

## PDF hosted at the Radboud Repository of the Radboud University Nijmegen

The following full text is a publisher's version.

For additional information about this publication click this link.

<http://hdl.handle.net/2066/79374>

Please be advised that this information was generated on 2018-12-07 and may be subject to change.



# Anabases

9 (2009)

varia

---

Nathalie de Haan

## The “Società Magna Grecia” in Fascist Italy

---

### Avertissement

Le contenu de ce site relève de la législation française sur la propriété intellectuelle et est la propriété exclusive de l'éditeur.

Les œuvres figurant sur ce site peuvent être consultées et reproduites sur un support papier ou numérique sous réserve qu'elles soient strictement réservées à un usage soit personnel, soit scientifique ou pédagogique excluant toute exploitation commerciale. La reproduction devra obligatoirement mentionner l'éditeur, le nom de la revue, l'auteur et la référence du document.

Toute autre reproduction est interdite sauf accord préalable de l'éditeur, en dehors des cas prévus par la législation en vigueur en France.

**revues.org**

Revues.org est un portail de revues en sciences humaines et sociales développé par le Cléo, Centre pour l'édition électronique ouverte (CNRS, EHESS, UP, UAPV).

---

### Référence électronique

Nathalie de Haan, « The “Società Magna Grecia” in Fascist Italy », *Anabases* [En ligne], 9 | 2009, mis en ligne le 01 mars 2012, consulté le 01 mars 2012. URL : <http://anabases.revues.org/367>

Éditeur : PLH-ERASME (EA 4153)

<http://anabases.revues.org>

<http://www.revues.org>

Document accessible en ligne sur : <http://anabases.revues.org/367>

Ce document est le fac-similé de l'édition papier.

© Anabases

## The “Società Magna Grecia” in Fascist Italy\*

NATHALIE DE HAAN

---

The serious crisis that troubles Italy, still tormented after years of war, makes it difficult for the government to fulfil its task of satisfying the spiritual needs of the Country. [...] Nowadays it is an act of real *Italianità* to support, even on a small scale, not only social initiatives, but also those that focus on the conservation and valorisation of the country’s natural beauty and cultural heritage. That is why we, Friends of the Mezzogiorno, plan to found a Society that aims at the protection of one of the richest, but also most forgotten regions of our country: ancient Magna Grecia.

This statement was published in October 1920, in a circular letter sent to numerous members of the upper class of Italian society<sup>1</sup>. This letter announced the founding of the Società Magna Grecia, and was a call for membership<sup>2</sup>. The actual initiative was

---

\* *I am very grateful to the board of ANIMI and to Dott.ssa C. Cassani for permission to access the archives of Umberto Zanotti Bianco and the Società Magna Grecia, housed in the office of ANIMI at Rome. What is presented here is part of a larger research project that hopefully will result in a biography of Zanotti Bianco. I warmly thank the colleagues of the Équipe de Recherche ERASME, Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, in particular Prof. Corinne Bonnet and Prof. Philippe Foro, for the inspiring Journée d'études. Last but not least, I thank Malena B. McGrath (Rome), who kindly corrected my English.*

<sup>1</sup> The text of the letter can be found in U. ZANOTTI BIANCO, “Paolo Orsi e la Società Magna Grecia”, in *Paolo Orsi. Suppl. a Archivio Storico per la Calabria*, Rome, 1935, p. 324-325.

<sup>2</sup> For the Società Magna Grecia see M. PAOLETTI, “Umberto Zanotti Bianco e la Società Magna Grecia”, *Bollettino della Domus Mazziniana* 38 (1992), p. 5-30; N. DE HAAN,

taken by Umberto Zanotti Bianco and Paolo Orsi, supported by a group of friends. In the first fourteen years of its existence, the Società Magna Grecia financed and initiated numerous excavation and restoration projects in Southern Italy focusing on the archaeological remains of the Greek and Byzantine past. The Società Magna Grecia was an autonomous society that worked together with the state controlled *soprintendenze*.

This contribution starts with a brief portrayal of the “founding fathers” of the Società Magna Grecia, Umberto Zanotti Bianco and Paolo Orsi. Their objectives are explored, followed by a description of the way the Società organized its projects. A sketch of the network of individuals behind the Società is necessary as well. Finally, the way the fascist regime reacted to the Società Magna Grecia, ultimately dissolved in 1935, is discussed briefly. As I have argued elsewhere, this reaction was various and incoherent, seeming to reflect the troubles the regime had in ways to evaluate the Greek past of Italy<sup>3</sup>. The regime’s inconsistent treatment of the Società Magna Grecia provided room for Zanotti Bianco, the director, and many of his friends, who were in part antifascist. At the same time, the antifascist position of some of its leading members, Zanotti Bianco *in primis*, seems to have been one of the main reasons for the suppression of the Società by the fascist government.

