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Una Faccia, Una Razza? Citizenship and Culture of
Fascist Empire in the Dodecanese Islands

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***Una Faccia, Una Razza?* Citizenship and Culture of Fascist
Empire in the Dodecanese Islands**

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Abstract

How did Italy imagine its ‘Greek’ occupied territories of the inter-war period? This paper takes the Dodecanese Islands as its privileged site for discovering the Fascist regime’s attitudes toward its non-African but, nonetheless, colonially occupied subjects of the Mediterranean—subjects who may have been the same in face, but were different in race. It examines the creation of a special form of citizenship, *cittadinanza egea italiana*, as a political instrument to encourage imperial loyalty and to initiate a project of cultural, but also ethnic, transformation in the islands. By examining in particular how Fascist Italy made use of the Second Treaty of Lausanne (1923), when integrating Dodecanese subjects as Italian nationals, the paper shows how Fascist governance’s struggle to establish hierarchies and racial differences between Italians and its occupied subjects in the eastern Mediterranean never reached a satisfactory resolution and eventually gave way to Anti-Semitic policies and a hardline approach to colonial occupation.

Keywords

Citizenship, empire, Italian Fascism, eastern Mediterranean, ethnic minorities.

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If we said that we came here and that we wanted to stay to enjoy the islands or to have a new Italian market, if we said that the occupation of the Dodecanese was an end in itself, foreigners would laugh in our faces. The Dodecanese is only and exclusively a pawn of foreign policy, we need it for an element of Mediterranean equilibrium, we need it for the naval base on Leros, we need it for our economic, cultural, and political expansion in the Levant, it will be a deposit for merchandise, a center of traffic, a lighthouse of culture, a point of support for all the migratory colonies in the Orient, and if it should occur, a trampoline, to launch a few jumps, in the case that others should jump and alter the Mediterranean balance.¹

As Orazio Pedrazzi described it, the Dodecanese protectorate was, strictly speaking, to be viewed as a piece of strategy—as a “trampoline” in the great game of imperial rivalry for control of the Mediterranean. Journalist and foreign correspondent, Italian diplomat in the Balkans and eastern Mediterranean and author of numerous texts that would help to define Fascist attitudes toward colonial subjects in these regions, Pedrazzi was speaking to an Italian parliament eager to learn of the nation’s future foreign policy in the eastern Mediterranean. In the aftermath of World War One and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the eastern Mediterranean consisted of nation-states and protectorates, ethnicities and ethnic minorities, and fierce imperial rivalries among European nation-states that vied for prestige and empire. The Dodecanese Islands were situated in a critical imperial passageway—looking on the one hand toward Anatolia and the vast territories of “Asia Minor”, and on the other toward Egypt and the Suez Canal—and were crucial for Mussolini’s new commitment toward renewing the Roman Empire in the Mediterranean. Yet Pedrazzi warned against Italy’s new regime in the Dodecanese becoming confused with a civilizing project. If Italy were to subject the Dodecanese Islands to the same kind of colonial and developmental projects that it had in store for Libya, to treat part of Greece as if it were Africa, it would only provoke laughter and ridicule from the European powers. The occupation of the Dodecanese Islands could not be an “end in itself”; the spiritual and cultural value of the territory was too great. The site of *Magna Graecia*, the Roman Empire, and the Venetian merchant empire in the Orient, the Dodecanese Islands were the cradle of the Italian nation’s very own imperial history.

At the same time, the territory could not be made into a province of Italy because of the special nature of the inhabitants. In particular, their alien religions—and especially their doctrine on marriage, which permitted both divorce and polygamy—made them unsuited to becoming fully-fledged Italians. Nevertheless, in 1924, after the signing of the Second Treaty of Lausanne, and the annexation of these islands that Italy had held unofficially since 1912, the fear that Italy’s expansion plans would somehow be undermined was pressing and a suitable strategy for ensuring sovereignty had to be settled upon with some speed. The Fascist regime quickly moved to integrate all of its *Dodecanesini* as Italian subjects. Yet the question still remained open as to whether the project was the extension of the irredentist project to expand Italy’s national borders or whether it would be a colonial one that looked more like the project in Libya. This paper shows why both potential scenarios were untenable. The instability of the boundaries and definitions of Italy’s role in the islands would lead to an increasing concern about establishing the locals as racially inferior to Italians. The Dodecanese Islands were to become the Scylla and Charybdis of Italy’s eastern Mediterranean policy. Were its treatment of the Dodecanese to be unabashedly colonial, Italy would seem to be making Greek Islands into the virgin territories of conquest in Africa, an anachronistic gesture that could only solidify Italy’s reputation as “backward”. Alternatively, if the annexation were construed as a move toward territorialization and nationalization, toward integration of the Dodecanese Islands as part of the Metropole and an Italian territory, then the nation risked a precipitous decline into Levantine decadence and Ottomanization.

¹ Orazio Pedrazzi, *Il Levante Mediterraneo e l’Italia*. (Milan: Alpes, 1924) , 41-2.

Initially, the insular properties of the Dodecanese made them a contained space where the regime held the view that it might safely experiment with schemes of autarchy and colonial modernity and, therefore, partial integration of its occupied subjects into the nation. It was convinced of the cultural value of the islands in the construction of its specific idiom of colonial occupation, but took the view that the islands were unsuitable for Italian immigration, except for colonial officials and the so-called *Levantini*, i.e. Italian emigrants living in the eastern Mediterranean.² As time wore on, the regime launched industrial and agricultural projects on the islands and encouraged further Italian immigration. What changed in the course of Italian rule in the archipelago, and why? In this paper, I attempt to answer this question by examining the culture of Fascist Empire as it emerges through a variety of documents relating to the question of Italian Aegean Citizenship.³ These documents are windows on the issue of how the regime institutionalized the idea of occupied subjects that were 'above' African colonial while clearly 'below' Italians. How did the regime demarcate boundaries between the occupied and the occupiers? Where (and how) did it draw the symbolic line between the Levant and Italy?

Colonial studies have repeatedly revealed that the boundary between Self and Other in the colonial setting is never fixed but constantly shifting.⁴ Even the relatively thin existing historiography on this particular chapter of Italy's colonial past has registered the instability of boundaries in this setting through strikingly different accounts. While Greek historiography has portrayed the Fascist period as fiercely oppressive, the local memory of the occupation has been especially influenced by popular stereotypes of familiarity, fraternization and even romance between Italians and Greeks, stereotypes often encapsulated by the expression that Italians and Greeks are *una faccia, una razza*, or one face, one race.⁵ A thorough evaluation of the practical tools that the regime used to manage its Dodecanese subjects is thus a starting point from which to question myths about relations between occupier and occupied and a gateway to a larger inquiry into how the regime operated at the empire's borderlands, in outposts that were key to the colonial enterprise of reuniting the Mediterranean under Italian rule. By focusing on the weak points of such schemes of colonial modernity, it is possible to see how the regime's attempt to use the isolated geographies of the Dodecanese Islands as a template for its rule elsewhere ultimately broke down within the larger framework of broad imperial expansion in the Mediterranean and Africa: as the analysis presented in this paper shows, although the Dodecanese Islands were to become an important model for further occupations that would take place in Albania, Greece and Dalmatia, the question of how a settler empire was going to work in white occupied territories was never fully resolved.

Italian Aegean Citizenship: Definitions and Imperial Uses

The conquest of the Dodecanese Islands was a result of the Italo-Turkish War (1911-12), when Italian ambitions had shifted from East Africa to the Mediterranean. At the same time that empires were being dissolved and their territory transformed into nation-states, Italy embarked on widening its colonial expansion project through a decisive move toward the crumbling Ottoman Empire.⁶ Italy's

² Vittorio Alhadeff, *L'ordinamento giuridico di Rodi e delle altre isole italiane dell'Egeo* (Milan: Istituto editoriale scientifico, 1927).

