

TOURISM AND IMPERIALISM IN ITALIAN EAST AFRICA: THE DISCURSIVE AND PRACTICAL FUNCTIONS OF THE *GUIDA DELL'AFRICA ORIENTALE* (1938) IN CONSTRUCTING A COLONY

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Sommario

La Guida dell'Africa Orientale Italiana fu pubblicata nel 1938 dalla Consociazione Turistica Italiana – questo il nome con cui il Touring Club Italiano era conosciuto sin dal 1937, quando fu costretto a 'italianizzare' il proprio nome. La guida è palesemente propagandistica nei toni e si presenta come un trionfante risultato in onore del Re e appena incoronato Imperatore Vittorio Emanuele III, del Duce, e dei soldati morti in Abissinia. Le 640 dense e dettagliate pagine della guida furono pubblicate solo due anni e quattro mesi dopo la dichiarazione della conquista dell'Abissinia da parte delle forze di Mussolini e della sua incorporazione nell'Africa Orientale Italiana: una nuova entità politica che includeva le già esistenti colonie della Somalia e dell'Eritrea. La meticolosa guida rappresenta, in effetti, un notevole risultato da parte degli autori che avevano intrapreso complesse ricerche in una regione ancora molto instabile e caratterizzata da continue ostilità tra le truppe coloniali e i combattenti della resistenza, che le forze italiane non furono mai in grado di pacificare completamente. A posteriori, data la nostra conoscenza di come la storia si è evoluta, si può essere tentati di vedere la Guida dell'Africa Orientale semplicemente come un ulteriore pezzo di tragicomica magniloquenza nel vanaglorioso arsenale di propaganda auto-incensatoria dell'Italia fascista. Tuttavia, la guida rappresenta chiaramente un investimento significativo di tempo e denaro per cui le ragioni della sua produzione necessitano una più attenta indagine. In questo articolo analizzo da vicino il testo della guida attraverso l'apparato teorico degli studi postcoloniali sul turismo. Sostengo che la guida sia molto più rilevante di una semplice millanteria coloniale; e che rappresenti piuttosto il piano di un impiego del turismo come elemento essenziale dell'assoggettamento, dello sfruttamento economico e dell'insediamento coloniale nell'A.O.I. (Africa Orientale Italiana). Intendo affermare che, come emerge dal sostegno

ufficiale di cui godeva, e dagli investimenti in esso, il regime italiano pianificò l'utilizzo del turismo al massimo del suo potenziale come arma per la conquista definitiva e l'assoggettamento della popolazione colonizzata.

Keywords: Guida dell'Africa Orientale Italiana, Touring Club Italiano, Consociazione Turistica Italiana, Italian Colonialism, Tourism

1. Introduction¹

The *Guida dell'Africa Orientale Italiana* was published in 1938 by the *Consociazione Turistica Italiana* (C.T.I.)² as the 24th instalment of their Guide to Italy. The 22nd and 23rd books in the series are devoted to the Italian possessions in the Aegean (1938) and to Libya (1937) respectively. That the C.T.I. was able so quickly to incorporate the freshly conquered territories of the new Italian Empire into their offering of detailed guidebooks is as astounding for the hubris of the endeavour as it is impressive for the scale, speed and thoroughness of the work undertaken³. This fascinating document is not only a record of the ambitions of a Fascist state determined to impose its authority and its model of modernity onto the territories it had conquered, but also a prescient recognition of the economic potential of mass tourism: an industry that would indeed grow into one of the world's largest in the second half of the 20th century (Apostolopoulos, 1996:17). The guidebook is also an important document in the history of European colonialism because it is a record of a uniquely articulated entanglement of tourism and imperialism from the very outset of a colonial project. Indeed, the detailed and impeccably researched content of the guide provides clear evidence of state investment in tourism infrastructure in Italian East Africa. The *Guida*

¹ All translations were done by the author.

² The *Consociazione Turistica Italiana* was the name chosen to replace *Il Touring Club Italiano* as a result of the Mussolini regime's campaign to forcibly 'purify' the Italian language of foreign loanwords.

³ That the Aegean, Libya and Italian East Africa were incorporated into a series of guidebooks to each Italian region is also interesting. This speaks volumes of colonial Italy's concept of its colonies which it saw as extensions of the Italian metropolitan heartland and potential sites of mass settlement by Italian citizens.

dell'Africa Orientale Italiana (referenced as *Guida* hereafter) manifestly illustrates that Mussolini's Fascist government planned to harness and develop the modern phenomenon of tourism in its colony as a central strategy for consolidating the Italian presence in the conquered region, extracting economic value from the colony, and reinforcing a relationship of economic and cultural dependence of the local Africans on the Italian occupiers.

I am by no means the first to note the unique level of deliberate entanglement of tourism and colonialism in the Italian case. Malia Hom (2012:282) examines "tourism as a colonizing strategy" in colonial Libya and Albania. Her analysis makes use of the Touring Club's guides to Albania (1939) and Libya (1937), among other texts, to argue for the special importance Italian colonial policy placed on tourism. She notes that in the 31 years of the Italian occupation of Libya (1912-1943), tourism was successfully implemented as an economic driver in the colony, a force for modernisation, and an extremely powerful propaganda machine which served to integrate Libya, Italy's so called "fourth shore", into the nation's concept of itself as an Empire. Poignant is her observation that just out of sight of the leisure routes traipsed by Italian tourists were the numerous concentration camps in which tens of thousands of Libyans perished during the same period (Hom, 2012:284). Brian McLaren (2006) argues along similar lines, though focusing special attention on the architectonics of the tourist infrastructure in Libya and its contribution to the modernisation of the colony. He states that "following the military conquest and creation of viable infrastructure of transportation and public services, tourism can be considered a third wave of colonization" and that "[o]rganized travel in the Italian colonies was widely regarded as an important economic force that could facilitate the process of modernization" (McLaren, 2006:5). It is clear from these studies, that tourism was indeed effective as an arm of Italian imperialism in Libya and that there is therefore no reason to imagine that the regime would not attempt to repeat its success in *Africa Orientale Italiana* (A.O.I.; Italian East Africa). Malia Hom notes that Italian East Africa was beyond the scope of her own study but that "a comparative study of the burgeoning tourism industries in Italian East Africa and Italy's Mediterranean colonies would be a

welcome addition to the scholarship on Italian colonialism and tourism history in general” (2012:283). Given that no such study has to date been done, this study aims to cover some of the ground in this regard and contribute to deepening our understanding of tourism as a colonial strategy in the Italian case.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the discursive and practical functions of the *Guida dell’Africa Orientale Italiana*: the discursive functions concern how the text contributes to writing the colony into existence as a textual entity or an idea of nation while the practical functions concern the way the text could be used by would-be settlers and investors as a manual for colonisation and settlement. In my estimation, the text is designed to serve three major functions contributing to consolidating the regime’s position in the region and drawing economic value from the newly constituted colony. Firstly, the guide served as propaganda for the regime, aimed at concretising the colony in the imaginary of the Italian nation. Secondly, it was designed to encourage and facilitate tourism and the development of tourist infrastructure in the colony, for the purpose of extracting wealth and encouraging investment along with being a detailed manual dedicated to potential settlers and investors in the colony. Thirdly, it serves as an ethnographic survey of the indigenous people of the region, enacting what Arjun Appadurai terms “metonymic freezing” (Appadurai, 1988:36). When applied in the realm of tourism, Appadurai’s concept can be used to indicate a situation where indigenous populations are trapped in the limbo of the ethnographic present subject to the objectifying gaze of the tourists, upon whom they have become economically dependent – their cultures reduced to a repetitive performance designed to meet the expectations of tourist onlookers hungry for an ‘authentic’ and ‘exotic’ experience.

