

## Artículo

## Tourism and political economy for the Italian colonies during the interwar years\*

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## ARTICLE INFO

*Article history:*

Recibido el 18 de diciembre de 2018

Aceptado el 9 de abril de 2019

On-line el 29 de mayo de 2020

*JEL classification:*

N00

N01

N17

*Keywords:*

Tourism

Policies

Italian colonies

Africa

## ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the policy conducted by the Italian authorities to expand tourism activity in the north and the Horn of Africa and in some areas of the Dodecanese. In April 1939 Italy invaded Albania, that is, a few months before the outbreak of the Second World War, although Italian investments in this country came from behind. ENIT, the body responsible for tourism in Italy, was not only in this effort, but other agents such as the Touring Club, for example, also played a fundamental role in promoting tourism in these areas. Mariotti himself, already mentioned and who worked at ENIT, designed an entire program for the promotion of tourism in the colonies. In this sense, we must not forget that we are in a moment of great nationalist exaltation, on the one hand, and of expansion of tourist activity, as an economic activity and as a booming social practice, on the other. If at the beginning of the twentieth century it had been a minority practice, a period of disclosure began in the 1920s. In this sense, the fascist regime has tried to convince more citizens to join this practice thanks to the so-called National Work of Dopolavoro. This document examines some unpublished aspects of tourism for the Italian colonies (compared to that adopted by other more important European colonial models) during the years between the two wars of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in some ENIT (Italian Tourist Board) implemented for the promotion and development of colonial territories.

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### Turismo y economía política para las colonias italianas durante los años de entreguerras

## RESUMEN

El artículo analiza la política llevada a cabo por las autoridades italianas para expandir la actividad turística en el norte y el Cuerno de África y en algunas áreas del Dodecaneso. En abril de 1939, Italia invadió Albania, es decir, unos meses antes del estallido de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, aunque las inversiones italianas en este país llegaron desde atrás. ENIT, el organismo responsable del turismo en Italia, no solo realizó este esfuerzo, sino que otros agentes como el Touring Club, por ejemplo, también jugaron un papel fundamental en la promoción del turismo en estas áreas. El propio Mariotti, ya mencionado y que trabajó en ENIT, diseñó un programa completo para la promoción del turismo en las colonias. En este sentido, no debemos olvidar que estamos en un momento de gran exaltación nacionalista, por un lado, y de expansión de la actividad turística, como actividad económica y como práctica social en auge, por el otro. Si a principios del siglo xx había sido una práctica minoritaria, un período de divulgación comenzó en la década de 1920. En este sentido, el régimen fascista ha tratado de convencer a más ciudadanos para que se unan a esta práctica gracias al llamado Trabajo Nacional de Dopolavoro. Este documento examina algunos aspectos inéditos del turismo para las colonias italianas (en comparación con el adoptado por otros modelos coloniales europeos más importantes) durante los años entre las dos guerras del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y en algunos ENIT (Consejo de Turismo Italiano) implementado para la promoción y desarrollo de territorios coloniales.

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*Códigos JEL:*

N00

N01

N17N34

*Palabras clave:*

Turismo

Políticas

Colonias italianas

África

\* This a paper of the project Programa Estatal de Fomento de la Investigación Científica y Técnica de Excelencia (2017-2020), Ministerio de Economía Industria Competitividad Gobierno de España: "El turismo durante la Guerra Civil y el primer Franquismo 1936-1959. Estado y empresas provadas en la recuperación turística de España. Una perspectiva comparada". Principal Investigator Carlos Larrinaga.

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## 1. The importance of tourism and its “internationalization”

During the period between the end of the first and the beginning of the Second World War, tourism began to be seen as increasingly important at the economic level, so much so that it required more and more political and economic commitment to structuring and organizing the travel industry. There was a growing awareness of a source of revenue enjoyed up until the Great War by Italy but which was threatened by the appearance of other countries and by a development oriented towards big business, involving hotels and transport and leading to a restructuring of tourism. The years from 1922 to 1943 were dominated by a distinct cyclical pattern: they started with an inflationary recovery which was then curbed in 1926 by the need to stabilize the lira; they continued into the international crisis of 1929 followed by a struggle towards con autarchy and a war economy and ended with the system collapsing (Zamagni, 1990, p. 313).

In Italy tourism acquired political and economic importance partly thanks to its inclusion in the Ministry for the Press and Propaganda. As a matter of fact, under the Royal Decrees No. 1851, of 21 November 1934 and No. 1925, of 3 December 1934, the assignments of the Commission for Tourism<sup>1</sup> were transferred to this Ministry and the new ENIT statute was approved<sup>2</sup>. These measures constituted the logical sequence of planned directives that had already led to the establishment of the Commission, and were intended to concentrate tourism activities in a single management and coordination centre, created by the State, to achieve “a more compact and effective operation for defence and conquest” (*Le vie d'Italia*, 1935, p. 77). Yet tourism was connected above all with propaganda activities, and therefore, despite the Commission promoting and beginning to construct a methodical organization to merge and make the best use of the various isolated initiatives under way throughout Italy (which were often scattered, ineffective and even uneconomical), and trying to focus them in a set of more efficient activities, the idea was to bring all of this under the aegis of the abovementioned

Ministry, which the government believed represented a more efficient way to coordinate all the activities using all the tools made available by propaganda. Not all the measures, initiatives and activities of that time will be included in this paper, as they already feature in a vast bibliography;<sup>3</sup> it will focus instead on those aspects which have received far less attention but which can contribute further to the history of tourism of that period, such as the promotion of tourism in the colonies.

In this regard, this research topic still seems to need developing. The Italian Touring Club (TCI) and its guides are the main source of data and information.<sup>4</sup> The importance of the role of the State should be underlined, as it is significant from a national point of view, and even more so in its creation of hotel facilities through the Etal agencies (The Libya tourist and hotel organization) in Libya and those of the CIAAO (Compagnia Immobiliare Alberghi Africa Orientale/East African Hotel Property Company) in Italian East Africa. Podestà (2011) shows how the Touring Club played a fundamental role in the cultural and tourist promotion of the empire, both by organizing pioneering events and excursions, defined as “manifestations of active tourism”, and above all through its publications. In 1929 a guide entitled *Possedimenti e colonie* (Possessions and colonies), was published as the 17<sup>th</sup> volume of the series *Guida d'Italia*, edited by the pioneer of the Touring Club, Luigi Vittorio Bertarelli. The Minister of the Colonies, Emilio De Bono, described it as a work of “very effective propaganda”, thereby underlining the close link between the promotion of tourism and colonial propaganda.

<sup>3</sup> See: Mariotti (1933); Mochi (1982); Ministero della Cultura Popolare (1939); Presidenza del Consiglio dei ministri (1934); Strangio (2006); Teodori (2007); Berrino (2011).

