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In memoriam



Giovanni Pettinato, a dieci anni dalla scomparsa (2011-2021)

Un ricordo di Claudio Lo Jacono (Presidente dell'Istituto per l'Oriente Carlo Alfonso Nallino)

Sono passati più di 10 anni ormai dalla morte del Prof. Giovanni Pettinato, e all'Istituto per l'Oriente che presiedo è sembrato, più che giusto, addirittura doveroso proporre un ricordo, per quanto agile. Che è non solo personale — per aver partecipato quasi un ventennio fa con lui a una memorabile missione interministeriale in Iraq, in rappresentanza del Ministero per l'Università (in una delle sue tante poliformiche vesti burocratiche), in cui Giovanni mi fece da splendida guida al Museo nazionale di Baghdad, spiegandomi la statuaria esposta, prima delle devastazioni volute dallo Stato Islamico d'allora — ma che è anche istituzionale.

Ho conosciuto infatti Giovanni nella sede dell'Istituto per l'Oriente, da cui dipendeva amministrativamente il CASAVO — Centro per le Antichità e la Storia dell'Arte del Vicino Oriente — da lui all'epoca diretto, dove si stampava grazie al Prof. Lapo Del Monte la splendida rivista *Oriens Antiquus*.

Giovanni era spesso ispido, ma con me è sempre stato gradevole e dotato di spirito, forse (chissà) grazie alla comune matrice centro-sicula che ci legava: lui di Troina, il mio lato paterno di Piazza Armerina.

Ulteriori parole sono inutili e indebite da parte di chi, come me, non ha seguito le tue orme scientifiche. Ma il ricordo e la stima rimangono intatti, caro Giovanni.

Introduction by Maria Giovanna Biga (Sapienza Università di Roma)

Ten years since his passing (Rome, May 19, 2011), it was important to remember Giovanni Pettinato. He was a great Italian orientalist, who held the chair of Assyriology and Ancient Eastern History at the University of Turin from 1970 to 1974 and then that of Assyriology at Sapienza University of Rome from 1974 until his retirement in 2010, where he trained many generations of orientalists. I awaited the announcement of some commemoration of Pettinato organized by the Italian institutions whose cultural life he participated in and whose international prestige he increased, and in particular, from the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei of which he was a member, or Sapienza University, but none came. I had been one of his students at the University of Turin from 1970, when Pettinato arrived from the University of Heidelberg and I tried to organize a workshop about his work during the *Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*, which was to be held in Turin in July 2021. This was not possible for various reasons. I then decided to organize a seminar on the figure and work of Pettinato, which was held online due to the pandemic on May 28, 2021.

Some of his former students from the University of Turin participated (Alida Caligaris, Alfonso Foschi, Elena Gaibotti and Ezio Gerbore). There were also some of his colleagues from the University of Turin (Fabrizio Angelo Pennacchietti and Alessandro Roccati), his Milanese friend from the period of teaching at the Academy of Ancient Civilizations in Milan (Enrico Gargano), some colleagues and friends who collaborated with him (Dario Di Blasi, Mario Fales, Vincenzo Orioles and Claudio Saporetti), and some of his first students at the University of Rome, who now teach Assyriology at the Sapienza University of Rome (Franco D'Agostino and Lorenzo Verderame). Pettinato's great friend and German colleague, Hartmut Waetzoldt, who followed him as an assistant from Heidelberg to Turin and who taught us to read the Sumerian texts of the III Dynasty of Ur in order to then work on Pettinato's Neo-Sumerian vocabulary project, unfortunately could not participate due to a stroke.

Everyone responded enthusiastically to the invitation. The seminar was very well attended by students and colleagues and was an opportunity for many students to get to know this outstanding orientalist scholar.

The following pages are the result of that seminar and include also the papers of other scholars: Carlo Casagrande, who attended Pettinato's first courses in Rome and the course on the Ebla texts that he held at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in the academic year 1976-1977; Pietro Mander, who in those years also began to study Sumerian with Pettinato; his lifelong friend and colleague, Sergio Angelo Picchioni, who wrote a passionate memorial tribute to Pettinato in an email, which he has allowed me to publish; Valeria degli Abbati

a student of his last years of teaching at Sapienza. From everyone's words, different aspects of Pettinato's exuberant personality emerge.

As his first Italian student who continued to work in the oriental field, I wrote a recollection of Pettinato in the newspaper *Osservatore Romano* as soon as the news of his passing arrived. Later I wrote a memoir on Pettinato for the magazine *Rivista Biblica*.¹ Finally, I wrote the entry on Giovanni Pettinato for the *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*.² Raffaele Romanelli, its director, recognizing the great stature of the scholar, "a giant of his discipline", asked Mario Liverani to write it and Liverani advised him to contact me.

I had already written about Pettinato as a great scholar who understood the scope of the discovery of the Ebla archives by recognizing a new language, identifying the syllabary used by the scribes and starting to write the oldest history of Syria of the third millennium BC. Those years were unforgettable, with the continuous discoveries that Pettinato made, studying those very difficult texts. I was with him during his long mission to Aleppo in Syria (from August to October 1976), where the tablets had been brought (in 1975) after their discovery, and then to Mardikh, where there were still many recently found tablets to be numbered.

In some recent articles I have recounted the continuous discoveries and the great emotions of those first years studying the tablets.³

Unfortunately, however, in the same period, an absurd competition began (I do not want to use the term "war" since unfortunately a real war is underway after the Russian invasion of Ukraine) between Pettinato and Matthiae, the archaeologist, director of the Italian Archaeological Mission at Ebla, because Pettinato wanted to become director by replacing Paolo Matthiae. Certainly, Pettinato, due to his personal ambitions and with the support of some authoritative colleagues, was ill advised by some older "students" about the students just out of high school, who formed a 'magic circle' around him, conquering his trust.

The competition became unprecedentedly violent, and time was spent, or rather, wasted in absurd meetings to decide strategies against the Mission.

1 Maria Giovanna Biga, "In memoriam. Giovanni Pettinato (1934-2011)", *Rivista Biblica* 59, 3 (2011), p. 439-442.

2 Maria Giovanna Biga, s.v. Giovanni Pettinato, in: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Treccani, vol. 82 (2015). The article is available online https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-pettinato_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/.

3 Maria Giovanna Biga, "Dalla lingua di Ebla alla ricostruzione della più antica cultura semitica". In: A.A.V.V. *Atti della V Edizione delle Giornate di Archeologia e Storia del Vicino e Medio Oriente* (Milano 4-5 maggio 2019), Milano, 2020, p. 245-259; Idem, "The diffusion of cuneiform writing in Syria in the third millennium BC", *Pasiphae*, 21 (2021), p. 49-62.

How much time that could have been devoted to study was spent in very long, useless and destructive meetings that extended into the night to try to damage the Mission's archaeologists. All means were used to try to steal the direction of the mission from Matthiae.

This absurd opposition did not produce anything good but instead led to the creation of an international committee for the study of Ebla's texts to check the veracity of Pettinato's statements. Against all of this, and driven by a growing interest in the historical methodology of the Roman school created by Mario Liverani, I went to work with Liverani in June 1979.

I understood that those texts had enormous potential, despite being laconic and apparently arid lists of goods that came out of the coffers of the Eblaite state, and made it possible to write the oldest political, economic, social and religious history of Syria. This interested me more than philology, which often stopped at the translation of texts with philological commentary.

Pettinato was highly offended by what he considered my "betrayal", but many years later, when we were both at Sapienza University in Rome, our relations improved. Pettinato asked me a few times to be co-supervisor of theses for which he was supervisor and once, in a very frank conversation, admitted that he had made many mistakes in the management of the discovery of Ebla's texts. He had thus lost a precious opportunity for the revenge of Italian orientalist science. After the great fame of the 1930s when there were great scholars, it marked time for many years, despite having some figures of great international importance such as the Assyriologist Giorgio Castellino, Pettinato's predecessor in the chair of Assyriology in Rome and Luigi Cagni in Naples.

The French who discovered the texts of the Mari archives in the 1940s managed their discovery personally and did not create any international committee to control their work; and so did the other German, English and American scholars.

Therefore, despite the numerous mistakes made by Pettinato in managing the discovery of the Ebla tablets, it must be recognized that he was "the right person in the right place". Thanks to his enormous preparation, acquired over many years of very hard study in Rome at the Pontifical Biblical Institute and then at the University of Heidelberg, he managed to translate many Ebla texts in a few years, understanding the most important, which were all identified, translated, and published in several volumes. They remain pioneering but fundamental. Volumes III (Napoli 1981) and IV (Napoli 1982) of *Materiali Epigrafici di Ebla* with all the monolingual and bilingual lexical texts in the great archive L 2769 remain the only publication that has made these texts accessible for the study of the Eblaite language even 47 years after their discovery.

Finally, I would also like to remember here the great work that Giovanni Pettinato did to disseminate the texts, not only those of Ebla but from all over

the ancient Near East. Over the years, he published volumes on Near Eastern astronomy, on the religions of the ancient Near East, on Babylon, on Gilgamesh, the mythical king of the city of Uruk, on the Sumerians, on angels and demons in the Near East, arousing great interest in orientalist disciplines in the general public.