2. Writing the colony into existence

This section concerns the ways in which *La Guida dell’Africa Orientale* was designed to contribute towards writing *Africa Orientale Italiana* into existence in the collective national imaginary of the Italian people as an imperial colony. The reading of the guidebook

performed in this section is underpinned by a theoretical approach to the study of nationalism which, broadly speaking, views the nation as a product of printed media (Anderson, 1983; Said, 1994; Bhabha, 2013). As is proudly indicated in the preface of the guidebook, *La Guida dell'Africa Orientale* was published only two years and four months after the surrender of Addis Ababa to Mussolini's forces and the proclamation of the return of the Empire. Atkinson argues that "[p]ersuading Italians whose traditional affiliations were local and regional to identify with Italy and its imperial agenda meant mobilizing the increasing range of geographical media that circulated through everyday lives" (2005:22). He cites the *Guida dell'Africa Orientale* as an example of these geographical texts designed to produce an imaginary for the Italian Empire.

According to the writer of the preface of the *Guida dell'Africa Orientale*, Carlo Bonardi, the guidebook is composed of 640 dense and meticulously researched pages containing all the information then available to the conquering colonisers and "an inventory of everything the Italians found there" (*Guida*:5)⁴, laid bare and rendered accessible to metropolitan audiences by, to use Edward Said's terms, "the authority of the European observer, traveller, merchant, scholar, historian, novelist" (1994:58). As a stock-take of the natural resources of the conquered territory it is clear that that the guidebook is a document of much greater importance than one might initially assume, forming an intrinsic part of the process of writing the colony into existence and establishing a blueprint for its economic exploitation. A compelling piece of evidence for the effectiveness of the guide as propaganda is a 1939 review in the English publication *The Geographical Journal* where the author, E.H.M. Clifford, praises the thoroughness of the guide, of which he is largely uncritical and takes at face value⁵, in the following terms:

⁴ "Un inventario di ciò che gli Italiani vi hanno trovato"

⁵ An indication, perhaps, of a tacit approval of the perceived benefits of Italian occupation, *The Geographical Journal* reviewer's only nod to the status of the *Guida dell'Africa Orientale* as a piece of propaganda (elaborate, complex and detailed, but a piece of propaganda nonetheless) is his criticism of the historiography of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, the character of Haile Selassie and the representation of Addis Ababa as "la capitale barbarica dei Negus" (the barbaric capital of the Negus) among other more blatant attempts to sully the image of the independent nation prior to the invasion.

The Consociazione Turistica Italiana are to be heartily congratulated on this, the latest addition to their series of guides. To have produced so complete a publication so soon after the Italian occupation of Ethiopia is a remarkable achievement, particularly in view of the still very unsettled state of the country. This mass of information, resulting from a great deal of travelling and a thorough study of available documentation, is ably presented. (Clifford, 1939:448)

This review is instructive in terms of our understanding of the mechanisms by which the text effected its rewriting of the territory it represented. By appearing as an objective, scientific and thus seemingly stable account of the landscape, its history and the people that inhabited it (this later making use of blend of the picturesque and pseudo-scientific anthropology discussed below), the guide occludes the underlying political motives that informed its commission. The volume, though being of recent production by a foreign invader with a clear agenda, manages to pass itself off as the most objective and reliable account of the landscape and its people available.

According to Huggan (1989:127; see also Tickell, 2004:21), colonial cartography hinges on the systematic erasure and forgetting of old and the imposition of new spatial configurations on the landscape in the interests of an imperial agenda. Said says that “[j]ust as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings” (1994:7). Atkinson (2005) notes that an important element of these images and imaginings came in the form of maps and geographical surveys. It is a commonplace that one should not confuse the map with the territory. A map is a representation of the landscape, which is very often imbued with ideological significance. The enthusiasm for geography and map-making shown by the Fascist state and Mussolini himself, is indicative of how a “[p]ersistent coalition of bellicose regime, colonial lobby, and geography played a

significant but often overlooked role in fascist expansionism” (Atkinson, 2005:20). Maps are by far the most important feature of the guidebook.

Prominent throughout the guidebook, as we shall observe in due course, is a focus on roadbuilding and the new roads of the Empire are a prominent feature of maps designed to encourage motoring tourism as a first step to investment and settlement in the hinterland of the colony. The reviewer from the *The Geographical Journal* is enchanted by the maps in the guide and by the apparent progress they represent. He says: “[t]he maps are numerous, well produced, and up to date, showing the remarkable amount of road construction that has been achieved” (Clifford, 1939:449). The maps produced by the C.T.I. represent the first maps of A.O.I. for civilian use. From the very detailed section of the guide devoted to the available maps of the region (*Guida*:30-32), and the mention of the Director of the *Ufficio Superiore Topografico* of each of the five Governorates in the acknowledgments at the beginning of the guide (*Guida*:7-8), it is clear that the C.T.I. maps were based on maps produced for military purposes by the *Istituto Geografico Militare*⁶ during the conquest of Abyssinia. It is telling that maps which were created for use by the invading military, were so quickly repurposed for the next wave of invaders: the tourists, settlers and entrepreneurs with the trusty *Guida dell’Africa Orientale* in their pockets.

In a comparative study of early imperial and colonial era cartographic practices, Jeffrey C. Stone (1988:59) argues that the maps produced in the colonial period had as their main function not the minute description of the topography of the landscape, but rather served as a survey of the location of the local populace for the purposes of colonial administration. This observation is valuable in terms of the present study of the *Guida dell’Africa Orientale* and is clearly demonstrated by the maps and descriptions of the administrative areas of A.O.I. in the guide. After the invasion of 1936, the Ethiopian Empire was merged with the colonies of Somalia and Eritrea to form six administrative districts of a new territory called

⁶ The *Istituto Geografico Militare* (IGM), or *Military Geographic Institute*, is an Italian public organisation coordinated by the Italian Army. It is the national mapping authority of Italy.

Italian East Africa. The ancient Empire of the King of Kings, Emperor Haile Selassie, was written out of existence in the guidebook and, in its place, a textual blueprint for a colony is drafted along with a comprehensive set of new maps and national symbols to match. The composition of the new colony is explained in a section entitled *Sguardo d'insieme* in minute detail to Italian readers, who were thus to assimilate the revised geography imposed by the conquerors on their new empire⁷. Each of these governorates had new heraldry designed for it along the lines of the crests of the Italian regions, provinces and communes: a set of new symbols to delineate, define and contain the new administrative regions of the colony. Each of these insignia features the symbol of fascist Italy along with an image designed to represent the indigenous culture of the governorate, such as a crescent moon to represent Islam for Harar and a rose to represent Addis Ababa, whose name in Amharic means 'new flower'. These insignia are prominently displayed on the inside cover of the guidebook.