<sup>4</sup> It was founded in 1894, in Milan, and nowadays, with its roughly 300,000 members, it is one of the biggest tourist organizations in Italy. It was originally called the Touring Club Ciclistico Italiano (Italian Cycling Touring Club, TCCI) and founded by a group of 57 cyclists, including its first president, Luigi Vittorio Bertarelli. Its main purpose was to popularize the bicycle, seen as being an affordable means of transport for everyone, a symbol of modernity and a driving force for the spread of tourism throughout Italy. The Italian Touring Club has distinguished itself throughout its long history because of its strong commitment to the “development of tourism, also seen as a means for getting to know countries and their culture, and for mutual understanding respect between different peoples. Specifically, the T.C.I. intends to cooperate in the safeguarding of and in educating people about how to properly enjoy Italy’s historical, artistic and natural heritage, which it considers to be an irreplaceable asset that needs to be handed down to future generations” (taken from the first Article of the Italian Touring Club’s Statute). Tourist guides between the end of the 19th and the mid-20th century were mainly what were known as travel notebooks. The notebook was a log, or a collection of papers or a small diary, in which the traveller, the writer-traveller or the traveller-discoverer made notes about everything. There is endless literature about travel diaries and one of the best collections on travellers in English is that of Pemble (1986). There are fewer essays that have tried to understand the role played by tourist guides in building the image of a country; for example, see, among others, some essays dealing with Italian and French cities: Battilani and Strangio (2005); Di Nola (1989, pp. 181-262); Ebano (1989, pp. 329-335); Gallo (2000, pp. 25-45); Moret (1992, pp. 79-98); Chabaud (1998, pp. 323-345). There is very little literature on this topic, but there are references to tourism in the colonies in Gadda for Rhodes, Flaiano for Eritrea, Montanelli for Albania and Eritrea, and Ansaldo for Libya. There are more detailed essays by Massarotti and Zagnolo in *Italian Architecture Abroad 1870-1940* and Martinoli and Perotti in *Italian Colonial Architecture in the Dodecanese 1912-1943*.

<sup>1</sup> Government intervention in the field of tourism dates back to 23 March 1931, when Royal Decree No. 371 established a Commission in charge of managing and coordinating all the national activities concerning tourism: it was specified that the Commission acted on behalf of the Government in this field. In 1934 the Commission’s assignments were transferred to the State Undersecretariat for the Press and Propaganda, an organ of the Prime Minister’s office, and a Directorate General for Tourism was established. In 1935, under Royal Decree No. 1009, the Undersecretariat became the Ministry for the Press and Propaganda, and then in 1937, the Ministry of Popular Culture: thus, tourism left the Presidency of the Council of Ministers to be managed by what was probably the most important Administration at that time, since it was responsible for promoting Italy and the Fascist regime to the whole world (Strangio, 2008, pp. 65-68).

<sup>2</sup> The Royal Decree Law No. 2099, of 12 October 1919, converted into Law No. 610, of 7 April 1921, founded ENIT (the then national agency for the tourist industry, subsequently the Italian Tourist Board under Decree 1041/60 of the President of the Republic) which promoted the public and centralized organization of tourism. For the history of tourism in general, see Battilani (2001, particularly pp. 218-241); Berrino (2000, pp. 13-23); Ead (2001, pp. 17-44); Ead (2007, pp. 73-88); Sereno (2000, pp. 25-38); La Francesca (2003); Volpe (2004, pp. 34-54); Cavalcanti (2007, pp. 519-536). See also Mariotti, s.d.; A. Berrino (2005, pp. 33-54); Strangio (2006, pp. 267-284); for economic policy in the 1930s see Teodori (2007, pp. 551-566). For tourism in the Fascist period, see Strangio (2007, pp. 97-130); Syrjämaa (2007, pp. 344-357).

Besides the Fascist institutions, there were a great many arms, cultural and sports associations that helped to manage leisure time in the colonies. They each organized meetings and sports competitions, and often published bulletins and newsletters, just as in the motherland. They certainly contributed to the spread of a national lifestyle which also touched those natives who were more involved in the colonial societies and economy. The spread of western sports such as football in the “indigenous” schools, supplemented the “education” of their young subjects. This work focuses on tourism in the Italian colonies with particular reference to those in Africa during the inter war years but there is no doubt that countries with a colonial tradition more rooted than the Italian one, Great Britain and France, have contributed to developing the tourism system in their empires. Zuehlow writes well (p. 29): “The Grand Tour generated a body of literature describing travel adventures. These accounts did not disappear from the public consciousness. Yet the wave of new texts reflected the reality that something had changed. By the 1820s a new way of looking at the world, developing from at least the middle of the eighteenth century, had taken hold—a romantic vision of landscapes and history, a sense of excitement to be had in nature that European mountains and beaches offered in abundance. The old cities were still attractive, but more and more people wanted to escape the “beaten track” in order to locate “hidden secrets.” They wanted to visit the mountains and to experience wild nature. They wished to enjoy “romantic travel”. What was soon known as the “sublime and beautiful” was very much on offer, if only you could leave home to find it. It was a goal that, increasingly, attracted tourists from all social classes and helps to explain the rise of a much more widespread wanderlust during the nineteenth century”.

## 2. Tourism in the Italian colonies

The Italian colonies had a different role and varied in importance, according to their territories and their level of development, from a tourism point of view: countries such as Libya<sup>5</sup> and Eritrea<sup>6</sup> certainly had more resources and pros-

pects than other colonies such as Somalia<sup>7</sup>, Ethiopia<sup>8</sup> and some areas of the Dodecanese<sup>9</sup>. Some colonies were actually very mountainous with a climate that did not suit European people, and they were also difficult to reach and somewhat risky from an investment point of view, given that their only resources and attractions were their geography and their wildlife. Somalia was mainly exploited for its potential agricultural resources, just as its population was exploited for the cultivation and trade of cotton. Distance also played a strategic part in the development of some colonies, especially Libya, Tripoli, and the Dodecanese, while Eritrea was of particular significance, having been the first area to be colonized.

The Touring Club played a fundamental role: shortly after the occupation of the Dodecanese in June 1912, it included an article on Rhodes in its monthly magazine, the first of a long series printed over the period of Italian domination. In 1929 its 850 pages guide to Italy’s possessions and colonies was published, 150 pages of which were about the Dodecanese; this publication clearly showed the link between the promotion of tourism and colonial propaganda. Through this guide, the Touring Club took on the role of pioneer in providing information about Italy’s newly conquered territories and this allowed it to be the first to describe them and define their characteristics. The territorial expansion of the Kingdom of Italy after World War I provided what was probably a unique opportunity in the modern era, and that was to witness the birth of the tourism-based stereotype of some towns. It is well-known that guides did not just represent reality or one of its features, but often helped to shape it. The observations made by Leonardo di Muro on the examples of Trentino, of the Tyrol and of Istria were also relevant for the Dodecanese. The Touring Club put commitment and energy into introduc-

<sup>5</sup> The Italian Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti began the conquest of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica on 4 October 1911, sending a significant number of men to Tripoli to fight against the Ottoman Empire. In the early 1930s, Mussolini ordered the start of a vast immigration of Italian colonists to the arable areas of the colony and tried to integrate the local Arab and Berber population, also by creating colonial troops. The General Governorate of Libya was proclaimed in 1934 (with the union of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica) and African citizens were subsequently awarded the status of “Libyan Italian citizens” with all the ensuing rights. After 1934, Mussolini initiated a favourable policy towards Libyan Arabs, calling them “Italian Muslims of the Fourth Coast of Italy” and building villages for them, with mosques, schools and hospitals. For further details see, among others, Labanca (2007, pp 108-122).