**A Souvenir of Pettinato by Alida Caligaris (Allieva di
G. Pettinato all'Università di Torino)**

I met Professor Giovanni Pettinato in 1970. I was in my second year at the University in Turin. At the time I was studying Greek and Roman Archaeology and Egyptology, but I did not know anything about Ancient Near East civilisations. A couple of Pettinato's lessons were enough to spur my interest in History, Art, cuneiform writings and languages of the Ancient Near East. Still today this passion has never left me, although I have had a different career as a High School teacher.

Pettinato was an extraordinary teacher and nobody among us could escape the fascination of his lessons. He was able to open a very wide horizon over these ancient civilisations. So an unusual "cohabitation" started with Professor Pettinato during seven years, until 1977: in Turin and, after I was graduate, in Rome, where he taught from 1974. In 1977 I had to choose a different way of life and a different job. I left Rome.

Professor Pettinato was a very "unusual" teacher, who was present at our lives every day, he knew our families and he was always interested in what his students did, as nobody usually was at the University at this time. For this reason, I speak about "cohabitation" between him and us.

He had a very bad temperament, but he was a scientist of a very high level: Assyriology owes him a lot. He was very eloquent too.

After more than 40 years, I cannot forget his lessons and in part I used his method while I was an History teacher. This study and life experience will stay in my memory forever.

**To the Memory of Giovanni Pettinato by Alfonso Foschi (Allievo
di G. Pettinato all'Università di Torino)**

Tutto è già stato detto sulla figura del Professore G. Pettinato dalle sue lezioni all'università, dalle sue pubblicazioni, dalle sue conferenze sulla materia di sua competenza e su argomenti di vario genere visti i suoi molteplici interessi. Posso solo fare leva sui ricordi dei miei anni universitari per dire quanto questo

docente e uomo straordinario mi ha trasmesso e lasciato in eredità per il mio lavoro di docente di scuola media superiore.

Innanzitutto l'amore ed il rispetto per il proprio lavoro, fatto di studio severo e al contempo di umanità: era capace di passare in un attimo dallo studioso attento e competente all'uomo pronto a cogliere le tue debolezze, le tue fragilità e le tue potenzialità.

Si è battuto perché avessimo, benché studenti, la possibilità di lavorare, dietro modesto ma significativo compenso, alla schedatura di libri per il progetto di un vocabolario neosumerico; ci ha mandati ad Heidelberg, sua sede universitaria prima di approdare a Torino, per approfondire la conoscenza del tedesco, lingua in cui sono scritti molti testi della materia di studio; ha voluto che potessimo fare, lottando con le istituzioni universitarie, un viaggio di istruzione in Iraq, spesati di tutto, escluso il viaggio, per vedere sul campo quello che fino ad allora era stato solo oggetto di studio; era severo nell'assegnarci i compiti per verificare le nostre competenze e i nostri miglioramenti sugli argomenti trattati; nei giorni degli esami (Assiriologia e Storia Orientale Antica) controllava che non mancassimo alle altre lezioni della giornata; ha convinto i nostri genitori a farci trasferire a Roma, dopo aver avuto la cattedra alla Sapienza, perché potessimo continuare a studiare con lui e fare al contempo nuove esperienze.

Così, grazie a lui, ho amato tantissimo il mio lavoro di insegnante, nel quale ho sempre cercato di applicare i suoi insegnamenti: studio assiduo e rispetto per le persone, approfondimenti attraverso viaggi di istruzione e uscite didattiche, esperienze oltre la scuola (conferenze, cineforum, laboratorio teatrale, serate a teatro e concerti, e altro ...).

Con riconoscenza e affetto, un grazie di cuore al Professore G. Pettinato.

Ricordo di Pettinato by Elena Gaibotti (Allieva di G. Pettinato all'Università di Torino)

Devo dire grazie al professor Pettinato per una delle esperienze più belle della mia vita. Iscritta al primo anno di università nell'anno accademico 1970-71, avevo frequentato il corso di Storia orientale antica, poi a partire dal secondo anno mi ero concentrata sull'archeologia del mondo classico, ma nel 1972 fu proprio il professor Pettinato a coinvolgermi con la proposta di seguire tra la fine di luglio e agosto il Ferienkurs dell'università di Heidelberg per imparare il tedesco. E così, con un bel gruppetto di giovani piemontesi, partimmo per la Germania, dove passammo un mese meraviglioso. Oggi i ragazzi viaggiano fin da giovanissimi, ma allora non era così. Per me era la prima volta

che trascorrevi un periodo lontano dalla famiglia: era davvero affacciarsi su un mondo sconosciuto e stimolante, con l'opportunità di conoscere anche studenti di paesi lontani. Ricordo ancora l'amicizia con due giapponesi, che poi vennero a trovarci a Torino. E le belle gite sul Reno, nella Foresta Nera, a Magonza; le passeggiate lungo il Neckar, le serate ai concerti o al ristorante greco. Un'esperienza indimenticabile grazie a un docente come Giovanni Pettinato, che era diverso dagli altri professori universitari, perché cercava di instaurare con gli studenti un rapporto meno distaccato, più coinvolgente anche sul piano umano.

My Memories of Giovanni Pettinato by Ezio Gerbore (Académie-Saint-Anselme)

It was 1971 the first time I attended a lecture by Professor Giovanni Pettinato. I hadn't been able to attend from the start, and the course was already, I believe, at the third lesson. I entered a small classroom that seemed to me to be crowded with students. When the professor arrived, I was surprised by something that had never happened to me before or in other classes: the professor, after looking at all the students, realized that he had never seen me before, and asked me who I was and where I came from. On one hand, this worried me at first; on the other hand, it made me understand that the teacher was not only interested in his own lesson but was also somehow interested in knowing better the students who were actually sitting in front of him. I'm telling this, as I'd like people to understand the difference between Giovanni Pettinato's attitude and that of most of university teachers I had met till then.

Anyway, the lesson began. That year it debated the trading in Mesopotamia, in particular during the period of Ur II. In this context, Professor Pettinato quoted Giustino Boson, an Assyriologist who was one of the first to study the matter and who had also written a book about Assyriology, published by Hoepli in the 20's. The name awakened a vague memory in my mind, but I focused on the lesson and that feeling of a *déjà-vu* disappeared.

Sometime later, I visited a friend of my family, prof. Lino Colliard, who was the director of the regional historical archive of Aosta Valley back then and, while talking with him, I mentioned that I was attending the classes of an Assyriologist. He asked me if I was interested in following in the footsteps of Justin Boson, former president of our Académie Saint Anselme. At that point, I remembered the Assyriologist mentioned by Pettinato and whom I hadn't recognized from the beginning. The professor Colliard added a piece of information that I did not know: he told me that the "briques de Boson" still existed

at the Collegiate Church of Sant'Orso. Since "briques" in French means "bricks", I asked professor Colliard what he meant and if Justin Boson used to collect bricks. He replied that they used to jokingly call that way the cuneiform tablet that Boson had left at the great library of the Collegiate Church of Sant'Orso after his death.

Time passed, and Pettinato and I became friends; in fact, he once asked me if there was the possibility of spending his holidays in Aosta Valley. I replied that I would help him find an apartment to rent for the summer and that, if he had come on holiday to our region, beside admiring our landscapes, he would have had the opportunity to examine the famous "Briques de Boson". He was immediately enthusiastic about that and, as soon as he came to Aosta Valley, we went to the prior of the Collegiate, Canon Jean Domaine, who welcomed us into the private library of Sant'Orso. When he opened the drawers of the large table located in the central hall, I was overwhelmed by excitement: in front of us, there were about eighty cuneiform tablets. Most of them were small with the rations of the messengers dating back to Ur III; others were larger and more recent. Obviously, Giovanni Pettinato too was excited about the discovery: those tablets belonged to an archive about which Boson had already published several books, but those tablets at the Collegiate Church were still unpublished. At that point, prof. Pettinato decided that he would transcribe all the material during his summer vacation. It took him two summers. I was in charge of cleaning up the tablet and, in case, to strengthen the most fragile ones. Indeed, he found a way to get me a wage, even if I would have gladly worked for free or, rather, I would have even paid to have the opportunity to do it. In any case, as he had promised me, the wage was always paid to me regularly: Pettinato believed that any intellectual work had to be paid, in order not to make it lose importance and dignity. The transcriptions were later published in 1976.⁴

This whole experience made me reflect on several matters. The first thing that surprised me was that there were some connections between Giovanni Pettinato and Giustino Boson. Boson had been a lecturer in Assyriology and Ancient Eastern History in Turin from 1924 to 1936.⁵ He then was a university professor in Milan from 1924 to 1949.⁶ Since Boson moved to Milan, the city of Turin no longer had a professor of Assyriology, until 1970. That year, prof. Giorgio Gullini, Dean of the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy back then,

4 Giovanni Pettinato, *La collezione della Collegiata dei SS. Pietro e Orso — Aosta*, Roma, 1977.

5 https://accademiadelle scienze.it/storiaescienza/dossier/l_assiriologia_e_la_filologia_semitica_3762.

