato, e consacrato nella gloria dell'esercito la religione del dovere, compiuto eroicamente per la grandezza del nome italiano."

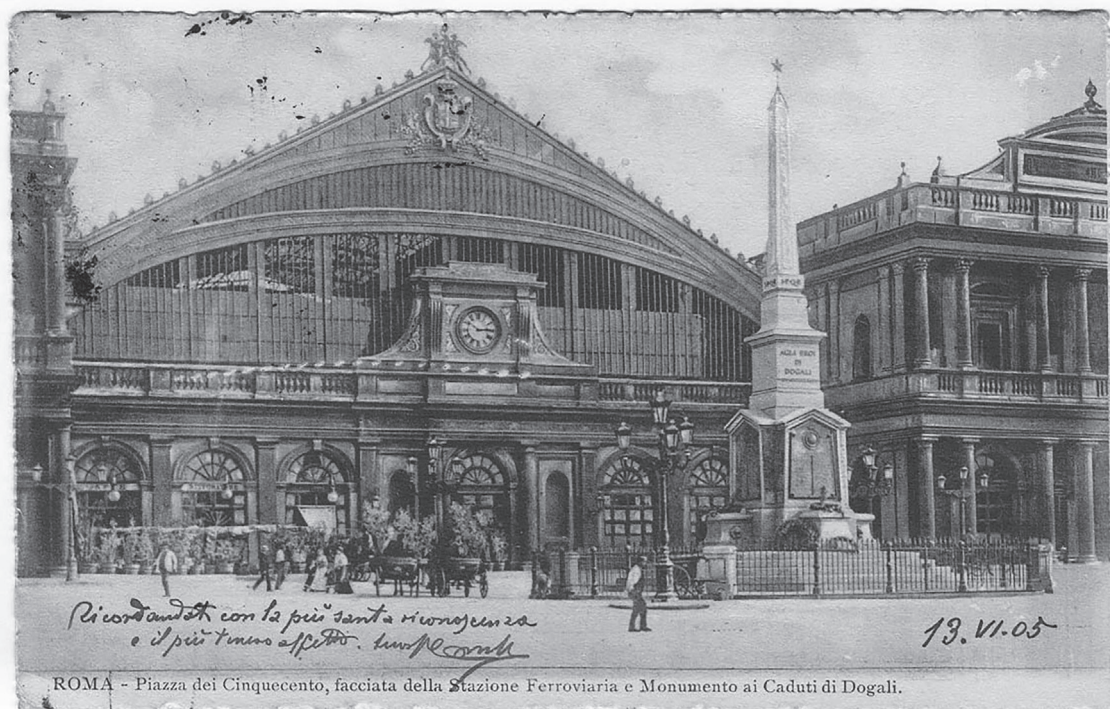


Fig. 3. Period postcard of the Piazza dei Cinquecento with the Dogali obelisk in front of Termini station, c. 1900.

“interpreter of universal thought”. He continued: “The immortal city that sharpened the sword in the Punic wars, delivers this monument to history and for the reverence and as an example of present and future generations.”<sup>23</sup> The association between ancient and modern imperialism in Africa was thus made explicit: Rome, as the Eternal City immune to the passage of time, embodied an everlasting agenda of military expansion and conquest in Africa that started with the Punic wars and continued unto today and into the future. The obelisk represented that imperial immortality, an indestructible trophy of empire that demanded sacral reverence as an altar of colonial sacrifice.

For all its studied stateliness, not everybody agreed with Torlonia’s exalted (and rather morbid) rhetoric. “Poor fallen of Dogali!”, a commentator from the papal newspaper *L’Osservatore Romano* sarcastically remarked on the day of the inauguration of the monument:

Our architects place in the middle of Rome a funerary memorial, as if a city of living beings is nothing more nor less than a cemetery [...] And they have placed it right there at the train station so as to say to those who arrive in our city: ‘What abysmal taste these Romans have!’<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 141: “Roma, la storica Metropoli, sicura di farsi interprete del pensiero universale [...] il ricordo del generoso sangue italico [...] La città immortale, che temprò la spada nelle guerre puniche, consegna alla storia, alla pietà ed all’esempio dei presenti, e dei futuri, questo monumento.”