## Umberto Zanotti Bianco and Paolo Orsi

Umberto Zanotti Bianco was born in 1889 on the island of Crete as the son of an Italian father, a diplomat, and a Scottish mother<sup>4</sup>. The aristocratic Zanotti Bianco family was financially well off: Umberto was never on anyone’s payroll. His aristocratic and his international family background would turn out to be of vital importance in his later life. After the devastating earthquake that struck large parts of Sicily and Calabria in December 1908, young Zanotti Bianco travelled to Calabria early in 1909. He was encouraged to do so by one of his schoolteachers in Turin, Padre Semeria, and by Antonio Fogazzaro, a well-known writer who inspired Zanotti Bianco a great deal.

---

“Umberto Zanotti Bianco and the Archaeology of Magna Graecia During the Fascist Era”, in N. DE HAAN, M. EICKHOFF, M. SCHWEGMAN (eds.), *Archaeology and National Identity in Italy and Europe 1800-1950. Proceedings of the International Round Table at the Royal Netherlands Institute, Rome, 21-22 February 2007, Fragmenta. Journal of the Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome*, 2 (2008), p. 233-249.

<sup>3</sup> DE HAAN, “Umberto Zanotti Bianco”. Some overlap between this article and the present one has been inevitable.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. J. TORRACA, “Profilo di Umberto Zanotti Bianco”, *Nuova Antologia* 85 (1953), p. 78-87 (reprinted and up-dated in *Archivio Storico per la Calabria e la Lucania* 34 [1965-1966], p. 3-15); A. MEDEA, “Vita di Zanotti Bianco”, *Il Ponte* 19 (1963), p. 1422-1432; S. SETTIS, “Archeologia, tutela, sviluppo. La lezione di Umberto Zanotti Bianco”, in S. SETTIS, M.C. PARRA (a cura di), *Magna Graecia. Archeologia di un sapere*, Milan, 2005, p. 322-328.

Zanotti Bianco was shocked by the poverty that he found on his first stay in Southern Italy. It was obvious that the misery he saw was not only the outcome of a natural disaster, but to a large extent the result of structural neglect. For Zanotti Bianco, who was raised with the intellectual legacy of Giuseppe Mazzini, the enormous social problems of Southern Italy were a serious obstacle for a truly united Italy. Action, in the Mazzinian sense, was not seen as a choice, but as a duty. As a result, in 1910, Umberto Zanotti Bianco founded, together with Giovanni Malvezzi and Tommaso Gallarati Scotti, the *Associazione Nazionale per gli Interessi del Mezzogiorno d'Italia* (the National Association for the Interests of the *Mezzogiorno* in Italy, ANIMI)<sup>5</sup>. The three of them knew each other in the circle of admirers around Fogazzaro and had been close friends since 1908, especially after their travel together in Calabria<sup>6</sup>. During that same stay, Zanotti Bianco met Giuseppina Le Maire, who he would work with on many social and cultural projects until her death in 1937. It is obvious from the outset that Zanotti Bianco, despite his young age, had great organisational abilities and that he was very talented in mobilising others for his ideals. Senator Leopoldo Franchetti, for example, willingly agreed to act as president of ANIMI. Very soon Zanotti Bianco was working fulltime for the Association while also studying law in Rome. He spent most of his time in Reggio Calabria, where ANIMI opened an office in 1911, living off a small allowance from his father. He worked with great passion, constantly travelling in Calabria, founding infant and elementary schools and libraries. The first adult literacy campaigns were also soon started.

From the beginning, Zanotti Bianco drove the educational and cultural programs of ANIMI. In his view, cultural education was an important tool for the emancipation of the people. Decisive in this respect had been his encounter with the archaeologist Paolo Orsi in 1911, on board a steamship in the Strait of Messina<sup>7</sup>.

Paolo Orsi (1859-1935) was at that time *soprintendente* of Sicily and Calabria and director of the Archaeological Museum at Syracuse<sup>8</sup>. Undoubtedly, Orsi was impressed by this young man who devoted his time and energy to this region of Italy, probably because Orsi himself had dedicated most of his archaeological career to the cultural

---

<sup>5</sup> U. ZANOTTI BIANCO, *L'Associazione Nazionale per gli Interessi del Mezzogiorno d'Italia nei suoi primi cinquant'anni di vita*, Rome, 1960; M. ROSSI DORIA, "Il Meridionalista", in *Umberto Zanotti Bianco (1889-1963). Atti del convegno su Umberto Zanotti Bianco, Roma 26-27 gennaio 1979*, Rome, 1980, p. 9-28.

<sup>6</sup> M. ROSSI DORIA, "Il Meridionalista", p. 9-10.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. U. ZANOTTI BIANCO, "Paolo Orsi e la Società Magna Grecia", *Archivio Storico per la Calabria e la Lucania* 5 (1935), p. 317.