6 Lino Colliard, *La culture Valdôtaine au cours des siècles*, Aosta, 1976, p. 483.

decided to resume the classes of Assyriology and Ancient Eastern History, assigning them both to Giovanni Pettinato. Looking back, it almost seemed that the tablets not yet published by Boson were just waiting for his successor at the University of Turin to be finally published.

My friendly relationship with Giovanni Pettinato would end with the end of the work on the tablets, if only his teachings were limited to the purely scientific part directly linked with Assyriology. Looking back at the whole experience, the teachings by Giovanni Pettinato were much more complex and complete than I thought they would be at the beginning. First and foremost, Pettinato had created an atmosphere that was completely different from that I experienced in other fields and with other professors: it really seemed to me that we weren't just students, but members of a study group, of a real cénacle where everyone could bring their own experiences, contribute with their abilities without any discriminations. Later on, when I had the chance to coordinate authors of different ages and experiences with their books and researches, the experience with Pettinato brought me to consider them as co-workers, equally useful and important, without discriminating anyone.

There was also another reason that made me consider Giovanni Pettinato a true teacher, also in my own experience as a researcher and author, even if I have later abandoned Assyriology and ancient Eastern history; as a matter of fact, while I was studying medieval history, I have always kept his teachings in consideration, fundamental for anyone interested in history or in any fields: and that is reading documents, analyzing them, understanding them, not inventing anything, but sticking to the text. The reconstruction of a historical period or an episode always must involve absolute respect for the documents and their content. Any different types of approach to the reconstruction of history have no value and cannot be scientifically accepted. For all this, I'm still deeply grateful to Pettinato and his personal way of reconstructing the past.

Giovanni Pettinato in Turin by Fabrizio Angelo Pennacchietti (Università di Torino)

I don't remember exactly the first time I met Prof. Giovanni Pettinato. It must have been in 1970 on the occasion of a council of the Humanities Faculty of the University of Turin, chaired by Prof. Giorgio Gullini. In 1964 the dynamic archaeologist, who recently moved from Rome to Turin, established the Italian-Iraqi Institute of Archaeology in Baghdad. Then, in 1969, on the advice of Prof. Giorgio R. Castellino, professor of Assyriology in Rome, Gullini called Giovanni Pettinato from Heidelberg to Turin to teach Ancient Oriental History.

Pettinato taught that from the autumn of 1969 to the end of the academic year 1973-1974.

Those were the most intense years of my life. Not only they coincided with my appointment as Director General of the *Italian-Iraqi Institute of Archaeology* in Baghdad and the teaching assignment of Semitic Philology at the University of Turin and at Ca' Foscari University in Venice, but also, and most importantly, with the birth of my daughter Selma (1971) and of my son Luca (1972). Despite this inextricable overlapping of commitments, I managed to associate with Giovanni until we became friends.

Pettinato's bearing immediately impressed the colleagues at the faculty, me first. He absolutely did not possess the Piedmontese professorial demeanour: dishevelled hair with two bushy tufts to the right and left of the baldness, the oversized shirt, always with a smoking cigarette on his lips, even in the faculty council. Moreover, with a typically Sicilian inflection, he showed a slow and serious phrasing that succeeded to obtain respect and attention by all through his meditated words. Giovanni immediately established relationships of confidence and familiarity with the heads and employees of the offices of the University that he frequented more often. Therefore, he became the most knowledgeable person in the Faculty.

Affectionate and generous was the hospitality of Giovanni and his wife Agathe in their modest flat in Turin. They got Stefania, their last born, in 1971, the same year as the birth of my first child, Selma. Their family was already cheered by the lively presence of the twins Daniela and Marcello.

As soon as he settled in the bright room made available to him by Giorgio Gullini on the top floor of the immense building in via San Massimo 20 in the centre of Turin, Pettinato set in motion his "war machine" (as I called it), in deciphering, filing and editing Sumerian texts. This impressive undertaking involved the Assyriologists Harmut Waetzoldt and Sergio Picchioni and formed a crowd of students fascinated by the subject and enchanted by Pettinato's teaching way.

The pleasure of attending Agathe's and Giovanni's family in Turin and the stimulating presence of the trio Pettinato, Waetzoldt and Picchioni in the Faculty suddenly ended in the autumn of 1974, the year when they moved to Rome at the behest of Prof. Sabatino Moscati, thanks to the amazing discovery of the Ebla archive. The professor was followed in Rome by a group of prepared and eager students, including Maria Giovanna Biga, who inherited his teaching and enthusiasm.

I had the pleasure of attending Giovanni Pettinato in Rome at least once per month from 1977 to 1981, being co-director of the *Centre for Antiquities and the History of Art of the Near East* (CASAVO) and editor-in-chief of the journal

Oriens Antiquus, of which Pettinato was the director. After that I met my friend in his beautiful flat in Rome at EUR, on the occasion of my less and less frequent engagements in the capital city. However, I remained a constant friend and supporter of Giovanni, while admiring his genuine generosity and his extraordinary knowledge of cuneiform languages and civilizations.

In Memory of Pettinato by Alessandro Roccati (Università di Torino)

The first time I met Giovanni Pettinato was in wintertime at Heidelberg. I came from Bonn, where I was a DAAD-Stipendiat, to visit some friend, who taught me about a mysterious Italian young scholar working by night and sleeping by day ... The Oriental Seminar lay still in that wonderful place on the Neckar shore and I could attend an evening lecture of prof. Adam Falkenstein in a snowy environment. The following afternoon Doctor Pettinato took us on an old shabby car for a trip along the river. A lasting friendship was initiated, owing to the mutual interests for our research fields.

Several years after that encounter, Giovanni got the first chair of Assyriology in Turin University, where I had also started working in the Egyptian Museum. In his home I made the acquaintance of his wife and his children, and on one occasion also his parents. I owe to Giovanni to have soon approached the university, offering me several opportunities to teach, in Genua and Turin. More than that, in 1973 he organized an exciting round tour of ancient Mesopotamian sites for a score of graduate students (among them Vanna Biga), and he was the leader. I remember that on the site of Ur he challenged me to run to the top of the ziggurat: he arrived second, but then I had to offer a lunch to the entire team in order to celebrate my promotion as keeper in the Egyptian Museum of Turin.

Our destiny joined us again in Rome, where he was called to teach Assyriology, but also to back the archaeological expedition of "La Sapienza" University, which was making fantastic discoveries in Syria. As the epigraphist of that Mission he engaged in deciphering the thousands clay tablets unearthed in Tell Mardikh, after having identified that site with the ancient city of Ebla. Due to his accomplished knowledge of Sumerian, for which he was the best follower of Prof. Falkenstein, he may be considered the second discoverer of the archive, since he provided the first clues for its interpretation. I was called some years later to take the chair of Egyptology at the same university, and quite often we had opportunities to share common views especially on the Ebla archive. Unfortunately, the enquiry to find out evidence for

Egypt in that wide documentation did not succeed to provide a definite answer before his death.

Later on Pettinato inspired the Centro Studi del Vicino Oriente, organized and funded in Milan by a pupil of his, prof. Luisa Terzi, and there again we shared many good opportunities to compare our views. Eventually, when Pettinato was entrusted the organization of a school of Oriental studies in the University of Enna, not far from his birth place in Sicily, he relayed on me for lecturing Egyptology. Meanwhile I missed the opportunity to cooperate with him working on materials stored in the Archaeological Museum of Byblos, a site of exceeding importance for the research of both of us.

In view of the *Rencontre Assyriologique* held at Rome in 2011, prof. Vanna Biga with my enthusiastic support prepared an announcement that actually many contacts with the Nile land could be detected through a keen sieving of the contents of the archive, but Prof. Pettinato did not live enough to experience what looks like a promising new chapter to advance in the study of the archive.

A Souvenir of Giovanni Pettinato by Enrico Gargano (Vicepresidente Accademia delle Antiche Civiltà)

I am the vice president of the Accademia delle Antiche Civiltà, AdAC, a non-profit cultural association based in Milan, a natural continuation of the Centro Studi del Vicino Oriente, csvo, which aims to spread the knowledge of the main civilizations of the Ancient World with particular reference to the Ancient Near East, to the whole Mediterranean basin and to the Mesoamerican area with courses, seminars, conferences and conventions at university level.

I am very grateful to Professor Maria Giovanna Biga, organizer of this seminar in memory of one of the most important Assyriologists of recent decades, and I sincerely thank her for inviting me and for giving me the opportunity to briefly explain my shared experience with Professor Giovanni Pettinato during his teaching period in Milan at the Near East Study Center, csvo.

I will now try to retrace the most significant moments of this relationship which began in 1998 and lasted almost eight years, practically until 2005-2006 when the Professor interrupted his collaboration with the csvo mainly for health reasons.

