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THE PRESENCE OF ITALIAN ARCHITECTS
IN MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

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THE PRESENCE OF ITALIAN ARCHITECTS
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Map of Tunis, 1906: in addition to the partially-built chequered extension, based on the street axis formed by Avenue de France and Avenue de la Marine (later called Avenue Jules-Ferry and now Avenue Habib Bourguiba) and running between the Medina and the lake of Tunis, north of the historic town the very large layout of the Parc du Belvédère can be seen

Italian architects, decorators and contractors in French Tunisia: continuity and discontinuity in the building production of an integrated community

Ettore Sessa

In 1936 the construction of such a sophisticated, even if simple, detached family house as Villa Zirah built by architect Giovanni Ruota, is one of the revealing signs of the space in the new town of Tunis around the mid-thirties by the group of planners and building entrepreneurs belonging to the big Italian community.¹ Villa Zirah, completed the following year, is one of the few mentionable works by Ruota, and it can be distinguished in the high-class neighbourhood context of Avenue de Paris extension - today called avenue de la Liberté: this mainly happens because of the expressive contrast of the harmonious modulation of the façade both with the continuous window sill, marked by saw-toothed pseudo-astragal, and with semicircular eccentric *avant-corps* - by the first dynamically ornamented - surmounted by a pergola with ray-shaped transoms; the pergola theme has become a distinctive note of many kinds of works built by planners of Italian community. Ruota,² who is also the builder of the nearby Villa Disegni, had completed the year before the construction of a considerable rental building also connoted by a *Déco* arbitration *facies* at 22, rue d'Algérie - Maison Tabone, surmounted by a pergola too. Villa Zirah stands for another important milestone in the building production of Italian people living in Tunisia towards

the gaining of that “modernity”, so wished for in the fortnightly propagandistic review *Italiani di Tunisia*.³

In that period Italian people registered for assessment in the whole French Protectorate in Tunisia are 94,300, a little more than 70% of them coming from Sicily - versus 108,000 French and naturalized French citizens; we have to say, moreover, that a great part of them was just formed by Italian people induced to change citizenship because of the legal French restrictions against “foreigners”, who were almost totally Italians.⁴ They lived mostly in Tunis and in the nearby fishermen port town La Goulette, even if other valuable colonies were settled in Bizerte, Sousse and Sfax - in their hinterland mining industry was flourishing, besides, of course, several rural settlements close to Grombalia (at Khanguet-gare, at Draa ben Jouder, at Bordj el-Amri, at Oued el Khadra, at Semech) and many other areas of Cape Bon peninsula.⁵ It was, actually, the greatest community of European people, over a total of 2,800,000 inhabitants; 2,336,000 of these were Islamic, 59,500 professed the Jewish religion - and among these, many Italians were the first to settle in Tunisia in the first years of the Restoration; the remaining, a little more than 400,000, most of them French and Italian people, with a



Aerial view, with the Lake of Tunis at the end of Avenue Jules-Ferry (today called Avenue Habib Bourguiba), Tunis (photograph from the second half of the '50s). On the northern side, just beyond the intersection with Avenue de la Liberté, there is the Colisée building, planned by S. Aghilone in 1931 and built by G. Canino

significant presence of Maltese and Greek people, besides little minority presences of Belgium, Spanish and German people, belonged to other Christian faiths.

Therefore, even before the Paris government decided the military occupation of the country in 1881,⁶ the Italian presence in this area of Maghreb was somewhat noteworthy and important. And this happened well before the several agreements in the Seventies of XIX century between the bey of Tunisia and the Italian king - a commercial agreement which France looked at with ill-concealed suspect, worried also by the strengthening of control by the Ottoman emperor over Tripolitania. The treaty between Rome and Tunis in 1878, at last, led off the moving from Italy - and particularly from Sicily - of thousands of fishermen and almost a hundred of small shipowners and entrepreneurs of transformation activities and conservation of fish; it was a further

progress compared with the treaty of ten years before, that “granted Italian people freedom of trade and industry, as well as of buying real estates, land, and so on...; it also granted the maintenance of their nationality and legal immunity because they depended directly on the Italian consular authorities”.⁷

This massive immigration was applied as a fly-wheel for an economic impulse and it could be put at the core of a half-century tradition; Italian people living in Tunisia, who were 6,000 during the period of Risorgimento, became 30,000 in the eighties of XIX century. Between 1884 and 1901 the French authorities - even as a reply to the Triple Alliance - removed all privileges that, in line with the progressive turning point impressed to the Regency by Khair-ed-Din Pasha and later by Muhammad Bayram, had contributed to the rising of a real Italian community consisting of several social classes with the development, particularly in Tunis, of a middle-class of professions, trading and entrepreneurial activities. Once abolished the consular jurisdiction, the French administration extended the programme of limitation to other fields, such as the public contracts from which Italian enterprises were ruled-out,⁸ with few exceptions like Giuseppe Rey from Piedmont and Sicilian Giuseppe Di Vittorio.⁹