<sup>6</sup> The occupation began in November 1879 with the Lazzarist priest Giuseppe Sapeto who, on behalf of Rubattino, a Genoese shipping company, began the negotiations for surrender of the Bay of Assab to the Italian Government. On 10 March 1882, the Government acquired the possession of Assab, which officially became Italian on 5 July that same year. In the years from 1885 to 1890 the important port city of Massawa was acquired (which became the temporary capital of this overseas possession) and Italian control extended into the hinterland. In 1890, Eritrea was officially declared an Italian colony. For further details, see again Labanca (2007, pp. 64-85).

<sup>7</sup> The Berlin Conference saw the onset of a long and bloody struggle, with three countries battling for Somalia. Italy, Great Britain and France divided up its territory in the late 19th century. The first agreement between the Sultan of Zanzibar and Italy was drawn up in 1885 to make Somalia a protectorate; when Egypt withdrew from the Horn of Africa in 1884, Italian diplomats reached an agreement with Great Britain for the occupation of the port of Massawa which, together with Assab constituted Italy’s possessions in the Red Sea, known as the Eritrea Colony from 1890, and the basis for a plan to eventually control the entire Horn of Africa. The British established the Protectorate of British Somalia in 1886, later to become Somaliland, following Egypt’s withdrawal and the treaty with the Warsangeli clan. The southern area, occupied by Italy in 1892, became known as Italian Somalia. The more northern part of the territory was ceded to France, which founded French Somalia comprising the territories of Afars and Issas. In 1936, after the war in Ethiopia, Italian Somalia became part of Italian East Africa, together with Ethiopia and Eritrea and with the addition of Ogaden.

<sup>8</sup> The opening of the Suez Canal increased European interest in the country. Following the Walwal incident in December 1934, Italy attacked the Ethiopian Empire on 3 October 1935. The Italians, under the orders of General Pietro Badoglio, managed to overcome Ethiopian resistance and push as far as the capital, Addis Ababa, which they entered on 5 May 1936. Ethiopia was annexed to Italian East Africa.

<sup>9</sup> During the Italo-Turkish War which culminated in the occupation of Libya, Italy tried bring the war to a rapid end by occupying the Dodecanese. Astypalea was occupied on 26 April 1912, followed on 12 May by Karpathos, Kasos, Tilos, Nisyros, Kalymnos, Leros, Patmos, Kos, Symi and Chalki; on 4 May Italian troops landed on Rhodes, which was completely occupied on 16 May. Under the treaty of Lausanne (18 October 1912) Italy obtained sovereignty over Libya (recognized by foreign powers) and the temporary possession of the Dodecanese islands. Under the Paris Peace Treaties of 10 February 1947, the islands were transferred to Greece.

ing Italians to the new provinces, being the first to describe them and to decide what they really looked like, in many cases even inventing details about them. This operation was parallel to that carried out to invent Italian names for places that had never had them before, as in Alto Adige (di Mauro, 1982, pp. 369-430). Following the establishment of the Directorate General for Tourism, Fascism interfered quite heavily in 1934 in the Touring Club's work, censoring its publications, and insisting on the Italianization of its name, which was changed to *Unione Turistica Italiana* (Italian Tourism Union) and then to *Consociazione Turistica Italiana* (Italian Tourism Association), which meant it could keep its original initials, CTI (Bozzini, 1994).

After the conquest of Ethiopia in 1936, the 1929 guide seemed rather limited. The CTI decided to divide it into three parts: in 1937 the volume on Libya was followed, followed by the Guide to Italian East Africa while the one on the Dodecanese, scheduled for 1940, was never published. Examples of active tourism, such as cruises and excursions were particularly important as part of the tourism propaganda that went with the guidebooks. The cruises that stopped off in Rhodes were always mentioned in the *Messaggero di Rodi* which also took on the role of "Journal mondain", publishing the guest lists for the Grande Albergo delle Rose and giving great prominence to the official visits by leading figures to the possession of Rhodes. For example, the visit of Italy's king and queen to the Aegean in May 1929 was enthusiastically reported day by day in Italy too, on the newsreels of the Istituto Luce<sup>10</sup>.

In 1928 the general manager of ENIT, Angelo Mariotti, set out the programme for promoting colonial tourism in a report made to the AIT (Alliance Internationale de Tourisme), which complied with the intentions of the central agencies to integrate the colonies within the motherland and to set Italy on the same road as the great and long-standing European empires. He focused on the Italian colonies of Tripolitania and Rhodes as promising destinations and on the plan agreed with the TCI to promote trips to Eritrea. A programme had been organized at the end of the 1920s in which the role of colonial tourism was seen as very important, and which promoted a series of tourist trips and schemes that included Tripoli and Rhodes. Despite these initiatives, the number of foreign visitors in the early 1930s was very low, with only a few hundred travellers; and it was only in 1932 that the first photos of the colonies appeared in ENIT's most important publication, *Le vie Italia*<sup>11</sup>. Many trips, especially to Somalia and Eritrea, had been made above all for scientific and military reasons, for anthropological studies and because of the

need to understand the territory's physical geography. There were, however, some exceptions: there was some form of tourism, for example in Eritrea, albeit very limited, mostly exploited by wealthy travellers or people with a strong sense of adventure.

The situation was very different for tourism in Tripolitania. The first Conference for Travel Agency Managers was organized in Tripoli in 1921 by the Tripolitanian Tourist Board, and was attended by representatives of the main Italian and foreign tourist companies. Given the potential<sup>12</sup> that Tripolitania had to offer, from the point of view of tourism resources, the end of the conference saw the approval of some important declarations. They recognized that the shipping companies serving the Italian colony firstly needed to make things easier in order to attract as many tourists as possible, both from Italy and from abroad, and secondly they needed to find an agreement with the ticket offices to provide coupons allowing travellers to choose which port to leave from without having to pay a supplement. In addition, bureaucratic procedures were simplified so that it was easier for Italians to go to the colonies, such as the authorization of foreign passports for Italy that could be extended to give access to the colonies. Given the favourable climate, special offer campaigns sometimes led to a surfeit of tourists, to the extent that there was a kind of high season for tourism or "colonial season" which ran from 15 October to 15 May.

The Ministry of Communications granted 50% reductions on tickets issued by every Italian station for Italian ports of embarkation for those going to Tripoli and returning from Tripoli to Italy, from any port chosen by tourists back to their home station and even through border stations that could be different from where they had entered Italy, and made tickets valid for 60 days; this was also granted for the "Tripoli International Fair". In 1929, the routes to the Tripoli colonies were guaranteed by a maritime service with two lines from Naples and Genoa to Tripoli, both of which stopped at Syracuse<sup>13</sup>.

