

NECROLOGIO

Maurizio Taddei
(1936-2000)

Maurizio Taddei died on 5 February 2000, a Saturday afternoon. We had met three days before at the Istituto Universitario Orientale in Naples as we both were members of a board of examiners. That morning he told me he had had a terrible night, but had regularly come to the University. It was quite clear, however, that he was not feeling well and, as a matter of fact, we had to interrupt the examinations for half an hour and go to a coffee-house for a short pause. Later on, he came to see me at the editorial office of *Annali*, asking me to join him for lunch, but I was not free. I wished him well, telling him that we would meet again the following week. He did not seem to believe it.

I had first met Taddei as a student in autumn 1969, when I decided to follow his course on Indian Art and Archaeology. He had come to the Istituto Orientale as lecturer the year before, but in those days he still considered himself primarily an officer of the Museo Nazionale di Arte Orientale, Rome, which he had joined in 1964 and where he was to stay until 1974. It was a few months later that he showed my fellow students and me the Gandharan collection there. Taddei's qualities as public officer and his keen interest in administrative matters, which he considered central in any policy meant to run and improve state institutions, owed much to his activity in the Museum. In the University he was never to approve the colleagues who looked down on administrative work, and his competence in this field greatly helped him when, after being named Professor of Archaeology and Art History of India in 1976, he was elected vice-chancellor from 1981/82 to 1983/84.

During his course of 1969/70, he asked me to join the Italian Archaeological Mission to Afghanistan, of which he had been named Director in 1967, after many years of fieldwork in Swat. Although my interests as a student lay elsewhere, he eventually convinced me, and in September 1970, I went with

him to Ghazni. It was during the excavation campaign at Tapa Sardar that I began to know him better. He was a very hard worker. In the evening, after a long, exhausting day on the excavation site and in the Mission's storehouse at Sultan Ibrahim, besides getting through with the Mission's papers he used to read over again his grammar of Pushtu, a language of which he had a good command. In November, at the end of the campaign, he suggested I go along with him to Pakistan – to Peshawar, Swat, Lahore and Karachi. In Peshawar, the Dean's was still there and some Anglo-Indian rituals lingered on. He had always been fascinated by these echoes of the Raj since when, in 1954, as a very young man, he had gone to the Subcontinent for the first time. His appreciation of British India had certainly pushed him to improve his English, which he used to speak and write impeccably. He liked the way the British are, and Britain was, no doubt, the country he liked better in Europe. Taddei was a very reserved person, and only later in his life, he was able to open himself to others with relatively greater ease. In his bungalow at the Dean's, we used to sip tea (and some whisky) in an almost perfect silence, looking at the fire in the fireplace. Conversely, his descriptions of the Gandharan reliefs in the Peshawar Museum were detailed and concerned, displaying his typical, analytic way of examining things. I had further evidences of his intellectual personality in Lahore. In front of the Museum I had recognized the Zam-Zammah where Kim stood when he first met his Lama and this stimulated him to make many observations on the history of the Raj. Taddei knew the history of British India extremely well, and he was to evoke many stories of that epoch, particularly those of the Mutiny, which impassioned him. Many years later, he would write a couple of articles on this subject matter (Taddei 1993; 1996). Although he duly accompanied me to the Lahore Fort, he showed scarce interest, the only monument he liked being the Shalimar gardens farther off. There was something in him that barred any but a tepid appreciation of Moghul architecture, with few exceptions.

What surprised me most, although I was still a student, was Taddei's profound knowledge of, and interest in European art, notably that of the late Middle Age and the Renaissance. This is probably the less known part of his scientific, and human, personality. In 1971, his Italian translation of Erwin Panowsky's *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* was published,¹ the Warburg school being his constant reference point, together with Marxist analysis. Taddei could have easily written several important contributions on western iconography, as clearly appears from his examination of the *Madonna della misericordia* in the only article he partly devoted to western art (Taddei 1982). The fact that he did not is much to be regretted. His knowledge of Tuscan art, in particular, was, at the same time, analytical and comprehensive. It

¹ E. Panowsky, *Rinascimento e rinascenze nell'arte occidentale*, Milano 1971 (trans. based on the 2nd English edn.).