⁷ "Italian East Africa is the official designation of the Italian colonial empire in East Africa proclaimed by il Duce on 9 May 1936 (year XIV of the Fascist Era) and consists of the Colony of Eritrea (c. 119 000 km² with c. 600 000 pop.), Italian Somalia (c. 600 000 km² with c. 1 million pop.), and the Ethiopian Empire (c. 989 000 km² with between 5-10.5 million pop.) equalling a total land area of 1 708 000 km², (5 times that of Italy) with 7 to 12 million inhabitants. Italian East Africa is now divided into 5 governorates: Eritrea (capital Asmara; c. 202 000 km² with 1 million pop.); Amara (capital Gondar; c. 223 000 km² with c. 2 million pop.); Harar (capital Harar; c. 202 000 km² with c. 1 400 000 pop.); Galla and Sidama (capital Gimma; c. 353 000 km² with c. 1 600 000 pop.); Somalia (capital Mogadiscio; c. 702 000 km² with c. 1 300 000 pop.), and finally the Governorate of Addis Ababa (c. 7000 km² with c. 300 000 pop)" (*Guida*:33).

[Africa Orientale Italiana è la denominazione ufficiale dell'Impero coloniale italiano in Africa Orientale, proclamato dal duce il 9 maggio 1936 XIV, e comprendente la Colonia Eritrea (c. 119 000 kmq. Con c. 600 000 ab.), la Somalia Italiana (c. 600 000 kmq. con c. 1 milione di ab.) e l'Impero d'Etiopia (c. 989 000 kmq. con forse 5-10.5 milioni di ab.), in totale c. 1 708 000 kmq. di superficie (c. 5.5 volte quella dell'Italia) con forse 7-12 milioni di abitanti. L'A.O.I. è ora divisa in 5 Governi: Eritrea (capoluogo Asmara; c. 202 000 kmq., 1 milione di ab.), Amara (capoluogo Gondar; c. 223 000 kmq. c. 2 milioni di abitanti); Harar (capoluogo Harar; c. 202 000 kmq. c. 1 400 000 ab.), Galla e Sidama (capoluogo Gimma; c. 353 000 kmq., c. 1 600 000 ab.), Somalia (capoluogo Mogadiscio; c. 702 000 kmq., c 1 300 000 ab.), più il Governatorato di Addis Abeba (c.7000 kmq., c. 300 000 ab.) (*Guida*: 33)].

Worth quoting is Tickell's study of British colonial India as an example of how maps were utilised as a fundamental part of the colonial project:

Not only was the production of an accurate map of India a practical necessity for the military and political domination of the subcontinent, it was, as a number of postcolonial commentators have pointed out, also a way of constructing India as a domain of British cultural and political sovereignty. As in other orientalist projects of this period, the continuous process of gathering and organizing factual information about India (in this case Indian topography), neutralized the threat of its cultural and physical difference and, in turn, presented the authoritative "position of the [European colonial] subject as fixed and unchangeable". (Tickell, 2004:20 citing Pratt, 1986:140)

Thus, for the average Italian, unlikely ever to set foot on African soil, the empire that Mussolini had conquered in their name would always be little more than a visual representation in the form of maps proudly displayed all over Italy in various forms of media, including the map of the empire on the inside-cover of the C.T.I. guidebook (Atkinson, 2005:22-23).

Part of the same process of rewriting the landscape to Italian specifications is a section on toponymy in the guidebook. The writer of the section complains that the project of accurately labelling and mapping the landscape is often frustrated by the nomadic lifestyle of the inhabitants of the region (*Guida*:32). He goes on to explain how the orthography of the place names in the colony was beset by inconsistencies owing to the linguistic diversity of the region and the motley history of its cartography by various powers. This situation, he says, would shortly be set to rights as the place names in the colony would all be made to conform to the Italian pronunciation and orthography. This short section is particularly interesting because it betrays an anxiety on the part of the coloniser that the landscape, its inhabitants and their mode of living frustrate the project of European

modernity to map, fix, categorise and label the landscape. It suggests that the urge to rationalise the landscape exceeds in importance the mode of subsistence of the local people in that harsh territory. The review in *The Geographical Journal* indicates the incisive intervention of Italian toponymic reforms and principles of town-planning on the cityscapes of Ethiopian towns:

Much of the accounts of the larger cities (e.g. Addis Ababa, Gondar, Dire Dawa, and Harar) is devoted to town-planning schemes that have been prepared. These are unquestionably a wise measure and appear to have been finely conceived. But it will of course be some years before there is much to show in this direction, particularly while the present economic chaos prevails. Little is said of present conditions. In all principal towns streets have been renamed, so that it is difficult, if not impossible for the old stager to locate himself without reference to a town plan. (Clifford, 1939:449)

Clifford's review reveals the textual reframing of the conquered territory of which the guidebook was an essential contribution as well as the reviewer's faith in the Italian project of modernisation. The guide would have been one of the first significant pieces of media in which the Ethiopia of the Negus was erased and the new Italianised landscape of the colony would have appeared. The fact that the guide focuses on the anticipated future landscape as opposed to the current lay of the land is an example of the colony as a product of discourse far from the realities on the ground.

An example of this is the elaborate description of the plans for the future of the landscape of a new imperial capital at Addis Ababa:

The Italian city will rise up in the area bordered to the north by the former Great Ghebbi line (Via Toselli-Via Mogadiscio) and to the south by the current Vallauri Radio Tower where the new railway station will be built. The principal axis of the city will be Viale Mussolini which will be extended beyond the current station and

culminate at the façade of the new station; it will be tree-lined, and will be a minimum of 40 metres and a maximum of 90 metres wide [...] Also along the axis of Viale Mussolini, downhill from the commercial sector, between the current station and the new one, will extend the monumental zone. At the centre of this sector public buildings will be erected among which the Residence of the Governor General, the Palazzo del Fascio with the Torre Littoria. This will be the heart of the Empire, the centre of imperial life; here will be found the headquarters of the Government Offices, Military Headquarters, banks and insurance companies. (*Guida:477*)⁸

Of special note also are the plans to completely erase the centre of Addis Ababa, replacing it with parks and grand houses, as well as the plans described in the guide for the establishment of separate quarters to house the indigenous people, divided into ethnic areas very much along the lines later adopted by the Apartheid era planners of South African townships (*Guida:478*). These ambitious plans to radically restructure Addis Ababa's landscape into a grand imperial capital, structured according to Fascism's unique concept of capitalist modernity, totalitarian architectonics and racist principles of strict separation along ethnic lines, are symbolic of the guidebook's function as a piece of propaganda. As Clifford says above, "little is said of present conditions" in the region, instead, reading the evocative language of the guidebook and trusting in its confident tones, in the mind of the reader a mirage of a rationally designed and magnificently appointed city is conjured up.

