

THEMES IN MODERN AFRICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

Festschrift for Tekeste Negash

edited by Lars Berge and Irma Taddia

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Tekeste Negash

Prof. Marita Hilliges

Vice-Chancellor, Dalarna University, Sweden

Professor Tekeste Negash has been a genuine pioneer at Dalarna University. He is a man of many talents, an academic that commands great respect and a good colleague with an infectious wit and sense of humour.

Thanks to his involvement in internationalization in general and in African issues in particular, in 2006 Dalarna University was able to set up the Dalarna University Centre of African Studies. Tekeste was the living link between a wide range of outstanding scholars and institutions both in Europe and in Africa. Thanks to his close contacts, not least with colleagues at Bologna University, and their warm recommendations, Tekeste was able to gather together an impressive team of academics within the broad area of African Studies. Tekeste is truly an academic entrepreneur, in the best sense of that word.

Tekeste was of course the driving force behind the development of our own Master's programme in African Studies. With his wide and deep knowledge of African history, politics and education issues, his own teaching contribution was considerable. He also brought in a long list of scholars from this and other countries that are still working and teaching at Dalarna and that together represent a solid basis of academic quality. The institutions that Tekeste helped to forge close links with make a long and impressive list: the Bahar Dar, Jimma and Mekelle Universities in Ethiopia; a wide range of Italian universities apart from Bologna itself, including Cagliari, Macerata, Napoli, Pavia, Rome III, Rome "Tor Vergata", Perugia and Siena. From other countries we work together with the Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany, the two universities of Tromsø and Hedmark in Norway, the University of Tallinn in Estonia, the University of Oulu/Uleåborg in Finland, INALCO in Paris and the University of West Bohemia, Pilsen.

Improving the quality of teaching and research was the main aim of these scholars engaged in the Master's programme, and the yearly gatherings Tekeste instigated brought together many leading scholars in Africa to present and discuss their latest works. These *Africa Days* and their social programmes have also deeply involved people from other parts of the University and not least cohorts

of international students, who with their enthusiasm and curiosity have made important contributions to the life of our university campus in Dalarna.

Although the character of the African Studies programme is changing, as it must after the departure from Dalarna of its nestor Tekeste Negash, much of the spirit lives on, not least in a broad interest in African development which can now be seen throughout this University. Our growing collaboration with African universities is giving us a new sense of direction – on a firm scholarly foundation of which Tekeste Negash was one of the main architects.

UNESCO and the idea of schooling and modernity

Lars Petterson

Dalarna University

One of Tekeste Negash' contributions to the discussion on education relates to his criticism of the UNESCO general assumption that societies in Africa and Asia should follow the Western path to Industrialization, Modernization and Democratization through alphabetization and popular education. Behind this assumption lies the idea that it was national legislation on primary schooling that paved the way for the combined processes of Industrialization, Urbanization and Democratization. It is, however, only after substantial manipulation with chronology and historical processes that such a reasoning may be used to explain the emergence of National Legislation on popular schooling in Prussia (1807), Denmark (1814), Ireland (1831), Sweden (1842) and England (1870) by relating to the level of industrialization and urbanization.

In Sweden, as in most other countries in Europe, mass schooling started in the nineteenth century. But schooling for the masses in no way began with the school ordinance of 1842: at that time, close to half of the parishes in Sweden already had some form or other of common school. Nor did 1842 lead to a dramatic increase in the number of schools: as late as 1910, fewer than half the children in Sweden were registered pupils of a permanent school which offered full-time teaching. A strong focus on nineteenth-century reforms can be misleading if it leads to the assumption that there was no teaching for the mass of the people before that time. Throughout the Swedish realm (including at that time also Finland) every individual had since the seventeenth century experienced a Christian upbringing which involved reading the psalm book and Luther's little catechism. The tradition of reading maintained within the church laid the foundation for a certain degree of universal education. The clergy kept a strict watch on the level of knowledge among the laity by frequently visiting households and questioning their members about the faith, and through constant meetings for communal reading and religious songs. The skills and knowledge required were, of course, directly related to Protestant orthodoxy.

What was demanded was not *literacy in* the general sense of the word. The ability to read was remarkably widespread (from the seventeenth century onwards)

in Sweden in comparison with other parts of Europe, but the ability to write was no more common than in, for example, England during the early modern period. It was the task of the clergy to disseminate an ability to read among the laity and to check that it was maintained. There was seldom any question of increasing the number of people who could write. We are dealing here with a vertical channel of communication which functioned in one direction only. Ordinary people needed to be able to read so that the instructions of those in authority could be transmitted to them. Learning occurred through the study of a limited range of texts approved by the church: the psalm book, the little catechism of Martin Luther. However, the church was never the most important link between the state and the individual. In this respect, the primary role was played by the household, and this meant that pockets of non-conformism survived. The persistent efforts of the state to integrate individual as obedient subjects may be far-reaching, but they could never be totalitarian. The individual was brought up in a household, and the mistress of the household was generally the person who inculcated the dominant rules and values.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, most inhabitants of the Swedish realm were still semi-literate in the sense that they could read but not write. The ability to read was probably more widespread in Sweden than in any other part of the Nordic region (or probably in the world), but it seems as if the ability to write was more common in Denmark. In the case of Sweden-Finland, a law had been introduced as early as the late seventeenth century – 1686 to be exact – stipulating that every household should be visited by a clergyman once a year and its members questioned on the faith.

It is not easy to determine precisely when schooling within the household was replaced by a school-based system of popular education. There is no obvious turning point. The two forms of education co-existed for long periods of time, producing a mixed system of education in which it is difficult to disentangle its different elements. At all events, it is clear that no rapid change occurred in Sweden and that there were great regional variations. In general terms, it can be said that schooling within the household remained dominant throughout most of the nineteenth century, and the only older piece of legislation force was the decision taken in 1640 concerning children's schools in the towns. Throughout the country, schooling within the home was the dominant form of education both in the countryside and in the towns, until schools for the poor and other children began to become common in the towns from the late eighteenth century onwards. But the urbanisation of the country occurred at a relatively late stage. Only one-tenth of the population lived in towns in Sweden till the middle of the nineteenth century. Even if the schoolmaster usually was someone who had been ordained, there is nothing to suggest that the teaching

in reading provided within the household was qualitatively inferior to that given by common schools.

The period 1800-1890 is the age when *writing* literacy became the norm in the Nordic region – a development which naturally involved a significant enhancement in the communicative competence of ordinary people. The parish schools established at the beginning of the century and the monitorial schools set up in the 1820s made the possibility of acquiring writing literacy more generally accessible in the countryside. This development was associated with a more far-reaching change: the transition from teaching within the household to teaching at school.

The growth of writing literacy naturally made it easier to regard communication as a two-way process, which in its turn made it easier to treat schooling as a matter of civic concern. There were also those who argued that the education of the masses was a democratic right. However, the authorities generally still saw education primarily as a means of sustaining the existing social order: the masses could more easily be kept under control if certain harmless pieces of knowledge were imparted to them, and if they were made conscious of their own, subordinate, place in the larger scheme of things.

The motives for replacing teaching within the household with a school education were mixed and they were, of course, connected with what were regarded as the most important tasks of the education system. Many supporters of school education thought the separation of the child from its parents for teaching purposes was a fundamental precondition for effective education. However, they did not apply this view to all children: they regarded the affluent members of society as capable of taking responsibility for the upbringing of their children in the future as they had in the past. In contrast, they believed that the children of the lower classes were misled by their parents and therefore needed to be placed in a school environment.

In other words, two kinds of separation were envisaged: one between the different social classes and the other between the children of the poor and their parents. The element of social segregation presents a sharp contrast with the idea of citizenship which was now being advanced with increasing emphasis throughout the Nordic region. The middle class believed that civic virtues would be most effectively promoted if its own children did not come into direct contact with the children of the underclass. That is why two parallel school systems were created, one for each class, and survived until far into the twentieth century; until 1962 to be precise. However, the most important form of segregation in the middle of the nineteenth century was the separation of children from their parents. It is probable that the most important motive for those who supported the creation of a system

of common school was the separation of the children of the underclass from the adult world. The goal was to institutionalize teaching, to separate the child from home and household, and to place the children of the underclass in a special moral quarantine.

The reason for this attitude towards the children of the underclass was that the system of norms embraced by their parents was regarded as incompatible the ideal of citizenship. That ideal included the concept of *individualism*, but the poor were still trapped within patriarchal structures which upheld unchanging corporatist traditions, paternalistic care, stable power hierarchies and the guild system. Among the underclass, the individual was still firmly embedded in the collective unit of the household or the corporation. This meant that he was both in principle and practice subordinate and subject to the collective unit, but also that it looked after and protected him. A different, but closely related, reason was the need, which was mentioned with increasing frequency, for a labour force which could write but which was also mobile and preferable also obedient. A growing number of parents among the underclass now had work outside as well as within the old units of production, the household, and this added to the necessity of introducing common schools.

The common schools which emerged during the first decades of the nineteenth century and which were sanctioned by the state, mostly adopted the so-called monitorial method of teaching. This was based on the principle that the schoolmaster delegated the great bulk of the teaching to "monitors", and only played a supervisory role himself. This method of teaching was characterized by the maintenance of a strict hierarchy of rank, an impersonal system for conveying orders and a minutely regulated set of rewards and punishments. It originated in Britain, and was suffused with the spirit of the utilitarian philosophy. It was believed that a single teacher could supervise hundreds of pupils.

The growth in the number of monitorial schools was quite rapid, and the use of the monitorial method was recommended at all the schools in the country. In 1842, the method was made obligatory at the teacher training colleges (seminaries). The monitorial method was adopted in virtually all urban schools and in most rural schools. The remaining schools were usually too small to be suited for the use of monitorial teaching.

The monitorial school represented a solution to the problem of educating the masses whose very structure clearly demonstrates that it was a product of the ideals and practice of British industry. The use of compulsion was to be avoided to the greatest extent possible, and schooling therefore had to be institutionalized and conducted within the framework of a network of schools in which teaching was reduced to learning by rote, and subordinated to a sort of intellectual

mechanization derived in all its essentials from the techniques which had been developed in Britain to control the labour process within the new factories created by the industrial revolution. The members of the societies which offered mass education to the underclass at the cheapest price wanted the forms assumed by discipline and learning within the school to resemble as closely as possible the conditions which governed factory production. Schools were therefore organized like factories, even though factories were still rare in the Nordic region, and the product manufactured by these school-factories was a labour force.

The common assumption that there was a causal relationship between industrialization and the institutionalization of popular education does not apply in the case of the Nordic region. The monitorial method clearly reflected the ideals of industrial mass production with its strict division of labour, but it is still the case that in the Nordic region the introduction of monitorial teaching *anticipated* the process of industrialization by several decades.

The assumption that the common school system emerged purely as a result of demands for broadly-based civic education are also without validity. The question of *what* was taught at the new common schools was entirely subordinate to two different questions: *how* the students were taught and *where* they were taught. The actual content of what was taught was remarkably similar to what it had been since the seventeenth century: the only additions were writing literacy and, in some cases, mathematics.

The essential function of the common school was to assign roles to individuals which extracted them from all collective communities. Its purpose was to *separate* and to *segregate*. It completed the process of individualization which had begun with the separation of work from the household.

It is clear that the common school system that emerged in Sweden during the nineteenth century was regarded as a solution to what was seen as the greatest problem facing society – the growth of an underclass which owned no property of its own, and which was perceived as a threat to the survival of the existing social system. The common school, not least when it was accompanied by the use of the monitorial method, seems to have appealed to many because the reformers succeeded in presenting it not only as a universal cure for ignorance, disobedience and discontent, but also as a solution to the whole social crisis of the age, as an integral element in a strategy designed to re-establish order on new foundations. Those who sought to promote common schools had two motives: on the one hand they naturally wanted to give individuals an opportunity to create a more tolerable life for themselves, but – just as naturally – they wanted to safeguard the great social project which had just been initiated, and to accommodate those social groups within it which did not own property.

The trend of the age was towards a clear segregation of the social classes for educational purposes, accompanied by integration of children of the same class. The circular of 1849 and the statute of 1856 concerning secondary schools united the whole school system, except for the common schools, into so-called elementary secondary schools. This was an important step towards producing an integrated and homogeneous social élite, whose children had hitherto been separated in schools for men of “the economy” and men of “learning”.

After some attempts to implement the statute of 1856, a new statute was issued in 1859 which effectively integrated the secondary school system. It stipulated that the division between the so-called Latin and practical lines of study would begin in the third grade, but the latter was abolished in 1869 and after that the division began in the new second grade.

Other educational reforms in the latter half of the nineteenth century included the transfer in 1862, of responsibility for the matriculation examination from the universities to the secondary schools, the introduction of a period of probationary service for teachers in 1865, and the addition of a “semi-classical” line of study (i.e. Latin without Greek) in 1869. Boys and girls studied under quite different conditions. Until they passed into the highest grades of grammar school, boys attended state-financed secondary schools at which fees were not paid. As for girls, at mid-century there were still only five private, fee-charging girls’ schools in the whole of Sweden, all located in large towns. However, in 1861 a state-financed girls’ secondary school was founded. It was linked to the royal Women’s Teacher Training College established in the same year.

Establishing African studies at Dalarna University: programme based on partnerships

*Catharina Enhörning
Dalarna University,
International Relations Office*

Tekeste Negash, one of the founders of African Studies Education at Dalarna University, has shown us that, it is possible indeed, to create such a master programme as the African Studies Programme by working together with other professors and colleagues around the world. Tekeste Negash motto is “The sky is the limit”. It has definitely been proved here at Dalarna University Centre for African Studies.

Introduction

Dalarna University offers a Master programme of African Studies since 2006. The main purpose of my paper is to introduce the African Studies Programme at Dalarna University and the role of European and African partnerships in the development and implementation of this programme.

A distinct feature of the Programme of African Studies is that there are virtually no Swedish Students. Another feature is that the Programme of African Studies at Dalarna University is the only postgraduate education in Sweden. The question why Swedish students have not yet found their way to African Studies Programme is out of the scope for this paper.

The African Studies programme has had sufficient number of students, between 20-30 students each year, during the last couple of years, although we have noticed a decline during the last two years due to the tuition fees that were introduced in Sweden in 2011. However, since this master programme has been developed and implemented through close cooperation with partner institutions we are optimistic about the future. The most efficient instruments used are double degree agreements and lifelong learning agreements in order to facilitate and increase student, teaching and administrative staff mobility within the programme.

This paper will discuss the process for the development of double degree agreements and the vital role of networks through the lifelong learning mechanisms.

The paper also describes the importance of flexibility and the reorganization of courses in order to maximize the expertise that is available outside of Dalarna University. I conclude that postgraduate programmes, such as the African Studies programme could be developed even in institutions that do not have teaching staff to cover all areas of a given programme.

1. The evolution of African Studies Education in Dalarna

The idea of developing courses on Africa originated from our contacts with colleagues from the universities in Oulu, Finland, and Bologna, Italy, during Dalarna University's 25th anniversary in 2003. A small delegation from Bologna University participated in the celebrations. During the formal and semi-formal discussions on bilateral cooperation, the colleagues from Bologna pointed out that there were several scholars at Dalarna University who had done considerable research on Africa. In 2003, nine scholars, among them two historians, two social anthropologists, one medical historian and one linguist were actively engaged in researching Africa. But none of them, with the exception of a small course on religion and politics in Eastern Africa, taught courses with specific focus on Africa. To a large extent, this had to do with the principles of recruitment at Swedish Universities. In many other European countries, experts are recruited as specialists, where for instance the discipline of History is divided both in terms of periods and regions. So a Department of History in any Italian university could have an expert on African History. Whereas, in Sweden, researchers are recruited primarily on the basis of their knowledge of a certain period, i.e. early, modern, contemporary.

Our collaboration with the universities of Oulu and Bologna was made possible by a combination of two factors. The first was a generous policy from Dalarna University (2000-2007) that encouraged us to establish and consolidate collaboration and networking with institutions in Europe. The second factor, which we believe has been very crucial, is the Erasmus and now the life-long learning programmes of the European Union. Our University has been consistently favorable to these programmes.

The initial planning for developing a master programme in African Studies took place in the summer of 2004. Although there were more than half a dozen experts on various aspects of Africa at Dalarna University, it was discovered that there was a great deal to gain from the wide network that already had been established with many Universities in Europe in general and Italian universities, in particular Perugia, Macerata, Cagliari and Pavia Universities. In April 2005 the first meeting was held at Dalarna University with our partners, Bologna and Oulu. Two other planning meetings took place, one in Oulu and the second in Bologna. It took two years of planning before the African Studies programme could be launched in September 2006.

2. Distinct features of African Studies Education at Dalarna University

The African Studies programme is made up of four obligatory and two optional courses. The most distinct feature of the programme is the course module called Dynamics of African Societies. This is a course that spans over the entire semester and is greatly made up of lectures given by people from our partner institutions. During the 2007 autumn term we have had 8 lectures from outside Sweden and 9 lecturers mostly from the Nordic Africa Institute and Life and Peace Institute, both in Uppsala. During autumn 2011 there were 23 international scholars teaching the 20 weeks of the term. The active involvement of our partners in teaching enables us to gauge the quality of the programme. The other courses given during the autumn also make use of the wide network that we have managed to establish.

The active participation of lecturers from partner institutions is a very important component of the African Studies programme for a number of reasons. First, our partners enable us to recruit students to the programme. It is sadly a fact that there are very few Swedish students that have found their way to the African Studies programme in Dalarna so far. Second, together with our partners we are in strong position to offer a postgraduate programme that is supported and appreciated in Europe. We can safely state that the African Studies programme at Dalarna University is of high quality in so far as we can judge from comments we get from our colleagues in Finland, France, Germany, Norway and Italy.

However, as is always the case, every external lecturer that comes to African Studies expects a return visit from us in Dalarna. And obviously, the more bilateral agreements we have the more we bind ourselves to lecture outside Sweden. So far it is Lars Berge, Director of African Studies since April 2008, and Tekeste Negash that have taken the major responsibility. The implementation of bilateral agreements (life-long-learning and double degree agreements) takes time as well as resources. The price tag of the African Studies programme has to be weighed with the quality of education and the reputation of Dalarna University. Quality costs.

African Studies programme was first given on campus and on distance. There were about 25 students on campus and about 40 students on distance. The number of distance students decreased radically due to technical problems, mostly because the distance students were unable to use Fronter, the learning platform on the web, properly. At the end, only about 6 distance students followed the programme. The first year was a learning process. We had the opportunity to test the structure as well as the content of the courses we offered. The continuous and positive feedback by external lecturers made us feel confident of the entire concept of the programme.

We launched also another master, Master in African Literature and Postcolonial Studies. However this programme had to be cancelled due to cutbacks of the

University. At the moment we only offer single subject courses within African Literature: Exile in English-language African Literature and Modern African Literature from a Historical Perspective.

3. Double Degree Agreements

Dalarna University has three double degree agreements with the Universities of Bologna, Oulu, Cagliari, Macerata, Perugia and Pavia on the formation of syllabus and teaching of the African Studies programme. By virtue of these double degree agreements, the African Studies programme given at Dalarna is considered integral part of the post graduate education given by the partner institutions. Students doing a two-years master programme in Bologna, Oulu, Cagliari, Macerata, Perugia and Pavia spend one year at Dalarna University and then continue the second year at their home institution. The strength of the African Studies education in Dalarna lies in the possibilities of linking it to more universities in Europe through double degree agreements. Once again, it is important to note that the policy of the European Union, through its lifelong learning programmes, has been very conducive for the development of double degree agreements.

4. Collaboration with Universities in Ethiopia

Dalarna University has established agreements with the universities in Mekelle, Bahar Dar and Jimma in Ethiopia. Tekeste Negash took the initiative to establish these agreements. A delegation from Dalarna University, Tekeste Negash, Lars Berge and Catharina Enhörning, attended a conference at the African Union in Addis Abeba in 2007, together with Prof Irma Taddia from the University of Bologna. The delegation from Dalarna also visited the University in Mekelle.

5. Compendium for the Master students of African Studies at Dalarna University

The African Studies programme at Dalarna University is built on partnership. Tekeste Negash produced, together with Dr. Berit Sahlström, a compendium in 2010 with contributions from several of our partner universities. All the lecturers whose works are in the compendium have delivered papers and lecturers in one or more of the three major African Studies course modules: Dynamics of the African Societies, Education and Change and Religion and Politics.

The compendium is a partial reflection of the extent of our collaboration and it has been put together for the benefit of the students of African Studies at Dalarna

University. The lecturers were Lars Berge, (Dalarna), Giampaolo Calchi Novati (Pavia), Bianca Carcangiu (Cagliari), Uoldelul Chelati Dirar (Macerata), Joyce Kemuma (Dalarna), Federica Guazzini (University for Foreigners, Perugia), Elisa Magnani (Bologna), Christine Matzke (Berlin), Tekeste Negash (Dalarna), Irene Gilsenan Nordin (Dalarna), Karin Pallaver (Bologna), Alessandro Pes (Cagliari), Irma Taddia (Bologna), Pierluigi Valsecchi (Pavia), Elena Vezzadini (Bergen), Åsa Wedin (Dalarna), Jan Záhorský (Pilsen) and Massimo Zaccaria (Pavia).

6. Conclusion

The African Studies programme is based on partnerships. Currently, the African Studies programme at Dalarna University is taught by lecturers from around 20 universities.

Few universities possess all the staff needed to give a high quality education on multi and interdisciplinary issues and areas. The case of African Studies shows that knowledge on modern Africa is widely dispersed among many universities in Europe. It is only through networking and partnerships that a cohesive and comprehensive African Studies education in Europe can be delivered. We have come a long way, but this presentation must have made it obvious that the field of African Studies is huge and complex and it would highly presumptuous to assume that it can be covered by a one year postgraduate programme. What is certain is that African Studies Education in Europe could easily draw synergic effects if advantages are taken of the possibilities available for partnerships through agreements and collaboration.

***Homage to Tekeste Negash from Addis Ababa University
in the occasion of his festschrift***

Prof. Shiferaw Bekele

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I have known Professor Tekeste for well over three decades. We have met in conferences abroad as well as in Ethiopia every time that he came for research at the University libraries and archives. I invited him several times to make presentations in my graduate seminars in the History Department of Addis Ababa University.

I was always struck by the invariable enthusiasm with which students looked forward to his lectures. Graduate students from other departments also asked me if I would allow them to attend his lectures. I always allowed all who requested to attend. The lectures were well received to my pleasant surprise and they were always followed by spirited discussions. When I ran into my former students after their graduation, many of them expressed to me their gratitude for inviting Tekeste to their seminars.

At times I also organized public lectures for Tekeste to which I invited many colleagues of the University. These meetings were always attended to capacity and generated robust discussions that went even beyond the lectures; in the days that followed they were the subject of a large number of comments in staff lounges and cafeterias. What also struck me was the invariable reception of his books. Establishment intellectuals were sometimes displeased by his ideas while other intellectuals received them with great appreciation. Indeed, Tekeste has been an intellectual who came up with original, thought-provoking and sharply critical publications. I had the privilege of reviewing his books, which I found insightful and gratifying works on top of their originality.

Tabula Gratulatoria

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Religion and Capitalism

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New modes of production, urbanization and the development of Islam in nineteenth-century Tanzania

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This article originates from a paper presented in the panel “Religion and Capitalism in Africa”, convened by Tekeste Negash at the European African Studies Conference in Uppsala in 2011¹. When Tekeste first asked me to present a paper, I thought that little room was available for analysing religion *and* capitalism in the area and for the period I was working on, i.e. Western Tanzania in the nineteenth century. No doubt, Muslim traders² settled in this area for the first time in the 1840s, but for a long time the impact of Islam remained limited. Nonetheless, the establishment of Muslim traders in the caravan towns of the interior created hubs of coastal culture that became the basis on which Islam later developed as a major force of change in twentieth-century Tanzania³. Islam did not develop in the interior, as it is commonly believed, as a consequence of colonization and the use by Europeans of Muslim agents, interpreters, clerks, etc.⁴ It was a much more complex process that originated in the nineteenth century and was related to the involvement of the area in the global economy. That is why I decided to present a paper that starting from the analyses of the development of new trade patterns,

1 An abridged version of this paper was originally published in the dossier “Religion and Capitalism in Africa”, edited by Taddia, I; Tekeste Negash, in *Storicamente*, vol. 8, 2012.

2 In this paper I will use the definition “Muslim traders” – or more in general “coastal traders” – to refer to the traders coming from the coast who operated in the interior; I have used “Arabs” only when this definition appears in contemporary European sources.

3 Austen, R. “Patterns of Development in Nineteenth-century East Africa” in *Journal of African History*, vol. 4, n. 3, 1971, p. 650.

4 For a useful recent overview on the available literature on the expansion of Islam in Tanzania, see Rollinger, L. “Constructing Islam and Swahili Identity: Historiography and Theory” in *The MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies*, 2005, pp. 9-20; for a discussion on the forms of Islam that spread in the coastal hinterland, see Glassman, J. *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast 1856-1888*, London, James Currey, 1995, pp. 137-145.

urbanization and wage labour in nineteenth-century Tanzania sets the scene for an overview of the earliest development of Islam in the interior. My intention with this paper is therefore not an in depth analysis of the spread of Islam in the regions of the interior. No comprehensive analysis has been made on this subject⁵ and further research in this area is very much needed, especially in order to balance our definitely better knowledge of the development of Islam in the coastal areas of East Africa and in the Indian ocean⁶. As it has been rightly pointed out, the history of Islam in this period necessarily lies hidden behind the secular and commercial activities of coastal traders that are so much better known⁷.

With this paper I will especially focus on the commercial towns that developed along the caravan roads of the interior. Contrary to the colonial period, when capitalist modes of production developed primarily in the rural areas, nineteenth-century capitalism was more visible in urban centres. In the interior of Tanzania urban centres were established as a consequence of the development of long-distance trade⁸ and it was in these towns that the changes brought by the new economic patterns were more visible. This makes the study of their political and economic life a lens through which to explore the consequences of the growth of stable commercial relations with the coast in connection with the development of international capitalism, as well as the role of new economic actors in dispersing the seeds of coastal culture, among which is Islam.

The sources I have used for this paper, which are mainly traveller and missionary reports, are generally silent on the origin of the traders that operated in the interior, and call all of them with the broad term "Arabs". We know that the community of Muslim traders that settled in Tabora, western Tanzania, was

5 A possible exception is the chapter by Sperling, D.C. "The Coastal Hinterland and Interior of East Africa", cit.

6 See, among others, Pouwels, R.L. *Horn and Crescent. Cultural Change and Traditional Islam on the East African Coast, 800-1900*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987; Middleton, J. *The World of the Swahili: an African Mercantile Civilization*, New York and London, Yale University Press, 1992; Le Guennec-Coppens, F. "Changing Patterns of Hadhrami Migration and Social Integration in East Africa" in Freitag, U.; Clarence-Smith, W.G. (eds.) *Hadhrami Traders, Scholars and Statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s-1960s*, Leiden, Brill, 1997) and in the Indian Ocean (see Freitag, U.; Clarence-Smith, W.G. *op. cit.*; Parkin, D.; Headle, S.C., *Islamic Prayer across the Indian Ocean: inside and outside the Mosque*, Richmond, Curzon, 2000; Simpson, E.; Kresse, K. *Struggling with History: Islam and Cosmopolitanism in the Western Indian Ocean*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2008.

7 Sperling, D.C. "The Coastal Hinterland and Interior of East Africa" in Levtzion, N.; Pouwels, R.L. (eds.) *The History of Islam in Africa*, Oxford, pp. 288-289.

8 Burton, A. (ed.) *The Urban Experience in Eastern Africa c. 1750-2000*, Nairobi, British Institute in Eastern Africa, 2002.

mainly formed by traders coming from Oman. According to Burton, traders of coastal origin were instead settled in Msene, Western Unyamwezi, and had a “natural aversion” to the Omani traders living in Tabora⁹. There is still no comprehensive analysis of the historical categories of identity and self-identity that developed in the areas of the interior of nineteenth-century Tanzania, with the partial exception of Tabora¹⁰. Identities in this period were clearly fluid and a definition or “self-definition” as “Arab” could have different social and economic meanings and implications. In the paper I have used “Arabs” only when this definition appears in contemporary European sources, and otherwise “Muslim traders” – or more in general “coastal traders” – to refer to the traders coming from the coast who operated in the interior.

The first sections of this paper are devoted to the analysis of the characteristics that can be considered as peculiar for the understanding of capitalism in the area: the development of trade and urban life, the emergence of a class of wage labourers and the influence of local political authorities on trade¹¹. Particular attention will be devoted to the history of urbanization in Tanzania, with special reference to the nineteenth century. A final section provides an overview of the available evidence on the earliest conversions to Islam in the interior, with special reference to the caravan towns of the interior.

1. The historical background: global and local markets

The 19th century was a critical point in the development of international capitalism¹². For the African continent this meant the production and commercialization of new export goods as well as the import of new commodities from different parts of the world. On general terms, this put the basis for the integration of local economic activities into international commercial networks and was at the origin of a gradual “commodification” of the regional economies¹³. The consequences that this had on African societies depended on the extent to which previous trade

9 Burton, R.F. *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*, 2 voll., London, Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860.

10 McDow, T.F. “Being Baysar: (In)flexible Identities in East Africa” in *The MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies*, pp. 34-42.

11 Iliffe, J. *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 19.

12 Inikori, J. “Africa and the Globalization Process: Western Africa, 1450-1850” in *Journal of Global History*, vol. 2, n. 1, 2007, pp. 63-86.

13 Glassman, J. *op. cit.*, p. 36

relationships had been established with the international markets, as well as on the types of goods that were exported.

The Indian ocean is one of the oldest economic and cultural world-systems: thanks to the presence of the monsoon winds, the driving force of the Indian ocean commerce, India and the Arabian peninsula established close commercial relationships with East Africa¹⁴. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, the East African coast remained more a part of the commercial world of the Western Indian Ocean than of East Africa, being almost completely separated from its interior. The goods exported from East African ports could be easily obtained in the immediate vicinity of the coastal hinterland and there was therefore no need to organize expensive and risky expeditions in the interior to obtain export commodities. At the same time the regions of the interior were characterized by the presence of a widespread network of African local and interregional trades, mainly in salt, iron, copper, foodstuffs and forest products, that was connected only occasionally to the coast¹⁵.

Therefore, trade relations existed therefore before, but it was only from the first decades of the nineteenth century, owing to the huge expansion in demand for ivory and slaves, that regular commercial relations were established¹⁶. East African ivory was more suitable for being carved than West African or Indian ivory and in the nineteenth century it began to be widely used in Europe and America to produce luxury goods, such as carved figures, parts of instruments, combs and billiard balls, that became a symbol for the growing Western middle class¹⁷. Slaves were another important item of trade. In the eighteenth century slaves were shipped from East Africa to the Middle East and the Mascarene Islands, but this trade flow diminished as a consequence of the Napoleonic wars and the abolitionist movements in Europe¹⁸.

In the nineteenth century the increase in the demand for East African slaves was mainly driven by the expanding plantation economy of Zanzibar and Pemba¹⁹.

14 Gilbert, E. *Dhows and the Colonial Economy of Zanzibar, 1860-1970*, Oxford, James Currey, 2004, p. 25.

15 Gray, R.; Birmingham, D. (eds.) *Pre-colonial African Trade: Essays on Trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900*, London, Oxford University Press, 1970.

16 Sheriff, A. *Slaves, Spices and Ivory in Zanzibar. Integration of an East African Commercial Empire into the World Economy 1700-1873*, London, James Currey, 1987.

17 Beachey, R.W. "The East African Ivory Trade in the 19th Century" in *Journal of African History*, vol. 8, n. 2, 1967, pp. 269-290.

18 Glassman, J. *op. cit.*, p. 29.

19 Cooper, F. *Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1977; Sheriff, A. *op. cit.*

In the second half of the century, slaves were increasingly captured in Katanga and Manyema – present-day Democratic Republic of Congo – and in present-day southern Tanzania²⁰. Until the 1870s Kilwa remained the most important port of shipment for slaves, whereas ivory mainly came from lake Tanganyika and the interlacustrine region and partly from Chagga and Masai countries and was shipped to Zanzibar through Bagamoyo²¹. Copal was also widely in demand, being used in the United States to produce high-value varnishes for the furniture industry. East African copal was considered the best in the world and was extracted in the forests of the East African coastal hinterland²².

During the nineteenth century all of these products experienced growing prices on the international markets. If we take ivory, for example, its price in Zanzibar doubled between 1826 and 1857, and it doubled again in the next thirty years²³. Henceforth, it became very convenient for Indian and coastal traders operating on the coast to penetrate into the interior in search for the precious elephant teeth, slaves and gum copal, which they acquired with imported cloth, glass beads and metal wires. The increase in the price of East African commodities coincided with a decrease in the price of import commodities, that, thanks to the mechanization of the production process in America and Europe, could be imported in huge quantities into the East African interior. Glass beads were mainly produced in Venice, whereas cloth came from India, Great Britain and America. The industrial revolution significantly decreased the production costs for cloth in America and Europe and imports of Indian cloth into East Africa gradually diminished, being mainly replaced by unbleached cloth produced in Massachusetts, locally called *merikani*²⁴. The continuous expansion of trade in the nineteenth century was sustained by the growing prices of East African commodities, especially ivory, on the international market that led to the accumulation of merchant capital on the coast. Thanks to this capital, coastal traders could fit out larger and better financed caravans for the interior²⁵.

20 Deutsch, J.G. “Notes on the Rise of Slavery and Social Change in Unyamwezi” in Médard, H.; Doyle, S. (eds.) *Slavery in the Great Lakes Region of East Africa*, Oxford, James Currey, 2007, pp. 111-123.

21 Smith, A. *The Southern Section of the Interior 1840-188* in Oliver, R.; Matthew, G. (eds.) *History of East Africa*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963, pp. 273-274.

22 Sunseri, T. “The Political Ecology of the Copal Trade in the Tanzanian Coastal Hinterland, c. 1820-1850” in *Journal of African History*, vol. 48, 2007, p. 202.

23 Sheriff, A. *op. cit.*

24 Glassman, J. *op. cit.*, p. 56; Prestholdt, J. *Domesticating the World. African Consumerism and the Genealogies of Globalization*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2008.

25 Sheriff, A. *op. cit.*, p. 181.

As already mentioned, commerce in ivory and slaves required more capital than that in salt and iron, which were typical products of African interregional and regional trade. This capital was provided to coastal traders by Indian financiers, who advanced the resources needed to travel and trade to coastal traders going inland. In exchange they obtained part of the export goods, generally ivory, when the caravan came back from the interior. The connection of the interior of East Africa to the global market in the nineteenth century was with no doubt stimulated by Muslim traders coming from the Swahili coast. However, the development of these new economic patterns was not a one-way-process and East Africans maintained the power to shape their relationships with the outside world, in the framework of a new market economy.²⁶

The most important group of traders in central Tanzania were the Nyamwezi from the region of Unyamwezi. Before the development of long-distance trade with the coast, Nyamwezi traders²⁷ had already been the intermediaries of a wide network of interregional trade, where salt, iron, copper, cattle and agricultural products were exchanged. Thanks to these commercial activities they pioneered the caravan road to the coast and records of their presence in the coastal ports are available from 1811²⁸. Nyamwezi traders were generally members of the local aristocracy who had been able to exploit the opportunities offered by the trade with the coast and had accumulated wealth in export goods, such as ivory, or commodity currencies, especially cloth and beads. This allowed them to finance their own businesses with the coast and, according to many contemporary sources, they maintained a prominent position along the central caravan road at least until the 1870s²⁹. Nyamwezi traders also enjoyed political power, as the local chiefs appointed many of them at the head of local districts, the so-called *gunguli*. They had the right to take part in the election of the *mtemi*, the local chief, and this

26 Koponen, J. *People and Production in late Pre-colonial Tanzania. History and Structures*, Helsinki, Finnish Society of Development Studies, 1988.

27 Nyamwezi traders have been called in the literature both with the Swahili word *wandewa* and the Nyamwezi one *vbandevba* (see, for instance, Unomah, A.C. "Vbandevba and Political Change in a Nyamwezi Kingdom Unyanyembe during 1840 to 1890", Paper presented at the Universities of East Africa Social Science Conference, Dar es Salaam, 27-31 December 1970). These expressions were however used in Unyamwezi to refer more in general to rich or wealthy people, rather than specifically to traders. Traders were very often rich men, but rich men were not always traders. In this paper I will use therefore the term "Nyamwezi traders" when talking about merchants from Unyamwezi. I wish to thank Dr. Frank Nolan for pointing this out to me.

28 Roberts, A.D. "The Nyamwezi" in Roberts, A.D. (ed.) *Tanzania before 1900: Seven Area Histories*, Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1968, pp. 117-150.

29 Pallaver, K. "Nyamwezi Participation in Nineteenth-century East African Trade. Some Evidence from Missionary Sources" in *Africa*, vol. 61, n. 3-4, 2006, pp. 513-531.

gave them a great influence in the economic and political life of the towns of the interior³⁰. Owing to their long tradition in interregional trade, local traders were able to rapidly adapt themselves to the new patterns of trade, whereas Muslim traders became users and modernizers of already existent commercial patterns³¹.

Africans living in the regions of the interior did not only take part in long-distance commerce as traders, but also as wage labourers. The Nyamwezi, in particular, were the most requested porters and developed specific abilities to carry goods to and from the coast. They were the first class of wage labourers that developed in the area and became the backbone of the long-distance trade with the coast.

2. Long-distance trade and the emergence of a class of waged labourers

As Coquery-Vidrovitch and Lovejoy point out, «in societies that were restrained by a low level of technology, necessary work depended to a very great extent on human energy»³². Groups of waged workers were not common in pre-colonial Africa, but they developed in some specific historical situations, especially when the request for a particular type of occupation was expanding too fast to be satisfied by other forms of labour. In pre-colonial Africa wage labour was generally limited to certain sectors: transport, exchange and possibly craft production, and, among these, human transport was usually the first form of hired labour³³.

In nineteenth-century East Africa the development of the trade in ivory, copal and slaves created the conditions for the development of a class of waged workers in the transport sector, human porters. Their role in East African long-distance trade has been deeply investigated³⁴. Recent research has demonstrated how porters were not slaves, as it had been commonly believed, but rather a group of specialized and skilled workers who received a wage in exchange for their work³⁵. They developed specific abilities to transport all the

30 Unomah, A.C. *op. cit.*, p. 5.

31 Médard, H. *Le Rouyame du Buganda au XIXe siècle: mutations politiques et religieuses d'un ancien état de l'Afrique*, Paris, Khartala, 2007, p. 115.

32 Coquery-Vidrovitch, C.; Lovejoy, P. (eds.) *Workers of African Trade*, Paris, Beverly Hills, Sage, 1998, p. 9.

33 Iliffe, J. *The Emergence of African Capitalism*, London, Macmillan, 1983, p. 8.

34 Cummings, R. "A Note on the History of Caravan Porters in East Africa" in *Kenya Historical Review*, vol. 1, n. 2, 1973, pp. 109-138; Rockel, S. *Carriers of Culture. Labor on the Road in Nineteenth-century East Africa*, Portsmouth, Heinemann.

35 Rockel, S. *Carriers of Culture... cit.*, pp. 19-23.

goods needed for the maintenance of caravans during their inland journeys and they carried commercial goods back to the coast. As a class of wage labourers, porters acted individually and collectively to defend their common interests. When the wages were not considered appropriate they refused to continue their march until conditions of employment were renegotiated. African porters successfully transported goods across deep-rooted trade networks and played a critical role in creating the conditions for the participation of East Africa to the global economy. As Stephen Rockel has pointed out «Wage long-distance porters created the conditions for the emergence of an African modernity, admittedly one with its own contradictions and severe limitations, in which market forces, entrepreneurship and creative cultural adaptation were free for a period to find their way»³⁶.

Together with porters other professional figures developed in connection with the caravan trade. The *kirangozi* was the guide who was in charge of leading the caravan. He possessed a deep knowledge of the best paths to follow in order to find food and water during the journey. Besides ki-swahili, he was skilled in the languages needed for trading in the interior. He was often in charge of the negotiation of tributes, the *hongo*, that had to be paid to local chiefs along the caravan roads³⁷. The *nyampara* was the head of small gangs of porters, generally composed by ten-fifteen individuals. He recruited his own group of porters in the coastal ports, negotiated their salaries and he was responsible for them during the journey³⁸. There were several *nyamparas* in the same caravan, but only one *kirangozi*³⁹. That is why the *kirangozi* was also known as chief headman. Armed guards, the *askaris*, always travelled with a caravan. They had the task to protect the caravan and also to maintain the order in the porter ranks. The number of *askaris* employed generally depended on the total number of porters; commonly there was one guard to every ten porters⁴⁰. The *askaris* were for the most part of coastal origin and many of them settled in the commercial towns of the interior.

36 Ivi, p. 23.

37 Beidelman, T.O. "The Organization and Maintenance of Caravans by the Church Missionary Society in Tanzania in the 19th century" in *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 15, n. 4, 1982, pp. 618-619.

38 Burdo, A.M.L. *Les Belges dans l'Afrique Centrale: voyages, aventures et découvertes d'après les documents et journaux des explorateurs*, Bruxelles, Maes, 1886, p. 306.

39 Père Livinhac, Sainte Marie près de Roubaga, 9/9/1879, White Fathers Archive, Rome (hereafter WF) C 11-12.

40 Père Charmetant, *Notes à consulter sur l'organisation et la marche de la caravane*, 1878 WF C 11-2.

Different types of workers were employed in the caravan trade and all of them received a wage in exchange for their work. This contributed significantly to the expansion of a monetary economy in the regions of the interior. Money, in the form of cloth and beads, became common in the payment of wages and was used to buy food along the caravan roads. The caravan staff received daily food rations, the so-called *posho*, that could be paid both in grains (generally sorghum or millet) or in exchange goods, especially beads. Having a very small unit value, glass beads were particularly suitable to be used in these small transactions, and porters became the main agents in spreading the use of these means of payment along the caravan roads in the Zanzibar commercial hinterland⁴¹.

Porterage was a well-rooted occupation especially among the Nyamwezi of Western Tanzania. Before the development of stable trade connections with the coast, the Nyamwezi had been employed as porters in local and interregional trades, carrying iron, salt and copper along the caravan paths that connected Unyamwezi with lake Tanganyika, lake Victoria and the southern regions of Ufipa and Ruemba. Well before the contact with traders coming from the coast, labour specialization had emerged as a result of an unequal distribution of goods⁴².

In the first part of the nineteenth century the Nyamwezi worked as porters only during the dry season. Porters were, in fact, also farmers, and when the rainy season started they refused to go beyond Unyamwezi and went back to their fields⁴³. The caravans had therefore to stop in Unyamwezi in order to recruit fresh gangs of porters that could reach the shores of the central lakes or the regions of Eastern Congo. The time necessary to find and engage new porters created the need to have small depots where the goods could be stored and protected⁴⁴. Some of these depots, especially those situated in places where food and water were easily obtainable, gradually developed into small settlements and later into commercial towns. Urban development in the interior of Tanzania was strictly related to the growth of long-distance trade and the establishment of coastal traders in places where local political authorities were favourable to trade. In the places where there

41 Pallaver, K. "A Recognized Currency in Beads': Glass Beads as Money in 19th-century East Africa: the Central Caravan Road" in Egleton, C.; Fuller, H.; Perkins, J. (eds.) *Money in Africa*, London, British Museum Research Publications, 2009, pp. 20-29.

42 Holmes, C.F. "Zanzibari influence at the Southern end of Lake Victoria: the Lake Route" in *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 4, n. 3, 1971, pp. 478-479.

43 Deutsch, J.G. *Emancipation without Abolition in German East Africa c. 1884-1914*, Oxford, James Currey, 2006, p. 24.

44 Brown, W.T.; Brown, B. "East African Trade Towns: A Shared Growth" in Arens, W. (ed.) *A Century of Change in Eastern Africa*, The Hague-Paris, Mouton, 1976, pp.183-200.

was a permanent Muslim trading colony, like Ujiji or Tabora, the role of coastal traders was much more clearly defined than along the caravan roads or in the trading areas where they did not settle; that is why the analysis of their commercial and political activities in the urban centres of the interior can provide a more comprehensive picture of their role.

3. The development of urban settlements in Tanzania

The historical development of towns in what is today Tanzania can be divided in four main stages: the development of towns along the coast, the creation of caravan towns in the interior in the nineteenth century, the colonial period and the period after independence. The first period saw the development of towns along the coast, which was related to the establishment of commercial relationships between East Africa and the commercial world of the Indian ocean. The Swahili culture that originated from these trade relations was characterized by the gradual adoption of Islam, the involvement in commerce and the increasing urbanization along the coast from the ninth and tenth centuries onwards. The urban character of these towns was not determined by the number of their inhabitants, which remained limited, but rather by their social life, which was typically urban and centred around the mosque and the flourishing commercial life⁴⁵. Among these towns, the most important were Kilwa Kisiwani, Kaole, Sofala and Mombasa.

The nineteenth-century urban development was mainly a consequence of the growth of long-distance trade. The journeys into the interior lasted several months and therefore the necessity to store and protect their goods, particularly during the rainy season, obliged coastal merchants to establish depots where the caravans could halt. Among the most important caravan towns that developed in nineteenth-century Tanzania, some were situated on the coast, like Bagamoyo and Pangani, and others in the interior, like Tabora, Ujiji, Mpwapwa, Mwanza and Arusha. In these towns there was a stable presence of coastal people, engaged both in agriculture and trade. There were also daily markets, where commercial caravans could halt and obtain provisions. Besides these commercial towns there were fortified settlements of powerful chiefs, like Iselamagazi, in Unyamwezi, the resident of chief Mirambo⁴⁶.

During the colonial period, the colonial power influenced the patterns of urbanization, both with the selection of pre-colonial towns that were useful for the

45 Burton, A. *The Urban Experience...* cit., pp. 7-9.

46 On Mirambo see Bennett, N.R. *Mirambo of Tanzania*, New York, 1971.

colonial economy and administration, and the creation of new settlements. Some of the pre-existing towns flourished during the colonial period, whereas others declined. Dar es Salaam, for instance, was chosen by the Germans as the main centre of the administration of German East Africa, and replaced Bagamoyo as the most important port of the colony. The port of Dar es Salaam was provided with modern infrastructures and the urban fabric of the city was designed according to racial standards and divided in residential areas for Europeans, Africans and Indians⁴⁷. The fate of pre-colonial settlements in colonial times was related to their position in the transport network that was built during the colonial period. The clearest example of this tendency is Ujiji, that in the nineteenth century had been the terminus on lake Tanganyika of the central caravan road and, as already mentioned, a place where there was a big community of coastal traders and a rich market for interregional and regional products. The most important railway that the Germans built in East Africa was the *Central Railway* that roughly followed the path of the central caravan road. The railway reached Tabora in 1912, and was later extended to lake Tanganyika. However, Kigoma, and not Ujiji, was chosen as the final terminus of the railway, and consequently Ujiji lost its importance as a commercial town. Tabora, instead, became one of the most important railway stations of the interior and therefore maintained its administrative as well as economic role⁴⁸.

Finally, after the independence many of the towns that had developed during the previous period as centres of the colonial economy maintained their role, like for instance Arusha and Dar es Salaam. The political capital of Tanzania was however moved from Dar es Salaam to Dodoma, a city that was considered as more “authentically African” than Dar es Salaam, which had been created by the colonial power.

The historical studies on the urbanization of Tanzania have focused on the first, the second and the last stage⁴⁹, whereas very little attention has been so far devoted to the towns that developed in the nineteenth century, with the exception

47 Burton, A. *African Underclass: Urbanization, Crime and Colonial Order in Dar es Salaam*, Oxford, James Currey, 2005, p. 45.

48 Baltzer, F. *Die Kolonialbahnen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung Afrikas*, Berlin und Leipzig, 1916.

49 For the colonial period, the biggest part of works is on Dar es Salaam; see Blji, H.J. *Dar es Salaam. A Study in Urban Geography*, Evanston, 1963; Leslie, A.J. *A Survey of Dar es Salaam*, Oxford, 1963; “Dar es Salaam, City, Port and Region” in *Tanzania Notes and Records*, vol. 70, 1970; Burton, A. *African Underclass...* cit.

of some studies made in the 1970s⁵⁰. This lack of studies not only involves their urban history, but also their social, political and economic life, and partly explains the limited knowledge that we have on the spread of the coastal culture in the interior.

4. Traders, Islam and political life in Tabora and Ujiji in the nineteenth century

The most important caravan town that developed in the interior in the nineteenth century was undoubtedly Tabora, in western Tanzania. It was an ideal place to establish a depot, being situated at the natural junction of the commercial routes of African interregional trade, coming from the North, or the Lake Victoria region, from the West, the Lake Tanganyika area and from the South, Ufipa and Northern Zambia⁵¹. Besides its geographical position, the plain of Tabora was very rich in water, an essential factor for a place that had to restore the caravans coming from Ugogo, the dry region situated between Unyamwezi and the coast. The presence of water was also essential to allow the cultivation of foodstuff needed for the maintenance of the town⁵². Another important town was Ujiji, on the shores of lake Tanganyika, where a large Arab-Swahili community established to trade in ivory and slaves.

Coastal traders did not have the power or influence to dominate local politics in the towns of the interior. They therefore generally cooperated with local political authorities in order to protect and support their business. In the town of Ujiji, for instance, the leader of the resident coastal trading community collaborated with the local chief in ensuring the regular delivery of tributes from caravans. Different issues, like market conflicts and land questions, were dealt with collectively by the representative of the coastal community, the elders and the local chief⁵³. Personal relationships were established to reinforce commercial collaboration. The leader of the coastal traders community of Ujiji, Mwinyi Heri, married the daughter of the

50 Brown, B. *Ujiji: History of a Lakeside Town*, PhD Thesis, University of Boston, 1973; Brown, W.T A *Pre-colonial History of Bagamoyo: Aspects of the Growth of an East African Coastal Town*, PhD Thesis, University of Boston, 1975.

51 Burton, R.F. *The Lake Regions of Central Africa*, vol. 1, London, Longman and Roberts, 1860, p. 325; Unomah, A.C. *Trade and the growth of towns in Pre-colonial Unyamwezi*, Public Seminar Paper, Makerere University, Kampala, 1970

52 Rapport du Père Guillet, Tabora, 08/10/1881, WF C 20-62; "Pour trouver l'eau dans tous les tembes de la ville n'aurant pas à creuser à plus de 1 m ou 1m et 50", P. Combarieu to MM, Tabora, 28/10/1879, WF C 14-283.

53 Brown, B. "Muslim Influence on Trade and Politics in Lake Tanganyika Region" in *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 4, n. 3, 1971, p. 627.

King of Bujiji, acquiring the status of chief and in the 1860s and 1870s he exerted great influence both in Uvira and Ujiji⁵⁴. The same happened in Tabora, where in the 1840s Muhammad bin Juma, a trader from Oman origin living in Tabora, married the daughter of Fundikira, chief of Unyamwezi. After this marriage the Muslim community supported Fundikira and his family in the disputes with his neighbours.

Before the establishment of German colonial rule, local political authorities had the power to control trade and therefore the activities of coastal traders. There were two ways by which local rulers could influence trade: by taxation and by not allowing porters to enlist in the caravans⁵⁵. In Tabora, after the death of chief Fundikira in 1859, his successor, Mnywa Sere, levied taxes on the profits made by trade⁵⁶. This caused the strong opposition of local coastal and Nyamwezi traders. They declared war against the local chief, supporting one of his brothers, Mkasiwa, to the succession to the throne. Mnywa Sere was defeated and Mkasiwa became the new chief⁵⁷. However, Mnywa Sere continued to fight the traders of Tabora until his death, in 1865, causing great damage to the progress of trade. As a consequence of these rivalries the sultan of Zanzibar appointed a *wali*, a delegate of his power in the coastal community of Tabora, who had to be the intermediary between the coastal community and the local chief⁵⁸. Despite the appointment of his representative in Tabora – and almost contemporary also in Ujiji – the influence of the Sultan of Zanzibar on the towns of the interior remained very limited, at least until the 1880s when he intervened to protect European trade interests in the interior⁵⁹.

During the biggest part of the nineteenth century the number of coastal traders in the interior remained limited. According to Richard F. Burton, in 1857 there were 25 Arab residents in Tabora, whereas in 1872 David Livingstone calculated the total number of coastal traders as being 80, the total population being 5,000⁶⁰. Generally,

54 Sperling, D.C. *op. cit.*, pp. 288-289; Brown, B. "Muslim Influence..." *cit.*, p. 628.

55 Journal de Père Deniaud, 03/12/1879, WF C 11-18; P. Combarieu to Maison Mère, Tabora, 27/12/1879, WF C 14-282

56 Speke, J.H. *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, London, Blackwood and Sons, 1863, p. 77.

57 Bennett, N.R. "The Arab Impact" in Ogot, B.A.; Kieran, J.A. (eds.) *Zamani: A Survey of East African History*, Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1968, p. 222.

58 Henri, L. *Notes sur Tabora (particulièrement sur les Arabes) 1924-25*, manuscript, WF.

59 Pallaver, K. "Nyamwezi Participation..." *cit.*, p. 518; Brown, B. "Muslim Influence..." *cit.*, p. 628.

60 Burton, R.F. *op. cit.*; Livingstone, D. *The Last Journals of David Livingstone in Central Africa from 1875 to his Death*, London, Murray, 1874.

traders travelled in the regions of the interior and only temporarily resided in town. Part of the coastal community, however, resided permanently in Tabora and Ujiji and employed their slaves to cultivate grains and food for passing caravans. In the 1890s the entire production of cassava in the area of Tabora was in the hands of a coastal trader who had completely abandoned trade⁶¹. During the German occupation, the Muslims of Tabora split into two factions according to their main occupation: one faction was composed by the plantation owners, who supported the Germans, and one was formed by traders, who, allied with the local chief Isike, opposed the occupation fearing that the German presence could damage their business⁶².

The coastal traders living in the commercial towns were not the rich men “living in luxury” described by contemporary travellers⁶³. Generally they were deeply in debt with the Indian financiers of the coast, who advanced the goods necessary for their journeys into the interior at extraordinary interest rates. Father Hauttecoeur of the White Fathers, comparing the Muslims living in Tabora with those in Algeria, where the headquarters of his society were located, described them as follows:

All the Arabs here are very far from being proud as those in the North; they are all poor devils who try to make a fortune and who have nothing more than debts. The richest Arabs here in Tabora, with the exception of two or three, are up to their ears in debt and even if they could sell all of their goods here they would not be able to repay them. They exercise their trade on behalf of the Arabs and Indians on the coast who make them pay through the nose. An Arab told me once: You see here all the Arabs of Tabora and you think that at home they are rich as they are here: [...] here they have slaves, women, and everything they want, but in Muscat they will have nothing of this. One of them has not been visiting the coast for sixteen years⁶⁴.

In fact, what happened quite often was that the coastal traders, after buying ivory and slaves in the interior, were still not in a position to pay back their debts on the coast. They therefore remained in the towns of the interior from where they sent their caravans to the coast and their commercial agents to neighbouring regions⁶⁵.

61 Becker, J. *La Vie en Afrique en trois ans dans l'Afrique Centrale*, Paris, J. Lebègue and C., 1887, vol. 2, p. 30.

62 Lt. Hermann, Tabora, 2/4/1892, Reichskolonialamt, Berlin, 10001/1030-6381.

63 See for instance Burton, R.F. *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 328.

64 Père Hauttecoeur, Tabora, 25/12/1882, WF C 20-104.; my translation.

65 Mgr Bridoux, Mpala, 9/6/1889, WF C 16-179.

The limited number of coastal traders living in the interior was one of the reasons behind the limited influence of Islam in the area in this period. On general terms, Islam had a limited impact inland even if we have knowledge of earlier conversions in some of the areas that had developed deep connections with coastal traders⁶⁶. The most well-known example of nineteenth-century conversions is that of the Yao, who in the second half of the nineteenth century migrated from Mozambique and established in Malawi and southern Tanzania. Yao traders were mainly involved in the slave trade and exported their captives to the coastal port of Kilwa. In this area the development of long-distance trade was at the origin of the development of new towns, that were governed by big trading chiefs. According to Alpers, these chiefs were among the first individuals to be influenced by the religion of the coastal traders, who arrived in the interior at the middle of the century⁶⁷. Two important Yao chiefs, Makanjila III Banali and Mataka II Nyenje, converted to Islam, the former in 1870, the latter in the 1880s and were the pioneers of the great expansion of Islam that started in the 1890s⁶⁸. Few other, isolated cases of conversions are documented in East Africa, like the case of Mumias around Mount Elgon, in the 1880s⁶⁹ or the ruler of Ubungu, south-western Tanzania, who was known in the 1850s and 1860s as a “serious Muslim”⁷⁰. Chiefs connected to Muslim traders and engaged in commerce often sought for new forms of legitimization that put them closer to their Muslim commercial partners. This was true also for the area subject of this study. Isike, chief of Unyanyembe from about 1877 to 1893, was observing Ramadhan in the early 1880s, even if he was probably less committed than other chiefs to Islam⁷¹.

Nonetheless, in the caravan towns of the interior conversions were very limited. According to Father Mènard, of the White Fathers, in Tabora «The influence of Islam, as far as creed and religious practices, is nowadays barely spread among the Wanyamouesis [Nyamwezi] and even much less among the Watousis [Tutsi], a race who takes care of the cattle. Only the slaves of the Arabs and of the Wangwana are Muslim»⁷². He went so far as to say that “the Arabs of Tabora are totally absorbed

66 Iliffe, J. *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, cit., p. 79.

67 Alpers, E. “Trade, State and Society among the Yao in the Nineteenth Century” in *Journal of African History*, vol. 10, n. 3. 1969, p. 417.

68 Ivi, p. 419.

69 Glassman, J. *op. cit.*, p. 69.

70 Iliffe, J. *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, cit., p. 78.

71 *Ibidem*.

72 P. Guillet to MM, Tabora, 20/08/1881, WF C 16-73; my translation.

in trade and they do not care at all about religion. [...]; fanaticism is not among their defects”⁷³. If we consider that this note was written in Tabora, the place of the interior with the biggest Muslim community, and put down by a catholic missionary, who at that time naturally feared the competition of Muslims, we can quite confidently assert that the influence of Islam in the area was at the time very limited. As a matter of fact, the number of Africans who adopted Islam was very small, and limited to the entourage of Muslim traders. The largest part was composed by *wangwana*⁷⁴, coastal people who were Muslim and spoke ki-swahili, and had generally arrived in the interior together with commercial caravans, and Manyema freed slaves⁷⁵.

The German colonial period saw the spread of Islam in the urban centres, as well as in the countryside, of the interior of German East Africa as well as the first substantial increase in the conversions to Islam by inland people⁷⁶. Recent studies⁷⁷ have convincingly shown how Islam did not develop in the interior only as a consequence of colonization and the use by Europeans of Muslim agents, clerks or interpreters⁷⁸. On the contrary, the process had started well before, thanks to the activities of Muslim teachers coming from the coast and by personal adherence to Islam by individuals in contact with inland trading settlements⁷⁹. Before the German conquest, in the immediate hinterland of Bagamoyo and Dar es Salaam, there was a significant increase in the conversions to Islam, owing to the establishment in the area of Hadhrami Arabs⁸⁰.

During the nineteenth century the Muslim communities that were established along the caravan roads were mainly interested in trade – and politics, when it was relevant for trade – but not in spreading their religion. This is confirmed by the absence of places of worship in the commercial towns of the interior. European observers who visited Tabora and Ujiji were struck by the total absence of public

73 P. Ménard, Tabora, 25/12/1882, WF C 20-103, my translation.

74 In the towns of the interior the *wangwana* conducted small commercial activities; among them there were Baluchi men coming from Makran and Oman; see McDow, F. *op. cit.*. For a definition of *wangwana*, see Glassman, J. *op. cit.* p. 62.

75 Iliffe, J. *A Modern History of Tanganyika...* cit., p. 214.

76 For a recent study on the subject with a focus on South-eastern Tanzania, see Becker, F. *Becoming Muslim in Mainland Tanzania, 1890-2000*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008.

77 See, for instance, Reese, S.S. (ed.) *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa*, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2004.

78 Trimmingham, J.S. *Islam in East Africa*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1964; Sperling, D. *op. cit.*, p. 295.

79 Iliffe, J. *A Modern History of Tanganyika...* cit., p. 214.

80 Glassman, J. *op. cit.*; Le Guennec-Coppens, F. *op. cit.*

places of prayer and religious instruction. Nonetheless, the coastal presence in these towns became the nucleus from which the coastal culture expanded in the interior. These towns were crossroads for the spreading of ideas throughout East Africa⁸¹. Coastal traders spoke ki-swahili, dressed in the coastal way, introduced the use of new commodities and the cultivation of new plants and were Muslim. Elements of the coastal religion were gradually incorporated into local religious practices and culture – like, for instance, healing practices – and were adopted in the interior far more rapidly than the religion itself⁸². The pace of this process is for its nature impossible to quantify or clearly identify, but its origins can be traced back to the nineteenth century and the establishment of direct and sustained contacts with coastal traders and the coastal culture.

5. Conclusions

During the nineteenth century the areas of the interior of Tanzania were connected to the expanding global market. The international development of capitalism drove the demand for East African commodities, like ivory, copal and hides, sustained the plantation economy of Zanzibar and Pemba that employed slaves coming from the mainland, and permanently changed the terms of participation of East Africans to the world economy. This process was not an abrupt shift from agriculture and craft production to new, capitalist, modes of production, but rather a complex of gradual economic changes determined by market forces, driven both by international capitalism and by the emergence of local entrepreneurial groups, i.e. Muslim traders, Indian financiers and African traders. Owing to the presence of coastal traders as well as thanks to the activities of African traders and porters who regularly visited the coast, new forms of accumulation, wealth and exchange developed in the regions of the interior and new imported ideas became gradually part of the daily lives of many Africans. The places where Muslim traders settled were very few when compared to the vast area where they were trading and this partly explains why the Muslim presence had a little religious impact on the local populations, contrary to the economic and political changes generated by the trade connections with the coast. No doubt, the towns that were established along the caravan roads, like Tabora and Ujiji, became outposts from which new ideas expanded and gradually took roots in the interior, not only Islam but also Christianity. The lack of general studies on the spread of Islam in the Zanzibar

81 Brown, W.T.; Brown B., *op. cit.*, p. 198.

82 Glassman, J. *op. cit.*, pp. 134-135.

commercial hinterland in the nineteenth century makes it difficult to provide a general picture of the direct connection between the development of capitalist modes of production and of new religious patterns.

Islam and capitalism: some considerations on the construction of the idea of a Western “modernity”¹

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Introduction

Whether Islam can be compatible with capitalism is *not* the type of question that historians usually ask, because they are generally more concerned with the historical unfolding of phenomena, and less accustomed to engaging with wide, opaque categories such as “Islam” and “Capitalism” outside their historical context. However, social theory debates on Islam, capitalism and modernity unveil the intimate relationship between history and social theory, not only *from* history *to* social theory – because social theory makes ample use of historical arguments – but especially the other way around. As I will discuss in this paper, certain important branches of social theory provide validation for the belief that the West represents the most developed area of the world; this knowledge in turn affects history as an academic discipline in subtle ways.

The debate on the relationship between *Us* and the *Other*, and in our case more specifically the relationship between *Us* and the *Islamic Other*, is profoundly shaped by the way in which the founding fathers of social theory defined it a century ago or more. Max Weber certainly occupies a crucial place among them, both as a founding father of the sociology of religion, and because of his definition of Western modernity as being in an oppositional relationship to Islam. Weber was certainly neither the first nor the only thinker to express this view; however, because of the place that Weber’s theses occupy at the very heart of the construction of Western identity – with regard first and foremost to the question of what modernity is – his discussion of why “Muslims are not like us” has had endless reverberations.

¹ An abridged version of this paper was originally presented at the European African Studies Conference in Uppsala, 2011. That version was successively published in a special issue of *Storicamente*, “Religion and Capitalism in Africa”, edited by Taddia, I. and Tekeste Negash, vol. 8, 2012.

It is important at this point to clarify the limitations and the scope of this contribution. This article is not so ambitious as to attempt a deconstruction of Weber's thesis, either by using the tools of historical criticism or from a historical point of view, or to provide a sociological critique of its main arguments; these are tasks that have been amply performed both by historians and social scientists². My concern here is to discover some examples of the use by historians of the many "irradiations" of Weber's thesis on Islam, and thereby to give an idea of to what extent discourse about "the Muslim world" is still trapped within it³. For instance, the underlying thesis that Islam endemically impairs the "Muslim world" from developing is, perhaps, the key issue of the sub-discipline known as Sociology of Islam⁴. Another case in point which I shall discuss in this article is represented by the most well-supported and best-known rebuttal of Weber's thesis on Islam, namely Maxime Rodinson's essay *Islam et capitalisme*⁵. As we shall see, although it is an erudite and articulate attempt to engage with Weber's thesis, this work remains closely within the paradigm presented by the former. The consanguinity of Weber and Rodinson is striking, and it will be the subject of the second section of this work.

2 As to the refutation of the theory of "decline" of Middle Eastern economy and society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see: Gran, P. *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760-1840*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1979; and the fundamental Inalcik, H.; Quataert, D. *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, Cambridge, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1994. See also Owen, R. *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800-1914*, London, New York, I.B. Tauris, 1993; Pamuk, S. *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism, 1820-1913: Trade, Investment, and Production*, Cambridge, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1987; Pamuk, S. "Estimating Economic Growth in the Middle East Since 1820" in *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 66, n. 3, 2006, pp. 809-828. These are the most fundamental among dozens of studies on the economy of the Near East from the Middle Ages to the present.

Some specialized studies on Islam and Weber: Turner, B.S. *Weber and Islam*, London, New York, Routledge, 1998. Turner, B.S. "Islam, Capitalism and the Weber Theses" in *The British Journal of Sociology* [First published in 1974, *The British Journal of Sociology* vol. 25, n. 2, pp. 230-243], reprinted in Volume 61, Issue Supplement 1, 2010, pp. 147-160. Huff, T.E.; Schluchter, W. *Max Weber & Islam*, New Brunswick, NJ, Transaction, 1999. Schluchter, W. *Paradoxes of Modernity: Culture and Conduct in the Theory of Max Weber*, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1996. Salvatore, A. "Beyond Orientalism? Max Weber and the Displacements of 'Essentialism' in the Study of Islam" in *Arabica*, vol. 43, n. 3, 1996, pp. 457-485.

3 For a critique to the notion of "Muslim world" see Zubaida, S. "Is There a Muslim Society? Ernest Gellner's Sociology of Islam" in *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 24, n. 2, 1995, pp. 151-188; and Schulze, R. *A Modern History of the Islamic World*, New York, New York University Press, 2000, see in particular the Introduction, pp. 1-13.

4 Masud, M.K.; Salvatore, A.; van Bruinessen, M. *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debat*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009.

5 Rodinson, M. *Islam et Capitalisme*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1966.

I am well aware that with this contribution I am venturing well outside my comfort zone, as I am an historian of colonial North-East Africa by training. In addition, I am stepping into an extremely heated and highly political debate, as is demonstrated by the dozens of titles which pertain in particular to the question of modernity and Islam, to which I will not be able to add a great deal⁶. However, my purpose is not to contribute to these debates, but rather to demonstrate how reflections on them are both necessary and crucial for historians. In fact, in spite of the wide differences in methodologies, scope, and aims between history and sociology, there is a distribution of "geopolitical knowledge" in these two disciplines, as there is in many others, which is made up of a few fundamental hegemonic assumptions which lie at the very core of the Western identity. The association between modernity and the West is one of them, but for so long as these assumptions run deep and undetected at the very heart of the historical discipline, it is more difficult to address them. This paper therefore hopes to contribute towards a greater awareness of the effects of the Eurocentrism of a certain social theory on historical methodology.

This article proposes two examples of how Weber's thesis on Islam has been incorporated into works of social theory that have been authoritative and influential well beyond the scope of their own discipline, particularly in the historical domain. This is the case with Eisenstadt's theory of multiple modernities and Gellner's discussion on nationalism and modernity. Both Eisenstadt and Gellner are profoundly influenced by Weber's sociology of religion, and they both make the claim that the legitimacy of their theory rests on the reformulation, revision and reinterpretation of this founding father's sociology. The influence of Weber in shaping their most innovative theories has also been analysed by a number of authors, such as Hefer, Spohn, and Mabry⁷. The decision to discuss Eisenstadt's and

6 The relation between modernity and Islam, especially on the wake of 9/11 is enormous, and there is no place here but to mention some guides to the debate: Masud, M.K.; Salvatore, A.; van Bruinessen, M. *Islam and Modernity*, cit.; Salvatore, A., *Islam and the Political Discourse of Modernity*, Reading, Ithaca, 1999; Salvatore, A. *Between Europe and Islam: Shaping Modernity in a Transcultural Space*, Peter Lang Publishing, 2000. For some perceptions from the part of Muslim intellectuals: Cooper, J.; Nettler, R.L.; Mahmoud, M. *Islam and Modernity: Muslim Intellectuals Respond*, IB Tauris, 1998. For a particularly conservative position, see Lewis, B. *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 2002.

7 Hefner, R.W. "Multiple Modernities: Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism in Globalizing Age" in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 27, 1998, pp. 83-104. Spohn, W. "Eisenstadt on Civilizations and Multiple Modernity" in *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 4, 2001, pp. 499-508. Mabry, T.J. "Modernization, Nationalism and Islam: An Examination of Ernest Gellner's Writings on Muslim Society with Reference to Indonesia and Malaysia" in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 21, n. 1, 1998, pp. 64-88.

Gellner's theories here is not motivated by the fact that their models represent the last word on what modernity is, but because of their importance in the discipline of history. For instance, no serious historical work on nationalism can avoid engaging, either directly or indirectly, with Gellner's most influential *Nations and Nationalism*, a work that postulates the existence of a Western modernity⁸. Similarly, Eisenstadt's multiple modernities have been considered a powerful way of theorizing on the historical evolution of the "Orient", as compared with Europe⁹. This choice is naturally arbitrary, but it is something with which I am very familiar from my work with both nationalism and North-East Muslim Africa.

1. On the connections between capitalism and modernity

Before I begin, I would like to dedicate a few words to explaining why this discussion of Islam and capitalism becomes a discussion on Islam and modernity. I will not even attempt to provide a definition of either capitalism or modernity here, and not only because the debate on the definitions and concepts associated with these two terms is immense, starting with Marx and Hegel in the nineteenth century to Bauman, Lyotard, Zizek, Habermas, Mouffe, Chakrabarty and so on in the twenty-first. My aim is much more modest, and is simply to explain why I will use the terms "capitalism" and "modernity" interchangeably in this essay. I am aware that there is a difference between the two, but if we explore all the classical theories of modernity of the founding fathers of sociology, such as Weber, Durkheim, Simmel and Marx, we see that all of them associate the coming of modernity with industrialization and capitalism in a way that makes it impossible to make a clear distinction. Thus, in the Durkheimian theory, the coming of modernity coincides with a "structural differentiation" created by the new division of labour born out of the industrial system¹⁰. Similarly, for Weber, Man becomes modern when he interiorizes the rational, but atomized, system of the industrial machine. For Marx, it is industrial capitalism, rather than modernity, which is at centre stage in the evolution of history, yet the question of modernity returns in his description of world history as being characterized by the gap between a

8 Gellner, E. *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1983.

9 See in particular: Hefner, R.W. "Multiple Modernities" cit.; Sahin, S. "Social Theory and Later Modernities: The Turkish Experience" in *International Sociology*, vol. 21, n. 3, 2006, p. 412. Watenpaugh, K.D. *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 2006.

10 Emirbayer, M. (ed.) *Emile Durkheim: Sociologist of Modernity*, Malden, MA, Blackwell Pub, 2003.

"backward" pre-industrial stage and the modern stage characterized by the class struggle¹¹.

One might argue that there can be capitalism without modernity, but for the classic theories of sociology, there can be no modernity without industrial capitalism, and therefore, for a long period, any discussion on the possibility of a capitalist system developing in the Middle East, such as Rodinson's, had included an underlying implication regarding the general potential of the Oriental Other to become modern. The inability to make the economy capitalistic was the economic angle which, taken together with political and historical aspects, demonstrated the inherent inability of the lands of Islam to be "like us".

1.1 Weber and Islam

The following short treatment of Weber's position on Islam is an extrapolation of his lifelong reflections on the connection between religion, culture and modernity. I am fully aware that I am not doing justice to the complexity of Weber's thought, but this is quite deliberate. I am reading in Weber's text what many of his commentators found justified the incompatibility between Islam and modernity. It is precisely this selective and unsubtle reading that interests me here.

As Salvatore and Turner have pointed out, Weber's sources for his interpretation of Islam were classical German Orientalist works, because he was not himself an expert on the Orient¹². Even if he had been, it is doubtful that he could have escaped – to use Said's definition once again – from that «distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts» that was Orientalism¹³. Weber's interest in Islam was a function of his wider project on comparative religion and his theory on the development of Western modernity and its Calvinist roots. His aim was to find a system which explained why Christianity and Islam provided such opposing outcomes in terms of societal organization, the former leading to 'Oriental despotism', and the latter giving rise to capitalism and modernity. Weber's theory on Islam was therefore subsumed into his general theory, first that modernity was a march toward rationalization, and second that it was shaped as much by cultural and religious values as by economic processes¹⁴.

11 Elliott, J.E. (ed.) *Marx and Engels on Economics, Politics, and Society: Essential Readings with Editorial Commentary*, Santa Monica, Calif., Goodyear Pub. Co., 1981.

12 Salvatore, A. *Social Theory and Later Modernities*, cit.; Turner, B.S. *Weber and Islam*, cit.; Turner, B.S. *Islam, Capitalism and the Weber Theses*, cit.

13 Said, E.W. *Orientalism*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1978, p. 12.

14 Weber, M. *The Sociology of Religion*, Boston, MA., Beacon Press, 1964 (1st ed. 1922). Weber, M.

Modernity for Weber was a synonym of rationality, but with religious roots. According to Weber's famous thesis, Calvinism, with its moral values of asceticism and restraint, and its salvation doctrine which provoked a "salvation anxiety" in believers, created the conditions for the emergence of a new sense of time, space and work ethic which lies at the base of the current capitalist system¹⁵. With time, this led people to question their religious beliefs, in a process known as 'disenchantment'. This may be described as the movement from a magic-religious understanding of reality to one inherently characterized by a rational – and thus critical – vision of the world. This is why modernity came to coincide with an increasingly rational, functioning, individualistic society, in which religion progressively lost its significance. Yet modernity was fraught with contradictions: the individual is both free and imprisoned in the "iron cage" of the modern bureaucratic state¹⁶.

As a monotheistic religion, Islam could have represented a similar movement towards overcoming magic and the supernatural as meaningful factors in explaining social facts. Islam was inherently different from Christianity, however. As Weber wrote in *Sociology of Religions*, in Islam there was no sense of sin, and no striving for perfection:

Islam was never really a religion of salvation; the ethical concept of salvation was actually alien to Islam. [...] [T]he original Islamic conception of sin has a similar feudal orientation. The depiction of the prophet of Islam as devoid of sin is a late theological construction, scarcely which is only barely consistent with the actual nature of Muhammad's strong sensual passions and his explosions of wrath even over very small provocations, minor provocation. [...] Wealth, power, and glory were all martial promises, and even the world beyond is pictured in Islam as a soldier's sensual paradise¹⁷.

For Weber, the reason was to be found in the origins of Islam and the nature of the first religious community which gathered around Muhammad, from the so-

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, London, Routledge, ed. by Giddens A. and Parsons T. (1st ed. 1904-5) 1992.

15 Weber, M. *The Sociology of Religion*, cit.

16 In Weber's famous words: «For the "last man" of this cultural development, it might well be truly said: "Specialist without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of humanity never before achieved»); see Weber, M. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, cit., p. 182.

17 Weber, M. *The Sociology of Religion*, cit., pp. 263, 264.

called Medinan period. As Muhammad had to struggle not only for the affirmation of his prophecy, but for the very physical existence of the first community of the converted, the questions of protection of territory and war became primordial and embedded in the very formulation of Islam¹⁸. This is why, for Weber, Islam was an essentially political religion.

Later, Islam managed to capture and convert the masses through mystical Sufism, which for Weber had an affinity with pre-Islamic polytheistic religious, and which was a drive towards transcendence which bore no resemblance to the Protestant quest for salvation: «this search of the dervishes for salvation, deriving from Hindu and Persian sources, might have orgiastic, spiritualistic, or contemplative characteristics in different instances, but in no case did it constitute “asceticism”».

«Islam was diverted completely from any really methodical control of life by the advent of the cult of saints, and finally by magic»¹⁹.

Finally, Weber added an economic argument to his discussion: capitalism did not develop in the Islamic world because of the patrimonial nature of the state, which was run through a large patrimonial bureaucracy that exploited the masses. In addition, a ruler depended on a powerful class of warriors in order to rule. Every attempt by independent social groups to defy the system was curbed by violence, or, alternatively, these groups were co-opted into the state and were assigned high positions in the bureaucracy or in the military. This prevented the development of the civil institutions which were necessary for the promotion of capitalism within an absolutist state²⁰. In short, Islam obstructed modernity.

It is evident that this view of Islam as a deterrent to the development of capitalism, albeit well-known, and much older than Weber’s time, has laid the foundation for many of our present perceptions of Islam: for instance, the commonly-held idea that in Islam, religion and politics are inseparable, or that there is an affinity between Islamic religion, underdevelopment, and being “traditional/un-modern”.

1.2 Islam as the cradle of capitalism: Rodinson

Rodinson, a Marxist scholar based in France, published his work *Islam et Capitalisme* for the first time in 1966 (it had to wait twelve years to be translated into English). Thus, the work was conceived during the first phase of the Cold War, at a time when discourse on the so-called Third World was completely intertwined in

18 Ivi, pp. 264-266.

19 Ivi, pp. 182, 266.

20 Turner, B.S. *Islam, Capitalism and the Weber Theses*, cit., p. 148.

the ongoing ideological debate. The analysis of the connections between Islam and capitalism reflected an intention to place the Islamic world somewhere between the Socialist Soviet Union and the Capitalist West, at a particularly important juncture, ten years after the end of the colonial empires, when there were still high hopes for what was seen as the impending development of the postcolonial world. The question that Marxist and liberal thinkers faced at that time was how development was to be understood in non-Western countries, whether it had to be in socialist or liberal terms, or whether there was the possibility of an “authentic third way”. Rodinson wrote his book before the so-called “Islamic revival”, and did not see the Iranian Revolution or the development of the oil economies in the Arabic peninsula. His preoccupation was to place Islam in the trajectory of capitalist development and class struggle, and demonstrate that the possibility of social change could only be ascribed to Marxism.

If Marxism represented the largest framework of his study, Rodinson was more specifically replying to Weber’s analysis of Islam, and in particular to Weber’s argument on the incompatibility between Islam and capitalism. Weber did not consider trade to be a relevant characteristic of Islam, which was judged to be an incidental, and not fundamental, trait of this religion. Instead, Rodinson emphasized that it was impossible to disconnect the origins of Islam from trade. The Prophet Muhammad came from one of the most important trading ethnic groups in Mecca, the Quraysh, and he himself was a trading manager working for his future wife, and first convert, the widow Khadija. Commerce was perhaps the *raison d’être* of a city like Mecca, and the whole Arabic peninsula was a trading platform relying on Asia and Europe. These and other historical facts were discussed at length in Rodinson’s work. He did not rebut Weber’s thesis on historical grounds alone, however, but went back to the sacred texts of the Quran and the Sunna, looking at the way these texts sanctioned aspects that were seen by Weber as necessary conditions for capitalist developments. First, Rodinson demonstrated the importance of rational thinking and reason in the Quran, which assigned a place to reason that neither the Old nor the New Testament ever had, in contrast to Weber’s thesis on the irrationality of Islam. Rodinson also demonstrated that the Quran never forbade such things as accumulation, striving for profit, private ownership, or inheritance, and therefore had elements in common with a capitalist ethic. Even though Islam imposed restrictions on the use of owned items and capital (such as the prohibition of usury or the imposition of alms), it had always been possible to circumvent them. In addition, these restrictions were only palliative remedies for socio-economic inequalities, and therefore there was no fundamental break between the economic systems of the pre-Islamic and Islamic communities. The compatibility between Islam and capital accumulation

was evident, because Islam never represented an obstacle to economic injustices and exploitation, and allowed the accumulation of immense fortunes. In short, Islam was no communism and Muhammad was no Marx. Finally, the late arrival of the Islamic world compared with the West was explained not in religious and cultural terms, but by contingent and historical conditions that made the Muslim world a prey to the economic hunger of the Western markets.

The first problem related to this approach is that Rodinson continually shifted from the level of the "Islamic essence" (that of the Quran and the Sunna) to that of "historical development": in other words, the historical facts that led to an interpretation of the texts as being favourable towards certain forbidden forms of accumulation. There is no methodological sensibility for the fact that the two plans should remain distinct, but this is again, perhaps, a characteristic of his profoundly ideological times.

There are other important limitations of this work, to which researchers should by now be more sensitive, after thirty years of post-colonial studies, but which are not always acknowledged, as demonstrated by the fact that similar approaches are still in use today. The problem arises from Rodinson's analysis of "Islamic essence", his reading of the sacred texts and what they say about capitalist formations, and the fact that his own interpretation stands as a basis for arguing that Islam is compatible with capitalist accumulation. It seems that this analysis is primordial to the historical one, as the holy texts are the essence; that is, what is immanent beyond historical change. Rodinson does not seem struck by the idea that similar discussions had already taken place within Islam, and for centuries. In his argumentation, what is absent are both the classical and centuries-old scholarly Islamic interpretations, debates and disputes on this topic – in other words how the problem of the relationship between profit and belief has been posed by Islamic scholars throughout the centuries –; and more specifically, the way in which capitalism in its modern form has been understood by Muslim intellectuals since the nineteenth century. During the whole period from the Tanzimat to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, intellectuals of the Ottoman Empire engaged in heated discussions about the meaning of modernity, capitalism, and the relationship between Western economic hegemony and Islam. Some examples of this debate are richly illustrated in recent scholarship, such as Tripp's *Islam and the Moral Economy: The Challenge of Capitalism*²¹.

21 Tripp, C. *Islam and the Moral Economy: The Challenge of Capitalism*, Cambridge, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Rodinson was searching in the Quran for the “real” relationship between Islam and capital accumulation, and noted a cause and effect relationship between the existence of certain religious rules and the coming into being of the phenomenon known as capitalism, using a methodology, in fact, which was not very different from Weber’s own approach. The immense tradition of exegesis in Islam, and its many, at times violent, debates on interpretation do not affect the Rodinson’s text, as they did not affect Weber’s. This is the same problem which bedevils those Western commentators on Islam who search in the Quran for the reasons behind the present day “evils” of the Middle East, from the status of women to terrorism, ignoring the fact that holy texts are always placed into a hermeneutical tradition, however open the relationship between the person and the sacred text may be. We cannot ask the question whether Islam has hampered or favoured capitalism. We can ask instead how religious interpretations have been integrated into – and have had a dialogue with – the various cultural formations that constitute this phantom entity called the “Islamic world” in different eras.

2. Modernity and Islam in the post-Cold War era

The question of economic, social and political development in the Middle East and North Africa has never ceased to be one of the most central issues of the study of this region, even more so, perhaps, since the rise of “political Islam” or “Islamic fundamentalism” and “global terrorism”, as is obvious from the significant body of literature produced on this issue, in particular since 9/11²². From the point of view of Western social theory, these politico-religious developments appeared even more interesting, as they defied all those sociological predictions, rooted once again in Weber, according to which ‘modernization’ would necessarily entail secularization and the end of religion. Instead, religiosity has appeared to increase, and not decrease its political and social impact in the Middle Eastern and North Africa region. This, in turn, seemed to confirm the hypothesis of some that development in that part of the world did not correspond to that of the West²³. Anxiety over new forms of Islam which are perceived as more fundamentalist, and the presence of Islamic religious communities in a secular Europe, have prompted questions such as whether the Muslim world will be a part of Western-led globalization of

22 I define “political Islam” as those political movements that claim an Islamic puritan ideology, with reference to the first community of believers.

23 An approach which ignored the increasing role of religious identification which is taking place in the West as well, see Hefner, R.W. *Multiple Modernities*, cit.

if they will always resist it, or if Islam is compatible with values such as the free market economy, human rights, gender equality, secularization and democracy²⁴.

Islamist revolutions and the rise of political Islam coincided with the end of the Cold War. This led to the mainstream developmental theories which had been popular during the Cold War period, both socialist and secular, being questioned. New theories were to be formulated to justify a new global configuration, often defined as hegemonic-multipolarity, with the US as a weak hegemon at the centre of a more multipolar world²⁵. In this context, two mainstream modernity theories emerged in the fields of political sciences and international relations, which, in spite of their lack of nuance, are still routinely cited in academic circles as well as in the media. The first is Fukuyama’s thesis of “the end of history”²⁶. The end of socialism, Fukuyama maintained, was the end of history because it allowed the release of liberalist values which had previously been constrained by the socialist bloc. The capitalist system of free markets and secular individualistic liberal modernity would have been able to absorb those areas, and modernity, finally, would have truly become a convergent phenomenon all over the world. The second is the equally popular Huntington’s thesis of the *Clash of Civilizations*, according to which patterns of development are different in every part of the world because they are isomorphic with the “civilizations” to which they correspond²⁷. Civilizations do not share the same values and world view, and for this reason, must either learn to cohabit or will end up destroying each other (such as “Islam” and the “West”).

Social theorists who were dissatisfied with these explanations – the inherent universalistic Western-centrism of the former, and the equally ahistorical racist pluralism of the latter – have tried to develop alternative interpretations. We shall consider two influential theories here: Eisenstadt’s multiple modernities and Gellner’s analysis of Islam. While different, they share a common starting point, which is the rejection of both neo-Marxist and postmodernist/postcolonial

24 Looney, R. “Review: The Arab World’s Uncomfortable Experience with Globalization: Review Article” in *Middle East Journal*, vol. 61, n. 2, 2007, pp. 344-5.

25 Keohane, R.O. *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1984; Mouffe, C. “Cosmopolitics or Multipolarity” in Pulkkinen; Palonen; Ihalainen (eds.) *Redescriptions: Yearbook of Political Thought and Conceptual History*, Jyväskylä, SoPhi, 2004, pp. 15-26.

26 Fukuyama, F. *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York, Toronto, New York, Free Press, Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992.

27 Huntington, S.P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1996.

approaches. They also attempt to offer interpretative frameworks to Islam within the liberalist tradition, and thus aspire to being “non-ideological”, yet universalistic.

2.1 Eisenstadt’s multiple modernities

Samuel Eisenstadt, an Israeli sociologist, worked on the concept of multiple modernities throughout his life, in numerous books, articles and chapters²⁸. It is therefore difficult to give a consistent summary of this concept, as its formulation varied according to the period, his public, and the angle of analysis²⁹. I shall therefore consider here only Eisenstadt’s most widely known version, which is included in his article entitled “Multiple Modernities”, published in *Daedalus* in 2001. Again, the objective here is not to offer a comprehensive vision of the changes and transformations in this theory, but to consider only its most influential and ubiquitous position, the one that would be most likely to influence scholars from disciplines other than the theory of sociology.

In the *Daedalus*’ “Multiple Modernities” the author defines modernity as the set of specific historical circumstances that occurred in the West when «the unquestioned legitimacy of a divinely preordained social order began to decline»³⁰. Eisenstadt defines modernity as a «cultural program» centred on the following values:

an emphasis on the autonomy of man [...]. In the continuous expansion of the realm of personal and institutional freedom and activity, such autonomy implied, first, reflexivity and exploration; second, active construction and mastery of nature, including human nature. This project of modernity entailed a very strong emphasis on the autonomous participation of members of society in the constitution of the social and political order on the autonomous access of all members of the society to these orders and to their centres³¹.

In this perspective, the individual is the agent of his or her own destiny, and can shape the future through his/her agency.

Because of this set of unique characteristics, however, modernity is neither an easy process nor one without contradictions or moments of immobility. In

28 See also Eisenstadt, S.N. “Multiple Modernities in an Age of Globalization” in *Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*, vol. 24, n. 2, 1999, pp. 283-295; Eisenstadt, S.N. “Multiple Modernities” in *Daedalus* vol. 129, n. 1, 2000, pp. 1-29; Eisenstadt, S.N. *Comparative Civilizations and Multiple Modernities*, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2003.

29 Spohn, W. “Eisenstadt on Civilizations and Multiple Modernity” cit.

30 Eisenstadt, S.N. “Multiple Modernities” cit., p. 4.

31 Ivi, p. 5

fact, perhaps the most essential characteristic of modernity is its «potent capacity of continual self-corrections»³². Very much in line with the Weberian metaphor of the “iron cage”, modernity is characterized by the fundamental opposition between universalistic totalitarian tendencies and the pluralistic visions of society that challenge them, between the push for freedom of the individual and the constraints that limit him or her because he or she is a part of modern society and its institutions, as the project of modernity is also a project of control of the self. This is why “aberrations” such as Fascism, Nazism, Socialism and the Holocausts should not be seen as phenomena outside modernity or failing in it, but rather as a full part of the process of construction of modernity and its inner connection with the questioning, debate, criticism, and revisions of the rational and critical mind.

For Eisenstadt, modernity developed in the West and expanded to the Other through colonization and conquest³³. As soon as it touched different environments and cultures, however, it developed into new forms which were different from, but parallel to, the Western version. Thus, if modernity in the West is defined as a process of secularization, modernization, structural differentiation and capitalist development, once modernity is grafted on to the Other, it does not necessarily assume the same shape. Multiple modernities are defined as the outcome of this process of – at times violent – encounter. Thus,

[t]he appropriation by non-Western societies of specific themes and institutional patterns of the original Western modern civilization societies entailed the continuous selection, reinterpretation, and reformulation of these imported ideas. [...] The cultural and institution programs that unfolded in these societies were characterized particularly by a tension between conception of themselves as part of the modern world and ambivalent attitudes toward modernity in general and toward the West in particular³⁴.

Such appropriation implies also «attempts at “de-Westernization”, depriving the West of its monopoly of modernity»³⁵.

32 Ivi, p. 12.

33 Ivi, pp. 13-15.

34 Ivi, p. 14.

35 Ivi, p. 24.

Like Nazism or Fascism, political Islamist movements and terrorism are not outside modernity, the outcome of the battle between tradition and its opposite, but phenomena which lie at the very core of modernity itself, springing from its inner dynamic of the perpetual re-discussion of social structures and their basis of legitimacy, and from the battle between orthodox universalism and heterodox utopianism.

Before discussing the limitations of this approach as it applies to the Muslim world, I shall first summarize Gellner's reflections on modernization and Islam, so as to be able to better perceive the convergences between the two.

2.2 Gellner, modernization, nationalism and Islam

Sociologist, philosopher, anthropologist and eclectic thinker, Ernest Gellner has been one of the leading figures in nationalism studies. His work, *Nations and Nationalism*, is considered one of the most authoritative theories on the formation of nationalism in the West. Gellner is also known for his anthropological studies on Morocco (see for example *Saints of the Atlas*, 1969, *The Concept of Kinship and Other Essays*, 1986)³⁶. But it is mostly in his later work, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, that he attempted to create a broad theory on modernity, religion, Islam, postmodernism and "reason"³⁷. In this book, he argued that since the end of the Cold War the world had been facing three ideological options: a return to faith, which for him was the solution embraced by people in the Muslim world; a postmodern option, which was a sort of indulgent subjectivism; and finally, a sort of third way that he defined as "subjective relativism". His discussion of Islam cannot be disconnected from a general discussion of post-Cold War modernity, in the same way as for Weber the discussion of Islam was subsumed to a discussion on Western modernity, even if, unlike Weber, he actually had "first-hand" knowledge of the Muslim world.

But what is modernity for Gellner? In short (and simplifying once again), Gellner shared with Weber and Eisenstadt the belief that modernity was a product of the West, which spread across the rest of the world through the "ghastly tidal wave" of industrialization. Industrialization affected different places unequally, but in every place it reached, it dissolved existing social structures³⁸. For Gellner

36 Gellner, E. *Saints of the Atlas*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1969. Gellner, E. *The Concept of Kinship: And Other Essays on Anthropological Method and Explanation*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1987.

37 Gellner, E. *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, London, New York, Routledge, 1992.

38 Gellner, E. *Nations and Nationalism*, cit., p. 112; Mabry, T.J. "Modernization, Nationalism and Islam..." cit., p. 65.

industrialization and technological changes have had a direct influence on the way human beings have perceived themselves, and thus on the process of modernization in general, so that in modern society, people have become increasingly anonymous and modular, and nationalism has become a necessary ideology in order for this anonymous mass of atomized subjects to be bound together. The condition of modernity required «an anonymous impersonal society, with mutually substitutable atomized individuals, held together by a shared culture»³⁹.

In the Muslim world, however, nationalism never had the same impact as it did in the West. Gellner affirmed that in the Muslim countries, religion, rather than nationalism, had been a more significant agent of identification among modular citizens, as a consequence of the identification of the élites with it. The perpetuation of the so-called “high Islamic culture” and of political Islam was secured by the preservation of power élites. For Gellner, among all religions, «fundamentalism is at its strongest in Islam», in the sense that in a contest between reason and faith, faith wins⁴⁰. For Gellner religious fundamentalism meant the inability to find forms of softening and re-interpretation of the Scriptures, which were read in their literal and puritanical form. The reason behind the strength of Islam as an identification element was to be understood as a reaction to the loss of superiority of the Islamic world, and to imperialism and the conquest of Muslim territories by the West. In this situation of inferiority the élites who dominated Muslim societies through their monopoly of high Islamic culture (which means a monopoly of religious authority, literacy and identification of the group with Islam⁴¹), refused to follow the foreign path of secularization, and “corrected” the culture of modernization by introducing autochthonous elements. Thus, while other aspects of the industrialization process were accepted, secularization was refused, and instead «a vehement affirmation of the puritan version of its own tradition» was adopted⁴². Islam was not contradictory to capitalism; on the contrary, for Gellner, «Islam is a religion well suited to an industrial social structure», because of the nature of the Islamic *umma*, and its characteristics of literacy, identity and egalitarianism⁴³. In the Muslim world, however, capitalism, literacy, and rationalism did not give rise to a move towards secularism and the modular individual that needs nationalism

39 Ivi, p. 57.

40 Gellner, E. *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion...* cit., p. 2; Mabry, T.J. “Modernization, Nationalism and Islam...” cit., p. 70.

41 Gellner, E. *Nations and Nationalism...* cit., p. 76.

42 Ivi, p. 11.

43 Gellner, E. *Muslim Society*, Cambridge, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 7.

as a form of identification, because identification was already provided by Islam. In a way, one may conclude, the Muslim citizen can be capitalist or rational, without being modern.

2.3 *Whose modernity?*

The discussion of these two approaches to the question of Islam and development shows the extent to which the discourse has been unable to detach itself from the original Weberian formulations on Islam. Although Weber only had German Orientalist texts at his disposal, the last theories discussed above were produced during or after that revolution in the “*us* and the *other*” way of thinking, as represented by postcolonial studies. Aside from the question of being a supporter of this trend or not, it is beyond any doubt that this scholarship has had a profound impact on the way we conceptualize the West and the Rest, and should – at least in theory – have provoked a rethink of the way we write about this. Yet the juxtaposition of Weber’s theses on Islam with Eisenstadt’s and Gellner’s demonstrates the difficulties involved in departing from a strong Eurocentric standpoint. None of these theories manage to question the assumption that modernity is – at least originally – Western, and erase the very possibility that non-Western worlds have contributed towards shaping what today we call modernity.

It is quite paradoxical that historical works have demonstrated over and over again the connections between the Rest and the West, the profoundly capitalist nature of the pre-colonial Middle East, and its intellectual vibrancy, but yet this discourse appear to have had appallingly little impact on the theorization of modernity. The theses studied seem to assume that Europe functioned in a sort of intellectual vacuum during the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, and was cut off from the rest of the world. That certain parts of Europe and America became the world’s hegemon from the 16th Century onwards is an historical fact. By eliminating the relational aspects, or rather the complexity of the relations that have characterized the exchanges between the West and the Rest, however, we are in fact distorting the specific position of the West (or rather, the Wests) in the world.

Eisenstadt and Gellner blatantly ignore the presence, world view and structural agency of anything which is not Western. The world outside Europe is depicted as a “receiver” – or at best a transformer – of Western modernity. In their work, Africa and the Middle East are insignificant in the ideology of the construction of this modern – positive – space. It is a question in itself why these authors seem to “forget” that this Other never lived outside modernity, but was always an integral part of it, especially since the period when certain areas of Europe formed a hegemonic world

economy, which corresponds to the time when the idea of modernity arose. Why would the Enlightenment, the Greeks and the Judeo-Christian tradition have created the idea and space of modernity, but not the Black Atlantic, Indian Ocean trade, and finally colonialism? One blatant example is the question of slavery: for Gellner, industrialization “atomized” Man; but then, what was the impact of centuries of slave trade on “Man”? What did slavery do to the societies affected by it, what intellectual consequences did it have on the formulation of “modernity”? Similarly, are we really ready to define the political and economic reforms that took place in the 19th Century Ottoman Empire from the period of the Tanzimat as having been “grafted” upon it by the European spirit of Capitalism?

There is an intrinsic positivism in the definition of modernity that I have analysed above, in spite of “certain reserves” about modernity which have been expressed by all the sociologists I have discussed, which can be condensed into the metaphor of the Iron Cage. The manner in which modernity is too closely conceptualized by them resembles a Eurocentric, self-congratulatory way of talking about ourselves – constructing a moral order that extrapolates moments of history as constitutive elements of modernity (the Greeks, the Judeo-Christian tradition), and considering the blind spots of the modern world as a sort of ‘tragic consequence’ of our own greatness (Eisenstadt).

2.4 A case in point: Islamic finance in the Muslim world

This last section will contain a short discussion from the secondary literature of an empirical case in point, today’s Islamic finance and banking. Recent studies on Islamic banking can be helpful for testing the hypothesis that modernity, once transferred from Europe to the Muslim *Other*, has provoked alternative forms of modernity (Eisenstadt) which have partly developed as a form of reaction to the West (Gellner). More specifically, are Islamic banking and finance opposed, or alternative, to “Western” banking? Do they bear the marks of pre-modern forms of capitalism? The relationship of Islamic banking to Western forms of capitalist finance can shed some light on questions of the compatibility of Islam with modern capitalism in the post 9/11 era, a period in which relations between the West and the Muslim *Other* are supposed to be at their worst.

In 2007, the literature on Islamic banking registered about 300 Islamic banks and financial institutions worldwide⁴⁴. In addition, countries like Sudan,

44 Pollard, J.; Samers, M. “Islamic Banking and Finance: Postcolonial Political Economy and the Decentring of Economic Geography” in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol. 32, n. 3, 2007, pp. 313-330.

Malaysia, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain have “Islamicized” their financial systems. But what do Islamic banking and finance consist of exactly? A form of banking is defined as Islamic when it complies with two fundamental rules: the first is the interdiction of *riba*, or interest, which is forbidden in the Quran because it is considered to be unearned profit⁴⁵. This does not mean, of course, that capital should not be borrowed and lent, but that Islamic banks should base their revenues on other forms of profit than interest. One alternative to interest is the concept that one who is lending money or investing capital in someone else’s venture should be repaid for the risk he or she is incurring. Thus, the risk involved in a certain investment has a certain cost, which the client pays. The second principle is the prohibition of excessive risk or uncertainty. The principle is to tie investments as much as possible to the “real” economy, avoiding making money a commodity. Finally, Islamic banks also avoid certain type of investments in items which are deemed immoral (such as alcohol, drugs and prostitution). In the real world of business management, these principles are, of course, not enough; there is often great uncertainty as to whether an investment can be sanctioned by religion, and by what legal procedures, and so there exists a complex religious and legal apparatus in support of Islamic banking, which is still in development.

Islamic banks are not necessarily non-Western institutions: not only are an increasing number of Western banks opening their own Islamic branches, but it has also been remarked that in some Middle Eastern states, the largest banks and the greatest volume of transactions have been captured by Islamic branches of Western banks. Pollard and Seamers note that in Europe or the U.S.A., the prevalent clients of this type of bank are wealthy professionals, and not the poor; that these banks are oriented towards large investments⁴⁶; and finally that in the countries where they represent the prevalent form of banking, they do not seem to affect the social structure in any way. In other words, these are very different institutions from, for instance, “ethical banks”, or banks that invest in “microfinance” and projects for the alleviation of poverty.

Coming back to the question posed above – whether these banks are opposed to the West, alternative or pre-modern – it may be noted that Islamic banks are transnational institutions, often of a hybrid nature (non-interest based branches of interest-based banks), and fully-functioning within the global financial system. Yet they do tend to have religious clients. A client chooses an Islamic bank

45 Ivi, p. 314.

46 Saleem, A. *Islamic Banking – a \$300 Billion Deception*, USA, Xlibris Corporation, 2005.

because it combines the services of a bank with giving the individual the feeling of being a “good Muslim”. The client does not choose it for purely economic reasons, and the bank does offer services (albeit at first sight very similar) which are different from those of interest-based banks. The conclusion of Samers and Pollard is that Islamic banks are not forms of finance that can be described as alternative (in the sense that they offer a different, “purer” economic path), or oppositional (in the sense that they refuse other forms of banking). Nor are they relics of the past, being very recent developments in the world of finance. They are instead entangled and structured in the current financial system, together with the Western banking system, and at times within it.

They are an integral part of the financial landscape, but with their own rules, which have been developed both through dialogue with other financial institutions and to satisfy the needs of a specific sector of clients. They are not only “caused” by global finance, but they modify and affect global finance as well, as proven by the fact that Western banks are opening Islamic branches. As Islamic banking is a sector which is still under construction, nobody knows exactly how far it will evolve and be successful, and whether in the end it will offer a real alternative to Western banking, to the point of overtaking it.

Islamic banking is a very poignant example of how, if we wish to use the term modernity, we can conceptualize it as a trans-local concept in which the local and the global meet and give shape to each other, often through unequal relationships, but relationships nonetheless; that is, with every element giving meaning to the others through their interactions.

3. Conclusion

The presence of the Other in creating modernity is a blind spot of many social science reflections about modernity, and reveals the strength of European ideological hegemony. By erasing all trace of the presence of the Other in making the West, and of the West in making the Other, without recognizing the importance of their interactions and mutual shaping from the ideological, material, cultural, and religious points of view, the definitions of modernity and capitalist development analysed here in fact erase the very presence of the Other in world history, deprive the West of the possibility of a deeper understanding of its ideological processes, and allow it to continue repressing a part of itself.

This argument is far from new; it runs through the writings of various post-colonial thinkers, from Chakrabarty’s *Provincializing Europe*, to Aimé Césaire’s *Discourse sur le colonialisme*, in which he famously argued that the rise of Nazism and the Holocaust in Europe were possible because Europeans

had learned from colonialism to close their eyes to bloodbaths where they concerned the Other⁴⁷.

However, if the historical assumptions of the most influential social theory are flawed, and if the centrality of Europe in shaping modernity has been questioned over and over again, how is it that this idea constantly returns in historiography? There are certainly many possible answers to this question, such as the embeddedness of history as an academic discipline and the hegemonic construction of the nation through historical mythologies. Indeed, it would be a strange sight to see historians from any European university fight for greater recognition of the Islamic Golden Age in the making of the Renaissance, or for the compulsory teaching of Ottoman nationalism as a full contemporary of the movements for national liberation in Europe.

This is why the kind of exercise proposed here is important: there is a tendency to forget to what extent the structure of academia in the discipline of history is also influenced by an unconscious “geopolitical awareness” of Western supremacy. Similarly, our research questions are generated and oriented in reaction to a more or less unconscious collective belief in the superior modernity of the West. This is the mechanism at work when historians are asked to explain, justify, and help their students and readers to understand the historical reasons behind the supposedly unachieved and failed modernity/development/capitalism of the Oriental Other, or when we feel called upon to explain why the Oriental Other is not, after all, as un-modern/underdeveloped/resistant to capitalism as he or she is believed to be.

At the same time, historians, more than the practitioners of any other discipline, are especially well placed to see that modernity does not belong to one place, but is an ambiguous, uneven, and at times bloody, process whose agents were all the global partners that contributed, as dominated or dominators, as subalterns or hegemony, to the rise of a capitalist system. By engaging with social theory, instead of rejecting it, as it is often the case, historians should and could contribute to a renewal of the type of questions that social sciences pose to the history of the Middle East.

47 Césaire, A. *Discours Sur Le Colonialisme*, Paris, Présence africaine, 1989. Chakrabarty, D. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000.

Saints' bodies, Islamic and colonial medicine in Eritrea (1887-1940)

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Introduction

Studies have pointed out how Christian missionaries actively participated in both defining and implementing colonial policies in Eritrea¹. Their involvement in education and medicine has been, in several contexts, complementary to secular policies. In many instances, the absence of an educational policy and the lack of funds for Italian schools provided missionaries with the opportunity to offer this service to the government².

Wherever Swedish Evangelical and Capuchin Missions were set up, schools, hospitals or medical clinics were also established. Already in 1866, when the first Swedish Evangelical Mission of Lutheran confession arrived in Massawa and Moncullu, they established a hospital and a school³.

1 See Marongiu Buonaiuti, C. *Politica e religioni nel colonialismo italiano (1882-1941)*, Milano, Giuffrè editore, 1982; Taddia, I. *L'Eritrea - Colonia 1890-1952*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1986; Negash Tekeste *Italian colonialism in Eritrea, 1882-1941*, Uppsala, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1987; Betti, C. *Missioni e colonie in Africa orientale*, Roma, Studiorum, 2000; Uoldelul Chelati Dirar "Church-state relations in colonial Eritrea: missionaries and the development of colonial strategies (1869-1911)" in *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 8, 3, 2003, pp. 391-410; Miran, J. "Missionary, Education and the State in the Italian Colony of Eritrea" in Hansen, H.B.; Twaddle, M. (eds.) *Christian Missionaries and the State in the Third World*, Athens, Ohio University Press, 2002; Uoldelul Chelati Dirar "Curing Bodies to Rescue Souls: Health in Capuchin's Missionary Strategy in Eritrea, 1894-1935" in Hardiman, D. (ed.) *Healing bodies, saving souls: medical missions in Asia and Africa*, Amsterdam, New York, Rodopi, 2006.

2 Miran, J. "Missionary, Education and the State in the Italian Colony of Eritrea..." cit., p. 132.

3 Ivi, p. 123.

Christian ideologies were generally in line with those of colonialists, particularly in the field of education⁴, despite possible antagonism that arose with colonial administrators in several contexts⁵. The presence of Capuchin fathers, in particular, was strongly supported by the Italian Government and by some representatives of the Italian Catholic intelligentsia⁶.

Literature underlined a variegated image of missionaries, colonial administrators and «colonial subjects», stressing the complexity of «interests at stake»⁷. From this point of view, a relevant amount of studies on the social and political role of Christian missionaries in colonial Eritrea can be found.

On the other hand, little academic attention has been hitherto paid to the role of Islam and Muslim leaders in that period⁸. Several Muslim groups in Eritrea, such as the Hadendowa, the Beni-Amer, the Afar, the Saho and the Habab, actively collaborated in the colonial economy, as they did both in trade and the Italian army⁹.

Studies pointed out their participation in educational policy as well. When, in 1911, the Italian government built the school Salvago Raggi in Keren, «the first school of arts and crafts for the sons of Muslim chiefs and notables», the aim was to train future interpreters, clerks and skilled workers in crafts and in modern agricultural practices¹⁰. A part of the Muslim élite promoted the local enrolment at the school where some future leading Muslim figures were finally educated. The position that the Mīrghanī family, the leaders of the Khatmiyya Islamic brotherhood, assumed in this regard, appears emblematic.

Sīdī Jafar al-Mīrghanī, leader of the brotherhood, decided to enrol his son Sīdī Bakrī (d. 1954), in the school where he would also pursue the study of the Italian language. Mīrghanī's favourable attitude towards the new Italian school represented a model for the Khatmiyya followers and helped overcome eventual

4 Negash Tekeste *Italian colonialism in Eritrea...* cit., pp. 78-79.

5 Uoldelul Chelati Dirar "Church-state relations in colonial Eritrea: missionaries and the development of colonial strategies (1869-1911)..." cit., p. 402.

6 Marongiu Buonaiuti, C. *op. cit.*; Betti, C. *op. cit.*; Uoldelul Chelati Dirar "Curing Bodies to Rescue Souls: Health in Capuchin's Missionary Strategy in Eritrea, 1894-1935..." cit.

7 Uoldelul Chelati Dirar "Church-state relations in colonial Eritrea: missionaries and the development of colonial strategies (1869-1911)..." cit., p. 407.

8 Miran, J. "A historical Overview of Islam in Eritrea" in *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. n. 45, 2, 2005, pp. 177-215.

9 Negash Tekeste *No medicine for the bite of a white snake: Notes on nationalism and resistance in Eritrea, 1890-1940*, Uppsala, 1986, p. 47.

10 Negash Tekeste *Italian colonialism in Eritrea...* cit, pp. 79-80.

local misgivings towards a school funded by a Christian power¹¹. Other leading Muslim personalities in the political and economic history of colonial Eritrea had studied in the Salvago Raggi school and among them we can also note M. Aberra Hagos. The latter, founder of an important transport company for Eritrean people, was the main representative of the Khatmiyya Islamic brotherhood in Asmara¹².

If the Islamic involvement in colonial education and economy has been partly considered, the study of medicine and Islam in colonial Eritrea is certainly a neglected issue in current historiography. Within my research on Islam and Italian colonialism in Eritrea (1890-1941), I found some references to this theme. This article does not claim to be an exhaustive study on the issue, but rather to give new insights for future researches. The aim is to cast light on the involvement of Islamic mentors in colonial policy and, in particular, on the role of Islam within colonial welfare.

It deals with the role of health care practice of an Islamic brotherhood during the Italian occupation (1890-1941): the Khatmiyya Islamic brotherhood. The latter was led by the Mirghani family, or "Morgani" in colonial jargon. They had a prestigious genealogy, as descendants of Ali and Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet. Highly respected for their noble origin, the family had a religious influence in North East Africa thanks to Muhammad 'Uthmān al-Mirghani (1793-1853), the founder of the Khatmiyya Islamic brotherhood¹³.

In Sudan, this Sufi brotherhood expanded and gained large popular support. During the Anglo-Egyptian rule (1899-1956), British authorities considered *sayyid* 'Alī al-Mirghani (d. 1968), a Sudanese representative of the Mirghani family, as their favourite interlocutor. *Sayyid* 'Alī was «regarded as the unquestioned religious leader of the country. It was *sayyid* 'Alī who took precedence as first citizen at all official functions», at least, until World War I¹⁴.

Even in Eritrea, their representatives were recognised as the main Muslim authorities by (Italian) colonial administrators. They were on good terms with the colonial establishment and actively supported several political initiatives managed by Italian authorities in the country but also internationally.

11 Bruzzi, S. "Il Colonialismo Italiano e la Khatmiyya in Eritrea (1890-1941)" in *Africa*, Roma, vol. 61, n. 3/4, 2006, p. 447.

12 Puglisi, G. *Il Chi è? Dell'Eritrea*, Dizionario Biografico, 1952, p. 207.

13 See Grandin, N. "Le shaykh Muhammad Uthman al-Mirghani (1793-1853). Une double lecture de ses hagiographies" in *Archives des sciences sociales des religions*, vol. 81, n. 1, 1984.

14 Voll, J. *A history of the Khatmiyya tariqa in the Sudan*, PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1969, pp. 195-196.

In this paper, we will point out the Mīrghanīs' activity not only as religious representatives but also as medical mentors for the local people. In fact, from the use of Islamic medicine they gradually expressed their interest in colonial medicine. We, therefore, would like to underline how the Mīrghanī family might have participated in a transformation process of old values to create and propagate new ones among its adherents, especially through the concept of health.

The misleading dichotomy between European "modernisation" and Islamic "traditionalism" can be challenged by the Khatmiyya case study. Indeed, the latter was a reformed Islamic brotherhood that adapted to colonial domination and incorporated, more or less actively, some ideas and organisations connected with the colonial model of "modernity"¹⁵.

1. Health and baraka

Uoldelul Chelati Dirar pointed out the role and use of health care in the practice of Capuchin Missionaries in Eritrea. He underlines how «curing diseases was perceived as instrumental in acquiring new converts»¹⁶. Health, in fact, was considered as a space in which missionaries could contact the local population to further their proselytising mission. Consequently, according to the author, there was a sort of unconscious competition between missionary doctors and local healers in an effort to transform local societies through the concept of body, health and sin¹⁷.

As Vaughan states, missionaries competed with local healers on their own ground, as they perceived their activities in a holistic way. Curing the sick was connected, not only, with curing the body, but also, with a wider social and religious reform, closely entwined with the saving of believers' souls¹⁸.

15 The relationship between Islam and Modernity has been the focus of a wealth of literature. See Khalid Masud, M.; Salvatore, A.; van Bruinessen, M. (eds.) *Islam and Modernity. Key Issues and Debates*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009. Martin van Bruinessen examines in particular the encounter between Sufism, popular Islam, and Modernity, in his chapter "Popular" Islam and the Encounter with Modernity. Regarding the Islamic Modernists thought see also Rudolph, P. *Islam and colonialism. The doctrine of jihād in Modern History*, Mouton Publishers, 1979. For the current debate on the Horn of Africa, see Taddia, I. "Riflessioni sull' Islam moderno nel Corno d' Africa: un ricordo di Ottavia Schmidt di Friedberg" in *Ethnorêma*, n. 8, 2012, pp. 51-65.

16 Uoldelul Chelati Dirar "Curing Bodies to Rescue Souls: Health in Capuchin's Missionary Strategy in Eritrea, 1894-1935..." cit., p. 251.

17 Ivi, p. 259; Vaughan, M. "Healing and Curing: Issues in the Social History and Anthropology of Medicine in Africa" in *Social History of Medicine*, vol. 7, n. 2, 1994, pp. 283-295.

18 *Ibidem*.

In Eritrea, as in other African countries, health became one of the main targets of a more or less conscious competition with Muslim *shaykhs* to win the allegiance of potential proselytes¹⁹. As the Christian missionaries used European medicine to foster their religious influence, it is interesting to point out the attitude envisaged by Muslim mentors toward health.

Among Islamic religious practices there is one, in particular, that is associated with the concepts of health and spiritual medicine: the *ziyāra*. The latter is a pious visitation to local shrines or living saints.

The use of the term "saint" is certainly controversial in Islam. In this article, I will comply with the practice of several authors²⁰ by using the Arabic terms *wali* ("Friend of God") and *shaykh*, indiscriminately with "saint". However, some precisions are required because in Sunni Islam the sanctity status is not established at an institutional level, but rather through an informal process of popular recognition. Moreover, in spite of the close historical link existing between the cult of saints and Sufism, some authors prefer to maintain a distinction between the two phenomena, considering that the former could involve a broader section of believers than the latter²¹.

In Islamic societies believers used to visit Sufi saints and shrines because they were believed to hold *baraka*, namely a «beneficent force, of divine origin, which causes superabundance in the physical sphere and prosperity and happiness in the psychic order»²².

The more a *shaykh* was invested with *baraka*, the more his blessings were considered powerful, so that he could gain growing prestige among his followers. Cruise O'Brien pointed out how the *baraka* could be identified with the idea of health and power²³, since the concept of health is considered in its holistic sense.

Indeed, Sufi saints have often been regarded as central to religious life, both as political leaders and as moral models. The saints' physical body has been considered in itself the repository of sacred power. Their body and its images have been the focus of a rich Sufi literature where they are portrayed as Friends of God

19 Uoldelul Chelati Dirar "Curing Bodies to Rescue Souls: Health in Capuchin's Missionary Strategy in Eritrea, 1894-1935..." cit., p. 263.

20 See Reeves, E. "Power, Resistance, and the Cult of Muslim Saints in a Northern Egyptian Town" in *American Ethnologist*, vol. 22, n. 2, 1995.

21 Ivi, p. 307.

22 Colin, G.S. "Baraka" in Gibb, H.A.R.; Kramers, J.H.; Lèvi-Provençal, E. *et al.* (eds.) *The encyclopaedia of Islam*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, vol. 1, 1986, p. 1032.

23 O'Brien, C.; Coulon, C. (eds.) "Charisma and Brotherhood" in *African Islam*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988, p. 4.

(*awliyā' allah*) able to teach people by their example in everyday life. As social and religious focal points for regional *ziyāra*, Muslim *shaykhs'* residences represented a destination for believers and a place of treatment for sick and troubled people. Muslim communities gathered around saints and their shrines to learn from the saints' example and from their acts of generosity and insight²⁴. Around these personalities, regional centers were eventually set up and attracted followers both at a local and trans-regional scale.

At the end of the nineteenth Century, on the eve of a renewal Islamic movement, several shrines or mausoleums were erected in honour of leading charismatic personalities or saints, respected for their pious activities. Among them we could include founders and promoters of Islamic brotherhoods. This was the case of Sayyid Ḥasan al-Mirghani (d. 1869)²⁵ near Kassala in Sudan, as well as Shaykh 'Abd al-Rahman Zayla'i (d. 1882) a Kolonkool and Shaykh Uways Muhammad al-Barawi (1847-1909) a Biyoole, both leading representatives of the Qadiriyya Islamic brotherhood in Somalia. Narratives of their performance of *karamāt* ("miracles") proliferated²⁶. Concerning Shaykh 'Abd al-Rahman Zayla'i, for example, some stories circulated regarding his wonders connected to the provision of food, an important issue in a period of frequent famines affecting the region; others testified his spiritual powers, namely, the healing properties of his prayers. Shaykh Uways, an erudite personality in Koranic exegesis and Islamic sciences, became popular in South Somalia and in Brava, where he treated people suffering from illnesses caused by the *jinn*, spirits considered responsible for evil influences²⁷.

24 The saint' physical body and its images have been the focus of a rich Sufi literature. The body is often treated as a site of sacred power. Embodiment concept has been used to study Sufi saints and cults in Werbner, P.; Basu, H. (eds.) *Embodying Charisma: Modernity, Locality and the Performance of Emotion in Sufi Cults*, London, Routledge, 1998. Kugle explores the concept of embodiment locating the body at the center of Sufi phenomenology. For a study on the role of saints and their bodies in Sufi communities see Kugle, S. *Sufis and Saints' Bodies*, U.S.A., The University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

25 Grandin, N. "Al-Sayyid Muhammad al-Hasan al-Mirghani" in *Islam et Sociétés au Sud du Sahara*, 3, 1989, pp. 107-118; Karrar, A.S. *The Sufi brotherhoods in the Sudan*, C. Hurst, London, 1992.

26 See: Gar-det, L. "Karama" in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, cit., vol. 4, pp. 615-616; Shanafelt, R. "Magic, Miracle, and Marvels in Anthropology" in *Ethnos*, vol. 63, n. 3, 2004, pp. 317-340; Ewing, K.P. "Dreams from a Saint: Anthropological Atheism and the Temptation to Believe" in *American Anthropologist*, New series, vol. 96, n. 3, 1994, pp. 571-583.

27 Samatar, S.S. "Sheikh Uways Muhammad of Baraawe, 1847-1909" in Samatar, S.S. (ed.) *In the Shadow of conquest: Islam in colonial Northeast Africa*, Trenton, N.J., Red Sea Press, 1992.; Martin, B.G. "Shaykh Zayla'i and the Nineteenth-Century Somali Qadiriyya" in *In the Shadow of conquest: Islam in colonial Northeast Africa*, Trenton, N.J., Red Sea Press, 1992. Literature on *jinn*, spirit

In Eritrea, close to the port of Massawa, there was the shrine of Hāshim al-Mirghani, a representative of the Khatmiyya Islamic brotherhood. Even when he died in 1902, his burial place had continued to be a destination for religious visits (*ziyāra*). It was his daughter, *Sittī* 'Alawiyya, who took care of the shrine and inherited her father's charisma. This case of transmission, from father to daughter, of a leading religious role is rare but not exceptional in North East Africa and beyond²⁸. In Harar, a major Islamic city of the Horn of Africa, and in other regions in Sudan and Ethiopia, women can assume a leading religious role at Sufi regional centers. In Ethiopia there is the mausoleum of *Sittī* Momina (d. 1929), a holy place for both Muslims and Christians. Pilgrims gather there and chant *dhikrs* composed by *Sittī* Momina and her contemporaries. The attendance at these gatherings is considered therapeutic in resolving personal troubles.

In Somalia, there was a contemporary figure, Mana Siti Habib Jamaluddin (1804-1921), known as Dada Masiti. She was popular at Brava where, still today, a yearly *ziyara* is performed to her shrine. She was a well-known mystic, scholar and poet, as well as model of piety for local women. Her poetry is still memorized and transmitted by Bravanese people who consider it as a source of deep Islamic knowledge. In Sudan, there is the shrine to Sitti Maryam (d. 1952) who lived between Sinkat and Sawakin during the Anglo-Egyptian condominium. Every year her shrine in Sinkat is the destination of a popular *ziyara* in which women participate.

Her sister, *Sittī* 'Alawiyya al-Mirghani lived over the Sudanese border, in the former Italian colony of Eritrea. Her shrine and that of her father's are located in Huthumlu, close to the port of Massawa where a yearly *ziyara* is performed.

During their lifetimes, all these women were believed to hold *baraka* and to perform miracles (*karamat*), as in the case of other pious *Ashraf* and Sufi saints.

This was also the case of *Sittī* 'Alawiyya in Eritrea. Local people used to visit her, not only for her religious learning, but also for help, material or economical needs. In the late 1930s, as an Italian report suggests, *Sittī* 'Alawiyya's residence was an informal institution, but also a center of local welfare: she promoted, in her role as chair, a charity that was quite well structured for that period. This was the description given by an Italian traveller who visited her:

possession and medicine is very rich. See Nicolini, B. "Nastri culturali tra Africa orientale e Asia" in Nicolini, B.; Taddia, I. (eds.) *Il Corno d'Africa: tra medicina politica e storia*, Aprilia, Novalogos, 2011, pp. 36-54; Najat, K.; Hardie, T. "Possession and jinn" in *Journal of Royal Society of Medicine*, vol. 98, 2005, pp. 351-353.

28 Bruzzi, S.; Zeleke, M. "Women religious leaders: A comparative study on Sufi shrines in Eritrea and Ethiopia" in *Northeast African Studies*, vol. 12, n. 2, 2012 (forthcoming).

She [*Sitti 'Alawiyya*] presides at the Charity Council of the Islamic Community that she herself founded. The budget is financed by voluntary offerings, as a charity and to propagate the faith.

The main aim is to relieve people who are old, poor, sick and unfit for every kind of work. Poor people receive monthly benefit from the Community management [...] ²⁹

A part of the charity's activities, that *sharīfa* 'Alawiyya promoted, was devoted to the care and assistance of sick people. She inherited, not only the *baraka*, but also the social and religious role that had belonged to her father.

In order to consider the role of this Muslim organisation regarding medical knowledge and healing activities, it seems interesting to point out the continuities and changes in its *shaykhs'* aptitude towards medicine. In particular, we will consider this point by looking at the transformation of their charitable activities from one generation to another.

Some of the Mirghani family's representatives, similarly to other Muslim *shaykhs*, were believed to have thaumaturgic powers thanks to their *baraka*. In effect, people had faith in these *shaykhs'* capability to perform *karamāt* (miracles) and to solve believers' material, social and political problems, since it was a kind of medicine perceived holistically.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Muslim believers used to visit local *shaykhs* for their prayers of blessings, but also for the treatment of several diseases. This was also the case of *Sīdī Hāshim al-Mirghani*, as reported by a colonial official: ³⁰

[...] As Muslims put down illness to the influence of evil spirits, sick people generally turn to Morgani [*Sīdī Hāshim*] to be exorcised and, of course, they reward his work with gifts. The latter are given in proportion to the financial situation of the sick person himself [...]

In that period, he performed so-called "exorcism practices" to heal locals who rewarded him with offerings. The colonial use of the term "exorcism", referring to *Sīdī Hāshim's* medical practices, is misleading. It would be more correct to speak about

29 Caniglia, G. *La Sceriffa di Massaua La Tarica Katmia*, Roma, Cremonese Libraio Editore, 1940, pp. 36-37.

30 Regio esercito italiano, Comando superiore in Africa al Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 16 gennaio 1887 in Archivio Eritrea (Roma), pacco 43.

habitual and Islamic medicine. These healing practices are not specified in detail, but we can suppose Sidi Hāshim resorted to Islamic medicine, as self-help therapy by prayer. Among the collection of Khatmiyya writings conserved in the Rome Archives, we find one of these prayers in particular, *al-Ṣalāt al-kashfiyya* composed by Muhammad 'Uthmān Tāj al-Sirr (d. 1903) that is aimed "to bring relief from any sorrow"³¹. 'Uthmān Tāj al-Sirr was the husband of Sitti Maryam, Sidi Hāshim's daughter. He had been resident in Sawākin since 1867, after a stay in Eritrea³².

In Arab and Muslim societies, the popular belief in the existence of *jinn* is widespread. They are invisible spirits that could penetrate the lives and bodies of human beings causing illness; some *shaykhs* were popular for their miraculous capability to restore people troubled by the *jinn*'s influence. These shaykhs, like Sidi Hāshim, managed not only social and economic resources, but also the knowledge of Islamic medicine and healing practices. This use of *tibb* ("medicine") contributed to «creating confidence and fortifying the charisma» of the *shaykhs*³³. What is interesting to point out is their growing interest towards European medicine.

Since, at least, the late 1920s, the second generation, that of Sidi Hāshim's daughter, Sitti 'Alawiyya, has expressed a growing interest in colonial knowledge. Indeed, the healing effectiveness of European medicine was becoming popular through missionary and colonial health care activities. She was aware of its effectiveness and, if necessary, she would not have hesitated to make use of it.

2. Health and colonial control

Sitti 'Alawiyya's awareness of the power of colonial medicine emerges in an episode reported by Fioccardi, a colonial administrator. The latter explains that he tried to talk to the *sharīfa*, the title used by the descendent of the Prophet, to prevent her travelling to the Gash Barka region, in the South-West of Eritrea. Italian administrators considered the travels of an influential religious mentor, as was the case of the *sharīfa*, as dangerous and destabilizing for public order.

These travels were, in many instances, comparable to the Christian missionary strategy of itinerant proselytism. The latter had generated occasional tensions

31 Rome (MAE), 1044/8. See R.S. O'Fahey, Albrecht Hofheinz and Bernd Radtke, "The Khatmiyya tradition" in *ALA* 1994, 1, p. 203.

32 Hofheinz, A. "Sons of a hidden Imām. The genealogy of the Mīrghanī family" in *Sudanic Africa*, iii, 1992, p. 21.

33 Last, L. "Charisma and Medicine in Northern Nigeria" in O'Brien, C.; Coulon, C. (eds.) *Charisma and Brotherhood in African Islam*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988, p. 185.

among the local population undermining the *pax coloniale*³⁴. In fact, the excess of proselytizing Christian missionaries was in contrast with the colonial administrative and political priority of maintaining peace and order³⁵.

Even for Sitti 'Alawiyya these travels represented a key instrument in propagating Islamic faith and in collecting offerings. From the colonial point of view, on the contrary, these trips could undermine political stability, so that administrators used to prevent and limit these *shaykhs'* movements within the colonial borders, as much as possible.

The way in which this political control was exercised and preserved by colonial authorities assumed, in a way, the form of biopolitics: Fioccardi, at that time regional administrator in the Keren district, tried to prevent the *sharīfa's* travels to the Gash Barka region by explaining to her that it was dangerous for her health. He stressed the point that the region was particularly unhealthy and dangerous.

Reporting their meeting he wrote:³⁶

Today the Scerifa [*sharīfa*] tormented me for two hours concerning the issue of her travels to Barca [*in the south-west of Eritrea*]. She told me very cunningly that the Diglal

[*a local authority*]³⁷ wrote to her providing her with hygienic advice whose importance and inspiration she understands.

As I insisted on the issue of Barca's weather conditions and insalubrities, she answered that it would be better to have a fever than to die in poverty.

She added that she knew perfectly well that fevers can be fought with quinine.

Prevention through hygienic and sanitary precautions, such as following special rules of personal conduct, was extremely important to prevent diseases. In this sense, we can clearly understand the impact of the local authorities' advice, as that given to her by the Diglal. This episode points out the exchange of information among local authorities and highlights the impact of mobility and circulation of knowledge among them, a subject which is still underestimated. There was a close political relationship between the Diglal and the *sharīfa*, as a

34 Uoldelul Chelati Dirar "Church-state relations in colonial Eritrea: missionaries and the development of colonial strategies (1869-1911)..." cit., p. 402.

35 *Ibidem*.

36 Telegramma – espresso di servizio, Commissario Regionale di Cheren, 29 ottobre 1914 in Archivio Eritrea (Roma), pacco 1022.

37 On the role of Diglal among Beni Amer see: Nadel, S.F. "Notes on Beni Amer society" in *Sudan Notes and Records*, vol. 26, n. 1, 1945, pp. 51-94.

leading Islamic personality, and the communication between them represented a further component of colonial dynamics, often ignored and external to the control of the official authorities.

Another aspect that deserves particular consideration is her emphasis on quinine, an important tool of colonial domination in Africa. From the early 1830s, in particular, quinine was produced in European manufacturing companies gaining a growing relevance within the colonial conquests. The case of West Africa is well-known in this issue, where, by the 1850s, British soldiers used quinine to penetrate and conquer the region. The continent, known as the “white man’s grave”, was a particularly hard environment for Europeans to penetrate. Malaria had represented the main cause of death especially for newcomers who had no opportunity to build up any immunity. From the early 1900s this drug became increasingly important for the suppression of malaria, but, at first, its use was only experimental; the cause of death was connected not only with the disease but also with the erroneous treatment the patients received. Even quinine prophylaxis was not immediately adopted and only when its use spread, did the death rates among Europeans fall significantly. Finally, the adequate introduction and diffusion of quinine in the continent represented a main medical reform, a technological advance that had enabled and favoured the “scramble for Africa” since the late nineteenth Century³⁸. Indeed, according to Headrick, «scientific cinchona production was an imperial technology par excellence. Without it European colonialism would have been almost impossible in Africa»³⁹.

This new European technology represented a further “tool of Empire” and was not ignored by local authorities. It is in this context that Sitti ‘Alawiyya’s reference to quinine should be understood. During the negotiation with Fioccardi regarding her travels, she replied by underlining her knowledge of the power of quinine. In other words, faced with the colonial attempt to use health safety reasons as “political technology” to limit her freedom of movement, she responded by stressing her knowledge of the effectiveness of both endogenous and exogenous health care. As several reports of Fioccardi attest, in the 1910-1920 period she was

38 Curtin, P.D. “The White Man’s Grave: Image and Reality, 1780-1850” in *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 1, n. 1, 1961, pp. 94-110; Curtin, P.D. *Disease and Empire: The Health of European Troops in the Conquest of Africa*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998; Headrick, R.D. *The Tools of Empire. Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*, New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981.

39 Ivi, p. 72.

continually involved in negotiations with the colonial authorities⁴⁰. As the previous episode testifies, in this period the competition between colonial authorities and local leaders was also felt in the area of *biopower*. Consequently, for some Muslim *shaykhs*, empowerment might be linked to the capability to adopt colonial knowledge and technologies, integrating them into an Islamic context.

