

ANTONIO LEBOLO:  
HIS LIFE AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO EGYPTOLOGY

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Introduction

Among the early collectors of Egyptian antiquities, few had more colorful - or more controversial - careers than Antonio Lebolo. Who was this man? Why is he, and his accomplishments virtually forgotten among Egyptian scholars today? Adventurer, archaeologist, and rival of the great Belzoni,<sup>1</sup> Lebolo's finds are now housed in the major museums of Europe. Several mummies discovered by Lebolo were acquired by the young church in 1835. Thus, he and the mummies became intimately connected with the saga of the Book of Abraham. It is the purpose of this paper to shed some light on the forgotten life of Antonio Lebolo, and his contributions to Egyptology.

LEBOLO'S EARLY LIFE

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<sup>1</sup>Giovanni Battista Belzoni was an Italian explorer and collector of antiquities in Egypt. He was for a time employed by Henry Salt to collect artifacts for Salt's collection. Belzoni was doing excavation in Thebes at the same time as Lebolo. Dawson notes the two were rivals; for more information on Belzoni see Warren R. Dawson, Who Was Who in Egyptology, 1972, 23-24. Belzoni Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries (London: John Murry, 1822), Vol. II, 129, he calls both Lebolo and Rossignano "renegados" and agents of Drovetti.

Lebolo was born in Castellamonte, a small town which sits at the base of the Italian Alps, on January 22, 1781.<sup>2</sup> This area was on the French-Italian border, and in the late 1700's it was known as Savoy, as well as Piedmont. It became part of the French republic in 1803, and by 1812 it was then part of Napoleon's French empire. After the revolution in 1815, Piedmont came under the jurisdiction of Sardinia in the kingdom of Italy.

Dawson, in his Who Was Who in Egyptology describes Lebolo as a "Piedmontese traveler in Egypt."<sup>3</sup> Stanley Mayes in his book The Great Belzoni states that both Lebolo and Rosignano, Drovetti's agents, were Piedmontese.<sup>4</sup> It seems that both Mayes as well as Dawson obtained their information from Belzoni's book

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<sup>2</sup>See H. Donl Peterson, "Antonio Lebolo, His Roots and Branches." This work has been compiled by Dr. Peterson after years of research and contains copies of church records and certificates pertaining to Lebolo's life. This compilation is in Special Collections in the Harold B. Lee Library on the Brigham Young University campus in Provo, Utah. On page 133 of Peterson's work under the date of 1781, it reads: "Lebolo Joannes Petrus Antonius son of Petri and Marianna, Married, born on January 22, 1781 and baptized the following day. Godparents Mr. Petrus Morozzo and Anna Maria wife of Bernardini Meuta."

<sup>3</sup>Warren R. Dawson, Who Was Who in Egyptology, (London: The Egypt Exploration Society, 1972, 166. The second edition of Dawson's book, revised by Eric Uphill, adds more information as will be seen below.)

<sup>4</sup>Stanley Mayes, The Great Belzoni, (London: Putnam, 1959), 173. Dawson, in Who Was Who 1972, 253, describes Rosignano as a "Piedmontese adventurer in Egypt; agents for Drovetti at Thebes where he worked with Antonio Lebolo and joined him in hostile acts against Belzoni."

where he states that "Mr. Lebolo . . . and Rossignino" were "both Piedmontese, and country men of Mr. Drovetti."<sup>5</sup>

#### LEBOLO AS A GENDARME

Little is known about the early life of Antonio Lebolo; however, we learn from some records that he was a "gendarme" in the service of the French. Mayes, in his book, mentions in passing that Lebolo was "a former gendarme of Milan."<sup>6</sup> Count Carlo Vidua tells us that "Mr. Lebolo from Canavese, formerly a police officer in service of France, came to Egypt and was employed by Mr. Drovetti in the excavations, which he does continuously in Thebes." Vidua again states: "Mr. Lebolo served for some time in Piedmont with the carabineers and spoke very highly of his leader. He was also under Count of Agliano in Savoy."<sup>7</sup> This information about Lebolo's earlier life seems to come directly from him, as it appears that Vidua did not know Lebolo before his journey to Thebes. In an unpublished letter from F. Brouzet to Bernardino Drovetti, Brouzet writes: If that good Mr. Lebolo is still with you in Alessandria, please give him

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<sup>5</sup>Giovanni Belzoni, Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries with the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs, and Excavations, in Egypt and Nubia (London: John Murry, 1822), Vol. II, 129.

<sup>6</sup>Stanley Mayes, The Great Belzoni; 173.

<sup>7</sup>"Vidua, Letters," Tom. II, Letter Nos. 34, 35 to the Marchese Doria Di Cirie from Cairo June 28, 1820 (translation by Murray R. Loe). Count Carlo Vidua (1770-1841) was an Italian traveler who visited Egypt in 1820. For more information, see Dawson and Uphill, Who Was Who, 243.

our regards; we wish him all the best in the world in his work." The letter is signed "Your faithful servant, F. Brouzet, Senior Superior Officer of the Royal Gendarmerie, Retired. Turin, August 18, 1820."<sup>8</sup>

It is not precisely clear what connection Brouzet had with Lebolo; however, it seems that the relationship was more than just passing. Giovanni Marro, in his summary of Antonio Lebolo's life, writes: "We came to know that he was an officer of the French Police after he was a Piedmonte Carabinier."<sup>9</sup>

#### LEBOLO AND DROVETTI

There is almost nothing known of Drovetti's early life or of his association with Lebolo at this time. There are some assumptions that can be made, however. Drovetti was born in Barbania in 1776,<sup>10</sup> a few miles from Castellamonte, the

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<sup>8</sup>This letter and others are contained in the papers of Giovanni Marro, now housed in the Accademia Delle Scienze Di Torino. Professor Marro had collected papers and letters that pertain to Drovetti and his work in Egypt. Marro published one volume in 1940 titled: Il Corpo Epistolare di Bernardino Drovetti. Volume II was not finished; however, the summaries and organization were completed before his death. Marro's collection contains many important letters and documents that give added insight to the Drovetti era in Egypt. I, along with Professor H. Donl Peterson, was permitted to go through Marro's unpublished papers, and copied some of these papers that pertain to Lebolo and Drovetti. Hereinafter, these papers will be referred to as "Marro Papers."