⁸ "La città italiana sorgerà nella zona limitata a N dalla linea ex Ghebbi grande – via Toselli – via Mogadiscio e a S dall'attuale centro marconigrafico Vallauri, ove sarà costruita la nuova stazione ferroviaria. L'asse principale della città sarà il viale Mussolini, che sarà prolungato oltre l'attuale stazione fino alla facciata della nuova stazione; esso sarà alberato, con una larghezza minima di m. 40, massima di 90... A valle del quartiere commerciale, tra l'attuale stazione e quella nuova sempre lungo l'asse del viale Mussolini si stenderà la zona monumentale. Al centro di essa sorgeranno gli edifici pubblici, fra cui il Pal. Del Governo Generale, il Pal. Del Fascio con la Torre Littoria. Sarà questo il cuore dell'Impero, il centro della vita imperiale; qui saranno le sedi degli Uffici di Governo, dei Comandi militari, delle banche, degli istituti di assicurazione".

The guidebook also played a role in imbuing the landscape of the territory with a sort of sacred geography, complete with pilgrimage routes at the most important sites in the struggle to subject that land to Italian control. For example, included in the preface of the guidebook, written by fascist senator Carlo Bonardi, is a paragraph which describes the tourism potential of A.O.I. in the following terms:

Of special interest are the regions of Eritrea and Somalia: sacred for the Italian blood spilled here in remote and recent times. Sites that would not have any character worthy of note for tourists, take on an elevated historical and emotional importance; names like Dógali, Amba Alági, Macallè, Adua, Tembièn, Amba Aradàm, Mai Cèu, Neghèlli, Gianagobò, Birgòt, and Gúnu Gádu shall always evoke sacred memories in the hearts of every Italian. Pioneers and tourists should not overlook the dutiful tribute of the fallen in the cemeteries which mark the stages along the path to ultimate victory. (*Guida*:15)⁹

This endorsement of the guide by Fascist Senator Carlo Bonardi¹⁰ is an indication of its importance as propaganda as well as the entanglement of tourism, settlement and nation-building. In the preface, Bonardi delineates the intended scope and function of the guidebook. Firstly he notes:

The goal of the guidebook is, first and foremost, to render homage to his Majesty the King Emperor; to *il*

⁹ “Interesse specialissimo presentano le zone dell'Eritrea e della Somalia sacre per il sangue versato dai nostri in tempi lontani e vicini. Luoghi che non avrebbero per il turista alcun carattere degno di nota, assumono una importanza storica e sentimentale altissima; nomi come Dógali, Amba Alági, Macallè, Adua, Tembièn, Amba Aradàm, Mai Cèu, Neghèlli, Gianagobò, Birgòt, e Gúnu Gádu susciteranno sempre una sacra commozione nel cuore d'ogni Italiano. Pioneri e turisti non dimentichino il doveroso tributo ai Caduti che riposano nei cimiteri che segnano le tappe della Vittoria”.

¹⁰ Bonardi joined the Fascist Party in 1923 and served first as a Deputato (May 1924-January 1929) and then as a Senatore (January 1929-August 1945). Soon after the March on Rome, he became Undersecretary to the Ministry of War in Mussolini's Government. This committed fascist politician became Vice-President of the Touring Club in 1928 and President of the organisation in 1935.

Duce, the founder of the Empire; the major Leaders who contributed to the completion of this titanic undertaking; to the Heroes who fell in the name of Italy and all Combatants; to the Princes of the House of Savoy; to the most humble Soldiers; to the Sailors, to the ever-faithful Black Shirts; to the Workers, who through their work and sacrifice paved the way for the conquest and rendered it definitive. It is homage also to Italians of every rank and class whose discipline and readiness to take commands from their Leader demonstrated our resolve in the face of the sanctions of 52 foreign states united in the illusion that they could impede the will of a people to find its own place in the sun. (*Guida*:5)¹¹

The value of the guidebook as masterful propaganda is not to be dismissed. Not only does the guidebook contribute towards writing the colony into existence, but it contributes towards creating a history for the colony: a history dominated by the bold action, courage, tenacity, grit and determination of the Fascist New Man in all his incarnations.

The first print-run of the guidebook saw 490,000 copies produced and distributed freely to the members of the Touring Club. Further updates and reprints were promised. As history would have it, no such reprints became necessary as war broke out, Italy was ejected from East Africa in 1941, and the erstwhile colony dissolved. However, had history turned out differently, it is clear that the guidebook would have become one way in which armchair *pionieri e turisti* at home would be able to explore their faraway colony in great detail in their imaginatons, all the while imbibing what the Fascists would have

¹¹ “La guida si propone anzitutto uno scopo ideale: quello di rendere un omaggio alla Maestà del Re Imperatore, al Duce fondatore dell’Impero, ai grandi Capi che lo hanno coadiuvato nella realizzazione della titanica impresa, agli Eroi caduti nel nome d’Italia e ai Combattenti tutti, dai Principi di Casa Savoia, ai più umili Soldati, ai Marinai, alle fedelissime Camicie Nere, agli Operai, che col loro lavoro e col loro sacrificio hanno preparata e resa definitiva la conquista. Omaggio pure agli Italiani di ogni ceto e condizione che, con la loro disciplina pronta a ogni ordine del Capo, hanno dimostrato come si risponda alle sanzioni applicate da 52 Stati coalizzati nell’illusione di poter infrangere la volontà di un popolo risoluto a trovare il proprio posto al sole”.

them believe about that territory, its people, its history, and the activities of the colonists living there. The guidebook was, for this reason, first and foremost a marvellous piece of propaganda.

3. Tourism as a catalyst for economic expansion and settlement

The writers of the *Guida dell'Africa Orientale Italiana* are clear that the tourism infrastructure in A.O.I. was still in its infancy at the time of writing and that the guide represents an early step in transforming the colony into a safe and pleasant destination for Italian mass tourism. Bonardi writes the following in his preface to the volume, underlining the intention to valorise the colony through an entanglement of tourism infrastructure and economic development:

The guidebook clearly also has tourism-related goals: as we work to complete the road network, as we consolidate, day-by-day, safety and security so too are the logistical structures being improved. New hotels and refuelling and refreshment stops are being built, all of which makes possible, in a word, the development of that great modern phenomenon we call "tourism". The excellent climate; the quality of the road network, and, therefore, the development of motoring; the expansive panoramas; the fauna; the flora; the character and customs of the populations varied in terms of race, religion, language; and its great economic potential all make Italian East Africa a country destined for a bright future in tourism. (*Guida:5*)¹²

¹² "La guida risponde anche a finalità turistiche, evidenti: mentre si sviluppa e si perfeziona la rete stradale, mentre si consolida, giorno per giorno, la sicurezza generale, progredisce anche l'organizzazione logistica: si creano nuovi alberghi, si perfezionano i punti di tappa e di rifornimento, si rende in una parola possibile lo sviluppo di quel grande fenomeno moderno chiamato "turismo". L'eccellenza del clima, la perfezione della rete stradale, e quindi lo sviluppo dell'automobilismo, i vasti panorama, la fauna, la flora, i caratteri e i costumi delle popolazioni diverse per razza, per religione, per lingua, le risorse economiche potenziali, fanno di gran parte dell'A.O.I. un paese destinato a un brillante avvenire turistico".