3. “Arabic fantasy” at Sittī ‘Alawiyya’s residence and colonial medicine

Colonial sources, related to social and religious practices performed within Sufi centres in Eritrea, appear poor and misleading in their understanding of the local context. Popular or religious rituals and dances performed at Sittī ‘Alawiyya’s residence are simply defined as Arabic “fantasy”, a recurring theme in colonial narratives. This expression represented a sort of macro-category to refer to a wide range of local performances, avoiding a detailed description. An example is given in a 1920 colonial photograph of Sittī ‘Alawiyya’s residence, where a group of local women seated are watching other women dancing in the centre of a circle. Here, the title of the photograph is «Arabic fantasy at Scerifa Alauia’s (residence)»⁴¹. Fioccardi, a colonial administrator in the Keren district, again uses the expression in a colonial report to justify the popularity Sittī ‘Alawiyya had in the region. According to him, people used to visit her for her “bizarre” personality and, in particular, for so-called «unpunished Bilen fantasies» that she would habitually lavish on her visitors⁴².

It is hard to establish whether this impressive and popular “fantasy”, namely, a Bilen performance of unclear definition, could be a ritual of possession (such as the *zar*) or not. Nevertheless, Fioccardi’s assertion that this performance was not punishable as it should have been, is meaningful, considering the fact that ecstatic practices have often been considered dangerous and destabilizing for political establishments.

In Sudan and Ethiopia, the *zar* was (and still is) particularly common and is also often performed at Sufi centres. *Zar* rituals evoke the idea of a spiritual or mystical aspect of illness and its treatment. They are predominantly women’s healing practices where the cause of female patients’ afflictions is ascribed to spirit

40 AE (Roma), pacco 1022, Telegramma – espresso di servizio, Comm. Regionale di Cheren, 25 luglio 1915.

41 “Fantasia araba presso Scerifa Alauia” in *Raccolta E. Lo Giudice*, 47, Fototeca IsIAO (Roma).

42 Cheren, 6 settembre 1917, Colonia Eritrea, Commissariato di Cheren, Riservato-Urgente, Al Signor Reggente il Governo della Colonia. Oggetto: Grave dissidio seguito da ingiurie Tra Morgani e Scerifa. Archivio Eritrea (AE) pacco 1022.

possession. They have been considered as therapeutic cults concerned with the moral, spiritual and psychological dimensions of disorders. To seek relief from spirit possession women activate the spirit by means of ecstatic dances or other specific rituals⁴³.

Notwithstanding the paucity of our sources, the practice of these kinds of therapy rituals at Sitti 'Alawiyya's residence should not be excluded considering the frequent performance of *zar* rituals within Muslim shrines in the region. In fact, according to Lewis, in the Sudanese and Egyptian area the greatest elaboration of *zar* coincided with the rise and spread of the Islamic brotherhoods as the main expression of popular Islam. The term *ḥaḍra*, which denotes Sufi rituals, is often employed to «describe a *zar* seance and in the holding of *zar* ceremonies at, or in association with visits to, the tombs of Sufi saints – powerful sources of mystical blessings»⁴⁴.

This is, in fact, the case of the so-called *zar ḥaḍra* rituals still performed in Ethiopia, for example at a Sufi shrine whose custodian is the daughter of the *shaykh* who founded the centre of Tiru Sina⁴⁵.

Zar ḥaḍra is a weekly gathering ritual attended by possessed women that takes place regularly at the shrine. It is a session of prayer, chanting, singing and dancing whose aim is to appease a possessing spirit⁴⁶.

Another example of similar rituals at Sufi centres is the one performed at the shrine to Sitti Maryam (d. 1952), sister of Sitti 'Alawiyya, in Sudan. She was a leading religious authority, particularly active in Islamic proselyte activities during the Anglo-Egyptian protectorate (1899-1956). Nowadays, her shrine is the destination of a popular *ziyara* especially among women, during which they can practice devotional chanting in “remembrance of God” and ecstatic dances⁴⁷.

Sufi brotherhoods are well-known for their general tolerance towards “popular” religious practices and for employing and integrating them into Sufi rituals, an

43 Lewis, I.M.; al-Safi, A.; Hurreiz, S. (eds.) *Women's medicine. The zar-bori cult in Africa and beyond*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1991; Boddy, J. *Wombs Alien Spirits. Women, men, and the Zar Cult in Northern Sudan*, Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989; Nicolini, B. *Studies in Witchcraft, Magic, War and Peace in Africa*, New York, The Edwin Mellon Press, 2006.

44 Lewis, I.M.; al-Safi, A.; Hurreiz, S. (eds.) *op. cit.*, p. 13.

45 For a comparative study on this ethnography by M. Zeleke and the case of Sitti 'Alawiyya see: Bruzzi, S.; Zeleke, M. “Women religious leaders: A comparative study on Sufi shrines in Eritrea and Ethiopia...” cit.

46 Zeleke, M. “Ye Shakoch Chilot (the court of the sheikhs): A traditional institution of conflict resolution in Oromiya zone of Amhara regional state, Ethiopia” in *African Journal on Conflict resolution*, ACCORD, vol. 10, n. 1, 2010, pp. 63-84.

47 Cifuentes, F. “Sufi Sheikhs, Sheikhas and Saints of the Sudan” in *African Arts*, 2008, pp. 50-59.

open approach that has a role in the propagation of Islam among non-Islamized people.

This general openness towards local practices may also be noticed if we look at their approach to colonial medicine. In fact, an aspect that deserves particular attention is the question of how colonial medicine was progressively integrated and used by locals through the mediation, not only of Christian missionaries and colonial administrators, but also through Islamic mentors and *shaykhs*' activities.

In this context, we note that from the late 1930s the Mīrghānī did not only treat sick people with Islamic medicine. They rather preferred to send local people to colonial hospitals, often managed by Christian missionaries.

Caniglia reports on the subject of charity activities that Sitti 'Alawiyya promoted in the colony:

Sick people are admitted to the hospitals of Asmara and other close locations at the expenses of the [Muslim] Community. The latter also provides for their needs in the event of death.
Hospitals are magnificently equipped and managed by our worthy healthcare workers who are inspired by their Christian vocation⁴⁸.

In the case of the Mīrghānī to whom sick and needy people used to turn, we can clearly note a particular interest not only in the use of habitual and Islamic medicine, but also in European medicine.

It is noteworthy that the cross-religious dimension of medical practices is not at all an uncommon or new phenomenon in the Eritrean and Ethiopian region, where we can record a wide range of religious and healing practices that Christians, Muslims and other religions groups share in the same territory.

Moreover, histories of medicine and native authority point to a common direction: the impossibility of capturing the cultural complexities of colonial experience in simple dichotomies of local tradition and European modernity, the colonizer and the colonized. Several studies have described the dynamics of these encounters as processes of adjustment to the colonial establishment⁴⁹.

A case study on the complexity of the Islamic and colonial leaderships' relationships is that of Northern Nigeria. Here, the Muslim leadership, which ruled in the first half of the twentieth century, during the British administration

48 Translated from Italian. Caniglia, G. *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.

49 Robinson, D. *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880-1920*, Athens, Ohio university press, 2000.

of the country, was able to explore modern colonial ideas while still adhering firmly to the matrix of Islam⁵⁰, especially in the field of colonial medicine. In fact, as Shobana Shankar points out, Nigerian emirs modernized and enhanced their authority through cooperation with Christian missions, in the anti-leprosy campaign in colonial Hausaland in the 1930s. Their representatives were «agents of change», not merely «compromisers who kept the old apparatus of governance in place and allowed Europeans to impose their idea of civilization»⁵¹. They «believed that religion and religious differences could be subordinated to medical welfare and to political authority». They had submitted to a “Christian” administration «under which they were able to exercise great power. As a consequence, among their people their power grew, not in the mould of pre-colonial aristocracies but, as a model of moderation in modernization»⁵².

Could we compare the former case with that of the *Mirghanī* leaders in Eritrea? The complex and problematic relationship between Islam and Modernity emerges as a key issue in this context. The latter is a question that has received particular attention in the rest of Islamic societies, but still not in Eritrea. The way in which Muslim élites incorporated modern Western ideas could even be, though not exhaustively, noticed in the case of the *Khatmiyya*. Its representatives, being religious, political and medical mentors, expressed a growing interest in colonial education and medicine, maintaining Islamic leadership and legitimacy. As it is still a rather neglected issue in the historiography of the Eritrean region, the history of medicine and Islamic practices could provide new insights for studies connected with the social history of the country.

50 Last, L. “The ‘colonial caliphate’ of northern Nigeria” in Robinson, D.; Triaud, J.L. (eds.) *Les temps des marabouts: itinéraires et stratégies islamiques en Afrique occidentale française v. 1880-1960*, Paris, Karthala, 1997, p. 72; Shobana, S. “Medical missionaries and modernizing emirs in colonial Hausaland: leprosy control and native authority in the 1930s” in *Journal of African History*, vol. 48, 2007, pp. 45-68.

51 Robinson, D. *op. cit.*, p. 238.

52 Shobana, S. *op. cit.*, p. 68.

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Health, Islam and capitalism: three possible key-factors in developing Somaliland¹

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Introduction

The main aim of this contribution is to investigate the socio, political and economic dynamics that have occurred in Somaliland in the last decades. Even though this country is still unrecognized by the international community, Somaliland's economy has undertaken an enduring growth, above all in the private entrepreneurial sector.

I will argue that religion has had an important role in the Somali cultural and social identification. According to this hypothesis, the article analyzes the Islamic factor by showing how it has led to the creation of many alternative connections supported by mutual trust and religious solidarity among involved communities. These connections are somehow fulfilling the absence of political legitimacy while progressively substituting conventional routes of intra-national negotiation, like diplomacy.

To confirm this tendency, specific arguments are drawn from Somaliland's health sector. The health care system is considered a preferential index to evaluate the level of national development. Above all, the private non-profit sector gives some evidence of the Somali capacity of running competitive private businesses while multiplying simultaneously their resources and suppliers with a consequent increase in autonomy and efficiency. This successful compromise bears the fruits of Somali engagement and can be identified by their inexhaustible adaptability to adverse conditions and their ability to avoid, not deny, the rational rules imposed by external actors and their ostensible, insurmountable interests.

A brief introduction dealing with Somalia and Somaliland's political status is fundamental: from this issue inexhaustible questions have been raised upon whether a nation can or cannot exist².

1 This paper was originally published in the dossier "Religion and Capitalism in Africa" Taddia, I.; Tekeste Negash (eds.) in *Storicamente*, vol. 8, 2012.

2 To this regard see: Bayart, J. F. "Africa in the world: a history of extraversion" in *African Affairs*, vol. 99, n. 395, 2000, pp. 217-267; Clapham, C.; Herbst, J.; Mills, G. (eds.) *Big African States*,

Historical main streams of research on African post-colonial nation-building were initially oriented to consider the state as an essential device to overcome the colonial experience. A major concern for scholars was the possibility to apply-export a European frame of democratic state in a non-European context. Simultaneously, another perspective focused on the identification of a reliable way for newly born countries to gain economic growth without the protection of the government and political institutions³. Empirical observations have confirmed that a great majority of the African countries have been unable to reach the scope⁴; on the other hand, a certain predisposition to the sacrifice of civil society and human rights has characterized their struggle to increase local wealth⁵.

As for what regards Somalia, a third aspect emerges which is the need to understand the importance of non-state actors in the dynamics of social representation and wealth production⁶. The civil society, often the business class, has been considered for her inclination to become a viable counterbalance to governmental and political institutions. But, it has not always achieved successful results nor has it automatically entailed democratic solutions. In Somalia, the line between an almost non-existent formal governance and a detached informal sphere has blurred and it has been slowly translated into an instrument deployed in the struggle for power and control⁷. Conversely, as it will be discussed in details, in northern Somali and the elders⁸ have

Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2006; Herbst, J. *States and Power in Africa*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000; Sorensen, G. *Democracy and democratization: processes and prospects in a changing world*, Colorado, Boulder West View Press, 2008.

3 Little, P.D. *Somalia: economy without state*, Indianapolis, Indianapolis University Press, 2003; Shaw, T. "Reformism, Revisionism and Radicalism in African Political Economy during the 1990s" in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 29, n. 2, 1991, pp. 191-212.

4 Chabal, P.; Daloz, J.P. (eds.) *Africa works: disorder as political instrument*, Bloomington, Oxford, London, International African Institute, James Currey, Indiana University Press, 1999; Zartman, I.W. (ed.) *Collapsed States. The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, London, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995.

5 Hangmann, T.; Hoehne, M.V. "Failure of State, failure debate: evidences from the Somali territories" in *The Journal of International Development*, vol. 21, n. 1, 2009, pp. 42-57; Kibble, S. "Somaliland: surviving without recognition; Somalia: recognised but failing?" in *International Relation*, vol. 15, n. 5, 2001, pp. 5-25.

6 Hangmann, T. "From State Collapse to Duty-Free Shop: Somalia's path to modernity" in *African Affairs*, vol. 104, n. 416, 2005, pp. 525-535.

7 Academy for Peace and Development (APD) *The Role of the Private Sector in Zones of Conflict: The experience of the Somaliland Academy for Peace and Development*, Hargeisa, 2002; Menkhaus, K. "Governance without government in Somalia" in *International Security*, vol. 31, n. 3, 2006, pp. 74-106.

8 Traditional leaders, elders known as *Odayaal*, had a key role in the Somali politics before

traditionally become depositories of conflicts regulation⁹. Marleen Renders¹⁰ states that they have created in the long run a sustainable equilibrium of forces which, in the event of a strife, gives them the capacity to mediate between concerned stakeholders facilitating the dialogue with opposite factions. As a consequence, a special authority has allowed their accumulation of influence derived from the demarcation of hostilities on behalf of the community and it has led to their inclusion in the political institutions (f.i. birth of the Somaliland Parliament, 1993). The efficacy of local instruments to solve socio-political tensions is much valid today and it represents a successful alternative to the pacification process pursued in the south. The same can be said for the economic sector: an informal economy has developed underground in both contexts and a peculiar milieu has been shaped where rules of a savage competition dominate in the absence of a centralized regulatory system. Both in the north and in the south this have resulted in a conflict where involved players have changed their strategies. This paper considers the first case while the latter will be subject for future research.

There is a great attention to the capacity of, or more often, the deficiency of political institutions in Somalia and the effects of this lack of management in the economic performance. Something similar happens in Somaliland but diverse phenomena produce disparity with the south. One of this study's key assumptions is that Somaliland has given birth to an unconventional political situation. Somaliland Republic was proclaimed in 1991 following the collapse of the Siyad Barre

colonial occupation: they were representatives of their kinsmen to the local assembly (*shir*) where conflicts and disputes were discussed and regulated. During colonial times, they were given space in the process of institution-building. Consequently, the preservation of their political legitimacy in the north served the purpose of peace restoration when Somaliland proclaimed secession from Mogadishu in 1991. Interesting to this regards are the following works by: Farah, A.Y.; Lewis, I.M. "Peace-making endeavour of contemporary lineage leaders in Somaliland" in Adam, H.M.; Ford, R. (eds.) *Mending rips in the sky: Options for Somali communities in the 21st century*, Lawrenceville, NJ, Red Sea Press, 1997; Gundel, J. *The Predicament of the 'Oday': the role of traditional structures in security, rights, law and development in Somalia*, Oxfam Novib, Danish Refugee Council, 2006; Renders, M. "Appropriate governance-technology? Somali clan-elders and institutions in the making of the Republic of Somaliland" in *Afrika Spectrum*, vol. 42, n. 3, 2007, pp. 439-459; Academy for Peace and Development (APD) *Peace in Somaliland: An Indigenous Approach to State-Building*, Hargeisa, APD, 2008; Hoehne, M.V. "From pastoral to state politics: Traditional authorities in Northern Somalia" in Buur, L.; Kyed, H.M. (eds.) *A new dawn for traditional authorities? State recognition and democratisation in sub-Saharan Africa*, New York, Palgrave, 2007, pp. 155-182; Terlinden, U. *Somaliland: Building governance bottom-up*, University of Bonn, Centre for Development Research, 2003, 14.

9 Hoehne, M.V. "From pastoral to state politics..." cit.

10 Renders, M. "Appropriate governance-technology?..." cit.

dictatorship. It declared its secession from Mogadishu mainly as a reaction to the prolonged persecutions perpetrated by the regime against the *Ishaq*¹¹ population. Since that time, it has never received recognition by the international community. Under such circumstances Somaliland lives today in a certain degree of virtuality which utterly hinders the legitimacy of its political status abroad.

Despite its illegitimate position at a diplomatic level, an inside perspective of Somaliland's status presents many interesting elements. Local leaders and clan elders have been able to create durable institutions following Western democratic patterns through their amalgam with traditional figures vested with political authority¹². An Executive headed by the President was established in 1993 under the Somaliland National Charter and a bi-cameral Legislature split the Parliament into two branches: the Lower House (House of Representatives) and the Upper House corresponding to the House of Elders (*Golaha Guurtida*). The *beel* system¹³, which allowed clan representation in the Parliament, had been used since 2001 when a democratic referendum turned the mechanism of political representation into a multi-party system of government.

Michael Walls and Steven Kibble¹⁴ tell us that Somaliland does meet some of the principal requisites of a nation-state¹⁵:

1. It has an organized political leadership;
2. It has a given population and the capacity to provide some kinds of services;
3. It has a territorial area where it can impose its control (not without difficulties);
4. It has an entity that views itself as capable of entering into relations with sovereign states;
5. It is an entity that seeks full constitutional independence and international recognition of that sovereignty but is unable to achieve it;

11 The *Ishaq* clan is one of the six clan families (Daarod, Dir, Hawiye, Dighil, and Rahanweyn) composing the Somali society. They constitute the majority of the population in the northern Somaliland which dominates in the central province while the Western and Eastern regions are occupied mainly by Daarod (Dulbahante and Warsengheli) and Dir (Issa and Gadabursi).

12 Gundel, J. *op. cit.*; Hoehne, M.V. "From pastoral to state politics..." cit.

13 Wartorn Societies Project International *Rebuilding Somaliland. Issues and possibilities*, Lawrenceville, N.J., Red Sea Press, 2005, pp. 71-86.

14 Walls, M.; Kibble, S. (eds.) "Beyond polarity: negotiating a hybrid state in Somaliland" in *Africa Spectrum*, vol. 45, n. 1, 2010, pp. 31-56.

15 These requisites meet the criteria of the 1933 Montevideo Convention of the Rights and Duties of States.

Moreover, they argue that post-war reconstruction has hastened the process of urbanization, leading to pressure on both infrastructures and the environment. In this phase, tensions over the ownership and management of resources have heightened, resulting in localized instances of conflict¹⁶ which have consequently been handled by traditional leaders.

1. Alternative capitalism

The influence of globalization over Somaliland rehabilitation and development has to be evaluated. Recently the structure of the local economy have been keenly modified by the country's reliance on foreign interferences, when not dependence on external aid. The penetration of managerial frames and an intense financing from abroad have redefined the relationship between internal and external actors. The Somali economy has been developed along with an underground network of entrepreneurial activities which keeps on working, sometimes even thriving, apart from the official government that is still not reliable enough to guarantee the protection of businessmen and their revenues. Without an effective governmental apparatus, a reliable system based on the *hawilaat*, money transfer agencies importing remittances from the diaspora, has replaced the ordinary economic institutions that should carry out financial transactions¹⁷. *Hawilaat* are deep-rooted in an informal ground that awards a leading importance to personal ties and mutual trust. Roland Marchal¹⁸ includes them among the hallmarks of the Somali economy by describing their function in the local context: depending mostly on foreign assistance, Somaliland has learned to please donors in order to have access to imported resources; its financial system is quite rudimentary since there are no banks but exclusively these money transfer agencies (*hawilaat*); to their cash desk converge not only the money poured in by the international organizations for humanitarian purposes but also sums belonging to private individuals and the Somali diaspora¹⁹.

It is undeniable that transnational connections have typically distinguished Somali economic practices. For Peter Little, Somalia has always been a trade

16 Ivi, p. 41.

17 Horst, C. *Money and mobility: transnational livelihood strategies of the Somali diaspora*, Geneva, GCIM, 2004; Lindley, A. *Remittances in Fragile Settings: a Somali Case Study*, Brighton, Institute of Development Studies, HICN, 2007.

18 Marchal, R. *Globalization and its impact on Somalia*, Nairobi, UNDOS, 2000.

19 The situation has changed recently. The discovery of potential oil fields in the eastern region of Somaliland and the endorsement made by the Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan to foster bilateral relations are two elements out of many others in a context of transition which is bringing the international community to cope with Somaliland as a "de facto" entity.

based, external, and market oriented economy²⁰. Furthermore, William Reno adds that, especially in the northern region, linkages binding local merchants with international networks through commercial routes were protected and contracted with incentives even during colonial times²¹. In the past Somalis have been parties to a trading network with ancient commercial ties to Asia. «Livestock was raised for sail and the trees which produced scented gums and resins (frankincense and myrrh) were exploited for export long enough ago so that the region was known to the Romans as “Terra Aromatica”»²². Then, under the British rule Somaliland’s economy relied mainly on the raising and commercialization of livestock with the neighbouring countries (primarily the military garrison in Aden). One of the crucial points in the British colonial policy was to create a sustainable economy through the intensification of livestock breeding to the benefit of international exports. The pivotal function of nomadic pastoralists in the economy of Somaliland stood clear also after independence (which meant the union of the British Protectorate to the former Italian Somalia). The political marginalization of the remote northern province from the capital Mogadishu, which peaked up under the regime of Siad Barre, ensured the isolation of Somaliland markets through the compromise of the *franco valuta*²³ system. The system was established to regulate profits on exports whose earnings should partially return to the government in the form of commercial licences²⁴.

20 Little, P.D. *op. cit.*

21 Reno, W. “Shadow States and Political Economy of Civil Wars” in Brendal, M.; Malone, D.M. (eds.) *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars* Lynne Rienner, London, 2000, pp. 43-68.

22 Gesheker, C. “Anti-colonialism and Class Formation: the Eastern Horn of Africa before 1950” in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 18, n. 1, 1985, p. 20.

23 «In the 1970s and 1980s, the most common means of remitting wealth was called the *franco valuta* system. Somali migrant laborers flocking to high-paying jobs in the Gulf either purchased high-value consumer goods and shipped them back to family members, or transferred their salaries via Somali traders, who then paid their relatives in Somali shillings and used the hard currency to purchase imports» quoted in Menkhaus, K. *Remittance Companies and Money Transfer in Somalia*, Somali Joint Needs Assessment, UN & the World Bank Coordination Secretariat, 2001, available at: <http://www.google.it/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&ved=0CDIQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.somalijna.org%2Fdownloads%2FRemittance%2520companies%2520%28Ken%2520Menkhaus%29.doc&e=UqAGUdJPo8jgBP6ngJgO&usg=AFQjCNGoudFRTr8N6xDt9bt9nRi-o9npIw&bvm=bv.41524429,d.bGE>. Consequently, the Somali government earned proportional benefits through the allocation of licences to traders who were not subordinate to custom duties for their imports in the country.

24 Vali, J. “Somalia: Understanding an Unconventional Economy” in *Development and Change*, vol.

The exclusion from governmental patronage of the livestock market, a prerogative of the nomads whose control Siad Barre had always sought but never achieved, brought to the consolidation of surrogate economic channels, for instance the *abbaan* and the *dilaal*'s intermediation in the negotiation with foreign firms. This blend of commerce, customary authority, and local administration has been recovered today under changed features and «it represents a hybrid re-traditionalization of power in that it recovers some of the flexibilities and practices of customary authority figures to adjudicate disputes and distribute resources»²⁵.

Nowadays, it is evident that Somaliland strategy is multifaceted in relations to the resources it profits by and these are mainly of two kinds. Many funds correspond to supplies by the diaspora and the Somali communities abroad. Either they are suitable for small and medium investments or they feed great companies (some of them detaining monopolies like the most representative telecommunications sector). The other kind pertains to the businesses of humanitarian assistance. A distinct trait marking the discrepancy between these two praxis frequently concerns the transparency by which money is allotted, managed, and delivered: on the one side, the United Nations Agencies are compelled to follow international procedures and render public their administrative accounting to the donors; on the other side, capitals belonging for instance to Islamic organizations are impenetrable to scholars and analysts. They seem to mingle charitable initiatives and a concrete strategy of investments involving the Somali business class and the local community. This procedure has led progressively to the opening of informal channels run out of the regular network with direct consequences on the reduction of the government's capacity to control the circulation of private money.

Some stimulus for reflection is provided by Anna Lindley²⁶ when she assumes that a critical environment can produce opportunities for adaptive actors and uphold the importance of their social ties for the development of economic infrastructure while in absence of an efficient administration. This is particularly true in Somaliland where the poor regulatory system has contributed to unleash a growing professionalization and the expansion of larger enterprises. This escalating

19, 1988, pp. 203-265; Vali, J. *Nomads, Farmers, and Townsman: incomes and poverty in rural Somalia*, Jobs and Skills Programme for Africa, 1981; Abdi, I. Samatar *The state and rural transformation in Northern Somalia, 1884-1986*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1989.

25 Reno, W. *Somalia and survival in the shadow of the global economy*, Oxford, Oxford University Papers, 2003, p. 33.

26 Lindley, A. "Between "dirty money" and "development capital": Somali money transfer infrastructure under global scrutiny" in *African Affairs*, vol. 108, n. 433, 2009, p. 520.

growth of companies has been vertiginously rapid, unplanned, and often based on the swift accumulation of capitals with little long term strategic vision.

An effect of this commercial explosion in the informal sector has been the mounting chase for resources and the establishment of a climate of raw competition. This has guaranteed a sort of natural selection of the strongest businesses ensuing an immediate exclusion of the weakest. The hard economic contest involving medium and small enterprises have encouraged a flourishing economic sector. After that, a larger network of trade have been strengthened and oligopolies/monopolies have been harmfully empowered with a huge sway on the young political institutions.

The state of things described gives a clear definition of the high potentials and risks offered to the “business class” in Somaliland. As many scholars have pointed out, presently there are no immediate connections forcibly binding economic development to political institutions²⁷. Somaliland is one of the most emblematic examples of this rule. Where governmental bodies are historically unreliable to the population who has been the first victim of political mismanagement, it is not surprising that traditional social and economic patterns have found alternative ways to bring forth wealth and progress. Nevertheless, despite the indisputable evidence of responsibilities that emerges from the economic sector, many other elements are at stake.

2. Islam

The Islamic factor exercises a great influence on this very fragile context. Somaliland is an Islamic country ruled by the Islamic Law, Shari’a, in the Sunni Shafi’ite School where kinship ties and religion go together warding a syncretic socio-cultural environment. One hypothesis formulated here is that religious networks have yielded in Somaliland what traditional politics and bureaucracy have not been able to achieve: international legitimacy and a certain degree of reliability. The integration in the Islamic network has given Somaliland free access to political and financial support that has been recently converted into humanitarian assistance. Islamic intra- and inter-regional cooperation is a relatively new phenomenon. It

27 Bryden, M. “No quick Fixes. Coming to terms with terrorism, Islam, and statelessness in Somalia” in *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, vol. 22, n. 2, 2003, pp. 24-56; Bryden, M. “The ‘Banana Test’: is Somaliland ready for recognition?” in *Annales d’Ethiopie*, vol. 19, n. 19, 2003, pp. 341-364; Bryden, M. “Somalia and Somaliland: envisioning a dialogue on the question of Somali unity” in *African Security Review*, vol. 13, n. 2, 2004, pp. 23-33; De Waal, A. *Class and Power in Stateless Somalia*, SSRIC, 2007, available at: <http://hornofafrica.ssrc.org/dewaal/>; Jhazbhay, I. “Somaliland: Africa best kept secret. A challenge to the International Community?” in *African Security Review*, vol. 12, n. 4, 2003, pp. 77-82.

was born from the ashes of the community-based associations founded during the colonial period and has developed in the 1960s/1970s into a modern network of urban charities and local voluntary development organizations²⁸. They have expanded rapidly, and have created a consolidated web of assistance entailing a substantial amount of religious and political implications.

The major sources of Islamic charity are *Zakat* (Islamic alms) and *Awqaf* (charitable endowments). These agents of wealth redistribution are different from each other: while the first is compulsory, the second is completely voluntary. They can assume many faces. This versatility advocates their employment in the dynamics of poverty alleviation and justifies their strong role in the national and international charitable activities. However, there are many problems concerning their transparency which has worsened since September 11, 2001. 9/11 is a watershed and represents a crackdown in the communication between Western countries and the Muslim world. Many linkages tied to Islamic charitable institutions have become harshly over-monitored by American investigation authorities for national security thus creating a simultaneous association process linking Islamic relief organizations with alleged promoters of international terrorism. With the worsening of the whole panorama, John Benthall stressed that the majority of Islamic charities regarded «accountability as merely a courtesy owed to donors; most have not adopted the kind of procedures common in the West»²⁹. Islamic charities at present are still not inclined to share their financial data. This implies the scarce capacity of researchers to address organizations' activity and their impact in the recipient countries.

In Central and Southern Somalia, Islam has followed an evolution toward the establishment of a range of fragmented and isolated enclaves. Often consisting of a fundamentalist matrix, they have scattered along the paths of conflict and they have become instrumental to the mechanisms of the striking forces that contend for business and supremacy. Somaliland's case seems different. Marleen Renders has recently worked on the Islamic factor in Somaliland and she has highlighted how the position of religious figures in this area has completely changed from the one they had played during colonial times (they were marginal when not excluded from the

28 Ghandour, A.-R. "Humanitarianism, Islam and the West: contest or cooperation?" in *Humanitarian Exchange*, vol. 25, 2008, pp.14-17; Habib, A. *The Role of Zakah and Awqaf in Poverty Alleviation*, Jeddah, Islamic Development Bank Group Islamic Research and Training Institute, 2004; Salih, M.A.M. *Islamic NGOs in Africa: the promise and peril of Islamic voluntarism*, Copenhagen, University of Copenhagen, 2002.

29 Benthall, J. "Humanitarianism and Islam after 11 September" in *Humanitarian Action and the Global War on Terror*, HPG Report n. 14, 2003, p. 43.

secular power which was a prerogative of the *Akils*)³⁰. Today *wadaad*, religious men, are almost independent from the central government and use multiple financial sources, belonging for the great majority to Muslim charitable funds.

Whereas the old *wadaad* were dependent on handouts from their clansmen, the new religious men (*sheikh*) are economically autonomous and cultivate all kinds of business connections separately from their lineage. Despite their apparent re-integration as a new kind of *wadaad* in the age-old interaction between Somali Islam and the clan system, their economic independence and power constitute a crucial change and may make for a fundamentally altered political dynamic in the future³¹.

In the light of these considerations, it's likely that the effects Islam has exerted and exerts over the socio economic context have had great repercussions in the shaping of a development strategy. It is appropriated to reckon the very essential meaning of the cultural linkages tying communities inland and abroad. The implications, in the absence of whatever political legitimacy, could furnish a vital outlet for the local economy. The argument stated here confirms the evidence that Muslim channels have obtained the leading task of economic facilitators which could not be reached through the traditional political and diplomatic ways. Their importance seems to be overcome only by the diaspora financial revenues and the Western function of capital supplier which in any case is predominant. In mentioning briefly the role of diaspora and its connections with Islam, many studies³² reveal that diaspora collected funds are spent to tackle various sectors: humanitarian assistance and local development are among them.

These studies underline how often mosques are involved in sending remittances through organized donations, just to convey a relevant supply of resources to their community of origin. Nothing more is said by Hammond et al. about this mixture of diaspora and Islamic deeds. According to Valeria Saggiomo:

30 «*Akil* is an Arabic borrowing word which roots mean "wise", "intelligent". During the Egyptian domination of the Somali coast the role of *Akils* (chiefs) was established to represent the community through official delegates. In the colonial period they were appointed by the British administration as salaried headmen who were chosen for their ability to relate with the colonial bureaucratic system» Lewis, I.M. *A pastoral Democracy, a study of pastoralism and politics among the Northern Somali of the Horn of Africa*, Hamburg, LIT, 1999, p. 200.

31 Renders, M. "New Religious Men in Somaliland" in *ISIM Review*, vol. 20, 2007, pp. 24-25.

32 See in particular: Hammond, L.; Awad, M.; Dagane, A.I. et al. *Cash and Compassion: the Role of the Somali Diaspora in Relief, Development, and Peace-Building*, UNDP, 2011; Lindley, A. "Between 'dirty money'..." cit.

although the use and collection methods of Islamic charitable funds are recently being studied in many Muslim communities, there is as of yet no specific research available on Somalia. Different attempts have been made in the field of education while the health field is still unexplored. Islamic charities in Somalia mainly rely on three different funding channels: private donations, public donations, and funds that are raised by user fees for social service provision³³.

This way it seems evident how remittance transfer are conducive to the needs of Islamic charities and their financial patterns. However all aspects concerning the frame of funds collection and displacement among Islamic charities still need a thorough and systematic investigation.

3. Health

Health policy can be acknowledged as a parameter to gauge government efficiency and is definitely among the leading catalysts of funds and resources from private investors and governmental institutions (most of them deriving usually from multilateral donors, United Nations first). The public health sector in Somaliland has endured a sharp rehabilitation phase in the last twenty years with limited meaningful results. Currently, the state is living in a condition of chronic dependence on foreign assistance. The services provided are generally of poor quality and not competitive with the recently emerged private sector. Private care, with its clinics and pharmacies mushrooming, operates without any kind of central control. There is a third typology which has to be quoted: it is the private non-profit category which combines public and private financial sources by delivering good quality services through an efficient, cheap and sustainable policy.

The prolonged dictatorship and the following civil war, which is still going on in Central and Southern Somalia, shredded what remained of the feeble health service network established during the Siyaad Barre era³⁴. The reconstruction phase, endorsed in 1991 by the newly proclaimed Republic of Somaliland³⁵, tried to fill the gap in the provision of basic medical assistance. This has been done with

33 Saggiomo, V. "From Charity to Governance: Islamic NGOs and Education in Somalia" in *The Open Area Studies Journal*, vol. 4, 2011, p. 56.

34 Qayad, M.G. "Health care service in transitional Somalia: challenges and recommendations" in *Bildhaan: an International Journal of Somali Studies*, vol. 7, 2007, pp. 190-210.

35 Here it is made a particular reference to the five years reform plan introduced by the government of Mohamed Ibrahim Egal in 1999.

a huge amount of resources supplied by the foreign community, generally in the shape of humanitarian aid. Even though the virtual state suffered the difficulties connected with its illegitimate political condition, which also has restrained the possibility to ask for heavy bilateral financial support, humanitarian cooperation has overcome numerous obstacles and now can tackle some of the most urgent necessities of the country.

The complexity of the issue is very concerning and this paper is clearly not sufficient to satisfy the criteria which requires the exposition of a detailed analysis of the entire health sector. Anyhow, focused observations shed light on the stratification of multiple forces pressing for improvement but disbanded because of the lack of communication³⁶. Furthermore, there are different levels of functionality: on the one side, there is a huge need of support which is furnished by many external donors following agendas determined by default. On the other side, there is a weak governmental apparatus which is not able to impose its local priorities because of the status of its chronic reliance on external aid.

This is the background. Most of the time, public services are not able to provide patients with basic treatments and research interest has switched to the complementary private facilities. The research underlined a shadow environment, not easy to approach. It is still left in the dark, the insurmountable difficulties owing to the inadequacy of research instruments and environmental obstacles.

A third level of services has been reasonably accessible to research investigation: it is the private-non-profit sector. The following description indicates the common features this sector shares with the public and the private ones. Private entrepreneurship and real autonomy are fundamental instruments to the execution of projects directly managed and monitored by local implementers. This aspect merges with public support and a differentiated fund-raising using preferential humanitarian channels. Patients are requested to give a contribution for the treatments delivered on the base of their economic possibilities. Medical therapies, when not affordable to patients, are partially subsidized by the state. Financial assistance comes from international organizations reflecting, where possible, a direct demand of senior managers or the clinics' directors.

This paper illustrates the case study of a non-profit hospital founded and managed by a Somali non-profit organization, Al-Manhal Charitable Organization. This medical

36 Zizzola, D. *Gestione e Finanziamento della Politica Sanitaria in Somaliland: influenza dei meccanismi di cooperazione sulla sanità pubblica e privata*, tesi di laurea, Università di Bologna, 2009; Zizzola, D. "Il processo di nation-building nelle dinamiche di gestione della politica sanitaria: il caso del Somaliland" in Nicolini, B.; Taddia, I. (eds.) *Medicina Moderna e Consuetudinaria nella ricostruzione degli stati del Corno d'Africa*, Roma, Novalogos, 2011, pp. 146-170.

facility receives funds and donations from a various range of partners. This hybrid form of assistance, enforcing the clinic's sustainability, highlights the local actors' ability to relate with governmental institutions for protection and on Western secular organizations for fund raising, but in the mean time demonstrates unquestionably how they are able to gather resources even through alternative channels: Islamic charities, diaspora remittances, and private sponsorship by local firms.

The hospital's name is Manhal Speciality Hospital and was opened in 2006 in the capital Hargeysa. It was established thanks to a private venture of Somali scholars who forgathered within Al-Manhal Charitable Organization in Mogadishu in 1994. The group worked hard to improve Somali living conditions and to underpin the peace-building effort. As it can be seen, this is a crucial instance of the stabilization and emancipation path endorsed by Somaliland during the last twenty years.

The hospital staff started its activity specializing in ophthalmology services inside the Hargeysa General Hospital, taking care of the ophthalmology ward. When they broke away from the central medical facility to found their own clinic, it soon became extremely evident how patients required various needs to be covered: among them, the most urgent, were child and maternal healthcare and basic medical treatments. Today, the hardest challenge to the hospital remains reproductive healthcare and blindness prevention control.

The great majority of public facilities survive with a shortage of trained medical staff, drugs and equipment, and is consequently compelled to deliver medium to low quality services, even though for free. Meanwhile, Manhal Speciality Hospital uses a different policy to manage its resources. By supporting the national health plans in an attempt to cooperate with the Ministry of Health and Labor and other international agencies for the realization of the national health policy, it contributes to the ministerial effort to cultivate alternative financing modalities. This has been done by developing a health care delivery network financed with cost-recovery strategies³⁷ and community involvement based on the following principles.

- Meeting the health care needs at affordable costs for those who can support themselves.
- Subsidizing those fellow community members who cannot fully afford services.

³⁷ Cost-recovery strategy has been inspired by the Bamako Initiative officially signed in 1987. This approach has been intensively exploited also by Islamic organizations whose great priority in the humanitarian action is the achievement of a complete sustainability and economic independence of targeted subjects from aid delivery. Actually this model is subject to critics by other concerned agents because of the difficulty in the supervision of local actors and the risk of mismanagement it entails.

- Alleviating those who can never afford healthcare by the exemption of service charges through fund raising for the exempted costs.
- Improving equitable access of essential health care to all communities through camping services, especially remote locations.

The cost recovery budget is sustained by many international actors: World Health Organization, Global Foundation, Help Patient Fund (Kuwait), Red Crescent (U.A.E.), International Islamic Charity Organization, UNICEF, Kuwait Zakaat Fund, Red Crescent (Qatar), Arab Doctors Union, Sheik Eid bin Muhamed Al Thani-Qatar, Islamic Welfare Organization (Kingdom of Bahrain). Western humanitarian agencies are committed to the hospital funding as are Islamic charities, though often in a fitful way.

Moreover, it is interesting to note the composition of the Hospital Board of Trustees at its opening: it was comprised of twelve members. Among them, the Mufti of Somaliland, Shekh Mohamed Shekh Omer Dirir, the manager of Telesom, one of the major telecommunication companies, Abdul-Karim Mohamed Eid, the vice-Minister of Ministry of Health and Labor, Ahmed Ali Shire, a member of the parliament, Farhan Mohamed Ali, the manager of Candle Light, a non-profit Somali organization, Ahmed Ibrahim Awale, one of the managers of Dahabshil Company, the principal remittances agency in Somaliland, Hassan Abdi Awad, the manager of Uneico Construction Company, Engr. Abdul-Qadir Liman, and so on.

It is strikingly evident that the heterogeneous composition of the Board of Trustees reflects the alternative solutions implemented by the Al-Manhal Charitable Organization. They succeeded in differentiating the provenance of revenues so ensuring the clinic's financial viability; the board members belonged to all segments of the society. This measure allowed them to pursue the benefit of limiting the chronic dependence on foreign aid, which, on the contrary, has constantly been besieging the public sector. In the mean time, they have arranged an operating mechanism which involves local institutions and it simultaneously allows the control of quality levels proving their ethic of honesty and transparency. Even though this enterprise seems to not be completely satisfying, autonomous, or respectful to the higher level standards set in the Western world, the distance separating this clinic to its corresponding local public counterparts is quite noticeable.

In spite of the difficulties that the country and this single hospital are trying to cope with, it is impossible to deny the success Manhal Speciality Hospital has been able to achieve since its opening. Statistics and data have been deeply examined by the author even if they are not reported in details. According to

its original aim, the article attempts to give a good exemplification through a single case-study of what has been observed in the broader context of the whole Somaliland. There are always fewer barriers in the community involvement in social development and the collective deployment of resources with the shared purpose of equal improvement. Therefore, mixed assets are suitable to the enhancement of local capacities because they upgrade individual awareness. They strengthen endogenous pledges for growth and they employ their engagement responding to external challenges in a very original way, built upon the real needs of Somalilanders.

4. Conclusion

Looking at the different realities that compose contemporary Somalia, we can observe multiple political and economic issues concerning whether a nation can or cannot exist. Considering the world systematic evolution toward a global economy and its constraints, the least developed countries, Somalia for instance, is trying to create its separate way, looking for growth and socio-political improvement. This is done by using both conventional and unconventional tools mixed with a new economic approach rooted and promoted by the Islamic religious community.

The goal of this paper is to give some preliminary observations on the unique capacity of Somalilanders to react to the challenges imposed by the outer world by looking at three key-factors and their mutual interaction. Thereby, this article proposes a concrete sample of enterprise which combines health, Islamic and Western charity, and economic sustainability through wide fundraising and humanitarian assistance. Thus, it considers some of the dynamics which rule the parallel economic way-out that are newly adapted and performed by Somali people in extremely difficult contexts.

Though this analysis is a preliminary assessment of the strategic relation binding opposite factors into a communal system of profit sharing and technical exchange realized to achieve development and economic benefits, a distinct research pathway emerges here. It could be used as a suggestion to see the unconventional linkages that are growing stronger among agents tied to each other albeit historically autonomous. A good possibility would be the one to test the effectiveness of combining economic advancement with the protection of vulnerable subjects handing over old tactics of capital accumulation while restoring a web of community values. Only time will prove the strength of those values. However, those principles are highly profit oriented therefore, either they could cut the edge of a consolidated praxis of financial rule and wealth enhancement or they could be instrumental to a new pattern of power acquisition through the

propagation of social inequalities and rights violations in a durable way. The task of demonstrating which tendency will prevail over the other belongs to a further commitment.

History and Society **II**

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Divided loyalties: an African Christian community during the 1906 uprising in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa¹

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Introduction

In early April 1906, chief Bambatha and the young men of the Zondi chiefdom swept through the Natal thorn veld and, by making use of the uniting symbols of the Zulu kingship, the names of Shaka and Dinuzulu, they raised the banner of resistance against the white settler government and the British colonial power in KwaZulu-Natal. Ever since the end of the South African war in 1902, relationships had been tense between the white settlers and the ten times larger black population. However, with the outbreak of actual violence, many hitherto non-aligned groups were now forced to take a stand. This was the case among many Africans particularly in the troubled districts of the rural areas. Even if patterns of participation or non-participation often followed lines of kinship and family, allegiances were never clear-cut. For a great many there was deep ambiguity whether to join in the uprising, try to remain neutral or support the government. In the regions directly affected by the uprising were Swedish missionaries. Now they had to decide if they were to take side with the whites, with whom they had so much in common, or with the black population, whom they had come to educate and convert to Christianity (and without whom their presence ultimately was meaningless). As developments unfolded according to the logic of a colonial war in a black and white racist society, neutrality soon turned out to be a superseded alternative. For the many rank-and-file African converts, who lived in the nearness of mission stations but in the midst of a non-Christian majority population, the uprising brought much confusion and heart-searching on which side they were to stand:

¹ The present article is based on research and source material of which some previously have been published in Berge, L. *The Bambatha Watershed. Swedish Missionaries, African Christians and an Evolving Zulu Church in Rural Natal and Zululand 1902-1910*, Uppsala, The Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, 2000.

the lines of allegiance did indeed cut through both family and kin. Even among the missionaries' black assistants, the evangelists, the future leadership of the evolving Zulu church, there was uncertainty. Like their African nationalist colleagues in the Natal Native Congress, most of them identified themselves with the values of the white man, and wished to be received by him as an equal. Nevertheless, between several of them, the uprising and all the violence that followed created a deep crisis of confidence.

1. The colonisation of Natal and Zululand

The legacy of a glorious Zulu history was a powerful symbol when mobilising for war. In the early nineteenth century, Natal and Zululand were parts of the Zulu kingdom under Shaka kaSenzangakhona (c. 1816-1828). Due to a well organised state and superior war technology, the Zulu war machine had caused havoc and demographic change in large parts of southern Africa, reaching as far north as to the great lakes. In the Zulu kingdom itself, the pre-capitalist economy was based on production by and for the largely self-sufficient homestead. Cattle played a major role in religion, in transactions and in the accumulation of surplus wealth. Through cattle people could get in touch with their "shades" or ancestors. Division of labour was among family members based on sexual divisions in each homestead. Only men would handle cattle and the young boys would lead the cattle between summer and winter grazing grounds. Women were in charge of raising crops. With a polygynous social system, households consisted of a husband with one or several wives. Each wife lived with her children in a hut of her own next to the piece of land worked by her and her daughters. The surplus of their labour, like maize or other crops, could be bartered for cattle which, in this way, functioned as a kind of "bank" for their savings, a way to store surplus otherwise destroyed by insects. Cattle could also, after long negotiations ensuring mutual family obligations, be used as bride wealth, to marry a new wife into the homestead and thereby increase its production capacity. Even if the production of crops was seen as inferior to cattle keeping, it was the work of wives and their children which ultimately provided the subsistence base upon which society depended².

British arrival to South Africa, where the Dutch since the 1650s had established a provisioning station for the trade on the Indies, was mainly to prevent the French

2 Guy, J. "Gender oppression in Southern Africa's precapitalist societies" in *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, Walker, C. (ed.) Claremont and London, David Philip and James Currey, 1990, pp. 34-35.

(under Napoleon) from occupying the strategically important Cape of Good Hope, a stepping stone on the route to India and the East. To protect their base, the British sought to “pacify” bordering territories and in the footsteps of soldiers followed traders, settlers and missionaries who soon began to insist on British “protection” from hostile neighbours. In this way Natal, south of Zululand, had become a British colony in 1856.

The most far-reaching changes in South Africa are associated with the late nineteenth century mineral discoveries. The growth of the gold mining industry in the Transvaal led to a massive influx of Europeans and the employment of a large number of African migrant labourers. The mineral discoveries led to economic development and changes that included most of the subcontinent. In Natal, mercantile activities created a new market for agricultural produce. The settlers’ large tracts of land were transformed into commercial farming and the white presence increased. The colonial exploitation was intensified when the settlers in 1893 were granted responsible government by Britain and, in 1897, when white farmers became a majority in the cabinet. Even if the Natal settlers by the early twentieth century only amounted to some ten per cent of the population, they had still taken over more than two thirds of all fertile land. Black families were – in order to remain on the land that since origin of times had been counted as common, and that no one definitively could own – forced to pay either in rent or in labour. The alternative was to be evicted to any of the areas which, because of poor soils, had been rejected by white farmers and now were designed African reserves.

When Zululand formally was annexed in 1887, this part of the country was also subject to the “hut tax”, since long imposed in Natal. This was actually a tax on every wife, i.e. on each productive unit in every household, since each wife had her own hut. It was yet another attempt to solve the white farmers’ “labour problem” but also to hold back the higher competitiveness of black peasants, the result of their family members co-operating in the production of crops and their relatively little need for manufactured goods. The increased fencing of white-owned land hindered the movement of Africans’ cattle between summer and winter grazing but, in the last years of the century, the situation radically worsened with a series of severe cattle epidemics (where up to 95 per cent of African-owned cattle died in certain areas, a disaster for Africans’ savings). In 1903, these were followed by a severe drought. More men were forced into wage labour while women and daughters, the productive and reproductive part of the population, by social sanction and colonial law, were kept at home – although it did happen that a few escaped to the big cities or to neighbouring mission stations.

2. The 1906 Bambatha uprising

The spark that ignited the dry bush was the new tax imposed by the settler government in late 1905, the per capita tax of one pound on every adult male. In the reserves, discontent was rife among increasingly crowded and impoverished peasants. On both sides rumours and mistrust grew. Some said that Dinuzulu kaCethswayo (1868-1913), the son of the last Zulu king, was gathering his troops in Zululand, ready to throw all whites into the Indian Ocean. Others said that “messengers” were moving around, telling people to kill all white pigs and destroy all Western tools. The group that most severely felt the new hostile sentiments was the black Christians, those who had left the old community, religion and life style for Western education, individualism and a hope for a new future. They were not many, probably no more than ten per cent of the black population in Natal and considerably less in Zululand. Already at an early stage, several black Christian families were accused of being traitors, chased away and their Western (square) houses were burned.

The uprising, initiated by Bambatha in 1906, was soon spread to various parts of Natal and Zululand. In rank he was not a major chief but, like so many other headmen under British indirect rule, he was being pressured from two sides. He was to act both as a government official, i.e. collect taxes and judge in disputes, and, as chief, “the breast of the nation”, rule his people by allocating the common land. This, however, was in a situation where land was increasingly scarce, cattle herds had been decimated up to 80 or 90 per cent, hunger and even famine were spreading – and where the young men could not afford to marry and taxes were being raised.

To begin with, the whites appeared to be on the losing side. Settlers were easy targets on their isolated farms. In the long run, however, Zulu assegais and spears could not match the Maxim guns and dum-dum bullets. Not even the *intelezi*, the ritual medicine given to the men before battle, which would turn the white man’s bullets into water, seemed to help. By the tenth of June war was over. The uprising can adequately be summed up in the losses: twenty-four white soldiers lost their lives and thirty-seven were wounded while between 3,500 and 4,000 Africans were killed and some 7,000 taken prisoner. Afterwards, the suppression was harsh with an extensive burning of homesteads and crops. Several settlers took the opportunity to settle old scores with labour tenants. In the footsteps of the uprising followed hunger, cattle plague and pestilence and, with many of the men in jail, women and children were without their breadwinners.

The Bambatha uprising was the last armed resistance in that part of Africa and marked the end of one, pre-colonial, or pre-capitalist, epoch, and the beginning of

another: the “new” South Africa. For most people, living conditions were severely affected and an increasing number of men and boys joined the stream of labour migrants to white farms or gold mines. In London, it was now clear that Natal could no longer be entrusted a small, arrogant and incompetent settler élite and plans were made for the unification of the four South African colonies. Among whites, the relief over the defeated uprising led to a reconciliation between English and Boer. The South African Union was established in 1910. Among a growing number of blacks it was felt that the leaders of the old had been wrong and the African Christians right: the future laid not in armed resistance but in Western education and a peaceful struggle for franchise. The ANC was formed in 1912.

3. The state of research

The earliest, most complete account of the events of the uprising is James Stuart’s *History of the Zulu Rebellion*³. Stuart, a colonial official, defended the “almost perfect” segregationist system of administration in Natal and argued that the reasons for revolt were mainly to be traced to external influences. Among them were the African Christians and especially the “Ethiopians”, the members of the African Independent Churches⁴. The pioneering and most comprehensive study of the uprising, and the still indispensable starting point for all later research, is that by Shula Marks of 1970: *Reluctant Rebellion: The 1906-8 Disturbances in Natal*⁵. In a context of African resistance history, Marks contributes with a broad perspective, analysing black and white societies over time and the colonial setting, where land and labour are seen as basic components in a society characterised by racial supremacy and cultural domination. In relation to Stuart, Marks has two important observations. Besides claiming that Dinuzulu was not responsible for the uprising, she shows that the African Christians, notably the “Ethiopians”, were not major participants. The war was basically tribal, run as far as possible on traditional lines⁶. Nevertheless, «Christianity and education were probably

3 Stuart, J. *History of the Zulu Rebellion 1906 and of Dinuzulu’s Arrest, Trial and Expatriation*, London, MacMillan and Co., 1913. A civil servant and fluent in the Zulu language, Stuart acted as an intelligence officer during the war. As a most well informed participant and an eye-witness, his study can be seen as a semi-official, primary source.

4 Stuart, J. *History...* cit., pp. 420-21, 513, 520, 536 and 538. On “Ethiopians”, the African Independent Churches, the classical study is Sundkler, B.G.M. *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, London Oxford University Press, 1948 (1961).

5 Marks, S. *Reluctant Rebellion: The 1906-8 Disturbances in Natal*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1970.

6 Ivi, p. 335, cf. pp. 308-313, 326.

the most important factors making for constructive change in African society»⁷. Missionary teachings had resulted in a new independent spirit experienced among African Christians in the years around 1900. The work of Christian missions and their converts, she says, threatened the status quo of white dominance⁸.

In later studies, Marks more directly relates the uprising to the expansion of capitalism in Natal and an African peasants' resistance to proletarianization⁹. In yet further specialising research, others have interpreted it either as "an inevitable climax", following the 1890s deteriorating conditions in the homestead economy, or as the result of conflicts between generations¹⁰. In the light of an increasing literature on the uprising or aspects of it, it is, as observed by Marks in 2002, «somewhat surprising that there have been relatively few sustained attempts to re-examine the uprising using new sources»¹¹. An increasing number of scholars agree on the Bambatha uprising as, in the words of Paul la Hausse, «a defining moment in the history of African nationalism in South Africa»¹². With the crucial role played by African Christians in the construction of African nationalism it is, furthermore, surprising that so few comprehensive studies have been made on the role of this group during the formative years before, during and immediately after the uprising¹³. There are several probable reasons for this. Since most studies focus

7 Ivi, pp. 81-82.

8 Ivi, pp. 56, 59, 78-81, 356-358, 365.

9 See Marks, S.; Atmore, A. *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class Formation, Culture and Consciousness 1870-1930*, New York, Longman, 1982, pp. 23, 41, cf. Marks, S. "Class, Ideology and the Bambatha Rebellion" in Crummey, D. (ed.) *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa*, James Currey and Longman, London and Portsmouth, 1986, p. 351.

10 Two recent studies give special attention to the Bambatha uprising. One is: Carton, B. *Blood From Your Children*, Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 2000. The other, particularly highlighting one of the regions, Mapumulo, and two of its chiefs involved, is Guy, J. *The Mapumulo Uprising*, Scottsville, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2005. Lambert, J. *Betrayed Trust*, Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1995, comprehensive study covers the nineteenth century long-term social and economic developments in rural KwaZulu-Natal, resulting in the decline of the homestead economy, where the uprising is seen as an inevitable climax. La Hausse, P. *Restless Identities*, Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 2000, focuses on the period 1910-1940, of the emerging African Nationalism in KwaZulu-Natal history.

11 Marks, S. "Zulu Christians and the Bambatha Rebellion" in *Swedish Missiological Themes*, vol. 90, n. 2, 2002, p. 259.

12 La Hausse, P. *Restless Identities*... cit, p. 12.

13 Even if all of them primarily deal with a later stage in the development of African nationalism in KwaZulu-Natal, at least three major studies should be mentioned: Marks, S. *The Ambiguities of Dependence in South Africa: Class, Nationalism and the State in Twentieth-Century Natal*, Cape Town, Ravan Press, 1986, Cope, N., *To Bind the Nation. Solomon kaDinuzulu and Zulu Nationalism*

on a later period, the general assumption seems to be that the real story of African nationalism only began as a result of the uprising¹⁴. Another may be a shortage of historical sources in the local KwaZulu-Natal records regarding the role of missions and converts¹⁵. A third is undoubtedly a long-standing gap between institutional mission histories, often produced by church historians, which tend to ignore the wider society in which the missionaries operate, and more “secular” histories which tend to ignore or downplay the influence of religion on society. This in spite of a general upsurge in interest of publications about religion in African history, including South Africa, as Norman Etherington remarks in his 1996 survey of the topic. Interestingly, he also pointed at a number of gaps in this research, among them the work of non-Anglophone missions and the gendered nature of religious experience¹⁶. The object of the present article is to fill some of these gaps by indicating how the source material of one of these non-Anglophone missions, the Church of Sweden Mission (CSM), with a decidedly grass-root setting and with the aid of gender and nationalist theory perspectives, can contribute to a further understanding of the role of missionaries, converts and evangelists during the 1906 uprising.

4. A gold mine in Swedish archives

It is a paradox that much of Zulu social history is written in Swedish and kept in Swedish archives, inaccessible to South African historians. Towards a background where the spreading of literacy coincided with the arrival of Christian missionaries and the establishing of elementary schools this, however, becomes intelligible. Oral history is useful in balancing dominant historical traditions but it is only

1913-1933, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg , 1993, and, finally, La Hausse, P. *Restless Identities...* cit.

14 The “nation”, la Hausse writes, was only discovered by the African Christian élite through the Bambatha uprising, which gave them a powerful metaphor for their own marginalisation within colonial society and “an awareness of the terrifying distance separating a ‘traditional’ past from the unstable modernity of the present”, La Hausse, P. *Restless Identities...* cit, p. 9.

15 Surprisingly, this seems to be the case with one of la Hausse’s principal characters, Petros Lamula (c. 1881-1948), the first black teacher of the Norwegian (NMS) Lutheran mission. Even if Lamula in early 1906 lived in one of the most violent areas of the uprising (first at Umpumulo training college, then as a refugee near Ekombe) la Hausse has to admit that “In the absence of appropriate evidence it is difficult to gauge the fugitive teacher’s reaction to the Bambatha rebellion”, La Hausse, P. *Restless Identities...*op. cit., p. 39.

16 Etherington, N. “The Historiography of Christianity” in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 22, n. 2, 1996, p. 201.

with the spreading of a general literacy that black history becomes visible in archival sources. Mission archives can, in this respect, provide an abundance of new sources, and thereby contribute to the unfolding of new perspectives of Zulu social history. This becomes clear in a comparison with some of the British colonial sources, often based on the reports of colonial officials. Many of them, young men of the English upper middle classes were, in spite of an “Oxbridge” graduation, not seldom ignorant in the Zulu language and often received reports from paid informants – who knew what they wanted to hear. The missionaries, on the other hand, knew the language well since they, faithful to Protestant traditions, for years had worked with Zulu translations of the New Testament. Many had lived in their regions for decades, they knew the people, their religion and were acquainted with chiefs and headmen, not least their wives.

A particular feature of the KwaZulu-Natal religious environment is the long history and relatively strong presence of Lutheran – Norwegian, German and Swedish – missions. By 1910, almost a third of the total number of African Christians of KwaZulu-Natal was Lutheran¹⁷. «Clearly, the Swedish mission archives», Marks says, «contain by far the most informative new sources on the uprising»¹⁸. Swedish mission stations were situated in three out of four war zones and the CSM missionaries were among the very few whites who dared to stay when battle cries were heard over the hills. In contrast to most other missions, all male CSM missionaries had academic degrees and, in addition to this, many had a teacher’s exam. All were ordained clergy in the Church of Sweden. They were trained observers. Among the women missionaries, all unmarried, most were teachers, others were nurses or lay workers. The privileged position of the state church, accounts for an exemplary order of minutes, reports, statistics, letters and diaries, equivalent only to a government office. By posing new questions to this rather substantial material, which covers the period before, during and after the uprising, and by employing a variety of perspectives, including an awareness of possible missionary bias, new light can be shed on the 1906 events.

17 During the latter part of the nineteenth century, Norwegian, German and Swedish Lutherans had run more than a third of all mission stations in southern Africa of which no less than 70 per cent were in the colony of Natal and the Transvaal. Cf. Scriba, G.; Lislerud, G. “Lutheran Missions and Churches in South Africa” in Elphick, R.; Davenport, R. (eds.) *Christianity in South Africa. A political, Social and Cultural History*, James Currey and David Philip, Oxford and Cape Town, 1997, p. 173; Norenus, J.E. *Bland Zuluer och Karanger: Femtio års Missionshistoria på Svenska Kyrkans Fält i Sydafrika. Vol. II*, Uppsala, Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1925, pp. 181-182.

18 Marks, S. “Zulu Christians...” cit., p. 259.

5. An african Christian community

The grass-root observations of the CSM sources can shed new light on how Christian communities were differently exposed to the uprising depending on regional variations. In the large African reserves to the south, where the basic fabric of the homestead economy had remained relatively intact during most of the nineteenth century, there had been few incentives for conversion. With the missionaries' general ban on polygyny and demand for a new division of labour, with the women at home and the men in the fields, it was even less attractive. To belong to a homestead with many wives was prestigious to both men and women. For men it was much harder to break with established economic and social patterns which meant that a husband with a plurality of wives formed a small, competitive enterprise – not least in relation to the monogamous white farmers. Supported by the system of indirect rule, chiefly power, social structures and religion were relatively unbroken in the reserves. Chiefs often used their authority to suppress the comparatively few African Christians and, particularly in the years after the South African war, there was a constant and bitter struggle over converts between chiefs and evangelists. A popular way to get rid of a male convert or an evangelist was the forced labour service. A chief was obliged to provide the state with labourers and, without a fair rotation system, he could repeatedly send out men against whom he bore a grudge. The severe drought of 1903 was followed by further impoverishment, even famine, depletion of cattle herds and yet more men away on wage labour. With traditional values, disallowing women to seek labour away from home, the women's share in the maintenance burden was increased. In the CSM sources this is indicated by a steep decline in girls' and women's attendance at out station schools. The survival of the homestead economy depended on them and it so altered the balance of power between men and women that it led to women's questioning of the patriarchal role of homestead heads and chiefs in African traditional religion. The frustration over this disintegration of traditional values is evident in the statement by a homestead senior in the Noodsberg area who, in a dispute with the local Swedish missionary claimed that «religion is the concern of men – not women»¹⁹.

In the white-dominated farming areas of the north the cash economy had already been introduced, marking a shift from an economy in which people were

19 Hallström, C.A. *Vägrödjaren på Appelsbosch. Fredrik Ljungquists levnadssaga*, Uppsala, Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses bokförlag, 1937, p. 103.

the object of production to one in which production was the object of people. Here, a heterogeneous and alienated African population lived as impoverished labour or rent tenants. Chiefs were weakened and Christianity tolerated among fellow Africans. Rather, it was the settler who threatened the Christian community. Missionaries were accused of “spoiling the natives”, producing useless labourers who not only had become “proud and idle” but who also demanded higher wages. It was not unusual that settlers threatened to expel any labourer who became a Christian or that hymn books and bibles were burnt. During the uprising, the fundamental conflict in the north was rather that of a class struggle between tenant and landlord, thus confirming the image of a resistance against proleterianisation, as analysed by Marks in her more recent studies²⁰. At the centre of local settler hatred was the mission. The church at the Oscarsberg mission station was spared by the rebels but, when the white settler troops arrived, they broke into the building and desecrated the church, missionary Knut Hallendorff wrote. Later, at the entirely African-run Amoibie outstation, the church building was set on fire and burnt down: «they tolled the bell while our temple perished in the flames», Hallendorff said²¹. Hence, in both regions Christianity was openly regarded as a dangerous force. Whether confronted with chiefs in the reserves or with white farmers in the north, it was threatening status quo. In both cases it was ultimately the white settler government which defended the established order. Adherence to “traditionalism” and segregation became a convenient pretext for withholding political rights from the educated Africans.

Most previous studies thus agree that the African Christians as a group did not take part in the rebellion, which still remains true. Such studies have, nevertheless, primarily focused on the older and more established Anglophone missions and, accordingly, given emphasis to the role of the rather small, monogamous, African Christian middle class élite, the future ANC leadership²². However, since conversions came very slow during most of the nineteenth century and it was only in the last decade that a substantial increase in the number of baptisms occurred, most Christians of the early 1900s were either recent converts or first generation church members. This is where the Swedish mission comes in. The CSM was a

20 Marks, S.; Atmore, A. *Industrialisation and Social Change...* cit.; Marks, S. *The Ambiguities of Dependence...* cit.

21 Hallendorff, K. *Svenska Kyrkans Missions Tidning*, vol. 31, n. 15-16, 1906, pp. 254-255.

22 Marks, S. *Industrialisation and Social Change...* cit.; Meintjes, S. “Edendale 1850-1906. A Case Study of Rural Transformation and Class Formation in an African Mission in Natal” PhD Thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, London. 1988; Marable, W.M. “African Nationalist: The Life of John Langalibalele Dube” in PhD Thesis, University of Maryland, 1976.

latecomer to the region, it could not offer large stretches of land for the since long established, monogamous, Christian families, to settle on. The CSM converts were rather representative of the vast majority of the pre-1906 African Christians of the rural areas who only recently had been baptised. Between the years 1904 and 1906 the baptism of adult CSM catechumens in the reserves increased by no less than 70 per cent. In 1906, in the southern part of the reserve, 93 out of 115 baptismal candidates were women (something CSM missionaries passed over in silence in correspondence with pecuniary supporters in Sweden who lived with the illusion of an ethnic *Folk Church* being formed in Africa). To the women, the mission offered a new future for themselves and their children or access to religious worship denied in male-dominated Zulu religion. It is noteworthy that, in addition to schooling, the missionaries also provided new agricultural skills, particularly useful in the duties traditionally assigned Zulu women. For women it was, furthermore, much easier to surpass the missionary ban on polygynists – since each wife was married to only one man. At Pentecost in 1906, diverging strategies among men and women were strikingly contrasted. The week before the outbreak of violence, there was an exceptional peak when no less than 70 women and children but only one, elderly, man were baptised in one day at the Appelsbosch church. At the very same time, up in the hills surrounding the mission station, the men were sharpening their weapons in preparing for uprising against the whites, including the missionaries. Indeed, African Christians did not take part in the uprising – but their husbands, fathers, brothers and sons did.

6. The missionary factor

The missionaries themselves are of course important not only as producers of archival sources but also as agents of religious, economic and social change. In spite of the Zulu saying that “Zululand is not bigger than God’s little finger” KwaZulu-Natal was crowded with missionary societies. Missionaries came from a number of Western countries and different denominations but after some years, when firmly established in the black and white colonial context, they turned out remarkably similar. This is particularly evident when missionary attitudes are analysed in relation to issues crucial for the survival of the homestead economy: the distribution of land and labour as well as polygyny and bride wealth. Even if the missionary project primarily has to be seen as an integral part of the colonial context, i.e. where the encounter took place, the background in the missionaries’ home countries is not irrelevant. This is particularly true in a comparison between Swedish and Norwegian missionaries operating in roughly the same KwaZulu-Natal region. Swedes and Norwegians had a common background as neighbours

on the Scandinavian peninsula, closely related languages, similar Protestant-Lutheran state church settings and were, until 1905, subjects of the Swedish-Norwegian double monarchy. In the mission field they nevertheless reached remarkably divergent standpoints.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, when Sweden was rapidly transformed from a pre-capitalist to a capitalist society, Swedish intellectuals searched for new national identity that could soothe the travails of social change. With inspiration from German romanticism and Hegel's speculative thinking of the people, *Folk*, as an organism, diverging class interests and culturally diverse regions were to be embraced into one imagined community. The Nation was to be characterised by low thresholds for entry and lofty ceilings for cultural and social differences – but under one roof. H. W. Tottie (1846-1913), the leading CSM theologian at the time, was an exponent of such nationalism. It was an essentially conservative programme, initiated from the above by the state church, against the forces of modernisation. Instead of the individual's conversion, Tottie advocated the Christianisation of entire peoples and the establishing of ethnic *Folk* churches on the mission field. In 1886 Tottie met with Dinuzulu when he visited in Zululand, conquered by the British but not yet incorporated into the colony of Natal. Much of his thinking was mapped on the situation in Zululand. The ethnic *Folk* church was to become a new consolidating "cement" in the face of a disintegrating Zulu culture, threatened by Western colonialism and greedy capitalism. A people, with its national identity and distinctive character, was, Tottie said, not to be subjugated by the mission. Instead, indigenous social institutions, such as polygyny, were to be tolerated and the future church truly Zulu in character. The CSM goals were intended for Zululand but, for a number of reasons, the larger CSM mission stations were all established in colonial black and white Natal, which somewhat came to distort Tottie's original vision. As an associate professor at Uppsala in the 1890s he influenced a generation of future CSM missionaries.

In the early twentieth century, Tottie's spirit still influenced Swedish missionaries both in the other CSM mission field in India and in southern Africa. CSM missionaries took a keen interest in recording Zulu oral history and culture, encouraged the use of Zulu names amongst their converts and struggled to keep Zulu the language of instruction in their schools, despite the government's demands for more English. Among all the mission societies operating in southern Africa, only the CSM was ready to accept polygyny amongst its baptised members²³.

23 One exception was John William Colenso (1814-1883), the first bishop of the Church of England

This in spite of accusations of giving in to heathenism or criticism by other missionaries, not least German and Norwegian missionaries who claimed this threatened the envisaged future, united Zulu Lutheran church. Not all Swedes did, however, agree. To some of the women missionaries, with fantasies about black men entertaining themselves in their “harems”, the idea was utterly repellent. Neither were the mission supporters at home – mostly women in sewing societies who, through needle-work and parish fairs, financed the mission project – expected to endorse such a reform. The question had to be postponed.

It is in this respect interesting to compare the Swedish missionaries with their Norwegian Lutheran counterparts, often the sons and daughters of fishermen and peasants with a background in the pietistic revival of the Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS). This broad, popular movement – religiously and culturally conservative but politically liberal and a “school in democracy” – had become one of the prime movers behind the nineteenth century Norwegian nationalism. This was, first of all, aimed against the former Danish rule and its remaining cultural dominance based in the capital Christiania (Oslo). This was to be replaced by a distinctively Norwegian culture, modelled on the little fishing villages of the far north. Secondly, it was a political struggle for independence, aimed against Sweden, the ruling power, with the king in Stockholm. The different concepts of the two national movements were to be played out in South Africa.

To the Biblicist Norwegians, almost everything in Zulu culture was considered heathen. This included dress, food, beer and medicine. At baptisms, the NMS converts were given new, Western, names. The new name was to symbolise the new Christian individual born through the baptism, while the old names were seen as too much associated with the old heathen world and religion. Since the Norwegians received their ideals from the only “true” Christian society they knew, i.e. Norway, a great number of Zulu men and women came to live their lives not only as “Martin Luther” and “Mary Magdalene” but also as “Johannes Haugvaldstad” and “Elisabeth” and “Henriette Jakobine Gislesen”²⁴. An acceptance of polygyny was, of course, unthinkable.

in Natal. With evidence from the Old Testament he argued that polygynists should be accepted as church members. He did, however, have very few followers and many enemies and, as said by his biographer, Jeff Guy, Colenso’s ideas on polygyny, education and the entire concept of mission were rejected then and have after that been ignored ever since. Guy, J. *The Heretic. A Study of the Life of John William Colenso 1814-1883*, Braamfontein and Pietermaritzburg, Ravan Press and the University of Natal Press, 1983, p. 80.

24 On Norwegian and Zulu culture confrontation, see *Norwegian Missions in African History, Vol. 1: South Africa 1845-1906*, Simensen, Jarle (ed.), Universitetsforlaget AS, Oslo, 1986.

With the outbreak of the Bambatha uprising, however, the roles were changed. Several of the Swedes, used to the privileged position of the state church at home and comfortable with the Lutheran concept of the two kingdoms with its firm belief in obedience to the authorities, found no difficulties in siding with the government. This was particularly true for the leading CSM missionary Johan Fredrik Ljungquist (1847-1926). Before the uprising, he had been one of the leading proponents for a tolerant view of Zulu culture, an acceptance of polygynists into the Church and a swift handing over of congregations to the black evangelists. During the uprising, however, he, his mission station and, not least, his evangelists came to play a key role as an intelligence centre for the white militia, tracing rebels and handing over information about collaborators. Naturally, the rebels were enraged. At times the congregation was in a most exposed position and his mission station besieged by rebels. From the surrounding hills threats were shouted against the missionary and the few monogamous African Christian families who had gathered around him. During the nights they were barricaded in the church: «That night all were prepared to be murdered»²⁵ one of his colleagues wrote. When the war was over, Ljungquist received a medal by the settler government for his services to its militia. Among the people in the reserve, however, the spirit of resistance had rather increased and the conditions for mission work were clearly worsened. As late as in 1933, the missionary-in-charge referred to the Bambatha uprising as a crucial watershed among the people in the region and the «deep-rooted, evil and hardly Christian spirit» that had followed and «still prevail particularly among the younger people»²⁶.

In regard to the Norwegian missionaries, previous research has convincingly demonstrated how surprisingly uninterested they were in the freedom struggle at home. Their pietistic faith proved sceptic against all “worldly” culture, including politics. Even if NMS missionaries must have been aware of the national mobilisation at home, during the nineteenth century it had been difficult for them to equate the Norwegian struggle with that of the Zulu. To them there was an abyss between the civilised and Christian Norway and the dark, uncivilised and heathen Africa. During the 1906 Bambatha uprising, however, the situation was different. Several of the NMS missionaries, who still were celebrating the Norwegian independence from Sweden in 1905, could now pass on arguments used in their own struggle for independence. One should not too harshly condemn those who had joined in resistance, one missionary wrote in 1907, «Like a Zulu at heart remains a Zulu,

25 Johansson, N. *Svenska Kyrkans Missions Tidning*, vol. 31, n. 19, 1906, p. 316.

26 Sandström, J. *Bland svarta kristna. Ur en missionärs anteckningar*, Smålandspostens boktryckeri AB, Växjö, 1935.

also a Norwegian is in his heart no more than a Norwegian»²⁷. In retrospect of developments in Zululand, another missionary wrote «For the people to follow their royalty is only national and natural. Nationalism is no sin, but to trample it down and to ridicule over it remains a sin»²⁸.

7. The leadership of an evolving Zulu church

A special feature of the Western missionary enterprise was that the Christian message was carried further from the mission station into the surrounding regions by African co-workers, mostly men who were employed or voluntary workers, who served as catechists or evangelists and were useful as guides and interpreters. The importance of the evangelist as a forerunner and pioneer of Christianity can hardly be exaggerated. Without the evangelists, the missionaries would have been more or less alien to the life and thought patterns of those they sought to convert²⁹.

Several of the evangelists were firmly rooted within the CSM, already from early childhood brought up at mission schools or boarding homes. Some were refugees because of religious persecution or as a result of the civil wars in Zululand, others had left missions of other denominations to join the CSM because of its more lenient attitudes towards polygyny or other Zulu customs³⁰. They were rewarded with wages and, for a few, with the opportunity to reside on the small lots of private land, owned or rented by the mission. There was also a possibility of receiving further education. Most of them were in charge of their own districts, with their own outstations and local schools. In larger and more established regions, the evangelist could be the leader of congregations with an average of some 70-80 baptised members. Among their followers they were so respected and trusted that they sometimes became equivalent to chiefs. Some of them were staunch Lutherans, preaching the gospel and propagating the dignity of labour. As said by evangelist Moya Kuzwayo (1869-1924) «the whites work all day but you are lazybones; you don't plough and therefore you don't have anything to

27 Missionary Strømme, P.A.R. *Norsk Missionstidende* 6, 1907, p. 128.

28 Titlestad, L.M. *Norsk Missionstidende*, vol. 22, 1914, p. 523.

29 Thus the call of scholars like Richard Gray and Bengt Sundkler, for more attention being paid to the significance of the African initiative, still appears valid. Gray, R. *Black Christians and White Missionaries*, Yale University Press, Yale and London, 1990, and Sundkler, B. "The Churches' Hinterland" in *Religion and Social Change in Southern Africa: Anthropological Essays in Honor of Monica Wilson*, David Philip and Rex Collings, Claremont and London, 1975.

30 Ljungquist, F. *Svenska Kyrkans Missions Tidning*, vol. 37, n. 3, 1912, pp. 34-40.

sell; you merely want to drink beer»³¹. Under difficult circumstances, however, it was not unusual that people, even chiefs, came to ask for his help. The evangelist could at times be compared with an *izinyanga*, a diviner and/or herbalist. Like the *izinyanga*, he was known to be a qualified healer of both physical and spiritual ill-health³².

Different from the older and more established English-speaking missions, not many within the CSM African Christian leadership could be counted among the emerging African Christian middle class élite, described by scholars like Marks, Meintjes and Marable³³. The salaries were rather poor since their monthly pay was £1,5 while labourers in Johannesburg could earn up to £2,0³⁴. Most of the evangelists depended heavily on the mission either for payment or for the small lots of land on which they lived. Their congregations were, furthermore, based among the impoverished and recently converted people. In regard to the 1906 uprising, it can be assumed that most of the evangelists agreed with the leading members of the African Christian political élite: The uprising represented a former way of life. Most of them understood the remarkable opportunity which the uprising represented. They could now condemn the system of indirect rule through chiefs and headmen and the forced labour system by equating chief Bambatha with the criticised Natal native policy. Prior to 1906, the CSM evangelists could be seen as representing a new, modernising, set of values, which also may have enabled women's emancipation. When the evangelists readily sided with their missionary superiors in a conflict which included local politics, they assumed a position which was not very different from that of the African Christian middle class élite. Nevertheless, what was painfully clear after Bambatha's uprising was that the constituency of the CSM evangelists in the reserves was not that of the African Christian leaders of the English-speaking missions. For a foreseeable future they were now compromised and had lost a considerable amount of the authority they previously had enjoyed among the many women in the reserves.

The events of 1906 did nonetheless bring about a new unity between non-Christian and convert. When the resistance leaders utilised Zulu history, Dinuzulu's

31 Ljungquist, M. *Svenska Kyrkans Missions Tidning*, vol. 34, 9, 1909, pp. 145-147.

32 Hallendorff, K. in Report from Emtulwa 1898-1902, Missionsstyrelsens Protokollsbilagor 1903, A II: 10, CSMA.

33 Marks, S. *The Ambiguities*.... op. cit., Meintjes, S. "Edendale 1850-1906".... op. cit. and Marable, W.M. "African Nationalist..." cit.

34 Helldén, *Lunds Missionstidning*, vol. 59, n. 7, 1905, pp. 109-110, Ljungquist to Hogner 3.10.04 in Misionsdirektorns korrespondens, Sydafrika 1903-1904, E I: c 3, Church of Sweden Mission Archives (CSMA), Uppsala.

name and raised a united reaction against the Natal government, they spurred a much greater interchange between non-Christians and converts. What emerged was eventually a new Zulu nationalism, acceptable to an increasing number of African Christians. Nevertheless, as the Swedish sources reveal, the relationship between Dinuzulu and a local African Christian community developed long before 1906 and was far more cordial than noted by previous research³⁵. With the CSM Ceza congregation located in northern Zululand in the relative proximity of the royal homestead at Nongoma and with links to the royal family among parish members, sympathies for the Zulu cause were strong among the Christians. In contrast to the situation in the Natal reserves, where Christianity was opposed by chiefs supported by the settler government, the establishment and development of Ceza congregation occurred in agreement with Dinuzulu's tolerant religious policy. While he maintained a non-compromised position vis-à-vis the Natal government and increasingly was seen as a unifying symbol of an emerging Zulu nationalism, African Christianity at Ceza unfolded in a most interesting development. To no little extent was this due to its talented Church founder and leading evangelist, Stefan Mavundhla (born in the 1870s) who both before and after the uprising repeatedly affirmed his allegiance to a distinctly Zulu flavoured African Christianity. As a key individual, the founder of the congregation and who, because of this, could enjoy a more independent standing within the CSM, he demonstrated that it was possible to be both a nationalist and a Christian. During the uprising he had been heard saying «perhaps God will now look to his people and again grant them their freedom»³⁶. After Bambatha's defeat, bitterness and hardened feelings were widespread among parish members at Ceza. For Mavundhla, one of the most skilled theologians among the CSM evangelists, it was natural to voice his deep-seated convictions in Lutheran-theological terms «Had I only seen and so acted on the fruits by which I know the whites, indeed even missionaries, I would never have become a Christian. It is rather [due to] the word of God – the Bible»³⁷. Mavundhla's statement may be compared with another confession given by Dinuzulu who at his Treason Trial, on being asked whether or not he was a Christian, bitterly remarked: «I do not know who is a Christian in this

35 Marks, S. "Zulu Christians..." cit., p. 258.

36 Sandström, J. *Tjugo års missionsarbete i Sydafrika. Minnen och erfarenheter*, Håkan Olssons boktryckeri, Lund, 1926, p. 28. Sandström, J. *Svenska Kyrkans Missions Tidning*, vol. 33:, n. 8, 1908, pp. 140-142. Cf. Norenus 1925, p. 74.

37 Sandström, J. *Lunds Missionstidning*, vol. 61, n. 2, 1907, p. 22.

country. It was only Christ who was a Christian»³⁸. Because of Mavundhla's firm stance, and in spite of CSM missionary interference, he paved the way for religious independence and nationalist resistance and, eventually, large scale conversions.

To draw a too sharp demarcation line between converts and non-Christians as well as between conditions before and after the uprising is not advisable in regard to the CSM African Christian congregations. Many converts did not understand why Christianity and "traditionalism" should be mutually exclusive. Among the majority of CSM converts who lived far away from the mission stations there must, for natural reasons, have arisen the question of an essential and optional *modus vivendi* between Western Christianity and African traditional religion. The term "conversion" is in this respect misleading in so far as it implies an overnight and abrupt break with an entire world view, and its replacement by a new, which to many must have been unknown and foreign. It is more probable that people adopted what at the time seemed appropriate for their needs, and retained those aspects of the old which were valued and found indispensable, indicating a slow and over an extended period of time gradual change. The frustration that the failure of the uprising must have evoked also among CSM converts, and the differing attitudes and tensions that the uprising had uncovered among its members as well as their conflicting sentiments, needed to be heard. In want of a political arena for voicing of the grievances and in recognising that political and religious issues were not put away in separate vessels, some CSM evangelists urged that the details of the conflict be brought forth. The only available forum was the CSM Evangelists' Conference at Ekutuleni in Zululand in May 1907. Because of their "war medicines", *izinyangas* (diviners and/or herbalists) had played an important role during the war. Afterwards, as indicated by a debate in the all-Lutheran paper *Isitunywa*, there had been a sudden increase in converts', particularly African Christian women, consulting *izinyangas*. It also became known that no less than three of the CSM evangelists in different ways had dealings with *izinyangas*³⁹.

The first question to be discussed at the Conference was the one raised by Mavundhla: «Is it advisable for us to call in our doctors or to fail to do so?» Of the four days set aside for the conference almost two were devoted to it. The

38 Marks, S. *Reluctant Rebellion...* cit., pp. 356-357.

39 Kempe, R. *Svenska Kyrkans Missions Tidning*, vol. 33, n. 2, 1908, p. 23. Cf. *Isitunywa* 1907. Helldén to Ihrmark 3.4.07, Posse to Ihrmark 25.1.07, L.P. Norenus to Ihrmark 4.1.07, Missionsdirektorns korrespondens. Sydafrika 1907-1908, E I c:5, CSMA. Posse to friends in Sweden 8.2-33.3.07, Hedvig Posse Samling, Rundbrev till vänner från Hedvig Posse 1907, CSMA. For spirit possession among women in KwaZulu-Natal in the early years of the twentieth century, see Ngubane, H. *Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine*, London, 1977.

major claim was that also Christians were, to a certain extent, dependent on the *izinyangas*. Some argued that their medicines sometimes had proven useful and that the “doctors” for many church members were the only available consultants. The claims of the *izinyanga*-tolerant evangelists were characterised by distrust in novelties brought by whites and a corresponding confidence in domestic, old and approved measures. To them the white physician corresponded to the indigenous *izinyanga*. The white physician was for whites. He knew how to cure Europeans’ illnesses while the *izinyanga* was for blacks and was the most qualified to deal with Africans’ maladies. Others were staunchly critical, drawing attention to *izinyangas* ignorance of physiology, their costly charges and how dangerous their seducing of converts was. The debate was both lively and lengthy which most clearly indicated the evangelists’ great concerns. At the end of the day, however, the final resolution was a negotiated compromise. The consultation of *izinyangas* was, if not unavoidable, not to be approved of but it was also stated that their medicines were partly to be recognised as useful and that, when no alternative options were available, Christians who made use of their medicines were not to be condemned but, but warned. Lastly, in recognising *izinyangas*’ double competence in both spiritual and physical cures which were to be required by Christians, the resolution of the Evangelists Conference included a demand for their own further training in elementary medical skills⁴⁰.

8. Concluding remarks

In the years before 1906, at a time of impoverishment and social change in the large and crowded African reserves of Natal, the CSM was seen as affording solace and a plausible alternative among a great many wives and young women. What is emphasised by the CSM grass-root sources is that no less than 70 or 80 per cent of the recently converted Christians were women, married to non-Christian men. The bitter contest that followed between chiefs and black evangelists should be seen in the context of gender struggles, given the increasingly crucial role African women had for the survival of the traditional family and the homestead economy. Then came the uprising. Clearly, the African Christians as a group – of which the largest part had converted during the past decade – were not major participants.

40 Par. 2, Clause 1 and Par. 3., Kempe, A.R. *Protokoll hållet med evangelisterna i Svenska kyrkans sydafrikanska mission å Ekutuleni den 17-20 maj 1907*, 1907, *Inkommande handlingar. Protokoll 1907-1942*, D I a: 5, Sydafrika (Fältarkivet), CSMA. Kempe, A.R. *Svenska Kyrkans Missions Tidning*, vol. 33, n. 2, 1908, pp. 22-24. Cf. Jönsson, L. *Lunds Missionstidning*, vol. 61, n. 9, 1907, pp. 129-132.

African Christians did not take part in the uprising – but their husbands, fathers, brothers and sons did. In the aftermath of the uprising, when patterns of loyalties had been exposed, internal conditions within the congregations were characterised by social and moral disruption. The CSM had lost much of its former appeal and, in due time, the new setting paved the way for Isiah Shembe's African Independent Church.

The two main features of the CSM ideology were the concepts of *Folk* Christianisation and the goal of an ethnic *Folk* Church: culturally inclusive and politically preservative. Polygyny was the issue on which the CSM ideology most clearly diverted from the main course followed by other missions. An admittance of polygynists would have promoted the realisation of the idea of the *Folk* Church and recognised polygyny as the cornerstone it was in the Zulu pre-capitalist economy. Nevertheless, the CSM did not follow its course. The disagreement between theory and practice had further implications. The CSM ideology was originally intended to consolidate an independent spirit in Zululand of the 1880s, conquered by Britain in 1879 but not yet incorporated into the neighbouring British colony. Instead, the ideology came to be implemented within the framework of the white settler dominated Natal. There, however, a tolerance towards indigenously developed structures was long outdated. A respect for chiefs and headmen would have implied support of its segregationist government, which in turn would have undermined the efforts to educate Africans, education being a major inroad into the black population. The value of Africans' education was, furthermore, opposed by the dominant white settlers. Consequently, before 1906, the CSM struggle was in effect a conflict with the government which supported chiefs and settlers. In 1906, the striking difference between Swedish and Norwegian missionary attitudes towards the uprising can only be explained against the backdrop of the very different national movements in their native countries and Norway's recent independence from Sweden in 1905. After 1906, the dominant CSM missionary attitudes shifted in favour of the government, illustrating that the CSM disagreement with the white settler opinion, after all, did not imply any radical questioning of white supremacy. Nevertheless, the establishing of self-ruling churches and the fostering of an African educated class among their followers remained an obstacle to the government's reinforced policy of segregation.

Before the uprising, the CSM black evangelists in the reserves were seen as representing a new set of values which also may have enabled women's emancipation. Siding with their missionary superiors, in a conflict which included local politics, they had assumed a position which was not very different from that of the African Christian middle class political élite, the future leaders of the ANC. Nevertheless, with their quite different constituency among the women in the

reserves, they were compromised and lost much of the confidence and authority they previously had enjoyed. It was rather in the CSM congregation at Ceza, in Zululand, where a future, Zulu flavoured Christianity was found. Established by a black initiative and developed on its own terms with cordial relations to Dinuzulu, who both symbolised a new Zulu nationalism and was not compromised during the uprising, the Ceza congregation became a model for future developments where it was possible to be both a nationalist and a Christian. Eventually this paved the way for religious independence and large scale conversions. Among the black leaders of the CSM there was a new spirit of independence. The claim raised for a tolerant view on *izinyanga*, an issue which was very controversial in missionary circles, indicates a radicalised opinion in the wake of the Bambatha uprising. In a modified form the proposition had to be accepted by the missionaries. The privilege of formulating relevant matters to be taken up within the mission was no longer confined solely to the missionaries. In years to come, similar calls for greater independence within the future church were increasingly radicalised, particularly in the years after World War I. Clearly, it was among people like the black evangelists, clergy and school teachers that the future leadership was to be found in the evolving Zulu church as well as on the political arena of the emerging African National Congress.

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***Memories and identities from the Horn of Africa states:
discussing Eritrea***

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Introduction

Recently, Horn of African states have received a great deal of attention and an international debate is ongoing among scholars. This gives a new contribution to the dynamics of sub-Saharan Africa in a crucial political period like today. Developments in African politics allow us to reflect on the origin and the nature of modern African states in the context of the decolonisation process and in the light of new political changes. New events during the last decades represent a turning point in contemporary African politics in many respects. Much has been said on the nature of African states, on the continuity of their political borders, and on the complex geography of the continent in terms of human borders. Moreover, a lot has been discussed recently in terms of the lack of stability, problematic evolution or clear degeneration of African institutions which demonstrates a very pessimistic view that is shared by many scholars on present Africa.

The perseverance of European origins of independent states and the dimension of colonial borders, that are still the same today, created during the scramble in 1884-1885, as well as the the continuity of the political asset, have generated a huge debate between historians, politicians and scholars dealing with contemporary African studies. This persistent trend has given rise to an international debate that is still alive. One common reflection emerges today: if we want to look at the origin of the state we have to go back to the colonial period and investigate how colonialism can explain, or not explain, the historical reconstruction of the past decades. In other terms, my aim is to focus on the debate today about the legacy of the colonial past in reframing the states of the Horn. The Horn of Africa states have some peculiarities and it seems to me they have to be considered in a common historical reflection and treated as a unique case in comparison to political-historical events of sub-Saharan Africa. In the last decades, the Horn of Africa has been stigmatized as one of the most unstable regions in the world with

no place for peace-building, institution building, or democratic processes. This presentation deals with Eritrea, a new state born in 1993, in the context of recent political developments in the Horn and neighboring countries. The process of independence/autonomy concerns Eritrea 1991, Somaliland 1991 and Southern Sudan 2011. I developed some reflections on the other states of the Horn of Africa in a previous essay¹.

One remark is necessary: the Eritrean history has been extremely politicized and I deliberately do not include several authors, political scientists, scholars, and sociologists, quoting only a few authors who deserve attention. I also do not discuss the crucial issue of unionism and separatism in Eritrean politics. This is not my area of research, although this is an extremely important historical matter. Historical reflection on separatism and unionism deserves an appropriate discussion, following the historical work conducted by Tekeste Negash starting from the 1980s to Shumet Sishagne². My presentation deals on the part of the Eritrean people who substained separation from Ethiopia in view of a complete independence. One point is clearly evidenciated since the beginning: when I speak about nationalism and independence, I refer only to a part of Eritrean society. There is another part of Eritreans who shared pro-unitarian ideologies as well as a complete assimilation with Ethiopia. This is relevant point and I can refer to the documentation provided in a number of works by Tekeste Negash, one of the few historians covering different periods such as Italian colonialism, the British period and the 1960s-1980s. I do not consider this phenomenon as to limit my discourse to the ideology of nationalism.

1 See: Taddia, I. *A Reflection on Eritrea and the Emergence of New States in the Horn of Africa, Conference paper*, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies Doha, 2012. I addressed this issue for the Horn in various essays; see in particular: Taddia, I. "Modern Ethiopia and Colonial Eritrea" in *Aethiopia*, vol. 5, 2002, pp. 123-138; Taddia, I. "At the Origin of State/Nation Dilemma: Ethiopia, Eritrea, Ogaden in 1941" in *Northeast African Studies*, vol. 12, n. 2-3, 1990, pp. 157-170.

2 See: Negash Tekeste *Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Federal Experience*, Uppsala, Nordic Africa Institute, New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 1997; Negash Tekeste *The Eritrean Unionist Party and its Strategies of Irredentism, 1941-50* in Bahru Zewde; Pankhurst, R.; Tadesse Beyene (eds.) *Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference of Ethiopia Studies*, vol. I, Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa Printing Press 1994, pp. 299-322; Negash Tekeste "The dilemma of Eritrean identity and its future trajectories" in *Revista de Politica Internacionala*, nr. XI-XII, 2008, pp. 21-34, Bucharest, Multimedia Political Communication; Negash Tekeste *Competing Imaginations and the Nations: The Eritrean Nationalist Movements 1953-81* in Rudbeck, L.; Negash, T. (eds.) *Dimensions of Development with Emphasis on Africa*, Uppsala, Nordic Africa Institute, 1995, pp.150-171. See also Shumet Sisagne "The Genesis of the Differences in the Eritrean Separatist Movements (1960-70)" in Tadesse Beyene (ed.) *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Addis Ababa-Huntingdon 1989, vol. 2, pp. 447-68; Shumet Sishagne *Unionists and Separatists: the Vagaries of Ethio-Eritrean Relations, 1941-1991*, Hollywood, Ca., Tsehail Publishers, 2004.

Eritrea was a colonial state that did not become independent during the decolonisation process, a unique case in Africa (if we leave aside the Western Sahara). Eritrea, therefore, reminds us of the alien origin of a state in Africa, but in a negative sense as a colonial state not involved in the decolonisation process. Indeed a paradox, given the fact that the Eritrean border can be seen as a real border in the scramble for Africa. Moreover, the Italian colony was reaffirmed in spite of the battle of Adwa in 1896 with the Italian defeat. In 1963 the Organisation of African Unity ratified the colonial borders for the new states, but not Eritrea. The “African paradox” signifies that the only legitimized nations were nations created by Europe. The non-decolonisation after the Second World War can be attributed to a complex of interrelated causes: international politics, regional Ethiopian hegemony, weakness of Italian diplomacy due to the collapse of Fascism, losing the war, and lastly, as I discussed in a previous essay, the emergence of a new political equilibrium in the Horn³.

In the 1950s, Eritrea failed to become an independent state: in this sense Eritrea can be seen as a case of “unfinished decolonization”. The dimensions of this phenomenon can be explained by Italian political history rather than by internal-Eritrean-political factors. I believe that we should stress the political dimension of the failure in decolonisation: in any case, this process was not related to the weakness of Eritrean nationalism as that emerged only in a later period. The Eritrean lack of success was a product of Italian politics and the Italian failure to promote a sustainable decolonization, given its unstable role in international politics in the 1940s and in the 1950s. This seems to me to be the main characteristic of the Eritrean struggle for independence from the beginning, in order to underline a political path towards the unsuccessful decolonization.

Present Eritrea must be *de facto* related to the colonial past. Eritrea was a colonial state in the 19th and 20th century and, like other African colonies, was created during the scramble for Africa. Within this frame, Eritrea achieved a specified identity, a new economy, a new administrative-political structure, and new territorial borders. We can speak of, as with many other African colonies, an imposed identity. I quote from Sorenson, «Eritreans nationalists describes significant economic and social changes under Italian colonialism, supporting arguments that Eritrea’s experience mirrored that of other African colonies»⁴.

3 See Taddia, I. “At the Origin of State/Nation dilemma...” cit., pp. 157-170. See also the analysis provided by Erlich, H. *The Struggle over Eritrea*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1983; Sherman, R. *Eritrea: the Unfinished Revolution*, New York, Praeger, 1980; Redie Bereketeb *Eritrea: the Making of a Nation, 1890-1991*, Trenton NJ, The Red Sea Press, 2007.

4 Sorenson, J. “Discourse on Eritrean nationalism and Identity” in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 29, n. 2, 1991, p. 302.

And we can analyze this point under the frame of «Colonialism as a State Maker» quoting Calchi Novati⁵.

According to Markakis, nationalism was not a product of anti-colonialism, but emerged after the fall of the Italian rule in 1941; it is not «a purely ideological phenomenon», on the contrary, «nationalism in the first instance was a struggle for state power»⁶. I think we have to go further and add at least two relevant points to Markakis analysis.

As Tekeste Negash has clearly emphasized, nationalism in the 1940s and 1950s was mainly a matter of Italian secret activities that was supported by Italians in order to restore the colonial economy and settler interests⁷. A clear point in the emergence of the first nationalism and very instrumental. I do not focus on this, but I must clarify this point by quoting Tekeste Negash's work on what I call "instrumental nationalism", the active role of Italy in financing independent strategies. Certainly, during the 1940s and the 1950s, ideologies of independence were declared in Eritrea. After the fall of Italian colonialism, numerous new political parties were created which expressed the aspirations matured during the colonial years. Many Eritreans, as well as many Italians living in Eritrea, shared these nationalistic sentiments. Some political parties fostered by Italian settlers were clear evidence of this phenomenon. There are various documents on this topic.

The independent Party – "Il Blocco per l'indipendenza" – a coalition created in 1949, consisting of various Italian and Eritrean parties, was promoted, organized and structured by Italians. It is an example of a party that was totally fostered by the colonial state. Within this particular context it is important to underline a peculiar ideology of decolonization that reflects a common interest between the colonizers and the colonized, a theme unusual in African political history. The struggle for the creation of an autonomous state in the 1940s was supported both by Italian settlers and a notable part of Eritreans themselves. Both actors failed.

5 Calchi Novati, G. "Colonialism as State-Maker in the History of the Horn of Africa: A Reassessment" in Ege, S.; Aspen, H.; Birhanu Teferra *et al.* (eds.) *Research in Ethiopian Studies. Selected papers of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Trondheim July 2007*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag 2010, pp. 233-244. See also: Uoldelul Chelati Dirar "Colonialism and the Construction of National Identities: The Case of Eritrea" in *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, vol. 1, n. 2, 2007, pp. 256-276, Uoldelul Chelati Dirar; Reid, R.J. "Experiencing Identities: Making and Remaking African Communities" in *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, vol. 1, n. 2, 2007, pp. 234-237.

6 See Markakis, J. (Review of Tekeste Negash) "Italian Colonialism in Eritrea, 1882-1941. Policies, Praxis and Impact" in *Review of African Political Economy*, 1989, pp. 157-170 and Markakis, J. *National and Class Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987.

7 See: Negash Tekeste "Italy and its relations with Eritrean political parties, 1948-50" in *Africa* (Rome), vol. 59, n. 3-4, 2004, pp. 417-452.

This is a clear example of a “colonial constructed consciousness” scholars did not analyze properly, with the exception of the recent articles by Tekeste Negash that I have already mentioned.

According to my understanding, the legacy of the past and the fact that Eritrea traces its origins to a long time ago and in the 20th century and from colonial rule, can partially explain the independence struggle. This can be only a part of the issue.

I would like to discuss and reaffirm what I think to be the major point of my presentation, a point that I have analyzed in detail with the help of archival sources, oral documentation and field work in the country⁸. Eritrean independence, which was completed in 1993, emerged in a very specific context in post-colonial Africa. It is not a simple case of delayed decolonisation, postponed by 30 years with respect to other former African colonies. The turning point of Eritrean nationalism was caused by Italy’s failure to promote independence and a new political consciousness was born, which, though not anti-Italian, was focused on anti-Ethiopian sentiments. International politics and the construction of new dynamics in the Horn delayed the process of the creation of national identities. The post-Second World War period was of fundamental importance in reshaping the entire politics of the Eritrean question and the politics of the Horn. During the 1960s, the superpower rivalry exacerbated the conflict. The dismantling of the international order meant a new political situation for the Horn.

The internal alliances and international relations completely changed the nature of the struggle and the political context of the guerrilla war. Colonialism seems an irrelevant phenomenon. Equally important is the analysis that emphasizes the Eritrean attempt to oppose Ethiopian «regional hegemony or contrasting the control done by international strategic countries»

Many authors have clearly discussed the importance of the developments of the military struggle in late 1960s, followed by the Mengistu regime in late 1970s. A lot of work has been done on the differentiation among internal factions of guerrilla war in Eritrea following the 1970s. To me, most of the work seems more descriptive than analytical. Other research is based on one-sided material and represents a kind of idyllic vision of the Eritrean struggle. Eritrean movements themselves usually reproduce some myths in analyzing the Eritrean issue. We lack

8 See Taddia, I. *L'Eritrea colonia. Paesaggi, strutture, uomini del colonialismo*, Milano, Franco Angeli 1986; Taddia, I. “Post Twentieth Century Eritrea” in *Northeast African Studies*, vol. 5, n. 1, 1998, pp. 7-29. For the debate see also: Ruth Iyob, *The Eritrean Struggle for Independence Domination, Resistance, Nationalism, 1941-1943*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1997; Gilkes, P. “National Identity and Historical Mythology in Eritrea and Somaliland” in *Northeast African Studies*, vol.10, n. 3, 2003, pp. 163-188.

serious work focusing on the role and the nature of the Eritrean state. In spite of many different interpretations, the research is still ongoing.

I would like to point out, however, that I have not changed my intellectual perspective on the legitimacy of the Eritrean political identity. With regard to the colonial past, I underlined two processes: the changes in the internal (national) political debate and the deconstruction of the colonial economy. These appear to be the two basic problems for the future of the Eritrean state.

1. *Discussing Eritrea today*

More relevant, in this context, a reflection on the present days. As all African countries after independence, Eritrea followed the same process of writing a new history for a new nation, with the aim to reconstruct a “usable past”. Memories and identities were reframed by state historiography in order to rethink of the past in terms of a nation. During the last years there is a new evidence in re-discussing this conventional way of writing about the pre-colonial history. A crisis of legitimacy, of identities, new deconstructed memories of the past, particularly in the years of the guerrilla war. I would like to focus on the scholarly debate which is a really controversial matter and to dedicate my attention to a quite recent phenomenon: a critique “from inside”. I think it would be of some interest to analyze in detail some works such as Bereket Habte Selassie, *Wounded Nation. How a Once promising Eritrea Was Betrayed and its Future Compromised* and Gaim Kibreab, *Eritrea. A Dream Deferred*⁹, these being the most relevant books among many others.

My first aim is to document the dissent and protest among Eritreans themselves. My second aim is to open a discussion and engage a wider debate involving scholars in this field, in order to find more documentation on the present political situation in the country. It is important to record this dissent *from inside* and I want to do this by using the available documentation recently published outside Eritrea, and collecting many primary sources on recent politics. In a country so isolated for so long of a period with a very complex political equilibrium characterized by “no-peace-no-war”, a further discussion is welcome.

9 Bereket Habte Selassie *Wounded Nation. How a Once promising Eritrea Was Betrayed and its Future Compromised*, Trenton, The Red Sea Press, 2011 and Gaim Kibreab *Eritrea. A Dream Deferred*, Woodbridge, James Currey, 2009. Bereket work is the second volume of his *mémoire*; see Bereket Habte Selassie *The Crown and the Pen. The Memoirs of a Lawyer Turned Rebel*, Africa World Press, 2007.

Bereket Habte Selassie is a very well known and esteemed academic and a political scientist and jurist who has been directly involved in the Eritrean process of writing the constitution. He played an important role in bringing the country to the rules of law and democracy. This volume is an historical and biographical testament of a man who had supported the struggle and played an active part in the guerrilla war, as well as a record of his life and a testimony to his political /legal engagement. At the same time, *Wounded Nation* is an open accusation against the Eritrean leadership. It is a unique document containing a combination of personal experiences, scholarly research, oral testimonies, and formal documentation. This volume stands out as one of the most important and authoritative mémoires based on Bereket's long lasting experience in the country, his international activity as advisor and his work in Ethiopia. It is a very rich biography of a still active politician and scholar. I will discuss what I think are the most original parts of the volume, his approach and its contents.

The book, published recently, has received great attention in the international audience¹⁰. The author is very clear from the beginning when, in the introduction, he argues that «in its post-independence Eritrea could have been a “promising nation” had it not deteriorated into a state of paralysis because of the anti-democratic, one-party regime led by Eritrea's President Isaias Afewerki and a few determined power-hungry men»¹¹.

In this perspective, the main goal of the book is to «understand what went wrong in Eritrea and why» (see chapter 4, *Immaculate Deception. The Original Sin of Eritrean Politics*) and investigate on «a missed opportunity for peaceful and democratic change» (see chap. 10, *The Berlin manifesto and the G15. A Squandered Opportunity*), being fully aware that «The truth shall set you free»¹².

The author depicts post-independence Eritrea as being in a severe crisis and surviving on an artificial life support system. In current Eritrea, according to his view, «things are worse than before and its people have lost their fortitude and the fact of hoping any longer»¹³.

What I think is most original in the volume is that Bereket does not question only present politics. This very innovative approach, for a former active EPLF

10 See some reviews: Desta Asayehgn *Ethiopia Observer*, n. 1, 2011, see on line: <http://www.ethioobserver.net/>; Habtemariam, S.T. January 31, 2001, <http://awate.com/>; <http://www.africaworldpressbooks.com/>.

11 Bereket Habte Selassie *Wounded Nation...* cit., p. 3.

12 Ivi, p. 10.

13 Ivi, p. 4.

member, questions the nature of the guerrilla war itself, considered a negative premise for the political dynamic of the new state. He declares his “self-imposed censorship”, for not having mentioned before to anybody of some crimes committed by EPLF against some fighters. He has felt guilty for this, but now he comes out with the truth, the silence has been broken. The policy of the EPLF was not openly transmitted outside, so the guerrilla in the Sahel was characterized by many secrets and mysteries.

Chapter 4, one of the most challenging, analyses pre-independence ideology in the contest of present reality and disillusion and demonstrates a sharp contrast. Many young fighters were attracted by the EPLF propaganda and the Eritrean masses were promised a better future, promises that never materialized. In many fields the government failed: lack of freedom, excessive authority, control of economy and all aspects of social life, and a compulsory never ending military service among others. The centralisation of the authoritarian regime did not end, but increased in 1994 and in the following years after establishing PFDJ (People’s Front for Democracy and Justice). Bereket reports that the President set up a “secret party”, very well trusted, to head the PFDJ central committee. That prolonged the totalitarian and centralized government politics, a continuum of the guerrilla war rules conducted by EPLF. Economic degeneration, lack of resources, and the strict control of private economy (practically non-existent) accelerated and increased diaspora and opposition, both inside the country and outside which is analysed mainly in chapters 10 and 11. This point, also analyzed by Desta Asayehgn in *Ethiopia Observer*, is relevant: «Based on psychological analysis or what he calls “sociopathic” block, Bereket concludes that the power of Isaias originates out of the barrel of a gun because as he puts it “all dictators are chips from the same block»¹⁴.

Another relevant point of discussion is

The constitution and the Broken Promise, giving Bereket role as a chair of the Constitutional commission. The Constitution, in spite of the ratification in 1997, was not implemented and Eritrea was prevented from having a general law, a unique case in sub-Saharan Africa. This fact was particularly disappointing for the author, having spent many efforts in the drafting committee¹⁵.

14 Desta Asayehgn *Ethiopia Observer...* cit., p. 3.

15 This is a fact that I experienced directly during a number of private conversations with Bereket in Asmara in 1997-1998. See also his presentation at the already mentioned conference I contributed

I must point out that Bereket started thinking of his experience in negative terms regarding his country a long time before this book, so we were prepared for this critique. This is proven by his presentation in the Rome conference, as I mentioned, in December 2002:

In Eritrea, the government of the Popular Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), the successor of the old EPLF, promised a democratic transition from a government of military provenance to constitutional democracy. To put it mildly, the PFDJ government has yet to fulfill that promise; this will no doubt go down as one of the understatements of the year. Meanwhile the devastating war with Ethiopia of 1998-2000 has introduced a new dimension to the political situation in Eritrea, deepening the crisis. Eritrea, too, is facing famine caused by drought. Eritrean opposition parties and groups would argue, as many Ethiopians have done and still do today, that the causes of famine are not limited to natural disasters; wrong policies and bad politics must be added as causes¹⁶.

This volume does not deal with war and politics only, the author is particularly sensitive to history and he highlights the main problem common to African countries: the artificially fixed boundaries that are a legacy of colonial rule. Therefore, the feeling that

Identity politics is a continental-wide African phenomenon... and that despite the artificial nature of the boundaries that define the post colonial states, people have accepted this new identity. In other words, the artificially forged identity has become the basis of a new national consciousness¹⁷,

an argument that I have already emphasized in discussing the ideological nature of the Eritrean state.

Again his words:

It is also necessary to think in regional terms, going beyond national boundaries [...] and interstate regional cooperation [...] This question would require extraordinary vision and courage and leaders with such a qualities¹⁸.

to organize in Rome in 2002: Bereket Habte Selassie "Italy and the Horn of Africa: Colonial Legacies and Challenges in the Age of Globalization" in *Northeast African Studies*, vol. 10, n. 3, pp. 139-162.

16 Bereket Habte Selassie "Italy and the Horn of Africa..." cit., p. 148.

17 Bereket Habte Selassie *Wounded Nation...* cit., pp. 78-79.

18 Ivi, p. 279.

That Eritrea did not have so far. After a reaffirmation of the need of thinking beyond national borders, the heritage of the former colonial rule, the conclusions outline the “lesson learned from the past”, or “the lesson to be learned” with a special concern for future generations, and this is not a rhetoric statement. These are serious questions about the country’s destiny.

To conclude my understanding of the volume, some remarks are relevant: to tell the story “behind the story”¹⁹ is a challenging effort, and Bereket is the most qualified person to do so. The author speaks on the importance «to tell the truth as I found it from documents, from my own direct knowledge, and from many interviews and other sources», but, for the historical point of view, it is more questionable. Bereket’s view represents his personal view, there is no unique dimension in history. Methodologically speaking, it is not possible to generalize a personal experience, a personal life and attitude. Given this, there is no question about the value of an authentic intellectual life.

No less important is another critique that I want to mention here in conclusion. Gaim Kibreab is already known for his previous work on refugee camps and Eritrea social studies, including the last one dealing with the Eritrean liberation struggle²⁰. This new book, *A Dream Deferred*, a survey on Eritrean politics, explains very clearly the origin of the «loss of illusion» and the path towards «submission to tyrannical power». He describes Eritrea as one of the most insecure countries in the continent and one of the most closed and repressive states in the world. The country is a one man power, the President, and a severe critique of his role and his contempt towards intellectuals and freedom of thought is reported. The aim of the author is to try to explain why Eritrea turned into such a repressive regime with a political system in such a state of deterioration²¹. The sources and documentation Gaim provides leaves us without any doubts: they are from the most well known international agencies such as human rights associations, the World Bank, UN, and NGO, plus his scholarly experience and knowledge of the country and his personal involvement in Eritrean politics with EPLF. I share Tekeste Negash’s view on this matter and on the importance of the book for Eritreans and for the African countries as well, in spite of some critiques²².

19 Habtemariam, S.T. *op. cit.*, p. 2.

20 Gaim Kibreab *Refugees and Development. The Case of Eritrean Refugees*, Trenton, Red Sea Press, 1987; Gaim Kibreab *Critical Reflections on the Eritrean War of Independence: Social Capital, Associational Life, Religion, Ethnicity and Sowing Seeds of Dictatorship*, Trenton, Red Sea Press, 2008.

21 See Gaim Kibreab *A Dream Deferred*, Chapter 8, *Shattered Promises: In Lieu of a Conclusion...* *cit.*, pp. 353-393.

22 Tekeste Negash “Armed Struggle and Better Future: Dubious Connection” in *Africa Review of Books*, vol. 6, n. 1, March 2010; see also the reviews by Lionel Cliffe “Leeds African Studies Bulletin”

The path to the “blind alley” is explained by focusing on many factors, going back to the long guerrilla war struggle, 1961-1991, that Eritrea engaged in with Ethiopia, the heavy role of military power, the culture of intolerance and denigration of the “other”. These were the first symptoms, followed by a more acute reality. Given the experience of having worked on the first volume on the “seeds of dictatorship”, Gaim is anticipating what Bereket also discussed in “Wounded Nation”. The historical events of the guerrilla war seems to be prolonged in the following years and the negative experience implies the future results, the same negative outcome. Since the beginning of the independence in 1993, the situation has become very critical. Economic conditions of the country has progressively deteriorated more and more since 1991; financial crisis, stagnation, precarious human conditions, isolation, no expectations for the future. The political situation became strictly correlated to the economic crisis. Another explanation of the “blind alley” is linked to the political sphere as in the totalitarian power exercised by the President in the country; the absence of a constitution, an independent press and an independent judiciary system. Moreover, there is no freedom and no mass media communications. There is isolation, intellectual diaspora, an autocratic PFDJ government, a dependency syndrome, no goals of self-reliance (expulsion in 1997 of NGO), no democracy, no political parties, disillusion, deterioration of the party-government apparatus. A real *deferred dream*, as the title suggests.

Again, the problem is to understand and explain why this persistent negative trend turned out in a complete disaster and it is a difficult task for the author as it is for everybody. A turning point: the war in 1998-2000 against Ethiopia and the fall into deeper economic crisis with the decline of exports (Ethiopia was the more important state to import from Eritrea) – loss of revenues, no remittances – and a lack of food (imported to a greater extent from Ethiopia). The introduction of a prolonged national service (for all people between 18 and 50) deprived the economy of a needed labor force. The war was the beginning of a strong dissent among intellectuals and politicians. Dissident groups emerged openly from 2001, like G 15, and decided to circulate an open letter to the members of the government’s PFDJ (People’s Front for Democracy and Justice since 1994, the former EPLF) accusing the government of illegal and unconstitutional matter and called on the people for unity²³.

n. 72, Winter 2010-2011, pp. 118-120 and Tania Muller in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 48, 2010, pp. 520-521, more critical than the others.

23 See Gaim Kibreab *A Dream Deferred...* cit., Chapter 2, *The Broken Promises, Demand for Change, Violation of Human Rights*, pp. 25-52.

Some of these dissident groups were detained and are still in this condition. They were never really considered as an expression of political freedom, as other commentators have recorded, in a common drastic analysis of repression and political control²⁴.

The matter of documentation was, first of all, on the war conducted between 1998-2000 with Ethiopia, without any consent from the central council, but simply a President's war. Moreover, there was no democracy in the country nor any constitutional law available, in spite of a long period of legal government since the referendum of 1993. Another urgent problem was the relations with international donors and NGO and the increasing strict control by the government over foreign activities. Not only social and political life, but a very weak economy has been controlled by government where the private sector was completely dominated by government companies. The books contain many details on a Trust Fund established in 1995 and chaired by the president and the personalisation of economy, a negative factor for the regime itself according to the author. Generally speaking, the picture is severe in every field and in many critical political events in the last twenty years of Eritrean history.

A really «poisoned environment» as Dan Connell describes, and more «there is a need to recover from the trauma of the last years and resume the long march to popular democracy; the structures of intimidation and the culture of secrecy that dominate the political life need to be dismantled and a new expression of self-organisation needs to sprout and grow»²⁵.

The main failure is, in terms of politics, the inability to create a process of democratisation. In Gaim Kibreab's words:

In forming a new nation the Eritrea government failed to transform itself from a military organisation with no room for dissent to democracy that could embrace difference. This outlook was a continuation of the culture of intolerance and denigration of the "other" that was developed in the war of liberation. ...By the time the country achieved independence, the privilege of not been questioned had become entrenched as a culture²⁶.

24 We can mention for example the changing attitude of Connell, D. *Conversation with Eritrean Political Prisoners*, Trenton, Red Sea Press, 2004, and his previous work: Connell, D. "Redeeming the failed promise of democracy in Eritrea" in *Race and Class*, vol. 46, n. 4, London, April 2005, pp. 68-79.

25 Connell, D. "Redeeming the failed promise..." cit., p. 8.

26 Gaim Kibreab *A Dream deferred...* cit., pp. 187-188.

These intellectual reflections need to be considered; these books need further reflection on what seems the *inevitability* of the long struggle outcome, as many others in Africa, for decades. Therefore, this analysis is relevant to other contemporary African states, in a comparative perspective that leaves us no doubts about the importance of an open critique. It is an intellectual exercise we are prepared to do, as political scientists know very well. The fact that this time it is done by protagonists of these questioned years is very relevant and appreciated. We must point out clearly that Eritrea is not the only African state that needs a severe critique, it is not the only one to have such problems, and, above all, not the only state with a lack of democracy and no respect of human rights which are recognized by everyone. Ethiopia is involved in this negative process and has been highly criticized as well. Contemporary Ethiopia has recently received a great deal of attention. I would like to mention just the important reflections recently offered by Maimire Mennasemay in one of this essay regarding the future of the Ethiopian democracy²⁷.

At the end of my presentation, let me quote a recent dissertation *L'Erytrée, naissance d'une nation, faillite d'un état?* by Raphael Roig that clearly points out the issue I have already discussed before. It is interesting for the scholars to quote some relevant sentences that can reproduce the entire scholarly debate:

En dépit de la situation dramatique dans laquelle est actuellement plongé le pays, l'Erythrée demeure un extraordinaire laboratoire vivant pour la recherche contemporaine en sciences humaines. Dans le domaine de l'histoire des Nations, l'Erythrée est une véritable curiosité. De par l'analyse des événements qui ont mené à son indépendance, la compréhension du processus de construction de son identité nationale et l'observation du destin qu'elle se forge depuis 1991, elle présente en tous points tant de particularités qu'il y aurait encore beaucoup de travail à effectuer pour appréhender de façon exhaustive son cheminement historique. Si nous nous intéresserons particulièrement à ce qu'est réellement la nation érythréenne, ce qu'elle représente pour les artisans de sa naissance et pour les populations qui s'y identifient, nous nous pencherons bien évidemment sur la jeune histoire de l'Erythrée en tant qu'entité politique sur l'échiquier politique est africain et mondial.

Se poser la question de la nation érythréenne en termes d'échec ou de réussite ne renvoie aucunement à un quelconque jugement extérieur forcément subjectif, mais à l'analyse de son devenir selon les facteurs, les vecteurs et

27 Maimire Mennasemay "Preliminary Reflections on Ethiopian democracy and the New Millennium" in *The International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, vol. III, n. 2, 2008, pp. 49-89.

le contexte qui ont mené à sa naissance. Au regard de ces éléments et des constructions idéologiques des principaux ouvriers, actifs ou involontaires de sa construction, nous nous demanderons si la nation érythréenne, conceptuellement parlant, n'est pas un phénomène historique qui trouve plus de véracité durant le siècle de genèse qui précéda l'indépendance de l'Erythrée que pendant les dix-sept années qui lui ont succédé²⁸.

I share this reflection. Any lesson for the future? It is very important that we get more critical discourses on the state of Eritrea. However, these internal critiques have not, as yet, changed the foundational basis and the nature of the independent Eritrean state.

The “ideological nature of the Eritrean state”, as I have defined the present state, and national politics have been definitely questioned and criticized by some Eritrean scholars, intellectuals and political scientists, that were a part of the state apparatus and have supported the creation of the new state. Twenty years later, Eritrea has received a great deal of attention and an international debate is still ongoing. This gives a new contribution to the dynamics of sub-Saharan Africa. The process of reshaping Eritrean nation will affect all the Horn of African politics and contribute to re-discussing the legacy of the past. The Horn of Africa states have some peculiarities and it seems to me they have to be considered in a common historical reflection and treated as a unique case in comparison to political-historical events of sub-Saharan Africa.

28 See my English translation of a part of the original quotation of the mémoire by Roig, R. *L'Erythrée, naissance d'une nation, faillite d'un état?*, Paris, Centre Français des Etudes Ethiopiennes, Université de Paris I, 2009, p. 4: «If we think about the Eritrean nation in terms of a failure or a victory, this does not imply an external judgement always questionable, but the analysis of its future according to the factors, the means and the context that determined its birthday. Regarding the ideological constructions of Eritrean actors those who built the nation, one question is relevant: we are wondering if the Eritrean nation conceptually speaking is a matter of an historical phenomenon related to the years placed before independence rather than the following seventeen year later» [note that the dissertation was written in 2009].

Somaliland in the scramble for the Horn of Africa (1879-2004)¹

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Introduction

After being a British protectorate until June 26th 1960, in the month of July of that same year Somaliland merged with the Italian Somalia, which had gained its independence on July 1st, to form the Somali Republic². In 1991, Somaliland proclaimed itself an independent republic within its old borders. So far it has been administrated according to this new status, holding free and democratic elections, choosing its own president and government and running its own economic life and diplomatic relations with both its former motherland and neighbouring states, which at times hoped for a re-unification with the central Somali government. Due to this country's troubled situation, though, Mogadishu has become the nation's anarchic capital, controlled by warlords and other agents who help destabilize its territory and destroy any form of state legitimacy.

Kenya hosted the so-called Transitional National Assembly (TNA), which was attended in 2004 by representatives (61 out of 275) of the four major Somali clans and a coalition representing the minority clans (31)³. This assembly, though, couldn't settle in Mogadishu and ensure a modicum of stability for the country. Conflicts between Somali MPs, pressures from the Ethiopian government and the IGAD⁴ and the international community's lack of interest, on one hand,

1 Translated by Tiziana Cauli and Mario Trigo.

2 Lewis, I.M. *A modern History of the Somali. Nation and the State in the Horn of Africa*, Oxford, James Currey, 2004 (Fourth Edition).

3 "Somalia" in *Africa South of the Sahara 2006*, Europa Publications, London, 2005.

4 The IGAD (*Intergovernmental Authority on Development*) is the sub-regional organization for the development of Eastern Africa created in 1986 with the name of IGADD: *Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Desertification*. Later, in 1996, in the summit of Nairobi, a new statute was signed changing its name to IGAD and stating the three main goals of the organization: food security

and the population's hope for a normalization, on the other, led to the creation of the Islamic Courts as a «local response to insecurity⁵». They were defeated on December 24th 2004 by the Ethiopian army, which installed a transition government⁶ in Mogadishu.

In a stark contrast with this chaotic situation, Somaliland has been following its own path for fifteen years, even though it has had no response to its call for international recognition.

1. The birth of Somaliland

A result of the Anglo-French rivalry along the coasts of the Red Sea in the Nineteenth century, Somaliland first became known to Western powers when Napoleon's expedition to Egypt awoke Britain's interest in the Gulf of Aden. British occupation of Aden ensued in 1839, as a means to block other powers from that area, and it became a crucial port in the naval route to Asia after the closure of the Suez Canal in 1869.

Therefore, the British occupation resulted in many problems between Britain, the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, and in a rivalry with France over the Zeila⁷ issue.

British interests coincided with the Khedive's claims over the Red Sea, which were expressed by Ottoman sultan Abdul Aziz in May 1866, when he obtained the ports of Massaua and Suakin.

Egyptian ambitions aimed towards a great imperial design looking to expand the borders of the state towards the South. The Indian Office, from which Aden

and environmental protection; prevention, management and solution of humanitarian conflicts and issues; development of infrastructures. The IGAD Partners Forum was also created in 1996 with the member states of the IGAD as well as its Partner countries (Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Norway, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Switzerland as well as the World Bank, the European Commission, the UN Secretary, the United Nations Development Programme, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the FAO) and it is meant to reinforce the cooperation of donor states with the member states of the IGAD. The first meeting of the IGAD Partners Forum took place in Rome on February 25th 1997: it was the occasion for defining its structure with the creation of Committees for specific issues, the first of which was the Committee for Peace in Sudan, presided over jointly by Italy and Norway. The secretary of the IGAD has its headquarters in Djibouti (www.igadregion.org).

5 Marshal, R. "Somalia: un nuovo fronte anti-terrorista" in *Afriche e Orienti*, n. 1, 2007, pp. 4-21, especially p. 6.

6 During that same period of time, American planes have bombed alleged terrorist bases linked to Al-Qaeda on Somali territory, spreading disconcert and fear in the Somali population.

7 Trimingham, J.S. *Islam in Ethiopia*, London, Frank Cass, 1965; *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, Nouvelle Édition, Brill, Leiden, 2005, vol. XI, entry for *Zayla*, pages 520-521.

depended, as well as the British officers present in Aden saw this danger and focused on the protection of the coast of Somaliland, where the first British agent settled in 1879 overlooking the growing trade of cattle from Berbera towards Aden and confirming the strategic and economic weight of those shores⁸.

London proclaimed its protectorate over this territory in 1887, restarting the definition of border relations (which it already had begun with France and Italy) with Ethiopia, which played a defining role.

1.1 France

France was Britain's main rival along the coasts of the Red Sea. In this region, France's consular agent to Aden managed to obtain the assignment of the port of Obock from the Danakil (Afar) in 1859, and effectively buy it three years later. In 1862 Napoleon III took a crucial initiative by inviting the representatives of the Tadjoura and Rahayto sultans to the French capital and signing a public, solemn and official agreement with them⁹. Two consequences derived from this act: first of all, French ships were ensured a port of call on their way to Madagascar and Indochina; secondly, it deprived Britain and Italy of the right to question the legitimacy of the French rule over the southern Afar sultanates of Tadjoura, Rahayto and Debné. Only Egypt claimed, at the time, rule over the Western coasts of the Red Sea, but this did not prevent the occupation of Obock, which followed the designation of young commander Léonce Lagarde in 1884. This small territory fell under French control at a time when the possession of a port on the way to Indochina was mandatory for France because of the Chinese war and because of the British decision to close the port of Aden to French ships.

As a consequence, in 1886 Lagarde opted for the Djibouti peninsula, which was closer to the Ethiopian plateau. This territory was named "Côte française des Somalis", so that, according to Ali Coubba¹⁰, its real owners, the Afar, were not mentioned, even though they represented 90 per cent of the population, while the Somali Issa constituted the remaining 10 per cent. It was the same Léonce Lagarde who promoted the policy of keeping in good terms with neighbouring Ethiopia, strongly expanding French influence not only there but also in the whole North-eastern Africa. The policy of Paris was favoured by the rebellion of the Mahdi in Sudan in 1881, because it forced

8 Lewis, I.M. *A modern History of the Somali...* cit.; Gesheker, C.L. *British Imperialism in the Horn of Africa and the Somali Response*, PhD Thesis, University of California, 1972.

9 Coubba, A. *Djibouti. Une nation en otage*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1993, pp. 60-61; Doresse, J. *Histoire sommaire de la Corne Orientale de l'Afrique*, Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, Paris, 1971.

10 Coubba, A. *op. cit.*, p. 61.

the Egyptian army to concentrate on the North, abandoning positions along the coasts of the Red Sea such as Harar, Zeila and Berbera. And all these things happened while the Anglo-French co-rule in Egypt was failing, which gave both European powers more “autonomy” in order to guide their policies in Africa.

1.2 Italy

In the same years, Italy was starting to consolidate its settlement in the bay of Assab, which Genoan commercial company Rubattino had bought from two local chiefs in 1869. It was only in 1882 when the Italian government bought the territory from the private company after Britain had expressed a sort of assent to the operation, and it meant the first official step of Italian colonialism.

In July of the same year, British troops occupied Suez, Ismailia and Port Said. Following the Madhist uprisings, France’s interest in the coasts of the Red Sea, especially after the withdrawal of the Egyptian army from Massaua in 1885, made it convenient for the British government to encourage Italy to reach agreements with the Ottoman Empire. Thus, in February 1885, Italy proclaimed its protectorate over the Eritrean coasts from Assab to Massaua.

The creation of the Eritrean colony did not offer Italy a position among the Northern Somalis, but instead gave it access to Abyssinia, with which Italy signed the Uccialli treaty in 1889 – the Italian government interpreted that the treaty had established a protectorate agreement and it directly became interested in the division of the “Somali nation”¹¹.

1.3 Ethiopia

When John IV died in March 1889, Menelik, the king of Shewa, inherited the throne. He was a strong and intelligent man, who chose to be crowned at Entotto, near the new capital city of Addis Ababa. The centre of the empire was therefore moved to the South, from where the new king could exercise a stronger control of the situation, lead a process of modernization and expand his territories in order to create a Great Ethiopia, which was the only independent state in the continent along with a newly founded Liberia in an Africa under European colonization – something that gave Menelik the chance to sit at the same table with colonial powers and take part in the division of the Horn of Africa. For this reason, Menelik II helped to set the foundations of the internal problems of both his country and

11 Lewis, I.M. *A modern History of the Somali...* cit., p. 45; Pakenham, T. *The Scramble for Africa*, Abacus, London, 1991, pp. 470-486; Collins, R.O. (ed.) *Problems in the History of Colonial Africa, 1860-1960*, Prentice-Hall International, London, 1970.

the Somali region, torn apart and claimed in pieces of territory of different sizes. Two years later the King of kings signed the Ucciali treaty (April 10th 1891) and sent a letter to the European powers in order to inform them of the borders of the Ethiopian Empire, which didn't differ much from those of current Ethiopia¹². This way:

he made the former Abyssinian territory three times as big as it used to be, including ethnic groups and regions which only held sporadic contacts with the traditional Ethiopian plateau and were not politically dependent from it¹³.

In the meantime, fractures in the diplomatic relations between Italy and Ethiopia had worsened and resulted in the battle of Adua in 1896, which was amongst the worst defeats ever suffered by a colonial power in the Nineteenth century. Following the Negus' unpredictable victory over the Italians, the British government, which had accepted the Ucciali treaty as "reliable", signed a new treaty with Ethiopia on May 14th 1897 in order to define the areas of influence of the two countries. The treaty of Ucciali and the ensuing battle of Adua led to the involvement of the Ethiopian Empire in the political and diplomatic networks that were directed by the major European powers.

The battle of Adua ensured an international prestige to Ethiopia and contributed to its acceptance on an almost equal basis in the international landscape. France, Russia and Belgium had provided Menelik with weapons and strategic assistance on the battlefield. Ethiopia, which had been attacked by a European army, had not been left alone by the European diplomacy, probably with hidden purposes for the future. There was never anything like that for other African realms or rulers attacked by European armies during the scramble for Africa¹⁴.

The agreement signed in 1897 played a crucial role in preventing the Somali cattle raising populations from migrating across the territory, even though their "freedom" of movement was officially sanctioned.

Colonial powers and local populations, though, had already signed some agreements, mainly with Britain, which apparently didn't obtain many concessions. In general, the preambles of these agreements underlined the need

12 "Spanish and Italian Possessions: Independent States" in *Peace Handbooks Issued by the Historical Section of the Foreign office*, vol. 20, Greenwood Press, New York, 1969 (1st ed. 1920), *Abyssinia*, p. 104.

13 Triulzi, A. "Istituzioni tradizionali e rivoluzione in Etiopia" in Guadagni, M. (ed.) *La scelta "socialista" in Etiopia, Somalia e Tanzania*, Trieste, 1979, pp. 25-45, especially p. 28.

14 Calchi Novati, G. "Statualità africana ed espansione coloniale: la variante Menelik, imperatore d'Etiopia" in *Studi Storici*, gennaio-marzo 2005, vol. 46, pp. 219-241, especially pp. 236-237.

for safeguarding independence, watching over the public order and other more or less fair points. The “cession of lands” was not mentioned, while the clans’ chiefs took the engagement «not to yield, sell, mortgage or allow the occupation of any part of the territory they controlled if not to the British government»¹⁵. There were hopes for peace and friendly relationships between clans and «the gracious favour and protection of Her Majesty the Queen of England» was remembered. Further clauses prevented clans from establishing relationships with other foreign powers without British authorization.

The agreements that were signed with France and Italy were very similar.

Other agreements were established between the colonial powers which, on the basis of articles 34 and 35 of the General Act of the Berlin Conference (November 1884 – February 1885), had to communicate their areas of influence to other European states and take possession of them.

Controversies and conflicts born and managed with a total indifference for the interests of local populations led to wars, which mostly ended up in negotiations. Britain and France signed an agreement in 1888 in order to establish a border between Djibouti and Somaliland; Italy and France reached an agreement over the Eritrean colony; Italy and Britain negotiated over Northern Somalia; France and Ethiopia also reached agreements, just as Italy and Ethiopia did; and Somaliland was divided between Ethiopia and Britain¹⁶.