<sup>9</sup>"Marro Papers." This was written in Marro's hand and contained a brief summary of some of Lebolo's collections.

<sup>10</sup>Warren R. Dawson, Who Was Who, 90.

birthplace of Lebolo. Drovetti, as well as Lebolo, worked for the French government, Lebolo as a gendarme and carabinieri, and Drovetti as a colonel in Napoleon's army.<sup>11</sup> Drovetti and Lebolo may have worked together or at least been acquainted before Drovetti left for Egypt with Napoleon's army and became the Consul-General.<sup>12</sup>

Following the revolution of 1815 in northern Italy, those will allegiance to, or working for, the French government, may have had to flee for their lives. Vidua suggests that it was this very reason Lebolo came to Egypt.<sup>13</sup> It is not known precisely when Lebolo first appeared in Egypt, but he seems to have been there as early as 1818 working for Drovetti.

#### LEBOLO AS DROVETTI'S AGENT

According to Marro, Lebolo was "hired by Drovetti" as his assistant in the archeological excavations on the necropolis of Thebes.<sup>14</sup> It seems safe to assume that Lebolo was the

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Bernardino Drovetti was born in Piedmont in 1776; he later assumed French nationality and served as a colonel in Napoleon's campaign in Egypt. Drovetti saved the life of Murat, who was Napoleon's brother-in-law, and was given the office of Consul-General to Egypt for France. Dawson states that he "employed many agents to excavate and buy from native diggers, particularly at Thebes, and was quite ruthless in his dealings with any rivals." For more information on Drovetti, see: Dawson's Who Was Who, 1972, 90.

<sup>13</sup>"Vidua Letters," Tom II, letter 35. Vidua writes to the Marchese Doria Cirie that "Mr. Lebolo was a French police officer, in consequence of events he came to Egypt."

<sup>14</sup>"Marro Papers," Marro's summary of Lebolo.

supervising agent in behalf of Drovetti in all of southern Egypt, as most of Drovetti's time was spent as Consul-General. Belzoni reflects his fear of Lebolo's purchasing power and influence among the local Arabs when he writes: "I was anxious to reach Assouan, as I expected no good from the early journey of Lebolo, the agent of Mr. Drovetti." Lebolo had been sent to the island of Phiole to obtain for the Drovetti collection the obelisk which Belzoni so badly wanted for himself. "Lebolo," records Belzoni, "adopted the method of a trick to seduce those simple people: he pretended he could read the hieroglyphics on the obelisk and said it was written that the obelisk belonged to Mr. Drovetti's ancestors; consequently he had a right to it."<sup>15</sup>

Count Vidua, in writing of his stay in the necropolis, speaks of Lebolo as the one who gave "the honors in Thebes." Lebolo was considered by Vidua in his letter to be the "successor of Osimandia and Sesostri" and of his influence states: "His power doesn't go far in the provinces; but in Thebes he is obeyed. The sheik and the caimacan follow his orders; he looks for tombs; he gathers mummies; he finds papyruses; often fifty,

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<sup>15</sup>Belzoni, Narrative of the Operations, 108-11. Belzoni attributes most if not all of the friction which existed between himself and Lebolo to him obtaining the obelisk and not Drovetti. On page 129 of Belzoni's book, he states that when Lebolo became aware that he had obtained the obelisk, Lebolo and his men attacked him to ask "what business I (Belzoni) had to take away an obelisk that did not belong to me; and that I had done so many things of this kind to him, that I should not do any more." It was this event that forced Belzoni to determine that "it was high time for me to quit the country; so I returned to Beban el Malook, and immediately commenced my preparations to depart for Europe," pp. 134, 135.

sixty, even one--two hundred Arabs work under his orders. Drovetti. . .has employed him to preside over the excavations and the diggings continuously done for him in the vicinity of Thebes."<sup>16</sup> In letter No. 34, Vidua writes that even the "Turkish commander respects him for fear of Mr. Drovetti."

It is clear that Lebolo was an important man in the area of Thebes and "acted as dealer"<sup>17</sup> to the Consuls and tourists that came to the Luxor area. He was, adds B. H. Stricker, "the man behind the scenes of all the digging,"<sup>18</sup> as well as most of the purchasers from local Arabs. D'Athanasī, the successor of Belzoni and agent of Henry Salt, was frustrated because of Lebolo's efforts in Thebes. He comments that he (D'Athanasī) made a few purchases, "notwithstanding all of the difficulties which I experienced through the means of a certain Antonio Lebolo, a countryman of M. Drovetti, who had been buying up all the antiquities the Arabs had to sell."<sup>19</sup>

#### LEBOLO'S OWN COLLECTIONS

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<sup>16</sup>"Vidua Letters," Tom. II, No. 35.

<sup>17</sup>B. H. Stricker, "The Death Papyrus of Senaos," *Oudheidkundige Mededeelingen uit het Rijksmuseum Van Oudheden te Leiden* (O.M.R.O.), 23 (1942): 32.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>Giovanni D'Athanasī, A Brief Account of the Researchers and Discoveries in Upper Egypt (London: John Hearne, 1836), 51. Dawson and Uphill, Who Was Who, .