³ Archival documents presented in this paper are primarily from the Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome, here forth ASMAE, and the General State Archives of the Dodecanese Prefecture in Rhodes, here forth GAK. Because the Dodecanese Islands were placed under the tutelage of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs rather than the Ministry of the Colonies, the majority of records of the regime's directives are located in the former. The record of how local political actors implemented these directives is located in the General State Archives in Rhodes. The Fulbright foundation supported my extensive research in this latter archive in 2012-13, while a Dean's Pre-doctoral dissertation grant made possible the investigations in the Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Rome).

⁴ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism-postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

⁵ Nicholas Doumanis, *Myth and Memory in the Mediterranean: Remembering Fascism's Empire* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

⁶ As Alexander De Grand describes, "On the specific issue of unredeemed Italy, the Regno refused to limit itself exclusively to the question of Trento and Trieste. It demanded that Italy pursue an active policy of territorial expansion in the

foreign office had been aware since 1912 that the partitioning of former Ottoman territories among the European powers was going to look like another Scramble for Africa.⁷ This time, under the new regime of Fascism, not only was the nation not going to be shunted from the spoils but it was also going to move quickly to stake out its own claim to the Mediterranean as the core of its imperial project.⁸ Expansionist warmongers like Orazio Pedrazzi made cynical remarks, such as “in any case everyone is increasing their territories and planting their flags in the place of half-moons chased away by Catholicism, Protestantism and even English Judaism.”⁹ Italy had ultimately “lost” its bid to capture Tunisia, where it had large communities of emigrants: the number of Italians in Tunisia would outnumber French colonists for the entirety of French rule. The Dodecanese Islands were in many ways thought of as a remedial experience for Italy’s failure to annex Tunisia. Mussolini famously declared, shortly after the ratification of the Second Treaty of Lausanne in 1924,

Italy cannot but go to the Orient. To the West [Occidente] have been formed well-defined states. We cannot but spread out our arms there and even this may someday be forbidden to us. The lines of Italian expansion are toward the Orient.”¹⁰

Upon formal annexation of the islands, the Fascist regime had faced the issue of how to construct a steadfast dominance of the archipelago that would ensure Italy’s ongoing expansion in the eastern Mediterranean, alongside its conquest of North and East Africa. While Italy had achieved formal annexation of the islands by the Second Treaty of Lausanne, a strong threat to Italian sovereignty in the region was posed by new claims of “self-determination” in former Ottoman territories, as well as the presumed British mandate over the region in general. The British paid lip service to the idea that Greece was part of the larger ‘European’ cultural inheritance and that to govern Greeks as colonial subjects was absurd, even if British rule of Cyprus and the Ionian archipelago was often characterized by fierce stereotyping and civilizing discourses.¹¹ The two ways of framing the archipelago that emerged in Italian political and administrative discourses seem to speak to this prototypical problem of enacting a colonial project in Greece. Further complicating Italy’s colonial discourses for the islands was the fact that the eastern Mediterranean held a special currency within new productions of Fascist modernity while intersecting with futurist motifs of regeneration through the colonial project. Fascist Italy held the archipelago both as an exotic and underdeveloped territory—“orientalized” by years of Ottoman rule¹²—and also as the landscape of *magna graecia*, the Knights-St.John, and the Venetian expansion into the Ottoman world. Ultimately, a very different model for dealing with occupied Greek subjects emerged than the one that underpinned, for example, the British Empire’s rule of

(Contd.) _____

Balkans and Mediterranean.” *The Italian Nationalist Association and the Rise of Fascism in Italy*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978.

⁷ Phillip John Carabott, “The Temporary Occupation of the Dodecanese Islands: A Prelude to Permanency.” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 4:2 (1993).

⁸ Ibrahim Papoutsalaki, a Dragoman and former mayor of a district of Constantinople under Ottoman rule, who sought out the Fascist regime to hire him in an intelligence capacity, recommended that “mais si vraiment l’Italie veut attaquer la Turquie c’est le meilleur moment. Car les quatre vingt dix pour cent de la population est mécontente.” File on Ibrahim Edhem Papoutsalaki dated December 30, 1926. MAE: 988/1926.

⁹ Pedrazzi, *Ibid*, 41-2.

¹⁰ 21 February 1924. Pedrazzi, *Ibid*, 14.

¹¹ See Thomas Gallant, *Experiencing Dominion: Culture, Identity and Power in the British Mediterranean* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002) and Alexis Rappas, “Greeks under European Colonial Rule: National Allegiance and Imperial Loyalty” in *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* (34:2) 2010, 201-218.

¹² This was one of the most frequent tropes of Italian descriptions of the archipelago. It was perhaps best encapsulated in Giorgio Roletto’s words, which privileged the idea of geography, and the idea of the “bacino mediterraneo,” with its inevitably gendered undertones. Giorgio Roletto, *Rodi: la funzione imperiale nel oriente mediterraneo*. (Milano: Istituto Fascista dell’Africa Orientale, 1939).

Cyprus.¹³ Greeks were finally to become actors in the empire, and not just subjects, by first becoming partial citizens of the Italian empire.

Italy had used a form of “petty citizenship” for its emigrant subjects living outside of the peninsula, or *regno*.¹⁴ “Petty citizenship”—often known by the status of being *Italiani non regnicoli*—enabled ethnic Italians to preserve a juridical link to the peninsula without giving them the rights of full citizenship, such as voting, and was part of a broader strategy of what Mark Choate has called “the making of Italy abroad,” and of preserving Italian identity in the context of mass emigration.¹⁵ Italy had also used citizenship as a means to consolidate its control over the archipelago during its Liberal-era occupation of the islands. Between 1912 and 1916, Italy had attempted to make the Franco-Levantines, or *Levantini*, into Italian subjects by using the system of Ottoman capitulations already in place; the interim government even hatched a legislative proposal to create a simpler process of naturalizations to ensure Italian metropolitan citizenship for this community, though the law was never passed.¹⁶ The *Levantini* were dispersed throughout the eastern Mediterranean and the Italian government did not want to miss an opportunity to integrate these wealthy merchants into the Italian national body.¹⁷ *Levantini* included Jews as well as Christians and their “petty citizenship” was more informally called ‘small citizenship’ or *piccola cittadinanza*.

The 1926 creation of a special civil status, *cittadinanza egea italiana*, affirmed that Dodecanese subjects belonged to the Italian empire. This move to give occupied subjects a specific citizenship status was a new dimension of Italian empire, since never before had an Italian colonial territory had a specific form of citizenship. As already described, however, citizenship had been a powerful political tool after the unification and during the Liberal-era period when issuing citizenship became a way to reinforce national identity abroad and to mitigate the potential for decline due to emigration. It was also quite clearly an imperial tool and, for example, the practice of issuing citizenship to Italian emigrants living in Tunisia had also acted as a powerful tool against French sovereignty there.¹⁸ Using as its basis the unique circumstances (*sui generis*) of the Second Treaty of Lausanne, *cittadinanza egea* enabled all Dodecanese natives or permanent residents of the islands to become Italian Aegean Citizens, while maintaining what was known as the “personal statute”, or the right to marry (and more surprisingly, divorce) according to their stated religion.

The Treaty of Lausanne’s creation of a two-year window within which persons could “opt” for a particular citizenship purposefully enabled the population exchange between Greece and Turkey in the aftermath of Ottoman collapse and the reorganization of the eastern Mediterranean region along ethnic and religious lines.¹⁹ This same framework allowed the Fascist administration to handle

¹³ Rappas, *ibid*.

¹⁴ See Sabina Donati, *A Political History of Citizenship and National Identity in Italy, 1861-1950* (Stanford University Press, 2013), 183-216. Donati’s research into the administration of different kinds of citizenship in Italian colonies is the first of its kind. Many thanks go to Donati for her ongoing correspondence on the particular issue of the integration of Dodecanese subjects during the initial phases of this research.