In November and December 1997, an exhibition on cuneiform inscriptions from the Michail Collection was held in Milan at the Library of via Senato, organized by the same Library but resulting from an idea of the owner of the

tablets Louise Michail. This Lady, who still manages a prestigious antique shop in Milan today, had collected just over a hundred cuneiform tablets that deal with documents dating back to about 4000 years ago “documents that enlighten us on the historical events of the peoples of ancient Mesopotamia”. Prof. Pettinato then professor of Assyriology at “la Sapienza” University of Rome was called to take care of the catalog of this exhibition, published by Electa Editrice.

Of course, the undersigned, who lived in a small town in Brianza not far from Milan and was already a self-taught enthusiast of cuneiform scripts with particular regard to Akkadian and Sumerian languages, certainly could not miss such an opportunity, namely that of visiting the exhibition and so it was that I came to know directly of the scientific and popular activities of prof. Giovanni Pettinato through the wonderful catalog of exhibition. I remember my one breath reading all the introduction he wrote on the Mesopotamian civilization thinking about how lucky were all those, students and non-students, who could listen directly to his speeches and lessons.

A prophetic thought because a year later I read in a newspaper, I don't remember if it was the *Corriere della Sera* or *il Giornale* of Indro Montanelli, a short article that reported fantastic news: a “Center for the promotion of cultural courses and initiatives on the cultures and languages of the ancient Near East” would have opened in Milan “where they would have found teaching subjects concerning the civilizations of the Ancient Near East and where they would have taught professors of high scientific profile called by various Italian universities: among them Pettinato Giovanni for Assyriology, Roccati Alessandro for Egyptology, Carruba Onofrio for Hittitology and Anatolism, Fales F. Mario for history of the Near East and Aramaic language, Pennacchetti Fabrizio for Semitism and comparative Semitic languages, Invernizzi Antonio for history of art and archaeology of the ancient Near East. This private university-level school was created by prof. Luisa Fantini Terzi and was located at the Gonzaga Institute in via Vitruvio, near the Central Station of Milan.

Of course, I immediately got in touch with Prof. Luisa Terzi and began attending the CSVO where I personally met prof. Giovanni Pettinato with whom a relationship of mutual sympathy was established from the beginning. I started taking the Sumerian language course and his lessons were fabulous, he knew how to capture your attention with a simple and direct language which only those, who master the subject and have the ability to teach, possess.

They have been exciting years of study with a teacher who is always ready to solve your doubts and to spur you on in an increasingly advanced study!

His lessons in Sumerian literature were also memorable: Pettinato had the makings of a storyteller, one was enchanted to follow his stories and seemed to

relive those tales that told the intricate stories of the gods of the Sumerian pantheon. He applied the same narrative technique to the books he wrote where the simplicity of the language accompanied by its scientific rigor in dealing with the most varied problems of Mesopotamian civilizations made it a pleasant reading from the first to the last page.

After the first intense year of Sumerian language, it was the summer of 1999, returning from a mission in Manchester where I had gone for a conference on behalf of the CNR Institute where I was working, it was exactly 19th of June, I stopped at Heidelberg where Pettinato held the chair of Eblaitology.

I had with me the new copy of his latest volume *La città sepolta: I misteri di Ebla* (The buried city: the mysteries of Ebla), published by Mondadori in the "Le Scie" series. I bought it before leaving for England with the intention of showing him a preview and so it was. When I showed it to him in the study of the house where he was staying, he wanted to write me the dedication that I quote verbatim: "To my friend Doctor Gargano, waiting to see him try his hand at Ebla too. Sincerely G. Pettinato, Heidelberg 19.6.1999, 1.14 pm". [All'amico Dottor Gargano in attesa di vederlo cimentarsi con Ebla. Cordialmente G. Pettinato. Heidelberg, 19.6.'99 ore 13.14].

Of course, I had already read the whole book and I recommend reading it to those who have not yet done so. In it, the Professor takes us on an exciting journey through the millennia to discover the culture, the economy, the original power structure of this ancient Syrian city of the third millennium BC. where a Western Semitic language, still unknown at the time, was spoken, written in Sumerian cuneiform characters on magnificent clay tablets, a language that Pettinato was the first to interpret, an interpretation that is told to us in a pressing way making the reader retrace the most salient moments of this extraordinary decipherment!

I do not want to go further, but we must recognize that the enormous work of classification and translation of most of the Ebla archive-library, carried out by Pettinato following his resolution of the enigma of the language underlying the cuneiform writing of the tablets, remains and it will remain for a long time a fundamental point for the studies of Eblaitology.

He initiated this new science to this new branch of historiography, Eblaitology, provided the key and laid the foundations for the subsequent developments of the studies. It must not be forgotten, it must not be passed over in silence.

The world Assyriological school and in particular the Italian one has lost, in my opinion, one of the most valid representatives and it should be an honor, especially for the Italian one, ten years after his death, to count him and remember him among those who most contributed to the spread of the

knowledge of Mesopotamian civilizations. Pettinato deserves the credit for having opened a new window on the political, economic and cultural relations of a little known region of the earth between the Two Rivers: the Syria region of the III millennium B.C.

In Memory of Giovanni Pettinato by Dario Di Blasi (Direttore artistico Film archeologici)

I met Giovanni Pettinato several times in my capacity as curator of *the Rassegna Internazionale del Cinema Archeologico* di Rovereto, created to commemorate the immense research work of Paolo Orsi. I invited Giovanni Pettinato back in 2003 to hold a conversation in front of the Rovereto Review audience. I am honored to have enjoyed his esteem for so many years and am amazed at how he has been forgotten and erased from collective memory. A kind of *damnatio memoriae*! This is why I intervened to argue that the memory of Giovanni Pettinato is not enough. His activity, his work, his research must become current even with the help of archaeological cinema. He must be known by those who have never had the opportunity to know him. Giovanni Pettinato is not a memory! He is present, modern and current!

A Personal Assessment for Giovanni Pettinato by Frederick Mario Fales (Università di Udine)

I met Giovanni Pettinato in Heidelberg in 1971 just after my Italian M.A., and shortly before his death in 2011 he sent in an article for my *Festschrift*. He and I were thus intermittently tied for some forty years in common activities, which are difficult to forget just as they are hard to summarize, given Giovanni's often unpredictable nature and his largely "non-canonical" behavior.

We may start from Heidelberg 1971. On the banks of the Neckar, where I had come to attend courses in Assyriology and especially neo-Assyrian with Prof. Karlheinz Deller, I was welcomed by a short and smiling Sicilian docent, not yet forty years old — formerly a PhD student and graduate of the late Adam Falkenstein, the illustrious Assyriologist before Deller — who imparted courses on Sumerian language and literature in a formally correct German, albeit with a strong accent from the Italian South. This unique combination attracted me, as it did to learn of his modest small-town childhood and his upbringing in a seminary leading to the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, and how he had finally chosen not to become a man of the cloth but rather to

marry a young German girl (in this similarly to Deller himself, who had been a Jesuit novice in Rome). Furthermore, it struck me that, during our leisurely walks to various cafes and shops on the *Hauptstrasse* after his lectures, *Herr Dr.* Pettinato showed a fully unassuming attitude, never hinting at his privi professional status within the centuries-old university city, despite the fact that at that time Heidelberg, like most of Western Germany, was crossed by worrying currents of socio-political prejudice against the immigration of untutored *Gastarbeiters*, especially of Turkish and Italian origin.

From that time, I also remember a trip made together by car to Italy, motivated by Pettinato's courses in Turin for his first chair of Assyriology. Leaving Heidelberg very late on a cold afternoon, we spent the first night at his mother-in-law's farm in nearby Mannheim, a patch of green holding out against factories looming all around, where the toilet was still by tradition a wooden sentry box around a hole on the lawn, and washing was performed at the kitchen tap (with much greater discomfort for me than for him). This circumstance was to be smilingly recalled with the always very kind and admirably youthful Mrs. Agathe at Giovanni's funeral.

Let's move on to late 1975. As soon as the discovery of the first Ebla texts had been announced, I called Paolo Matthiae, formerly my professor at the University of Rome, and formally requested that Ca' Foscari in Venice — where I had been teaching Semitic Philology as Assistant Professor for two years — should be the first university to host a lecture of his as the archaeologist heading the expedition, together with the recently chosen philologist for the texts, Giovanni Pettinato. Matthiae accepted, taking into account the available calendar, and the two scholars arrived in the Venetian Lagoon in January 1976. At the time, it was snowing heavily on the small streets, squares and canals of Venice, thus freezing poor Pettinato's ample bald patch (whereas Matthiae still had a thick mane to sport). The three days of lectures in richly frescoed Baroque auditoriums proved to be very succesful due to the great novelty of the discoveries illustrated; for my part, the faculty budget I had received for the events made for comfortable evenings in warm cafés and restaurants of downtown Venice. Pettinato and Matthiae got along admirably well in their ideas on future research and I was therefore very honored to enjoy their joint act in preview and also flattered by their friendship towards me, despite having some momentary "flashes" in which they came to mind, almost prophetically, like Pinocchio's cat and fox.