<sup>8</sup> On Orsi see U. ZANOTTI BIANCO, "Paolo Orsi"; M. BARBANERA, *L'archeologia degli italiani. Storia, metodi e orientamenti dell'archeologia classica in Italia*, Rome, 1998, p. 80-82; M. PAOLETTI, "Paolo Orsi: la "dura disciplina" e il "lavoro tenace" di un grande archeologo del Novecento", in SETTIS-PARRA, *Magna Graecia*, p. 192-197. See also P.E. ARIAS, "Zanotti Bianco and Paolo Orsi", *Nuova Antologia* 125, fasc. 2174 (1990), p. 395-400.

heritage of Southern Italy, especially Sicily and Calabria. In fact, Paolo Orsi and Umberto Zanotti Bianco had a lot in common. Both men came from Northern Italy (Orsi was born in Rovereto) and shared a deep love for the *Mezzogiorno*. For both of them, committed citizens of the still young Italian nation, it was only logical to devote their time and energy to the benefit of that nation.

Soon after their first meeting, they started a correspondence and Orsi asked if Zanotti Bianco could help to find money for the restoration of Byzantine churches in Calabria<sup>9</sup>. The requests for money from Orsi were received with favour by Zanotti Bianco, who became more and more convinced that knowledge of the glorious ancient and Byzantine past would restore the scattered identity of a region regarded as backward by the rest of Italy. Hence, the archaeological remains and monuments were landmarks deserving attention and study. This was exactly the point where Orsi's and Zanotti Bianco's ideas converged. Orsi certainly played an important role in the first period of ANIMI's existence, in which Zanotti Bianco became aware of the value of the past as a weapon in the present to fight poverty and backwardness. Orsi would become his mentor and a close friend until his death in 1935, despite a difference of age of thirty years. It was Orsi who trained Zanotti Bianco as an archaeologist, directly in the field, during various excavation and survey projects in the 1920s. Zanotti Bianco, who had a degree in law, not in classical archaeology, was a dedicated and diligent student. His sketchbooks from projects in the 1930s show furthermore that he was a good draughtsman<sup>10</sup>. Knowing his limits, however, he never directed excavations projects alone, always working together with academically trained and experienced archaeologists.

## The “Società Magna Grecia”

The shared commitment of Umberto Zanotti Bianco and Paolo Orsi to the archaeological heritage of Southern Italy resulted in the founding of the Società Magna Grecia soon after World War I, in 1920. The aim of the Società was to promote research on the Greek remains in Southern Italy, the region called *Magna Graecia* (*Megalè Hellas*) since ancient times. Orsi and Quintino Quagliati, the *soprintendente* of Apulia, were appointed as presidents, and Zanotti Bianco became the executive director<sup>11</sup>. In the beginning the Società had a central seat in Rome and an additional department in Milan. Later on departments in Turin and Naples were founded. The Società

---

<sup>9</sup> U. ZANOTTI BIANCO, *Carteggio 1906-1918*, ed. by Valeriani Carinci, Rome-Bari, 1987, p. 144-145. Part of the correspondence between Zanotti Bianco and Orsi is kept in the archives of ANIMI: Fondo Umberto Zanotti Bianco and Fondo Società Magna Grecia.

<sup>10</sup> Archives ANIMI, Fondo Umberto Zanotti Bianco, Sezione B Serie 5 Società Magna Grecia, Unità Archivistica 13: taccuini.

<sup>11</sup> On Quagliati see A. CORRETTI, “Quintino Quagliati (1869-1932)”, in SETTIS-PARRA, *Magna Graecia*, p. 285-287.

organized lectures, occasionally even art fairs, to collect money. Brochures informing the members of the Società on projects and initiatives were published from the start on a regular basis.

The Società was independent of ANIMI. As the executive director Zanotti Bianco acted as fundraiser and dealt with the archaeologists responsible for the various state run Antiquity Services (the *soprintendenze*) in Southern Italy. The common practice was for the Società Magna Grecia to raise money from private individuals, companies and institutions. This money was spent by the *soprintendenze* in various excavation and editorial projects selected by the Società. The *soprintendenze* were responsible for the excavations carried out by their own archaeologists and workmen.

In the 1920s and early 1930s the Società Magna Grecia paid for the projects of the *soprintendenze* of Naples, Calabria, Apulia and Sicily, at the sites of Hipponium (Vibo Valentia), Taranto, Serra d'Alto (a prehistoric site), Syracuse, Metapontum, Velia, Sybaris and Himera<sup>12</sup>. Under the aegis of the Byzantine section (*Sezione Bizantina medioevale*) established in 1932, several Byzantine churches were restored. Furthermore, a photography campaign in Apulia provided a complete documentation of the frescoes in many cave chapels in that region<sup>13</sup>. This section of the Società was supervised by the Milanese art-historian Alba Medea, who was a lifelong friend of Zanotti Bianco.

Zanotti Bianco turned out to be a very skilful fundraiser for the many projects that took place under the aegis of the Società Magna Grecia. Private persons or institutions, e.g. libraries, could take a subscription to the publications of the Società. Of vital importance were the *Atti e Memorie della Società Magna Grecia*, a scholarly journal with high standards that was published annually between 1926 and 1932. Editor-in-chief was Zanotti Bianco.