¹⁵ Mark Choate, *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

¹⁶ Sabina Donati, “‘Statutis Civitatis’ and ‘Italianità’: Origins and Historical Evolution of Citizenship in Italy (1861-1050),” PhD Dissertation (Geneva: University of Geneva, 2007), 183.

¹⁷ See Robert Ilbert and Ilios Yannakis, *Alexandria, 1860-1960: a Brief Life of a Cosmopolitan Community* (Alexandria: Harpocrates, 1997) and Nicholas Doumanis, *Myth and Memory in the Mediterranean: Remembering Fascism’s Empire* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997).

¹⁸ Mary Dewhurst Lewis, “Geographies of Power: The Tunisian Civic Order, Jurisdictional Politics, and Imperial Rivalry in the Mediterranean, 1881-1935” in *The Journal of Modern History* 80 (December 2008): 791-830. Lewis shows that Tunisia was integrated into metropolitan France, like Algeria, because of the increasing pressures the Italian state could exert upon France as a result of the large number of residents in Tunisia applying for, and successfully receiving, Italian citizenship.

¹⁹ That is, to give all Muslims in the region the opportunity to migrate to the newly formed nation of Turkey, and all Greek Orthodox Christians from Anatolia and to Greece.

repatriation and naturalization on a case-by-case basis, as well as potentially to use the Lausanne Treaty and Aegean citizenship as a tool to advance its own political and imperial interests. By administering *cittadinanza egea italiana* to *Dodecanesini* living outside the islands, Italy dramatically increased the local population living in the islands in the post world-war period. This increase in the local population of the Dodecanese Islands reinforced Fascist demographic policy.²⁰ Mussolini affirmed in a cable to the local administration of the islands that it was in the regime's interest to be flexible on the issue of the statute of limitations, within which natives or permanent residents of the islands claimed the option of *cittadinanza egea*. The local administration was asked to evaluate each petition on a case-by-case basis, and it was especially advised that persons who were financially well-off be allowed to obtain Aegean citizenship and be encouraged to reside in the islands.²¹ On this basis, numerous wealthy Jewish refugees of the Greco-Turkish War arriving from the Anatolian coast were assimilated into the protectorate.²² Yet it was also essential that any person making an application for Italian Aegean Citizenship be of "good moral and political conduct" and not have a political record (*schedato*).

Dodecanese persons living outside the archipelago at the time of annexation had a two-year window within which to opt for citizenship by requesting it at the Italian consulate in their country of residence. Those persons actually residing in the archipelago at the time, in fact, accounted for only a small portion of the Dodecanese population:²³ given that the islands themselves had a very limited economy, a living was most often earned elsewhere. Some of the most frequent emigrations were to East Africa, Belgian Congo, Egypt and the Anatolian peninsula, but destinations also included the United States, Russia and Australia. Enrico Corradini observed in 1912 that the inhabitants of the Dodecanese Islands were quite like Italy: an emigrant nation suppressed by the "plutocracies" of Britain and France who only took care to safeguard their imperial interests by supporting Turkish nationalism and encouraging the suppression of Greeks. In Corradini's view, Italy did well to protect these Greek inhabitants, and in a certain sense, the decision to give Dodecanesini citizenship seems to have effectively reflected this nationalist's recommendations, at least initially.²⁴

The potential uses of Italian Aegean citizenship within Fascism's cultural expansion were myriad and far-reaching. In 1929, for example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs debated whether to provide passports to *Dodecannesini* who wished to leave the USSR and thereby save Dodecanese persons from the perils of Communism.²⁵ The idea was eventually abandoned by the regime, on the basis that to give passports to Dodecanesians residing abroad, who had failed to opt for citizenship within the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne, would undermine the prestige of Italy's rights as afforded by the treaty, "varrebbe – in pratica – una protezione che impegna il nostro prestigio senza risolvere la questione di diritto"²⁶ If specific proposals for protection such as this were rejected, the general rule was to allow such repatriations. Even *Dodecannesini* living abroad without the stated intention of

²⁰ Carl Ipsen, *Dictating Demography: The Problem of Population in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

²¹ Circular # 78, "Cittadinanza dei Dodecannesini" October 2, 1925 (GAK: 93/1927/163).

²² See Esther Fintz-Menasce, *Gli ebrei a Rodi: storia di un'antica comunità annientata dai nazisti*. Milano: Guerini, 1992.

²³ The research presented in this essay is by no means exhaustive of all the files concerning later naturalizations (located in the Dodecanese Historical Archive and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). However, a general pattern did emerge. The policy toward granting Aegean citizenship to petitioners seems to have been generally a generous one, unless there was something clearly in the person's moral or political background (or a clear national sovereignty that could be disputed by another national body) to make the granting of *cittadinanza italiana egea* prohibitive. It may be further safe to presume that Fascist Italy's demographic anxieties about the depletion of its population were also true of its Dodecanese possession. Indeed, there are frequent references throughout the literature of the period to the growth in the Dodecanese population, as proof of the magnanimity of the Fascist regime.

²⁴ Enrico Corradini, *Sopra le vie del nuovo impero* (Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1912), 153.

²⁵ Diplomatic Cable, Nov. 29, 1929 III. B. 1; ASMAE 993/1929

²⁶ "essi vengono ad essere completamente in balia di gente che pensa ed agisce al di fuori di quelle norme che sono patrimonio morale e legale della nostra civiltà, ed applica il principio della lotta di classe fino all'estremo" Dispatch n. 256358/223; Nov. 29, 1929; ASMAE 993/1929

returning to the islands were best given Italian citizenship. Given the likelihood that relatives of residents in the islands would return to join their families, it was urgent that Italy integrated these persons as Italian subjects, lest they risk losing them to Hellenic sovereignty. It was determined that, in addition to the usual criteria for the administration of ad hoc Aegean citizenship—namely, that the person be of “good, moral and political conduct”—, the regime should always issue Italian Aegean citizenship to relatives of natives of the islands because, otherwise, any former Ottoman subject of the Greek Orthodox religion would automatically be considered Greek.²⁷ If Italy did not move to integrate the relatives of Dodecanese subjects into the Italian imperial body, it would risk finding itself with the task of administering an ethnically and nationally Greek archipelago, and could be faced with a situation of ardent revolt and Greek nationalism with a legitimate claim to independence from Italy.

The potential for an Italianization project underpinning *cittadinanza egea* was evident and disturbed the local community from the outset. On the island of Kalymnos, protests, as well as an attempt by islanders to form their own government and declare themselves autonomous from Italian rule, followed Lago’s speech announcing the decree that the local population had become subjects of the Italian state. A Berlin correspondent, who was present to hear the speech, wrote, “from the Dodecanese arrives news of Italian imperialism that resembles the one in Alto Adige.”²⁸ The comparison to the Alto Adige region (also known as the South Tirol) underscores just how ambiguous it was as to whether Italy envisioned its occupation as an expansion of its national borders. The Triestine region of Alto Adige, Istria and the Dodecanese archipelago were Italy’s major territorial gains during the First World War. Shortly after the annexation of Alto Adige, or the South Tirol, a massive campaign to Italianize the German speaking population began.²⁹