Just six months later, as is well known, the two would enter a full collision course in front of an astonished international audience, for seemingly scientific reasons but in fact as a cover for a veritable power struggle, with the implications of the age-old and forever unresolved Middle Eastern political

scenario lurking in the background. On the squalid and vicious continuation of the decade, with the long and violent “Ebla wars” between philologists and archaeologists on all media, and then with the enhanced rivalry of publications and conferences between the Universities of Rome and Naples — operations that proved particularly harmful for the younger specialists caught in the crossfire — I leave the word to others, if they want to talk about it; I gladly erase this entire phase from the blackboard of my memory.

Let us move on, then, to a time when the malevolent Eblaite “fever” had finally subsided. In the late 1980s, I was the recipient of a major Assyriological “break”: the permission to study and publish about a hundred tablets in cuneiform script owned by Giancarlo Ligabue of Venice. Since one of the most consistent lots in the collection was represented by texts from the period of the Third Dynasty of Ur (21st century BC), of which Pettinato was one of the major world specialists, I contacted him and he gladly accepted to give me a hand in the edition of the texts, albeit with a schedule limited by his multiple teaching commitments (now centered in Rome) and scientific engagements (with frequent trips abroad). One way or another, we still managed to get together almost every fortnight in Venice, for intense Assyriological sessions in the sumptuous Palazzo Erizzo overlooking the Grand Canal, examining the tablets from all angles, whether by naked eye in the morning sunlight, or aided by powerful lamps, magnifying lenses, and unceasing cups of coffee provided by the Ligabue staff. Overall, Pettinato did the near-total collation of the texts which I had transliterated and gave me many suggestions to work out the barely legible inscriptions that accompanied the seal impressions, which represented my personal stumbling block. As amply acknowledged in the catalogue of the collection which I finally published in 1989, I have always been very grateful for these important inputs of his.

Here I may introduce a small humorous note. Among these tablets, there was one, enclosed in its specific clay casing (let’s say: its “envelope”) that had remained inviolate over the millennia, but was clearly attributable to the Old Assyrian age (ca. 1900 BC) on the basis of the cuneiform text incised on the surface of the “envelope” itself; and this was the dating I had given to the piece in the 1989 catalogue. Many years later, however, the collector Ligabue tired of merely listening to the thud of the tablet within its casing and decided to have the latter opened with the minimum of damage by a laser cutting specialist, especially summoned to Venice, as was also Pettinato for the subsequent reading of the text. As these things go, however, the laser operation, planned as a *coup de théâtre* to be recorded on film, proved to be painstakingly slow due to the risk of cracking the ancient clay casing into crumbly fragments. Thus, when it came elegantly open and the inner tablet was finally retrieved unscathed

from the darkness of antiquity, long hours had gone by, and Pettinato had precious little time left to catch the train back to Rome, despite a motorboat for the station summoned by Ligabue; in his haste, he did not bring to mind my previous publication with its dating, but attributed the piece on the spot, without the slightest hesitancy, to the Old Babylonian age — the time of king Hammurabi the legislator, so to speak. Unfortunately, this Pettinato's erroneous attribution (reasonable date, but totally wrong dialect) was zealously immortalized by Ligabue in his proud video of the event with audio comment, which then made the rounds of the web for years. Worse, it ended up being projected on a large screen within an exhibition at Palazzo Loredan in Venice, where in 2016 Ligabue's son Inti had entrusted me and the archaeologist Dr. Roswitha Del Fabbro (for the seals) to celebrate in style his late father's Mesopotamian collection for a wide audience. In practice, therefore, I found myself explaining several times, for the insatiably curious visitors of this successful and very popular exhibition, a regrettable "beginner's mistake" made by a world-famous Assyriologist.

Finally, Pettinato invited me in the late 1990s to join him at the "Center for Studies of the Near East" (CSVO) in Milan, a private institution to spread the knowledge of the languages and cultures of the Ancient Near East, founded and directed with an iron fist by one of his former pupils, the shrewd and indomitable Ms Luisa Terzi, which was hosted in a few unused classrooms of the illustrious Gonzaga high school. My task was to teach History of the Ancient Near East for one intense afternoon a week to adult students in a Milan that — at that time — almost completely lacked courses on Ancient Western Asia in the city's universities. The challenge was therefore particularly daunting, but it was amply comforted by the coterminous presence at the CSVO of a very knowledgeable team of specialists on the ancient Orient, which included, in addition to Pettinato, the Egyptologist Alessandro Roccati, the Semitist Fabrizio Pennacchietti, the (late) Archaeologist Antonio Invernizzi, and in later years also the Hittitologist Stefano De Martino. With this group of colleagues, I remember having spent almost a decade marked by very pleasant human relationships, with an absolute freedom of choice and style in teaching and with far more informal teacher-student relations than at the University. The culminating moments were the productive annual conferences organized by Ms. Terzi in the Auditorium of the Gonzaga school and the restricted meetings of the teaching staff, enjoyably held in a superb villa on the road to Pavia with Leonardesque wall-decorations and no restrictions in food, wine and aged spirits.

To sum up: as has happened to others, even to his long-time students, my relationship with Giovanni Pettinato has experienced pleasant moments, such as those I have mentioned, but also harsh difficulties, because he "was like

that". A first example: he was invited to Padua to evaluate a promising young candidate (and sole aspirer) for the post of Research Assistant but he failed her, thus enraging our Paduan colleagues accustomed to reverential respect for local "birthright". Fortunately, after a decade spent in the Purgatory of high school teaching, this young specialist meritoriously returned to the university ranks, where she is still active with great honor — even directing with zeal and skill a vast dictionary project at the *Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, which would have been mouth-watering for Pettinato himself.

Other cases: Giovanni clearly stated on several occasions in public and in private that he esteemed me highly, and I believed him as I still do. Nevertheless — or perhaps for this very reason (!) — he made every effort in 1994 to fail me in the national competition for the chair of Full Professor: this time, however, unshakeable colleagues within the Committee, to whom I have always been grateful, narrowly prevented his success. Thereupon, at the first opportunity, he took great care to announce his unchanged friendship and respect for me, in accordance with his role as a living contradiction, surely more racked by his conflicting impulses than I could even imagine. Later, at the turn of the millennium, he urgently asked me for support to promote the University of Enna in Sicily, on which he had great plans for Oriental studies, but after I accepted, he did not follow up on the matter himself. Finally, going back to the beginning of this paper: after a decade of lax contacts between us, in the last year of his life he contributed an extremely long essay — almost a testament as justification for his work in Iraq, which had been hotly contested from both the scientific and ethical points of view — with Silvia Chiodi for my *Festschrift*, leaving the curators and then me (who was feted by surprise) totally amazed.

I repeat: Giovanni Pettinato is difficult to forget, but also controversial to judge, in commemoration as he was in life. A typical facial expression, or a habitual phrase of his, sometimes comes to my mind, causing a smile of recognition and a twinge of longing. However, he certainly is not one of the deceased to whom I turn, eyes to the sky, pleading with them urgently to illuminate me on their possible thoughts and reactions vis-à-vis one or another terrifying event of recent years, from pandemic to the menace of war. Such questions are reserved for the righteous — those who, whichever their achievements or fame here on earth, were utterly devoid of animosity or envy. Giovanni's abode is rather in the Elysian fields of complex *chiaroscuro personae*, such as the great authors from Sicily, from Pirandello to Sciascia, have bequeathed to us.⁷

⁷ F.M. Fales, *Prima dell'alfabeto. La storia della scrittura attraverso testi cuneiformi inediti*, Venezia, 1989; Idem, "A Tablet Sees the Light". In: J. Gießauf (Ed.), *Zwischen Karawane und Orientexpress. Festschrift für Hannes Galter*, Münster, 2017, p. 81-89.

Remembering Giovanni Pettinato by Vincenzo Orioles (Università di Udine)

I gladly accepted the invitation of my colleague Maria Giovanna Biga to give testimony to the figure of Giovanni Pettinato. I am not a scholar of the ancient Near East, nor even less a Semitist, and over time I have dealt with topics that are very different from those of Pettinato (I refer to my Biosketsch <http://www.orioles.it/profilo_en.htm>). However, I consider myself attentive to all possible modulations of language, wherever they find their manifestation; without disturbing Jakobson's motto *Linguista sum: linguistici nihil a me alienum puto*, I could call myself an all-round linguist. In view of these premises, I shall construct this recollection without going into the merits of my colleague's interests and scientific achievements, but rather by discursively setting out the exposition according to the convergences that over the years have made possible my approach to Giovanni Pettinato.

Linguists and Orientalists

The first area of contact was, so to speak, institutional. In the nineties of the twentieth century, Linguists and Orientalists, starting from the common disciplinary denominator, had formed a Coordination that aimed to constitute an indispensable bridge between their respective traditional interests. In that context I had the opportunity to approach Pettinato in Rome, appreciating his stature and scientific personality, but also establishing an empathetic relationship.