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in D’Onofrio 1967, 306: “Poveri morti di

Dogali! [...] I nostri architetti, invece, ci piantano in mezzo a Roma un ricordo funerario, come se una città di vivi fosse né più né meno che un cimitero ... E lo hanno piantato là proprio alla stazione ferroviaria tanto per far dire a coloro che arrivano nella nostra città: ‘Che gusto abissino hanno questi romani!’”

Almost two decades after the fall of the Papal States, nationalist and papal interpretations continued fighting over Rome. The Dogali obelisk, the first national monument in Rome visible at the very entrance of the city at Termini station, immediately became a minor battleground in this on-going conflict (fig. 3). But Torlonia was not dismayed by the Catholic critique. That same day, immediately after having given his speech at the obelisk, he unveiled a large marble plaque on the façade of the municipality at the Capitol, the most prominent memorial space in the city. The plaque, still visible on location, is once again dedicated “to the glorious soldiers of Dogali” as the inheritors “of the military virtues of our fathers”: another clear association between ancient Rome and modern Italy. But significantly, in this context no mention is made at all of Roman imperialism in Africa. Instead, the plaque explicitly compares the fallen at Dogali to the Fabii ambushed in the Battle of the Cremera between Rome and Veii in 477 BC.<sup>25</sup> On the Capitol, in the absence of an ‘Egyptian’ memory marker such as an obelisk, the colonial connotation of the Dogali monument as an indicator of both Roman identity and non-Roman alterity evaporates. The Dogali battle is here entirely Romanized, disconnected from Africa and, geographically as well as historically, reduced to the very onset of Roman expansion at the city’s doorstep.

### Remembering martyrs in fascist Rome

With the inauguration of the Dogali obelisk and of the plaque on the Capitol, Rome’s urban tissue was incised with a route of martyrdom, running from the entrance to the city at Termini until Rome’s symbolic heart at the Capitol. The square in front of the train station where the monument was placed was baptized Piazza dei Cinquecento, in reference to the number of soldiers who fought at Dogali. All people who entered Rome by rail were thus immediately confronted with the symbolism of militant sacrifice. From the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli e dei Martiri, in the ancient baths on the other side of the square, the Via Nazionale led, in a straight line, to Italy’s prime national monument, the *Vittoriano*. When, in 1921, the remains of an anonymous Italian soldier fallen in the First World War were placed in the shrine within the monument, Rome’s route of modern martyrdom was complete. Upon exiting Termini station, all visitors to Rome were led into the Eternal City along a religious-nationalist trajectory that started with the Dogali obelisk and ended with the ‘Altar of the Fatherland’ downtown.

The start and finish of this route of martyrdom were however to change significantly following the fascist seizure of power in Italy. After the allegedly heroic ‘March on Rome’ in late October 1922, Mussolini arrived comfortably at Termini with the night train from Milan, dressed in full fascist regalia for a meeting with the king. At the Quirinal palace, he was given the task to form a government and serve as prime minister; by early 1925 a full fascist dictatorship had been established. That same year the Dogali obelisk was moved from its prominent position in front of the station to a small park nearby, towards Piazza Esedra. In the light of the upcoming jubilee year of 1925, the monument had become a traffic obstacle, but the new fascist government had other considerations in mind as well: such a prominent location at the entry to the Eternal City

<sup>25</sup> The text of the plaque is quoted in Berggren and Sjöstedt 1996, 142: “ai gloriosi soldati di Dogali/che coll’in-

signe valore superarono la leggenda dei Fabi/[...] Che ricorda al mondo le virtù militari de’ nostri padri.”



should not be reserved for a monument that was, essentially, commemorating a humiliating defeat. The obelisk was thus, quite literally, marginalised in the hidden spot where it still stands today, sacrificed despite embodying the idea of sacrifice itself.