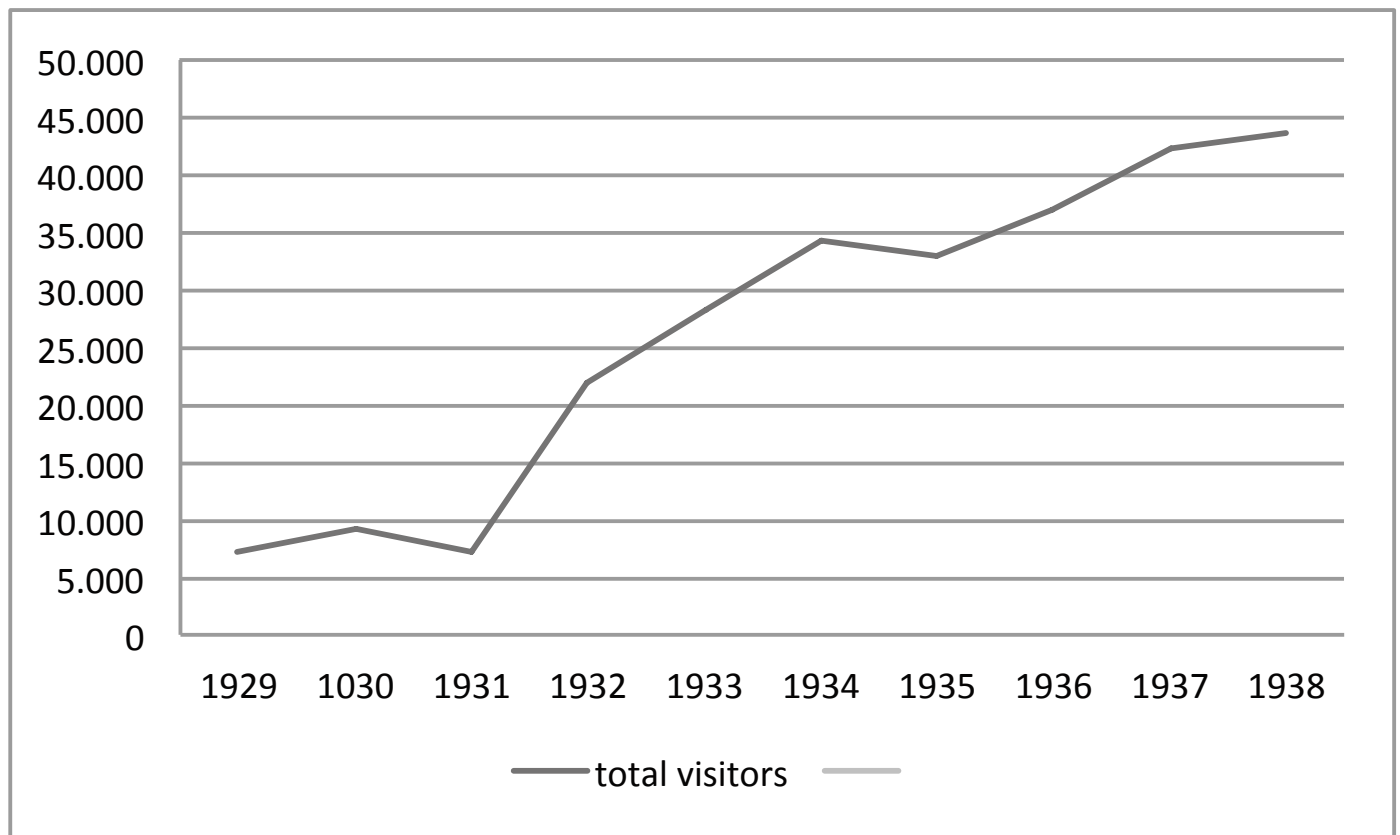
Other steps were taken to increase tourist trips to Tripolitania, such as the discount campaign undertaken by hoteliers and transport companies in Tripoli, for the first two months and the last twenty days of the tourist season. Finally, those who participated in the abovementioned Conference decided that, in order to develop tourism in Tripolitania, an intensive and well-organized propaganda campaign was required: a) a significant amount of photographic material was needed, both archaeological and folkloric, to be distributed to all Italian and foreign organizations, including the Italian and foreign press and the Directorate General of Fine Arts for a targeted and complete circulation in all countries; b) the Tripolitanian Tourist Board would have to cooperate with the Government, banks and private companies interested in developing tourism in this colony, to make available the resources needed to carry out the set programme. Subsequently, the Italian Transatlantic Company, bowing to pressure from ENIT to try and assist tourists who wanted to go to the colonies by car, decided to abolish the tax for embarking and

<sup>10</sup> ACS, *Presidenza del Consiglio dei ministri, 1928-1930*, 4.8.7002.

<sup>11</sup> Fantoli (1934, pp. 274-287), where the activities promoted by Governor Volpi, Governor De Bono and others were described, which aimed to make the most of the colony from a structural point of view, alternated with evocative descriptions of the country; on similar topics *ibid.*, pp. 437-448; Ardito Desio's article is more about possible explorations (1934, pp. 737-747); General U. Ademollo's is of a more political nature (1935, pp. 241-257); while A.F. Pessina wrote more specifically about tourism (1935, pp. 309-319), where by "avantgarde tourism" he meant non-traditional tourism, using military convoys, camels and makeshift vehicles; *Le tourisme en Italie. Bulletin d'information de l'Enit*, a. 3, n. 2, February 1926, containing the article *Le tourisme en tripolitaine*, pp. 8-9, which tried to inform foreign tourists about the possibility of new itineraries and excursions to one of the main Italian colonies.

<sup>12</sup> *Le tourisme en Italie. Bulletin d'information de l'Enit*, a. 3, n. 2, February 1926, containing the article *Le tourisme en tripolitaine*, pp. 8-9; see also Pessina (1935, pp. 308-319), who defined tourism in Libya "avantgarde" because it was out of the ordinary.

<sup>13</sup> Aghito (1939, pp. 31-33).