We learn from many sources that Lebolo acted as a special collecting agent for Consul-General Drovetti. Further, Lebolo was allowed to collect antiquities "on his own account,"<sup>20</sup> which he clearly did with much success. Marro, in his summary of Lebolo, states: "He was hired by Drovetti as his assistant in the archaeological excavations on the necropolis of Thebes, with permission to ascertain a personal collection of antiquities."<sup>21</sup>

Unfortunately, the whereabouts of each artifact that Lebolo collected can no longer be determined. As W. D. van Wijngaarden notes: "We can cherish but little hope ever to be fully informed" of what Lebolo sold and what he kept for himself. He continues, "The excavations in Egypt in those days were generally of the nature of robbing and plundering the places where antiquities were found."<sup>22</sup> These "archeologists," if we may use the term, men like Lebolo, Belzoni, Rifaud, and Cailliaud, as James Baikie points out, "are specimens, not of the worst, but of the best work that was being done in Egypt in 1818."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Dawson and Uphill, Who Was Who, 166.

<sup>21</sup>"Marro Papers." This information is contained in Marro's summary of Lebolo. See note 8 above.

<sup>22</sup>W. D. van Wijngaarden, "A Greek-Egyptian Mummie" O.M.R.O., 23 (1942):2.

<sup>23</sup>Quoted by Colin Clair, Strong Man Egyptologist (Oldbourne, 1957), 136, 137. Clair also quotes Burton in reference to Belzoni's tactics. "Belzoni defended himself in a characteristic way, by knocking down an assailant seizing his ankles, and using him as a club upon the foeman's heads. This novel weapon, in the Samson style, gained a ready victory." A graphic description of the conditions under which excavation was carried out in those early days of Egyptian archeology. p. 136.

How large a collection Lebolo amassed is not known, although it appears to have been considerable as Vidua writes that "Mr. Lebolo works successfully in his new career; he found beautiful pieces for the Drovetti Museum; and since he was allowed by him to do some excavations of his own, he gathered for himself a collection, which will bring him a moderate fortune."<sup>24</sup>

The most famous find of Lebolo's was that of the Soter tomb, in the winter of 1819-1820. Minutoli, the Prussian General from Berlin, makes note of this find and states that this tomb was found "in the presence of Mr. Henniker and Grey, and sold in retail by Mr. Lebolo."<sup>25</sup>

Frederick Henniker and his traveling companion, George Frances Grey, were in the village of Al Gournah when the Soter tomb was discovered. This vicinity of Thebes contained a large number of tombs which Henniker writes were "occupied by the Arab and his family, the remainder by cows, goats, dogs, corpses, and other curiosities; in some are to be found ten or twenty mummies; the plain is strewn with broken bones, the coffins are used for firewood, and amomum or bitumen offends the nose wherever there is a fire." Henniker continues: "A mummy may be bought for five or ten shillings, and in consequence of traffic, many of these

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<sup>24</sup>Vidua, Letter No. 34. In Vidua's letter to the Marchese Doria Di Cirie, Lebolo is described as being so successful that he is "allowed to do some diggings of his own."

<sup>25</sup>Heinrich Carl Menu Minutoli, in Abhandlungen Vermischten Inhalts, Vol. I (Berlin: Nicolaus Library, 1831), 173-174.

Troglodytes are become men of property, worth five or six hundred sixpenses."<sup>26</sup>

Henniker, who was present when the tomb was found, describes its discovery:

I was standing by when the resurrection men found a sepulchre, they offered me the haul, unopened, for four guineas. It proves to be Grecian-Egyptian, the first of its kind hitherto discovered; three chambers, fourteen coffins, on each of which was placed a bunch of sycamore branches; these branches fell to atoms at the touch--there are also coffinless bodies, having the appearance of leather, dried in the same manner as is still practiced by the Capuchin friars in Sicily: one of these stood erect at the entrance, the others were prostrate on benches; the heads were shaved; the bears were of a few days growth; on the principal coffin is the following inscription:

The hieroglyphical figures testify to the degeneracy of the art; the papyrus found in his case, is not, as is usual, rolled up, but folded flat; the body was enveloped in thirty linen wrappers, the hands and mouth gilt--from another I copied an inscription, which attests the coffin to be about sixteen hundred and fifty years old--some long earthenware jars were in the tomb, but empty.<sup>27</sup>

As a tourist, Henniker had the opportunity of viewing the first Roman-Egyptian tomb to be found, items of which were eventually acquired by at least six European museums.

Contemporary writings attribute the discovery of the Soter tomb to Lebolo. The curator of the Royal Egyptian Museum of Turin, Giulio Di San Quinino, was different than other tombs not being excavated in stone, but was at the "bottom of a well

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<sup>26</sup>Frederick Henniker, Notes, during a visit to Egypt, Nubia, the Oasis Mount Sinai, and Jerusalem (London: John Murray, 1832), 136.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 136, 137.

structured in brick and ornamented throughout with various pictures."<sup>28</sup> The tomb, writes Di San Quintino, was different than other tombs not being excavated in stone, but was at the "bottom of a well structured in brick and ornamented throughout with various pictures."<sup>29</sup>

Henniker did not buy the complete collection but only the "principal coffin," as he called it, of the Archon Soter. Either Henniker or his servant unwrapped the mummy, but found nothing besides a papyrus "folded flat," unlike the usual roll. The mummy of Soter, as well as the mummy of Tphous, which was purchased at the same time by Henniker's traveling companion, Grey, was lost, according to Stricker.<sup>30</sup>