Meanwhile, the other end of Rome's route of martyrdom equally underwent a significant change. Under Mussolini's regime, the tomb of the unknown soldier increasingly served as a central site of mourning in the fascist state liturgy, but the area of the Capitol was also imbued with yet another semi-religious monument: the *ara dei caduti fascisti*. This "altar of the fallen fascists" was inaugurated in 1926 to commemorate the fascist men killed in the chaotic years between the end of the First World War and Mussolini's seizure of power, a period of intense political turmoil and recurrent violence throughout Italy. For the regime, the black-shirt belligerents who had died in street fights and skirmishes with antifascists were to be considered the martyrs of the fascist 'revolution', consecrated with the March on Rome. In the construction of fascism as a 'political religion', such alleged martyrdom could be mobilised handily for creating a sacral symbolism of sacrifice.<sup>26</sup> Significantly, this symbolism once again materialised in a specific 'Egyptian' object, which already had been connected before to the Dogali obelisk: the pedestal of the Sallustian obelisk, which Lanciani had proposed to use as a base in his design of a monument for the Italian King. With the rejection of Lanciani's proposal, the pedestal remained for a few years in the gardens of the Villa Ludovisi, and after the creation of the new neighbourhood around Via Veneto, it eventually ended up in a municipal storage, totally forgotten and neglected, before being resuscitated as a fascist relic.<sup>27</sup>

The man responsible for this sudden resurrection was Rodolfo Bonfiglietti, an engineer working in the service of Rome's *Governatorato*, the fascist municipality. In the summer of 1924, Bonfiglietti unexpectedly encountered "an enormous block of pink Egyptian granite" in a disused corner of a municipal storage in Via Volturno, in front of Termini station, squeezed "behind the cabin where the custodian lives, a remnant of the Servian wall, and the electrical substation of the tramlines". Bonfiglietti immediately identified the granite block as the Sallustian pedestal, and he recalled it had been claimed in the 1880s as a base for the Dogali obelisk nearby. That connection, Bonfiglietti argued, should be restored, for the block could serve perfectly to support "a non-destructible, non-damageable trophy of war". But Bonfiglietti also made a second connection between the two 'Egyptian' artefacts: they both were threatened by marginalisation. Indeed, at the very moment he rediscovered the Sallustian pedestal, the Dogali obelisk was being removed by the fascist government from its prominent position in front of the station to the small park nearby, in Bonfiglietti's verdict, "in between the chalets of the drinks-seller, the public restrooms and the transformer cabin for the streetlight."<sup>28</sup> For Bonfiglietti, this destiny was unacceptable: how could an Egyptian obelisk be placed next to "pseudo-Swiss chalets in a pseudo-English garden"? Such foreign, non-Roman creations did not match the grandeur of Egypt, which, though equally foreign, could also be claimed as intrinsically Roman.

<sup>26</sup> On fascism as a political religion, see Gentile 1990; id. 1993, and the discussion in id. 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Diebner 2011.

<sup>28</sup> Bonfiglietti 1924, 339-49: "un enorme blocco di granito egizio rosa [...] dietro il casotto d'abitazione del custode, fra un resto di muro Serviano e la sottostazione

elettrica delle tramvie [...] servendo di base a un non distruttibile, a un non danneggiabile trofeo di guerra [...] fra gli chalets del bibitaro, dei gabinetti di decenza e della cabina dell'illuminazione elettrica. Ottimi vicini per la storia e per l'arte, gli chalets pseudo svizzeri e l'obelisco egizio, in un giardino pseudo inglese!"

Bonfiglietti's proposal to integrate the obelisk with the pedestal came to nothing, but while the Dogali obelisk was marginalised, the rediscovered granite block eventually took centre stage in the memory politics of the fascist regime, most likely following Bonfiglietti's initiative.<sup>29</sup> In the summer of 1926, *Capitolium*, the official journal of the fascist *Governatorato*, announced the upcoming inauguration of "a simple and solemn memorial for the fallen fascists", consisting of "an imposing marble block" to be placed on the Capitol as "an everlasting chapel of the holocaust of the young, sacrificed for the reborn potency of young Italy".<sup>30</sup> This "marble" block was the Sallustian pedestal, and like the Dogali obelisk, it was to perform a semi-religious role as a monument of sacrifice, its indestructible materiality, "eternal like the memory of the heroes", representing "the granite robustness of the Idea".<sup>31</sup>