A number of benefactors immediately donated large sums of money. The list of members of the year 1931 reveals the involvement of the royal family, of many aristocrats, of banking and financial institutions, of cultural institutions, scholars and cultivated individuals in both Italy and abroad<sup>14</sup>. To give just a few examples: King Vittorio Emanuele III was *socio perpetuo*, as were banks such as the Banca Commerciale Italiana and the Banca Monte de' Paschi at Siena. Among members were the Biblioteca Hertziana and various other foreign Schools and Academies in Rome, and individual scholars such as Eugenia Strong, Bernard Berenson, Amedeo Maiuri, and Giulio

---

<sup>12</sup> An overview of all projects can be found in U. ZANOTTI BIANCO, "L'opera della Società Magna Grecia nei primi dieci anni", *Annales Institutorum Romae* 3 (1930-1931), p. 173-193.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. A. MEDEA, "Mural Paintings in some Cave Chapels in Southern Italy", *American Journal of Archaeology* 42/1 (1938), p. 17-29.

<sup>14</sup> The list of 1931 can be found in the archives of ANIMI: Fondo Umberto Zanotti Bianco Sezione B Serie 5 Società Magna Grecia, Unità Archivistica 16. A copy of the list is in Pisa (Università di Pisa, Biblioteca del Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche) and has been published by M. Paoletti: M. PAOLETTI, "Umberto Zanotti Bianco", Appendice II, p. 27-30.

Emanuele Rizzo. Even the *Confederazione Nazionale Fascista del Commercio* at Rome was member (*socio perpetuo*), as was the *Federazione Provinciale Fascista del Commercio Napoli*. This seems to indicate that Zanotti Bianco was not averse to some pragmatism if it served his own goals.

The way that the Società operated was special for several reasons. First, archaeological research on such a large-scale basis focussing on the Greek remains of Southern Italy had never taken place before the creation of the Società Magna Grecia. Secondly, all research was done by the *soprintendenze*, the Società was not an additional archaeological institution but made use of the existing organizations. The money involved, however, was private. The success in fundraising can also be explained by Zanotti Bianco's promptness to announce results and projects in newspapers and magazines whenever he could, his ample use of photography and his ability to "translate" scholarly results for a wider audience. By selecting and scheduling its projects the Società claimed an important role in the archaeological research agenda of Southern Italy.

## The Società Magna Grecia and the networks behind it

The first circular letter, cited above, marking the founding of the Società, was signed by fourteen individuals. All fourteen members of this founding committee held influential positions in Italian society, formally or informally. Scholars, politicians, government officials and persons with careers or close ties in the cultural world took a place on the committee. Aristocracy was well represented. Later brochures of the Società usually listed all names of this founding committee, the *soci fondatori* as they were called: Sofia Cammarota Adorno, Eleonora Duse, *duchessa* Amelia Gallarati Scotti, Maria Gallenga, Giuseppina Le Maire, *contessa* Silvia Manzoni, Carolina Maraini, *principessa* Adelina di Strongoli, *barone* Alberto Blanc, *professore* Giacomo Cenni, *generale* Mario Moris, *senatore* Corrado Ricci, *ingegnere* Enrico Vismara, *dottor* Umberto Zanotti Bianco<sup>15</sup>.

Sofia Cammarota Adorno was daughter of a former Senator, Giuseppe Cornero, and married to Gaetano Cammarota Adorno, who held a high position in the Ministry of Education. She had been active in social projects in Reggio Calabria in the years after 1910 and had become a close friend of Zanotti Bianco in that period<sup>16</sup>. Eleonora Duse was a famous actress at that time. Amelia Gallarati Scotti is probably a younger sister of Tommaso, Zanotti Bianco's good friend and co-founder of ANIMI. Stemming from a family that played an important role in artistic and intellectual circles at Rome, Maria Gallenga (born Monaci, 1880-1944) was a successful artist, active in textile

---

<sup>15</sup> Cf. M. PAOLETTI, "Umberto Zanotti Bianco", Appendice II, p. 27-30; N. DE HAAN "Umberto Zanotti Bianco", p. 238-239.