In contrast to the project in the Alto Adige, annexation in the Dodecanese Islands did not produce direct or outward attempts to transform locals into Italians. A clear example of this was the fact that the new organization and administration of schools included only one hour per day of Italian language instruction. After 1936, education of local children in the mother tongue would be banned, but initially the Italian administration refrained from maneuvers that could be construed as explicit attempts to re-make the ethnic identity of the Dodecanese. In theory, *cittadinanza egea italiana* was meant only to ensure imperial interests in the region, and therefore its objective in terms of the local occupied was merely to generate loyalty among Italy’s subject community and admiration for the regime. As described by one cable issuing from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Italian Aegean citizenship was an extraordinary means of propaganda that,

demonstrates to our sympathetic *Dodecanesini* the moral advantage of belonging to a nation like Italy and to be in its patronage [...] The recognition of Italian Dodecanese citizenship, recently obtained by the foreign ministry, is the most efficient and useful form of propaganda that we can make for the Italian regime in the Aegean islands.³⁰

²⁷ “Nei riguardi della sudditanza Rodia per opzione, è stato da questo Governo seguito il criterio di limitarne la concessione a Dodecanesini che, oltre naturalmente essere di buoni precedenti politici e morali, possedessero qui qualche bene avessero altri interessi o una stretta parentela con persone già riconosciute suddite italiane. È ciò soprattutto perchè tali Dodecanesini, residenti all’estero, avrebbero un giorno certamente fatto ritorno nel Possedimento e non sarebbe stato per noi evidentemente opportuno che, in mancanza della concessione della sudditanza rodia e per non riconoscere più la Turchia la loro qualità di sudditi ottomani, perchè religione ortodossa, essi finissero con l’assumere la cittadinanza ellenica.” Diplomatic Cable of Jan. 22, 1929; ASMAE 993/1929

²⁸ Correspondence collected by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, appearing in the Berliner Tageblatt on December 13, 1925. ASMAE 988/1925 (Busta: Decreto Cittadinanza).

²⁹ See Roberta Perger “Borderlines in the Borderlands: Defining Difference through History, “Race”, and Citizenship in Fascist Italy,” *Max Weber Working Paper* (Florence: European University Institute, 2009).

³⁰ “Dimostrare cioè ai Dodecanesini sudditi nostri simpatizzanti la convenienza morale di appartenere ad una grande Nazione come l’Italia o di goderne il favore. È ciò che fanno la R. Legazione ed i RR. Consolati, proteggendo e aiutando gli uni e gli altri. Il riconoscimento della cittadinanza italiana dodecanesina, ottenuto recentemente dalla R. Legazione, è certamente la più efficace ed utile propaganda che possiamo fare per il regime italiano delle Isole Egee.” April 23, 1929 ASMAE 998/1929.

Dodecanese persons showed some adroitness in understanding and re-using this peculiar colonial apparatus to their advantage; sympathy and patronage for the regime could always be staged. Persons abroad at the time of annexation, and who returned after the two-year window within which to claim Italian Aegean citizenship, petitioned for it later, on the basis of having “forgotten” to opt for Italian citizenship or having been “unaware” of the regime change in 1923. Peppering such petitions were enthusiastic declarations of “obedience” and “devotion” to the Fascist regime. Applicants who managed to convince the authorities of their political indifference and their humble intentions were the most likely to be successful in obtaining citizenship or residence permits. Such was the case of Paolo Candilafti, who left the archipelago in 1919 and emigrated to Australia and then France, without opting for Italian citizenship abroad; nonetheless, as late as 1935 the administration chose to grant him Aegean citizenship, observing that “the interested party is a merit-worthy and able person, he could be considered one of our subjects because he was only absent from the island [Kastellorizo] for reasons of work.”³¹ Non-natives of the islands could likewise earn the right to Italian Aegean citizenship. A Bulgarian who had immigrated to Rhodes in 1925 was able to convince the authorities to give him Italian citizenship in 1932, with the patriotic exclamation that he had “always been unquestioningly obedient to Italian laws and devoted to the glorious Italian regime that I admire and the glorious tricolor flag that has protected me now for twelve years.”³²

Patriotism in fact for the regime became an increasingly important subtext to the regime’s vision of *cittadinanza egea italiana*. A 1934 reform to the citizenship law provided that Dodecanese persons could achieve full metropolitan citizenship after completion of military service (decree no. 1379, October 19, 1933, converted into law no. 1931 of January 4, 1934). Military service could take place in Italian colonies as well as on the peninsula. The first Fascist governor of the islands, Mario Lago, inveighed against the practice of completing military service outside of Italy proper. According to Lago, the point of military service was to instill national patriotism and “an exact understanding of the power and greatness of the Patria,” and therefore, it did not have the same benefit if it was completed outside of metropolitan Italy. The governor further feared that full citizenship would be granted to persons who were not fully Italianized: “they should spend their period of military service in vaster environments and find themselves exclusively in contact with the Metropolitan element.”³³

Yet there was a rift between the local administration’s views about cautiously integrating Dodecanese natives as Italians, and the regime’s schemes to generate greater manpower for imperial expansion. Dodecanese persons found plenty of opportunities with the regime that might eventually lead to full metropolitan status. A young physician from Rhodes, Giorgio Peridi, for example, was able to obtain full Italian citizenship, even though he was living in Alexandria, because of a professed faith in the regime and his declared plans to move to the Italian colony of Eritrea. The remarks in his file highlight that Giorgio Peridi “had [during his permanency on Rhodes] nourished Hellenic sentiment but he did not make any obvious political propaganda and he behaved well toward the authorities.” After medical school in Athens, he had moved to Alexandria where he gained employment at the Italian hospital ‘Benito Mussolini’, demonstrating his loyalty to the regime by “assiduously attending, and obtaining good results, lessons in Italian culture and literature that are given at the Fascist Center.”³⁴ The Italian administration thus affirmed that Peridi should be allowed to complete the required military service, the last step toward full citizenship. Peridi had already gone to the local Fascist headquarters in Alexandria to sign up for service in colonial Eritrea.

The local administration seems also to have viewed Italy’s African colonies as a route to reshaping the national consciousness of Dodecanese subjects, particularly peasants, and turning them into Fascists loyal to the empire. Although the number of Dodecanese subjects who repatriated to

³¹ “l’interessato sia persona meritovole di agevolazione, si potrebbe considerarlo nostro suddito, perchè assente dall’isola a scopo di lavoro.”N. 1556/3, Kastellorizo (Castelrosso) December 29, 1936 (GAK 323:1935).

³² “Sono stato sempre ossequiente alle leggi Italiane e devoto al Regime Italiano che ammira le sue glorie e la gloriosa bandiera tricolore che da 12 anni mi protegge”N. 1758/39-1932, Rhodes, March 5, 1937 (GAK: 323/1935); Nicola Vergof.

³³ ASMAE Telespresso n.1885, Mario Lago to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Uffici Trattati), January 13, 1935. 988/1935

³⁴ GAK: Envelope 323:1935.

Rhodes on the eve of the Ethiopian invasion was relatively small (fewer than one hundred), the archives have much to say about how the colonial African experience may have had an impact on these “semi-citizens”. Comments on their “political and moral conduct” were extremely positive, and the administration reported in many petitions of their “enthusiasm about the upcoming Italian action in Ethiopia.”³⁵ Cables to Rome conveyed satisfied reports about numerous Italian Aegean citizens who repatriated on the eve of Italy’s 1935 invasion of Ethiopia. One cable enthusiastically described how many of these peasants sought inscription into the Fascist party, even describing one instance of a Greek who, while recounting his odysseys in Africa, suddenly announced to a gathered crowd his desire to become an Italian citizen:

If I knew how to write I would publish who the Greeks are because you don’t know them, but once you do know them you will hate them as I do because they are as Barbaric as the Abyssinians. The Italians are in contrast civil, good and human and if it weren’t for the Conte Vinci to save us we would be lost. So why not love the Italians? And why not want to be Italian?³⁶