The relationship with French governors, and therefore the legal conditions of professionals and companies of the Italian colony - particularly in the building sector, undergo a general improvement at the end of World War I and after the agreements

between Italy and France in 1923; the fact that Italy had left the Triple Alliance in 1915 had, in fact, temporarily put those contrasts down with the French Republic Government which, on the other hand, had disadvantaged Sicilian exports. Nonetheless, a further worsening will be noticed at the end of the thirties, with relation to the strengthening of the imperialism of Fascist *régime* - that just in Tunisia has a foreseeable echo, despite the traditional progressive vocation of the most famous members of the community. The situation will later degenerate soon after 1945, when the Protectorate enforces restrictive measures that will cause the dislocation of the Italian Community - or an induced minority transformation of mimetic approval with French-speaking members, once the Anglo-American allies have given the whole Tunisian territory to France, after the short Italian occupation in 1942. The new path impressed to the history of the country thanks to the brave independent action by Bourguiba, also implied a retrieval of propitious terms for the Italian community: but, by now, its consolidate balances were unavoidably compromised.

The considerable presence of architects, engineers and decorators coming from Italy and living in Tunis in the space of time between the institution of the French Protectorate and the outbreak of World War II, can therefore be considered a complicated event. The Italian community, particularly in Tunis and, to a lesser extent in the rest of the country, was already substantial even before the creation of the French Protectorate. A first nucleus of people from Leghorn,



L. Rey, Villa Maria, Tunis, 1906 (period photo)

mainly of Jewish religion, was dedicated to trade and productive activities - that will later become solid firms, as the typographical factory Finzi and the furniture-making factory Coen; there were also professionals - among them two surgeons Giuseppe Passeri and Giacomo Castelnuovo stand out. A heavily populated community of fishermen, farmers, craftsmen and small shipowners had settled in Tunis from Sicily - two areas, one in Tunis and the other in La Goulette, were officially called *Petite Sicile*.

Moreover, Tunisia had been the object of the Italian entrepreneurs' attention, and particularly of those who worked in Sicily, since the seventies of XIX century; if Joseph Whitaker - one of the most prestigious heirs among the pioneers of the industrialization of Marsala wine - besides looking after his own business, carries out an exacting ornithological campaign at the peninsula of Cape Bon, whose activity was portrayed by Francesco Lojacono in a bright oil painting at the end of the XIX century, on the other hand the business-



G. Di Vittorio, Casa Menabrea, Tunis, 1904 (photo by E. Sessa, 2005)

man and shipowner Ignazio Florio usually goes round with the financial circles in Tunis; besides, he also enjoys shooting parties and journeys in the company of his charming wife Franca Jacona Notarbartolo and a series of acquaintances, among them the painter Ettore De Maria Bergler. At the beginning of XX century, Florio is already President of Tunis Commercial Bank, of which builders Giuseppe Di Vittorio and Luigi Rey - Giuseppe's son, born in Tunis in 1889 - are respectively manager and assistant chairman. Moreover both the General Italian Navigation of which he is the main shareholder and chairman, and the following Tirrenia Company ensure commercial routes to Tunisia.

The presence of painters Giuseppe Enea and Michele Corteggiani from Palermo is probably also linked to Florio - Corteggiani is already assistant of De Maria for the painting cycle of the mirror room at Grand Hotel Villa Igiea built on the eastern coast of Palermo, upon Florio's will, and on a project by Ernesto Basile; they will make, besides other works, the painting

decorations of *Theatre Municipal* in Tunis: the furnishing of the latter and of the neighbouring Casino d'Hiver - called Le Palmarium - and of Hotel Tunisia Palace - all made by Rey - were provided by the furniture store Ducrot in Palermo, which will later provide furniture for pubs, night clubs and bars.

At the end of XIX century, when the works of the Italian Community in the building sector were particularly appreciated - so much that the magazine *La voce del muratore* was published in Tunis, there was a generation of immigrants' sons, so lively and esteemed - even by French authorities - that they would become a specific professional and entrepreneurial class.

By the mid-thirties the Italian community in Tunis can claim a prominent role in the Protectorate economy and in the European physiognomy impressed on some of its important urban centres like Bizerte and Tunis. Particularly in the latter the works of Italian builders, planners and decorators assume a considerable importance. They will mainly act in that orthogonal urban lay-out balanced by Combat Engineering - soon after the institution of the Protectorate - along the axis that from the door of France linked the Medina to the port, without the fortified surrounding wall. This axis would become the breezy two-lane Avenue Jules Ferry, separated by a two-row *promenade* - first renamed Avenue de la Marine and later avenue Habib Bourguiba, real essence of new Tunis.