<sup>16</sup> V. CORNERO, "La storia del volo passa da Rocca", *Asti in Vetrina* 19/5 (2008), p. 10-11; G. RUSSO, "Zanotti Bianco, apostolico laico del Sud", *Corriere della Sera*, 25 novembre 2003, p. 37.

printing, clothes and interior design<sup>17</sup>. Carolina Maraini, maiden name Sommaruga (1869-1959), was born in Lugano (Switzerland), as was her husband Emilio<sup>18</sup>. Emilio Maraini (1853-1916) had been very successful in business and had made his fortune as a manufacturer of sugar. In 1900 he was chosen as member of the Italian House of Representatives, having both Swiss and Italian nationality. The Villa Maraini, built in 1902, was their residence at Rome. The villa has housed the Istituto Svizzero, since 1947, the year in which Carolina Maraini donated the villa to the Swiss Republic under the condition that it should be used to strengthen the cultural ties between Switzerland and Italy<sup>19</sup>. Physicist Gian Alberto Blanc (1879-1966) got the first Chair of Geochemistry at the University of Rome, in 1928<sup>20</sup>. He had a vivid interest in palaeontology and made important contributions to that scholarly discipline as well. He published, for example, on the Palaeolithic site of the Romanelli Cave near Lecce, one of the first sites where carbon-14 dating was employed. Blanc had participated in the March on Rome in 1922 and was active in the fascist party and fascist organizations until the mid-1930s.<sup>21</sup> Senator Corrado Ricci (1858-1934) had been an influential government official serving in various museums and institutions<sup>22</sup>. In 1906 he was nominated director-general of antiquities and fine arts, a position he kept until 1919. Already in 1911 Ricci had developed the first plans for the liberation of the area of the imperial *fora*, a project that was finally carried out under Mussolini in 1932 when the Via dell'Impero was built. Ricci was appointed Senator in 1923 and was certainly not an opponent of the fascist party: he signed the so-called "*Manifesto degli intellettuali fascisti*" of 1925<sup>23</sup>. Blanc and Ricci seem to have been the only *soci fondatori* that were actively supporting the fascist party and government.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Dizionario della Moda*: [http://dellamoda.it/fashion\\_dictionary/g/gallenda.php](http://dellamoda.it/fashion_dictionary/g/gallenda.php) (consulted on 29 August 2008); B.M. DU MORTIER, "Couture! 1900-1940", *Rijksmuseum Kunstkrant* 25/5 (1999), p. 4-7.

<sup>18</sup> On Carolina and Emilio Maraini see O. REVERDIN, "L'Istituto Svizzero di Roma", in P. VIAN (ed.), *Speculum Mundi. Roma centro internazionale di ricerche umanistiche*, Rome, 1993, p. 282-283.

<sup>19</sup> O. REVERDIN, "L'Istituto Svizzero", p. 281.

<sup>20</sup> On Blanc see C. CORTESI, M. FORNASERI, *s.v.* "Blanc, Gian Alberto", *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, X, 1968, p. 762-764; B. CHIARELLI, G. D'AMORE, "Blanc, Gian Alberto (1879-1966)", in F. SPENCER (ed.), *History of Physical Anthropology: An Encyclopedia*, Oxford-New York, 1997, p. 183.

<sup>21</sup> C. CORTESI, M. FORNASERI, *s.v.* "Blanc, Gian Alberto", p. 762-764.

<sup>22</sup> On Ricci see A. CEDERNA, *Mussolini urbanista. Lo sventramento di Roma negli anni del consenso*, Bari, 1979 (reprint Venice, 2006), p. 248-250; D. MANACORDA, "Per un'indagine sull'archeologia italiana durante il Ventennio Fascista", *Archeologia Medievale* 9 (1982), p. 452-453; M. BARBANERA, *L'archeologia*, p. 149-150.

<sup>23</sup> D. MANACORDA, "Per un'indagine", p. 453. The initiative for this *Manifesto* was taken by Giovanni Gentile and was soon answered by the *Manifesto degli intellettuali antifascisti* of Benedetto Croce.

The fact that the Società often referred to the members of this committee might reflect how the committee gradually came to function. Despite the neutral or antifascist political positions of most of its individual members, the committee, just as the many prominent members of the Società, served as a kind of protecting shield. All of them had extended personal networks in Italian society, some in the international world as well. These networks partially overlapped, but covered many spheres: politics, industry, aristocracy, the financial, scholarly and artistic world. The same goes for the honorary members, all well-known and respected scholars of Classical Antiquity: Domenico Comparetti, Giacomo Boni, Ettore Pais, Domenico Ridola, Vincenzo Casagrandi, Roberto Paribeni, Giulio Emanuele Rizzo and Edoardo Galli<sup>24</sup>.

Finally, financial aid from members of the Italian royal family, including King Vittorio Emanuele III, was “advertised”. Zanotti Bianco knew some members of the royal family personally and was a friend of Princess Maria José, the wife of Crownprince Umberto.

### Zanotti Bianco, the Società Magna Grecia and the Fascist Regime

The seizure of power by Mussolini in 1922 and the subsequent fascist dictatorship from 1924 onwards were a heavy blow for Zanotti Bianco, who was a committed democrat. It took Zanotti Bianco much effort to keep ANIMI out of the hands of the fascist regime and this strategy was successful only until 1928. That year Zanotti Bianco published the results of his survey in Africo, a remote village in Calabria. It was, in fact, a public outcry about the enormous poverty he had seen there. For the regime this anonymous publication in an official ANIMI report was the last straw, coming after critical reports on social circumstances in Southern Italy in the years before. Attempts to incorporate ANIMI in fascist organizations and programs had not been successful, particularly because of Zanotti Bianco’s obstruction. After the publication of the report on Africo, Zanotti Bianco was shadowed day and night by the military police<sup>25</sup>.