For the regime, the peasant journey through Africa had taught Greeks of the magnanimity and grandiosity of the empire, the recognition that to be Greek was to be primitive, in this speaker’s words, as barbaric as an African. The report described how this particular Greek Dodecanese subject was born in Addis Ababa, but had never been to Rhodes until the forced evacuation on the eve of the Italian invasion and the gassing of Ethiopia. Pursued by the Ethiopians, his file states he turned to Zervo, a famed Greek nationalist, who had promptly turned him over to the Ethiopians because he was ‘Italian’ (had Italian Aegean citizenship). After being injured, he was rescued by the Italian foreign ministry. These adventures led him to conclude that Conte Vinci was “civil, good and human” and his savior from the infamy of being Greek. Thus, as evidenced here, the myth of *Italiani, brava gente* was a part of the regime’s own rhetoric and construction of itself as the strong state able to protect those Greeks who decided to become loyal patrons.³⁷ The authors of the cable also used this anecdote to illustrate the effectiveness of Italian Aegean citizenship in courting imperial loyalty. The *Dodecanesini* in east Africa “have not been brainwashed by anti-Italian rhetoric for all that the propaganda has been so effective in Abyssinia,” and the Italian authorities therefore endorsed the decision to grant Italian Aegean citizenship to the numerous Dodecanese Greeks who had been forced to return to the archipelago, some of whom had not yet claimed any form of Italian citizenship.³⁸

Citizenship as Ethnic Transformation

If the case-by-case administration of Italian Aegean citizenship was a good way to weed out political dissidence, it was also a place to expunge Ottoman degeneracy from the archipelago. The applications of persons with a criminal background were denied, however devoted they came across as being in their petitions. Such was the case of Filizza Psaltu, whom the administration determined was a prostitute. Psaltu was not only a prostitute: since entering into a life of crime, she had also been living with a Turk (her presumed pimp) for some years, and was therefore “di pessima condotta morale.”³⁹ The Treaty of Lausanne—and the politics of race and nationalism that had shaped it—also provided the administration with a convenient legal mechanism to refuse residence and citizenship to a person it viewed to be undesirable. Yousef Soleiman, a Turk from Rhodes, had immigrated to the United States with an Italian passport and then been convicted of running a brothel in Pennsylvania. The regime refused the request that Soleiman be deported back to Rhodes, on the basis that, although Soleiman had an Italian passport, he was a Muslim and “did not belong to the ethnic majority of the

³⁵ GAK: Envelope 1493/1935.

³⁶ GAK: Envelope 1493:1935.

³⁷ As Rodogno notes, the practice of granting citizenship to conquered peoples may have appeared to replicate Roman models of rule, but the criteria for administering citizenship was distinctly Fascist in conception: “By contrast, from the second half of the 1930s onwards, the essential requirement for the acquisition of citizenship was race.” Rodogno, 63.

³⁸ “non siano imbevuti della retorica antitaliana per non essere stata la propaganda molto efficace in Abissinia”

³⁹ Petition for Filizza Psaltu (GAK: 323/1935)

islands, which is known to be of the Greek Orthodox race and language.”⁴⁰ Italy did not have to recognize him as a “citizen” of the Dodecanese archipelago, even if the local administration had earlier issued him with an Italian passport. Although it is difficult to gauge, given the fact that there were relatively fewer instances of Turkish petitions for resident permits or Aegean citizenship, it is clear that the Turk was less likely to receive an *ad hoc* application of Italian Aegean Citizenship than his Greek counterpart. It was unlikely, for example, that a Turk could obtain permission to stay in the archipelago on the basis that he had family residing in the archipelago or held property there.⁴¹ This “bad Turk” embodied the petty crime, vice and the lack of hygiene that were targeted as unwelcome in the new project of Mediterranean possession.

The 1934 reform to the law governing Italian Aegean citizenship, which provided for the acquisition of full metropolitan citizenship, also made it possible to inherit or pass on Italian Aegean citizenship. In this respect, it came to closely resemble Italy’s metropolitan citizenship, on the basis of race or *jus sanguinis*. The new law affirmed that women should receive their citizenship through marriage, or, if unmarried, on the basis of the citizenship held by their fathers or brothers, and in the last instance, in the absence of the ties in question, on the basis of their mother’s citizenship status. In practice, this provision of the citizenship law meant that descendants of Dodecanese natives, even those residing outside the archipelago and who had never set foot on the islands, could become Italian Aegean citizens. It was by and large Greek Dodecanese subjects who obtained Italian Aegean citizenship abroad.

Interestingly, Italy seemed quite eager to integrate the Dodecanese emigrant community in Egypt by these means. By the 1930s, it was possible for Greek Dodecanese persons born in Egypt, but whose fathers had emigrated there with Italian Aegean citizenship, to become Italian ‘citizens’, though they were neither Italian on the basis of race, *jus sanguinis*, nor born in an Italian occupied territory. As long as the administration did not believe that Egypt would contest the Italian decision, the petitions of all Dodecanese persons for *cittadinanza egea italiana*, whether residing in Egypt or wishing to return to the islands, were granted. It stands to reason that this decision to apply Italian Aegean Citizenship to Dodecanese Greeks living in Egypt may have served more than one purpose. For one, to increase the number of Italian nationals there would help to undermine the British mandate in Egypt. Given the dissident and anti-Fascist Italian communities living in Egypt, it may also have been yet another form of political propaganda against Italian anti-Fascism in Egypt.⁴²

Returning emigrants from Australia, who had acquired a form of English colonial citizenship while abroad (Australia was at this time under English sovereignty), were more often than not repatriated to the archipelago. Often, Aegean citizenship was presented as a measure that “corrected” the confused and tangled situations of empires and nation-states. Many Dodecanese persons acquired multiple national identities as they migrated throughout the eastern Mediterranean and Africa for work, and their re-entry to the Dodecanese Islands was marked by the Italian regime’s desire that their return home also meant a re-location of their Dodecanese identity.

In its fervent quest to court Dodecanese loyalty, Italian Aegean citizenship resembled the models of citizenship that Italy had developed for Italian emigrants in the liberal period—such as

⁴⁰ Ministero degli Affari Esteri (MAE) Busta: 993/1929. In general, the islands were inhabited part of the year or for several years at a time, and then residents left for greener pastures in the eastern Mediterranean while their land on the islands was left fallow.

⁴¹ For example, Bilal Terzioglu was denied his request to join his relatives on Rhodes, though he essentially was pleading asylum, as a deserter of the Ataturk army, and was therefore unable to return to Turkey (December 28, 1934; GAK 323/1935). Yet, Terzioglu was not alone and the petitions by Turks generally betray the applicant’s mood of desperation. There are also instances of Muslims who wished to retain the Turkish citizenship acquired while in Turkey and yet still continue to reside in the islands, a desire which the administration flatly refused.

⁴² Marta Petricoli, . *Oltre il mito. L’Egitto degli italiani (1917-1947)* (Milan: Mondadori, 2007); Robert Ilbert and Ilios Yanakakis, *Alexandria, 1860-1960: the Brief Life of a Cosmopolitan Community*. Alexandria: Harpocrates, 1997; Rosetta Caponetto, “ ‘Going out of stock’: Mulattoes and Levantines in Italian literature and cinema of the Fascist period,” PhD Dissertation: University of Connecticut, 2008.