Although they filled a role in the public sector jobs - actually limited to an *élite* of excellent people from this community,

they acted largely in the field of residential buildings. To that end their contribute to the pronunciation of an updated, if not originally “modern” physiognomy of Tunis architecture, surely less in the *Art Nouveau* period and more definitely in the *Déco* one, was relevant. Nonetheless, in spite of Italian etymons still significant in the late-eclectic period or in the first Liberty witty remarks - see the works by Benito Barsotti, Pietro Brignone and Salvatore Desiato - with the carrying on of the XX century, French ways adapted to a generic “Mediterranean” background will prevail. But the latter - sometimes with limited concessions regarding the formal instrumentation - will rarely digress into the very fashionable *arabiscances* of that period regarding the colonial official architecture of the French *Maghreb*. Anyway, the presence of Italian people in Tunis will always be a “foreign” presence according to the opinion of the Protectorate authorities. This happens in spite of the consolidated relationships with people from Tunis and with the bey ruling class: acquiring their stylistic ways was perhaps considered inappropriate.

Between the twenties and the thirties few, but significant works by Italian planners who are productive in Tunisia either occasionally or exceptionally bring a different cultural message that, also in the residential building sector - the case of Ugo Chiari is significant - gives the “Mediterranean” style a precise ideological meaning and a peculiar didactic entail. These works can be grouped with several buildings by Italian interpreters of *Art Nouveau* French variants and of *Déco* style in the up-to-date



S. Desiato, residential house, 11, Rue de l'Atlas, Tunis, 1911 (photo by E. Mauro, 2007)

building sector, both as regards those constructed by immigrants from Italy - like Remo Radicioni, Giuseppe Riccobono, Giuseppe Alfredo Sesta Catania, Guglielmo Vella - and those built by people grown up in place or in France - like Francesco and Salvatore Aghilone, Edmondo Boccarra, Giuseppe Augusto Coppola, Vito Mario Giglio, Romeo Giudice, Raimondo Maida, Francesco Marcenaro, Giovanni Ruota, Vito Silvia.

As regards Italian people in Tunis we can distinguish three seasons sometimes partially overlapping, in almost seventy years of activity in the fields of building and ar-



E. Boccara, Koskas and Abitbol apartment buildings, 61, Avenue de la Liberté, Tunis, 1928-1930 (photo by E. Mauro, 2007)



A. Averso, "soluzione d'angolo" of the Casa Averso, Rue de l'Inde, Tunis, 1935 (photo by E. Sessa, 2005)

chitectonic decoration.

During the first period, between the last decade of autonomous sovereignty of the Regency and the World War I, there are two tendencies: the first one regards a monotonous neo Renaissance eclecticism from handbook sources, which precisely constitutes a stream of Italianism, and later a more exuberant *Art Nouveau*, even if provincial and with an easily communicative "Frenchifying" aspect. In the first of the two tendencies, which is quite different and often anonymous, we find buildings of a conventional, though dignified, tone which characterized the first XIX century aspect of Tunis; the refined square formal lay-out of inconspicuous private houses like Kheïreddine palace at *place de Tribunal* in the Medina of Tunis and the Dar Baccouche, at the edge of the Medina, influenced the white plaster buildings of the first expansion just out of the Door of France and in La Goulette, so much that we can join them to the previous almost subliminal arrangement of neo Renaissance

shapes in the mosque Sahib Ettabaâ.

This stylistic line will be pursued successfully until the end of *Belle Époque*, its interpreters are the builders Giuseppe Abita, Giuseppe Di Vittorio - also in his own house in rue du Portugal of 1906 - and Luigi Rey - Villa Maria of 1906 and many private and rental houses in Avenue Bourguiba, in Avenue d'Angleterre, in Rue de Maroc and in Rue d'Autriche. Salvatore Desiato, one of the ten architects mentioned in the *Almanacco italiano della Tunisia* (Italian Almanac of Tunisia) of 1922, more pretentious with some of his rental houses at the beginning of the first decade of the century, gives a version of this stream affected by *horror vacui*, with some peaks of debatable creativity - especially in the small palace at 11, Rue d'Atlas and in the big building in Rue Thiers-ibn Khaldoun, close to office of the Dante Alighieri association. In this late eclectic phase rare Arabic influences can be found as to the Italian commissions in Tunis - a recurring theme in institutional architecture instead.