2. The colonial administration

The colonization of Somaliland was always postponed in favour of Britain’s strategic interests, such as keeping rival powers away from its territories and refurbishing Aden; that’s why it had a smaller impact in both its economy and institutions than the one in the Italian Somalia¹⁷.

A 23-year long religious war (1898-1921) added to the effects of this administrative disinterest. Muhammad Abdullah Hassan, also called the “Mad

15 Lewis, I.M. *A modern History of the Somali...* cit., p. 47; Pakenham, T. *The Scramble for Africa...* cit., pp. 123; 218; 259; 524.

16 *International Boundary Study*, n. 153, November 5, 1975; “Ethiopia – Somalia Boundary” in *International Boundary Study*, n. 154, February 20, 1976; “Djibouti (French Territory of The Afars and Issas) – Ethiopia Boundary” in *International Boundary Study*, n. 87 (Revised), May 18, 1979, Department of State, United States of America; The Geographer, Office of the Geographer, Bureau of intelligence and Research. See also Hertslet, E. *The Map of Africa by Treaty*, vol. 1-2-3, Frank Cass and Company Limited, London 1967.

17 Calchi Novati, G. *Il Corno d’Africa nella storia e nella politica*, Torino, SEI, 1994, p. 60.

Mullah” by the British, started the conflict. He was born in Eastern Somaliland and belonged to the Ogaden clan on his father’s side and to the Dulbahante on his mother’s side. He could not be called a traveller, but he visited not only Sudan and Nairobi but also the Hejaz and Palestine during his pilgrimage to Mecca, where he was deeply influenced by the teachings of Sayyid Muhammad Salih. He became a member of the Salihyya¹⁸ brotherhood and preached its message after settling in Berbera, where a French Catholic mission started its religious activity in 1891, much to Abdullah Hassan’s outrage, who asked his followers and the Somali people to rebel against the British infidels and all the missionaries¹⁹. His winning strategy consisted in appealing, at least initially, to the common religious creed that broke clan barriers and the strongly rooted Somali tribal allegiance. He abolished clan names within his “army”, where everyone was a “dervish” (from the arabic, who devotes his life to God and to the others). Although he managed to resist his main enemies, Britain, Italy and Ethiopia for two decades, he was defeated by internal conflicts and by his own barbaric tyranny, which he had taken far beyond the teachings of Muslim religion, to the extent that he was repudiated by Muhammad Salih himself for breaking the rules of his brotherhood²⁰. The “Mad Mullah”, though, was a charismatic and brave leader who could count on a deep knowledge of his own people, which allowed him to fight a long jihad and a “nationalistic” fight against the invader. That’s why, after his death in 1920, he became an icon of freedom for the Somali people²¹.

The consequences of the Mad Mullah’s rebellion in Somaliland and in the Northern part of the Italian Somalia were disastrous, insomuch as it was neither easy nor cheap to organize the reconstruction process; Britain’s lack of interest

18 The exact origin of this brotherhood is not very clear; it seems to be a branch of the Rashidiyya, a tariqa founded by the Sudanese Ibrahim al Rashid, who died in 1874. After his death in Mecca, the zawiya of Rashid was taken by his nephew Muhammad Salih (who died in 1919) who came from Sudan. Around 1887, the Mecca based branch took the name of Salihyya, whereas the Sudanese branch still called itself Rashidiyya. The Salihyya was exported in Somalia and other African regions by pilgrims coming from the Hejaz. Some communities (“jamaaca”, in Somali) devoted to prayer and agriculture settled all around Somalia. These communities managed to draw slaves and other emarginated groups to their ranks as well as to cultivate previously barren land (*Encyclopédie de l’Islam*, Nouvelle Édition, vol. VIII, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1995, pp. 1024-1025, entry for Salihyya). See also: Hasselblatt, G. “La posizione dell’Islam e del diritto islamico nei vari stati. Corno d’Africa” in Steinbach, W.U. (ed.) *L’Islam oggi*, ENDE, Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, 1993 (Italian edition by Agostino Cilardo), pp. 631-649, especially pp. 647-649.

19 Lewis, I.M. *A modern History of the Somali* cit., p. 67.

20 Tringham, J.S. *Islam in Ethiopia* cit., pp. 134-135.

21 Ivi, p. 134; Lewis, I.M. *A modern History of the Somali...* cit., pp. 82-83.

in the area added to the difficulties in raising financial support²². Leather and meat trade, though, had never stopped during the war and new techniques for the cultivation of sorghum and grain had been developed as well due to local action. Somali people took their own initiatives concerning agriculture, but they didn't do the same for education²³.

2.1 Missionaries

Efforts to spread education were made by missionaries²⁴, especially Capuchin friars from Toulouse, which were given a small building for rental in Berbera by the Egyptian administrators of Somaliland in 1881. Here, they started teaching the traders' children²⁵, but the Egyptians did not allow them to start a school. In May 1882 the missionaries left Berbera for Zeila, where the main commercial routes passed, and Harar. Here, the local chiefs' attitude towards them shifted from a certain amount of tolerance to open hostility.

When Britain replaced Egypt in Somaliland, in 1884-1885, Harar became a centre for the process, and the Capuchins kept good relationships with the new administrators. The latter, though, had no plan of extending their control to the inland and encouraged the Muslims' return to Harar. In so doing, they exposed the missionaries to the hostility and pressure of the arrogant newly appointed emir Abdullahi. At the end of 1886, Capuchins finally left Harar.

They focused their activities on Zeila, where they built a small school, but also here they had to accept the failure of their task to teach and convert the Somali people: «Our situation is precarious; we are like wounded birds on a broken branch²⁶».

The missionaries decided to move to the quickly developing city of Berbera with the approval of the British. The Apostolic delegate chose Father Evangeliste of Larajasse, vicar of the convent of Marseille, in order to run the new mission in Somaliland; he arrived to Berbera in September 1892 and rented a small house from an Indian merchant. Three months later Father Bernard de Marles joined him. They operated according to the rules of their order and offered their home as a shelter and for medical care. Women and children found protection and assistance there. Father Evangeliste even tried to organise a general education

22 Ivi, p. 101; Jardine, *Il Mullah del paese dei Somali*, Sindacato Italiano Arti Grafiche, Roma, 1928.

23 Lewis, I.M. *A modern History of the Somali...* cit., p. 103.

24 Carcangiu, B.M. "I Missionari della Consolata nella Somalia Italiana (1925-1930)" in Salvadorini, V.A. (ed.) *Studi Mediterranei ed Extraeuropei*, Edistudio, Pisa, 2002, pp. 147-174.

25 *Ibidem*; Geshekter, C.L. *British Imperialism in the Horn of Africa...* cit., p. 200.

26 *Ibidem*.

course for Arabic and Indian traders based in the city, but he had to abandon his project due to the scarce number of participants and the cultural barriers which made it difficult to interact with them. Moreover, rumours were spread that the Capuchin fathers were involved in the slave trade. They were therefore isolated and decided to turn to a private form of religious activity, a sort of monastic life, so as not to irritate the British authorities. Acknowledging that for a proper evangelical work they needed to speak the local language, they studied Somali and their work resulted in the creation of a grammar and a dictionary, which were published in English after a rich Englishman agreed to provide the necessary funds. Droughts, famine and sickness, which hit the region between 1894 and 1895, made the Capuchin's presence a necessity for the city, to the extent that the colonial administration gave them the authorization to build a bigger location for their activities.

Within this new environment, strengthened by their knowledge of the Somali language, the missionaries were able to work more calmly. Somalis almost forgot their initial diffidence and a larger number of people, especially children from wealthy families, started to attend the mission. Many projects were successfully run, but the apostolic activity had to face many obstacles and the Capuchins eventually acknowledged it, even if they did manage to convert some locals that helped them to spread the Catholic faith in the most impervious areas of Somaliland.

The Mad Mullah's rebellion changed this situation completely. Due to these political changes, all the missionaries were expelled in 1910²⁷; until then, very unusually for British colonies in Africa, no protestant British missionaries had operated in these territories²⁸.

Until the end of the war against the Dervish, even if they were careful with education initiatives and school projects, the British never managed to start any

27 The British governor expelled the Capuchins from Somaliland on the grounds of political reasons, and they moved partly to the French Somalia and partly to the Mission of Aden; Pásztor, L. (ed.) *Guida delle Fonti per la Storia dell'Africa a Sud del Sahara negli Archivi della Santa Sede e negli Archivi Ecclesistici Italiani*, Collectanea Archivi Vaticani, Inter Documentation Company Ag Zug Switzerland, 1983, pp. 67-68; Baur, J. *Storia del Cristianesimo in Africa*, Editrice Missionaria Italiana, Bologna, 1998; Lewis, I.M. *As the Kenyan Somali 'Peace' Conference Falls Apart in Confusion, Recognition of Somaliland's Independence is Overdue*, www.somaliland.org.

28 The author of this article has researched the archives of the SOAS, the Church of England Records Centre and the Public Record Office in London but has found no mention of the presence of British (or of any nation, for that matter) protestant missions in Somaliland. The only faint trace has to do with the presence in Somalia in 1981 and 1993 of volunteers from the Salvation Army in London, who worked in refugee camps and regarding which brief articles were published in *The War Cry*, the journal of the Mission.

significant education programme due to religious and language-related barriers. In neighbouring Sudan, the Gordon College ensured a Muslim education and the teaching of the Arabic language to its pupils. The British administration never managed to run its education programmes in Somaliland successfully, although many attempts were made in 1935; religious issues always got in the way. Law and order had not been restored and the lack of funds prevented economic and social development. Somali-British Isaq and Darod tribes increasingly turned to pastures and water beyond the Southern border with Ethiopian Somalia. Thus, the Ethiopian government had decided that a border commission that was dealing with the establishment of the border between British Somaliland and Ethiopia should study until which point the “British” Somalis would be able to move into Ethiopian territory and which would be their traditional rights²⁹.

2.2 Nationalism

Nationalism, Britain’s fear of an uprising and the conflict with Ethiopia regarding borders were added, therefore, to the post-war problems. Moreover, as previously mentioned, the colonial administration did not plan to spend a large amount of funds on this territory.

British official sources admitted that Somaliland was more of a geographical term and, in spite of the creation of a small urban sector growing on trade, it never was an economic and administrative entity. Only after the Second World War would investments become more significant in order to keep satisfied the local élites, who were on the verge of turning to nationalism³⁰.

And nationalism exploded, though, with the establishment of the Italian East Africa in 1936.

Ironically, the triumph of Fascist Italy over Ethiopia resulted in a restoration of Somali unity [...] During their occupation of Ethiopia between 1935 and 1940, Italians unified Ogaden and their colony in Southern Somalia. In so doing, they put together, for the first time in forty years, the Somali clans which had been arbitrarily divided by the establishment of the Italo-Ethiopian borders³¹.

29 Doresse, J. *Histoire sommaire de la Corne Orientale de l’Afrique*, Paris, librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1971, p. 331.

30 Calchi Novati, G. *Il Corno d’Africa...* cit., p. 62.

31 Laitin, D.D.; Samatar, S.S. (eds.) *Somalia. Nation in search of a State*, Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1987, p. 62.

In 1940, following the attack of the Fascist government against Britain in Somaliland, the Somali populations of that territory also merged with those already included in the Italian East Africa, although this was only for a very short period, between August 1940 and March 1941.

Britain's counter-attack to the Italian invasion in 1941, though, unified the entire Somali peninsula, excluding French Somalia, under its military administration for at least ten years.

Somalis in the British colony remember the Fascist occupation for the cattle seizures, arbitrary beatings, burnings of several tariqas and a serious lack of food due to the British coastal embargo. During this short period of Fascist domination, the protectorate suffered destruction and insecurity.

Nomad cattle raisers suffered less deprivations in 1940 and 1941 (they were years with rains above average) even if, in the interviews made by Charles Lee Gesheker, some of them claimed that when the Italians were ruling the protectorate «there was not even the cloth needed to wrap the dead»³². The Italian “interval” created new opportunities in the retail market for a rising Somali small bourgeoisie, when different Parsi and Banyan merchants shut their activities down and left the protectorate for good.

Under the British military administration, a new feeling of national consciousness developed among the Somalis³³. In the mosques and markets, in public and in private, the urban Somali population started questioning the colonial government's legitimacy, «asking for political unity and addressing at length problems beyond those of their own tribes»³⁴.

According to John Markakis, this new consciousness surfaced in the British protectorate within an «emerging class which was linked to the international demand for cattle and its related products and involved in the transport opportunities across the Horn of Africa»³⁵.

32 Gesheker, C.L. *Anti-colonialism and class formation: The Eastern Horn of Africa, 1920-1950*, in Laban, T. *Proceedings of the Second International Congress of Somali Studies*, University of Hamburg, August 1-6 1983, vol. 2, Hamburg, Helmut Buske Verlag, 1984, pp. 217-265, especially p. 243.

33 Regarding the origins of nationalism in the Horn of Africa, see Taddia, I. “At the origin of the State/Nation Dilemma: Ethiopia, Eritrea, Ogaden in 1941” in *Northeast African Studies*, vol. 12, n. 2-3, 1990, pp. 157-170.

34 Laitin, D.D.; Samatar, S.S. *op. cit.*, p. 63.

35 Markakis, J. *National Class Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, s.d., p. 52.

And it did not take long for the consequences to be seen, quite literally, brick by brick. When Somalis started to urbanize, before 1940, they founded social clubs and assistance societies for themselves and for the poor with no clan distinction. The Nadi Hadiyat ar-Rahman (Gift of God Club) in Berbera and Burao and the Khayriya (Blessed Association) in Hargeisa did not oppose colonialism, but they criticised the British administration for the scarce support it offered to social services. Club members tried to promote an interest in education, while they supported Koranic schools and asked Somalis to overcome their clan divisions in the name of Islamic unity³⁶.

In 1940, the formation of a Somali intelligentsia was made possible by the spread of modern education and employment opportunities within the state administration³⁷. In 1950, Britain introduced secondary schools and several Somali students were sent to Egypt and Sudan in order to complete their higher studies. According to Castagno³⁸, in the Italian Somalia about 5.000 Somalis were employed in all branches of the public administration, including the police force, while the British Somalia, according to Lewis³⁹, only had a small institution with 300 officers, of whom only thirty were Somali.

In 1943 the first indigenous political organization, known as the Somali Youth Club, was founded in Mogadishu during the British military administration that covered all the Italian colonies. In the same period, the Somaliland National Society resulted from the unification of several social clubs which were formed by traders and educated Somalis from the Northern British colonial cities. Its goals were social and cultural. In 1947, the Somali Youth Club changed its name into Somali Youth League and the Somaliland National Society merged with a driver's association called the Somali Transport Company, changing its name into Somali National League in 1948.

36 Geshekte, C.L. "Anti-colonialism..." cit., p. 244.

37 Markakis, J. *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53.

38 Castagno, A.A. "Somalia" in *International Conciliation*, n. 522, 1959 (is quoted in Markakis, J. *op. cit.*, p. 53). See also Castagno, A.A. Jr. "Somali Republic" in Coleman, J.S; Rosberg, C.G. (eds.) *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1964, pp. 512-559.

39 Lewis, I.M. "Modern Political Movement in Somaliland" in *Africa*, London, n. 3, 1958, pp. 244-261 (Part I), specially p. 251; Lewis, I.M. "Modern Political Movement in Somaliland" in *Africa*, London, n. 4, 1958, pp. 344-363 (Part II).

3. The “Somalias” after the Second World War

Following the end of the war, a long and complicated diplomatic controversy arose over the Italian colonies in Africa. The famous Bevin Plan for the unification of all Somali territories alarmed Ethiopia, the United States and the Soviet Union. They saw it as a strong British interference over the entire Horn of Africa and thus over the whole strategic area. The United States⁴⁰ pushed for the Ethiopian emperor, defending the restoration of his powers over the territories which had been claimed by Menelik II at the end of the Nineteenth century.

Moreover, the former Italian Somalia was assigned by the UN to Italy as a Trust Territory; its population benefited from it because Italy, eager to restore its reputation within the international community, did all it could in favour of Somali people. At the same time, British Somalia didn't even know if and when it would gain its independence, and progress was much slower. Due to their pre-war situation, British and Italian colonial administrations had no official contacts before the independence and the unification of their territories. «Between the years 1956 and 1957, the course of the events had already become clear: opportunities for a fruitful cooperation were definitely lost»⁴¹.

Political activity in the different “Somalias” was not very lively after the return of the Italians. Actually, both the Somali Youth League and the Somali National League kept meeting on a weekly basis in different parts of the region, but they were left with no common cause to defend, so the «public interest started to falter»⁴².

At the end of 1954, though, a dramatic event changed the course of Somali politics, leading to an evolution of the protectorate and later to its independence, which was obtained when the crucial pasturelands of the Haud and the Reserved Areas were transferred from British to Ethiopian control. By the time the protectorate shifted from military to civil administration, British control over the Haud had weakened to the point that only two Civil Affairs officers were present in the area since 1954.

40 Carcangiu, B.M. “Gli Stati Uniti e la questione dell’Ogaden (1950-1960)” in *Africa*, Roma, 52, n. 3, 1997, pp. 365-399.

41 Lewis, I.M. *A modern History of the Somali...* cit., p.148.

42 Ivi, p. 150; Lewis, I.M. *Modern Political Movement...* cit., Part I, Part II.

«Without any consultation with its Somali subjects», on November 29th1954⁴³, the United Kingdom signed a new agreement with Ethiopia which established a full withdrawal of the British authority and replaced British officers with a single British liaison officer based in Jigjiga. The tasks of the connection officer, John Drysdale, and his assistants, consisted in facilitating the British-protected Somalis the exercise of their rights in connection with pasture and water in the Haud, which had been first proclaimed by the Anglo-Ethiopian treaty of 1897 and were upheld by the new agreement. The slow withdrawal of the British had not drawn much attention, but when the contents and implications of this new treaty became known, a general protest broke out. Demonstrations took place across the protectorate for the offence suffered by the Somalis, which sent their delegations to London and New York, where they were received with a certain amount of sympathy but to no results.

Michael Mariano had a leading role in the protest. He managed to form a national convention called National United Front (NUF), which included the Somali Youth League and the Somali National League and whose main goal was gaining the Haud back from Ethiopian control and obtaining independence for the protectorate. At the same time, the implementation of the treaty was not an easy process. The connection officer found its task impossible to accomplish and Ethiopia had reached a point in which it would not tolerate the British presence in the area anymore. Moreover, the concession of the Haud to the Ethiopian administration had already been acknowledged with two treaties signed by the British government in 1942 and 1944, which strengthened Ethiopia's presence in the territory. Actually, the British tried to find a solution by gaining the territory back (it was vital for the Somali population of the area) but it was not possible, because of the treaty of 1897, duly stipulated between the European government and Menelik II.

The NUF made its own attempts too, but it reached no positive results. Widespread nationalism was now inevitable and this sentiment was fuelled in August 25th 1956 by a speech in Qabradare, in Ogaden, by Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie, in which he defined the Somali people as part of the "great Ethiopian family".

In the same year, faced with the growing Somali political activity, the British administration announced the gradual introduction of a representative government and its intention not to oppose a possible unification with the Italian Somalia. New steps were made in the development of the protectorate: new schools were started,

43 *Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Ethiopia relating to certain matters connected with the withdrawal of British military Administration from the territories designated as the Reserved Area and the Ogaden*, London, November 29th 1954, Treaty series No.1, 1955, Archive Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1010.

including secondary schools, more Somalis were given crucial positions within the administration and the police and, in 1957, the protectorate's first legislative council was installed. Its six unofficial members were appointed by the Governor following a series of meetings in Hargeisa. They did not represent the political parties, but the country's main clans. In this new situation, the NUF, finding itself in the middle of a difficult moment for political life in Somalia and without any positive solution, was slowly turned into a political party.

The legislative council started its sessions in 1957, and based on the work of a research commission, among whose members were five Somalis, a new council was formed in 1959, with twelve elected members, two unofficially appointed members and fifteen official members, its president being governor Theodore Pike. Elections were held in March. The ballot was secret in a small number of urban districts, whilst people voted by acclamation in rural areas. The vote was not extended to women⁴⁴.

The SNL won the majority for the new legislative council, which was held in February 1960. Its leader, Muhammad Haji Ibrahim Igal became the head of Government Business.

British Somaliland was moving towards independence. Britain's approval for its unification with the Italian Somalia became official in 1959, and in the same year, all parties and political groups within the protectorate took part in the formation of the Pan-Somali National Movement in Mogadishu; the movement aimed at obtaining the unity and independence of all Somali territories and the creation of strong ties with other African and Asian states.

Independence could no longer be postponed.

4. The Anglo-Ethiopian agreements on the Reserved Area of the Ogaden

Transactions for the transfer of the aforementioned territories between the Ethiopian and British delegations had moments of harsher or quieter conflict. Less than two months later, on October 2nd 1954, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Rome received from the Italian Embassy in Addis Ababa a report on the Anglo-Ethiopian transactions.

They were halted after a rough meeting in with the British delegation, which included the Governor of British Somalia, irritated by the problems raised by the Ethiopian negotiators and by their seemingly excessive demands,

⁴⁴ Lewis, I.M. *A modern History of the Somali...* cit, p. 153.

finished abruptly and... even impolitely. After this the Governor of British Somalia and his men considered they had to return to Hargeisa. The attitude of the British delegation angered the Ethiopian government deeply and (always according to our informer) it refused to continue the discussions if it did not receive any excuse both from the British government and the government of British Somalia.

After a more serene mood was restored on both sides, the British delegation returned to Addis Ababa and the discussions started again, although there were few hopes for an agreement, as the British administration would have wished. Great Britain, in fact, would have wanted an:

arrangement of the Reserved Area that, consolidating the temporary agreement of 1944, would precisely and definitely grant the government of British Somalia several rights and specially those of 'surveillance' of the area, which would practically allow the British to intervene with police forces in order to prevent attacks and border violations by those Somali tribes on British territory.

The Ethiopian government strongly opposed the granting of this request because it would have turned into a real British occupation of the Reserved Area and would mean an eventual rejection of Ethiopian sovereignty on the area. The formal acknowledgement of a full Ethiopian sovereignty (which seems incompatible with the exercise of the rights claimed by the British) is the hardest obstacle being faced by the transactions⁴⁵.

As expected, the second try for an agreement was unsuccessful: any decision, thus, was postponed to the moment in which discussions would restart in London, with the direct presence of minister Aklilou and legal counsellor Spencer. Moreover, this would have taken place at the same time that the Ethiopian emperor was visiting the British capital. The Ethiopian government hoped to find in the Foreign Office a more conciliatory attitude regarding the:

sovereign powers of Ethiopia in its territory than what it had seen until the moment in the government of Somaliland. The Anglo-Ethiopian discussions regarding the Reserved Area are also certainly interesting for Somalia... Also, we should not exclude that the British claim for surveillance rights in

45 Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1010, Etiopia. Posizione 15. *Telespresso* n. 1952/522, Ambasciata d'Italia, Ministero degli Affari Esteri, *Rapporti anglo-etioptici: negoziati per la "Reserved Area" nell'Ogaden*, Addis Abeba, 2 ottobre 1954.

the area hides the goal of setting a veiled but effective control over Northern Ogaden, which, as it is known, was always of interest to the British in the past and could still be interesting for them today, seeing as there is talk about oilfields possibly existing in that territory⁴⁶.

Discussions were resumed in London during the visit of the emperor of Ethiopia⁴⁷, joined by minister Aklilou and Spencer, counsellor for the Foreign Office, as well as Stafford, appointed counsellor of the Ethiopian government for the territories bordering the Empire. In London the mood was more relaxed and positive for the talks⁴⁸: indeed that was what the Ethiopian government expected in dealing directly with the British government, insofar as a decision had to be taken and the issue could no longer be postponed.

4.1 Anglo-Ethiopian agreement

On January 5th 1955, the Daily News Bulletin of the Imperial Ethiopian Government in Addis Ababa informed Ethiopians about the signing of a treaty between their country and Britain, which had taken place on November 29th 1954. The agreement, signed by the Ethiopian Minister of Foreign Affairs and the First Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs of Her Royal Majesty provided that the British military administration should withdraw from the remaining parts of the Ogaden and Ethiopia's Reserved Areas, which the British had occupied on the basis of Article VII of the war time 1944 treaty; subsequently, Ethiopia would step

46 Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1010, Etiopia. Posizione 15. Telespresso n. 1997/529, 11 ottobre 1954, Ambasciata d'Italia, Ministero degli Affari Esteri, *Rapporti anglo-etiopici: negoziati per la "Reserved Area" nell'Ogaden*, Addis Abeba, 11 ottobre 1954.

47 Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1010, Etiopia. Posizione 15. Telespresso n. 2077.546, Ambasciata d'Italia, Ministero degli affari Esteri, *Visita dell'Imperatore d'Etiopia in Inghilterra - Rapporti anglo-etiopici*, Addis Abeba, 25 ottobre 1954; Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1010, Etiopia. Posizione 15. Telespresso n. 5061/2590, Ambasciata d'Italia, Londra, *Visita Imperatore d'Etiopia in Gran Bretagna-Rapporti Anglo-Etiopici*, Londra, 6 novembre 1954.

48 The British press commented on the visit of Haile Selassie and there were two articles of particular interest on the *Manchester Guardian* and the London *Sunday Times*. Both said the Imperial visit had "vast political goals" and both placed Somalia among the issues to be discussed, hoping for an agreement between the two countries. The *Manchester Guardian* stated the same regarding Eritrea, "ill-willingly federated with Ethiopia in a temporary fashion". Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1010, Etiopia. Posizione 15. Telespresso n. 2077.546, Ambasciata d'Italia, Ministero degli affari Esteri, *Visita dell'Imperatore d'Etiopia in Inghilterra - Rapporti anglo-etiopici*, Addis Abeba, 25 ottobre 1954.

into the jurisdiction and administration of these territories. The new agreement had to be enforced and completed before March 1st 1955. It included a number of administrative agreements in order to facilitate the use of pasture areas by populations from Ethiopia and Somaliland on both sides of the border⁴⁹.

The right of those tribes from the British Somalia to enter the Reserved Areas and the Haud in order to use those pastures and water sources for their cattle was therefore acknowledged and regulated with specific rules.

It was a success for Ethiopia: it might be true that Ethiopian sovereignty was somehow limited by the acknowledgement of the rights of Somali tribes to the pastures, which they had always exercised, as well as by the powers vested on the British to administer the Somali during their colonial administration of the territory, but it is also true that Ethiopia reached its old borders, that might have seemed irrevocably lost. There was also a success in the agreement with the French government for the delimitation of its border with French Somalia. This, according to Tacoli, Italian ambassador to Addis Ababa, «was a favourable compromise for the British, but increased Ethiopia's claims over the Italian Somalia»⁵⁰.

Relations between the Ethiopian government and the Italian officials in Addis Ababa had thus become tense – the latter were able to know directly the intentions and moods of both the Ethiopian government and the diplomatic envoys of other Western states and they all pointed to Ethiopian control over the largest territory possible.

4.2 Reactions of the Somali

The Anglo-Ethiopian agreement quickly had an effect on the Somali people, even those inside the Italian Somalia. A secret telegram sent on January 28th 1955 from Mogadishu to Rome⁵¹, informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the «reactions to the recent Anglo-Ethiopian agreement» which were:

spontaneous and sudden, to a point that the administration could do nothing but try to study these reactions with the aim of keeping all tempers cool

49 Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1010, Etiopia. Posizione 15. Imperial Ethiopian Government, "Daily News Bulletin", *Communique*, Addis Ababa, Wednesday, 5th January, 1955.

50 Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1010, Etiopia. Posizione 15. *Telespresso* n.18/7, *Accordo etiopico-inglese per la "Reserved Area"*, Addis Abeba, 9 gennaio 1955.

51 Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1010, Etiopia. Posizione 15. *Telespresso* n. 76034/38, *Reazioni delle popolazioni della Somalia all'accordo anglo-etioptico sulla Reserved Area e sull'Haud*, Mogadiscio, 28 gennaio 1955.

and convincing local party leaders to keep these demonstrations orderly and disciplined. This action had a doubtlessly positive effect and the state of lively excitement that for a while pervaded evolved circles in the urban areas of the territory can more or less be considered over, even if some groups still meet in order to study the way to keep the agitation alive at least in the more decidedly nationalistic parts of the territory.

What is surprising is the lack of knowledge regarding the progress of the Anglo-Ethiopian agreement by the Italian Trust administration, which only knew about it at the end of December 1954 thanks to Gethin, the British consul in Mogadishu, who asked to publish the news of the closed agreement in the Italian newspaper in Somalia. The document stresses how the Italian administration had always «avoided episodes that would be negative for the relationships with other states, always intervening in time to calm the situations when it was needed and possible» and it also shows that also in:

these circumstances, considering our delicate situation as “godfathers” of the independent Somali state, it would have been very inappropriate to repress nationalistic feelings that found their way of expression in these well known protests and demonstrations, inasmuch as this would have produced feelings of mistrust and hostility regarding this administration in the Somali people, with the negative consequences that can easily be imagined.

4.2.1 Telegrams of protest

Following the official announcement of the 1954 treaty, political parties and committees sent their telegrams of protest to a number of foreign authorities asking for justice and the annulment of an agreement that had no value at all for cultural, historic, religious and political reasons⁵². The content of the telegrams was the same for all of them, as they were succinctly adapted depending on the addressee. Here we have a telegram sent to the United Nations, in New York, on January 9th 1955:

Ethiopia and the United Kingdom have recently agreed to transfer to Ethiopia Somali territories known as the Reserved Area and Haud which are now under British administration *stop* this agreement damages our fundamental interests and the future Somali nation that has nothing in common with Ethiopia *stop*

52 Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1010, Etiopia. Posizione 15.

Somali people consider it an act of hostility against their present and future prosperity *stop* on behalf of the Somali people we strongly protest against the illegal and arbitrary decision that has been taken without consulting the Somali people inside the aforementioned area *stop* Somali people everywhere are against a transfer of part of our national territory to Ethiopia or any other foreign power *stop* we will ask for the immediate annulment of that arbitrary and illegal decision *stop* we also ask that the wishes and wellbeing of the Somali people living inside the area be taken into account *stop* we respectfully ask for your quick intervention and help *stop*⁵³.

Other messages were sent to Jawahar Nehru, with a final phrase in which the Prime Minister was invited to submit their protest to the member nations of the African-Asian conference (Bandung – April 1955); to the Italian government; to Winston Churchill; to the British government; to the general Secretary of the Arab League, stressing the Islamic faith of the Somali; to the Prime Minister of the Egyptian government; and many others, coming from smaller or bigger towns in all Somalia. Most of them were signed by the presidents of the Hisbia Dighil Mirifle (Abdinur Mohamed Husein), of the Benadir Youth Union (Scerif Mohamed Husein) of the Somali Democratic Party (Abdullahi Hagi Mohamed) and the Somali Youth League (Aden Abdullah Osman)⁵⁴.

The Ethiopian government also received a telegram on January 17th, in which it was noted that although for the time being demonstrations in Mogadishu and other Somali towns were pacific, Somali people had never acknowledged or signed any sort of annexation of the territories in which they lived. The answer came on January 23rd and was signed by the Secretary of the Prime Minister, who after expressing its astonishment for the requests, without mentioning the agreement from 1897, stressed authoritatively that the treaty had only restored the pre-war situation and that no comment regarding the “unquestionably Ethiopian” territories would be accepted or taken into account. The answer of the Ethiopian government ended with a reminder that such territorial requests had been the cause of the war in 1935-36. It seemed a strong warning to the parties of Italian Somalia⁵⁵.

53 Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1010, Etiopia. Posizione 15. *Telegramma in partenza. Provenienza: Mogadiscio. Destinazione: New York. Secretary General Unations, New York, 9/1/1955.*

54 Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1010, Etiopia. Posizione 15. *Telegrammi in partenza.*

55 Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1010, Etiopia. Posizione 15. *Telegramma in partenza. Provenienza Addis Abeba. Destinazione: Mogadiscio.*

The Somali Youth League had also shown its solidarity with Somali people in the British protectorate since January 9th and had sent telegrams to Berbera and Awareh offering its cooperation in order to demonstrate and protest «against the arbitrary and illegal Anglo-Ethiopian agreement» and informing all the local political parties of its availability using the fastest way in that moment and place, which was the cablegram⁵⁶.

Protests and demonstrations spread across the Italian and the British Somalia and delegations were sent to London and New York, where they were received with sympathy but didn't actually accomplish anything.

The leader of the immediate and massive protest was Michael Mariano, a Christian Somali state employee from Northern Somalia who took part in the formation of the Somali Youth League and under whose leadership the SNL and the SYL joined forces in the National United Front (NUF), which asked for the return of the territories assigned to the British Somaliland. It was not a fight against colonialism in the same vein as those taking place in all the territories of Africa and around the world, but a fight against an injustice imposed on the Somali people lightly and with ignorance by the very same state whose protection the leaders of the Somali had accepted. This type of protectorate, held as colonial by experts in international law and which was widely used by Great Britain, was not actually a responsible and proper international institution that could be transferred at any given moment without care for previous agreements of absolute protection.

5. Reactions in Somaliland

Protests erupted across the British protectorate, especially in border areas, which were the most affected by the issue. Demonstrations were disciplined and the delegation which was sent to London in order to remonstrate against the agreement and ask the British government to postpone its application maintained a moderate attitude. Their objections were based on legal considerations, as the Reserved Areas and the Haud were defined as Somali territories under a British protectorate by two treaties in 1884 and 1886. Subsequent treaties, therefore, could not be considered as valid (specially the Anglo-Ethiopian one from 1897 and

Abdinur Mohamed Hussein Scerif Mohamed Hussein Abdullahi Hagi Mohamud Scerif Mohamud AbdurahmanAden Abdulla Osman Mog, 23/1/1955.

56 Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1010, Etiopia. Posizione 15. Telegramma in partenza. *Somali Youth League. Provenienza: Mogadiscio. Destinazione: Berbera, 9/1/1955.*

the one from November 1954) because they were signed without consulting and without even informing the Somali populations which were affected by them⁵⁷. Britain rejected these allegations completely, both regarding its legal points and a possible postponement of the implementation. The British government had always considered itself bound by the 1897 agreement, which acknowledged the Ethiopian sovereignty over the Haud and the Reserved Areas even if they were populated by tribes from the British Somaliland.

Regardless of the considerations we can make about the agreement (and the very same Minister didn't hesitate to call it 'unfortunate' due to the lack of knowledge regarding Ethiopia and Somalia at that time) it does exist and Ethiopia could have claimed its application at any moment to force the withdrawal of the British military occupation force in the Ogaden since 1941. Instead of running this risk, the British Government agreed with Addis Ababa on the establishment of a special administration aimed at protecting Somali tribes within the Ethiopian territories⁵⁸.

As previously mentioned, Britain also denied any postponement of the enforcement of the treaty, which was due on February 28th 1955. According to the British government, the Ethiopian government would not accept any delay in the process.

The situation had to be accepted as it was defined in the underlying international agreements, hoping that the rights granted to the Somali populations in the border area will be enough to safeguard their interest and their traditions. It is easy to imagine that these words, while peppered with continuous displays of sympathy for the human side of the problem and for the dignified way in which the Somali delegation upheld its cause in London, won't be enough to soothe the resentment that the recent Anglo-Ethiopian agreement seems to have stirred in big parts of the public opinion of those territories... Nor does it seem that the British government, whose line of conduct seems undoubtedly grounded on the principles of law, will drop the execution of its commitments with Ethiopia, even if that might mean

57 Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1010, Etiopia. Posizione 15. Telespresso n. 1040/474, Ambasciata d'Italia, Londra, *Accordo anglo-etiopico per la "Reserved Area" - Reazioni somale*, Londra, 24 febbraio, 1955.

58 Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1010, Etiopia. Posizione 15. Telespresso n. 1040/474, Ambasciata d'Italia, Londra, *Accordo anglo-etiopico per la "Reserved Area" - Reazioni somale*, Londra, 24 febbraio, 1955.

(as many here fear) a considerable blow to British prestige with regards to those peoples which were until now closely linked to the British colonial administration.

Even Hopkinson, who was then the British State Minister for the Colonies, had stressed the uneasiness and the feeling of embarrassment with which the British government was being forced:

to disappoint in spite of itself the expectations of the chiefs of peoples and tribes that had proven to be loyal and true British subjects... The Government could not act differently, having undertaken the 1897 treaty, which was not a good deal but that can be explained by remembering the circumstances that brought about its signature.

In those years, the Mahdi was leading an uprising in Sudan and Britain feared his possible alliance with Emperor Menelik. The government therefore decided to win the emperor's favour with some concessions in the Somali territory: Renell Rodd, which would later be appointed Britain's ambassador to Rome, negotiated the agreement and established a simple delimitation line within which Ethiopia gained a number of territories which should have remained under British control⁵⁹.

Britain was then led to acknowledge Ethiopia's ambitions with a further treaty in 1944, which had resulted from Menelik's imperialist plans, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, the Second World War, a troubled relation between London and Rome and the British military administration of the former Italian East Africa. Once these emergencies had been overcome, though, London kept agreeing to the African emperor's requests in order to facilitate its own diplomatic and economic relationships with Ethiopia by removing the obstacle of the border issue.

Moreover, the Ethiopian government was tenacious and did never lose sight of its goals. The nationalistic fever that had awoken in 1955⁶⁰ was not running out of steam,

59 Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1010, Etiopia. Posizione 15. Telespresso n. 1040/474, Ambasciata d'Italia, Londra, *Accordo anglo-etiopico per la "Reserved Area" - Reazioni somale*, Londra, 24 febbraio, 1955; Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1010, Etiopia. Posizione 15. Telespresso n. 13, *Rapporti anglo-etiopici-Reserved Area*, Roma, 10 gennaio 1955.

60 Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1037, Somalia. 1955. Telespresso n. 1839/858. Ambasciata d'Italia, Londra. *Problemi Somali*, Londra 11 aprile, 1955; Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1010, Etiopia. Posizione 15. Telespresso n. 4731/23. Ambasciata d'Italia, Londra. *Accordo anglo-etiopico per l'Haud e la "Reserved Area" - Reazioni somale*, Londra, 19 settembre 1955; Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1037, Somalia.

to the extent that on August 25th of that very same year Haile Selassie, in Qabradare, in the Ogaden, defined the Somali people as being part of the “great Ethiopian family” and their future progress as depending on its ties with Ethiopia⁶¹. The immediate consequence of this was a rise in political activity and a decided claim for full autonomy.

5.1 Independence

In 1956, the British government agreed to the introduction of a government representative in the protectorate and accepted a possible independence and the unification between British Somaliland and Somalia. As previously mentioned, a legislative council was created in 1957 with six members appointed by the governor and representing the clans and families. The first elections for a legislative assembly, in which women weren't allowed to vote, were held in 1960. The Somali National League and the United Somali Party won the majority of the votes.

In less than ten years, the British administration had managed to lead the protectorate to independence and the process had been sped up by the announcement that the Italian Somalia was to become independent on July 1st. The imminence of independence had fuelled the Somali population's nationalism. In 1959, as previously mentioned, delegates from all parties and political groups took part in the formation of the Pan-Somali National Movement, whose main goals were independence and the unification of all Somali territories, as well as the creation of strong ties with other African and Asian states. Thus, the two Somali

1955. *Telespresso* n. 1697/453. Ambasciata d'Italia, Addis Abeba. *Fermento antietiopico in seno a popolazioni del Somaliland confinanti con l'Ogaden*, Addis Abeba, 30 settembre 1955.

61 Lewis, I.M. *A modern History of the Somali...* cit, p. 152. Number 5 of the 1955 edition of the weekly publication *New Times and Ethiopia News* by Sylvia Pankhurst included a letter sent by 83 Somali chiefs to the Ethiopian Emperor «in order to express their gratitude and satisfaction for the return to the Motherland of the territories of the Haud and the Reserved Areas». A debate raged on the pages of the *Manchester Guardian*, in which Michael Mariano quoted communications coming from Mogadishu and Jiggiga «describing the displays of force to which the Ethiopian government had resorted in order to obtain the signature of the famous letter by the Somali chiefs». Thus, according to Mariano, no consideration could be given to those displays of support extorted through violence and intimidation. The controversy finished apparently with a letter that was published in the same journal on March 11th, in which a counsellor of the Ethiopian embassy stated that the communications quoted by Michael Mariano proved absolutely nothing against the government of Addis Ababa, «whereas it is much more reasonable to consider that those populations, who had already proven their close feelings for the Motherland courageously fighting against the blackshirts of Marshall Graziani» are actually happy for the announcement of their return under a direct Ethiopian administration (Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri (ASMAE), Serie Affari politici 1950-1957, Pacco 1037, Somalia. 1955. *Telespresso* 1342, *Accordo anglo-etiopico per la "Reserved Area" - Reazioni*, Londra, 14 marzo 1955).

territories appeared ready for unification. British colonial secretary Alan Lennox-Boyd had announced his government's intention to facilitate negotiations for the unification between Somalia and the Protectorate. Two different positions were expressed on this regard⁶² by the Government Business and Michael Mariano. While the former was more cautious and foresaw a longer time in order to harmonize the conditions of the two territories before they could merge, the latter aimed at reaching unification in the shortest possible time. According to this point of view, traditional and administrative differences could be dealt with later.

According to Giampaolo Calchi Novati⁶³:

The British protectorate was smaller and less important than Mogadishu from a political point of view. Its administration was based on different criteria and its ruling élites had received a different training (English-speaking versus Italian-speaking, until Somali was adopted as a written language in 1972); they never truly mixed. British pragmatism, high standards in administration and personal commitment were in contrast with a less scrupulous political and individual moral within the former Italian Somalia. In the South, the European colonization was more intense, leading to a faster development. This gave the Northern territories a taste for tradition in opposition to a void "modernity" which had not been truly appropriated. The economies of the two regions were based on different export markets. In order to close this gap, the old separation was taken into account in the distribution of government positions; the result was that specific requests of the North kept being brought up, endangering the unity of the state.

Once independence was reached, administrative integration between the two territories was not easy. Mogadishu and Hargeisa, the two main centres of Italian and British Somalia respectively, were not even connected by a telephone line⁶⁴.

5.2 Union of the two territories

Concerning the former Somaliland, the new State was certainly created on June 26th 1960 by the Order in Council of the same day, which gave a complete independence to the former British Protectorate⁶⁵.

62 Lewis, I.M. *A modern History of the Somali...* cit., p. 162.

63 Calchi Novati, G. *Il Corno d'Africa...* cit., p. 98.

64 Lewis, I.M. *A modern History of the Somali...* cit., p. 171.

65 Angeloni, R. *Diritto Costituzionale Somalo*, Milano, Editore Giuffrè, 1964, p. 60.

Shortly after that, Somaliland's representative Assembly approved the Act of Union between the new state and the Somali Republic, implicitly accepting its constitution. As a consequence, Somaliland's MPs joined those of Somalia in the National Assembly, which was created by the Constitution, and in the election of the temporary head of state, which would later appoint the first government of the republic.

The joint Somali Republic came into existence within the international community on July 1st 1960, when the Italian Somalia became independent. The National Assembly, the head of state and the government were unified and the two former colonies turned into the Northern and Southern regions of the new Republic.

The Republic's founding act is therefore the Constitution, which was promulgated by the temporary president on July 1st 1960 and confirmed by a referendum on June 25th 1961.

The Act of Union, which was implicitly accepted since July 1st 1960, became a law on January 31st 1961. Why did it take so long?

Unification resulted from a specific desire of Somaliland's and Somalia's populations, which expressed their will through the representatives they had elected during a conference held in Mogadishu from April 16th to 22nd 1960. At the end of the conference, the newly reached agreement was announced along with the new State's institutions, and committees were created «to enquire and conveniently solve problems linked with the administrative, financial and judicial system existing in both territories»⁶⁶. The United Nations would be asked to «provide experts who could help in the fast integration of the two territories».

The agreement was based on an ambitious and difficult plan which should have required more time and been divided in phases. The 6-month anticipation in Italy's withdrawal from its Trust Territory led to a hasty independence for the British protectorate, whilst politicians from both territories were still working within the political committee, with the Constituent Assembly and on the elaborate plans for the celebration of independence.

According to Paolo Contini, this situation was further complicated by the fact that:

nobody held an official responsibility in the creation of the union's legal basis. The United Nations, the Italian government in the South and the

66 Contini, P. *The Somali Republic: An Experiment in Legal Integration*, Frank Cass Limited, London, 1969, p. 7.

British government in the North were only involved in the preparation of their territories for the transfer of powers by the established dates. As a consequence, immediately before the unification, there was little to no dialogue between the administrative authorities of the two territories.

In short, it is not surprising that this “hasty union”⁶⁷ did not have well defined legal goals.

It was therefore established that an act of union would be signed by the representatives of the two territories. This act would be an «international agreement and it would be legally binding for both states». Legal details, therefore, were not dealt with on time and in those same moments doubts were expressed over the act’s legitimacy and legal effects. Somalia’s Act of Union and the Union Law of Somalia and Somaliland were both written as bilateral agreements but none of them had been signed by the representatives of the two territories. Somalia’s Act of Union had been approved “in principle”⁶⁸ but it had not been turned into a law. On July 1st 1960 a Legislative Decree had been passed in order to deal with some legal effects of the union. But as it was not turned into a law according to Article 63 of the Constitution, this Legislative Decree never entered into force.

In order to solve uncertainties, the National Assembly approved the Act of Union Law No. 5 on January 31st 1961.

According to articles 1 and 3:

Somaliland and Somalia, being united, constitute under the Constitution the Somali Republic, which shall be an independent, democratic and unitary republic.

The Capital of the Somali Republic shall be Mogadishu. The Legislative Assemblies of Somaliland and Somalia⁶⁹ shall together comprise the first National Assembly of the Somali Republic [...] The laws in force in Somaliland and Somalia at the time of the establishment of the Union shall remain in full force and effect in the respective jurisdictions subject to the provisions of the Constitution, this law or any future law [...] Subject to the provisions of Article 94 of the Constitution concerning the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, and any future law, the courts as presently constituted in Somaliland and Somalia shall continue to exercise the respective

67 Touval, S. *Somali Nationalism*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 110.

68 Haji, N.A.; Noor, M. (eds.) *The Legal System of The Somali Democratic Republic*, Charlottesville, Virginia, The Michie Company, 1972, p. 133.

69 Angeloni, R. *op. cit.*, p. 278.

jurisdiction conferred upon them by law [...] Save as otherwise provided in the Constitution, this law or any future law, all public bodies, both central and local, shall continue to exist and shall retain all their duties, functions and powers [...].

Doubts over the legitimacy of the union were therefore silenced by the Act of Union of 1961 and the union was strengthened by the integration of the different laws and legal systems in force in both halves of the Republic⁷⁰.

The constitutional referendum was held on June 20th 1960. Dissatisfaction was already being displayed in the North and the Union did not seem a stable machine. Moreover, the Somali National League boycotted the referendum and less than 50 per cent of the electors actually voted. As a result, district offices and parties such as the G.L.S., S.N.L. and U.S.P. remonstrated over the legitimacy of the referendum results. The United Sections of the Supreme Court declared their validity and published them on July 4th 1961. The Constitution was approved by nearly 1,756,216 out of 1,948,348 votes with only 183,000 nay votes⁷¹.

Dissatisfaction over the distribution of power among family-clans and between the two regions degenerated in December 1961, when a group of young British-trained officials from the North rebelled against their low rank positions within the country's police compared to those that were occupied by Italian-trained officials from the South. Police agents in the North reacted by arresting the rebels and «showing, in so doing, a strong Somali unity⁷²» Actually, according to Lewis⁷³, the circumstances which led to the conflict between Italian and British-trained officials are still not clear and although unity remained untouched, dissatisfaction persisted.

6. From dissatisfaction to secession

Mogadishu did not give the due consideration to the results of the referendum nor to the military coup of 1961, which endangered the newly legitimated unification process.

Although all territories seemed harmonized in their ethnic, religious and

70 Haji, N.A.; Noor, M., *op. cit.*, p. 134.

71 Angeloni, R. *op. cit.*, p. 277.

72 Nelson, H.D. (ed.) *Somalia. A country Study*, Foreign Area Studies The American University, Washington D.C., 1982, p. 36.

73 Lewis, I.M. *A modern History of the Somali...* cit., p. 173.

linguistic elements, the two different colonial heritages had generated incompatible administration systems. The survival of the union, in spite of the many provocations, was only made possible by the general perception, in Somaliland, that unity was the only possible way to the unification of all Somali territories, including the Haud and the Reserved Areas. And thus there was a gradual process of administrative annexation by way of a feeble political union.

The 1969 coup took Siad Barre to power. He was a Marrehan from the big Darod family who hated the family clan of the Isaq, based in the North. Under its rule, the situation worsened, as key political positions were kept for officials from the South, while the Northern populations were considered as inferior.

«Northern disenchantment turned into rage from 1978⁷⁴».

The war between Ethiopia and Somalia over the Ogaden issue had destroyed Siad Barre's Somalia; alliances between European powers in the Horn of Africa were changing; in 1977, the territory of the Afar and Issa had become independent under the name of Djibouti, where France exercised its hegemony. The situation appeared particularly hostile to Northern Somalia.

In 1981 the guerrilla Somali National Movement (SNM) was formed in London. In the meantime, relations between Northern and Southern Somalia were deteriorating. In 1983, the North suffered from a series of economic measures which were adopted by the central government, such as a ban on the cultivation and selling of a narcotic plant, the qat (*Catha edulis*), which was broadly and successfully commercialized across the North-west of the country. The government ban was considered as:

a further attack against the entrepreneurship and commercial activity of the Isaq. A growing presence of refugees in the North and the tendency towards a military government led by Mogadishu added to these reasons for individual frustration⁷⁵.

1988 was a crucial year in this regard: Hargeisa, the Northern capital city, was destroyed and many people died. Protests erupted across the entire Somali territory and the opposition movements that were formed against the regime managed to achieve its downfall in 1991.

74 Prunier, G. "Comment survivre sans la 'Communauté Internationale'. Somaliland, le pays qui n'existe pas" in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, octobre 1997, p. 18.

75 Lewis, I.M. *A modern History of the Somali...* cit., p. 252.

The Somali National Movement, though, did not immediately start a campaign for independence. On the contrary, it tried to form a national assembly in order to reach an agreement with the South, maybe some sort of federal solution. But the brutality of the government campaign and the assignment of a new government in Mogadishu, in January 1991, which did not include any SNM representative contributed to a change in the North's public opinion. In May 1991, the leaders of the SNM and the traditional elders from the North met in Burao in order to strengthen peace and find an agreement over an interim administration. «Public gatherings against the new leadership in the South, though, led to a sudden change of plans⁷⁶».

On May 18th 1991, unexpectedly, the SNM declared the independence of Somaliland within its previous borders.

While all fighters from the South identified with clans and clan fractions, the Somali National Movement in the North was:

trying a completely different way of national reconciliation, until secession... Independence had only come from a deep feeling of rejection of the South and all Somali politics since 1960. Due to the injustice of peace and the violence of war, this feeling grew from 1991 because of the persisting anarchy of the South⁷⁷.

Somaliland has kept proclaiming its independence unilaterally.

The process is well known. In May 1993 a new conference was held in Borama with the presence of the Northern clans. A new transition chart was approved, confirming the independence of the territory, and this chart was replaced, during a further “national conference” in early 1997, by a temporary constitution which confirmed Somaliland's independence. In May 2001, the same constitution was approved by a national referendum, «a result interpreted by most observers as “the approval of Somaliland's independence and the rejection of Mogadishu and the Somali government”»⁷⁸.

76 “Somaliland: Time for African Union Leadership” in International Crisis Group *Africa Report*, n. 110, 23 May 2006, p. 6; www.internationalcrisisgroup.com.

77 Prunier, G. *op. cit.*; see also Lewis, I.M. *Blood and Bone. The Call of Kinship in Somali Society*, Laurenceville, The Red Sea Press, 1994; Lewis, I.M. “Visible and Invisible Differences: The Somali Paradox” in *Africa*, London, vol. 74, n. 4, 2004, pp. 489-515.

78 International Crisis Group *op. cit.*, p. 6.

7. Conclusion

Since its second independence, Somaliland had to face a bitter internal conflict in order to achieve the solid unity it can display today. It shows all the elements of a sovereign state but still lacks the advantages of an international recognition. Its foreign policy, relations with neighbouring countries, economy and eligibility for international aid are all deeply affected by this. The Act of Union of 1961, though, keeps Somaliland officially linked to the central government in Mogadishu, a government which has not actually existed for fifteen years, in spite of the many attempts to revitalize it at an international, continental and regional level. This issue should have been included within the inspiring principles of the Organization of African Unity, which was founded in Addis Ababa on May 25th 1963, in the same years when the Pan-Somali Movement had raised the issue of the unification of all Somali populations, leading to Somalia's isolation. The first council of the OAU ministers, held in Cairo in April 1964, addressed this problem by adopting a resolution that bound all African states to the respect of their borders' integrity⁷⁹. This resolution was in contrast with the decisions of the Conference of All African Peoples, held in Accra in 1958⁸⁰. Ironically, thus, the politics of continental organizations were an obstacle to the solution of the prickly present problem in the Horn of Africa.

Somaliland, though, desperately needs to be recognised as a state and its policies are moving in this direction⁸¹. An opening was shown by the African

79 Reisman, W.N. "Somali self-determination in the Horn: Legal Perspectives and Implications for Social and Political Engineering" in Lewis, I.M. (ed.) *Nationalism & self Determination in the Horn of Africa*, London, Ithaca Press, 1983, pp. 151-173, especially p. 166.

80 «The conference: a) exposes the artificial frontiers created by the imperialistic powers... b) claims for the abolition or the adjustment of these frontiers soon; c) calls upon the Independent States of Africa to uphold a permanent solution for this problem based on the true wishes of the people». Healy, S. "The Changing Idiom Of Self-Determination in the Horn of Africa" in Lewis, I.M. (ed.) *Nationalism & Self Determination in the Horn of Africa...* cit., pp. 93-109, specially p. 98.

81 The current president of Somaliland, Dahir Rayale Kahin, elected in 2002 after the death of Mohammed Ibrahim Egal, stated the following in an interview with *Jeune Afrique* (n. 2367, mai 2006, F. Soudan, "Africains, si vous saviez...", pp. 32-39): «Our independence is irreversible, there is no turning back, even if our brothers from the South find peace again – something which I hope... Do you know any other African country that, without ever receiving a dollar of aid, has been able to build a state and a nation and, even more, leave a war behind? Being forced to count only on ourselves has taught us to live without begging or humiliation. It is a strength that we'll need in the future... To all my African brothers I say: our cause is just, but you don't know it. To the heads of state: you have the moral duty to help us. Be proud of us and of what we do. We are living proof that Africa can take things in its own hands and rise by itself».

Union's summit held in Banjul on June 25th 2006, which included a delegation from Somaliland⁸².

As early as June 2nd 2006, Suliman Baldo, director of the Africa Programme within the International Crisis Group, wrote an article in Arabic on London-published *Al-sharq al-Awsat*, entitled «Somaliland (Ard al-Sumal) [...] does such an issue exist?». In the article, he asserted that⁸³:

After Montenegro voted for its independence on May 21st, many countries were shown how support can be gained for an (independence) process.

Given Somalia's involvement in this kind of process and the EU's involvement in the solution of the crisis between Serbia and Montenegro when the problem of sovereignty was raging, the African Union should take the initiative and address the issue of Somaliland and Somalia in order to ensure a peaceful future.

But let's take a look at the agreements in force.

The Republic of Somaliland (Ard al-Sumal) was proclaimed on May 18th, fifteen years after the unilateral declaration of its independence from Somalia, even though its sovereignty was not recognised internationally. Its state system is a constitutional and democratic one, although its main political personalities have shown separatist ambitions.

In December, President Zahir Riyali Kahin asked for its country's candidacy to the African Union, proclaiming its right to the creation of a state in the region, which was separate during the colonial years but included in the Somali state after the difficult period in which it gained its independence from Great Britain. Somaliland voluntarily merged with Somalia in the years of the dream of a Great Somalia – which would have included parts of Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti. Later it claimed for the acknowledgement of its borders through independence. Given that Somaliland is the only region within the former Somalia that displays a certain stability, wouldn't it be fair to acknowledge its ambitions?

Hundreds of thousands of refugees have returned to their homes, thousands of land mines have been removed. Somaliland is currently a rare case of stability within the African continent and the Islamic world.

The troubled perspective of a united Somalia raises some issues, as it represents the past for people in Somaliland (whereas other Somalis seem more attracted by the old idea of a Somali Republic).

82 "Jeune Afrique", n. 2373, 2-8 July 2006, pp. 12-13.

83 Translated from Arabic by Nicola Melis.

The problem could be solved with the concession of a strong autonomy, but this may not be enough.

The African Union finds itself stuck in a difficult position. It has to accept a secessionist part even though territorial integrity and unity are amongst its fundamental requirements for admission.

The AU should send its observers to Somaliland in order to enquire over the possibility of a federal, confederal or independent form of government. The aim is that of ensuring a solid and long-lasting peace.

Somaliland has its own Constitution, which was approved by a regular referendum. It has its own flag, a national anthem, a currency, a capital city, Hargeisa, and its own President, Dahir Riyale Kahin. And, above all, its population desires to maintain peace and build a national state.

The government webpage offers a long list of the foreign states where Somaliland holds representatives: the United States, the UK, Italy, Ethiopia and Djibouti. The UK in particular, its former colonizing power, has kept its economic, cultural, social and diplomatic relations with Somaliland and supports its position, helping in many ways a territory whose extension Great Britain itself reduced.

An international recognition of Somaliland could also «help social reconstruction in Somalia,» as Lewis said⁸⁴. Djibouti has economic and political interests in both the North and the South of Somalia, Ethiopia expressed its concerns over Islamic fundamentalism and Kenya is having serious problems with Somali refugees. Many Western and African countries, though, do not know the true history of Somaliland and the real reasons behind its requests. The real fear in the UA and the UN is the possibility of causing an explosion of secessionist ambitions within the African continent.

And it is true; it could happen. Puntland, for instance, proclaimed itself a “regional territory” within the Somali Republic and is pushing for a federal form of government.

But perhaps the time has come for trying new ways and solutions that might respond better to African history and culture.

84 Lewis, I.M. *A modern History of the Somali...* cit., p. 307.

Law No. 5 of 31 January 1961: Act of Union⁸⁵

Article 1. (Union and Capital of the State)

1. Somaliland and Somalia, being united, constitute under the Constitution the SOMALI REPUBLIC, which shall be an independent, democratic and unitary republic.

2. The Capital of the Somali Republic shall be Mogadishu.

Article 2. (National Assembly)

The Legislative Assemblies of Somaliland and Somalia shall together comprise the first National Assembly of the Somali Republic.

Article 3. (Continuation of Laws and Institutions)

1. The laws in force in Somaliland and Somalia at the time of the establishment of the Union shall remain in full force and effect in the respective jurisdictions subject to the provisions of the Constitution, this law or any future law.

2. Subject to the provisions of Article 94 of the Constitution concerning the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, and any future law, the courts as presently constituted in Somaliland and Somalia shall continue to exercise the respective jurisdiction conferred upon them by law.

3. Save as otherwise provided in the Constitution, this law or any future law, all public bodies, both central and local, shall continue to exist and shall retain all their duties, functions and powers.

4. Subject to the provisions of any future law, the terms and conditions of service of public officials and employees serving central or local bodies shall not be less favourable than those applicable to them at the time of the establishment of the Union.

5. All rights and obligations, whether public or private, shall continue in existence in accordance with the applicable law, and shall be recognized and given full force and effect.

Article 4. (Succession to Rights and Obligations)

1. All rights lawfully vested in or obligations lawfully incurred by the independent Governments of Somaliland and Somalia or by any person on their

⁸⁵ Angeloni, R. *Diritto costituzionale somalo*, Milano, Giuffrè Editore, 1964, pp. 278-280.

behalf, shall be deemed to have been transferred to and accepted by the Somali Republic upon the establishment of the Union.

2. Whenever such rights or obligations arise from any international agreement their acceptance by the Somali Republic shall be subject to Article 67 of the Constitution.

Article 5. (Citizenship)

All persons who on the date of the establishment of the Union possessed the citizenship of Somaliland or Somalia shall become citizens of the Somali Republic.

Article 6. (Army and Police)

1. The Somaliland Scouts and the National Army of Somalia shall constitute the National Army of the Somali Republic and shall be under the authority of the Minister of Defence.

Article 7. (Financial provisions)

Until a unified budget of the Somali Republic has been established, the budgetary appropriations for Somaliland and Somalia shall as far as practicable continue to be applied in the respective territories for the purposes for which they were originally intended.

Article 8. (Customs)

1. Until otherwise provided by law, goods imported from foreign countries and moving from the territory of Somaliland to the territory of Somalia and vice versa shall be subject to the customs laws in force at the date of the establishment of the Union:

Provided that (a) where the rate of duty in the territory to which the goods are proceeding is equal to or lower than the rate in the territory from which the goods are proceeding, no duty shall be charged; and (b) where the rate of duty in the territory to which the goods are proceeding is higher than the rate in the territory from which the goods are proceeding there shall be charged an amount equal to the difference between the two rates.

2. No customs excise, or other tax shall be imposed upon the movement goods (including animals) between Somaliland and Somalia or vice versa when such goods originate in the Somali Republic.

3. Nothing in this article shall be deemed to revoke or modify any restriction in force at the time of unification in Somaliland or Somalia on the import, export or movement of any goods into or out of Somaliland or Somalia.

Article 9. (Repeal of Inconsistent Legal Provisions)

1. Any provision of any law of Somaliland or Somalia, including the Somaliland Order in Council, 1960 (being the Constitution of Somaliland), which is inconsistent with the Constitution of the Somali Republic or this law is hereby repealed.

2. The provisions of the Union of Somaliland and Somalia Law (No. 1 of 1960) are hereby repealed, except for Article 11(4) thereof.

Article 10. (Title and Entry into Force)

This law may be cited as the “Act of Union” and shall be deemed to have come into operation on the 1st day of July, 1960.

Proclamation of the results of the referendum⁸⁶

(From the memorandum of the Supreme Court, July 4th 1961)

The United Sections of the Supreme Court

Definitely proceeds, after hearing the conclusions of the Attorney General and according to the 3rd point of Article III of the Temporary and Final Provisions of the Constitution, to:

Confirm the decision taken by the Central Office for the referendum regarding the claims presented to it by the District Offices of Merca, Afgoi, Belet Uen, Dusa Mareb and El Bur.

Reject the claims presented directly by the G.I.S., S.N.L. and U.S.P. parties.

Confirm the correctness of the operations of the referendum and proclaim the results of the popular consultation:

Votes cast	1,948,348
Votes in favour of the Constitution	1,756,216
Votes against the Constitution	183,000
Null votes	9

Consequently, confirm that the majority of votes are in favour of the Constitution promulgated on July 1st 1960.

Orders the immediate communication of these document to the National Assembly and its publication in the Official Bulletin.

86 Angeloni, R. *Diritto costituzionale somalo*, Milano, Giuffrè Editore, 1964, p. 277.

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The 1896 Battle of Adwa and the forging of Ethiopian nation

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Introduction

In 1896, eleven years after the Berlin Conference¹, the Ethiopian army decisively defeated the Italian army at the Battle of Adwa. It was a decisive battle because it aborted Italia's ambition to establish a colonial foothold in Ethiopia. On March 2, 1896, *The New York Times* headline states: «Abyssinians Defeat Italians; Both Wings of Baratieri's Army Enveloped in an Energetic Attack»². On March 4, 1896, *The New York Times* featured another story about «Italy's Terrible Defeat». It also states «three thousand men killed, sixty guns and all provisions lost». It further indicates how high the defeat's impact has reached by referring to the Pope who «is greatly disturbed by the news»³. «The terrible defeat» sent shock waves throughout Europe and the colonized world. This was the first time that a non-white people had defeated a European power. According to Teshale, the victory the Ethiopians had achieved over Italy was different than other battles won by African forces. The victory was permanent⁴.

While Europeans saw the defeat as a real threat to their vast colonial empires in Africa, Asia, the Americas and the Caribbean, the colonized subjects in these

1 The Scramble for Africa is a reference to direct colonial occupation of territories in Africa by European colonizers. The Scramble began in 1876 and by 1885 European powers have reached an agreement at the Berlin Conference as to how to carve the continent into their spheres of influence. For a comprehensive treatment of the subject, see Pakenham, T. *The Scramble for Africa: 1876-1912*, New York, Random House, 1991.

2 *The New York Times*, March 2, 1896.

3 *The New York Times*, March 4, 1896.

4 Teshale, T. «Adwa and Menelik's Ethiopia» in Brown, P.S.; Fassil Yirgu (eds.) *One House – The Battle of Adwa 1896 – 100 Years*, Chicago, Nyala Publishing, 1996, pp. 30-31. In 1879, the Zulu defeated the British at the Battle of Isandhlwana. The Zulus, however, lost the subsequent battles.

territories understood the event as the beginning of the end of colonialism. Adwa as Davidson aptly puts it has become a prelude to decolonization in Africa⁵. Clearly the victory at the Battle of Adwa lends itself to multiple meanings and interpretations, depending upon perspectives and stances in relation to colonialism. The purpose of this chapter is to look into the interpretations of the event from the perspectives of the colonized and how the victory affected the idea of global Ethiopia. It can be argued that the Battle has further enhanced the symbolic significance of Ethiopia in Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean. The Battle may have also given geographical and historical certitude to Ethiopia. The Battle of Adwa is another significant symbol in the imaginary of the idea of Ethiopia. This chapter looks into the symbolic importance of Adwa in the conception and development of pan-African solidarity and identity.

Ethiopia at the time of the Battle was a highly traditional empire-state where kings and nobilities ruled over a predominantly agrarian people. Modes of rules were not only dictated by customs and personal whims, they were also exploitative. Adwa then ushered a new paradigm to alter or reform the tradition, to replace it with a modern system of centralized and unified government. While the symbolic significance of the Battle successfully echoed the call for freedom and independence and an end to colonial domination abroad, the full meaning of Adwa has yet to be fully realized within Ethiopia. Adwa suggests the power of indigenous multiple voices voluntarily cooperating to defeat and challenge the European colonial order.

Virtually all the regions, religions, linguistic groups, aristocrats and peasants pulled their resources together to formulate and execute a strategy of victory. By their actions the Ethiopians were not only affirming the power and immense possibilities of unity in diversity, but they were placing issues of freedom and internal reform at the top of the national agenda. Adwa necessitates a new set of directions interspersed with broader definition and application of freedom so that all those who participated in the Battle would be able to participate in the affairs of their country. As Maimire puts it, «from the perspectives of the thousands who participated in the campaign of Adwa, the resistance to the Italian invasion embodies the aspiration for freedom, equality and unity as well as the rejection of colonialism»⁶.

5 Basil, D. *The Ancient World and Africa*, p. 326.

6 Maimire Mennesemay “Ethiopian History and Critical Theory: The Case of Adwa” in Mikias, P.; Getachew Metaferia (eds.) *The Battle of Adwa: Reflections on Ethiopia’s Historic Victory Against European Colonialism*, New York, Algora Publishing, 2005, pp. 288-289.

Adwa reminds the Shoan nobility⁷ to let freedom ring from northern highlands to the rift valleys, the river basins, the plain lush fields of Arussi and the salty Danakil depressions. Adwa presents a unique opportunity to reconfigure the empire-state. Unfortunately, absolutism and imperial glory overshadowed and undermined the emancipatory project suggested by the historic event of Adwa. Adwa presses on the monarchy to modernize and to let the people involve in the political process through constitutional means. Unfortunately, the leaders resisted internal reform or introduced ineffective and nominal elements of modernity. Absolute monarchy, casual modernity and detached tradition were pursued and, to this date, insist on clinging to the status quo. The status quo is the cause of immense poverty and disenfranchisement for the vast majority of the people in the country.

Adwa's magnificent victory is a model in as far as people of various cultures, religions and languages willingness to assemble for a purpose. 100,000 Ethiopian troops took positions on the fields and mountains of Adwa to encircle and defeat the enemy. The multi-cultural army paid the ultimate sacrifice when about nine thousand of its soldiers died at the Battle. With their sacrifice, they set the stage for the birth of a new Ethiopia where the reach of freedom, politically and economically, would be more egalitarian. The model, unfortunately, was not pursued in post-Adwa Ethiopia. The model of voluntary cooperation and coexistence has yet to be implemented in the twenty first century Ethiopia. The model has yet to break the cycle of poverty and endless violent conflicts in the Horn of Africa.

While the victory is certainly a major milestone in Ethiopian history, Menelik and his successors failed to fully appreciate and adopt the new reality that emerged (locally and internationally) as a consequence of the victory. The meaning and reach of freedom hampered by intolerance to internal criticism and resistance to reform the monarchy. Internationally, most historians agree that Adwa opens the way for the ultimate demise of colonialism in Africa and elsewhere.

Adwa is significant because it disturbed the colonial order in the world. Colonial subjects interpreted Adwa as a call to resist and defeat colonialism and racial oppressions through out the world. With Adwa, they have a permanent symbol and a constant reminder that colonialism was wrong and it ought to be defeated. No system is just in as long as it treats human beings as objects and

⁷ Shoa is located in the central highlands of Ethiopia. Emperor Sahle Selassie, the grand father of Emperor Menelik, established a powerful kingdom in Shoa, with its capital at Ankober. Shoan kingdom competed for power and territory with established kingdoms in the Ethiopia Empire.

fodders to exploitative and profitable economic systems. Citizen subject is a right that cannot be denied and that should be exercised if at all freedom is a universal right of peoples and communities. Adwa, to most historians, is an African victory. The 1884-85 Berlin Conference was convened to divide up the entire continent of Africa and assign colonial territories to European powers. The Europeans allocated the Horn of Africa to Italy. Italy's military push in Ethiopia is a part of the European colonial order in Africa.

In preparation to this essay, I conducted field and library research here and in Ethiopia. I visited the town of Adwa in September 2006 and March 2012. Adwa is, only 25 miles west of the ancient city of Aksum. I made the journey to Adwa in search of memorial markings, to participate in the 116th Battle of Adwa Anniversary, to pay tribute to the war heroes and heroines, to converse with residents and to visit relevant institutions and museums. The Battle of Adwa is known locally as 1886, the Ethiopian calendar year for 1896.

I also had a chance to examine archival documents in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies at Addis Ababa University and the National Archive in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The National Archive has, among other books, manuscripts and papers written in local languages and scripts, a rich collection of documents encompassing the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries of the Common Era in Ethiopian history. I particularly read and copied relevant documents from the archival collections of Belata Mersea Hazen Wolde Qirqos⁸, Doctor Dejazemach Zewde Gebre Selassie⁹, Dejazemach Kebede Tesema¹⁰, and Aleqa Taye Gebre Mariam¹¹. Recent

8 I have read and copied vast archival collections of Mersae Hazen Wolde Qirqos including biographical essays of Emperor Menelik II, Lij Iyassu, and Empress Zewdeitu, Ethiopian ancient and modern history of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Ancient Ethiopian History, Ethiopia (Nubia and Habesha), Aspects of ancient Egyptian and Ethiopian history and Brief Historical Notes About Emperor Menelik II. All are written in Amharic by hand. Some of this documents need to be copied, for they are fading.

9 Zewde Gebre Selassie, who is related to Emperor Yohannes II, is an Oxford trained historian. He has authored an authoritative biographical book on Emperor Yohannes II. His archival collections include A Genealogy of the Peoples of Hamasen (Eritrean highlanders who have historical and cultural ties to the highlanders of northern Ethiopia), Empress Taitu's Role at the Battle of Adwa, and Gebre Hiwot Baykedagn's Critical Essay on Emperor Menelik II and Ethiopia. Both are written in Amharic.

10 Kebede Tesema's archival collections at the National Archive include the Imperial Government Land distribution Policy, Anonymous Essay Critical of Emperor Haile Selassie's Foreign Policy, Ancient Aksum, A History of Ethiopian Kings and Notes on Ethiopian History. All texts are in Amharic.

11 Among the archival collection of Aleqa Taye Gebre Mariam in the National Archive, I found the Foundational History of the Ethiopian People which is hand written in Amharic. Aleqa Taye has

publications of memoirs in Amharic by former palace officials or associates, such as Fitawrari Tekle Hawariat Tekle Mariam and Dejazemach Zewde Retta, have also helped a great deal to elucidate historic events. Tsehafe Tezaz Gebre Selassie's *Tarike Zemen Ze Dagmawi Menelik Neguse Negest Ze Ethiopia* (Historical Period of Emperor Menelik II of Ethiopia) is a useful source of the Battle. Gebre Selassie served as personal chronicler of the Emperor¹².

The collection donated to the National Archive by Belata Merse Hazen Wolde Qirqos includes a critical essay entitled *Atse Menelikena Ethiopia* (Emperor Menelik and Ethiopia) written by a great Ethiopian scholar, Gebre Hiwot Baykedagn. His essay criticizes Ethiopian historians for failing to engage in critical interpretations of the past. He also points out the achievements and failures of Emperor Menelik. Another scholar who was trained in Europe, Afeworq Gebreyesus wrote the biography of Emperor Menelik. The work is regarded as serious and fruitful. Gebre Hiwot Baykedagn criticizes the book for lack of balance in the appraisal of the leadership of Emperor Yohannes II in comparison to Emperor Menelik. In addition, almost ten years ago, I participated in a book project to celebrate the centennial anniversary of the Battle of Adwa. The book, *One House: The Battle of Adwa 1896-100 Years*, edited by Pamela S. Brown and Fasil Yirgu, has contributors, such as the Late Laureate Tsegaye Gebre Medhin, Richard Pankhurst, and Teshale Tibebu. My contribution is entitled "How Africa Defeated Europe".

Menelik's (Abba Dagneu) success at the Battle of Adwa may be attributed to the following factors: One, he surrounded himself with great advisors, such as Empress Taitu Bitul, Fitawarari Habte Giorgis Dinegde (Abba Mechal) and Ras Mekonnen, a nephew and father of Emperor Haile Selassie.

Menelik was a popular leader, skillful diplomat, and good listener. Menelik believed in reconciliation. Those who revolted against him once defeated they were immediately pardoned and allowed, unfortunately, to retain their original privileged position. Menelik was keenly aware of the colonial expansionist ambition of the French, British and Italians in the region. As a result, he actively sought and acquired modern weapons from Europe. He even bought a large quantity of weapons from the Italians. He also fully exploited the rivalries among

recorded eight battles between Ethiopia and Italy from mid 19th century to early 20th century of the Common Era.

12 The original manuscript written in Geez on parchment is available in the archives of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies. The Amharic version was translated by Belata Mersea Hazen Wolde Qirqos in 1959 (Eth. Cal.) and published by Artistic Printing Press in Addis Ababa.

the three colonizers. More importantly, out of a long war experience, together with his ministers, regional kings, he developed a winning war plan.

Menelik's war declaration was widely heeded and welcomed throughout the country, a clear affirmation of his popularity. Menelik's declaration is an important literary document in the context of preparation, the will to fight and become victorious at the Battle of Adwa. Menelik appealed to love of family, religion and country. He reminded Ethiopians that the intention of the enemy is to take away the core values and traditions cherished by the people. Menelik declared (translation mine):

Up until now, through the grace of God, who permitted me to live by destroying my enemies and expanding the territorial boundaries of our country. It is also through the grace of God that I am ruling. Therefore, I have no fear of death. More importantly, God has never let me down and I am confident that he will let me be victorious again.

At this time, another enemy has entered our territory by crossing our God given sea. His objective is to destroy the country and to change the religion. As a result of a major cattle disease that devastated a large number of our livestock and brought great sufferings to our farmers and pastoralists in the last few years, I remained quiet and patient to numerous hostile provocations. And yet the enemy continued to dig deeper in the ground like a hog.

Now God willing or with God's help, I will not surrender my country. My fellow country folks, I do not believe that I disappointed you in the past. You have not also disappointed me. If you are strong, then help me with your strength to fight the enemy. If you are not strong, I seek your moral support for the sake of your children, wife and religion. If, on the other hand, you seek lame excuse not to join the national campaign against our enemy, I will be upset and I will not have mercy on you, I will punish you. My campaign begins in October, and I expect volunteers from Shoa to gather in Woreilu by mid October¹³.

1. Taitu Bitul, the visionary co-leader

Empress Taitu Bitul was actively involved in Menelik's government. She exemplified the possibility of reform and transformation from within. She was a persistent critique of the nobilities and ministers of Menelik. Born in Wollo from a Christian

13 Abebe Haile Melekot *Ye Adwa Dilena ye Ethiopia Gegnoch Willeta*, Addis Abeba, Commercial Printing Press, 1991 (first published in 1988 Eth. Cal.), p. 82. Emperor Menelik II's Official War Declaration was made on September 7, 1988 (Eth. Cal.).

and Muslim family, Taitu had a comprehensive early training in traditional education. She was fluent in Ge'ez, the classical Ethiopian language. Mastering Ge'ez was a rare achievement for a woman at that time. Education is often the privy of male children, who continue their traditional education in the churches and monasteries for an extended period of time. Those who passed the arduous levels of training would be allowed to serve as deacons and later priests in the thousands of churches and monasteries throughout the country. Their education includes Ge'ez literature, Chant, Choreography and Translation. Besides, Taitu was a great benefactor of the Ethiopian Tewahedo Orthodox Church. She contributed land and building materials to several important monasteries. She also supported the Ethiopian Church in Jerusalem, Israel¹⁴.

Taitu was married to Menelik at the age of forty-three and she was four years older than Menelik. Apparently the respect and reverence Menelik had to Taitu were in part dictated by custom. He was being respectful to an elder. On the other hand, the respect might have been earned as a result of the loyalty Taitu brought to the marriage from important northern regions of Begemedir, Lasta and Yeju. Clearly the marriage was more than romance; it was in fact, a political marriage intended to calm the competing *Ras* of the northern region. According to *Qegnazematch* Tadesse Zewelde, Taitu was co-equal with Menelik, who consulted her prior to making important decisions¹⁵.

Taitu, who is credited as the founder of Addis Ababa as the Capital City of Ethiopia, was known for her courage and uprightness. For instance, Taitu urged the Emperor to reject the now infamous Wuchale Treaty of 1889 as soon as the discrepancies between the Italian and the Amharic versions are discovered by Aleqa Atsme Giorgis, a historian and a councilor to the Emperor. She led her own battalion at the Battle of Adwa. At the Battle of Meqelle¹⁶, she advised Ras Makonnen to cut off the water supply to the Italians in order to disgorge them

14 Ethiopia and Egypt are the only two African countries that established churches in Jerusalem since the early period of Christianity. The Ethiopians claim to Jerusalem goes back to the time of King Solomon and Queen Sheba. They claim that they were given land in Jerusalem to build their temple and later their churches.

15 For a brief but concise biography of Taitu, see Tadesse Zewelde *YeItege Taitu Bitul (1832-1910 Eth Cal)* *Achir YeHiwot Tarik*, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Kuraz Asatami Direget (1980 Eth. Cal.).

16 The Italians moved into Tigray and established military bases in Aqordat, Amba Alage, Meqelle, Adwa and Adigrat. Their initial success in defeating the poorly armed militia of Ras Mengesha gave them premature hope of defeating the whole Ethiopian army. The Ethiopians were victorious at the Battle of Amba Alage. At the battle of Meqelle, the Ethiopians suffered heavy casualties, but managed to disgorge the Italians from their heavily fortified positions. These battles were fought prior to the decisive battle of Adwa.

from their entrenched and heavily fortified positions at Endeyesus Hill on the eastern part of Meqelle City. Tadesse also identifies Taitu as the receiver and analyzer of intelligence information collected by spies, such as *Basha* Awalom Haregot and Gebre Igziabher¹⁷. The intelligence data obtained by Awalom and Gebre Igziabher were characterized as crucial importance to the outcome of the Battle by historians. The information enabled Menelik to attack the Italians, at a site of his choosing, at Adwa instead of Adigrat, near the Eritrean border where the Italians expected to have a relative military advantage¹⁸. The Italians were hoping that he would attack them in Adigrat, close to the Eritrean border where they have a well-fortified military base.

Because of the many absences of the Emperor from the capital City, she virtually managed the affairs of the government in consultation with key ministers. Menelik conducted several campaigns both in the north and southern part of the country against his old or new rivals.

Taitu made a concerted effort to break the monopoly of political power by Shoan nobility. She used every opportunity to diversify the power base through marriage and other means. Through marriage, she weaved a complex relationship between the Shaon nobilities and the nobilities of the northern highlands. It is true that she favored her relatives to be close to power. She presided over many arranged marriages favorable to her relatives whom she anticipated to taking over Menelik. And yet she spoke her mind and consistently defended national interests. Unfortunately, she was removed from power in the last years of Menelik. With her removal from power and prolonged illness of Menelik soon after the Battle, the opportunity to further pursue the full meaning of Adwa was not seized.

Taitu Bitul was an authentic Ethiopian leader. Her deeds at a critical moment in Ethiopian history not only saved Ethiopia from European colonization, but it also paved the way to decolonize Africa. Her decisive advice and action has resulted in the defeat of the Italian army at the 1896 Battle of Adwa. Taitu exemplifies what is best and intelligent among Ethiopian leaders. She consistently fought hard for the public good. She knew and defended national interests by overcoming challenges both from within and from without. Her leadership immensely contributed to the process of nation building and modernization at the beginning of the 20th century.

17 Zewde Gebre Selassie's Archival Collection, National Archive 17.01.1, National Archive, Addis Ababa Ethiopia. Date of Examination December 19, 2006.

18 Pankhurst, R. "The Battle" in Brown, P.S.; Fasil Yirgu (eds.) *One House – The Battle of Adwa 1896 – 100 Years*, Chicago, Nyala Publishing, 1996, p. 51.

Independence and cooperation define her partnership with Emperor Menelik II. Their marriage was a marriage of equals characterized by trust, respect and reciprocity. Taitu and Menelik shared the enormous task of building a newly reconstituted country with diverse population and cultures. Differing qualities of two great Ethiopians crystallized into an effective and successful leadership.

Taitu was a poet, Ge'ez reader, military strategist, diplomat, hotelier, industrialist, banker, philanthropist, institution builder, and church patron. Taitu have registered many firsts. She founded the capital city Addis Ababa. She established the first international hotel, now called Itege Hotel. She led a battalion in a major and decisive battle against the Italian army, established a wool factory, candle factory, built the historic Menbere Tsehay Qidist Mariam's Church at Entoto, and uncovered the deceptive article of the Wuchale Treaty. Taitu was removed from power unceremoniously at the time of Menelik's prolonged illness and later death. Lij Iyasu, the chosen heir to the throne by Menelik, failed to co-rule with her or at least to seek her counsel. Iyasu was overthrown by anti Taitu Bitul group of Shoa, three years after he assumed power at the age of fourteen. To her credit, Empress Zewditu who assumed the throne after Iyasu has maintained good relations with Taitu, but the power rests with *Ras* Tafari, the regent who later became the absolute monarch.

Taitu's pioneering work in the field of politics, economics, culture, social welfare, military have added to the definition and implementation of national agenda and interests. Taitu brilliantly pushed for what unites Ethiopians. For instance, the founding of Addis Ababa as a new capital city of Ethiopia allowed Ethiopians to migrate and settle in this uniting place from all regions of the country.

While the two books made a concerted effort to document and narrate the biography of Taitu Bitul, Ambassador Mengiste Desta offers a more detailed chronology and contextual explanation than Tadesse Zewelde. Tadesse, on the other hand, utilizes primary sources, eyewitness accounts to write his readable narrative¹⁹.

Mengiste also turns his book into a campaign to build a public memorial for Taitu Bitul in Addis Ababa. He is urging committees established to carry out the project to bring the project to fruition. In an attempt to highlight the importance of a public memorial, the forward of Mengiste's book is written by the Coalition of the Ethiopian Women Association that was established in 1996.

19 Empress Taitu's narrative, in part, is based on a review I wrote of two Amharic books: Tadesse Zewelde *Taitu Bitul: Achir Yehiwot Tarik (1832-1910)* [*Taitu Bitul: A Brief Biography*] Addis Ababa, Kuraz Publishing Agency, 1988; and Mengiste Desta *Girmawit Itege Taitu Bitul Birhan Zethiopia: Kostrawa Ethiopiawit Jegna (1832-1910)* [*Empress Taitu Bitul, an Enlightened and Courageous Leader of Ethiopia*], Addis Ababa, Chamber Press, 1999.

Menelik's skills of military strategy and diplomacy are combined with Taitu's courage, wisdom, loyalty and vision of seeking and maintaining national interests. Taitu, unlike Baafina (the ex-wife who sought to undermine the king), consults, caucuses, shares and reinforces strong leadership with the king. The married couple and partners became formidable leaders to face and resolve many challenges both in times of war and peace. They made Ethiopia's transition to modernization an irreversible march of time.

It is also important to note that Taitu brings to the marriage her northern experience and knowledge given her link to Gondar, Semen, Begemedir and Yeju nobilities. In addition, Taitu brings her knowledge of the inner workings of *Atse* Yohannes IV and *Atse* Tewodros's palaces. In other words, the marriage can be characterized both as political and as the saying goes *yacha gabecha!*

In addition, Taitu insists on remaining a respected person (not a dependent) by seeking ways to improve her life through education, a rare and groundbreaking approach given our entrenched and backward notion and praxis on gender. She studied Ge'ez in Gojam at Debre Mewe monastery. She also composed qene poetic verses both in Ge'ez and Amharic. Taitu, who is known as the light of Ethiopia, also played harp and kirar (a remarkable combination of spiritual and secular musical instruments) and designed decorative curtains for churches and monasteries.

What is more impressive about Taitu is what she did in the field of governance and nation building. First of all, She ensured peace and stability during the frequent absences of Menelik from the Capital, originally located at Addis Alem, Shoah and later moved to near-by Addis Ababa at Entoto.

Furthermore, she fully engaged herself in activities that significantly contributed to national interests. She founded and named Addis Ababa (new Flower) as a permanent seat of the central government. To set an example and to make the founding a reality, she built a house in a land fenced by *Negus* Sahle Selassie, the Shoan king and grandfather of *Atse* Menelik II. Taitu built the house while Menelik was in Harar in a military campaign for an extended period of time. Upon his return, Menelik approved her initiative and moved with her to the new house in Addis Ababa. (*Negus* Sahle Selassie shares credits with Taitu with regard to the founding of Addis Ababa.)

Taitu established the first modern hotel, now known as Itege Hotel located in Arada *qebele* of the Capital, in Ethiopia a little more than a century ago and she also became its first manager. The Hotel serves local and international cuisines. Again *Atse* Menelik supported her action by becoming a regular customer of the hotel and by encouraging the nobilities and government officials to patronize the hotel. Besides by opening up *yengeda bet*, she has pioneered and encouraged both local and international tourism.

Taitu, in an attempt to modernize the Ethiopian economy from within and to counter the heavy handedness of the Abyssinian Bank, a foreign bank, she established a development bank where indebted traders are able to obtain loans and continue trading.

Taitu established the first wool factory in collaboration with experts from Turkey and India thereby paving the way for possible Ethiopian industrial age. Taitu also turns local raw materials into candles. Church costumes were designed and made by tailors in an organized fashion thanks to her pioneering effort.

On a religious front, Taitu built the historic Menbere Tsehay Entoto Mariam church. She also built a residential multi-storied building in Jerusalem to be used by priests and pilgrims from Ethiopia.

These are some of the major accomplishments of Taitu. By any measurement, Taitu is a national treasure that deserves national monument and her legacy continues to inspire the young generation to know, build and defend national interests.

2. The Battle of Adwa as a historical event

The Battle of Adwa, Donald Levine writes, is a historical event for three reasons. It represented the first time since the beginning of European imperial expansion that a non-white nation had defeated a European power²⁰. Levine further writes, that the Battle of Adwa had two fateful consequences: the preservation of Ethiopia's independence free from Italian colonization and the confirmation of Italy's control over the part of the country Italy had named Eritrea in 1890. As Levine correctly points out, Menelik's expedient willingness to let the Italians continue their colonization of Eritrea and not to commit himself to assist the Eritreans in their struggle against Italian colonialism created a painful rift between the two culturally and historically related peoples. Ethiopians and Eritreans have yet to achieve a peaceful coexistence in the Horn of Africa.

Adwa acquired symbolic significance when those labeled as barbarians defeated a purportedly civilized army thereby dismantling the basis for white supremacy and colonialism. Adwa forced Europeans to take Africans and their

20 Levine, D.N. "The Battle of Adwa as a 'Historic' Event" in Brown, P.S.; Fasil Yirgu (eds.) *One House: The Battle of Adwa 1896-100 Years*, Chicago, Nyala Publishing, 1996, p. 1. The word nation is Levine's. Ethiopia is in a transition from empire-state to a federated state. For a comprehensive treatment of the transition to a federated state, see Abraham, K. *Ethiopia from Empire to Federation*, Addis Ababa, EIIPD Press, 2001.

freedoms seriously. I think Maimire Mennasemay puts it best when he stated that emancipatory projects both in and outside of Ethiopia has sought the Battle of Adwa as a reference relevant to formulate concepts and approaches suitable to specific conditions. While Adwa might have contributed to the project of emancipation among the Africans and the Diaspora, Maimire argues that the outcome or consequence of the Battle is an unfinished internal business²¹.

As much as ancient Ethiopia inspired Pan-Africanist movements and organizations throughout the African world, contemporary Ethiopia's history also has its significance in the dynamics of Pan-Africanism. Contemporary Ethiopia²² was particularly brought to the African world's attention in 1896 when Ethiopia, an African country, defeated Italy, a European country, at the Battle of Adwa²³. The Berlin Conference of 1885 found its most important challenge in this famous Battle. European strategy to carve Africa into their spheres of influence was halted by Emperor Menelik II and Empress Taitu Betul at the Battle of Adwa. The Europeans had no choice but to recognize this African (not European) power. AfroBrazilians named their newspaper *O Minelik*, a name that honors Emperor Menelik II, the victor leader of the battle of Adwa. The newspaper was a voice of the oppressed and the discriminated AfroBrazilians²⁴.

The African World celebrated and embraced this historical victory. In the preface to the book *An Introduction to African Civilizations With Main Currents in Ethiopian History*, Huggins and Jackson wrote: "In Ethiopia, the military genius of Menelik II was in the best tradition of Piankhi (a ruler of ancient Egypt and Nubia or Ethiopia), when he drove out the Italians in 1896 and maintained the liberties of

21 Maimire Mennasemay followed the tradition established by the great late 19th century Ethiopian scholar in interrogating the Battle in conjunction with internal issues. For his critical analysis and insights regarding the Battle, see Maimire Mennasemay "Ethiopian History and Critical Theory: The Case of Adwa" in Mikias, P.; Getachew Metaferia (eds.) *The Battle of Adwa: Reflections on Ethiopia's Historic Victory Against European Colonialism*, New York, Algora Publishing, 2005.

22 According to Tsegaye Tegenu, the contemporary history of Ethiopia is a product of "full internal dynamism as a result of migrations, demographic consequences and changes in the structure of power". See his excellent analysis on the meaning of Ethiopia in "Ethiopia: What is in a name?" in Katsuyoshi Fukui *et al.* (eds.) *Ethiopia in Broader Perspective, Papers of the XIIIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, vol. 2, Kyoto, 12-17 December 1997, p. 165.

23 For a comprehensive treatment of the Battle of Adwa, see Brown, P.S.; Fasil Yirgu's (eds.) *op. cit.*

24 <http://www.ethiomeia.com/all/6175.html>. The original source of the information is Assefa Negash of Holland who presented a framed copy of the newspaper to an Ethiopian war hero General Legesse Tefera on July 2, 2008 in Washington D.C.

that ancient free empire of Black men”²⁵. Huggins and Jackson analyzed the victory not only in terms of its significance to the postcolonial African world, but also in terms of its linkage to the tradition of ancient African glories and victories.

Adwa symbolizes the aspirations and hopes of all oppressed people. Adwa catapulted Pan-Africanism into the realm of the possible by reigniting the imaginations of Africans in their quest for freedom throughout the world. Adwa foreshadowed the outcome of the anti-colonial struggle. Adwa is about cultural resistance; it is about reaffirmation of African ways. Adwa was possible not simply because of brilliant and courageous leadership, but also because of the people’s willingness to defend their motherland, regardless of ethnic, linguistic and religious differences. Adwa was a story of common purpose and common destiny. The principles established on the battlefield of Adwa must be understood and embraced for Africa to remain centered in its own histories, cultures and socioeconomic development. We should always remember that Adwa was won for Africans. Adwa indeed is an African model of victory and resistance²⁶.

Adwa shows what can be achieved when united forces work for a common goal. Adwa brought the best out of so many forces that were accustomed to waging battles against each other. Forces of destruction and division ceased their endless squabbles and constantly being used by the colonizers came together to say no to white supremacy. They came together in search of freedom or the preservation and expansion of the freedom at hand. Menelik used his “majic wand” to draw all into a historical battle at Adwa. And in less than six hours, the enemy is decisively defeated. The overconfident and never to be defeated European army fell under the great military strategy of an African army. The strategy was what the Ethiopians call *afena*²⁷, an Ethiopian version of blitzkrieg that encircles the enemy and cuts its head. Italians failed to match the British and the French in establishing a colonial empire in Africa. In fact, by their humiliating defeat, the Italians made the British and the French colonizers jittery. The colonial subjects became reenergized to resist the colonial empire builders.

Menelik could have kept the momentum by reforming his government and by allowing the many forces to continue participating in the making of a modern and

25 Huggins, W.N.; Jackson, J.G. *Introduction to African Civilizations With Main Currents in Ethiopian History*, New York, Negro University Press, p. 11.

26 Bekerie, A. “How Africa Defeated Europe” in Brown, P.S.; Fassil Yirgu’s (eds.) *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

27 For an excellent historical overview of the Battle of Adwa, see Milkias, P. “The Battle of Adwa: The Historic Victory of Ethiopia over European Colonialism” in Milkias, P.; Getachew Metaferia (eds.) *The Battle of Adwa*, New York, Algora, 2005, p. 57.

good for all state. Menelik however chose to return back to the status quo, a status of exploitative relationship between the few who controlled the land and the vast majority of the agrarian farmers.

As long as Menelik's challenge to and reversal of colonialism in Ethiopia is concerned, his accomplishment was historic and an indisputable event. It is precisely this brilliant and decisive victory against the European colonial army that has inspired the colonized and the oppressed through out the world to forge ahead against their colonial masters.

Menelik's rapprochement with the three colonial powers in the region may have saved his monarchical power, but the policy ended up hurting the whole region. The seeds of division sown by the colonizers, in part, continue to wreck the region apart. Realizing the need to completely remove all the colonizers as an effective and lasting way to bring peace and prosperity in the region, the grandson of the Emperor, Lij Iyassu attempted to implement anti-colonial policy. He began to send arms to freedom fighters in Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia. He entered into a treaty of peace and cooperation with the Austrians, the Germans and the Turks. Unfortunately, the rule of Lij Iyassu was short-lived. The tri-partite powers colluded with the then Tafari Makonnen to remove him from power.

Famine ravished central and northern Ethiopia, devoured the resource rich south to prepare for the Battle of Adwa. Highly organized societies in the south, such as the Wolaita and Keffa Kingdoms were brutally conquered and dismantled in an effort to make ways for Menelik's expanding empire. The southern region enormously suffered from Menelik's southern strategy for his modern empire-state. The freedom lost in the process of expanding the empire should have been restored in the post-Adwa Ethiopia. The remarkable cooperation of the conquered and the conquerors at the Battle of Adwa should have paved the way for apology, reconciliation and new social order. Unfortunately, these issues are still unresolved. The nobility and its vast militia are allowed to exploit the farmers and pastoralists.

The Emperors of Ethiopia imagined modernity and propelled into it, in earnest, since the Battle of Adwa. They had opportunities to pursue modern development seriously, perhaps somewhat similar to the Meiji Restoration in Japan. A modern development informed by tradition and indigenous knowledge and local history, as Maimre puts it, is an unfinished business

In 1898, Hilaire Belloc composed the widely quoted poem: «Whatever happens, we have got, the Maxim gun, and they have not». The poem was composed in reaction to the fierce resistance the Mahdists of Sudan put up against British colonialism. Menelik understood Belloc's "maxim". No one has responded as articulately as an anonymous local poet, when he or she composed: *Beseraw wechefo, Bametaw Irsas: Tefeteme Talian, Abesha Indayderse* (By his

own gun, by the bullets he brought; the Italian is finished; he cannot challenge Abesha)²⁸.

The Battle of Adwa was a defining historical event with respect to relations between Europe and Africa. It was also an event that brought a tangible place and time of an African people to the attention of the African Diaspora. The struggle against colonialism and racism received a moral boost as a result of the victory at Adwa. The strategies and tactics deployed by Ethiopians to achieve victory against colonial power had become a subject of keen interest in the African Diaspora.

28 Hillaire Belloc quoted in Green, D. *Three Empires on the Nile: The Victorian Jihad, 1869-1899*, New York, Free Press, 2002, p. 243.



***Colonial internment camps in Africa Orientale Italiana.
The case of Dhanaane (Somalia)***

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Introduction

The supporters of Italian colonialism have sustained that Italians in Africa held always a human and non racist behaviour. There are commonplaces about the generous character of Italians, or list works of civilization as roads, schools and hospitals. The role and the real entity of the deportation of civilians and of political and racial persecutions effected by Fascist Italy before the German occupation has often been minimized and underestimated. What I will describe here wants to show the radical falsehood of this thesis.

Italians occupied Massawa, on the Red Sea, on 5th February, 1885¹. Eritrea became officially an Italian colony on 1st January, 1890, whereas Somalia in 1906². With Ethiopia's wars Italy occupied the country and in 1936 it became an Italian possession. In this way, the Italian military power built a new African empire; Oriental Italian Africa, A.O.I. was born in 1936 and consisted in the colonies of Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia³. The Italian control was not very strong in every part of the empire. The rebels didn't ever stop their activity against colonial control. As a matter of fact, Italians used every mean for the colonies' pacification. First of all Mussolini decided to take Ethiopia with a big chemical weapons attack, which the Geneva Convention had prohibited in 1925⁴. Then Italian authorities started a strong repression of local authorities. This meant summary deaths, deportations and internment camps. Italy also introduced a racial administration in its colonies⁵.

1 Del Boca, A. *Gli italiani in Africa Orientale*, vol I, Roma-Bari, Editori Laterza, 1976, p. 186.

2 Novati, G.C.; Valsecchi, P. *Africa: La storia ritrovata*, Roma, Carrocci Editori, 2010, p. 240.

3 Del Boca, A. *I gas di Mussolini. Il fascismo e la guerra d'Etiopia*, Roma, Editori riuniti, 1996, pp. 148-182.

4 Rochat, G. *Il colonialismo italiano*, Torino, Loescher Editore, 1974, p. 144.

5 For Italian pacification see: Campbell, I.L.; Gabre-Tsadik, D. "La repressione fascista in Etiopia:

1. Italian apartheid⁶: racial laws in colonies of the A.O.I.⁷ (1935-1941)

The Italian colonies of the Oriental Africa were affected by a discriminatory legislation that reached the peak in 1938 exactly when the regime adopted the incredible racist and anti-Semitic politics in Italy and establishing an organic planification called *apartheid*⁸. It consisted in: the negation for the Africans of their political rights, as they were considered subjects and not citizens; limitation of their civil rights; wide conquests of cultivable land; upsetting of local economy and its subordination to requirements of the white minority, the extension for all the population of European customs and institutions, from the administration of justice to the definition of property; a severe repression of any form of political opposition and limitations of the use of local language, the Orthodox cult, the diffusion of African culture. It was imposed the scholastic European model by which, were in fact excluded the Africans, the clear separation between the two races was underlined by the prohibition of sexual relationships, there were ghettos reserved for the Africans and they were discriminated in all the places and from the public services⁹.

On the 5th of August, 1936 Lessona, the Minister of colonies, transmitted to the viceroy Graziani the *Directives of the fascist government for the organization of the empire*¹⁰:

[...] F. *Rapporti tra nazionali e indigeni*. La conquista dell'impero ci impone obblighi di carattere morale e politico sui quali è necessario portare subito e con la dovuta energia la massima attenzione. Nel settore politico abbiamo instaurato la norma della politica indigena separata da quella nazionale, ma attentamente seguita, aiutata e vigilata [...] Nel settore sociale, conseguentemente, si deve mantenere, per obbedire alle direttive politiche, netta separazione di vita se pur si voglia, come si vuole, armonica e redditizia collaborazione. La razza

la ricostruzione del massacro di Debra Libanòs” in *Studi Piacentini*, 1997, n. 21; Negash, T. *Italian colonialism in Eritrea, 1882-1941: Policies, Praxis, and Impact*, Stockholm, Uppsala University, Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1987; Negash, T. *No medicine for the bite of a white snake: notes on nationalism and resistance in Eritrea, 1890-1940*, Uppsala, Uppsala University, 1986.

6 I decided to use the same title as the author Antonella Randazzo in *Roma predona*, since it explains very clearly the strategy used by fascism in the colonies.

7 A.O.I. means Oriental Italian Africa.

8 Randazzo, A. *Roma predona. Il colonialismo italiano in Africa: 1870-1943*, Milano, Kaos edizioni, 2006, p. 176.

9 Taddia, I. *L'Eritrea-colonia, 1890-1952*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1986, pp. 72-81.

10 Archivio Centrale dello Stato (A.C.S.), *Fondo Graziani*, b. 30, f. 2.

bianca deve imporsi per superiorità affermata non pure assiomaticamente, ma praticamente. [...] Nell'AOI i bianchi devono condurre vita nettamente distinta da quella degli indigeni. Codesto governo generale disporrà pertanto: a) che si arrivi gradualmente a tenere separate le abitazioni dei nazionali da quelle degli indigeni; b) che sia evitata ogni familiarità tra le due razze; c) che i pubblici ritrovi frequentati dai bianchi non siano frequentati dagli indigeni; d) che sia affrontata con estremo rigore – secondo gli ordini del duce – la questione del “madanismo” e dello “sciarmuttismo”¹¹.

In short, racial discrimination was codified according to the laws. On April 19th 1937, the Italian authority launched decree no. 880, which punished with five years of jail, all marriages contracted between Ethiopian subjects and Italian citizens¹². It followed the decree no. 12723 which prohibited the Italians use of public exercises managed by local populations, and then the number no. 41675 that prevented the Italians to work for local owners¹³. The districts, the schools, the commercial exercises, the public transport, social recreational or sporting activities were rigorously divided into “white” and “black”. Mussolini demanded an urban planning that enacted a clear separation between the citizens¹⁴. They even planned roads only for indigenous people. With the *Manifesto degli scienziati razzisti* (*Manifest of racist scientists*) of 1938 the regime tried to confer a “scientific dignity” to the racial prejudice¹⁵. With the law no. 822 of May 13th 1940, Italians were forbidden to recognize children they had with local women, and these children had no possibility to have an education in Italian schools¹⁶. The massive propaganda of Mussolini’s regime contributed to the reinforcement of the common fascist stereotype against indigenous people as subjects destined to subjugation because of their anthropological inferiority and cultural backwardness¹⁷. In the

11 During the colonial period “Madama” was the name given to an Abyssinian woman living with an Italian man. “Sciarmutta” was the derogative name for a local prostitute.

12 Randazzo, A. *Op. Cit.*, Milano, Kaos edizioni, 2006, pp. 178-179.

13 *Ibidem*.

14 A.C.S., “Relazione allo schema di piano regolatore della città di Dessiè”, “Relazione allo schema di piano regolatore della città di Gondar”, “Zonizzazione” in *Fondo Graziani*, s. 45.

15 The *Manifesto degli scienziati razzisti* was published for the first time anonymously on the *Giornale d'Italia* dated 14th July, 1938 with the title *Il Fascismo e il problema della razza*, and republished on 5th August, 1938 in the first issue of the magazine *La difesa della razza: La difesa della razza*, anno I, numero 1, 5 agosto 1938, p. 2.

16 *Ivi*, p. 186.

17 Sorgoni, B. “Italian Anthropology and the Africans” in Patrizia Palumbo (ed.) *A Place in the Sun: Italian Africa in Italian Colonial Culture*, Berkeley – Los Angeles, University of California

Italian empire the “domination” of the whites on the blacks was absolute, and it was exercised also through the discrimination in the scholarship field. Local populations had not possibility for studying; they could learn how to read and how to write only in missionary schools¹⁸.

2. Colonial internment during the Fascist period

The fascist government applied manifold coercive methods; it used internment and concentration of prisoners in Africa, just like in Italy. The internment was disciplined in 1938 by the Law of War and it was decided without possibility of appeal, by the central organs of the Office of Internal Affairs. The new law of war established that the Office of Internal Affairs with its decrees, could confine the “hostiles” – people suspected for activity against the State – into prisons, or decide a mandatory exile in determinate places. The treatment of hostile subjects was defined by a decree of the Duce and the Offices of Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Finance. The discipline of the internment had already been predisposed from 1925, in the circle of the master plan for the war period¹⁹. In 1936, the Office of Internal Affairs reconnected to a ministerial memorandum of the Office of Internal Affairs, which established the criteria in principles for the construction of the detention camps²⁰. Moreover, it indicated the people who could be sent there: political suspects (even already confined), opponents of the regime and spies in possession of information about military activities. The Office of Internal Affairs was responsible for the organization of the camps²¹. In accordance with International laws, the internment was a restriction of personal freedom; states could put into jail certain categories of foreigners or citizens, keeping them at distance from the war zones and relegating them in militarily non important places where they could be easily supervised. Soon the fascist

Press, 2003, p. 34.

18 Si veda Taddia, I. *Autobiografie africane*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1996.

19 Di Sante, C. “Lager, la verità sul metodo italiano. L'internamento come leva per il controllo dei territori e dei civili” in *L'Unità*, 21 gennaio 2002, p. 29.

20 Detention camp is a term for all those places where people are kept against their will. They include concentration camps, punishment camps, re-education camps, extermination camps, war-prisoner camps, confinement camps, labour camps, isolation camps etc.

21 Di Sante, C. (ed.) “I campi di concentramento in Italia. Dall'internamento alla deportazione (1940-1945)” in *Atti del convegno organizzato a Teramo nel marzo del 1998 dal Dipartimento di Storia e Critica della Politica e dall'Istituto abruzzese per la storia della Resistenza e dell'Italia contemporanea*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2001, pp. 20-21.

regime used the internment also against political opponents in order to repress the political opposition party²².

The camps were to be set up away from major centers or from big communication routes, in zones that were not considered militarily important and distant from the boundary line, and where the population was not politicized. The prisoners' living conditions were different from camp to camp; in fact, they depended on the severity of the directors and the relationships that they had established with the local population. The limitation of the personal freedom, the bureaucratic obstacles to get permissions and family reunifications, the overcrowding, the hygiene deficiencies, the cold and the absence of food represented the hardest and most difficult aspects of imprisonment in the concentration camps.

The colonial internment was the segregation overseas or the expulsion (deportation) from those countries, of colonial subjects.

The colonial internment was used in all dominions but with different methods. The opportunity to create penitentiaries or concentration camps in the African colonies, where to confine the undesirable Italians, was expected since the first conquests²³. This possibility remained always as an intention, but the logistic and juridical difficulties prevented the concrete expression. The situation was different for local populations. The Italian domain policy forced indigenous people to hard labour in the agricultural penal colonies, trying to facilitate fertilization of the colonized desert lands. They even made punitive and re-educational camps²⁴. During the Italian domain in Africa, 1882-1942, Italians built many detention camps, the majority in Libya, one in Eritrea (Nokra) and one in Somalia (Dhanaane). Fascist Italy prepared sixteen concentration camps in Libya. They were destined to the populations who were forced to leave el Gebel Achdar. Four re-education camps in Libya too. They were made for the education of young indigenous people, who had chosen to be part of the colonial administration. And there were three punitive camps. Local populations were confined in if they committed crimes against the Italian administration or they behaved in a wrong manner or attempted an escape from a concentration camp. Punitive camps were open in Eritrea, Somalia and Libya²⁵.

The concentration camps were prepared from 20th June 1930 (they closed in 1933), when Pietro Badoglio, the Governor of Cirenaica and Tripolitana, prepared

22 Di Sante, C. "Lager, la verità sul metodo italiano..." cit., p. 29.

23 *Ibidem*.

24 Di Sante, C. (ed.) "I campi di concentramento in Italia..." cit., p. 17.

25 Ottolenghi, G. *Gli italiani e il colonialismo. I campi di detenzione in Africa*, Milano, Sugarco Edizioni, 1997, p. 98.

the ministerial memorandum according to which about 100 thousand people were forced to leave their property bringing with themselves only the livestock. These people were imprisoned in the concentration camps in the central region of Libya, after a forced march of over thousand kilometers in the desert²⁶. The Libyan tribes of the Gebel were confined to make them sedentary, in this way Italians wanted to suppress anti-colonial resistance. The re-education camps were instituted to educate the most intelligent young Libyan people, so they could serve as assistants in the administrative and military colonial apparatus. These camps were prepared from January 1934 but had short life, especially for maintenance costs of the structure²⁷. The history of punitive camps was much longer and more articulated. They were established during the liberal Italian age, in Eritrea. In fact, the traditional leaders were threatened and placated by taking in hostage their children and relatives, if they did not support the Italian presence. The prisoners were relegated in bleak jails (like Nokra). Moreover, those who were accused of rebellion against the colonialism but still had not been sentenced, were moved from colony to colony (for example from Somalia to Eritrea)²⁸. In Somalia the colonial internment was not necessary or possible as long as the colonial control regarded only the principal inhabited centers on the coasts. The perspective of the internment was more attentively considered in the Twenties, when the inside control became greater and in the Thirties, when the regime chose to transform Somalia in the south front of Ethiopia's war. In 1935 Dhanaane's camp was opened. It was meant to contain prisoners captured all along the road from Mogadiscio to Addis Ababa. This camp was reserved to the confinement of Somali people and above all of the Ethiopians²⁹.

3. Labour and punitive³⁰ camps: general aspects

There were three punitive camps in Italian colonies: Nokra in Eritrea, Dhanaane in Somalia and el-Agheila in Libya³¹. These camps were characterized by very

26 Archivio Storico del Ministero Africa Italiana (A.S.M.A.I.), *Eritrea*, b. 122/10, f. 8.

27 Ottolenghi, G. *op. cit.*, Milano, Sugarco Edizioni, 1997, pp. 116-117, 157.

28 Di Sante, C. (ed.) "I campi di concentramento in Italia..." *cit.*, p. 50.

29 Ivi, pp. 59-60.

30 With reference to the author Gustavo Ottolenghi, I decided to use the term punishment camps for colonial internment camps in A.O.I. since I believe it reflects the real function these camps had on the people deported there.

31 Ottolenghi, G. *op. cit.*, Milano, Sugarco Edizioni, 1997, p. 108.

rigid general organization and structures, in fact they had not only the function of containment, they controlling those people who were confined, but also to punish them because they were «rebel, subversive, anarchic, disorder instigators, intriguers, the Italian people's enemies»³². The institution of these camps did not contemplate the prerogative to re-education for the instigators, only that of punishment. This is because they were characterized by principles of absolute strictness. The location of these camps was select in isolated, desert and arid zones; the intent was to block every kind of communication between the prisoners and the inhabitants of the cities. The aridity of surroundings made impossible the escapes because there was no shelter for the fugitives. Likewise, possible rebels' attacks to the camps were discouraged by the easiness with which they would have been identified. The choice of areas with such characteristics was possible because these prisoners, unlike the ones in the concentration camps, were not granted to develop agricultural or pastoral activities³³. However it is correct to admit that the prisoners in such camps were forced to forms of hard labour. All prisoners were forced to work, only the sick, people over sixty, children under fourteen and pregnant women were excluded from working³⁴. Italian authorities introduced the hard and not remunerated labour in camps for various reasons. In the first place, because they needed to reduce the maintenance costs of prisoners. Moreover, it was necessary to occupy local populations to decrease the risk of plot. A third reason was to direct the nomadic populations toward a type of sedentary life. The males were essentially employed in the construction of buildings, roads and railways, while the sick ones were employed in maintenance and reparation of the structures, inside the camp. The women could be associated with local prostitutes.

People of different origins were confined in punitive camps. People transferred to Nokra and Dhanaane were essentially the ones who had hindered Italian occupation, with arms (Ethiopian and Somali soldiers, partisans and rebels), with propaganda (Coptic priests, wizards, street singer, muezzin, diviners), with economic helps (landed gentry, farmowners, merchants and tradesmen) or with bureaucratic helps (notables and officials of local administrations)³⁵. Whole families were sent to the camps where their life was difficult and full of problems.

High walls up to four meters, with barbed wire, surrounded the camps; there were wooden towers in the four angles of the camps, they were about eight

32 *Ibidem*.

33 *Ibidem*.

34 *Ibidem*.

35 Ivi, pp. 114.

meters high and consisted of covered platforms for military personnel, equipped with lighthouses for night time illumination of camps (supplied by generators) and machine-guns³⁶. The prisoners were lodged in tents, without any illumination or points of light (not even candles were allowed!). Fire inside the tents was forbidden. The camps had only one well for water provisioning of the prisoners and some reservoirs for common showers under the open-air. Next to the showers, in the centre of the camp, there were stages and pitchforks for the hanging of the sentenced to death. Common latrines were surrounded by poles and covered by branches. Near them there were “places of punishment”, i.e. places where tortures took place. It could be inside a tent or outside: there were holes in the ground, about two meters deep and two square meters wide, covered with metallic grids at the level of the ground. The guilty was lowered inside these holes, and remained there for all the period of the punishment. This zone of camp had loudspeakers and microphones for warning purpose, in this way all prisoners could hear the victims screaming and crying. Punishments varied from deprivation of food, to exclusion from hours of “freedom”, to inhibition of contacts with other people in the camp. There were also public whippings with sticks; sprinklings with hot or ice-cold water; obligation to stand up under the sun, in normal position or with arms tight or lift, burdened or not with weights; administration of purgatives; binding of hand and feet. Some of the most feared punishments were: victims constrained to a pole naked, dotted with molasses, very attractive for flies and wasps; the constraint of wrists and feet to horizontal beams; being buried in the sand with only the head out; the cut of a hand, a foot or the tongue. These punishments often caused death. Guilty women were sent to brothels, and before the departure they were submitted to gang rapes, under their relatives’ or family’s eyes. In a corner of the camp there was a place dedicated to shootings. The death sentence regarded all those who were guilty of particularly serious crimes, for example homicides, attempts of escape, rebellion against the troops of vigilance, sabotages, detention or hiding of crews. Executions happened by hanging or shooting, the dead bodies often were left outside for some days, and then buried without funeral rites. Torture was also a practice in the punitive camps, both on men and women, in case of aggravating

36 For the structure of camps, the conditions of the prisoners, the torture and punishment practices, see: A.C.S., *Fondo Graziani*, b. 5, s. 34; Graziani, R. *Il fronte Sud*, Milano, Mondadori, 1937; Ottolenghi, G. *Gli italiani e il colonialismo. I campi di detenzione italiani in Africa*, Milano, Sugarco Edizioni, 1997; Del Boca, A. *I gas di Mussolini. Il fascismo e la guerra de’Etiopia*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1996; *Centro di documentazione sui campi di concentramento “Villa Oliveto”*: <http://www.storiaememorie.it/villaoliveto/Home.htm>; *I campi fascisti. Dalle guerre in Africa alla Repubblica di Salò*: <http://www.campifascisti.it/index.php>.

circumstances for the punishment, for particularly serious crimes or to extort information. The torture could consist in the cast-iron red-hot application, burning soles of the feet, input of extraneous things in natural hollows, eradication of the fingernails, suspension to beams from the hair with weights on the ankles, being forced to drink salt or fetid water, bindings to thorny plants. The women were tortured sexually, the husbands sometimes must hold them while they were raped. The tortures and the executions of indigenous soldiers (*askari*) were particularly cruel if they had favored some prisoners or external rebels. They were forced to ingest their own excrements, or submitted to eviration and sodomization, to the cut of the tongue, the feet or the hands, to the breakup of limbs, to the extraction of teeth, to blinding. These treatments happened in the tents in the presence of only other local soldiers. The torture often ended with the decapitation of the victim. The viceroy Graziani, in his memorandum of the 6th February, 1937, addressed to all district delegates, specified imperatively that they had to apply «il principio della responsabilità collettiva e non solo quella dei singoli», so if an individual of a determinate kabyle performed a crime all the kabyle must be punished because «presupposti coadiuvatori del reo o comunque individui che ne condividevano l'attività criminosa»³⁷. There were no structures for the sick in the punitive camps. Those who were extremely sick were transferred under guard to the concentration camps or to the nearest city. There was a place to be used as a kitchen. There were no places for schools, but only some for the cult. The hygienic common structures were small and inadequate for the number of potential users. A serious hygienic problem was represented by the preparation of cemeteries where to bury the prisoners. The cemeteries had to be built far from the camps, the wells and from groundwater, but the prisoners wanted to bury their loved ones in the immediate vicinity of the residences, for religious reasons. So the prisoners buried first the corpses under the tents, and after some time colonial sanitary authorities prepared the exhumation. From the medical point of view the more frequent diseases were dysentery, typhus, malaria, smallpox, scurvy, trachoma, salmonellosis, leishmaniosi and several diseases from malnutrition. The medical equipment was characterised by insufficient quantity, quality and irregularity of deliveries. It was impossible to separate infectious sick from the others in the punitive camps like as in the sanitary structures of the concentration camps, where they were transferred; this contributed inevitably to the diffusion of epidemics.

37 A.C.S., *Fondo Graziani*, b. 7, f. 11.

4. A lager of the fascism: Dhanaane³⁸ (1935-1941)

Dhanaane's camp opened in Somalia, under instructions from governor Rodolfo Graziani, in October 1935, when the Italian-Ethiopian conflict started. In theory, Dhanaane had to be a place of concentration for war prisoners but, as such, it remained inactive. In fact the Italian commanders gave it a different course: the complete annihilation of the adversary³⁹. The initial objective of this camp was to collect the prisoners captured all along the road between Mogadiscio and Addis Ababa, but at the end of the Ethiopian war, it became the principal camp for Somali, Eritrean and Ethiopian civilians. These prisoners were forced to work and to live, until the liberation in 1941, in miserable conditions because the food and the hygienic sanitary conditions were insufficient. So over two thousand two hundred persons died in Dhanaane⁴⁰. From August 1936 the camp started to be crowded by common prisoners and bureaucratic Ethiopians belonging to managerial middle class (the high-ranking one, about four hundred, had been deported to Italy). When Graziani became Ethiopia's viceroy, he started the liquidation of the loser's imperial army and of the rebellious formations, whose components were sent to Dhanaane's camp as «elementi nocivi e potenzialmente pericolosi per il governo coloniale»⁴¹. The number of prisoners increased up to one thousand eight hundred unities in 1936, number decidedly higher than the capacity that had been planned for the camp⁴². The prisoners increased more after Graziani's attack on 19th February, 1937, when they became over three thousand five hundred. In that occasion Dhanaane was officially transformed in a terrible punitive camp⁴³. Also some of the four hundred people belonged to the Ethiopian aristocracy were sent to Dhanaane, after their reentry in Ethiopia from the deportation in Italy⁴⁴.

This camp was built among the dunes of the Somali coast overlooking the Indian Ocean. Dhanaane was built about forty kilometers south of Mogadiscio, in a desert zone. The area was about a square kilometer and the perimeter was of about four kilometers; up to a maximum of four hundred tents were disposed in

38 I took the title from the article with the same name, written by the historian Angelo Del Boca: Del Boca, A. "Un lager del fascismo: Danane" in *Studi Piacentini*, n. 1, 1987.

39 Ottolenghi, G. *op. cit.*, Milano, Sugarco Edizioni, 1997, pp. 164-165.

40 Di Sante, C. "Lager, la verità sul metodo italiano..." *cit.*, p. 29.

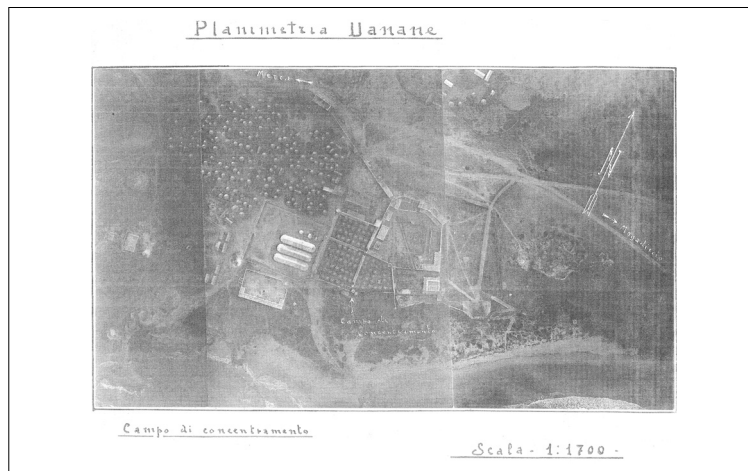
41 A.C.S., "Graziani a Santini, Telegramma 20650, 21 dicembre 1937" in *Fondo Graziani*, b. 34.

42 Del Boca, A. *Un lager del fascismo: Danane*, Studi Piacentini, vol. 1, n. 1, 1987, p. 59.

43 Ottolenghi, G. *op. cit.*, Milano, Sugarco Edizioni, 1997, p. 165.

44 *I campi fascisti. Dalle guerre in Africa alla Repubblica di Salò*: <http://www.campifascisti.it/index.php>.

this zone, but about two thousand people entered to Dhanaane's camp⁴⁵. In the camp there were four medical and first aid tents, one for religious Islamic services and one for the Orthodox Christians, another for questionings, tortures and punishments. There were also a brothel, six huts-jails, one marquee used as refuge for disabled people. A zone of the camp was reserved to the women's tents, while the hygienic services were in common⁴⁶.



Aerial photograph of Dhanaane, wanted by Graziani and developed in the military darkroom of Mogadiscio. Archivio Centrale dello Stato (A.C.S.), *Fondo Graziani*, s. 40.

The prisoners could not practice agriculture and breeding because of the bad environmental conditions; however the prisoners were employed in works of maintenance of the camp, in adjacent roads, in particular in the road from Mogadiscio to Merca, or in the railroad Mogadiscio – Villaggio Duca degli Abruzzi⁴⁷. In Dhanaane it was easy to die. Figures given by Italy and by Ethiopia after the Second World War were different. Colonel Eugenio Mazzucchetti's diaries, who was the directory of Dhanaane from 1936 to 1941, gives evidence of the insufficiency of the food, the bad living conditions, the obligation to work and finally the exceptionally high rate of mortality. It is therefore possible to consider

45 Ottolenghi, G. *op. cit.*, Milano, Sugarco Edizioni, 1997, p. 165

46 *I campi fascisti. Dalle guerre in Africa alla Repubblica di Salò*: <http://www.campifascisti.it/index.php>.

47 Ottolenghi, G. *op. cit.*, Milano, Sugarco Edizioni, 1997, p. 166

the camp rather a death instrument than a constriction one⁴⁸. Now some extracts from the diary of Colonel Mazzucchetti:

9 December 1937 Danane

The annotation describes the punishments which were imparted to prisoners that attempted an escape from the camp:

Giornata movimentata. Sono evasi due confinati dal 5° campo, che però vennero ripresi dopo poche ore da pattuglie di Zaptiè e indigeni che battevano la boscaglia. Sono stati messi ai ceppi e riceveranno 50 curbasciate ognuno⁴⁹.

19 February 1938 Danane

Mazzucchetti writes that he has taken a provision for an Italian soldier because he maltreated the prisoners:

Ho dovuto rimandare al suo reparto con una punizione di rigore l'autiere Aiello Antonino di Palermo, perché manesco con i confinati addetti al servizio dell'autobotte. Ne ha picchiato uno producendogli delle lesioni per fortuna non gravi. Lo sostituisce l'autiere Siciliano Domenico, calabrese. Anche l'Aiello non era di Bergamo!⁵⁰.

3 October 1939 Danane

Over the years, the flow of prisoners sent to Dhanaane increased a lot. Mazzucchieri reports the uselessness of the detention of young and elderly people:

Oggi il commissario di Mogadiscio mi ha mandato 18 ragazzi Ahmara [sic] piccoli vagabondi abbandonati a loro stessi per le vie di Mogadiscio. Sono per la maggior parte venuti con autisti o con ascari in Somalia e poi rimasti soli per la partenza dei "padroni". Sono bei ragazzi quasi tutti, dai musetti intelligenti e parlano italiano o si arrangiano. Ne faremo dei buoni sudditi e dei futuri ascari. Sono pure giunti 10 confinati del governo dell'Harrar [sic]. Per la maggior parte vecchi e ammalati, dei detriti umani! Ma che pericolo possono costoro rappresentare per la sicurezza dello Stato?!⁵¹.

48 Di Sante, C. (ed.) "I campi di concentramento in Italia..." cit., p. 60.

49 Mazzucchetti, E. "Danane: Diario somalo. 31 ottobre 1935 – 23 giugno 1941", trascrizione del manoscritto originale di Guido Votano (ed.) in *I campi fascisti. Dalle guerre in Africa alla Repubblica di Salò*: <http://www.campifascisti.it/index.php>.

50 *Ibidem*.

51 *Ibidem*.

18 April 1940 Danane

Colonel Mazzucchieri is sorry for the bad conditions the new prisoners of Dhanaane are forced to live in:

Ieri ed oggi sono giunti complessivamente 35 uomini e 75 fra donne e bambini nuovi confinati. Sono dei ribelli di Abebè Aregai e le loro famiglie ed amanti. Molte ragazze fra i 15 ed i vent'anni alcune graziose ma denutrite e luride. Mancano di tutto e non sono in grado di dare loro un vestiario né stuoie né recipienti per mangiare. Faccio distribuire delle vecchie latte di olio come gavette. Che vergogna! Bella figura fa il campo e l'Impero!⁵².

Michael Tessema arrived to Dhanaane in September 1937, and stayed there for three years and three months as a political imprisoned. He worked for the Ethiopian Justice Office. This document describes his experience, which the reconstituted Ethiopian empire presented to the United Nations commission for war crimes in 1950. In his testimony Mr. Tessema reports the terrible living conditions of the prisoners, the elevated number of deceases, the punishments and the hard labour. Also, he denounces the practice of killing sick and weak prisoners with poisonous injections:

[...] Three prisoners used to live in a little tent provided for one soldier. The prisoners were not given any kind of cloth, blanket or carpet to sleep on. [...] At first, the food was four hard biscuits (galeta) in a day. As we used to drink sea water the daily death rate was between six and thirty persons, who died from dysentery. A total of 3,175 persons died. I was able to know this, because while I was a prisoner myself there I was given a job as a medical assistant, and so records of the sick persons and obituary notes were kept by me. Up to the end the Italian authorities never provided potable water for prisoners at Danane. From 6,500 persons, who were at Danane, 3,175 died. The reason why not all of them perished was because the prisoners used to receive some money from their relatives and bought "aqua minerale" which was brought from Italy in sealed bottles, and churned milk from Somalis. [...] The staff included a total of about sixty Europeans. From among the Italians who were there, Brigadier Baroni, Sergeant Tosato, and a marshal of carabinieri whose name I have forgotten, used to whip prisoners, saying that the prisoners did not salute them or that they did not work hard enough. [...] The sort of work which the prisoner; used to do was to clean away dirt,

52 *Ibidem.*

to go to a place called Ganale and work in the garden, to collect and fetch firewood, and build roads. Those females and males who were tired and refused to work were tied by their hands behind their backs and hanged on the wall for seven days without their feet touching the ground. Because of this cause the arms of two persons swelled up and were amputated. [...] When prisoners became very sick, Captain Antonio used to say it is better for them to die. And killed them by giving them injections of arsenic and strychnine. Also when some of them came for treatment he used to tie them down by force and perform operations against their will [...].

5. Conclusion

The last detention camps were freed during World War II as the English army was successful against Italian troops still settled in the colonies.

Over six thousand individuals entered in Dhanaane, from 1935 to 1941, of which five hundred were women, and the maximum rate of presences was in 1939⁵³. On the 18th March, 1941, English soldiers occupied the camp, freeing local populations: one thousand three hundred Ethiopian and three hundred Somali people. The prisoners could return to their respective clans⁵⁴. In Dhanaane three thousand two hundred people died for disease, lack of food and hygiene, hard infamous works, i.e. 49% of all prisoners, while four hundred individuals died for maltreatments, tortures and executions, corresponding to 6% of the total⁵⁵. In the end the camp was then destined again to confine war prisoners, but Italian this time. The English soldiers closed one thousand two hundred national soldiers and over two thousand *askari* in Dhanaane, most of them were subsequently sent to concentration camps in India. About three hundred Italian soldiers stayed in the camp till the end of the conflict. They came back to Italy in 1945. Finally Dhanaane was closed and slowly felled into disrepair⁵⁶.

The causes of death brought in the official ministerial relations speak essentially about the diseases which resulted to be accountable for beyond 80% of such deceases, 12% for natural causes (old age, burden preexisting invalidity),

53 Di Sante, C. (ed.) "I campi di concentramento in Italia..." cit., p. 60.

54 Del Boca, A. *Un lager del fascismo: Danane...* cit., pp. 67.

55 *I campi fascisti. Dalle guerre in Africa alla Repubblica di Salò*: <http://www.campifascisti.it/index.php>.

56 *Ibidem*.

5% for incidental and 3% for executions⁵⁷. Indigenous survivors but also some of the responsible Italians declared in trial centers that over 30% of the prisoners could be considered died in summary executions⁵⁸. From the critical comparison of studies recognized as reliable (Irish Reports of the Selected Committee on the Abyssinian War, 1968; Reports of the Libyan Studies Center, 1984; Acts Foreign U.S.A. Relations, 1950), the author Gustavo Ottolenghi declared that one hundred fifty-two thousand local populations died in Italian detention camps, from 1895 to 1941, of which one hundred twenty thousand were men, thirty thousand women and seven hundred and fifty children of age less than twelve years old. About seven hundred and fifty individuals were killed during escape attempts, while another one thousand eight hundred and fifty persons were executed subsequently for the same reason. About two hundred people died in the punitive camps while they were tortured or for its immediate consequences⁵⁹.

57 Archivio Storico del Ministero Affari Esteri (A.S.M.A.E.), *Africa Orientale Italiana* (A.O.I.), b. 4, pos. 6/1.

58 Ottolenghi, G. *Op. Cit.*, Milano, Sugarco Edizioni, 1997, p. 172.

59 Ivi, p. 173.

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An Ethiopian paradox: Adwa and land-locked Ethiopia¹

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Introduction

The issue of access to the sea has become one of the most hotly debated in contemporary Ethiopia. Columns of newspapers and magazines abound with articles on Ethiopia's right of access to the sea and the injustice of the post-1991 territorial arrangement in that respect. But, few of these discussions are informed by awareness of the historical longevity of this issue. Since the appearance of the Ottomans on the Red Sea Coast in the sixteenth century, Ethiopia had been denied independent access to the sea. This state of affairs continued until 1950, when the UN resolved to federate the former Italian colony of Eritrea to Ethiopia, thereby giving the latter control of the two Eritrean ports of Massawa and Assab – a situation that came to an end with Eritrea's independence in 1991.

In a way, Ethiopia's land-locked status could be said to have been decided in 1908, when Emperor Menilek concluded the last of his three boundary delimitation treaties with the Italians. The first two, signed in 1900 and 1902, had delimited the boundary between the Italian colony of Eritrea and independent Ethiopia from the Sudanese border to the elusive Muna River on the Agame-Akkala Guzay boundary. The 1908 treaty fixed the eastern boundary between the two countries at a line drawn sixty kilometers parallel to the coastline. Thus, Menilek, victor of Adwa and builder of the largest ever empire in the country's history, presided over the territorial encirclement of the country, as treaties signed earlier with the British, French and Italians had sanctioned the territorial limits of their respective colonies of British, French and Italian Somaliland. What explains this paradox of arguably Ethiopia's most successful modern emperor failing to gain at least a foothold (to use his own expression) on the sea coast? This paper is intended to unravel this mystery.