Baptised the "altar of the fallen fascists", the monument was inaugurated at the end of October that year in the presence of the *Duce* to mark the 4th anniversary of the March on Rome. While incense burned to accentuate the sacral nature of the ceremony, the "powerful block of very precious pink granite" was unveiled in the small garden east of the Palazzo Senatorio overlooking the Forum Romanum, "as if it emerged from its natural glorious soil". Neglected and forgotten for decades, the Sallustian pedestal now suddenly reappeared in the very heart of Rome under the claim that it had always belonged there. It was foreign but also essentially Roman, *Capitolium* argued: "all its history, all its faraway adventures, all its noble origins obtain more value in its new destiny". Indeed, its resurrection meant more than "a triumphant arrival", it "marked the beginning of a great march towards the highest goals". Like the Dogali obelisk, the granite pedestal carried with all its indestructible history the promise of a shining future. Its specific materiality, moreover, particularly its pinkish colour, was once again used to signify sacrifice: "the blood of the young" had been shed "to redden the ancient granite with all the dawns that rise in the Orient".<sup>32</sup> Torlonia's bloodthirsty rhetoric during the inauguration of the Dogali obelisk in 1887 thus returned with a vengeance almost forty years later at the inauguration of the fascist altar. Significantly, as in the case of the obelisk, the granite block was turned into a marker of original Romanness at the Capitol as well as of a distant non-Roman origin, representing the blood of Italian martyrdom as well as the lure of oriental otherness.

### Revenge: trophies removed & repatriated

In the years following the inauguration, the altar became one of the most important relics in the public liturgy of fascist Rome. The granite block was embellished with travertine slaps on top, with carved figures of lions and eagles which turned it into a venerable sepulchre in the classical style of the Tomb of the Scipios. To seal this progressive 'Romanization', the altar was also adorned with large fasces and laurel wreaths to be venerated in frequent processions organised by the

<sup>29</sup> See Bonfiglietti 1928.

<sup>30</sup> Cecchelli 1926, 218: "il semplice e solenne ricordo ai caduti fascisti. Un imponente blocco marmoreo [...] in eterno il sacello del giovanile olocausto per la rinata potenza della giovane Italia."

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in D'Onofrio 1967, 277-78: "la granitica robustezza dell'Idea"; "granito eterno come la memoria degli eroi."

<sup>32</sup> 'Lara dei caduti fascisti', *Capitolium* 2, 1926, 424: "emerso dalla sua naturale zolla di gloria, un possente blocco di preziosissimo granito rosa. Tutto il suo passato tutte le sue lontane avventure, tutte le sue nobili provenienze si avvalorano nel suo nuovo destino [...] più che un arrivo segna l'inizio di una grande marcia verso mete supreme [...] il sangue dei giovinetti [...] per inosare l'antico granito di tutte le aurore che sorgono all'oriente."



Fig. 4. The Dogali obelisk with the Lion of Judah, postcard from the late 1930s.

regime. Official delegations of foreign statesmen often made a detour on the Capitol to pay their respect to the fallen fascists.<sup>33</sup> Steadily increasing over the decade, this public self-confidence and boastfulness of the regime reached a climax with the conquest of Ethiopia in May 1936. The colonial campaign in the Horn of Africa, badly launched some fifty years before with the defeat at Dogali, was now officially concluded: Italy finally had its empire, Mussolini declared triumphantly. The sacrifice of the fallen, celebrated at the altar on the Capitol, was vindicated, the promise of the ‘fascist revolution’ seemed to be fulfilled.<sup>34</sup>