D'Athanasī, who was at Thebes at the time of discovery, purchased the mummy and coffin of one "Soter Corneliou," which he describes as "the finest specimen of all." "An English traveller," writes D'Athanasī, purchased the mummy of the "governor of Thebes" from Lebolo. Obviously, this is Henniker. D'Athanasī then laments the fate of the Archon of Thebes: "Having taken it into his [Henniker's] head, whilst on his road to Cairo, that there might be some gold coins in this mummy, he

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<sup>28</sup>Guilio Di San Quintino, Lezioni Archeologiche (Tornio: Stamperia Reale, 1824), 6.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>B. H. Stricker "The Death Papyrus of Sensaos," 32. For some reason the coffins were saved and later sold to Henry Salt for his collection. As was mentioned earlier, mummies could be bought for five to ten shillings, and at the time these mummies may have seemed unimportant to Henniker and Grey.

caused it to be opened, and, not finding any thing in it of the nature he sought, he threw it into the Nile. . .Such was the fate of the governor of Thebes."<sup>31</sup>

The contents of the tomb of Soter is discussed by Quintino in his Lezioni Archeologiche. Here he begins at the opening of the tomb:

Here twelve or thirteen sarcophagi were found; some were well-preserved and others were not. All were square-shaped with semicircular lids, except one which was cut in the common way, in the shape of the human body, and they were all adorned with the typical religious hieroglyphic inscriptions and ornamented with many-colored figures and with a portrait of the deceased.<sup>32</sup>

These few mummies, all from a single find, were, in the words of San Quintono, "destined to a variety of fates."<sup>33</sup>

In the letters of C. J. Reuven, the director of the Museum at Leiden, to M. Letronne of the University of France, Reuven lists the whereabouts of the mummies.

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<sup>31</sup>D'Athanasia, A Brief Account, 51. See also Stricker ("Death Papyrus," 31).

<sup>32</sup>Di San Quintino, Lezioni Archeologiche, 6. Stricker ("Death Papyrus," 31), stats that Lebolo was a "well-known private collector," and usually made a habit of sending a report of the find along with the mummies. The quote probably came from the report from Lebolo to San Quintino accompanying the mummies.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

Mr. Grey had one mummy, that of Tphout (now in the British Museum).<sup>34</sup>

Mr. Salt the coffin of one mummy, that of the archon Soter with the MS (in the British Museum).

Mr. Drovetti had three; to wit: that of Petemenoph, son of Pabot, and two others, each of a double casket, without any Greek inscription (these are in the Museum of Turin).

Mr. De Minutoli probably had three. To start out, Mr. Di San Quintino attributes to him expressly following Mr. Lebolo the mummy of Senchonsis also called Saaulis, daughter of Picot, that must have perished on the sea with half of the collection, inasmuch as it was not found with the rest of the collection, that arrived in Berlin. Furthermore, this last half contains two coffins of the same type of those discovered in the tomb, the one of Phasminis, daughter of Heraclius and the others Sensaos and Tkauthi her sister. These two coffins came from the same tomb, but all the circumstances make this conjecture possible.

Mr. Cailliaud had one mummy, Petemenoph, son of the archon Soter (Kings Room of the Royal Library of Paris).

Mr. D'Anastasi had one mummy Sensaos, daughter of the archon Soter (Leiden Museum).

Finally, Mr. Lebolo conserved one of them intact, in the ordinary form of mummies (in Trieste in 1824; but possibly passed on later to some museum).<sup>35</sup>

Reuens gives a total of ten mummies, and the coffin of Soter which then accounts for eleven found in the tomb by Lebolo. This presents one problem. Henniker states that there were "fourteen coffins"<sup>36</sup> in contrast to Reuven's eleven. One more mummy can be added to bring the total to twelve, since Reuven records that

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<sup>34</sup>This seems to be a mistake on the part of Reuven since the British Museum has the coffin and not the mummy. This agrees with Stricker, who states that the mummy of "Tphous. . . purchased by Henniker's companion was lost." ("Death Papyrus," 32).

<sup>35</sup>C. J. C. Reuven, Lettres a M. Letronne, (Leide: J. Luchtmans, 1850), Art. II, "Momie Grecque," 42, 43.

<sup>36</sup>Henniker, Notes, 136.

there was a mummy in the Leiden Museum "that could have been part of this same collection."<sup>37</sup>

Van Wijngaarden states that the twelfth mummy mentioned by Reuvens originated from the "tomb of Soter the archon, which was discovered and plundered during the winter of 1819-1820 at Thebes."<sup>38</sup> This then brings the count to twelve known, leaving only two to reconcile the difference of Henniker's fourteen.

Perhaps a few more mummies may be accounted for, since Minutoli writes: "Concerning the other mummies found by Mr. Lebolo in the same tomb, he opened some of them hoping that they would contain a few papyrus or any other precious object."<sup>39</sup> The destruction of mummies in order to find gold jewelry, papyrus,

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<sup>37</sup>Reuvens, Lettres, 44. This mummy is described as being "without coffin (no. 9 of the D'Anastasi mummies), wrapped in cloth, whose back is plastered and painted in effigy of the deceased, which represents a bearded man dressed, as far as we can tell, in Greek pallium garb, and wearing rings on his fingers. This mummy offers the most probability of having been part of the same tomb that contained the mummy of Sensaos; first, because in the catalog of Mr. D'Anastasi it is placed directly after these already mentioned, and it appears that objects of the same nature, received together, have been described together; in the second place, because the painting of the deceased resembles very closely the style of the painting that we see on the cloth and the portraits of the Charles X Museum."