piccola cittadinanza—by allowing for extensive repatriations and, as in the case of Dodecanese persons in Africa, enabling them to maintain their status as Italian nationals even when being born and residing abroad for long periods of time. Yet many more “citizens” were lost in the tangled web of emigrations, empires and nation-states. Persons who acquired one or more national identities during the course of their migrations could not always be reintegrated as Italian subjects. Other governments could contest Italian claims to sovereignty, frustrating the stated aims of the regime to use Dodecanese citizenship as a means to build cultural and political hegemony in the eastern Mediterranean region. The regime was often unsuccessful even in maintaining the Italian Aegean identity of its clearly marked Dodecanese subjects. The porous borders of the Mediterranean Sea undid the attempt to naturalize Dodecanese persons. Italian Dodecanese subjects would suddenly appear on the lists of the Greek army: “È la solita storia dei marittimi dodecannesini la cui madre è cretese,” remarked an administrator in a file about one such case.⁴³ Many of the archipelago’s residents succeeded in maintaining their Greek or Turkish nationality and thereby avoided the system of petitions and patronage that accompanied *cittadinanza egea italiana*, even at the cost of later incurring difficulties for themselves.⁴⁴ Numerous Dodecanese persons attempted to evade the citizenship system, and some were less successful than others. Giovanni Micailo had migrated to North America in 1923, just before the Treaty of Lausanne went into effect, and in order to re-enter the archipelago had assumed the identity of a former co-worker. His falsified passport was ultimately discovered and he was forbidden to reside in the islands; he went on to become one of the numerous undesirable *apolidi* or stateless persons. His failed ruse was symptomatic of a larger issue of gaps within the citizenship program. In its practice, the administration of *cittadinanza egea* was an increasingly complex system that only with difficulty accounted for the identity of its subjects. The criteria for membership became more and more restrictive, at the same time that *cittadinanza egea italiana* became more and more urgent for carrying out business and living an ordinary, everyday life. The colonial gaze clearly emerges in these documents, with colorful remarks about the physique and appearance of applicants peppering the paperwork of individual applications, such as cerulean eyes, robust build, wide nose, and so on.

Empire: Imperial ‘Citizens’ and ‘Others’

The 1936 invasion of Ethiopia exacerbated the regime’s dilemma of whether to view the islands as a foreign territory or as part of the Metropole, as a “strip” (*lembo*) of Italy in the eastern Mediterranean that might be a potential space for Italian settlement. With the invasion of Ethiopia, Italy began to perform its fantasies of Eurafica and Mussolini’s *comunità imperiale* of the Mediterranean. This final stage of empire engendered new fears about colonial hybridity and racial miscegenation, first in the form of racial laws in the colonies, establishing a regime of apartheid in the racial laws against Jews in Italy and its colonies. Italy reversed its earlier stance toward mixed marriages and *meticci*, the children of mixed race couples (Italians and Italian colonial subjects in Africa), by making mixed marriages illegal and denying metropolitan citizenship to mixed race children.⁴⁵ It eventually deployed quite similar prohibitions against mixed marriages in the Dodecanese Islands, with regard to marriage between Jews and Italians.

The heightened atmosphere of racism after the Ethiopian invasion led to the publication of the manifesto of the *Difesa della Razza* and to the racial laws against Jews. As Fabrizio de Donno has argued, the alliance with Nazi-Germany, which came about in the aftermath of the Ethiopian invasion,

⁴³ Crete’s vicinity to the Dodecanese Islands was a persistent thorn in the administration’s side. The comment also reflects how citizenship in Greece functioned differently; it was possible to be viewed as Greek based on maternity and not only paternity. GAK: 323/1936.

⁴⁴ After the 1939 invasion of Greece, and the declaration of war against Greece, all Dodecanese persons with Greek citizenship were considered enemies of the state and were interned.

⁴⁵ Giulia Barrera, “The Construction of Racial Hierarchies in Colonial Eritrea: the Liberal Era and Early Fascist Period, 1897-1934” in *A Place in the Sun: Africa in Italian Colonial Culture from Post-Unification to the Present*, Patrizia Palumbo, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Giulia Barrera, “Sex, Citizenship and the State: The Construction of the Public and Private Spheres in Colonial Eritrea” in *Gender, Family and Sexuality: The Private Sphere in Italy, 1860-1945*, Perry Wilson ed. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

created new needs for Fascist discourses of race. De Donno shows that the category *Romanità* was eventually used to resolve idiosyncrasies about race and national identity inherent to the Italian colonial project:

The idea of *Romanità* was the basis on which both the Aryan and the Mediterranean ideas of race were erected. These racial notions provided the ideological terms with which to re-establish modern Italy in a Europe dominated by racism.⁴⁶

This new need for an outward expression of Italy's Roman dominance over the Mediterranean produced dramatic moments, such as Mussolini's 1937 visit to Libya, in the aftermath of the Ethiopian invasion, when he presented himself as the "Founder of the Empire" and "defender of the prestige of Rome, the common mother of all Mediterranean peoples."⁴⁷ Capping this spectacular performance was Mussolini's acceptance of the Sword of Islam from the Libyan people, meant as a symbolic endorsement of the three-year old leadership of Libya by Italo Balbo, who was to transform the colony into Italy's "fourth shore" of the Mediterranean. The conquest of Ethiopia brought over nine million Muslims under Italian colonial rule. Mussolini's histrionic claim to make a bid for the "patronage" of the Muslim world on this occasion was a prototypically Italian colonial gesture: re-appropriating the idea of Italy as 'Other', Mussolini reasserted the scheme of Mediterranean empire as the rejoining of Italy to Africa and the Orient.

In 1939 Italy annexed Libya—the four provinces of Tripoli, Bengasi, Misurata and Derna—to the Kingdom of Italy, making the colony in Libya, briefly, into a metropolitan territory. Libyans who had fought in Italian campaigns at the southern frontier of the Ethiopian War could apply for citizenship with petty privileges referred to as *cittadinanza italiana speciale*. This civil status was almost exactly the same that which Dodecanese locals had possessed since 1926. Davide Rodogno has argued that the islands were not only at the geographic frontier of the colonial project but also at the frontier of experiments in Italian colonial modernity in the Mediterranean: many of the juridical policies experimented upon in the Dodecanese Islands would be deployed in later occupations of Greece, Dalmatia and the Balkans. A citizenship policy aimed at retaining Aryan Dodecanese subjects, while expelling Jewish ones, would purify the Ottoman element from the region and, in its fiercest ideological and most racist iteration, pave the way toward the Mediterranean 'small space' habitable for Italians.⁴⁸

Apart from the already mentioned parallel with what occurred in Libya after the Ethiopian invasion, the juridical framework for Dodecanese subjects was also a model for Albanians who became subjects of the Italian king upon the 1939 invasion and annexation, and then, in 1941, for ex-Yugoslav subjects who became subjects after the Italian invasion of Dalmatia. The granting of citizenship to occupied peoples in the Balkans resembled the special status administered to Dodecanese subjects as early as 1926, because of their white, non-African status.⁴⁹ In Albania, for

⁴⁶ "With the fascist-Nazi alliance, the fascists were faced with the problem of race in a new form (which in the past they had criticized) but sought to deal with it in a way that could turn it to their advantage." Fabrizio de Donno, "La Razza Ario-Mediterranea" in *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* (8:3), 2006: 394-412.

⁴⁷ See John L. Wright, "Mussolini, Libya, and the Sword of Islam" in *Italian Colonialism*, Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller, eds. (Palgrave and MacMillan, 2005).

⁴⁸ According to Rodogno, the Dodecanese archipelago became the so-called "small space" and a juridical model for later territorial conquests in Albania and the Dalmatian coast. Rodogno's conclusion about the 'small space' seems generated by some of the different suggestions put forward by Fascist ideologues so as to best utilize the archipelago for imperial plans, not all of which were enacted. He includes, for example, a later 1939 proposal by one ideologue that all of the local inhabitants of the Dodecanese Islands be expelled in order to make space for Italian colonialists. The present study is grounded mostly in archival documents, found in the General State Archives of Rhodes, that speak to the actual policies that were implemented. It is clear from these documents, however, that the islands were certainly to have a role in defining a strategy for future 'white' and 'slav' territories.