To celebrate this long-delayed victory, the Dogali obelisk, which had been marginalised for over a decade, received new significance in the shape of a peculiar addition to the monument: a large bronze lion (fig. 4). This statue, originally a gift from a French railway company to the *Negus negesti*, “King of kings”, Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie, had been seized by the Italian troops in Ethiopia as booty.<sup>35</sup> Brought to Rome in 1937, it was placed as “a trophy of war” and an “*ex-voto* of vindication” at the base of the Dogali obelisk. The commentary in the Roman newspaper *Il Messaggero* linked the lion trophy with the fallen at Dogali: “the symbol of the defeated and deceased empire of the Negus has been placed at the feet of the obelisk erected to the memory of those vindicated by the valour of the legionnaires of Mussolini.” The same rhetoric of revenge characterised the official inscription, dated 9 May 1937, colonial anniversary and year XV of the fascist era: “This simulacrum of the Lion of Judah was brought here from Addis Ababa after the conquest of the Empire. O glorious fallen of Dogali, fascist Italy has vindicated you.”<sup>36</sup> The Dogali monument had thus turned into a symbol of colonial retribution. From the perspective

<sup>33</sup> See Diebner 2011.

<sup>34</sup> After decades of relative silence, Italy’s colonial history and the conquest of Ethiopia are increasingly discussed in the scholarly literature. See esp. the pathbreaking work by Angelo Del Boca, e.g. Del Boca 1992, as well as Ben-Ghiat and Fuller 2005, and Andall and Duncan 2005.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Pankhurst 1969.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in D’Onofrio 1967, 306-8: “come trofeo di

guerra [...] *ex voto* di rivendicazione”; “il simbolo dello sconfitto e scomparso impero negussita è stato posto ai piedi dell’obelisco eretto alla memoria di coloro che il valore dei Legionari di Mussolini hanno vendicato”; “Questo simulacro del Leone di Giuda/da Addis Abeba fu qui portato/dopo la conquista dell’Impero/O gloriosi morti di Dogali/l’Italia fascista vi ha vendicati/l’X maggio MCMXXXVII-XV.”

of the regime, Rome's route of martyrdom was finally completed: at the start as well as the end of the route, from Termini to the Capitol, the sacrifice of the fallen could now be claimed as the germ of final victory.

The evermore farfetched rhetoric of the regime was well captured by the scholar Alberto Tulli, who gave a paper on the Dogali monument for the decisively fascist national congress on Roman studies in 1938.<sup>37</sup> His remarks on the monument reveal the fundamental ambiguity in fascist appropriations of the obelisk as a material marker of virile *romanità*, but also as a relic of degraded barbarism. For Tulli, the materiality of the obelisk was paramount. Its size and shape, "high and insistent", evoked "the affirmation of the oriental power of ancient imperial Rome" which formed "the basis of modern Roman imperialism in East Africa", where Italy's troops followed the "example of the classical cohorts". Indeed, the obelisk, "durably erected", could be considered "a perennial affirmation of ancestral potency", while the statue of the bronze lion was an "unshakeable manifestation of the determined virtue of the Italian legions". Tulli thus expanded upon Torlonia's connection between ancient and modern imperialism, supposedly embodied by the material robustness and almost Freudian potency of the obelisk. Even the small park in which the monument now stood, scorned before by Bonfiglietti as a "pseudo-English garden", had a positive connotation for Tulli since "the trees and palms remind us of those in Egypt".<sup>38</sup>

But that association with Egypt also lay bare the intrinsic ambiguity of Tulli's overly fascist interpretation. On the one hand, he proclaimed the obelisk and the lion together to be "the testimony of the radiant glory of modern imperial Rome in its latest exploits overseas for the defence of civilization, just like Livy and Pliny urged to their contemporaries". On the other hand, however, the obelisk also represented the lack of civilization "in the period of full syncretism", being one of the "evident symbols of the confusion in human thinking in which Christianity had to restore order". Originating from the Iseum Campense, the obelisk had witnessed how "the intellectual emptiness of Egyptian religion competed with the mental poverty of its ceremonies that were entirely incapable of lifting the spirit".<sup>39</sup> A distant echo of the remarks of Schiaparelli from 1883, Tulli's verdict embraces the obelisk as a marker of the triumph of *romanità* while at the same time rejecting the obelisk as a marker of non-Roman (and non-Christian) barbarism.