<sup>38</sup>Van Wijngaarden, ("Greek-Egyptian Mummie," 2) states that this mummy is unique for two reasons. In the first place, the mummy is important "because of itself it has so many peculiarities that it may be counted among the most important pieces of the Egyptian collection of the Museum." In the second place, this mummy is "worthy of attention because it was part of a well-known tomb discovery. After all, the presumption expressed by Reuvens and mentioned above, that is originated from the same tomb as the mummy of Sensaos. He also stated that this mummy is a "member of Soter the archon's family."

<sup>39</sup>Minutoli, Vermischten Inhalts, 164.

and other precious artifacts was a common practice in that era. As Henniker notes, mummies were plentiful and could be bought for very little from the local inhabitants.

San Quintino describes three mummy masks that came from the Soter tomb found by Lebolo. However, he states the mummies did not exist.<sup>40</sup> Minutoli believes that these three masks came "from other mummies dismembered by Mr. Lebolo."<sup>41</sup> The eleven mummies mentioned by Reuvens plus the unnamed mummy in Leiden make twelve. The three death masks at Turin that come from the same tomb gives a total of fifteen. It could be, however, that one of the death masks of Turin belongs to the governor of Thebes, the archon Soter. This could be very possible, since Reuvens states if the coffin of Soter "was passed on to Mr. Salt it is Lebolo that sold it to him, without doubt with the papyrus." Lebolo could well have kept the mask of Soter which ended up in Turin. In any event, twelve of the fourteen coffins seen by Henniker are accounted for in at least six European museums.

#### OTHER COLLECTIONS

The sale of the artifacts and mummies of the tomb of Soter was made by Lebolo as an antiquities dealer and not as an agent

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<sup>40</sup>Di San Quintino, 10, 11. Di San Quintino says that these masks were "taken from the mummies that, as I have already said, were found by Signor Lebolo in the same tomb as that of our child, and that they were undone by Lebolo himself."

<sup>41</sup>Minutoli, Vermischten Inhalts, 167.

of Drovetti. Drovetti, however, did acquire three mummies from this tomb in his collection that found a final resting place in Turin with many other artifacts acquired by Lebolo. This first collection of Drovetti's was sold to the king of Sardinia in 1824 for 400,000 lire.<sup>42</sup>

L. A. Balboni tells us that in 1820, Lebolo was a collector of antiquities in Egypt and sold to Burghart a "rich collection of antiquities for the Imperial Museum of Vienna."<sup>43</sup> This collection is also discussed by Komorzynski, who states that it was purchased in Egypt in 1821 by Ernst August Burghart under the direction of the emperor, king, court and state council. The largest share of this museum's collection was brought by Burghart from Antonio Lebolo in Alexandria.<sup>44</sup>

In a letter from Gau<sup>45</sup> to Drovetti dated May 10, 1820, Gau discussed another collection of Lebolo's:

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<sup>42</sup>Dawson and Uphill, Who Was Who, 90.

<sup>43</sup>L. A. Balboni, Gl'Italiani nella Civiltà Egiziana del Secolo XIX (Alessandria d'Egitto: Tipo-Lit. V. Penasson, 1906), Vol. I, 239. This reference and the detail of the purchase of antiquities from Lebolo comes through the "Lady Amalia Nizzoli that records it in her 'Memories on Egypt.'" Marro, in his summary of Lebolo, states that Lebolo sold "his own cabinet to Burghart" for the Imperial Museum of Vienna (Marro Papers).

<sup>44</sup>See also Egor Komorzynski, Das Erbe des Alten Agypten, (Vienna: H. Bauer, 1965), 65. This book is referred to by H. Donl Peterson in his article presented at the Sperry Symposium, January, 1980, entitled, "Mummies and Manuscripts: An Update on the Lebolo-Chandler story."

<sup>45</sup>Franz Christian Gau, an artist and architect, was in Egypt in 1818-1819 and became acquainted with Drovetti and Lebolo. For more information, see Dawson and Uphill, Who Was Who, 114.

The antiquities that the Roman bought from Mr. Lebolo and Mr. Joseph have been bought through the government, and they (Lebolo and Joseph) were paid 10,000 Roman crowns, and they are now displayed in the Vatican Museum; I have been told that there is an enormous quantity of objects and, what amazed me, is that there are more than ten statues made of granite and all are well preserved. Where did he (Lebolo) find them???<sup>46</sup>

In a letter to Drovetti from F. Cailliaud, he speaks of "Lebolo's tomb:"

When we arrived in Gournah, Mr. Lebolo brought me to his house where together we opened the tomb where he had collected the antiquities. I have personally broken off the seal of the trunk containing the papyri and one after the other one I inspected them, but, as I had foreseen, the strong one with Hieroglyphics does not exist. I found three of them hieratic and Greek characters which nonetheless will be of great interest for the knowledge of Hieroglyphics.

I think that it is still possible to find instruments. The machine of which you have spoken with Mr. Lebolo, is a sort of lyre, it only needs strings. Actually, he has some pieces of great interest.<sup>47</sup>

Lebolo kept his collection in Al Gournah and in the tomb he inhabited--what place could be safer? In his letters, Vidua also speaks of Lebolo's tomb, as did Cailliaud.

...Who, do you think, gave me the honor of those sepulchers, and who reigns in Thebes in exchange of the dead king? A Piedmontese. Mr. Lebolo from Canavese ... Mr. Lebolo works successfully in his new career; he found beautiful pieces for the Drovetti Museum; and since he was allowed by him to do some excavations of his own, he gathered for himself a small collection, which will bring him a moderate fortune. In those ten

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<sup>46</sup>"Marro Papers." This letter is addressed to Drovetti and speaks much of Gau's drawings and his need for money. Marro, in his summary of Lebolo, states that this collection was sold to "the pontifical government and was a rich collection of Egyptian antiquities," and that they were now "displayed in Rome in the Vatican Museum."