**Figure 1.** Visitors to Libya (1929-1938).

Source: Based on data from ASMAE, *Africa III, Documenti Colonie Eritrea 1881-1910*, b. 75; Migliaccio (2008, p. 117).

disembarking automobiles. The Tripolitanian Tourist Board, on behalf of ENIT and jointly with the Ministry of Communications and with the shipping and airline companies, promoted the distribution of passes vouching for reduced ticket costs for the entire trip<sup>14</sup>. In addition, the Royal Decree of 31 May 1935 established the Etal (Libya's Tourist and Hotel Board) which was made responsible for increasing tourism in Libya (as underlined in Article 1 of its statute)<sup>15</sup>. This agency was made up of a network of interacting organizations which coordinated their activities in a highly focused way. The propaganda and advertising service, the transport service and the theatre and shows service formed the operative part of this new institution. Through these measures, the Italian government intended to strengthen tourism in the occupied areas; nevertheless, the increase in the flow of visitors needed to be carefully assessed. The statistics published on this by the press were mainly aimed at making a good impression on people in the motherland, who were weighed down by a

considerable tax burden in order to sustain investment in the colonies. Figure 1 shows a growth trend between 1929 and 1930 and a sharp decline in 1931; there was a resumption of growth until 1934, and a slight fall in 1935, when the Etal was founded, followed by a further return to growth until 1938. The Second World War broke out shortly afterwards, in which Italy was allied with Germany and Japan, having become closer to them after the military campaign in Africa which had led to the creation of Italian East Africa (IEA), provoking negative reactions at political level above all from France but also from Great Britain.<sup>16</sup>

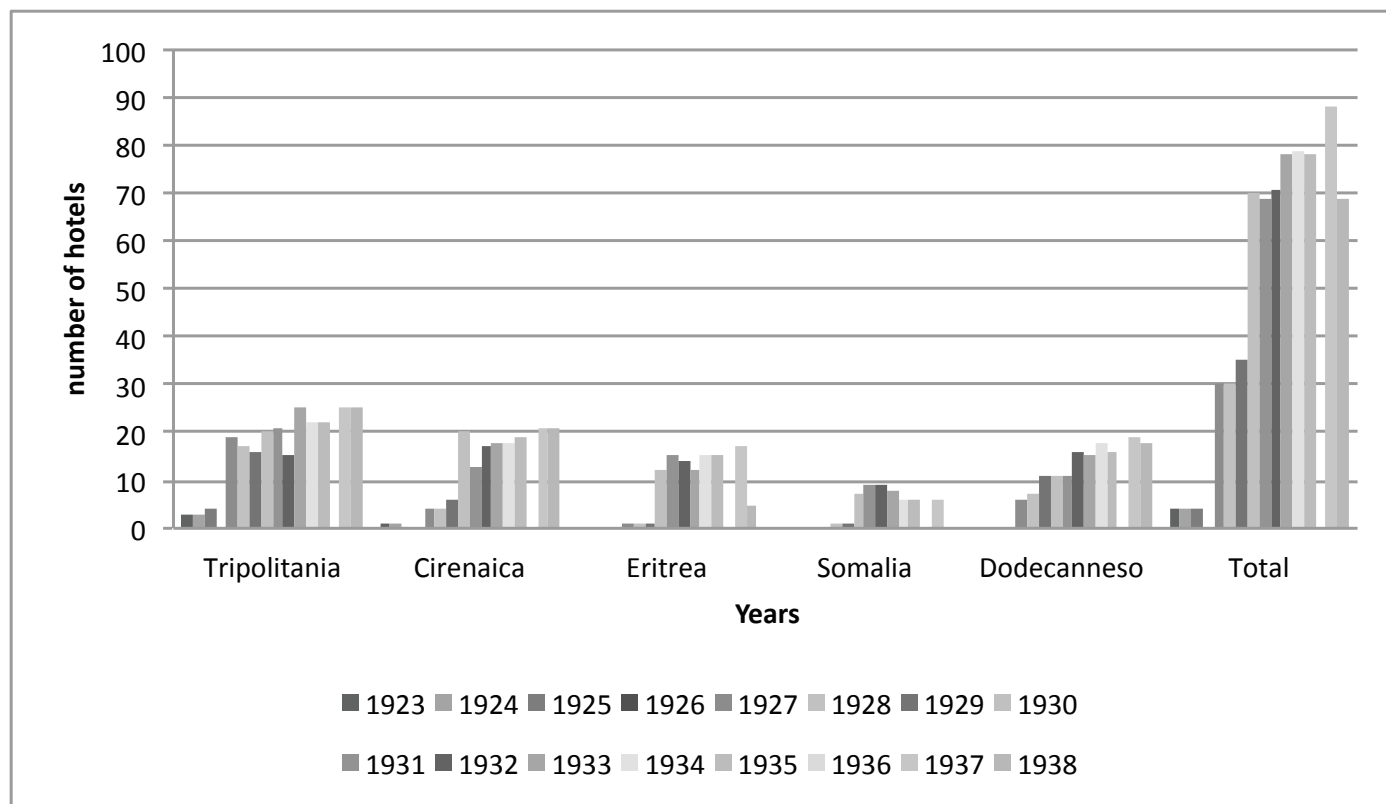
Tripoli was the most visited location, with its triumphal arch of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, its perfumes market, its oases, the Hippodrome of Busetta and the Baths of Leptis Magna, and the natural attractions of the Harug plateau and the Marmarica plateau.<sup>17</sup> How show Hom (2012, pp. 286-293): "The trope of *romanità* ('Romanness') was actualized through the practices of Italian colonial tourists in Libya. The successes of tourism there made for the framing of Albania through *ospitalità* ('hospitality'), or in the very language of tourism itself. By exploring the historical interac-

<sup>14</sup> Migliaccio (2008, pp. 101-136).

<sup>15</sup> Vicari (1942). The initial capital of this Board came from a contribution of seven million lire from the Libyan Government, a contribution of two million lire from Libya's *Cassa di Risparmio* (savings bank), and then from private donations and legacies; revenues consisted of income generated by its activities and the income already assigned to the abolished Tripoli Tourist Board and then allocated to the Commission for tourism in Libya (a body established by Royal Decree No. 1485 of 2 November 1935), and of operating subsidies that the Libyan government, town councils and other bodies could grant to the Board and of any other income, pursuant to Article 3 of the abovementioned Royal decree.

<sup>16</sup> *L'inaugurazione degli alberghi municipali*, "L'avvenire di Tripoli", VIII, 93, 30 April 1935, p. 3; "Case d'oggi", 5, May 1935, p. 293. As Migliaccio reported (2008), p. 116, there are clear inconsistencies regarding the reliability of the sources reported in the press at that time, compared with unofficial data found by the researcher in the Historical Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>17</sup> ASME, *Africa III, Documenti colonie B*.



**Figure 2.** Number of hotels in the Italian colonies and possessions (1923-1938).  
 Source: ENIT, *Gli alberghi in Italia (Hotels in Italy)*, a.a. 1923-25; 1927-35; 1937-38.

tions between colonial rhetoric and touristic praxis, I intend to tease out the connective tissue between tourism, colonialism, and imperial formations—one filament being that Italian colonial tourists, conditioned to the pleasures of Empire, were more open to new forms of cultural imperialism predicated on consumerism, mobility, and leisure—the very stuff of tourism—that emerged in the post-war era”. Similar actions were implemented in Morocco there is not the least doubt that the image of Protectorate was popularised and was generated a certain attraction to these lands, where an incipient tourist flow, but with enormous interest, had its origin, even recognized by technicians of francoist Administration (Araque Jiménez, 2015, p. 443) Even though the notorious low official rates of tourist movement during the Protectorate, we know that an amount of 17,000 tourists have visited Tetouan in 1929, and the visits had grown respect the same period of previous year in the first semester of 1930. Estimating an average expenditure of 17 pesetas per person and day, the tourism had left 225,000 pesetas in the capital of Protectorate, “number that represents an acceptable beginning of tourist flow”. We are completely convinced, in spite of we have not nowadays had reliable data to confirm, that this flow grew during the six years of Republican Government. Nevertheless, as soon as the Spanish Civil War began this rising trend broke off, going to ruin with the economic expectations that had been created. And this situation not only by the events happened in the Protectorate, where the repercussion of that terrible war barely affected, but also the situation unleashed in Spain since the fateful date of 18th July 1936.