The sober Islamic influence of the bulky but not monolithic Palais Arabe built at the beginning of XX century in Rue de Rome by Giuseppe Abita - born in Trapani in 1856 - as a stock room, factory and rental building for the brothers Eugenio and Alfredo Coen, or the affected neo Moorish treatment of Villa Menabrea in 1906 by G. Di Vittorio, belong to the same category of mixture, on the whole pleasant, of the anonymous palace De Guidi in Rue Ch. De Gaulle (1903-1906).

The latter is an extreme case in the cycle of the second trendy *Art Nouveau* works of the first season made by Italian people in those years; Italians are compelled to work as decorators or building contractors even if they are often effective but not official planners. Whole areas of white-plastered buildings with a superficial *Art Nouveau facies*, with plenty of models in relief, in formal stucco structures, are built by Abita, Di Vittorio, Rey and other builders following the aesthetic influence introduced by Jean-Emile Resplandy. We can distinguish for their originality but not for their perfection: the residential building in Avenue de Londres built in 1907 by P. Brignone; the peculiar Villa Campo built in 1908 in the middle of the white buildings in the “testuto ippodameo” - the simple urban layout - of *Petite Sicile* in La Goulette; the house in Rue de Salines decorated in 1909 by E. Bocchieri with exuberant symmetrical mosaic works of animal-shaped figures put on the series of archivolts as ray-shaped framing decorations; the wrought-iron fancy parapet of the *immeuble* Disegni by A. Peters in Rue de Yougoslavie; the 1907



G. Abita, Abita apartment buildings (separated by Passage Abita), Rue Kalthoum, Tunis, 1906-1908 (photo by E. Sessa, 2007)

maison Pavia in Rue Said Darwich by A. Pavia; the ruined Excelsior Garage in Avenue de Paris, planned by F. Marcenaro in 1920.

The beginning of the twenties can be considered conclusive as regards this first diversified season. The presence of very few Italian professionals -naturalized to that purpose - is recorded against the overwhelming supremacy of professionals of other nationalities in the field of building contractors and of the “artistic definition” of edifices. This condition seems already overcome at the end of the thirties also for



R. Radicioni, Immeuble De Caro, 16, Avenue de Paris, Tunis, 1933-1935 (period photo)

the occasional contribution of big personalities such as Florestano Di Fausto and Remo Radicioni, independent from the Italian community circle. There are two seasons almost dominated by *Déco* style in the years between the two wars: the first season, which can be divided into two tendencies, is the most enduring lasting until the first half of the thirties. The first tendency is characterized by the presence of eclectic etymons, traditionalist rules and regulations - both on a distributive level and on a plan structure - and by *Déco* architectonic codes, influenced by French style or given by new development of consolidated *repertoires*.

A fundamental change happens in the first half of the thirties when, upon the example of high standard planners such as Victor Valensi and René Audineau, the most endowed among Italian planners make a clean sweep of traditionalist delays to launch an original *Déco* tendency from Maghreb, still free from Arabic features. The best works that reveal the tendency are mostly built during the thirties by: Jean Ruota; Giuseppe Alfredo Catania - born in Palermo in 1889 - who in Villa Salvo at 21, Rue Allaa El Fassi, uses a combinatory virtuosity close to *folie*; by Barsotti - born in Tunis - particularly with Notarbartolo palace in Rue de Serbie planned in 1931; by Vito Silvia - born in Tunis - a fancy composer of disposition of masses and layouts connoted by mingled works in relief on the building at 19, Rue du Cap Vert in 1935 - already used in the small palace at 19, Rue de Palestine in 1934; by Giuseppe A. Brignone who, after a doubtful beginning, since 1931 has given proof of his skill starting with the small palace at 7, Rue de la Banque, today rather tampered, where he adapts secessionist memories, protorationalist etymons of a French kind and marks of astylar currents of Sicilian modernism (the kind derived from the cycle of "white town houses" by Ernesto Basile).

We can find similar characters, even if in a more softened version, in the small palace built by Ange Averso as his own dwelling in 1935 in Rue de l'Inde which has an exceeding volume with a crown on the corner-shaped jutting out roof, like the small palace at 7, Rue de la Banque and the one with a corner balcony facing Rue Houcine

Bauzaïone; or like the more representative edifices built in 1931 in Rue Atatürk, at the corner of Avenue Bourguiba, first work in Tunis by R. Radicioni.