<sup>47</sup>"Marro Papers." Letter from F. Cailliaud to B. Drovetti, dated August 23, 1820.

days that I lived in Thebes, Mr. Lebolo accompanied me, took me everywhere, had me come to dinner at his house, which is among monuments and half embedded in tombs, all filled with mummies, papyruses, and little statues. An Egyptian bas-relief was the top of the door; we made fire with pieces of mummies' coffins...Oh, if Sesostri had lifted his head up, and had seen a Piedmontese commanding in the city with one hundred doors.<sup>4a</sup>

Existing records and journals leave little doubt that Lebolo was a dealer in antiquities, as well as a collecting agent for Drovetti. He excavated, and then sold, acting as archeologist and merchant. He was not better than another, but was one of the best among many that time period had to offer.

#### MUMMIES IN AMERICA

Eleven mummies, found by Lebolo were eventually sent to the United States, four of which were purchased by the church in Kirtland in 1835. The history of the mummies was published in a church publication in December of 1835. It reads:

The public mind has been excited of late, by reports which have been circulated concerning certain Egyptian mummies and ancient records which were purchased by certain gentlemen of Kirtland, last July... The records were obtained from one of the catacombs in Egypt, near the place where one stood the renowned city of Thebes, by the celebrated French Traveler, Antonio Lebolo in the year 1831. He procured license from Mehemet Ali, then Viceroy of Egypt, under the protection of Chevalier Drovetti, the French Consul, in the year 1828; employed 433 men four months and two days (if I understood correctly, Egyptian or Turkish soldiers), at from four to six cents per diem, each man entered the catacomb June 7, 1831, and obtained eleven mummies in the same catacomb: about one hundred embalmed after the first order, and deposited

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<sup>4a</sup>Vidua, Letter No. 34.

and placed in niches, and two or three hundred after the second and third order, and laid upon the floor or bottom of the grand cavity, the two last orders of embalmed were so decayed that they could not be removed, and only eleven of the first, found in the niches. On the way from Alexandria to Paris, he put in at Trieste, and after ten days illness, expired. This was in the year 1832. Previous to his decease, he made a will of the whole to Mr. Michael H. Chandler, then in Philadelphia, Pa. his nephew whom he supposed to have been in Ireland. Accordingly the whole were sent to Dublin, addressed according, and Mr. Chandler's friends ordered them sent to New York, where they were received at the custom house, in the winter or spring of 1833. In April of the same year, Mr. Chandler paid the duties upon his Mummies, and took possession of the same. Up to this time they had not been taken out of the coffins nor the coffins opened. On opening the coffins he discovered that in connection with two of the bodies, were something rolled up with the same kind of linen, saturated with the same bitumen, which, when examined, proved to be two rolls of papyrus, previously mentioned. I may add that two or three other small pieces of papyrus, with astronomical calculations, epitaphs, etc. were found with others of the Mummies.<sup>49</sup>

Concerning the discovery, we must rely on sources that are not even second hand. According to the Chandler/Cowdery account, it states that the records and mummies came from the area of Thebes and were discovered by Antonio Lebolo. There is no question that this is possible, since Lebolo worked almost exclusively in the vicinity of Thebes. He also carried out excavations on his own as is seen with the Soter find and probable others.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Messenger and Advocate, 2:3 (December, 1835); 232-33. This was recorded by Oliver Cowdery, who interviewed Michael H. Chandler within six months of the purchase.

<sup>50</sup>It would be naive to assume that Lebolo did no digging on his own, or did no more than the Soter excavation, when considering Lebolo sold his own collections to the Vatican and to Burghart for the Imperial Museum of Vienna.

As to the date, there is a problem. I am unaware of any record of Lebolo being in Egypt after December of 1821.<sup>=1</sup> This does not mean in any way that he could not have been or would not have been in Egypt any number of times after 1821.

Dawson, in his Who Was Who, states that Lebolo died in Trieste in 1823. The second edition leaves the death date open in light of Cowdery's account above.<sup>=2</sup> However, this is not possible since the church register in Castellamonte records Lebolo's death there on February 19, 1830.<sup>=3</sup> Was Chandler mistaken on the death date? Was he misinformed? Was it Lebolo at all that discovered the tomb? The date for the discovery by Lebolo himself is wrong; of this, there is no doubt. Even if the discovery took place on "June 7, 1831" as stated by Chandler/Cowdery, the time allowed to accomplish all that the

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<sup>=1</sup>Balboni, Gl'Italiani nella Civiltà Egiziana, 307, 308. Balboni, in his book has a copy of a letter written by Lebolo to Segate, dated November 25, 1821, Lebolo being in Egypt at that time. Lebolo's marriage record is dated June 12, 1824 at Venice. The record states, "...born in Castellamonte...presently domiciled in Alexandria Egypt" (H. Donl Peterson, "Mummies and Manuscripts," 1980).

<sup>=2</sup>Dawson and Uphill, Who Was Who, 166. Speaking of the mummies Uphill states that "Further ones appear to have been received in America...which if correct shows that Lebolo cannot have died in 1823 as previously thought."

<sup>=3</sup>A copy of Lebolo's death entry is in the position of H. Donl Peterson. It reads: "1830 Lebolo Antonio the wife of whom is Anna Dufour, African woman, son of Pietro and Marianna Meuta, aged of fifty years, provided with sacraments, died on the nineteenth day of February and the next day buried."

report indicated would be questionable.<sup>54</sup> Although we can only make assumptions about the difference in dating, other details that Chandler gave about the mummies incline us to question his veracity.