### 3. Infrastructure: hotels

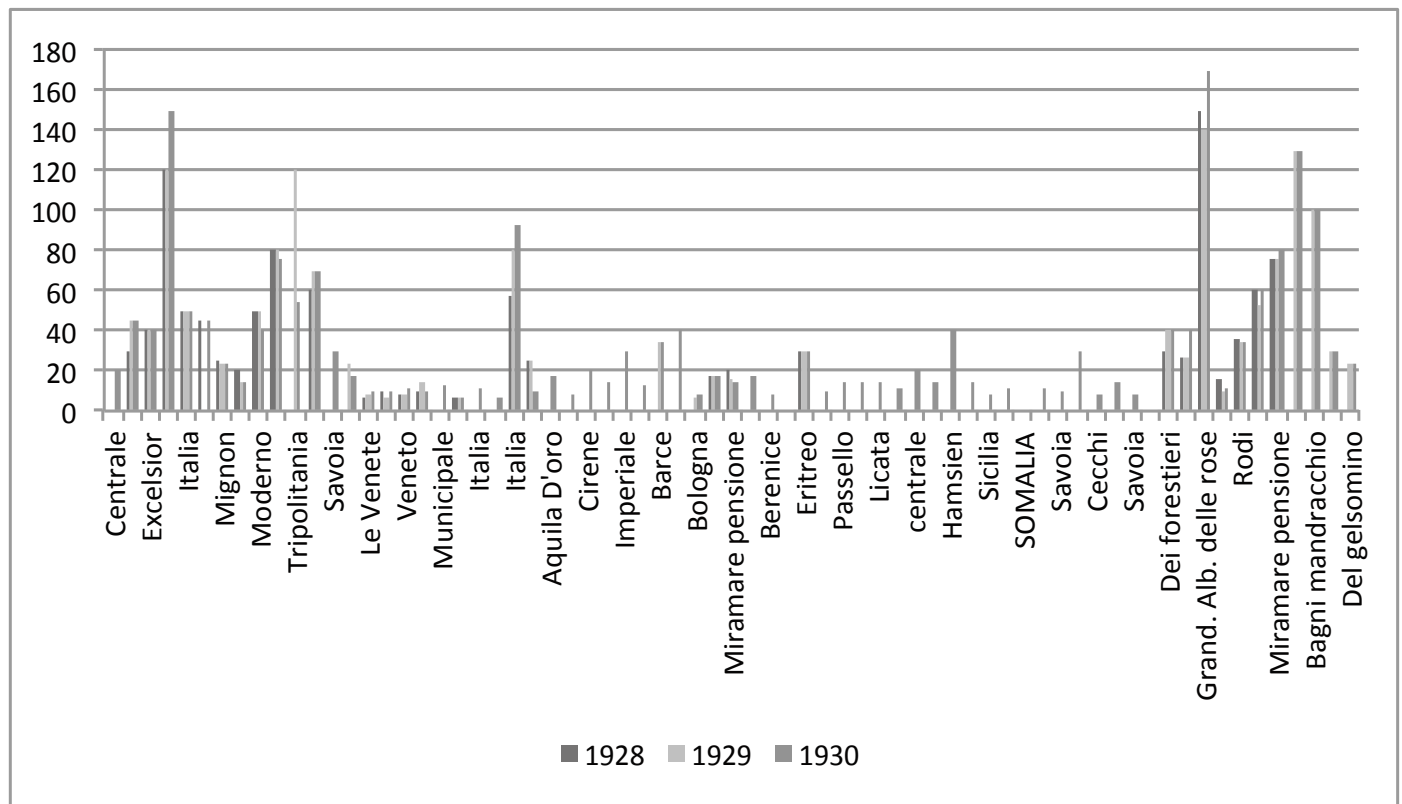
To demonstrate the Italian government’s strong commitment to enhancing and launching these areas with regard to tourism and tied in with its propaganda policy, and in an attempt to bring the colonies closer and integrate them within the motherland, a series of hotels were built, supported by infrastructures such as railways and roads and reviewed by ENIT in its magazine *Gli alberghi in Italia* which had a section dedicated to the Italian colonies and possessions<sup>18</sup>.

These lists show that between 1923 and 1938 there was the following number of hotels (Figure 2).

In the period in question, hotels recorded a growth trend, especially from 1930 onwards (with peaks in 1931, 1934 and 1937); the best-equipped ones with several rooms were in Tripoli: the hotels with the most rooms were the Grand Hotel, with 120-140 rooms and 10 bathrooms and the Tripolitania with 160 rooms. The Italian government had been planning to build comfortable hotels since 1924, with the aim of expanding the “fourth coast”.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> For a reconstruction of the investments and the high costs of the fascist government in the colonies see Historical Archive of the Chamber of Deputies, parliamentary acts—Legislation XXVIII—various financial years

<sup>19</sup> Italo Balbo (politician and Governor of Libya from 1 January 1934 to 28 June 1940 under the Fascist regime) called Tripolitania and Cyrenaica the “fourth coast” of Italy, with reference to the other three Italian coasts: the Tyrrhenian, Adriatic and Ionian. See Romano (2007).



**Figure 3.** Number of rooms in the Italian colonies and possessions.

Source: ENIT, *Gli alberghi in Italia (Hotels in Italy)*, a.a. 1928-30.

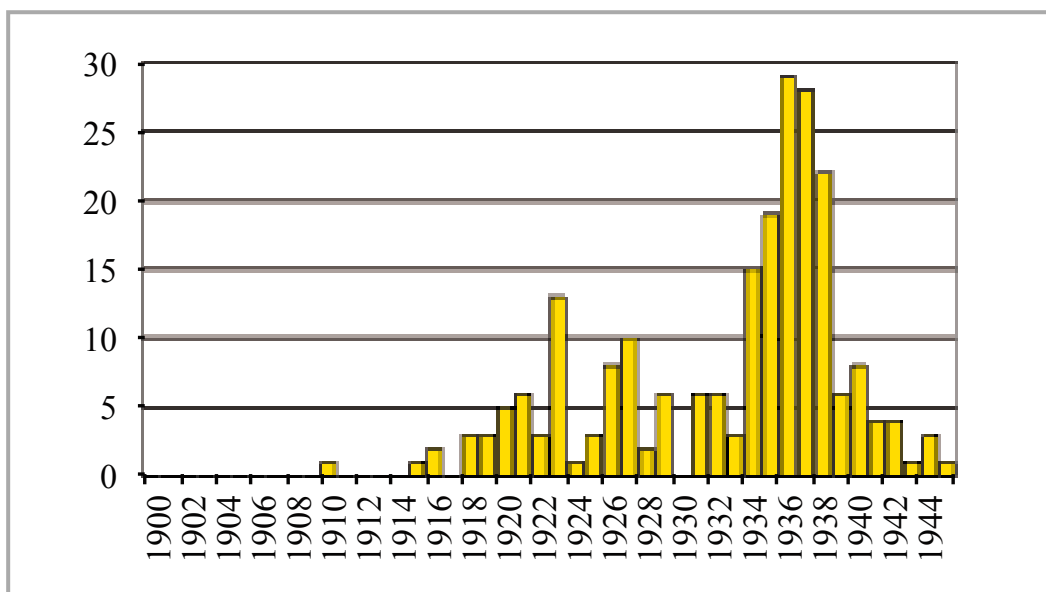
Figure 3 shows in detail the number of rooms from 1928 to 1930 and highlights a growth in the number of rooms from 1930 onwards in some places, especially the Dodecanese, Eritrea and Tripoli in Libya (the numbers of the rooms of the major hotels of the Italian possessions are shown).