It is clear from the fact that the guidebook was commissioned, and from its content, that the fascist regime early on saw the potential of tourism to create economic value in its colonies. The second half of 20th century would indeed witness the establishment and consolidation of mass tourism, what Bonardi describes above as “that great modern phenomenon”, as one of the largest industries in the world and a defining feature of globalisation (Apostolopoulos, 1996:17). For purposes of comparison, Ballengee-Morris (2002) performs an interesting study on the use of tourism as a catalyst for investment and settlement in Virginia which, importantly, benefitted the incomers and out-of-state investors more than the local people hosting the incoming tourists. She writes:

New businesses required workers and physical expansion and that in return required migration. Family members moving to other regions encouraged visitations. Hotels, inns, boarding houses, restaurants, taverns, and points of interest became a part of expansion.

(Ballengee-Morris, 2002:234)

The guidebook to A.O.I. makes it clear that similar initiatives were being put in place in occupied Ethiopia in a deliberate attempt to draw tourists to the region which would in turn be followed by investors and settlers¹³.

¹³ Potential tourists, settlers or investors wishing to travel to A.O.I. could take ships operated by Lloyd Triestino which left the ports of Genova, Naples, Venice and Trieste bound for African ports. The options for reaching the ports of A.O.I. were many given the strategic location of the Italian colonies on the busy shipping route of the Red Sea. Services devoted to the Italy/A.O.I. routes included *Linea 152 Celere Tirreno-Africa Orientale Italiana* which departed every 15 days from Genova, stopped at a number of ports on the Tyrrhenian coast before continuing to, among other stops, to Massawa (10 days), Djibouti (12 days) from where a train to Addis Ababa could be caught, and Mogadishu (16 days). The price of ticket to Massawa was L. 2815 for 1st class, L. 1920 for 2nd class, L. 1335 for 2nd class economy, and L. 875 for 3rd class. For purposes of comparison: a packet of Sigarette Nazionali at the time would have cost L. 0.50 for a pack of ten. So for the price of getting to Massawa from Italy in third class, a passenger would have to pay the equivalent of 1750 packs of cigarettes. This would have been a considerable expense for the average Italian of the time. The cheapest available ticket between an Italian port and Massawa on any line was L. 800. Alternatively a traveller could fly in an Ala Littoria Savoia Marchetti S73 from Rome to Asmara or Addis Ababa with stops at Siracusa, Bengazi, Cairo, Wadi Halfa, Khartoum, Cassala and Asmara for those continuing to Addis Ababa. The trip took three

An essential first step on the path to the demographic and industrial colonisation of Ethiopia, and a project close to the heart of the Touring Club, with its focus on automobile touring, was the building of a network of modern roads. Just like their Roman predecessors on whom they modelled their imperial ambitions, the Fascists placed enormous value on the completion of great works of engineering and infrastructure development as a potent visual symbols of their control of the land, as a mark of the modernising benefits of Italian rule, and, of course, to consolidate their hold on the conquered territories and facilitate the next wave of civilian colonisation with tourists at the helm. It is worth noting McLaren's assertion that in the Libyan case "[t]he tourist system had the task of constructing an image of a modern and efficiently organized colony thereby putting the accomplishments of Fascist colonization on display" (2006:6). The functional linkage between tourism, propaganda, and economic development is clear in the Libyan case described by McLaren. He continues to say that Italy's infrastructure projects in Libya had a practical and a propagandistic value in that "[t]hey provided the necessary amenities to create the impression of a more modern and efficient colony, while giving an important visual corollary to the Italian military and administrative presence in the region" (McLaren, 2006:23). For those millions of Italian citizens at home, who would never lay eyes on Italy's African possessions, media like the C.T.I. guidebook, vaunting the achievements of Italians as road builders and sweeping modernisers, would serve to cement their belief in the legitimacy of the Empire. The legacy of this discourse endures to this day in the popular imagination of Italians about their colonial past (Labanca, 2004:309).

and a half days and included in the trip were room and board at the Grande Albergo Berenice in Bengazi, the Grand Hotel Nilo in Wadi Halfa and the C.I.A.A.O. Hotel Asmara for those continuing to Addis Ababa. The cost of the the trip was L. 4500 for Asmara and L. 6000 for Addis Ababa. Accomodation for travellers in A.O.I. was largely handled by the state-owned *Compagnia Immobiliare Alberghi Africa Orientale*, the conveniently hospitable acronym of which was C.I.A.A.O. According to the guide by mid 1938 there were hotels run by C.I.A.A.O. or other private entities of a high standard equipped with running hot and cold water, baths, showers, patisserie, barber services and restaurants in every city or town of any importance in the empire and plans to build many more C.I.A.A.O. hotels in every important centre.

As roads and communication networks fanned out across the empire at an incredible pace, and hotels and infrastructure were built to bring the comforts of home to this wild frontier, the realisation of Mussolini's dream of settling millions of Italians in the Ethiopian interior became ever closer to being made a reality. Del Boca provides a colourful description of the frenzy of investment and construction which, in a very short time, transformed the landscape of Ethiopia:

Certain that Ethiopia was theirs for good, convinced that the Ethiopian tribes would furnish them with an inexhaustible and dirt-cheap labour force, the Italians set about providing the empire with what it lacked, in other words, practically everything; roads, railways, factories, hospitals, schools, hotels, post offices, telephone exchanges, etc. In the space of five years, the life span of the ephemeral empire, they wrought miracles; Haile Selassie was right when he said they had a genius for constructing. In five years, they endowed Ethiopia with over 5000 kilometres of new roads, some asphalted, some flattened with steamrollers, overcoming difficulties that seemed insurmountable. (1969: 232)

The enormous investments, actual and planned, in the construction of roads, rails, hotels etc. would do little good without the support of the detailed maps and information in the guide. The guide is therefore far more than propaganda but a detailed manual for the civilian settlement and colonisation of the newly conquered empire. According to Cannistraro, between 1936 and 1937, the Italian government put aside 19.136 billion lire in the budget to support infrastructure development in A.O.I. (1982:5). This exceeded the total national revenue of Italy during the same period by 555 billion lire. Creating and maintaining an empire was an expensive enterprise, and tourism was clearly identified as a driver of for the economic colonisation of the colony and one way to make this investment pay off in the longer term. Del Boca (1969:237) makes it clear that the Fascist establishment knew full well that Ethiopia would require the investment of vast sums of capital and the passing of many years