impassioned him as only few other things did. He used to spend his holidays in Tuscany, where he now rests in the cemetery where his father, who in his days had left Tuscany for Rome, is also buried. I now fondly recall how we would discuss at length iconographical and iconological matters. His knowledge in this field should not be misunderstood for some sort of 'technical' co-nnoisseurship. He was deeply affected by emotion at the sight of certain masterpieces. I still remember the marvel and emotion he still showed when – in the early 1990s, I think – he told me about his visit to Colmar and the sight of Grünewald's altarpiece. He naturally knew the work, but seeing it was different. It was for him a strong, emotional experience. He could not believe, so to say, that Grünewald's quality as a painter was matched by such a deep understanding of the intellectual debate of the Quattrocento and, more generally, of the whole western intellectual and religious experience. The altarpiece was a summa of learning, a trip to Colmar – he maintained – is 'a must' for any cultivated mind.

Taddei was a Marxist, but his education as a man of the middle class which had solid roots in nineteenth-century Italy did not allow him to accept certain Marxist dogmas easily. He had a very good knowledge of the nineteenth century, a crucial period in Italian history, and although he did not theorize (he disliked theorizing in general), he certainly did not share the interpretation of the Risorgimento as an unfinished or even missed revolution. He had the Italian *Ottocento* in high esteem, even with reference to Indological studies. He preferred to analyze the facts as a historian of culture, with his usual attention, showing an extreme sensibility with regard to the social and intellectual mechanics that had been at work before and after Unity. The four volumes that he has edited on Angelo De Gubernatis and Italy at the time of King Umberto (from 1878 to the regicide of July 1900) stem out of this interest (Taddei 1995, 1997a, 1997b; Taddei and Sorrentino 2001). A few years ago, fishing in the cultural production of *Ottocento*, Taddei came across a title of Pacini's, *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei*. I still do not know what he was after, but I succeeded in finding him a CD and the libretto of this forgotten opera, whose source was not Edward Bulwer Lytton's – actually later – novel, both works probably having an antecedent somewhere in Naples' intellectual milieu of the early 1820s. Actually, I used to hear Taddei pronounce the name of Pompeii in relation to Giuseppe Fiorelli, the famous archaeologist who was appointed director of the excavations by the Piedmontese government in 1860.

The name of the buried city drives our attention to another aspect of Taddei's formation. He had an excellent knowledge of classical archaeology, having studied archaeology in Naples and Rome. He was a classical archaeologist who happened to excavate in South Asia and become a student of things Indian, being increasingly involved in Indian matters without ever forgetting his sound, classical education. In the early years of our acquaintance, he was strongly engaged in the cultural debate opened by *Dialoghi di archeo-*

logia, the journal founded by Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli. Between 1967 and 1972, that is, up to the year *Il Saggiatore*, Milan, published it, this journal succeeded in being, at the same time, militant and free. Taddei, like some other young archaeologists who took part in the enterprise, firmly believed in what was being done, and when a more conformist line was imposed upon the journal, he left it together with eleven colleagues (beginning of 1973). This experience was to remain one of the most important of his and his friends' intellectual life. It was on this journal that he published one of his earliest and more stimulating contributions on Gandharan art.² Taddei's skill in analyzing the more subtle relations, or differences, between Gandhara and classical art is apparent in this article as in those which were to follow.

Dialoghi di archeologia was not the only journal for which he worked. Since 1968 he was on the editorial board of *East and West*, one of the best known of the Italian journals on Asian cultures published by the Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente (IsIAO, former IsMEO) in Rome. He became president of the board in 1997. For several years, from 1981 to 1991, he was also a member of the scientific board of *Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli*. Taddei liked editorial work. He told me once that, had he not become an archaeologist and an art historian, he would have liked to have been a typesetter. Actually, the interest and care he took in editing went far beyond pure need. In both Rome and Naples, he was always busy with papers to edit, photographs and drawings to prepare, printers to discuss with and, later on, with computers and disks.