Significantly, this two-edged symbolism of self and other, accentuated in the claim of colonial vindication, was not confined merely to Italians. In June 1938, over a year after the bronze lion had been placed at the base of the Dogali obelisk, Zerai Deres, a young Eritrean who had been deported to Italy and who worked as interpreter, loudly proclaimed his support of Haile Selassie in front of the monument. When a fascist officer tried to intervene, Deres drew his sword

<sup>37</sup> Tulli 1942. On the organising Istituto di Studi Romani, see Arthurs 2012.

<sup>38</sup> Tulli 1942, 182: "l'affermazione della potenza orientale dell'antica Roma imperiale nelle sua rievocazione, alta ed insistente [...] sulla base dell'imperialismo romano moderno in Africa Orientale [...] all'esempio delle classiche Coorti. Affermazione perenne, infatti, della potenza avita, sta, durabilmente eretto, il monolito di Roma; manifestazione incrollabile della strenua virtù delle Legioni italiane [...] in mezzo agli alberi e alle palme, che ricordano quelle d'Egitto."

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 184-85: "testimonianza della gloria fulgida di Roma imperiale moderna nelle sue novissime gesta d'oltremare per la difesa della civiltà, così come già Livio o Plinio ammonivano ai loro tempi. [...] Nei tempi di peno sincretismo [...] simboli evidenti della confusione del pensiero umano, in cui il Cristianesimo doveva rimettere l'ordine e l'orditura! [...] la vacuità di pensiero della religione egizia gareggiava con la povertà di mente delle sue cerimonie, assolutamente incapaci a sollevare lo spirito."



and wounded the officer as well as several onlookers, before eventually getting caught and being imprisoned. Deres remained in captivity until his death in the final days of the Second World War. Soon he would be turned into a martyr as well, a mythical hero of Ethiopian nationalism who had struck the colonial regime in the very heart of the empire.<sup>40</sup>

The fascist claim on revenge, embodied by the Lion of Judah being placed in front of the obelisk as an imperial trophy, thus backfired, triggering acts of subaltern resistance. Mussolini's regime had sought to strengthen the significance of the Dogali monument as an identifier of Italian imperial success by adding a non-Italian statue to the obelisk, combining an ancient with a modern trophy of colonial conquest. It was a double-edged endeavour that enhanced the meaning of the monument as a marker of Italian identity, but also of African alterity. This ambiguity was not lost on Eritreans and Ethiopians, for whom the monument became a symbol of resistance and independence. This materialised in the eventual return of the bronze lion to Ethiopia as a sign of anticolonial vindication. Having been removed from the Dogali monument shortly after the Allied liberation of Rome in 1944, the Lion of Judah was brought back to Addis Ababa in the 1960s and placed on its original location in front of the city's train station. On the occasion of its homecoming, Haile Selassie, restored as ruler of Ethiopia in 1941, lauded Deres' defiance in front of the Dogali monument. For both sides in the colonial conflict, the obelisk and the lion counted as multi-layered signifiers of defeat, sacrifice, revenge and eventual victory. The monument, from its inauguration in 1887 a double-sided symbol of self and other, could be appropriated by the colonizers as well as by the colonized.

While the Dogali obelisk was partially decolonized after the Second World War with the removal of the bronze Lion of Judah, the altar of the fallen fascists was almost entirely 'deromanized' and brought back to its original 'Egyptian' form. Around the end of 1945, when similar acts of *damnatio memoriae* had cleansed much of the area around the Piazza Venezia of its heavy fascist symbolism, the granite block was stripped of its travertine decoration, the dismembered slabs deposited in a storehouse of Rome's archaeological service.<sup>41</sup> The block itself, restored to its pre-1926 condition, was however not removed from the small garden on the Capitol, most likely because of the practical difficulties in transporting such a heavy load of granite. As a result, it remained on location, moved only a few meters away to the margins of the garden behind a fence, with the side bearing the fascist dedication strategically placed against a wall so that it is no longer in sight. Only the erratic scholar who jumps the fence might be able to decipher the inscription, dated year V of the fascist era, which is still vaguely visible in the pink granite: "This stone on the imperial hill of Rome will remember in the centuries to come the heroic sacrifice of the fallen for the revolution of the black shirts."<sup>42</sup>

### Conclusion: the obelisk and the altar as marginalised memorials

The postwar situation of the Dogali obelisk and the Sallustian pedestal gives counterweight to the overload of symbolism the two objects had attained during the fascist regime and the development of Italian colonialism. As monuments to martyrdom, the two pieces of granite were infused

<sup>40</sup> See Ficquet 2004, 375-76.