¹ This paper was first presented at the 18th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies held at Dire Dawa (Ethiopia) on 29 October-2 November 2012.

1. *The Antecedents*

As far as access to the sea is concerned, the Aksumite era was the heyday of imperial glory. Aksum not only had the internationally recognized port of Adulis but also controlled both sides of the Red Sea, effectively reducing the sea to an Aksumite lake, as the popular rendering has it. Indeed, the sixth century Aksumite king Kaleb is famous in history for leading a naval expedition to South Arabia to punish the Jewish persecutor of the Christian community. But the rise of Islam not only deprived Aksum of its possessions on the eastern coast of the Red Sea but also effectively blockaded it from the outside world. A period of isolation thus set in – isolation that came to an end only with the rise of what is known as the medieval kingdom in the fourteenth century, when its powerful emperors restored Ethiopia's control of the western coast of the Red Sea.

The year 1557, when the Ottoman Turks took control of Massawa, marks a turning point in the history of Ethiopia's access to the sea. For the Ottomans initiated a history of foreign control of the coastline that was to persist until the middle of the twentieth century. They were succeeded first by the Egyptians and then by the Italians. Hence the obsession of Ethiopia's modern emperors, particularly Tewodros and Yohannes, with the "Turk", even long after the Ottomans have disappeared from the scene! For Ottoman control of both the coastal region and the hinterland that they had christened "Habashat" remained tenuous. They had delegated their authority to the local rulers of the mainland outpost of Harqiqo, who came to assume the title of *na'ib* ("delegate"). Dependent as the *na'ibs* were for their provisions and fresh water on the highlands, they found it prudent to maintain cordial relations with Ethiopian rulers.

It was the advent of the Egyptians in the first half of the nineteenth century and their takeover of the Ottoman coastal possessions, including Massawa in 1841, that began to pose considerable challenge to Ethiopia. For the moribund Ottomans had now come to be replaced by the more aggressive Egyptians. The first clear articulation of this sense of encirclement is to be found in Emperor Tewodros's famous and fateful letter of 29 October 1862 to Queen Victoria. The letter reiterated the emperor's predicament about sending his envoy to the queen and other European rulers for the "Turks" (i.e. the Egyptians) had complete control of the sea. He concluded his letter by appealing to her sense of Christian solidarity². As is now common knowledge, far from responding positively to the

2 See: Rubenson, S. *Acta Aethiopica*, Vol. 2, *Tewodros and His Contemporaries 1855-68*, Addis Ababa and Lund, 1994, pp. 197-201.

emperor's request, the queen did not even deign to acknowledge his letter. This led the mercurial emperor to take a retaliatory measure (the detention of all Europeans who happened to be nearby) that was ultimately to cost him not only his throne but also his life.

The encirclement that Tewodros resented turned into full-scale aggression under his successor, Yohannes. He had to fight two major wars with the Egyptians (Gundat in 1875 and Gura in 1876) before he could ensure his country's independence. But the glorious military victory did not translate into a diplomatic one. Least of all did it guarantee him unimpeded access to the sea. With the same mis-placed confidence that had cost his predecessor his life, he again turned to Queen Victoria. In a letter that he wrote her on 20 November 1879, he lamented the fact that the «Turks» were mocking «me in my own country by denying me access to the lucrative Massawa market» and appealed to her to help him get an outlet, adding that he would so much love to build a town on the coast³.

How mis-placed Yohannes's trust in the British was became manifest in February 1885, when the British, who had taken custody of Egyptian overseas possessions by virtue of their occupation of the country in 1882, handed over Massawa to the Italians. True to the character of Perfidious Albion, they had reneged on the commitment they had entered into by virtue of an earlier treaty that they had signed with the emperor (the Hewett Treaty of June 1884), by which they had guaranteed him free use of the port of Massawa. More ominously, the Italians, not content to confine themselves to the coastal possession, pushed into the interior with vigour and determination. Yohannes tried to stop this, successfully at Dogali (January 1887) and not so successfully at Sa'ati (March 1888). Exactly a year later, Yohannes turned his attention to the menace that his faithful execution of his own obligations under the Hewett Treaty had triggered the confrontation with the Mahdists. He did not return alive.

2. Menilek's multiple overtures

Menilek's diplomacy had two phases: pre-1889 and post-1889, as *negus* of Shawa and *negusa-nagast* of Ethiopia. In the earlier phase, he was focused on gaining access to the sea through Zeila on the Gulf of Aden, Obock and Djibouti on the Bay of Tadjourah and Assab. Massawa was outside his orbit; it remained of little

3 Rubenson, S. *Acta Aethiopica*, Vol. 3, *Internal Rivalries and Foreign Threats 1869-1879*, Addis Ababa and New Brunswick, 2000, pp. 332-333.

or no concern to him even after his assumption of the imperial throne in 1889. Otherwise, he was as passionate as his predecessors in his quest for an outlet. In November 1878, a year before Yohannes's letter to Queen Victoria cited above, Menilek wrote, as was to become his wont, a circular to King Umberto of Italy, Queen Victoria of England and King Leopold of Belgium, lamenting his encirclement by the Egyptians and asking whether this is a prelude to the islamization of Christian Ethiopia. Could the European Powers be oblivious of Ethiopia's historic claims to the coast, he queried. He then went on in a passage that has been cited quite often for its rhetorical eloquence:

I have consistently complied with the wishes of European rulers, shown due respect to their subjects, and have striven hard to abolish the slave trade and all in all demonstrated my desire to westernize my country. All this notwithstanding, I am going to die of anger because I have been condemned to permanent servitude to the Egyptians and barred from importing arms and artisans⁴.

The European powers that were stepping in the shoes of the Egyptians were not particularly keen to accede to his request for a port or a foothold on the coast. Their main objective was to attract Shawan trade to their respective ports: the British to Zeila, the French to first Obock and then Djibouti, the Italians to Assab. Historically, Zeila had been the natural outlet for trade passing through Shawa. Menilek's occupation of Harar in 1887 added to its importance. Initially, before the British had securely established themselves there, Menilek was seeking Italian diplomatic support to acquire Zeila. When this became unattainable, he was prepared to let the Italians, whom he had befriended more than any other Europeans, to seize control of the Gulf of Aden port. Coming as it did at a time when Emperor Yohannes was locked in arms with the same Italians on the Massawa front, this, as Richard Caulk did not hesitate to point out, «was a measure of reckless opportunism which even the pursuit of arms could not justify»⁵. In the wake of his occupation of Harar in 1887, Menilek briefly entertained the notion of pushing on to extend his authority to Zeila. But this aspiration proved to be transitory.

But the Italians were not keen to stake out their territorial claims as far as Zeila. They were content to try and develop the rather forlorn port of Assab by

4 Ivi, pp. 292-295.

5 Caulk, R. *“Between the Jaws of Hyenas”: A Diplomatic History of Ethiopia (1876-1896)*, Wiesbaden, 2002, p. 64.

promoting commerce with the interior, notably Shawa. Purchased in 1869 by a maritime company, the Rubattino, it was acquired by the Italian government in 1882. It was a few months earlier that Pietro Antonelli, the person who was to be so central to the future troubled relations between Menilek and Italy, had made his appearance. At this stage, his main objective was to entice Menilek to redirect Shawan trade to Assab, abandoning the old Zeila trade route. In March 1881, he actually succeeded in persuading Menilek to sign a contract committing him to send caravans to Assab in return for an initial payment of two thousand rifles. This was the prelude to the more elaborate treaty of commerce that the two parties were to sign on 21 May 1883, which in turn formed the precedent to the fateful Treaty of Wechale of 2 May 1889. The fact that these agreements were predicated on the supply of arms to Menilek must have acted as a disincentive in his drive to acquire a port as his major objective had been all along the unimpeded acquisition of arms⁶.

The Italian occupation of Massawa in 1885 and Yohannes's furious reaction to this forced Menilek to tread rather cautiously in his dealings with the Italians. It was then that he turned his attention to exploring more seriously the French alternative port of Obock. Until the French government's occupation of Obock in 1884, Shawan trade with the French port was conducted more through the intermediary of private traders like Paul Soleillet, Leon Chefneux and Arthur Rimbaud than through direct government involvement. Obock itself was abandoned for the more congenial Djibouti after 1887⁷. But, the divergence between the ardent enthusiasm of the private traders and the skepticism of French officials persisted. Nonetheless, encouraged by the persistence with which the French traders began to court his favours, Menilek asked for an enclave at a place called Ambado. But, far from ceding to Menilek's wish for a port, the French were bent on extending their sovereignty to the salines of Lake Assal – something that Menilek considered non-negotiable. Not even the offer of *Ras* Makonnen to divert the entire Harar trade to Djibouti could move the French officials to relent. The most they were prepared to concede was an enclave “under France's guardianship”. Indeed, as far as Menilek's major pre-occupation with the unimpeded import of arms was concerned, the French in Djibouti and the British in Zeila proved less accommodating than the Italians at Assab. It was this state of affairs that pushed Menilek to tie up his fate with Italy⁸.

6 Ivi, pp. 25-26.

7 Ivi, pp. 27-29.

8 Ivi, pp. 67-76.

3. Refocussing on the North

Barely two months after the death of Emperor Yohannes, Menilek signed the fateful Treaty of Wechale with the Italian envoy, Pietro Antonelli. In essence, the treaty elevated the treaty of commerce that the Italians had signed in 1883 with the Shawan *negus* to a treaty with an Ethiopian monarch with implications on territorial limits and sovereignty. Historical attention has invariably focused on the controversial Article XVII, which ultimately led to the diplomatic rupture and the war of 1895-96. No less important, however, was Article III, which delimited the boundary between Ethiopia and the ever-expanding Italian possession beyond the Marab River. That article broadly indicated the escarpment to be the boundary between the two countries, with the exception of the Italian highland outposts of Halay, Saganayti and Asmara, as well as Adi Nafas and Adi Wansa. The boundary was to start from Arafali on the Gulf of Zula (also known as Annesley Bay) and, after making the above-mentioned territorial adjustments in favour of Italy, to be drawn in a straight line from Adi Wansa to the Sudanese border. Article IV stipulated that the medieval monastery would remain an Ethiopian enclave but could not be used as a military outpost. Article V defined the terms for the use of the port of Massawa, setting down a duty of 8% on all imports and exports and restricting the supply of arms to the emperor alone⁹.

What is clear from the above relevant articles of the Treaty of Wechale was that Menilek, while making territorial cessions that would have been unthinkable for Yohannes, still safeguarded his residual rights to much of the Eritrean highlands as well as to the coastline south of Arafali. But, before the year was out, the Italians managed to erode Menilek's claim to the Eritrean highlands by a wily agreement (known as the "Napoli Convention") that they made *Ras Makonnen* sign during his visit to Italy in November 1889. This revised the boundary drawn by the Treaty of Wechale considerably to recognize the areas occupied by Italy after the signing of the treaty. As the Italians had used the power vacuum created by the death of Yohannes to extend their territorial possessions towards the Marab, this represented a considerable diplomatic coup. It was on the basis of this revised boundary that the Italians proclaimed their new colony of Eritrea in January 1890. That this colony did not include the entire *Marab-Mellash* became evident, however, in the boundary delimitation agreement that Menilek and Antonelli signed in Addis Ababa in February 1891. Although this agreement recognized many of the recent

⁹ See: Addis Ababa Study Group *The Ethio-Eritrean Boundary in Historical Perspective*, Addis Ababa, 1999, Annexe 1.

territorial acquisitions of the Italians, it left most of Saraye and a good deal of Akkala Guzay within Ethiopia. With regard to the coastal boundary, however, the Eritreans pushed further south-southeast from Arafali to a place called Mangabo.

In his famous circular of 21 April 1891, Menilek, while conceding to the Italian gains on the Eritrean highlands, reasserted emphatically his right to the coastline by making Arafali once again the southernmost limit of Italian possession. What is interesting about this circular was that it was based on drafts submitted to him by the Italian envoys Augusto Salimbeni and Pietro Antonelli. Confident of Italian protectorate rights over Ethiopia by virtue of Article XVII of the Wechale Treaty, the envoys wanted Menilek to stake out his territorial claims in the widest possible terms and thereby pre-empt the claims of rival colonial powers, notably the British and the French. But, Menilek's circular differed from the Italian drafts in at least two significant ways: in projecting his future plans of, God willing, conquering «all those provinces anciently Ethiopian, up to Khartoum and [Lake Nyanza]» and restoring Ethiopia's ancient coastline¹⁰. It is the latter aspect that is of particular interest here.

As in the Treaty of Wechale, Arafali was to be the departure and terminal point of Ethiopia's boundary. Here is how Menilek asserts his maritime claim:

Starting from Hambossa, it [the boundary] includes [within Ethiopia] Lake Assal and the territory of our ancient vassal Mohammed Hanfare and goes *along the coast* [my emphasis] to Arafali. [...] The [Red Sea] coast was Ethiopia's ancient boundary. But, because of the decline of Ethiopia's power and lack of support from the Christian Powers, the Muslims took over the coast. Now, too, we do not have any intention of acquiring our coastline by force. We hope that Christ will guide you Christian Powers to restore to us our maritime boundary or at least give us a port or two¹¹.

What is of interest in this document is the tension between the confidence with which Menilek asserts his maritime claims and the powerlessness that he reveals with regard to the actual state of affairs. On the one hand, he claims that Ethiopia's historic boundary runs along the coast. On the other hand, he concedes the coast is no longer under his control and beseeches the European powers to restore it to him or, at the very least, give him some outlet to the sea.

10 Caulk, R. *op. cit.*, pp. 269-270.

11 See: The National Archives, London, Foreign Office, 95/751, Menilek to Victoria, 14 *Miyazya* 1883/21 April 1891.

4. *Adwa and its sequel*

These territorial tussles between Menilek and Italy soon assumed secondary status as their divergent interpretations of Article XVII of the Wechale Treaty put them on a collision course as the Italians sought to establish a protectorate over Ethiopia and Menilek asserted his sovereignty. The details of that imbroglio do not interest us here. In any case, it is a much-belaboured subject¹². What is more germane to our subject here is that the Italians, ignoring the restrictions that Menilek had tried to place on their *Marab-Mellash* possessions, steadily pushed southwards. Not only did they come to establish full control of the *Marab-Mellash* but, by 1895, they had started making forays across the Marab. After defeating the governor of Tegray, *Ras Mangasha Yohannes*, at Koatit and Sanafe, they pushed steadily into Tegray, establishing impregnable forts at Addigrat and Edga Hamus. Menilek had no choice but to mobilize his people to repel the Italian assault. After some six months of campaigning, the final battle was fought at Adwa on 1 March 1896. The outcome was a resounding victory for Menilek and Ethiopia.

But that resounding victory did not achieve the long-standing objective of Menilek and his predecessors, i.e. access to the sea. The question has often been asked why Menilek did not follow up his victory by driving the Italians out of Eritrea altogether. Takla-Hawaryat Takla-Maryam, who later rose to be Ethiopian Minister of Finance under Emperor Hayla-Sellase, had accompanied his patron, *Ras Makonnen*, as a young boy and found it incomprehensible that Menilek and Makonnen could not think of consummating the Adwa victory by liberating Eritrea. Indeed, Menilek has often been accused by Eritreans, particularly those with Unionist inclinations, of having sold Eritrea. The most violent condemnation of Menilek in this regard came soon after Adwa. *Blatta* Gabra-Egziabher Gila-Maryam, pioneer of the Amharic press and member of the early twentieth century group of reformist intellectuals, wrote a letter with some other like-minded Eritreans, comparing Menilek to Nero, who cut his mother's womb. Contrasting his conduct with the single-mindedness with which his predecessors (Tewodros and Yohannes) had defended their country's sovereignty, the Eritreans said that he can only qualify to be called "King of Half of

12 The interested reader could refer to the sustained debate between Sven Rubenson and Carlo Giglio on the interpretation of Article XVII. See Rubenson, S. "Trials of Strength with Egypt and Italy" in *The Survival of Ethiopian Independence*, London, Heineman, 1976, Chapter V (on Wechale see pp. 370-398); Giglio, C. "Article 17 of the Treaty of Uccialli" in *Journal of African History*, vol. 6, n. 2, 1965, pp. 221-235.

Ethiopia¹³. But, these accusations seem to be grounded more on passion than on reason. One can adduce on Menilek's behalf a number of factors to explain why he had to be content with what he had achieved at the Adwa battlefield. For one thing, the victory was an expensive one, resulting in many Ethiopian casualties, including some of the most able commanders. What one heard at the Ethiopian camp the evening of 1 March was not jubilation but wailing for the dead. Secondly, the problem of supplies was a very acute one, forcing Menilek to fight at Adwa with only two-thirds of his force, while a third was out foraging for food in Shere. Ethiopian soldiers were both famished and fatigued after the six-month long campaign. Thirdly, the Italians had a string of fortified positions to fall back on had Menilek pursued his victory. The Italians were defeated at Adwa in part because they made the tactical mistake of coming out of their forts. Fourthly, Menilek could not be sure of the diplomatic consequences of pushing the Italians out of Eritrea even had he been militarily capable of achieving it. He had already conceded much of highland Eritrea to the Italians and he thought it politic to stick to the objective of restoring the status quo ante.

The series of agreements that Menilek concluded with the defeated Italians was thus limited to this objective. The first agreement was the truce of Faras May that Menilek signed on 16 March after negotiations with the Italian envoy, Major Tommaso Salsa. This was a curious document that was signed by Menilek unilaterally, pending ratification by the Italian governor of Eritrea, Antonio Baldissera. Apparently, Major Salsa was deemed to be of too low a profile to sign the document with Menilek. At any rate, the most important clause was the first one, which declared the abrogation of the Treaty of Wechale and provided for the conclusion of another treaty «similar to those signed by [equal] European monarchs». *Until then*, so Article II laid down, the Marab-Balasa-Muna line was to serve as «the boundary between Agame and Akkala Guzay» (i.e. between Ethiopia and Eritrea), the Italians being bound by Article III to abandon their fort at Addigrat. While the conditionality of Article II suggested that Menilek had not yet abandoned all hope of restoring at least some of the Marab-Mellash, the truce nonetheless ended up sanctifying the status quo by introducing the Marab-Balas-Muna line, which was to be recited like a “catechism” in subsequent agreements, including the final one of 1900 that definitely settled the boundary¹⁴.

13 Zewde, B. *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia: The Reformist Intellectuals of the Early Twentieth Century*, Oxford, 2002, pp. 156-157.

14 See Addis Ababa University Study Group *op. cit.*, Annex 4; Zewde, B. *Society, State and History. Selected Essays*, Addis Ababa, 2008, p. 398.

As it transpired, having received a faulty version of the document, the Italians were unaware of the conditional clause and blissfully assumed that Menilek had acquiesced in a Marab-Balasa-Muna boundary. Notwithstanding this, however, Baldissera was instructed by Rome not to ratify the truce¹⁵.

The more formal treaty ending the hostilities was signed in Addis Ababa on 26 October between Menilek and Dr. Cesare Nerazzini representing the Italian government. The first three articles were variations on an unequivocal abrogation of the controversial Wechale Treaty and an emphatic assertion of Ethiopia's independence and sovereignty. Article IV stated that the two parties would delimit the boundary between Eritrea and Ethiopia within a year. Until then, the article went on in a repeat of the Faras May provision, the Marab-Balasa-Muna line will serve as the boundary. Article V obligated not to cede any of the territory under its occupation to a foreign power, Ethiopia asserting its reversionary right to any such territory¹⁶. Once again, as in the truce of Faras May, Menilek accepted the *de facto* boundary as only provisional. But there was no reference to the question of access to the sea. Menilek had focused his attention entirely on the Marab front in the hope of salvaging at least Saraye and Akkala Guzay.

This lingering hope of the emperor was finally laid to rest when he signed the agreement that formally delimited the boundary in July 1900. This was the first of three treaties that delimited the boundary between Eritrea and Ethiopia. It sanctified the Marab-Balasa-Muna line as the official boundary and thus put both Saraye and Akkala Guzay securely within Eritrea. A second treaty signed on 10 July 1902 revised the western boundary in such a way as to place the whole of the Kunama within Eritrea. The treaty that is most pertinent to our discussion here was signed on 16 May 1908. It was this treaty that condemned Ethiopia to be land-locked.

The Italian officials who played a prominent role in persuading this suicidal agreement were the governor of Eritrea, Ferdinando Martini, and the envoy in Addis Ababa, Federico Ciccodicola. Before Martini assumed his governorship in 1897, the fate of Eritrea was hanging in the balance, with a powerful group even advocating the abandonment of the forlorn colony. Martini came with the strong conviction that the colony could be made viable. Enjoying unlimited financial resources from the metropolis and ably assisted by someone who was subsequently to become a household name in Ethiopianist circles, Carlo Conti Rossini, he was able to achieve by diplomatic means what his military predecessors had tried and

15 Caulk, R. *op. cit.*, pp. 581-582; 641.

16 Addis Ababa University Study Group *op. cit.*, Annex 5.

failed to do with arms. In other words, he was able to sanctify the Marab-Balasa-Muna line and establish Italian influence in northern Ethiopia¹⁷.

The terms of the 1908 agreement were first mooted in a telegram from the Italian foreign ministry to Ciccodicola dated 5 December 1905¹⁸. In contrast to his persistent, if ultimately futile, determination to retain Saraye and Akkala Guzay, Menilek did not seem to have raised serious objections to terms that sealed his country's total encirclement. At any rate, we have no record of such objections. He appears to have resigned himself to the loss of the coastline that he had claimed so emphatically in his 1891 circular. As the following exchange with Martini shows, however, he had not lost complete hope of getting some kind of foothold through the goodwill of the Europeans, in this case the Italians – very much in the spirit of his concluding lines in his famous 1891 circular. The exchange, which is recorded in Martini's diary, took place on 19 July 1906, in the course of Martini's visit to Addis Ababa:

Menilek: All countries except Ethiopia have a port. You should ask your King to grant me a port; I will not use it against any one.

Martini: I know that there is an agreement between Italy, France and England¹⁹. I do not know the exact terms of this agreement, nor whether what you request can be granted. At any rate, I will convey your request to the King. But, I cannot, I repeat cannot, know whether your request will be granted.

Menilek: You are great; you have done a lot to maintain the amicable relations of the two countries. You are close to the King and you should please me by getting this [i.e. a port] for me.

Martini: I repeat I will convey your wish to the King. But, what do you need a port for?

Menilek: I will go to the sea by train.

On parting after this interesting exchange, Menilek reminded Martini that the Italians were the first Europeans with whom he developed close relations and added that he was counting on them to grant the greatest wish of his life, that is giving Ethiopia access to the sea²⁰.

In April 1907, the Italians tried to exploit Menilek's abiding concern for an outlet to the sea by offering him a port at Raheita, some fifty kilometers southeast

17 Ivi, p. 74.

18 Ivi, p. 95.

19 Apparently a reference to the 1906 Tripartite Agreement.

20 Martini, F. *Il Diario Eritreo*, vol. 4, Firenze, n.d., p. 493.

of Assab, on the Djibouti border. But Menilek found the conditions that they put for such a cession unacceptable; they had included rectification in their favour of the boundary between Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland, extension of the railway south of the Marab river and acquisition of the lucrative salt plains of Tegray in the course of what they called the “regularization” of the eastern boundary²¹.

Thus, once again, Menilek’s wish for a port remained a pious one. The treaty that was concluded between the two countries on 16 May 1908 not only laid the emperor’s long-standing aspiration to rest but also sealed Ethiopia’s fate for some five decades to come. The exact wording of the fateful article (I) was as follows:

From the most easterly point of the frontier established between the Colony of Eritrea and the Tigre by the Convention of the 10th of July 1900 the boundary proceeds in a south-easterly direction, parallel to and at a distance of 60 kilometers from the coast, until the frontier of the French possessions of Somalia²².

His decades-long quest for an outlet to the sea notwithstanding, Menilek obtained not the slightest of assurances in this regard. The only concessions made to this constricting boundary line was possible adjustment in the demarcation process to take the contours of the terrain and the settlement patterns of the frontier peoples, whose freedom of movement across the boundary line was also guaranteed.

5. Adwa and Badme

Fast forward about one hundred years and one is struck by the historical parallels. Both Adwa (1896) and Badme (1999-2000) were spectacular Ethiopian victories. Yet, neither managed to resolve Ethiopia’s perennial quest for an outlet to the sea. Just as Menilek stopped short of driving the Italians out of Eritrea, the Ethiopian forces did not envisage converting the victory into an acquisition of the port of Assab that was so resiliently embedded in popular imagination. Where they differ significantly is in the relative interest of the rulers in acquiring a port and the relative capacity to realize that objective. As we have seen above, Menilek never tired of expressing his fervent desire to acquire a port. On the contrary, the

21 Archivio Storico Ministero Africa Italiana (ASMAI) 37/2/15, It. Chargé d’Affaires, Addis Ababa, to MAE, 15.4.07.

22 Addis Ababa University Study Group *op. cit.*, pp. 95-96.

EPRDF rulers showed singular abnegation in that regard – abnegation that was incomprehensible to the general public. That explains why after the conclusive military victory at the Badme war, they adhered scrupulously to the principle of restoring the *status quo ante*. Hence the anomaly of the Algiers agreement, whereby the victor, in the words of Christopher Clapham, «snatched defeat from the jaws of victory»²³. By contrast, Menilek, while his efforts to negotiate for a port in no way matched the fervor with which he expressed his desire for it, strove consistently to restore at least parts of the Eritrean highlands (notably Akkala-Guzay and Saraye) to Ethiopia. When we compare the relative capacity of the two rulers to achieve their objective, the EPRDF rulers were in a far superior position after the war than was the case with Menilek. Had the desire been there to acquire a port, they had enough resources to steer the course of the war to that end. At the very least, they could have made Ethiopia's acquisition of its own port a condition for the conclusion of peace²⁴. In conclusion, therefore, it could be said that Menilek had the desire for a port without the means to realize it while the EPRDF had the relative capacity to acquire a port but no desire for it.

23 Quoted in Abebe Teklehaimanot Kahsay *Ethiopia's Right of Access to the Sea under International Law*, LL.M Thesis, University of Georgia, 2007, p. 64.

24 Ivi, ch. 5.

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Writing letters from the Libyan front

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Italian Colonialism in Eritrea by Tekeste Negash is a book which has strongly influenced my research. I have always been struck by its lucidity and its ability to identify the pivotal points of the history of Eritrea with extreme clarity. Published in 1987, *Italian Colonialism in Eritrea* is still valid when applied to a modern day context. Tekeste was one of the first historians to illustrate how, from 1912 on, Eritrea was transformed into a large pool for the recruitment of colonial troops. This was a phenomenon that involved tens of thousands of Eritreans. According to the estimates available, in Libya there were around 60,000 askari engaged in the period 1912-1932. The invasion of Ethiopia and the creation of the Italian East Africa involved a similar number of Eritrean troops¹. A total of 120,000 to 130,000 Eritreans entered the ranks of the Regio Corpo Truppe Coloniali [hereafter RCTC]².

The experiences of these men have still to be studied in depth, but I should emphasise that the military perspective is one of the possibilities on offer to researchers, but certainly not the only one. Military life implies transformations involving very different aspects of the soldiers' lives. For example, this paper focuses on how military life also contributed to extending the practice of letter-writing to soldiers. The case analysed is that of the recourse to the practice of writing in the first Eritrean battalion to have served on the Libyan front, the V battalion. The men of this unit arrived in Libya in February 1912. After six months of service they returned to Eritrea, but were first taken to Rome where they briefly visited the capital city of the Kingdom of Italy.

The war in Libya was an important moment for Eritrean society. As the engagement of the askari in Libya covered such an extensive period and involved a

1 Tekeste Negash *Italian Colonialism in Eritrea, 1882-1941: Policies, Praxis and Impact*, Uppsala, University of Uppsala, 1987, p. 4.

2 Calchi Novati, G. *L'Africa d'Italia: una storia coloniale e postcoloniale*, Roma, Carocci, 2011, p. 254.

consistent number of Eritreans, it unavoidably saw relapses, a good part of which have still to be investigated. For almost twenty years the country was asked to shed a quantity of blood that was never measured, but that was clearly enormous. The askari sent to Libya came face to face with new situations. They witnessed a different aspect of Italian colonialism, one that was incapable of standing up to the Libyan resistance. They definitely came back different men, and in many cases, on their return, the resources, knowledge and awareness acquired during the Libyan experience allowed them to better their position within society.

The main role played by the Libyan experience in the collective history of Eritrea clearly emerges, for example, in the field of literature. The first novel in the Tigrinya language to be published in Eritrea, *Story of a young conscript* by Abba Gabra Yasus Haylu is entirely set around the experiences of the askari in Libya³. The novel, which appeared in 1949, despite the author's claims that it had been ready as early as 1927, tells the story of a group of young askari sent to fight in Libya. The narrator is one of the askari, Tuquabu, who tells of his childhood, of signing up, of the sea voyage, his arrival in Libya and the battles fought until his return to the homeland. Many of Tuquabu's companions were to fall on the field and the initial enthusiasm would give way to disillusion. The novel provides us with a precious opportunity to understand how the experience in Libya was lived by one sector of the Eritrean society. Even although the author was not an askaro, he was, in any case one of the country's major intellectuals. His point of view must be taken into due consideration, even if his reflections are strongly influenced by the debate on the identity and political destinies of Eritrea, typical of the period immediately following the end of the Second World War. The text is a clear attack on Italian colonialism. The rhetoric vision that the Italians had built up around the history of the askari and which still prevails today, is completely demolished by the bitter considerations of Tuquabu/Abba Gabra Yasus Haylu. The engagement of the askari in Libya is a paradoxical situation, whereby people die in a voluntary war that benefits another country for a cause that is not its own. During his service, Tuquabu realises that he is nothing more than a mercenary paid by a master who does not respect him⁴.

3 Abba Gebreyesus Hailu (1906-1993); for a biographical sketch see *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, ad vocem. The full title of the novel is: *Nezeteaskere nehade menesey ziri. Hade zanta* [trad. "Story of a young conscript"], Asmara, Silla, 1949. The English translation was published in 2012: Abba Gebreyesus Hailu *The Conscript: a Novel of Libya's Anticolonial War*, translated from the Tigrinya by Ghirmai Negash, Athens, Ohio University Press, 2012.

4 Chelati Dirar, U. "Truppe coloniali e l'individuazione dell'African Agency. Il caso degli ascari eritrei" in *Afriche e Orienti*, vol. 1, 2007, pp. 51-53.

Some elements that are useful in order to reconstruct the state of mind with which the askari faced the Libyan campaign can be detected in the poetry and popular songs, as always a source capable of capturing important parts of the emotional universe of the subordinate classes. The important problem of money orders and how these were managed in the homeland served as inspiration for the verses of a popular song in which an askaro in Libya informs his family that he has sent a *balya* (postal order) and asks whether the money has been saved or wasted on useless expenses⁵. Recently an analysis of the genre was also proposed by Zemhret Yohannes in a study on Italian colonialism in Eritrea. Here too the description of the experience that emerges is notably different from the Italian reconstruction of the same. For the askari, Libya had turned out to be a place of suffering and death; the initial enthusiasm, if indeed there had ever been any, quickly gave way to a heart-rending sense of nostalgia and remorse for having made a decision that had led them to unhappiness⁶.

It is highly likely, at least in the first phase of the conflict, that a certain consensus also existed among the Eritrean people who, as well as coming forth with donations, also offered many pledges of loyalty. In March 1912, for example, Muhammad ‘Umar al Sāfi, one of the most influential Hadrami traders in Massawa, told that during a trip to Yemen, he had been able to verify the entity of the propagandist effort carried out by “Turkish emissaries” which had led him to write to the Eritrean government and to several Egyptian newspapers. The letter Muhammad ‘Umar al Sāfi sent to the newspapers and to the Italian authorities⁷

5 Balya sadidalkilokuya aqamitkiyyodo satikiyyo shahiya [trad. “I have sent you a money order. Did you saved it or did you buy tea?”], I thank Prof. Abbebe Kifleyesus for this information.

6 Zemhret Yohannes *Italyawi memzati ab Ieritra* [trad. The Italian colonization of Eritrea], Asmara, Hidri, 2010, pp. 374-375.

7 «The 6th of February I went from Massawa to Aden on a business trip. Then I went to Aden. I found that the residents and traders had false and biased information against the Italians. They believed that mosques in Massawa were closed down and they told me that Eritreans had paid to help the Italian government, an act that was considered against the interests of Muslims. I said that the help that we had provided to our government was motivated by the peace, the security, the development of our land and of our sea. I thank God for the peace brought [by the Italians].

As far as it concerns the closing down of mosques and the destruction of religion, I said that it wasn't true at all, in fact the Italians have built mosques in Asmara, Keren, Caieh. Muslim received honors and respect and during the holy month of Ramadan the cannon fire for us to indicate the proper time for meals in the morning and in the evening. In addition to that they have prohibited the preparation of food in the markets out of respect for this sacred month.

In occasion of the public prayer during the holiday, when the Iman stand up in order to pray for his fellow muslims, it is given to him a robe with an hundred francs from the Government in honor of the holy feast.

can be classified as part of a new kind of correspondence that some researchers have signalled. Indeed, the arrival of colonialism encouraged the emergence of new literary genres and practices, as Irma Taddia has repeatedly pointed out in several of her works⁸. The administrative and bureaucratic requirements simulated the diffusion of a correspondence between the colonial administration and several local figures, who were usually notables, or others of medium-high ranking. The fact that written correspondence was also being practiced by the askari is the sign of another step forward towards eliminating the concept of the written document as an element exclusively linked to religious life, and the definition of a private literature focusing on letters, diaries and memoirs. The letters of the askari provide us with an example of correspondence written by soldiers, and not, as in the past, by the political and religious representatives of the various communities. This phenomenon further widens the horizons of those who used writing as a new form of private communication.

The conflict in Libya principally intensified the phenomenon of the “letters written by the leaders” to the authorities. In this way they affirmed their loyalty and offered the colonial government the possibility of gauging the level of consensus that surrounded it. In the latter months of 1912, after the peace agreements were signed with the Ottoman government, «Degiac Tesfumariam [...] the well-known leader of the Mai Zada», «Abdalla Eluan [...] the extremely prolific *cadi* of the *miniferi*» and «Grazmac Chelati Agos [...] former authoritative partisan of the [sic] rebels in Acchelé Guzai» wrote to the government to congratulate it on the peace that had been obtained. Salvago Raggi sent a copy of the letters to the ministry of the colonies as a sign of the devotion and loyalty of the population to the Italian cause, and these were particularly appreciated by the Foreign Minister who, in turn, forwarded them to the Minister for War and the Colonies, and to the Prime Minister⁹.

Who does not believe in my words he has just to go and see. After my speech they understood and my words were welcomed. Best wishes. Signed: Mohamed Omar El Safi», “La smentita di un notevole di Massaua a calunnie sparse da emissari turchi” [trad. The denial of a notable of Massawa to slander spread by Turkish emissaries] in *Corriere della Sera*, 25 March 1912, p. 2.

8 On the emergence of a private epistolography see: Spaulding, J. “The Birth of an African Private Epistolography. Echo Island 1862-1901” in *Journal of African History*, vol. 34, 1993, pp. 115-141. On the Eritrean case see: Taddia, I. “The Regional Archive of Addi Qäyyeh (Eritrea): an Important Source for the History of Colonialism” in *History in Africa*, vol. 25, 1998, pp. 423-425; Taddia, I. “Correspondence as a New Source for African History. Some Evidence from Colonial Eritrea” in *Cahiers d’Étude africaines*, vol. 40, n. 1, 2000, pp. 109-134; Taddia, I. “La parola e il testo”. Fonti per la storia dell’Etiopia-Eritrea, secoli XIX-XX” in *L’Uomo*, vol. 1-2, 2011, pp. 141-156.

9 Giuseppe Salvago Raggi to Ministero Affari Esteri [hereafter MAE], Asmara 8 November 1912

In the case of Eritrea, still no in-depth analysis has been performed on the writing habits of the subordinate groups, based on the model of the recent initiative by Karin Barber, who studied the memoir, letter and diary writing forms as well as the other forms practised in social groups that were not directly involved in the decision-making circle¹⁰. Even if Karin Barber's selection does not include any example of writing practices connected with military life, the army must be seen as one of the environments where the conditions for adopting new forms of communication presented themselves most clearly, and one within which private correspondence necessarily played a central role. Indeed, private correspondence provided a rather effective response to the needs generated by the change in service conditions that colonialism had introduced into the military life of many African subjects, by repeatedly having them serve far from their original location. In this context, the conditions were ripe for the establishment of new epistolary circuits and for people to use writing as a form of personal expression. The fact that many askari did not know how to write need not be seen as an insurmountable obstacle. The researchers who have written about popular writing during the war have emphasised that the equation illiteracy equal lack of writing is not always true, as otherwise we could not explain why in Italy, during the great war, the correspondence to and from the front came close to totalling four billion letters. The category of the illiterate was studied in-depth with a view to breaking away from the too clear-cut "literate-illiterate" dichotomy, and instead favour the identification of a grey area, containing people who were not entirely literate, such as, for example those who would know how to read but not how to write. The categories of the "semi-literate" and "hardly literate speakers" therefore emerged to contain the profiles of those who had not yet interiorised the rules of written communication¹¹. It should not then be forgotten that the askari came from a context where, traditionally, people had a high opinion of those who could write. For both Christians and Muslims, the written text played a fundamental role and in each community, and even if the illiterate remained the prevalent group, there were people who were able to master the practice of writing. For example,

and Ministero delle colonie to Ministero della guerra e Presidente del Consiglio, 1 December 1912, Archivio Storico Diplomatico Ministero Affari Esteri, Roma [hereafter ASDMAE], Archivio Storico Ministero dell'Africa Italiana [hereafter ASMAI], 115/1, fasc. 7.

10 Barber, K. (ed.) *Africa's Hidden Histories. Everyday Literacy and Making the Self*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2006.

11 In this regard see Bellosi, G. "La voce «in un pezo di carta»" in Bellosi, G., Savini, M. (eds.) *Verificato per censura. Lettere e cartoline di soldati romagnoli nella prima guerra mondiale*, Cesena, Il Ponte Vecchio, 2002, pp. 41-90.

it was perfectly normal that religious texts followed the group in order to allow it to carry out its religious practices and face the general anxiety generated by the long distance from home and by the context of the war itself. The incredulity of the Italians at this population's familiarity with the written word led to the press noting, with surprise how when the askari arrived in Rome, some of them were carrying «the holy books, tied on a string hanging down their backs»¹².

The military experience also made it easier to widen the linguistic horizons of the soldiers who, as well as being in direct contact with soldiers who spoke different languages, were also encouraged to learn Italian, this being a compulsory requisite for any soldier who may have wanted to further his career.

The development of the languages skills within the RCTC in the period in tandem with the war in Libya must be linked to the more general effort made to improve the basic education of the Eritreans, which was taking place in the country at that very time. Despite being strongly determined to limit the education of its Eritrean subjects as much as possible, the Italian did however have to deal with the requirements created by the need to ensure that their own government functioned properly, and this forced it to resort notably to employing members of the local community to fill basic administrative roles. A schooling system for Eritreans was therefore set up and despite all the precautionary measures adopted, it ended up widening the confines of illiteracy. The proof that the relationship between written communication and the Eritrean society was changing rapidly could be seen in the very years following the conflict in Libya, from the appearance of the first periodical publications in the Tigrinya language, which were obviously aimed at an exclusively local readership. This phenomenon signalled the existence of small groups that could use the printed word to communicate, keep in touch, express their opinions on the present situation and feed their imagination. The brevity of these two experiences also signals the precariousness of the experiment. But the signal was there, and therefore should in any case be noted¹³.

The military environment was also a universe that was widely permeated by the written word. Numbers were not only a fundamental component of ballistics, but also of the daily organisation of military life, which involved battalions, companies and soldiers that were all identified numerically¹⁴. The written form

12 "L'accoglienza festosa di Roma agli ascari eritrei" in *La Stampa*, 28 July 1912, p. 4.

13 *Melihti Selam* [Messenger of peace], 1909-1915, published by the Evangelical Church and *Nay hezb ityupye ineteyna fetawi* [The best friend of the Abyssinian people], published by the Catholic Church during the years 1916-1917.

14 The soldier's number was by far the most important piece of information about a soldier career:

often appeared during training, and in the functioning of the various units, who regularly communicated with one another via written messages¹⁵. Finally, the service record, the administrative document that summarised the status of the service rendered by the soldiers, was largely based on combinations of alphanumeric data. Therefore, military life, with its continuous references to the written universe, underlined the importance of this ability and became a means for its diffusion. By his own admission, one of the things that most grabbed the imagination of the *tirailleur* Bakary Diallo when he signed up was the skill of the scribe, an element that immediately became a constant source of inspiration to him¹⁶. In some cases, reading was also used as a source of intellectual pleasure, such as in the case of “Makonnen”, an “evolved askaro” of the V battalion who, according to the journalist of *L'Italia a Tripoli*, had a passion for the novels of Fogazzaro and the military tales by De Amicis¹⁷.



Caption: «Our askari, the magnificent bronze soldiers, that during the charges and the assaults go fast, and are invincible, swinging swords, daggers and rifles, also have their moments of rest, during which they read Italian books, for the most part of Roman history», *La Tribuna Illustrata*, 16, 21-28 April 1912, p. 249.

«given the frequent cases of homonymy between indigenous, and the almost absolute impossibility to use other clues for the identification of the same, the soldier's number remains the only secure piece of information upon which the career of one soldier should be reconstructed», RCTC, “Ordini Permanenti”, 12 February 1919.

15 Killingray, D. *Fighting for Britain. African Soldiers in the Second World War*, London, James Currey, 2010, pp. 248-249.

16 Bakary Diallo *Force bonté*, Paris, Rieder, 1926, pp. 33-34.

17 “I particolari dell'azione” in *L'Italia a Tripoli. Storia degli avvenimenti della guerra Italo-Turca*, Milano, Società Editoriale Milanese, p. 502.

In the case of the askari, the panorama linked to the production of letters by the Eritreans is enhanced by the addition of a new category. If, up until this point, the examples available to us concerned the diplomatic and administrative correspondence between the heads of the local systems and the outside world, or between the Eritreans and the government, instead the correspondence of the askari is the first documented case of an epistolary exchange between the subordinate classes of the Eritrean society. An exchange that addresses this same society and contains unexpected linguistic skills and strategies that aim to introduce written communication, into contexts that can hardly be considered literate. This phenomenon also confirms the strong upturn in the number of written documents produced locally in Eritrea in the colonial period and the prime importance of this period in the genesis of a private literature¹⁸. Indeed, letter-writing offered people the possibility to bridge the distances that separated them, allowing them to be in two different, distant places almost at the same time. A characteristic that was immediately appreciated in the new colonial context by the populations in question¹⁹.

The military authorities did everything possible to develop this practice within the troops and were seen to encourage every opportunity to «recommend that the Eritrean askari in Libya wrote frequently to their families in the colonies»²⁰. This was a kind of sensitivity brought on by a dual consideration: firstly, writing letters helped to placate the soldiers' anxieties and fears linked to serving far from home and from their families. The colonial authorities were aware that serving overseas for an extended period of time was a particularly traumatic experience for the African soldiers. In Libya, for example, the askari would not live in the "family camps", where the presence of women ensured they received not only practical support but also the emotional support which by now formed part of the daily life of the askari. The authorities believed that favouring contact with the soldiers' lives back home would help to boost morale and improve discipline within the troops. Therefore this correspondence was seen to create a climate that was more favourable to the mission, with inevitably positive effects on the enlistments. This was the reason behind the immediate attention paid to all the initiatives that aimed

18 Taddia, I. "La parola e il testo. Fonti per la storia dell'Etiopia-Eritrea, secoli XIX-XX..." cit.

19 This research thread was initiated by Goody, J. *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1968. A recent contribution in this line is represented by Delmas, A.; Penn, N. (eds.) *Written Culture in a Colonial Context. Africa and the Americas 1500-1900*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2012.

20 Michele Rubiolo to MAE, Asmara 22 March 1912, ASDMAE, ASMAI, 115/1, fasc. 3.

to facilitate written communication between the askari and those back home. The “Permanent Orders” of the RCTC dated January 1912 had high praise for the initiative carried out by the commissioner of Keren, Vittorio Fioccardi, who had distributed writing paper, “*arab pens*” and ink to the lower camel racing ranks of the Sahel, «ordering them to do everything possible to write often to their families in Eritrea from Libya». Fioccardi had then given the highest ranking soldier large envelopes with the commissioner’s address, to enable all the correspondence to be collected and sent together²¹. We can see confirmation of the importance attributed to this aspect in a comment made some weeks later by the commander of the RCTC, col. Rubiolo:

I would like to take this opportunity to recommend that the native soldiers sent to Tripoli write home to Eritrea expressing their satisfaction regarding the warm welcome they have received, the way in which they are treated, and their approval of our participation in the war. It would be good if the officials would encourage this practice, by taking an interest in the letter-writing, addresses, layout so that the soldiers left behind here are motivated to go to Tripoli²².

The commissioner of the Seraè, Alberto Pollera, had in fact noted that the population of his commissariato was rather reluctant to enlist. According to the colonial leaders, the fear of the unknown, but also, much more simply, the fear of the sea voyage seemed to be the reasons behind this reluctance. Attempts were therefore made to encourage the correspondence, but the first letters that arrived from Libya were so generic and formal that they did not prove very useful. Alberto Pollera therefore advised «the Commanders of the detached units in Libya to use appropriate suggestions in order to encourage the most intelligent, able soldiers to write in more detail about their impressions of the new country»²³. This episode, in its simplicity, provides us with some important clues that help us understand the written communication between the askari. In the first place, it indirectly reveals how a certain familiarity with the practice of writing existed not only in the battalion in Libya, but also in the context from which the askari had come. They were writing to their own community, presumably to members

21 “Corrispondenza privata dei militari indigeni in Libia” in RCTC, *Ordini Permanenti*, 6, 22 January 1912 in ASDMAE, ASMAI, 115/1, fasc. 6.

22 Michele Rubiolo to MAE, Asmara 14 February 1912, ASDMAE, ASMAI, 115/1, fasc. 2.

23 Alberto Pollera to Governo dell’Eritrea, 4 March 1912, in Vitale, M.A., *L’Italia in Africa. L’opera dell’Esercito (1885-1943). Ordinamento e reclutamento*, Roma, 1960, p. 196.

of their own families. The experiment did not achieve the desired results, not because the askari were unable to write letters or because at home no-one was able to read them, but because the texts they produced were too short and formal. However, the experiment was not interrupted, but instead some variations were recommended in order to improve the result. Furthermore, as we can see from the notes exchanged between the various administrative offices in Eritrea, there were complaints about the difficulties faced in sending letters experienced by family members who were resident in isolated areas. They also made insistent requests for free postage on letters to and from Eritrea destined to the askari in service in Libya²⁴. In the case of the VII battalion, there is even a list of the letters sent from Eritrea²⁵.

Other armies will understand the importance of correspondence in keeping the relationships with one's country of origin alive and limiting the stress generated by serving far from home. For example, during the Second World War, the British army tried to encourage the exchange of letters between the African soldiers and their families, by distributing postcards and organising letter-writing courses for the soldiers' wives²⁶. The French too saw the benefits of encouraging the *tirailleurs* to correspond with their families, as they were aware of the advantages that this would bring to the morale and discipline of the troops²⁷.

As the years went by, the attempt made by the government to promote private correspondence amongst the Eritrean people became easier to implement when "letter-writing" became part of the primary school programme for Eritreans. In the twenties, the *Book for primary native schools* of the Colonia Eritrea focused particularly on private correspondence, illustrating the various types and providing several letter templates. For example, the text introducing correspondence illustrated the various different parts of which a letter is composed, using a question/answer formula, and even guiding the reader on how to prepare the envelope. The text deserves to be reproduced in its entirety here:

24 Governatore della Cirenaica to MAE, Tripoli 23 March 1913, and Ministero delle colonie a Regio Commissario dei Servizi Postale e Telegrafico della Tripolitania, Roma 27 May 1913, ASDMAE, ASMAI, 115/1, fasc. 8.

25 ASDMAE, Archivio Eritrea, 658 "Militari eritrei in Libia".

26 Killingray, D. "Gender Issues and African Colonial Armies" in Killingray, D.; Omissi, D. (eds.) *Guardians of Empire. The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers c. 1700-1964*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1999, p. 239.

27 Mann, G. *Native Sons. West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century*, Durham-London, Duke University Press, 2006, pp. 153-158.

About letter writing

Q. What does it is a letter?

A. A letter is a written message sent to an absent person to communicate or ask news.

Q. How many parts does a letter have?

A. A letter is made of five parts: the salutation, the body, the greetings, the signature with the date and the letter cover.

Q. What does salutation means?

R. It is the expression of confidence or respect with which the letter writers goes to the receiver.

Eg. Dear brother, beloved sister, illustrious Sir, Dear Commissioner, Sir, etc.

Q. What does it is the body of the letter?

A. It is the news that you give or you require.

Q. What does it is the signature and the date?

R. It consists in writing to the right of the paper your full name with expressions of affection and respect according to the nature of the letter you are writing and to the left of the paper the place where you wrote the letter, the day, the month and the year.

Eg.: To a brother or a sister: your affectionate brother Chidanè.

To your father or mother: your affectionate son Gebrè.

To an important person: Your devoted servant Abteghiorghis.

NB. In an informal letter, after the signature, if you had forgotten something important, you can add it using the abbreviation PS that stands for postscript, meaning that was “written after”.

In a formal letter you should avoid the use of postscripts.

D. How to write a letter cover?

R. You have to write the name and surname, the title and the address of the receiver, preceded by phrases of respect even if they are your relatives.

Dear Sir Antonio Baldelli

Vice Chancellor

Via Torquato Tasso N. 75.

Milano

Dear Sir Ghebrè Micael Memratù

Bulukbasc of the III battalion

(Cirenaica) Derna²⁸.

²⁸ *Libro per le scuole elementari indigene della Colonia Eritrèa pubblicato per cura della Missione Cattòlica*, Volume III. Classe IV, Asmara, Tipografia Franciscana, 1924, pp. 169-171.

The text then continued by presenting a series of correspondence templates which significantly, included the letter of an askaro in Libya to his mother, brother and captain, and the letter of a «young boy to his askaro brother in Tripoli». Another factor that further called for the practice to be used more intensely was that in the space of a year of war, the term of service had gone from six months to one year, so doubling the period of time that soldiers spent far from home.

As early as the time when the second battalion was sent to Libya, Muslim and orthodox religious figures were sent to accompany the soldiers. Therefore, this period saw the appearance of “professional” writers who could have helped the askari to draft their texts if they had needed assistance. Being far away is a circumstance that transforms writing from an occasional practice into a recurring one, and military service has always been a context that promoted correspondence. Even if the result achieved was often a stylized text, the importance of the text itself must not be underestimated. The results of these changes were initially seen in the thirties, when the postcards sent by the askari to their families were no longer a rare occurrence.

The analysis of the documentation relative to the mission of the V battalion repeatedly turns the spotlight on episodes featuring the writing practices of the askari, and also a certain variety in the situations and ways in which the correspondence was used. For example, it is very likely that some askari used letter-writing not only to keep their family relationships alive, but also to stay in touch with their fellow soldiers. According to “La Provincia di Brescia”, some askari of the V battalion convalescing in Italy resorted to writing letters to stay in touch with their companions who were still in Libya, describing their impressions of their visit to Rome in June 1912²⁹. On this same occasion, the *bulukbashi* who commanded the convalescing askari used correspondence for a different purpose when he decided to send a brief thank you letter on behalf of all his men to the “Messaggero”: «We were very happy» reads the short letter «to receive such a warm welcome in Rome. We saw lots of beautiful things: we could talk about them for a year! Long live Rome! Long live Italy!»³⁰ With this letter to the editor of the “Messaggero” the askari were experimenting with a new kind of letter and addressing a new readership. This was no longer a letter to the members of their close family or an

29 «An Askari has just received a letter from Rome; the sender is his buddy that is receiving medical treatment in Italy. He writes him about how beautiful Rome is», Mezzadri, L. “Asterischi tripoli” in *La Provincia di Brescia*, 21 July 1912, p. 5.

30 *L'Illustrazione Italiana*, 27, 7 July 1912, p. 8. The cover of this same issue is dedicated to the askari.

administrative request, but a message from the representative of the convalescing askari to the citizens of Rome, through a newspaper medium. In this way another concept of correspondence, used as an opportunity to communicate, was tried out and adopted, so consolidating the practice of writing within the group.

A few weeks later, another episode occurred that will help us to understand better how the askari used writing as a new form of private communication. When crossing the sea towards Italy, the journalist Luigi Lucatelli accompanied the men of the V battalion and later recounted various interesting episodes. Lucatelli became particularly friendly with an askaro named “Abdasellasse”: «We got to know each other thanks to my little Kodak with which I had taken his portrait in a camp. He wanted to come and pick up a copy at my house, and then he told me the address to write on the envelope to send it to his mother in Adi Ugri»³¹. The askaro known as “Abdasellasse”, with the help of Lucatelli, is proof of the fact that writing was sometimes performed by delegation, as is often the case in semi-illiterate contexts.

This episode is also an example of how the Eritreans began to use another important means of communication: photography. Similarly to writing, photography was also an instrument that war tended to bring to the centre of personal communication. For many, the first time they had a photograph taken was on the occasion of their military service, a practice also adhered to scrupulously by the askari³². For example, Cassai Gareselase from Rome included a photograph when writing to his captain on 22 October 1912.



Caption: Studio portrait of the zaptiè “Cassai Gareselase”, 1912 (Addi Qayyeh Regional Archive, Mendefera, Migration I)

31 Lucatelli, L. “Tornando da Tripoli col 5° battaglione eritreo” in *Il Secolo*, 25 July 1912, p. 1.

32 In the course of my archival researches I came frequently across studio portraits depicting askari.

Cassai had served as a *zaptiè*, but subsequently found a job at the Bank of Rome and had moved to the Italian capital. In the letter addressed to his captain, who was in Eritrea, Cassai begged him to reassure his family that he was in good health. The matter of money orders continued to be one of the letter's main themes. Cassai had sent one hundred lire and wanted to know whether the money had really arrived: «tell them that when they receive the money they must answer me immediately, either in Italian or in Abyssinian, because otherwise I will not know whether they have received it or whether it has been lost». He then sent a copy «of the certificate issued by the general of the theatre» and a photograph³³.

The reference to the writing of the askari made it easier for them to connect with the Italians and to become part of their world. As a nation faced with an estimated forty percent illiteracy rate, it is only natural that the Italians would consider the ability to read and write as a typical indicator of the more educated segments of the population. In 1912, on the occasion of the visit of the V battalion to Italy, a cartoon was published in “L’Illustrazione Italiana” depicting an askaro who delivers the impressions of his life to a telegram. This constituted recognition of the fact that the askari could write, and therefore placed them on a social level that many Italians had not yet reached.



A feste finite si affretta a telegrafare le sue impressioni ai parenti lontani.

Caption: Biagio, “L’ascaro eritreo in Italia”, detail, in *L’Illustrazione Italiana*, 31, 4 August 1912, jacket.

³³ “Cassai Gareselase” to “Capitano”, Roma 22 October 1912. “Cassai Geraselase” enrolled in the Zaptiè and went to Libya from April to September 1912, in Addi Qayyeh Regional Archive, Eritrea, Migration I. The “certificate” mentioned by “Cassai” was most probably a letter of reference. Cassai had been the personal interpreter of general Tommaso Salsa in Derna at the headquarter of the Brigata Speciale di Montagna. I would like to thank Alessandro Volterra for drawing my attention to this document.

The curiosity about the emotions provoked by the sight of Italy was one of the issues most commonly dealt with by public opinion. While the general public was asking whether the askari had appreciated their welcome, and whether the Italians had made them feel at home, the middle class was wondering how the askari had reacted at the sight of such a modern country. What kind of emotions had they felt when seeing monuments and cities, travelling on the more modern forms of transport, or visiting steel works and other industrial factories? Could the representatives of a culture that might be considered anti-ethical appreciate the grandeur of a country that favoured a modern way of life? This interest was the source of a constant flow of questions, to which the askari patiently gave answers that were close to reassuring.

But this curiosity was also behind one of the most interesting examples of the askari' writing, the work *Impressioni d'Italia* by Gdei Kalu, published in August 1912 by the magazine "Noi e il Mondo"³⁴. Gdei Kalù belonged to the group of convalescing askari that visited Rome in June 1912, preceding the arrival of the V battalion by a few weeks. His text may certainly have been "adjusted" by the editors of "Noi e il mondo", but some elements do lead us to believe that it is basically an original work. For example, the reference to the height of the king, which was a touchy subject and a considerable source of embarrassment for the court and the country, would surely not have featured in a text that had been specifically constructed. The notation was not contested because Gdei Kalù was a visitor to the country and so allowed to break the rules slightly. The other details contained in the article are equally credible and correspond to the sequence of the facts as we know them. Additional, equally important elements in the article are the continuous references to reading and writing. Gdei Kalù claimed to have written to his father, mother, brothers and sisters describing the beauty of the Italian cities, and there is even a reference to reading («the books where we read»), all of which implies a certain familiarity with reading and writing. The words of Gdei Kalù are clearly a tribute to Italian generosity and grandeur. Naturally these are the kind of words that Italy expected from its *askari*. Today they may seem naive, and appear to be a sign of wanting to be "italiano" at all costs, almost to the point of being embarrassing. Perhaps for many readers their first instinct would be to disown this testimony, claiming that it was not authentic, and attributing it to some obscure editor of "Noi e il mondo". However, rather than rejecting the text, we could instead opt to subject it to a detailed analysis which takes into consideration the historical

34 Gdei Kalù "L'ascaro Gdei Kalù scrive le sue impressioni d'Italia" in *Noi e il mondo*, August 1912, pp. 61-64. I warmly thank Gian Carlo Stella for providing me with this text.

context in which it was written³⁵. The disarming, all-too-obvious pro-Italian message is only one of the ways of interpreting the words of Gdei Kalù. Another interpretation of the same significance is the aspect of identity linked to the war, which was capable of completely redefining the mental and moral universe of the askari, of giving them a new perception of themselves, in this case expressed via the metaphor of being Italian. But it is time to hear what Gdei³⁶ has to say:

The askaro Gdei Kalù writes about his impressions of Italy.

My name is Gdei Kalù and I'm an Italian soldier. The village where my father and his son were born is called Adi Ugri [Mendefera], I'm very happy to write this article because I want to say to my Italian brother that I'm very happy to be an Italian.

Italy is the most beautiful country in the world after Adi Ugri, where you go hunting gazelles and lions. But also Adi Ugri belongs to Italy because my father has fought with the Italian captain so when I was born I was already an Italian.

Believe it or not but when in Naples King Vittorio visited the hospital he told me: "Goodbye my askari". I had already seen the King in many photographs and a friend of mine, which I prefer not to name, told me that he was short. The King of Italy is short indeed but he is very smart. Also all my Italian brothers are very good: when they fight they always run, they shot they die but they keep always happy and confident and they shout: "Long live Italy!" It is a very nice view indeed. But the Turks are the opposite. The Turks escape and I have killed many of them as they are very stupid.

Now we are in Italy and we belong to the first company of the 5th battalion. The name of our captain is Fassini and our chief is called De Marchi, they are very good. In Palermo, Naples and Rome we were received by enthusiastic crowds that shouted: "Long live to the askari" and the women threw flowers from the terraces and said: "Well done" and the cars could not move. I was so happy that I wrote to my father, my mother and my brothers telling them

35 An interesting attempt of interpreting this kind of literature was made by Riesz, J. "The Tirailleur Sénégalais Who Did Not Want to Be a «Grand Enfant»: Bakary Diallo's Force bonté (1926) Reconsidered" in *Research in African Literature*, vol. 27, n. 4, 1996, pp. 157-179.

36 Ghidei Kalu (Gdei Kalù), was born in Arresa, 27 km Sud-Est Mendefera (Adi Ugri). He was decorated with a silver medal for his actions during the battle of Bu Kamesh on May 20, 1912. He was then injured and sent to Italy for medical treatment. In 1913 he was back to Libya, attached to the V battalion. Ghidei was honored posthumously with another silver medal for his actions during the battle of Maharuga (December 1913; I thank Gabriele Zorzetto for this important information).

about the beauty of Palermo, Naples and Rome and telling them everything what we saw.

We saw St. Peter's and the theater with so many lights and women dancing, we saw the Coliseum, as big as the mountain of the Gebel and the barracks of the Bersaglieri.

I was wounded at Forwa's fort in Bu-Kamesc and I'm very happy to have been injured for the sake of the great Italian government. And all those who were injured are happy, only those who can't walk are unhappy because they can't go back to war and have to go back home.

I haven't written to my father and my mother that I was wounded because they are always worried about me: "Gdei how are you? Are you ok?"

We are not afraid of being wounded: we are among the Italians and they care a lot about us. We too we like very much the Italians, Italy and the Italian government: the Italian government is sweet like honey.

You asked me where do we go now: we are going back at war with our white Italian brothers. I'm very happy when I think that I will see them again. They share with us everything: when one of us is wounded and falls to the ground then our white Italian comrades run to those who are injured and give them water to drink and carry them on their shoulders to the nearest medical point, they never lie. Then they return to the battlefield and if injured they don't ask for help.

So I saw Italy. Now I do not care to go to battle and die. When I saw the most beautiful thing I don't mind dying. Because you should know that before our departure, many Italians asked me what I liked most, the Vesuvio, the Coliseum or the Conca d'Oro. To tell you the truth what I like most in Italy is Italy itself. Then a man that was talking with me smiled and said: "Bravo askari".

My father too would say he does not care to die if he had seen Italy. The books we read say that we should live among the one that have seen our victory or die with the rifle in hand covered by glory. I do not know if your books say that too. But ours say so. Now I finish writing the article but I do not stop to think of Italy.

Gdei Kalù



L'ascaro Gdei Kalù scrive le sue impres- sioni d'Italia

◆ ◆ ◆ Un mese addietro Roma accoglieva trionfalmente gli ascari feriti nella guerra di Libia e in questi giorni la Capitale si prepara ad accogliere il 5° battaglione di ascari eritrei che verrà il 29 luglio a rendere omaggio alla tomba del Re Buono. Da noi pregato, un ascaro di questo stesso battaglione, Gdei Kalù di Adi-Ugri, ha scritto per NOI E IL MONDO un breve articolo per descrivere le impressioni della "bella Italia", e della "grande Roma", ricevute da lui e dai suoi compagni. Traducendo dall'Amarico queste parole del bravo ascaro Gdei Kalù noi abbiamo lasciato ad esse, quanto più rigorosamente era possibile, la loro ingenua semplicità così piena di profonda poesia. E, per accompagnare le sue parole, abbiamo evocato la simpatica figura di Gdei Kalù su lo sfondo dei più illustri monumenti romani sui quali le figure tricolori dei nostri soldati coloniali si sono profilate in queste settimane con un effetto singolarmente suggestivo e pittoresco

Io mi chiamo Gdei Kalù e sono un soldato italiano. Il paese dove è nato mio padre e il figlio di mio padre si chiama Adi Ugri ma io adesso sono molto contento di scrivere l'articolo perchè voglio dire ai miei fratelli italiani che sono molto contento di essere un italiano.

L'Italia è il più bel paese che ci sia dopo Adi Ugri dove si va a caccia delle gazzelle e dei leoni. Ma anche Adi Ugri è un pezzo dell'Italia perchè mio padre ha fatto le battaglie con il capitano italiano ed io quando son nato ero già un italiano. Tu non vuoi credere quello che dico: ma il Re Vittorio a Napoli quando è venuto nell'ospedale mi ha detto: «Addio, mio ascaro».

Io il Re l'avevo già visto nelle fotografie e uno che conosco e che non ti voglio dire mi aveva detto che era piccolo.

Il Re d'Italia è piccolo ma ha il cervello fino. Anche tutti i miei fratelli italiani sono molto bravi: quando fanno i soldati corrono sempre, sparano e poi muoiono,

sempre contenti e tranquilli e gridano: «Evviva l'Italia».

Questo è bello da vedere: i Turchi invece no. I turchi scappano e io ne ho uccisi molti ma sono molto stupidi.

Adesso siamo venuti in Italia e siamo della 1ª compagnia del 5° battaglione: il nostro capitano si chiama Fassini e il nostro maggiore si chiama De Marchi e sono molto buoni. A Palermo, a Napoli e a Roma siamo stati ricevuti con tante feste tutti i giorni e c'erano tutte le piazze piene di gente che gridava: «Viva gli ascari» e le donne sulle terrazze che gettano i fiori e dicevano: «Bravi» e gli automobili non potevano più andare avanti. Allora sono stato così felice che ho scritto a mio padre, a mia madre, ai fratelli, alle sorelle che è molto bella Palermo, bella Napoli, bella Roma e ho raccontato tutto quello che abbiamo visto. Abbiamo visto San Pietro e il teatro con tanti lumi e le donne che ballavano, e il Colosseo che è grande come la montagna del Gebel e la caserma

Caption: Gdei Kalù, "L'ascaro Gdei Kalù scrive le sue impressioni d'Italia" in *Noi e il mondo*, August 1912, pp. 61-64.

III
Methodology, Law and Education

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Trespassing boundaries. The challenges for Eritrean historiography¹

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Introduction

I would like to start by thanking the editors of this book that gave me the privilege to contribute to this collective gift to a dear friend and a colleague who, for many decades, has enlivened the historiography on Eritrea. In fact Tekeste, though since our very first meeting² we tended more often to disagree rather than agree on sundry issues, has nonetheless had the indisputable merit of having consistently been a challenging provoker. His independent views and often original approaches to Eritrean history have been crucial in opening new paths of research and in suggesting new perspectives³. Therefore, with this paper I want to pay my respect to his lifelong epistemological struggle by discussing some methodological and hermeneutical issues which I deem crucial for the future development of Eritrean historiography.

The aim of this paper is to discuss, with no pretense of being exhaustive, some of the main epistemological shortcomings of Eritrean historiography and, at the

1 A first version of this paper was submitted at the symposium “Giornata internazionale di studi sull’Eritrea” organised at the IUO in Naples on May 2010 by Prof Lusini to whom I’m indebted for his generous hospitality and to whom I still owe my apologies for not having been able to submit a final version of my presentation.

2 This happened on 1996 at the “Adwa: A Challenge to History?”, *Adwa Centenary Conference*, organised by the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, in Addis Ababa and Adwa between February 25 and March 2, 1996.

3 To this regard I consider crucial milestones in my academic development his masterpieces: Tekeste Negash *No Medicine for the Bite of a White Snake: Notes on Nationalism and Resistance in Eritrea, 1890-1940*, Uppsala, University of Uppsala, 1986; Tekeste Negash *Italian colonialism in Eritrea, 1882-1941: policies, praxis, and impact*, Uppsala, Uppsala University, 1987; Tekeste Negash *Eritrea and Ethiopia: the federal experience*, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1997.

same time, to suggest possible alternative frameworks, mainly on the basis of my own research and teaching experience carried out both in Eritrea and in Italy over the past 15 years.

I hope this will also contribute to foster a lively and free debate on Eritrean history and, in a broader perspective, on Eritrea's nation building process, which I think is much needed both within the Eritrean academic community and society at large.

1. Methodological issues

A great deal of inspiration for this paper comes from an article by John Coakley⁴ that I found fascinating and impressively close to many reflections that have filled my mind in the recent years when thinking about the main trends and challenges ahead of the new Eritrean historiography.

At the very beginning of his article, discussing «the centrality of historical interpretation to the process of the creation and maintenance of ethnic or national solidarity», Coakley states that,

The capacity of political elites to shape political outcomes by influencing the way in which the past is perceived and interpreted is a well-known characteristic of public life. It is not, then, surprising that the education, information, and foreign ministries of the modern state devote particular attention to matters of history, especially in contexts where a political regime feels threatened.

He then goes on to explain how history can absolve a handful of purposes such as helping in the consolidation of particular regimes (especially if they are aware of the relevance of the past in legitimizing contemporary ideologies); developing a selective reconstruction of the past in which the main actors are divided between heroes and villain traitors; bending historical and archaeological narratives to the endorsement of contemporary claims over disputed territories or, eventually, providing an ideology of legitimacy to the vanquished in order to «revive the flagging spirits of a vanquished people»⁵.

Coakley further develops his analysis explaining that the process of construction of the sense of a shared past is often the result of a selective and oversimplified

4 Coakley, J. "Mobilizing the past: nationalist images of history" in *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol. 10, 2004, pp. 531-560.

5 Coakley, J. "Mobilizing the past: nationalist images of history", cit.

reading of historical events, which then often results in gross misinterpretation instead of just being the by-product of an objective historical experience. Those tamed historical narratives would thus play three main functions: the rallying of otherwise divided communities behind a shared set of claims; their mobilisation through given political channels and the legitimisation of the nationalist struggle on the international arena. This framework, to be successful, assumes the deep involvement of professional historians, who are asked to play the pipe for the power that be.

On these grounds, according to Coakley, nationalist historiographies would fulfill at least one of the following functions: define the conceptual boundaries of the nation; reinforce a shared feeling of pride in national achievements; nurture self-commiseration over the unfair suffering and thus justifies the claim for some form of compensation; legitimise the ongoing nationalist struggle by rooting it into the past or, finally, provide inspiration for the future of the nation, described as necessarily bright and glorious.

Reading and rereading those lines I was struck by their incredible, and I would even say urgent, relevance for Eritrean historiography. Therefore, starting from these broad methodological suggestions, I will move onto a more detailed discussion of the Eritrean case.

2. Problems in Eritrean history

Writing in 1994, in a period marked by shared enthusiasm and optimism about the future of independent Eritrea and the Horn of Africa at large, Prof. Bairu Tafla⁶ analysed in very clear terms some of the limitations that Eritrean historiography had to deal with and, at the same time, he laid out possible new paths to be explored by present and future generations of historians. With impressive visionary words, Prof. Bairu stated that it was high time for historiography in the region to stop playing the role of “liberation history” and start moving toward a liberated history, acknowledging the complex web of connections and exchange that has linked the history of the Horn of Africa and giving voice to the plural narratives emerging from the undeniable interdependence that has shaped the history of the region since time immemorial.

⁶ Bairu Tafla “Interdependence through Independence: The challenges of Eritrean Historiography” in Marcus, H.G.(ed.) *New Trends in Ethiopian Studies, Papers of the 12th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Michigan State University 5-10 September, 1994*, Lawrenceville, Red Sea Press, 1994, pp. 497-514.

Along a similar track, Prof. Irma Taddia⁷ has been insisting on the idea that, though it is legitimate to develop national historiographies, especially for a young and identity-craving state like Eritrea, it is also crucial not to lose the broader perspective of the complex, continuous and strong connections that have been unfolding on regional level⁸. The underlying assumption was that the excessive emphasis on the national (some time just nationalist) perspective, would have led to a rather narrow hermeneutical approach, missing the broader and more articulate historical picture.

Unfortunately, some 20 years after these inspired and visionary suggestions, it seems that Eritrea has yet to reconcile with its own past. History, in the region, remains an arena where political conflict is carried out with other means. In spite of the above mentioned enlightening suggestions, it seems to me that we have been unable to take stock of previous experiences and mistakes and, paraphrasing a famous, powerful pamphlet by Roman Jakobson⁹, I would say that our generation has squandered its historians and even the new generations, which could have taken over the task of building a new and vibrant historiography, are now scattered in exile all over the planet, but in Eritrea. It is therefore not a futile exercise to try to make sense of those persisting fragmented visions of the Eritrean past and to untie the knots that still keep Eritrean historiography and society tied up.

From a broad point of view, a first, untied knot can be found in the missed liberation of Eritrean society and of its political and social dialectic. In other words, the liberation of Eritrea from Ethiopian oppression and the achievement of national independence has not implied the complete and effective liberation of Eritrean people and society which, in a sort of Sisyphus¹⁰ damnation, has just

7 Taddia, I. "Some reflexions on Ethiopian Studies Today" in *The Australasian Review of African Studies*, XXVI, 1 (2004), pp. 18-25; Taddia, I. "Il Corno d'Africa fra colonialismo, problemi dello Stato e conflitti" in *Africa* (Rome), LIX, 1 (2004), pp. 92-100.

8 An example of this in Taddia, I. "The Politics of the Northern Border: State Control and the Land Tenure System in 19th Century Ethiopia" in Crummey, D. (ed.) *Land, Literacy and the State in Sudanic Africa*, Trenton (NJ) Red Sea Press, 2004, pp. 189-212.

9 In a brief but very intense essay Jacobson argued that the Bolshevik revolution had slowly eaten its own child, especially that generation of poets which had generously and uncompromisingly donated itself to what believed was the cause of progress, innovation and change for a better society; Jacobson, R. "On a Generation that Squandered its Poets" in Pomorska, K.; Rudy, S. (eds.), *Language in Literature*, Harvard, Harvard University Press, 1997, pp. 273-300.

10 According to Greek mythology, the gods as a punishment for having challenged them, condemned Sisyphus, king of Ephyra (Corinth), to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would always roll back down of its own weight, forcing him to begin again and again.

kept dragging itself from a *zāmān*¹¹ to another: from *zāmān mäsafānt*¹², to *zāmān Yohannäs*¹³, to *zāmān Mənlək*¹⁴, to *zāmān Tilyan*¹⁵, to *zāmān Janhoy*¹⁶, to *zāmān Därgi*¹⁷ and now to *zāmān Sha'abiya*¹⁸.

However, a scholar cannot be satisfied with this explanation which, without further elaboration, would be rather simplistic and banal. In fact, though it is apparent that in the 20/22 years after the achievement of its toughly and bravely conquered independence, Eritrea as a State and as a Nation has missed all its basic political targets such as institution building, transparency and accountability of state and government procedures, freedom of expression and association as well as freedom of movement; this by itself does not provide adequate and satisfactory understanding of the missed liberation of its historiography.

2.1 *The issue of Periodisations*

As stated earlier, there are several epistemological knots that still keep Eritrean historiography hostage of political agendas and that need to be untied. A first, major issue is periodisation. In spite of various thoughtful attempts¹⁹, a convincing periodisation of Eritrean history has yet to be framed and the great bulk of Eritrean historiography deals with the events that unfolded from the 19th Century, namely with the coming of Italian colonial rule, while whatever had happened before still lay in a broad and not particularly significant notion of precolonial history. In other words there is an apparent historiographic deficit when dealing with the huge and yet untapped wealth of that section of the Eritrean past.

11 The Tigrinya word *zāmān* could be translated as “era” or “period of..” An interesting analysis from this perspective in Mahrt M. “War, Spatio-temporal Perception, and the Nation: Fighters and Farmers in the Highlands” in O’Kane, D.; Hepner, T.R. (eds.) *Biopolitics, Militarism, and Development: Eritrea in the Twenty-First Century*, New York, Berghahn, 2011, pp. 17-33.

12 Era of the Princes or one of the most complex and fragmented period of Ethiopian and Eritrean history.

13 Era of Emperor Yohannes II.

14 Era of Emperor Menelik.

15 Era of the Italians.

16 Era of Emperor Haile Selasse II.

17 Era of the Derg or the Marxist leninist giunta that ruled Ethiopia from 1974 to 1991.

18 The present era marked by the rule of the PFDJ, former EPLF, popularly known also as *Sha'abiya*, from its Arabic nickname.

19 A very intense debate on this issue went on during the First International Conference of Eritrean Studies, held in Asmara from July 22 to 26, 2001.

I have the feeling that this deficit could be attributed to two main reasons. A first reason could be the lack of sound linguistic competence in terms of Ge'ez language that has not been adequately developed within the Eritrean university system²⁰ and is thus hampering the development of a sound historiographic tradition. A second reason is the relatively uneasy relation with a past that is still crammed with cumbersome celebratory representations of the Ethiopianist²¹ rhetoric that, while creating a narrative of alleged continuity of Ethiopian history through millennia²², have consistently belittled the role played in this long process by other communities including the Eritreans ones²³.

It is thus not a coincidence that some of the most relevant contributions on this portion of the Eritrean past have been provided mainly by foreign scholars²⁴, particularly in the fields of linguistics²⁵ and archeology²⁶. A comforting evidence

20 Evidence of this delayed development is the fact that, for quite a while, prominent leaders of Asmara University questioned the relevance of teaching Ge'ez within the offering of Eritrean languages arguing that it was not an Eritrean language.

21 Some major examples of this tradition are the famous Tekletsadiq Mekuria *Ye Ityopia tarikh ke atse Tewdros eske qeddami Hayle Sellase* [History of Ethiopia from Emperor Tewodros to Emperor Hayle Selassie II], Addis Ababa, Berhanena Selam, 1968. Jones H.M.; Monroe, H. *A History of Ethiopia*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1935; Perham, M. *The Government of Ethiopia*, London, Faber, 1948; Ullendorf, E. *The Ethiopians: an introduction to country and people*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1961; Levine, D. *Greater Ethiopia: the evolution of a multiethnic society*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1974; Rubenson, S. *The Survival of Ethiopian Independence*, London, Heinemann, 1976; Marcus, H. *History of Ethiopia*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994; Pankhurst, R. *The Ethiopians: a history*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1998 as well as the recent Henze, P. *Layers of Time: a history of Ethiopia*, London, Hurst, 2000.

22 A critical discussion of this historiographic trend in Triulzi, A. "Battling with the Past: New Frameworks for Ethiopian Historiography" in James, W. et al. (eds.) *Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism & After*, Oxford, James Currey, 2002, pp. 276-88 and Clapham, C. "Rewriting Ethiopian history" in *Annales d'Éthiopie*, 18 (2002), 37-54.

23 Sorenson, J. "Discourses on Eritrean Nationalism and Identity" in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 29, n. 2, 1991, pp. 301-317 and also Sorenson, J. *Imagining Ethiopia: struggles for history and identity the Horn of Africa*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993.

24 A notable exception is the fundamental work done by Prof. Bairu Tafla with the special issue of the Eritrean Studies Review which he edited in 2007 and that was completely devoted to Eritrea in the 19th C before the arrival of the Italians. See: Guest Editor, Bairu Tafla "Eritrea on the Eve of European Colonial Rule" in *Eritrean Studies Review*, vol. 5, n.1, 2007.

25 Particularly relevant in this field the contribution of the Italian school as represented by the production of the late Paolo Marrassini and his disciples Alessandro Bausi, Gianfrancesco Lusini and Alessandro Gori.

26 See particularly the sholarly production of Rodolfo Fattlovitch, Andrea Manzo, Peter Schmidt and Matt Curtis. On Eritrea between the 18th and 19th C a fantastic and innovative contribution has

of the achieved maturity of Eritrean historiography will be possible only when Eritrean historians will easily and confidently deal with both the history of *Kommishtato*²⁷ as well as the history of the kingdom of Damat or the monastery of Däbrä Bizän, without feeling any more the need for asserting a specific, though unlikely, Eritreanness of that history.

3. The conceptualisation of colonialism in Eritrean society

Another epistemological knot consists in the simplified and overstretched use of a crucial notion in Eritrean historiography, namely colonialism. In fact, though colonialism has been one of the main objects of historiographic inquiry within Eritrean intellectual and political milieux, the degree of effectively shared knowledge that Eritreans have achieved about this founding period of contemporary Eritrean history is still highly questionable. In fact, on one side, conventional nationalist narratives have repeatedly stated that Italian colonialism has been a watershed in the development of Eritrean societies to the extent that it could be considered a major catalyst of the very notion of Eritrean nationhood. Nevertheless, what is still missing is an in-depth and articulated analysis of the real impact of Italian colonialism on Eritrean societies and to what extent it has been able to effectively change their power structures, social relations, labour organisation, local identities etc. Moreover, we still need to ascertain to what extent the impact of Italian colonialism can be seen as relatively homogeneous and to what extent as just limited to some specific contexts, such as urban areas or military garrisons and their surroundings. In other words, we still need to break down the impact of Italian colonialism on rural, nomadic and semi-nomadic populations and the, even further, along ethnic, religious and gender lines. To this regard, it seems to me that the predominant emphasis on the exploitative relations between the colonised and the colonisers has certain limitations²⁸. One of those being that it ignores the complex interactions of the Eritrean societies with the colonial power and tend

been Miran, J. *Red Sea citizens: cosmopolitan society and cultural change in Massawa*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2009.

27 *Kommishtato* the Eritreanised version of the Italian *campo cintato* (enclosed camp), refers to the part of down-town Asmara which was originally planned as a white only district and that has later become the quintessential symbol of modern Eritrean urban life and identity.

28 To this regard a crucial contribution has been the seminal work of a dear friend and colleague, the late Alexander Naty, whose untimely death has deprived us of an extremely brilliant and intellectually free source of inspiration. See for instance Alexander Naty, "Memories of the Kunama of Eritrea towards Italian Colonialism", *Africa*, (Rome) 56, 4 (2002), 573-589.

to build a rather Manichean discourse on the colonial experience which would see Eritreans as fiercely and consistently pitched against Italian colonial rule. This reading of the colonial experience ignore the level of interaction and differentiated positioning that marked those years and does not provide adequate answer to the complex role of colonial troops and civil servants²⁹.

However, a further element that has for a long time blurred the historiographic understanding of Italian colonialism in Eritrea, has been the overstretched use of the very notion of “colonialism” within (the context of) nationalist narratives. In fact, many political and teaching materials produced in the field, during the years of the liberation struggle and partially recycled into the teaching materials developed later in the first years after independence, would normally start by stating that Eritrea has been subjected to various *colonial* forces such as Turkish, Egyptian, Italian, British and Ethiopian³⁰. Building up on the ambiguity of the Tigrinya term *gäza’ti*, which can roughly be translated as rulers or occupiers, Eritrean nationalist narratives have translated it into “colonialism” and, playing with this ambiguity, they have also gained international currency for their arguments as well as internal consensus.

It is, in fact, evident that this nonchalant use of the term colonialism referring to historical periods so different and chronologically distant from one another has been very useful for political purposes inasmuch it has nurtured a strong feeling of belonging based on what Coakley has defined as «feelings of self-commiseration over the unfair suffering of the nation»³¹. Moreover, in terms of international support, putting the Eritrean nationalist struggle against Ethiopia within the framework of anti-colonial struggle³² has made possible to link it to the broader

29 See for instance Gebre-Medhin J. *Peasant and Nationalism in Eritrea*, Trenton, Red Sea Press, 1989.

30 Exaples of this attitude can be found in Osman Saleh Sabbe *The History of Eritrea*, Beirut, Dar el-Masirah, 1974; Zemhret Yohannes *Italyawi megza’ti ab Ertra* (Italian Colonialism in Eritrea), Asmara, Hidri, 2010; as well as in the political literature of the main nationalist organizations during the years of liberation struggle such as Eritrea’s Liberation Front ELF *The Struggle of Eritrea*, Damascus, n.p., 1965; Eritrea’s Liberation Front (ELF) *Tarikh Sewra Iertra* (History of the Eritrean Revolution), Field, 1973, and Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF), *Eretran qalsan, Kab tenti Kesa’è 1941* (‘Eritrea and its Struggle. From Ancient Times to 1941’), Field, 1978.

31 Coakley, J. “Mobilizing the past: nationalist images of history” in *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol. 10, 2004, pp. 531-560.

32 The National Charter approved in Nakfa on February 1994, in its very incipit still declared «Today, Eritrea finds itself on the verge of a new chapter in its history. For fifty years, the country and its people suffered under colonial rule. The colossal task of ridding itself of this colonial rule, and establishing national independence and dignity, has been achieved. For the first time, the people

wave of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements animating the radical left wing all over the world and has paid back in terms of international support. However, from a historiographic perspective the undifferentiated usage of the term colonialism, has diluted and made evanescent its historical specificity and has thus emptied it of its epistemological value. In other words it has made it difficult to provide real knowledge of colonialism, the alleged object of the discourse.

4. Choices for Eritrean historiography:

On the grounds of the statements above, I therefore believe that Eritrean historiography is now at a crossroads and important epistemological decisions have to be taken. The choice to be made is basically between simplification and complexity. In other words, the choice is between a domesticated and simplified reading of the Eritrean past, which would eventually amount to a fabrication of the past, and a much more articulated and not predictable reconstruction of this past which could eventually bring about healing and reconciliation among communities, thanks to a dispassionate and open acknowledgment of the existence of plural and not necessarily harmonised voices.

There is a strong need for new historiographic perspectives, capable of challenging empty ideological smokescreens such as those epitomised by the slogan “unity in diversity” as well as the many mythological representations of Eritrean nationalist movements and to produce new and plural knowledge and understanding of the Eritrean past. Unity in diversity has been the constant jingle of Eritrean nationalist narratives during the long years of the Liberation struggle³³ and a cornerstone of its approach to nation-building in independent Eritrea³⁴. The broad meaning of this slogan was that, though Eritrea presents a rather differentiated, ethno-linguistic, cultural and socio economic landscape, this diversity should not be perceived as a

of Eritrea have become masters of their own country and hold their future in their own hands». See PFDJ *National charter* available on line at <http://www.youngpfdj.org/index.php?option=com_docman&Itemid=137> accessed on April 2, 2013

33 I would even say that still is shared among the present Eritrean opposition forces as stated recently in one of their websites which, quoting one leader of the Eritrean Islamic Congress stated «Embracing unity in diversity is key to peace and harmony in Eritrea, says Mr. Hassan Salman who is Head of the Sudan based Eritrean Islamic Congress – one of the 13 members of the opposition Eritrean Democratic Alliance». see <http://cdrie.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=58:eritrea-embracing-unity-in-diversity&catid=34:english-articles&Itemid=53> accessed on April 2, 2013.

34 See the PFDJ *National charter* available on line at <http://www.youngpfdj.org/index.php?option=com_docman&Itemid=137> accessed on April 2, 2013

source of troubles and internecine strife as it would be bound by a stronger and more intense feeling of national belonging nurtured by the shared experience of the liberation struggle against Ethiopian rule³⁵.

However, it seems to me that here has not been any deep and free assessment of the extent, relevance and consistence of this diversity. Moreover, the conventional narrative on Eritrean “diversity” is based on a sanitised representation of Eritrean social and cultural pluralism, which, when it comes to ethnicity, cultures and traditions, just capitalises on colonial literature (namely Alberto Pollera’s³⁶ and Carlo Conti Rossini’s³⁷ pioneering works) without any substantial additional contribution.

Instances of this attitude can be found in the weekly English magazine *Eritrea Profile* as well as in many issues of the newspaper *Haddas Yertra* which, in their cultural pages, would often have a section on Eritrean cultures and traditions. Flicking through those pages the reader can easily detect that quite often they are just plain unquoted translations from Pollera’s major semi-ethnographic work *Le popolazioni indigene dell’Eritrea*,³⁸ published in 1935, with all the dust and incrustations of its colonial biases and stereotypes. In other words, all too often those pages speak about something that has not been really substantiated and thus hang on old-fashioned and often unacceptable colonial representations of Eritrean diversity and by so doing perpetuate within Eritrean communities the stereotypes and racial biases developed by the former colonial rulers.

Similarly, Eritrean nationalist narratives have built a Pantheon of founding fathers of the nation that are presented as iconic models to the young generations. Again, very little historiographic work has been done to study in depth the life stories, social background, education and political fortune of many of those figures. They are just assumed to be the uncritical and rather zealous object of national reverence with little room for any serious doubt or criticism about their real life story and their political agendas.

A case in point is Hamid Idris Awate, totemic father of the Eritrean liberation struggle acknowledged by all liberation movements in Eritrea as one of the

35 On these issues a crucial reading remains Fouad Makki “The Aporias of Eritrean Nationalism” in Hartmut Quehl (ed.) *Living In War Times, Living In Postwar Times*, Felsburg, Edition Eins, 2002

36 On Pollera ethnographic work a crucial reference is Sorgoni, B. *Etnografia e colonialismo. L’Eritrea e l’Etiopia di Alberto Pollera (1873-1939)*, Torino, Bollati Boringheri, 2001.

37 A precious guide to Carlo Conti Rossini’s huge production is Nallino, M. “Bibliografia degli scritti di Carlo Conti Rossini” in *Oriente Moderno*, vol. 29, n. 7-9, 1949, pp. 103-112.

38 Pollera, A. *Le popolazioni indigene dell’Eritrea*, Bologna, Cappelli, 1935.

pioneers of Eritrean nationalism. In fact, it would have been him the one who shot the first bullet against Ethiopian forces on September 1st, 1961 which marked the beginning of the protracted armed struggle against Ethiopian oppression in Eritrea. All Eritrean history text-books as well as political publications would agree on that and take it for indisputable historical truth. However, very little research has been carried out, up to now, on Idriss Awate's life and on his political views and perception of nationalism.

To this regard, it has been enlightening to follow the vitriolic debate flared recently among members of the Eritrea's National Council, an umbrella organisation coordinating different Eritrean opposition groups, after a member questioned the iconic figure of Idris Awate. Interestingly enough, Kornelios Adolay Osman, the highly controversial chairman of the Democratic Movement for the Liberation of the Eritrean Kunama (DMLEK or, in its Kunama version the "Kunama Koibisha Dimokratika Sungada") a Kunama based opposition group, challenged this picture saying that Idris Awate has committed many atrocities against the Kunama people based on ethnic hatred and, therefore, has labelled him as a criminal. What is more interesting is that the leaders of the Eritrea's National Council reacted rabidly, calling for the expulsion of Kornelios Adolay Osman from the Eritrea's National Council to later change this request into the suspension of the membership of the Democratic Movement for the Liberation of the Eritrean Kunama (DMLEK) and its chairman, Kornelios Adolay Osman. In other words, all otherwise often litigious and factious opposition groups coalesced without hesitation to protect the aura surrounding Idris Awate.

However, what really speaks volumes is the argument used to justify such a dramatic disciplinary action. In fact, the main charge was that Kornelios Adolay would have smeared the name of a hero and martyr that died for the cause of Eritrean independence and this, of course, was sanctioned as simply unacceptable. Apparently, nobody among the leadership of the coalition bothered to counter Kornelios Adolay statements with factual evidences and opposite arguments³⁹. On the opposite many web-sites state posting analogous charges of atrocities

39 Historical evidences of Idris Awate involvement in ethnic-based feuds can be found in Naty, A. "Environment, Society and the State in Western Eritrea" in *Africa* [London], vol. 72, n. 4, 2002, pp. 569-597 and in Lussier, D. "Local prohibitions, memory and political judgment among the Kunama: an Eritrean case study" in Fukui, K. *et al.* (eds.) *Ethiopia in broader perspective: papers of the XIIIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Kyoto, 12-17 December 1997*, vol. 2, pp. 441-455. In a broader perspective new insights on the study of political violence in Africa can be found in Abbink, J.; de Bruijn, M.; Van Walraven, K. (eds.) *Rethinking resistance: revolt and violence in African history*, Leiden, the Netherlands; Boston, Brill, 2003.

attributed to the above mentioned Kornelios Adolay⁴⁰. Having this debate going on among opposition forces based abroad, and therefore not being subject to the fear and anxiety of the heavy handed intervention of Eritrean security forces one cannot help but thinking that this zealous approach toward the Eritrean past and its main actors is so deeply entrenched into the Eritrean political culture that major historiographic change need to be made in term of research themes and methodologies. It is in fact really puzzling the idea that one of the characters enhanced to the status of icon of Eritrean nationalism could be considered by a segment (no matter how much a minority could it be) of the Eritrean population as a war criminal. This by itself is evidence of some flaws in the allegedly inclusive project of nation-building developed both by Eritrean Government and opposition.

5. Emerging themes and areas of investigation

Possible new approaches for the development of a more dynamic and inclusive Eritrean historiography can be found in the study of social and territorial mobility. It seems to me that a focus on the notion of territorial and social mobility has a great hermeneutic potential, as it provides more opportunities to understand the complex layers of interactions between the different sections of the Eritrean society. This is particularly true with reference to the colonial context, as the study of mobility enable the researcher to shed light on the grey areas of the colonial world, highlighting the dimension of interaction and breaking the vicious circles of nationalist or defensive discourses on colonialism. Of course, social and territorial mobility can be divided for analytical purposes but in reality it is quite difficult to differentiate them neatly, as they are often tied in a very intricate interplay. In fact, territorial mobility is often instrumental in facilitating social mobility as well as the quest for social mobility often pushes to strategies of territorial dislocation.

The study of social and territorial mobility implies a more holistic approach which goes beyond the restrictive perspective of the conventional attention given to colonial violence and its repressive and exploitative policies, to pay due attention to the strategies and initiatives set in motion by colonial subjects in order to achieve emancipation and climb the social ladder. In other words shifting the focus from the exploitative and repressive policies of the colonial authorities to the developing strategies implemented by the colonial subjects to outsmart the colonial rule and find their own way through it, basically means adequately acknowledging the relevance of the African agency.

40 See for instance reports posted on <http://www.deqebat.com/Dmleks_%20Leader.html> or <<http://erigazette.org/?p=3803>>.

Within the broader notion of social mobility during the colonial time, more specific fields of investigation can be identified in the study of education and of colonial troops. Up to now, in the study of education, during the colonial period, a great deal of attention has been paid to extremely restrictive and segregated nature of Italian Educational policies. However, this approach has failed to provide adequate understanding of the impact that colonial education and its operational procedure had on Eritrean societies. Moreover, the emphasis on the discriminatory nature of the colonial educational system does not help in understanding the foundations of the vibrant and dynamic intellectual debate going on among Eritrean elites in the early Forties⁴¹. Again, this kind of approach does not pay justice to the relentless and creative role played by the Eritrean agency, in spite of the repressive colonial system. It is therefore necessary to assess how education affected different social groups and communities, how much we can identify a gender, religious or ethnic divide within this process. Moreover it is crucial to assess what role Eritrean subjects were able to make of the little access to education they gained under the colonial rule.

Similarly, the study of colonial troops can be seen as both instances of social and territorial mobility. Social mobility is to be found in the fact that the colonial army offered a unique opportunity to improve the social status of the drafted soldiers and their families. Territorial mobility is to be found in the fact that conscription in the colonial army fostered processes of mobility from rural to urban areas as well as from different regions, even from outside the colonial borders of colonial Eritrea. An aspect not enough analysed is that colonialism made Eritrea a land of immigration for migrant labour in form of colonial troops, rural labour, urban workers in the domestic sector or in the unskilled sector. This contributed in making the notion of Eritreanness even more complex and substantially *metis*.

Finally another important area of investigation which emerges as in great need of further developments is that of borderlands. The study of borderlands has witnessed a great and fast developments in recent years and has played a crucial role in shedding new light on otherwise little understood aspects of the interplay among African societies⁴². There is an urgent need to assess and locate “historiographically” Eritrean borderlands, to be seen not in relation to the central state but in their inner dynamics and autonomous proactive role. This would

41 See on this topic the crucial contribution of Alemseged Tesfai *Aynəfālälä* [Let us not be divided] Asmara, Hidri Publishers, 2002.

42 A seminal work in this direction is Nugent P. and Anthony I. Asiwaju (eds.) *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities* London, Frances Pinter, 1996.

enable the study of communities such as the Afar the Kunama and the Beni Amer escaping from the unsustainable temptation to read their history only from the limited perspective of the Eritrean statehood.

6. Conclusions

As a conclusion it seems to me that the present dire situation of Eritrea calls for a deep and creative engagement of its people including its intellectuals. To this regard intellectuals bear the heavy responsibility of being able to envision, through their researches, new and free perspectives that can hopefully feed the realm of politics, without fearing the lack of support (or even retaliations) from the power that be.

To this regard I strongly believe in the stringent actuality of the words of the Italian writer Elio Vittorini who, in an intense correspondence with the then leader of the Italian Communist Party Palmiro Togliatti on the relationship between politics and culture stated that the revolutionary writer is not the one who play the pipe for the the revolution, but rather the one who

through its work is able to rise revolutionary issues different from the one that politics rises; inner, secret, recondite needs of human beings that only he can detect in human beings, that it is exactly typical of him writer to detect and it is typical of him to rise, and rise beside the needs risen by politics, to rise in addition to the need risen by politics⁴³.

Vittorini labeled the intellectuals who accepted to play the pipe for the power that be as *arcadians*. I guess we do not want to be labeled as *arcadians* by our readers and descendants.

43 Translation mine, in the much more effective Italian original: «Rivoluzionario è lo scrittore che riesce a porre attraverso la sua opera esigenze rivoluzionarie *diverse* da quelle che la politica pone; esigenze interne, segrete, recondite dell'uomo *ch'egli soltanto sa scorgere nell'uomo, che è proprio di lui scrittore scorgere, e che è proprio di lui scrittore rivoluzionario porre, e porre accanto* alle esigenze che pone la politica, porre in più delle esigenze che pone la politican, Vittorini, E. "Politica e Cultura. Lettera a Togliatti" in *Il Politecnico*, vol. 35, n. 3, 1947, pp. 2-3; 105-106.

“Science for science” or “science for social relevance”?
Some observations and reflections on African environment

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1. Impressions from the field

In the forests in Rukwa Region in Tanzania in 1988 and Chilimo in Ethiopia in 2002 I asked the Forest Officers stationed there about the link between what they had learnt at university or in their diploma courses and the knowledge required as a forester in the field. The reply was negative in both cases; there was hardly any link at all. And this was in spite of the fact that the universities where the forest officers were trained, Sokoine University of Agriculture, in Tanzania and Wondogenet Forest College in Ethiopia had had long term cooperation with the respective Norwegian and Swedish agricultural universities.

2. Acknowledgement of human agency

Gradually, however, it has been acknowledged both within universities, training institutions and government agencies that the management of forests, if it is to have any chance of being conducted sustainably has to be conducted in cooperation between state and other agencies and the population living in or adjacent to the forests. Community forestry and participatory forestry have thus slowly taken hold. What has emerged, however, is that those universities and training institutions that have shown openness to include and learn from experiences and practices from the field have been those that have most successfully connected science with social relevance. For instance Tanzanian universities/institutions have come much further in this respect than their Ethiopian counterparts. A problem that seems to have occurred in connection with north/south university cooperation is that the legacy of such cooperation has made it more difficult for southern universities to connect the university education and training to social relevance or real life problems.

3. Holistic awareness in Norway – ups and downs

This problematic gradually also emerged in the north, including in Norway, and in particular from the 1980s onward. The need to see development and the environment in a holistic way grew stronger with inspiration from the “Our Common Future” report from 1987¹. However, some Norwegian universities, e.g. the University of Bergen and The Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB) had already in the early 1980s established interdisciplinary centers to address cross cutting and interdisciplinary real life problems. In the early 1990s such development and environment centers developed at other universities, including Oslo and Norwegian University of Sciences and Technology in Trondheim (NTNU). This trend, however, of acknowledging the important link between science and social relevance to address real life problems, have, however, weakened during the last decade. The Center for Environment and Development at NTNU was closed in 1997 and the University of Bergen in practice undermined its interdisciplinary research wing, UNIFOB Global, in the spring of 2010.

The Norwegian Research Council has tried to compensate for the lack of willingness of universities to integrate interdisciplinary research approaches into the university organizational structure over time by launching interdisciplinary research programme, such a Development Paths of the South (1998-2008) and Poverty and Peace (ongoing)². However, even in these interdisciplinary oriented programmes, disciplinary struggles are waged, and particularly so when the issue of radical interdisciplinarity, the combining of natural and social sciences, emerge. The strength of disciplines in terms of university structures and not least career opportunities are closely linked with funding mechanisms. The “protectors” of disciplines are entrenched in academic committees and advisory boards in most northern universities seeing to it that the theoretical and methodological assumptions of the research undertaken adhere to the assumptions prevailing in the relevant discipline.

4. The critical importance of assumptions

But as the well known Cambridge economist Joan Robinson wrote in her *Economic Heresies*³, it is easy to make assumptions on which to build economic models –

1 United Nations Documents, *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Our Common Future*, UN General Assembly, 1987.

2 NORAD, *Evaluation of Research on Norwegian Development Assistance*, Evaluation Report 5, 2008.

3 Robinson, J. *Economic Heresies. Some Old fashioned Questions in Economic Theory*, Paperback MacMillan, London and Basingstoke, 1971.

what is difficult is to make assumptions that are relevant to reality. And where social relevance is concerned science must necessarily take account of the fact that human beings exist and that their actions and preferences impact on and are influenced by society. To make it simple, theories may make assumptions that conceptualize human beings as economic or rationale. They are always seen to act and prioritize in similar ways, not only when they have grown up in a cultural context of the north, but regardless of cultural context. Human beings act economically and rationally universally. They are addressing and responding to the market mechanisms in a way that generate economic equilibria of various types. There is no doubt or question in relation to most dominant theories that market mechanisms exist globally and should also guide human behavior for the betterment of all.

But if transaction in a society did not strictly follow the market laws of supply and demand but were based on principles of reciprocity and redistribution? And what happens in a society where market exchange, reciprocity and redistribution exist side by side and may even be interwoven in each other ⁴? How can one then understand and predict developments in a society? For science to be socially relevant does it need to be contextual, rather than universal? Is the universal approach to science built on specific values that are held as neutral and objective, while in actual fact they are not?

5. An example from the field of vision and images

Let us reflect about vision and images. It is often heard that "seeing is believing". What we see with our eyes or through a camera is truth. It is even the fact that the lens of a camera is called an objective, underlining its "objectivity" in capturing images. But if we look historically, we find that the art of painting developed certain ways of seeing or organizing the people and things in the pictures that adhered to certain principles, or one could say scientific principles of seeing. This mode of seeing developed in 14th century European painting was later transferred to the camera lens. It was designed to "see" in order to capture the principles of scientific painting. Hence the camera lens, the objective, may not be objective at all. Its development has been embedded in a culture where the art of seeing developed in certain ways, but later to be claimed to be universal. So rather than claiming that "seeing is believing", it might be the other way around.

4 Polanyi, K. *The Great Transformation. The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, Boston, Beacon Press, 2001.

6. An example from economics

If we turn to economics we know that the classical economists like David Ricardo⁵ observed a conflict between capital and labour. When profits increased they most often did so at expense of wages, thus lowering the welfare of workers. Of course there could be win-win situations, but in a historical context where labour unions were non-existing or weak, the rule was for increases in profits to undermine wages. This conflicting conception was developed further in the social science of Karl Marx who defined capital as a social category. This science, based on its assumptions, claimed to be empirically linked, showed that the development of capitalism would gradually move in direction of its own destruction. This was caused by the theory's claim that the relationship between the social relations of production (the ownership aspect) and the level of development of the productive forces (the technology) would generate a higher level of capital as compared to labour in the production process (mechanization and automation) that would reduce the surplus value generated in capitalist production systems. With a diminishing surplus, the capitalist system could not expand and would disintegrate⁶.

I asked an advanced student of economics at Uppsala University what he knew about Marxism. He said he was not interested since he believed Marxism to be some form of communism. He had no idea of Marxism beyond this. What he had learnt in his economics at the University of Uppsala, as in every other university in the world, was the economics that had taken away the conflict between profits, what accrues to capital, and wages, what accrues to workers. This was done through the marginal economic theories that developed in Europe towards the end of the 1800 and here every factor or production would be rewarded in relation to what its last unit contributed to the production processes. With certain assumption about human behavior, elegant models could be built that proved this type of science⁷. But were the assumptions of relevance to reality? And why do they have a universal character? Marxism, on the other hand, informs about a historical process where different social formations emerge and decline over time in relation to a changing global context, e.g. the slave-, the feudal- and subsequently the capitalist social formations. Hence history and context become important for our knowledge about

5 Ricardo, D. *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, Homewood, Illinois, Erwin Paperback Classics, 1963.

6 Skarstein, R. *Sosialøkonomiens elendighet*, Oslo, Pax Forlag, 1976, Ch.12.

7 Robinson, J. *Economic Heresies*, cit.

the world. In this way Marxist concepts such as mode of production can provide tools for identifying and analyzing different types of exchanges and relationships as mentioned above.

7. Example linked to sustainability

The report "Our common future" from 1987 (or the World Commission of Environment and Development chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland) claimed that inequality was the world's main environmental problem and it promoted the idea that «policies for greater material equality would be the most important ingredient in any recipe aimed at environmental sustainability». However, the report was not clear on whether it was "greater equality" or "relief of poverty" that was the necessary condition for such sustainability. It is possible to imagine a process of reduced poverty alongside increased inequality. The 1992 Rio meeting promoted actions plans on a global scale assisted by a clear statement about the need for poverty relief, rather than equality, as the overriding objective. The study of poverty has since then been intensive within many disciplines leading to more nuanced perspectives of poverty, away from the less than one dollar a day income definition of poverty towards seeing poverty as consisting of a number of aspects. However, poverty is still seen and defined from outside and basically alongside the perspectives and concepts of different disciplines.

Recent research has indicated that economic inequality in a society, rather than the extent of poverty, is a key aspect. The findings show that the greater the economic inequality is, the larger the negative aspects are in society, such as criminality, health problems, environmental problems etc. Hence the finding is that equal societies are more sustainable in every sense. The analysis is based on empirical investigations that cover both rich and poor countries, like the work published by Wilkinson and Pickett⁸.

Another approach to environmental sustainability is that presented by Andrew Dobson⁹. He attempts to think more rigorously about what the concept(s) of environmental sustainability might comprise. Importantly, any theory related to environmental sustainability needs to specify (i) what is to be sustained, e.g. critical natural capital, irreversible nature or natural value, (ii) why, e.g. for human

8 Wilkinson, R.G.; Pickett, K. *The Spirit Level. Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*, London, 2009.

9 Dobson, A. *Justice and the Environment. Conceptions of Environmental Sustainability and Theories of Distributive Justice*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998

welfare or duties to nature or a combination of the two, (iii) how, e.g. through renewal, substitution or protection (iv) the primary and secondary objects of concern which might comprise different combinations of present and future generation human need, present and future generation human want and present and future generation non-human need and (v) the possibility of substitutability between human-made and natural capital. Dobson, by distilling the contents of various sustainable development theories, comes up with three conceptions of environmental sustainability that vary on most of the five aspects specified above.

Clearly it emerges, that addressing environmental sustainability in a broad sense requires the recourse to both natural and social sciences and their combinations.

8. Marginalization and monopolization of knowledge

By marginalizing certain ways of thinking and conceptualization of realities, our ability to reflect on and inquire about the relevance of theoretical and methodological assumptions we use to understand and analyze the world weakens. There is a need to reflect more about why marginalization and monopolization of knowledge emerge. And further what this might imply for our, and our universities', ability to address pressing global problems, such as climate change, global inequality, poverty, natural resource degradation.

Medium of instruction and classroom interaction
The case of Karagwe

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Introduction

This chapter discusses effects that the mono-linguistic norm, brought to Africa by western colonizers, has on education in primary school. This norm was forced, explicitly and implicitly, on the African states that were constructed during the colonizing process, and today has strong impact on educational systems all over Africa, with few exceptions. The examples of how colonizers neglected linguistic realities abound and today many multilingual states hold stronger mono-linguistic norms than most of the former colonizers, both explicitly through laws and educational policies and implicitly through neglect or negative attitudes towards languages that are not connected to status of power. Language policies in education constitute a strong force in this sense. In poor countries such as Tanzania, Mozambique, Angola and Malawi, the majority of children are taught in a language they do not understand from primary school, a situation that would never be accepted in rich countries as the results are disastrous. That children learn best if they are taught in a language they understand, should not surprise anybody. Still an assumption seems to be held in many countries that if children are taught in a dominant language, such as Portuguese in Mozambique and English in Botswana, they will learn both the language and the school knowledge. This is unfortunately not so. Children are best taught a language through good language education, not through the use of the language as a medium of instruction in early literacy and mathematics teaching. The result is rather neither nor.

In Tanzania, which is the country that this paper will consider, the policy of one language for all, Swahili, is strong and there seems also to be an assumption behind school policies that Swahili language is mastered by all children when they start school. The fact that probably less than ten percent of the children come from homes where Swahili is used and have a working knowledge in the language when they begin school is neglected in curricula and language plans for education.

The usage of Swahili differs much between different parts of Tanzania. The small part of the children that grow up in Zanzibar are raised in a Swahili-dominant environment, with Arabic, English and some Indian languages as minor additional languages, while I estimate that less than one percent of the children in Karagwe, the area that is in focus here, understand more than a few words of Swahili before school.

In a poor country, such as Tanzania, it is important that resources spent on education are used efficiently. This concerns both economic and human resources. Education has always had a high importance in Tanzania, and in Karagwe people spend more than they can afford to educate their children. Education is seen as the tool for change and children are sent to school with the expectation that they will be able to create a better future not only for themselves but also for their families and the country as a whole. Parents and relatives run into debts to give their children what they perceive as good education. Also on national level education is perceived as important in the building of a strong nation with a better economic situation. However, as I see it, much of these efforts are spoiled through the language policies for education in the country. The main language policy is “Swahili-only”, which means that only Swahili should be used in school, from pre-school level (except for English). However, implicitly the policy of “English-is-better” has grown with the mushrooming of English-medium private school from primary school-level, in some cases even pre-school. In this chapter I will use the case of Karagwe district to discuss the effects these policies had on the educational outcome in primary school.

1. Karagwe – a case study

During 1999-2003 I carried out a research project in Karagwe district, in the north-west corner of Tanzania, on the borders to Rwanda and Uganda¹. The aims of the study were to study literacy practices among the inhabitants in order to find ways to develop literacy education in Tanzania to enable more positive results. I spent ten months in the area, divided in five field studies. The study was carried out in an ethnographic perspective with participant observation and interviews as the main research tools. Much time was spent in schools and classrooms but also in other places, to create an understanding of what people did with writing. Some of

¹ Wedin, Å. *Literacy Practices in and out of School in Karagwe. The case of primary school literacy education in rural Tanzania*, Stockholm, Centre for research on Bilingualism, Stockholm University, 2004.

the places I observed were offices, churches, health care centers, market places and social gatherings but I also spent extended time in homes, in remote villages, in the fields and at water sources such as runnels and brooks. One of the main obstacles I identified for literacy education was language patterns and language choice in primary school and their effects on interactional patterns in classrooms². The findings presented here are part of the findings in the whole study.

Karagwe is a multilingual area, which is typical for the whole of Tanzania. The people of Karagwe, the Banyambo, number about 500 000. The area was traditionally a hierarchical society, with ruling pastoralist clans and a number of agriculturalist clans. The king of Karagwe was one of the strongest in the Western Lacustrine area from around 1500 up to the beginning of the 19th century. When first the Arab traders and later the European colonizers and missionaries arrived in the middle of the 19th century the strength of the Karagwe kingdom had started to decline³.

The language of the Banyambo, Runyambo, is one of the Western-Lacustrine Bantu-languages together with neighboring languages such as Ruhaya, Kinyankole and Kinyarwanda. The Arab traders introduced Swahili and as the area was later colonized, first by the Germans and then by the British, both German and English has influenced language patterns in the area.

In the beginning of the third millenium and 45 years after independence and the creation of the Tanzania state, I estimate that most Banyambo over ten years of age are functionally bilingual in Swahili and Runyambo. Both languages are frequently used and most adults can use them for their daily communicative needs. English is a high status language that is mastered by only very few individuals in the upper classes, such as some higher officials and a few other high educated persons. The main additional languages are Kinyarwanda, Kinyankole, Kirundi and Arabic but as people keep moving into the area many other languages are also used. Particularly among elder teachers, who worked under the policies in the 1970s when teachers were frequently sent to work in other areas, it is common that they claim also to master a few of the other languages that are spoken in Tanzania⁴.

2 Wedin, Å. *Literacy Practices in and out of School in Karagwe...* cit.; Wedin, Å. "Classroom Interaction: Potential or Problem?: The Case of Karagwe" in *International Journal of Educational Development*, vol.30, pp. 145-150, 2009.

3 For further information on the history and traditions of the Banyambo see Wedin, Å. *Literacy Practices in and out of School in Karagwe...* cit.

4 Commonly it is acknowledged that more than 120 languages are spoken in Tanzania. The majority of them are Bantu-languages while some belong to other language families. Official policies

Although the monolingual norm has had much influence on Africa, the situation today, in Tanzania and elsewhere in Africa, is that of multilingualism. The linguistic situation in Karagwe, with one language being used mainly in private domains and one mainly being used in official domains, while other languages are used parallel to the main languages, is quite common in the world. My study showed that nearly all children in Karagwe master Runyambo when they begin school but not Swahili⁵. Nearly all children in the countryside and perhaps more than 90% of the children in the towns know only a few words in Swahili when they begin school. Only a few children, in towns, are raised in a Swahili-speaking environment. That the setting is multilingual also means that different languages are used similarly and code-mixing and code-switching is frequent. Those who know some English include English in their talk as a way to show the knowledge. This is particularly the case for officers and administrators who frequently sprinkle their talk with English expressions and phrases to show their status and education. Situations where interlocutors do not share one common language occur which results in spontaneous interpretations. It is not uncommon that an interaction between 3-4 people involves two or three languages. The fact that nearly all people are second language speakers of Swahili also means that a lot of informal learning and teaching goes on, included in natural communication. This means that not only do people know different languages, they have also developed communicative skills that are effective in multilingual communication, what I would like to call multilingual skills.

2. Education in multilingual areas

Similar situations, where children master one language when they enter school and are supposed to master another dominant language when they finish primary school, are found in several settings in the world and this is particularly common in former colonies. Research on education in bi- or multilingual settings is quite impressive today and has been carried out by among others Cummins, Heller & Martin-Jones, Hornberger & Chick, Gibbons and Deen *et al.*⁶ A study by Thomas

abandon language to be included in national surveys. Hence only estimations of number of speakers and level of mastery can be made.

5 Wedin, Å. *Literacy Practices in and out of School in Karagwe...* cit.; Wedin, Å. "Language Ideologies and Schooled Education in Rural Tanzania: The Case of Karagwe" in *International Journal of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education*, vol. 8, n. 6, 2005, pp. 568-588.

6 Heller, M.; Martin-Jones, M. (eds.) *Voices of Authority: Education and linguistic difference*, USA, Ablex publishing, 2001; Hornberger, N.; Chick, K. "Co-constructing school safetime: Safetalk

and Collier⁷ showed very impressively that the most important factor for children's success in education, is that their mother tongue is strongly supported throughout their schooling⁸. Thomas and Collier showed that the use of children's mother tongue through the first four years of schooling is crucial for the outcome of their schooling. That children are taught in a language they understand is particularly important during the first years of schooling, when children are supposed to learn the three R's (reading, writing and arithmetic). This means that, in the case of Karagwe, children should gain a lot if they were to be taught Swahili as a second language, following research findings on bilingual education, while they should simultaneously have support in their mother tongue, Runyambo. This is however not the case. Following the official policy of using Swahili only from pre-school, very little Runyambo is used in classrooms as this is against official policies. The main usage I found in class of Runyambo was for rebukes. The policy also has strong support among teachers and parents. Thus the multilingual situation in the society, and the multilingual communicative skills that people have, are not used in classrooms. The fact that Swahili is a second language for children is totally neglected and pupils are taught as if they were already fluent in Swahili from the school start.

Before looking into the question of language use in primary school in Karagwe, I will present some of the results from the study on language history and contemporary language attitudes in Karagwe.

3. Language ideologies in Karagwe 1500-2000

Before the coming of the colonizers and the missionaries, Runyambo was the language spoken by the Banyambo. Both the ruling pastoralist clans with the king and the "commoners" the inhabitants belonging to the agriculturalist clans, spoke

practices in Peruvian and South African classrooms" in Heller, M.; Martin-Jones, M. (eds.) *Voices of Authority - Education and linguistic difference*, USA, Ablex publishing, 2001; Gibbons, P. *Bridging Discourses in the ESL Classroom: Students, Teachers and Researchers*, London, Continuum, 2006; Deen, J.; Hajer, M.; Koole, T. (eds.) *Interaction in two Multicultural Classrooms: Mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion*, Amsterdam, Aksant, 2008.

7 Thomas, W.; Collier, V. *School Effectiveness for Language Minority Student*, NCBE Resource Collection Series, no. 9. George Washington University, <http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/resource/effectiveness>, 1997; Thomas, W.; Collier, V. "Reforming education policies for English learners means better schools for all. The State Educational Standard" in *The quarterly journal of the National Association of State Boards of Education*, vol. 3, n. 1, 2002.

8 Gibbons, P. *Scaffolding Language: Scaffolding learning*, Portsmouth, Heinemann, 2002.

the same language. Thus we can say that the language showed ethnicity, differing between those *within* and those *outside* Karagwe, those that were included in Banyambo and those who were not. Traditionally Banyambo-men travelled and probably knew more of the neighboring languages than women who were supposed to stay inside the group. However as the ruling clan only married with ruling clans in neighboring areas, women in ruling clans came from neighboring areas and thus should also have been at least bilingual. This pattern of language use and these language attitudes were to be changed with the coming of the westerners.

In Table 1⁹ there is an overview of language policies in Karagwe during the years 1500 – 2000. The table is constructed with the theory of triglossia as a base, see for example Martin-Jones and Rubagumya¹⁰, which takes social inequality as the base for difference in status for different languages. The theory distinguishes between high varieties (H) and low varieties (L). In the case of the history of Karagwe we see that the situation is complex.

Table 1: The language policy in Karagwe 1500-2000

Period	Runyambo	Swahili	English	German
1500 – 1900	H	Additional	-	-
1900 – 1916	L ↓	L1/H2 ↑	-	H1 ↑
1916 – 1961	L2 ↑	L1 ↓	H ↑	-
1961 – 1980	L ↓	H1 ↑	H2 ↓	-
1980 – 2000	L2 ↓	L1/H2	H1 ↑	-

H = language with high status, a dominant language

L = language with low status, a dominated language

L1 /L2 = one of the low languages (L1) was dominating the other (L2)

H1/H2 = one of the high languages (H1) was dominating the other (H2)

= the language was gaining new domains

= the language was losing domains

The first westerners arrived 1864 in the area, after the Arab traders, and around the turn of the century the Germans had strong influence mainly in domains of education, administration and religion. To weaken the strong

9 Wedin, Å. *Literacy Practices in and out of School in Karagwe...* cit.

10 Martin-Jones, M. *Models and Methods in the Study of Bilingualism among Linguistic Minorities*, PhD dissertation, Stanford University, 1988; Rubagumya, C.M. "Language promotion for educational purposes: The example of Tanzania" in K. Legère (ed.) *The Role of Language in Primary Education with Special Reference to Kiswahili*, Bonn, German Foundation for International Development, 1991.

power of the king, the traditional omuteko-schools were boys had learned warfare, traditions, hut-construction and good manners were forbidden by the Germans¹¹. The last king of Karagwe, Ntare VII was hung by the Germans in front of the post-office in Bukoba due to his strong force¹². In the school system introduced by the Germans Swahili was used as the medium of instruction in school and Swahili thus became a gatekeeper for minor posts in administration. German was reserved for a very small minority, such as some selected sons of the king. Hence this was the time when language was turned into a marker for high status and for access to official posts.

The British seized power in this area in 1916, a few years earlier than in the whole of Tanganyika, which resulted in a change in language policies. To keep a distance to the powerful Muslims at the coast, the British tried to play down the role of Swahili. Thus they introduced local languages in primary school with a shift to English after a few classes. In Karagwe this meant that Ruhaya, which is close to Runyambo, was used in school. This resulted in a raise of the status of Runyambo/Ruhaya. Simultaneously English took over the role of high status language from German.

Independence brought important changes in language policies in Tanzania. Under the leadership of president Nyerere, Swahili was promoted as the only language to be used in official domains. The use of Swahili all over the country was made an important tool to unite the new nation and to create self reliance. Swahili was made the language of instruction in primary school. This was supposed to be followed by the exchange of English with Swahili also on secondary and tertiary levels¹³. This has however never been implemented.

From the 1980s Structural Adjustments Plans were forced on Tanzania by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank which had heavy impact on Tanzanian economy and politics¹⁴. Following this English has gained

11 Katoke, I. *The Making of the Karagwe Kingdom*, Tanzania, East African Publishing House, 1973.

12 Hydén, G. *TANU yajenga Nchi: Politic development in rural Tanzania*, PhD dissertation, University of Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1968.

13 Trappes-Lomax, H.R. "Can a foreign language be a national medium?" in Rubagumya, C.M. (ed.) *Language in Education in Africa - A Tanzanian perspective*, Clevedon Philadelphia, Multilingual matters, 1990; Rubagumya, C.M. (ed.) *Language in Education in Africa: A Tanzanian perspective*, Clevedon Philadelphia, Multilingual matters, 1990; Rubagumya, C.M. (ed.) *Teaching and Researching Language in African Classrooms*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters Ltd, 1994.

14 Buchert, L. *Education in the development of Tanzania, 1919-199*, Oxford, J. Currey, 1994; Brock-Utne, B. *Whose education for all? The recolonization of the African Mind*, New York, Falmer Press, 2000.

in importance and status compared to Swahili in the country. This trend has been particularly strong in Karagwe with its close connections to Uganda and Rwanda and its location far from the Swahili-dominant coast. English holds a stronger position in Uganda and Rwanda while the position of Swahili is weaker. It has traditionally been common among ruling clans and rich people in Karagwe to send their children to Uganda for education, which nowadays means English medium education.

Thus English medium education has been highly valued for a long period in Karagwe and this is increasing nowadays with new private schools, invariably English medium, coming up. So the official policy to allow private schools in Tanzania, and only English medium, has had strong impact on education in Karagwe. In the beginning of the third millennium, the language situation in Karagwe is one where English is the high status language, although very few know more than a few words in English. Swahili is still very strong but those who can, take every chance to put their children in private English medium schools.

If we look closer into how languages are used in Karagwe today we get a clearer picture on language patterns in the area. In Table 2¹⁵ an overview is given on language use in different domains in contemporary Karagwe. The table shows that Runyambo does not hold many domains but that it holds the domains where most inhabitants spend most of their time. For most people in rural areas the only place where they are likely to meet Swahili outside school, is occasionally in the market-place and if they happen to visit a hospital or an office of any kind. As most Banyambo children go to school and as children, according to my findings, actually acquire functional skills in Swahili before they leave standard seven, most people can be assumed to have working knowledge in Swahili. However, one has to remember that the increase in number of school drop-outs and the number of children who do not go to school, may result in an increase in the number of inhabitants that do not know Swahili, at least in rural areas. Also the increasing number of children who spend their early schooling in English medium school is:

15 Wedin, Å. *Literacy Practices in and out of School in Karagwe...* cit.

Table 2: Language use in different domains in contemporary Karagwe¹⁶

Domain	Level/Event	Language(s) mainly used
Commercial	National/International	Swa/Eng
	Regional	Swa/Ru
	Small trade	Ru/Swa
Education	Informal	Ru (Swa)
	Primary school	Swa/Ru*
	Vocational training	Swa/Ru/Eng
	Secondary school	Eng/Swa
	Tertiary level	Eng/Swa
Official	Adult education	Swa/Ru
	National/International	Swa/Eng
Informal	District/Regional	Swa/Ru/Eng
	Home	Ru (Swa)
Cultural	Neighbors	Ru (Swa)
	Workplaces**	Ru/Swa
	Worship	Swa/Ara /Ru
	Literature	Swa (Ru)
	Music	Swa/Ru/Eng
	TV/Video	Swa/Eng/Ru
	Social events	Swa/Ru
	Newspapers	Swa/Eng
Village/Family related	Swa/Ru	

* Note that it is against official policies to use Runyambo language in primary school.

** Workplaces here include the most common workplace, the "mashamba" (fields), market places and places for employment such as shops, workshops and offices.

3.1 Language skills among students in primary school in Karagwe

Through observations in schools and in homes and interviews with children, parents and teachers, I found that children in Karagwe generally do not master Swahili until standard five or six in primary school. Runyambo is the language that children are socialized in and that is used in the domains where they spend their time, except for a few Swahili-speaking families in larger towns and children in immigrant families. Some children could communicate with me in Swahili in standard three but on a rudimentary level. This was verified by teachers who said that they could not for example tell a story to children in the lower classes as the

16 Key: Swa = Swahili, Eng = English, Ara = Arabic, Ru = Runyambo, including also Ruhaya in the case of cultural domains. Languages are given in order of estimated frequency that is Ru/Swa means that Runyambo language is used more often. Languages given in brackets are used in certain cases, such as in some families, in towns or in some congregations. In regional trade other languages such as Kinyarwanda and Luganda are also used but they are not mentioned in the table.

children would not be able to understand it (taking it for granted that it would be likely to affect Swahili usage. Id in Swahili). However I found that most students that leave standard seven, that is the whole primary school, probably master Swahili on a functional level. I interviewed some of the students with the poorest results in literacy in standard seven and they could all communicate in Swahili at a level that could be expected at their age. Also in follow-up interviews after one year they were still fluent in Swahili.

3.2 Language attitudes among teachers in Karagwe

The status of different languages may also be observed by analysing language attitudes among teachers. Teachers were asked to express their language use and their language attitudes in a questionnaire. The questionnaire was answered by 51 teachers from seven schools. The results are given in table 3¹⁷.

Table 3: Teachers' self-report on language use in different domains¹⁸

Domain	Swahili	Swahili/ English	English	Swahili/ Runyambo language	Runyam- bo l anguage
In classrooms	32	18	0	3	0
In the school yard	36	1	0	7	2
In teachers' office	43	9	0	0	0
At home with children	12	0	0	23*	15
With neighbours	3	0	0	25	25
At home to elders	1	0	0	18	34
At the market and in shops	26	0	0	22	3
Preferred language to use	43	2	1	2	1

* One of the teachers also reported the use of Kinyarwanda with children and elders in the home.

When the results from the questionnaire are compared to findings from observations we get interesting information on teachers' language use through which some understanding of their language attitudes can be obtained. In the questionnaire all teachers claim to use Swahili in classrooms. Many also claim to

17 Wedin, Å. *Literacy Practices in and out of School in Karagwe...* cit.

18 N = 53 although not all teacher answered all questions. In the table Runyambo language stands for both Runyambo language and Ruhaya. No teacher used the word "Runyambo language" for the local language, instead they used "Kilugha" (a Swahili derogative for language), "Kinyambo" (Swahili for Runyambo), "lugha ya mama" (Swahili for mother tongue) or "lugha kieneji" (Swahili for vernacular or local language).

use English while only three claim to use Runyambo in class. We should remember that this includes teachers of pre-school and the first years, where most children do not understand Swahili at all. This is what we could expect teachers to answer as the setting where they are asked is the school and as this is according to regulations. If we look at teachers' self-report on language use in the teachers' office we can see that teachers claim to use 'Swahili only' or Swahili and English. However, as I spent much time in teachers' offices, among other places, I know that the languages they actually use are Swahili and Runyambo, approximately equally. None of the teachers answering the questionnaire knew enough English to use it for conversation of the type used in their offices. When answers for all domains are compared with the results from my observations in different areas, I conclude that teachers over-report on their use of Swahili and English while they under-report on their use of Runyambo. For example, half of the teachers claimed to only use Swahili in market places and shops while observations showed that the language most frequently used there is Runyambo with Swahili as the second. In homes Runyambo is the language for daily communication and for interaction with children, also in teachers' homes, while twelve teachers reported to use only Swahili.

The answers of these teachers are in accordance with the official policy of Swahili-only in school and the results show that these teachers are officially loyal to this policy. The fact that the questionnaire was carried out by the researcher in their schools, probably had the effect that teachers rather answered even more in accordance with official policies than they might have done if asked elsewhere. However their actual behavior, using Runyambo to a great extent also on the school compound, showed that there is a discrepancy between what they expressed in their answers and their actual linguistic behavior. The pattern of language use and the over-estimation of their use of high-status languages tell us that Runyambo is low valued. These attitudes are important to take into consideration when analyzing language use in the schools.

4. Creation of safety strategies to hide failure

Apart from observations on classrooms I wanted to get a picture of pupils' understanding of what was taught. Thus I studied pupils' exercise books and interviewed pupils a few days after observed lessons. The understanding of what was taught was generally very poor, which of course has many reasons as the educational conditions overall are poor. However, as nearly no one of the interviewed pupils showed any understanding at all of what had been taught, except from some of the best-performing students in the higher grades, I conclude that the language choice and language use in classrooms was one important obstacle

for their learning. Students seemed not to have understood what had been taught at all, except from some fragments.

However, the classroom observations also revealed an interactional pattern that served to hide failure and to create an image of educational success. Teachers and pupils had developed strategies for classroom interaction that created a sense of successful teaching where students learned what they were expected to, while the fact that they had not understood most of it was hidden, both to teachers and pupils. These strategies I call *safety strategies* as they function to create safety in a situation with high pressure. The gap between extremely high expectations on teachers and pupils concerning the outcome, and what could possibly be achieved under the existing educational situation is huge. Also the hierarchical system put teachers and pupils under high pressure. Teachers punished pupils who failed and were themselves punished by their superiors. A teacher could for example be replaced to a remote school with one day's notice. These safety strategies served to hide failure and to create an image of successful teaching/learning and took different forms. Some strategies among teachers that had this function were to only address successful students, not to follow up poor results in exercise books and to punish children who failed. Strategies that were used by poor performing students were not to hand exercise books in, to hide in the back of the classroom, to copy fellow pupils' work and not to show up in school at all. Among children it was well-known that some pupils spent most of the school-time "hiding in the bushes" (Swa: *wanajificha kichakani*). This way they hoped to escape punishment in school and also the punishment they would have received at home refusing to go to school. So they dressed in their school uniforms in the morning and joined other school children but on the way to school they stopped and waited "in the bushes" until their friends returned from school and they could join them home.

The primary school context in Karagwe is strictly authoritative and both teachers and pupils follow stipulated norms. Pupils obey teachers, as they would obey elders in their homes, at any cost and teachers obey their superiors – or rather they show obedience. There is of course resistance going on but in pupils' sub-rosa pupil-pupil interaction and outside the control of superiors. Official curricula and textbooks are highly prescriptive and normative and individual initiatives are not encouraged, neither pupils' nor teachers'. Lessons follow a common form, prescribed through teachers' guides and curricula. In this a type of interaction has been created in classrooms. Through these patterns pupils were guided to give the right answers although they did not understand. One example is seen in the following example from a crowded standard one¹⁹:

19 Text marked with underline is pronounced in high tone. Italics mark what is said in low tone.

- | | |
|---|--|
| D: Kwamba mkitaka mvua ikinyesha ee? | D: That if you want if the rain is falling ee? |
| W: Ndiyo | Ps: Yes |
| W: Nitashindwa kufanya kazi yangu kwa sababu sitaweza kufanya nini? | D: I will fail to do my work because what will I not be able to do? |
| W: Kufua | Ps: To wash the clothes |
| D: <i>Kufua</i> , kwa hiyo, kutofua kwangu kunatokana na kunyesha kwa nini? | D: <i>To wash the clothes</i> , so, my not washing comes from the falling of what? |
| W: Kwa mvua | Ps: Of Rain |
| D: Kwa <i>mvua</i> . | D: Of <i>rain</i> . |

This is an example of this type of teacher-student interaction that it is frequently used in the classrooms. The teacher is talking about washing clothes, “kufua”, and the falling of rain, “kunesha kwa mvua”. In the first line the teacher uses high tone to ask students for confirmation, “ee?”. Pupils answer in chorus: “*Ndiyo*” (Yes). Other common ways to ask for confirmation that teachers use are: “*Sivyo?*” (Isn’t it?) or “*Tuko pamoja?*” (are we together?). Pupils’ answer is invariably “Yes”. In the fourth line she uses “*nini?*” (what?) with high tone to show that she calling for the pupils to respond. Here she asks what is falling. The falling of rains is the topic of the lesson and the verb “*-nyesha*” actually means raining and is naturally followed by “*mvua*” (rain). In normal speech, question words are pronounced with low tone so the use of high tone is here a marker of the interactional pattern. The pupil’s answer is followed by the teacher’s repetition of the answer in low tone that marks the correct answer. As is usual in this type of interaction pupils do not have to understand to give the answer as it is included in what was said before. Pupils are encouraged to shout the answer in chorus and they are explicitly taught this pattern in pre-school and the early years of schooling.