In a different way, Salvatore Aghilone (born in Tunis in 1895), one of the protagonists of the last season of the Italian building in Tunis, with some of his minor works, among them the 1927 small palace at 7, Avenue de la Liberté, can be perfectly located in that compromise period to which all the works by Mario Vito Giglio - born in Tunis in 1882 - belong: he is the author of plans of unquestionable traditionalist approach like the one of the building made in 1931 in rue Patrice Lumumba. The passage to more conventional forms of decorative *repertoires* in the original plan by F. Di Fausto for the Italian Consulate is also due to Mario Vito Giglio. The works by Romeo Giudice - born in La Goulette in 1908- like the residential buildings of 1929 in Rue de Khartoum and in Rue Ibn Tafragin, some works by Edmondo Boccara - born in Tunis in 1896 - like the rental building made in 1928 at 2, Avenue de Madrid and the real estates Koskas and Abitbol built in 1928 in Avenue de la Liberté, most of the works of sculptor-decorator Guglielmo Vella - residential buildings at 21, Rue du Cap Vert, at 13, Rue L'Atlas and Villa Cattani at 105, Avenue de la Liberté - and above all the works by Francesco Marcenaro - born in Tunis - all belong to the same *Déco* traditionalist tendency,

The latter achieves after valid attempts at mediation between tradition and innovation - the office of 'Nouvelle Fanciére' in Rue de Grèce in 1927, the plan for the



G. Brignone, small residential palazzo, 7, Rue de la Banque Tunis, 1931-1933 (photograph by E. Mauro, 2005)

theatre-cinema-music hall 'Le Capitole' in 1929, the residential building at 71, Rue Houcine Bouzaïene in 1933. In 1933, together with J. Ruota, he also builds at 22, Rue de Palestine, a small palace with an elegant modular façade, obtained thanks to a co-ordination of built-in decorative elements and fluted surfaces. He will try, in an unconvincing way, the definitive "modern" redevelopment of his own formal ways in the exuberant *Déco* style of the residential building of Avenue Bourguiba in Sousse, vaguely "Tropical". This peculiarity is also due to a seasonal vocation of the colonial



S. Aghilone, residential house, 3, Rue de Canada, Tunis, 1941 (photo by P. Miceli, 2007)

seaside resort of the historical Sousse, as certified by many examples; among them we can distinguish the soft jutting out composition for the façade of the 1936 small palace by O. Cauro in Rue Khaled Ibn Oulouvalid. The production of architect Ramondo Maida - a municipal doctor coming from Caltanissetta - for Bizerte, seems to be more coherent, even if not as sturdy as the buildings by Marcenaro. Bizerte is a strongly militarized town where, particularly during the thirties, Maida builds an appreciable series of small palaces - from the one of 1931 in Place des Jeunes to that of 1940 in Rue de Grèce - where he co-ordinates, making it up-to-date, an abacus of architectonic elements, which are distinctive of his own ways of planning, grateful for the land where he works.

We can say the same for Giuseppe Augusto Coppola - born in Tunis in 1896 - who builds in Bizerte a garage and a residential building in Rue d'Espagne in 1936. On the same model he had already built in Tunis the buildings of Avenue de Madrid (1931) and of Avenue Chedly Kallala (1932). The

residential buildings constructed in Tunis after the plans by Remo Radicioni are characterized by Mediterranean influences, connoted in a different way. He was born in 1903 at Castelferretti, in the province of Ancona and his period in Tunis is in a certain sense emblematic of the new course of which the Italian magazine «Italiani di Tunisia» is the interpreter and it has a singular genesis: he arrived in Tunis in 1931 at 29 as a political anti-fascist republican refugee. After being a volunteer in the Italian colonial troops in Libia, within the span of five years he is “rehabilitated” by the *régime* for “good conduct”.¹⁰ We don't know if he was progressively involved in the propagandistic turmoil promoted by Canino.

But it is a fact that his planning ways go from Mediterranean *Déco* - with echoes typical of Nice - see the building in Rue Atatürk of 1931 - to the monumental shapes of the *immeuble* Caruana, planned at the beginning of 1931 and finished with significant changes in 1934, to achieve eventually a composed classicist middle-class noble tone, more in XX century style than *Déco*, in the *immeuble* De Carlo in Avenue de Paris, planned in 1933 and finished in 1935.

His following buildings, all crowned by a pergola - the *immeuble* Pietrangeli of 1934 at 10, Rue de Sparte, the *immeuble* Fontana of 1935 at 84, Rue de Yougoslavie and, even more, the project of *maison Gastone* of 1936 for Avenue Farhat Hached - belong to the last short season characterized by an objective modernity, for which the Mediterranean style was not a linguistic code,

but an aesthetic parameter.

It is a *file rouge* that links different meanings: the late prorationalism of the big multifunctional building 'Le Colisée' in Avenue Bourguiba, wanted by C. Canino and planned in 1931 by S. Aghilone; the reductionist apartment building at 12, Rue Hamed Tlili by Quirino Riccardino (1931-1933); the Spartan modernism of school Umberto I and Prince of Naples by G. A. Sesto Catania - finished in 1935; the expressive rental building at the end of Rue Atatürk by G. A. Brignone (1936); the dreamlike Villa Mussolini south of Grombalia agricultural land by U. Chiarini (1937); the softened déco-twentieth-century mixture of the many furnishings by Aldo Ronco, from the Ben Baron warehouse to Luciani chemist's in what was at that time Rue d'Italy, from Caffè Cintra to Villa Mangani; the dynamic stream-line formalism of Cafés Scifo, in Rue d'Italy too, by Giovanni Panarello (1939).