before it would become profitable, noting that the huge amount of money invested into the colony in the five years that it was under Italian rule is an indication of the long-term ambitions of the regime to render the colony fit and appealing for mass settlement by the masses of landless peasants overcrowding Italy at the time. The historian notes also that during the five years of Italian occupation in Ethiopia only 300,000 Italians settled there: a figure which he describes as “laughable”, given the ambitions to settle millions (Del Boca, 1969:236). If I may be indulged the temerity to disagree with this eminent and pathfinding historian, I would suggest that this figure is far from laughable. Firstly, attracting 300,000 ill-prepared people armed with scant information, in the space of a mere five years to settle – in what was essentially a lawless and wild frontier country recently ravaged by war and still roamed by bandits and rebels, economically underdeveloped, characterised by poor communication routes – is, in my opinion, not to be so casually dismissed. Secondly, dismissing the ambitious plans put in place by the regime as pure and misguided hubris because they failed is unfair, given that the project was interrupted by the outbreak of the most catastrophic war in modern European history, which posed (and proved to be) an existential threat to the regime. In this instance, Del Boca falls into the very discursive trap he was so instrumental in overturning: that of dismissing the seriousness of Italian colonialism based on the fact that it was short-lived. Further evidence for my claim in this regard is the comparison of the Libyan case. According to McLaren, the Governor of Libya, Italo Balbo, had plans that were considered ambitious to populate Libya with 20,000 carefully selected Italian settlers per year beginning in 1938, with the goal of gradually settling 500,000 by 1950 (2006:39). Given these comparatively modest ambitions in the context of a colony just a stone's throw from the shores of the homeland and that had been in Italian hands already since 1912, it is clear that Del Boca's derision of the settlement of 300,000 Italians in Ethiopia in a mere five years is unfair. My analysis of the *Guida dell'Africa Orientale Italiana* and supporting documents, indicates the far more frightening possibility that, given enough time, a state on the African continent, home to millions of Italian settlers with an

economic and social system resembling that of Apartheid South Africa could well have materialised.

The guidebook also acknowledges a number of commercial concerns and state-supported monopolies which helped sponsor the guide and which were, in turn, likely to benefit from increased traffic of tourists, settlers and business travellers between Italy and A.O.I. These included Azienda General Italiana Petroli (A.G.I.P; General Italian Oil Company), which held monopoly on fuel in the colony, the Azienda Monopolio Banane, which was Somalia's biggest agricultural concern, and maritime transport companies, which operated routes that tourists would utilise in reaching A.O.I. from Italy, such as *Lloyd Triestino S.A. di Navigazione* and *Adriatica S.A.* which largely monopolised the routes between Italy and the ports of its African Empire, as well as operating a shuttle servicing the coastal cities of the Horn of Africa; the airline Ala Littoria which operated routes between Italy and the major centres; and the state-operated colonial hospitality concessionary Compagnia Immobiliare Alberghi Africa Orientale (C.I.A.A.O.; The Hotel Real-Estate Company of East Africa). Said (1994:281) argues "[c]olonialism is the forced extension of the capitalist system to new markets", where the colony and its people are reduced to the status of commodity and a natural resource to be consumed and exploited. Haile Larebo, in a study of Italian empire building in Ethiopia, makes reference to the concerted effort of the regime to promote capital extension and by proxy colonial penetration into Ethiopia. She writes:

As in Eritrea, this exclusion of foreign competition gave the new Italian business a protected market. By the early 1940s, about 4007 industrial and 4785 commercial firms with a total capital of about 2,700,000,000 Lire and 1,000,000,000 Lire respectively were authorized to work in A.O.I., and another 4,452 were under consideration. Out of these 1,225 industrial and 1,435 commercial companies (with a capital of 458,598,000 Lire and 603,322,000 Lire respectively), applied to work in the four Ethiopian governorships. But only four hundred industrial and 650 commercial firms actually made some

investment in the Empire; the remainder simply acted as distributing or purchasing agents for their mother firms in Italy. (Larebo, 2005:85)

It is important to remember that the highlands of Ethiopia were considered ideal for European settlement, given the healthy climate and fertility of the land. The guidebook is a unique record of a practical model for creating a settler colony. Of particular interest, in terms of investment and settlement, are sections of the guide devoted to sectors for potential investment in various types of agriculture and livestock rearing, forestry¹⁴, mineral resources, and logistics among others (*Guida*:92-108). These details would have been of little interest to the casual tourist and were obviously targeted at travellers interested in investment. The level of detail is astounding: it includes such minutiae as figures relating to the capacity in tonnage of the various ports in A.O.I., import and export duties and tariffs applicable to different products, and a detailed list of suppliers, retailers and industrial and commercial concerns already present in the colony for the purposes of setting up business networks (*Guida*:101-108). Within this precise section on the economic potential of the colony there is a description of the various programmes planned to be implemented for the rapid settlement of the colony. These are worth quoting in full here as they render clear and unambiguous the plans of the regime to effect mass settlement in the conquered region and introduce an agricultural, industrial and commercial system, which would be profitable to both Italian settlers and to the homeland. The plan detailed below is striking also because it describes a model of land redistribution and the regulation of indigenous labour with an ominous resemblance to the migrant labour system adopted by colonial and apartheid South Africa. Most importantly, the inclusion

¹⁴ Interesting, in regard to forestry, is the mention in the guidebook of the efforts of the so-called *Milizia Forestale* to reforest areas of the colony that had been denuded by years of deforestation. The guide mentions that this foresaw the cultivation of alien species to supplement the local flora biome. Of particular interest, from the perspective of colonial culture, are the unsatisfactory attempts mentioned in the guide to introduce Mediterranean plant species in Eritrea (99). The practice of importing species from Europe, in an effort to shape the indigenous landscape to suit the tastes of settlers, was commonplace in colonial settings with deleterious long term environmental consequences on native biodiversity being the inheritance of many postcolonial states.

of this policy serves as clear evidence that the guidebook was designed as a manual for settlement in the colony.

The plan provides for four forms of colonisation. Firstly: demographic colonisation, directed by the large "Colonisation Entities" autonomously and as legal persons, financed by banks and other assisting institutions and bodies. Each Entity will annually send a large number of family heads chosen from the regions (in Italy) assigned to each for settlement on lands (in Africa) assigned to each Entity; the following year, the family head having established a home and prepared the land, the remainder of the family is sent. Secondly: capitalistic colonisation initiated by Italian citizens, large land owners, industrialists and capitalists. Indigenous manpower organized and directed by Italian nationals will be allocated to the latter. Thirdly: Industrial colonisation undertaken by appropriate "Companies" to develop industrial plants making use of indigenous manpower organized and directed by Italian experts. Fourthly: Small-scale colonisation which consists of the allocation of modest concessions of land (10-51 hectares) to veterans of the Ethiopian campaign and to workers who contributed to the conquest of Ethiopia¹⁵. (*Guida*:98)

¹⁵ "Il piano prevede 4 forme di colonizzazione: 1a Colonizzazione demografica, diretta da grandi "Enti di Colonizzazione" a carattere autonomo e con personalità giuridica, finanziati da banche e altri istituti ed enti assistenziali. Ogni Ente invia ogni anno sui terreni a lui assegnati un forte numero di capi famiglia scelti nella medesima regione; l'anno seguente, allorchè il capo famiglia ha sistemato la casa e i terreni, viene inviata la famiglia. 2a Colonizzazione a tipo capitalistico, a iniziativa di cittadini Italiani, grandi proprietari di terre, industriali, capitalisti. A questi saranno affidate mano d'opera indigena, inquadrata e diretta da nazionali. 3a Colonizzazione a tipo industriale svolta da apposite "Compagnie" per la coltivazione di piante industriali usando mano d'opera indigena inquadrata e diretta da tecnici ed esperti nazionali. 4a Piccola Colonizzazione, che prevede la concessione di modesti appezzamenti di terreno (10-15 ha.) ai veterani della campagna etiopica e agli operai che hanno cooperato alla conquista dell'Etiopia".