The influence of Zanotti Bianco in the Società was great from the start as he was one of the founders but there seems to be a trend during the 1920s as his involvement grew steadily. At the same time, his directorship of ANIMI, which continued to focus on social problems, was becoming more and more difficult as has been explained. The continuation of ANIMI was at risk and Zanotti Bianco decided in 1930 to step down as director in order to prevent its dissolution. In its first ten years of existence, the Società

---

<sup>24</sup> These are the names listed in a leaflet of 1925. The brochure of 1931 does not list any honorary members. Some of them, Giacomo Boni and Domenico Comparetti, had died at that time.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. N. DE HAAN, “Umberto Zanotti Bianco”, p. 237-238, with references to records in the *Archivio Centrale dello Stato* at Rome.

Magna Grecia seems to have had the advantage of operating on the "fringe". Unlike ANIMI, its primarily scholarly and cultural objectives must have seemed relatively harmless to the regime. Zanotti Bianco dedicated more and more time to the Società, while he was forced to gradually reduce his involvement with ANIMI, at least officially. Most probably, this did not mean a major change to Zanotti Bianco: in his view, as stated above, both cultural as well as social projects could serve the needs of the *Mezzogiorno*.

Also in this period, the late 1920s and early 1930s, Zanotti Bianco participated in several excavation seasons training himself as a field archaeologist. He assisted Pirro Marconi in 1929 at the excavation of a Greek temple in Himera (Sicily). Together with Paolo Orsi and Rufo Ruffo della Scaletta, an antifascist aristocrat and old friend, he explored the necropolis of Sant'Angelo Muxaro on Sicily in 1931 and 1932<sup>26</sup>. Furthermore, during a brief stay in the Sibaritide, Zanotti Bianco was able to locate the ancient site of the Greek city Sybaris. After twenty days, however, the Prefect of Calabria forced him to leave the site: he was no longer allowed to stay in Calabria<sup>27</sup>.

Although he was not willing to come to agreement with the regime, Zanotti Bianco was not naive. Results of the Società were published without his name to keep his official role to a minimum. He tried to keep his social, cultural and scholarly projects separated from his personal political views. This explains his reaction to an attack published in 1926 in a Sicilian newspaper, the *Gazzetta di Messina*, in which the Società was accused of being an antifascist organisation. Zanotti Bianco's reaction was indignant: the Società was free of any political inclination and his own well-known liberal, democratic convictions had no influence upon the Società<sup>28</sup>. Besides, the political positions of both presidents were known as well, so the imputation was vile. This last remark seems to allude to the fact that Paolo Orsi was nominated *senatore a vita* in 1924 by the King, at that time already a marionette of the regime<sup>29</sup>. In the end, however, Zanotti Bianco's hope that the authorities would distinguish between the results of the Società and his own person turned out to be unfounded.

Around 1932-1933, the years in which the fascist regime became more aggressive, the climate for the Società Magna Grecia changed as well. The Società celebrated its first decade of activities and organised a folkloristic exhibition on Southern Italian traditional costumes in the Royal Institute of Art at Naples. In the local and national press the inau-

---

<sup>26</sup> Cf. G. AGNELLO, "Zanotti Bianco nella campagna di scavi di S. Angelo Muxaro", in *Archivio Storico per la Calabria e la Lucania* 34 (1965-1966), p. 59-78.

<sup>27</sup> P.G. GUZZO, "Ricerche intorno a Sibari: Da Cavallari a Zanotti Bianco", in SETTIS-PARRA, *Magna Graecia*, p. 133-135.

<sup>28</sup> Letter of Zanotti Bianco to the President of the *Comitato d'interessi comuni alla Calabria e alla Sicilia* dating 28 August 1926 (Archive ANIMI, Fondo Umberto Zanotti Bianco Sezione B Serie 5 Società Magna Grecia, Unità Archivistica 1); cf. N. DE HAAN, "Umberto Zanotti Bianco", p. 241.

<sup>29</sup> The nomination of 18 September 1924 was followed by Orsi's oath on 2 December 1924.

guration of the exhibition on 15 May 1933 attracted attention, also because the opening ceremony was attended by the Prince and Princess of Piedmont. Newspapers reporting the event, however, either did not mention the Società Magna Grecia at all, or, in some cases, stressed the patriotic, even “proto-fascist” character of the Società<sup>30</sup>!

Apparently, in 1932 this appropriation of results attained in Greek archaeology could still coincide with the official “cult” of the *Romanità*. This cult, however, grew particularly strong in the 1930s and culminated in the *Bimillenario Augusteo* of 1937-1938. A case in point is the founding of the *Istituto Italiano per la Storia Antica* in 1935<sup>31</sup>. During its first meeting the board stated that all efforts of this new Institute would concentrate primarily on Roman history<sup>32</sup>. But still, the regime did not always react in a coherent way and this ambiguity seems to reflect the regime’s struggles with the appreciation of Italy’s Greek past.