Similar patterns to this pattern with teachers calling out for students response is found in other poor settings in schools where resources are scarce and teachers and pupils work under hard conditions²⁰. Focusing on the chant-like choring in

20 See for example: Aziz, A.A. *Strategies for Communication between Teachers and Pupils in a Rural Malaysian School*, Singapore, Singapore University Press, 1981; Watson-Gegeo, K.-A. “Thick explanation in the ethnographic study of child socialization: A longitudinal study of the problem of schooling for Kwara’ae (Solomon Islands) children” in *New Directions for Child Development*, vol. 58, pp. 51-6, 1992; Arthur, J. “English in Botswana primary classrooms: Functions and constraints” in Rubagumya, C.M. (ed.) *Teaching and Researching Language in African Classrooms*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters Ltd, 1994; Arthur, J. “Code-switching and collusion: Classroom interaction in

primary school in Zululand, South Africa, Chick²¹ named the type of classroom interaction he observed “safe-talk”. He claimed that the function of this type of interaction was to create safety among pupils and teachers. He argued that teachers and pupils in co-operation managed to create an image of successful teaching and learning by using safe-talk and in the same time hiding the fact that not much learning was taking place. In Peru, van Lier²² found similar interaction patterns in primary school classrooms. Hornberger and Chick²³ compared these findings and concluded that safe-talk served to save the faces of teachers and pupils while they simultaneously constituted a barrier for pupils’ learning. As neither teachers nor pupils became aware of pupils’ actual knowledge level, pupils were not taught necessary pre-knowledge to learn what they were supposed to. Hornberger and Chick²⁴ argued that main factors that caused safe-talk was the fact that pupils were taught in a second language which was an ex-colonial one (English in South Africa and Spanish in Peru) and neither teachers nor pupils mastered. Other factors they pointed out were that pupils belonged to a minority group which was systematically discriminated against in the educational system and in the societies at large.

In the case of Karagwe the situation becomes slightly more complex. One similarity between the case of Karagwe and the cases of Peru and Zululand is that pupils are taught in a language that they do not understand but in contrast to those settings, in Karagwe teachers’ have a good command of Swahili. Also contrasting to the other cases is the fact, which was confirmed by my study, that pupils learn Swahili through their primary school years. Other similarities are the

Botswana primary schools” in Heller, M.; Martin-Jones, M. (eds.) *Voices of Authority: Education and linguistic difference*, USA, Ablex publishing, 2001; Ndayipfukamiye, L. “Code-switching in Burundi primary classrooms” in Rubagumya, C.M. (ed.) *Language and Education in Africa: A Tanzanian perspective*, Clevedon Philadelphia, Multilingual matters, 1994; Ndayipfukamiye, L. “The contradiction of teaching bilingually in a postcolonial Burundi: From Nyakatsi to Maisons en étages” in Heller, M.; Martin-Jones, M. (eds.) *Voices of Authority: Education and linguistic difference*, USA, Ablex publishing, 2001; Chick, J.K. “Safetalk: Collusion in apartheid education” in Coleman, H. (ed.) *Society and the Language Classroom*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996; van Lier, L. “Conflicting voices: Language, classrooms and bilingual education in Puno” in Bailey, K.M.; Nunan, D. (eds.) *Voices from the Language Classroom: Qualitative research in second language education*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 367-387; Heller, M.; Martin-Jones, M. (eds.) *op. cit.*

21 Chick, J.K. “Safetalk: Collusion in apartheid education” in Coleman, H. (ed.) *Society and the Language Classroom*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

22 Van Lier, L. *op. cit.*

23 Hornberger, N.; Chick, K. *op. cit.*

24 *Ibidem.*

high pressure on teachers and pupils due to the huge gap between expectations and possible results and the hierarchical educational system that leaves little room for teachers or pupils own creativity. However the Banyambo as a group is well represented in higher administration, the government and in the economic sector. The Banyambo are far from an oppressed group in Tanzania. I conclude these safety strategies, particularly the call-response interaction that directs pupils to give answers without having understood, also in Karagwe constitute main obstacles for learning in school. As neither teachers nor pupils become aware of pupils' actual knowledge, teaching does not become relevant and does not meet pupils needs.

5. Discussion

In this chapter I have tried to show some of the effects that the monolingual norm, in this case Swahili-only, has on primary school education in Karagwe. So many inhabitants put so much efforts into education, teachers, pupils and parents, but the outcome is extremely poor. In this school context I find it relevant to talk about two curricula, the intended and the actual or hidden. The intended curriculum is what teachers are expected to follow through official regulations such as official curricula, textbooks, teaching aids and teacher education and so on while the actual or hidden curriculum is what is actually carried out. Obedience is important in this school context and teachers are expected to show obedience, which they do. This includes little room for teachers' or pupils' own reflection and creativity. The safety strategies described in this chapter should be seen in this perspective. These strategies are, as I see it, results of both teachers' and pupils' creativity and reflexivity in a seemingly impossible situation and under unrealistic demands. By creatively finding ways to show good results these strategies have been developed to save the faces of those involved. By only teaching those subjects that are valued, such as Swahili, English and Mathematics, and cancelling lessons in for example Sports, Music and other subjects that are not tested in official tests, teacher may decrease their impossible workload.

Also concerning language ideologies in education we can talk about two curricula, one intended which stipulates that the two languages that should be used in schools are Swahili and English, and one actual where Swahili and Runyambo are the languages that suit teachers' needs. This is reflected in teachers' answers to the questionnaire compared to their actual behavior. The fact that reprimands frequently are given in Runyambo can be interpreted as a way for teachers to make sure that they are understood and also as a way to use their authority. It is clear for pupils that using Runyambo is a sign of low respect. Power relations are also visible in the fact that pupils are not allowed to use Runyambo in the presence of teachers,

while, as mentioned, the opposite is possible. This way, pupils are socialized into existing language ideologies, that English and Swahili are the valued languages while Runyambo is devalued together with everything that is perceived as local, traditional and non-western.

As I see it, it is a waste of resources that language policies prohibit teachers to use a language that the pupils master and simultaneously to prevent the use of relevant research on how education could be planned in multilingual settings. I also find not democratic that pupils that have been exposed to Swahili before school are favored before those who have not. To create a type of bilingual education that would support Swahili and Runyambo equally is not politically possible in Tanzania, neither parents nor teachers, nor probably pupils, would accept of that. However, to promote pupils' learning by making use of relevant methods and types organization of education that promote learning in a second language and also learning that language should not be a treat to anybody. It only acknowledges the fact that Swahili *is* a second language for these children and makes it possible to plan education accordingly²⁵. This would not demand more resources; expect from educating teachers in teaching in a second language context.

The safety strategies that were a result of the pressure on teachers and pupils due to the gap between expectations and possible outcome and due to the hierarchical school system, apparently constitute an obstacle for pupils' learning in school. However, in my study I could also show that the interactional patterns in schools did not only have a function to hide failure but also to help pupils listen more carefully²⁶. This could be made a relevant teacher strategy in a situation like Tanzania, where classes are huge and teacher aids and books are scarce. If teachers could be made aware of the problems the present use of call-response interaction have in the classrooms while simultaneously being given tools to use this interaction pattern to enhance pupils learning this could promote learning.

However, it is crucial that when new policies are created, they are developed without parroting examples from the west. Rather they should be developed by experienced teacher trainers and teachers in cooperation. These policies and advices should give room for teachers own creativity and give advice on how to adapt them to local interactional patterns. Karagwe is only one of many districts in Tanzania and interactional patterns and language attitudes in Karagwe are not identical to those in other areas in Tanzania.

25 See for example Gibbons, P. *Scaffolding Language...* cit.; Schleppegrell, M. *The language of schooling*. London, Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004.

26 Wedin, Å. "Classroom Interaction: Potential or Problem?: The Case of Karagwe..." cit.

Intercultural teacher education in the globalized world The case of Finland

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Introduction

Finland has a very interesting geopolitical location in the Northernmost Europe between the East and West as its immediate neighbours Norway, Sweden and Russia, with which it has a long common border at the Eastern edge of the European Union. Culturally Finland has been described as a very monocultural country. Although this maybe is true if we only look at ethnicity and religion, it is questionable when the whole range of languages, dialects, political views and particularly forms of living in different areas of the country are considered. The myth of one nation, one language and one culture was deliberately constructed at the times of nation building and was considered important in the fight for independence¹. However, within the latest decades, the rights of old minorities such as Swedish-speaking Finns, the Sami and Roma people have become better recognised, although diversity did not become a bigger issue in Finland until the new minorities began to enter the country in the 1970's. The biggest immigrant groups at the moment are Russians, Estonians, Swedes (partly returning Finns), followed by immigrants from Somalia, China, Thailand, Iraq, Germany, Turkey and Great Britain². Due to the common history, both Sweden and Russia have significantly influenced Finnish political, social and cultural life. It is important to remember that Finland has always been a border country between the East and West. Although it mostly seems to identify itself with the Nordic and Western countries, many Eastern elements are evident in many areas from mentality and administrative traditions to genetic heredity³.

1 Häkkinen, A.; Tervonen, M. "Ethnicity, marginalisation and poverty in the 20th century Finland" in Puuronen, V.; Häkkinen, A.; Pylkkänen, A. *et al.* (eds.) *New challenges for the welfare society*, Joensuu, University of Joensuu, 2004, 22-23.

2 Migri <http://www.migri.fi/netcomm/content.asp?path=2762>

3 Simola, H. *The Finnish miracle of PISA: historical and sociological remarks on teaching and teacher*

The 1960's and 1970's were times of rapid and comprehensive social and educational developments in Finland. Particularly in the 1970's the national consensus about the welfare state and all citizens needing quality education was crystallized and gained strong support from all parties and social groups. The comprehensive school reform of the 1970's was called "the mother of all reforms" and it inspired and gave birth to innovations and transformations in many sectors of life. The leading value and ethical principle in all the changes was equity – equity between social classes, sexes, ages, regions and ability groups. Teacher education was one area in this equity-led process. It was argued that all age groups need teachers who have academic education. This meant reforms which moved primary teacher education to universities and changed teacher education programmes into university degree programmes.

The 1990's and time after that have been considered a very different era compared to earlier decades in education but in other sectors of society as well Rinne *et al.*⁴ conclude that the Second Republic came to an end when the Soviet Union collapsed and finally when Finland joined the European Union in 1995. Finland has been ranked as one of the most competitive countries in several surveys carried out during this decade, and it is considered one of the least corrupted societies in the world. In several evaluations, it has been stated that one of the key drivers of Finland's success has been and will be a uniformly high-quality education system which has helped speed the country's social and economic internationalisation in the 1990's⁵.

Most political documents in Finland emphasise at the moment the vital importance of being a participant in the discussions about development and decisions on the European and global levels. In the policy papers, particularly work-based immigration is emphasized and welcomed. Education is expected to respond to the challenges of increasing diversity in population, international migration and co-operation, and the changes caused by globalisation in economical, social, cultural and ecological aspects⁶.

education, Comparative Education 41(4), 2005, p. 457.

4 Rinne, R.; Kivirauma, J.; Simola, H. "Shoots of revisionist education policy or just slow readjustment? The Finnish case of educational reconstruction" in *Journal of Educational Policy*, 26, 3, 2002, 646.

5 Aho, E.; Pitkänen, K.; Sahlberg, P. "Policy development and reform principles of basic and secondary education in Finland since 1968" in *World Bank: Education working paper series number 2*, Retrieved 08.05.2008, 2006, from http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099079967208/Education_in_Finland_May06.pdf

6 Räsänen, R. "Education for intercultural, multi-levelled citizenship in Europe: The case of

However, within the latest year there has been a visible and alarming change in the attitudes towards newcomers. The financial crisis and global recession have given reasons to the opponents to make difference between Finns and non-Finns and to emphasise the priority of Finnish inhabitants in employment and social welfare sectors. Global solidarity and responsibility is forgotten in the discussion, and little attention is given to the fact that more than a million of Finns have emigrated from Finland and have been employed in other countries. Even at this very moment large numbers of Finns are working all over the world in various tasks e.g. in firms and organisations.

This article will discuss in more detail how education has responded and can respond to the challenges of internationalisation and diversity within, what transformations are taking place in Finland on national policies, and especially what changes are needed in teacher education if transformative global learning is really desired. It argues that if transformations are pursued, changes are needed both on political and institutional levels, both in structures and practices. It also argues that teacher education and teachers' new competences are central for the transformative processes and that is why comprehensive changes would be required in teacher education curricula, contents and methods. Finally it discusses the theoretical foundations and practises of the Intercultural Teacher Education⁷ at the University of Oulu, and analyses the conditions for such programmes as change agents⁸.

Finland" in Kotthoff, H.G.; Moutsios, S. (eds.) *Education policies in Europe*, Munster, Waxmann, 2007, pp. 221-224.

7 ITE see <http://www.oulu.fi/ktk/ite>

8 See also Jokikokko, K. "Reflections on interculturally oriented teachership" in Räsänen, R.; San, J. (eds.) *Conditions for intercultural learning and cooperation*, Research in Educational Sciences 23, Turku, Finnish Educational Research Association, 2005, pp.183-206; Jokikokko, K. "Perspectives to intercultural competence" in Räsänen, R.; San, J. (eds.) *Conditions for intercultural learning and cooperation*, Research in Educational Sciences 23, Turku, Finnish Educational Research Association, 2005, pp. 89-106; Järvelä, M.L. "Tavoitteena interkulttuurinen opettajankoulutus. Orientaatioperusta ja epistemologia" in Teoksessa; Räsänen; Jokikokko *et al.* (toim) *Interkulttuurinen opettajankoulutus*, Acta Universitatis Ouluensis E 55, Oulu, Oulun Yliopistopaino, 2002, pp. 31-47; Järvelä, M.L. "The Power of Dialogue: Intercultural Education for Teachers in Finland" in Helot, C.; De Mejia, A.M. (eds.) *Empowering Teachers Across Cultures, Enfoques críticos, Perspectives croisées*, Peter Lang in Frankfurt, 2011, pp. 89-114; Räsänen, R. "Teachers' intercultural competence and education for global responsibility" in Talib, M.T.; Loima, L.; Paavola, H. *et al.* (eds.) *Dialogs on diversity and global learning*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, pp. 29-50; Räsänen, R. "Transformative global learning in teacher education in Finland" in *Journal of Development Education and Global Learning*, 1, 2, 2009, pp. 29-50.

1. Intercultural and global education in Finnish policy papers

Education for international co-operation has been recognised in the aims of Finnish education since the very beginning of the comprehensive school reform at the end of 1960's. In the Finnish educational discourse, the concept "international education" is older than its successor "global education", and is founded on United Nations documents, UNESCO recommendation and declaration⁹, and the terms introduced in them. In the national curricula of the decades following the birth of comprehensive school system, the scope of international/global education is wide: according to UNESCO documents, it included education for peace, human rights, equality, development studies, environmental education and respect for other cultures. International education was singled out as the core element of ethical education, and attention was drawn to educating citizens who would demonstrate global concern and responsibility¹⁰.

The present core curricula for basic education and upper secondary school were issued in 2003 and 2004¹¹. It is evident from their contents that the core curricula now more clearly than ever before acknowledge the multicultural nature of Finnish population and consider it as richness, instead of a burden or extra expense, when organising education. These core curricula (2004) also distinguish a number of integrated, cross-curricular themes that should be taken into account in the whole school culture. All of these cross-curricular themes are connected with development issues and global learning including the content areas on culture, internationalisation, active citizenship and sustainable development¹².

9 UNESCO *Recommendations concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms*, Paris, UNESCO, 1974; UNESCO. *Declaration and integrated framework of action on education for peace, human rights and democracy*, Paris, UNESCO, 1995.

10 Räsänen, R. "Intercultural education as education for global responsibility..." cit., pp. 19-21; Räsänen, R. "Teachers' intercultural competence and education for global responsibility..." cit., pp. 44-47; Kaivola, T.; Melen-Paaso, M. (eds.) "Education for global responsibility – Finnish perspectives" in *Publications of the Ministry of Education 2007*, 31, Helsinki, Helsinki University Press, 2007.

11 While writing this (2012), the new ones are underway; National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools, Helsinki, National Board of Education, 2003; National Core Curriculum for the Basic Education in Finland, Helsinki, National Board of Education, 2004.

12 For the basic education these integrated themes are: Growth as a person, Cultural identity and internationalism, Media skills and communication, Participatory citizenship and entrepreneurship, Safety and traffic, Technology and individual and Responsibility for the environment, well-being, and a sustainable future. The themes for upper secondary level (2003) continue the same discussions: Active citizenship and entrepreneurship, Safety and well-being, Sustainable development, Cultural identity and knowledge of cultures, Technology and society, Communication and media competence.

The core curricula have played an important role in providing one framework for Global education, but several other national processes have given direction for the developments of education in the 21st century. Global education in Finland was evaluated by the peer reviewing team from the Council of Europe's North-South Centre in 2004¹³. One of the suggestions made by the Review Report was to draft a national strategy for global education in the whole country. As a result, a committee was established for the purpose in cooperation with the Ministries of Education and Foreign Affairs. The committee submitted its strategy to the Ministry of Education at the end of 2006¹⁴. In its report it paid special attention to the role of education sector in managing globalisation and to the construction of a holistic strategy for global education in the country.

The holistic approach in global education adopted in the report puts emphasis on certain aspects: lifelong education from early childhood to adult education; life-wide education involving formal education, non-formal education and informal education; interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral approach comprising cooperation of various professionals and different workplaces; comprehensive transformations in school curricula and school ethos; action from local to global arenas; holistic view of a human being and learning consisting of cognitive and affective aspects as well as active participation, through individual contacts and societal structures¹⁵. The strategy had adopted The Council of Europe's definition of global education:

Global education is education that opens people's eyes and minds to the realities of the world, and awakens them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights to all. Global education is understood to encompass Development Education, Human Rights Education, Education for Sustainability, Education for Peace and Conflict Prevention and Intercultural Education, being the global dimension of Education for Citizenship¹⁶.

From the perspective of teacher education, the new Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009-2015 (2009) is particularly interesting. Compared to the earlier higher education strategies,

13 "Global education in Finland" in *The European global education peer review process*, National report on Finland, Lisbon, North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, 2004.

14 "Global Education" in *Publications of the Ministry of Education 2007*, 12, Helsinki, Helsinki University Press, 2010.

15 *Ibidem*.

16 From the Maastricht Declaration, 2002.

which mostly discussed various mobility programmes and the attractiveness of higher education institutions, the scope of aims and strategic choices is much wider in the new document. It distinguishes five comprehensive aims, which are demanding and important: 1. to create a genuinely international higher education community, 2. to increase the quality and attractiveness of higher education institutions, 3. to promote the export of expertise, 4. to support a multicultural community and civil society, 5. to promote global responsibility. The last two objectives in particular bring a new direction to the internationalisation discourse of universities, including teacher education. The strategy emphasises that people with immigrant background as well as foreign students and personnel are a valuable resource at Finnish institutions and society. It also emphasises that institutions of higher education should utilise their expertise to solve global problems. They should support students' prerequisites to function in a global environment as well as to understand the global effects of their activities.

International reviewers¹⁷ have pointed out that Finland has been rather progressive in its policies in order to formulate holistic strategies for global education, intercultural education being one of its main sectors. It has also been emphasised that higher education and teacher education have important roles in the implementation – teaching, researching and societal activism – of the strategic aims. In spite of the strategies, however, the practices are not necessarily in line with the policies, and efficient measures should be taken to change the practices as well.

2. Teacher education and global education in Finland

Finnish teacher education has, mainly due to PISA studies, received a lot of international attention. Several positive aspects have been pointed out e.g. its high academic status and its popularity among talented and motivated students. One interesting feature in Finnish education is that teachers enjoy a higher status than in almost any other OECD countries, which is largely due to the university degree education for all teachers¹⁸. Finnish teachers, and the comprehensive school system for that matter, have the trust of parents and the general public – and particularly after the results in the international assessments, also among the political and economic elite in the country. The high standard of teacher education is considered as one of the main reasons for Finland's success in educational comparisons.

17 "Global education in Finland..." cit.

18 Simola, H. *The Finnish miracle of PISA...* cit., p. 458.

In principle, Global education (previously International education) has been part of teacher education programmes since the 1960's, and since then there have been separate International education-courses in several teacher education departments in Finland. Contents for those courses were mostly derived from the United Nations documents and UNESCO declarations including studies in human rights, peace, development and intercultural communication. With the exception of very few institutions, global education or intercultural education have, however, been a very marginal area in teacher education consisting of separate courses and having minor influence on the mainstream thinking or perspective change. Since the 1990's the exchange programmes of the European Union have maybe been the most efficient single factor affecting the internationalisation of higher education institutions, including teacher education. To a certain extent, joint curricula and programmes as well as European master's programmes have had a similar effect. However, these programmes have mostly been designed for mobility within the EU countries, which might have increased a very Western and Eurocentric thinking and approach to educational matters.

Traditionally, Finnish teacher education programmes have been very ethnocentric and based on monocultural views of Finns and Finnish culture¹⁹. Still, changes are particularly urgent in teacher education, because teachers influence their students' worldviews, knowledge and attitudes through the contents of their teaching, teaching material, methods and their own attitudes and activities. The national strategies provide educators with many relevant suggestions and give excellent guidelines for teacher education reforms as well. As student teachers in Finland are generally speaking motivated and talented, efforts to provide them with competences of teaching in the multicultural, global societies should be successful. Järvelä²⁰ argues that besides curricula also structures of teacher education need close examination; she suggests that academic environment might maintain ethnocentrism, cultural superiority and structural suppression that discriminates representatives of Finnish minorities as well as students with immigrant backgrounds.

19 Räsänen, R. "Intercultural education as education for global responsibility" in Kaivola, T.; Melen-Paaso, M. (eds.) *Education for global responsibility – Finnish perspectives*, Publications of the Ministry of Education 2007, 31, Helsinki, Helsinki University Press, 2007, pp. 20-21; Virta, A. "Learning to teach in culturally diverse classrooms" in *Journal of Intercultural Education* 20, 4, 2009, pp. 285-298.

20 Järvelä, M.L. "The 'Dinosaur' in higher education: Reconsidering racism in Western academe" in Järvelä, M.L.; Ritola, L.; Sitomaniemi-San, J. (eds.) *Education, ethics and diversity. A publication in honour of professor Rauni Räsänen*, Oulu, Oulun Yliopistopaino, 2010, p. 131.

3. Teachers' intercultural competences

When planning and evaluating teacher education programmes that pay attention to changing environments, discussion about the permanent and new aspects of the profession is needed. The core tasks and responsibilities of the profession may remain largely the same even when time passes, but new competence areas emerge or become more significant in new environments. That is why a careful analysis is needed to be able to judge what is essential in education, what is the knowledge and what are the skills required in the changed context. Evidently, such qualifications as caring for children, creativity, innovativeness, reflection and basic teaching skills are required in all teaching posts. However, special criteria for working in multicultural global contexts must be observed and added to the curricula of teacher education.

A considerable number of studies on the competences required in multicultural contexts have emerged internationally as well as in Finland during the past couple of decades²¹. Both Bennett and Noel talk about the importance of being confronted by outside views in teacher education and of *becoming aware of the multiple perspectives and relativity of knowledge*²². Confronting other views and becoming aware of multiple perspectives is particularly important for representatives of mainstream cultures, because they are seldom forced to question their views or have little experience about what it is like to belong to a small non-privileged minority and be marginalised. To avoid making too hasty generalisations of different groups of people we should know enough about these people's histories, know where they come from and learn about their cultures. But it is equally important to remember that people are above all individuals – we all belong to several cultural groups (e.g.

21 Alasuutari, H. "Conditions for mutual learning in education sector development cooperation" in Järvelä, M.L.; Ritola, L.; Sitomaniemi-San, J. (eds.) *Education, ethics and diversity*, Oulu, Oulun Yliopiston kirjapaino, 2010, 54-84; Jokikokko, K. "Interculturally trained Finnish teachers' conceptions of diversity and intercultural competence" in *Journal of Intercultural Education*, 16, 2, 2005, pp. 69-83; Jokikokko, K. "The meaning of significant others in the intercultural learning of teachers" in *Journal of Research in International Education* 2009, 8, 2009, pp.142-163; Jokikokko, K. "Opettajien kulttuurienvälisen oppimisen ja kompetenssin ulottuvuuksia" in Järvelä, M.L.; Ritola, L.; Sitomaniemi-San, J. (eds.) *Education, ethics and diversity*, Oulu: Oulun Yliopistopaino, 2010, pp. 85-112; Räsänen, R. "Teachers' intercultural competence and education for global responsibility..." cit.; Talib, M.T. *Eksotiikkaa vai ihmisarvoa. Opettajan monikulttuurinen kompetenssi*, Turku, Suomen Kasvatustieteellinen Seura, 2005.

22 Bennett, C. "Preparing teachers for cultural diversity and national standards of academic excellence" in *Journal of Teacher Education* 46, 4, 1995, p. 262; Noel, J. "Multicultural teacher education: From awareness through emotions to action" in *Journal of Teacher Education* 46, 4, 1995, p. 270.

ethnicity, religion, language, gender, sexuality and social class) and differences within cultures are as big as between cultures both in our own groups and in other cultures.

The second important requirement for culturally sensitive teacher education in the global world is *awareness of how our community and background has affected us*²³. That is difficult unless we have encountered others who think differently and we have other cultures as a mirror for our assumptions. On the other hand, understanding one's own, historically constructed biases and ethnocentrism helps to be more open to others' meaning making efforts and to look at one's own culture through the others' eyes. In addition to understanding one's personal history and its effects, collective memories and histories of nations and cultural groups are vital in this consciousness-raising. In this process we sometimes must go beyond names and birthplaces, habits and customs to cultural deep-structures – to the beliefs, attitudes, values and traditions that have shaped us. It is generally claimed that one's own culture forms a solid foundation for one's development and growth. That is partly true, but it can also become a mental prison if one never dares to go outside its walls or look beyond its boundaries. Bennett²⁴ compares cultural consciousness-raising to cultural therapy which is a process of bringing one's own culture to the level of awareness, which again makes it possible to perceive it as a potential bias in social interaction. Understanding this helps to realize that things are seldom black or white, but historically and culturally developed phenomena; in fact, it is hard to think of anything that would be truly ahistorical, i.e. unrelated to some tradition or historical development. In consequence, all learning takes place in comprehensive socio-cultural and socio-political contexts²⁵.

The third criterion of intercultural teacher education is *developing special intercultural skills and sensitivity*. Referring to Gudykunst and Kim²⁶ and Bennett²⁷ we argue that intercultural competence includes intellectual and emotional commitment to the fundamental unity of all humans, but at the same time, acceptance and appreciation of the differences between people of different cultures. Interculturally competent teachers are aware of the diversity of cultures, but they

23 Bennett, C. *op. cit.*, p. 261; Noel, J. *op. cit.*, pp. 269-270.

24 Bennett, C. *op. cit.*

25 Nieto, S. "The light in their eyes. Creating multicultural learning communities" in *Multicultural education series*, New York and London, Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1999, p. 2.

26 Kim, J.Y.; Brent, R.D. "Intercultural transformation" in Kim, J.Y.; Gudykunst, W. (eds.) *Theories in intercultural communication*, London, Sage, 1984, pp. 299-321.

27 Bennett, C. *op. cit.*, p. 263.

know that cultures are not static but dynamic, and they are conscious of the dangers of stereotyping. This demands constant efforts to see the cultural attributes of others and to consider cultures from their perspectives. Bennett²⁸ emphasises that sufficient linguistic competence is important in intercultural communication, but in the long-run, attitudes are even more crucial; without mutual respect, genuine listening and equal dialogue, even the most perfect linguistic skills prove insufficient. Intercultural dialogue which is based on equity and respect increases intercultural learning – both understanding of one’s own background and that of the representatives of other cultures. However, reaching this mutual state of respect, let alone complete understanding in a dialogic situation is a demanding task for anybody, for various reasons (language choice and participants’ linguistic skills, culturally indicated positions in the interaction etc.)²⁹. Nevertheless, a kind of “reciprocal authority”³⁰ is something we must strive for and dialogue is, despite its imperfection, one of the best methods in constructing intercultural learning and transformative pedagogy.

Particularly the representatives of critical pedagogy distinguish also a fourth demand for an interculturally educated teacher: *to develop a commitment to combat inequality, racism, as well as sexism, and all other forms of prejudice, oppression and discrimination* through development of understanding, attitudes and social action skills. Bennett³¹ argues that it is crucial to strive for clearing up myths that foster beliefs about the evilness and inferiority of certain races, cultures or cultural areas. This should include an awareness of institutional and cultural racism and power structures in the world, and one should stress basic human connections and similarities in addition to differences. Järvelä³² has pointed out that ideas about inferiority of certain cultures can be particularly consistent in academic cultures and the conceptions about the superiority of Western cultures can be dominant messages in the hidden curricula of teacher education. In order to succeed in

28 Bennett, C. *op. cit.*

29 Järvelä, M.L. “Dialogue in education and cultural encounters” in Räsänen, R.; San, J. (eds.) *Conditions for intercultural learning and cooperation*, Turku, Finnish Educational Research Association 23, 2005, pp. 35-47.

30 Beck, C. *Difference, authority and the teacher-student relationship. Philosophy of education*, Retrieved 04.05.2010, 1994, from http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-yearbook/94_docs/BECK.HTM

31 Bennett, C. “Preparing teachers for cultural diversity and national standards of academic excellence” in *Journal of Teacher Education* 46, 4, 1995, p. 263.

32 Järvelä, M.L. “The ‘Dinosaur’ in higher education: Reconsidering racism in Western academe”... *cit.*

this kind of epistemic reform, we need what Kellner³³ calls “multiple literacies”, including e.g. social and cultural literacies, ecoliteracy, media and economic literacies.

The fifth requirement for the global citizen and particularly for the teacher is *to understand that human species have a crucial role and responsibility in maintaining the balance in the ecosystem and cherish conditions where future generations can live on the globe*. Sustainable development must cover all sectors of society, viz, ecological, economical, social, cultural, political and technological aspects. It should be explicitly stated in policy papers and strategies that the wellbeing of human societies and ecosystems on the globe depend, more than ever on sustainability that does not remain on the level of paying lip-service only, but on all parties’ actions³⁴. On the whole, sustainability should be emphasised in teacher education, including courses on leadership³⁵.

In addition to the above-mentioned five criteria for intercultural competence, there are *special pedagogical skills* that experts in intercultural and international education need. In the globalising world, educators should be aware of the various approaches to intercultural education, and of how the approaches could be implemented in schools and education. They should realise that intercultural education and education for global awareness is not a technique but a perspective or a philosophy that influences all aspects of education and school life³⁶. Future teachers should be supported by their teachers, mentors and fellow students in reflecting upon their knowledge and philosophies concerning cultural diversity and sustainable development³⁷. It takes societal and ecological consciousness and cultural sensitivity but also special pedagogical skills and motivation to act against inequity, stereotypes and discrimination. This requires cultivation of intellect, courage and personal integrity, all of these being qualities that Saïd³⁸ included in his conception of a “true intellectual”.

33 Kellner, D. “Multiple literacies and critical pedagogies. New paradigms” in Trifonas, P.P. (ed.) *Revolutionary pedagogies. Cultural politics, Instituting education and the discourse of theory*. New York and London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2000, pp. 196-221.

34 UNESCO “Our Creative Diversity” in *UNESCO report of the World Commission on culture and development*, Paris, EGOPRIM, 1995.

35 Hargreaves, A.; Fink, D. *Sustainable leadership*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2006.

36 Nieto, S. *Affirming diversity*, New York, Longman, 1996 and 2000.

37 Räsänen, R. “Teachers’ intercultural competence and education for global responsibility...” cit., pp. 35-40.

38 Saïd, E.W. *Representations of the intellectual*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1994.

4. Approaches of intercultural education

Approaches of how to consider cultural diversity in education have differed and the methods have been divided into several categories accordingly³⁹. In some approaches individual development and intercultural competences are the focus of education, in others societal problems and structural inequities are the starting point⁴⁰. Banks⁴¹ talks about three main approaches. First, approaches where *minority cultures are regarded as a deviance to be “cured” and normalised*. Second, approaches where *other cultures are recognised, but are included in the curriculum as separate courses or content areas*, as exceptions from the “normal” and mainstream teaching. And third, approaches where *the entire curriculum is constructed in a new way acknowledging various perspectives* with the aim of making students aware of the tendencies of monoacculturation and ethnocentrism in educational institutions.

According to the first approach, particularly at the times when assimilation policies have been applied, states and schools have taken cultural difference as a handicap. The majority has been considered the norm, which has meant that immigrant learners should “catch up” mainstream students through special education and other remedial arrangements. In the second alternative the presence of other cultures is recognised as such, but not necessarily as an integral part of school curricula, which can still be ethnocentric and monocultural while other cultures are introduced as separate courses, books and theme weeks or through celebrating certain festivals, heroes or significant incidents of the respective groups. After these celebrations and special courses, teaching continues as before, according to the mainstream culture. Justifiably, McCarthy and Dimitriadis⁴² criticise this type of multicultural education as having become clichéd school projects, which manifest themselves in superficial “going through” texts about various minorities or preparing native people’s cultural products, for example cultural artefacts of the Sami people in northern Lapland. In Finland, intercultural

39 Grant, C.; Sleeter, C. “Race, class, gender, exceptionality, and educational reform” in Banks, J.; McGee, C. (eds.) *Multicultural issues and perspectives*, Boston, Allyn & Bacon, 1999, pp. 65-73; Banks, J. *An introduction to multicultural education*, Boston, Allen & Bacon, 1999, pp. 232-249.

40 James, K. “International education. The concept and its relationship to intercultural education” in *Journal of Research in International Education* 4, 3, 2005, pp. 313-317.

41 Banks, J., *op. cit.*, pp. 232-249.

42 McCarthy, C.; Dimitriadis, G. “All-consuming identities: Race and the pedagogy of resentment in the age of difference” in Trifonas, P.P. (ed.) *Revolutionary pedagogies. Cultural politics, instituting education and the discourse of theory*, New York and London, RoutledgeFalmer, 2000, pp. 50-55.

education is often realised through theme weeks and separate projects. Nieto⁴³ has also criticised this approach and has suggested guidelines for a more thorough and pervasive approach. She emphasises that intercultural education is not a question of methods but a way of looking at the world from several perspectives; and that is why it should be present throughout education and would require changes in the entire curriculum⁴⁴.

A major problem in mainstream-centric education is that it provides pupils with only one way of seeing the world, a way which is usually taken for granted. The third alternative represents a more comprehensive approach where the aim is to break monoacculturation and make students conscious of the possible hegemony of mainstream culture and hierarchies of knowledge systems, identifiable with power structures in the society. In this approach, it is acknowledged that a truly intercultural education, which recognises diversity as a starting point, requires a holistic reform, which includes policy, contents, curricula, methods, school material and the entire educational ethos (see Figure 1 below).

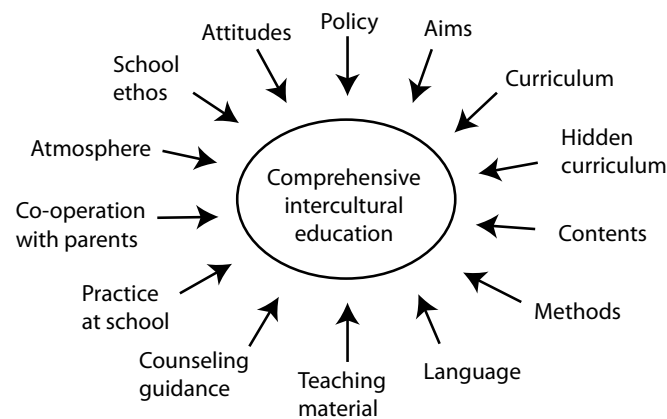


Figure 1. Comprehensive intercultural education⁴⁵

43 Nieto, S. *op. cit.*, pp. 305-320.

44 Banks, J. *op. cit.*, pp. 20-26; Järvelä, M.L. "Tavoitteena interkulttuurinen opettajankoulutus..." *cit.*, pp. 37-38; Järvelä, M.L. "The Power of Dialogue: Intercultural Education for Teachers in Finland..." *cit.*, pp. 100-109; Räsänen, R. "Toimintatutkimuksen kautta interkulttuuriseen opettajankoulutukseen Oulun yliopistossa" in Räsänen, R.; Jokikokko, K.; Järvelä, M.L. *et al.* (toim) *Interkulttuurinen opettajankoulutus*, Acta Universitatis Ouluensis E 55, Oulu, Oulun Yliopistopaino, 117-138; McCarthy, C.; Dimitriadis, G. *op. cit.*, pp. 51-55.

45 Räsänen, R. "Intercultural education as education for global responsibility..." *cit.*; Räsänen, R. "Teachers' intercultural competence and education for global responsibility..." *cit.*

The comprehensive approach means that intercultural education forms a logical continuum, which starts from early childhood and continues through the whole educational path to higher education and adult education. Thus it includes not only formal education but also nonformal and informal educational sectors with all activities including work places and free-time activities, religious as well as secular areas. Conclusively, the comprehensive approach is one that builds a solid basis for life-long education, which has today positioned itself at the very centre of attention, after having been identified primarily as a means to bridge educational differences⁴⁶.

Nieto⁴⁷ points out that monocultural education deprives all students of the diversity that is part of our world which is why intercultural education is not only for minority students or ethnically mixed groups; instead, it is pervasive basic education about all people and for all. It deconstructs ethnocentrism and supports perspective transformation and mental border crossing. Consequently, intercultural education is not a neutral approach but a strongly value-laden activity which demands active participation and open discussion about social justice, poverty, discrimination, and issues on gender and sexuality both in schools and in society. In comprehensive educational processes, knowledge is combined with social awareness, which enforces action towards the agreed goals on local as well as national, regional and global arenas⁴⁸.

5. Teacher education and critical pedagogy

Particularly representatives of critical pedagogy have emphasised teachers' role as social actors and "transformative intellectuals"⁴⁹. The influence of critical theorists has been prominent in linking intercultural education with wider issues of socioeconomic and political inequity and ethical considerations. They argue that if wider changes are pursued, education should include an awareness of

46 Winther-Jensen, T. "Redefining lifelong learning internationally" in Kotthoff, H.J.; Moutsios, S. (eds.) *Education policies in Europe. Economy, citizenship, diversity. Studies in international comparative and multicultural education*, Volume 10, Münster Germany, Wazmann Verlag, 2007, p. 49.

47 Nieto, S. *op. cit.*, p. 310.

48 See also Räsänen, R. "Intercultural education as education for global responsibility..." *cit.*, pp. 22-24; Räsänen, R. "Teachers' intercultural competence and education for global responsibility..." *cit.*, pp. 35-40.

49 Giroux, H. *Introduction to the politics of education by Paulo Freire*, New York, Bergin & Garvey, 1985; Raivola, R. "Onko opettaja säilyttävän tehtävänsä vanki?" in Luukkainen, T. (toim) *Hyväksi opettajaksi*, Juva, WSOY, 1993, 9-30.

institutional and cultural racism and economical and political power structures within countries and on the global scale. It is important to point out that global education and tolerance does not mean putting up with anything and everything; violence, pollution, discrimination, injustice and violations of human rights are issues that one should be sensitised to, and they are also issues to fight against⁵⁰.

Stephen May⁵¹ has further discussed the conditions for transformative critical pedagogy and has developed three key principles for its success (in brief):

to become aware of and deconstruct the apparent neutrality of education – and particularly citizenship education – and realise that knowledge and values that often are presented as universal are neither common nor available to all,

to situate cultural differences within a wider nexus of power relations of which they form part of and to interrogate the normalisation and universalisation of the cultural knowledge of majority groups and its juxtaposition with other knowledges and practices,

to maintain a reflexive critique of specific cultural practices that avoids the vacuity of cultural relativism and allows for criticism (both internal and external), transformation and change.

In addition to the above-mentioned principles, McLaren and Torres⁵² remind that critical multicultural ethics must be performed and must not be reduced just to academic exercises and reading; instead, ethics of compassion and sense of solidarity includes also practical engagement in activities where these principles are practiced. They remind of the importance of students' lived experiences in their learning and of engaging their minds, bodies and affection in the learning processes.

The above key principles suggested by May are essential when transforming Finnish teacher education; as it was stated before, Finnish education and teacher education programmes have traditionally been ethnocentric and monocultural. In her recent study Virta⁵³ found out an interesting phenomenon that it is easier for Finnish student teachers to become sensitive towards diversity in pedagogical

50 Parekh, B. *Rethinking multiculturalism: Cultural diversity and political theory*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, p. 300.

51 May, S. "Critical multiculturalism and cultural difference: Avoiding essentialism" in May, S. (ed.) *Critical multiculturalism. Rethinking multicultural and antiracist education*, London, Falmer Press, 1999, pp. 11-45.

52 McLaren, P.; Torres, R. "Racism, and multicultural education: Rethinking 'race' and 'whiteness' in capitalism" in May, S. (ed.) *Critical multiculturalism*, London, Falmer Press, 1999, 46-76.

53 Virta, A. "Learning to teach in culturally diverse classrooms" in *Journal of Intercultural Education*, 20, 4, 2009, pp. 285-298.

relations than to notice the biases in teaching contents and presented knowledge. The core contents of various school subjects in the Finnish core curricula mostly follow the traditional concept of identity construction, which means that children learn first about your own town/city where the school is situated and the immediate environment, then Finland, neighbouring countries and Europe, and finally countries and cultures outside Europe. The picture given about Finland and people living in Finland can also be very one-sided and monolithic. It is not shown how “the world is in Finland” and how Finland is connected to the world.

As we can see, there are many big educational questions that need to be raised, quite many of them ontological and epistemological by nature. For example: how could ethnocentrism be avoided, whose cultures should be introduced, and how are different groups presented in teaching material? The European dimension can be pondered (whether there is such a thing as European culture or European values). Further, how have the conceptions of citizenship changed and how do we teach multi-levelled local, national, European and global aspects of citizenry? Perhaps we should start our teaching from the other end – from the globe and global responsibility and discuss that in relation to home areas⁵⁴.

It is not only contents that need to be re-considered, but all the aspects of education need attention. One of those aspects is teaching methods. Many of the intercultural learning theories are based on people staying in contact with another culture for a longer period of time and going through adjustment processes. Pedagogical situations in the classroom are different and consequently, raise the question of how perspective shift or transformation can take place in such an “artificial” situation. In most formal education, diverse experiences, intercultural encounters, various perspectives, dialogue as well as cognitive and affective tensions must be specifically planned and organised, including various methods, for example debates, role-plays, guests, visits, exchange programmes and specific reading materials. An open atmosphere in a multicultural group as itself is a very fruitful starting point for intercultural education as it naturally provides different points of view which trigger critical thinking and possibilities for cross-cultural dialogue and reflection⁵⁵.

54 Boulding, E. *Building global civic culture*, New York, Teachers' College Press, 1988; Gerle, E. *In search of global ethics*, Lund, University Press, 1995; Sihvola, J. *Maailmankansalaisen etiikka*, Helsinki, Otava, 2004.

55 Järvelä, M.L. “Dialogue in education and cultural encounters...” cit., pp. 35-47; Van Oord, L. “After culture: Intergroup encounters in education” in *Journal of Research in International Education* 7, 2, 2008, pp. 131-147; Räsänen, R. “Intercultural education as education for global responsibility...” cit., pp. 24-25.

Noddings⁵⁶ has especially reminded of the importance of caring relations in teaching situations. She talks about two kinds of caring that need to be cherished in education: caring *for* and caring *about*. The former form of caring includes caring relations between people – being accepted and loved as well as showing affection, love and responsibility for others. The latter form consists of caring about environment, social justice, ideals and important matters that give meaning and direction for life. Noddings⁵⁷ suggests four methods in order to cultivate caring attitudes and actions: modelling, dialogue, practice and affirmation. She emphasises that teachers are models whether they want it or not. She pays particular attention to dialogue about the issues that are important to people and their wellbeing. Finally, what really matters in the end, is our actions. To conclude, school, and particularly teacher education should provide possibilities for caring relations and responsible actions.

6. Intercultural Teacher Education Program (ITE) at Oulu University

Developing intercultural teacher education as a collaborative action research process has long traditions in the Faculty of Education at Oulu University⁵⁸. Global perspective as well as global ethics came to the picture naturally since the beginning of the 1990's as the Teacher Education Department in Oulu is a member of the UNESCO Associated schools-network. The pedagogy which focuses on intercultural and global education has since then been developed as a collaborative project resulting in a special teacher education programme (ITE), which provides students with bachelor's (three years) and master's degree (two years), including the teacher's diploma.

The ITE-programme follows mainly the aims and structure of "ordinary" primary teacher education programme, but pays special attention to raising ethical sensitivity, intercultural competences and global awareness. The aim is also to study the possibilities of education on the local and global level – how education could play a transformative role for sustainable and fair development. For practical reasons, as some of the students are not Finnish-speaking and exchange students study with the group, large amount of the studies is given in English as Lingua Franca. Students are also required to study the minimum of one

56 Noddings, N. *Educating moral people*, New York, Teachers' College Press, 2002, pp. 190-192.

57 *Ibidem*.

58 The research group (EDGE) has been active since the early 1990s. See <http://www.oulu.fi/ktk/edge>

term outside Finland. The Erasmus networks and other exchange programmes⁵⁹ have provided excellent opportunities for studies abroad, as well as for employing international experts to lecture in the programme. The main theoretical guidelines in the development of the programme have been provided by critical intercultural pedagogy, transformative learning and global ethics.

Content-wise about one third of the studies (mainly the school subjects) is fairly similar to other teacher education programmes, two thirds of the courses have about the same title but are focused according to the special orientation of the programme. The subject specialists, for instance, discuss how to change the didactics of their subject so that it crosses cultural and national borders and demonstrates how different the world looks when it is viewed from different socio-cultural positions and from other parts of the world. Important questions to consider all through the programme are for instance: whose knowledge is included, who have access to knowledge and education and what kind of a worldview – and future for that matter – do we construct, and want to construct, through education.

About half of the studies is especially designed for the ITE students. Special courses deal with intercultural education, comparative education, education and development, and global education⁶⁰. At the very beginning of their studies, students take part in the simulation project called ICONS (international communication and negotiation skills), where students representing governments of different countries discuss current issues in world affairs via ICT. The simulation sessions are preceded by a thorough study of the topics and of the respective country and its relation with other states. The students in Oulu have represented e.g. Great Britain, India and South Africa, which has meant to familiarise themselves with the countries and their position in world politics when negotiating about trade, health issues, education, environment and human rights. The aim of the project is to open up the global perspective and to show the interrelatedness of the issues and parts of the world. The purpose is also to start societal and ethical reflection from the beginning and to reveal concretely the tendencies of ethnocentrism and effects of power structures locally and globally.

Within the first two years students focus on studying European educational systems and cultures, educational philosophies, practices and policies. Education of minority groups gets special attention in the studies. The study units have included excursions to Russia and many other European countries; and the representatives of

59 E.g. North-South-South – programme.

60 E.g. human rights, peace, equity, environment, globalisation and theories of knowledge and development.

the respective countries give lectures about their countries and cultures. The students are offered various opportunities to meet and discuss with the people from various regions, particularly with their future colleagues in other countries. The comparative method which considers the historical and cultural situation of the countries helps to understand the context and provides students with vast amount of options to consider when they are making educational choices in their future jobs.

Master's level studies in the programme include courses in research methodology, longer periods of practice and a Master's thesis with a multicultural or global perspective. The most popular minor subject choices are special education, English, intercultural education, Finnish as a foreign or second language, social sciences and arts. However, all other alternatives within the range of home university and other Finnish or foreign universities are possible, among them African studies at Dalarna university. The master's level courses include Educational policy, planning and leadership and Global education and development. The international group has three master's level courses of its own: Educational management and leadership, Education and development and Global education. The aim in these courses is to direct the attention again to globalisation and global aspects of education (including international agencies and non-governmental organisations) and provide competencies for doing research on intercultural and global education.

Teaching practice partly takes place in the practice school, which is attached to the Department of Teacher Education. It is a part of the University and teachers are particularly trained for tutoring and guidance. Several practices can be designed individually according to students' interests and the aims of the programme. In addition to learning the basic skills of teaching, experience about different pedagogical cultures and contexts is considered important. That is why students have worked e.g. in small rural schools, urban schools, refugee centres, immigrant classes, international schools in Finland and abroad, in various organisations and development co-operation projects. In addition to guidance before and during the practice, group discussions after the working period are considered essential for individual and shared learning. Well-structured diaries in pedagogical portfolios have proved to be important for the reflection and dialogue – for interpersonal and intercultural sharing and learning. Students are encouraged to be creative with their practice choices; civic service and participation are supported.

Special attention in the programme has been paid to tutoring, individual guidance, and collaborative learning in the group. During the first three years, tutoring sessions and studies in intercultural (i.e. diversity) education run parallel to all other studies with the aim of providing long-term and continuous reflection on socio-cultural experiences and students' professional development in a secure atmosphere. The mentors support and challenge the learning processes, develop the programme

together with the students and collect feedback about its meaningfulness. Visits by experienced professionals from different fields of life are an important part of these sessions. As a whole, intercultural and international education is in the programme seen as a holistic approach where various perspectives to knowledge and issues of diversity, cultural encounters, dialogue and reflection are provided throughout the programme (See also <http://www.oulu.fi/ktk/edge/>).

7. Future challenges

The comprehensive national strategies and the integrative approach in the Finnish core curricula are right measures for gradual educational transformations where students' cultural diversity, different needs and strengths and relevant competences for the interrelated globe form a starting point for good teaching in all educational institutions. Although teachers, as stated earlier in this article, are the key actors in the changes, the role of informal and non-formal education must not be ignored. One of the biggest present-day challenges is to build integration between these sectors and make them work unanimously for the benefit of the next generations. Teachers also need support in order to be successful in their work: they deserve wise policies, supportive national guidelines, relevant and efficient training and good leadership in the educational institutions. It is also clear that educational sector alone cannot change everything, but parallel transformations are needed particularly in the social and economic sectors as well.

In spite of the many positive national reforms and international efforts in recent years, the situation in the field – in schools or teacher education institutions – is not quite satisfactory yet. Teacher education programmes have long and strong traditions, and they are, at least in Finland, tight, versatile and fragmented into many small content areas. To introduce any new contents – or perspectives, for that matter – into the old structures seems difficult; the usual result has been that schedules have become even more hectic as few of the former elements change, but the new substance is added on top of the old ones. As a consequence, with the exception of very few teacher education institutions, intercultural and international education has mainly consisted of separate courses which have had minor influence on the mainstream thinking or hardly any major perspective changes. What is missing is the realisation that teaching cultural sensitivity and global responsibility does not necessarily require a lot of new courses but transformations in thinking and in the old contents and structures. It is mainly a question of a paradigm shift from monocultural and ethnocentric curricula to

comparative and multi-perspective approaches⁶¹.

The same problems concern schools. The cross-curricula themes have played an excellent role in drawing attention to the areas which need attention in all school subjects and in the whole school culture. However, the overarching themes have not yet become an integral part of school work but are mostly taken care of through theme weeks or separate projects. To assist the integration, changes in the national curricula (new ones are under construction) are needed as well: the interconnections between the overarching values, different cross-curricula themes and various school subjects must be made more transparent. Besides, the number of cross-curricula themes is too abundant, which, without visible interconnections in the value-basis, gives the false impression that they have little in common and can even be contradictory.

Teacher education in Finland takes place in the university context and consequently is affected by the transformations in higher education. As stated before, internationalization has been a central slogan and aim in higher education policies. However, what is meant by this slogan varies. The aims stated in the 2009 Internationalisation strategy for higher education institutions are varied and, to certain extent, seem even contradictory to each other. They raise questions of whether internationalisation is driven by competition and economic benefit for home university or by co-operation, mutual learning, joint benefit and solidarity. How would ethical internationalisation be possible in the present competitive structures?

An interesting, although alarming analysis of the consequences of the global restructuring of the university system is given by Cris Shore⁶² who describes a clear paradigm shift towards neo-liberalism in universities. He claims that along with the neo-liberal reform, a new set of discourses has emerged around universities and their role – a discourse that draws together different, often contradictory agendas. Policy papers present several examples of the contradictory nature of this rhetoric, such as the demands of growth while at the same time claiming to promote environmentally sustainable development, or ensuing equity of access and achievement in education while at the same time promoting severe competition and international research excellence. There has been a shift towards

61 Gundara, J.; Sharma, N. "Interculturalism, sustainable development and higher education institutions" in *The International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning*, 2, 2, 2010, pp. 23-34.

62 Shore, C. "Beyond the multiversity: neo-liberalism and the rise of schizophrenic university" in *Social Anthropology* 18/2010, European Association of Social Anthropologists, 2009, p.18.

a new multi-layered conception of universities' tasks. Institutions of higher education are expected to fulfil a plethora of different functions including new regimes of measurement and monitoring, developing performance indicators and quality assurance. Shore⁶³ claims that these changes have caused uncertainty about academic subjectivities and about university's role.

These neo-liberal reforms arrived in Finland later than many other Western countries, but they have reached us – the new university law is the most concrete indication of it. In the middle of these reforms, the initial ideas of international or global education introduced by the United Nations and UNESCO sometimes seem very remote from the present-day teacher education realities. David Purpel⁶⁴ has pointed out that we have trivialised education and live in the middle of moral and spiritual crisis in education. He continues that present-day education is often like an emperor without clothes and that we need to return to the realms of the fully clothed. We must turn to the questions about what is essential in education and what are the main commitments of educators. He concludes that it is not change itself that is needed but rather the changes that resonate with pursue of personal meaning, affectionate human relations, social justice, world peace and ecological harmony.

63 Ivi, pp. 115-129.

64 Purpel, D.; McLaurin, W. *Reflections on the Moral and Spiritual Crisis*, New York, Peter Lang, 2004.

The role of Islam in the Federal Somali Constitution of 2012: some preliminary remarks

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More than twenty years of brutal civil war and total collapse of the Somali state has left Somalia with few solid ties – outside those of clan and subclan membership – apart from those provided by Islam.

Islam has a long history in Somalia¹. While certainly at times also divisive, Islam in Somalia has always been able to suggest solutions where secular institutions have failed. For many Somalis, Islam, and Islamic brotherhoods in particular², also provide a means of positioning themselves in the world and in the history³. The success of Sufi orders in Somalia must to some extent be seen in relation to their capacity to institute social unity in religious terms. More than once in Somali history, Islam has been able to provide more inclusive identities than those provided through the tracing of patrilineal descent in the system of clanship. The ability to bridge clan differences by offering a basic form of unity has also been in line with the nationalist sentiments that swept across the country for decades, at least before the civil war⁴.

1 Excavation in the capital Mogadishu have revealed remnants of a mosque that is one of the oldest of the entire continent. Early inscriptions also confirm the early arrival of Islam in the coastal cities, and burial remains in the interior indicate a comparably early spread of Muslim funerary practices. By the end of the eleventh century most people in what is today Somalia had at least been in touch with Islam. The writings of I.M. Lewis provide the best introduction to Somali social life as well as Islam in Somalia. *A Modern History of Somalia: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa*, Westview, 1988, devotes considerable space to Islam in Somalia; *Saints and Somalis: Popular Islam in a Clan-based Society*, Lawrenceville, 1998, contains both classic essays on Somali Islam and newly written material.

2 The three largest Sufi orders that still exist in the country and that formally organize nearly all Somalis are the Qadiriyya, Ahmadiyya, and Salihyya.

3 On a high (fictional) genealogical level many Somalis regard themselves as descendants of the Prophet Muhammad's lineage Quraysh, usually mediated by his uncle Abu Talib. This implies the possibility of arguing that Somalis are of Arab descent, a topic that remains disputed among many Somalis.

4 Mentioning these unifying tendencies in Somali Islam, it should be borne in mind that in the past, the different orders have occasionally fought harsh against one another.

Somalis are almost exclusively Sunni Muslims and follow the Shafii school of law. In later years, some followers of the Hanbali (Wahhabi) school of law have also emerged, due to external influence, as well as some Shia influences. To what extent these form of Islam are gaining ground at popular level is hard to assess, but at public level some Islamist movements appeared and consolidated their presence all over the country⁵.

In this framework, on August 1st, 2012, while the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) proceeded in slow reconquest of the territory in the hands of *al-Shabaab*, the National Constituent Assembly in Mogadishu, ratified the Constitution of the Provisional Federal Republic of Somalia⁶. The long text, which includes 143 articles, was acclaimed by the UN as “a major milestone” in the road map of the transition process, started with the Transitional Federal Charter of February 2004⁷, and culminated in the swearing of the members of the Lower House of the Federal Parliament⁸.

The new Constitution would mark a decisive step in the reconstruction of the Somali state. Is this really true, in terms of effectiveness? What is the role of Islamic legal tradition in this process of reconstruction, *vis à vis* the protection of Human Rights? In this brief comment, I will focus on these particular

5 *Al-Shabaab* (literally “the Youth”) is an Islamist armed movement that since 2006 has gradually taken hold in South-central Somalia coming to control more than two-thirds of the territory in 2009-2010. Acting first as a armed vanguard of the Union of Islamic Courts (the political organization of fundamentalist Islamic matrix settled in Mogadishu since 2006), Al-Shabaab has been added to the umpteenth power vacuum that opened after the same Union of Islamic Courts was eradicated by the Ethiopian military intervention (December 2006-January 2009). Its strategy is based on suicidal actions and guerrilla against the Transitional Government considered a “puppet” and AMISOM, regarded as a foreign occupation force.

6 The adjective “temporary” does not appear in the text approved but is extrapolated from the reading of articles 133, 134, 136 and forth in Annex C, containing the rules regarding the revision of the Constitution during the first term of the House of the People (August 2012-August 2016). In particular, Annex C, which lists the matters for which the constituent recommends a revision, explicitly refers to a “provisional constitution” with reference to the ratification of August 1st, 2012, while art. 136 defines “final” the Constitution that will be ratified through a popular referendum, within the next four-year term.

7 Adopted by the Somali tribal leaders gathered in Nairobi for the Somali National Reconciliation Conference, the Charter Transitional Federal has represented the legal basis for the agenda of the Transitional Federal Government until the actual Constitution of 2012. The Charter of 2004 established a parliamentary Republic, whereby the principle was declined in terms of democratic representation based on traditional clans (cf. Art. 30).

8 This was at the end of August 2012.

aspects, neglecting some other very relevant critiques which can be raised to the Constitution⁹.

The new Constitution comes after a period of twenty years *vacuum* of sovereignty which has been the fertile ground for the increase of international criminal phenomena such as terrorism and piracy spread out in these lawless lands where there is not effective sovereignty. In fact, since 1991, the year of the fall of the military regime of Siad Barre, Somalia is at the top of the list of so called “failed states”, that is states where no government entity is able to exercise a monopoly legitimate use of force over the entire territory. Currently, Somalia is governed by multiple entities that have a different degree of control on a limited part of the territory. On the paper, the Federal Government, referred to in the Constitution under review, is recognized by the international community as the sole legitimate ruler of Somalia, it would establish itself in Mogadishu and in the center-south of the country where *al-Shabab* still resist¹⁰. So, the first, and certainly the most radical critique to the Somali Constitution of 2012 is the relationship between constitutional process and the peace process in the broader framework of State building. The new Constitution is a mere attempt to impose the idea of a pacified state; and as such it is absolutely unrealistic. Pretending to normalize the Somali state without having previously created the necessary factual premises in terms of internal stabilization is quite illusory. In other words, and briefly to say, the Constitution was intended to channel the process of State-building in the shortcut bypassing the logical previous agreement, which is the peace agreement between all parties of the Somali conflict¹¹.

9 See Allison, J. “Somalia’s new Constitution puts the cart before the camels” in *Daily Maverick*, August 3, 2012.

10 In the north-western region, the Republic of Somaliland, with its capital Hargeisa, since 1991, acts as independent State; in the north-east (the Horn of Africa in a geographical sense) since 1998, there is Puntland State of Somalia, with its capital Garoe, which claims have been available to be part of a Federal Somali State. Between Somaliland and Puntland, there are disputed lands between the regions (Sool, Sanaag and Cayn) by governments of Hargeisa and Garoe, on which in 2012 was formed the Khaatumo State of Somalia, with its capital Taleex. In the south of Puntland in 2006 arose the Galmudug State, with its capital Galcaio southern entity itself open to a federal project. In the extreme southern offshoot of Somalia, bordering with Kenya and with the support of the latter, was formed in 2010 Azania (Jubaland or) State of Somalia, with capital Baidoa, which is also available to come together in a federation Somalia. Finally, there is the phenomenon of transnational piracy that plagues the territorial waters of Somalia and has its bases mainly terrestrial Puntland and Galmudug.

11 The Constitution of 2012 is not remotely comparable to that of 1961 in terms of democratic constituent process. The latter was, in fact, prepared under Italian trusteeship by a committee of 23 experts, was later discussed and issued by a political committee of 50 members and, therefore, re-discussed, amended and approved on a provisional basis, article by article, by Constituent Assembly

There is a concrete risk that the State is shaped and federalized along clan lines. Major clans may, in fact, dominate any single future State of the Federation, marginalizing and discriminating minority clans¹².

In this perspective, recalling Islamic religion, Islamic principles and *Shari'a* in the text of the Constitution can be understood as a very strong sign of legitimacy. Is this true? And above all, what could be the implications for the Somali legal system?

It is not completely convincing the argument of those who affirm that the Constitution of 2012, recognizing a central role to Islamic Law (*Shari'a*), will be an element of attraction and integration for *al-Shabaab* leaders who manage to survive the military offensive of AMISOM. As discussed below, the controversial relationship between *Shari'a* and human rights as formulated in the Constitution 2012 is anything but a reassurance to the Islamic fundamentalists; on the contrary, it appears to them as the latest attempt by external foreign, infidel powers contaminating the purity of Islam with unacceptable hybridization experiments in the state legislation.

The Constitution under review contains a catalog, rather extended and advanced of human rights as usually internationally recognized: civil, political, economic, social, cultural and the "Third generation" of Rights. Deserve praise, in particular, the rules for the protection of gender identity and weaker vulnerable segments of Somali society, namely women and children.

With regard to women, considering the socio-cultural context of reference, the most striking right, is certainly the physical integrity which is basically the banning to of the traditional practice of female genital mutilation, called «cruel and degrading» and, as such, considered equivalent to the crime of torture. Of a great importance is also the part in which, as an exception to the general

composed of 90 members of parliament and 20 members from different sectors of civil society to last, was finally approved by the people in a referendum. On this point, cf. Contini, P. "Integration of Legal Systems in the Somali Republic" in *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, vol. 16, 1967, pp. 1088-1105.

12 The traditional social system in Somalia ties together all people in a wide-branching system of clans. By calculating descent along paternal lines, every Somali can position himself or herself in one particular clan. Somalis divide themselves in six larger cluster of clans. Darood, living in the Northeast and in Ethiopia and northern Kenya, Isaaq, living central northern Somalia; Hawiye inhabit the central part of the country and the southern coastal cities; Dir clans in the northwest; Digil and Merifle groups of clans, collectively known as Reewin or Rahanweyn live the area between the two southern rivers Jubba and Shabele. Each one of these six cluster is divided into clans (*qoolo or qabiil*). It is only on that level of division that kinship assumes concrete social and political significance.

prohibition imposed by the *Shari'a*¹³, it recognizes woman's right to abortion «in cases of necessity, especially to save the life of the mother». There are other important rights clearly announced in the Constitution such as the prohibition of any form of violence against women (art. 15, 2); the illegality of the marriage without the consent of both man and woman (art. 28, 5) or of marriages in which one or both spouses have not attained their majority age set at 18 years; the right to participation in public life at all levels (although it has not expressly established reserved female quotas). These are very sensitive issues *vis à vis* both Islamic legal tradition and Somali customs.

With regard to children, it is openly affirmed the prohibition to use them in armed conflict (art. 29, 6). Their legal status is further strengthened by the right to receive parental care, including education, the prohibition of infanticide and the obligation of the state to take care of abandoned kids and orphans (art. 28, 3). Minor work is ambiguously forbidden if this can be a risk for child's health (art. 29, 3).

As it happens elsewhere in post-conflict situations¹⁴, the gap existing between the theory announced in the Constitution and the Somali reality is certainly the main obstacle to the implementation of human rights constitutionally declared. The catalogue of Human Rights appears like a fictitious instrument, due to cultural, financial, political and religious obstacles which limit the effectiveness of the laws.

The Constitution of 2012 declares Islam as the religion of the State¹⁵ and, while guarantees freedom of creed and belief¹⁶, prevents the spread of other faiths in the country¹⁷.

Article 4, paradoxically titled "Supremacy of the Constitution", reads: «after *Shari'a*, the Constitution [...] is the supreme law of the country». So, in a quite bizarre way, Constitution is formally subordinated to Islamic Law. This is an original

13 On the large doctrinal debate on the legitimacy of abortion among Muslim scholars, see Atighetchi, D. *Islam and Bioethics*, The Hague, Springer, 2003.

14 For a comparison with the Afghan post-conflict situation, the new Constitution and the role of *Shari'a*, see: Papa, M. *Afghanistan: shari'a, consuetudini e legge statale nella ricostruzione dell'ordinamento giuridico*, Torino, Giappichelli Editore, 2006.

15 See Art. 2.1. See also art. 3.2 that defines Somalia «a Muslim country». In this respect, the Constitution of 2012 did not deviate from the Transitional Federal Charter of 2004 (see Art. 8.1) as well as from the Constitution of 1961 (see Art. 1.3).

16 See art. 17.1.

17 See Articles. 2.2 and 17.2. In essence, the freedom of religion is confined to the inner consciousness. It is to say that before the war there were few Christians who went to schools organized by either Italian Catholics or North American Mennonites.

formula within the larger scenario of Islamic Constitutions of other Islamic countries: none of them adopts this absurde formulation putting in a direct relation the (supreme) positive law and *Shari'a*¹⁸.

The primacy of Islamic Law is also inferable in art. 3.1: «the Constitution [...] is based on the foundations of the Holy Quran and the Sunna of our Prophet Mohamed [...] and protects the higher objectives of *Shari'a* [...]»¹⁹.

This is particularly significative of the deep degree of islamization of the Somali legal system at large, if we consider that in the Transitional Federal Charter of 2004, the Charter itself was identified as the only supreme legal source «binding all Authorities and persons» (Art. 3.2) and *Shari'a* was not included among the guiding principles for the interpretation of the Charter. On the contrary, wider room and a major emphasis was given to the values of reconciliation, unity, democracy, good governance, human dignity, integrity, fundamental rights and freedoms, and rule of law²⁰. The Constitution of 1961 placed itself at the top of the hierarchy of sources without any reference to *Shari'a* (Art. 5).

The special privilege of Islamic Law is also found at level of the hierarchy of the sources, where the Constitution introduces the «Rejection clause» according to which «no law which is not compliant with the general principles of *Shari'a* can be enacted» (art. 2.3)²¹. This is a very crucial clause which does not limit the legislative function of the Parliament itself but affects also the work of the courts: ordinary courts are, in fact, expressly called to interpreting the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution in the light of *Shari'a*²².

In this task judges will be assisted by an *ad hoc* Commission at national level: the Commission on Human Rights, to which the Constitution assigns the specific goal of «the promotion of human rights, and specifically of *Shari'a*, setting standards and

18 Among others see the Afghan Constitution, of 2004, art. 3; and more recently, the Egyptian Constitution of 2012, art. 2.

19 The reference to the Noble Quran and the *Sunna* of the Prophet Muhammad recalls very closely the formula adopted in the Saudi *Nizam Asasi* of 1992.

20 See art. 4.1-2.

21 The Transitional Federal Charter of 2004 expressed the repugnancy clause in a less explicit formula: «*Shari'a* shall be the basic source for national legislation» (Article 8.2). Of course, there was no trace of the clause in the Constitution of 1961.

22 «When interpreting the rights set out in this Chapter [i.e. Chapter 2], a court shall take an approach that seeks to achieve [...] the values that underlie them» (art. 40.1); «[i]n interpreting these rights, the court may consider the *Shari'a* [...]» (art. 40.2); «[t]he recognition of the fundamental rights set out in this Chapter does not deny the existence of any other rights that are recognized or conferred by *Shari'a*, or by customary law or legislation to the extent that they are consistent with the *Shari'a* and the Constitution» (art. 40.4).

parameters for the implementation and fulfilment of human rights obligation». Since the role of the Constitutional Court is limited to review the text of the laws and administrative acts which appear contrary to Constitution, it can be presumed that the Human Rights Commission will emerge as an independent jurisdictional body of religious power. It will be a sort of Council of religious leaders and experts, having the last word in the very sensitive issue of Human Rights.

From what mentioned above, it can be desumed that, in the best case, new Somali model could result in a hybrid legal system which establishes a dialectic between *Shari'a* and positive law, or, in the worst scenario, it can lead to an Islamic Supreme Body implementing a theocratic constitutional institution²³.

In conclusion, since the Constitution does not arise as a true fundamental law and binding legal order of the new Somali state, human rights enshrined in it remain dangerously exposed to an uncertain interpretation of *Shari'a*.

The risk is tremendously amplified from the lack of a national University system, which has been completely destroyed during the war. The absence of a new generation of scholars and intellectuals exposes the new born Federal state to the risk of dangerous infiltrations from abroad. Many Somalis are openly opposed to the growth of the islamist movement. It is often regarded as too alien in comparison with the traditional Somali Islam, often known as Islam of the *Ulama* (the religious scholars). The mixture of political ambitions and religious teachings represented by the Islamists is one factor that directly opposes the traditional Somali tendency to keep separate religious and secular power. In contrast to the leaders of the islamist movements, traditional Somali religious leaders have in a number of cases acted as peace negotiators. It deserves to be pointed out that there are tendencies in Somali society that may be misread as heightening Islamist power, while in fact they only are effects of the increasing significance attributed to religion in general. Many Somalis argue that this significance ultimately may be traced back to the absence of a government.

23 A risk, the latter, far from being unrealistic when you consider that, in reaction to the presence of foreign troops (Ethiopian first, then AMISOM) Somali Islam trasformed to a progressive radicalization starting from the first Islamic Courts and al-Shabaab movement onwards.

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The UN resolution against female genital mutilation

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Introduction

On 20 December 2012 the General Assembly of United Nations has adopted the Resolution A/RES/67/146 on «intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilations». This resolution is a success that can be attributed to the joint efforts of Italy and African States that together have won what can undoubtedly be called a great “battle of rights” in the name of girls and women. This is the reason why I dedicate these pages to Tekeste Negash, a scholar whose love for Italy is deep almost as much as his passion for the vastness of the African cultures.

1. The international framework

The issue of female genital mutilation has been an unwelcome guest in the international agendas for decades, treated with caution and a spasmodic attention not to interfere with the “internal affairs” of other countries; the UN Community has long demonstrated its inability to address what was seen as a “cultural phenomenon”, expression of local traditions and/or religion not to be touched or criticized because such an attitude would have been regarded as an expression of neo-colonialism, a way to impose alien (*rectius*: Western) values and principles to cultures whose history and dignity would have consequently been considered unworthy of protection and respect.

A legal approach to the problem of female genital mutilation required therefore an intense preparatory work in order to demonstrate that the fact of being millenary, widespread and religiously tolerated (if not encouraged) does not necessary make a custom just, fair and lawful. Under this last point of view, it's true that the idea of lawfulness has changed many times during the history of men and that the very idea of law has different meaning in different cultures; nevertheless today there is at least a (theoretical) common ground, represented

by the international Conventions on human rights, some of which have been signed and ratified by almost all the countries of the world. The content of these Conventions (and, among them, are here particularly relevant the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW 1979, and the Convention on the Rights of Child, 1989) outlines a common core of values that must be considered as accepted by all the States that are parties of the Convention. This common core is exactly what can help us today in defining the lawfulness or unlawfulness of a certain behavior.

If we assume that the set of principles incorporated in the international Conventions on human rights has an universal value for all the States Parties – and this is the assumption of this paper – then we have at disposal the legal base to affirm that female genital mutilations are unlawful and as such must be addressed by the legal systems. Looking at the most important documents on the protection of women's rights, the CEDAW, one can observe that at the time of its writing, the general problem of violence against women was not taken into consideration nor was the specific aspect of violence via cultural tradition even considered. Nonetheless, the Convention in its preamble affirms the «faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person»: is it really possible to affirm that cutting off part of the genitalia of a girl respects her dignity and worth as a human being? Furthermore, article 3 of the CEDAW asks the State to guarantee «the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms [of women] on a basis of equality with men», thus recalling first of all the content of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights of 1948, that represents the «common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations»¹.

Article 1 of the UDHR affirms the right to life, liberty and security of person, and once again it's seems obvious that these values can be reconciled with practices like excision and infibulations just pretending to ignore what FGM really are and how deeply they affects the victims.

Yet for decades the problem of traditional harmful practices seemed to be simply non-existent, hidden behind other more relevant questions to the point that the first significant step toward the official censure of harmful traditional practices is dated 1989: the Convention on the Rights of the Child at its article 19 par. 1 requests the States Parties to take «all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or

¹ See: *Universal Declaration on Human Rights, Preamble*, UN Department of Public information. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948.

mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation»; this general prescription about violence against child is completed by article 24 on child's health, whose paragraph 3 imposes to States Parties to «take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children». Here we have, for the first time, in explicit wording, the recognition that do exist certain 'traditional practices' able to affect deeply the physical and mental health of child and that they must be fought both at national and international level. The limit of the Child Convention is that it does not provide for a list of such behaviors; on one side this strategy leaves open the door to the inclusion of a wide set of actions into the notion of harmful practices; on the other side, since no example is given the States can easily affirm that their traditional practices are not harmful and shall not be included among those prohibited by the Convention... and this is exactly what has happened.

Aware of these interpretative problems, the international community proved itself incapable of finding a solution until the so-called Beijing+5² when the UN General Assembly adopted per consensus the Political Declaration and the Resolution A/Res/S-23-3 on «Further Actions and Initiatives to Implement the Beijing Platform for Action» that specifically addresses the problem of female genital mutilation, defined as a «form of violence against women». In the Resolution the UN Community recognizes that a lot of socio-cultural attitudes are deeply discriminatory and that together with economic inequalities they reinforce women's subordinate place in society. As a consequence, girls and women are vulnerable to many forms of violence occurring in the family, among which are quoted (and it must be noted that it is the first time that the different forms of violence are called by their names) sexual abuse of female children, dowry-related violence, marital rape and, finally, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women.

These behaviors are considered as violations of the human rights of women and girls and seen as they are, *c'est à dire* obstacles to the full enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

From this moment on, further documents have addressed the issue of female genital mutilation³, showing an increasing consciousness by the international

2 "Beijing + 5" is the short name for the Five-year Review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action held in the General Assembly, 5-9 June 2000. The twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" adopted a Political Declaration and outcome document entitled "further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action".

3 General Assembly Resolution 56/128 of 19 December 2001; Commission on the Status of Women Resolutions 51/2 of 9 March 2007, 52/2 of 7 March 2008, 57/7 of 12 March 2010.

community about the unlawfulness of such practices that has culminated in the initiative – taken by the UN Group of African States with the support of Italian NGOs⁴ and government – of drafting a Resolution against female genital mutilation voted and accepted by General Assembly last December. As Emma Bonino writes⁵:

This remarkable development has come about thanks to a coalition of non-governmental organizations that have worked closely over the past 10 years and those U.N. member states – notably Italy and Burkina Faso – that have been most dedicated to combating the practice at home and internationally. The U.N. resolution will be adopted by consensus, demonstrating the international community's unified stance. The consensus is strengthened by the fact that two thirds of U.N. member states are co-sponsoring the resolution, with 67 states joining the 54 nations of the African Group, which initially introduced the text. The next step will be for all states to implement the recommendations of this breakthrough document, starting, in the words of the resolution, by taking “all necessary measures, including enacting and enforcing legislation to prohibit female genital mutilations and to protect women and girls from this form of violence, and to end impunity”. [...] The resolution can bring an end to this useless controversy by establishing that the prerequisite for addressing a human rights violation is the establishment of a clear legislative framework for deterrence and protection of potential victims, which in turn strengthens grass-roots activists, placing their work unequivocally within the rule of law and creating the context in which government and civil society can cooperate most effectively. [...] The resolution [...] unequivocally condemns any medicalization. Laws have been adopted in a number of countries, but the political will to implement them effectively has seldom followed.

2. The national and regional steps

It is true that for too many years the States and the religious authorities have denied that female genital mutilation should have been considered a problem and not something to be proud of and worthy of protection: the legislative laxity; the strong

4 Stop Fgm is an international campaign promoted by Emma Bonino, Senator of Italian Republic, and run by NGO “No Peace without Justice” (international nonprofit organization founded by Emma Bonino) and “Aidos” (Associazione Italiana Donne per lo Sviluppo).

5 *The International Herald Tribune*, December 19, 2012.

social relevance of the practice (with the discrimination of the girls “uncutted”, considered impure, damaged and depraved); the chauvinist attitude of religious leaders that have used the practice to control the feminine sexuality. All these factors, together with the general indifference of the international public opinion, have left for many years the States free to, at least, ignore the problem when not even promoting the practice. It is therefore not surprising that the international campaign “Stop FGM” began collecting significant results when FGM became a problem also in Europe and North America, due to the migration process that has brought thousands of people from Africa, with their traditions and customs, to face directly with other cultures and legal systems.

In Europe and North America it was commonly perceived that female genital mutilation is an “African” problem and an “Islamic” issue, but both the statement have proven to be false: it is not a mere African problem because all that affects the safety (in its broader meaning) of a woman is a threat to all women of the world, a proof of how much remains to do to ensure their dignity. It’s not an “Islamic” issue because, even if the majority of the populations that accept and practice FGM profess the Islamic religion, this practice has no roots in the Islamic tradition since nor the Qur’an nor the *Sunna* (the teachings of Prophet Muhammad) recommend it. Still, the combination of guilty silence and willful misinterpretation by those who should have known and teach the *Shari’a* (the sacred law of Islam) has produced, over centuries, the widespread belief that FGM are a religious duty and, as such, unavoidable⁶.

The “cultural approach” adopted in facing the FGM has generated a legal approach that was sometimes vitiated by a sort of anthropological curiosity for the strange habits of foreigners; nevertheless, the European and North American legislators began to enact laws to counteract the practice, criminalizing the conduct and extending the protection of girls to the point of prohibiting the exit from the country of child when there is the suspect that they can be victim of actions

6 It’s not the purpose of this paper to analyze the responsibility of religious leaders with regard to the diffusion of FGM, but it is nonetheless interesting to read what the *shaykh* of al-Azhar Muhammad Sayed Tantawi affirmed in his intervention at the Cairo Conference on 2003: “Now comes the issue of FGM. Wise men give each specialist his due. FGM is a medical issue, what doctors say we heed and obey. There is no text in *Shari’a*, in the Koran, in the prophetic *Sunna* addressing FGM. All texts on this issue either have been called weak or could not be substantiated. The issue has to be referred to doctors. There might be cases where FGM is advised, and other cases where doctors do not advise it. So we have to refer to doctors’ ruling”. This approach clarifies the absence of specific Islamic obligation about the performing of FGM and must be underlined because Tantawi predecessors were far more prone to betray the spirit and the source of Islamic law affirming the consistency of FGM with the *Shari’a*.

considered as crime by the guest Country⁷. The alarm level toward the harmful traditional practices increased together with the increasing of episodes brought to the attention of the judiciary, urging a clear answer from the legislator. An example of this process is given by Italy. In 1999 a dramatic case of genital mutilations concerning a girl and a boy sons of an Egyptian married to an Italian women was discussed in front of an Italian court and settled applying the articles 582 and following of the penal code on severe bodily injuries. Shocked by the discovery that it was possible for an Italian citizen to be victim of such a violent crime, the Italian parliament opened a debate on the opportunity to enact a specific discipline against FGM: after years of discussions and at least four different drafts, the law 7/2006 on «provisions relating to the prevention and prohibition of the practice of female genital mutilation» entered into force. The law amends the Italian penal code introducing a specific discipline for the offence of female genital mutilation⁸. This choice reflects the high degree of disapproval toward the conduct: FGM are certainly a kind of bodily injury, but since they cause serious damages on the women's physical and moral integrity, affecting the sexual and reproductive health of girls and women, it was deemed necessary to affirm strongly the will to «prevent, fight and repress» the conduct.

What about those African States where the female genital mutilations are practiced? Their response to the issue is the results of both the relentless action of local activists and of the growing international blame that has followed some brutal episodes brought to the attention of public opinion. Even though some

7 I.e: UK *Children Act* of 1989; Canadian Bill C-126 del 1993 modifying the *Criminal Code and Young Offenders Act*.

8 The new articles 583-Bis and 583-Ter, introduced in the Italian penal code by article 6 of law 7/2006, punish any practice of female genital mutilation “not justifiable under therapeutical or medical needs” with imprisonment ranging from 4 to 12 years (3 to 7 years for any mutilation other than, or less severe than, clitoridectomy, excision or infibulation). The penalty can be elevated up to 1/3 if the victim is a minor or if the offense has been committed for profit. An Italian citizen or a foreign citizen legally resident in Italy can be punished under this law even if the offense is committed abroad. The law also mandates any medical practitioner found guilty under those provisions to have his/her medical license revoked for a minimum of six up to a maximum of ten years.

states, like Burkina Faso⁹ and Ghana¹⁰, have adopted yet in the '90s a legislation against FGM, the assumption by the States of a collective responsibility toward the maintenance of this practice and the development of a general social awareness by the interested population of the unlawfulness of FGM is more recent.

At the regional level, the change of attitude toward the FGM is shown by the 2003 Cairo Declaration adopted at the end of the Afro-Arab Expert Consultation on «Legal Tools for the Prevention of Female Genital Mutilation»; it calls the twenty-eight African and Arab countries affected by the FGM for the adoption of «specific legislation addressing FGM in order to affirm their commitment to stopping the practice and to ensure women's and girl's human rights» and recommends a multi-disciplinary approach that must see «the participation of both elected officials and other government actors and members of civil society, including advocates, religious leaders, traditional leaders, medical providers, teachers, youth, social workers, and the all forms of media including electronic media». In order to avoid confusion or misinterpretation on the extent and purpose of the Cairo Declaration, it specifies that the legal definition of FGM should be formulated by national legislatures on the basis of the World Health Organization definitions.

At the same time, taking into account the different national contexts, the Declaration admits that the process of banning FGM could be not an easy task and reputes «desirable to provide for a period of sensitization to precede enforcement of the prohibition as it applies to parents and family members». Furthermore, the Declaration continuously reaffirms the necessity to involve the religious leaders in all the programs, consultative process and debates on the issue, thus showing how strong has been the role of religion in sustaining the spread and maintenance of the practice.

9 In Burkina Faso the new criminal code, enacted with law n. 43/1996, outlaws FGM. The code provides punishment for those involved in the excision of women and girls. According to article 380, a prison sentence of six months to three years and/or a fine is inflicted to whom ever attempts or succeeds at damaging the physical integrity of a woman's genitalia by total ablation, excision, infibulation, desensitization or any other method. If death follows, the prison sentence is five to ten years. Similar penalties are applicable to those who request, incite to excision or promote it either by providing money, goods, moral support or all other means. If the guilty party belongs to the medical or para-medical corps they undergo to the maximum penalty and the judge can additionally forbid the guilty party to practice his or her profession for a maximum of five years (Article 381).

10 In Ghana the art. 69A of the penal code of 1960 as amended states that: «(1) Whoever excises, infibulates or otherwise mutilates the whole or any part of the labia minora, labia majora and the clitoris of another person commits an offence and shall be guilty of a second degree felony and liable on conviction to imprisonment of not less than three years.

(2) For the purposes of this section "excise" means to remove the prepuce, the clitoris and all or part of the labia minora; "infibulate" includes excision and the additional removal of the labia majora».

Immediately after the Cairo Declaration, the African Union adopted the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, based on the ascertainment that despite the ratification of plenty of international human rights instruments by the majority of Member States, and despite all their solemn commitments to eliminate all forms of discrimination and harmful practices against women, nothing is substantially changed for African women. Therefore the Maputo Protocol, once more, specifies that are considered «harmful practices» all the behaviors, attitudes and practices which «negatively affect the fundamental rights of women and girls, such as their right to life, health and bodily integrity» and that the State Parties shall enact and effectively implement all the appropriate national legislative measures to prohibit them¹¹.

The change of approach toward the FGM is shown also at the national level: during the first decade of the XXI century a number of States have enacted laws in order to criminalize the conduct; examples are given by the Benin Law 3/2003 on the repression of female genital mutilation¹² whose article 2 outlaws all types of FGM «performed by anyone in whatever capacity»; in Kenya the Children's Act 8/2001 prohibits (article 18) «female circumcision as a cultural rite, custom or traditional practice that negatively affects the life, health, social welfare, dignity or physical or psychological development of a child»; in Egypt, after years of schizophrenic attitudes ranging from the invitation to protect and spread FGM as a mean to moderate the nature of women¹³ to the repression of it via Ministerial

11 To harmful practices is dedicated the article 6 of the Protocol: «State Parties shall condemn all harmful practices which affect the fundamental human rights of women and girls and which are contrary to recognized international standards, and undertake to take all the necessary measures, inter alia:

- a) to create public awareness regarding harmful practices through information, formal and informal education, communication campaigns and outreach programs targeting all stakeholders;
- b) to prohibit the amelioration or preservation of harmful practices such as the medicalisation and para-medicalisation of female genital mutilation and scarification, in order to effect a total elimination of such practices;
- c) to rehabilitate victims of harmful practices by providing them with social support services such as health services to meet their health-care needs, emotional and psychological counseling and skills training aimed at making them self-supporting in order to facilitate their re-integration into their families, communities and in other sectors of the society;
- d) to protect and grant asylum to those women and girls who are at risk of, have been, or are being subjected to harmful practices and all other forms of intolerance».

12 Defined by article 3 of the law as the «partial or total ablation of the external genital organs of persons of the female gender and/or other surgery performer on these organs».

13 The al-Azhar *shaykh* Jad al-Haqq was famous, under this respect, in the 1990s.

Decree, the Parliament has finally criminalized FGM by amending the penal code in 2008¹⁴: the new article 242 bis extends to FGM the rules on bodily injury laid down in articles 241 and 242 of the code¹⁵.

3. Conclusion

Celebrated by Italy's Un ambassador Ragolini as «the beginning of a new journey», the Resolution is a milestone in the fight against FGM not because of its content, that reflect what has been said on the issue in other international documents, but because it arises from the initiative of those countries that, in being involved in the phenomenon, are directly responsible for its eradication.

the representative of Burkina Faso said the degrading practice of female genital mutilation harmed women's physical and moral integrity, and was falsely justified under religious and cultural pretences. Africa had mobilized to combat female genital mutilation, he said, with Governments showing political will to free women from its yoke by launching programmes, adopting laws and releasing both human and financial resources. Civil society was raising awareness and he welcomed the campaign for a global ban on female genital mutilations launched by the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices. Indeed, the time had come to recognize women's rights, break the silence surrounding female genital mutilation and move towards its elimination. He called on all co-sponsors to play an active role in creating a world free of female genital mutilation¹⁶.

The mere existence of resolutions and laws does not of course guarantee that the legal protection of girls and women will be truly enforced at national level, since law in action is often very different from law in the books. The Resolution cannot answer to some questions: How the final interpreter of the law, the judge, will understand the content, purpose and scope of the law? Will he/she be able to resist to cultural pressures once the light of the international attention will be

14 Law No. 126/2008 amending several provisions of the Child Act (No. 12/1996); the Penal Code (No. 58/1937); and the Code on Civil Affairs (No. 143/1994).

15 Article 242 bis provides that without prejudice to the Penal Code, article 61, or any heavier penalty provided for by another law, anyone inflicting the injuries covered under articles 241 and 242 of the Penal Code in the course of performing female circumcision shall be punished by a term of imprisonment of between three months and two years or a fine of between 1,000 and 5,000 pounds.

16 www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/ga11331.doc.htm

turned off? How the States will deal in real terms with the educational task that only will in the future succeed in delegitimizing FGM and those who still support them?

The UN resolution cannot answer to these questions because it is not binding and therefore cannot be used to sanction non complying State Party, but – calling for the establishment of mechanism to monitor an adherence to and implementation of the legislative framework, and to observe 6 February as the International Day of Zero Tolerance to FGM to be used «to enhance awareness-raising campaigns and to take concrete actions against female genital mutilation» – it shows a political force which encourage Member States to start a new political and juridical course.

Building a new colonial subject? Comparing fascist education systems in Albania and Ethiopia

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Introduction

Colonialism doesn't present always the same features. Often a colonial power carried out different policies of colonization depending on the circumstances¹. At first sight, a comparison between Italian colonial experiences in Albania and Ethiopia could seem inappropriate because many differences characterized colonized countries, before and after Italian occupation. For instance, analyzing the status of citizens in Albania and Ethiopia during Italian occupation we can perceive many differences, above all regarding formal status of citizens for Albanian people and that one of colonial subjects for Ethiopian people. But colonialism was often more a cultural process and a tangible reality rather than a purely formal status. A comparison between Italian Education Systems in both countries could turn out helpful to outline main features of Italian Colonialism in relations with natives. Tekeste Negash, Irma Taddia, and Silvana Palma, stated that Italian education in Eritrea (during both, the Liberal and the Fascist periods) was informed to improve few basic skills of colonial subjects to obtain their own loyalty to the Italian flag without the possibility of social conflicts².

Comparing the Ethiopian and Albanian cases can be useful to understand if the Eritrean case was an occasional praxis of Italian colonial policy or if we

1 Ferro, M. *Histoire des colonisations: des conquêtes aux indépendances*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1994, pp. 9-10.

2 See Tekeste Negash *Italian Colonialism in Eritrea, 1882-1941: Policies, Praxis, and Impact*, Stockholm, Uppsala University, 1987; Taddia, I. *La memoria dell'impero*, Manduria-Bari-Roma, Laicata, 1988; Palma, S. "Educare alla subaltermità. Prassi e politiche scolastiche nella colonia Eritrea" in Carcangiu, B.; Tekeste Negash (eds.) *L'Africa orientale italiana nel dibattito storico contemporaneo*, Roma, Carocci, 2007, pp. 211-238.

can assume that a low grade of education for colonial subjects was a methodical attitude by Italian governors in the colonies.

A brilliant comparison made between colonial cities in Albania and Ethiopia has revealed few common points in Italian Colonial Architectural policies³. Comparing Education Systems established by Italians in these countries could be useful to understand better and clearly which were Fascist aims about occupied people and, which were the roles of natives in colonial societies.

Italian occupation of both Ethiopia and Albania presents in fact many differences but also some similitudes; Italy occupied these countries during a specific stage of Fascist regime development. Ethiopia was conquered in 1936, Albania in 1939. According to Renzo De Felice, late 1930s corresponded for Fascism to a stage of consolidation in Italy, the so-called age of *consensus*⁴. Ethiopia and Albania were occupied by Italians for few years, 5 years for the Ethiopian case, 4 years for Albanian case. Therefore, we are analysing very short occupations in terms of time. This chronological aspect of Fascist occupation has often inclined scholars to consider it just a military occupation rather than a proper colonization, with its social and cultural consequences. Another similitude is represented by the multicultural peculiarity of Ethiopian and Albanian societies. In both countries, Catholic population represented a minority, and new Education systems were set up just few decades before Italian occupation.

These similitudes seem allowing a comparative work, with the aim to outline different and common points in Fascist Education policies, trying to not overstretch similitudes.

1. The Fascist education system in Ethiopia

On May 1936, just a week after the proclamation of the Empire of Italian East Africa, the newspaper of Turin *Il Giornale d'Italia* published an article entitled “La gioventù intellettuale etiopica desidera collaborare con l'Italia”, written by Indro Montanelli. Analysing Ethiopian social and cultural situation before Italian occupation, the author described to Italian readers how really existed in the country a kind of Ethiopian Modernist Party. It was formed by few intellectuals and it was called “Circolo per i laureati”. The best representatives of Ethiopian youth took part in this movement. The conservative wing looked at them with suspect and

3 Pula, B. “Building the Cities of Empire: Urban Planning in the Colonial Cities of Italy’s Fascist Empire” in Steinmetz, G. (ed.) *Sociology and Empire*, Chapel Hill, Duke University Press, *forthcoming*.

4 De Felice, R. *Mussolini il duce. Lo Stato totalitario*, Torino, Einaudi, 1981.

consequently they were taken apart from politics. They claimed a new social order on a European basis, a modern separation of powers, executive, legislative and judiciary. On the contrary they were excluded by public careers and they were usually confined on irrelevant positions. By this way they were not dangerous for social order⁵.

In the same article, the journalist explained to Italian readers that the program of Ethiopian Intellectuals was just an illusion because the country was not ready for this kind of political development. In fact – Montanelli wrote – Ethiopia was a country without national consciousness and political Education, which were the basis for a modernization of the traditional state.

Montanelli's article was part of a wider Fascist propaganda, organized to justify the Italian occupation of Ethiopia and collect approval about the alleged *missione civilizzatrice* among Italians.

With his words Montanelli argued that in the 1920s and early 1930s young Ethiopian intellectuals were the opposition of the regime built by Ras Tafari.

Even if the concept explained in the article was the result of Fascist propaganda, it is important to underline that the words written by Montanelli represented not just the author's point of view. At the beginning of the Empire of Italian East Africa the Fascist Government, not just Montanelli, often represented Ethiopian people as a block without differences between social groups.

Montanelli's article referred to 50 Ethiopian students. Before their coming back to Ethiopia they had taken their degrees at universities in America and Europe. Montanelli also referred to 200 young Ethiopians who had finished high school. The Ethiopian Intellectuals, explained Montanelli, supported Italian occupation of Ethiopia as the only way to modernise their country.

Despite Fascist propaganda, the modernization of Ethiopian Education system had began in 1908 when the Emperor Menilek II founded the Menilek II School in Addis Ababa, as a first effort to develop a Government school system based on a European Education system. Since then the modernisation stage of the country started. But as from late 19th century, few Ethiopian students had already gone abroad to take University degrees.

In 1925 Ras Tafari Makonnen founded the Tafari Makonnen School and six years later, in 1931 he founded the Empress Menen School, the first school for Ethiopian girls⁶.

5 Montanelli, I. "La gioventù intellettuale etiopica desidera collaborare con l'Italia" in *Il Giornale d'Italia*, 17 maggio 1936.

6 Pankhurst, R. "Education in Ethiopia during the Italian Fascist occupation (1936-1941)" in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 5, n. 3, 1972.

In 1936 when Italians occupied Ethiopia the *Westernization* of Ethiopian education system had already started. In 1934 Andrea Festa, Chief of the central office for primary education in Eritrea, explained at the Second Italian Congress of Colonial Studies the “Fascist Idea of Education” for Ethiopians. He declared that Fascist plans about schools for Ethiopians aimed at forming the new generation and defining educational aims in terms of colonial policy. The native child – he added – had to be acquainted with a little of our civilisation in order to become a conscious propagandist for Italian culture. He had therefore to know Italy, its glories, and Ancient History, in order to become a conscious militia man in the shade of our flag⁷.

The Italian Education system in the Empire of Italian East Africa were set up in the Royal decree of 24th July 1936. The Fascist Government distinguished between Italians and *sudditi coloniali* (colonial subjects as Italians preferred to call people from their colonies)⁸.

Italian Education for Ethiopian students had to be workable to Fascist policy. By this way the courses for Ethiopian students encouraged Fascist Government to indoctrinate them with feelings of loyalty and subservience towards Fascist establishment, to give them an understanding of hygiene in part at least to reduce the dangers of contamination to Italian residents among them, and to prevent them from acquiring professional or political aspirations out of harmony with the Fascist ethos⁹.

According to the law, Fascist aim was to give native people a basic education which could allow to work according to their attitudes.

Behind the separation that the Fascist Government had done between Italian and Ethiopian students, there was not just an outline of Education system in the colonies but the idea of the superiority of the civilization of Ancient Rome inheritors upon Ethiopian people.

According to this point of view the Fascist Education system in Ethiopia was just a tool to pursue a more important political goal. Fascist aim was to change the Ethiopian social structure and to turn it into an easier scheme in which Italians would have occupied upper social standings. The Fascist idea of the new colonial society was that Ethiopian people should be just the executors of the jobs not lived up by Italians.

7 Pankhurst, R. *op. cit.*, pp. 364-365.

8 The Royal Decree 24 luglio 1936-XIV, n. 1737 was published in *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 3 October 1936, n. 320, p. 1494.

9 Pankhurst, R. *op. cit.*, p. 366.

Pursuing this goal, the Fascist Government tried to press down Ethiopians in the social hierarchy. Two elements had more relevance for the success of the Fascist project: the first one was to delete previous differences inside the Ethiopian society; the second one was to use the Education system to shape a new identity for Ethiopian people and to confine them into a generic lower stratum of the colonial society.

There were also exceptions to this program. In 1940 the Fascist Government set up a special convent school for the children of native notables. But this Government act was more an effort to induce Ethiopian notables to embrace the Fascist cause than a real attempt to create an Ethiopian élite in Italian colony.

That it is demonstrated by the enactment of racial laws to separate the way of life of both Ethiopians and Italians. The project to run schools for sons of Ethiopian élite was dropped because it was dangerous for the social balance in the colony. It would have created two groups of colonial subjects, one of which in a leading position compared to the other.

The Fascist Government had the same thought about both Ethiopian élite Education and *meticci*, mixed race persons. High Education for some Ethiopian students would have bred a caste of persons that would have felt themselves more similar to Italian than to Ethiopian people altering the fundamentals of Fascist Government in the colonies. For the same reasons Mussolini's Government prohibited unions between Ethiopians and Italians to stem the proliferation of *meticci* because of the ambiguity of their position inside the social structure.

After Italian occupation of Ethiopia, Fascist Government established in Addis Ababa a central office for Education to organize the Education System in the Empire. Education program for natives provided only primary schools, and lectures were given both in Italian and Amharic or in other Ethiopian languages. According the Central office for Education in Addis Ababa, Fascist Education in Ethiopia had to become the political tool through which natives could be converted to Fascist cause. The same office organized Education System for natives presuming that they had attitudes for manual works. Therefore, primary schools for the majority of natives had to be organized as rural schools where pupils could receive a proper education to become skilled workers or farmers. Following this assumption, Central office in Addis Ababa proposed three types of schools for natives: a three years first-grade school, were course on agriculture or handicraft only had to be taught; a second-grade school for interpreters and clerks; a third-grade school for local chiefs with special courses and a limited number of pupils.

The school for local chiefs had to be reserved to sons of the Ethiopian élite¹⁰.

In 1939 the Commission established by Italian Government to improve, by Fascist perspective, the laws about the rights of *meticci*, reported to Benito Mussolini the results of the survey. Representatives of Fascist National Party, the Minister of Italian East Africa and the Division of Demography and Race of the Minister of the Interior, had taken part in the Commission. The Commission determined that in the colony

another difficulty in the process of reabsorption of *meticci* was represented by the European Education received by them. *Meticci* turned away from indigenous environment due to their Education and for this reason are unable to be part within the social environment of their fathers because they are not citizens; as time goes by *meticci* would be able to become a distinguished category whom is good to avoid inside population colonies. With the aim to do it, is a necessity to forbid all kinds of schools reserved for *meticci*. We set that *meticci* can attend only schools for natives where they can receive an adequate education as colonial subjects¹¹.

In December 1938 Stazzera, the Governor of Gimma, in his quarterly report to Minister of Italian East Africa, took stoke of Italian Education in his territory.

In 1936, Stazzera informed that in the schools of Gimma area there were 700 pupils. During the 1937-1938 school year the number of pupils increased up to 2300. According to Stazzera's report, the number of pupils grown as well in 1938-1939 school year up to 3000. In his report, Stazzera made a brief account of Fascist Education for natives in Gimma region. The Governor stated that «there are 31 schools – wrote Stazzera – one of which for Italian students in Gimma. There are also 6 schools for indigenous in Gimma, Bonga, Lechenti, Ghimbi, Dembidollo and Gore». All these schools were managed by the Mission of Consolata of Turin. There were other 23 schools ran by

10 Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS) – Ministero dell’Africa Italiana (MAI) – Direzione Generale Affari Civili – Busta 158.

11 ACS-MAI- Busta 2053/Fasc. III-75. The record is entitled *Relazione di accompagnamento al disegno di legge del Ministro dell’Africa Italiana Teruzzi*. In the same record, the Commission on the rights of *meticci* expressed perplexity about the possibility to reabsorb *meticci* in Italian social structure. According commissioners, *meticci* couldn’t gain access to western education because they were not citizens like their fathers, therefore western education for *meticci* would have qualified them asking the same rights of their fathers. According to this thought, Commissioners suggested to banish *meticci* from schools for Italians, confining them in schools for natives.

the Residenze. Schools of Residenze were managed by both soldiers and civil servants. Stazzera emphasized the role of Fascist Education in Gimma area, underlining that

teachers direct Ethiopian students to a disciplined life style. They give to students some knowledge of both Italian language and arithmetic. They also teach their students to enjoy the rural life style. In October 1937 we opened the school of Muslim studies and in 1938-1939 we have added a second level course. It is superfluous to explain that school buildings in Gimma are rudimentary but renovations are in progress. We cannot however forget that a school with a surplus of comforts have not to disaffect natives from both rural way of life and the tukul where a native is born and where it is a good thing that he remains. Native students are equipped by Residenze of meal, books, notebooks, aprons and khaki clothes. Students seem to be very proud to wear the uniform during the class time¹².

Fascist Government also left to Christian missionaries a part of Education of colonial subjects but Christian schools had to observe the Fascist syllabus. Before the Italian occupation there was in Addis Ababa the Consolata Mission school. In October 1936 it was reorganized and named Clementina Graziani, the mother of the Viceroy. The French Capuchin Mission School was taken over in 1936/1937 school year by the Sisters of Canossa¹³.

2. The Fascist education system in Albania

In 1939 (12th April) Albania its signed union with the Kingdom of Italy and Vittorio Emanuele III, the King of Italy, became the King of Italy and Albania, Emperor of Ethiopia. According to the treaty people from Albania maintained the status of citizens and relevant rights and duties. The union foreshadowed an independent Albania but, just few days after the union, the Italian Government established two new institutions: the *Sottosegretariato di Stato per gli Affari Albanesi* and the *Luogotenenza Generale per l'Albania*. In spite of a formal existence of an Albanian Government, Cabinet prerogatives were completely deprived of contents, so during the period of union with Italy, we can affirm that Albania was occupied by Italy¹⁴.

12 ACS – MAI – Direzione Generale Affari Politici-Busta 143. Governatorato Galla e Sidama, *Report* Settembre-Ottobre-Novembre 1938.

13 Pankhurst, R. *op. cit.*, p. 378.

14 Trani, S. "L'unione tra l'Italia e l'Albania (1939-1943)" in *Clio*, vol. 30, n. 1, 1994.

The *Sottosegretario di Stato per gli Affari Albanesi*, Zenone Benini, was generically responsible for Albanian affairs, for propaganda, culture and education. He was directly responsible to the Italian Foreign Minister. On the 23rd April 1939, Francesco Jacomoni di San Savino became the *Luogotenente Generale per l'Albania*. According to the new Constitution, Albania maintained its Parliament and Government, but the Prime Minister and his Cabinet would have been appointed and dismissed by the King Vittorio Emanuele III¹⁵. At the end of April of the same year, Achille Starace, the secretary of Partito Nazionale Fascista, announced the birth of *Partito Nazionale Fascista d'Albania*. The new party was under control of *Partito Nazionale Fascista*.

By the establishing the roles of Luogotenente Generale, Sottosegretario di Stato and by creating the Partito Nazionale Fascista d'Albania, the Italian Fascist Government were building an apparatus which controlled Albania's Foreign and Home affairs. It is therefore clear that the formal union with Albania was, all things considered, an Italian occupation of a foreign country. Fascist Education played a central role in this process, because it was one of the tools used by Italians to *fascistizzare* Albanians.

Since 1925, with the sign of the financial and military treaty, Albania suffered from a kind of informal Italian protectorate. Italian education system influenced Albanian Education through Catholic schools earlier than 1939. During the 1920s Jesuit and Franciscan *licei* represented the way in which Catholic and also Italian culture spread throughout the country. The situation changed in 1933 when Zog, the former King of Albania, banished foreign schools from his kingdom. According to Roberto Morozzo della Rocca, the aim of Zog's decree was to hit foreign schools to better check Italian influence in the country¹⁶. The banishment lasted just till 1936 when foreign schools were restored.

According to the records published by Bernd Fisher, when Italians occupied Albania 663 elementary schools, 19 intermediate schools and 4 *licei* were founded¹⁷. Prior to Italian occupation Albanian Education System counted 1595 teachers and 62971 pupils, most of them involved in technical schools. The first act of Fascist Government, concerning Education, was to close all the schools to arrange a new system. Fascists operated a proper purge amongst teachers because most of them were considered nationalists therefore dangerous for the process of Fascistizzazione of Albanian youth. Moreover Italian Government decided for the closure of a number of secondary schools and foreign schools.

15 Fisher, B.J. *Albania at war, 1939-1945*, West Lafayette, Purdue University Press, 1999.

16 Morozzo della Rocca, R. *Nazione e religione in Albania, 1920-1944*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1990.

17 Fisher, B.J. *op.cit.*, p. 50.

The new syllabus provided for teaching Italian Language as well as Italian Culture and History of Fascist Revolution. Albanian language was also taught but a new syllabus was unequivocally addressed to the denationalization of Albanian pupils. According to Giovanni Villari, young people, from elementary schools to university level, were made to learn, for example, the songs and anthems of Italy, with a boastful ignorance of Albanian patriotic songs¹⁸. Most pupils were addressed to technical schools to respond to two different needs: firstly the necessity of a specialized working class; secondly because addressing native pupils to schools as *licei*, the Fascist Government was frightened by the peril to bring up a generation of native intellectuals.

In October 1939, the *Luogotenente generale* delivered a speech for the opening of the new school year. In this speech the main goals of Fascist Education System in Albania were described. According to Jacomoni, Fascist schools had to preserve Albanian cultural heritage and educate Albanian youth to a new Imperial fate¹⁹.

Fascist youth organizations completed the new Education system. *Balilla*, *Federazione della Gioventù Albanese del Littorio e Gioventù Femminile del Littorio* managed the free time of Albanian youth. These Fascist youth organizations set up solid camps throughout the country. In the summer 1939 the Government organized a travel to Italy for thousands of Albanian guys to start a programme of *Fascistizzazione* of Albanian youth.

Fascist Education in Albania was spread using not only schools but also Fascist propaganda. A special office for Fascist propaganda in Albania was established by the *Sottosegretariato* in 1939. The main goal of this office was to spread out Italian culture among Albanian people²⁰. According to the report of the Office for Fascist Propaganda in Albania, one of the crucial problems concerning Italian culture in Albania was represented by the spreading of Italian books throughout the country. The aim of this cultural policy was to direct Albanians with some knowledge of Italian Language toward Italian intellectual life. Fascist Government decided to pursue this policy through the establishment of 10 libraries exactly alike, built in the most important Albanian cities. Each library received 300 books. The Office for Fascist Propaganda sorted out the books following a strict criterion: books

18 Villari, G. "A failed experiment: the exportation of Fascism to Albania" in *Modern Italy*, vol. 12, n. 2, p. 163.

19 ACS – Direzione Generale Propaganda – Busta 3. The Luogotenente generale speech for the opening of new school year, 23 October 1939.

20 ACS – Ministero della Cultura Popolare (MINCULPOP) – Gabinetto – Busta 92. Report on Fascist Propaganda in Albania, November 1939.

with excessive propaganda or polemical contents were banned because they were considered self-defeating. The office favoured books with national and educational contents. History, politics, war, Italian Fascism, Italian East Africa Empire and sport represented major topics in the choosing of the books list.

The establishment of new Italian libraries ran side by side with the dismantling of old Albanian libraries. These last ones were considered a peril for the program of *Fascistizzazione* because of these libraries contained censored books.

The process of *Fascistizzazione* of Albanians ran not only amongst pupils but also within Albanian cultural élite. On 8th April 1940 Fascist government established the Institute of Albanian Studies *Fondazione Skanderbeg*. Principal aims of the Institute were to boost philology, arts, literature and History in Albania and to promote cultural exchanges between Albanian and Italian intellectuals. Members of the *Fondazione* should be named by the Chief of Cabinet and have Italian or Albanian nationalities.

In January 1939, just before the union with Italy, Albanian newspapers announced the project for the establishment of a new *Circolo italo-albanese Skanderbeg*, outlining the common source of Albanian and Italian origins²¹.

Between 9th and 13th April 1940 the *Fondazione Skanderbeg* organized in Tirana the first conference on Albanian studies. Francesco Jacomoni, the former Luogotenente Generale per l'Albania, remembers in his memoirs that the *Fondazione* played an important role connecting Italian and Albanian intelligenzia. He describes the *Circolo Skanderbeg* as a place where Italian travellers could meet Albanian intellectuals. This kind of meetings had the value to refuse many commonplaces about Albanians. Jacomoni refers particularly to commonplaces concerning Albanian muslims fully spread through Italians. He remarks in his memoirs how *Circolo Skanderbeg* was a favourable environment for cultural collaboration between Albanians and Italians²².

3. Conclusion

As we could deduce, Fascist Colonization did not run in the same way in Albania and Ethiopia. A formal status of citizens, a formal independent Cabinet and many others features could suggest that only Ethiopia suffered a proper colonization while

21 ACS – MINCULPOP – Direzione Generale Propaganda – Albania – Busta 2. Report on *Il Circolo italo-albanese Skanderbeg*.

22 Jacomoni di San Savino, F. *La politica dell'Italia in Albania*, Rocca San Casciano, Cappelli, 1965, p. 184.

Albania was just occupied by Italians without significant cultural involvement. But if we compare Education systems established by Italians in Ethiopia and Albania we can remark how the process of *fascistizzazione* ran in different ways with a similar aim.

Even if the Ethiopian case was featured by a very high degree of racial segregation, a datum that we cannot find in Albanian case, both experiences seem to have a common basis.

Fascist Education System in Albania and Ethiopia served to create a new society, a Fascist society, in which native people had to be subordinated to the Italian element. With this perspective we can better understand why during Italian occupation of these countries, native pupils had to attend prevalingly technical schools and they could not achieve higher education degrees.

We can find another important similitude in the effort made by Italians to cancel native's traditions and cultures through Fascist Education. In this way Italian Government tried to replace native culture with the Fascist culture. This process was not an effort to assimilate native people; rather it was an attempt to cancel native's identities to better teach them what was their subordinate role in Fascist imperial community.

According to Giuseppe Bottai, Italian Minister of Education until 1943, and quoting Davide Rodogno, Fascist imperial community could be depicted as a whole of three concentric circles, organized following hierarchical and racial principles. The first circle included Italians as fathers of new civilization. The second one was occupied by other European populations, above all from the Balkans, included Albanians. The third circles comprised people from African colonies, with a different status for Lybians, considered a more civilized population than Ethiopians and Eritreans²³.

Education represented one of the most important tool used by Italians to forge people from countries included in the second and third circles of the schema. Bottai's plan was clear enough about the fact that only people from the first circle, therefore Italians, had to be considered proper citizens.

The comparison of Fascist Education Systems in Albania and Ethiopia seems to prove that Fascist aim was to set up, not only in Africa but also in the Balkans, a society populated by colonial subjects.

23 Rodogno, D. *Il nuovo ordine mediterraneo*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2003, pp. 78-79.



IV
Languages and Literature



Water of life and death

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Introduction

The words sea and ocean in modern English refer to salt water, while lake gives the idea of sweet water. We can argue to what extent the concepts of sea and ocean in modern European languages are relevant to other cultural contexts and what happens if we use sea and ocean in translations where the translated text is about sweet water. In this presentation I will discuss about some religious concepts related to water in the ancient Middle East concerning this issue. Then religious concepts of water in ancient Iran, ancient India and the concepts of paradise in the Quran and Muslim India will be dealt with in order to investigate the relation between sweet water and salt water in these traditions as well as how these waters have been translated.

1. The ancient Middle East

Two things existed in the beginning according to the Babylonian epic *Enuma Elish*. They were Apsu the sweet water and Tiamat the salt water. A number of gods came into being from the mingling of these two waters. There was a conflict between the gods and Apsu-Tiamat. Apsu was killed and Tiamat decided to fight the Gods. Marduk was the only god who dared to oppose Tiamat in battle and he succeeded in killing Tiamat. Then the world was formed out of Tiamat's body. Tiamat's husband Kingu was killed and man was formed out of Kingu's blood. Marduk thus became the lord of the gods. It is hard to look upon the salt water in this story as something altogether bad. The conflict was between both the waters and the gods. Thus there is not a differentiation made between good sweet water and destructive salt water. Both waters played their part in the becoming of the gods and the world and man was created out of the salt water and her husband¹.

¹ This tradition is discussed in many scholarly works for example Frymer-Kinsky, T. *In the Wake of*

There is a clear difference between the life-giving good waters and the destructive waters in some of the older parts of the Bible but there is no difference between the two in other parts. In Job 38:4-10 we can read about the Lord founding the earth and putting a limit for the sea, *yam*. In the same chapter it is obvious that God is the one who makes it rain so that the grass can grow (26-27) and gives wisdom to the clouds (36). Psalms 18 is to a great extent about rescue from various things. One of them is the great waters *mayim* (17). In Psalms 89:10 (the Lord) is said to rule over the rising sea, *yam*. Psalms 104:2-25 is about creation and how it is upheld. Water, *mayim*, was standing over the mountains but the Lord made a boundary (for them). Then there are fountains for the animals and the large and wide sea, *yam*, with animals and ships. In Psalms 148 there is an exhortation to praise the Lord which also goes for the heavens and the waters, *mayim*, above the heavens (4). In Jer. 5:22 we are told that the Lord has made the sand (beach) a boundary for the sea, *yam*. The worldview in the older traditions of the Bible, as indicated in the examples above, is often the following one. The earth is situated in the middle. Above is heaven and from it comes rain. God gives the life-giving water on earth. Beneath the earth are the waters of destruction. Sometimes they are just called waters. Sometimes the word used is sea. They often rise in efforts to overthrow God on his throne or harm people but they do not reach their goal. In the worldview just presented there is a clearer dichotomy between the good life-giving waters and the waters of destruction. The latter are those which oppose God, threaten human beings and would create chaos if they were allowed to. However, the Hebrew words do not indicate by themselves that the thing as such is good or bad. That goes both for the waters, *mayim*, as well as for the sea, *yam*. The sea could represent opposition to God and danger for human beings. On the other hand the sea could also be a place of life, where fish is swimming etc. as indicated in one of the examples above as well as in the myth of creation in the first book of the Bible (1: 21-22). In the same way waters, *mayim*, may indicate the good life-giving waters just as the rain, the fountains etc. or they may be the danger from which God saves man. There is seldom any discussion of sweet or salt water as in the Babylonian myth of creation. There are direct references to a sea as the Salt Sea for example in the same book of the Bible (14:3). It is, however, here a matter of fact statement and the text does not contain any of the mythical elements

the Goddesses: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth, New York, Random House Publishing Group, 1993; Eliade, M. (ed.) "Enuma Elish" in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 5, pp. 124-126, New York, Macmillan Publishing, 1986 and Westenholz, U.; Westenholz, A. *Gilgamesh, Enuma Elish. Guder og mennesker i oldtidens Babylon*, Copenhagen, Spektrum, 1997, pp. 171-195.

discussed above. It should also be mentioned that the analysis of the Biblical text is often difficult since it is not always easy to differentiate between various strata of the traditions and to what time they belong. The picture presented above is part of what is supposed to be the older traditions. The view of the world and of mankind goes through various phases of development in the later texts of the Jewish Bible.

The Babylonian and the Biblical traditions discussed above have in common that the people who carried those traditions or their ancestors had the possibility of experiencing the sea and the danger which water can bring about. Therefore it is meaningful in these traditions to discuss the symbolism of sea or salt water and they often have their opposites in lakes, rivers and sweet water. However, large areas and important parts of water symbolism have to be left out if we only discuss the sea and salt water or instances where we can be sure that salt water is intended. Examples of that are the ancient Iranian and ancient Indian traditions, the concepts of paradise in the Quran and other Muslim traditions as well as the ideas connected to Eden in the Bible.

2. Ancient Iran

Our sources to ancient Iranian religions are not very rich and it is not always easy to judge the age of various traditions in Iranian sources. The oldest traditions which have been kept alive within the Iranian setting are those preserved by the Zarathushtrians. The oldest among these is from a linguistical point of view the Avesta, if we disregard the inscriptions of ancient Iranian kings. The latter can be dated, but they mostly give information about the power of the king, areas conquered etc. Cultural and religious aspects are seldom dealt with in any detail. Glimpses of Iranian religions and cultures can also be found in the writings of Greek authors like Herodotos and Xenophon. But their information also mostly consists of passages too short for making any deeper analysis of culture and religion. The difficulty with the Avesta as well as the linguistically later Zarathushtrian traditions in Pahlavi is that the oldest written documents are quite late compared with what is supposed to be the age of some of the oldest traditions contained in them. The dating of such traditions have been made through classical sources referred to above, as well as other old Middle Eastern writings. Primarily, however, the material of comparison has been the Indian Vedic traditions, which are richer in quantity, but share the same problems of dating since they also were orally transmitted and were supposed to be orally transmitted like the Avesta. Besides it is also a truism that traditions from these times and this part of the world often contain a lot of traditions, which are much older than the time when they were put into writing. The Jewish Bible is a good example of such a situation.

Let us now look at some of the ancient Iranian traditions with the problems of dating discussed above in mind. Parts of the Avesta as well as the older parts of the Vedic traditions in India are supposed to reflect religions and societies in the middle of the second millennium BC, although some scholars have a much earlier dating and some a later dating. The societies in the areas at that time which are now Iran and the Indian subcontinent were pastoral societies and various kinds of herds were the main factor of maintenance. They were also tribal societies, which means that they did not have great kingdoms covering vast areas. In this setting water and fire as necessities of life would presumably play an important role. They actually do as we can see in their traditions. Other parts of the Avesta, however, indicate conditions at the time of the great Achaemenian kings. These passages indicate another social structure and differ from the oldest Vedic traditions, which were moulded before the time of large kingdoms in post-Vedic India.

Both water and fire are important in ancient Iran² and in the Avesta. Let us focus on water because of the theme of this paper. There are three major religious settings referring to water. In the first one the common word for waters used is *apas*. The waters receive offerings which is natural since they are also seen as goddesses. In the second we find a special water goddess. The third setting contains the large water called Vourukasha, which is usually translated with sea. This sea can be connected either to a goddess Aredvi Sura Anahita or to a god Tishtriya, which may suggest two different mythical traditions. It seems reasonable therefore that the reverence for water is old in Iran and a part of the old society.

The importance of water is further supported by a direct correspondence with the oldest Vedic traditions regarding water as well as by the rituals of the Iranian society. There is an offering to the waters from ancient times onwards at the end of the daily offerings performed by priests which are called *yasna*.

Aredvi Sura Anahita is a goddess who is often referred to in *yasht* number 5 in the Avesta³. Here her complexity indicates a time of origin when an influential king ruled since she combines both the images of water and fertility with the image of a warrior goddess⁴. In the beginning of the *yasht* we are presented with

2 See Widengren, G. "Die Religionen Irans" in *Die Religionen der Menschheit*, vol. 14, 1965, pp. 123-124; Boyce, M. *Zoroastrians. Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, London, 1979, pp. 3-5.

3 See for the Avesta text: Geldner, K.F. *Avesta The Sacred Book of the Parsis*, vol. II, Stuttgart, 1989, pp. 82-102; Malandra, W.W. *An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion. Readings from the Avesta and the Achaemenid Inscriptions* (Translated and Edited by Malandra, W.W.), Minneapolis, 1993, pp. 120-130.

4 For the discussion regarding Aredvi Sura Anahita see Boyce, M. *Zoroastrians. Their Religious Beliefs and Practices...* cit., pp. 61-63 and Malandra, W.W. *An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion...* cit., pp. 117-120.

pictures of flowing waters and motion and the goddess is identified with all kinds of lifegiving water on earth as well as the great river flowing down from heaven to earth into the vast Vourukasha. From there the water spreads all over the earth. At the end of the Yasht the picture of the goddess is such that scholars are convinced that it presupposes an image in a temple. There is no flowing motion or references to the goddess driving a chariot and her dress is described in great detail. There are a few hints to more static conceptions earlier in the yasht but the totality of the description is not given until the end. Here the goddess is static and decorated in such a detailed way that the image suggests an icon in the shelter of a temple. In the discussion referred to above Boyce regards it as the wishes of the king Artaxerxes II or III being accepted by the Zarathushtrian religious leaders. Thus, icons in temples became a reality in the fourth century BC according to Boyce.

Yasht number 8 is dedicated to Tishtriya⁵. He is responsible of mist rising from the Vourukasha. In the middle of this water there is a big mountain from which the mist is said to rise. Thus, clouds can be formed so that rain can fall and bring fertility. His opponent is the demon Apaosha who tries to hinder the process in order to let dryness prevail. In the beginning Apaosha gets the upper hand but after rich offerings to Tishtriya the latter becomes victorious and the order of life is secured.

In Yasht 5 there is the flowing goddess descending from heaven into the Vourukasha and then water spreads all over the earth. In Yasht 8 the water of the Vourukasha rises in the form of mist and then clouds are formed and rain falls. The latter case does not require that Vourukasha is sweet water since the lifegiving water comes in the form of rains. Yasht 5 on the other hand indicates some kind of identity between the goddess coming down from heaven, the water of Vourukasha and all the lifegiving water of the earth. Verse number 5 tells us that water from Vourukasha spreads throughout the world through rivers and not by means of mist rising from the water. Perhaps we have two traditions of how water comes to earth or two aspects of it. The one dominating Yasht number five with the goddess flowing down from heaven into the Vourukasha and further on into the rivers of the earth. The other one would then be water coming in form of rains through clouds formed by mist. The one in charge of this process is Tishtriya. In India we also have a goddess Sarasvati on one hand and on the other the rains coming when Indra has vanquished his enemy Vrtra, who obstructs the water. We will return to

⁵ For the Avesta text see: Geldner, K.F. *Avesta The Sacred Book...* cit., pp. 105-118; Malandra, W.W. *op.cit.*, pp. 143-149.

Indra and Vrtra when the Indian traditions are discussed below. In the Yashts we have at least two traditions related to different gods. Those traditions may have developed out of one tradition where the two aspects of flowing water and rain have been differentiated. In India we also have the goddess as the river and the male god presumably related to rainfalls. Yasht number five suggests sweet water regarding the goddess, Vourukasha and other waters on earth such as rivers since they all are life-giving. At the same time there are no signs in Yasht 8 of differentiating between various kinds of water. The only problem regarding fertility and the right order of the earth is not created by waters of chaos but by those forces such as Apaosha who try to obstruct water from reaching mankind, cattle and nature. If we do not take part in the discussion, where scholars try to find a certain mundane place of identity for Vourukasha⁶, it seems that water is life-giving water. As long as it comes in the form of rain or exists as rivers and lakes the right order is upheld. If it on the other hand it is obstructed either so that rain does not fall or the water of rivers and lakes vanishes chaos is close. The lack of indications of salt water in these two yashts poses a from our perspective interesting question. Does Malandra and Boyce⁷ mean salt water or merely that it is a lot of water, when they use the term sea in relation to Vourukasha? In the perspective of religious traditions our discussion suggests the latter. The picture presented in the two Yashts discussed also fits well with the picture of waters as *apas*. There too the question is if water is obstructed or not. When there is water order prevails. Neither salt water nor any specific kind of water causing disorder seem to be of importance in the religious traditions of Indoeuropean ancient Iran.

3. Ancient India

The oldest Indoeuropean traditions preserved today in India are the four Vedic collections *samhitas*. They too like the Avesta were orally transmitted and that is still the ideal. Because of that, similar discussions can be made regarding authenticity, the age of various traditions in it etc. as is the case regarding the Avesta although certain aspects are easier to deal with in the Vedic traditions because of the art of the succeeding traditions and their richness in India.

6 For example: Nyberg, H.S. *Irans forntida religioner (The Ancient Religions of Iran)*, Stockholm, 1937, pp. 281-282, 289.

7 See Malandra in his already quoted translation of yasht 5 and 8 and Boyce, M. *Zoroastrians...* cit., p. 7.

Etymologically the same word is used in India for water *ap* plural *apas* as in ancient Iran. In India too the waters can be regarded as goddesses. T.Y. Elizarenkova distinguishes between two aspects of water *apas* in an article on old Vedic traditions⁸. They are rivers, ponds or streams of rain on earth or they are heavenly cosmic waters. The old Vedic view is that the universe consists of three parts. Heaven, the space in between heaven and earth and finally the earth. There are heavenly rivers just as there are rivers on earth. There are also large waters both in heaven and on earth. There is for example such a large gathering of water in heaven, which the god Varuna is in charge of. The Sanskrit word is *samudra*, which at one occasion has been translated by the well-known scholar O'Flaherty with sea and at another occasion by ocean according to the references presented by Elizarenkova herself. When the latter discusses this concept in the beginning of her article she also states that it is a problem whether the rgvedic IndoEuropeans knew of the sea or the ocean or not. The rain falling down on earth belongs to the space in between heaven and earth. Water is also the essential element in the fight between the god Indra and his opponent Vrtra who tries to obstruct the flow of water. Indra's victory is seen by Elizarenkova referring to F.B.J. Kuiper as a question of cosmic order. The view that it is a tradition about creation and the ordering of the world has also been expressed by other scholars⁹. Elizarenkova also shows that *ap/apas* is the most common word for water in the old Vedic traditions. Water is an important part of Vedic ritual just as it was in Iranian rituals. The waters occur in the following situations according to Elizarenkova. They flow. They help their worshippers by giving them vital force such as milk, sap and a healing remedy. They are also purificatory for example in a ritual context.

To Elizarenkova's study on the various words used for water we should add the goddess Sarasvati because of the parallel with Iran. She is also seen as a river¹⁰. The picture of water in ancient India would also be incomplete without a further discussion on the role of Indra in this context. The central hymn in Rgveda is 1:32. It belongs to the ritual context, since it is a part of the Rgveda and like many hymns in it it contains a lot of references to traditions of which we have very little

8 For this reference and the following see: Elizarenkova, T.Y. "The Concept of Water and the Names for It in the Rgveda" in *Orientalia Suecana*, vol. 45-46, 1996-1997, pp. 21-26.

9 Gonda, J. *Die Religionen Indiens, I Veda und älterer Hinduismus*, Die Religionen der Menschheit Band 11, Stuttgart, 1960, p. 56, with references also to other scholars.

10 See Ivi, p. 36; Klostermaier, K.K. *A survey of Hinduism*, Albany, State University of New York Press, (second edition) 1994, pp. 50, 329, 479; and for examples Rgveda, *Hymns of the Rig-Veda in the Samhita and Pada Texts Reprinted from the Editio Princeps by F. Max Müller*, vol. I, Varanasi (Third Edition) 1965, pp. 6, 49, 7 and pp. 6, 61, 2.

knowledge. The functions of the hymns chanted in various rituals were not to give detailed descriptions of various traditions. In this aspect they are similar to the *yashts* of the Avesta. Because of that many ideas and traditions in the Rgveda and in the Avesta are still unclear to modern scholars. The hymn Rigveda 1:32¹¹ begins by referring to the heroic deeds of Indra which are the slaying of the *ahi*, translated by dragon or serpent in western scholarly works. Thus the waters (*apas*) become free and the interiors of the mountains (*parvata*) are split open. The last word is also problematic since it means something consisting of knots or wads. In Grassman's dictionary it is translated by mountain, rock and cloud pictured as mountain¹². Mountain means that we are on solid ground while cloud suggests something in the air. Later on Indra is referred to as the one who created the sun, heaven and the morning redness. It is mentioned together with his slaying of the *ahi*. Then comes the major part of the hymn focusing on Indra's fight with Vrtra obviously the same as the *ahi* mentioned above. In the end the very waters, which were formerly enclosed by Vrtra, flows over and covers him and his mother the two major representatives of evil. It is stated that lightning, thunder and mist was of no avail to Vrtra during the fight. That is his tricks were not sufficient to win his fight against Indra. Interesting from our point of view is that the tricks seem to refer to a fight in the air and not on the surface of the earth. At the same time Indra's act of opening up for the waters is followed by him letting loose seven rivers (*sindhu*).

It is clear from the hymn discussed above that there is a fight between Indra who frees the waters from Vrtra, who has been enclosing them and thus prevented them from bringing fertility. The word *vrtra* comes from a stem meaning to enclose. Here the fight is not between good water and destructive water but between Indra who opens up for the waters and Vrtra who tries to keep them back. The only kind of water mentioned is the good life-giving water.

In this hymn we also have the word *samudra*, which has been discussed above. In the second verse after the killing of the *ahi* the waters are said to come down to the *samudra* usually translated by western scholars with sea¹³. In the hymn however there are no specifications indicating salt water or destructive water or any difference in character between *apas* and *samudra*.

11 Text Rgveda, M.G. *op.cit.*, vol. I, pp. 23-24.

12 Grassman, H. *Wörterbuch zum Rigveda*, Wiesbaden, 1964, (fourth edition), p. 791.

13 Compare Elizarenkova and O'Flaherty I discussed above and Lommel, H. *Rgveda*, translation *Gedichte des Rig-Veda, Auswahl und Übersetzung von Hermann Lommel*, Weishetsbücher der Menschheit, München 1955, p. 51, 32.

Other points which could be interesting to make regarding Rgveda I:32 are not that clearcut. We have seen earlier that Elizarenkova together with other scholars have stressed that this hymn is about creation and cosmic order. J. Gonda is of the same opinion and he also discards earlier interpretations as too limited in scope. Vrtra is according to him not a cloud, a dragon, or a demon of draught. Neither are the mountains clouds or the rivers falling rain (see note 12). Thus he avoids discussing issues which could be interesting from a perspective where both the Iranian and the Indian traditions are taken into consideration. In his discussions he also directly expresses the opinion that the tricks of Vrtra are not sufficient to place the fight between Indra and Vrtra only in the air. The point is well made that it is about a fight regarding cosmic order. That is also the case according to my opinion regarding the Avestan examples discussed above where we on one hand have the mist and on the other the female river flowing down from heaven to earth. In these cases too chaos will predominate in all universe if the waters do not flow. It is an interesting parallel between Aredvi Sura in Iran and Sarasvati in India on one hand and the mist resulting in rain in Iran and Indras fight with Vrtra in India on the other. The *soma* ritual in India which is important regarding Indra may support the idea that the water is rainfall because of the ritual setting. There are the presstones between which the plant is pressed. From them the juice falls down into a vessel and is then taken care of. The noise of the stones resembles the thunder in the air etc. But the ambiguity of words like *parvata* and the long and heated discussions among indologists regarding many aspects of the fight between Indra and Vrtra does not make it worthwhile here to pursue the comparison with the Iranian Avestan material in detail. The main point is after all from our perspective that the water is the good life-giving water.

We may conclude that water is good and evil forces are not other kind of waters but those who try to prevent water from its lifegiving functions just as in the examples from the Avesta discussed above. When the word ocean is used by Elizarenkova it is done to translate *samudra*, which means confluence of water¹⁴. The words ocean or sea only seems to have been used by scholars because of its largness and there are no indications of *samudra* being salt water or destructive water¹⁵.