A comparison with Libya is again instructive. McLaren mentions organised tours run by the Italian Colonial Institute and the Touring Club, such as a fourteen day cruise in 1924 organised by the I.C.I. (2006:50). On board were 255 potential investors from various fields of commerce, industry and agriculture who were invited on the tour explicitly for the purpose of soliciting investment in the colony. He also cites as an example of the dynamic linkage of tourism, economic development and propaganda, the popular and influential annual Tripoli Trade Fair. This fair was designed to draw prospective investors to the colony, showcase the arts and industries of the colony, attract tourists and establish colonial Libya firmly in the national consciousness as an arena for leisure, a rich land to be exploited economically, and a source of exotic imports.

The guidebook, which the writers promised to update frequently and continuously, was an essential part of the long-term ambition of settling the colony with thousands of Italians. In an age of easy access to information we may take for granted how transparent the world has become. We must remember that in 1938 the guide was the *only* reliable source of practical information about the territory at the time and for this reason it would have been essential for the success of any trip to the empire be it for leisure, business, or with the intention of settling there.

4. The 'native' as spectacle

I turn my attention now to the ways in which the *Guida dell'Africa Orientale* frames the indigenous inhabitants of the Italian empire in East Africa as elements of the picturesque and objects of the tourist gaze, essentially freezing them in time and place and limiting their agency as autonomous subjects. In his classic 1954 treatise on the subjects of colonialism and neo-colonialism, Jean-Paul Sartre considers the role tourism can play in the creation of a relationship of dependency of the hosts on the visitors and, more insidious still, the aestheticisation of the former for the pleasure and diversion of the latter. In this case his observations concern Asia, regions of which, in Sartre's time, formed part of the French overseas empire, but the observations are substantially applicable to our purposes here:

The picturesque has its origins in war and the refusal to understand the enemy: our enlightenment about Asia actually came to us first from irritated missionaries and from soldiers. Later came travellers – traders and tourists – who are soldiers that have cooled off. Pillaging is called shopping, and rape is practised onerously in specialized shops. (Sartre, 2001:22-23)

McLaren (2006:121) argues that the C.T.I. guide to Libya participated in the dissemination of exoticising discourses drawn on the one hand from the decadent exoticism of romantic colonial literature and, on the other hand, the pseudo-scientific and racist practices of colonial anthropology. Balangee-Morris's observations about the case of tourism development in rural Appalachia are again relevant. She describes how the othering category *hillbilly* was crafted by writers of texts aimed at tourists. She argues that these texts were a means of waging a discursive war against the local people in order to gain access to the mineral wealth of the region. She writes: “[c]olour writers came into the region and defined the people in romantic, generalized, and stereotyped way creating a mythic Appalachian culture, which served the marketing of the new tourist industry in the area” (Balangee-Morris 2002:235).

It is important to understand what is meant by the kind of exoticism described by Balangee-Morris above, and which is apparent in the *Guida dell’Africa Orientale*. According to Huggan, exoticism is nothing more than a “mode of aesthetic perception – one which renders people, objects and places strange even as it domesticates them, and which effectively manufactures otherness even as it claims to surrender to its immanent mystery” (2012:13), while Edward Said (1994:159) describes the exotic as “aesthetic substitution which replaces the impress of power with the blandishments of curiosity”. Both of these discursive exercises can be considered strategies of containment along the lines termed by Arjun Appadurai as “metonymic freezing” (1988:36). Appadurai's thesis concerns the constitution of the concept of “native” as opposed to the Western subject as visitor/observer. Appadurai outlines three faulty

assumptions of the discipline of anthropology which are particularly relevant to this study. He writes:

We have tended to use the word *native* for persons and groups who belong to those parts of the world that were, and are, distant from the metropolitan West. This restriction is, in part, tied to the vagaries of our ideologies of authenticity over the last two centuries. Proper natives are somehow assumed to represent their selves without distortion or residue [...]. What it means is that natives are not only persons who are from certain places, and belong to those places, but they are also those who are somehow *incarcerated*, or confined, in those places [...]. Natives are in one place, a place to which explorers, administrators, missionaries, and eventually anthropologists, come. These outsiders, these observers, are regarded as quintessentially mobile; they are the movers, the seers, the knowers. The natives are immobilized by belonging to a place. (Appadurai, 1988:37)

These assumptions all concern the spatial and temporal isolation of the native as opposed to the Western subject. While the Westerner can roam and observe, the native must remain fixed and be observed; while the Westerner can change and adapt his environment, the native must remain an unchanging element of a specific habitat to which he has been confined. To Appadurai's explorers, administrators, missionaries and anthropologists, I must add tourists. Tourists are above all consumers of difference; they are drawn to the four corners of the world in a quest to experience the exotic and to rediscover in distant peoples a sense of cultural authenticity they feel has been lost in their own countries (Cohen, 1988).

The idea of tourist as amateur anthropologist and consumer of difference is strongly expressed in the following two extracts from the guide:

The local populations and their habits and customs, if observed attentively offer considerable interest; even a tourist with limited time will note varying physical features, some more resembling those of Europeans and others resembling those of Negroes; greater or lesser nobility in their bearing; a variety of dress; different dwellings and villages; differences in the plants cultivated and the methods used to cultivate them; different livestock, markets, festivals, churches, cult sites or trees, nuptial ceremonies and funerals, songs, dances and arts. (*Guida*:15)¹⁶

Diverse natural environments and the economic potential these afford lead to differences in the material lives of the various peoples. This can be observed by travellers in the form of dwellings, agriculture, household items and tools, foodstuffs, primitive industrial products, and, in general, any material activities performed by the populations of the regions visited. More difficult to perceive are the features of social life, an understanding of which requires careful observation, study, and enquiry which is not always easy to perform. (*Guida*:83)¹⁷

The guide includes a 13 page section describing the appearance, customs, habits and cultures of the various subject people living within the borders of the new empire. Indicative of the importance

¹⁶ “Le popolazioni e i loro usi e costumi, se guardati con occhio attento offrono pure non lieve interesse; il turista anche affrettato noterà i caratteri somatici più o meno affini a quelli degli europei o dei negri, la maggiore o minore nobiltà del portamento, il vario modo di vestire, le forme dell’abitazione e dei villaggi, le piante coltivate e i metodi di coltivazione, il bestiame, i mercati, le feste, le chiese e i luoghi o gli alberi cultuali, le cerimonie nuziali e funebri, i canti, le danze e le fantasie”.