Giovanni Pettinato's Ability to Disseminate Science

As a charismatic communicator, Giovanni Pettinato was for me a point of reference for high-profile talks in my city and at my University. I saw him as an ideal and elective protagonist of lectures and conferences capable of involving on the one hand the students and on the other the educated audience who was regular visitor to the cultural initiatives that I promoted, as they say, 'on the ground'. I therefore proposed a series of lectures at the University of Udine, relying on our mutual friendship with Frederick Mario Fales.

The Udine Lectures in 2000

The first Udine initiative dates back to 1995, when I was head of the Department of Linguistics and Classical Philology, and was held in the didactic context of my General Linguistics courses. The discipline was apparently distant from the speaker's profile, but I won the bet because, firstly, it is the task of every teacher to stimulate his students by offering them opportunities and stimuli that go

beyond the perimeter of their knowledge, and secondly, Giovanni Pettinato was, as those who read me know, a ‘dragger’. Here are the two topics discussed:

March 9, 1995: *L'attività della missione archeologica italiana in Siria: decifrazione delle tavolette cuneiformi*

March 10, 1995: *Il contributo della Siria per la linguistica mesopotamica. I vocabolari bilingui di Ebla*

On the sidelines of that contact, Pettinato gave me an interview that is worth quoting (it is attached to this contribution) because it sets the ‘state of the art’ of knowledge on Eblaith and of the research perspectives that were emerging in the middle of the last decade of the 20th century. Particularly noteworthy, from a linguistic point of view, is the proposal to classify Eblaith within Semitic and its typological characterisation as a “lingua franca adopted in the 3rd millennium in the area of the Fertile Crescent”.

The Second Udine Lecture in 2000

Five years later, the idea for a new invitation to Friuli was offered to me on a silver platter by the publication of the book *La scrittura celeste. La nascita dell'astrologia in Mesopotamia*, which appeared in 1999. Pettinato dealt with the subject in a naturally technical way but, as is well known, the very word astrology fuels cultural curiosity and suggestions which, combined with the authoritative nature of the speaker, make one imagine the success of the event.

April 15, 2000: *La “scrittura celeste”. Astronomia e astrologia nella Mesopotamia antica*

The 2002 Gorizia Lecture

At that point, the figure of Pettinato had become so familiar to our research teams that it would not be long before the third move to our university, this time to the Gorizia site, was recorded.

February 14, 2002, Gorizia site: *L'invenzione della scrittura*

This was an organic cycle of meetings on “Communication, languages and society” that the International Centre on Multilingualism had planned with the dual aim of involving the general public in a series of topics of wide impact and at the same time providing reasons for reflection and in-depth study for students of university courses based in Gorizia. With this in mind, together

with my colleague Raffaella Bombi, I decided to invite speakers with significant experience in various sectors of science, culture and public life to illustrate the topic from their own specific angle. Using his renowned capacity for storytelling, Pettinato took his audience on a fascinating comparative journey between the genetic moment of writing at the dawn of the third millennium B.C. and the writing 'revolution' we were witnessing at the beginning of the third millennium A.D. in 2002.

Whether ideogrammatic, cuneiform or alphabetic, writing is not only a mere document and fixation of factual reality, but it also helps us as a tool for the manifestation of thought, and above all functions as a powerful means of handing down historical memory.

Ebla, Emblem and Icon of the Multilingual City. Report to the Conference in December 2002

A special dimension of 'contiguity' with Giovanni Pettinato was plurilingualism, or, to use another technical term now in current use, that cultural, linguistic and even scriptural diversity that crosses a territory, a community, a city. In particular, the urban variational space was the thematic horizon of the conference that, as Director of the International Centre on Plurilingualism, I had promoted in December 2002 on the theme *Multilingual cities. Perspectives and insights on languages and cultures in urban areas*. The city, which is a crossroads of heterogeneous origins, and thus situated at the intersection of different linguistic types, is a privileged place of observation for the linguist: on the one hand, it is the elective seat of multilingual dynamics, but at the same time it is a factor of linguistic unification. To illustrate the peculiar physiognomy assumed by urban universes in the ancient world, there was no better example than Ebla: hence Pettinato's involvement with a paper entitled Ebla: one writing, two languages (published in its Proceedings, edited by R. Bombi and F. Fusco, Udine, Forum, 2004 : 403-414) from which we extract a significant passage.

Ebla, infatti, è espressione di plurilinguismo già per la sua attività *princeps* del commercio con l'estero, praticata in una maniera impressionante. Da qui i tre paragrafi, in cui si articola il mio contributo: dapprima ci soffermeremo sul tema a) Scuola e cultura ad Ebla, quindi allargheremo il discorso al b) Commercio e rapporti internazionali, per concludere poi con alcune riflessioni sul c) Espansione dell'eblaita nel terzo millennio ed eredità nei millenni posteriori (p. 403).

An absolutely original factor of the 'bilingual' condition of the Syrian town was that the Eblaites, in order to draw up lexical lists in their language, made use of

an exogenous scriptural variety, thus disproving the scepticism of those who thought “poco credibile che nella Siria del terzo millennio si usasse il cuneiforme Sumerico per esprimere una lingua così diversa come era appunto la lingua semitica di Ebla” (I quote from a valuable and perhaps little known ‘popular’ booklet by Pettinato himself: *La civiltà mesopotamica*, Enna, Archeoclub d’Italia, 2000, pp. 19-20). But what kind of bilingualism is involved? Pettinato himself acknowledges that we are not dealing with real bilingual texts “in quanto la traduzione eblaita del lessema sumerico è sporadica”, and therefore it is “presumibile che gli scribi fossero padroni di ambedue le lingue, il sumerico e l’eblaita, senza per questo voler affermare che essi fossero ‘bilingui’” (as he says in the introductory essay to *Il Bilinguismo a Ebla*. Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Napoli, 19-22 April 1982, edited by Luigi Cagni, Naples, Istituto Universitario Orientale, Department of Asian Studies, 1984 : 14).

Concluding Remarks

Even if there were no further occasions for direct contact, Giovanni Pettinato’s research and acquisitions on the precious epigraphic material resurrected from the ashes of Tell Mardick would have allowed me to extract a whole series of generalisations on the subject of bilingualism in the ancient world, and in particular on the not always linear relationship between language and writing. Pettinato is of course the mentor and inspirer of the studies carried out by the Orientalists of the Udine school. Here I would like to recall the singular circumstance that it was the Master who commented on the flattering results of the archaeological missions conducted by his students, in particular Frederick Mario Fales and Daniele Morandi Boinaccosi. I refer to the article *I muraglioni di Qatna* (“The walls of Qatna”), which appeared in *Il Sole-24 Ore* on January 2, 2000 and can also be found at <<http://www.qatna.org/press/qatna-1999-2000/2000%2001%2002%20ilsole.pdf>>.

Some Personal Memories of Prof. Pettinato, Teacher and Family Man by Carlo Casagrande (Allievo di G. Pettinato alla Sapienza – Università di Roma)

I met Professor Pettinato in 1975 when, about to graduate in mathematics, for my own personal culture I wanted to follow at the University of Rome some courses of a philological nature which held great interest for me: Glottology (Indo-European), Germanic Philology, Hittitology, Semitic Philology, Hebrew, Assyriology. In addition to the intrinsic interest of the subjects I was also motivated by the possibility of personally meeting scholars of international level: Belardi, Moscati (whom I had already learned about as a boy in my

schoolbooks, and with whom I could now speak in person), Matthiae, Liverani, Archi, Soggin, Garbini and, precisely, Pettinato.

I became friends with Franco Pomponio, one of the young researchers in the Assyriology course, and I remember the great friendship that existed among the young “Tre Torinesi”: Vanna Biga, Alida Caligaris and the unforgettable Marina Fransos, who unfortunately passed away in 2006.

When the seminar on Ebla was subsequently organized in Rome at the *Biblicum* on January 29, 1977, I had the idea of securing a photographic memorial of that meeting of scholars: Fr. Dahood, Pettinato, Picchioni, Fr. Mayer etc. Afterwards, I gave each of the participants a copy of the photo and kept one for myself signed by all the participants. Over the years, as we youngsters became elders and some of our elders left us, that photo reminder has become a historical document.

Professor Pettinato had a volcanic temperament, somewhat similar to that of his homeland, Sicily, and he retained all the musicality of the Sicilian accent while expressing himself in perfect Italian, often enriched by Latin citations, and was able to devote himself without sparing himself to every aspect of his work. I remember his lectures: the professor at the head of the table with all of us seated around, never a bored repetition of data and notions (such as those of Prof. Binns of Hogwarts) they were instead always lively, and full of references — sometimes up to the moment — to the studies he was conducting, and it could not be otherwise, given that precisely in those years he was laying the foundations for deciphering the Eblaite of the third millennium BCE, clearly evinced as a Semitic language. He loved to talk and communicate his enormous knowledge to his students as much as possible, at the same time always remaining totally concentrated on his work. He often quoted in class his former colleagues and his own teacher Falkenstein in Heidelberg, and for me it was extraordinary that this Catholic Sicilian had become, in Germany, his teacher's successor, evidently due to his absolutely extraordinary skills.