"He procured license from Hememet Ali." This would have had to have been done in order to "personally" excavate in Egypt at that time. If Lebolo was acting as an independent, he would need a license from Ali. However, if he were operating as an agent of Drovetti, "with permission to ascertain a personal collection,"<sup>55</sup> he would need no license, but would then be "under the protection of" Drovetti.<sup>56</sup>

The license was procured by Lebolo, according to Chandler/Cowdery, in 1828. This very well could have been if Lebolo had returned to do excavations on his own.

The report then speaks of Lebolo employing 433 men, four months and two days (such exact numbers!). This is not hard to believe in light of Vidua's comment that Lebolo would sometimes

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<sup>54</sup>If the discovery took place in June of 1831, the mummies would then have to be removed and transported from Qurna to Cairo, and from there to Alexandria. Once there, they would have to be packed and crated for the voyage to Trieste where they would need to be unloaded and moved to where Lebolo was to die. Once the will was probated (and the freight paid), the mummies were then to proceed to Ireland. After the search for Michael Chandler failed, his "friends" sent them to New York. From the date of entering the tomb to the time Chandler received the mummies was about twenty-two months. It is possible, but not probable.

<sup>55</sup>"Marro Papers." Marro's summary of Lebolo. See note 8 above.

<sup>56</sup>Vidua, in letter No. 34, writes that even the "Turkish commander respects him (Lebolo) for fear of Mr. Drovetti."

have up to "three hundred men at his command."<sup>57</sup> According to this account, after entering the tomb, they obtained eleven mummies; probably those had coffins and could be removed intact. It would be surprising if there were not more than eleven coffins in the tomb, and as habit dictated in the past, the better ones were opening looking for valuable artifacts.<sup>58</sup>

"One hundred mummies after the first order, and 'one to two hundred after the second and third order' were contained in the tomb." Of the two to three hundred mummies in the tomb, most were in such a state of decay that only eleven could be removed. As Henniker stated, there were more than fourteen mummies in the Soter tomb and all but those fourteen were too decayed to be removed."<sup>59</sup>

Belzoni speaks of such a tomb as described by Chandler/Cowdery:

After the exertion of entering into such a place, through a passage of fifty, a hundred, three hundred, or perhaps six hundred yards, nearly overcome, I sought a resting-place, found one, and contrived to sit; but when my weight bore on the body of an Egyptian, it crushed like a bandbox. I naturally had recourse to my hands to sustain my weight, but they found no better support; so that I sank altogether among the broken mummies, with a crash of bones, rags, and wooden cases, which raised such a dust as kept me motionless for a quarter of an hour, waiting till it subsided again. I could not remove from the place, however, without increasing it, and every step I took I crushed a mummy in some part or another. Once I was conducted from such a place to another resembling it through a passage

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Henniker, Notes, 137. See notes 30 and 31 above.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

of about twenty feet in length, no wider than body could be forced through. It was choked with mummies, and I could not pass without putting my face in contact with that of some decayed Egyptian; but as the passage inclined downwards, my own weight helped me on; however, I could not avoid being covered with bones, legs, arms, and heads rolling from above. Thus, I proceeded from one cave to another all full of mummies piled up in various ways some standing, some lying, and some on their heads. The purpose of my researches was to rob the Egyptians of their papyri; of which I found a few hidden in their breasts, under their arms, in the space above the knees, on the leg, and covered by numerous folds of cloth that envelop the mummy.<sup>60</sup>

It is possible that this large number of mummies could have been in the tomb with the eleven that Chandler received. However, there is one problem. There are not that many known tombs in Qurna that could accommodate two or three hundred living, much less mummified, people. Could the eleven mummies that Chandler received have come from more than one tomb? Could they derive from Lebolo's last collection, sold after his death?

Lebolo did not make a will leaving the eleven mummies to Michael H. Chandler. The will of Antonio Lebolo was found in the fall of 1984 and contained no mention of a Michael H. Chandler, or the eleven mummies. The will itself was over two hundred pages, most of which listed Lebolo's belongings. From his will, Lebolo obviously passed away a wealthy and influential man in his community.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Mayes, The Great Belzoni, 160.

<sup>61</sup>The will is housed in the state archives in Torino. Mr. Comollo, H. Donl Peterson and myself were in Torino for the purpose of locating the will when it was found. Copies of the will are in the possession of Professor Peterson and myself.

Where then did the eleven mummies that Michael Chandler acquired from? At the time the will was found, and in the same archives, the heirs of Antonio Lebolo were filing suit against one Alban Oblasser, dated July 30, 1831. This suit charged Oblasser, who then resided in Trieste, of the sale of "eleven mummies" that he had been given by Lebolo to sell on consignment. The sale of these mummies by Oblasser left monies owing the estate of the Lebolo heirs.<sup>62</sup> Could these "eleven mummies" be the same "eleven mummies" that Chandler received?

Another account of Chandler receiving the mummies is giving in 1842 by P. P. Pratt.

A gentleman, travelling in Egypt, made a selection of several mummies, of the best kind of embalming, and of course, in the best state of preservation; on his way to England he died, bequeathing them to a gentleman of the name of Chandler. They arrived in the Thames, but it was found the gentleman was in America, they were then forwarded to New York and advertised, when Mr. Chandler came forward and claimed them. One of the mummies, on being unrolled, had underneath the cloths in which it was wrapped, lying upon the breast, a roll of papyrus, in an excellent state of preservation, written in Egyptian character, and illustrated in the manner of our engraving, which is a copy from a portion of it. The mummies, together with the record, have been exhibited, generally, throughout the States, previous to their falling into our hands.<sup>63</sup>

In light of the "Oblasser suit," this account seems even more plausible than the Chandler/Cowdery "will" story.

However Chandler came by the mummies, in "April of 1833" he paid the duty and took possession of them. From New York "he

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<sup>62</sup>A copy of this suit is in the possession of H. Donl Peterson as well as myself.