⁴⁹ "Finally and most significantly, the racist norms which the regime was currently applying in its Eastern and North African colonies were not extended to Albania – putting the "Sons of the Eagles and the Aegeans on the same footing. In fact, the

example, a full monarchical union took place between Italy and the Albanian kingdom. In the occupation of the Ionian archipelago, it was proposed that islanders wishing to marry Italians be viewed as *italiani non regnicoli*, so that marriages that did not violate the racial laws could take place; but this proposal, however, was never enacted.⁵⁰ Although there were several proposals to change the juridical status of the Dodecanese archipelago, no such changes were put into place. There was, perhaps, a 1939 initiative to extend the privilege of full Italian citizenship to all Dodecanese locals.⁵¹ On the other hand, there was also a proposal to expel Dodecanese locals to make space for Italian settlers; but neither the expulsion of the local community, nor the full integration of the islands into Metropolitan Italy, took place. The institutionalization of Italian Aegean Citizenship had already formalized a mechanism for the abolition of ethnic minorities in the island and for the shaping of a new political identity of Dodecanese subjects.

The new imperial era saw *Dodecanesini* become subject to a more radical scheme to remake their political, cultural and religious identity. Starting in 1937, the teaching of Italian in schools became compulsory and the mother tongue was banned. Mussolini ordered the departure of the first Fascist governor of the islands, Mario Lago, and replaced him with the bombastic Cesare De Vecchi, whose rule over Italian Somalia had a well-deserved reputation of being excessively brutal and harsh. Henceforward, in popular memory, the two governors of the Dodecanese Islands would come to symbolize the two faces of Italian rule: the soft project to slowly turn the islands and its subjects toward loyalty to Italy through the culture of colonial modernity and, contrary to this, the fierce project to actively transform the identity of the islands and to territorialize the subjects as Italians. De Vecchi embarked on what he called the cultural *bonifica* in the islands, an extension of the Fascist *bonifica* of Italy, rooted initially in the eradication of malaria in the Pontine Marshes and then implemented in a vast number of cultural and political projects for the Italian nation. De Vecchi's project for cultural *bonifica* in the Dodecanese Islands centered heavily on the establishment of Italian as the primary language spoken. In June 1939, Decree N.163 enforced the closing of most of the archipelago's private schools by making it obligatory for children of 6-11 years to attend Italian schools. In a singular study of Fascism's religious policies in the Dodecanese archipelago, Cesare Marongiu Bonaiuti has argued that, because De Vecchi had little faith that the Catholic Church would be able to accomplish the project of cultural assimilation of the islands, De Vecchi turned his focus on the school system and to the institutionalization of the Italian language.⁵² After the failure of the *autocephalia*, the project to separate the Greek Orthodox Church from its authority in Constantinople, De Vecchi turned toward "Romanizing" Dodecanese youth. The GIL or Fascist Youth Organization (Gioventù Italiana del Littorio) had already been in place since formal annexation, but it now became a center of the everyday experience in the islands. The numerous tourist infrastructures that, in the 1920s and early 30s, were meant to support a bourgeois and cosmopolitan experience of the islands were now reconfigured as "health colonies" where Dodecanese youth could exercise and regenerate their bodies and souls.

Mass expulsions did occur in the case of the large and vibrant Sephardic Jewish community, which, throughout the 1920s and 30s, the local administration had encouraged to develop and prosper. The application of the Racial Laws was used to revoke any form of Italian citizenship and to expel Jews who had migrated to the islands after 1919, and were therefore held to be non-natives of the Dodecanese Islands. This was almost half of the community, as many Jewish persons had left the Anatolian areas near the islands and naturalized to the Dodecanese as refugees of the Greco-Turkish War, the so-called Asia Minor catastrophe.⁵³ Members of the Jewish community who were natives of

(Contd.) _____

1938 legislation about mixed-race unions was not applied vis-à-vis Italo-Albanian marriages and the 1940 law related to *meticci* was completely silent about Italo-Albanian progeny." Sabina Donati, Diss, 262.

⁵⁰ See Rodogno, 276.

⁵¹ See Pignataro, *ibid*, 29.

⁵² C. Marongiu-Bonaiuti, *La Politica Religiosa Del Fascismo nel Dodecaneso* (Napoli 1979) 84-100.

⁵³ See Esther Fintz-Menasce, *Gli ebrei a Rodi: storia di un'antica comunità annientata dai nazisti* (Milano: Guerini, 1992) and Renée Hirschon, *Crossing the Aegean: an Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey* (New York: Berghahn, 2003).

the islands and had been living there at the time of formal annexation had, according to the Treaty of Lausanne, received Italian Aegean citizenship by “right”, and therefore did not lose their Italian Aegean citizenship. Sadly, because they were not expelled by the Italian regime in 1938, they were later deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau where most of them perished. The citizenship privileges that, in the early years of occupation, the regime had been willing to issue on a case-by-case basis, were staunchly revoked in the new mania of empire. It is clear from the documentation that the regime had decided to give a new reading of the Treaty of Lausanne’s provision of the ethnic minority. Ciano signed a document stating that members of the Jewish community who had obtained Aegean citizenship after emigrating in 1919 had done so by virtue of the special sovereign powers of the regime and not by right or international treaty:

la revoca della cittadinanza ha effetto soltanto per gli ebrei che avessero ottenuto la cittadinanza medesima in base ad un provvedimento formale di concessione, adottato nell’esercizio di un potere discrezionale, con facoltà, quindi, di accogliere o respingere le domande degli interessati.

Ciano clarified that *piccola cittadinanza*, which had often been used for the so-called *Levantini*—some of whom were of Jewish descent—was a non-revocable status but that the large majority of the Jewish community of Rhodes and Kos had a status which was much lower, i.e. *cittadinanza italiana egea*. Such a discretionary citizenship the regime could revoke at will, and the Second Treaty of Lausanne’s creation of the category of “ethnic minority” became a convenient alibi for the politics of race, which the regime now felt compelled to enact with the coming settlement project.

The regime therefore drew the line between the Levant and its Mediterranean empire by expelling half of the Dodecanese Islands’ Jewish community. The petitions by numerous Jewish persons against the regime’s call for their expulsion show that the regime was now clear that Dodecanese subjects were not to be confused with petty Italian subjects, or ‘small’ citizens. In one document, signed by Bastianini, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs assessed a petition that asked whether Jewish persons originally from Turkey and now residing in the archipelago, holding certificates of Italian *sudditanza*, should not be viewed as *attaches* and protected by the stipulations of the 1924 Treaty of Peace. De Vecchi explained that persons like Samuele Raffaele, who had arrived in the Dodecanese Islands as a refugee of the Asia Minor Catastrophe and obtained an Italian passport, had only done so “date le facilitazioni accordate in quel tempo all’elemento ebraico.” As a non-native of the islands, Raffaele had no actual civil or political rights with respect to the Italian state. De Vecchi asserted that Raffaele had only resided on the islands “di passaggio”, and declared that he had a status that was at best that of refuge, and at worst, that of *apolide*. As it had already done on occasion previously, the regime invoked the concept of the ethnic minority, invented and legalized by the Treaty of Lausanne, so as to strip members of the Jewish community of citizenship and transform them into foreigners and, ultimately, stateless persons without the right to reside anywhere within Italy or its colonial territories. De Vecchi clarified that Aegean citizenship was not to be confused with *piccola cittadinanza* when the issue arose again a year later:

Agli ebrei immigrati nel Possedimento dopo il 1 gennaio 1919, non la piccola cittadinanza è stata concessa (ciò che per l’articolo 1 del R.D.L. 10 settembre 1922 avrebbe dovuto essere concessa per Decreto Reale) ma la cittadinanza egea.⁵⁴

Those few Jewish persons who had opted for Turkish citizenship—which legally did not prevent them from residing in the archipelago—were ultimately saved, first from Italian expulsion and then from Nazi deportation. Their Turkish citizenship prevented them from being viewed as *apolidi* and, as a result, because Nazi Germany was not yet occupying Turkey in 1943, they could not be deported. As Turkish nationals they avoided the colonial apparatus that legalized their expulsion, deportation and extermination elsewhere.