14 See *ibid.* Rigveda, I, 32,2 and IX, 2,5.

15 Compare the text references in Grassman, H. *Wörterbuch zum Rig-Veda* 1483... cit., and the meanings he gives of *samudra* as "flutenreich, zum Meere gehörig, Ansammlung der Wasser, Meer, die Somakufe und der Soma", all of them having positive connotations.

4. Islam

Just as in ancient Iran and ancient India there are concepts in Islam where water always seems to have a positive connotation. Here the focus will be on the concept of paradise in the Koran as well as paradise exemplified in the building of gardens among some Muslim rulers. In these cases too the picture seems to be of water as a life-giving entity.

Before looking into the Islamic traditions, however, something should be said about its historical background in the Middle East. E. Moynihan has given an excellent overview regarding the concept of paradise as a garden and its relation to gods and kings in the ancient Middle East. It starts with Sumer in the third millennium B.C. and how the gods created a garden by providing fresh water so that a place came into being characterised by various kinds of trees, green fields and meadows. It continues with Babylonian and Akkadian traditions, Persian kings and the Jews during the Babylonian captivity. The Persian king Cyrus the Great had a paradise garden of which he had the responsibility. In the 5th century B.C. the Persian concept of paradise got into Greek traditions through people like Xenophon and later on into Roman and other European traditions. The word paradise itself originates in the Persian *pairidaeza*, which connotes an area surrounded by walls. Inside were the fantastic trees, the flowers and the water flowing in regular patterns. Outside was the desert, chaos and death. In the Sumerian and Babylonian traditions it was the garden of the gods and in Persian traditions the king is the one in charge of the garden being paradise on earth. Moynihan also deals with the importance of trees in this garden as well as various patterns of water like the mountain of paradise and the four rivers of life as well as the Akkadian way of dividing earth into four quarters. Her argumentation is well supported by references to relevant texts and archeological material¹⁶. To Moynihan's overview may be added that already in Sumerian time the king was in charge of a special tree in a temple area. In Babylonian traditions the king is the gardener of a divine garden¹⁷. These examples show that the king as a gardener is an important feature already before the time of the Iranian king Cyrus the Great. Water is a necessity and a life-giving entity in all the examples discussed above which relate to the garden.

There are thus rich and manifold possibilities in the Middle East regarding eventual influences on Islamic concepts regarding paradise and heavenly gardens.

16 Moynihan, E.B. *Paradise as a Garden in Persia and Mughal India*, London, 1982, pp. 1-12.

17 Widengren, G. *Religionsphänomenologie*, Berlin, 1969, pp. 154-155.

On one hand there is the historical line Sumer, Akkad, Babylon and Israel and on the other hand we have the line Sumer, Akkad, Babylon, Iran, Jews, Greek traditions and Roman traditions. There has of course been a lot of crossinfluences between these lines throughout history as well as particular influences on Islam from specific religions in the area.

The word closest to paradise in the Koran is *jannat*. It means garden and from the context it is quite clear that with a few exceptions it is a heavenly garden. It occurs 142 times, which shows that it is an important concept. The heavenly garden is in almost all cases a reward for a godfearing life. One example is sura 18:29-30/30-31. The reward for those who believe will be the gardens of Eden. There rivers will flow and people will be given armlets of gold and they will wear green robes of silk brocade. In the preceding verse we are told that for the evildoers a fire is prepared and if they ask for help they will be helped with water like molten metal which burns their faces. In sura 55:60 there is a reference to goodness and in the following verses the focus is on two gardens in which there are two abundant springs, fruit, datepalms, pomegranates and maidens in tents reclining on green cushions and beautiful carpets. In sura 47:12/13 we are informed that God will let those who believe and do good enter gardens underneath which rivers flow. In verse number 15/16 there is a similitude about a garden promised to those who take care regarding God. In it are rivers of water, rivers of milk, rivers of wine, rivers of honey and all kinds of fruit. The word *jannat* is once mentioned in the Koran together with *firdaws*, which is from a Persian word for paradise although in a later stage of linguistical development than the Avestan *pairidaeza*. In Sura 18:107 we can read about the garden of paradise *jannat al-firdaws*. The word *firdaws* is also used once more in the Koran in Sura 23:11 although in this passage it is standing by itself and not together with *jannat*. Thus we find the concept of garden as a heavenly garden in the Koran. In those places where we find details regarding nature water is sure to be one of them. In none of those cases there is any discussion about destructive water. Water is always the positive life-giving water being a necessity in a garden.

It is not possible here to look into the details of how the various ideas in the Koran regarding the garden and what it is relates to other cultures and religions. However, the relation to Judaism seems obvious when we read about the garden of Eden and the relation to Persian concepts seems equally clear in the word *firdaws*. The latter may also be the case in the verse about molten metal referred to above. Molten metal is part of the ordeal which will afflict the bad human beings at the end of time according to Zarathushthrian belief. There is, however, no indication in the Koran that the water is flowing in fixed structures as in the garden of the

king Cyrus¹⁸ or in the Eden of the Bible. In the latter there is the picture of the river flowing from Eden watering the garden and then spreading into four rivers (Genesis 2:10-15). In spite of the lack of structure in the flowing of the water in the Koran in comparison with Eden and the gardens of Persian kings its function is the same as in those traditions as well as in most of the other ones dealt with above. The water is the good life-giving water. There are also quite a few verses referring to Jesus in the Bible in connection with life-giving water. But in those cases it is rather a symbol of life than actual water (for example Joh 4:10-15, Joh 7:37-39). But this symbolism also points in the direction of water as the good life-giving water.

Although the focus in this article is on water in the Koran in relation to the concept of paradise, some general remarks will also be given regarding the most common words for water and sea in the Quran. The word for water is *ma'*. It occurs 63 times. Water brings verdure (6:99). It comes from clouds and makes desert land produce fruits (6:57/55). It has been sent down to clean people spiritually (8:11). In the three preceding examples the water is good water sent by God. This is also the case in most of the verses in the Quran. There are, however, a few cases where water has a different connotation. Most of them correspond directly to old biblical traditions. Thus Noa and the water which brought destruction to most people is dealt with in 11:43-44/45-46, 54:11/12 and 69:11. There is also a verse about God creating the heavens and the earth and that his throne is above the water. The lack of further information in this passage makes it hard to decide the characteristics of this water. However, the similarity makes it tempting to compare it with the old biblical traditions discussed above where God is on his throne with the waters underneath. Waters which sometimes tries to oppose God. To these verses may be added 18:29/28 dealt with above where the evildoers asking for help in the fire will get water, which is like molten metal. Thus there are the few examples regarding Noa and the picture where it is compared to molten metal where water has a connotation which is clearly dangerous or negative. Besides there is the passage about God on his throne which remains unclear regarding good or destructive water. Otherwise the clearly dominating idea is once again water as the good life-giving water.

The most common word for sea in the Quran is *bahr*. It occurs 41 times. There are some passages where two seas are mentioned where one has sweet water and the other one has salty and bitter water as in 35:12/13, 25:53/55. In the latter passage we are also informed that there is a bar between the two seas. In 27:61/62 we can read about a barrier between the two seas. In both these cases God is the one who

18 See Moynihan, E.B. *Paradise as a Garden in Persia and Mughal India*, London, 1982, pp. 16-17.

put it there. In most cases however there is no reference to two seas and sweet and salt is not mentioned. Among such examples there is one reference to how the Israelites walked through the sea, but the people of Pharaoh drowned 2:50/47. There are further references to the same experience of the Israelites in 7:38/34, 10:90 and Moses in this connection in 20:77/79 and 26:63. Many of the examples give the impression that the sea might be dangerous but through the power of God it can be travelled by ships and thus used for the good of mankind as in 10:22/23 and 16:14. Further references to ships on the sea but without mentioning the danger explicitly are 2:164/159, 14:32/37, 17:66/68, 22:60/64 and 31:31/30. Thus in the cases regarding *bahr* there is a greater variety. In some passages two seas are directly mentioned and in some of them there is a differentiation between sweet and salt water. In most of the other verses the potential danger of the sea is either directly mentioned or taken for granted. In most of those cases the positive side of the sea is put forward as the means of shipping. It is however often stressed that shipping is possible through the act of God.

In spite of the lack of regularity in the flowing of water in the Koran the picture of paradise as a garden with trees, plants, fruit etc. corresponds well with the various gardens discussed above where the water is the good life-giving water. This function of the water is kept in later traditions among Muslim rulers. We can see the same function of water in the gardens of the Mughal Muslim rulers in 16th century India. But here the water is clearly structured in heavy squares from which water flows in four directions. Behind the concept of the garden which is here clearly seen as paradise on earth are many of the traditions discussed above including the Koranic ones, Persian kingship traditions and other various Middle East traditions which have been intertwined in various ways throughout history. The structures of water can be seen for example in the some time capital of Akbar the Great Mughal (1542-1605) in Fateh Pur Sikri as well as in the garden of his mausoleum in Sikandara. In the latter place the inscriptions clearly indicate the place as a heavenly place. One example is from the south gateway where the arch is referred to as higher than the portico of the ninth sphere and the light of its shadow is the face of the shining star. It is the ornament of the nine heavens and the seven climes (the whole world)¹⁹. The same structures and ideas can also be seen in the gardens of the palaces of the other Mughals. Besides the concept of the flowery garden as paradise on earth can be seen in the inscriptions of the special chamber where the grandson of Akbar met especially chosen people. The inscriptions in the ceiling

¹⁹ Smith, E.W. *Akbar's Tomb, Sikandarah, Near Agra, Described and Illustrated*, Allahabad, 1909, text p. 31, tr. p. 31.

are “If (there is a) paradise on earth, it is here, it is here it is here” *agar behesht dar dunya injast injast injast*. The garden of paradise is indicated by the decorations of plants in the ceiling where the inscriptions are written as well as in the flowers on the canopy of the throne placed in the very same room at that time, which is the famous peacock throne. Once again there are too many traditions leading up to such a way of decorating canopies over the thrones of Mughal rulers to be dealt with here. In these cases as well as in the ceiling of the masoleum in Shiraz of one of the greatest Persian poets Hafez the paradise is indicated by flowers and plants not by showing flowing water. In the Mughal gardens the structure of the flow of water was one of the most striking features. On the canopies paradise is merely indicated by a plentitude of plants. In the Mughal gardens and in the contemporary texts describing them there is no sign of any kind of destructive water. Water is always the good life-giving water in them.

5. Conclusion

Water is as we have seen always good life-giving water in the ancient Iranian and Indian traditions discussed above. There are no discussions about salt water and sweet water in them. However western translators have preferred to translate large waters with sea or ocean in these traditions. That goes for the large waters in heaven as well as large waters on earth. It seems that these translations have been chosen because of the size and not because of a distinction in the traditions between sweet and salt water. If there is a problem regarding water in these traditions it is due to the obstruction of water and not related to salt water. On one hand there is no rain and on the other draught has brought about the disappearance of water. The danger of draught can be seen in the struggle in Iran between Tishtriyā and Apaosha and in India between Indra and Vṛtra, which in both cases ends with the victory of the good power and the presence of water. When there is order and water is around this is reflected either by the flow of the goddess or goddesses or by reference to large waters in heaven or on earth.

In the ancient traditions of the Middle East such as the Babylonian and the old Biblical ones we find more complex pictures. In the Babylonian mythology discussed above there is sweet water and salt water. Out of them came the gods and in the end man. Fighting starts when the gods become too many and uncontrollable. There is no distinction between sweet and salt water in terms of cosmos – chaos or beneficent – destructive. The conflict is between the waters and the gods. When the gods are victorious it does not mean that one kind of water is victorious and the other defeated or that sweet water becomes accessible again. In some of the old Biblical traditions there is a destructive water either rising in what seems to be

opposition against God or extinguishing most of mankind, although this is done according to the will of God. Besides there are the passages where God is directly referred to as the one who set a borderline for the water which would otherwise threaten mankind. In many cases water is the good life-giving water necessary for plants and man alike. Sometimes the water outside the shores is threatening and sometimes it is full of life that is full of fish etc. It is obvious that the Biblical passages just belong to various mythological settings and various times in history. One is the water trying to destroy order irrespective of the order being God on his throne or mankind on land. In many cases it expresses the necessary requisite for life often painfully obvious in the Middle East and thus even becomes the symbol of life. There is not a dicotomy valid for all these cases where some kind of water is life-giving and another destructive. Sea, *yam*, can for example be threatening and used to destroy as in the case of Mose and Pharao and in other traditions it is full of life. Water, *mayim*, is life-giving provided by God or the abyss out of which man is saved. Thus there are various sides to both water and sea depending on the context where it is found. Somehow the large and the deep seems to have a potential of being threatening while lakes, rivers and rain are regarded as something necessary for the continuation of life.

It seems that great caution is needed in translating words referring to water not to give the wrong idea about the water referred to. Ocean and sea with corresponding words in other European languages have been used by translators because of the large area covered by water even in those cases that those waters certainly are not salt water but the life-giving sweet water.



Modern african women-writers and their role in political process. Creative writing from Ethiopia and Nigeria

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At the end of the XX century – early in the XXI century the genre of the novel, to be more exact, its neo-Enlightenmental form, begins to play a dominant role in African literatures. It focuses on the psychology of the characters and at the same time it is created for mass readers. Creative writing by women in African countries deals with the female characters and their role in the family and society but it is also concerned with crucial historical and political events in their countries which used to be mainly the centre of men-writers' attention.

As in other African countries, the revival of literature in Ethiopia is closely connected with the struggle for political independence. The creative activity was highly stimulated by the five-year experience of the struggle against Italian aggression in 1935-1941. During the first post-war decade all works of art in this or that way touched upon the events of the past catastrophe. Prose writers, playwrights and poets considered it their duty to remind about the past and to stress the greatness of the people's heroism¹.

Among the authors of heroic-patriotic drama was Senedu Gebru with her play *The Grief of the Ethiopian People* published in Amharic in the "Book of My Heart" collection after the war².

Senedu Gebru is the first woman-writer in Ethiopia, a distinguished state and public figure. She occupied a number of high posts: she was in charge of the work of the Red Cross, headed the Empress Menen High School for Women. In 1957, according to the new constitution, she was elected to the House of Representatives, where later

1 For a better understanding of Ethiopian arts and literature see the recent work: Balashova, G. *Drama in Modern Ethiopian Literature and Theatre*, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Institute of African Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, 2012.

2 See: Gebru, S. *The Grief of the Ethiopian People*, Addis Ababa 1942-43 (Ethiopian calendar), 1949-50 (European calendar), in Amharic.

she held the position of the vice chairperson. In 1960 she chaired the Human Rights Seminar held in Addis Ababa, in 1961 she was the vice-president of the Red Cross at the international conference in Prague. Senedu Gebru widely traveled in Europe and visited India. Like her husband, Girmachew Tekle Hawaryat, after 1950s she left the world of literature and drama, engaging solely in public and state activities.

Senedu Gebru's heroic drama in verse *The Grief of the Ethiopian People* is dedicated to the tragic events of the "twelfth of Yekatit" (February 1937, Eur. calendar), also known in the recent Ethiopian history as the "Graziani Massacre". The play has only a few characters; the events that happened within several years both in Ethiopia and Europe are reflected implicitly through the stories told by their participants and witnesses. The play opens with a scene in which two young men are planning an assassination of the Italian Marshal Graziani. The events after the attempted assassination are narrated by a young woman called Itenesh, who was at home on that day with her children and saw all the events through her window.

In the next scene the action is moved to England, where the Emperor Haile Selassie I lives in exile. He is shown at the moment when he is told about the massacre and atrocities committed by the Italians in Ethiopia. The stories told by the characters gradually outline the life of the young man suspected of the attempted murder of Graziani. The young man disappears, and for several years his sister Itenesh fails to find him.

After five years, when the Emperor has already returned to Ethiopia, Itenesh is disturbed by "visions"; in one of her visions she recognizes her missing brother. She wants to make the vision come true; to touch her brother and talk to him, but this is forbidden by "laws of Heaven". Heavenly spirits suggest that she should describe the events of that tragic day as a story, and the content of the play is actually a kind of enactment of this "command from heaven".

The play freely uses elements of mysticism and religious symbolism, which is characteristic not only for the works of individual writers, but for the whole Ethiopian culture. Written in a rather lively language, this play is not very stage effective, although the author is apparently conversant with the rules of staging.

At present, a new generation of women-writers has appeared in Ethiopia as well as in other African countries. Analysis of some very crucial political events is the main focus of their attention in the novels and stories.

We would like to point out the novel written by a young woman-writer from Ethiopia Maaza Mengiste and her novel *Beneath the Lion's Gaze*, recently published in the United States³.

3 Maaza Mengiste *Beneath the Lion's Gaze*, New York, 2011.

Maaza Mengistu was born in Ethiopia, Addis-Ababa, graduated with an MFA in Creative Writing from New York University, currently lives in Brooklin, New York. *Beneath the Lion's Gaze* is her first novel, a fictionalized retelling of the Ethiopian revolution of 1974. It was called in the New York Times by Yorraine Adams «an important novel, rich in compassion for its anguished characters».

The situation after the Ethiopian revolution of 1974, especially during the first three years, was very terrible, the military junta called the Derg terrorized the Ethiopian people until 1991. As Maaza Mengistu writes at the end of the novel:

There are no confirmed numbers of how many men, women and children lost their lives during its rule. Some reports... say... the death toll could be in the hundreds of thousands. By the end of the most violent period of the Derg's rule, the Red Terror (1976-1978) of Menghistu Haile Mariam had effectively eliminated all opposition through deportation, imprisonment or exile⁴.

The story opens in Addis-Ababa, 1974, on the eve of a revolution. Yonas in his mother's prayer room, pleading to his god for an end to the violence that has wratched his family and country. His father, Hailu, a prominent doctor, has been ordered to report to jail after helping a victim of state – sanctioned torture to die. And Dawit Hailu's youngest son has joined an underground resistance movement, a choice that will lead to move upheaval and bloodshed across a ravaged Ethiopia.

In fact Maaza's central character of the novel is – Ethiopia itself, which comes to life through events during two chaotic periods in lives, in 1974 and 1977. It was a time when a group of junior army officers formed the Derg (Military Committee) to restore the order but soon did away with the aging Emperor Haile Selassie, the institution of monarchy itself and massacred scores of senior officials and loyalists.

We can not name it historical novel in the usual sense, but these historical events dominated everyone's life, particularly in the capital.

When the novel begins in 1974, opposition to the Emperor was unstructured but in the process of forming two factions – one civilian, one military. The civilian intellectuals then tried unsuccessfully to influence the relatively uneducated Derg leaders. As they lost ground, the battle intensified. Maaza introduces her characters with and in response of these events. A young victim of a police shooting is treating by Dr. Hailu. His son, student, Dawit, involved with campus radical supporters.

4 See *ivi*, p. 300.

With increasing force, the Derg imposed absolute control of every aspect of life, and of life itself. Maaze conveys the mood in a vivid perception.

Public protests which might have broken out elsewhere were not Ethiopian's way. Instead of it, Ethiopia exhibited the habitual fatalism of earlier generation, accepting in silence whatever happened, hoping to survive, taking spiritual and religious shelter. Those who did oppose the Derg were, with some exceptions, westernized and some had studied abroad.

This was not, at first, a traditional Ethiopian uprising being based on reform rather than overthrow. That changed with the emperor's removal in 1974 and subsequent murder.

In the novel the writer depicted the fight between the Red and White Terrors. The campus radical supporters – in the novel and in fact – were influenced by the socialist ideas of students living in Europe and in previous USSR, as well as in North America. The Derg had cooled toward USA when its request for arms was rejected and joined the Socialist camp when it accepted the East block arms. Maaze's passing mention of Cuba refers to the 10,000 troops sent by Castro for Moscow's request to help Ethiopia repel an invasion from Somalia in 1977. Ethiopia, a firm US ally since World War II, was now a cold war enemy.

The book greatly differs from creative works of that time, which appraise the revolution, admiring its ideology and ideas. There were such books as trilogy by Berhanu Zerihun *The flood* (1979/1980)⁵, Be'alu Girma, *The call of the Red Star* (1979/1980)⁶, majority of plays and poetic verses by prominent author Ayalneh Mulatu and others. In the novel *The call of the Red Star* Be'alu Girma ideologically takes the side of the government in his account of the Revolution. He also sympathizes with the ideals of the revolution in his *The Author*, published later the same year. But afterwards he disappointed in the ideas of building of "Ethiopian socialism" and in his new novel *Oromay* (from ital. *Pointless*), which he had written during his stay in Eritrea during "the red star campaign", he criticized high government and party officials. They became the targets of ridicule and attack. This novel is believed to have contributed to his sudden disappearance and death in 1984.

Maaza Mengiste gives us a fine but subtle portrait of Ethiopia's character and it seems (up to my opinion) one of the serious weakness of the book. She pays rather

5 Zerihun, B. *Ma'ibel (The flood)*. On this author see: Zerihun, A. *A Survey of Research on the Writings of An Ethiopian Novelist: Berhanu Zerihun*. (First Presented at the Symposium Organized in Memorial of the Author by the Addis Ababa University Cultural Centre, May 1988 and published in the Institute of Language Studies Newsletter, issue No. 5, 1990).

6 Be'alu Girma *The call of the Red Star*; for both writers see: Molvaer, R.K. *Black Lions, The creative lives of modern Ethiopia's literary giants and pioneers*, Red Sea Press, 1997.

limited attention to the Derg whose motives are never examined. We can only guess who the Derg's members were. How did they see themselves? Ethiopians still seem unready to examine the shadows of their recent past.

The common feeling for all the people of that time was fear. Terrible fear. Power was now in the hands of unknown commoners with unknown intentions. Anyone can be arrested and tortured at any moment: a father, sister, even a small child. Amnesty International has estimated that 200,000 or more were killed during these years, the majority in Addis Ababa where resistance was strongest. Maaza clarified that there were no harder times than these Derg years.

The final weeks of Haile Selassie's reign, including the poignant moment when he was taken from his palace in the back of a Volkswagen (as reported in the world press) are memorably presented. Maaza shows him as a frail, confused old man, past 80, formerly all-powerful, now helpless and alone. There are pages in her brief rendering of Haile Selassie's final days – not many days, not many scenes – that are painful but also compelling, even touched with greatness.

Let's briefly notice about Maaza's characters. They are an ordinary collection of Addis residents. Middle-aged Hailu is a doctor at a government hospital, not particularly religious, highly professional and committed to his work, devoted to his family, out of touch with his radicalized son, Dawit. He watches his more traditionally inclined wife waste away from a heart ailment, revealing herself in mystical devotional language. His older son, Yonas, a decent man of weak character, has a deep love for his young daughter and for his wife Sara. Sara, one of Maaza's more complex character, suffers intensely after two failed pregnancies and fears deeply for the safety of her single daughter, subjecting herself to a shocking penance to assure Tizita's life. She responds to the political crisis with exceptional courage.

Others, most of them little more than noticed, include Melaku, the neighboring shopkeeper who becomes the most appealing character in the novel. Several household and compound residents and neighbors flesh out the little community. By 1977, Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam was the unchallenged leader of the Derg though he does not appear in the novel. In the author's note Maaza tells us that the fictional Major Guddu was "inspired" by Mengistu, remaining a remote, evil figure rather than a participant in her story.

I agree with some reviewers who wrote that Maaza's characters – even the central figures – are not fully drawn. But maybe she had another aim before her – her characters embody a uniquely Ethiopian response to the trauma they are living through. Each character contributes to the texture, because in Ethiopia God's world has always known evil.

Some will find it hard to appreciate Maaza's portrayal of Ethiopian religious sentiment, at times as some noted she tends toward "Purple prose". I would like to add that the narrative is unnecessarily fragmented and that it came to a somewhat unsatisfying end and the readers can discover it themselves.

Such complaints do not diminish Maaza's impressive achievement. Her view of Ethiopia is original, her characters respond to these terrible years believably and sometimes in ways that can be found only in Ethiopia. This is a novel that deserves an attentive audience, not just only among Ethiopians. It is a portrait of a society – inseparably both Ethiopian and Christian – under intense stress. The national character that was brought to the surface will be immediately familiar to Ethiopian readers – so familiar, in fact, that they might not even notice it⁷.

Other African writers deserve to be mentioned like Flora Nwapa (1931-1993). We have to stress that in fact she is the first Nigerian woman-writer of novels. She is well known mainly as the author of two novels: *Efuru*⁸ and *Idu*⁹ published in Nigeria and Great Britain, the action of which is located at the beginning of the colonial period in Iboland, Nigeria.

A woman is the central personage of these novels. Flora depicted the position of a woman in the traditional society and deals also with the problems of the families without children.

At the same time in some other novels like *Never again* (1975)¹⁰, *One is enough* (1985)¹¹ the writer touches upon the problems of civil war between Nigeria and Biafra during the years 1967-1970, although not in a direct way. In one of the interviews she noted that women and young girls have learned the evils of the war which have destroyed the lives of too many people.

Among a new generation of women-writers in Nigeria we can name Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie who directly touches upon the typical male subject – matter – fight of Biafra in her novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2009)¹².

7 For further documentation on Ethiopian literature see: Gerard, A.S. *Four African Literatures: Khosa, Sotho, Zulu and Amharic*, Berkley Univ. of California Press, 1971; Kane, T.L. *Ethiopian literature in Amharic*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1975.

8 Nwapa, F. *Efuru*, Enugu, 1966.

9 Nwapa, F. *Idu*, London, 1970.

10 Nwapa, F. *Never again*, London, 1975.

11 Nwapa, F. *One is enough*, London, 1981.

12 Adichie Ngozi, C. *Half of a Yellow Sun*, London, 2009.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born in Nigeria in 1977. She is from Abba, in Anambra State, but grew up in the university town of Nsukka, where she attended primary and secondary schools. *Purple Hibiscus*, her first novel, was shortlisted for the Orange Prize and many other awards in 2003¹³.

For three years Biafra led civil war against Nigeria for self-independence. Civil war is depicted as it is seen by twins – Olanna and Kainene – and their husbands, Odenigbo – a scientist-mathematician who is for the separation of Biafra – and an Englishman, Richard, who is writing a book *The world was silent when we died*.

A bit comic character is a young village servant Ugwo working for Olanna and Odenigbo, for whom war becomes a cruel school of life.

Young women-writers' concern for serious social and political events and their countries – Ethiopia and Nigeria – is a new phenomenon in African literatures¹⁴.

13 Adichie Ngozi, C. *Purple Hibiscus*, London, 2002.

14 For a larger bibliography of the themes discussed in this paper see: Balashova, G.A. *Drama in modern Ethiopian literature and Theatre...* cit.



***Ascari tales: preliminary remarks
on Gebreyesus Hailu's The Conscript***

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Twenty-four years after its first publication in English¹, Gebreyesus Hailu's novella *The Conscript*, originally written in Tigrinya, is finally made available to an international reading audience in a fine, nuanced translation by Ghirmai Negash. The novel can look back on almost a century-long gestation period. Initially written in 1927 (September 1920 Ethiopian Calendar) by Dr. *Abba* ("Father") Gebreyesus Hailu (1906-1993), an Eritrean intellectual and Catholic theologian, it was not until 1950 that *The Conscript* could be published, owing to its explicit anti-colonial stance, which would have made publication under Italian colonial rule impossible. The story charts the experience of Tuquabo, a young Eritrean *ascaro* or soldier in the Italian colonial army, who gets sent to "Tripoli" to fight the Libyan resistance against Italy's imperial enterprise. In four chapters the author maps Tuquabo's physical and mental journey from an eager volunteer to a disillusioned, politically conscious veteran with first-hand experience of Italian racism and oppression, and a profound knowledge of the injustice and futility of colonial war. Told from a variety of perspectives – an authorial narrative voice, a first-person narrator, and various figural narrative situations with different focalizations – the text is a story not only of personal political awakening but also of a community (or rather: communities) under siege. While, militarily speaking, we witness the Libyan nationalists under attack – only to find that they are formidable opponents – the focus is on the people of Eritrea, particularly the Tigrinya-speaking Christian *Habesha* community in the central highlands. Gebreyesus Hailu cleverly paints a picture of this community by resorting to oral poetry, proverbs, and analeptic

¹ My contribution is a reflection on Gebreyesus Hailu *The Conscript: A Novel of Libya's Anticolonial War*, Athens, Ohio University Press, 2012, transl. from the Tigrinya by Ghirmai Negash intr. by Chrisman, L. The novella was first translated and adapted in 1988 by Amanuel Sahle, then Institute of African Studies, Asmara University, under the title "The Black Train".

descriptions of childhood experiences, community celebrations, and ordinary life to reveal the disruptions and changes Italian colonial presence has brought to this part of the world.

The narrative starts *in medias res* with Tuquabo taking leave of his stunned and shaken parents. Elderly and soon to be in need of filial support, they cannot fathom the motives of their only surviving child for leaving behind a good, if modest, life in order to fight someone else's war abroad. For the reader, the reasons soon become clear enough. This is part of the sophistication of Gebreyesus Hailu's text that it does not reduce colonial and colonized entanglements to a one-dimensional dichotomy of oppressor and oppressed, but also shows Eritrean involvement and complicity. It makes the story of Tuquabo's political awakening all the more powerful. Initially full of admiration for (Italian) military prowess, Tuquabo is ready to prove his own bravery like so many Eritrean youths at the time. His awareness of injustice and prejudice, however, begins to sharpen once he embarks on the journey which will take him from the Eritrean central highlands to the port of Massawa, and from there to Sudan, Egypt, and Libya. This travelling movement by train, ship, and later on foot opens his eyes, ears, and mind and hones his powers of observation and deeper reflection. Not only does he become aware of Italian racism and the double standards Eritrean *ascari* are subjected to, he is also made to face his own prejudices towards other cultures and religions. Partly derived from Italian propaganda, they are also rooted in the long-established attitudes of his own community towards other, particularly Muslim, cultures. Overwhelmed by the beauty of the sea, the new landscapes, and communities they encounter on their journey, Tuquabo and his fellow *ascari* are beginning to understand the narrowness of their own thinking, «because knowing only their own people and dress custom, they had never before imagined the expansiveness of the human race and culture inhabiting the world» (19)². It is particularly his attitude towards "Arabs" and their culture that changes dramatically. Faced with the brutal treatment of Italian officers, and the relative luxury these officers enjoy in stark contrast to the hardships of the *Habesha* soldiers, Tuquabo begins to appreciate and admire the Libyan cause: «[Indolence] is what was said about the character of the Arabs. But seeing now how they were arming themselves to fight when told there was an alien army coming to attack them, no one can believe that supposed laziness after all» (35). It also makes him question his own motives for joining the war: «... it was strange to watch the *Habesha*, who at first did nothing when their land was taken and bowed to the Italians like dogs (as if that were not shameful enough

2 Page numbers in parentheses refer to Gebreyesus Hailu, 2012.

indeed), preparing to fight those Arabs who wanted to defend their country» (29). The Libyans turn out to be indomitable opponents, and the ensuing battle is fierce. Though it ends «with full victory for the *Habesha*» (40), the narrator leaves no doubt that Italy is the true beneficiary.

In the final chapter, appropriately entitled “The Thirst of Death”, the brutality of Italian colonialism is fully revealed. While Italian officers cautiously guard their drinking water, many brave *ascari* die of thirst on their way home. The scramble for water becomes a dehumanizing experience for the *Habesha*, with many dying in stampedes at the few available wells, «like buzzing flies that fall into a bowl of milk» (48). Laura Chrisman, in her superb introduction to the novel, points out that Gebreyesus Hailu «complicates [the colonial] equation by featuring both colonizer and colonized as animals» (xix). While *ascari*, and Eritreans in general, suffer inhuman degradation at various points – be it at the well, as servants («dogs»), or at the train station where crowds are whipped like «donkey[s]» (12) and «growling sheep or goats» (54) – their treatment ultimately unmasks the bestiality of colonial rule (xix-xx). In the end, there is no winner in this equation, only destruction and death. While many *ascari* lose their lives, it is the death of Tuquabo’s mother of a broken heart (an allegory for the loss of the motherland) and Tuquabo’s own change of heart that indicates the impending demise of Italian imperial ambition. At the end of the narrative, when Tuquabo’s journey has turned full circle, he revokes his involvement with the colonial power in a moving *melkes*, a traditional Tigrinya dirge:

And knowing that I killed my mother, to follow my vanity [...]
I am done with Italy and its tribulations
That robbed me off my land and parents
I am done with conscription and Italian medals
Farewell to arms! (56-57).

Both Ghirmai Negash and Laura Chrisman have commented on the rich use of oral and written poetry in the text, on its general poetic qualities, and on repetition and parallelism as particular poetic devices (ix-x). The ensuing circular narrative structure, however, evokes a spiralling movement or a Soyinkan Moebius strip rather than an endless repetitive loop. There is no going back to the beginning, only a profound change in attitude.

The Conscript is not only a many-sided novel in theme, form, and context, it is also a visionary text, in that it anticipates the worsening of Italian-Eritrean relations in the mid-1930s and projects the eventual failure of the Italian colonial enterprise. If we consider creative writing to be part of knowledge production

and the discursive practices of its time, then the novel has much to offer to both literary critics and historians. Starting from the usual historical narrative of three phases of Italian colonialism in Eritrea – from the creation of Eritrea to the Battle of Adwa, 1889-1896; its consolidation as a geopolitical and socio-economic entity, 1897-early 1930s; and the final, fascist period until 1941³ – we soon realize that incidents often attributed to the third phase of colonial rule are already depicted in *The Conscript*, set in the second. While the period prior to Mussolini was governed by a racism based on the belief of European technological superiority, resulting in a (no less exploitative) colonial paternalism in which land expropriation and the use of local manpower as *ascari* played an important role, the 1930s were marked by the introduction of an apartheid-like form of racial segregation which officially denied Eritreans their humanity. Tuquabo already experiences this dehumanization on the battlegrounds of Libya. We also know from historical research that *ascari* largely formed a nascent local élite under colonial rule and were viewed as privileged intermediaries between the Italian authorities and their indigenous subjects⁴. This official discourse the novel again undermines, with one of the supposed mediators being taught a very different story.

Interesting tensions also emerge when we look at the publication history of the text. As mentioned above, *The Conscript*, written in 1927, was only published after the demise of Italian colonialism in 1950, when the country was under a British military caretaker administration, albeit with many of the Italian administrative structures still intact. It was a time of immense political turbulence and great uncertainty for Eritrea's political future. While UN Resolution eventually federated the country with neighbouring Ethiopia – the Federal Act being implemented in 1952 – the resolution had already been passed in 1950, the very year the novel was published. In his “Preface to the Tigrinya Edition”, Gebreyesus writes that publication was only possible through a loan received from the Ethiopian-Eritrean Unity Association (xxix), a body which campaigned for Eritrea's possible incorporation with Ethiopia. This is an interesting piece of information which further in-depth studies of *The Conscript* should heed. The Unionists in Eritrea were known for actively supporting the arts; among those activities was an anti-colonial play, “Eritrea's Past Property” (1947) by Berhe Mesgun, dealing with

3 Tekeste Negash *Italian Colonialism in Eritrea, 1882-1941: Policies, Praxis and Impact*, Studia Historica Upsaliensia 148, Uppsala, Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1987, p. 2.

4 Uoldelul Chelati Dirar “From Warriors to Urban Dwellers: *Ascari* and the Military Factor in the Urban Development of Colonial Eritrea” in *Cahiers d'Études africaines* XLIV, 3, 2004, 175, pp. 533-574.

the abominable treatment of Eritrean *ascari* and their families⁵. Play and novel are very similar in tone – the idea of being treated “like animals”, for example, or the utter disregard and contempt even for those who proved heroes on the battlefield. It was a time when anti-colonial sentiments could finally be voiced by the Eritrean public; and it is evident that writers and theatre-makers did not hold back. A comparison of these texts is bound to make for interesting reading. Where they seem to differ, however, is in *The Conscript*'s ambiguous stance towards what would become the region's two main historiographical traditions – the Greater Ethiopia narrative, on the one hand, which absorbs Eritrea as an integral part; and, on the other, the idea of Eritrean nationalism and political legitimacy being rooted in Italian colonial experience⁶. While the publishing history of the novel and the narrator's reference to Eritreans as the «children of Ethiopia» (14) suggest endorsement of the Greater Ethiopia paradigm (particularly with the financial support of the Unionists in mind), Tuquabo's recognition and understanding of «the meaning of Eritrea» (18), and his wonderment at the country's diverse and beautiful countryside suggest a germinal vision of Eritrea as an autonomous political entity. This was indeed to be fought for in the thirty-year war for Eritrean independence (1961-91) decades later. Interviews with contemporaries suggest that several active Unionists had second thoughts about their links with Ethiopia when the Federal Act was gradually undermined by the Ethiopian Crown; I have also met former Unionists who later joined the initial opposition to Ethiopian hegemony, the Eritrean Liberation Movement. Subliminally, *The Conscript* seems to anticipate these developments, with much of the Libyan rhetoric against Italian invasion echoing that of future Eritrean liberation movements fighting Ethiopia: «Either we liberate our land or we shall be buried there. We should take back to our people the sign of our victory, or let them hear of our death» (36).

But not only the novel merits further study, but also the author himself: how come Dr. *Abba* Gebreyesus Hailu achieved such a high level of education when schooling for Eritreans was limited to a maximum of four years under colonial rule? What influence did he have as vicar general of the Catholic Church in Eritrea, or later as Ethiopian cultural attaché in Rome? Are there any other texts which could be made available again, not only the dramatic fragment on Emperor Tewodros mentioned in the Preface, but perhaps also religious or political writings?

5 Matzke, C. “Looking for ‘Eritrea's Past Property’ (1947): Archives and Memories in Eritrean Theatre Historiography” in Hutchison, Y.; Banham, M.; Gibbs, J.; Osofisan, F. and Plastow, J. (eds.) *African Theatre 9: Histories 1850-1950*, Woodbridge, James Currey, 2010, pp. 1-22.

6 See: Uoldelul Chelati Dirar *op. cit.*, p. 534.

Historians of early African élites should find Gebreyesus Hailu a worthy figure to study (and *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* might find him an ideal candidate for their re-launched “African Local Intellectual” strand).

In sum, this novel will be great value to a number of academic communities and the general reading public. For the literary critic, it will broaden the corpus of African works written during colonial times and join the growing list of (rediscovered) early landmarks in both European and African languages, such as *Ethiopia Unbound* (1911), *Chaka* (1925), and *Shaihu Umar* (1955). With all of these novels requiring further scholarly attention, the literary histories of the continent continue to be rewritten. *The Conscript* will also prompt reconsideration of critical concepts such as “agency”, “resistance” and “transnationalism”, because, as Chrisman rightly points out, «cultural, political, and identity formations [...] developed not only through the metropolitan-imperial axis but also through horizontal flows to other colonized and racially subordinated populations» (xvi). Furthermore, *The Conscript* will add new aspects to the seldom-explored motif of the African colonial soldier in creative writing. When it is read against more recent works such as *Burma Boy* (2007), *Black Mamba Boy* (2010), and tales from *Ethiopian Stories* (1994 [1930s]), we can again expect interesting findings to emerge. For the “proper” historian, the novel will add new source material to the study of *ascari*, a field notoriously difficult to research⁷. And, for the linguist and scholar of translation studies, the various versions of the text – the novel under review plus earlier excerpts in Ghirmai Negash⁸ and Amanuel Sahle⁹ – will enable the study of communication processes from one language, context, and culture to another.

Last but not least, *The Conscript* will be an enjoyable experience for the general reader interested in early-twentieth-century texts and/or the literatures of (the Horn of) Africa. It is with delight that I envisage an ever-greater global presence of the literatures of the Horn and its diaspora. Just recently, in December 2012, the Kwani’s Litfest in Nairobi was devoted to “Conversations with the Horn”; and there are more and more new voices emerging internationally which creatively (re-)map

7 See: *ivi.*, pp. 549.

8 Ghirmai Negash *A History of Tigrinya Literature in Eritrea: The Oral and the Written, 1890-1991*, CNWS Publications 75, Leiden, Research School of Asian, African, and Amerindian Studies (CNWS), University of Leiden, 1999; Ghirmai Negash “Native Intellectuals in the Contact Zone: African Responses to Italian Colonialism in Tigrinya Language” in *Biography* vol. 32, n.1, 2009, pp. 74-88.

9 Sahle, A. “The Black Train (Translated and Adapted from Abba Gebre Yessus Hailu’s ‘Hade Zanta’)” in *Ethiopian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 5, n. 1, 1988, pp. 33-66.

the region in a multiplicity of languages. When I look at these developments, I cannot help but feel a certain glee. For years I have been given the well-meant, and certainly very realistic, advice to move my research away from the region and focus on more “rewarding” fields of enquiry – career-wise, that is. While it is perfectly feasible to spend one’s academic life entirely on the literatures of South Africa or Nigeria, for example, Eritrea and the Horn are still considered to belong to those “minor” areas neglected in literary circles, with the exception of a few canonized writers. The publication of *The Conscript*, however, proves once more that there exists a wealth of creative expression worthy of critical attention – and that this material might actually change the way we think and write about African literature today. For their efforts in making available again a treasure of early Tigrinya literature, Ghirmai Negash and Ohio University Press can therefore only be commended.

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Women's voices: exploring "development" in an Ethiopian town¹

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Introduction

In recent years, the importance of women as participants in development schemes has been a dominant theme in discussions of development cooperation. Beginning with the Women in Development (WID) policy promoted by development agencies in the late 1970s and early 1980s, policy-makers have maintained that in order to make development work, women must participate in development projects and must be offered the training or education components needed to make this happen. At this writing, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, this participatory discourse has expanded considerably: the early focus on women has moved to a focus on gender and gender relations and – most recently – to the mainstreaming of women in all phases of development programs and implementation². Thus, the participation of women in development is no longer seen as a “project” but is taken – or should be – as a matter of course in development projects, programs and indeed, policies.

Whether this triad – gender/participation/ development – is nowadays taken as ‘a matter of course’ by development agencies is a moot point – and I leave it to others to test whether and how it is working. My intention here is not attempt to review

1 I am indebted to the members of the senior seminar in Social Anthropology, University of Addis Ababa, Spring term 2001. I am also grateful to my friends and colleagues Eva Poluha, Dalarna University, and Annika Rabo, Stockholm University, for many helpful questions, comments and criticism.

2 Some well-taken criticism has been levied at “gender mainstreamers” and their pronounced tendency to proceed from Western gender schemes and to pay too little attention to identifying and considering local structures and traditions. See for example: Woodford-Berger, P. “Gender Mainstreaming: what is it (about) and should we continue doing it?” in Cornwall, A.; Harrison, E.; Whitehead, A. (eds.) *Feminisms in Development. Contradictions, Contestations and Challenges*, London, Zed Books, 2007, pp. 122-134.

the current discourse(s) of gender, participation or indeed development. For my purposes with this paper, I will let it suffice to refer to development most generally as “planned social change”³³ and to move from here to my specific concern: the several experientially based definitions or understandings of development which emerge in the narratives produced by three women who participated in an early WID project in a small town in Ethiopia.

I begin, following Reissman, with a definition of narrative as «talk organized around consequential events»⁴ – here the consequential event was a successful water project. Generating and vitalizing the narrative are memories, experiences, reflections and interpretations of events of consequence to the narrator. Based on this, the narrator «organizes and gives meaning to experience»⁵. However, while the “meaningful experience” is clearly anchored in the life arena of the individual and arises from her understanding of her particular situation, the context also includes a variety of meta-narratives or general discourses which are being (somehow) disseminated and which affect her understanding of her experience.

In the context which concerns me here – the life arena of the women whose narratives I focus on – the meta-narratives were several: first, the policies of the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) and WID which put great emphasis on the importance of women’s participation in the development process; second, and perhaps more important, the strong ideological press on development and progress which was mediated and promoted by the Derg government’s official women’s organization, the Revolutionary Ethiopian Women’s Association, REWA. In both contexts women’s participation in development and the importance of change and progress were well-articulated and well-propagated themes which were defined as individual as well as communal goals.

The particular project the women refer to and participated in was initiated and to some extent implemented by Sida between 1982-1985. The project involved a gravity-fed water system which was to be constructed and partially paid for by people living in the area of Dodota in the region of Arssi in Ethiopia. Somewhat unusual for the times, the project was an outcome of discussions of local needs⁶ as

3 See Lewis, D. *Anthropology and Development: the Uneasy Relationship* [online], London, LSE Research online. Available at <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/archive/00000253>, 2005.

4 Reissman, C. *Narrative Analysis*, London, Sage Publications, 1993, p.3. See also: Tonkin, E. *Narrating our Pasts*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

5 Bruner, E. “Ethnography as narrative” in Turner, V.; Bruner, E. (eds.) *The Anthropology of Experience*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986, p. 143.

6 By the time the Dodota project was initiated, there had been a perceptible shift from policies aiming for high growth rates and encouraging capital flows to low income countries to a focus on

identified by local people – in particular the women whose lives were structured by endless hours of walking to find water and carry it home. Also unusual was the fact that the daily workings of the water project – office management, collection of fees and some technical implementation – were carried out by some fifty local women who had been specifically trained to do each of these jobs⁷.

To locate the women and their narratives in the actual context, I will begin with some brief comments about the Dodota Water Supply Project and the findings of several evaluations in which I participated. I will also give a short sketch of the town of Huruta, the location of the head office of the project. I will then go on to my main concern, the women's narratives about their lives and, more specifically, their several views of development.

1. Beginnings: the Dodota Water Supply Project

The need for the water project was first mentioned in 1980 by women attending several meetings of the local Women's Associations in the *woreda* (district) of Dodota in Arssi, Ethiopia. The issue focused upon was development: the many assembled women were discussing what could or should be done to encourage development in the area. They reached consensus rather quickly: water was the key factor. «Without access to clean water closer to our homes», they said, «there will never be any development in this region». One woman then mentioned the terrible consequences of the constant lack of water: «we have so little water here», she said slowly, «that we can't even wash our dead».

Some five years later, as a result of the combined efforts of Sida's newly established Women's Office, members of local branches of the then-active

the "basic needs" of the poor and an obligation to include local populations in defining these needs. Although the shift was short-lived and was soon replaced by neo-liberal structural adjustment policies which aimed to reduce debt and big government, the project here was clearly concerned with a basic need-access to clean water. That the project occurred within the Derg government's village-ization program made it no less focused on "basic needs". I mention this and other development policies in more detail in Narrowe, J. "Development policy, education and training: women and change in contemporary Ethiopia" in Milkias, P.; Kebede, M. (eds.) *Education, Politics and Social Change in Ethiopia*, Los Angeles, Tsahai Publishers and Distributors, 2010. See also: Hilhorst, D. "Village Experts and Development Discourse. 'Progress' in a Philippine Igorot Village" in *Human Organization*, vol. 60, n. 4, 2001, pp. 401-413; Niki, N.; Wright, S. *Power and Participatory Research. Theory and Practice*, London, Intermediate Technology Publications, 1995.

⁷ See in particular Narrowe, J. "All You Have to do is Teach Me" in *Education and Training in the Dodota Water Supply Project*, Stockholm, Development Studies Unit, Stockholm University, 1989, for a discussion and analysis of the training component of the project.

Revolutionary Ethiopian Women's Association, and hundreds of residents of the area, a successful gravity-fed water system was constructed in the *woreda*. When completed in 1985, the system supplied upwards of 60,000 people in the *woreda* with clean piped water within walking distance of their homes and continues to do so until this day.

I had been actively involved in the water project for many years. In 1988, I participated in the initial evaluation of the project; in 1996 I returned to identify the "lessons learned" in Dodota which might be applied elsewhere in Ethiopia. Both studies indicated that the system was working satisfactorily. Success was attributed to the use of contextually appropriate technology and to the widespread local input and participation: local people had originally identified the need for the project, local people constructed and paid for much of the system, and local people, mainly women, managed and operated the system. Today, many years later, the Dodota water system still functions⁸ and is frequently referred to as a prime example of sustainable development cooperation⁸.

2. In the field: defining development in Huruta

I come now to the intention of this paper – an understanding of development as narrated by three women in the town of Huruta. In 1999 and again in 2001, in conjunction with two short term teaching positions at the Kotebe College of Teacher Education in Addis Ababa, I re-visited Dodota. My interest now was not to evaluate the system but to probe whether/how the system and participation in its construction and maintenance had affected local perceptions of development.

⁸ The initial discussions with women in Dodota were conducted by Poluha, E. *A Study in two Ethiopian Woredas on the Economic Activities of Peasant Women and Their Role in Rural Development*, Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University Press, 1981. Several evaluations followed: Narrowe, J. "All You Have to do is Teach Me..." cit.; Poluha, E.; Narrow, J. *The Dodota Water Supply Project – Impact, Sustainability and Replicability: An Evaluation*, Stockholm, Sida, 1989; Olson, B.; Narrowe, J.; Asfaw, N. *From Project to Company: A Case Study of the Dodota Water Supply System*, Stockholm/Addis Ababa, Sida, 1996 and most recently by: Poluha, E. "Promotion of Change and the Current Aid Discourse. A Discussion based on Experiences from the Dodota Water Scheme" Paper presented at the *XVII International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Addis Ababa, Nov. 2-5, 2009; Poluha, E. *Development discourses and anthropology. Experiences from an evaluation in the Amhara Region*, Bahar Dar, University of Bahar Dar, October 30, 2009. In the former paper Poluha critiques the conceptual framework – project-program, popular participation, sustainability and indeed development – which accompanied the project and argues that these terms contain value-laden implications which prevent a fully critical view of events. She suggests, in particular, that the positive tones of 'development' can usefully be replaced with the more neutral concept of "change". This view has clearly influenced my position in this paper.

During my visit in 1999, I conducted several informal focus group discussions on this topic with many residents of Huruta – men and women, young and old. Again and again, all maintained that some development was taking place in Huruta and for a variety of reasons: «because of the water system, because we are hardworking, because we are highlanders». In 2001, I returned to ask essentially the same questions. I now limited my contacts to three women in Huruta town whom I had met several times through the years. As we sat together, I asked them whether we could talk about their lives, particularly their experiences with the water project and what they might mean by "development".

Very shortly, however, as we sat together, I realized that what I assumed was the strength of common memories did not eliminate some amount of suspicion toward me. At our first focus group discussion, one of the women asked, rather curtly, why I was so interested in Huruta women and in their stories. I quickly pointed out, very gingerly, that we had discussed this earlier and that they had agreed that women elsewhere might learn from their participation in the water project and from their accomplishments as women in rural Ethiopia. After a long and (for me) tense moment of silence, Aznaketch, the oldest of the women looked at me quietly and said, slowly, «*Batam t'ru naw*, very good». The others nodded. I felt that I was re-defined as reliable.

The incident reminded me of the fact that my initial relationship with these women was very much related to formal "development cooperation" in the specific context of the Swedish input in the water project. This became clear in the course of our talks; the women returned very often to the themes that we had discussed in previous years during the several formal evaluations – themes which constitute what I have identified as the meta discourse of development. They pointed out again and again in (for me) familiar phrases that the water project had positively affected their everyday lives: they no longer had to walk for several hours to get water, their children's health was better, and the abundant water supply facilitated a number of new income-generating activities. All of that, they pointed out, was *l'mat*, Amharic for growth and development.

Several question remained – most particularly their personal views of development. I then began the individual interviews and, with the help of interpreters⁹, I spent three to four hours discussing these and other questions with

⁹ I enlisted the help of Berhanu Belacho and Guday Emire, at the time both teachers at the Kotebe College of Teacher Education, and W. German, a former high school biology teacher, to translate at the interviews. All interviews were taped, then transcribed and translated by two Kotebe students. Please note that the names of the women, though not their stories, are fictitious.

each woman. As we ate considerable amounts of *kollo*, roasted wheat kernels and a favorite of mine, we spoke of Huruta and its history, we touched upon important turning points in their lives, we spoke of the history of the water system, and we/I brought up some gender issues – particularly how their mothers’ lives differed from their own. My method was deceptively simple: I allowed «the associative nature of natural memory»¹⁰, including memories of our long common history to take its course and to energize our conversations.

As I later read and re-read the interviews/narratives, I discerned several sub-texts – subtle differences in what each woman selected to remember and how she defined development. I will shortly come to the women and their narratives. First, however, I will have to place the women in their physical and social context and to briefly describe the town of Huruta.

3. The Context: Huruta Town

Huruta is a market town of some ten thousand people located in the highlands in the region of Oromia, 110 kilometers south of Addis Ababa. It is now a new town: according to the comments of the town’s elders, and related in a composition written by a student in the local high school, Huruta was founded as a garrison town at the time of King Menelik II as a rest spot for his non-commissioned officers and enlisted men, both Amhara och Shewa Oromo¹¹.

At the time of my two visits in 1999 and 2001, Huruta was divided into two *kebele*, urban dwellers associations, of roughly the same size. I took a quick ride through the town and counted eighteen hotels, five groceries, sixteen tearooms, twenty-eight *taj*, honey liquor houses, and many cottage industries, including eleven small grinding mills, two factories (flour processing) and four oil pressing machines. To this list must be added several shops which sold both new and used clothes, many small fruit and vegetable stands, a photo shop, at least two shops selling electronic goods, and a small shop selling yarn.

In addition to the look of the town, my discussions with Hurutans in 1999 and 2001 revealed a distinctively boastful attitude on their part toward their

10 Terdiman, R. *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis*, Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1993, p.37.

11 This is referred to in an essay entitled *The History of Huruta* (1998) written by a senior student in Huruta’s Senior Secondary School. In 1885, the emperor Menelik placed his lower grade enlisted soldiers in Huruta because «the water supply from the Kalata River was ample». Officers were stationed in the nearby town of Assela. The term “Huruta” derives from the Oromo language *heruta* which means “he who settles disputes”.

community, most particularly to their tradition of hard work and cooperation. They insisted that these were typical characteristics of highlanders – and not, they hastened to point out, of lowlanders.

This sketch will suffice as a description of the town. I now turn to the narratives, the "meaning-making structures"¹² of three women in Huruta: Ms Aznaketch, 76, Ms Almaz, 47, and Ms Aster, 38. The interviews touched upon a variety of questions about their lives – their views of Huruta's history and their personal contributions to Huruta's contemporary history, their views of development and change, and their views of women's lives nowadays as compared to years gone by.

4. General views: "development" in the women's narratives

I detected several similarities in the women's narratives. First, not surprisingly, they moved back and forth from past to present, then back to the past and to the present again. They were consistently reflexive, comparative and critical: no one doubted that "now" was better than "then". Related to this was their focus on "modernity" which they readily described as a varied package of changes, most essentially good, and which they define mainly defined in terms of technology and education. All viewed modernity as a goal and in some most respects an appreciated quality of their lives. No one spoke of the "then" as better than "now" and, with one exception which I will note below, there were no hints of nostalgia in their narratives.

At times, the women referred to what I have understood as the official or meta participation discourse which characterized both Sida's policies and REWA's programs. In each, women were portrayed as both the instruments and the benefactors of development whose participation as active and capable workers was crucial¹³. But as we moved through our conversations, I noted that each woman expanded or augmented the official discourse with its characteristic rhetoric of the "importance of development" and the "participation of women" into a more variegated discourse of her own. As the women spoke in generally positive tones about the changing position of women in Ethiopia. I was reminded of a conversation with a woman in a neighboring village who described the changes between her mother's life and her own in very concrete terms: «my mother», she said, «was just like the stove, you never really saw her. And now, we women are discussing all sorts of ideas... even with you!».

12 See: Reissman, C. *Narrative Analysis...* cit., p. 4.

13 See: Berhane-Sellassie, T. (ed.) *Gender Issues in Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1991.

I now come to the focus of this paper – the women's individual narratives, my questions, our conversations.

5. "I baked bread and brewed beer": Aznaketch's narrative

I begin with Ms. Aznaketch's narrative. At 76, she is the oldest of the three and the only one born in Huruta. Her knowledge of the town stretches back several generations and her focus on the past is quite strong. At the time of our conversation she was a member of the Huruta Council of Elders.

We sat on benches in her home, she had a tape recorder on her lap which she turned on and began to talk about Huruta:

Long ago, Huruta was just like a *tj'aka*, a jungle, but with time, it became a town, an *akababi*. We stopped the jungle and built some houses, then a church, a market, mosques, an elementary school, and a kindergarten. This town became more established when the Derg came to power. And thanks to Sweden we got the water system.

She quickly established a framework for her subsequent narrative, one structured by movement from a not-modern jungle, *tj'aka* to a more modern area or town, *akababi*. She continued to describe the movement, now putting her fellow townspeople – a strong "we" – in the continuum.

«So there have been changes», I said.

All my life the changes are all the things that we have done – the schools, for example, the water system, and electricity. Now we also have a flour factory. A woman...has built this. And we also built a clinic. Now everything is better compared to the beginning when Huruta started. But now I hope that somebody will come and help the orphans and the elderly, like me.

She moved now to her own contributions and included herself in the activities:

Then I was the boss and I helped with my money and my labor: I made tella, beer – 66 pots – and I made bread and taj. When the water project started, I contributed money and my labor [...]

She continued to speak of herself and her personal history, moving again from what was worse in her life to what is better, from what was difficult, «fetching water and grinding grain», to what is now easy.

At that time [when I married], I fetched water from far away in an ensera on my back. I also ground grain at home. Now I fetch water close to us and the

machine grinds and makes the flour, so I would like to say thanks to God, things are close to me and modern [...]

Aznaketch sees her life as having moved from a non-modern past to a modern present. Her focus is on change, improvement, and on her community's and her personal input in the process. She continued speaking about her personal history, moving from past to present and back to the past with a rhythmic regularity. Her reference here is to her tuberculosis:

I took 74 needles and 600 pills for TB, and after I took all this medicine, I was ok. Then the government asked me to tell other people about what I did¹⁴. Now thanks to the Swedish government, all the water is here and just like in Addis, I have got electricity. But long ago, there was no school here in Huruta. Our children went to Assela and to [far-away] Nazreth. Now everything is better because all the students study in Huruta, and they learn more and they get jobs to develop our akababi [...]

I asked Aznaketch to compare her grandmother's life with her own. Again she refers to the movement toward the modern and the better, here with a comment on gender:

At that time, my grandmother's time, there weren't any modern things – water, electricity, schools for us – there were none of these things. But in my life, things have gotten more modern step by step and now it's just modern, modern, modern [...] And about women's lives: in my grandmother's time, nobody saw women. They were inferior. No one saw any value in women. The only things women did was get married – no school, no nothing. Women were in the house grinding grain and baking enjera, they were only in the house. Everything was on behalf of men, and women lived under them. But now it's better. During the former (Derg) government, a lot of women organized an association and the government allowed us to do all sorts of things. We contributed to the water system too. The government asked me, "please Asnaketch, come to our meeting" because I was a good speaker and I supported my country. I have also had much experience because I have lived under four governments.

I asked her what she meant with this word *l'mat*, development:

14 I was told that Aznaketch was a model patient who was quickly engaged by the health authorities in Huruta to tell others about how she cured her tuberculosis.

When we talk and teach about development, we say, if we do this, we grow. Growth is development and development is growth. There's a lot to do – irrigation, vegetables – these are ways we generate income. We must teach the following generation. What's most important is that we grow inside when we participate. Remember this [...]

I paused a bit to consider what she meant by “we grow inside”. She reflected for a moment and once again she moved into the future and concluded with what she views as the actual locus of development – “we grow inside”, an individual focus. Moving with her in her past-present flow, I now wondered what she thought about changing traditions – now and long ago:

There are many changes. For example, marriage, compared to the old one, is changed, it's better than the old one. The necklace, the ceremony – now it's better. The man used to not give gold. Now the necklace is gold. It's better.

«What about changes which you don't like...»

I don't know about all the old traditions but I do know about the Christian Church. I follow that program and it is good and I want to keep this program for the future. And about the old traditions like (female) circumcision... Now in the modern time, there is no circumcision. But I believed at that time that circumcision was good, that's why all my daughters were circumcised. At that time, we believed that if the girl was not circumcised, she would have a bad smell, and she would break things – all the glasses and plates¹⁵. Today there is no circumcision here in Huruta but they do it in the villages [...]

The town of Huruta, maintained Aznaketch, is modern, and the villages, often referred to as “the rural areas”, are not. Still, her comments on circumcision indicate a doubt, a comment on modernity that contains a question. As we will see, she shares these themes – particularly the issue of female circumcision – with the other women.

6. “We have to work”: W/ro Almaz's narrative

I turn now to Ms. Almaz, the owner and founder of a flour mill and factory in Huruta. Several themes emerge in her narrative: first, her successful career, second,

¹⁵ When I asked about this, I was told that «some people believe that when the girls are not circumcised, they just run after boys and break things».

her concern with her town and its people, and third, her entrepreneurial approach to "development".

In recent years, Almaz has become somewhat of a celebrity in Ethiopia. She has appeared several times on Ethiopian Radio's weekly sports program in conjunction with the victories of the young people's soccer club she sponsors in Huruta. Like Aznaketch, Almaz referred openly to her personal successes. We see that she has adhered to an entrepreneurial plan for change and development in Huruta.

Actually, I was born near the town of Serey in the place called Felege Berhan. I went to school until sixth grade. After that, according to our cultural tradition, when I was 13, I was married, I had two children, and I was a housewife. After the two children, I was bored staying at home without any job. I was anxious to work and continue my schooling. Then I continued my school and I finished grade 12. After that it was very difficult to find work in our region, even if I wanted to work. So I said to myself, I have to make my plan, to create a job. And I planned everything. I went to the Assela development bank and I asked them to give me some money and they gave me some small money. And I established a small grocery and I brought some items – alcoholic drinks and soft drinks – by truck from Nazreth. After that I opened an oil press with the profits. First I was the only one doing this in this area, but when anybody opened something, everyone else wanted to open something similar. So when I saw that other people were opening enterprises similar to my oil press, I thought "I have to do something else". I had some money and with this money, I thought I could start a bigger enterprise. I went to Addis for advice. Some people advised me to start a [...] factory in this region because this area is famous for its cool weather crops – wheat, barley and such. So I decided to produce [...] here in Huruta. The farmers would benefit [...]

Planning, risk-taking, scrutinizing and investing characterize Almaz' personal history. Yet she readily points out that the beneficiaries are both her family and the *akababi*. She spoke of this constantly – how her factory has contributed to the community's welfare, how she intends to invest in and improve her community.

You know, I started to open a club for some of the people I employ. And I am doing something for the general community. I have also started this literature club and sport club through my factory in order to save those people – especially the young ones – and to help them stay away from alcoholic drinking, chewing chat, smoking cigarettes and so forth. They keep fit through physical education and sports. There is one other thing:

some of the boys in my clubs are known on the Ethiopian radio and TV for the poems and stories they write. This is not only good advertisement for my factory; they are also keeping themselves safe in light of the problems that we have related to HIV-AIDS. The other thing I want to mention is that if... we all would work according to our capacity, we could reduce poverty in the community.

Her description of her plans for development was striking. I wondered aloud how Almaz perceived of herself: «There are 5,000 women in Huruta», I said. «How are you different from these 5,000 women?» She reiterated her views on gender, exceeding the rhetoric used in the context of the water project.

At first, our people had a very low opinion about me. Everybody said, you are a woman, so why don't you start resting? The men are sitting around, so why do you work? I said, "I am going to help, not rest". I never accepted inferiority [of women]. If I work hard, I don't feel inferior, I feel superior. I have no girlfriends; my intimate friend is my work and then my sons, my husband, my family workers.

Almaz is endlessly active in the community. She spoke at length of an on-going project she initiated to focus on HIV-AIDS education in the community:

Here in our high school, two weeks ago, we had a party, and I told about AIDS. When I did this, [some people listened]. And in two weeks, we will have another meeting and I will speak to many people, such as students who are above grade nine, especially women and men who come from villages outside Huruta, and prostitutes [...] I am sponsoring all these meetings to teach our people especially the illiterate ones about AIDS. Some people don't even know how to use condoms or birth control pills [...]

I wondered about the past and about the changes she has experienced. What, I asked, was the difference between her life and her mother's life?

It's almost the same. My mother did the same things; she bought cereal crops and put the cereals into big plastic bags and then my father took everything to the market. I worked with my mother when she was collecting these things. So my mother was very modern. My mother had seven boys and one girl – the only daughter my mother had was me! One of the boys is my secretary in the factory, but the other boys have no jobs.

Clearly Almaz needed no outsider-initiated development discourse to move her on; her active mother was her role model and she has repeated in her own life

her mother's constant push toward change. I also noted that her last comment was similar to that of Aznaketch: gender equality is perceived as aspect of modernity and is "happening". She then moved on to changes in Huruta.

Today people are trying to work: there's competition and also the new health center that we have built. Ten percent was financed by the akababi and 90% was financed by the Oromo Development Association (ODA). So we are doing a lot of things with this development association and with community participation. The factory and the private sector are getting a chance to grow.

I looked skeptical and asked outright: «Aren't some people suffering?»

Yes, some people have problems because they don't know the accounting system, they don't know the prices and the costs. Some people are borrowing money from the bank but they don't know how to work and to manage in the system.

I moved on: «What about poverty now?»

Things are better now than before. People are making money and they are producing more but they don't know how to manage money... My father advised me never to go to the bank to get money because the money you get from the bank is not yours, it is the bank's. You don't only borrow the amount; it is always more. He said that a bank loan is a sea that drowns you and a fire that burns.

«But Almaz» I interjected, «you borrowed money from the bank for your factory [...]»

Yes, I got it from the Development Bank. But before I went to the bank, I studied what to do and how to manage the money and I knew what I could spend and what I could save, and how much interest to pay. I knew all of these things [...]

Almaz retained her insistence on the importance of analyzing situations and of planning, indeed the main themes of her narrative and perhaps of her life. Now curious about her various plans, I asked Almaz to talk about three important events which she thought had somehow changed her life. I repeat her response in its entirety:

First, I wanted to change my life and I needed money. So I went to the members of the *ekub*¹⁶. I was then renting a small house for my first grocery.

16 The *ekub* is the traditional local revolving loan society.

Another merchant nearby wanted to sell his house for some unknown reason. I wanted that house for my grocery. But I had no money to buy it, so I said, what should I do? Then I went to the ekub members and asked them whether they could give me the money without drawing the lottery. I told them my problem and said 'if you don't give me the money, I will not be able to buy the house. Everybody said no, we have to draw the lottery. I was very sad. Most of the time, I sent my money to the ekub through other people but on that day I went to the ekub and I sat together with the members. When the lottery was drawn, it was for me! The merchant was leaving on Saturday but I got the money on Saturday. And then I bought the house, thanks to God. I was very happy – I couldn't believe it.

Second: I had some money and I wanted to buy a truck. Some people advised me to go to Addis and talk to the person who imports trucks. I went there and I told him about the truck. But I had very little money.. I had only 20.000 birr but I needed 180,000 birr. So I spoke to him about the money and he said, "You have very little money – only 20,000. I can't give you a truck for 180,000! But I will talk to my wife – give me some time". He went to his wife and they discussed it. For some reason, she agreed and they took the risk. He promised me that he would bring the truck three months later. During that time, I managed to collect 15,000 birr and I now had 35.000. And that man was surprised – he could see that I am very strong. And he sold me the truck – an Isuzu.

The third one I will never forget. When I wanted to import my machines from China [for the flour factory], I went to the Development Bank and asked them for money. They promised me 3 million birr but I said too much! I don't need all that, no, no, no. I took only 998,000. Then I talked to some other people – they told me, it's ok, you should take 3 million birr. Then I went back to the development bank and asked them for the 3 million birr. They said no, you already canceled. You can only get 998,000 birr. So I took it – that was the actual price of the machinery. Now I had the money but the machines were not yet here. They were in the port. So I took the money and gave it to the dealer because I didn't want to spend the money for other things. But I suddenly realized that I gave him the money without getting the machines... I was very scared! God help me! I shouldn't have given him the money before I got the machines! God help me!!! The machines were in the port of Asseb. It was just the time when all the goods in the port were confiscated by the Eritrean government. Then someone called me and told me that my machines had been unloaded. My machines were the last machines that were unloaded!! That afternoon they announced on the radio that the port was closed. When I heard this news, I said thanks to God so many times [...]

«What great stories and what great luck», I said, and we laughed together. One more point: «Would she like to change anything in her life?»

I would have married later, but even then I had no problem: we have had a good marriage. I would also like to see my two sons married with children and that they love each other, but thanks to God everything is ok. Now I have to go to church with my husband for mass [...]

I was clearly moved by Almaz's narrative. «Only one more question», I said, «What do you want to tell us and African women and the world?»

To work and to change themselves so that they change society, so that they assist others and not be dependent, not only in Africa but also in the world. We women have to work.

I was caught up in her enthusiasm and conviction. «Is this happening here?» I asked.

Not really, but it is only because we have too little education.. Knowledge is not yet given to many [...]. The families do not accept these ideas. They don't think these ideas are good. The family follows the cultural message that men are superior and women are inferior. It's very strong, but new ideas are trickling down [...]

7. W/O Aster: community employee and community worker

I had known Aster since 1988. She was one of the fifty women who had been trained to manage and operate the Dodota Water System Project. We had discussed the importance of the water system in her life and in her community's life many times in my several previous visits. In those days we sat near the water pumps and talked while she worked. This time we sat in her garden. I begin by asking her to tell something about her early life.

I was born in a rural area 50 km from Huruta, and I went to school until sixth grade. I worked for my family – I was a shepherd – and when I was 14 years old, I got married. This is the usual age for our culture... After that I came here with my husband and we lived in Huruta.

Before I came to Huruta I didn't know about life in a town. My husband was a soldier and I didn't have any job. I wasted my time [...] without a job but in the *kebele* the head administrators told us that "we will choose members of

soldier families to work to support the people with a water project”. At that time Huruta didn’t have pure water so the government brought a message to our *kebele* and said, these people who are [members of] soldier families can train and work to support this area. And after that we were called together and I was chosen to learn bookkeeping in Assela town. This was in 1975(ET) (1983 GT)¹⁷. I trained for one month and I came back to our town... On January 28, 1976(ET) 1984(GT) I got a message from the head of the kebele that I had to work there with the water pump. I am still working there and I am happy because the people who chose me say that “she is a good woman. She supports us and she is useful to us not only now but in the future” and I hope that other people can be as fortunate I am [...]. There should be more opportunities to establish investments and to start other projects here. By working in projects, the lives of poor people will become better.

Aster refers to the several themes of her life: her move from the rural area to Huruta; her eventual participation in the water project, the importance of the project for the development of Huruta and for her own personal development; her contributions to her community and her belief in training and work as a means for continued change. Although these themes constitute the local discourse of development that is recognizable in all the narratives, Aster focuses most specifically on the importance of projects.

The water project and the [new] health center have already made Huruta better and we also want a kindergarten to teach our children... And [we need] also some handicraft projects and home economics. And some information about family planning; there is nothing here, only in Assela. There is also no support for the children of poor families. There are problems but nobody asks us about what to do and it is not organized [...]

I wondered about the word “rural”. «Is Huruta a rural area?»

For me it’s a city, for others, like you, it’s a rural area [...]. I would like to go to a big city and a better life [...]. [There I could] expand my knowledge and I could get a better job. Urban areas are good to get new ideas, but not for the buildings, the roads, the cars – they are nothing for me.

17 The dates refer to the Ethiopian year (ET) and the Gregorian year (GT).

Urban seems to mean the exposure to new ideas. What then did she mean by the word "modern"? «*It means*», she said «*when we have new things here compared to the beginning*». «So is anything here modern?» I asked, and was surprised that she did not refer to the water system.

No, actually there are only two factories – oil and flour. There are no other factories, but in other regions, there are more factories. If there are more factories, the people who live there can expand their knowledge.

«If you could change two things in Huruta...»

I have so many wishes but the most important one is that I want to see all the children go to school. I don't know how long I'll live in this world – God knows my age – but if it is possible, I want to go to another city and learn and come back and teach my people. That is my wish. I will try to improve my *akababi* by educating people in our *kebele* and even open a small factory or industry to help the jobless people [...] to do something for the people in Huruta.

She paused, and continued:

Maybe there is some change in water hygiene, but really not enough. Water isn't enough. There must be education: even if water is present, we have to be educated. Training must go on continuously. There has to be improvement of the country as a whole.

I turned to a familiar question: «What was the difference between her mother's life and her life, and what might be the difference between her life and her daughter's?»

When I was 33, I knew more than my mother. When my mother was young, all women stayed at home and worked because they thought that if women go outside they will not be good women [...]. My mother believed that I should stay at home and I also shouldn't contact any man. I couldn't go outside, even to study. But now I can see a big change. Nobody says those things now. Now women are going everywhere to learn: we have full rights and equal rights. And for my daughter, I want her to do everything and go everywhere, and have experience and to be educated. I am dreaming that my daughter will be everything [...]. I remember that when I was young, I thought my mother was wrong. Women who go outside are not prostitutes. They go out and develop themselves and get an education and experience [...]

Aster's constant focus is on the positive value of change, that which has happened and what should and can happen. Her comments on the reality of changed roles for women mirror those of the other women. Like Aznaketch, her dominant perspective is that of a community worker, an active member of her *akababi*. Her wish is to implant what she sees as agents of development – mainly education and its counterparts – factories, a kindergarten, a new project – into her community. Yet rather than planning as an individual, as would Almaz, Aster views a community-embedded, community-organized project as a means to accomplish the plan. Almost to prove her point, Aster asked to break our interview short; she had to go to the community headquarters to help register voters for the upcoming municipal election.

8. Looking back and looking forward: three views of "development"

My initial question in this paper concerned the views of "development" held by these three women and how these views might relate to what I have suggested were the official tones of the Women in Development policies then being implemented. Clearly and obviously, for each of them, participation is a point of departure, a basic aspect of policies implemented by WID and Sida and REWA. But there are several sub-themes which specify what participation might entail and did entail for each of the women.

At first we hear the elderly Aznaketch who locates "development" as occurring within individuals and an outcome of individuals' input and devotion; "development is growth and it occurs within us". I then hear Aster as she moves outward and locates development in the community – an aspect and outcome of communal activities. Finally, the entrepreneur Almaz moves in yet another direction; while clearly focusing on communal activities, she defines "development" in economic terms, very much the result of personal input, personal risk-taking in the form of bank loans, and personal planning. Together I think we can combine their views of development as a multi-faceted process that initiates *personal* growth, creates and/or strengthens *communal* structures and ideologies, and relates to *economic* growth and involves and supports various entrepreneurial strategies.

Perhaps a meta-theme of their narratives and essential to their views of "development" is their strong belief in the importance of on-going participation. Here I am reminded of Nelson and Wright's (1997) distinction between "instrumental" and "transformational" participation. They point out that while 'instrumental participation' leads to the accomplishment of a specific goal, 'transformational participation' leads to the creation of an essentially new system or, to add my critique, to a new role as citizen. For Aster and Aznaketch, participation

in the water project may at first have been "instrumental"; they were determined to complete the project. In time, however – and I see this clearly illustrated in Aster's narrative – their participation led to an attitude that might have been far more "transformational".

Put differently, in the course of the years, the water project may have created a degree of self-consciousness, an intellectual or cognitive landscape and a lived-in and recalled history that function as both input and a concrete backdrop for their comments. Perhaps the project's emphasis on local input and that it was reinforced by prevalent local attitudes toward "hard work", "our traditions" and by functioning institutions for community cooperation, the water project generated a kind of cognitive or intellectual shift (watershed?) for Hurutans: after "water" could come a school, an ambulance, a clinic, an improved future for "us". My reading of the women's narratives do indicate such a progression.

However, my assumptions must remain assumptions. Probing the shift from instrumental to transformational participation would require a return visit (or indeed visits) to Huruta to substantiate. We cannot know whether and how the participation in this project moved the women into more constant or continuous participation in their community. No doubt, participation as an activity rather than an ideal or discourse is affected by a variety of economic, political and social factors which affect the realm of action. These are far beyond the concerns of this paper. What we do see here is a complex view of "development" – a series of insights which are clearly more specific than "planned change" and which emerge from local perceptions grounded in local activities. The women urge us to view "development" as an activity engaging three somewhat related yet distinct spheres – the thoughts and actions of individuals, the activities of communities and the strategies of entrepreneurs. Indeed, Asnaketch, Aster and Almaz might be presenting us with a challenging model where "development" interventions – to gain any measure of success – need to touch the "I" of individuals, the "we of community" and, not to be left out, the heads of entrepreneurs who dare to take local risks and make investments which make sense in the local context.

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Place and belonging in Alexander McCall Smith's Mma Ramotswe

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This essay will focus on the novel *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency*¹ which is the first book in Alexander McCall Smith's best-selling series of the same name. Set in Gaborone, the capital of Botswana, the series has captured world-wide attention and sold more than twenty million books. The books have been translated into 42 languages, and become bestsellers through the world². The series focuses on the character of Precious Ramotswe, who is described as «a traditionally built African lady, unlike these terrible, stick-like creatures one saw in the advertisements»³. She is the first woman in Botswana to enter the profession of private detective, and by «human intuition and intelligence» she sets out to help those around her and to make Botswana a better place. The opening lines of the novel are as follows:

Mma Ramotswe had a detective agency in Africa, at the foot of Kgale Hill. These were its assets: a tiny white van, two desks, two chairs, a telephone, and an old typewriter. Then there was a teapot, in which Mma Ramotswe – the only lady private detective in Botswana – brewed redbush tea. And three mugs – one for herself, one for her secretary, and one for the client. What else does a detective agency really need? Detective agencies rely on human

1 McCall Smith, A. *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*, Polygon, 1998, London, Abacus, 2005.

2 McCall Smith's *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Series*, to date, consists of thirteen novels: *The No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency* (1998); *Tears of the Giraffe* (2000); *Morality for Beautiful Girls* (2001); *The Kalahari Typing School for Men* (2002); *The Full Cupboard of Life* (2003); *In the Company of Cheerful Ladies* (2004); *Blue Shoes and Happiness* (2006); *The Good Husband of Zebra Drive* (2007); *The Miracle at Speedy Motors* (2008); *Tea Time for the Traditionally Built* (2009); *The Double Comfort Safari Club* (2011); *The Saturday Big Tent Wedding Party* (2012); and *The Limpopo Academy of Private Detection* (2012).

3 McCall Smith, A. *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*... cit., p. 193.

intuition and intelligence, both of which Mma Ramotswe had in abundance. No inventory would ever include those, of course⁴.

In his portrayal of Mma Ramotswe, McCall Smith explores what he calls «all that is fine in the human condition»⁵. Mma Ramotswe is a character who looks on life positively, and through her empathy and generosity inspires those in the community to which she belongs. She shows qualities such as integrity, compassion, and forgiveness, and through her moral judgement and attention to interpersonal relationships, she highlights important dimensions of the human experience.

In this essay I would like to address the themes of place and belonging, and the associated communicative ethical aspects of Mma Ramotswe's actions, in light of what the philosopher Seyla Benhabib calls «situating the self» where focus is placed on the way in which selfhood and identity are developed in the context of belonging to a concrete human community. Benhabib argues that the «abstract and disembodied, distorting and nostalgic ideal of the autonomous male ego» privileged by the universalist tradition, has shown its inability to address, what she calls, «the indeterminacy and multiplicity of contexts and life-situations with which practical reason is always confronted»⁶. Accordingly, Benhabib argues for what she terms a «post-Enlightenment defence of universalism» which would be «interactive not legislative, cognizant of gender difference not gender blind, contextually sensitive and not situation indifferent». According to this way of thinking, the identity of the self is constructed by a «narrative unity» that is a narrative which does justice to the life-situation of the individual, and is a

contingent (conditional) processes of socialization through which [the individual] becomes a person, acquires language and reason, develops a sense of justice and autonomy, and becomes capable of projecting a narrative into the world of which she is not only the author but the actor as well⁷.

I will argue that the narrative of Mma Ramotswe's life, as portrayed by McCall Smith, with its emphasis on place, belonging, and engagement with community, shows the development of this character's sense of selfhood, agency and autonomy. McCall Smith's portrayal of Mma Ramotswe shows how this character becomes

4 Ivi, p. 1.

5 McCall Smith, A. *In the Company of Cheerful Ladies*, London: Polygon, 2004, p. 179.

6 Benhabib, S. *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*, New York: Routledge, 1992, p. 3.

7 Ivi, p. 5.

the initiator of her unique life-story, and – to paraphrase Benhabib – becomes the complete author of a meaningful tale that is situated within the cultural codes of her society and her community⁸.

In this respect, the setting of the novel is significant. The opening lines of the *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*: «Mma Ramotswe had a detective agency in Africa, at the foot of Kgali Hill» are a bow to Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa* – «I had a farm in Africa at the foot of the Ngong Hills»⁹ – a narrative also similarly affected by the spirit of Africa. Thus the African setting plays an important part in the narrative. Just as in Blixen's traditional style of storytelling, deliberately old-fashioned, where destiny and courage are central themes, McCall Smith too focuses on these themes in his portrayal of Mma Ramotswe. However, instead of a farm in Africa, the central focus of McCall Smith's narrative is a detective agency in Africa, more specifically, in Botswana, an agency that Mma Ramotswe establishes on receiving her inheritance, the proceeds of the sale of her father's cattle, after his death¹⁰.

The fact that the central character, Mma Ramotswe, is a detective has obviously proved to be a good choice for the success of the series. The moral dilemmas that Mma Ramotswe encounters and tries to solve, her innate curiosity, and her genuine interest and sense of justice in helping those around her, explain her popularity as a character. This sense of justice is an essential aspect of the detective genre, and from an Aristotelian point of view, is one of the most important human qualities and an intrinsic part of the make-up of the good citizen. Justice is associated with the establishment of honesty, a quality demonstrated by Mma Ramotswe¹¹. Mma Ramotswe tries to help those in need and her public engagement is strongly in keeping with the detective tradition¹², where the detective, in the words of Dorothy Sayers, can be seen as a «protector of the weak»¹³.

An important factor in the popularity of the series, as in detective fiction generally, is the strong sense of place and belonging that Mma Ramotswe characterises. Botswana, the county itself, is portrayed as one of the characters in the series, and Mma Ramotswe is an African patriot proud of her country:

8 Ivi, p. 218.

9 Dinesen, I. *Out of Africa and Shadows on the Grass*, New York: Vintage, 1989, p. 3.

10 McCall Smith, A. *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency...* cit., p. 3.

11 LaGrand, V.; Mattson, C.E. «Peter Wimsey and Precious Ramotswe: Castaway Detectives and Companionate Marriage» in *Christianity and Literature*, vol. 56, n. 4, 2007, p. 651.

12 *Ibidem*.

13 Sayers, D.L. «Introduction» in Sayers, D.L. (ed.) *Ominibus of Crime*, New York, Harcourt Brace, 1929, p. 12.

She was a good detective, and a good woman. A good woman in a good country, one might say. She loved her country, Botswana, which is a place of peace, and she loved Africa, for all its trials. I am not ashamed to be called an African patriot, said Mma Ramotswe. I love all the people whom God made, but I especially know how to love the people who live in this place. They are my people, my brothers and sisters. It is my duty to help them to solve the mysteries in their lives. That is what I am called to do¹⁴.

Not only is Mma Ramotswe's sense of community highlighted here, and her concern for her fellow-man: «It is my duty to help them to solve the mysteries in their lives», but also her sense of destiny: «That is what I am called to do». Her sense of place is also tangible, the very physicality of the countryside – of Botswana – the physical space where her clients live their daily lives. This is also seen in the first person narrative of Mma Ramotswe's father, Obed Ramotswe, who describes his only sadness on his approaching death is that he will have to leave Botswana, the country he loves, which he sees in a wider context as representative of the whole of the African continent:

The only thing that makes me sad is that I shall be leaving Africa when I die. I love Africa, which is my mother and my father. When I am dead, I shall miss the smell of Africa, because they say that where you go, wherever that may be, there is no smell and no taste. [...] And I have a good daughter, a loyal daughter, who looks after me well and makes me tea while I sit here in the sun and look out to the hills in the distance. When you see these hills from a distance, they are blue; as all the distances in this country are. [...] I have never seen the sea, although a man I worked with in the mines once invited me to his place down in Zululand. He told me that it had green hills that reached down to the Indian Ocean [...]. But why should I want to go to Zululand? Why should I ever want anything but to live in Botswana, and to marry a Tswana girl? I said to him that Zululand sounded fine, but that every man has a map in his heart of his own country and the heart will never allow you to forget this map [...]. So I never went with him to Zululand and I never saw the sea, ever. But that has not made me unhappy, not once¹⁵.

Obed Ramotswe's deep respect for his homeland, demonstrated here, is a concern shared also by his daughter, Precious. Her love for her place of birth is

14 McCall Smith, A. *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency...* cit., p. 2.

15 Ivi, pp. 15-16.

evident throughout the novel. An example of this is seen in her sense of at-oneness with the landscape, as expressed as follows:

She awoke in the small hours of the morning, and the fire was low. She could make out its embers through the spaces between the branches that made up the wall of the hut. Somewhere, far away, there was a grunting sound, but she was not afraid, and she walked out of the hut to stand underneath the sky and draw the dry, clear air into her lungs. And she thought: I am just a tiny person in Africa, but there is a place for me, and for everybody, to sit down on this earth and touch it and call it their own¹⁶.

Mma Ramotswe's commitment to the local – touched as it is with a feeling of nostalgia – at the same time expresses hope for the future. This is demonstrated in the following passage, where, once again, the reader is given a profound sense of the physicality of place, and Mma Ramotswe's part in it:

There was a slight smell of wood-smoke in the air, a smell that tugged at her heart because it reminded her of mornings around the fire at Mochudi. She would go back there, she thought, when she had worked long enough to retire. She would buy a house, or build one perhaps, and ask some of her cousins to live with her. They would grow melons on the lands and might even buy a small shop in the village; and every morning she could sit in front of her house and sniff at the wood-smoke and look forward to spending the day talking to her friends¹⁷.

A keen awareness of community and belonging is expressed here, where the public and the private spheres are intertwined. The public – in the form of the community and the village life – and the private – in the personal interaction between Mma Ramotswe, her family, and friends – are brought together and given equal space in the narrative. In Benhabib's terminology, it can thus be argued that Mma Ramotswe, the individual, is «embedded» in the local, and her personal identity is defined by her membership of the community¹⁸.

The association of the private and public spheres is frequently expressed throughout the narrative, an example of which occurs towards the end of the novel, where Mma Ramotswe is portrayed as a representation of the land itself.

16 Ivi, p. 123.

17 Ivi, p. 160.

18 Benhabib, S. *op. cit.*, p. 5.

Her husband-to-be, Mr J.L.B. Matekoni, thinks of her as follows:

He looked at her in the darkness, at this woman who was everything to him – mother, Africa, wisdom, understanding, good things to eat, pumpkins, chicken, the smell of sweet cattle breath, the white sky across the endless, endless bush, and the giraffe that cried, giving its tears for women to daub on their baskets; O Botswana, my country, my place¹⁹.

From a feministic and gender perspective, Mma Ramotswe's portrayal as representative of the land could no doubt prove problematic, conquering up images of the traditional role of woman as representative of the nation and as bearer and nurturer of its people. This patriarchal gender-bias is also suggested in her father's words above, where he says of his daughter: «I have a good daughter, a loyal daughter, who looks after me well and makes me tea while I sit here in the sun and look out to the hills in the distance»²⁰. Mma Ramotswe's situation between tradition and modernity is an underlying theme in the story. On the one hand, she is portrayed as very traditional; she does not want change and longs for things as they were:

Mma Ramotswe did not want Africa to change. She did not want her people to become like everybody else, soulless, selfish, forgetful of what it means to be an African, or, worse still, ashamed of Africa. She would not be anything but an African, never, even if somebody came up to her and said «Here is a pill, the very latest thing.» She would say no. Never. No thank you²¹.

In her youth, Precious enters into an unhappy marriage with the notorious Note Mokoti, who, even before she agrees to be his wife, beats her and tells her: «Now that you are going to be my wife, I must teach you what wives are for»²². She is cruelly abused by her husband, and is beaten so badly that she ends up in hospital and loses her new-born baby²³. So she returns to her father's house and looks after him for the next fourteen years until his death. Thus at the age of thirty-four, Precious Ramotswe, «now parentless, veteran of a nightmare marriage, and mother, for a brief and lovely five days, became the first lady private detective in Botswana»²⁴.

19 McCall Smith, A. *No 1 Ladies Detective Agency...* cit., p. 232.

20 Ivi, p. 15.

21 Ivi, p. 214.

22 Ivi, p. 51.

23 Ivi, p. 57.

24 *Ibidem*.

But Mma Ramotswe is anything but a traditional daughter, and in spite of her earlier hardships, or perhaps because of them, she learns to chart out her own story with confidence and authority. She goes against traditional practices and her expected role in the patriarchal society. She sets up a detective agency, instead of a store, as considered more appropriate by her father. In her encounter with the lawyer, who arranges for her to get her inheritance, after the sale of her father's cattle, she shows her determination to be the author of her own story:

The lawyer winced as she spoke, "It's easy to lose money in business", he said. "Especially when you don't know anything about what you're doing". He stared at her hard. "Especially then. And anyway, can women be detectives? Do you think they can?" "Why not?" said Mma Ramotswe. She had heard that people did not like lawyers, and now she thought she could see why. This man was so certain of himself, so utterly convinced. What had it to do with him what she did? It was her money, her future. And how dare he say that about women, when he didn't even know that his zip was half undone! Should she tell him? "Women are the ones who know what's going on", she said quietly. "They are the ones with eyes. Have you not heard of Agatha Christie?"²⁵

This exchange is a good example of the gendered nature of citizenship of the traditional male-dominated public sphere, which the novel focuses on²⁶. According to this way of thinking, women are excluded from the ideal of the civic public realm, which is normatively masculine, and supported by the opposition between the public and private dimensions of human experience²⁷. Such a view reflects what Carole Pateman calls «the problem of women's standing in a political order in which citizenship has been made in the male image»²⁸. Gender issues are also explored in Mma Ramotswe's meeting with the gangster-like Charlie Gotso,

25 McCall Smith, A. *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency...* cit., p. 59.

26 An issue debated by such theorists as Benhabib, S. *op. cit.*; Pateman, C. *The Sexual Contract*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988; Pateman, C. *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1989, Pateman, C. "Citizen Male" in *Australian Left Review*, vol. 137, 1992, pp. 30-33; Young, I.M. "Impartiality and the civic public: Some implications of feminist critiques of moral and political Theory" in Benhabib, S.; Cornell, D. (eds.) *Feminism as critique: On the politics of gender*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1987, pp. 56-76.

27 Foster, V. "In Search of the Public: Girl's Status as Learner-Citizens, Global Issues and Local Events" in *Paper Presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education*, Melbourne, November, 1999, p. 2.

28 Pateman, C. *The Disorder of Women...* cit., p. 14.

whose views on his wife represent the traditional role expected of women. On meeting Mma Ramotswe he reflects on his own wife, as follows:

Mr Charlie Gotse looked at Mma Ramotswe. He respected fat women, and indeed had married one five years previously. She had proved to be a niggling, troublesome woman and eventually he had sent her down to live on a farm near Lobatse, with no telephone and a road that became impassable in wet weather. She had complained about his other women, insistently, shrilly, but what did she expect? Did she seriously think that he, Mr Charlie Gotse, would restrict himself to one woman, like a clerk from a Government department? When he had all that money and influence? And a BA as well? [...], but then, he reminded himself, this fat woman down in Lobatse had borne him five children already and one had to acknowledge that fact. If only she would not carp on about other women²⁹.

Mma Ramotswe is very different from Charlie's wife, and is therefore well able for him. When he asks scornfully if she thinks she can «tell men things», she retorts calmly: «Sometimes. It depends. Sometimes men are too proud to listen. We can't tell that sort of man anything»³⁰. Grudgingly, Charlie gives her his respect, and by her guile and ingenuity she manages to outwit him and obtain the information she requires in order to solve the case at hand.

The emergence of Precious Ramotswe's selfhood and the development of her narrative as an autonomous individual with integrity is helped greatly by her father's cousin, who takes care of Precious after the death of her mother, when Precious was four years old:

The cousin wanted Precious to be clever. She had had little education herself, but had struggled at reading, and persisted, and now she sensed the possibilities for change. There was a political party now, which women could join, although some men grumbled about this and said it was asking for trouble. Women were beginning to speak amongst themselves about their lot. Nobody challenged men openly, of course, but when women spoke now amongst themselves, there were whispers, and looks exchanged. She thought of her own life; of the early marriage to a man she had barely met, and of the shame of her inability to bear children. She remembered the years of living in the room with three walls, and the tasks which had been imposed

29 McCall Smith, A. *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency...* cit., pp. 186-187.

30 Ivi, p. 187.

upon her, unpaid. One day, women would be able to sound their own voice, perhaps, and would point out what was wrong. But they would need to be able to read to do that³¹.

The cousin, whose husband had left her because she was barren, was determined that Precious would have the chance to live a better life than she had led. To this end, she believed that education was crucial. She started by teaching Precious at an early age to count. They counted goats and cattle. She made Precious remember lists of things – sometimes they sat outside the nearby store and waited for a car or truck to go by and the cousin called out the registration number which Precious was expected to remember the next day – or even the day after.

[Precious] was never wrong, this child who watched everybody and everything with her wide, solemn eyes. And slowly, without anybody ever having intended this, the qualities of curiosity and awareness were nurtured in the child's mind³².

These qualities of curiosity and awareness become important qualities for Precious Ramotswe in her future work as detective. They can be linked with those of perception and emotion, two closely related ethical qualities, which according to the literary critic, Martha Nussbaum, are central elements of an Aristotelian ethics, and traits associated with the role of the detective³³. Mma Ramotswe has a highly developed sense of perception, which is an essential part of her detective work:

Everything you wanted to know about a person was written in the face, she believed [...] it was more a question of taking care to scrutinise the lines and the general look. And the eyes, of course; they were very important. The eyes allowed you to see right into a person, to penetrate their very essence, and that was why people with something to hide wore sunglasses indoors. They were the ones you had to watch very carefully³⁴.

Mma Ramotswe's philosophy is a simple philosophy. It is a philosophy of the everyday. She does not complicate things unnecessarily and chooses a down to

31 Ivi, p. 31.

32 Ivi, p. 132.

33 Nussbaum, M. *Poetic Justice*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.

34 McCall Smith, A. *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency...* cit., p. 5.

earth approach in all she does. The passage below sums up her philosophy of life:

She stopped. It was time to take the pumpkin out of the pot and eat it. In the final analysis, that was what solved these big problems of life. You could think and think and get nowhere, but you still had to eat your pumpkin. That brought you down to earth. That gave you reason for going on. Pumpkin³⁵.

In her work as a detective, Mma Ramotswe brings the private, everyday sphere of woman's experience into the public arena. Using the resources available to create her own identity, she enters into the public sphere, and mediating between «public norms» and «private values», she demonstrates agency, autonomy and selfhood. By displaying an embodied subjectivity grounded in everyday experience, she re-negotiates women's marginalised positionality and seeks out alternatives for action and empowerment. But Mma Ramotswe is not only concerned with gender issues and the empowerment of women. By her everyday common humanity she demonstrates qualities that are essentially ethical and good – in the sense of what Aristotle terms goodness: focusing on the universality of the human experience and the celebration of our common humanity. These universal virtues are firmly anchored in the local. Mma Ramotswe writes her own story and the story of others around her. She writes a narrative of independence but which has a strong sense of place and belonging. From her engagement with the local, she writes a meaningful tale of human endurance and survival that is firmly situated within the cultural codes of her own place and the community to which she belongs.

35 Ivi, p. 84.

The imagery of cursing in four Ethiopian languages¹

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1. Introduction

This paper is a follow-up of Baye in which a comparative description of the pragmatics of greeting, felicitation and condolence expressions in Amharic, Oromo, Wolayitta and Nuer was made. The first three languages belong to the Semitic, Cushitic and Omotic subgroup of the Afroasiatic phylum respectively, whereas Nuer falls within the Nilotic group of the Nilo-Saharan phylum. The purpose of the description was to see if the four linguistic groups shared the same perceptions and patterns of linguistic expressions. The assumption was that, if they did, that would furnish further empirical evidence for the long – held claim of Levin, Ferguson (1976) and Hayward (1991)² that the Ethiopian region constituted a unique (socio-) linguistic / cultural area. The study strongly showed that the speakers of the three Afroasiatic languages had a greater degree of convergence of both perceptual and linguistic features than did the Nuer of their Nilo-Saharan neighbours.

This led to a follow-up question of whether the same tendency of convergence and divergence of both perception and expression could also be attested in cursing across the same four languages. To this effect, a corpus of expressions of cursing was collected and analyzed in terms of both content and patterns of expression.

1 This is a shortened version of an earlier paper. It is based on empirical data collected during a series of fieldworks by me and my graduate students of Anthropological Linguistics. The Oromo data were selected from a corpus collected by native Oromo students. The corpus was checked by Kebede Hordofa and Askale Lemma, both native Oromo linguists. The Nuer data were also rechecked with native speakers in Gambella during my fieldwork in 2002. I am grateful to my resource persons; and needless to say all remaining errors are mine.

2 Levine, D. *Wax and Gold: Tradition and Innovation in Ethiopian Culture*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1965; Levine, D. *Greater Ethiopia*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1974; Hayward, R.J. "A Propos Patterns of Lexicalization in the Ethiopian Language Area" in *Afrikanistische Arbeitspapier*, 1991, pp. 139-156.

Once again, the result seems to strongly show the same degree of convergence by the three Afroasiatic languages. This may be taken as a linguistic pointer to the peripheral position of the Nuer in the socio-cultural influx and influence of traits, otherwise, characteristic of the region as a whole. From the historical perspective of contact and interaction within the region, the Nuer are one of the most recently incorporated peoples and, hence, the least in terms of interactions with the other groups of the region. The presence of clusters of linguistic traits in genres of cultural expressions, across the region, may indicate the level of contact and historical interaction among the groups, more than retentions of common linguistic phenomena.

The paper is organized as follows: in 2, I discuss types of cursing. In 3, I present the thematic classification of cursing; in 4, I deal with authority and directionality of cursing and, finally in 5, I provide a summary of the whole discussion.

2. Types of Cursing

Cursing is divided into endocentric and exocentric; the former referring to self-cursing, and the latter to cursing others.

2.1 Self-cursing

Self-cursing happens when one holds him/ her-self responsible for whatever bad has happened to him or to others. It has the form of expression of desire or wish that bodily harm happens to one or loses one's life for the wrong one has done or caused. The following are examples of expressions from Amharic and Wolayitta.

Amharic:	igr-e-n / iğg-e-n bā-säbbär - ä - w ³ leg-my-acc hand-my-acc cond-break-3ms-3mso “If only He would break my leg/hand, would I...”
Wolayitta:	ta -kuše me?e - rene my-hand broke-cond. “If only He would break my hand, would I...”

3 Note the following abbreviations:

acc. (Accusative);	ms (masculine, singular);
cs. (Causative);	mso. (masculine, singular, object);
impf. (Imperfective);	nom. (Nominative);
jus. (Jussive);	opt. (optative);
imp. (Imperative);	pf. (perfective);
	poss. (Possessive).

The expressions are desirous of the unpleasant to happen or to have happened for the guilt one holds himself, responsible. The curses refer to such major body parts like the hands, the legs, the eyes, the ears and the mouth all of which are means of interactions and channels of communication and production, as will be shown later. Their dysfunction is incapacitating thus suggesting that the cursee be permanently dependent, contrary to self-actualization.

More serious, however, is the wish for one's immediate death, which is a call for the total exclusion of the guilty from the society one has wronged. The following expressions are examples from Amharic and Wolayitta again.

Amharic: bä - gäddäl - ä -ñ ñ cond- killed -3ms-1sacc
 "If only He would kill me..., would..."

The expressions suggest regret that one would not have done the wrong only if God had broken his leg, blinded his eyes, sealed off his mouth, etc., all calling for one's state of incapacity and hence dependency.

Wolayitta: ta-na t'oosi wor- o
 I-acc God killed-cond
 "If only God would kill me..., would..."

Self-cursing does not always occur only for the wrong that one feels he has done, but also for the fact that he has not come to the rescue of a loved one during times of danger. The most common curse among the Amhara in this regard is a death wish like the following:

bä-moti-ku-t if-die-1s-it
 Lit. "If only I died or to have died it..."

It is an expression of regret that one has failed to avail himself in aid of someone in danger for which reason he detests his life and wishes to have "died it". The pronoun "it" has reference to his life, which he wished to have lost it rather than suffer from the guilt. The expression has no sense of appeal to an external causer for the death to happen; the expression is, thus, different from those others, which call for a divine causer for their wish to come true, as will be shown below.

2.2 Other-cursing

Other-cursing targets an individual offender. The curser could be an individual victim of the offence or a collective cursing an individual who has wronged the community to which he belongs. It has both verbal and non-verbal features in its

invocation. The non-verbal features include such acts as plucking out grass and throwing it away; dropping down one's walking or prayer stick; rubbing palms of the hands with audible friction and then collectively shouting the curse. Plucking out and throwing away lush grass has the dual function of ascertaining that the curser has truly been affected by the curse. In other words, it is a way of expressing that one is honest and serious about the damage done to him. Secondly, the lush grass symbolizes the efficacy of the curse on the cursee. It is a wish that the cursee be like the grass, which is disengaged and thrown away from its natural context⁴. The ultimate purpose of the curse is the exclusion or elimination of the cursee from the community.

An illustrative example of collective cursing is the following case of a clan member of Boorana Oromo who denied some of his clansmen access to a water-well. The victims took the case to the *Gumii Gaayyoo*, a council of elders with judiciary power as well as spiritual guidance over the affair of the clan. The *Gumii* decided in favour of the victims but the offender did not refrain from his act, despite persuasive efforts by everyone concerned. This was a clear defiance of the collective will of the victims and the *Gumii*, whose power and authority he had challenged.

The *Gumii* was made aware of the situation and a meeting was called for a hearing. At the meeting, the *abbaa seeraa* "father of the law" or the main spokesman of the *Gumii* called the attention of all the people in attendance to turn their face to the west, which, among the Boorana, as indeed among other groups, is a harbinger of darkness and metaphorically that of death. The audience was requested to repeat after the *abbaa seeraa* the following expressions of curse:

ati akka marraa bišaan Booranatti hanqifte, marraa bišaan si hanqatinna;
akka marraa bišaan Booranatti had'd'eessite marraa
bišaan sitti had'd'aayinna!

"As you have made grass and water shortened to your fellow Boorana; let grass and water be shortened (in short supply) to you. As you have made grass and water bitter to Boorana, let grass and water be bitter to you"⁵.

4 According to Cvetanovska, Jelena, (nd) similar paralanguage devices are used before cursing in traditional Macedonian culture. These include taking off one's scarf, hat, elbowing the ground, or touching it with one's bare hands, all of which are forms of contact with nature, according to the author. The whole ritual of cursing has revenge as its sole purpose, in which the damage done to a victim re-bounces and affects the person who has caused it.

5 Bokku, T. "Cursing: A thematic Approach" in *A term paper submitted for the Course*, SOAN 531 Anthropological Linguistics, 1988, p. 5; see also Asmerom, L. *Oromo Democracy, an Indigenous African Political System*, New Jersey, Red Sea Press, 2000 on the *Gadaa* System in general.

The offender was, thus, cursed on the very thing, water, and lush grass that he threatened to cause shortage of, a thing very close to the heart of the Borana, who would find life nearly impossible with their water wells tampered and its volume reduced. The curse is, thus, retaliatory in its effect since it calls for the same wrong to be done on the offender, which reminds one of the Old Testament canon, that preaches an eye for an eye. The Borana expression:

ati akka marraa bišaan Booranatti hanqifte marraa bišaan si hanqatinna

“As you made grass and water shortened to your fellow Borana, may grass and water be also shortened to you”.

Their desire is for the offender to suffer from the very same problem he has caused. He knows from tradition that a curse can take effect sooner or later, on him or on his descendants. He was advised by his kins to admit guilt and request for their forgiveness lest the curse comes to effect. The following morning, he went to the *Gumii* and requested for a re-hearing in which he admitted to all that he had done and promised to abide by the *aadaa* “norm” of the land, that is, the Borana locality. At the same meeting, the *abbaa seeraa* called the attention of the *Gumii* again and ordered the audience to face east which symbolizes a bright future and a new beginning. When the audience had done so, he requested them to repeat, after him, the following words of absolution and blessing.

d'eetake la d'ageenna, la fud'anne; akka nu fud'anne kana, waaqii sirraa fud'atinna; hor! bul! been marraa bišaan Booranaa nagaan soorad'u

“We have considered and accepted your apology; let God accept it as we have done so; let you prosper, let you live long, go and use the clan resources in peace”⁶.

Upon hearing this, the offender offered the *Gumii* a sacrificial bull for their mercy to be sincere and their blessing to come true.

Cases like this are in abundance among the other linguistic groups in question. According to Yitbarek Ejjigu (p.c), of the Department of Ethiopian Languages and Literature, there is a tradition of collective cursing among the Wolayitta which is also called *Gomii*, practiced with same retaliatory intent as that of the Borana.

A similar tradition is reported among the Amhara of North Wällo, called *abaarsa*, the same word for curse in Oromo. There is a distinction though between

6 Bokku, T. *op. cit.*

this word and its Amharic equivalent *irgman*, since the latter refers to curses in general, collective as well as individual. *Abarsaa* is strictly collective and is believed to have a more immediate effect than individual cursing. Unlike the practice in the Borana case, which takes place at any convenient place, *abarsaa* takes place in a market, where a large crowd is easily found.

According to Lulseged Erkihun, (p.c) a person who has suffered loss or damage of property, may appeal to the village elders and/or religious leaders for a curse to be said on a possible culprit. Such a person may be asked to tell if there is anyone whom he considers a possible suspect so that they may consider approaching him before hand and that compensation could also be considered without the case becoming public. In other words, the elders can play a mediation role of settling the case by themselves. If the victim has no one to suspect, then, the elders move to the next step of making sure that the complaints are genuine. They do this to avoid the curse from backfiring on him, as is often believed with people who file false complaints and call for collective cursing to take place. If the complaint is verified by immediate neighbours and others whom the victim or the elders, themselves may call as witness, then, the elders consider cursing as a last resort.

As stated above, cursing is done at a local market where most members of the community are believed to be present. When the market is in full swing, the elders stand at the center, quite visible to everyone, and call the attention of all. When there is complete silence, the most senior of the elders, usually one believed to have some spiritual power of healing and cursing with efficacy, says the following with a commanding tone.

He orders everyone to rub his/her palms and make audible friction, which goes on for about a minute, and until a second order is made by the same person to join him by saying the word *arkabas!*

ĩšš! lit. “rub!”

arkabas!⁷ Lit. “Raise your hand!”

At this point, everyone would raise his hands and applauds showing support for the action to come to effect. The action is a call that the culprit suffer a similar loss or damage of property or that he drops dead. In the Macedonian practice of collective cursing, a curse is pronounced to the effect that ‘the culprit turn into stone’ and that this is followed by rubbing a stone with another and then throw

⁷ *Arkabas* seems to be akin to the Oromo expression of *harka baasi* “raise your hand” an example of contact phenomenon.

them away, very much like the rubbing of one palm with the other in the above examples of North Wällo. In some cases, mention can also be made to such hostile lowland places as Ausa into which the cursee should be thrown as in the following expression of disengagement.

ansa! Ausa⁸!

Lit. "Pick-up! And throw (him/her) to Ausa"

The expression is a kind of appeal to God that the culprit be taken away from their midst and thrown into such a place as Ausa, where he would die melting in the scorching heat or suffering from malaria. The expression is hence different from that of the Borana where the appeal to the supernatural is one of a polite pleading as is clear from the use of the optative mood "may or let this or that happen to..."

Like the market, the church or other places of worship serve as locus for collective cursing irrespective of religious differences. When wrong is done to someone or damage to his property, the wronged may request the head of a local church, for example, for a curse to be said. On a Sunday morning, right after Mass, the head priest would tell the congregation about the case and then request them to throw down their prayer or walking sticks as symbolic of their desire that the culprit be incapacitated or even be dropped dead. This is more disastrous than the raising hands and clapping of hands which calls for the exclusion and not elimination of the cursee. This has been the practice among the Amhara peasants, for example, of North Shewa, according to Amdemariam Abebe⁹.

According to Pritchard¹⁰ there is also a highly ritualized collective cursing, and sacrifices of reconciliation and forgiveness, among the Nuers of Southwest Ethiopia and the Sudan. Like in the case of the Borana, the practice here is guided by wut hok, "a man of the cattle" or any senior person, who, according to Kelemework¹¹, has the right to assume authority over the affairs of his community. He can settle disputes between or among warring factions with curses like the following:

8 Ausa is a place known for its hostile climate, with temperature at its height and malaria epidemic at its worst. For highlanders, it is hell on earth and it is a place into which are thrown exiles and convicts.

9 Both Lulseged Erkihun and Amdemariam are living witnesses of the practice of collective cursing in their respective localities where they were born and brought up; both are 50 years of age.

10 Pritchard, E. *Nuer Religion*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1967.

11 Kelemework', T. "The Anthropological and Linguistic Significance of Maledictions in Selected Ethiopian Languages" in *A Term Paper Submitted for the Course SOAN 531*, 1998.

ramo bi kor ñNk kN tuNkN bi kuoth nak
“Let the spirit kill the person who starts war again”¹².

On the other hand, a Nuer woman cannot curse anyone but her own husband and for offences like filing a divorce for no good reasons. Only in retaliation to this, can she curse her husband with efficacy by saying:

či yie kuoth ġi bi močkă gat
”Let the spirit give you no child”

The curse is reflective of the high value of having many children among the Nuers, as indeed among the other groups though to a lesser degree. The Amharic blessing expressions *wiläd* “have a baby” and *kibäd* “be great” is reminds one about the value of having many children. The fact that only the male folks practise collective cursing seems to suggest that only they are more empowered to curse with efficacy in Nuer, which is in sharp contrast with the situation in the other linguistic groups where females, particularly mothers, curse with more efficacy than fathers. Note also that the tone of the curse among the Nuer is one of pleading to the spirit and not commanding as that of the collective cursing of the Amhara peasants of North Shoa and North Wällo. There, the cursing seems to assume a deep feeling of anger and bitterness, which gets expressed in a forceful manner with noise from rubbing hands and saying the curse expression loudly.

3. Thematic classifications of curses

The catalogue of expressions of curses collected from speakers of the four linguistic groups, concern things that are valued as most relevant for life. These include body parts, which serve as channels of communication and also as means of production and relations thereof. The body parts include the eyes, the ears, the hands, the legs, and the mouth. Dysfunction of any of these leads to partial or total incapacity and dependency, which goes contrary to self-actualization, and subsequently to loss of pride or high self-esteem.

¹² Ivi, p. 13.

The relation of production has scope over the self, his lineage and the society to which he is engaged and from which he develops a sense of identity as someone who needs success, inclusion and pride or high self-esteem. Cursing is anathema to these and arises from failure which leads to exclusion and shame.

3.1 Subsistence

There are curses that refer to basic means of subsistence such as grains and cattle. It is not always clear as to what kind of offence leads to such curses. However, in some cases of spontaneous offence, the curses may take as their immediate cause the thing that has been the cause for offence. For example, a person who has been found misusing or abusing basic supplies may be cursed with expressions that make reference to a state of lack of the supply itself as in the following examples

Amharic:	ihil/t'iggät yï-nss-ah grain/cow 3s-deny-2s lit. "Let He deny you of (all your) grain/milking cows"
Oromo:	wan ñat-t-u d'ab-i thing eat-2m-impf lack-imp mid'aan haa d'um-u grain juss. you-lack "That you be lacking in grain"
Wolayitta:	usa toppo neesi "lit. May your wealth/supplies never last long"
Nuer:	-----

The expressions are a call for the sufferance of the cursed from the lack of the resources he has abused. They are, hence, retaliatory in intent and deterrent in effect.

Shortage or lack of basic supply of grain or herd engenders low social status and inglorious self – esteem. The following expressions allude to such reference and are psychologically more devastating than those expressions of supply cited above.

Amharic:	kä - säw bātačč yī -a - d irgī - h from- man below 3ms-cs - make-2mso Lit. “Let Him make you below man” “Let Him make you inferior to others”
Oromo:	namaa gadi si -haa -god’ - u man bellow 2p-opt-make-impf “Let Him make you inferior to others”
Wolayitta:	asa - ppe guye ki – ya man-from below 2s-be “You become lower than others”
Nuer:	(a) bi ġin ε ġη kā gaat murr dyal “Lit. Let it be that you be/become slave to your brothers”
	(b) bi duŋth ġŋk kā gaat murr dyal “Lit. Let it be that you remain inferior to your brothers”

The expressions are almost literal equivalents in their substantive content, which concerns the relative position, high – low, or fore – back, of the cursed in relation to his immediate folks, siblings, or to the broad context of the community at large.

The apparent difference is in the scope of the group in which the position of the cursed is being reviewed. In the three Afroasiatic languages, the scope seems to span over the generic or the socially specific man, whereas in Nuer it appears to cover a much narrower scope of siblings within the domain of the family, if one takes the literal meaning of the term *dyal* “brother” to include siblings only. But it is possible that its range of reference may extend to a much wider scope of social, rather than fraternal, affinity, an interpretation not implausible given the clan or tribal nature of the Nuer society¹³.

The Amharic expressions are appeal to the Almighty to punish the cursee by making him permanently in want of the things that he has abused whereas the expressions in Oromo and Wolayita make a direct reference to the cursee by

13 Pritchard, E. *Nuer Religion*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1967. In fact, a Nuer father can have claim over every child in his community and expects service, particularly during old age. Failure to be of service to him may lead to severe curses of the type:
čī bi tek ε wā
Let your life be short

wishing that he be in a state of lacking and suffering. The difference in the form of expression is between the optative, *yi-nissa-h* “may He deny you of...” of Amharic and the directive “you be and remain lacking...” in the other two languages. Nuer does not seem to have any such expressions of cursing on supplies such as grain, which might suggest that their pastoral way of life makes little or no reference to things, which are by and large agrarian as in the other three groups. However, Nuer has expressions that make general reference to a position of low status in their social hierarchy, which is determined by the amount of cattle or herd that one owns. A curse that appeals to lack of affluence in this is one, which wishes that the cursee be slave to his brothers, a relation of absolute dependency, and hence of no own position and role in the society. In short, the cursee is reduced to an inferior status in the expressions of the Afroasiatic groups, and to a situation of disengagement and then to enslavement in Nuer.

3.2 Lineage

There are expressions that have scope over both anterior and posterior consanguine relations of the cursee, though the main focus is often on the latter. Examples of such expressions include the following:

- | | | |
|------------|-----|--|
| Amharic: | (a) | zär a- y-wt'a -ll -ih seed neg-3s-grow-for-2s
Lit. “Let there be no seed from you”/ “have no successor” |
| | (b) | däbza-h yi-t'fa trace-2s 3s-disappear
Lit. “Let your trace disappear”
“Let there be no remain or trace of you” |
| Oromo: | | d'ala malee haf-i child no remain-imp
“Let you remain with no child” |
| Wolayitta: | | šeešay ač'č'oppo
“Let there be no descendants of you” |
| Nuer: | (a) | či kwedu bi met ḡuan
“Let your descendants be not many” |
| | (b) | či kwedu guoth kel bit met maat
“Let your descendants get dissipated” |

It is interesting to note the degree of gravity of such expressions in the Afroasiatic languages, in which, the curse has a sense of wish for the total exclusion by means

of elimination or extinction of the cursee and his relations, anterior and posterior, whereas in Nuer, it is a wish for the dispersal and reduction of one's descendants (posterior), his entire clan to an inconsequential size through exclusion which eventually results in total dissipation. The expressions seem to reflect the high value attached to clan size in Nuer social organization.

In this respect, it is reported in the literature¹⁴ that an old Nuer man may take in marriage a young girl even after potency and ask one of his sons to act as a surrogate husband to impregnate her for him so that he can have more children even after at such a doddering old age. This signifies the high value the society attaches to clan size, and a curse such as the above is, thus, a debilitating one since it calls for dissipation. The expressions in all the languages make direct reference to the cursee without any appeal made or called for the intervention by any external authority.

As hinted at above, such curses have spillover effect on descendants of the cursee, affecting at least five to seven generations down the line. The curse reminds one of the parallel between God's curse on Adam, which is believed to have effect on every human being, and the curse on an individual human being spanning over some generations of his line. Among the Amhara of North Wällo failures in one's life is often associated with a curse that might have been said in the long past but taking effect at the present time. Thus, *İrgman alläbbaččäw*¹⁵ "they have a curse on them" is a common expression that gets whispered around. In such instances, the curse does its purpose deterring actions that are incongruent with the dictates of society to which one has to be slavishly engaged.

3.3 Health

There are curses that have specific reference to one's personal well being, safety and security which is addressed in all the four languages with expressions such as the following:

Amharic:	yä-alga k'urañña y-arg-ih of-bed spirit 3s-make-2s "Let Him make bed-ridden"
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14 Pritchard, E. *op. cit.*

15 In the same vein, one who thrives quick, and without other things being equal, goes with the reference *niggirt alläw* 'he has a fortune foretold'. Tebeje Mekonnen (p.c.), 80 years old, resident of North Wällo.

Oromo:	mana-tti si haa- hamb -is-u house-of 2s- opt- remain-cs-impf “Let Him make you remain at home”
	č’abi hiriya-ke gidduu d’a break friend-2m among be “You be the broken one among your friends”
Wolayita:	nena ek’k’idosan melisso “Let you remain dry”
Nuer:	bite ġuey ni č’ian “Let you be sick always”

The Amharic expressions are a wish for the cursee to become bed-ridden and in the Oromo counterpart to be house – bound. In both, the reference extends to total incapacity, a state in which one is reduced to absolute dependency, with no position and associated roles from which one draws a social status as a self-supporting member. This is a curse, which goes contrary to the purpose of self-actualization and self-esteem through inclusion. In Wolayitta and Nuer, the reference of the expression is to one’s immobility, as can be understood from the use of the terms “dry” and “stiff”, which suggest a sense of incapacity for movement, work, and hence, to a state of total dependency.

Among the Amhara, a parallel is drawn between health and market from the expression:

“t’ena gäbäya-wn a-yi- nsa -č’ihu” health market-def Neg-3ms deny-2pl ”May He not deprive you of health which is like a market”

The parallel is that as a market is a place where one can find everything he needs, likewise health is a state in which one can do anything he wishes to. In other words, just as a market provides everything one needs to buy, so does health enable one to do just anything he wants to.

In a country where modern medical care is a luxury to the majority of people and where epidemics of all type easily turn into pandemics and take their toll in tens of thousands of lives at every spell, such proverbial expressions are vivid reflections of the harsh realities of life among the rural poor¹⁶. Furthermore, among the rural

16 Baye, Y. “The Pragmatics of Greetings, Felicitations and Condolence Expressions in Four

peasantry, supplies rarely last to the next harvest, and most are threatened with hunger which gets worse when there occurs a spell of drought. Elderly mothers and small children fall victim.

The absence of social security schemes coupled with high infant mortality is a concern for most elderly people since they would have no one to turn to during their years of absolute dependency. The only guarantees are children, families and relations, immediate as well as distant. Children are, thus, considered as assets or wealth on which one can be cursed so that one remains lonely and weak and even destitute to the extent of beggary, particularly during old age when one is frail and hence vulnerable to all kinds of diseases. The Amharic lineage curse, *zär aywīt'allih* lit. "That you see no seed of yours grow and flourish" is an expression of threat of this kind and more. The curse is a statement of desire for the cursee to see no soul of his growing into symbol of success and source of support for hard times and crises.

On the other hand, the positive counterpart, *zär ywīt'allih* is an expression of blessing said to someone who has all the making of a redeemer for those who count on his presence. So the trio *habt* "wealth" *t'ena* "health" and *zär* "kinfolk" fall at the top of the hierarchy of Ethiopian social values, clearly attested from such expressions of crystallized perceptions of life in the Ethiopian region across generations and linguistic groups.

However, the following expression of blessing from Amharic also suggests that health and wealth have primacy over kinsfolk, which means that kin is derivative of the first two.

habt kä t'ena idme kä - ingära yi-st'-
 aččihu wealth with health long life with injera 3ms-give-2pl
 "May He give you wealth with health and long life with injera"

ingära "bread" "main diet" is a figurative expression for wealth in Amharic. The reference here is to a situation in which one has abundant wealth but suffers from poor-health, or where one lives a very long life but suffers from lack of basic subsistence, that is, wealth. Life is complete if only both health and wealth are secured or ensured and long life, which could be a derivative of these, makes sense if one lives it to the full without much to worry about his bread and butter on a

Ethiopian Languages" in *Journal of African cultures and Languages*, 1998, pp. 1-25; Pankhurst, R. "The Hedar Bashita of 1918" in *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, vol. 21, 1977, pp. 103-31; Pankhurst, R. "A historical note on influenza in Ethiopia" in *Medical History*, vol. XXI, 1977, pp.195-200; Pankhurst, R. "Influenza: the Hidar bashita" in *An Introduction to the medical history of Ethiopia*, Trenton, New Jersey, 1990, pp. 45-69.

daily basis. The underlying idea in this is that success in the acquisition of riches is rewarding and leads to more pride and greater degree of inclusion whereas failure begets shame, poor self-esteem, dependency and exclusion. One would conjecture here that fear of failure and its attendant, shame, is what is at work at a more general level of social intercourse.

4.1 Authority and directionality in cursing

Cursing expressions are either performative or desiderative in their forms. In the performative cases, the curser declares his wish directly by using the imperative/command form of the verb as in the following Amharic examples:

1. afär bil-a
soil eat-2p! "lit. Eat earth" / "be dead" or "damn you"

The pragmatics of such structures is something like "I declare, say, pronounce", that "you be dead!" The curser is in this sense verbally performing the act of "death wish", which is absolute and lasting exclusion of the cursee and the interaction is face-to-face. There is no explicit appeal to or invocation for authority for the wish to come true. The curser is charged with high emotion or anger, which is not befitting for a context of a humble pleading which presupposes a feeling of powerlessness refuge in the supernatural to which pleading is made for the wrong to be heard and for justice to be done in one's favour. This is particularly true with the elderly in general and mothers in particular, who raise their hands towards the sky, in an appeal to the Almighty or to an ancestral spirit.

In desiderative expressions, the curser appeals for the intervention of a divine authority/power for his wish to get effect for the wrong (s)he has suffered. Hence, the performative expression in (1) above has the form in (2) below where the verb is in the jussive and not in the commanding imperative.

2. yï-gdäl-ih¹⁷!
3ms-kill-2ms "Lit. Let Him kill you/make you dead!"

The third person prefix /yï-/ refers to the impersonal power, God or some

17 Other forms include:

Yi-a-nsa-h!

3ms-pick up-2mso "Let him take you off the living"

Yi-dfa-h

3ms-turn-up-side-down-2mso "Let him turn you upside down, that is, make you dead".

ancestral spirit, as in the Nuers examples earlier on. Sometimes the authority is explicitly mentioned as in the following Amharic expressions.

3. (a) mädhanealäm bä-ačč'ir yï -as-k'ärr-ih
the saviour in-short 3ms-cs-keep-2mso
Lit. "Let The Holy Saviour make you live short"
- (b) yä-ännat-e wuk'abi indä-wät't'a-h yï- as- k'ärr-ih
of-mother-my spirit that-went -2ms ms-cs-keep-2mso
Lit. "Let the spirit of my mother make you never get back home"

In (a), the reference is to the Holy Saviour or God, whereas in (b) it is to an ancestral or personal spirit/cult. It is possible for anyone to make his appeal either to God or to a Saint or to a spirit of his ancestor or his own if he has one. Similar expressions are very common in the other Afroasiatic languages, though not very much so in Nuer.

Oromo: rabbi si- hin gudd-is-in
'God 2s-neg big-cs-neg
Lit. "Let God not make you big"

Wolayitta: nena t'osi gofaantto
"you God turn you upside down"
"Let God kill you"

Nuer: bi kuoth či nak
"Let God kill you"

As shown throughout the presentation, the parties involved in the process of cursing are the offender, the offended and the authority to which appeal is made. The offended can be collective to which the offender is a part as in the case of the Borana example above or it could be individual who appeals to the collective for a collective curse to be said against an unknown offender as in the case of the North Shoa and North Wällo examples. Or it could be an individual cursing another individual in a face-to-face context, where the offended appeals to his personal or ancestral spirit or to God for justice to be done. All such cases are different from cursing practices in other societies such as the Tamil of Sri Lanka, for example, where a proxy curser, residing around a shrine or temple, does the curse and where money is paid for the service Cvetanovska, (n.d.).

4.2 Directionality

Directionality refers to the relative positions of the curser and the cursee in the society and the direction the curse should take for maximal efficacy. The relation could be one of chronology where there is opposition between the elderly and the young; or consanguine, as in that of parents and off springs; or societal level, where it holds between the whole and any of its parts, individuals or groups. There are also cases of relations between the part and the whole in which the former assumes power over the whole as in instances of relations between kings and their subjects, the deity and their congregations and between the rank and the file in other structures of power relations.

In all such pairs, the curse emanates from the one which has the feature [POWER], in its broad sense, and moves downward to those which are [-POWER]. For example, the elderly have chronological power over the young, the Lord has divine power over his creations, the king has political power over his subjects; and the community assumes collective power over its individual parts, and hence can exercise cursing on its individual or group member.

In each pair, it is the one with the feature [+POWER] that can curse with efficacy. The other member of the pair may complain but cannot curse with effect. It is also the same with pairs that are equally positive or negative for the feature [POWER] since they cannot curse with efficacy and hence neither party takes offence for being cursed by the other as much as he does feel hurt when insulted, a situation that may lead to and often result in physical attack. Of course, a society may rise against its leadership and express its feelings in the form of casual words of anger, or in terse and subtle expressions as in the Amharic poetic genre of Wax and Gold, in which, a serious intent gets expressed in tiers of two meanings one of which is stronger than the other as in the following couplet from North Wällo¹⁸,

dīha-mma dīha nā-w mīn ak'īm all -ä-w
 poor -foc poor be-3s what power has -3s-3obj
 “(The) poor is poor, what power does he have”

īssu īndä-tākkäl-ä īssu-w yī-nk'äl -ä -w
 He as - planted-3ms he-foc 3ms-uproot-3ms-3mso
 “He, as he has planted it, he should uproot it”

The reference here is to a certain corrupt official who was appointed by the late emperor as governor. The people became frustrated with him but felt powerless

18 Levine, D. *Wax and Gold: Tradition and Innovation in Ethiopian Culture...* cit.

to take any action against him; they lament on their state of powerlessness in a manner that calls for the king to intervene and take the official off their shoulder as it was he who imposed him on them in the first place. But this is the literal meaning of the couplet, the wax. The underlying, which is the intended sense, involves the key word, *näk'k'älä* “uproot” in the second verse, which carries the layers of meaning as relieve someone of his responsibility, which is the wax, and that of uprooting or killing him, a curse of complete exclusion, alias elimination, which is the gold, in relation to which, reference is made to God for his divine intervention to kill the official.

The couplet is a folk expression of resentment and not an outright curse as such, but it is serious enough to be an example of bottom up cursing, where subjects react to injustices done to them by those higher up in the power hierarchy. Such reactions against one who is empowered by virtue of his position in the hierarchy would be collective since individual measures may lead to a fatal blow of exclusion by means of total elimination. Other expressions of cursing are characteristically top down and unidirectional, and are hence distinguished from other forms of expressions of exclusion such as ordinary insults and swears, which can be bi- and even multi- directional, that is they can be reciprocal.

At the level of individuals, there are proverbial references about the efficacy of curses by parents and the elderly in general, across societies. According to Astley¹⁹, a Moorish proverb goes as follows:

If the saints curse you, the parents will cure you, but if the parents curse you, the saints will not cure you.

Saints are more elevated and more benevolent compared to ordinary humans, and are not supposed to curse, but if they should, the cursee would, probably, find protection or cure from his parents; which suggests that a parent can provide protection from the curse taking effect on a child. However, if a parent curses a child, there is no cure that could come from even the comfort of a compassionate saint. The proverb indicates the degree of efficacy of parental cursing, and it seems that this is a feature that holds across societies as the following Macedonian expression also attests:

Parental curse does not fall on the ground Cvetanovska (nd:4)

¹⁹ Dukinfield, A.H.G. “Cursing and Blessing” in Hastings, J. (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, iv, New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1967, p. 369.

However, compared to the curse of a father, the curse of a mother is believed to be most disastrous as the following Hebrew proverb also clearly illustrates.

The blessing of the father establishes the houses of the children, but the curse of the mother roots out the foundation (*ibid.*).

This clearly suggests that the blessing of a father is a necessary but not sufficient protection from the curse of a mother, which is devastatingly depressing and consuming of one's stamina. That this is indeed the case also comes from a proper understanding and interpretation of expressions of the languages in question.

- | | |
|------------|---|
| Amharic: | (a) t'ut-e yi-t'al-ih
breast-my 3s-fail-2s
"Let my breast fail you" |
| | (b) iġġ-e yi-t'al-ih
hand-my 3s-fail-2s
"Let my hand fail you" |
| Oromo: | harki-koo si-ha-ganu
Hand-my 2s-let-desert
"Let my hand desert you" |
| Wolayitta: | (a) t'ammido t'anta nena ?olo
"Let the breast you suckled fail you" |
| | (b) ta kuše nena ĉ'addo my hand you fail
"Let my hand fail you" |
| Nuer: | ----- |

All the three expressions refer to what a mother can provide for her children, particularly during their early days when they are totally dependent on her care. The reference to the *breast/hand* in all the expressions of the three languages is symbolic of all the motherly care and support provided during the period of helplessness. The appeal a discontented mother makes to her "breast/hand" (Amharic and Wolayitta) "hand" (Oromo) does seem to be a regional feature of high symbolic value for the basic care that mothering entails. Both breast and hand are not only means of provision but also means of contact and communication of

love and affection, a mother can express to her child and at the same time ensure a feeling of safety by feeding and caressing.

It is also stated in the literature that like the curse of a mother, the curse of the dying, as against the living, is very serious, having far reaching negative consequences extending over generations of descendants as pointed out earlier. Like a mother who is compassionate, loving and caring, and who feels terribly hurt and betrayed by acts of uncaring siblings, the ailing elderly, weakened by circumstances and reduced to their death-bed, are believed to curse with efficacy. This has been reported to be true in all the four linguistic groups, but consider the following Amharic saying:

Amharic:	'yä-mmi-y-adig liğ a-y-t'la-h that-prg-3s-grow child neg-3s-hate-2s "Let not a growing child hate you"
	yä-mmi-y-mot säw a-yi-rgäm-ih' that-prg-3s-die person neg-3s-curse-2s "Let not a dying person curse you"

The reference to a child is made for the fact that there is every possibility of him to grow into a man of great power to take revenge on those against whom he has harboured grudge. The dying has no power in his hands, but can curse with appeal to God, in whom he seeks mercy for his life and efficacy for his curse, a paradox. In both cases, it is power, which is at issue and which is lacking, thus, leading to a state of helplessness and to a situation of soliciting external intervention for the curse to come to effect.

5. Summary

In summing up, it has been shown throughout that the expressions of cursing are very similar, and in some cases even identical, in the themes they address, and in their forms of expressions. The most general and recurrent themes are health, wealth, and lineage, which subsumes social status, which is corollary to the first two, but more directly to wealth. This is consistent with the Amharic proverb «*gänzäb kallä bäsämay mängäd allä*» "if there is money, there is a path even across the sky".

The proverb suggests that nothing is impossible if there is wealth. In the Ethiopian perception, wealth is derivative of health, physical and mental. The physical aspect accounts for the body parts, which are channels of communication and means generating wealth which is necessary for ascertaining one's position and associated roles in the society. Failure in playing out the roles brings about shame to the individual self and eventually to the collective self, which has also to

exist with its distinctive features in relation to other societies. Failure to maintain these leads to shame and fear of dissipation of the society whereas success leads to pride in one's position in the network of other selves.