He was particularly proud of his editing of *South Asian Archaeology* 1977, where ('perhaps', he said) there is not a single misprint. Actually, the editing of some of the proceedings of *South Asian Archaeology* took much of his time through the years. He had been appointed as Italian representative of the Association of South Asian Archaeologists from the beginning (the Association was founded in Cambridge in 1970, and the first conference was held there the following year), and since then he edited the proceedings of the three conferences held in Italy, which he had also organized (Naples 1977, Venice 1987, Rome 1997), and, in addition, together with Janine Schotsmans, those of the Bruxelles conference of 1983. He was much concerned about the Association, and was ready to work hard to make a success of it. He had matured very deep feelings towards his fellow organizers from the other European countries, as is shown, in particular, by his relations with Johanna E. van Lohuizen-de Leeuw. Several years earlier, in 1962, he had been co-author of the chapter on Indonesian art that she had written for the fourth volume of *Civiltà del-*

² M. Taddei, Harpocrates-Brahmā-Maitreya: a Tentative Interpretation of a Gandharan Relief from Swāt. *Dialoghi di archeologia* 3 (1969), 364-90. Milano.

l'Oriente, edited by Giuseppe Tucci.³ Actually, it had been Tucci who had requested young Taddei to write the final part of the text, and once he confessed to me that he had felt ill at ease to complete an article on a subject matter that was not his own, and written by such an intimidating personality as Professor van Lohuizen was commonly believed to be. However, they took to each other when they met, and when she died in 1983, he thought it was his duty to pay homage to her memory by collecting some of her unpublished papers, which he introduced with a preface and accompanied with a list of her published works (Taddei 1990).

What has been said so far, I think, gives an idea of Taddei as an intellectual and as a human being. Still, I have said very little about his scientific work as an Indologist, which is the main reason why he will be remembered for long. Of his fieldwork in Swat in the 1950s and 1960s, the catalogue of sculptures from the excavation at Butkara I is the most significant testimony.⁴ Taddei's first-hand knowledge of Gandharan art comes from his fieldwork in Swat. His capability of recognizing a scene from an insignificant fragment, his quick appraisal of the authenticity of a piece and of its finding place, depended on the fact that he had personally handled thousands of sculptures. He grafted on this his deep interest in iconography, which allowed him to become the best student of Gandharan art since the days of Alfred Foucher. His approach to Gandhara, however, was not only that of an iconographer, but of a real art historian, a very rare presence in Indian studies. His later studies on Gandharan narrative scenes and his discovery of their chronological priority with respect to narration in classical art are of the greatest importance. His contributions on the art of Gandhara is now being collected in a volume, which will be published by the Istituto Universitario Orientale in 2003 as homage to the memory of a scholar to whom this branch of Indian studies owes so much.

As said above, in 1967 Taddei was appointed Director of the Italian Archaeological Mission to Afghanistan organized by IsMEO, and was entrusted with the continuation of the excavations at the Buddhist sanctuary of Tapa Sardar in the *dasht* near Ghazni. Only little work had been done there previously. He not only uncovered a large part of the site, coping with several difficulties, including that of restoring the huge unbaked clay sculptures and protecting the site from the severe winter, but succeeded in making the site and the finds widely known through several interim reports, and by discussing some related questions in several occasions. Taddei's knowledge of Afghanistan's later Buddhist and Hindu production was as complete as his knowledge

³ J.E. van Lohuizen-de Leeuw and M. Taddei, *Arte dell'Indonesia*, in G. Tucci, *Le civiltà dell'Oriente*, 4 vols., vol. 4, 975-1030. Roma 1957-62 [M.T., *Il periodo giavanese orientale, l'Islam e la moderna arte indonesiana*, 992-1005].

⁴ D. Faccenna (ed.), *Sculptures from the Sacred Area of Butkara I (Swat, Pakistan)*. Descriptive Catalogue by Maurizio Taddei, 2 vols. Roma 1962.

of Gandharan art, and all acknowledged his authority. Proper excavations went on at Tapa Sardar until 1976. In 1977, only some work in the storehouse was carried out. The following year the situation became difficult, until it was clear that no further fieldwork would have been possible for many years to come. Taddei had grown a real love for Afghanistan, and could not believe that a season of his life was over. For years, he was to think that everything would become normal again, and fieldwork could be resumed. This is the reason, I think, why he never felt like writing the excavation's final report, despite my occasional insistence. The only occasion I saw him genuinely interested in a site different from Tapa Sardar and in the possibility of organizing a new archaeological team was in 1986 in Sind, when he visited the site of Dhamrao near Mohenjo-daro. The site was perfectly legible, with the streets of the lower town still practicable, a sacred area with a stūpa, a citadel, and several minor mounds all around. The project could not be realized, and Taddei was to return to Pakistan as director of the Mission in Swat in 1995.