Worthy of mention were the Grande Albergo delle Rose with 150 rooms on Rhodes and the two hotels on the island of Nisyros, the Bagni di Ippocrate with 130 and the Bagni di Mandracchio with 100 rooms. Moreover, the island of Rhodes was considered as an important emporium for transit between East and West from a strategic and military perspective, and as a centre for spreading the Italian language in the Near East, and from 1923 onwards the town underwent a modernization process by means of town planning and the building of new public works.

To complete this brief examination, the Albanian element must be considered; Albania became part of Italy in 1939 by means of a coup-de-main by Mussolini who dethroned King Zog I and installed King Victor Emanuel III as King of Albania. This authoritarian move led to Albania's cities being rapidly overhauled, using government capital and grants from the Società Svea (Company for the economic development of Albania). Italy had already begun to establish its presence in Albania as far back as 1925 by constructing various buildings and creating infrastructures. Between 1939 and 1942 the commitment of the Italian government and Italian entrepreneurs became clear with the increase in the hotel business which saw the building of the

Grand Hotel in Tirana and the extension of the Continental Hotel, the Doges Hotel in Durrës and in Petrola, 14 km from Tirana, the Hotel Italia in Kuhis and others in Elbasan and Lezhë, together with improvements to various other hotels (see also Hom 2012, pp. 294-300). Hom writes (*ibid.*, p. 283) "that tourism's ideological power intensified as Italy's colonial project advanced, in so far as tourism, under the guise of ospitalità, became the dominant trope of colonial rhetoric in Italian-occupied Albania". As such, Albanians were framed as willing hosts to their Italian colonizer-guests, and implicitly, their hospitality indicated a willingness to become subjugated to Italian rule. Put another way, the language of tourism framed Italy's last colonial exercise in the Mediterranean. Here, the preposterous transition remained incomplete, attenuated by war and the fall of fascism. Yet, the Italian experience in Albania signalled a greater empire of tourism that was beginning to form just as Italian Empire came to an end.

It is interesting to note that the fascist government promoted the development of tourism with an increase in legislative provisions, above all in terms of hotels; graph 4 summarizes quantitatively the number of laws, decrees and different legislative typologies on the subject of tourist-hotel measures which clearly had repercussions not only within the Italian territory but above all the colonial one. In fact the most intense period is precisely that of the creation of the empire (9 May 1936) and extended until almost the entry of Italy into the war (1940).



**Figure 4.** Normative interventions in tourism-hotel matters in Italy (1900-1945).

Source: Elaboration on data taken from parliamentary Repertories.

#### 4. Some reflections: tourism in Italian East Africa (A.O.I.)

Italian East Africa was the official name of Italy's imperial colony in East Africa, proclaimed by Mussolini on 9 May 1936 and it comprised the colonies of Eritrea, Italian Somalia and the Ethiopian Empire.<sup>20</sup> The *Guida d'Italia* published by the CTI (Italian Tourist Association, the new name for the Touring Club Italiano in the last years of the Fascist era), which includes the 640-page 1938 volume entirely dedicated to A.O.I., whose main objective was to give tourists a practical guide to the various aspects of these lands. It was published shortly after the Italian occupation with the aim of promoting tourism in those lands and to promote the Italian African empire using propaganda. The guide was given out free of charge to the almost 150,000 members of the association and was, as Acquarelli wrote,<sup>21</sup> an important publication among the tourist guides on offer in the 1930s in Italy, although it was not the first guidebook published on the colonial territories, as was mentioned previously. Given its widespread distribution, the guidebook in question could be considered as part of a communications project that involved one in ten Italian families. This guide was the 24th volume of the CTI series *Guida d'Italia*, whose objective was: "Give the tourist a practical guide for visiting the cities and regions of Italy and Italy's colonies, explaining the various aspects mainly from a geographical, historical, artistic and economic point of view" (p. 13).

Who was this guide primarily for? As Acquarelli points out, reporting Bonari's words, firstly for servicemen, secondly for businessmen and finally for scholars. Del Boca said, quoting the Sultan Abba Gifar, vassal of Ethiopia, that "the white men first send a missionary to Africa, then a doctor, then a consul and finally a conquering army" (Del Boca 1992, p. 28). In reality, the

war of 1936 which gave rise to the A.O.I. went hand in hand with a real migration of servicemen but also of entrepreneurs, building constructors and workmen who followed behind the troops, setting up small communications and trade centres and building roads. Although, as we shall see later on, the text fits into the Touring Club's tourist guides, it would also be a valuable source of information for economic and political activities in the new territories.

On a par with what had long been happening in countries such as France and Great Britain where tourism, which was on its way to becoming a mass phenomenon, began to be widespread in Italy too, where the institutionalization of leisure time with paid holidays included in the first contracts of the 1920s was at the root of the emerging mass tourism.

The Guide to A.O.I. includes twenty-one locations with hotel complexes that were added to a novelty in the hotel facilities on offer, namely the "colonial trading-post", a kind of shop with rooms to let, varying greatly in size and structure (ranging from a small grocery store to bigger structures that could provide a bed for the night), as will be said later.

According to the reports, A.O.I. had all the elements necessary for a considerable growth in tourism, especially at national level. Interest in these lands ranged from the landscape, flora and fauna, to the historical aspect, because of the various campaigns involving Italian servicemen. There was even a plan to introduce mountaineering, which was almost unknown, since despite the several ascents that had been made over recent years, entire mountain ranges were still waiting to be discovered, with many rock walls and summits ready to be scaled by enthusiastic climbers.

The provision of hotels for tourism had made rapid progress thanks to the CIAAO which had overseen the building of hotels at the Baths of Ambò and of Erèr. Because of the type of land, there were many mineral-rich springs, especially the Finfinne springs of Addis Ababa, for which there was a plan for rational exploitation.

There were going to be several places among the stations by the lakes; Gorgora on the north shore of Lake Tana, one on the shores of Lake Hayq, a hotel in Adami Tullo on the shores of

<sup>20</sup> In 1935-1936 the empire of the Negus of Ethiopia was occupied—together with the other two Italian colonies (Eritrea and Somalia) it formed the geographical, political and economic unit of Italian East Africa.