The more successful the Società became, the bigger the problems grew with the fascist authorities. From 1932 onwards the *Atti e Memorie* could not be published. Finally, one of the biggest discoveries of Greek archaeology in the 1930s, the result of a project begun by the Società, would lead to its dissolution.

In April 1934 Zanotti Bianco, together with Paola Zancani Montuoro (1901-1987), discovered an important sanctuary of Hera at the Sele River near Paestum (fig. 1)<sup>33</sup>. The campaign had been Zancani Montuoro’s initiative. She had studied Classical Archaeology at the University of Naples, her city of birth, where Giulio Emanuele Rizzo was her supervisor. She had graduated *magna cum laude* and had been the first woman to win a scholarship for the Italian School in Athens. She came from a rich family as well, financially independent and sharing the antifascist ideas of Zanotti Bianco. Zancani Montuoro had been the secretary of the Naples Section of the Società Magna Grecia. Although Zanotti Bianco did not know her very well, she convinced him that the project should be financed by the Società. Despite the annoying obstruction of policemen, who followed Zanotti Bianco, the two uncovered an ancient sanctuary from the archaic period at Foce del Sele<sup>34</sup>. It turned out to be a truly spectacular discovery, especially when archaic metopes of excellent quality came to

<sup>30</sup> N. DE HAAN, “Umberto Zanotti Bianco”, p. 241-243 with references.

<sup>31</sup> L. POLVERINI, “L’Istituto Italiano per la Storia Antica”, in P. VIAN (ed.), *Speculum Mundi*, p. 584-596.

<sup>32</sup> L. POLVERINI, “L’Istituto Italiano per la Storia Antica”, p. 586-587.

<sup>33</sup> On Zancani Montuoro cf. L. VLAD BORELLI, “Paola Zancani Montuoro (27 febbraio 1901-14 agosto 1987)”, in M. RUSSO (a cura di), *Paola Zancani Montuoro*, Sorrento, 2007, p. 19-32.

<sup>34</sup> A typescript (17 pages) entitled “Sulle rive del Sele”, written by Zanotti Bianco, gives a detailed account of the discovery in April 1934. The typescript can be found in the Archive of ANIMI: Fondo Umberto Zanotti Bianco Sezione B Serie 5 Società Magna Grecia, Unità Archivistica 21.

light. The results of this first and of the following campaigns attracted a lot of national and international attention.



Fig. 1. Umberto Zanotti Bianco and Paola Zancari Montuoro on the bank of the Sele River, April 1934.

© ANIMI, Fondo U. Zanotti Bianco, Serie Fotografie, sottoserie UA 58.  
Courtesy ANIMI, Rome.

## The Dissolution of the Società Magna Grecia

On 21 August 1934 the Società Magna Grecia was dissolved by decree of the Prefect of Rome. The official motive given was that the financial resources provided by the State were sufficient for all archaeological activities. The real reason was that the regime's attempts to incorporate the Società, its results and its members had failed. The discoveries at Foce del Sele became a threat to discoveries and excavations paid for by the regime, in Rome, Pompeii, Herculaneum and elsewhere. The important discoveries were rapidly published for a wide audience in various newspapers and Italian magazines, for example the *Illustrazione Italiana*. Preliminary reports appeared in important international scholarly journals, such as the *Journal of Hellenic Studies* (1932, 1934) and *Gnomon* (1932). In these reports Zanotti Bianco and Zancani Montuoro never expressed any attachment to the regime, whereas such expressions of support of the *Duce* and the Italian government were a common phenomenon in scholarly publications in the 1930s.

It was almost as if the *Romanità* propagated by the regime was in imminent danger of being overtaken by the *Grecità* supported by a private society. For the regime this must have felt like undesirable competition. It should not be forgotten, in the 1920s and 1930s the study of Roman art and architecture was still strongly influenced by the more generally acknowledged superior quality of the study of Greek archaeology. The idea that the *Romanità* of the Roman people, who had conquered a large part of the world, was at risk because of the *Grecità* of Southern Italy, most notably a region that had been colonized by the Greek was difficult, if not insupportable. If we consider the

rhetoric of those years, this interpretation does not seem exaggerated. Italians should be seen as people who colonize and not as people that had been colonized, even if the colonization had happened in a remote past.

Finally, too many members of the Società were at best neutral in their political attitudes, too many were openly opponents of fascist ideas and of the regime. The more attention the Società attracted, the bigger this problem became. Till 1934 the attitude of the regime was to either to ignore the Società Magna Grecia or to appropriate its results. This strategy, however, did not work when the spectacular results of the first Foce del Sele campaigns were widely published. In the end, the only possible solution for the regime seems to have been to dissolve the Società.