<sup>41</sup> See Diebner 2011, 164-65. On postwar acts of antifascist iconoclasm, cf. Arthurs 2015.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Diebner 2011, 166: "Questa pietra su col-

le imperiale di Roma ricorderà nei secoli il sacrificio eroico dei caduti per la rivoluzione delle camicie nere XXVIII ottobre anno V."

with an extremely heavy rhetoric of sacrifice, bloodthirstiness and vindication, introduced by mayor Torlonia in 1887 and brought to a climax during Mussolini's regime in the late 1930s. After the war, the monuments were decisively sidelined and in a sense brought back to their earlier status as second-rank ancient artefacts in the Eternal City. Now, the Sallustian pedestal once again lies, to quote Lanciani, "idle and despised" in a corner of the Capitol, just like it used to in the Villa Ludovisi or in the storage in Via Volturno – neglected by some and forgotten by most. The Dogali obelisk, already removed from its central location in front of the train station in 1925, still stands, but has equally become a marginalised memorial. The small park in which it is located, easily overlooked by the inhabitants of Rome and by the millions of tourists who yearly visit the city, is mainly in use today as a shelter for homeless migrants, many of them, ironically, originating from the African lands Italy once tried to conquer. Only the large square in front of Termini station, the Piazza dei Cinquecento, still remembers in name the 'fallen of Dogali', but its original message of martyrdom has faded away. From a site of imperial memory, it has decisively turned into a site of postcolonial forgetting.

The present fate of the Dogali obelisk and the Sallustian pedestal can be considered illustrative for the way in which Italian society has coped with its own colonial and totalitarian past, a *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* defined by divisive interpretations and awkward silences.<sup>43</sup> In this context, there is a clear parallel to be drawn with two much better known objects in Rome that carry comparably heavy symbolical weight as markers of fascist power and colonial booty: Mussolini's marble obelisk at the entrance to the Foro Italico, and the looted Stele of Axum that overlooked the Circus Maximus between 1937 and 2003. What is striking about these two well-documented cases is that, in the case of Mussolini's obelisk, it has been kept entirely intact, and in the case of the Stele of Axum, it was eventually repatriated and re-erected in its original location.<sup>44</sup> In between these two extremes of uncritical conservation or long-overdue repatriation, the Dogali obelisk and the Sallustian pedestal represent a middle-way of semi-silent oblivion, an ambiguous state that is arguably linked to their 'Egyptian' character. Having wandered through the city from the Iseum Campense to the Piazza dei Cinquecento and from the Villa Ludovisi to the Capitol, the two pieces of Egyptian granite have witnessed a large array of attempts at appropriation, from Lanciani's design of a royal monument and Torlonia's claim on military martyrdom to fascist and antifascist illusions of sacrifice and revenge. In all these appropriations, there is a recurrent tension between identity and alterity: the two granite objects are said to represent Romanness but they also signify non-Roman otherness. They do belong in Rome, but they will never be at home. And although the stones no longer speak loudly the language of nationalism or totalitarianism, they are still there in all their undeniable material presence. In Rome, "city of the wandering stones and wandering monuments",<sup>45</sup> these two marginalised memorials will continue to wander, if not physically then at least metaphorically.

<sup>43</sup> There is a large recent literature on the politics of memory in contemporary Italy. For a useful overview, see Foot 2009.

<sup>44</sup> On Mussolini's obelisk, see e.g. Arthurs 2010; and

Lamers and Reitz-Joosse 2016. On the Stele of Axum, see Pankhurst 1999; and Ficquet 2004.

<sup>45</sup> Nash 1957, 232: "Rom ist die Stadt der wandernden Steine unter der wandernden Monumente."

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