The expressions in all the languages are performative and desiderative, the former uses the imperative and the latter the jussive or optative mood. The jussive is restricted to expressions that call for a divine intervention for justice to be done for the wrong one has suffered or caused others to suffer. There is a sense of powerlessness in such expressions on the part of the wronged. The imperative is more direct and assumes a context of face-to-face encounter in which the wronged expresses his death-wish in a commanding and forceful tone with visible anger and highly charged emotion.

Curses are power oriented in the sense that only those with the feature [+POWER] can curse with efficacy. The direction is, thus, from the more empowered to the less or non-empowered, and the effect is one of exclusion of the cursee from his position in the network for his failings. In all the groups, it is power of a universal or of ancestral nature which is invoked.

It seems plausible to conclude from the facts presented and the explanations forwarded that while the general purpose of cursing is the same across societies where the tradition still exists, its thematic references, patterns of expressions and appeal to authority seem to be region specific. In this respect, pervasive expressions of cursing with strongly dreadful imagery like in the following from Amharic seem to be specific to the Ethiopian region:

- (a) t'ute/iğge yit' alih
"Let my hand/breast fail you"
- (b) yalga/bet k'urañña yargih
"Let Him make you bed-ridden/house-bound"
- (c) afär bila it.
"eat earth" "be/drop dead" soil eat
- (d) käsaw bätačč yawlih
"Let Him make you inferior to man/everyone"

Furthermore, overriding collective curses like:

Amharic: t'ik'ur wišša wiläd!
black dog beget
Lit. "Give birth to a black puppy"

Oromo: saree gurratti d'ali
Dog black beget
“Give birth to a black puppy”

Wolayitta: kareta kana yela
Black dog beget
“Give birth to a black puppy”

All meaning, lit. “you deliver a black puppy for a baby”, appear to be specific to the region, minus Nilotic. It has not been possible to find both the concept and the expression in such neighboring Bantu languages like Kiswahili, for example.

Of course, one may raise a question of why such a high degree of isomorphism in both the themes and patterns of expressions among the Afroasiatic groups in question. A usual answer would be contact phenomena and diffusion of traits from one to the others as in Haberland²⁰, for example. This would mean that either there had been no cursing practiced at all in the others or that the form and content of the tradition was substituted by traits diffused from other languages, like Amharic.

Given the fact that traditional societies are regulated by mechanisms like cursing and blessing, more than by codes of law, one would not assume such mechanism to be inexistent or that they are completely replaced by traits from other sources. The Borana practice of collective cursing, which is still strong, is a good example for the existence of the tradition as an institution of social interaction and regulation. The North Shewa and North Wällo practice of the same culture further suggests that each group has the same tradition in a slightly different fashion.

I believe there to be a coalescence of traits, following and as a result of the contact phenomena, which has become fossilized over the long period of interaction, resulting in overlapping and/or cross-cutting features particularly among the Afroasiatic groups, which have been in longstanding contact and interaction during which they have influenced each other to the extent that a new set of traits has emerged. It is not, hence, possible to trace a trait back to one particular source group from which it has spread to the others. The situation is, thus, one of feature convergence and coalescence which has led to the claim that the Ethiopian region is a distinct socio-cultural and linguistic area.

20 Haberland, E. “The Influence of the Christian Ethiopian Empire on Southern Ethiopia” in *Proceedings of the Second International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Manchester, 1963, pp. 235-238.

V
International Relations and Politics



Economic reforms, productivism and social development in Africa

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Introduction: three decades of economic reforms and poverty reduction

As the current financial crisis became a reality there was a Doha debate in 2011 on the BBC on the United Nations. The motion was: “The United Nations System is Terminally Dead. Democratic Nations Should Establish an Alternative Forum Through Which to Agree on Global Issues”. The debate was very lively and heated and at the end the motion was defeated. What was not mentioned by any of the participants was what would have happened in the current situation had the United Nations not been in place. The UN was formed after two big world wars. The founding members vowed that never again should the world be forced into a situation under which nations would go to war against each other. It is crystal clear that every time there has been a financial or other economic crisis, nations have gone to war over resources, materials and markets. Even as the UN Charter was still finding its place in the legislative processes of the founding nations, big powers were already fighting to control power, production, markets, materials and labour in Africa and Indo-China. The end of one war marked the beginning of another and one wonders what the fate of smaller nations would have been without the UN in the current financial crisis.

The Doha debate on the UN system skipped this very important question. The UN is not only important for what it has failed to achieve. It is more important for what it has managed to put in place. One of the most important issues it has managed to keep on the global agenda is poverty eradication. Between 1992 when the historical summit on sustainable development was held in Rio de Janeiro and 2008 when the Accra Summit on Poverty Eradication was held, over 125 global action summits have been held. Sixty eight of these were held in 2005 alone. In Africa, an average of five regional and sub-regional conferences has been conducted. Most of these conferences were funded by the UN. In addition, the United Nations Development Programme has deployed resources directly addressing poverty

reduction. It produces annual global and country human development reports. The UNDP works in partnership with the North-South Institute based in Canada that focuses on increasing the voice and role of civil society in poverty reduction. It also funds the programme known as Capacity 2015 dedicated to capacity building for poverty reduction. The UN Secretary General publishes annual reports on the implementation of MDGs. These initiatives of the UN are supplemented by other efforts on civil society aimed at reducing world poverty by half by 2015¹.

The global anti-poverty agenda has achieved a lot especially in terms of mobilizing global efforts and raising awareness about the plight of the poor and the depth of poverty in some nations. But most of the efforts have been eroded or diluted by negative trends in growth and social development. The Economic Report on Africa 2008² for example, indicated that income inequality was on the rise and Africa was ranking second to Latin America as the region with one of the highest income inequalities. It also noted that while there has been progress in debt relief, annual inflation had gone down from over 20% in 2001 to slightly over 10% in 2008; current account balance average was up from -2.5% to 3% the GDP from 2002 to 2007 and annual average growth rates of exports rose to 25% of GDP in 2005/06 but fell to below 10% in 2007. Other figures are more grim and over 2009 and 2010 even got grimmer.

According to this 2008 report, in spite of deep and through economic reforms, foreign direct investments stagnated at the same level over many years. Average growth though relatively high was not high enough to support the achievement of MDGs. It stood at average 6.1% for Eastern Africa, 5.8% for Southern Africa and the African average was 5.9%³. Non-oil rich countries recorded a higher real GDP growth rate of 4.2% compared with 1.3% for oil rich countries. Out of the five lowest economic performers on the continent three were in the Eastern and Southern Africa region (Somalia, Zimbabwe and the Comoros). Out of the ten countries with the largest fiscal surpluses only three were in Eastern and Southern Africa (Angola, Botswana and Lesotho). But none of these have a strong manufacturing base. Among the ten African countries with the highest inflation rates six were

1 These include WFONA a UN initiative for assessing progress on MDGs and engaging civil society; GCAP-Global Coalition Against Poverty; Reality of Aid Global Network a lobby group European NGOs; CONGO (Condition of NGOs Against Poverty); Alliance 2015 and EU Coalition of NGOs Against Poverty; Choske – an antipoverty civil society network; Civicus, Social Watch and national anti-poverty globally.

2 Economic Commission for Africa and African Union *Economic Report on Africa 2008. Africa and the Monterrey Consensus, Tackling Performance and Progress*, UNECA, Addis Ababa, 2008.

3 ECA and AU *op. cit.*, p. 70.

in Eastern and Southern Africa – Zimbabwe (leading), Eritrea, Ethiopia, DRC, Mozambique, Angola and Kenya.

The figures on sector specific growth patterns were even more disturbing. The share of agriculture to GDP had shrunk from 32.6% in 2002 in East Africa to 26.7% in 2006 while in Southern Africa it rose slightly from 8.3% to 8.7%. The overall growth rate in agriculture went down from 8.1% in 2004 to 3.5% in 2006 in Eastern Africa and from 9.8% to 0.8% in Southern Africa. This is the sector that sustains livelihoods of over 70% percentage of our population in either small holder or commercial farming. The ECA report also indicated that food production was stagnating with oil seeds and banana production on the decline; services had stagnated at 11% in Eastern Africa and 34% in Southern Africa. Earnings were still at \$45 billion for the whole continent out of a global \$802 in 2007 in spite of efforts to improve infrastructure and conservation.

Therefore in spite of decades of concerted efforts between the UN, bilateral donors, international non-governmental development organizations, civil society organizations and other agencies, poverty has continued to advance in Africa. It has become deeper and deeper over the period 2009 to 2011⁴ and eluded those seeking to alleviate it by trying either halve it by 2015 or to eradicate it by 2030⁵. In this chapter the key question is why? The argument is that the world has been running on a two track system in which the political process is being primarily driven by the social policies as developed by the UN and the economic policies being driven by the Bretton Woods institutions mainly the World Bank and the IMF lately joined by the World Trade Organizations.

These two systems have been moving in the opposite direction. While the economic system has been backed by economic and political might of powerful nations⁶, the political system of the UN lacks economic and even political clout. As a result the policies of the Bretton Woods Institutions have determined the wealth and poverty of nations while the social programmes of the political machinery under the UN have kept hope alive but have not managed to have lasting impact on the economic programmes that shape the systems of power, production, distribution and governance and their underlying most dominant system that has

4 See the *Africa Development Report* 2011.

5 Most African governments have developed long term development goals ranging from 2015 (Nigeria) 2020 (majority) and 2030 (Namibia) as target years for establishing a self-sufficient industrialized economy.

6 See Cossudovsky, M. *The Globalization of Poverty and the New World Order*, Center for Research on Globalization, Ottawa, 2003, Chapter 1.

shaped the structure of rights and entitlements thereby giving new meaning to various elements of human rights and social justice⁷. The chapter examines the two world systems separately and shows the opposite directions in which they have been moving with the dominant one ultimately shaping and reconstructing the system of law, human rights and social justice. Governance reforms of the last three decades in Africa are examined within the prism of this *two world system*. The driving force of these reforms globally and in Africa, has been the urge to reward a few or those assumed to be the best and to leave the rest to fend for themselves. The emerging ideology is that of 'productivism': an ideology committed to confine rights and entitlements to those who are deemed to be productive either through their ownership of capital or their management skills.

1. The UN system and decades of commitments to end poverty

Once upon a time it was believed that benefits of growth could trickle down to impoverished and disadvantaged parts of the economy. In the early nineties after the first Human Development Report, it was recognized that instead of growth dividends trickling down, they could easily trickle up thereby widening the gap between disadvantaged groups or sectors and well to do communities. To prevent this being the norm, the United Nations Development Programme initiated a human centred social agenda predicated up on provision of support for a sustainable environment, adequate water and sanitation; habitable housing and adequate food and nutrition. In what d'Adrea has called the «Twelve Commitments» of the UN organizations between 1995 and the year 2000, it seemed that the world was moving towards tangible results on poverty alleviation. The FAO launched Rome Plan of Action (FA-F5, 1996) in which it called upon all development partners to team up to eliminate hunger and malnutrition. The United Nations Development Programme led a collective effort of all UN agencies and international development agencies to put together the most ambitious social Agenda in Copenhagen in 1995. This remains the biggest social summit in world history. In 1994 UN-Habitat launched a Habitat Agenda in Istanbul calling upon nations to provide respectable shelter, clean water and sanitation to people in urban areas.

In 1998 the World Bank had published, *The Path out of Poverty* emphasizing the necessity of providing basic health care, strengthening the health care systems and training more health care workers. The same commitment was reiterated in the

⁷ Refer to Barnett, M.; Duvall, R. (eds.) *Power in Global Governance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Copenhagen Social Agenda and in the Beijing Platform of Action (1995). Reducing infant mortality and maternal deaths featured in the *Path out of Poverty*, the Social Agenda and the Beijing Commitments (1995). The third set of commitments was about protection of poor children through providing them with basic education, protecting the family (which is the best institution for providing children with basic necessities) and guiding and protecting children against all forms of violence. This was crowned by the passing of the UN Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Abuse.

In 1996 UNESCO added its voice by calling for renewed efforts to strengthen education. This was a continuation of the series of world conferences organized by UNESCO⁸ since 1990 and special conferences for education in Africa⁹. The commitments on education included educating girls, providing skills training, increasing access to education services, supporting functional literacy especially for women and empowering the poor to control their lives¹⁰.

The fourth set of commitments arose out of the Beijing Platform of Action (1995), the Copenhagen Social Agenda (1995), The Istanbul Habitat Agenda (1994) and the Cairo Population Conference (1996). The Beijing Platform Agenda commitments related to the need for addressing gender inequality, increasing women's access to education, credit and skills, redressing power imbalances between gender groups, reversing trends towards the feminization of poverty and strengthening the leadership roles of women in national institutions and the provision of services and generally protecting women from all forms of discrimination and exploitation. These commitments were followed by concerted action against trafficking in humans with special emphasis on measures to prevent trafficking of women.

The fifth and perhaps most significant were a set of commitments in which poverty was recognized as an obstacle to human rights. The Vienna World Summit of 1993 laid foundations for this recognition. Building on earlier concerns that poverty anywhere is an obstacle to development everywhere (ILO, 1944)¹¹, the

8 For example the World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien 1990); the World Summit for Children (NY, 1990); International Congress on Human Education for Human Rights and Democracy (Montreal, 1993); the Mid-Decade Review Meeting of the International Consultative Forum on Education for All (Amman, 1996).

9 Pan-African Conference on the Education of Girls (Ouagadougou, 1993); Audience Africa (Paris, 1993) and several conferences of Ministers of Education in Africa (CMEDAF) Beijing 1991.

10 See, d'Adrea *op. cit.*, p. 32.

11 The Philadelphia Declaration of the ILO in 1944 stated that poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere.

Vienna Declaration reiterated the position that extreme poverty was an impediment to the full enjoyment of human rights. Concerted action to reduce poverty was seen as essential for strengthening human rights. Government intervention to support vulnerable people and social groups and use of development assistance to address their problems were put on the Vienna agenda. The Copenhagen Social Agenda reiterated these resolves and called for action on foreign debt and political instability. The Habitat Agenda drew the world's attention to environmental factors such as drought, climatic instability, earthquakes, demographic, epidemiological and other health factors that were raising levels of instability and increasing vulnerability in poor countries and communities, and undermining human development.

In the year 2000 two more major commitments were made. The first one was in Dakar, Senegal on Education for All (EFA). EFA has six primary goals: to expand early childhood development programmes; provide free and compulsory primary education for all; promote learning and life skills for young people and adults; raise adult literacy by 50%; achieve gender parity by 2005 and gender equality by 2015; and improvement of quality of education. Then came the Millennium Development Goals 2000 with eight major commitments on its own. The primary objective is to reduce world poverty by half by the year 2015. The MDGs have inspired most of the least developed countries and encouraged them to set a target of 2025 to have established conditions for sustainable development and to have achieved living standards currently applicable in developed countries.

The last most comprehensive programme was the UN Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010. It is known as the Brussels Declaration. It has seven major elements. The first is the goal of fostering a people centred policy framework to eradicate poverty, overcome structural bottlenecks and ultimately pull LDCs up the path to accelerated growth and strengthened physical and human capacities¹². The second is to strengthen good governance at national and international level. At national level it is a commitment to rule of law, human rights and democracy. At international level it is about ensuring a fair regulatory system that supports the interests of LDCs. The third is about building human and institutional capacities which include social infrastructure, training for social services delivery and support for provision of housing and sustainable human settlements. Broader issues include education, employment and tackling major health challenges.

The fourth was on building productive capacities to make globalization work for LDCs. This commitment covered structural and supply-side problems of

12 UN document A/CONF. 191/13, p. 16.

LDCs, the most critical of which related to insufficient financial resources, skills shortages, poor infrastructure, environmental decline, lack of trade support and other factors inhibiting the capacity of poor nations to benefit from the global trade system. Developed countries undertook to provide technical and financial support in the key areas identified and LDCs undertook to develop policies that could make this support possible.

The fifth was on enhancing the role of trade in development. The goals were to increase the share of trade in the GDP of LDCs; address unfavorable market conditions and supply – side constraints; enhance the competitiveness of LDC products; increase coherence in the policies and actions of the Bretton woods Institutions, UN and the WTO promote regional integration and enable LDCs to attract trade, commodities and regional trade agreements, trade in services and reducing the impact of economic shocks. The sixth was on reducing vulnerability and protecting the environment under which LDCs undertook to strengthen disaster mitigation and early warning systems and introducing special insurance schemes. Developed countries agreed to implement a new international disaster reduction strategy and support capacity building for early warning systems and disaster mitigation. The last was on mobilizing financial resources for the Programme of Action itself. It was recognized that in the foreseeable future it was difficult for LDCs to mobilize required resources locally but the need to mobilize local resources and reduce external dependency was underlined. LDCs were encouraged to develop policies aimed at domestic resources mobilization, linking the financial sector with local development agencies, promoting innovative financial schemes, strengthening financial regulations and improving revenue collection. Ironically this very robust declaration has been almost forgotten and rarely features in the dialogue between the EU and LDCs.

The work done by the UN and other development organizations on poverty reduction over the past sixty years is invaluable. It is the main argument of this chapter that the results of the programmes of the UN and its agencies would have been more substantial if both UN and the Bretton Woods Institutions were directing their development programmes in the same direction. Unfortunately this has not been case.

2. *The tale of two systems*

As the UN was being launched and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was being developed in 1945, another institution or group of institutions that were going to influence global trends were being formed at Bretton Woods – the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. These twin institutions

were formed in the US and when the suggestion was made that they should be located in another place outside the US that possibility was ruled out by the US government. Right from the start they came under the strong influence of the US as the biggest funder in the context of the Marshall Plan (a programme developed to support economic recovery after the second world war). Corporate interests were immediately at the core of these two financial institutions because financial and corporate interests were inseparable. In the context of the war and the need for economic recovery, it was crystal clear that in the post war period corporations with financial clout would dominate or even supersede state organs of governance. Hence while the UN started and continued to be an inter-governmental forum catering for the political interests of member states, the Bretton Woods Institution came in to serve primarily the financial interests of the corporate world.

The corporate world they were poised to serve was engaged a new war. The post-war reconstruction efforts required natural resources, materials for products, routes and ports, reliable capital and a growing pool of skills. The new wars were therefore corporate and were about markets, quotas, tariffs foreign relations or relations with governments. The US government which controlled over 70% of transitional corporations began to make it clear that unfriendly governments which obstructed corporate interests were not going to be tolerated. In 1954 when the government of Guatemala nationalized land held by the United Fruit Company without compensation, it was overthrown.

It has been argued by Clairmont that what sprung from Bretton Woods was not therefore a coherent international trading and monetary system that weighed judiciously the interests of the richer and poorer countries, the big and small, but rather one that bore the birth marks of the dominant imperial hegemony, engineered to meet its current and future needs¹³. The Bretton Woods system was not launched by small nations or for their benefit. It was right from the start dominated by one superpower which itself was dominated by transnational corporations. In 1948 as the UDHR was beginning to take shape, the State Department in the US released, for its own use a State Department Policy Planning Study (no. 23) in which as quoted by Clairmont it was stated «We should cease thinking about vague and unreal objectives such as human rights, the rising of living standards and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are hampered by idealistic slogans, the better»¹⁴.

13 Clairmont, F.E. *The Rise and Fall of Economic Liberalism: The Making of the Economic Gulag*, Southbound, Third World Network, Penang, p. 16.

14 Ivi, p. 18.

This disrespect for human rights was not only confined to the US. Even before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was ratified by the European Nations, France was showing that it was not going to subscribe to “vague objectives” such as human rights and democracy in the colonies. It was already engaged in wars against freedom movements in Algeria, Madagascar and Vietnam. By 1954 its use of hard and “straight power”, had left 20,000 dead in Vietnam, 90,000 in Algeria and over 100,000 in Madagascar. The Netherlands had massacred 150,000 in Indonesia. Between 1949 and 1955 over 5.2million had been killed in Indo-China alone and this does not include the one million massacred earlier by Japan in the same sub-region. The people who were being exterminated were same people that had joined these colonial powers in their fight for freedom from the Nazis out of which struggle the UN was formed with the signatories avowing that never in human history would the international community allow such carnage to happen again.

But by ‘human’ they definitely meant people of free nations and when they immediately turned on the colonial people of color, they justified their massacres as being aimed at the defense of their ‘free world’. The recent invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan are continuation of the same ideological façade under which massacres of people of color take place unabated. The project for the defense of the free world would not have been successfully executed in the early fifties without the financial support of the US, the UK and Bretton Woods Institutions.

The destruction of Europe during the war and the subsequent destruction in the colonies were not only wars for routes, ports, markets, materials and labour but they also provided an opportunity for the only surviving financial system that had been saved from Nazi destruction by the Atlantic Ocean, to assert itself on the world economic and political arena. By financing Europe, through the Bretton Woods Institutions, the US entered right from the start as the leader and because it served corporate interests, the Bretton Woods system had to follow its dictates. In the division of labour the International Monetary Fund became an instrument for short term capital and the World Bank for long term capital development loans.

As the UN system moved to support the popularization of democracy and the right of nations to self determination, the Bretton Woods System began implementing the Marshall Plan for European recovery. The first victim was Greece which was under socialist control. Labeled by the State Department the “rotten apple” that could infect other nations such as Turkey, North Africa and even France, it was denied support from the Marshall Plan a decision which has made a basket case in the European Union to date. The current economic woes of Greece might be reflective of its own policy failures. But they bear the scars of long term isolation and neglect by its European neighbours and their Atlantic allies, due to its persistent socialist orientation. In addition to starving the red listed nations,

the Marshall Plan was used to secure share ownership, markets and other rights in Germany, Italy and other European nations by American companies.

Conditionally was the mode and regimes that were less emphatic on human rights got better terms and more funds¹⁵. Japan had its own recovery programme run by the Bretton Woods Institutions – the Dodge Plan. Through this plan the Liberal Democratic Party was generously funded by these institutions, the US government and US corporations. The agenda was to marginalize the Japanese trade union movement and other subversive elements¹⁶. Through this alliance, the *Zaibatsus* (formerly SMEs which later became MNCs) got enough financial support to establish a presence not only in Asia but on other continents including North America.

For the first three decades 1950-1980 the role of the Bretton Woods Institutions in Africa was tangential. But African economies through the World Bank and IMF became much more integrated with the US Corporate entities especially in the sixties and seventies. As the European nations recovered from the destruction of the Second World War the Bretton Woods Institutions began working for ways of widening the existing and creating new financial markets. They pushed for deregulation and liberalization of financial markets – banks, pension funds and other credit institutions. To promote the global expansion of the banking systems they engineered demand for aid by promoting a chronic dependence on development assistance in less developed countries. Regional banks were also established – the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the Development Bank for Latin America which remains based in Washington. With deregulation and liberalization of the financial markets there was a money glut partly exacerbated by the oil boom after 1973. In order to sell this money, structural adjustment programmes were initiated. As Suzan George has noted in her *A Fate Worse than Debt*, structural adjustment was a programme launched to address three aspects of a global crisis.

The first aspect was that there was a money glut made worse by the oil boom with most petro-dollars deposited in the global financial institutions. This money had to find a market. The second aspect was that this glut would be solved by an actual economic crisis that had dogged most LDCs since the oil crisis. These countries needed money to get out of their crisis and financial institutions needed this crisis to solve their own crisis. The third aspect was that deregulation and liberalization of the financial markets had increased the deficit for the US. As the transitional

15 Ivi, p. 22.

16 Ivi, p. 24.

corporation controlled the capital flows in and out of the US, the US became more and more indebted and by attracting more and more foreign investment especially through government bonds, the government and the economy got deeper into debt. As noted by Clairmont, 'Since 1981 the US has shifted from being the world's biggest creditor to its biggest debtor'¹⁷. To resolve this crisis more credit had to be dished out to economies desperately in need of cash injection so that interest, reimbursements and tax revenues on lending institutions could generate a solution out of this crisis for the US economy. Within these crises the Bretton Woods made a great leap southward with structural adjustment and poverty reduction programmes.

This great leap southward was not as easy as initially thought. Although LDCs were in need of money, this in itself did not give assurance that if given loans they would utilize them optimally, generate enough to pay back the loans and reinvest or be able to take new loans. Besides, these economies were already very heavily indebted and if new big loans were superimposed on them, they would neither cope nor pay back the old and new loans. The Bretton Woods Institutions were not new in the field of "development" lending. The Marshall and Dodge Plans were their first major experiences. Lending or development support was under these plans based on a project approach which was based on transfer of capital through loans and technical assistance. With the Marshall Plan, reconstruction was in familiar terrain-similar institutions, similar systems of bureaucracy, linear approaches to management and similar culture of governance, production and distribution. With LDCs this would not work because in most of them the institutions of power, production and governance were different. The culture at micro and macro levels was the opposite of that dominant in the west and the legal and bureaucratic regimes were not the same.

In the sixties and early seventies a project approach had been attempted by Bretton Woods Institution especially in Africa and Latin America funding big projects – factories, dams, infrastructure or specific sector projects. Most of these projects had become bloated, bureaucratic, costly and inefficient and had actually exacerbated the debt in these countries. To avoid these obstacles, the lending institutions adopted an integrated programme approach. This approach was adopted to acknowledge the inter-linked nature of sectors and several factors. For example funding a road without including a component on human capacity for maintenance and future repairs would make the project ineffective or funding the construction of a cashew nut factory would not be efficient without addressing

¹⁷ Ivi, p. 27.

supply and demand side factors. The white elephant projects that the World Bank supported in Africa in the seventies were testimony of this. It was on the basis of this experience that the World Bank had started integrated rural or water development programmes in the late sixties and early seventies¹⁸.

The project and integrated programme approaches were mainly public sector driven. They focused on public enterprise and government based projects. This focus left out the private sector and civil society; ignored issues of governance and did not seek to address issues of politics. In the new drive under structural adjustment, politics and governance had to be integrated. The shift began in the early seventies and the Bretton Woods institutions were unified in pushing three types of reforms: political, economic and financial. Though inherently intrusive, it was clear that politics and governance systems had to be changed in order to be brought into line with the wishes and strategies of the funding agencies. In essence four major ideological packages were used to legitimize the intrusive nature of the structural adjustment programmes. These include rolling back the frontiers of the state; the ideology of “productivism” emphasizing rewards, incentives and security for actors and sectors assumed to be inherently productive; institutional economics and the reconstruction of the theories of public goods and public choice.

3. Governance reforms and the rolling back of the frontiers of the state

Immediately after the UN Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries was passed in Brussels in 2001, The World Bank published its Report titled *Finance for Growth: Policy Choices in a Volatile World*¹⁹. The Report started with a statement of the obvious that the financial systems of developed economies have helped these economies to prosper. But the argument went further to say governments are not good at providing financial services even in times of crisis, an argument which would not be accepted by all in 2011. The report went further to recommend open financial markets as a solution to the financial crisis of developing countries then. In Chapter 3 the report criticized the capacity of governments to own and effectively manage public enterprises in general and financial institutions in

18 African Development Bank, *Africa in the World Economy. Public Sector Management in Africa, Economic and Social Statistics on Africa*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 122; Baum, W.C.; Tolbert, S.M. *Investing in Development, Lessons of World Bank Experience*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985, pp. 19-22.

19 World Bank, *Finance for Growth. Policy Choices in a Volatile World*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001.

particular. It concluded, «Despite the working goals often espoused by advocates of state ownership – and though there are isolated pockets of success – achievement of these goals has generally been elusive, to say the least»²⁰.

The Report advocated privatization which it said could lead to a more efficient banking sector and a vibrant economy. It called upon developing and small countries to allow foreign banks to operate in their economies because they had the potential to strengthen them. The main argument was that foreign bank participation was an insurance against crises²¹. Rolling back the frontiers of the state took three major forms, first was political liberalization through introducing multiparty politics. On this there is agreement on all fronts that it increased freedom and voice thereby strengthening the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights and similar African Instruments of Human Rights²².

The second was the promotion of “productivist” ideologies through privatization and public choice. The third was through liberalization of investments and labour markets. The driving force was deregulation and marketization. The motive was to open up markets for participation by international capital. The justification was that foreign and private investors or actors were more productive than state or local actors. Below we assess the implications of each of these.

4. Productivism, privatization and global corruption

The World Bank adopted and pushed privatization as a major lending policy in the eighties. Supported by the leaders of dominant powers such as Margaret Thatcher (UK) and Ronald Reagan [US), the big banks and accounting firms rallied to the call to maximize their gains from the spoils. The banking industry was dominated by six major banks mostly based in the US. To dominate the restructuring process most of them merged. The bank mergers were followed by mergers of accounting firms. Arthur Young and Ernst Whiney forming Ernst and Young; Coopers Lybrand Deloitte and DRT International also merged into Coopers and Lybrand Delloite. Others were Price Waterhouse, Arthur Andersen (now defunct) and

20 Ivi, p. 15.

21 Ivi, pp. 21-22.

22 These include the Cultural Charter for Africa (1976) Strengthening Cultural identity, use of language and media; Part V of the NERAD Statue of 2001 on democracy as pre-condition for sustainable development. The 1990 Declaration on the Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World (AHG/Decl.1 (XXVI) 1990; The Algiers Millennium Declaration 1999 reiterating the importance of democracy for development.

KPMG. Rothschilds Bank took lead of the privatization drive with other banks sharing in the spoils²³.

In a nutshell privatizations in Europe led to more sophisticated forms of corruption through which conflict of interest on the part of governments, banks and accounting firms was ignored. It is even disturbing that in the case of the UK, Ministers such as John Redwood the main architect of the privatization strategy in Margaret Thatcher's government joined the government directly from Rothschilds which was the lead bank in the privatization drive. The Finance Secretary Francis Maude joined Solomon Brothers immediately after losing his parliamentary seat in 1992 while Lord Young the former British Trade Secretary also joined Salomon Brothers and John Moor a former Treasury Minister remained senior privatization advisor to Hill and Knowlton International while he was in government. This kind of inter-locking responsibilities in key ministries and financial institutions dealing with privatization would have led to serious accusations of corruption if they were suspected let alone evident in a less developed country. In the case of the UK they were seen as normal.

In the case of LDCs and Africa in particular, privatization and its underlying ideology of productivism had more serious consequences. In many cases the assets were sold to government officials and factories have been sold at give away prices causing more losses to these economies. In cases where assets were sold to foreign northern companies, these sales involved multiple losses. First these factories and enterprises were established through state guaranteed loans most of which remain unpaid and were not taken over by buyers. Secondly these loans are being repaid even after governments have lost control of these enterprises. Third, these assets were sold back to the rich economies that had given loans for them in the first place. This meant a transfer of assets back to the North on the cheap.

In addition, in the many cases where the assets were bought by people in power, apart from the distortion in the welfare system, the privatization restructured the structures of opportunity. While the livelihoods of workers and managers who operated the enterprises were either terminated or diverted, politicians who chanced to be in power at that time grabbed the new opportunities thereby restructuring their lives and livelihoods. It has transpired now that in the case of Tanzania for example some of the assets grabbed by people in power during the privatization have been put to waste²⁴. The assumed productivity of the private

23 They include Shroeders, Samuel Montagu; Credit Suisse, First Boston, Morgan Greenfell; SG Warburg, Barclays de Zoette Wed; Bearing Brothers and Bankers Trust.

24 A case in point is the Mchuchuma Coal Mine in Tanzania which was bought by a leader at give

sector has not been proved even on a balance of probability in this case. Similar cases of government buildings that were sold to politicians at low prices that have remained un-refurbished and inadequately utilized are also common.

Privatization has not only changed welfare, income and opportunity structures in Africa. In the majority of cases it has left many former employees without jobs. In many instances unions have been reluctant to oppose privatization measures that lead to redundancies. In a few cases workers have tried to block unilateral decisions on privatization likely to lead to lay offs. In the case of Tanzania for example, the High Court ruled in 2002 that «employees of a public corporation operate it on behalf of themselves and the public as a whole. When they oppose a privatization move, they do it not only on their own behalf but on behalf of the public as a whole». It was decided that in making a decision on their application, the court has to examine the public interest as a whole. In the case of the anticipated redundancies that the workers expected to arise out of the privatization of the Tanzania Railways Corporation the court ruled, «it is the public or society therefore which will suffer if this application is granted. The whole declared policy of privatization, which of course, may not be commending itself to all will be thwarted. This will not be in the public interest»²⁵.

But in an earlier case in which the Minister of Trade and Industry issued licenses to private cargo handling companies, sidelining a national shipping company with a statutory monopoly over cargo handling services and violating a government directive on how (if at all) such licenses could be issued, the High Court argued that if an injunction restraining the commercialization of services in the ports was given, it would not only injure the interests of the Tanzanian public but also those of landlocked countries that depended on the Tanzanian ports²⁶. The issue of rule of law and the failure of government to follow its own rules and procedures was not addressed. The emphasis was on public interest. Redundancies, the right to be heard and the Union's right to participate in critical decisions related to workers' livelihoods were not regarded as public interest issues. In an earlier case when the government was planning to sell the Tanzania Cigarette Company to an International firm, the workers' Union argued that the company was operating

away price and was reported in February 2009 as operating at zero capacity with difficulties in paying wages.

25 Tanzania Railway Workers Union v. Tanzania Railways Corporation and PSRC, Civil Case No. 190 of 2002, High Court of Tanzania, Dar es Salaam. Unreported.

26 COTWU(T)-OTTU Union and Another v. Hon. Iddi Simba, Minister of Industries and Trade and 7 others, Misc. Civil Cause No. 100 of 1999, High Court of Tanzania, Dar es Salaam, Unreported.

efficiently at a profit and it would be against public interest to sell it. The workers' were told they did not represent the public and only the government could stand for and defend public interest²⁷.

The ideology of productivism has dominated politics and political action in Tanzania for over three decades now. As can be seen from the above cases it has had a significant impact on perceptions of the role of law in development. While the social movements such as unions continued to look at law as a source of protection against the violence of development, public policy institutions such as courts of law saw legal protection of vulnerable groups as a form of violence against development. Similarly these three cases show the emerging conflicts in the interpretation of 'public interest'. While social movements continued thinking public interest was best protected through public enterprises, the new ideology based on productivism no longer considered it productive to protect public interest through public enterprises even if they were functioning well as in the case of Cigarette Company.

5. Investment protection by subsidizing investors

Productivism as an ideology is not futile in itself. It is true that actors and sectors that are productive should be given maximum promotion and protection. Such approaches become futile only when they do not generate enough benefits for the poor countries in which they are practiced. One area in which futility has been experienced as regards the benefits deficit for the poor countries and the poor in these countries is investments. Two sectors have been affected severely. First is the mining sector and second is the textile sector. It is undeniable that there are many factors that shape foreign direct investment flows in Africa. Primary of these is market size as most countries apart from the big five (Sudan, Algeria, DRC, Nigeria and South Africa) are small in size. This is compounded by logistical and infrastructure bottlenecks such as road, air and other transport infrastructure are limited. Most countries are still operating donkey, small boat, footpath economies and movement of goods and materials is limited. Third of course is the image problem as Africa's negative image is characterized with corruption and conflicts, flies, floods, famines and fights between communities. Rule of law problems often associated with lack of reliable intellectual property protection laws have also

27 The Secretary General of OTTU v. The Presidential Parastatal Sector Reform Commission, Civil Case No. 145 of 1995, High Court of Tanzania, Dar es Salaam. Unreported.

been advanced²⁸ although it is not clear whether transnational corporations really take this into consideration when they are making decisions on FDI. Transaction costs and governance problems have also been identified as reducing Africa's competitiveness²⁹. In spite of these obstacles, the majority of African countries in the last three decades have sold off their public enterprises and embraced foreign direct investment as the most reliable channel for fast track growth.

Notwithstanding negative factors limiting FDI in Africa, it is crystal clear that FDI in the region has been more pronounced in the extraction of primary commodities – marine, forestry and non-renewable resources such as minerals. These resources are located in areas difficult to access and with a track record of conflicts and bad governance. Taking the example of the mining sector, the phenomenal rise in FDI flows into this sector has defied all the reservations cataloged earlier such transparency, governance and image obstacles. Apart from Ghana, South Africa and Tanzania, the other countries where FDI has increased in the mineral extraction industry, DRC, Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Mauritania and Sudan are by no means exemplary on governance, transparency, infrastructure, efficiency or peace.

In order to open up the mineral sector for investments many African countries were compelled to deregulate under the structural adjustment programmes. In the 1960s the World Bank was more involved in funding mineral exploration. In the 1980s it shifted to privatization, commercialization and private development in the sector. Using SAPs it increased its push for deregulation. As reported by UNCTAD, by the end of 1995 over 35 countries had passed new mining laws, reduced taxes on mining operations and eased migration laws on expatriate workers destined for this sector³⁰. Ghana, Mali Guinea, Madagascar and Tanzania operationalized these reforms through staged systematic phases. In the process these countries also invested huge sums of money to sweeten the mines for privatization.

The cost of deregulation of the mining sector in these countries will never be adequately documented. The environmental cost for example has not been adequately assessed. In Tanzania where surface mining was banned for a long time the ban was lifted as part of the deregulation efforts. After privatization, the Mwadui Diamond Mine was subjected to heavy surface mining. A substantial part of the town was pulled down making the town dwellers homeless. The Mwadui

28 OECD *The Impact of Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights on Trade and Development in Developing Countries*, Paris, OECD, 2003.

29 UNCTAD 2005, p. 23.

30 UNCTAD 2005, p. 41.

Dam which was the main source of fish in the area was destroyed leaving numerous people whose livelihoods depended on the dam without any tangible means of survival. Although the courts had made rulings that protected the citizens from violation of their environmental rights stating in some cases that breach of these rights amounted to criminal acts³¹, when it came to foreign investors destroying a whole habitat, the voices of environmental groups passed unheeded. In other mining areas of Tanzania such as Merereami in Arusha, air pollution is so high that a cloud of heavy dust hangs permanently in the air although rainfall is very rare. In addition surface mining has changed the landscape in that region. Other costs to the communities involve their forcible eviction from land earmarked for mineral development leaving them without alternative means of livelihood. This has also happened in Botswana, Kenya and Uganda, only to mention a few others.

The human cost in terms of loss of livelihoods and dignity cannot be easily estimated but even for a country reducing citizens to dehumanizing conditions in order to attract investors, constitutes serious devaluation of the lives and dignity of the citizens and their country especially if the gains for the country are minimal.

In the case of mining in many LDCs in Africa, the gains have been minimal. As most countries have weak systems for tax assessment and taxes are based on profits, failure to ascertain the quantum of profits has led to very low tax gains in spite of the investments made, revenues forgone and the environmental and human costs invested in order to attract investors. In the case of Tanzania for example, gold exports rose from 1% in the 1990s to over 40% of the national export revenues in 2003. Six major mining companies earned a declared sum of \$890 between 1997 and 2002 but the government only got 10% out of this as tax revenues and while mineral exports increased substantially the share of the mining sector to GDP remains a minuscule 2%³².

6. The role of academic disciplines in the reform process

As the neoliberal agenda ascended to prominence lawyers and human rights activists took centre stage. The first agenda was political liberalization. The process required constitutional change, legal reforms and de-regulation of the political processes. For the first time in the eighties, even human rights activists got

31 In Joseph Kessy and others v. The City Council of Dar Es Salaam high court of Tanzania, Dar Es Salaam, Civil Case no. 299 of 1988 it was held against a local authority that operating a refuse dump on a residential area was not only a tort but a crime.

32 UNCTAD 2005, p. 50.

recognition from the state in Africa. Immediately after the political reform process was put into motion, economists stepped in. The World Bank and IMF used local and international economics experts to advise governments on economic liberalization. The key phrases were “free enterprise”, “free trade”, “market liberalization” and “private enterprise as the engine of growth”. Keynesian models were put aside and theories of Arthur Lewis (*Theory of Economic Growth*)³³ and Jan Tinbergen (*The Design of Development*) were peddled in new wrappers with new fervor and flavor³⁴. The state was stigmatized and its involvement of the state in the provision of public services stereotyped as bureaucratic intrusion in business³⁵. Voices of dissent from some economists³⁶ went unheeded. But as the liberalization and free for all project proceeded, some disciplines had to be watered down. One of these was rural development. Having been promoted in the sixties when peasantry was seen as a dangerously potential force for Cuban or Chinese type of revolutions in Africa, it was used to study and understand the peasantry. Rural sociology and anthropology were prestigious disciplines during that period. With the onset of trade liberalization the peasantry became an obstacle to commercialization of farming, commoditization of communal land and most important the peasant had to be made redundant if food markets had to be dominated by imports. Rural sociology and rural development studies were silently shelved or subsumed in broader areas such as environmental studies. Anthropology was de-rated in many universities and relegated to a minority discipline in some.

In the reconfiguration of alliances between state, policy and academic disciplines, governance reforms became critical – to open up political systems, liberalize budgets and public expenditure and give access to international finance institutions to have a say on the design, management and accountability for public finance. Decentralization became an essential component of the governance project. With decentralization, power would be devolved to where control was weakest. Hence access to resources and the local budget was made easier. The governance reforms made it necessary to enroll a new partner – public administration. As the unbundling of state systems of decision making progressed, it became also

33 Lewis, A. *Theory of Economic Growth*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1955.

34 World Bank, *op. cit.*, 2001.

35 World Bank, *Bureaucrats in Business. The Economics and Politics of Government Ownership*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1995.

36 Ghai, D. (ed.) *The IMF and The South. The Social Impact of Crisis and Adjustment*, London, Zed Books, 1991; Sagasti, F. *et al. The Future of Development Financing: Challenges and Strategic Choices*, Palgrave MacMillan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005.

necessary to cement the emerging order through legitimacy and legality. The legal profession became very handy. It had done well in dismantling the constitutions of the state centred regimes, restoring human rights and protecting civil and political rights. Now it was being enrolled for a more difficult or even dirtier job – deregulating the economy and providing foot-soldiers to guard the interests of the new stakeholders – multinationals. This has led to a boom in legal services especially in Eastern and Southern Africa and law has been crowned the queen of professions alongside economics and public administration.

In performing the dismantling act the lawyers became more visible than the economists and political scientists because they provided more than technical or advisory services. They were at the parliamentary hearings defending new positions before sometimes hostile members of parliament. During privatization they were at the forefront negotiating with unions or fighting them in courts. When mining or logging companies took over communal land and civil society groups organized collective action, they were on the ground defending the rights of the new owners and opposing the rights of communal or indigenous owners.

It is amazing how flexible and agile the legal profession has turned out to be. Alongside public administration specialists, lawyers have adopted new terminologies. Commercialization of services in public goods has been achieved through what is called “disaggregation”, a term that has been developed to reduce the visibility of the new and steep hierarchy in decision making, dilute the need for participatory management and actually personalize authority in public offices. To dismantle vertical consultative structures of participatory management the concept of “corporatization” has emerged. Through this, decision-making is atomized in organizations and leadership is centralized.

In the formation of executive agencies that are semi-autonomous and not directly accountable to parliament, the concept used is “hiving off”. The concept gives an impression that the hived off agency is “part” of the public enterprise system while in actual fact is very much “apart” and not “part” of this system. When it comes to the implementation of procurement policies under which the budget of the public enterprises has to be accessed by private enterprises, the strategy of “chunking up” is used. It means separating producer roles from regulatory roles so that conflict of interest “within the organization” is guarded against. In essence it is aimed at ensuring that procurement is open to scrutiny and state enterprises (where they still exist) are compelled to buy from the market.

The creativity with which public administration and the legal profession have managed to develop a set of terminologies that have helped to change the way public services are delivered while giving a semblance that not much has really changed is impressive. While there have been many developments in the law, it is

clear that lawyers have abandoned the traditional pillars of law and development which essentially is the duty to protect.

7. Conclusion

The objective of the chapter has been to show that the world have been moving on two tracks – one determined by financial institutions and driven by corporate greed and another shaped by UN agencies and predicated on human need. The failure of the two systems to work in tandem has left room for corporate greed to plunge the world into a financial crisis and putting humanity and human dignity and human development in jeopardy. Lawyers, economists and political scientists have been privy to the *disconnect* between economic interventions and human needs. It is the duty of professions and professionals to lead the path back to values of social justice and to gravitate the world away from greed that is leading humanity to self-destruction.

As we confront the current crisis economists, lawyers, political scientists and public administration specialists need to step back and consider their traditional roles in society. This can only happen if we agree that poverty is a threat to liberty. If we erode human dignity by tolerating and accelerating poverty, even those enjoying liberty will not do so for very long as the Arab revolts that engulfed the Arab world in 2010 have shown. As Mary Robinson (1999) former UN Commissioner for Human Rights said, «Human rights is more than just civil liberties... the right to human dignity is fundamental». We also need to accept that poor people cannot effectively exercise their political and civil rights because as Walter Schwimmer, the former Secretary General of the Council of Europe said at the Global Forum for Poverty Eradication in 1999, social exclusion is not only a question of lack of material resources and physical deprivation. We know that the poorer people are the less likely to participate in all aspects of life including cultural civil and political aspects (Council of Europe 1999: 33).

Whatever they are called – whether they are called poverty reduction strategies, wealth creation strategies or structural adjustment programmes, they are really instruments for violent development because as the UNHRC Report by Fantu Cheru stated, «Structural adjustment goes beyond a simple imposition of a set of macroeconomic policies at the domestic level. It represents political project, a conscious strategy of social transformation at global level, primarily to make the work safe for transnational corporations. In short Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) serve as “a transmission-belt” to liberalization, deregulation,

and reducing the role of the state in national development»³⁷. Therefore violent development has to be resisted in the same manner as any other form of violence.

37 Cheru, F. *UNHCR Report on the Effects of Structural Adjustment Policies on the Full Employment of Human Rights*, Geneva, UN, 1998.

Chinese policies in developing Rwanda

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1. Chinese-African relations: overview

There is a growing interest in China's relations with Africa. The Chinese presence in the continent would seem to place the role of other powers such as the USA or Europe at risk, and so it is important to remind ourselves how this relationship developed, and when it started and under what conditions. This article shows how the relationship has evolved over the past few decades, and particularly how it has changed in the last ten years, since the first Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). It makes use mainly of government reports and documents to review the most important meetings, and of United Nations and World Bank data for their outcome. The aim here is to illustrate the increase in the numbers of meetings and agreements, thereby providing evidence of the strengthening of their relationship.

In past decades, Chinese politics was usually seen as being one of non-involvement in African affairs. It was generally regarded as being limited to commercial ties that were created by means of ad hoc agreements, or even merely as an arms supplier. Although this idea is well-founded, China has had political relations with Africa and an African agenda since the 1950s. In 1954, a proposal to hold an Afro-Asiatic conference was put forward. It was held in April 1955 in Bandung, where more than 1000 representatives from 29 countries and 30 liberation movements from Africa and Asia met to discuss their world role. This was a time when China was seeking international allies against the Soviet Union and the West, and most African states were fighting for their freedom and independence from the colonial powers. On this occasion, China and Africa agreed to help each other, and to base their relations on the five principles of peaceful coexistence: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; mutual non-aggression; non-interference in each other's internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful co-existence¹.

¹ Van de Looy, J. "Africa and China: A Strategic Partnership?", African Studies Centre, Leiden – *ASC Working Paper*, vol. 67, 2006, p. 2.

In the 1960s, China continued to support Africa's struggle for emancipation, even though its level of international engagement was diminishing due to domestic circumstances² such as the Cultural Revolution. The Chinese position in Africa changed once again in the 1970s, when it took the place of the Republic of China³ as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. This strengthened the ties between Africa and the People's Republic of China, and increased diplomatic relations. While its ideological rationale had seemed to prevail until that moment, China's attention to economic matters intensified in the late 1970s and in the 1980s, in particular as regards trade relations. Economic development was seen as an outcome of political stability, and so China chose to consolidate both its economic and political relations. Economic interests were conspicuously linked with political actions to preserve them, as happened in Sudan in the 1990s, for example. There, China played a large part in limiting UN sanctions against the African state, due to its interests in the pipeline running from South Sudan to the Red Sea.

In the 1990s – but particularly after 2000 – relations between the Asiatic giant and Africa changed greatly, and the rhetoric of South-South cooperation has been very much enhanced. In October 2000, the first China-Africa Cooperation Forum was organized to define political and economic practices aimed at developing wider relations. New Forums on China-Africa Cooperation are organized every three years, which confirms the Chinese interest and involvement in the African economy and politics, and underlines its role as a fighter against neo-colonialism to preserve Africa's independence and sovereignty.

This changed Chinese approach to Africa is also reflected in its relations with Rwanda. In 1971, the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Rwanda established official diplomatic relations. These ties have continued since that time, and there have been substantial improvements in the last decade. Between 1971 and 2001, the two states signed eight agreements on technological and economic cooperation, giving proof of the depth of their relationship. Assistance with agriculture and engineering works are two of the main areas of action, although education and health are also very important. In recent years, tourism has also

2 Lafargue, F. "Kriegspiel pétrolier en Afrique" in *Politique Internationale*, vol. 112, 2006.

3 Before 1949, two powerful groups were fighting in China for control of the government. In 1949, the right-wing Kuomintang (KMT) was defeated by Communist forces, and the KMT moved its capital and government to Taiwan. As a result, we had the mainland People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan; International Crisis Group "Conflict history: Taiwan Strait", ICG 22 September 2004. For the sake of simplicity, we refer to the People's Republic of China in the article simply as "China".

become one of the foundations of the development of China-Rwanda relations, including its role in facilitating exchanges and trade.

2. Historical background: Rwanda-China relations

2.1 12 November 1971: establishment of diplomatic relations

In 1962, Rwanda became an independent republic, with Grégoire Kayibanda, the leader of the PARMEHUTU Party (Party of the Hutu Emancipation Movement), as its President. Rwandan foreign policy was quite clear-cut: it was part of the Western Bloc, with France as a strong partner, and it signed the Addis Ababa agreement which created the Organization of African Unity (OAU)⁴. For this reason, Rwanda was highly critical of communist activity in Africa, and maintained close ties with the Republic of China (ROC) instead of the communist People's Republic of China (PRC)⁵, whose policies in the continent it opposed because of its record of spreading conflict and supporting rebels throughout the world in general, and in Africa in particular⁶.

Rwandan relations with the ROC were for the most part based on economic cooperation. In post-colonial times, it desperately needed to develop its agricultural sector, and so it signed a five-year technical assistance agreement with the Republic of China for the development of the cultivation of soybeans, vegetables, sugarcane, and rice. In the prefectures of Kigali, Kibuye, Cyangugu, and Butare, cultivation began with rice as the main crop and soybeans as the second: it was not possible to obtain a double rice crop because of the climate. Chinese assistance was also extremely useful for the cultivation of sugarcane, rotated with vegetables or rice. It was cultivated in particular close to Kigali, in an area of 185 acres in the Nyabarongo river valley. In 1968, two years later, construction of a sugar refinery began⁷.

The situation changed radically in the early 1970s. In 1971, the PRC replaced the ROC as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and international recognition «passed from the ROC to the PRC» and almost every State recognized

4 Despite its "western position", Rwanda obviously adopted a very critical attitude towards colonial Portugal and the white governments in Rhodesia and South Africa.

5 Brenneman, L.E.; Hibbs, R.V.; James, C.A.; MacKnight, S.; McDonald, G.C.; Nyrop, R.F. *Rwanda, a Country Study*, Washington, DC, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969, p. 91.

6 *Ibidem*.

7 Ivi, pp. 118-68.

the People's Republic of China⁸. On 12 November 1971, Rwanda established diplomatic relations with the PRC. Since that time, relations between the two countries have been friendly, and they have especially fruitful economic links. There have been many official visits from Rwanda and China, but the agreements on technological and economic cooperation have more substance.

2.2 China-Rwanda agreements

Between 1971 and 2001, China and Rwanda entered into eight cooperation agreements, which were signed in 1972, 1978, 1983, 1988, 1991, 1996, 2000, and 2001⁹. Military cooperation between China and Rwanda started in the late 1970s, with delegations from each country paying visits to their ally. A further important aspect of military ties was a widely-exported Chinese product, arms, which have been imported to Rwanda above all in the past few decades¹⁰. In December 1989, China and Rwanda signed an agreement for the supply of various military equipment: mortars, machine guns, multiple missile launchers, mortar shells, missiles, shells and grenades, and «huge quantities of machetes»¹¹.

8 Today, the ROC – Taiwan has diplomatic ties with 24 states and regular relations with more than 140 others. According to the ROC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it has seven missions in African states, five embassies (in Burkina Faso, Gambia, Malawi, Sao Tomé and Príncipe and Swaziland), three liaison offices (South Africa), and one trade mission (Nigeria); <http://www.mofa.gov.tw/webapp/ct.asp?>

9 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China "Bilateral Relations". The main areas of action were agriculture, transport, industry, health, education, sport and culture, and military matters. The principal agricultural projects concerned planting rice paddies, the cultivation of vegetables, and irrigation. In the area of transport, the Chinese constructed roads and the Kigali-Rusumo highway (162 kilometres). Among other examples, the industrial sector involved the Rwanda Cement Factory in the West Province, the sugar factory at Kigali, the Army brickworks, and the Rwamagana rice husking factory. The main health project was at Kibungo, where a hospital and medical training school were constructed. The education sector was developed mainly through the provision of small grants to permit students to study abroad. Cooperation in sport and culture principally involved the building of the Amahoro National Stadium. The Economic and Commercial Counsellor's Office of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Rwanda, "China and Rwanda: 35 Years of Economic Cooperation".

10 There is evidence of arms trading. China supplied mortars, machine guns, multiple rocket launchers, and grenades in particular in the early 1990s, just before the 1994 genocide. In the period between 1990 and 1994, the People's Republic of China was one of Rwanda's main arms suppliers, alongside France, South Africa, Belgium, and Egypt.; Melvern, L. *A People Betrayed: the Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide*, London, Zed Books, 2000, p. 66; Chossudovsky, M.; Galand, P. "L'usage de la dette extérieure du Rwanda (1990-1994). La responsabilité des bailleurs de fonds" in *Centre for Research and Globalization Global Research* (CRG), 30 March 2004.

11 *Ibidem*.

When we consider the 1994 Rwandan genocide, it is important to recall the Chinese position, which was peculiar and yet in line with its traditional international policies. First of all, the Chinese Embassy was the only one that remained open in Kigali during the massacres. Secondly, we should look at its conduct in the UN Security Council, where it voted in favour of UNAMIR (the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda) and, in accordance with its support of UNAMIR, it abstained from voting on the French *Operation Turquoise*. Indeed, on 22 June 1994, the Chinese representative Chen Jian explained his vote at the UN Security Council, stating that:

We have always believed in respecting the opinions of the countries concerned in a given question and of the relevant regional organizations, and in securing the cooperation of all parties. Such cooperation is an indispensable condition for the success of United Nations peacekeeping operations. It is clear from the current situation that the action the draft resolution would authorize cannot guarantee the cooperation of the parties to the conflict. We also note that at its recent summit meeting, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) formulated the following proposals: 'Any action or effort undertaken by any countries, independently or collectively, should be placed within the framework of UNAMIR... All international efforts and resources should be employed to support the United Nations mandate in Rwanda'. Hence, and on the basis of the experience and lessons of the United Nations peace-keeping operation in Somalia, the Chinese delegation will abstain in the vote on the draft resolution before us¹².

After the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) took power in July 1994, discussions began at the UN to help Rwanda towards reconciliation. One of the most important decisions taken by the UN Security Council was the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR)¹³. China also abstained from this vote, and at the UN Security Council Meeting 3453 held on 8 November 1994, Li Zhaoxing stated:

We are strongly opposed to and condemn all crimes in violation of international humanitarian law, including acts of genocide. China is in favour of bringing to justice those responsible for such crimes. The establishment of an international tribunal for the prosecution of those responsible for crimes...

12 United Nations Security Council 3392nd Meeting, New York 22 June 1994, 1 p.m.

13 UN Security Council Resolution 955, 8 November 1994.

is a special measure taken by the international community to handle certain special problems... At present people still have doubts and worries about the way in which an international tribunal is established by a Security Council resolution under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter... China is not in favour of invoking at will Chapter VII of the Charter to establish an international tribunal... That position, which we stated in the Council last year during the deliberations on the establishment of an International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, remains unchanged... China was originally prepared to give positive consideration to the Security Council draft resolution and draft statute on the establishment of the International tribunal for Rwanda... In order to make sure that this Tribunal will effectively punish those who are responsible for crimes, full cooperation from the Rwanda Government is required after the establishment of the Tribunal. Without such cooperation and support from the Rwanda Government, it will be difficult for the Tribunal to perform its duties in an effective manner... The Rwanda Government has expressed its desire for further consultations... It is therefore an incautious act to vote in hurry on a draft resolution and statute that the Rwanda Government still finds difficult to accept... Therefore the Chinese delegation cannot but express its regret and has abstained in the vote¹⁴.

Chinese strategy in Rwanda seemed to be one of non-involvement in politics. Earlier economic cooperation between the two countries appeared to have been set aside, but their relations were to change again as a result of their own internal politics and economic developments, particularly when a new Chinese policy on Africa was inaugurated, and a South-South alliance was promoted against the Bretton Woods institutions and the central role of their Structural Adjustment Projects, which were worsening Africa's economy and helping China and Africa grow closer. In a certain way, we might say that in the past the ideological question appeared to be more important than economics, but then it seemed to become the opposite, with talk being mainly about economics, with ideology being kept at a distance.

3. 2000: the turning-point for the China-Africa Cooperation Forum

In October 2000, the first Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was held in Beijing, with 44 African countries and 18 international and regional organizations present. It had been convened by China in an attempt to promote

14 United Nations Security Council 3453rd Meeting, New York 8 November 1994, 3.35 p.m.

friendly cooperation and mutual development. The FOCAC was created to operate on two levels: concrete cooperation, and the promotion of political ties. The aim of the Forum is to lay the foundations for a new long-term partnership with the continent, for the development of both China and Africa, following the rhetoric of their common traits, due to their shared colonial past and their status as developing countries. The main areas of cooperation were the usual ones: trade, agriculture, economy, and education, with the addition of the new field of tourism.

In 2006, there was an intensification of the China-Africa dialogue. In January of that year, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a six-part document, *China's African Policy*, in which the main aspects of Chinese policy were articulated. The first three parts, *Africa's Position and Role*, *China's Relations with Africa*¹⁵, and *China's African Policy* serve to clarify the political basis for their relationship¹⁶, and obviously, the *conditio sine qua non* for relations with China is acceptance of the "One China Principle" by the African States. It is openly stated that «the Chinese Government appreciates the fact that the overwhelming majority of African countries abide by the One China Principle, refuse to have official relations and contacts with Taiwan and support China's great cause of reunification»¹⁷.

Part Four, *Enhancing All-round Cooperation Between China and Africa*, is the most detailed, and concerns economic relations. Priority cooperation areas are listed, such as: 1) the political field; 2) the economic field; 3) education, science, culture, health, and social aspects; and 4) peace and security. In the political field, among other things, exchanges between the Communist Party of China and African political parties and cooperation in international affairs, including coordinating positions on major issues, are mentioned. The second area includes ten main points¹⁸, of which trade is the first, with a promise of duty-free treatment for certain African goods and the future negotiation of a Free Trade Agreement with African countries and organizations. The creation of an African Development Fund¹⁹ to support Chinese investors in the continent is also called for. The third

15 Which discussed the historical background of their international role and relations with colonialism, their struggles for national liberation, and the creation of the People's Republic of China.

16 The basic principles and goals of the Policy are explained: 1) sincerity, friendship and equality; 2) mutual benefit, reciprocity and common prosperity; 3) mutual support and close coordination; and 4) learning from each other and seeking common development.

17 Ministry of Foreign Affairs – People's Republic of China *China's African Policy*.

18 Trade, investment, financial cooperation, agriculture, infrastructure, resource cooperation, tourism cooperation, debt reduction and relief, economic assistance, and multilateral cooperation.

19 In May 2007, the establishment of the Fund was announced by the China Development Bank, a

area relates for the most part to exchanges of students and professionals for human resources development in various fields, such as disaster limitation. The last area of cooperation is peace and security, and focuses on military cooperation, peacekeeping, judicial matters, and policing. Great importance seems to have been attached to the training of African military personnel, Chinese support for the African Union and UN in conflict resolution, and China's cooperation with African countries in dealing with illegal immigration.

Part Five of the document, *Forum on China – Africa Cooperation and Its Follow-up Actions*, focuses on the role of the FOCAC, which is considered to be the most significant tool for dialogue and political consultation. The Chinese desire for «further cooperation between the Forum and the NEPAD» is also expressed in the Policy²⁰. Finally, in the sixth part, *China's Relations with African Regional Organizations*, the important role of the African Union and African sub-regional organizations is recognized.

4. 2001: The new course

4.1 The intensification of economic relations between China and Rwanda

In the last decade, China has made a huge effort to develop its economy and to increase growth of its exports and its participation in the world economy and trade, and Rwanda has found an important role to play in this process. The economy has always been the major field of cooperation between them, and although they have comprehensive relations in various areas such as politics and culture, it still remains their most effective sphere of collaboration. This is due to the principal concerns and approach of both countries – the favourite Chinese “modus operandi” is to attach great importance to commercial links, which are often used as a “Trojan horse” for politics – but it is also a consequence of Rwanda's positive reception of non-invasive policies in internal affairs.

4.2 Trade

The total amount of trade between China and Rwanda has grown rapidly in the last few years. Trade has always been seen by the two countries as one of the most

government institution. Initially, the Fund was for \$1 billion; “China promises more aid” in *The New Times*, Kampala, 19 May 2007.

20 Ministry of Foreign Affairs – People's Republic of China *China's African Policy*.

important ways of encouraging economic development. In the past, Rwanda has made an effort to increase investments and trade in textile goods, construction materials, and pharmaceuticals. According to official sources, the Rwandan GDP increased from 1.8 to 2.2 billion US \$ in the five years between 2000 and 2005, while exports of goods and services increased from 8.3% to 10.6% of GDP, and imports from 24.6% to 31%²¹. In the same period, 2000 to 2005, Rwandan exports to China appear to have increased from 4.4% to 6.5% of total exports²².

The turning point in China-Rwanda trade took place in 2006, although the flows differ considerably, depending on which side we take into consideration. Between January and December 2006, Rwandan exports appear to have increased by 89.9% in comparison with the previous year²³. But imports from China did not have the same result, rising by just 3.3% in the same period. The most important commodities exported from Rwanda to China are raw materials, such as mining products²⁴. One of these is coltan²⁵ which in 2006 represented 17% of the total value of exports from Rwanda²⁶. Tin is another important Rwandan export, above all cassiterite (tin ore), which accounted for 16% of total exports in 2004; in 2003 this figure was 7%, and in 2002 2%, causing higher prices²⁷, but not higher production.

If we examine Chinese exports to Rwanda, we see that China sells «textile goods, light industrial articles, agricultural tools, and ferrous metals»²⁸. In particular, China exports a large quantity of cheap merchandise. These goods are priced extremely competitively, which causes some observers to worry about the danger

21 The World Bank “Rwanda Data Profile” in *World Development Indicators Database*, April 2007.

22 CIA *The World Factbook. Rwanda*. Update 10 May 2007.

23 “Rwanda exports to China up by more than 80%” in *Rwanda News Agency* (Kigali), 12 March 2007.

24 Rwanda produces and exports columbite-tantalite, tin, tungsten, gold ores, sapphires, cement, and natural gas. It also exports minerals produced in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

25 “Coltan” is the abbreviation of colombo-tantalite ore. It is a very important metal for “new technologies” such as the aeronautic industry and mobile phones.

26 Rwanda National Bank *Rwanda’s Exports*, 2006. However, in 2004, the export of coltan amounted to 13% of total exports, in 2003 it stood at 10%, and in 2002 it accounted for 21% of total exports; Yager, T.R. “The Mineral Industry of Rwanda” in *U.S. Geological Survey Minerals Yearbook*, 2004.

27 Thomas Yager attributes the higher prices to a rise in «Chinese consumption, an expansion of the consumer electronics sector, and the European Union’s ban on lead solders in electronic devices»; *ibidem*.

28 The Department of African Affairs – Chinese Foreign Ministry *China and Rwanda Bilateral Economy & Trade Relations & Economic and Technological Cooperation*, 2003.

to the African market. In a 2007 interview, Paul Kagame²⁹ said that there was no problem with cheap goods if Africa cannot produce them and they are required. As a result, he affirmed that it would be preferable to push Africa to produce her own goods rather than prevent the entry of Chinese goods³⁰. Moreover, China grants a duty-free right of entry for hundreds of African goods. In May 2007, because of the rise in the volume of imports and exports, the privately-owned Rwandan cargo airline Silverback announced a project to increase the number of international routes it flies, such as the Kigali-Shanghai route³¹.

4.3 Cooperation

The main sectors of cooperation between China and Rwanda are agriculture, engineering works, medicine, and tourism. Agriculture is the major occupation in Rwanda: 90% of the Rwandan working population is employed in this sector³², although it accounts for only 39.4% of GDP³³. Because it is one of the most important economic areas, the Government of Rwanda has tried to push donors to contribute towards its modernization and development. In a 2001 interview³⁴, on the occasion of his first trip to China as Rwanda's president, Kagame stressed Chinese support for Rwandan agriculture, for example for rice plantations and irrigation schemes, but he also underlined on the same occasion how much help this sector needed in order to be truly productive and the importance of China for realizing «agricultural modernization and developing good agriculture».

Another cooperation project between the two countries relates to bamboo. In 2006, a feasibility study on bamboo resources in Rwanda was commenced³⁵. The Chinese International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR)³⁶ sponsors

29 "Kagame speaks on flood of Chinese goods" in *Rwanda News Agency*, Kigali, 14 May 2007.

30 *Ibidem*.

31 Majyambere, G. "Silverback Open New Routes" in *The New Times*, 21 May 2007.

32 Including animal production, fishing and similar activities; WTO "Trade Policy Review Rwanda. Report by the Government" World Trade Organization – Trade Policy Review Body WT/TPR/G/129, 31 August 2004, p. 6.

33 CIA – *The World Factbook*. Rwanda Update 10 May 2007.

34 "Rwanda, China to Further Promote Cooperation: Rwandan President" in *People's Daily*, Beijing, 7 November 2001.

35 Minagri, "Chinese firm undertakes Rwanda bamboo study. The Chinese International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR), will next month begin working on a feasibility study on bamboo resources in Rwanda" Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources – Government of the Republic of Rwanda 2006.

36 The International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) is an intergovernmental

the project, which is entitled the Production to Consumption Study (PCS), in partnership with the Rwanda Private Sector Federation (RPSF). Its goal is to encourage bamboo and rattan plantations, and to develop a business in harmony with Rwandan rural life and the environment. The next step for the project will be to supply technical support to RPSF members who wish to participate in production and trade.

China has always been active in technologies and infrastructure development, and this area has seen a very rapid increase in the last few years. Rwanda is attempting to develop its ITC sector as much as possible, so that it becomes the “African Bangalore”. Cooperation in this field strengthened in 2006, when Chinese and Rwandan officials met almost every month. In August, the Fifth Session of the Joint Economic, Technical and Trade Cooperation Committee between the Governments of China and Rwanda was held in Kigali, and the strategy for future bilateral cooperation was outlined³⁷. In October, members of the Shenzhen Chamber of International Investment and Finance (SZAEFI) visited Rwanda and signed a memorandum of understanding with officials of the RIEPA (the Rwanda Investment and Export Promotion Agency) to support cooperation in «trade, investment and information technologies»³⁸, with a particular focus on communications. Following this memorandum, a number of projects have been set up and agreements signed, such as a contract regarding the mobile phone company China Links, which has decided to create an assembly plant in Rwanda: this represents a significant chance for the Rwandan economy, providing employment opportunities and perhaps the opportunity to lower mobile phone prices³⁹.

In November 2006, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation was held in Beijing. Some weeks after the Forum, China and Rwanda signed an agreement on a number of areas of action, including infrastructure, education, and culture, since when quite a few arrangements have been signed. At the beginning of 2007, the Rwandan company Terracom Communications signed an agreement with Huawei

international organization founded in 1997. Its headquarters are in Beijing, China, and it is open to all States under the UN system. At September 2006, 34 countries had acceded to its Agreement, including Rwanda.

37 The Economic and Commercial Counsellor’s Office of the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Republic of Rwanda “Sino-Rwandese Economic Cooperation Committee Meeting in Kigali”, 5 September 2006.

38 “Chinese investment and trade partnership with Rwanda is gaining momentum” in *The American Chronicle*, Beverly Hills, 9 October 2006.

39 *Ibidem*.

Technologies Company Ltd. to enlarge its communications network⁴⁰. In addition, the Rwanda MTN transmission project to construct a metropolitan network in Kigali and the country's backbone network has been won by China's ZTE. This project is intended to link "Rwanda's capital with the Ugandan border, where it will interface with the Uganda MTN network to provide an international fibre optic gateway"⁴¹.

Infrastructure development is a very significant area of cooperation, and it includes mainly road-building and construction. Some of the main projects are the construction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs office building in Kigali, financed by the Chinese Government, the enlargement of the Presidential Residence, and the creation of the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre road⁴². To confirm the Chinese concern for infrastructure development, in May 2007 President Kagame and President Hu Jintao signed a five-document agreement by which China promised to build two rural primary schools⁴³. According to the same agreement, China will provide Rwanda with anti-malaria medicine.

The 2007 agreement is just one of a series in the health sector, the first having been signed more than 20 years ago. In February 2003, China and Rwanda reached a deal⁴⁴ to send medical workers to Africa, as they also did in 2006. These agreements usually establish the details of how many doctors and medical staff are to be sent to the partner country, and for how long and where. For instance, the 2006 agreement established that China would send eight medical practitioners for voluntary employment for one year in the Kibungo hospital, which was built thanks to Chinese aid, and to build «a number of demonstration centres for the prevention and treatment of malaria in Africa»⁴⁵. Beijing has also proposed continuation of medical cooperation,

40 "Rwanda's Terracom signs US\$1 million deal with China's Huawei" in *East African Business Week*, 6 February 2007.

41 China Tech News "ZTE Gets MTN Backbone Network Job" in *Internet Society of China*, April 2007.

42 The Economic and Commercial Counsellor's Office of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Rwanda "China and Rwanda: 35 Years of Economic Cooperation", 3 November 2006.

43 This agreement also provided for cancellation of a part of Rwandan foreign debt, but the amount of the cancellation was not revealed. The promise looks more like a political move than a real intention to cancel Rwanda's debts; "China promises more aid", cit.

44 The Department of African Affairs – Chinese Foreign Ministry "China and Rwanda – Other exchanges", 2003.

45 GLCSS "Rwanda/China agreement signed", Great Lakes Centre for Strategic Studies 24 November 2006.

and has granted US\$250.000 for the supply of anti-malaria medicine and medical instruments⁴⁶.

Compared with their past relationship, tourism represents a less common field of cooperation, but the Approved Tourist Destination Status (ADS) granted by China to Rwanda is further evidence of their deepening ties, and reflects Rwandan regional and economic ambitions. The ADS is a bilateral agreement between the Chinese government and a foreign state by which Chinese tourists are allowed to travel to that destination on holiday. In 2006, China resolved to enlarge the number of African ADS countries⁴⁷. Bearing in mind the profitable relations between China and Rwanda since 1971, as also confirmed by the Chinese President Hu Jintao in November 2006⁴⁸, the Chinese government decided to include Rwanda among the new African ADS countries, thereby offering excellent future prospects for an important Rwandan economic sector⁴⁹.

4.4 2001-2007 Political relations: the One China Policy and Rwanda's regional role

Since 1971, when they established diplomatic ties, China and Rwanda have always enjoyed good relations, even though they were not as close as they are today. From the Rwandan point of view, it is political relations that are probably the most important, because they help the Government with its aim of giving Rwanda a strategic regional role. The mainstay of their friendship is still the One China Principle, which has been confirmed by the Rwanda Government on several occasions. For instance, in 2005, Francois Ngarambe declared that Rwandans «hope the Chinese people will soon complete their long-cherished wish to realize

46 The Economic and Commercial Counsellor's Office of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Rwanda, cit.

47 In January 2006, China's African Policy, Part IV-2, stated that: «China will implement the program of Chinese citizens' group tours to some African nations and grant more African countries, as they wish and as far as feasible, Approved Destination Status for out-bound Chinese tourist groups. China welcomes citizens from African nations for a tour of the country»; Ministry of Foreign Affairs – People's Republic of China. *China's African Policy*.

48 "China Grants Rwanda Tourism Destination Status" in *Xinhua News Agency* (Beijing), 3 November 2006.

49 Since 2006, China has granted Approved Destination Status to 26 African countries; "26 African Nations Approved as Tourist Destinations" in *China Internet Information Center*, Beijing, 9 November 2006.

national reunification»⁵⁰, thus denying Taiwan’s right to self-determination⁵¹. Rwanda has never contested this policy and, what is more, it reinforced its loyalty to this policy in May 2007⁵².

One of Rwanda’s goals is to become a regional power, taking advantage of its strategic geographical position. Given this ambition, Rwandan policy towards China seems to be aimed at gaining power in the Great Lakes Region. In the October 2006 memorandum, the creation of a «Chinese area within Rwanda’s export processing zone, which will serve as a regional distribution and logistics centre for the Great Lakes» is foreseen⁵³. Apart from the logistical aspect, Rwanda could be tactically important due to its membership of significant regional organizations such as the East African Community (EAC)⁵⁴ and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). The Chinese government supports investments in Rwanda⁵⁵ both because it could represent a good business opportunity and to increase the Chinese presence in the East African Market. Rwanda’s government is providing great support for investments in the country. The Kigali Free Trade Zone (KFTZ) is one of the projects planned to develop trade and investment. The Rwanda Investment and Export Promotion Agency (RIEPA) defines the Kigali FTZ as «a core pillar to position Rwanda as a trade and redistribution hub of goods and services within the Great Lakes Region»⁵⁶. What is more, it states that two of the KFTZ objectives are: «to promote strong physical and economic linkage with the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya; [and] to attract new firms and new types of businesses and industries to the region and specifically to Rwanda»⁵⁷. The definition and objectives of the KFTZ demonstrate

50 “China hails Rwanda’s adherence of one-China policy” in *Xinhua News Agency*, Beijing, 18 May 2005.

51 In 2006, China toughened its policy towards Taiwan. Part III of China’s African Policy of January 2006, states that: “The One China Principle is the political foundation for the establishment and development of China’s relations with African countries and regional organizations. The Chinese Government appreciates the fact that the overwhelming majority of African countries abide by the One China Principle, refuse to have official relations and contacts with Taiwan and support China’s great cause of reunification. China stands ready to establish and develop state-to-state relations with countries that have not yet established diplomatic ties with China on the basis of the One China Principle”. Ministry of Foreign Affairs – People’s Republic of China *China’s African Policy*.

52 “President Returns, Good Sentiments Stay in China” in *The New Times*, Kigali, 22 May 2007.

53 “Chinese investment and trade partnership with Rwanda is gaining momentum”, cit.

54 Rwanda and Burundi achieved EAC’s membership in November 2006.

55 “China promises more aid”, cit.

56 Rwanda Investment and Export Promotion Agency (RIEPA) “The Kigali Free Zone – Vision”.

57 Rwanda Investment and Export Promotion Agency (RIEPA) “The Kigali Free Zone – Objectives”.

Rwanda's regional ambitions and its strategic importance for Chinese ambitions in East Africa.

4.5 Support for stability and international affairs

Apart from economic cooperation, Rwanda and China seem to be willing to strengthen their political relations to support each other's international position through a series of official visits. In October 2001, the Rwandan Foreign Minister went to China to celebrate the 30th anniversary of diplomatic ties, and the Chinese Ambassador Shen Jiangkuan recalled a fruitful cooperation in «trade, economy, technology and science, culture and education» between the two countries and expressed «satisfaction in particular with the two countries' cooperation in international affairs»⁵⁸. Then in November, Paul Kagame visited China to start a new season of closer relations. In 2002, Chinese delegations paid visits to Rwanda in February and September, and so on. These regular visits became much more frequent between 2006 and 2007.

In March 2006, the Chinese and Rwandan Defence Ministers held talks on military cooperation, in particular personnel training⁵⁹. In June, a Rwandan delegation went to China to celebrate the 35th anniversary of diplomatic ties⁶⁰. During the reception ceremony, Chinese representatives urged for «more parliamentary cooperation between the NPC and the Rwandan Parliament, urging the two sides to strengthen legislative supervision, carry out close cooperation in international parliamentary organizations and promote mutual understandings and trust»⁶¹. In August 2006, Wu Guanzheng, an official of the Communist Party of China (CPC), went to Rwanda with his staff to support relations with the RPF. The CPC wishes to strengthen ties with the RPF to «share mutual experiences in party management and governance, and increase friendship and deepen cooperation, in an attempt to jointly push forward the comprehensive development of bilateral relations»⁶². RPF official Francois Ngarambe, on the other hand, placed the accent

58 "China, Rwanda Celebrate 30th Anniversary of Diplomatic Ties" in *People's Daily*, Beijing, 31 October 2001.

59 "Chinese, Rwandan Defense Ministers Hold Talks" in *Xinhua News Agency*, Beijing, 29 March 2006.

60 "China, Rwanda hold reception on 35th anniversary of diplomatic ties" in *Xinhua News Agency*, Beijing, 5 June 2006.

61 "China supports Rwanda to strive for national reconciliation, stability: top legislator" in *Xinhua News Agency*, Beijing, 6 June 2006.

62 "China's CPC to promote ties with Rwanda's ruling party: Chinese official" in *Xinhua News Agency*, Beijing, 30 August 2006.

on appreciation for economic cooperation and development, adding that Rwanda and China «have common views on many important international issues and are willing to make joint efforts to establish a fair and rational international new order»⁶³. On this occasion, they again stressed the various aspects of their relations. Rwanda tends to emphasize the economic element, while China underlines the socio-political characteristics of their collaboration. Inter-party cooperation was confirmed in 2008, when the RPF received a Frw 60 million donation of office and electronic equipment from the CPC.

Political relations give the impression of being of the greatest significance after economic cooperation. China and Rwanda seem to be working for the creation of new alliances, such as at the UN. Rwanda is a very small country with no large natural resources, compared with other African States, but its geographic location and diplomatic position attract foreign attention, and can be a useful card to play. In fact, it has borders with the Democratic Republic of Congo and its riches. Rwanda also has strong relations with other regional leaders⁶⁴, and is very much involved in Congolese political life. Moreover, Rwanda's EAC membership could have great appeal for China. The EAC, with a combined population of 120 million and a GDP of \$41 billion, has the potential to be a very attractive market. China's growing concern for political cooperation may be a consequence of its need to defend and strengthen its economic interests in Africa, which is seen as a possible beneficiary of a permanent seat at the UN Security Council. Chinese decisions at the UN, particularly on human rights issues, such as its veto to prevent sanctions against Sudan for the Darfur crisis, are sometimes criticised by other members. For this reason, its strategic alliances with African states would seem to imply that China is also trying to reinforce its status in the UN, and not only to exploit their resources.

One specific issue in international affairs is the fight against terrorism. In November 2001, two months after the terrorist attack of September 11, the Rwandan president visited China to promote cooperation. In an interview with the Chinese news agency Xinhua, he declared that «the world needs to be united in dealing with terrorism, and whether in Africa, America, Europe or China, terrorism must be dealt with seriously. In Rwanda, we have been victims of a different type of terrorism in the form of genocide. In three months during 1994,

63 *Ibidem*.

64 Relations with neighbouring Uganda are very strong, although sometimes they turn into conflict or simply disagreements because of convergent interests.

over 1 million of our people died as a result of this form of terrorism»⁶⁵. When Kagame defined genocide as a form of terrorism, he compared and combined two very different notions of international law, probably to “ride the wave” of the anti-terrorism campaign, to aim a wink at the USA, and to give new legitimacy to the RPF government, which is seen by many opponents as illegal.

China – Rwanda visits reached a climax in May 2007, when the Rwandan President went on his first State Visit to China. On this occasion, Chinese officials once again laid emphasis on parliamentary cooperation to «share experience in building a democratic and legal system as well as improving state governance»⁶⁶. Kagame announced that he was pleased about Chinese social and economic growth, and Mr Wu replied that not only development but also stability is very important for long-term development. On the same occasion, the two Presidents discussed regional problems such as peace in Sudan⁶⁷. The Rwandan President also underlined the importance of Rwandan foreign investments⁶⁸, rather than just trade. He restated his position at the meeting of the African Development Bank in Shanghai on 16 May.

At the same time as Kagame’s State Visit, a Chinese military delegation led by Lt. Gen. Chang Wanquan visited Rwanda for a «mission aimed at identifying key areas in which China would assist Rwanda within their military partnership»⁶⁹. The aim of the mission was to help Rwanda modernize its army. As a consequence, China decided to offer Frw 350m⁷⁰ to the Rwanda Defence Forces (RDF) «for procurement of military equipment» to increase the proficiency of its soldiers and the abilities of its training centres. Military cooperation between China and Rwanda began several years ago, in particular in the area of personnel training. These days, 30 RDF soldiers attend military courses in China, especially higher-level courses at the National Defence University in Beijing⁷¹.

65 “Rwanda, China to Further Promote Cooperation: Rwandan President” in *People’s Daily*, Beijing, 7 November 2001.

66 Interview with the Chinese Mr Wu Bangguo, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPC); “China to cancel Rwanda debt” in *Rwanda News Agency*, Kigali, 16 May 2007.

67 “President Returns, Good Sentiments Stay in China”, cit.

68 “Le président rwandais achève sa visite en Chine” in *Xinhua News Agency*, Beijing, 18 May 2007.

69 “Chinese Army Donates Frw350 Million” in *The New Times*, Kigali, 22 May 2007.

70 US\$600.000 at the exchange rate of 560 francs per dollar; *CIA – The World Factbook*.

71 Usually, Rwandan soldiers attend courses in “the use of heavy and powerful guns (artillery) and command” but also “physical tactics training and engineers”; “Chinese Army Donates Frw350 Million”, cit.

4.6 Cultural and social relations: support for education

Many agreements between China and Rwanda contain provisions that are not strictly related to economics or politics. They deal with social and cultural development as a basis for economic development. Usually they concern sport, student exchange programmes, and the construction of schools. The so-called «human resources development» relates to the financing of Rwandans to stay in China for training or specialization in specific areas, in particular in economics and development⁷². According to World Bank data, we see that between 1984 and 2002, the number of Rwandan students hosted in China was almost unchanged:⁷³ in 1984-85, there were 25 Rwandan government-sponsored students in China, and there were the same number in 1999-00. In 2000-01 the number was 32 and in 2001-02, it was 35. There was an increase between 1984 and 2002 as a result of bilateral agreements between Rwanda and China. Rwanda pays for their flights, and the host country pays the student's fees and provides him or her with a small grant, to which Rwanda adds another amount⁷⁴. In 2006, these agreements were supplemented with new ones, which expanded the scholarship programmes. The two countries decided that the number of Rwandan students in China could increase by 20, to reach 57⁷⁵.

During Kagame's visit to China in 2007, he discussed «social development projects», and also promised new schools for Rwanda in the agreements⁷⁶. That same year, in March, the Rector of the Kigali Institute of Education (KIE)⁷⁷, Emmanuel Mudidi, signed an agreement with the Chinese Ambassador to Rwanda, Oi Deen, for the teaching of Mandarin in Rwanda and the creation of a Confucius Institute.

72 The Economic and Commercial Counsellor's Office of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Rwanda, cit.

73 World Bank, *Rwanda. Education in Rwanda. Rebalancing Resources to Accelerate Post-Conflict Development and Poverty Reduction*, in World Bank Human Development Department (AFTH3) – Africa Region, Report No. 26038-RW, 3 June 2003, p. 131.

74 The World Bank Report shows how much Rwandan government spent in 2002 for each student in China: US\$ 1,800 grant for one year (Undergraduate, Master's and PhD students) and US\$ 2,238 for air tickets (US\$ 1,156 outbound and US\$ 1,082 inbound), for a total of US\$ 4,038 for each student, a very small amount compared with the US\$ 30,000 for each student in Europe; Annual academic fees were paid by China; *ivi*, p. 189.

75 Other 26 government officials and 8 technical staff are to be added to the 57 students who will receive education and training in China; Munyeshyaka, F. «China Pledges Support to Rwanda» in *Great Lakes Centre for Strategic Studies*, London 12 September 2006.

76 «President Returns, Good Sentiments Stay in China», cit.

77 The Kigali Institute of Education was created in 1999 for training specialized teachers.

This agreement calls for provision by the KIE of structural facilities, while China provides language tutors and teaching materials, and represents an opportunity for Rwandans to communicate with the Chinese, particularly for business motives. Both Mudidi and Deen talk about the need for Rwanda and China to speak the same language to promote trade and investment⁷⁸.

Other forms of cultural and social cooperation provide for building infrastructures linked with civil society intellectual or educational activities without a direct economic interest, such as the offer made in August 2006 by Wu Guanzheng for the construction of the road to the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre. When he visited the Centre, it was reported that he thought it was «thought-provoking, but that the access road was not in good condition», so Mr Wu proposed a Chinese grant to rebuild it⁷⁹. Other projects are the building of a new stadium to replace the Amahoro National Stadium, which was also built by the Chinese⁸⁰, and a railway line in Rwanda financed by China, for the line between Isaka – Kigali – Bujumbura⁸¹.

5. Conclusions

China's relations with Rwanda, and with Africa in general, causes concern in the West because it seems to create a threat for other powers, such as the USA or Europe. It is often accused of neo-colonialism or discrimination against Africa because it acts with a view to its own interests, like any other State. The Chinese President firmly rejected these accusations, pointing out that when the Chinese first arrived in Africa 600 years ago, they brought the Continent «a message of peace and goodwill – not swords, guns, plunder and slavery»⁸².

Allegations that China is acting like a neo-colonial power and wishes to exploit African resources are increasing, but paradoxically, African politicians defend China's position and its relations with the “Asian giant”, as Kagame did in

78 Mr Deen said: «Since I came to this country last year, unspecified numbers of businessmen have been coming to us and have expressed need to study the Chinese language so as to be able to do business in China», he said. “China is a big country with 5,000 years of civilization; therefore, to learn Chinese is not only about learning a language but about understanding more about the country's rich history»; “KIE to teach Chinese soon” in *The New Times*, Kigali, 29 March 2007.

79 The Economic and Commercial Counsellor's Office of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Rwanda, cit.

80 Munyeshyaka, F. *op. cit.*

81 “China to fund railway study” in *The New Times*, Kigali, 30 August 2006.

82 “China promises more aid”, cit.

May 2007, analysing China's presence in Africa in a historical and international perspective, and talking about the United States' policies in Iraq and colonialism. He considered criticisms to be hypocritical, because Europe and America have had strong relations with Africa since the 1800s, and defined the relationship between China and Rwanda as one «with both sides benefiting». The Chinese role in helping Rwanda develop its infrastructures, telecommunications, and agriculture is still well thought-of by Rwandans, also taking into account the fact that China is a huge market for Rwandan products and Chinese tourism and investments could be very important for its economy, although it is crucial for civil society to play an active role, and to attempt to find out about China and the opportunities alliances with it can offer, in order to avoid the risk of a new colonialism or unconditional support for non-democratic governments. In line with accusations from some observers who seek to link China-Rwanda ties with their actions and interests in Darfur, the implication that their actions in Sudan may be influenced by their common interests, in contrast with the official humanitarian mission, is even more powerful. Kagame obviously rejects this analysis, simply saying that Darfur's problem is so large that China and Rwanda can not manage it alone⁸³.

83 "Kagame Defends China" in *The New Times*, Kigali, 26 May 2007.

Djibouti: between aid, foreign military assistance, and prospects of development

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Introduction

Tekeste Negash is widely acknowledged as an outstanding historian of the Horn of Africa, who contributed much to the renewal of the literature especially regarding Italian colonialism. Acute observer of the long-term asymmetries determined by the European expansion overseas, asymmetries imposed by the Western values, technologies, and power that are still influencing the everyday political and socio-economic landscapes of Sub-Saharan Africa, he has also criticized developmental theories, relief comprised¹. It is well known that in the last two decades aid has been “embedded” within the dynamics of African conflicts to an unprecedented extent, often detrimental to development. What can be achieved via aid – sustainable development, democratization – is still open to debate: Thad Dunning’s empirical evidence underscores the importance of geopolitical context in conditioning the causal impact of development assistance, and highlights a small positive effect of foreign aid², while a recent quantitative analysis measured the degree in the vulnerability of extraversion portfolio of African countries, assessing the correspondence with their situation of external dependency³. Djibouti is an interesting case because it encompasses all the relevant issues that Sub-Saharan African countries in war-torn environments like the Horn of Africa are facing to escape poverty and build more equitable socio-political conditions.

1 Tekeste Negash “In and out of colonialism, The fall of development aid and the marginalization of Africa” in *Africana*, vol. 14, 2008, pp. 89-104.

2 Dunning, T. “Conditioning the effects of Aid: Cold War Politics, Donor Credibility and democracy in Africa” in *International Organization*, vol. 58, 2004, pp. 409-423.

3 Peiffer, C.; Englebert, P. “Extraversion, vulnerability to donors, and political liberalization in Africa” in *African Affairs*, vol. 111, n. 444, 2012, pp. 355-378.

A cursory examination of country indicators⁴ reveals that the economy's growth improved over the last ten years but its inequitable distribution excludes the most vulnerable, that is to say, the vast majority of the 800.000 inhabitants. International cooperation plays a vital role in providing access to basic services in Djibouti that still sees some of the highest levels of food insecurity and poverty of the planet.

1. The elusive development

More than other African countries, Djibouti stands for the paucity of reliable data⁵, that inhibits the scholars ability to assess how far the creation and persistence of inequalities is mutually dependent on the functioning of institutions which, in turn, are so closely interdependent with donors. This is one of the reasons why research lagged behind, forced to rely on inputs about development spending. Being poorly endowed with natural resources, mainly due to the harsh climate, the domestic production of this tiny Horn of Africa's country of 23,000 square kilometers, bordering the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, between Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somaliland, has always been limited – agriculture and manufacture account no more than 6% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – and so the internal market. The tertiary sector contributes to the rest of GDP and includes port-related services, military logistics service and tourism, plus the banking and public administration's services. From the late XIX century the economy of Djibouti pivoted on the harbor activities of the homonymous docking, which conditioned both its development and foreign relations in the regional arena. As the European colonial expansionism deprived Ethiopia of coastal outlets, Addis Ababa rerouted trades and privileged political connections first on the Côte Française des Somalis and then on the Republic of Djibouti, which was place of departure of much of the raw materials and consumer goods imported by Ethiopia⁶. Since the late colonial period, still reminded as a period of prosperity by Djiboutians, France supported the local economy devising a currency – the Djiboutian Franc (DF) – which from 1949 was conceived as an asset for development, being anchored at a fixed exchange rate with the US\$. Despite the already unfavourable trade balance, this measure was due to the geo-strategic location of Djibouti. The Caisse Centrale de

4 See the data released by Djiboutian ministerial sources: <http://www.ministere-finances.dj/Statis/index.HTM>.

5 Jerven, M. "For richer, for poorer: GDP revisions and Africa's statistical tragedy" in *African Affairs*, vol. 112, n. 446, 2013, pp. 138-147.

6 Oberlé, P.; Hugot, P. *Histoire de Djibouti, Des origines à la République*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1985.

Coopération Économique and the Fonds d'Investissement pour le Développement économique et social allocated millions of DF that seldom reached the inhabitants. This inflow of French aid did not cease after the national independence in 1977 – still in the way of “projets fantômes”⁷ – as the former colonial power and the newly independent sovereign State signed seven bilateral agreements which perpetuated the maintenance of French financial, economic and military assistance, later joined by the European framework assistance. The other main bilateral Donors were respectively Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Abu-Dhabi, Oman, Bahrein, while becoming the twenty-second member of the Arab League, Djibouti benefited from petrodollar multilateral cooperation. This reflects the features of the country, a francophone African State of Arab-Muslim culture. Despite the whole amount of assistance from Arab countries never superseded the level of French aid, the Djiboutian population was destitute.

Continuity between empire and development through French patronage gave considerable room of manoeuvre to Hassan Gouled Aptidon who served as president from 1977 until 1999. Clientelism and a plethoric administration made the Djiboutian State – an authoritarian one-party State since 1981 – as the first employer (the national budget multiplied by six in 1992), draining all the bilateral and multilateral aid which amounted to a quarter of the GDP. So, 90% of the revenues were siphoned off by 2% of the State élite in outrageous contrast with the vast majority of the people who lived well below the level of poverty⁸.

The regime built the first modern container terminal in 1985 and envisaged the “containerization” policy to serve as an important transshipment location for goods entering and leaving Africa and the Middle East. Even though Djibouti provided services as both a transit port for the region and an international transshipment and refueling center, the average growth at about 1% of the GDP explained the heavily dependence on foreign aid to compensate for its increasing balance of payments, thus allowing the government to escape any accountability towards the citizenship. Deteriorating the environmental and the domestic conditions, Djibouti suffered political violence. It is well known that the Horn of Africa’s scarce natural resources and pervasiveness of conflicts determined devastating effects on the regional ecology and the socio-economic environment, so that the developmental challenges proved to be more complex than elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa⁹.

7 Houmed, I.I. *Indépendance, démocratisation, enjeux stratégiques à Djibouti*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2002, pp. 39-46.

8 Dubois, C. *Djibouti 1888-1967. Héritage ou frustration?*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1997.

9 Taddia, I. “Il Corno d’Africa tra sviluppo, problemi dello Stato e conflitti” in *Africa*, vol. 54, n. 1, 2004.

Since the beginning of the Cold War, intra and inter-state conflicts have taken on sub-regional dimensions as the Horn's countries became embroiled in supporting various warring parties. The Ogaden war, the Eritrea's independence conflict, and refugees scattering across the Horn were all neighbourhood spillovers which affected Djibouti, that was used as transit country to channel the humanitarian aid towards the war-torn neighbours. President Gouled Aptidon piloted these processes gaining credit as a beacon of stability¹⁰, even after the country fell victim of a civil war.

The main driver of Djiboutian civil war has been ethnic exclusion: the Afar were systematically ousted from power and their areas were neglected due to the scanty budgetary allocations for health and educational policies which deepened horizontal inequalities and grievances. These inequalities were forged during colonial times, when the borders split apart about 2 million Afar people, whose homeland was roughly divided between Ethiopia, the Italian colony of Eritrea and the French Djibouti; anyhow, the porosity of the political borders, due also to lack of official control capabilities, did not impinged the seasonal migration routes of these semi-nomadic pastoralist communities. Problems surfaced as they did not find suitable accommodation within each single national arena, thus exacerbating domestic turmoil and boundary disputes¹¹. In Djibouti, the one-party State was marked by the dominance of the President's Issa ethnic group, of Somali origin, to the detriment of the Afars, and of all non-Somali people; patron-client relationships and practices of exclusion denied citizenship to a large population, thus fuelling poverty and conflict, coupled with the increased demographic pressure and the cycles of drought and famines. As a matter of fact, the available data clearly shows a precipitous economic decline in the GDP; so, the civil conflict affected the trajectory of escaping poverty/development of Djibouti. The predominantly Afar Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD) capitalized on Afar resentment at being excluded from the Issa-dominated one-party rule of President Gouled Aptidon and started an armed rebellion in the northeast of the country in the late 1980s. This low-intensity conflict became a proxy war, fuelled by the grievances of all the excluded from political and social rights¹². The regime

10 Laudouze, A. *Djibouti, nation-carrefour*, Paris, Karthala, 1982, pp. 23-5; Awenego, S. «Migrations du travail et déplacements des réfugiés. Un siècle de politique d'accueil à Djibouti» in Coquery-Vidrovitch, C.; Goerg, O.; Mandé, I. *et al.* (éds) *Être Etranger et migrant en Afrique au XX siècle*, L'Harmattan, Paris, vol. 1, 2003.

11 Yasin, M.Y. "Political history of the Afar in Ethiopia and Eritrea " in *Afrika Spectrum*, vol. 42, n. 1, 2008, pp. 39-65.

12 Bezabeh, S.A. "Citizenship and the logic of sovereignty in Djibouti" in *African Affairs*, vol. 110,

declared the state of emergency and to secure French military support attributed the insurgency to a supposed foreign aggression. Paris mediated and helped the peacekeeping process at a time when the La Baule Franco-African Summit already showed the expectations of democracy promotion among African aid recipients. Under French pressure, a ceasefire was reached in 1992 and the regime allowed a transition to multi-party rule. The civil war de-escalated significantly in 1994 when the government and a faction of the FRUD signed a peace accord which provided for a sort of asymmetrical power-sharing with the FRUD, and the recognition of the FRUD as a political party¹³.

The immediate halt in open hostilities did not achieve a sustainable peace. The extent of reforms was limited by the President's grip of the domestic arena; a splinter faction of the FRUD continued fighting and Djibouti remained heavily militarized with a large portion of its limited resources (about 5% of GDP) devoted to the armed forces¹⁴. During the 1998-2000 Ethiopian-Eritrean war the Djiboutian civil conflict saw an upsurge until the newly elected President Ismail Omar Guelleh – who succeeded to his uncle – reached a peace agreement promising reforms of the political system with a far-reaching decentralization¹⁵, as suggested by the Bretton Woods institutions.

2. The Aid, Development and Democracy nexus

Since the 1990s, democracy became a key development theme in Africa: demanded by the growing pressures of citizens, who expected better democratic rights together with better economic and human rights, good governance turned also to be a conditionality for assistance by the international financial institutions, and later decentralization and local governance were seen as tools for a sustainable

n. 441, 2011, pp. 587-606; Zegeye, A.; Macted, J. "Minorities in the Horn of Africa?" in Toggia, P.; Lauderdale, P.; Abebe Zegeye (eds.) *Crisis and Terror in the Horn of Africa. Autopsy of democracy, human rights and freedom*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2000.

13 Schraeder, P.J. "Origins and Unfolding of the Civil war in Djibouti" in Hussein, M.; Adam, R.; Ford (eds.) *Mending Rips in the Sky. Options for the Somali Communities in the 21st Century*, Lawrenceville, The Red Sea Press, 1997.

14 Kadamy, M. "Djibouti: Between War and Peace" in *Review of African Political Economy*, 70, 1996. On the trend of Djiboutian annual military expenditure see International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2010*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2010.

15 Stoven, B. "Le développement de Djibouti passé par des réformes administrative à l'échelle régionale" in *Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranée*, vol. 26, May 2000, pp. 943-947. On the Ethiopian-Eritrean war and its regional repercussions see: Tekeste Negash; Tronvoll, K. *Brothers at War. Making Sense of the Eritrean-Ethiopian War*, Oxford, James Currey, 2000.

development from the grassroots, with mixed results. Several prominent scholars have drawn attention on neopatrimonialism and on the many ways authoritarian regimes were able to remain in power¹⁶, domesticating the internal and external pressures for democracy and converting their political systems into electoral democracies. While new emergent Donors are offering un-conditional aid, “without string attached”¹⁷, a shift has taken place in aid to low-income countries and the drawbacks on African democracy and good governance promotion were recently acknowledged by the International Organizations¹⁸, calling for new strategies and for more attention Donors should pay on the ways their initiatives affect the political milieu in countries in the midst of State-Building process.

Djibouti may be considered a litmus test for this re-thinking of internal-external relationships and consistent reasoning that pairs Institution-Building’s initiatives for political liberalization and democratic good governance and neo-liberalist economic policies, as the security-stability imperatives prevailed. Troubled by long-term external debt (the State deficit was around 10,1% of the GDP in 1995), vulnerable to drought and famine and plagued by internal turmoil, the Djiboutian regime had to face the post-1989 shift and the demands of donors when France decided to share the burden of assisting the country with the International Monetary Fund. Djibouti did not departed from the paradigm of “transitional country”, expected to abandon authoritarianism conforming to Washington Consensus’ governance prescriptions; however, this “set course” immediately encountered difficulties due to the many anomalies of the State. Almost 70% of government revenue is denominated in foreign currency (import taxes, foreign aid grants and military revenue), while over 50% of the government expenditure is denominated in local currency (wages, salaries, and social transfers) because the economy is based on service activities connected with Djibouti’s strategic location in the Horn of Africa. Even the World Bank (WB), appalled, defined “unique” this fiscal structure¹⁹, while the country heavily relies on imported goods (food, medicines, consumer and capital goods). According to the Bretton Woods

16 Bach, D.; Mamodou Gazibo (eds.) *Neopatrimonialism in Africa and beyond*, New York, Routledge, 2012.

17 Naim, M. “Rogue Aid” in *Foreign Policy*, vol. 159, 2007, pp. 95-96.

18 World Bank *Silent and Lethal: How Quiet Corruption Undermines Africa’s Development Efforts*, Washington DC, World Bank, 2010; Putzel, J. *Do No Harm: International Support for Statebuilding*, Paris, OECD, 2010; Unsworth, S. *The State’s Legitimacy in Fragile Situations: Unpacking Complexity*, Paris, OECD, 2010.

19 Anós Casero, P.; Seshan, G. *Fiscal and Social Impact of a Nominal Exchange Rate Devaluation in Djibouti*, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 4028, October 2006.

paradigm, poverty was the outcome of temporary market dysfunction, so it had to be tackled at a domestic level. The government of Djibouti committed to implement structural reforms, especially concerning public finance, including: revising the investment, labor and commerce codes and privatizing management of publicly-owned utilities (electricity, water and telecommunications). The first International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) dates back to 1996 and the WB intervened supporting the SAP and with a number of projects related to institutional reforms and liberalization. However, global is the consensus on the abuses and the mechanisms conceived by the Djiboutian regime to escape IMF's ruling and audits²⁰.

At the macro-economic level, the State deficit was reduced but the social realm was characterized by poverty and a nominal democracy. With the French endorsement, in 1999 President Ismail Omar Guelleh promised transparency while inheriting the patronage system as well as the usual opaque procedures to avoid compliance with donors' conditionality²¹. Declined the transitional paradigm, mainstream literature focused on the so-called "grey zone countries" that did not suit the theorized democratization steps²², just like Djibouti, whereas the Donors were struggling with pauperism. In 2000 the regime designed its own Document Stratégique pour la Réduction de la Pauvreté (DSRP) aimed at supporting growth, developing human resources, strengthening social security, modernizing the State and favoring good governance. The DSRP was adopted during a national forum in July 2003 and then passed on the WB; the latter launched its first *Country Assistance Strategy* (CAS) for Djibouti, aimed at fostering growth and employment, promoting reforms to increase the harbor facilities, the regional transit trade, and to attract private investments. This CAS envisaged Poverty Reduction strategies focused on health and education sectors. The regime is suspected to have inflated official data in order to attract more aid, and in 2004 the IMF and the government of Djibouti arranged a revised Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)²³. Since September 2002 the initiatives within the European Union cooperation framework

20 Houmed *op. cit.*, pp. 91, 93-106.

21 Lewis, I.M. *A modern history of Somalia*, Oxford, Currey, 2002, p. 290.

22 Sørensen, G. *Democracy and Democratisation: Processed and Prospects in a Changing World*, Westview Press, Boulder, 2008, p. 65; Van De Walle, N.; Ball, N.; Ramachandran, V. (eds.) *Beyond Structural Adjustment. The Institutional Context of African Development*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

23 The DSRP's text is available at <http://www.ministre-finance.dj/DSRP/ElaboDSRPRPFinal>. See also World Bank, *Djibouti. Note de présentation*, 2004, at: <http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/mna/mena.nsf/0/AAC2C402F013040A85256DA90068FBEB?OpenDocument>

came into force for the five-year period 2002-2007; aid allocation is not only based on an assessment of needs, but also on performance (such as implementation of measures towards poverty eradication and sustainable development) and Djibouti had to comply²⁴. Efforts were further increased by the 2005 approval of 153 million US\$ of 18 International Development Association (IDA) projects (Djibouti has not been eligible for the Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative, as 66% of this debt is kept by multilateral creditors) that revolved around social protection measures to the benefit of the poor²⁵ and was laid down following the peace settlement, endorsed by the official donor community that identified conflict as the main hindrance to development.

Notwithstanding all this aid inflows, poverty escalated in Djibouti because of mass unemployment and budget imbalance that refrained the State capacity to provide social services and honor its obligations; public employees expected to get their salaries with up to 5 months of arrear²⁶. The standstill determined social unrest. The government rides roughshod the still in force 1901 code that allows the formation of trade unions and the labourers' rights. During labor unrest in 1995, a large number of unionized workers had already been fired, and their grievances were only addressed in the 2001 peace agreement, which contained provisions for these fired union members to return to their original position. However, the government continued to mistreat labor unions and their members, repressing strikes forcefully in 2005-2006. In 2006, the government embarked on a wave of arrests of union leaders and expelled International Labor Office (ILO) representatives. Only under IMF pressure, a new labor code was approved²⁷, but the trade unions' situation did not improve, being now subject to harsher bureaucratic procedures²⁸.

To face the situation, the Bretton Woods institutions bound the government of Djibouti to modernize the fiscal administration and to facilitate internal and external investments, and launched a privatization process for a number of public

24 Dimier, V. "Constructing Conditionality: The Bureaucratization of EC Development Aid" in *European Foreign Affairs Review*, vol. 2, 2006, pp. 263-280.

25 "Une économie de services" in *Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranée*, 26 May 2000, pp. 920-935.

26 Direction des Statistiques des Etudes démographiques *Enquête Djiboutienne auprès des ménages. Indicateurs sociaux*, Djibouti, 2002.

27 Observatory on Protection of Human Rights Defenders, *Rapport: Mission internationale d'enquête - Djibouti: Les défenseurs des droits économiques et sociaux paient le prix fort*, August 2006, p. 19.

28 Freedom House *Freedom in the World: Djibouti*, at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6951>.

institutions²⁹. A whirl of rhetoric permeated the Djibouti's Document de Stratégie Pays (DSP 2007-2010), framed around two pillars: promoting local integrated development and capacity-building for good governance, helping the country to achieve any kind of grants within the regional multilateral bank, the African Development Bank (AfDB). Among credit facilities, it has to be mentioned the three-year 20 million US\$ grant provided by IMF in 2008 to Djibouti. The 2008-2012 economic program Extended Credit Facility (ECF) was then arranged to provide a higher level of access to financing (at zero interest rate) and more focused streamlined conditionality. This ECF replaced the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF), bringing to Djibouti a total disbursement of US\$ 33.9 million which contributed to macroeconomic stability, despite a mixed implementation record³⁰. The upsurge in military expenditure due to the boundary clash with Eritrea³¹ and the social public expense to tackle food security determined a deficit of 4.6% of the GDP in 2009, promptly depressed by government measures. Inflation rose because of the high prices of commodities, even if public subsidies are helping the worst-off.

In line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and complying with the European Development Fund that budgets 64 million euro (2000-2013), poverty, health, education, and women empowerment were identified as national priorities. The government supported a vast social survey to overcome the deficiency of data and statistics and launched an Initiative Nationale de Développement Social (INDS) in 2007 for greater equity in access to basic social services and for redistributing the national growth. INDS, which is the PRSP of second generation, is based on four strategies: a) growth and employment; b) basic social services; c) poverty reduction; d) good governance. The poverty reduction strategies proved to be the most disappointing, due to a lack in the screening of the identified priority actions (454!), the inadequate monitoring system, and none coordination among the deputed ministries. Only 20% were achieved and the financial resources mobilized cover only 54% of the total needs (estimated at 1.6 billion US \$).

The INDS revised for the period 2011-2015 reduced to 100 the priority actions, according to their feasibility and the relative impact on the development indicators, while the AfDB follows an holistic approach to Djiboutian problems. The second

29 UNIDO *Formulation d'une stratégie de développement industriel et du secteur privé Djiboutien*, Rapport final, Etabli pour le Ministère de l'Industrie de Djibouti, Février 2008.

30 <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/ecf.htm>

31 Mesfin, B. *The Eritrea-Djibouti border dispute*, ISS Situation Report, 2008.

AfDB's DSP 2011-2015, aligned on the revised INDS, focus on the reinforcement of socio-economic structures and stakes on the energy sector, conceived as a tool for national development as well as for regional integration. The AfDB argues that INDS is disconnected from the budget funds' and the public expenditure; this institutional weakness and the relative accountability is identified as the main reason for the failure of poverty reduction strategies in spite of the substantial amount of aid and national resources within a trend of fast economic growth. So, the AfDB scaled up earlier interventions with a four year 2.7 million US \$ grant focus on leadership capacity and accountable governance, to provide reliable and transparent services responsive to the need of the Djiboutians³².

Despite the cut in bilateral aid flows determined by the recent international recession, much of the aid still comes from Western countries. Analyzing the Net Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Djibouti, France classified first, followed by Japan, and the Arab Countries. The trend of the total amount of US\$ is steadily rising: 112 (2007), 121 (2008) and 162 (2009)³³. However, evidence shows that all this aid inflows did not open the political space, nor produced development. Is it because Donor activities are still uncoordinated? What are the principal sources of leverage that Donors possess over the Djibouti's regime (and vice versa)?

3. Basic needs denied

Having assessed how external development aid is a significant source of resources for Djibouti's balance of payments and to finance its development projects, one may question the effect of aid on social policies, namely the recipient government expenditures on health, education, housing. At a glance, the picture is gloomy: the 2011 Human Development Index ranked Djibouti 147th out of 169 States. The UN, under the framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), still considers development aid as the most suitable tools for promoting inequalities reduction policies³⁴. Committed to meet the MDGs, Djibouti has nevertheless limited fiscal space for social spending and, by now, has been unable to improve the living conditions of its citizens. According to Daniela Kirkby, analyst in

32 République de Djibouti *Initiative Nationale de Développement Social: 2011-2015, Version Préliminaire* 27 Février 2011 Banque Africaine de Développement, OECD, PNUD, *Perspectives Economiques en Afrique, Note pays Djibouti*, 2011.

33 Source: <http://www.oecd.org/dac>.

34 Thiele, R. *et al.* "Do Donors Target Aid in Line with the Millennium Development Goals? A Sector Perspective of Aid Allocation" in *Review of World Economics*, vol. 143-4, 2007.

Consultancy Africa Intelligence's Africa Watch Unit: «As blatant looting of state resources by corrupt officials continue without consequence, poverty has become a realistic feature in Djibouti»³⁵.

The majority of the Djiboutians still live in poverty, concentrated in the capital city, over 42% live below US\$2 a day and about 10% live in absolute poverty; 86% of the population is concentrated in urban areas, mainly in the capital city, the remainder being mostly nomadic herders. Lacking national formal safety nets to protect the poor, the worst-off manage informally by remittances from abroad or from better-off relatives living in Djibouti. About 60% of the households lack access to electricity and drinkable water, and have to pay twice as much for water carried by truck wagons³⁶. One-third of the Djiboutians is under-nourished. To make the situation worse, the non-stop stream of refugees (Somalis, Eritreans and Ethiopians), together with migrants, put pressure on already distressed social services.

In the last decade, the Horn of Africa experienced a severe food security emergency, with more than seven million people in need for humanitarian assistance due to persistent drought. Scanty rainfall and inadequate supplies of potable water further complicated the situation. Food security is a problem for Djibouti too: limited is the arable land, under the constant threat of desertification, so that crop production is restricted to fruits and vegetables and the rest of food has to be imported. Natural resource constraints coupled with rapid population growth and poor public infrastructure. The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) supports humanitarian projects in Djibouti since 2010. ECHO's approach in Djibouti is to save lives through supporting nutrition programs and providing food assistance³⁷. Besides addressing this state of emergency, development policies lag behind.

Despite limited improvements in the 1990s, poverty-alleviation policies seemed non-effective and empirical evidence confirms the structural feature of poverty. The official unemployment rate is high (about 54% according the 2010 survey), and less than 40% of the people are employed in the formal sector. Youth unemployment is impressive, almost 70% of those aged between 15 and 20 years old are idle.

35 Kirby, D. *Djibouti President Guelleh's Third Term: Another End to Democracy in Africa?*, 30/4/2010 in: www.consultancyafrica.com.

36 Soultan, I.A.; Tolno, F.D. «*Qualité et confort de logements dans la ville de Djibouti*» in AA.VV. *La population de Djibouti. Recherches socio-démographiques*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2008, pp. 248-266.

37 Between 2011 and 2012, the Commission allocated to Djibouti €5.9 million, including €2.6 million for drought response and €0.8 million for Disaster Risk Reduction projects. http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/djibouti_en.pdf.

Considering the average annual population growth rate of 2.5%, these figures roughly explain why Djibouti has some of the highest rates of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa: the real income per capita is relatively high if compared with the average of Sub-Saharan Africa but declined (780 US\$ in 2005, in 2010 it was about \$1,410.52) of about a quarter if compared to 1984 figures. Per capita consumption dropped an estimated 35% between 1999 and 2006 because of recession, civil war, and a high population growth rate (including immigrants and refugees)³⁸.

The health care services and the education system are unable to meet the needs of the citizenship, and their rates are even below the average of Sub-Saharan African nations³⁹. A downward trend in public investment in the last decade in the health system explains the dramatic infant and maternal mortality, and poor sanitary conditions add to the risk of epidemics. The government of Djibouti is supported by World Health Organization (WHO) and funded by a pool of donors led by the WB in a vast program to improve the health care delivery system, train personnel and provide equipment⁴⁰. Besides the Financial Institutions (Islamic Development Bank comprised) and Global Fund, bilateral donors include France, Egypt, China, and Japan contribute much. But still the government is reported to under-develop the minorities and divert food aid. Since 2001 schooling is free and compulsory up to the age of sixteen in Djibouti but in spite of the UN agencies technical assistance, education remains restricted to a tiny élite, marked by gender gap, and labourers are imported from abroad⁴¹. This unrighteous situation is even worse reflected in public-private sector wage differentials, and are clear symptoms of bad government hiring practices, part of the general mismanagement is reported in any Donors' audits that shows how about one-third of the funds disbursed is diverted from its original purpose: the basic needs. The only analysis that tried to assess the impact of the Djiboutian/Donors development policies argues that far from having alleviated poverty, these policies have worsen the grievances, attributing to control of state spoils⁴².

38 BfAD *Djibouti. Document de Strategie-Pays, 2011-2015*, 2011. On life conditions of refugees and migrants, see the quoted work of Bezabeh.

39 <http://www.prb.org/pdf08/africadatasheet2008.pdf>. See also Lejeal, F. "L'ajustement était indispensable pour restaurer l'autorité de l'Etat. Mais il frappe de nombreux djiboutiens" in *Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranée*, 26 May 2000, pp. 917-19.

40 WHO *Djibouti* at: <http://www.who.int/countries/dji/en>

41 République de Djibouti *Rapport sur le Développement durable, Adequation, formation et emploi. Une dimension du développement humain*, UNDP, 2007.

42 Brass, J.N. "Djibouti's unusual resource curse" in *Journal of Modern African Affairs*, vol. 46, n. 4, 2008, pp. 523-545.

Epitomized as a Fragile State, Djibouti benefits from the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), that assists the country through the Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization with three interventions related to the management of public finances and accountability of national and local governments. Some authority has been decentralized to district and local administrations, but control is still organized through the ruling party, whose successes in the elections swept away any opposition parties. The Mo Ibrahim Foundation highlighted how over the past five years, Djibouti's overall governance quality deteriorated, and this sounds even more distressing as this Foundation adopted a definition of good governance related to the successful delivery of public good and services that citizens have the right to expect⁴³. Djibouti's governance indicators are dire: a nominal democracy with a distorted electoral system, the oppositions excluded from decision-making, the labor unions and human rights organizations harassed, and the media intimidated, that induced Freedom House to classify the country as "partly free". All the theoretical assumptions on the imperative of good governance in the aid allocation process remain here a dead letter and Donor's incentives (if any) failed to improve democratic governance. Feeble support has been devoted to electoral commissions and voter education programs and bilateral and multilateral donors' missions statements are masterpieces of compliance with the regime⁴⁴.

The government does not adhere to basic democratic principles: Ismail Omar Guelleh managed to amend the Constitution to be re-elected President of the Republic for a third term in April 2011, and the observers wonder skeptical about the effect of aid on democracy in a recipient country like Djibouti. On the whole, the regime may be considered a "hybrid" one, whose leadership follows extraversion policies: instrumentalizing its underdevelopment for foreign aid and relying on its geo-strategic importance⁴⁵. In cold statistics, scholars talk of "development authoritarianism", as the central government keeps a tight grip on the national socio-political and economic landscape. As almost two-thirds of foreign aid is distributed to the general public via the State apparatus, it should be worth questioning on the problem of aid fungibility and of accountability⁴⁶. Instead, Donors devote themselves entirely to technicalities.

43 BfAD *Facilité en faveur des Etats Fragiles (FEF): Directives pour l'administration du programme d'assistance technique et de renforcement des capacités au titre des opérations du pilier III*, Juillet 2010.

44 Guazzini, F. "Gibuti: una democrazia?" in *Afriche e Orientali*, vol. 14, n. 1-2, 2012, pp.18-32.

45 Verjee, A. "A friendly little dictatorship in the Horn of Africa?" in *Foreign Policy*, April 8, 2011.

46 See: Brown, S. "Well, What Can You Expect? Donor Official's Apologetics for Hybrid Regimes in Africa" in *Democratization*, vol. 18, n. 2, 2011; Hagen, R.J. "Buying Influence: Aid Fungibility in a Strategic Perspective" in *Review of Development Economics*, vol. 10, n. 2, 2006, pp. 267-284.

4. Towards the coordination of aid

The “fragmentation” of the aid industry is visible in tiny Djibouti too, that faces the proliferation of actors involved in development assistance, with the relative problems of duplications of aid efforts and inability to gain economies of scale. Up until recently, the Djiboutian authorities lacked any national coordination mechanism regarding aid, and the project-approach prevailed. According to the 2005 Paris Declaration and to the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action, throughout the world Donors are moving towards budget support and the recipient government is expected to gain control over the use of aid resources⁴⁷. So, the government of Djibouti and the stakeholders – civil society groups, multilateral and bilateral donors – embarked on talks to devise a road map for coordinating aid in May 2011. First and foremost, food supply, water and energy are the sectors concerned. The stakeholders agreed to exchange information and harmonize initiatives in order to increase aid efficiency; they expect to strengthen the dialogue on their actions and audit, and act as catalysts for fund raising and co-funding.

In the context of this strategy, the government is committed to adopt measures to reduce the costs of energy, and water supply. Food, housing and water are deemed more important than democracy, and this is the most evident “trade-off” that confirms the findings that donors care less about democracy in hybrid regimes⁴⁸. When Ismail Omar Guelleh is re-elected for the third term in April 2001, the new cabinet is half composed by technocrats, a move that reassured the stakeholders like the AfDB. When the regime expelled a team of electoral observers of Democracy international (USAID’s funded association) and the Human Rights Watch delegation, none of the donors said more than a few words suitable for the occasion. Sounding was the silence when, echoing the mass protests of the so-called Arab Spring, citizens took the street to criticize the regime and the widespread poverty. Donors still attributes to the Djiboutian institutional weakness the failure of poverty reduction strategies⁴⁹ but such is the general mismanagement reported in audits that about one-third of the funds disbursed is not found for its original

47 Knack, S.; Rahman, A. “Donor Fragmentation and Bureaucratic Quality in Aid Recipients” in *Journal of Development Economics*, vol. 83, 2007, pp. 176-197.

48 Brown, S. “Foreign aid and democracy promotion: lessons from Africa” in *The Journal of Development Research*, vol. 17, n. 2, 2005.

49 For instance, regarding the health care system, the country is now a member of the International Health Partnership and related initiatives (IHP+) for a better coordination of aid, but it remains urgent to reform the health financing system. See The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria *Audit of Global Fund Grants to the Republic of Djibouti*, 25 October 2012.

purpose. On the whole, the policies promoted by WB and IMF can be blamed as they were systematically applied pretending to ignore the features of the political and economic structures of Djibouti.

5. Policy Responses to attract private investments

Most literature suggests that a big change will be the move from aid to foreign direct investment from the private sector (*Trade not aid*) in ways that the benefits accrue to the population as a whole. This is expected to be the biggest challenge to Africa's governments, namely how to ensure that their people benefit substantially from these international private sector investments. Djibouti created the Agence nationale pour la promotion des investissements (ANPI) in 2001, albeit it took a decade to issue the relative code. This approach went well with the free market orientation of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), with its emphasis on foreign aid for financing development as unhelpful in eradicating poverty and inequality. Since 1998 Djibouti is member of the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (Comesa) and introduced the Value Added Tax (VAT) in 2009 for the sake of harmonization in this huge market⁵⁰.

As a matter of fact, inter-african trade dominates the total Djiboutian's export. Following the 1998-2000 Ethio-Eritrean war, more transit goods were diverted onto Djibouti. Imports and exports from landlocked neighbor Ethiopia represent 87% of port activity at Djibouti's container terminal and the weight of port-related services is appraised at 87% of the Djiboutian GDP, which is around 700 million \$ on the whole. However, the government does not include port income in the annual budget, so that reliability and transparency of information about the national economic indicators must always be questioned⁵¹. Since June 2000, the Port of Djibouti has been operated by Dubai Ports International on a 20-year concession, attracting international investors. In 2004 a Free Zone at Doraleh allowed greater investments managed by the company Dubai World (DW) from Dubai – twin town of Djibouti – and Qatar. Harbor and airport facilities soon improved and the tonnage of the transit goods conveyed by the main international shipping companies multiplied by ten.

50 Marché Commun de l'Afrique Orientale et Australe *Enquête du COMESA sur l'environnement des affaires à Djibouti, Perception des investisseurs*, Juillet 2009.

51 Lallemand, A. *Profiteering on location. Djibouti's repressive regime, not its people, has prospered since 9/11*, September 6, 2011, at: <http://www.publicintegrity.org>.

Djibouti seeks to become a trading, financial and even industrial hub for interconnecting the Horn of Africa with the Gulf States and the Chinese and Indian networks. This plan has been conceivable as the country is open to foreign investments, tax exempted. Since 2003, Djibouti received a massive flow of Net Foreign Direct Investments (FDI). Being directed towards capital-intensive sectors, they did not generate much employment, but the free capital circulation increased the number of banks operating in the country⁵² – even if only 5% of the credit is devoted to SME – not caring of the oversight in respect of money laundering or terrorist financing, and thus strongly blamed by the IMF⁵³. Before the recent global recession Djibouti managed to keep a constant flow of FDI (2006-09), if compared to the other Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) States and this allows the GDP's rising at 5% a year. In the next two years, FDI declined from the peak of 229 to 75US \$ million⁵⁴ but on the whole the fast economic growth should be attributed to this instrument. Since 2011 the surge in commodity prices and the drought in the Horn of Africa affected Djibouti, and its most vulnerable citizens. The government is committed to rigorous debt management – aggregate debt is consistently below 60% – relying on concessional funds to finance the vast number of projects. With an economic growth of 4.5% in 2011 and 4.8% in 2012, Djibouti apparently complies with the IMF requests⁵⁵, but grasping the surface data from the report *Doing Business 2011*, edited by the World Bank, Djibouti ranks at the 158 position on the list of 183 countries, and registered a sharp decline from 2010 due to the feeble protection assured to investors, the high costs of production and the muddled administrative system.

The authoritarian drift of the Djiboutian regime and widespread corruption led some major Western investors and banks to retreat, while in December 2010 the Conference held in the Saudi capital by the Dubai-based Gulf Research Centre (on the theme “Gulf Investments in Africa”), was attended by African heads of States, ministries and businessmen; two year later, the Islamic Banking Summit Africa took place in Djibouti to discuss “capturing the Africa opportunity in Islamic

52 République de Djibouti *Le secteur bancaire de Djibouti: Atouts et perspectives*, Banque Centrale de Djibouti, Septembre 2010.

53 Rey, F. «Djibouti: du vide à la saturation?» in *Jeune Afrique*, 1/7/2012.

54 African Economic Outlook report, at <http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/data-statistics/table-10-foreign-direct-investment-2005-2010-usd-million> See also Caslin, O. “Maritime: regain d’ambition pout Djibouti” in *Jeune Afrique*, 8/5/2012.

55 IMF *Statistics on Djibouti*, at <http://www.imf.org/external/country/dji/index.htm>

finance”⁵⁶. The reportedly announcements of the building of an oversea bridge connecting Djibouti and Yemen – a dramatically burdensome infrastructure, whose costs are expected to be covered by a pool of Gulf States’ Arab tycoons – was given a cold welcome and borne out due to the relevance Djibouti acquired in the post 9/11 period.

6. Foreign Military Assistance and the post 9/11 Security-Development Nexus

Mainstream literature denounces that foreign aid is allocated according to geo-political or commercial interests of the donors, uninterested to the recipient needs⁵⁷. France and the United States (US) are two cases in point that may be seen in the Djiboutian context that fits well the peace-security-development nexus that gained momentum after the end of the Cold war, tackled by the scholarly literature as a «security complex»⁵⁸.

From colonial times, Djibouti played a geo-political role that remained unchanged at the onset of the Cold War as the Western bloc was seeking to monitor and control the maritime flows across the Red Sea along both the North-South and East-West directions⁵⁹. Following national independence, Djibouti remained within the French sphere of influence and became the logistic headquarter of the most important French military base overseas, with thousands of soldiers, warships, aircraft and armoured vehicles, officially there to protect the country’s sovereignty from the expansionist ambitions of its two cumbersome neighbours, namely Ethiopia and Somalia. Djibouti gained up to 40% of its income from this base⁶⁰ until the fading of the Cold War marked a relative decline in the strategic importance of Djibouti, when the French military stationed were halved.

When post-Cold War humanitarian aid became the Western’s tool of political crisis management, this trend of accommodating humanitarian

56 <http://businessislamica.com/2012/11/08/islamic-finance-to-capture-growth-opportunities-in-africa>

57 *Inter alia*, see: Berthelemy, J.C. “Bilateral Donors’ Interests vs. Recipients’ Development Motives in Aid Allocation: Do All Donors Behave the Same?” in *Review of Development Economics*, vol. 10, n. 2, 2006, pp. 179-194.

58 Sharamo, R.; Mesfin, B. (eds.) *Regional security in the post-Cold War Horn of Africa*, Pretoria, Institute for Security Studies, 2011.

59 Kobuger, C.W. *Naval Strategy East of Suez: The Role of Djibouti*, New York, Praeger, 1992.

60 Marks, Th.A. “Djibouti: France’s Strategic Toehold in Africa” in *African Affairs*, vol. 73, n. 290, 1974, pp. 95-104.

assistance with the dynamics of violence was common in Africa, and Djibouti was used as a transit point for the UN Operation in Somalia and the Unified Task Force Somalia (UNISOM and UNITAF) in the early 1990s. Then, following the pull-out from Somalia, the US military assistance was minimal throughout the Nineties⁶¹. During the 1991 Gulf War Djibouti supported the US led-coalition: counterpart funds were Foreign Military Financing (FMF) followed by US\$ 1.6 million for International Military Education and Training (IMET). The bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, followed by the attack on the U.S.S. Cole in the Gulf of Aden, reportedly by al-Qaida members, renewed Djibouti's geo-strategic weight. Since 9/11, the US assumed the whole Horn of Africa as prone to terrorists (Islamist Jihadists), with suitable safe heavens because of State fragility and power region's burning political issues⁶²; therefore, a number of counter-terrorist initiatives were launched and Djibouti was considered «a front line State in the war on terrorism». The regime shared intelligence and the outpost described by the Central Intelligence Agency's Factbook as «the only U.S. military base in sub-Saharan Africa» at Camp Lemonnier. Djibouti leased 500 acres to the Pentagon for the logistic headquarter to the «Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa» (CJTF-HOA), housing soldiers of the Army, the Navy, and Air Forces. This is the closest base to the Hormuz Strait; it has to monitor the Horn's countries, the Seychelles and Yemen and – according to Alex De Waal⁶³ – its primary operating task is the air transport to Yemen⁶⁴. The US State Department remunerated Djibouti's collaboration multiplying for forty the previous amount of military assistance and extra training and funding were targeted for increasing the country's counterterrorism capabilities. No wonder if the regime decided to participate in the East Africa Counterterrorism Initiative (EACTI) and then offered its

61 Delaney, D.E. “Cutting, Running, or Otherwise? The US Decision to Withdraw from Somalia” in *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, vol. 15, n. 348, 2004, pp. 28-46.

62 Elliot, A.; Holzer, G.-S. “The invention of “terrorism” in Somalia: Paradigms and policy in US foreign relations” in *South African Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 16, n. 2, 2009, pp. 215-244.

63 De Waal, A. “Africa, Islamism and America's ‘War on Terror’” in Ead. (ed.) *Islamism and its Enemies in the Horn of Africa*, London, Hurst, 2004, p. 233, 235-6. See also Rotberg, R.I. (ed.) *Battling Terrorism in the Horn of Africa*, Washington, DC, Brookings Institution Press, 2005.

64 See its website at www.hoa.centcom.mil/english.asp. See also: Haynes, J. “Islamic Militancy in East Africa” in *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 26, n. 8, 2005. For a critique see Adebajo, A. “Africa and America in an Age of Terror” in *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, vol. 38, n. 2-3, 2003, pp. 175-191.

own territory for AFRICOM (the regional U.S. Command for Africa)⁶⁵. So doing, President Guelleh reduced the traditional national dependence from France and sought to attract more aid and investments.

The War on Terror (WOT) involved Djibouti, that played an increasingly important geopolitical role and gained unquestionable benefits from the strengthening of the bilateral relationships with the US. Actually, the lease of Camp Lemonnier represents a source of profit for the Country, summing up to 31 million US\$ yearly, while France's yearly installment amounts to 30 million euro (relatively negligible are the Spanish and German military presence within the WOT framework). According to a French Army's evaluation, the economic impact of the troops stationed in Djibouti in 2001 was about 128 million euro, corresponding to 25% of the GDP and to 65% of the State budget⁶⁶. The European Union's Naval Task Force against Piracy cooperates with the US military forces and the government of Djibouti since 2006 to contrast piracy off the regional coasts, being a severe threat to international shipping⁶⁷. The Djiboutian government willingly supported US and EU interests and allows military presence for them on its territory and access to its transport and port facilities. This did not prevent the regime to distance itself from the Western powers, as in November 2006 when Djibouti was alleged to violate the UN arms-embargo supplying weapons to the Islamic Courts in Somalia; the reaction was a public condemnation of the US air strikes launched from Camp Lemonnier to support Ethiopian troops entering Somalia in January 2007⁶⁸. Even if empirical evidence deconstructs US assumptions, as the incidence of Djibouti as transit point for terrorist activity, as well as of Jihadist terrorism on the Horn proved

65 See: Pham, J.P. "Next Front? Evolving United States – African Strategic Relations in the 'War on Terrorism' and Beyond" in *Comparative Strategy*, vol. 26, 2007, pp. 48-54; Volman, D. "AFRICOM: what is it for and what will it do?" in Francis, D.J. (ed.) *US Strategy in Africa. AFRICOM, terrorism and security challenges*, New York, Routledge, 2010, pp. 44-63. For a detailed critique, see Mesfin, B. *The establishment and implications of the United States Africa Command. An African Perspective*, ISS Paper 183, April 2009.

66 "Les activités de l'Agence française de Développement à Djibouti (Afd)" in *Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranéens, Spécial Djibouti*, n. 2846, 28 /5/2000, p. 926.

67 Daniels, Ch.L. *Somali Piracy and Terrorism in the Horn of Africa*, Lanham, Scarecrow Press, 2012; Rye Olsen, G. "The Post September 11 Global Security Agenda: A Comparative Analysis of United States and European Union Policies Towards Africa" in *International Politics*, vol. 45, 2008, pp. 457-474.

68 Atta Asamoah, A. *Sanctions and embargoes in Africa Implementation dynamics, prospects and challenges in the case of Somalia*, ISS Paper 180, March 2009.

to be generally quite low⁶⁹, the tiny country became a regional hub in the Bush administration's military and aid policy.