But in 1941 two consumed professionals like Vito Silvia and Salvatore Aghilone, with their *Maison Mineo* in Rue Jebel Bargou and the terraced small palaces in *Rue du Canada*, give the final sign of this last season full of proposals. The fact that the many architects working in Tunis imitate one another, using once again out of fashion *Déco repertoires* - almost as if this was a kind of creative autarchy - highlights a provincial regression that reveals the impending cultural isolation of the Italian community. A few years later, invested by the post-war retaliations by French authorities, it will lose its identity going towards an inexorable decline.

Notes

¹ The presence of a strong Italian community in Tunisia was already remarkable during the Regency and it became the main European colony just twenty years after the French occupation in 1881. Since the beginning of XX century many studies have been done upon it in order to decide its importance and peculiarity as an admirable event in the North-African Europeanization context. Recently, in the last few years, many studies have been carried out about the events of Italian community settled in Tunisia, between XIX and XX century; the aim of the studies was to analyse the different social aspects and to document the various work spheres (professional, handicraft, productive, commercial, artistic, entrepreneurial, but also financial). Silvia Finzi, heir of the most ancient 'dynasty' of Italian entrepreneurs in Tunisia, is the author of the drawing up and co-ordination of the most abundant collection of publication aiming at giving importance to the role of this community in relation to Tunisia during contemporary age. Various studies have treated this argument during a century and half (and, among these, we point out many French studies that, during the years between the two World Wars, revealed apprehension in relation to the expansionist aims of the Fascist *regime* in Africa). Among the studies see:

G. B. Machiavelli, "Sulle colonie europee della Tunisia. Osservazioni e confronti del Regio Viceconsole Avv. G. B. Machiavelli", *Bollettino Consolare*, 1 (1871); G. Loth, *Lew peuplement italien en Tunisie et en Algerie*, Paris 1905; T. Carletti, "La Tunisia e l'emigrazione italiana", *Bollettino del Ministero degli Affari Esteri*, 1906; F. Weber, *Gli Italiani in Tunisia*, Tunis 1906; G. Castellini, *Tunisi e Tripoli*, Torino 1911; P. Lambert, *Choses et gens de Tunisie: Dictionnaire Illustrée de la Tunisie*, Saliba, Tunis 1912; *Almanacco Italiano della Tunisia. Annuario Commerciale, Industriale, Amministrativo, Storico e Turistico*, Tunisi 1921; C. Tumedei, *La Questione tunisina e l'Italia*, Bologna 1922; M. Sarfatti, *Tunisiaca*, Milano 1924; G. Guyot, *L'Italie devant le problème colonial: Problème démographique, émigration et colonisation d'outre-mer. Généralité, économie, main-d'oeuvre*, Société d'Éditions Géographiques Maritimes et Coloniales, Paris 1927; A. E. Sayous, *Les Italiens de Tunisie*, Goemaere, Bruxelles 1927; A. Orani, *Legislazione fascista sulle scuole italiane all'estero*, Torino 1928; E. G. Parvis, *La Questione tunisina e la rinascita*