About Prof. Pettinato as organizer and director of research and his relations with the Italian and international academic world, has elsewhere been reported by the scholars who also have known this side of his activities; being a mere student at the time, I would not be able to say anything on this topic, also because at the end of 1977 I put my semitic studies on stand-by and started teaching mathematics in secondary school.

However, I can recall an episode about Prof. Pettinato as a family man which then led to a brief but interesting — and for me useful in my subsequent teaching of mathematics — scientific collaboration. One day the Professor, who familiarly called me “Carletto”, asked me if I could come to his house to help his son clear up some doubts in his algebra homework (I seem to remember),

when he was in year I or II of secondary school; it was only a specific exercise on a well-defined algebra problem and I gladly accepted, and his doubts were cleared up easily and definitively. At that juncture I was struck by this domestic and good-natured aspect of the great professor in the guise of a solicitous family man.

But it didn't end there. The professor suggested that I study an Eblaite tablet containing text and numerical signs (TM.75.G.1693), the text of which he himself translated for me:

« Problem / of the scribe / of Kiš / *iš-má-NI* » [presumably to be read "*iš-má-ià*"].

In addition to this text, five lines appeared with Sumerian signs indicating quantities of increasing value, each followed by the sign GAL. The last line reported, in Sumerian logograms, « nu-da-šid », “not calculated”, therefore “to be calculated”.

I immediately realized the interest of the problem since it appeared to be not of a practical type (i.e. concerning quantities with their own units of measurement), but rather of a purely arithmetical character, applied to even considerable absolute quantities, testifying to the level of abstraction reached in that cultural phase; equally significant is the fact that the sign GAL (“large”), normally used in mathematical texts to indicate the 60th multiple of physical quantities, in this context seemed instead to indicate a multiplication factor “by 60” of dimensionless numbers. It remained to be determined what was “to be calculated” by the student.

I devoted myself for a while to the study of the question and my interpretation was “simple”: it was a question of multiplying by 60 each of the large numbers indicated and writing the product phonetically in Eblaite. To someone who has never taught mathematics in school, this interpretation might seem “too simple”: but first, it is not necessary to assume *a priori* that the problem must have been “difficult”; and second, it could be interesting to propose to any class of any order or degree, or even to adults, a multiplication of the type $360,000 \times 6 \times 60$, “without using a calculator”.

This calculation is already delicate for those of us who have learned (more or less) the methods of written multiplication at school; and, above all, we use, in *writing* the quantities, a system of decimal digits parallel to (and inspired by) the system, also decimal, which we use in *thinking* and *saying* — in both Indo-European and Semitic languages — the quantities themselves.

For the aspiring Semitic-speaking scribe, however, there was an additional logical difficulty in carrying out these multiplications, namely having to navigate between the sexagesimal Sumerian system in which the quantities were *written* and the decimal system in which he himself *said* and *mentally*

structured these quantities; this led me to the conjecture that the task was — as already mentioned — to *write phonetically*, in Eblaite, the results of the prescribed operations. Our children do it in elementary school: “write the following numbers in letters”, and we do it on postal orders; for us it is a question of switching from the expression written in decimal digits to its linguistic, also decimal, transcription; and the two modalities, written and spoken, structure the quantities in the same way. For that scribe, on the contrary, his task was to move from the expression of quantities in sexagesimal figures to the Semitic linguistic — decimal — expression, which required his specific attention; it was a conjecture of mine which I communicated to the professor at the end of my reflections, which was not followed up.

Instead another — not mine — subsequent conjecture was followed up, according to which the problem to be solved should have involved equations but without — in my opinion — significant objective evidence of such in the text of the tablet; this interpretation seemed to me a stretch and it still seems to me, *absit iniuria verbis*, only imaginary.

***In memoriam* Giovanni Pettinato by Pietro Mander (Università di Napoli “L’Orientale”)**

Many years have passed by, but the meeting and following study experiences I had alongside Giovanni Pettinato still make up one of the most significant and, I dare to say, stirring episodes of my whole life. Giovanni Pettinato was my Master, and later he honoured me with his friendship. I remember at the time of his offering, it was hard to move from calling him “Professor ...” to “Giovanni ...”, because of the deference I felt towards him! In this recollection of mine, I therefore shall refer to him as “Giovanni”.

It was the academic year 1973-1974 and I was completing my graduation thesis at the University of Rome “La Sapienza”: I had collected and discussed the corpus of Hittite colophons, and I was being assisted by a friend of mine, Giuseppe Del Monte, together with Professor Mario Liverani as supervisor and Professor Alfonso Archi as co-supervisor, when in the “adjoining” disciplinary field of Assyriology, there was a novelty or rather an earthquake: the mild-mannered Professor Giorgio Raffaele Castellino retired and the Assyriologist from the University of Turin, Giovanni Pettinato, was then called to teach.

My interests at that time were quite broad, and went beyond Hittite philology alone, touching on areas of study such as historical-religious studies and Sumerian, which I had begun to study with Professor Castellino. Given that the

thesis was almost completed and since I felt the need to resume the study of Akkadian and Sumerian, I decided to follow the classes of the newcomer.

Giovanni's "impact" on the environment shaped by Castellino was not a smooth one, due to the exuberance of his temper. An exuberance that on the other hand made his fashion of teaching very attractive. At first it was not a happy encounter, but then Giovanni's friendliness prevailed, and he urged me to ask him for a private interview when he had just started his courses.

I remember that meeting so well. It took place in the study at his house in Via di Grotta Perfetta: it was when Giovanni welcomed me as his pupil. I had not yet graduated, but I was very happy to be able to resume the study of Sumerian, which fascinated me so much, and which I had neglected in favour of Hittite, the subject of the thesis I was drafting.

But let us go back to that fateful 1974. On July, 19th I finally graduated, and I left happily for my holidays. When I came back, I did not succeed to meet Giovanni.

He had become unavailable because, in August, the first batch of tablets had been discovered at Ebla and he had gone into an ascetic retreat to study them.

The lengthy eclipse of Giovanni had made me lose all hope of being able to resume Sumerian. Thus, I took the opportunity to pursue another one of my interests, the historical-religious one: I went to the memorable XIV conference of studies on Magna Graecia entirely devoted to Orphism. It was held that year in Taranto from October 6th to 10th. And then came the turning point.

Giovanni suddenly called us all together in a meeting; he would inform us of his study of the first forty or so Eblaite tablets. "Us" meaning "we": Professor Sergio Picchioni and Luigi Fozzati, who, although being an archaeologist, had been following the group since Turin. There were Marina Fransos, Alida Calligari and Maria Giovanna (Vanna) Biga, (Giovanni's three students, who also came from Turin), and other students and teachers from Rome, such as Franco Pomponio, the researcher who graduated with Castellino, Giuseppe (Pino) Visicato, the student-worker and professor of physics along with other Roman students; Elena Arcari, Angela Puglia and Vesna Davidovic with her engineer husband, Salvatore Monaco and other people whose memories are now too vague.

One cannot hide the fact that there was a dispute within the Tell Mardikh Archaeological Mission, an ugly affair that would last for over a decade and the disturbing premonitory signs of which had already begun to emerge in 1974, but I'd rather draw a veil over this aspect of the affair.

It was in the following year, in 1975, with the discovery of the great archive, that came into being what I would define the "heroic age", because it was a

truly heroic period in its own way, the intensity of which can be assessed from the pace of Giovanni's publications on the Ebla texts.

After a series of important articles on various journals (I will mention the most significant ones), a series of books followed, among which the first four volumes of the new series MEE (Materiali Epigrafici di Ebla), published by the then Istituto Universitario Orientale in Naples (abbr. IUO):

1. *Il calendario di Ebla al tempo del Re Ibbi-Sipiš sulla base di TM.75.G.427*, Archiv für Orientforschung 25 (1974/1977): 1-36
2. *L'atlante geografico del Vicino Oriente attestato ad Ebla e ad Abū Salābikh*, Orientalia 47 (1978): 50-73
3. *Culto ufficiale ad Ebla durante il regno di Ibbi-Sipiš*, Orientis Antiqui Collectio 16, Istituto per l'Oriente, Rome, 1979
4. *Catalogo dei testi cuneiformi di Tell-Mardikh-Ebla* (MEE 1), Naples, IUO, 1979
5. *Ebla — Un impero inciso nell'argilla*, Mondadori, Milan, 1979
6. *Testi amministrativi della biblioteca L.2769* (MEE 2), IUO, Naples 1980
7. *Testi lessicali monolingui della biblioteca L.2769* (MEE 3), IUO, Naples 1981
8. *Testi lessicali bilingui della biblioteca L.2769* (MEE 4), IUO, Naples 1982

The three international conferences on Eblaite philology, also promoted by the IUO, must be added to these studies. The proceedings of the conferences were promptly published by the indefatigable and diligent Father Luigi Cagni: such studies were carried out on the work published or made accessible by Giovanni:

1. L. Cagni (edited by), *La lingua di Ebla* (Atti del Convegno internazionale, Naples April, 21st-23rd 1980), Naples, IUO, 1981
2. L. Cagni (edited by), *Il bilinguismo a Ebla* (Atti del Convegno internazionale, Naples, Aprile 19th-22nd 1982), Naples, IUO, 1984
3. L. Cagni (edited by), *Ebla 1975-1985. Dieci anni di studi linguistici e filologici* (Atti del Convegno internazionale, Naples, October 9th-11th 1985), Naples, IUO, 1987

In less than a decade, Eblaitology was founded and started.