Taddei's love for Afghanistan extended to its modern history. He used to collect written and iconographical testimonies especially on the events of the 1920s and 1930s, and liked to speak at some length about Amir Abdur Rahman, Habibullah, king Amanullah and Bacha Saqao. On Amanullah he was even to write a historical outline for a publication addressed to the general public.⁵ He had met some of the most renowned Afghan intellectuals of Zahir Shah's time, and used to read with great attention the transformation of Afghan society and institutions in the urban transformations of Kabul (Jad-e Maiwand, Darul Aman and the Museum, the station of Paghman, and even such minor but 'timeless' establishments as the Kabul Hotel, where he always used to stay). Twentieth-century Kabul held a difficult dialogue with the remains of earlier times: Tapa Maranjan, Tapa Hazana (whose production he wanted me to study), the mosque of Shah Jahan (which IsMEO had restored) and Babur's gardens (whose restoration had been planned), the neglected tomb of Sir Aurel Stein... Being often with him, I slowly realized how deep was his interest and love for all this, and how confident he was about the future of Kabul and the whole country.

To my great regret, I could not go with him to Afghanistan in October 1999, when he was there for a week or so after many years. We should have gone together, but I was busy elsewhere. I was sure that he did not really expect what he was to see, and I am under the illusion that I could have mitigated the shock he received. When we met in Naples later on, in November, he told me, still incredulous, about the buildings of Jad-e Maiwand razed to the ground, and, what was worse, about the serious damages made at Tapa Sardar in Ghazni: the row of stūpas to the south of the main stūpa were all

⁵ "Amanullah", in *I protagonisti della rivoluzione*, VI. *Asia*, 2. *L'Iran e il subcontinente indiano*, 13-38. Nuova CEI, Milano 1983.

gone, and *vihāra* 23, where an image of a Buddhist deity in the shape of Durgā Mahiṣamardīnī had been found, and which had been the object of a very careful restoration, was also deprived of its images. After his return from Kabul, he wrote a memoir, which he submitted to IsIAO and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Considering the very simple recommendations for the conservation of Tapa Sardar, and reading between the lines his real impressions of the Afghan authorities he had met, it is clear that he did not have many hopes left. I even believe, contrary to my usual way of thinking, that his last visit to Kabul and Ghazni had something to do with his untimely death four months later.

Even a short, largely incomplete portrait of Taddei like the present one would be defective without mentioning his work as a professor. Taddei has been teaching Indian Art and Archaeology for more than thirty years at the Istituto Universitario Orientale, which has counted him as one of his most distinguished professors. He gave his lessons regularly, thrice a week, and he was never absent out of respect for his students, for the institution with which he strongly identified, and, first of all, out of self-respect. His lessons were, characteristically, unburdened by fashionable theorization, and very attentive to the details, whatever was the subject treated. The students who have followed his courses have been very numerous, and his legacy is destined to be a lasting one.

A complete bibliography of Taddei's is being published in the obituary written by Gherardo Gnoli for *East and West*,⁶ and the close relations existing between the Istituto Universitario Orientale and the Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente advises me not to reproduce here what would appear as a mere duplicate. In fact, IsIAO is the other institution with which Taddei identified, and to which he remained unswervingly devoted. The Institute was part of his life since he met, as a very young man, Giuseppe Tucci, whom he recognized as a genius, although their scholarly interests and ideological worlds could not be more distant. In his turn, Tucci had the greatest esteem and confidence in him. In the early 1970s, Tucci used to come to Ghazni every year and never interfered with Maurizio's direction of the excavation and of the Mission. Tucci had long walks, and came back to the site only when we were ready to leave. He was indeed fond of Taddei. Many were.

Below are listed the articles that Taddei published in Naples and the books he edited on behalf of the Istituto Universitario Orientale, sometimes in collaboration with IsIAO.

GIOVANNI VERARDI

⁶ Gh. Gnoli, Obituary of Maurizio Taddei, *East and West* 50, 545-64, Roma 2000.

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