Under a new name, the Società Paolo Orsi (founded in 1935), at least continued the Foce del Sele project, but the regime imposed conditions and restrictions, frustrating the projects of the Società Paolo Orsi as much as possible. In the end, Zanotti Bianco and Zancani Montuoro could only continue their excavation campaigns by paying for them themselves, partly with the financial and moral support of friends<sup>35</sup>. Thanks to their contacts with aristocrats, even members of the royal family, they tenaciously continued their research as long as they could.

To some extent, however, support of the authorities was necessary, for permits and for the payment of workmen that were hired via the *soprintendenza* of Campania and Molise. In an official letter from 15 March 1939 *soprintendente* Amedeo Maiuri not only authorised Zancani Montuoro to resume the excavations at Foce del Sele, but also promised to send a restorer from the *soprintendenza* as soon as possible<sup>36</sup>. Amedeo Maiuri is a good example of those government officials that tried to support the Foce del Sele project where they could, within the limits offered by position and career. Maiuri had largely profited from the financial aid of the Società in the 1920s that made possible his large-scale excavation projects at Velia and Cumae<sup>37</sup>. He evidently cherished his contacts with Zanotti Bianco. In this respect it is interesting to note that Maiuri systematically avoided the official fascist dating system whenever writing handwritten short letters or postcards, unlike more official letters, where the year of the fascist era would have been given too. Obviously, no copies of these personal cards and letters were recorded in the archives of the *soprintendenza*. The choice to refrain from fascist paraphernalia might reflect his strategy to not offend Zanotti Bianco. Maiuri also

---

<sup>35</sup> G. TOCCO SCIARELLI, "Umberto Zanotti Bianco e Paola Zancani Montuoro all' *Heraion* di Foce del Sele", in SETTIS-PARRA, *Magna Graecia*, p. 329-334.

<sup>36</sup> Archive of ANIMI: Fondo Umberto Zanotti Bianco Sezione B Serie 5 Società Magna Grecia, Unità Archivistica 26. In another letter dating 5 December 1940 Maiuri promises again to send a restorer (ANIMI: Fondo Umberto Zanotti Bianco Sezione B Serie 5 Società Magna Grecia, Unità Archivistica 27).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. U. ZANOTTI BIANCO, "L'opera"; extensive correspondance between Maiuri and Zanotti Bianco about the various projects that were financed by the Società can be retraced in the ANIMI archives.

wrote a preface full of praise accompanying the publication of the main results of the Foce del Sele project in the 1937 *Notizie degli Scavi* – a journal published by the Italian state<sup>38</sup>! This is another indication that the official position of the regime toward Greek archaeology in general and the Foce del Sele project in particular was not very coherent and that much depended on the decisions of individuals. Paola Zancani Montuoro and Umberto Zanotti Bianco would keep on excavating until 1941, often with the assistance of the *soprintendenza* directed by Maiuri. He followed the project with interest and enthusiasm indeed, despite the fact that he was a loyal and supportive official of the regime during the *Ventennio Fascista*<sup>39</sup>.

In 1941 Zanotti Bianco was put in jail in Rome and the Foce del Sele project eventually stopped. Zancani Montuoro and Zanotti Bianco resumed working together only after World War II and published all their results in the 1950s<sup>40</sup>. The Società Magna Grecia was refounded soon after World War II and still exists today.

## Conclusion

The focus on Italy's Greek past was certainly controversial in fascist Italy. The fact that leading and active members of the Società were openly antifascist gave the regime another good reason to finally dissolve the Società Magna Grecia in 1934. But still, even in the difficult years between 1934 and 1941, Zanotti Bianco managed, together with Zancani Montuoro, to continue the large-scale excavation project at Foce del Sele. The authorities obstructed and facilitated the project at the same time. This demonstrates, again, the difficulties the regime had in deciding exactly how ancient Greek remains on Italian soil should be treated: ignored or glorified.

Nathalie DE HAAN

---

*Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen*

*Geschiedenis*

*Postbus 9103*

*NL-6500 HD Nijmegen*

*N.deHaan@let.ru.nl*

---

<sup>38</sup> A. MAIURI, "Premessa", *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità* 1937, p. 206.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. D. MANACORDA, "Per un'indagine", p. 454-455; M. BARBANERA, *L'archeologia*, p. 149-150; P.G. GUZZO, *s.v.* "Maiuri, Amedeo", *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, LXVII, 2006, p. 682-687. Manacorda has labeled Maiuri as "archeologo fascista", characterizing him as "personalità complessa e contraddittoria"; the lemma by Guzzo is admirably balanced but necessarily brief. A biography of Maiuri is still lacking.

<sup>40</sup> P. ZANCANI MONTUORO, U. ZANOTTI BIANCO, *Heraion I*, Rome, 1951; P. ZANCANI MONTUORO, U. ZANOTTI BIANCO, *Heraion II*, Rome, 1954.