Obviously, such a fruitful scientific impulse implied an assiduous commitment of all of "us": some were engaged in endless filing of the transcriptions of the Eblaite texts, others typed the studies that were carried out, and some were to find references in the scientific literature. I do remember those whole days spent at Pettinato's house, all busy in the filing phase: we were all together, and the beer that Franco kindly brought us at the end of the day!

Those were years of intense work and exciting discoveries: a civilization, whose memory had been lost, came to light, offering endless surprises. Father Mitchell Dahood S.J., of the Pontifical Biblical Institute, also participated in the

research, and so actively that he wrote an appendix to the English language edition of the Mondadori book (*The Archives of Ebla — An Empire Inscribed in Clay — With Afterword by Mitchell Dahood S.J.*, Doubleday & Company, Garden City NY 1981). I definitively turned my energies to Ebla and Sumerian, because during a journey to Turkey I met Professor Dr. Heinrich Otten at the premises of the German Archaeological Mission in Boğazköy. I told him that I intended to publish my thesis on Hittite colophons. He replied that he too would be publishing the same corpus and wished me luck. Despite the fact that Giovanni assured me of the assistance of Professor Onofrio Carruba of the University of Pavia, the comparison with a *monstre sacré* of Hittitology, such as Otten, led me to abandon the discipline forever and the thesis remained unpublished, in the form discussed at the degree session.

Unfortunately, the enthusiasm of the work around Giovanni was also accompanied by jealousies and rivalries, to which Giovanni's temper unfortunately gave way, and in which the quarrel I mentioned earlier played a significant role. Vanna left the group in 1976, and Franco in 1980. The case that struck me most concerned another member of the group, Amedeo Alberti, the protagonist of an unpleasant episode for which I refer to the preface of my study, *Il pantheon di Abu-Šalābīkh*. Naples, Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1986, pp. v-vii.

I mention just one moment: the text of the Eblaite letter beginning with the obscure graphemes AN NA ŠEŠ / AN TA ŠEŠ, which Giovanni, as he got out of bed one morning, suddenly figured out to be Semitic personal pronouns: *anna šeš / anta šeš* "I am your brother, you are my brother". But this was not the only exciting episode: there were many, including the incorrect one when Giovanni defined that the GAL2.DUB2 graphemes expressed the verb *iktub*, which is the verb that corresponds to the Akkadian *šaṭāru / šapāru*, thus determining that the Eblaite language belongs to Western Semitic. Following studies clarified the correct interpretation of this and other misconceptions.

What Professor Dr. Dietrich Otto Edzard wrote in the *Vorwort* of the first volume of the scientific edition of Eblaite texts of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Syria, ARET 2 (Archivi Reali di Ebla — Testi), *Verwaltungstexte verschiedener Inhalts* (*Aus dem Archiv L.2769*), University of Rome "La Sapienza", published in 1981, remains as a recognition of Giovanni's work.

Giovanni's difficult temper played a role in my breaking off of this friendship and collaboration with him in 1994. There was no possibility of restoring them. But, in this particular sense, *mors omnia solvit*, and after his passing away, the memory of the good times has remained, and the memory of my participation in the "decipherment" of an unknown dead language (known writing but unknown language), an experience that few have been fortunate enough to be able to live.

A Souvenir by Sergio Picchioni (Università di Bologna)

Sono oltremodo riconoscente per l'iniziativa promossa da Maria Giovanna Biga a ricordo del Prof. Giovanni Pettinato, nostro indimenticabile maestro, a cui io debbo carriera e idee.

È vero che so molte cose di lui anche private, ma che appunto perché private penso sia bene che tali rimangano. Del resto potrei ricordare di lui alcuni aspetti che lo hanno riguardato, e in particolare: il suo carattere intrattabile, il suo illuminante giudizio scientifico, la sua assoluta mancanza di parzialità e di nepotismo, l'incomprensione e la irricoscenza di cui è tuttora oggetto, l'immagine deformata che il mondo accademico anche internazionale gli ha addebitato. Ognuno di questi aspetti merita però un breve commento.

Carattere: generalmente chi ha carattere, ha un brutto carattere, e Pettinato aveva un fortissimo carattere. Sabatino Moscati lo definì l'uomo dell'accetta, e di fatto Pettinato non lesinava né tagli né stroncature, così come non ammetteva nepotismi. Non accettò infatti mai di favorire nella carriera un suo nipote. Ma va anche detto, a sua discolpa, che l'asprezza caratteriale di Pettinato era dovuta anche, come lui stesso mi confidò, alle umiliazioni che come "terrone" italiano aveva subite nell'ambiente universitario tedesco.

Giudizio scientifico: per questo basta apprezzare sia l'identificazione da lui compiuta del sito di Tell Mardich quale antica Ebla, sia l'attribuzione dell'eblaita al ramo delle lingue semitiche.

Irriconoscenza: quasi tutti gli studiosi che debbono a Pettinato metodologia, sapere, e carriera o lo ignorano, o a volte lo descrivono come antagonista. Sta di fatto che alla tumulazione di Pettinato, avvenuta con la deposizione in una squallida fossa, non era presente nessuno dei suoi allievi romani. E neppure un rappresentante dell'Accademia dei Lincei di cui Pettinato era socio corrispondente. Pettinato sembrava non fosse mai esistito.

Immagine deformata: le sfortune di Pettinato, e le critiche alle sue tesi scientifiche, sono cominciate a seguito delle proposte identificazioni, e relativi commenti, che i testi rinvenuti a Ebla sembravano indicare. Una vera campagna denigratoria, partita dall'America e poi ripetuta anche in Europa bollò Pettinato quale immaginifico autore e invisio antisionista. A seguito poi della sconsiderata cessione dei testi eblaiti ad autori stranieri, invece che riservare l'onore della loro pubblicazione alla sola Italia, così come avrebbe voluto Moscati, esautorando oltretutto Pettinato dalla sua funzione di epigrafista ufficiale della missione archeologica, ha gettato su di lui ulteriore discredito e incomprensione.

In Memory of Prof. Giovanni Pettinato, with Gratitude by Valeria degli Abbatì (Allieva di G. Pettinato alla Sapienza – Università di Roma)

I would start these few words thanking Prof. Pettinato for guiding me, with patience and esteem, to take the first steps in my university career. His teachings were essential for my education and his explanations of ancient texts are the first I look at and will always be a precious fount of inspiration to learn something new.

I met the Professor in 2006 when I was little more than a freshman, and I followed his lessons until 2009 when he left the University. My first recollection of these lessons is cigarette smell that accompanied the fascinating tales of the deeds of Gilgamesh. Tablet after tablet I was getting to know not only the heroes of Mesopotamian Mythology, but also the Professor who revealed something about himself with his comments always a bit sarcastic about the ingenuousness of the king of Uruk. Professor Pettinato was generous and amusing, who didn't make his students weigh his career, but on the contrary, he brought out the best we could give.

Some years later I'm still very proud of his great regard for me, although I was such a young student; in his cycle of lessons on the ancestors of Gilgamesh, he asked me to write about the myth of Lugalbanda and the Anzu Bird and when he said that he had made my pages available to older students, he gave me such a demonstration of his trust. Without knowing it, or knowing it so well I suppose, he spurred me to find a personal method of study based on primary fonts and not on the commentary, even that from someone more expert than me. As the Anzu Bird did with Lugalbanda, he gave me tools for achieve my goals, "deciding my destiny".

I remember with a bit of melancholy the evenings passed in his office, talking with the Professor about Mythology, History and Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, and his affectionate "Certo, è ovvio!" that taught me never to feel completely successful and I still hear his voice when I'm studying something new; saying so, he gave me a great lesson in humility and how important it is to improve and I'm trying to follow his words.

I never hid my fondness for the Archaeology to Professor Pettinato, it was he who advised what was the best for my career and he was always there for me any time I needed. To demonstrate that all his teachings gave birth to a little plant in me, I wanted to dedicate the chapter on Early Dynastic in my PhD Dissertation to him and I'm sure he would have appreciated.

And if from that little plan some flower bloomed, I would end my words with a quote from the *Tale of Lugalbanda* and the Anzu Bird that made me, unworthily, his pupil:

*Well now, Lugalbanda,
Like a ship full of precious metal, a ship full of grain,
a ship delivering the apple harvest,
a ship piled up with cucumbers, so high that it casts shade,
a ship laden lavishly at the harvest field
return proudly in this manner to the brickwork of Kulab!*⁸

8 “The Return of Lugalbanda”, in H. Vanstiphout, *Epics of Sumerian Kings. The Matter of Aratta* (SBL — *Writings of Ancient World* 20), Boston, 2004. 143 (rr. 135-140).