Cultural promotion and imperialism: the Dante Alighieri Society and the British Council contesting the Mediterranean in the 1930s

van Kessel, T.M.C.

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## PREFACE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapters</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural foreign politics contesting the centre of the world</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe divided by crises and ideology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural promotion: a tool in international politics</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural foreign politics from a transnational perspective</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National identity constructed from abroad</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clashing empires and political systems in the Mediterranean</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modelling modernity</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship, race and religion</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline of the chapters</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOREIGN CULTURAL POLICY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapters</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Allgemeiner Deutscher Schulverein (1881) / Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland (1908) and the Deutsche Akademie (1925)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniting the <em>Volksdeutschen</em></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thierfelder and German language and culture for non-Germans</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodating to Hitler’s regime</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Alliance Française (1883)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission civilisatrice and France’s new orientation after 1870</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ministère des Affaires Étrangères and the impulse of the Great War</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline and revival of the Alliance</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Dante Alighieri Society (1889)</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian irredentism, emigration and national expansion</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of the Italo-Turkish War and the First World War: Fascism and virulent nationalism</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition with the Fasci Italiani all’Estero and the Istituti di cultura italiana</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensification of cultural propaganda in the 1930s</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The British Council (1934)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural propaganda disavowed</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counteraction to protect trade, territory and democratic Tradition</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close connection to the Foreign Office</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing significance of cultural foreign policy</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal ideologies</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. THE DANTE ALIGHIERI SOCIETY AND THE BRITISH COUNCIL: THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STATE 61

Internal leadership and government ties. The Dante Alighieri Society between two centuries 62
   Risorgimento and freemasonry 62
   From Risorgimento to Fascism: President Paolo Boselli 65
   A new generation 71
   Issue of independence 75
   After Boselli’s demise (1932) 82
   Superseded by the Istituti di Cultura 87

The British Council: an offshoot of the Foreign Office 89
   Emergence in the age of ‘new diplomacy’ 89
   The leading men 92
   Gendering the Council 94
   Critical of appeasement 96
   Battling for independence from the Ministry of Information 97

Conclusion 100
   The Dante’s balancing act 100
   The Janus face of the Council 101

3. CONSTRUCTIONS OF ‘ITALIANITÀ’ AND ‘BRITISHNESS’ 103

Cultural pilgrimages across the Mediterranean 103
   Reviving the Roman heritage 106
   Secular pilgrimages 107
   Paying homage to the dead 108
   Cultural crusades 110
   Missionaries of modernity 111
   Italy’s widespread presence in the Mediterranean 112
   Teaching Italian language and culture 114
   Promising a Pax Romana 118
   A Christian soul with a Mediterranean conscience 119

The projection of Britishness 120
   Format and circulation of Britain To-day & British Life & Thought 120
   Britain and European or World Civilization 123
   Freedom, democracy and peace 125
   The harmony of hierarchy 130
   Truth will triumph 134

Conclusion 136
## Table of Contents

### 4. THE BATTLE FOR CULTURAL HEGEMONY IN MALTA 137
- Malta: a chess-piece in the Mediterranean 137
- The Dante Alighieri Society in Malta 142
  - Indignation expressed in Dante publications 142
  - Annibale Scicluna Sorge: the intermediary 145
  - Evidence of Italian civilization in Malta 147
- The British Council in Malta 153
  - Establishing a British Institute 155
  - The first Council lecture 158
  - Dispelling suspicions of anti-Catholicism 161
  - The Institute opening its doors 163
- Conclusion 166

### 5. CULTURAL POLICY AND COLONIAL CONQUEST: THE DANTE ALIGHIERI SOCIETY IN ABYSSINIA AND THE BRITISH COUNCIL IN EGYPT 169
- The Dante Alighieri Society’s imperial dreams in Addis Ababa 169
  - A new Dante Alighieri Committee in Addis Ababa 171
  - Initial obstacles 174
  - The official opening of the Dante library 180
  - Pietrosi’s launching speech 182
  - Giving body to the library: the books and the building 184
  - Rumours regarding neglect 188
  - Competition in view 190
  - Great expectations: ideal and real power 191
- The British Council in Egypt: using the word instead of the sword 192
  - Alarm about Latin rivalry 193
  - Keeping teachers and children British 201
  - New effort to reach out to Egyptian children as well 206
  - A British Institute or an Anglo-Egyptian Society 207
  - British Evening Institutes 209
  - Calling for the use of new media 211
- Conclusion 213

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION 215

### BIBLIOGRAPHY 221

### SAMENVATTING 235