della Tripolitania, Istituto Coloniale Italiano, Torino 1928; F. Bonura, *Gli Italiani in Tunisia ed il problema della naturalizzazione*, Edizioni Tiber, Roma 1929; U. Bassi, *Note sui diritti dell'Italia in Africa*, Modena 1930; V. Magliocco, *La nostra colonia di Tunisi*, Milano 1933; A. Benedetti, *Per gli Italiani della Tunisia*, Roma 1934; G. Di Maggio, *Gli Italiani e le professioni liberali in Tunisia nella storia e nel diritto*, Roma 1934; C. Luccio, *Humbles figures de la Cité Blanche ou la Sicile à Tunis*, Pelletier, Paris 1934; G. Wian, *La Tunisia e gli italiani*, Casa Editrice Radio, Trapani 1937; Ch. de Monchicourt, *Les Italiens de Tunisie et l'accord Laval-Mussolini de 1935*, Paris 1938; E. Michel, *Esuli italiani in Tunisia (1815-1861)*, Milano 1941; N. Marchito, *L'Italia in Tunisia*, Roma 1942; L. Sitruk, *La condition des Italiens ne Tunisie*, Tunis 1947; N. Pasotti, *Italiani e Italia in Tunisia prima del protectorato francese*, Edizioni Corriere di Tunisi, Tunis 1964; J. L. Miege, *L'impérialisme colonial italien de 1870 à nos jours*, Paris 1968; N. Pasotti, *Italiani e Italia in Tunisia. Dalle origini al 1970*, Roma 1970; G. Rosoli, *Un secolo di emigrazione italiana*, Roma 1978; R. H. Rainero, *La rivendicazione fascista sulla Tunisia*, Milano 1984; R. H. Rainero, *La Commission italienne d'armistice avec la France. Les rapports entre la France de Vichy et l'Italie de Mussolini*, Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, Paris 1995; M. Brondino, *La Stampa italiana in Tunisia (1838-1956)*, Milano 1998; S. Finzi (edited by), *Memorie Italiane di Tunisia – Mémoires Italiennes de Tunisie*, Finzi éditeur, Tunis 2001; R. H. Rainero, *Les Italiens dans la Tunisie Contemporaine*, Éditions Publisud, Paris 2002; S. Finzi (edited by), *Métiers et professions des Italiens de Tunisie – Mestieri e professioni degli Italiani di Tunisia*, Finzi éditeur, Tunis 2003. As regards the figurative arts, the architecture, the decorative arts and the building production, both for the specific presence of Italians as planners, builders and decorators and to place the contribution of Italians in the big context of so called 'colonial' building trade (also realized by French, Maltese and Belgium citizens) during the years of French Protectorate, besides the monographic study *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 1948, about architecture of Tunisia, see: Ch. Géniaux, "L'oeuvre artistique du gouvernement tunisien", *Revue Bleue*, 1911, pp. 528-534; J. Valensi, *La Municipalité de Tunis à l'Exposition de Lion*, Imprimerie Typo-Lithographique Frédéric Weber, Tunis undated; G. Eloy, *La Ville de Tunis à l'Exposition*

Coloniale Internationale de 1931, Imprimerie Ch. Weber & Cie, Tunis 1931; A. Pellegrin, *Histoire illustrée de Tunis et de sa Banlieue*, S.té des Editions Saliba, Tunis 1955; G. Baudez, F. Béguin, "Arabisansances. Osservazioni sull'architettura coloniale francese nel Nord Africa 1900-1950", in *Lotus International*, 1980, no. 26, pp. 41-52; P. Signoles, A. Belhedi, J. M. Miossec, H. Dlala, *Tunis. Evolution de l'Espace Urbain*, Centre Universitaire d'Etudes Méditerranéennes, Poitiers 1980; F. Béguin, *Arabisansances: décor architectural et tracé urbain en Afrique du Nord, 1830-1950*, Dunod, Paris 1983; G. Gaggero, "Il Liberty in Tunisia", *Arte Lombarda*, 1993, nos 105-107, pp. 234-237; S. Santelli, *La Ville. Le Creuset Méditerranéen. Tunis*, Les Éditions du Demi-Cercle/CNRS Éditions, St Germain du Puy 1995; J. Abdelfkafi, "Une promenade architecturale à Tunis", *Architecture méditerranéenne, Tunisie*, 1997, no.178, pp. 137-147; P. Sebag, *Tunis. Histoire d'une Ville*, L'Harmattan, Paris 1998; L. Quattrocchi, *L'Art Nouveau à Tunis*, Agence de mise en valeur du Patrimoine et de Promotion Culturelle, Tunis 1998; *Peintres Italiens de Tunisie - Pittori Italiani di Tunisia*, edited by S. Finzi, Finzi éditeur, Tunis 2000; *Architectures Italiennes de Tunisie – Architetture Italiane di Tunisia*, edited by S. Finzi, Finzi éditeur, Tunis 2002; F. Ben Becher, *Tunis. Histoire d'une avenue*, Editions Nirvana, Tunis 2003; L. Ammar, *Histoire de l'Architecture en Tunisie, de l'antiquité à nos jours*, Tunis 2005, pp. 201-237; *Architetti e Ingegneri Italiani dal Levante al Magreb 1848-1945*, edited by E. Godoli and M. Giacomelli, Maschietto Editore, Firenze 2005, pp. 90, 99, 102, 105, 168-169, 171-173, 195-196, 297, 303-305, 318, 336-339; C. Oliviero, "La Petite Sicile di Tunisi", *Il Corriere di Tunisi*, May 2006, no.4, pp.18-19; *Tunis 1800-1950. Portrait architectural et urban*, edited by S. Akrouit-Yaïche, texts by Z. Mohuli e J. McGuinness, Editions Elyzad, Tunis 2006.