⁵⁴ GAK 725/1938 Provvedimenti per la difesa della razza.

Jews who remained in the archipelago because they had achieved Italian citizenship by right or option—that is, because they were residents of the archipelago prior to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire—suffered humiliations similar to Jews in peninsular Italy. Provisions prohibited marriage between Italians and persons of another race, which, in this case, meant people of Jewish descent. Marriage between Italians and foreigners became subject to the regulation and approval of the Interior Ministry, and not just the local administration, as had been the case under Lago. Jews, furthermore, could not: be teachers or caregivers to any minor who was not Jewish; run or own a business or possess property of significant value (more than five thousand lire); have any domestic help that was Italian; be part of a civil or military administration; or hold any kind of public office. Given these inhumane conditions, many more members of the Jewish community that were not forced to leave in 1938 (because they were natives of the islands) emigrated anyway. The Jewish Racial Laws also brought the closing of Jewish private schools and the expulsion of Jewish children from Italian administered public schools. Members of the Jewish community were required to report to the local civil registry and register their religion. Other Dodecanese persons sometimes had to obtain a certificate, stating that they were not Jewish, in order to carry out routine bureaucratic matters.

The Turkish community, in comparison with the Jewish community, had mostly migrated from the islands after the Balkan Wars and the Second Treaty of Lausanne of 1924. While they had been less likely to receive an ad hoc administration of Aegean citizenship if they desired to return to the islands, with the enactment of empire, and the creation of the Racial Laws, the regime was also sometimes willing to view Turkish persons as of “Aryan race”. According to Davide Rodogno, “a circular of 1939 on the application of the law against mixed marriages specified that Arabs, Chinese, Turks and Libyans were not Aryans. Indians, Iranians and Armenians were to be considered of ‘Aryan race’, as well as ‘Christian or Muslim’ Albanians, , while Egyptians were to be defined case by case.”⁵⁵ Yet in practice, Turks in the Dodecanese archipelago sometimes received the administration’s tacit agreement that they were “Aryan.” When the Turkish national Zecrà Cuzeta wished to marry the Italian subject (Aegean citizen) Mustafa Kuheinlau, he petitioned the administration’s approval for what was a mixed marriage between two different national sovereignties, describing both him and his future wife as of “razza ariana”. The regime seems to have tacitly accepted this description, as it granted approval of the marriage.⁵⁶ Similarly, there seem to have been no direct repercussions for the children of illegitimate unions between Italian citizens and Muslim subjects of the archipelago. The Muslim, Giovanna Boni, claimed that the father of the first of her three children was an Italian marshal (“un certo Luciano Vincenzo”); the authorities’ only concern seems to have been that the child be properly registered.⁵⁷

Conclusions

Italy’s journey into the Levant would be fraught with increasing confusion about what exactly was the scope of Italy’s project for cultural hegemony in the eastern Mediterranean. If at first occupation of the Dodecanese Islands was merely to be a strategic maneuver that advanced the colonial interests of Italy elsewhere—by creating an island base that pointed to the empire beyond, or *Oltremare*—as time wore on the Dodecanese Islands became the “end in itself”, which Orazio Pedrazzi had cautioned against in 1924. Containment and control over the subjects within the archipelago required vast surveillance and numerous carrots to entice imperial loyalty. A dizzying array of different citizenship statuses needed to emerge in order to ensure that occupied subjects of the eastern Mediterranean were not only firmly under Italian sovereignty, but also were not confused with ‘real’ Italians. During the occupation of the liberal period, some Dodecanese persons with connections to the archipelago—above all, the wealthy *Levantini*—received *piccola cittadinanza*, a status reserved for Italians who were abroad at the time of the national unification. Local Dodecanesians derisively referred to this latter group of Levantines as *Italiani con la coda*, or Italians with a tail, indicating how little the idea of ‘Italian’ had come to have

⁵⁵ Rodogno, *ibid*, 64.

⁵⁶ GAK: 1939/649 Mixed Marriages. Petition dated September 6, 1939.

⁵⁷ GAK: 1939/649 Mixed Marriages. Document dated January 12, 1938.

in this offshore context of colonial empire. The citizenship status of Levantines was very similar to that of the *italiani non regnicoli*, ethnic Italians that had, since the unification, resided outside the national borders and maintained petty privileges. Confounding the regime's attempt to maintain clear boundaries between Italian metropolitan citizens and 'white' Italian occupied subjects were further changes and gaps in the system. Later reformations to the original provision of the Italian Aegean citizenship law installed a system of easy progression toward full metropolitan citizenship. Local bureaucrats referred to this status as *grande cittadinanza*, thus further creating the illusion that Italian Aegean citizenship was comparable to 'small citizenship,' or the status that Italian emigrants enjoyed. Who were the real Italians? Were they the Italians of the eastern Mediterranean who had migrated to the Dodecanese Islands during the Ottoman collapse and become part of the colonial elite? Or could the Turkish, Greeks and Sephardic Jewish subjects who had once lived under Ottoman rule also be considered Italians? I argue that it was this context of confusion about who was the 'real' Italian that produced the later turn toward viewing the Dodecanese Islands as a settler colony.⁵⁸ The introduction of the Anti-Semitic Racial Laws, in such a way that much of the community was expelled, affirmed the new ideology of race by drawing the line between Italy and the Levant, an act that may further have prepared the islands for future settlement.⁵⁹

It is true that any discussion of governance in the Dodecanese archipelago must take into account the fact that repressing emergent Hellenic nationalisms was at the heart of the regime's governance. This vision of colonial occupation, however, obscures how the directives toward changing the political and social identity of the Greek community became entangled with another imperial program, directed at establishing clear ideas about Italian nationalism and Italian national identity in the 'Orient'. Archival documents evidence that, while fantasies of regenerating shared histories, creolizations and cultural memories between Hellas and Rome dominated the rhetoric of Fascist rule over the Dodecanese, it was the underbelly of Orientalist anxieties and fears about the Other destroying the fabric of Italy's Fascist project in the islands that determined the regime's strategies of rule. A fetish for Greece present in rhetoric was just that, a fantasy. Discussions that dealt with real Greeks on the ground trafficked stereotypes of Greeks as "hypocrites", "untrustworthy" and "liars." A Catholic missionary to the island of Rhodes wrote in his memoir that "si accorse ben presto che Greca fides – nulla fide," adding that General Giovanni Ameglio, leader of the 1912 conquest of the islands, had uttered "brutta razza greca."⁶⁰ To take up the sword of Islam and be ruler of almost eight million Muslims meant that Mussolini would have to ensure that all Italians had a clear sense of their racial supremacy, especially in the eastern Mediterranean.

⁵⁸ One particular group of settlers directly emigrated from areas of the Trentino to specific villages in Rhodes. New social history is currently being completed on the topic:

<http://www.partitodemocratico.it/print/262011/emigrazione-italia-grecia-prorogata-la-mostra-trentini-nellegeo.htm>

⁵⁹ In the 1920s, the islands were initially excluded from Italian settlement on the basis that there was not enough space for Italians and, given the fact that the large emigration to the United States of local Dodecanesini had ceased (because of the closing of the US borders) it was unlikely that more space was going to become available (Alhadeff, 1927). It is generally not believed that Italy's settler colonialism functioned the same way that German Nazi expansion did, but given this territory's function within the wider expansion plans in the Mediterranean (indeed, early ideologues referred to the islands as Italy's Alsace-Lorraine), such a thesis of expulsion to promote colonial settlement needs to be evaluated in the Dodecanese case.

⁶⁰ Corrado Prodomi, *Memorie di un missionario di Rodi-eggeo, 1913-1920* (Verona: Bettinelli, 1937), p. 106.

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