<sup>63</sup>The Latter-Day Millennial Star, 3:3 (July, 1842), 46.

took his collection to Philadelphia, where he exhibited them for a compensation." Cowdery continues, "from Philadelphia he visited Harrisburgh, and other places east of the mountains." Newspaper accounts and advertisements verify that Chandler did exhibit his collection. A Philadelphia newspaper contained the following:

#### EGYPTIAN MUMMIES

The largest collection of EGYPTIAN MUMMIES ever exhibited in this city, is now to be seen at the Masonic Hall, in Chestnut Street above Seventh.

They were found in the vicinity of Thebes, by the celebrated traveler Antonio Lebolo and Chevalier Drovetti, General Consul of France in Egypt.

Some writings on Papyrus [sic] found with the mummies, can also be seen, and will afford, no doubt, much satisfaction to Amateurs of Antiquities.

Admittance 25 cents, children half price. Open from 9 A.M. till 2 P.M., and from 3 P.M. to 6.

Ap 3 - d3W

This article began on April 3rd and ran for three weeks.<sup>64</sup>

The Hartford Republican ran this note while the mummies were on exhibition in Philadelphia: "Nine mummies, recently found in the vicinity of Thebes, are now exhibiting at the Masonic Hall, Philadelphia."<sup>65</sup>

By this time two mummies were already missing from the collection of eleven. In Pratt's account above, Chandler opened one coffin and unrolled one mummy at the customs house. Cowdery,

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<sup>64</sup>U. S. Gazette, published by Joseph R. Chandler, Philadelphia, Wednesday, April 3, 1833, p. 3.

<sup>65</sup>The Hartford Republican, Belle Air, Hartford County, Maryland, 3:41 (Thursday, May 23, 1833):1.

in speaking of this incident, says: "When Dr. Chandler discovered that there was something with the Mummies, he supposed, or hoped it might be some diamonds or other valuable metal, and was no little chagrined when he saw his disappointment."<sup>66</sup> As noted above, one mummy may have been destroyed at the customs house while Chandler searched it for the gold of the Pharaohs.

Two mummies appear to have been bought by Samuel George Morton in Philadelphia. He lists in his Catalogue of Skulls under item numbers 48, 60, "48. Embalmed head of an Egyptian girl, eight years of age, from the Theban catacombs. Egyptian form, with a single lock of long fine hair. Dissected by me before the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, December 10, 1833." There is little question that this mummy came from the Chandler mummies. Entry number 60 leaves no doubt: "Embalmed head of an Egyptian lady about 16 years of age, brought from the catacombs of Al Gourn, near Thebes, by the late Antonio Lebolo, of whose heirs I purchased it, together with the entire body; the latter dissected before the Academy of Natural Sciences, on the 10th and 17th of December, 1833, in the presence of eight members and others. Egyptian form, with long fine hair."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Messenger and Advocate, p. 234.

<sup>67</sup>Samuel George Morton, Catalogue of Skulls, (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Thompson, 1849), 38, 39. Both of these mummies were from Thebes and were dissected the same day by Morton.

By the time Chandler reached Baltimore, the number of mummies had dwindled to six. We read: "P.S. The citizens are respectfully informed that the Manager has received from the vicinity of Thebes that celebrated city of Ancient Egypt, Six strangers illustrious from their antiquity, count probably an existence at least 1,000 years anterior to the advent of our blessed Savior..."<sup>66</sup>

On September 9, 1833, we see in the Harrisburg Chronicle: "SIX EGYPTIAN MUMMIES now exhibiting in the Masonic Hall, Harrisburg." By the time Chandler reached Cleveland in 1835, he was tired of "life on the road." Following the typical advertisement of the mummies we read: "The collection is offered for sale by the Proprietor."<sup>67</sup>

About three months later, they were bought by the church in Kirtland, Ohio. In the journal of Joseph Smith, it reads for the date of July 3, 1835: "On the 3rd of July, Michael H. Chandler came to Kirtland to exhibit some Egyptian mummies. There were four human figures, together with some two or more rolls of papyrus covered with hieroglyphic figures and devices."<sup>70</sup>

On the 6th of July "some of the Saints at Kirtland purchased the mummies and papyrus."<sup>71</sup> Joseph Smith then kept the mummies

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<sup>66</sup>American and Commercial Daily Advertiser, Baltimore, July 22, 1833. This article was under the section for the Baltimore Museum and ran through August 9, 1833.

<sup>67</sup>Cleveland Advertiser, Cleveland, Ohio, Thursday, March 26, 1835.

<sup>70</sup>Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret, 1973), 2:235.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 236.

and papyrus in his possession until his death in 1844. They then passed to his mother who kept them until her death in 1855. Eventually it appears that they were acquired by the Woods Museum in Chicago. After the great Chicago fire of 1871, it was believed that the mummies and papyrus had been destroyed. In 1966, some fragments of the Joseph Smith Papyri were found in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, hinting that perhaps at least some of this Lebolo collection may still be found. The church obtained ownership of the eleven fragments of papyri in November of 1967. They are now housed in the Church Archives in Salt Lake City, Utah.

#### Conclusion

It can be seen from the records presented here that this unknown archeologist, Antonio Lebolo, was a key figure in the early days of egyptian archaeology. His activities laid the foundations of the egyptian collections in the major museums of Europe. This he accomplished by acting as an agent of Drovetti, as well as a private collector of antiquities. This paper is not intended to take credit from Drovetti, Belzoni, Salt or others who played such an important part in the study of egyptology, but only to give credit where credit is due. He is a man almost forgotten today, but one that is worthy of research and study to better understand this important era of Egyptian Archaeology.