² For biographical outlines about Giovanni Ruota (often documented as Jean Ruota) and about most of other Italian planners, decorators and entrepreneurs in Tunisia, besides the already quoted essays, that analyse the argument in a critic way, see: A. Salmieri and S. Finzi, "Breve inventario degli architetti ed imprenditori italiani in Tunisia", in *Architectures Italiennes de Tunisie ...*, cit., pp. 170-202. In the same volume the essays by P. A. Baldocci, S. Finzi, D. Melfa, A. Salmieri and L. Quattrocchi gives for the first time an organic and thematic reading of the event regarding

the Italian citizens' presence in the big process of Tunis' construction between XIX and XX century, and in that process regarding the new outline, though partial, regarding the new expansion quarters of towns such as Biserta, Susa, Sfax between the two World Wars.

³ This review published in Tunis since 1934, with a strong fascist inclination and with a great care of graphic and aimed at a self-esteem of the Italian community, can be put here as a corporative and recreational variant in the severe and progressive orientation of the local press published in Italian. The local Italian press had many mastheads, and some of these were actual and enduring such as *L'Unione*, printed since the first years of Protectorate, and *Il Lavoratore Italiano in Tunisia*, *L'Amico del Popolo*, *Il minatore*, *Il Viticoltore*, *L'Italiano di Tunisi*, *Il Pungolo*, *Il Giornone* – *Periodico Liberale Indipendente*, *La Voce dell'Operaio*, *La Voce del Muratore*, *Simpaticuni Italiani di Tunisia*, in its articles and columns about architecture and art, was supported by a group of well-off people of the community led by the land owner Carmelo Canino (born in Trapani in 1893). Thanks to it, a "Mediterranean" style is spreading out, a kind of undisclosed and unaware objectivity, recognized as the real expression, in keeping with that environment, versus the decorative abundances performed by the builders of the new French Tunis. The article signed "Il Negromante" (no.16, 15th October 1935) symbolic of this trend, is published with a series of pictures that compare traditionalist and innovative works in Tunis; among these works, besides the building *Le Colisée* by Salvatore Aghilone, Avenue Bourguiba and the *immeuble* Enicar by René Audineau Avenue de Londres, the building called "Cit  des Po tes" and the head office of Dante Alighieri company are also appreciated, both traditionalist works by Mario Vito Giglio, but considered representative of the "Italic" identity. On the contrary, the Belle  poque local architectonic production is criticized, both the northern historicist-eclectic one and the Art Nouveau one, with its "chrome yellow houses, full of floral style balconies, that seemed to be made by a pastry chef", a tacit reference to the current influenced by Resplandy who was also emulated by the local Italian builders.

⁴ G. Wian, *op. cit.*; N. Marchito, *op. cit.*; L. Sitruk,

op. cit.; term Tunisia, *Dizionario Enciclopedico "Il nuovissimo Melzi"*, vol. 2, Parte Scientifica, Edizioni Vallardi, Milano 1951; N. Pasotti, *op. cit.*

⁵ D. Melfa, "Paesaggi italiani in terra tunisina. Annotazioni su architettura e urbanistica rurale", in *Architectures Italiennes de Tunisie...*, cit., pp. 126-140.

⁶ The imposition of the Protectorate happened despite the previous institution of International Committee for Economic Affairs of the Regency (where, besides the delegates of United Kingdom and the Reign of Italy, there was the French Republic) and also by taking advantage of the accident caused by border violation of scab tribes over the French borderlines in Algeria. The acquisition of colonial French control drove the Italian Reign towards the defensive alliance with the Germanic and Austro-Hungarian Emperor signing the Triple Alliance in Vienna on 20th May 1882. Among many publications of that period about French properties in North Africa, see: *Le Mouvement Colonial: Nouvelle S rie du Mouvement African, Revue G n rale d'Exploration et de Colonisation*, 1894-1897; G. Malletterre, P. Legendre, *Colonies Franaises - Colonies M diterran ennes*, Librairie Ch. Deala-grave, Paris undated; *Chronique de l'Institut Colonial Franais*, Paris 1920.

⁷ S. Finzi, "La Camera di Commercio ed Arti", in *Memorie Italiane di Tunisia...*, cit., p. 41.

⁸ F. Weber, *op. cit.*

⁹ The first, called back in Tunisia from 1836 to manage the completion and decoration works of the Bardo's extension, establishes himself as a great builder and decorator, laying the foundations for the great entrepreneurial success of his son Luigi; the second, arrived in 1882, when the French Combat Engineering already "left the foreigner entrepreneurs out from all works", would quickly stand out thanks to his remarkable organizational, technical skills and economical competitiveness, so that the bey gave him many honours and official reward such as: "Cavalier - Official of Equestrian Order of Nichan Iftikhar" and "The Cross of Cavalier of Italian Crown (awarded also to G. Rey besides the office of Amin with a proper uniform for official ceremonies).

¹⁰ E. Godoli, "Radicioni Remo", in *Architetti e Ingegneri Italiani dal Levante al Magreb*, cit., pp. 296-297.

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