Scrutinizing U.S. domestic political and economic conditions, Robert Fleck and Christopher Kilby documented that the WOT's effect on the aid budget is significantly larger than is immediately apparent⁷⁰. President Guelleh skillfully emphasized Islamist threats as a front for his own illiberal regime and – in a pattern of interdependence between foreign and domestic politics⁷¹ – used WOT as a source of leverage; the regime induced competition between the US and France and «Djiboutians like that they can play us off a little bit»⁷². As a matter of fact, France had to expand the bilateral cooperation with its former colony⁷³ and did not refrain to provide military and logistic assistance, and medical care when Djibouti was struggling with Eritrea along the common border, in spite of the attitude of President Guelleh, who often recurs of nationalistic chauvinism to get more and more⁷⁴.

Set aside the dramatic increase in military assistance, donor policies effected a de facto accommodation with permanent emergency. The Agence française de Développement (Afd) is working on urban and infrastructural development programmes⁷⁵ and Economic Support Fund, a catchall funding source Washington uses to funnel aid to key allies, shot up many million dollars to Djibouti. To appease Djiboutians who do not feel at ease with the headquarter, CJTF-HOA humanitarian assistance projects' spam from building schools to drilling wells, supporting non-governmental organization operations and USAID increased its activities (humanitarian assistance, and education and health programs) after the opening of its local branch, but the military sphere is still paramount. The demise

69 Møller, B. *The Horn of Africa and the US "War on Terror" with a special Focus on Somalia*, DIIPER Research Series, Working Paper N. 16, 2009.

70 Fleck, R.; Kilby, Ch. "Changing aid regimes? U.S. foreign aid from the Cold War to the War on Terror" in *Journal of Development Economics*, vol. 91, 2010, pp. 185-197.

71 Sharamo, R.; Mesfin, B. (eds.) *Regional security in the post-Cold War Horn of Africa*, Pretoria, Institute for Security Studies, 2011.

72 West, D.L. *Combating Terrorism in the Horn of Africa and Yemen*, Harvard, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, 2005, p. 9.

73 Bollee, A. "Djibouti: from French Outpost to US Base" in *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 30, n. 97, 2003.

74 Guelleh, I.O. "Djibouti n'a plus besoin de la France" in *Jeune Afrique*, 3-9 February, 2008, pp. 24-29.

75 "Les activités de l'Agence française de Développement à Djibouti (Afd)" in *Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranéens*, Spécial Djibouti, n. 2846, 28 /5/2000, p. 926.

of development aid is unlikely to happen in Djibouti for those reasons, in spite of its limited if none effect on human capital and sustainable development. The Obama Administration reiterates the security-development nexus in order to legitimize the increase in development aid for AFRICOM. The U.S. military forces in Sub-Saharan Africa sharply increased according to an «intelligence, surveillance, recognition» strategy which is based on the deployment of Special forces: military contingents lightly equipped that train and support the African States Armies. The U.S. aerial base located in Djibouti works for the monitoring operations in Eastern Africa and the Middle East. The so-called Obama's Doctrine (lead from behind) determined an uprising of armed interventions in low-intensity conflicts. The Obama Administration required, within the AFRICOM framework's Foreign Military Financing (Fmf) program, an increase of 2.5 million US\$ of the budget quota allotted to Djibouti⁷⁶.

The case of Djibouti offers food for thought to Nicholas Van de Walle's argument about the US militarization of African policy⁷⁷. Continuity is prevailing in analyzing the Horn's conflicts through the lens of Islamist/terroristic challenges that Washington is keen on letting out "on contract" to its closer allies⁷⁸, while lowering the propagandistic tones. The demise of development aid is unlikely to happen in Djibouti, as it is subordinated to anti-terrorism and anti-piracy and exploited to the utmost by a predatory regime, thus sacrificing any democratic glimmer and, worst of all, being detrimental to development.

76 Djibouti received other U.S. funds: 350.000 US\$ for the International Military Education and Training (Imet) program, while some 249 million are needed for the working of Camp Lemonnier and further 41.8 are devoted to the infrastructural boosting of the same base. See Volman, D. *Obama moves ahead with AFRICOM*, 10/12/2009, in <http://pambazuka.org/en/category/features/60921>.

77 Van de Walle, N. "US policy towards Africa: The Bush legacy and the Obama administration" in *African Affairs*, vol. 434, 2010, p. 13.

78 White, L. *What Kind of Change for Africa?: U.S. Policy in Africa under the Obama Administration*, IRIS, Paris, April 2010.

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Revisiting ethnicity and democracy in Ethiopia

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Dalarna and Stockholm Universities

Introduction

In 1998 I presented an essay in which the concepts of “ethnicity” and “democracy” were discussed theoretically as well as in relation to Ethiopia’s history¹. Since then a lot of developments have taken place in the country. Relative peace has been established allowing the government to pursue a bold agenda of economic development. Indeed reports state that the GDP in Ethiopia, as in many other African countries, is growing at a very fast rate and roads, schools and primary health institutions are established all over the country even deep into the rural areas. In the field of democracy, however, several developments seem to indicate that there is an increasingly tighter control of the people and a curtailment of individual freedoms by the ruling party.

To shed some light on this seemingly contradictory development I shall in the present essay first depart from the discussion in the article from 1998 pertaining to the concepts of ethnicity and democracy. Secondly I shall briefly review events related to the electoral process from 1992 until 2010 as well as some recent legislation that seems to indicate growing impairment of democracy and human rights. Lastly I shall briefly examine the ruling party’s ideas on ethnicity and democracy as expressed in the exposé about the current Ethiopian Constitution, “A Constitution for a Nation of Nations” by Fasil Nahum², and in the 2006 Program of the EPRDF published on its website to see if it is possible to make sense of the concrete actions recently taken by the EPRDF government³.

1 Poluha, E. “Ethnicity and Democracy – A Viable Alliance?” in Salih, M.; Markakis, J. (eds.) *Ethnicity and the State in Eastern Africa*, Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1998.

2 Fasil, N. *Constitution for a Nation of Nations. The Ethiopian Prospect*, Lawrenceville, The Red Sea Press, Inc., 1997.

3 EPRDF Program 2006, Retrieved 2013-02-04 from eprdf.org.et

1. Ethnicity in Ethiopian history

Ethiopian history is characterized by major population movements. The causes for these were manifold, including wars of conquest, trading expeditions and movements of individuals and groups in search of improved living conditions. The large-scale migrations, especially of the Oromo people, and repeated movements to create a unified territory under Ethiopian rule have contributed to the mixing of ethnic groups. People with different ethnic backgrounds have come to live side by side, and sometimes new groups have appeared through integration. Living as neighbours, people also learned from one another, developing similar survival strategies, and elaborate forms of cooperation. Frequent intermarriage in several areas resulted in ethnic permeability with loose borders between the respective groups. This ethnic mixing has come to characterize several parts of the Ethiopian landscape, a pattern with pan-Ethiopian traits has developed, discussed both broadly and interestingly by Donald Levine⁴. Most ethnic groups have both Muslim and Christian adherents.

While in many countries religion is an important ethnic characteristic, providing yet another tie between members of the same ethnic groups, this is not the case in Ethiopia. In Ethiopia people speaking the major languages have members adhering to Coptic Christianity, Islam, Protestantism as well as other religions. Adherents of different religions mostly have not inter-married, however, even when they had the same ethnic background.

The flexible relationship between ethnic groups was promoted by the loose organization of the Ethiopian state. In times of strength power and royal authority, often in the form of exaction of tribute, was exercised by an emperor over feudal lords and/or ethnic chieftains and when the emperors were weak (1600-1850), the lords and chiefs could act like independent rulers. The latter wielded power over the peasants who were armed by the lords but only after having proved themselves loyal by paying their dues. During the reigns of Tewodros (1855-68), Menelik (1889-1913) and Haile Selassie (1930-74), there was an increased concentration of power and control in the central ruler.

According to Ethiopian tradition, a provincial lord aspiring to power usually had to be a man adhering to Coptic Christianity. He should also be knowledgeable in Amharic, the predominant language of the court at least since the end of the 13th century, and have an established relationship with a powerful patron often

4 Levine, D. *Greater Ethiopia. The Evolution of a Multiethnic Society*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1974.

strengthened by marriage. Without fulfilling these requirements, the chances of becoming a lord and a member of the ruling class were negligible. Most rulers came from the highlands with Amharic-speaking backgrounds but rulers of Tigrean and Oromo origin have also taken part in the power-wielding process⁵. Intermarriage between members of the ruling class whether Amharas, Tigrés, Oromos, Gurages or others were the rule rather than the exception. Whenever political alliances were entered, class or power interests rather than ethnic identity remained the major factor.

The large majority of peasants and pastoralists and an increasing number of town dwellers from all these language groups were far removed from power, however. They were poor and had no influence on the politics of the country. Thus to speak of Amharas as rulers of historical Ethiopia is, I mean, an a-historical allegation because we cannot use concepts in vogue today to analyse a historical past in which these concepts were not relevant; power was what was important and access to power was not equal.

Despite the poverty of the population an increasing number of Ethiopians were educated from the 1950s on, and criticism against how the country was ruled grew in this group. The most proximate reason for the justification of the overthrow of the Haile Selassie regime in 1974 was his and the whole government's neglect of the famine in Wollo. In point of fact, however, the revolution that followed was the result of the constantly deteriorating conditions in the country. Living conditions had not improved, instead prices for basic commodities increased. A few rich people had become richer while the standard of living for the majority showed no signs of improvement. This caused unrest, mainly in urban areas but also here and there in the countryside. People were fed up with the negligence, inefficiency and autocratic rule of the imperial government. The outspoken ones, initially students, demanded land reform, equality and a stop to the conspicuous exploitation of the poor by the rich.

The Derg government that followed tried in its early years to provide answers to these demands, proposing various socialist reforms to reach equality. In the absence of a well developed "civil society", however, the militaristic approach of the Derg leaders soon took the upper hand. Abandoning its original slogan of "Ethiopia forward without spilling blood", the Derg resorted to solving more and more of its problems through violence. The stark brutality and absolute neglect of any human rights gradually led to the complete alienation of the military regime

5 See also Tekeste Negash; Tronvoll, K. *Brothers at war. Making Sense of the Eritrean-Ethiopian War*, Oxford, James Currey and Athens, Ohio University Press, 2000, p. 6.

from the people. Towards the end the regime was not even able to keep together its own huge military apparatus which showed signs of disintegration on all fronts. After seventeen years of rule, the military regime collapsed and the TPLF/EPRDF which provided the strongest armed opposition marched into Addis Abeba without much resistance at the end of May 1991.

During the war against the Derg the TPLF had close cooperation with both the Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front and the Oromo People's Liberation Front both of which had also used self-determination as the major means to mobilize people against the Derg government. Ethnicity had thus advanced to the top of the fighting groups' political agenda. Groups organized after the 1991 take-over of power were also encouraged to establish parties based on ethnicity if they wanted to participate in the ruling of the country. Since then, ethnicity has been on top of the Ethiopian government's agenda and decentralization to states organized around ethnic majorities is, it is argued, expected to promote democratic rule as it should enable people to rule over their own collective affairs.

The establishment of ethnicity as the most important aspect of a person's identity, and as such a prerequisite for democracy, is based on several assumptions about both ethnicity and democracy. Most of these assumptions seem to be implicit and taken-for-granted, yet they do need to be spelled out and discussed for us to understand their implications. The following is an attempt to make some of the assumptions explicit:

First, most people belong to an ethnic group by virtue of the language they speak and the culture they share. Ethnic groups are, in this sense, enduring – they do not change over time.

Second, people belonging to the same ethnic group live together in geographically distinct communities, a phenomenon that makes the delegation of power to such units possible.

Third, ethnic groups are homogeneous and the people who belong to the group have similar interests. Thus delegation of power to them becomes relevant.

Fourth, ethnic groups can be compared to organized political entities, whose members share certain interests and have specific social relations with each other.

Fifth, democracy is based on respect for language and culture. Therefore democracy ought to be based in ethnic communities which have these attributes.

Sixth, ethnic group rights are more important than individual, class or gender rights. Therefore, democracy should be based on power sharing among ethnic groups.

The following pages will relate these assumptions to the theoretical discussions on both ethnicity and democracy and, in the light of experiences in Ethiopia, try to assess their relevance before going on to more recent events.

2. *Ethnicity – an elusive concept*

Early conceptions of ethnicity focused on its primordial qualities⁶ a common language, a collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history and allegedly inherited characteristics common to the members of the group. Emphasis was placed on such cultural aspects as dress and hairstyle, which, apart from language and values are distinctive among ethnic groups. Schermerhorn defines an ethnic group as a collectivity within a wider society, having a real or putative common ancestry, memories of an historical past and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements that are viewed as epitomizing their peoplehood⁷. In a similar way Manning Nash refers to the primordial aspects of ethnicity when he mentions «bed, blood and cult», meaning groups that are biologically self-reproducing, endogamous, with ideas about a common history and ancestors and a shared religion⁸.

Individuals become members of an ethnic group through enculturation. From birth children learn to recognize similarities and differences, to act in a way that parents and adults consider is “right” and in this context develop a specific competence of behaviour, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously. The conscious behaviour patterns and characteristics become a repertoire from which the individual can pick what is considered most relevant to the situation. The unconscious, on the other hand, is often made up of norms and values that have become part of their way of being. In this way, ethnicity is a form of social organization through which cultural difference is communicated⁹.

It is important to stress that individual human beings express a tendency to be both similar to and different from other human beings. Individuals also do this within their own groups, at times emphasizing similarities and at others showing less acceptance of group behaviour. When group behaviour is found less attractive, a member may want to stress his or her own distinctiveness. Group traits, whether considered good or bad, strong or weak, will vary according to both context and the people the individual meets. In this way, each human being can affirm her/his identity sometimes as an individual and sometimes as a member of his/her group.

6 Narrol, R. “Ethnic Unit Classification” in *Current Anthropology*, vol. 5, n. 4, 1964.

7 Schermerhorn, R.A. *Comparative Ethnic Relation: A Framework for Theory and Research*, New York, Random House, 1970.

8 Nash, M. *The Cauldron of Ethnicity in the Modern World*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1988.

9 Eriksen, T.H. *Ethnicity and Nationalism; Anthropological Perspectives*, London, Pluto Press, 1993.

If only primordial aspects are considered, ethnic groups readily appear as homogeneous and bounded entities. What is not covered by Schermerhorn's definition is the importance of interaction¹⁰ and context¹¹. When these aspects are taken into consideration, it becomes clear that an ethnic group can never exist in isolation – it always exists in interaction with and in relation to other groups. Whatever primordial qualities exist, they are irrelevant unless compared to “an other” from which they can be distinguished. In other words, there must be a “significant other”, because ethnic groups are always relational. There is always a “we” and “us” in relation to a “you” and “them”. Furthermore, the relationship is usually in flux, rather than stagnant.

Ethnicity is relational in the sense of being in a process of becoming either more or less important to relationships. Ethnic feelings can emerge in areas or countries where they did not seem to exist before. In Sweden, for example, it was not important to stress being Swedish until the 1970s, because Swedes had few encounters with strangers. But with the influx of immigrants, “Swedish-ness” is developing as a separate identity in relation to the other groups from whom Swedes want to distinguish themselves.

Ethnicity is, thus, “socially constructed” and, depending on the situation and context, its content will change. The importance attached to ethnicity by a male Ethiopian farmer living in a homogeneous area will probably be negligible, as compared to that attached by a middle-class man who wants to build a political career and to whom ethnicity might be a valuable asset. If, however, a new group of people move into the farmer's area and a struggle over scarce resources ensues, the importance he attaches to ethnicity can be expected to increase considerably.

While some researchers underline the importance of primordial feelings as the glue that keeps ethnic groups together, others have given greater emphasis to ethnicity as a resource to be mobilized or as an instrument to be employed for further ends¹² usually of a political and economic nature. The ethnic constituency

10 Barth, F. “Introduction” in Barth, F. (ed.) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 1969.

11 Young, C. *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1976; Hettne, B. *Economic Development and Economic Conflicts*, Göteborg, Padrigu, 1992.

12 Cohen, A. “Introduction and the Lesson of Ethnicity” in A. Cohen (ed.) *Urban Ethnicity*. London, Tavistock, 1974; Cohen, A. *Two Dimensional Man*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974; Cohen, A. “Variables in Ethnicity” in Keyes, C. (ed.) *Ethnic Change*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1981; Björklund, U. “Diaspora” in *Antropologiska Studier*, vol. 44, 1989, pp. 20-35; Wanek, A. “Nationalism: some Theoretical Considerations” in *Antropologiska Studier*, vol. 44, 1989, pp. 3-12.

then represents a “site of mobilization” for these ends¹³ but what are mobilized are the primordial feelings. Ethnicity as an instrument has also often been associated with separatist movements usually harnessed by minority groups who see separation as a means to end oppression. However, even a majority grouping with political power may have recourse to history and myth when, as in the case of Sri Lanka, it wants to deprive the minority of economic and political influence¹⁴.

It is important to recognize that ethnicity, like culture, is always formed in a process. It is never static. Thus new forms or characteristics are perpetually created, since what is considered important changes over time. This flexibility makes it possible for members of ethnic groups to communicate their ethnicity in different ways.

Difference can be intentionally under-communicated especially when other aspects like class¹⁵ are more important. It can also be under-communicated when some kind of stigma or association of inferiority is attached to a group. An individual from a minority group looking for a job in the administration of the majority or hegemonic group will play down all possible signs of ethnicity and instead enhance the required criteria and qualifications. On the other hand, when there is no need, ethnicity may not be communicated at all. When positive rewards of different kinds are expected, ethnic difference is often over-communicated. This can happen when ethnicity is used as a basis for recruitment to jobs or positions, or in the distribution of ecological and other resources. Political and other leaders who seek support do, when possible, often use ethnicity to gain adherents.

During an ethnification process, the leaders of each group seek to strengthen the image of the group, emphasizing the primordial aspects; who the group members are, from where they come, and what they are going to be. To do this, it becomes necessary for them to demarcate themselves in relation to other groups. Therefore, borders between groups must not only be maintained, but also sharpened to make one’s own group distinct. In embellishing themselves, they also have to belittle and sometimes vilify the others. One common approach is to adapt the past to present needs. People often have to create, or recreate the past through new histories and myths so that it serves their present needs. In the words of McDonald “to account for the present, to justify it, understand it,

13 Smith, A.D. “The Politics of Culture: Ethnicity and Nationalism” in Ingold, T. (ed.) *Companion Encyclopaedia of Anthropology*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994, pp. 706-733.

14 Tambiah, S.J. *Sri Lanka Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1986.

15 O’Brien, O. “Perceptions of Identity in North Catalonia” in *Critique of Anthropology*, Special Issue, vol. 10, n. 2 and 3, 1993.

or criticise it, the past is used, selectively appropriated, remembered, forgotten or invented”¹⁶.

Another way in which ethnicity is promoted as the major criterion for defining ethnic encounters is through stereotypes. Individuals usually use some form of stereotype to create order in complex situations. But stereotypes are also used by politicians in order to homogenize ethnic signifiers, since this practise facilitates identification. As such, the stereotyping function is a means for establishing borders and facilitates the inclusion of our own people and the exclusion of others. At its extreme, an ethnification process may imply that everybody must take sides and nobody is allowed to stay neutral. Then violence is easily introduced and the only way to resolve difference may be through brute force.

To unravel the stereotypes and see the complex, changing nature of ethnic groups, it is important to understand how depictions of them as bounded, homogeneous, enduring societies originated, since this process often accounts for the reification or essentialization of ethnic groups. Here I want to mention three sources of stereotyping, with emphasis on the last.

One important source of inspiration for essentialized conceptions of ourselves and others seems to be the genuine resentment that members of subjugated groups feel towards those who oppress them. Stereotyping the oppressors make them easier to handle but it also implies defining oneself as in every way different from the enemy, which is usually done through enhancing a rhetoric of cultural distinctiveness.

Another source, that promotes the image of societies as homogeneous and thereby facilitates essentialization, is the oral histories of “how things used to be” which are told in most societies. Almost all written history in Ethiopia is in the liturgical language of Geez or Amharic, apart from that recorded by foreigners. For non-Copts and non-Amharic speakers, oral histories are sometimes their only source of information about past events. As such, these histories become important both to the people themselves and to historians writing about the past. There is, however, a tendency for oral histories to become standardized and homogenized as part of the process of being told and retold from generation to generation. They give a picture of a people with a distinct history, which seldom is the case, especially as ethnicity historically did not have the importance in Ethiopia that it has recently acquired. Thus, Zitelman is quoted by Baxter as saying «the written

16 McDonald, M. “Celtic ethnic kinship and the problem of being English” in *Current Anthropology*, vol. 27, n. 4. 1989, p. 5, referred to in Tonkin, E.; McDonald, M.; Chapman, M. *History and Ethnicity*, London, Routledge, 1986.

historical texts, distributed through the networks of OLF's mass-organisations, gave a uniform picture of a golden Oromo past, when democracy under the *gaada* [Oromo age-grade system] was flourishing, and when Ethiopian colonialism had not yet disturbed the peace of the green pastures»¹⁷. Baxter himself notes that «it would be remarkable in the circumstances if a romanticised, primordial past were not being fabricated»¹⁸.

The texts of social scientists, especially anthropologists, are a third source of inspiration for the reification of ethnic cultures. Anthropological studies have to a high degree focused on groups and how they perceive themselves, rather than on individuals¹⁹. Much emphasis has been given to how members identify themselves in relation to people of another group or other groups, and how this process of identification can be understood as a means of self-definition or self-construction. In studying groups, anthropologists have, however, always had problems delimiting them, since the borders between groups are often fluid, so that one group, or parts of it, merge with another. This has resulted in an anthropological focus on difference between groups rather than on sameness. What has further sharpened the focus on difference in anthropological studies is their comparative nature. Thus difference between ethnic groups has been stressed rather than similarity, and similarity within the group rather than individual differences. Many anthropological monographs and articles have therefore come to represent ethnic groups as homogeneous and bounded thereby reifying what has been conceived as their cultures.

3. Democracy-individual and/or collective rights?

Democracy originated in Athens where the citizens collectively determined laws and policies by direct vote. Those who were present could vote and nobody even raised the issue of representation. The citizens were all adult men. Women, male immigrants, their descendants and slaves were excluded. In this way, direct vote rather than representation, exclusive rather than inclusive citizenship, and neglect of minorities characterized Athenian democracy²⁰. Thoughts of democracy

17 Baxter, P.T.W. "The Creation and Constitution of Oromo Nationality" in Fukui, K.; Markakis, J. (eds.) *Ethnicity and Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, London, James Currey, 1994, pp. 173; 174.

18 *Ibidem*.

19 Wolf, E. *Europe and the People without History*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982.

20 Hansson, S.O. "Demokratin har inte alltid varit demokratisk" (Democracy has not always been democratic) in *Forskning och Framsteg*, vol. 4, n. 94, 1994.

only gained ground in the West during the French Revolution²¹. In France the revolution was a reaction against the favourable treatment enjoyed by members of the different estates, especially the nobility, by those who were excluded from power and oppressed by the feudal system. The growing, power-hungry bourgeoisie was the most outspoken critic of feudal prerogative. The whole revolution was, in this sense, an act against group privilege and group representation, and for an ideal of citizenship where each *man* was to count equally.

The transition in the early twentieth century towards universal suffrage again entailed a contest over the various group privileges that had developed, this time based on sex (since women had no representation), on property (where lack of it had limited voting rights), on education and on race. The success of universal suffrage thus came to mean representative democracy with all-inclusive citizenship and respect for minorities, since nobody was to be discriminated against on the basis of sex, religion or ethnic identity. In European history then, democracy has come to challenge especially white male interest groups and their special political privileges and implied a promotion of everybody's individual rights²².

Still, until this day, many women as well as members of minority groups argue that their rights are not respected in this so-called Western or liberal democratic process. Despite political forums being democratically elected, they argue that these forums in no way mirror existing gender or minority group situations in society. To balance political representation, Young argues for partial group representation on the assumption that some groups are actually or potentially oppressed or disadvantaged and require representation on a group basis²³. According to Lukes and Gaventa, some groups never even contend for political power because power holders manage to manipulate their consciousness²⁴. They can sometimes even influence and determine the very wants of individuals and subordinate groups by subtle means.

More recent discussions about how categories and groups of women and minorities can best be politically represented argue that group representation

21 Phillips, A. "Democracy and Difference: Some Problems For Feminist Theory" in *The Political Quarterly*, vol. 63, n. 1, 1992, pp. 79-90.

22 I have here chosen not to discuss the implications of various democratic models like procedural, competitive, participatory or deliberative democracy but to focus on individual versus collective rights.

23 Young, I.M. "Polity and Group Difference: A critique of the ideal of universal citizenship" in *Ethics*, vol. 99, 1989.

24 Lukes, S. *Power: A Radical View*, London, Macmillan, 1976 (1974); Gaventa, J. "Makt och deltagande" in Petersson, O. (ed.) *Maktbegreppet*, Stockholm, Carlssons Förlag, 1987.

is complex since all groups have fluid borders and are difficult to delimit. Representation is further complicated by the fact that individuals, depending on their sex, class, ethnicity and age, belong to several groups or sectors simultaneously and only circumstances can determine which aspects will predominate in a certain situation. Thus, since it is difficult to determine who could really represent a group, Phillips argues that all political parties should be forced to mirror society through proportionality or through quotas of for example women or minority groups instead of making these groups themselves into political constituencies²⁵. According to this author, such a solution would make it possible for all silent and oppressed groups to speak out, while not restricting them to the group identity.

4. Ethnicity and democracy in the Ethiopian context

As was earlier shown, Ethiopian history is characterized by large-scale migrations and intermingling of peoples. Kinship groups that moved and settled together can often be found to be homogeneous in the sense of having a common language, history, norms and values and common ancestors. Interspersed and mixed with these groups, are groups that have intermarried and whose members belong to more than one ethnic group. With regard to mixed marriages in the countryside, it is mostly the women who have moved to their husbands' homes upon marriage. In towns, and especially among the upper classes, there has been what Smith calls a strengthening of the "lateral *ethnie*", a process of spatial expansion of *ethnie* at the cost of social depth²⁶. Smith's "lateral *ethnie*" in the Ethiopian context would mean an expansion of Christian highland Ethiopian society in space, towards the south, making the boundaries between groups diffuse and the sense of ethnic belonging of less importance. Instead of a focus on ethnicity emphasis was on class, and there was frequent exchange of upper-class members between neighbouring ethnic groups, especially through marriage and warfare, all predominantly within the same Christian faith. For the offspring of this process, ethnic identity was thus not the most relevant category. Instead, they learned Amharic, the official language, to pursue a career.

The *first assumption* outlined above that everybody belongs to one ethnic group or "nation", whose language they speak and with which they identify, may be relevant for certain groups in Ethiopia like Tigrayans²⁷. For others it would

25 Phillips, A. *op. cit.*, p. 87.

26 Smith, A.D. *op. cit.*, p. 713.

27 See for example Aregawi Berhe *A Political History of the Tigray People's Liberation Front*

be remote from, even contradictory to their life experience, especially since the meaning and implications of ethnic belonging have changed over time and continue to do so. Likewise the *second assumption*, that people who belong to the same ethnic group live in geographically distinct and bounded communities, seems to be relevant to some parts of Ethiopia like the Oromo or Amhara regions. At the same time, there are clusters of minorities everywhere where people mix and adapt to each other which makes it difficult to talk of geographical boundedness.

The *third assumption*, that ethnic groups are homogeneous and their members have similar interests, is based on the belief that primordial feelings alone determine a person's interests. This may be the case in a situation of interethnic group competition where ethnicity is considered the most important criterion for determining one's alliances. The assumption that ethnic groups are homogeneous, however, does not take the contextual or relational aspects of ethnicity into account, nor the fact that ethnicity changes over time. Furthermore, it does not recognize that each individual has multiple statuses depending on for example gender, age, class and religious adherence, apart from ethnic belonging. In most projections of ethnic-group culture, a male gender bias is dominant, since the male conceptualisation of what is relevant has come to count as the public culture²⁸. In Ethiopia, this can be seen in the identification of Oromo culture with the *gaada* system, a system to which women had no access. Furthermore, religion is often taken to be more important than ethnicity in Ethiopia, making marriages between Christian Amharas and Christian Oromos more frequent than between Christian Oromos and Muslim Oromos. This again shows that it is not possible to take the homogeneity and similarity of interests between members of the same ethnic group for granted.

The above refutation of the homogeneity of ethnic groups also shows that ethnic groups cannot be equated with political units, as is suggested in the *fourth assumption*. Members of ethnic groups share certain characteristics but seldom organize themselves for any specific purposes and have *per se* no shared goals. A group of people with the same ethnic characteristics may at certain stages mobilize as a political party. They then become an organization, a party, whereby the character of their collectivity changes. It is seldom, however, that all who share the same characteristics will join such an ethnic party. Therefore, delegation of power

(1975-1991). *Revolt, Ideology, And Mobilisation in Ethiopia*, Los Angeles, Tsehai Publishers and Distributorsarregawi, 2009, pp. 37-38; 42-47.

28 Das, V. "Cultural Rights and the Definition of Community" in Mendelsohn, O.; Baxi, V. (eds.) *The Rights of Subordinated Peoples*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1994.

to an ethnic group creates problems for both representation and accountability, because it is impossible to find representatives for such an amorphous category, and even more difficult to make them accountable to its members.

Democracy in Europe has emphasized individual rights. Nevertheless, part of the so-called democratic respect for the individual is the right of the individual *not* to be discriminated against on grounds of sex, ethnic identity, race and religion. There is, therefore, an implicit respect for the rights of collectivities in the Western concept of democracy. This is underlined by Das²⁹ who points out that «the subjects of [human] rights cannot be treated as isolated, atomised individuals, because in order for them to preserve and enjoy their culture, the collective survival of traditions becomes an important condition», and «collective existence is necessary because one's capacity to make sense of the world presupposes the existence of collective traditions»³⁰. For democracy to exist there must be respect for both the rights of individuals and of collectives – but not only for the latter, as is implied in the *fifth assumption*.

The *final assumption* that ethnic-group interests are more important than those claimed by other types of collectivities is partly refuted above. Only under certain conditions is ethnicity the overriding criterion guiding a person's acts and alliances. When the context and conditions are not ethnically defined, or are not the result of group contradictions, other interests may well take precedence. Thus, one cannot assume that one type of interests, like those deriving from ethnic identity, predominate over others in all situations. As a consequence, it seems that the right of the individual to decide which identity must be safeguarded and in what situation should take priority over the claim of an amorphous ethnic group to enforce its criteria on the individual.

Bearing these points in mind let us now take a further look at what has happened in Ethiopia in recent years.

5. Important Events Regarding Ethnicity and Democracy since 1991

5.1 Regional self government

In 1995 a new constitution became law in Ethiopia. According to the Constitution Ethiopia is a Federal State with nine National Regional States, NRS (*Kilil*), based on

29 Ivi, p. 119.

30 Ivi, p. 158.

the major language groups and two Federal Cities, Addis Abeba and Dire Dawa. The size and population of the different Regional States show great variations and according to the 2007 census the Harari Region had a population of 183 000 people while the Oromia Region had 27 million people.

All NRS enjoy the right of self-determination including secession. Accordingly the Regional States and the two federal cities have legislative, executive and judicial powers over matters falling under State jurisdiction all in line with the TPLF goal of self-rule. All states also have their own flags.

Recent studies³¹ however, show that although Regional States have the right to make their own plans and budgets their self-rule can be questioned on the ground that they are almost totally dependent on the Federal Government for their income. Actually, about 90% of the States' income comes from the Federal government and only a few percent comes from local revenues. The economic dependence of the States on the Federal Government therefore makes it imperative for States to follow national plans. If they present an alternative plan to that decided by the Federal Government the latter can stop budget support and make it impossible for them to carry out any development work.

Within the states the majority language is the official language used in the administration, in the judiciary and in schools. The federal policy states that the medium of instruction for the first 8 grades should be conducted in the pupil's mother tongue, and from grade 9 the language of instruction should be English. This is not always, but mostly, the case. Furthermore, Amharic as the official language of the Federal State, is taught from grade 3 in all regions except in the Oromia Region and in areas where Oromo is used as a medium of Instruction. In Oromo-speaking areas Amharic is taught from grade 5. The study of English as a subject starts in grade 1 in all regions³². Today, even schoolbooks are produced in the respective languages. The rights of the respective ethnic groups have thus language-wise, not only been promoted but also developed and strengthened. This is a great improvement especially to all school children around the country who can now learn in the language they speak at home.

31 Tengnäs, B.; Poluha, E. *et al. Sida-Amhara Rural Development Program 1997-2008*, in *Sida Review*, vol. 8, 2009; Poluha, E.; Meheret Ayenew *et al. Causes for and Circumstances Surrounding the High Turn-Over and Shortage of Staff in Selected Woredas in the Amhara Region*, Addis Abeba, Sida, Unpublished report, 2007.

32 Heugh, K.; Benson, C.; Berhanu Bogale *et al. September to December 2006. Final Report: Study on medium of instruction in primary schools in Ethiopia*, Commissioned by the Ministry of Education, 2006.

5.2 Elections and Political Parties

In June 1992, less than a year after the establishment of the Transitional government the first district and regional elections were held. Shortly before Election Day the major parties complained that their candidates were being harassed and even arrested and that it was impossible for them to carry out an election campaign and therefore they could not participate. Various observer groups concurred that these elections were more formal than real. A single party was on the stage and there was not even a choice of candidates³³.

The 1994 elections were for a Constitutional Assembly which would discuss, amend and ratify the new Constitution. These elections were again boycotted by the major opposition groups for the same reasons as in the 1992 elections. The EPRDF took all the seats in the Oromia and Amhara Regions and totally gained 484 out of 548 seats.

The 1995 elections implied an end to the Transitional Government and an implementation of the new Constitution. The major opposition groups again boycotted the elections claiming that they could not campaign. 545 representatives were elected to the new Federal Government. The EPRDF and its supporters took all seats but three. According to Tronvoll and Aadland the elections were «neither free, nor impartial»³⁴.

General elections in 2000 and local elections in 2001 followed the above mentioned trend with EPRDF total dominance of the political arena and its members ruling the Federal, Regional and Woreda governing bodies.

The 2005 general elections initially implied a great change. For the first time since it took power the EPRDF now let go of much of its control over the election process. All parties, including the opposition, were allowed to present their ideas and programs as well as their criticism of what the others had done or were promising to do, in public debates on radio and television. Why the EPRDF relinquished its control over the elections is difficult to know. Probably several factors contributed to the decision, amongst which could have been the conviction that the peasant population really supported them; that there was no viable alternative; and that there was pressure from some Western countries to allow the opposition to speak out in public.

33 Report of the Norwegian Observer Group *Local and Regional Elections in Ethiopia*, Oslo, Norwegian Institute of Human Rights, 1992; Ottaway, M. *Democratization and Ethnic Nationalism: African and Eastern Experiences. Policy Essay*, n. 14. Washington, ODC, 1994; Pausewang, S. "Regional and Woreda elections" in *Ethiopia*, June 21, 1992, unpublished report, 1992.

34 Tronvoll, K.; Aadland, O. "The process of Democratization in Ethiopia. An Expression of Popular Participation or Political Resistance?" in *Human Rights Report*, n. 5, Oslo, 2005.

Evidently the Ethiopian population, peasants as well as people in towns, got deeply involved in the 2005 elections. A farmer in a rural area in Gojjam, told me the following:

When they started the political discussions on the radio all peasants here got hold of a radio and listened. We listened to what the EPRDF said and we listened to what the opposition said. Sometimes we were working, being in the middle of the plowing season, but we stopped plowing to be able to hear what they said, because we were interested in the way they talked and argued. Then we discussed among ourselves what they had said and which groups that had a solution to our problems. And most of us agreed that we wanted the opposition³⁵.

All over the country people went to cast their votes and almost 90% of the population voted and the elections were free. It is difficult to know what the real results of the elections were, however, because the polls were contested. Accusations of fraud followed, people demonstrated, many were put into prison, some killed and others injured.

The elections of 2005 can be seen as an eye-opener both for the ruling party and the electorate. The party realized the need for greater control and “mobilization” of the electorate and new party statutes were decided upon in 2006. On the other hand, the electorate seems to have concluded that casting a vote on the opposition did not result in any change thus in the future they could just as well cast their votes on the ruling party and live in peace.

Later elections seem to reflect this awakening. The 2008 local elections delivered over 99 percent of the available seats in *woreda* (district) and *kebele* (urban or rural dwellers’ association) councils to the ruling party, cementing EPRDF control at the local level³⁶. In the following federal election, in 2010, the ruling party got 99.6% of the seats. In practice, therefore, Ethiopia can be categorized as a country with a one-party system. Political parties apart from the EPRDF are in theory allowed to work but in practice the scope of activity for any organization except the EPRDF seems to be hampered.

35 Poluha, E. “Prevailing over the power of continuity?” in Paulos, Milkias; Messay Kebede (eds.) *Education, Politics and Social Change in Ethiopia*, Los Angeles, Tsehai Publishers, 2010, p. 16.

36 Aalen, L.; Tronvoll, K. “The End of Democracy? Curtailing Political and Civil Rights in Ethiopia” in *Review of African Political Economy*, n. 120, 2009, pp. 193-207.

5.3 Restrictive Laws and Policies

Most media are publicly owned and state controlled. They also reach very few people in Ethiopia. The daily number of radio listeners is about 12 000, unless something important happens like the public political debates in 2005 when everyone with a radio took it out from its storage, bought new batteries and listened with family and friends. Television has approximately 320 000 viewers daily. The number of households with television constitutes about 2.41% of the population. The total edition of the different newspapers and periodicals varies from some hundred to a maximum of 25 000³⁷. The Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority is the licensing agency for all broadcasters in Ethiopia and has a mandate to regulate the broadcasting industry. It also acts as a regulatory agency with respect to the press industry.

Despite this limited reach of public media a new *media law* was released in 2008 which made it possible for the government to stop publication of newspapers considered to be a threat to public order.

In 2009 an *Anti Terrorism law* was promulgated which made it possible for the government to accuse media, groups and individuals for acts of terrorism and sentence them to imprisonment. This law has been used to put especially journalists but also opposition party members into jail. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, the third-largest number of journalists forced to flee their countries since 1992, after Somalia and Iran, has been from Ethiopia³⁸. With all the limits enforced upon journalists by previous and new laws, including being charged with terrorism and becoming imprisoned, it is impossible for Ethiopian media to fulfil the role of a fourth estate, by that meaning to undertake a critical examination of what parties, groups, companies, institutions, including other media, write, say and do. And yet, probing enquiries by media of all kinds of power-holders are considered a precondition for a population to be able to make informed decisions about what concerns them as citizens of a state.

Another Federal Law was issued in *January 2009* called the *Charities and Societies Proclamation*. This law brought about further political control of and restrictions on the activities of all Ethiopian Non Governmental Organizations (NGO) involved in key fundamental society issues such as human rights, conflict resolution and reconciliation, citizenship or justice and law. The law states that a government agency can deny any organisation the right to a licence or to work.

37 NationMaster.co 2011-10-11; www.ukinethiopia.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/mediamapping

38 Human Rights Watch *Development without freedom*, 2010.

Any government agency can also interfere in the work of an existing organisation. Furthermore, the new proclamation states that no Ethiopian NGOs are allowed to work on democracy issues unless at least 90% of their funds come from within country. Since most local NGOs engaged in these topics have carried out such work with support from abroad the law implied that they had to close down. The Charities and Societies Proclamation has thus changed the whole playing field with regard to democracy issues. The Ethiopian Human Rights Council, EHRCO and the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association, EWLA, are two organizations that used to be very active in reporting about and defending people's rights. These organizations have now had their assets frozen and the scope of their outreach has become much more limited with the loss of funds.

In 2012, the Ethiopian parliament passed a new *telecommunication law*, which implies further control of internet usage.

6. What Sense Can We Make of Recent Developments?

As I have tried to point out in this essay, ethnicity has not been a strong dividing issue in Ethiopian history but ethnicity has been used by the TPLF and other organizations to canalize opposition to the Derg regime. Once in power, however, the TPLF/EPRDF regime appears to see ethnic based political organizations as a useful instrument for strengthening its leadership. Even its reference to democracy is defined in terms of ethnicity. Explaining the EPRDF inspired Constitution of 1994, Fasil Nahum boldly points out that «This is not a constitution of the Ethiopian citizens simply lumped together as a people. The Ethiopian citizens are first categorized in their different ethno-linguistic grouping and then these groupings come together as authors of and beneficiaries from the Constitution»³⁹.

As Fasil points out, the constitution does not acknowledge, as is usual in other constitutions, the sovereignty of the Ethiopian people. On the contrary the preamble to the constitution states that «all sovereign power resides in the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia».

What does this mean? As argued above, ethnic groups are not homogeneous but fluid entities. If only ethnic groups are vested with sovereignty it means that this sovereignty only can be exercised through organizations claiming to represent the interests of the various ethnic groups. These same basic ideas are expressed in the Programme of the EPRDF from 2006, as published on its website (eprdf.

39 Fasil Nahum *Constitution for a Nation of Nations. The Ethiopian Prospect*, Lawrenceville, The Red Sea Press, Inc, 1997, p. 51.

org.et) «Since Ethiopia is a multi-national country the way to guide its different nationalities and peoples together for the struggle should be through a Front made up of multinational member organizations, and not in an organizational framework of individuals». (p. 34) This means that the ethnic based organizations are seen as vehicles for “guidance” of the different ethnically defined regions rather than as expressions of local autonomy. Indeed as we have seen above, whatever autonomy the National Regional States may want to exercise can be effectively curtailed by their almost complete dependence on the central government for their budgets.

On the question of individual rights, the Constitution deals with fundamental rights and freedoms in a more traditional way in Chapter 3, which is divided into “individual human rights” and “democratic rights”. With regard to human rights it is said that (Article 13.2) «The fundamental rights and freedoms specified in this chapter shall be interpreted in a manner conforming to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenants on Human Rights and international instruments adopted by Ethiopia». Article 29 deals with democratic rights, stating everyone’s right to hold opinions without interference (1), freedom of expression (2), freedom of the press and other media (3) etc.

These articles in the Constitution seem to be contradicted by the restrictive legislation discussed above which came after the 2005 elections. The new party program adopted by the EPRDF in 2006 may partially explain how the leadership interpreted the elections. In the Introduction to the 2006 program there is a reflection on recent «inarticulation over... issues of economic and democratic development...» that «eroded the EPRDF’s political partisanship and undermined its revolutionary democratic disposition therefore...» the organization has undertaken a broad movement of rectification and renewal of which the program is a result (p. 3).

The role the EPRDF claims for itself in its Statutes of 2006 may partly make sense of the discrepancy between the 1995 Constitution and the post-2005 laws and elections. Thus EPRDF states that its main objective is to «enable the people to rid themselves from abject states of poverty and backwardness» and achieve «justice, democracy and prosperity» (p. 32) To realize this objective,

EPRDF is expected to play the role of vanguard by bracing up its organizational capacity to lead the people in their efforts to raise their consciousness and organize themselves. In order for the EPRDF to play a leading role in the process of the mobilization of the entire people in realizing its revolutionary democratic programme, it is imperative that there is a lasting unity of ideas and practice between EPRDF and its member organizations and from top to bottom (p. 32).

Despite acknowledgement of fundamental human rights it thus becomes “imperative” for the EPRDF to curtail any real or imaginary threats to this “lasting unity of ideas”. This is reminiscent of all revolutionary movements since the time of Lenin. Indeed Aregawi Berhe, one of the founders of the TPLF, writes that in 1985 a party called the Marxist Leninist League of Tigray (MLLT) was formally established as a vanguard party for the TPLF⁴⁰. It is not known whether the MLLT currently exists as an organization or if it has been absorbed by the EPRDF. At any rate, the Marxist-Leninist principles still seem to permeate the ideas of the EPRDF leadership although not talked about in public or mentioned in official documents. However, in the new EPRDF program it is stated that EPRDF only embraces organizations where a «democratic centralism system is in operation» (p. 36).

EPRDF can claim that its “revolutionary democracy” has achieved rapid economic growth. Whether Marxism-Leninism is necessary to obtain this objective or if it is in the long-term interest of the Ethiopian people is a totally different question.

40 Aregawi Berhe *op. cit.*, p. 179.

Governance and collective sanctions: reflections on the taming of corruption

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1. Introduction: representing corruption

Tackling a problem requires an ability to read it, conceptualize it, represent it, define it, and then applying the necessary tools and mechanisms to (re)solve it. This may sound self-evident except when the problem to be engaged, in this case *corruption*, happens to be “complex”¹, “ill-structured”² and/or “wicked”³. The former requirements may become less straightforward or feasible imposing modest expectations regarding possibilities of any definitive solution to such an insidious phenomenon. They also entail initially approaching and defining the problem abstractly, moving thereon, and if possible, toward what Herbert Simon identified as the plane of a «well structured problem»⁴. This involves “identification” as well as “representation” problem⁵. *Identification* allows for limiting the range of values to be considered to a set of specific aims or purposes rather than that of the entire domain of human values. This allows for a measure of *parsimony*, task feasibility, as well eventual representation based upon which alternative problem-solving strategies may be formulated. *Representation*, by the same token, is an ambiguity and complexity reducing exercise, based on establishing a common frame of reference and goals, and is the pre-requisite for any possible problem solving or strategy

1 Fernandes, R.; Fernandes, S.; Herbert, A. “A study of how individuals solve complex and ill-structured problems” in *Policy Science*, n. 32, 1999, pp. 225-245.

2 Simon, H.A. “The Structure of Ill Structured Problems” in *Artificial Intelligence*, n. 4, 1973, pp. 181-201.

3 Rittel, H.W.J.; Rittel, W.; Melvin, M. “Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning” in *Policy Sciences*, n. 4, 1973, pp. 155-169.

4 Simon, H.A. *op. cit.*, p. 181.

5 Fernandes, R.; Fernandes, S.; Herbert, A. *op. cit.*

choice⁶. It starts with advancing an abstract vision of an alternative followed by “decomposition” of the various components of sub-problems, addressing each one on its own then integrating all sub-solutions into one⁷. This constitutes a form of “diagnosis”, followed by “prescription” and then “action”⁸ or, in other words, analysis, and then synthesis. Unfortunately, things may not be that simple when dealing with the problem of corruption, when it is difficult to indentify it with any single or group of factors and almost impossible to problematize in all its dimensions. For the problem at hand may be more complex, related less to the boundary between the well structured and the ill structured, but to that between the ill structured and the *wicked*.

Corruption, *identified* and *represented* in the context of this paper, as *bribery* and/or *extortion* is one of those kinds of problems. Both in its global but particularly national manifestations it is ill-structured. Where it is structural, endemic and pervasive, it is even *wicked*. If so, it may not suffice to address the problem using existing categories of law and/or good governance, which overlook the “long-term memory” of the collective and cultural specific dimensions of the subject⁹ – i.e. its path dependency. Such socio-historical conditions require focusing on the interactive and self-reproducing networks of corruption and attempting to “*subvert*”¹⁰ that phenomenon’s entire matrix. For this to work, it may be more effective to focus on a certain aspect of this negative value (e.g. bribery) rather than on its entire spectrum. Invoking the *sufficing* principle and narrowly specifying bribery as a foundational factor or element that influences this phenomenon’s pervasiveness, and then targeting it may be a more practical option. In order to undergo such an exercise, this study suggests collective punishment and sanctions¹¹, and “modified vendetta”¹² as conceptual tools or mechanisms that may help in reducing or even undermining the untenable problem of bribery. They are linked

6 Simon, H.A. *op. cit.*

7 Ivi, p. 227.

8 Mintzberg, H.; Ahlstrand, B.; Ahlstrand, L. *et al. Strategy Safari*, London, Prentice Hall, 1998, p. 32.

9 Simon, H.A. “The Structure of Ill Structured Problems...” *cit.*

10 Klitgaard, R. “Subverting Corruption” in *Finance & Development*, n. 37/2, June, 2000, pp. 2-5.

11 French, P.A. “The Hester Prynne Sanction” in *Business & Professional Ethics*, n. 4/2. 1985, pp. 19-32.

12 Corlett, J. Angelo “The ‘Modified Vendetta Sanction’ as a Method of Corporate Collective Punishment” in *Journal of Business Ethics*, n. 8/12, December, 1989, pp. 937-942; Shipp, S. “Modified Vendettas as a Method of Punishing Corporations” in *Journal of Business Ethics*, n. 6/8, November, 1987, pp. 603-612.

to Kurt Lewin's "theory" of change, incorporating the three steps of *unfreezing* a situation, inducing *change*, and then *freezing* achieved changes as a norm¹³. By exploring these as potentially relevant categories in the structural, as well as behavioral unfreezing of some of the most prevalent and institutionalized aspects of corruption, perhaps a new perspective on corruption fighting strategies may consequently evolve. This may also encourage future empirical studies examining possible correlations between corruption and regimes of collective sanctioning.

2. The wickedness of corruption

What is corruption, what are its causes, and why have numerous anticorruption policies failed to deal with it, have been questions, which dogged many – theoreticians and practitioners alike. Jakob Svensson for instance admitted that there is no clear definition of what constitutes corruption¹⁴. Much perhaps has to do with the fact that «different causal chains» pertaining to this phenomenon have led to «different discourses on corruption prevention and corruption control»¹⁵. Anti-corruption organization, Transparency International for instance, defined the phenomenon as «the misuse of entrusted power for private benefit». A broader definition provided by the Tax Justice Network in Australia proposed that, «an activity which undermines public confidence in the integrity of the rules, systems and institutions that govern society is corrupt»¹⁶. The significant point in the latter understanding is that it *suffices* to identify the different, even if sometimes vague, fluid, or contested manifestations of a phenomenon or subject matter by observing its «habitual characteristics» and implications, even in the absence of a clear definition or label. This necessitates that not only actual corruption be observed and prevented, but as importantly, the «appearance of corruption»¹⁷. «*Integrity of appearances*» provides clues to the ethical performance of an individual, a public official, or an institution. Failure

13 Wirth, R.A. *Lewin/Schein's Change Theory*, <http://www.entarga.com/orgchange/lewinschein.pdf>, 2004.

14 Svensson, J. "Eight Questions about Corruption" in *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, n. 19/3, 2005, p.21.

15 Graaf, G. de "Causes of Corruption: Towards a Contextual Theory of Corruption" in *Public Administration Quarterly*, n. 31/1, Spring, 2007, p. 39.

16 Zirnsak, M.; Clarke, K.; Feith, A. *From Corruption to Good Governance*, <http://victas.uca.org.au/main.php?pg=download&id=219239>, March, 2008 p. 9.

17 Warren, M.E. "Democracy and Deceit: Regulating Appearances of Corruption" in *American Journal of Political Science*, n. 50/1, January, 2006, p. 161.

in this respect, «disempowers» citizens by denying them participation, or the «means for inclusion in public judgments»¹⁸.

Competing representations contribute to dissipating strategies and efforts of fighting corruption as they serve to undercut consensus on the issue, and challenge any common frame of reference that would guide policy action. This may not be merely a *cause* for failing to grasp the issue but perhaps also an *effect* of the immense complexity or wickedness of the problem and how to confront it. Corruption involves a most intricate and elaborate labyrinth of human moral, cognitive and social processes. These range from the psychological and ideological to externally imposed agendas, the economic, the political, the socio-cultural and the technological. It is contagious and nebulous, and in fact «can be attributed to almost anything»¹⁹. In poorer and transitional countries where corruption is structural, pervasive and endemic, and despite its harmful impact on “good governance”, “sustainable development”, and “human justice”, it is considered to be something of a natural order. It is the way things are done in the conduct of business and governance, “habitualized” and “institutionalized” into the social fabric, rationalized and justified. Reasons to fight it or oppose it are weakly internalized so as to sustain any significant counter collective action. The system continues to self-reproduce until “conducting personal and public affairs eventually collapses” and as “rotteness” strikes at the core, society and the State are rendered «incapable of facing major outside challenges. Then, the price is very high in terms of uncertainty, loss of trust, and risky supersession at best – and civil unrest, revolt, and bloody revolution at worst»²⁰. Corruption in those terms reflects a «symptom of something gone wrong in the management of the state»²¹.

This does not mean that the whole blame is to be rested on the shoulders of the “system”, guilty as it may be, while exonerating individuals and group agents, explaining corrupt behavior by causes beyond their control. This would allow the «corrupt agent» to disappear together with the phenomenon under observation, despite that agent being a source of corruption. Agency consequently would be

18 Ivi, p. 160.

19 Caiden, G.E. “Corruption and Governance” in Caiden, G.E.; Dwivedi, O.P.; Jabbra, J. (eds.) *Where Corruption Lives*, Bloomfield, CT, USA, Kumarian Press Inc, 2001, pp. 21-26.

20 Ivi, p.2.

21 UNDP *Corruption and Good Governance*, Discussion Paper 3, Management Development and Governance Division, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, New York, UNDP, July, 1997, p.11, http://www.undp.org/governance/docs/AC_Pub_corruption-goodgov.pdf
Graaf, G. *op. cit.*

reduced to «background characteristics, translated into variables»²²; essentially that is, «swallowing» the whole «subject matter». On the contrary, this is to highlight agency and emphasize corruption as a *collective responsibility* susceptible to forms of *collective punishment* and sanctions. Such recourse is justified by the nature and *wickedness* of the problem and applies to the system, state, government as well as groups and individuals.

While it is apt to refer to corruption as evil, wrong, and immoral, the term ‘wicked,’ as conceived back in the early 1970s by Rittel and Webber²³, did not envisage negative ethical attachments to any particular issue. Rather, it was to contrast it with a tame, well-structured social problem. Wicked, as has been applied in this context was used to refer to the “malignant”, “vicious”, “tricky”, and “aggressive” nature of a social problem rather than to “malicious intent”²⁴. This analytical distinction does not hold when dealing with the problem of corruption. In addition to being difficult to formulate, with no “stopping rule” or final and clearly identifiable solution, and in many cases symptomatic of other problems²⁵, corruption is also wicked in an ethico-moral sense. It is wicked as a problem and as a value. Yet, this does not simplify matters much. For while it may be possible to develop a consensus of condemnation in the abstract, this is likely to breakdown once action and policy are undertaken, and “interests” threatened. In other cases and quite significantly, measures to fight corruption may end up instead producing adverse outcomes. One then, is faced with the *ambiguous* task of having to “weigh” trade-offs – what one hopes to achieve versus potential losses. In terms of *unintended consequences* even ethical decisions to provide incentives to reduce bribery incidences, cannot be defined as correct or incorrect, right or wrong, good or bad²⁶. One study for instance found that policy measures providing incentives or positive sanctions to fight bribery have created in some cases, inducements for extortion – a greater evil²⁷. The “ramifications” of the problem solving decision turn out to be confusing, and suggested solutions end up being in many cases, worse than the symptoms; hence wickedness²⁸. A more

22 Wildavsky, A. *New York Times Book Review*, April 27, 1980, p. 12.

23 Rittel, H.W.J.; Rittel, W.; Melvin, M. *op. cit.*

24 Ivi, p. 160-61.

25 Ivi, pp. 161-165.

26 Ivi, p. 162. See Simon, H.A. *op. cit.*

27 Khalil, F.; Lawr  e, J.; Yun, S. “Bribery versus extortion: allowing the lesser of two evils” in *The Rand Journal of Economics*, n. 41/1, Spring, 2010, p.179.

28 Churchman, C.W. “Wicked Problems” in *Management Science*, n. 14/4, December, 1967, p. B-142.

insidious component of such wickedness is that the margin of error is limited and in many ways quite risky. Once a decision has been made to confront the phenomenon, which must be first and foremost a political decision, failure is not an option. There is “no right to be wrong” so to speak²⁹. With all its intricacies, corruption is like a hornet’s nest. Either one burns it down in its entirety or suffers the consequences of being painfully, if not fatally, stung by its agitated inhabitants. Half hearted, skeptical or insincere measures may very well incite a vicious response that would enshrine a self assured corruption structure against a seemingly weak or failed state. Good and well intentioned laws may end up causing social unrest and unraveling activities³⁰ exacerbating the «softness of the state»³¹. Thus, in addition to being a matter of collective moral and social responsibility, fighting corruption is also a matter of national security and high politics.

Corruption, particularly where it is structural, pervasive and endemic, is one of those problems which beg some form of «resolution», where at best the «system of problems» or «mess»³² can only be iteratively «re-solved – over and over again»³³; the type of response that may address a particular problem or aspect of it but at the same time creates a new set of problems. What this means is that no definite *solution* to the social «mess»³⁴ of corruption is or can be proposed. At the same time, corruption is perceived here as wicked not as a matter of *definite* representation, but as a worst case *scenario* among better hopefuls, in order not to underestimate its complexity. If the problem happens to turn out to be tamer than it actually appears to be, then well and good. After all there are societies that have gone a long way toward minimizing levels of societal corruption. Whether their examples can be replicated is a contingent matter which depends on context, situation and environment as well as leadership and a host of other factors. For there is always the alternative possibility that once the system of corruption gets

29 Rittel, H.W.J.; Rittel, W.; Melvin, M. *op. cit.*, p. 166.

30 Dobel, J.P. “The Corruption of a State” in *The American Political Science Review*, n. 72/3, September, 1978, p. 972.

31 Caiden, G.E. *op. cit.*, p. 31.

32 According to Ackoff, R. *op. cit.*, p. 21: «[...] no problem ever exists in complete isolation. Every problem interacts with other problems and is therefore part of a set of interrelated problems, a *system of problems* [...] I choose to call such a system a *mess*».

33 Ackoff, R. *Redesigning the Future*, New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1974, pp. 21 e 33; Rittel, H.W.J.; Rittel, W.; Melvin, M. *op. cit.*, p. 160.

34 Ackoff, R. *op. cit.*, p. 21.

on top of things «it stays there»³⁵. Hence, readymade representations of «good governance» mechanisms as the «one best way» may not be totally relevant to the problem at hand.

3. On governance

The concept of governance and for that matter “good” governance is a term that has become increasingly in vogue since the 1990s. Yet it remains contested and ambiguous, lacking in precision or contextual meaning³⁶. One definition referred to it as the processes of decision making and implementation in broad terms so as to include both formal and informal actors³⁷. This was quite similar to Keohane and Nye’s definition, who in addition to incorporating both the former actors, identified *government* as a «subset» of governance, rather than as a synonym, «that acts with authority and creates formal obligations»³⁸. Both definitions tended to agree about the expansiveness of the concept and its applicability to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious leaders, research institutes, political parties, businessmen among others, constituting what is termed “civil society”, as well as to corporate governance, international governance, national governance and local governance³⁹. Eight characteristics or tools were attributed to good governance as techniques and means of fighting corruption, namely, participation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, equity and inclusiveness, consensus orientation and following the rule of law. These are then presented as the ideal that is to be strived for and brought to “reality”⁴⁰.

From a more focused administrative point of view however, Rod Rhodes perceived governance as «self-organizing, interorganizational networks characterized by interdependence, resource-exchange, rules of the game, and significant autonomy from the state»⁴¹. Ironically, this same definition can apply

35 Rothstein, B.; Uslaner, E.M. “All for All: Equality, Corruption and Social Trust” in *World Politics*, n. 58/1, November, 2005, p. 72.

36 Kjaer, A.M. *Governance*, UK, Polity Press, 2004, p. 2.

37 UNESCAP 1, <http://www.unescap.org/pdd/prs/ProjectActivities/Ongoing/gg/governance.pdf>.

38 Pollitt, C.; Boukaert, G. *Public Management Reform*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, P. 10.

39 UNESCAP 1, *op. cit.*; Pollitt, C.; Boukaert, G. *op. cit.*

40 UNESCAP 2-3, <http://www.unescap.org/pdd/prs/ProjectActivities/Ongoing/gg/governance.pdf>.

41 Kjaer, A.M. *op. cit.*, p. 3.

to the very concept of corruption in societies where it is structural, pervasive and endemic. So pervasive it becomes that it incorporates most, if not all, the characteristics of the above definitions. Corruption very well constitutes self organizing, interdependent, formal or informal networks, with their own rules of engagement and resource exchange, autonomous of the state or even in control of it. Most of the criteria of good governance mentioned above thus become quite irrelevant. In fact, due to the pervasiveness of corruption, people may accept and participate in it even when *conscious* of the error of its ways⁴². Through a continuous process of 'denial' they may condemn corruption verbally but resist attempts at breaking its networks as many adapt to its order of things. This constitutes a "social dilemma", where despite the fact that people do understand the situation and the disastrous consequences of their own attitudes, they are unable or continue to be unwilling to do anything about it⁴³. Christopher J. Anderson and Yliya V. Tverdova⁴⁴ for instance, observed that political allegiances in modern democracies filter perceptions or negative attitudes toward corruption depending on whether a group of people supports the government or not. This raises the question as to whether this group is guilty by association and therefore collectively responsible for corruption as well as deserving of concomitant collective punishment.

Even in civil society, informal NGOs are not above suspicion either. In most cases, they are funded and controlled by external actors with their own *agendas*, including, as Gerald Segal has put it, encouraging capitalism's secret weapon – an apolitical middle class, and empowering business leaders through trade, in order to create presumably alternative centers of power⁴⁵. Yet in many cases, both business leaders and the terms of *trade* are a major source of corruption. As alternative centers of power they either become autonomous of the state, with external commitment and support, or in fact become the state; establishing a form of a kleptocracy or what has come to be termed «state capture»⁴⁶. This

42 You, J.-S.; Khagram, S. "A Comparative Study of Inequality and Corruption" in *American Sociological Review*, n. 70/1, 2005, p. 139.

43 Kollock, P. "Social Dilemmas: The Anatomy of Cooperation" in *Annual Review of Sociology*, n. 24, 1998, p. 185.

44 Anderson, C.J.; Tverdova, Y.V. "Corruption, Political Allegiances, Attitude toward Government in Contemporary Democracies" in *American Journal of Political Science*, n. 47/1, January, 2003, pp. 91-109.

45 Segal, G. "Not Bombs But Baywatch" in *Newsweek*, March 8, 1998, p. 2.

46 Hellman, J.S.; Jones, G.; Kaufmann, D. "Seize the State, Seize the Day: State Capture, Corruption, and Influence in Transition" in *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 2444*, September, 2000, pp. 1-44.

«wicked» problem and by its very nature, is «enmeshed in established ways of life and patterns of thinking»⁴⁷ as the boundaries between kleptocracy on one hand, and freedom and free market on the other, wither away. Adding to wickedness is a situation where “civil society”, in many countries, fails to materialize as what may be designated the “corrupt society” replaces any semblance of the former, and as *democracy*, particularly in states with weak controls, can be a source of corruption and crime especially in societies with high socio-economic inequality levels, as the two separate studies of Rose-Ackerman, and You and Khagram have observed⁴⁸.

In this sense, corruption reflects a form of governance or in fact, *is* governance, for to *capture* the state as well as the society is to run both⁴⁹.

In order to avoid arriving at such an “undesirable” conclusion Hellman and Kaufman introduced the concept of *state capture* as an alternative term to salvage that of “governance”; perhaps also as a means to circumvent the wicked problem. State capture is defined as «the efforts of firms (or such groups as the military, ethnic groups or kleptocracies, formal or informal) to shape the laws, policies, and regulations of the state to their own advantage by providing illicit private gains to public officials»⁵⁰. It involves «parliament [legislative] capture», «*executive decree capture*», controlling and influencing the «*formulation*» and «*content*» of laws and regulations (e.g. courts capture), and shaping the «basic rules of the game». As such, state capture is «closely embedded in political processes» as well as in legal and economic activities (e.g. banks capture)⁵¹. With such extensive control, state capture reflects «not merely a *symptom* but also a *fundamental cause* of poor governance» as

47 Clarke, M.; Stewart, J. “Handling the Wicked Issues” in Jill, R.; Jeanette, H.; Janet, S.; *et al.* (eds.) *The Managing Care Reader*, London, Routledge, 2003, p. 274.

48 Rose-Ackerman, S. “Trust and Honesty in Post-Socialist Societies” in *Kyklos*, n. 54, 2001, p. 417; You, J.-S.; Khagram, S. *op. cit.*, p. 155.

49 In fact, “state capture” fuses two unvirtuous concepts, *Kleptocracy* and *Kakistocracy*. The first one refers to a rule or government by thieves; from Greek *kleptes* (thieves) and *kratos* (government, rule) (Wordsmith Words 2010a; Oxford English Dictionary 2010) and the latter to the government by the worst, least qualified or most unprincipled and unscrupulous citizens; from Greek *kakistos* (worst) + *-kratos* (government, rule). (Wordsmith Words 2010b; Oxford English Dictionary 2010). Together they combine the economic and political capture of the state and this is what makes the problem of corruption “wicked” both ethically and in terms of having no possible solution. This fusion is common among many regimes in less developed as well as transitional countries. The Mubarak regime of Egypt was an archetypal case in point.

50 Hellman, J.; Kaufmann, D. “Confronting the Challenge of State Capture in Transition Economies” in *Finance & Development*, n. 28/3, 2001.

51 Anderson, J.H.; Gray, Cheryl, W. *Anticorruption in Transition 3*, Washington DC, Worldbank, 2006, pp. 3, 7, 29, 85, 86; Hellman, J.S.; Jones, G.; Kaufmann, D. “Seize the State, Seize the Day: State Capture, Corruption, and Influence in Transition...” *cit.*, p. 3.

«collusion between powerful firms and state officials [...] reap substantial private gains from the continuation of weak governance»⁵². Reading through the above definitions and understandings of state capture, its characteristics and what the term is all about, one cannot but infer it to be government as well as governance. In a rather candid admission of such a reality former Russian President Vladimir Putin in a meeting with Russia's business leaders in July 2000 stated,

I only want to draw your attention straightaway to the fact that you have yourselves formed this very state, to a large extent through political and quasi-political structures under your control. So perhaps what one should do least of all is blame the mirror⁵³.

This condition of course, does not apply to Russia alone⁵⁴. Yet if such is the case, then what we are observing in countries or societies with rampant corruption is not merely a relationship of influence or control, but of *immanence*. In such morally, politically, socially and economically corrupt and decaying states or societies, *governance*, *state capture* and *corruption* merge and fuse; they become largely interchangeable, leading to a state of «banality of wrongdoing»⁵⁵. The proposed governance re-resolution becomes the problem as the very concept of «good governance» fluctuates from being an «insight» to being nothing more than a «cliché»⁵⁶.

An important point worth drawing attention to in this context pertains to the change in the very conception of the role of the state and how this served to affect incidences of corruption. Traditionally, the modern state was expected to play the role of a sovereign power structure that aimed at projecting national economic demands onto the international system. As opposed to this image, neoliberal notions of global interdependence came to perceive the state as the instrument through which external demands of capital flows are imposed on domestic groups.

52 Hellman, J.; Kaufmann, D. "Confronting the Challenge of State Capture in Transition Economies..." cit.

53 Quoted in Hellman, J.S.; Jones, G.; Kaufmann, D. "Seize the State, Seize the Day: State Capture, Corruption, and Influence in Transition..." cit, pp. 1-2; Hoffman, D. "Putin Aims to Assure Tycoons: Russian Disavows Pressure by Police" in *Washington Post*, July 29, 2000, p. A1.

54 Bhargava, V.; Bolongaita, E. *Challenging Corruption in Asia*, Washington D.C., World Bank Publications, 2004, p. 136.

55 Moody-Adams, M.M. "Culture, Responsibility, and Affected Ignorance" in *Ethics*, n. 104/2, 1994, p. 299.

56 Schmitt, M. "Transparency for What" in *The American Prospect*, n. 21/2, March, 2010, p. A10.

This in fact, constituted a reversal of its earlier role⁵⁷. Whereas bureaucracy reflected the organizational structure which served the interests of the national state, *state capture*, bearing the seemingly benign term of “management reform”, constituted the changing domestic equivalent, mirroring demands of global capital flow. State capture has in reality become a demand of transnational capital and foreign direct investment, for economic but also political and strategic interests. Global attitude toward commensurate corruption thus, came to depend on the extent to which this behavior facilitated or stalled such demands. Where it *enabled* interests of the kind, it was tolerated if not encouraged. When it constituted a *hindrance* or a loss, it was condemned. This helps explain ambivalent attitudes toward such behavior and sheds light on the ecology of the reciprocally supporting connections between globalization, governance and pervasive corruption, as the latter has simply come to reflect the *politics* of global capital flow. Globalization, in this sense becomes a process characterized by mutually constituting states and markets as well as by continuously decreasing mediation between states and citizens and incessantly increasing pecuniary mediation of social relations⁵⁸. As the formal and functional role of the state as the sole monopolizer of coercive power recedes in favour of global and external influences, marketing agents resort to hire or finance *informal* “specialists” in the use of violence such as, militias or mafias, but where tribes, subnational as well as supranational groupings may also play an important role. This becomes the means to self-protect but also «to enforce contract and assure property rights». Actors with comparative advantage in the use of force are equally willing to extort a share of production from direct producers as they increasingly come to replace the state as alternative centers of power⁵⁹. *Security*, let alone other needs, becomes a marketing enterprise. Modern globalized *marketing* as Ignacio Ramonet insightfully observed, «has become so sophisticated that it aims to sell not just a brand name or social sign, but an identity. It’s all based on the principle that *having is being*»⁶⁰. In a world of scarcity, inequality and anxiety, *having* in order to *be* is conducive to, and helps explain why, corruption, the ripping apart of the fabric of ethical intersubjectivities, the destruction of vital forms of organizational structures and the degradation of human relations, and moral values in the global

57 Clark, I. *Globalization and International Relations Theory*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 94.

58 Schwartz, H. “Globalization: The Long View” in Richard, S.; Underhill, G. *Political Economy and the Changing Global Order*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2005.

59 *Ibidem*.

60 Asad, T. *Formations of the Secular*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 152.

market, are being normalized as a way of life⁶¹. This creates the *corrupt identity* and from thereon, the *corrupt society* which at its extreme, becomes the *insane society* – the “unadjustment” of the entire culture itself rather than just individuals⁶².

4. On corruption, path dependency and bribery: the contagion of illegitimacy

If the above analysis and inferences are correct, then what we have here in fact is an institutionalized phenomenon – corruption that is, as *institution*. «Institutions are concentrations of power in the service of some value. A correlation between power and commitment to a certain value is thus the defining characteristic of an institution and determines its causal impact on social life»⁶³. An effective way of dealing with institutionalized corruption is through altering institutional power relations. For instance, if commitment to bribery is a defining (negative) value, then shifting the power relations between the corrupt civil servant and the individual seeking service, may be an important factor in changing behavior, while still maintaining an organization’s basic structure.

The question of how to fight corruption becomes one of how to perform acts of institutional *subversion* through both *endogenous* and/or *exogenous* imperatives i.e. to transform, demolish, deconstruct, infuse and rebuild institutions and their concomitant structures. Structures and policies, or the *institutional frame*, consequently, must “fit” the contingencies of “environment”, “size” and “strategy”⁶⁴ in order to be able, somewhere, to break the vicious and self-reproducing order of corruption. Some suggested concepts and tools which may be relevant toward this end and which take environment, size and strategy into consideration include collective responsibility, punishment and/or sanctions, and modified vendetta. Integrated together this helps in constructing a common and alternative conceptual framework or strategic perspective where fighting corruption becomes intertwined with institutional perspectives and collective behavioral change.

61 Sabet, A.G.E. *Islam and the Political: Theory, Governance and International Relations*, London, Pluto Press, 2008, p. 242.

62 Fromm, E. *The Sane Society*, New York, Henry Holt & Company, 1955, p. 6.

63 Stinchcombe, A. *Constructing Social Theories*, New York, Harcourt Brace, 1968, pp. 9-10.

64 Donaldson, L. *The Contingency Theory of Organizations*, first edition, Thousand Oaks, USA, Sage Publications, 2001, p. 3.

In order to move in this direction it may help to seek a common or “foundational” principle that permeates the dynamics of corruption in all its forms and characteristics. Admittedly this incorporates an element of subjectivity, but the attempt nevertheless, remains worthwhile. For the purposes of parsimony, *path dependency* is chosen as the defining characteristic, *bribery* as the defining form. The connected dynamics of both elements contribute to perpetuating the *environment* in which individuals and groups function, largely shaping both their *values* and *behavior*. Together they constitute the “contagion of [il]legitimacy” or the *structure* which “infects”, institutionalizes and socializes *agents* into this mess. To fight corruption therefore is to strike at those two conceptual elements by providing relevant counter-tools and mechanisms. Such tools and mechanisms do not have to do everything well, they only have to do something well⁶⁵. One that is, should not harbor ambitions for a “doing it all” or “one all purpose” tools or mechanisms, as this rarely is feasible⁶⁶. They need not be there to eradicate all corruption, but perhaps only one aspect of it – bribery. Choice may be informed by the same logic that J.T.J. Noonan has insightfully and parsimoniously applied when he observed that, «[a]s a world evil», «corruption», defined as bribery,

is not as bad as the exploitation of children by child slavery, child prostitution, child pornography, and child labor. Corruption is not as destructive of life as AIDS or as tobacco or some drugs. Corruption control may not be as vital to the planet’s health as arms control. All of these subjects may be more important globally than bribery. But the reduction, if not the elimination, of bribery may be the key to reducing each of the other evils⁶⁷.

In other words, bribery is identified and represented as a «weakest strategic component» which to a great measure determines corruption combating performance at all other levels⁶⁸; a center of gravity so to speak. The mechanisms and tools to be chosen and used for that purpose must be representative and relevant to the problem at hand, specifically made to serve its focus. To improve

65 Rigby, D.K. “Managing the Management Tools” in *Planning Review*, n. 22/5, Sept/Oct, 1994, p. 23.

66 Rigby, D.K. “Management Tools and Techniques: A Survey” in *California Management Review*, n. 43/2, Winter, 2001, p. 158; Rigby, D.K. “Managing the Management Tools...” cit., p. 24.

67 Quoted in Lennerfors, T.T. *The Vicissitudes of Corruption*, Published PhD dissertation, Stockholm, Royal Institute of Technology, 2008, pp. 13-14.

68 Rigby, D.K. “How to Manage the Management Tools” in *Planning Review*, n. 21/6, Nov/Dec, 1993, p. 9.

the level of performance and probability of success in implementation, two main conditions are necessary, ideally speaking, a- strong top-down support and commitment from the political hierarchy and; b- chosen tools and mechanisms should be used in a «major effort» and as «linchpins» not as a «limited initiative» i.e. «go deep, not broad»⁶⁹.

Focusing on bribery may still be a broad effort given its pervasiveness. At an early stage of policy implementation it may be better still to narrow focus further on a particular organization or (sub)sector (e.g. corrupt police force which presumably is responsible for law enforcement) where the full force and brunt of the tools and mechanisms could be applied. Maximizing “major” effort while minimizing target space may not only increase desirable outcome levels, but may also create a shock wave or “*ripple effect*” that spreads onto other domains or sectors bringing about an additional desired outcome elsewhere, even if one cannot fully anticipate its characteristics, while helping economize on energy. By going *deeper*, one at the same time, can go *broader*, as change in the performance of one institution or sub-institutional structure can very well affect the functioning of others.

The second component or the path dependency of corruption relates to the mechanisms of reproduction which sustain this perverse institution. It is beyond the scope here to examine all the specific causes or mechanisms of reproduction which serve to perpetuate this behavior. The point remains however, that an institutional approach offers “insights” into the nature of both endogenous and exogenous influences or even shocks, which may help bring about a “breakdown” or “decay” in such a highly resilient institutionalized corruption⁷⁰.

Path dependence «characterizes specifically those historical sequences in which contingent events set into motion institutional patterns or event chains that have deterministic (self-reinforcing) properties»⁷¹. One interesting study which corroborated his findings has been conducted by Jean Tirole⁷², who attempted to examine the persistence of corruption. The study started with a hypothetical steady state low corruption economy that was subjected to a perturbation, at an initial date zero, resulting in a «one-shot increase in the gain to being corrupt (or

69 Rigby, D.K. “Management Tools and Techniques: A Survey...” cit., pp. 152, 154.

70 Thelen, K. “How Institutions Evolve” in Mahoney, J.; Rueschemeyer, D. (eds.) *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge, NY, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 209.

71 Mahoney, J. “Path Dependence in Historical Sociology” in *Theory and Society*, n. 29/4, August, 2000, pp. 507-508.

72 Tirole, J. “A Theory of Collective Reputations (with applications to the persistence of corruption and to firm quality)” in *Review of Economic Studies*, n. 63, 1996, pp. 1-22.

a relaxation in the enforcement of anticorruption laws)»⁷³. He found that in «the unique continuation equilibrium» the temporary increase in corruption due to an initial temporary perturbation, transformed into a long term condition. The economy is unable to return to the earlier low corruption steady state, and must therefore remain corrupt. The agents at time zero have already “smeared” their reputation with more incentives to engage in corruption than if they had always remained honest. They have already been «locked into corruption»⁷⁴, so to speak, as the honesty barrier has been broken. *Past* behavior of this group’s members conditions both this group’s, as well as its individuals’ *current* behavior. A pattern of path dependency is established and «poor collective behavior in the past [...] make current good behavior a low-yield individual investment», generating «poor collective behavior in the future»⁷⁵. What we get here is a situation where, as William H. Sewell has described it, «what has happened at an earlier point in time» affects «the possible outcomes of a sequence of events occurring at a later point in time»⁷⁶. The result is a “vicious circle of corruption”, leading to such behavior becoming structural, pervasive and persistent. Going further beyond mere bribery, the members of the group may deliberately seek to sustain a reputation of being corrupt in order to extract or extort their “trading” partners⁷⁷. Consequently, even a “one-shot” enforcement of anticorruption laws leading to some measure of short term reduction in corrupt activities would have no permanent impact as corruption “ratchets up” rather than “down”⁷⁸.

4.1 Path dependency and change, Kurt Lewin revisited

Path dependency implies stability, persistence, and continuity. Decisions are influenced by earlier decisions, forcing corrupt behavior and fomenting a corrupt culture, reproduced in a self-generative form. It becomes institutionalized as its structures, actions and roles proliferate. The question of dealing with institutionalized corruption becomes one of how to break its path dependency and the “rigidities” it creates. What *tools*, if any, may serve this purpose? How may it be possible to bring about or allow for an endogenous process of “creative destruction”

73 Ivi, p. 3.

74 *Ibidem*.

75 Ivi, p. 18.

76 Thelen, K. *op. cit.*, p. 218.

77 Tirole, J. *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.

78 Ivi, pp. 3, 10.

capable of undermining corruption “*from within*”⁷⁹ with or without necessarily having to demolish an entire administrative structure, such as the bureaucracy for instance, with it? In a society where corruption is pervasive, connecting the concept of the *collective* to Kurt Lewin’s theory of change may help contribute to developing such contextual tools.

Lewin underscored the broad conditions that could bring about change in human behavior in terms of a balance of opposing, driving and restraining, forces. He observed that it was more important to remove the “*restraining*” forces which resisted change than merely to consolidate the opposing “*driving*” forces, even though change from an earlier equilibrium was possible only when the latter were more powerful than the former. The model comprised of three steps, a-unfreeze (create a felt need for change), b-change (attitudinal or behavioral modification or conversion) and, c-re-freeze (institutionalizing and reinforcing the change in behavior)⁸⁰ the first step disconfirms, the second drives, and the third locks-in.

Unfreezing a corrupt situation or, the *path dependent status quo* equilibrium, takes place under “*complex psychological*” (agent) as well as *structural* conditions. This is due to the fact that a driving force in one direction almost inevitably produces counter restraining forces in the opposite direction in order to preserve the equilibrium⁸¹. Those involved in corrupt behavior will resist any type of change that would disrupt the benefits that accrue to them from such an attitude. Unless of course some increased benefit or cost is sufficiently involved and a fundamental change in their perceptions of the situation has been brought about.⁸² The purpose here is to increase the driving forces, reduce their restraining counterparts, and to introduce “*implicit*” as well as “*explicit*” consciousness altering modifications⁸³. The latter involves creating an awareness that corruption “*demoralizes the human*

79 Schumpeter, J. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, London, Unwin University Books, 1970, p. 83.

80 Schein, E.H. *Kurt Lewin’s Change Theory in the Field and in the Classroom: Notes Toward a Model of Managed Learning*, 1995, <http://www2.tech.purdue.edu/Ols/courses/ols582/SWP-3821-32871445.pdf>, p. 2; Mathews, J. “Models of Change Management: A Reanalysis” in *The IUP Journal of Business Strategy*, n. 6/2, p. 7.

81 Schein, E.H. *op. cit.*

82 “Lewin observed behavior and change to be a function of the individual (agent) and the environment (structure). He set the formula as follows, $B = f(P, E)$ where behavior (B) is a function of the person (P) and the environment (E)” Coghlan, D.; Jacob, C. “Kurt Lewin on Reeducation” in *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, n. 41/4, December, 2005, p. 446.

83 Mathews, J. “Models of Change Management: A Reanalysis” in *The IUP Journal of Business Strategy*, n. 6/2, 2009, p. 7; Anderson, B.; Klein, E.; Stuart, J. “Why Change is a Consciousness Choice” in *The Journal for Quality and Participation*, Jan/Feb, 2000, p. 32-36.

spirit” even if the waste it causes in terms of energy and resources is not individually clearly observable⁸⁴. This constitutes the motivational, disconfirming stage.

Change involves moving to a new equilibrium through some form of “institutional conversion”⁸⁵ “reeducation”⁸⁶ or, environmental shift. An ecological shift shocks institutions into conversion away from earlier objectives toward other ends by confronting actors with different sets of issues and problems, causing them to re-conceptualize the entire institutional culture in favor of a *behavioral* change⁸⁷. It creates a situation of so called “survival anxiety”⁸⁸. This means that the path dependent status quo, corruption in this case, must be perceived or deemed not only inappropriate and unethical, but also very costly, both individually and collectively, rendering identification with it, of any kind or form, self-defeating. Behavioral change, as a most effective way of transforming culture, or the mental programming of the mind, as Geert Hofstede has designated it⁸⁹, is to be followed by or commensurately associated with a process of *reeducation*, the “unlearning” of «patterns of thinking and acting that are well established in individuals and groups and operates at the level of norms and values expressed in action»⁹⁰. In other words, change, whether environmental or institutional requires, as the content of such a change, both behavioral and values conversions, with the whole idea being to increase the cost of the path dependent status quo to intolerable levels.

Refreezing is the final stage which attempts to stall possibilities of reverting to an earlier or initial stage. It formally or informally *coopts*⁹¹ the agents, subjected to behavioral and values changes, into the new institutional structure, through different policies and procedures, as well as through commitment to and following up on replacing old attitudes with new alternatives. Together these elements constitute the new *legitimizing* and stabilizing tools and mechanisms. It is worth noting that this three-step model has been frequently and quite effectively used

84 Johnson, R.A. *Struggle against Corruption: A Comparative Study*, Gordonsville, VA, USA, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

85 Thelen, K. *op. cit.*, p. 228.

86 Coghlan, D.; Jacob, C. *op. cit.*

87 Thelen, K. *op. cit.*, p. 228.

88 Schein, E.H. *op. cit.*, p. 1.

89 Hofstede, G. *Culture's Consequences*, Thousand Oaks, California, Sage Publications, 2001, p. 12.

90 Coghlan, D.; Jacob, C. *op. cit.*, p. 446.

91 Selznick, P. “The Cooptative Mechanism” in Shafritz, J.M.; Hyde, A.C. *Classics of Public Administration*, 6th ed., International Student Edition, USA, Thompson Wadsworth. 2007, p. 143.

for political objectives of control, with various tools and mechanisms applied to politicize or depoliticize i.e. hold sway people, in one way or the other. It would be a relevant exercise to apply it to *administrative* ethics in an attempt to de-corrupt or sanitize a corrupt environment, as well.

4.2 *Collective responsibility, collective punishment and modified vendetta*

Lewin constructed his model with the purpose of analytically identifying the steps that ought to be followed in order to bring about a desired change. However, he did not provide in clear terms what the agents of change should do in detail in order to accomplish such an objective⁹². In order to help launch the unfreezing stage, by which the “natural defense mechanisms” and “mental set”⁹³ of corrupt *group* identifications, may be surmounted, the notion of the ‘collective’ needs to be reinstated as a tool of change.

Collective sanctions refer to a situation in which, «when an individual violates or complies with a rule, not merely the individual but other members of that person’s group as well are collectively punished or rewarded by an external agent»⁹⁴. Its punitive aspect aims at pervasive corruption as an intentional and willful act of wrongdoing. In a collective sense it involves the *perpetrator*, the *accomplice* as well as possibly the *witness* or “*fellow traveler*”. The latter may have not been a direct accomplice or culprit, yet becomes indirectly so given that he could have done something to stop or report the wrongdoing but chose not to. In addition, the environment in which all three parties practice their agency also exerts a crucial influence. Pervasive societal and organizational corruption therefore, is to be perceived from the different perspective of collective responsibility and collective punishment, as a means of changing the environment structure by altering agents’ behavior and increasing the cost of maintaining the status quo. This requires a *major effort*, and if fighting corruption is to constitute such an effort, punishment may well have to be *disproportionate*. Collective sanctions as a representation of disproportionality based on the principle that corruption is a collective responsibility helps “unfreeze” a situation and break path dependencies and patterns, as a prelude

92 Levasseur, R.E. “People Skills: Change Management Tool – Lewin’s Change Model” in *Interfaces*, 31/4, Jul/Aug, p. 73; Mathews, J. “Models of Change Management: A Reanalysis” in *The IUP Journal of Business Strategy*, 6/2, 2009, p. 8.

93 Mintzberg, H.; Ahlstrand, B.; Lampel, J. *Strategy Safari*, London, Prentice Hall, 1998, p. 142.

94 Heckathron, D.D. “Collective Sanctions and the Creation of Prisoner’s Dilemma Norms” in *The American Journal of Sociology*, 94/3, November, 1988, pp. 535-536.

to changing behavior toward a new equilibrium. This is the case because a one time or sporadic anti-corruption campaigns by say, an autonomous or semi-autonomous supervisory agency, while they may reduce the level of corruption during the operation, frequently have no effect thereafter⁹⁵. Disproportionate sanctions can work both ways; not only in the direction of punishment but also in that of “*amnesty*”. According to Tirole’s study, amnesty, if feasible and depending on types of corruption involved, may be «*welfare enhancing out of [the] steady state*» of corruption⁹⁶. Offered to those who had committed such acts at some initial point say, time zero, «*yields a Pareto improvement*», and enables a group to return immediately to the low corruption steady state⁹⁷. Certainly, an amnesty is not possible in all cases, and should not be offered to the “big guys” as this would be a sign that *big guys* do get away with their misdeeds. Any subsequent anti-corruption discourse would consequently lose its credibility and as a result, no trust is likely to be restored. Amnesty therefore, should not be perceived as a means of escaping consequences of misdeeds. In fact, it serves the additional purpose of its opposite – disproportionate punishment. It helps to justify and set the psychological ground for applying a strict and collective form of retribution beyond any reasonable excuses that could be made. Those who commit any form of administrative corruption or bribery, after time zero, would be administratively penalized *individually*, as well as being subjected to severe legal repercussions, but also as part of a collective form of punishment, all for having wasted their “*second*” chance. The purpose is to help demoralize and weaken responsive defenses of a *potentially* corrupt cohort, as well as identifying an individual and collective focus of “responsible agency”⁹⁸. Such a regime provides individuals belonging to a particular group with “incentives to regulate one another’s behavior”, thus enforcing norm compliance and creating a social context in which a wrongdoing individual turns his entire group into a group of wrongdoers as well. For it is to be clear that when dealing with others, a corrupt individual “never stands alone”⁹⁹. This constitutes a form of “modified vendetta”

95 Tirole, J. “A Theory of Collective Reputations (with applications to the persistence of corruption and to firm quality” in *Review of Economic Studies*, 63, 1996, p. 11.

96 Ivi, p. 12.

97 Pareto improvement refers to a «set of alternative allocations of goods or outcomes for a set of individuals, [where] a change from one allocation to another [...] can make at least one individual better off without making any other individual worse off», *ibidem*.

98 Moody-Adams, M.M. *op. cit.*, p. 292.

99 Heckathron, D.D. *op. cit.*, pp. 535-536.

which recalls ancient tribal and group notions of informal and “unofficial” control and retaliation against aberrant behavior by an individual(s) belonging to a collective¹⁰⁰.

Such tools of collective sanctioning should be evaluated in relation to their “utility” not their “novelty” or linearity, as they exist for the benefit of the people not the other way round¹⁰¹, particularly when dealing with pervasive corruption in societies where the idea of the collective is not strange to their cultural or ethical values. In many of these societies, members can readily accept the notion of collective responsibility to an act committed by an individual within the group. Daryl J. Levinson for instance, suggested a strategy of «*delegated deterrence*» as an alternative conception by which the «responsibility for deterring individual wrongdoers is effectively delegated by an external sanctioner to a group that is well-situated to implement an efficient regulatory regimen»¹⁰². This constituted a form of «informal monitoring» mechanism or tool, delegating monitoring of individual members to the group. Internal informal monitoring is believed to be much more effective than, formal monitoring by an external agent¹⁰³, as it becomes a form of self-policing.

Collective sanctions and delegated deterrence however, are not the same, even if overlapping and their differences remain quite subtle. Collective sanctions create a condition designated by Lewin as «*interdependence of fate*», where a heterogeneous group comes to form a psychological construct, not because of any particular similarities among its members, but due to a feeling of a common fate, or due to a strong sense that the fate of each member as well as that of the group is interdependent. The stronger the interdependence of fate the more an individual would be expected to contribute to the group’s welfare. Delegated deterrence in turn strengthens this relation by creating «*task interdependence*» or common goals and objectives among a group of possibly diverse members¹⁰⁴. Both tools link the group members’ *task* and *fate* in such a way that if the group as a whole fails to perform the task of monitoring and policing corruption among itself, all members

100 Shipp, S. “Modified Vendettas as a Method of Punishing Corporations” in *Journal of Business Ethics*, n. 6/8, November, 1987, p. 606.

101 Rigby, Darrell K. “How to Manage the Management Tools...” cit., p. 15.

102 Levinson, D.J. “Collective Sanctions” in *NYU Law School, Public Law, Research Paper n. 57, and NYU, Center for Law and Business, Research Paper n. 03-04*, March 24, 2003, p. 5.

103 Heckathron, D.D. *op. cit.*, p. 538.

104 Smith, M.K. “Kurt Lewin: groups, experiential learning and action research” in <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-lewin.htm>. Pp. 1-13, 2001, pp. 2-3.

are punishable. «[N]ot because they are deemed collectively responsible for wrongdoing but simply because they are in an advantageous position to identify, monitor, and control responsible individuals – and can be motivated by the threat of sanctions to do so»¹⁰⁵. If and when such a mechanism does in fact produce a new equilibrium of norm compliance, the external agent can eventually establish significant influence over group behavior as both formal and informal regimes of control buttress each other¹⁰⁶.

It is possible however, that members of the entire group may choose to “*rebel*” and decide that all of them would take bribes. Since all of them are culprits, the assumption is that no one will have an incentive to endure the risk or responsibility of exposing the activity. This situation can however, be turned into an opportunity. For one thing, if all engage in taking bribes, such a group activity would become more visible and discernable to “*integrity*” agencies as well as their network of *informants*, thus reducing the costs and demands of monitoring. In addition, it should be made clear that collective culpability and/or connivance would lead to ratcheting punishment up not down, given that as individuals they have failed to perform their collective *task*. There is no room here for pointing a finger of blame toward somebody else. Reporting a person who takes bribes becomes simply an act of self-preservation as well as self-defense given that such a person who chose to commit this act has at the same time, chosen to jeopardize the welfare of those working with him. In this case he has already committed a threatening and detrimental act to all others, the entire group. He has broken the code of *interdependency*. Thus, when one or more members of the group, say, reports the corrupt activities of a coworker to a supervisory agency, this individual is not to be perceived necessarily as a “whistleblower” in the strict sense of the word. Knowing this is important in minimizing psychological hindrances that may be associated with possible feelings of having betrayed a coworker.

The application of the tool of *amnesty* may also be practical in this framework. Any individual or member of this group who exposes its corruption would become automatically immune from any kind of responsibility or liability even if at one point of time, he had engaged in this very same wrongdoing. “Honor among thieves”, or the minimal level of trust that must exist among them in order to continue to function effectively as a group or as a network, is to be undermined by creating a context or a permanent environment of distrust, anxiety and uncertainty – a sort of a pervasive prisoner’s dilemma. This would set *path dependency* under constant

105 Levinson, D.J. *op. cit.*, p. 4.

106 Heckathorn, D.D. *op. cit.*, p. 538-539.

stress, as past collaborative behavior need not ensure the same in the future. Each member of the group will constantly recognize that at any time in the future, one or more individuals may very well decide to defect or jump ship in order to save oneself, wipe the slate clean, or for any number of reasons, personal or otherwise. Distrust of the kind also serves to *unfreeze* the problem as it destabilizes the “rules of the game”, jolts people out of “moral lethargy” by bringing them around to the idea that one can still be guilty for shirking responsibility or doing nothing when one should have¹⁰⁷, and *subverts* corruption by turning it against itself.

107 Houston, B. “Taking Responsibility” in <http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-yearbook/2002/01-houston%2002.pdf>, 2002, pp. 1, 5; Rääkkä, J. “On Disassociating Onself from Collective Responsibility” in *Social Theory and Practice*, p. 23/1, Spring, 1997, pp. 93-108.

Ethiopia's accession to the League of Nations and its reflection in the European press in the 1920s and 1930s

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Introduction

The basic idea of the following chapter is that the image of Ethiopia was not created by Fascist Italians in the 1920's but only followed a long-lasting opinion that had been developing since at least the 16th century in Europe¹. It can be also seen as a conflict between idealized self-image and demonized counter-image, as a conflict between myths and images of the high and the low. That I will discuss mainly an image of Ethiopia presented in the European media is of great importance for the purpose of this work since media especially with the beginning of the 20th century became the means of propaganda and the most important tool how to extend influence and information. As discussed by Mikkonen², throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, media and the press have had a considerable impact on people's images and worldviews. Newspapers, diplomatic documents, correspondences of Europeans are thus the main tool how to analyse the process of imagining Ethiopia before the 1935 invasion.

First, we have to start with a brief overview of the process of creating the concept of "the otherness" in regard to Ethiopia. Modern Ethiopia is based on ancient Meroitic and Axumite kingdoms and as the Solomonic dynasty derived its origin from the king Solomon and Israel, it is clear that there existed a long-lasting tradition of contacts with the Near East and Mediterranean. First European came to Ethiopia in the 15th century and since that time we can see how Ethiopia was depicted. Beginning with missionaries and writers as Alessandro Zorzi³,

1 This study was previously published in *Asian and African Studies* in 2008.

2 Mikkonen, J. *Historical Imagology and the Modern Press*, Paper presented at the Conference on Imagology and Cross-cultural Encounters in History, Department of History, University of Oulu, Finland, 29-31 August 2007.

3 Crawford, O.S.G. *Ethiopian Itineraries circa 1400-1524. Including those collected by Alessandro Zorzi at Venice in the years 1519-1524*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1958.

Manoel de Almeida or Bahrey⁴, through the Czech Franciscan missionary Václav Remedijs Prutký⁵ to the late 18th and 19th century travelers as James Bruce, Henry Salt, Walter Plowden and many others, Ethiopia tended to be depicted in multi-dimensional way. On one hand, as a country with long history and high Semitic culture that adopted Christianity in the early period, on the other hand, as a country of barbarous, uncivilized people with savage manners and vicious beliefs. These images coincide with general European thinking for which a nomad/pastoralist was the lower, while sedentarist was the higher. In the late 19th century, after the battle of Adowa where Ethiopians defeated Italian invading army, Ethiopia gained an image of the “pure” African kingdom that maintained its independence against the “white” European power and Ethiopia-oriented millenarian ethos became a popular feature especially within the Afro-American community⁶, while for Europe Ethiopia remained somewhat backward country and a puzzle, since in European colonial thinking there was no space between “the colonizer” and “the colonized” in sub-Saharan Africa.

Andall and Duncan⁷ show that «Africa was seen by nineteenth century Europe as a land of unfettered sexual opportunity and this notion enjoyed unchallenged popularity in Italy until the late 1930's when legislation on inter-racial sexual liaisons lightened». Lombardi-Diop⁸ named her promising study concerning 19th century Italian explorers in Africa “Gifts, Sex, and Guns” which appropriately correlates to previous statements.

For a better understanding of how an image of Ethiopia was developing in the first third of the 20th century, it is necessary to see Italian Fascist view on Ethiopia in the context of a historical process that begun more or less in the 15th century with the first missionaries coming to Ethiopia. Image of Ethiopia as a country of black, Christians, barbarians, backward pastoralists and vicious beliefs simply prevailed until

4 Beckingham, C.F.; Huntingford, G.W.B. *Some Records of Ethiopia 1593-1646. Being extracts from The History of High Ethiopia or Abassia by Manouel de Almeida Together with Bahrey's History of the Galla*, London, The Hakluyt Society, 1954.

5 Arrowsmith-Brown, J.H. *Prutky's Travels in Ethiopia and Other Countries*, London, The Hakluyt Society, 1991.

6 Gebrekidan, F.N. *Bond without blood. A History of Ethiopian and New World Black Relations, 1896 - 1991*, Trenton - Asmara, Red Sea Press, 2005.

7 Andall, J.; Duncan, D. “Memories and Legacies of Italian Colonialism” in Andall, J.; Duncan, D. (eds.) *Italian Colonialism. Legacy and Memory*, Oxford, Paper Lang, 2005, p. 12.

8 Lombardi-Diop, C. “Gifts, Sex, and Guns. Nineteenth-Century Italian Explorers in Africa” in Palumbo, P. (ed.) *A Place in the Sun. Africa in Italian Colonial Culture from Post-Unification to the Present*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2003, pp. 119-137.

the 20th century, as Ethiopia became the most prominent representative of Africa. Previous images and new-born myths were used by Mussolini's government and those regarding Ethiopian antiquity and nobleness eliminated in order to legitimize the necessity to civilize the last African independent country. That it resulted in a perverse and brutal war that violated several international agreements is already beyond the scope of this study.

1. Press and Ethiopia

For Czechoslovakian press in the 1920s and 1930s Ethiopia was not an unknown country since several authors of honorable education, as dr. Alois Musil, from time to time had brought news from Ethiopia, as well as news concerning Ethiopian relations with major European countries. In *Venkov* in 1920s, Alois Musil⁹ wrote a series of articles where he tried to inform readers about local conditions and troubles that Ethiopia, as a member of the League of Nations was facing. Contrary to a majority of other newspaper articles written in Czechoslovakia in this period, Musil focuses mainly on the British economic and political ambitions in Ethiopia and writes with no scruples about "predatory" policy of the British trade firms in Ethiopia.

Musil tries to explain the British-Ethiopian relations in a complex set of aspects, one of which is the creation of an image. He argues that it was especially the British press who continually wrote about «Abyssinia as a backward country that needs some country to come and to create a protectorate or a mandate». Musil almost cynically explains the British motives and reserved position toward the Ethiopian accession to the League of Nations. The British attitude can be best described as follows:

The Englishmen excelled in clear view, persistence and frequently unscrupulousness. What they did not reach in one way, they tried to reach in another way. They started to speak and write about slavery and began to assert that the Christian Abyssinia is the last supporter of slave traders who are destroying villages of pagan blacks and capturing women and girls.

Musil, on defence of Ethiopia, claims that in the time of Ethiopia's accession to the League of Nations, there has already been no slavery and that the slaves in Ethiopia are descendants of slaves from the 19th century. It is not the aim of this

9 *Venkov* July 27, 1924, the article is called "The Struggle for Abyssinia".

study to explore whether there existed slavery or not in Ethiopia in the first half of the 20th century, but what is more interesting is that it was not only Italy, as one might suppose who used a massive propaganda in newspapers to create a public opinion leading to appropriate results.

Musil continued in his work for all the 1920s and in his article in the same journal¹⁰ four years later he gave readers a good overview of Ethiopia's international relations. Musil sees a position of Ethiopia as a country that was betrayed by its Christian partners, as he says that it would seem as if other Christian powers would do anything to strengthen power of their African Christian ally, but the opposite is true. In fact, he blames the European powers of hypocrisy, since on one hand they are boasting that they would defend interests of Christian all around the world, but on the other hand a brief look at the map of East Africa shows that behind these promises there is a stronger imperialistic effort. A very interesting look at internal Ethiopian policy is brought by dr. Musil in this article as he considers Ras Tafari a leader who does not intend to incense local leaders against him and thus he gives them free hand to oppress peasants and traders by new taxes and duties. Moreover, Musil states that Zewditu reigns and Tafari cares only about his own profit¹¹.

In regard to Musil's accounts on imagining Ethiopia by the British press, it is true that the first major "campaign" against the "state of disorder" in Ethiopia was spread by Westminister Gazette in 1922. In an article "The Scandal of Abyssinia", Ethiopia was portrayed in the following manner:

Abyssinia is the only remaining free and ondependent native State in Africa. It is also the last home of open slavery. In its Capital, Addis Ababa, there are more slaves than free men. The British Legation itself is full of slaves, owned by the Legation servants, who would not take service if they were not allowed to bring their chattels with them. The Legation compound is British soil, yet not only do slaves who enter it not become instantly free, but if they have escaped from their owners can and do enter it without hindrance to recapture. That is an odd-enough fact; but still odder one is that a great many of these slaves are British subjects captured by slave-raids into British territory¹².

In the article there then follow a discussion over character of the Ethiopian slave state. Abyssinia was according to Westminister Gazette independent only because the

10 *Venkov* June 3, 1928, the article is called simply "Abyssinia".

11 *Venkov* June 3, 1928.

12 *Westminster Gazette* January 18, 1922.

neighboring powers did not have any line of policy which they could follow in order to partition the territory. As the newspapers began to be interested in order and law in Ethiopia, it became popular to inform about the negative sides of Ethiopia's conditions:

...there is nothing in Abyssinia that can be described as "order" and as for the "law" it is quite useless to appeal to it unless the complaint is rich enough to purchase the justice he seeks, and even then it may still be useless if the defendant happens to have a powerful protector¹³.

Images of distant people and distant places are almost in every case based on stereotypes and myths. The developing pattern of images of Ethiopia coincides with the same pattern of images of Africa that has been developing since the 15th century until nowadays. Analysing the media and their relevance in regard to Africa (in this case Ethiopia), we see somewhat general agreement within major European newspapers. One of the key concepts of the study of the media influence is their role in creating fragmented and ambiguous images as well as sensation-seeking "nature", since sensations bring more readers. On the other hand, objectivity means to present antagonistic views. When media present only one view, one can hardly consider them objective¹⁴. Stereotyping the enemy is one of the oldest methods of propaganda. Stressing the differences between the "normal" and "abnormal", the "good" and the "bad" one, the "right" and the "wrong", the "acceptable" and the "unpleasant", the "modern" and the "traditional" propagandists tended to legitimize their approach usually leading to war.

In the case of British military intentions were replaced by economic motives leading to gain control over water resources on the Nile. Africa has always been a question of such interpretations, oppositions, stereotypes and prejudices. While Africa had "tribes", Europe was represented by "nations". The word "tribe" bears a negative connotation meaning "backward", "stateless", "ignorant", while "nation" is allowed to make historical deeds, nation makes progress, nation is noble. One of the major aspects of propaganda is tendency to eliminate the "good" and replace it by the "bad", the "positive" by the "negative". We can see somewhat similar scheme in the Westminster Gazette series of articles in regard to Ethiopia, where authors did not seek to inform the public objectively. A typical example of making differences between the "nobleness" of the ancient times and "primitiveness" of the present time can be seen in the following words:

13 Westminster Gazette January 18, 1922.

14 Mikkonen, J. *op. cit.*

Trade conditions in Abyssinia are, to put it mildly uncertain. There is no stability, not at present any foundations upon which a stable commercial system could be built up. Abyssinia is almost as large as France and Germany combined; it is the home of an ancient “Christian” civilization; and it is one of the richest countries in the world – richer, we believe, than any other country in Africa of similar size. Yet it is decaying. Vast areas are going out of cultivation, partly owing to brigandage and partly to slave-raiding. One of the writers recently passed through an outlying district, which, when he first visited ten years ago, was a remarkably prosperous and populous country. The soil was so fertile that the hills were terraced for cultivation. Today it is possible to march through this district for days without meeting a single human being, the terraces are still there, but the people who should be sowing and reaping are either dead or slaves in the capital. The whole country-side is abandoned to the jackals and the hyenas¹⁵.

While official Ethiopian and some European documents tended to oppose these statements widely extended first by the British, then by the Italian press and officials, contemporary Ethiopian intellectuals usually of non-Amhara origin agree with general conditions in Ethiopia as being described by the European press. If one can make some generalizing statements going slightly beyond the scope of this work, one can state that the image of Ethiopia (or better to say Abyssinia) as an undeveloped country that with the help of European machine guns conquered the country of Oromo and other people is increasing.

2. Perspectives on Ethiopian history

It generally coincides with the three basic ethno-nationalist perspectives on Ethiopian history which can be divided as follows: 1) nation-building perspective; 2) national oppression perspective; 3) colonization perspective. While nation-perspective regards to the process of empire-building during the second half of the 19th century, “national oppression” came into political vocabulary of the Ethiopian élites within the 1960s evolution of Ethiopian Student Movement, inspired by Marxism-Leninism. The colonial perspective is then connected to the Eritrean issue and question of Italian legacy as well as Ethiopian state from 1952 to 1991¹⁶.

15 *Westminster Gazette* January 19, 1925.

16 Gudina, M. “Contradictory Interpretations of Ethiopian History: the Need for a New Consensus” in Turton, D. (ed.) *Ethnic Federalism. The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford, James Currey, 2006, pp. 120-124.

In other words, rewriting the history of Ethiopia has a lot to do with Levine's¹⁷ suggestion of "Amhara thesis", "Oromo anti-thesis" and "Ethiopian synthesis" which had to be reached by 1994 constitution but does not seem to fulfill. Ethiopia under the rule of Menelik II, Ras Tafari/Haile Selassie is usually depicted by the Oromo political leaders as the only African country that participated in conquering and occupying other African territories. The fact is that colonialism does not differentiate color of skin, religion or continent¹⁸.

Oromo intellectuals have seemed to adopt the vocabulary of those European activists that sought to emphasize Ethiopia's inability to resolve its own domestic problems and thus stressed the necessity of some foreign rule. The rule of the Abyssinians over the native population of Ethiopian south is also suggestively described by the British writer Evelyn Waugh in his notes on Ethiopian war, where he states that «peoples in the south and west treated with wanton brutality unequalled even in the Belgian Congo...» while at other place continues with the statement that «the Abyssinian officials, with retinues which varied in size from royal guard to a standing army, lived upon the work and taxes of the original inhabitants; their function was not to protect but to hold in subjection; fighting was the only occupation they recognized»¹⁹. In many works the general view on the Amhara-Oromo relation can be summarized as follows: «Oromo were not considered human beings by Abyssinians, but property to be owned and sold. Oromo peasants were given to the colonial settlers and local landlords to be "eaten"»²⁰.

What is common to both European press and the government opposition in Ethiopia is its depiction of Haile Sellassie as a ruler who violates international agreements or who exploited non-Amhara territories²¹. European colonial thinking was in this sense single-track as we can read in different contemporary sources that «Africa is Africa»²² which says even more about the then anthropological and colonial discourse than huge amounts of diplomatic and historical books. Ignorance was one of those features that "distinguished" Africans from Europeans and in this manner Haile Sellassie was a ruler who "ignored" treaties, concessions,

17 Levine, D.N. *Greater Ethiopia. The Evolution of Multiethnic Society*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1974.

18 Horvath, R.J. *A Definition of Colonialism. Current Anthropology*, 1972, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 45-57.

19 Waugh, E. *Waugh in Abyssinia*, London, Louisiana State University Press, 2007 [1936], p. 24.

20 Melba, G. *Oromia. An Introduction*, Khartoum, University of Khartoum, 1988, p. 65.

21 Ivi, p. 68.

22 *Westminster Gazette* 19th January 1925.

and agreements²³. On the other hand, it was not only the case of Europeans who distrusted the Regent/Emperor. His efforts to build roads, develop cotton industry, install telephones and telegraphs and thus to modernize more the country had an opposition in a part of nobility, though more or less passive, as shows an example of Fitaurari Habta Giorgis. During the 1920s, this Commander-in-Chief changed his opinion and became a slight supporter of Tafari's plans, which is by some sources²⁴ explained as a result of Ras Tafari's diplomacy and the tact with which he dealt with Fitaurari Habta Giorgis.

3. Ras Tafari as a symbol

Ras Tafari's charisma became a matter of many studies and works of travelers, diplomats, scientists etc. While some depicted him as a man who is interested only in his own property, others emphasized his progressivity and nobleness. The Reverend Ashley Brown, Chaplain of Aden wrote his impression on Ethiopia and the Regent:

But at this difficult time a very great man indeed controls the destinies of this Ancient Empire, in the person of the Prince Regent. Like many of the members of ancient Abyssinian families, he is no darker than many a Spaniard, with clear-cut features. Indeed in his person he preserves the tradition of the personal beauty in the House of David. He has great charm, great dignity and superb self-control. He is a very simple man. His private wealth is enormous, and he has interests in most of the business enterprises in the Empire. [...] He dresses in the simple white cotton clothes of his people, with a coarse black wool burnous or cape in rainy weather. He wears no jewels, a surprise to me, as I have often seen Indian princes literally ablaze with precious stones. He is a strong man and a very clever man. It has needed both great strength and ability to rule his State of powerful nobles and turbulent people through stormy days²⁵.

Reverend's impressions show a distinctive way of imagining the Regent and Ethiopia since he stresses the ancient character of the state and nobility of ruling class, which is an opposite of the Italian propaganda shown mainly on pages of

23 *Il Giornale d'Italia* 3rd Spetember 1935.

24 See: A Letter by American Vice Consul Loder Park from December 28, 1926. In: DEP Vol.II 1977: 48-55.

25 An English Clergyman's Impressions on Ethiopia. In: DEP Vol. II 1977: 67.

daily press where we can see somewhat general tendency to eliminate any notes regarding ancientry of Ethiopia. Reverend's accounts on Ethiopia can be derived from his Christian affiliation since he (at some points) expresses his admire to the state that was «Christian when our ancestors still worshipped their Teutonic deities». For Brown, Ras Tafari was a «great statesman and patriot [...] who burns to lift his people out of the morass of ignorance and superstition in which their isolation for so many centuries has kept them»²⁶.

Almost in the same manner Ras Tafari was viewed by American Embassy, as may be well documented by correspondence of American Consul Addison E. Southard, who gives some interesting accounts on the background of Ethiopian high political levels:

The Prince Regent is modernistic and progressive in his tendencies. The Empress is unusually conservative and reactionary. The various provincial rulers and higher government officials belong either to the "party of the Empress" or to the "party of the Prince". This means, in effect, that they oppose, and intrigue against, each other in the various Councils and frequently deadlock on matters sometimes of the most vital importance and frequently insignificant. The members of the party of the Empress are more or less against the introduction of foreign influence and modern progress into Ethiopia. Their basic reason is that such introduction would open the way to political and territorial aggression by certain European powers. They point to what they consider attempts of this sort in recent decades by Britain, France and Italy²⁷.

From a retrospective point of view, Southard's notes on opposition between Empress' and Regent's clique in regard to European influence seem to be in favor of Empress Zewditu since it was mainly from economic point of view that the Europeans wanted to gain control over Ethiopia.

4. Negative stereotypes

As has been stated and it is with no doubt, first major campaign (rather than propaganda) against Ethiopia in the 20th century was lead by the British press. In the following part I will offer a reader two articles that show how the British public

26 An English Clergyman's Impressions on Ethiopia. In: DEP Vol. II 1977: 68.

27 Southard to the Secretary of State. In: DEP Vol. II 1977: 77.

opinion regarding Ethiopia was shaped and on which information was based in the 1920's. First, in *Westminster Gazette*²⁸ series of articles, nothing can better illustrate the situation as the following part:

Gangs of slaves, marching in misery, the men chained together in rows, and the women and children dragging themselves along side the main body, can be seen by any traveler in Southern Abyssinia today. Some of these slaves are captured on Abyssinian territory, others in British East Africa, others in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. [...] The European powers have contracted not to supply Abyssinia amongst other African countries, with munitions, nor with materials for their manufacture, but America, unluckily, has not signed the contract; and so it is to America that the Abyssinian Government has lately turned. Payment was made in advance, three months ago, and the cartridges and automatic rifles, exported from the United States, are now lying at the port of Djibouti [...] with its terminus of the Abyssinian railway. [...] The purpose of these articles is to describe the position as it appears, not merely to the writers but to every European who has spent even a short time in Abyssinia. If on any aspect of the question we have failed to convey a sufficiently precise view of the facts, we shall be glad to do our best to remedy the defect. Meanwhile, we hope that the American public will realize what is being done in their name, and that the British public will face the intrinsically impossible situation created by the presence of British slaves in the British Legation at Addis Ababa.

The second article was written in *Manchester Guardian*²⁹ a year and half after the previous but followed the same structure and form, let us quote from the following passage:

The familiar features in the story may be catalogued as follows. First, Abyssinia is a rather scandalous country. The Abyssinians, at the very times when they have been falling under the shadow of Western economic expansion, have been importing Western lethal weapons in order to conduct systematic slave-raids against weaker and more uncivilised peoples in the interior-chiefly within the frontiers assigned to the Empire of Ethiopia occasionally in territories belonging to Kenya Colony and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. Abyssinia's successful application for admission to the

28 *Westminster Gazette* 20th January 1925.

29 *Manchester Guardian* 27th July 1926, author not known.

League was possibly stimulated by the fear that this scandal might become the subject of international action, and Abyssinia was admitted on the distinct understanding that the Abyssinian Government would loyally co-operate with the League in the suppression of the slave trade. The central Government of Abyssinia, however, is by no means in effective control of the whole extent of its juridical dominants. The scandal remains and may at any time afford a pretext for interested intervention, if it does not necessitate interventions of a disinterested character. A second feature is that the known resources of Abyssinia are rich, while her unknown resources [...] are likely to be overestimated by those who desire to exploit them. A third feature is that Abyssinia has two European neighbours – Great Britain [...], and Italy in Eritrea and Italian Somaliland – who possess interests in her territory derived from contiguity like the interests of France and Spain in Morocco. Great Britain wants to store the surplus waters of Lake Tana in order to make them available for extending irrigation in Egypt and Sudan. Italy wants to link her two East African Colonies by constructing a railway north and south to the west of the railway zone which in 1906 was assigned to France...Certainly France has no true grievance and no moral status for interfering, since she not only signed the 1906 agreement but has profited by it already. Nor is she a good friend to Abyssinia, for Djibouti and the Djibouti-Addis Ababa Railway are reported to be the main channel through which Abyssinia has been receiving for many years consignments of arms which may ultimately prove her undoing. The party with genuine grievance is Abyssinia herself. Will she ventilate this grievance at Geneva?

One of the most common features of all newspaper articles (in regard to Ethiopia) at least in former Czechoslovakia in the 1920s and 1930s was its interest in ethnic, religious or geographic conditions of Ethiopia, which corresponds to already mentioned aspects of “slavery”, “barbarity” and “primitiveness”. Many articles begin their words “Abyssinia is a country of black Christians”, which became a cliché, though we may now suggest that a rough majority of Ethiopians are Muslims. One such example of an “ethnographic” cliché can be abstracted from *Polední List*³⁰:

The Abyssinian population is rich in colour of skin, ranging from lemon yellow to the dark ebony. There we even find whole villages of albinos, of whose origin there exist various rumours. The most important of many

30 *Polední List* December 16, 1934.

Abyssinian tribes is the reigning tribe of Amhara, who own about one eighth of the land.

The main amount of newspapers articles came in 1934 and 1935 as the tensions were nearing. Press continued to describe Ethiopian military potentials using expressions corresponding to contemporary political and anthropological dictionary³¹:

The Abyssinians are good and brave soldiers and in their natural fortress and their climate they present a power, which cannot be underestimated by modern states. Regular army of Abyssinia has 100 thousand men in arms equipped by guns and machine guns and instructed by European advisers. Artillery has cannons of various origin. In the most recent times Abyssinia has even numerous cavalymen and a small number of airplanes. Besides the professional army there is also a trained reserve of 200 thousand of men at Emperor's disposal. Finally, Abyssinia can also call up all men from 15 to 65 years, which means 2 million of soldiers for whom, however, can be enough modern weapons. Abyssinia thus have quite strong defense and would surely be able to offer persistent resistance against big invading army.

Military preparations on both sides were largely discussed on pages of daily press³², as Mussolini expressed his resolve to stress Italy's position in the world by massive enlargement of military equipment, weapons and guns. European public was impressed by Italy's "fast division" composed of artillery, cavalry, motorized unit as well as unit of cyclists.

5. Creeping war

Czechoslovak daily newspapers in most cases showed a certain neutrality as for Italy's preparations for war, though in some examples there can be seen a hidden support of Ethiopia as e.g. *Československé slovo*³³ in February 1935 informs about Mussolini's order to send more soldiers to the Horn as he was feeling displeased after Ethiopia (ironically) "showed total disregard of Italian armament." Others, as *Polední list* rather follows the pro-Italian line when emphasizing the fact that Italy

31 *Národní Osvobození* February 22, 1935.

32 See e.g. an article in *Národní Listy* February 20, 1935 on military preparations and equipment of the Italian army.

33 *Československé slovo* February 22, 1935.

gained almost nothing after the World War I and that since Mussolini's access to power he took care of his colonies constructing new roads, buildings, ports, hospitals, airports etc.³⁴ *Národní politika* published a short interview with dr. Borský where he states that Mussolini's intentions (February 1935) were to make peace among tribes which do not follow orders of the Abyssinian Emperor³⁵.

At least a year before the Italian invasion events regarding Ethiopia were monitored in detail by newspapers and journals all around the world, including former Czechoslovakia. *Montagsblatt*³⁶ asks on September 1934 whether Italy really strives for protectorate over Abyssinia. The author answers that it is rather a matter of time if it comes through diplomacy or military action.

Some newspapers, such as *Lidové noviny*³⁷ pays attention to discomfiture of the League of Nations after the Walwal incident and suppose that there will be no quick solution of the crisis. *Národní politika*³⁸ goes further and criticize especially the British ambivalent attitude towards the crisis, when the journalist writes that

on every map, the site of WalWal is scetched in the Abyssinian part, about 100km in the interior. It is curious that the English newspapers are dry (means silent) as for these cases. Perhaps because they stand on causes of the 1925 accord when Italy and England mutually guaranteed spheres of influence over Abyssinia³⁹.

Shortly after WalWal Alois Musil⁴⁰ doubts England would stand Italian invasion and occupation of Ethiopia. Italian newspapers state that the reason of the military action was Abyssinian violation of agreements signed with Italy. According to them Ethiopia gives remarkable economic advantages to Japanese merchants, traders and emigrants while in Italians they see dangerous neighbours. Half a year before *Le Temps* pays attention to the same aspects of the conflict by bringing a large article ephasizing the role of the Japanese⁴¹.

34 *Polední List* February 17, 1935, article "The Struggle for Abyssinia":

35 *Národní politika* February 14, 1935.

36 *Montagsblatt* September 24, 1934.

37 See e.g. *Lidové noviny* Decemeber 16 and 18, 1934.

38 *Národní politika* December 20, 1934.

39 *Národní politika* December 20, 1934.

40 *Venkov* December 12, 1934.

41 December volumes of *Popolo d'Italia* and *Corriere della Sera* quoted by *Venkov* December 12, 1934; *Le Temps* April 7, 1934.

On January 1935 the main topic of European newspapers was a position of France and Britain in the Ethiopian question. *Polední List*⁴², quoting the French newspapers, writes about a certain probability that France would give a free hand to Italy; *Československé slovo*⁴³ discuss a reticence of Paris political circles concerning the Abyssinian crisis and the ambivalence of France regarding the Austrian independence. The newspapers bring information about willingness of France to agree with the policy of “appeasement”. *Večerní Československé Slovo*⁴⁴ is surprised by Italian readiness for new demarcation of the borders between Italian Somaliland and Ethiopia.

While the Czechoslovak newspaper mostly show a certain incredulity towards the Italian intentions, the French *Petit Parisien*⁴⁵ understand that Mussolini, outraged by hostile displays, which are touching the Italian prestige, wanted by a quick and energetic gesture to remind that Italy is prepared and decided to even invade in order to defend its rights. The newspapers writes, that it is surely allowed to hope in a peaceful solution of the crisis. *The Times*⁴⁶ concludes that the Italian move cannot be condemned as illegitimate. *Daily Telegraph*⁴⁷ thinks that it would be tragic if the situation ends in war.

While the British and French journals are more optimistic and hope for a peaceful solution the Czechoslovak newspapers already from the end of 1934 brought news about military preparations in Italy and discuss its threat. In February 1935 when the public was concerned with the League’s approach, *Lidové noviny*⁴⁸ warns of Mussolini who announced to his soldiers that they would go to Egypt and Somalia to defend the Italian interests which can be seen as a direct proof of creeping war.

Leftist journals and newspapers criticise not only Italian aggression and inability to make compromises but also European powers, which with their policy of appeasement give Italy a free hand in Ethiopia. *Sozialdemokrat*⁴⁹ stresses the anti-war demonstrations against Mussolini in Italy, *Rudé právo*⁵⁰, the most important

42 *Polední List* January 3, 1935.

43 *Československé slovo* January 3, 1935.

44 *Večerní Československé Slovo* January 14, 1935.

45 *Petit Parisien* February 12, 1935.

46 *The Times* February 12, 1935.

47 *Daily Telegraph* February 12, 1935.

48 *Lidové noviny* February 17, 1935.

49 *Sozialdemokrat* March 15, 1935.

50 *Rudé právo* May 14, 1935.

leftist daily ironizes negotiations between Mussolini and Laval, and Mussolini and Beneš already in the title of the article: "Laval agrees with Mussolini, Mussolini agrees with Beneš. And a result of this agreement? War". Also French daily journals are alarmed by Laval – Mussolini negotiation which they think would give a free hand to Mussolini for his action in Abyssinia⁵¹.

In May 1935 European newspapers already discussed the term of the war. It seems as if nobody believed in a peaceful solution of the conflict, as e.g. *Večerní Československé Slovo*⁵² asks in a title of an article "War in Abyssinia until May 20?" and answers by a subtitle "Harvests of international military industry – Italy will meet with the hardest resistance". *Giornale d'Italia*⁵³ speaks about massive mobilization in Ethiopia and adds that Italy cannot countenance to let her borderland be persistently threatened. *Právo Lidu*⁵⁴ quotes Alessandro Lessona who said in Rome that according to the situation, the government cannot hesitate. The question of relations between both states must be solved once and forever clearly and in an interest of safety of Eritrea and Somalia as well as in regard to dignity of Italian policy. *Lidové noviny*⁵⁵ speculates that Italy has already one million of soldiers in arms.

As I have found in newspapers and journals of 1935, it seems that since May, and more probably since July, the European public had no illusion about the Italian-Ethiopian conflict. It was only a matter of time as we have already seen in some examples of May volumes. In July 1935, *Popolo d'Italia*⁵⁶ claims that the only solution in regard to Italian-Ethiopian dispute can be a "total solution". Economic expansion without military action would end similarly as the Treaty of Ucciali. Communist, and thus anti-fascist daily *Rudé právo*⁵⁷ argues that all people from France are against Laval's policy of supporting Mussolini in his aggressivity against innocent Ethiopia.

*Lidové Listy*⁵⁸ quotes from News Chronicle when they inform about Abyssinian Ambassador dr. Martin's visit to London where he tried to obtain a 2 million GBP loan. According to his words, first,

51 Quoted by *Rudé právo* May 14, 1935.

52 *Večerní Československé Slovo* May 11, 1935.

53 *Giornale d'Italia* May 9, 1935.

54 *Právo Lidu* May 8, 1935.

55 *Lidové noviny* May 8, 1935.

56 *Popolo d'Italia* July 31, 1935.

57 *Rudé právo* July 10, 1935.

58 *Lidové Listy* July 26, 1935.

the money were supposed to be used for an economic development, but war, which is brewing, has the first right. Abyssinia was loaded with special war tax to which everybody has to contribute. It is supposed to bring 5 million GBP. First of all, we need a large amount of cartridges for our Mauser rifles since the war will last long. We have about 200 thousand of Mauser rifles. Our artillery has some new cannons, other come from 1896 when we took the victory away from the Italians at Adowa⁵⁹.

International wave of solidarity with Ethiopia appeared also on pages of daily newspapers and journals quoting one from another about protests against Italian aggression and European passivity. *Národní politika*⁶⁰ quotes from *Le Temps* and *Echo de Paris* and brings a large discussion over nationalist tendencies in African countries caused by Italian-Ethiopian dispute:

All natives not only in the French Somaliland, but also in the British colonies in East Africa, and even Southern Arabs talk only about the following war of the Abyssinians with the foreigners. Natives estimate the chances of the Abyssinians and the hopes “with the help of Allah” in this war and dream of a support which all colored Africans have to provide their colored brethren in Abyssinia, as soon as they are caught in danger, or in other words: The Italian-Abyssinian conflict has contributed much more in a couple of months to awaken an African nationalism that has fallen asleep since Lord Kitchener’s capture of Khartoum, than a long-lasting, to foreigners hostile pan-African and pan-Islamic propaganda. This critical situation definitely requires our absolute attention. It cannot be allowed our great colonisation work of the whole century that was sealed by our blood and our money to be threatened by a development of an action, which, geographically, has to be limited only for a given territory⁶¹.

The importance of “racial discourse” and growing chauvinism of Italy is underlined by the same article in discussion over Italian relations to Turkey and Japan. Japanese press understand according to *Národní politika* the Italian-Ethiopian dispute as a conflict of white race against “colored” people. These racial aspects are supposed to find support in France and Britain. *Národní politika* does not fully agree by stating that it was the French Ambassador to Rome, H. E. Chambrun, who tried to persuade Mussolini about the racial aspects of the

59 *Lidové Listy* July 26, 1935.

60 *Národní politika* July, 25 1935.

61 *Národní politika* July 25, 1935.

forthcoming conflict, but Mussolini did not reply⁶². Later in August, Sir Samuel Hoare tried to convince Mussolini of the necessity to stop the war or to solve the problem in other way than militarily⁶³.

6. Conclusion

August and September 1935 were with no doubt months of unstoppable preparations for war, especially on the Italian side, and reflections of Italian-Ethiopian “quarrels” can be well documented on pages of daily newspapers. *International News Service* interviewed Mussolini, whose following sentence was quickly picked up by newspapers from the world:

The Abyssinian dispute could be solved also in other than military way, if leaders who now manage the fate of Abyssinia, give up their illusions of possible resistance, and do not believe in hypothetical help from other countries and realize that it is in a real interest of Abyssinia to accept an Italian protectorate. I do not believe that in Geneva a real and radical solution of the Abyssinian crisis could be found. The Italian nation is spiritually integrated and ready to make sacrifices⁶⁴.

*The Times*⁶⁵ in regard to the previous statements informs about Haile Sellassie's persistent willingness to solve the problem peacefully without using weapons. His “neverending hope” and trust in the League of Nations is documented by an article about his military “operations” contrasting to Mussolini's conviction of Ethiopia as a dangerous country⁶⁶. *The Times* speaks about the Emperor's decision not to send for 60 thousand Wollamo and Konta men in arms to Addis Ababa because he wished to respect the will of the League of Nations⁶⁷. Ethiopian will have to solve the dispute on the ground of the League and her absolute belief in the principles of the League are documented also in the words of Takla Havariat who told the journalists in Paris on August 4th 1935, that for Ethiopia it is enough being a member of the League of Nations⁶⁸.

62 *Národní politika* July 25, 1935.

63 *Národní politika* August 25, 1935.

64 *Československé Slovo* August 15, 1935, the interview given on August 5.

65 *The Times* August 5, 1935.

66 See e.g. *Československé Slovo* August 15, 1935.

67 *The Times* August 5, 1935.

68 *Lidové noviny* August 15, 1935.

Positive reactions on Ethiopia's position among the great powers of Europe not only had a great impact in Africa, or Asia, but also European public perceived the conflict as the clash between unequal entities. We can read that «the proud independent country of Abyssinia» would never accept a protectorate or any other solution leading to suppression of her sovereignty. A pilot, Roy Tuckett, offered Ethiopia his help in the war, when he sent a telegram to the Emperor. The British conservative member of the Parliament, Vivian Adams told journalists that «England cannot abandon the hardest precautions like turning off the coal supplies or closing the Suez Canal in the case that Italy would stand on its position regarding Ethiopia»⁶⁹.

*Rudé právo*⁷⁰ speaks about support of white and black communists in Washington who protested against the Italian regime and its foreign policy. In general we can state that the so-called leftish newspapers (*Rudé právo* is a good example of those) tended more to see the conflict in racial (white and black), political (fascism vs. democracy) and even gender terms, since women were important for their role in family life and economy of the country, their importance was stressed as shows an example of an article concerning the foundation of a women committee for the defense of Ethiopia. Women involved in this committee gave their jewels as a symbol of their love to homeland⁷¹.

No other daily in former Czechoslovakia informed about these aspects of Ethiopian patriotism. While other newspapers usually inform about negotiations between governments of the involved countries, Communist daily did not miss the opportunity to point at the fact that the “peoples of” (whatever country) wish to stop the war and to express their support of Ethiopia. In general, the right-wing journals were more conservative and cautious, though it can be said without any dispute that the common feature of most of European (and probably even American) was their (at least) moral support of Ethiopia in an unequal fight against growing Italian aggression.

One interesting explanation why Ethiopia was attacked and threatened by Italy was expressed by Marcus Garvey whom we met earlier in this work. He saw the reason in a fact that Haile Sellassie ignored any relationship with the black people and throttled their aspirations. On the other hand, his critical comment is said to be the result of an attempt to regain the attention, lost authority and prestige⁷².

69 *Národní politika* August 2, 1935.

70 *Rudé právo* August 3, 1935.

71 *Rudé právo* August 3, 1935.

72 Sbacchi, A. *Legacy of Bitterness: Ethiopia and Fascist Italy, 1935 – 1941*, Asmara, Red Sea Press, 1997, p. 6.

This multidimensionality of imagining Ethiopia contributed to Mussolini's persuasion that other European powers simply would not oppose his expansion to Ethiopia⁷³ and creating an image of Ethiopia became one of the means of conquest. One of the main points of the invasion was surely economy, necessity to gain access to land suitable for agriculture. In my opinion, there are two reasons explaining the invasion in a symbolic way, or at least reasons that stay beyond the whole event. First was, as examined by Del Boca⁷⁴, the "Adowa complex". While for the Italians Adowa meant a point in history that needs to be revenged, for a part of Ethiopian population it was a time when Menelik's «savage army killed millions of Oromo»⁷⁵. Second, the strategy was to create an image of a cruel enemy that presents a direct threat to interests of the «peaceful nation of Italy». Enemy is always against our values and our values have to be defended by whatever means. Since ancient times, there has been a long tradition of imagining enemies as those who are against our enemies and it is thus not so improbable that Mussolini in his rhetoric used something from an ancient Roman propaganda against rising Christian community. Values of enmity, values of our enemies need to be put in contrast to our values of the good, the better. European rhetoric seems to follow this theory of rationalizing and legitimizing approach against the enemy by using strategic propaganda based on values of enmity⁷⁶.

73 Sbacchi, A. *Ethiopia under Mussolini. Facism and the Colonial Experience*, London, Zed books Ltd., 1989, p. 7.

74 Del Boca, A. *The Ethiopian War, 1935-1941*, Chicago and London, Chicago University Press, 1969, pp. 3-16.

75 Melba *op. cit.*, p. 66.

76 Abbreviations: DEP – *Documents on Ethiopian Politics*.

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