<sup>21</sup> Acquarelli (2010, p. 61).



Lake Zway, another one on Lake Abijatta and one in Shashamane, equidistant from Lake Shala and from Lake Awasa; it was hoped that they would become, among other things, places that appealed to hunters. As a demonstration of the propagandistic and rhetorical nature of the volume published during the Fascist era, great emphasis was placed on the works carried out by the Italians as a further attraction for tourists. This cultural initiative, together with others, aimed to transform the country as quickly as possible, by introducing a European lifestyle. The task of providing adequate hotels in A.O.I. was entrusted to the Compagnia Immobiliare Alberghi Africa Orientale (CIAAO); they were managed by the Società Gestione Alberghi Africa Orientale (SGAAO). Some already existing hotels had been taken on by the CIAAO, extended and passed over to be managed by the SGAAO. The CIAAO's plan included the building of fairly big hotels in all the main cities of the empire. In mid-1938, CIAAO hotels or hotels of other agencies or private companies were opened in Addis Ababa, Abiy Addi, Adi Ugrì, Adi Keyh, Adua, Agordat, Asmara, Assab, Bishoftu, Keren, Kismayo, Dessie, Dire Dawa, Jijiga, Jimma, Gondar, Harar, Massawa, Markos, Mogadishu, Qwiha and Vittorio d'Africa. The hotels had running water, showers, bathrooms, sometimes even bakeries or barber shops; they always had restaurants, generally supplied with products that were all or almost all Italian, and that were well-known in the main cities too.

Trading-posts/restaurants had sprung up in the smaller towns and at the main stopping places along the roads, usually in shanties or temporary shacks. Finally, along the roads and paths and near the building-sites and markets, there were the stores that were a typical institution in A.O.I., the most basic kind of colonial stores, generally shanties built with rough timber or packing cases, or shacks that were easy to move depending on where the traffic and the work were. Some were large and well-supplied with ordinary food and clothes and could provide shelter for the night, but even the smaller ones had tinned food, cold cuts, cheeses, pasta, wine, beer, orangeades, liqueurs, writing paper, pencils, candles, tobacco and matches. It was rare to find fruit and vegetables as well.

In short, those twenty years saw a considerable expansion in tourist resorts in Italy and also in its colonies and possessions, which repeated the same national policy (Martinoli, 1999, p. 47). Unfortunately, Italy would be at war only a few years later and would lose control of its colonies as early as 1943, especially those of A.O.I. which came under British control. The same fate, although due to a change in political regime, suffered Morocco and as Araque Jiménez writes (2015, p. 442): "The set of this infrastructure was aided by several public actions that were carried out by the Tourism Committee, in the first years, and by the Tourism Service during Franco regime, which achieved to spread and to popularize the Morocco's image". Thanks to them a minority tourist flow, but with great significance, was increasing and becoming established. Both of these institutions, attending their targets, developed a wide propaganda campaign in the beginning, to publish the diverse attractions, not only to Spanish visitors, but also to the European tourist flow, specially the one coming from France, which it was the most interested in these lands when it visited the area controlled by this country. In order to get this target, those institutions made a lot of studies in collaboration with the National Board of Tourism, and they published several tourist brochures and posters in different languages. Maps were another resource of tourist promotion used

by the Committee, conscious of the high utility of this kind of information. The first one was edited in 1929 and concerned to the Southern Spain and the Northern Morocco, with advices in French, English, German and Spanish. To this one was followed another ones with a more precise scale, which were limited to the occidental part of Protectorate, where the main road infrastructure was completely finished, and the military control of territory become more intense, due to this one the security in the routes was guaranteed and it is not necessary to take no type of "exceptional precaution", like assured some tourists that have travelled by them.

Yet the particular kind of tourism introduced during those years was not important for having launched or proposed possible destinations, but rather because of the attempt to create a unified policy and the favouring of welfare-based interventions. This laid the foundations for development that in the post-war period would lead to the urbanization of almost all the Italian coastlines and paved the way for the colonies to head towards a new frontier once they had begun to move towards independence.

## 5. Conclusions

The phenomenon of tourism in Italy was growing thanks to the commitment of the institutions, and with the spread of free time, holidays (10-20 days for employees and 6 days for factory workers) and of travelling for tourism, and tourist guides were a novelty for Italians. The Touring Club organized trips and expeditions in the colonies and was not the only association to do so: the other great institution was the Consorzio Italiano (Italian Consortium) for travel bureaus, a great promotor of trips during the twenty years of Fascism as well as an enthusiastic organizer of recreational activities, as witnessed by the Opera Nazionale del Dopolavoro (National Recreational Club), created in 1925. In addition, during the years of conquest the publication mentioned several times in this paper, *L'albergo in Italia*, dedicated various issues to publicizing the hotel complexes in the colonies.<sup>22</sup> The architectural development seen in the hotels, roads and other infrastructures built in the colonies made a significant contribution to the heritage left by the Italians in their colonies, especially in the Dodecanese<sup>23</sup>.

In the 1930s the colonies, as well as being areas of military and economic conquest, could also function as a tourist destination; as Acquarelli underlined "spreading the idea that a land possesses the necessary conditions for tourism is the same as saying that this land is peaceful, normalized, and comparable to the territory of a region in the homeland";<sup>24</sup> and the journey that the reader was persuaded to take (whether real or imaginary) was immediately charged with a different narrative aspect. This was perhaps the most important one, because it was at the heart of the collection of itineraries illustrated in the guidebooks, namely the importance of a patriotic memory, a historical and patriotic memory that was part of

<sup>22</sup> These issues covered: *Turismo in Somalia dall'albergo alla tenda* (settembre 1935); *Costruzioni alberghiere in Africa Orientale* (June 1937); *La nuova attrezzatura alberghiera in AOI* (September-October 1938).

<sup>23</sup> Vota, ed. (1938); Gresleri et al., eds. (1993); Martinoli and Perrotti (1999); Migliaccio (2008); Pignataro (2010).

<sup>24</sup> Acquarelli (2010, p. 63).

the rhetoric typical of that particular period of history. As Berhe points out (2017, p. 10), "if the regime failed to create a thriving tourism economy that could do without state donations, it achieved the (perhaps most important) goal of renewing the image of the Mediterranean colony, which was no longer perceived as a disinherited and wild land, but a thriving appendage of the Kingdom: a region open to tourism, but above all to the colonization of the Italian popular classes, which were basically the real recipients of this vast campaign of propaganda of the regime ". But it agree with Hom when she write (2012, p. 282): "In the case of Italy's Mediterranean colonies, this preposterous transition transpired not in the hands of scholars, but rather in those of tourists. Interestingly, Italian officials wanted tourism to supplement more conventional programs of demographic and agricultural colonization. However, at the apex of the fascist regime in the mid-1930s, this 'soft' service industry emerged as one of the colonies' few, if not only, profitable sectors. By the end of Italy's Mediterranean tenure in 1943, tourism had developed into a discursive force much more powerful than colonialism".

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