¹⁷ “Le differenze di ambiente fisico e le diverse possibilità economiche che ne derivano si ripercuotono sulla vita materiale delle varie genti. L’occhio del viaggiatore può cogliere queste diversità considerando le abitazioni, le colture, gli utensili del lavoro e della casa, gli alimenti, i prodotti dell’industria per quanto primitiva, e in genere tutta l’attività materiale delle popolazioni nei territori che percorrerà. Più difficile riesce cogliere gli elementi della vita sociale, la cui conoscenza richiede uno studio particolare mediante osservazioni e indagini non sempre agevoli”.

that racial classification and separation assumed in the fascist colony, the guidebook provides an orderly classification of the various groups according to their phenotypes (*Guida*:81). Atkinson argues on similar lines that “[t]heir (the geographers of the fascist regime) analyses of social structures, demographic conditions, and settlement patterns, for example, were inflected through the frameworks of European racial science and their recurrent concern was to identify, isolate and rank the region’s races” (Atkinson, 2005:21). A clear example of this tendency is how, as discussed above, the administrative districts of the A.O.I. were reorganised along ethnic lines and the vision of an ethnically divided Addis Ababa. This divide-and-rule strategy is apparent elsewhere in the guidebook where Eritreans and Somalis are treated with greater respect and tolerance than the newly conquered Abyssinians. In a general introductory section to the guidebook – which details the practical elements of a trip to A.O.I. (following a section on health precautions where the Italian tourist is cursorily advised to limit his exposure to natives and not to enter their huts owing to the prevalence of infectious disease) – there is a section devoted to advice on dealing with the character of the various indigenous populations of the region. It reads:

The Abyssinians (by which is meant the Tigre, the Amhara, the people of Shewa and other populations that live among them) have a closed character and are proud, temperamental and, like all orientals, deceitful and guarded. The Galla and Sidama are, in general, of a more open disposition, generous, excitable, but weak-willed and lazy. The Somalis are, in general, intelligent, generous, but also very often lazy and deceitful [...]. The Eritreans and the Somalis are proud to have belonged to Italy for a long time and to have contributed to the conquest of the Empire: the ascari and dubat enjoy great prestige throughout Italian East Africa. They consider themselves, as compared to the Abyssinians, almost equal to Italians and their natural collaborators. The traveller should take cognizance of their spirit and merit which are solemnly recognized by the Fascist

Government and taking them for Ethiopians would be considered a grave injustice and offensive. (*Guida*:19-20)¹⁸

Alongside anthropology, the guidebook enlists a colonial fantasy of exploration and seductive colonial mythos of discovering and exploring an untamed landscape inhabited by wild and mysterious people can be strongly felt in the extract below:

This wild country of violent contrasts where innumerable peoples, languages, civilizations and religions mingle in bewildering diversity, this land rich in history, legend and the unexpected, where lives are lived much like they were in Biblical times, has an allure which was deeply felt by our great explorers of Africa and is being felt today by our pioneers who often find in the forms of the landscape a faint resemblance to the Fatherland. (*Guida*:13)¹⁹

Here primitivism is highlighted and celebrated for its aesthetic quality and the African Other is represented as untainted by civilisation and offering a window into the past. The fantasy of exploration and discovery is further emphasised in a long section devoted to the

¹⁸ “L’Abissino (sotto questo nome s’intendono i tigrini, gli amara, gli scioani e altre popolazioni che con essi convivono) è di carattere chiuso, molto orgoglioso, volubile e, come tutti gli orientali, dissimulatore e accorto parlatore. Il Galla e il Sidama sono in generale di carattere più aperto, generosi, facili all’entusiasmo, ma deboli di volontà e indolenti. Il Somalo è in generale d’intelligenza sveglia, generoso, ma anche spesso indolente e dissimulatore... Gli Eritrei e i Somali sono orgogliosi di appartenere da gran tempo all’Italia e di aver contribuito alla conquista dell’Impero; ascaro e dubat godono di grande prestigio in tutta l’A.O.I. Essi si considerano, di fronte agli abissini, quasi pari agli Italiani e loro naturali collaboratori. Di questo spirito e dei loro meriti, riconosciuti solennem. dal Governo fascista, è doveroso tener conto nel trattare con loro; scambiarli per etiopici sarebbe grave offesa e ingiustizia”.

¹⁹ “Il fascino di questo selvaggio paese dai violenti contrasti, ove s’incontrarono e si sovrapposero innumerevoli genti e linguaggi, civiltà e religioni diversissime in una vicenda confusamente intuibile, terra densa di storia e di leggenda e d’imprevisto, ove la vita umana si svolgeva pur ieri come ai tempi biblici, è stato profondamente sentito dai nostri grandi esploratori africani e lo subiscono ora i nostri pionieri, che trovano spesso nelle forme del paesaggio un qualche richiamo alla Patria”.

history of European exploration and study of the region in which the secretive nature of the Ethiopian Empire which eluded European imperialism and remained mysterious to Europeans for many centuries is highlighted (*Guida*:73-80). The section naturally focuses on Italian explorers in the region who are monumentalised as intrepid heroes in whose footsteps the modern tourists are encouraged to follow. Papson argues that “[t]ourism depends on preconceived definitions of place and people” whose “definitions are created by the marketing arm of the government and of private enterprise in order to induce the tourist to visit a specific area” (1981:225; see also Hall & Tucker 2004:13), while Hollinshead claims that indigenous people in tourist zones of postcolonial settings find themselves “in a sort of tourized confinement in the suffocating straightjacket of enslaving external conceptions” (1992:44, see also Hall & Tucker 2004:13). These observations on tourism in contemporary postcolonial countries are fascinating when read against the backdrop of the *Guida dell’Africa Orientale* which reveals a prescient and cynical recognition of tourism’s potential to create economic and cultural dependency of a colony on the metropole. McLaren’s study of Italian tourism in Italian Libya indicates the perfection of this “self-conscious staging of indigenous culture” (2006:125), which saw Italians intervening in, and shaping to, their pre-conceived exoticising paradigm the local architecture, art, music and dance of the indigenous Libyans for the pleasure of Italian tourists which was in its infancy in A.O.I. but, based on the contents of the *Guida dell’Africa Orientale*, was very likely to be repeated.

5. Conclusion

The guidebook is very clearly propagandist in its tone and presents itself as a triumphant achievement in honour of the King and newly crowned Emperor Vittorio Emanuele III, il Duce and the soldiers who died subjugating Abyssinia. The dense and detailed 640 page volume was published only two years and four months after the declaration of the conquest of Abyssinia by Mussolini’s forces and its incorporation into Italian East Africa. The meticulously detailed guidebook does indeed, in a sense, represent an impressive achievement on the part of

the writers who undertook intricate research in what was still a very unsettled region characterised by continued hostilities between colonial troops and resistance fighters. In retrospect, given our knowledge of how history unfolded, it may be tempting to view the *Guida dell'Africa Orientale* as a mere piece of bombast in Fascist Italy's arsenal of self-aggrandising propaganda. However, as my analysis shows, the guidebook clearly represents a significant investment of time and money which make the motives for its commission worthy of suspicion and study. Based on my analysis of the text, I must conclude that the *Guida dell'Africa Orientale* is far more significant than a piece of colonial bluster. Rather it represents a blueprint for the harnessing of tourism as an essential element in the subjugation, economic exploitation and settlement of A.O.I. and that the Italian regime planned to utilise to the full the power of tourism as a potent strategy in the final conquest and subjugation of their colonial subjects and their lands.

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