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Conferences

Hordofa, another, which centred on the production of a manuscript book, was illustrated by a collection of photographs and included the portraits of prominent scribes. Beside one of them, *mulugeta* Araya Gebeyehu demonstrated the art of calligraphy, copying before the eyes of the visitors the pages of a Psalter. Simultaneously, the Italian Cultural Institute hosted an exhibition of photographs by Enrico Castelli entitled "Images for a museum".

It was decided at the business session that all papers given at the conference will be considered for publication in the conference proceedings.

The next conference will be held in München, organized by the Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde.

Ewa Balicka-Witakowska

"The Horn of Africa between History, Law and Politics", Rome, 13–14 December 2002

On 13 and 14 December 2002, an International Conference *The Horn of Africa between History, Law and Politics* was held in Rome, organized by the University of Bologna (Irma Taddia and Massimo Papa) and the University of Dalarna, Sweden (Tekeste Negash).

With a view to understanding the root causes of the long-standing grievances and underlying tensions between the countries of the Horn of Africa, this conference has addressed the overall aim of critically assessing the legacy of colonialism, as Irma Taddia signals in her introductory presentation.

The rich programme of the conference has brought together researchers involved in new and ongoing works and NGO staff to discuss both comprehensive evaluations and particular case studies that focus attention on these fundamental, contemporary issues, considering interdisciplinary approaches to the history of the Horn of Africa. There has been considerable scope for historical and political analysis meant to go further than the traditional paradigms, and the conference itself reflects how scholars are sensitive to the recent epistemological trends and ready to cut across old boundaries of disciplines.

The first Session was divided in two panels, respectively entitled "*Italy and the Horn of Africa*" and "*Politics and History in the Horn*". In the first panel, Bereket Habte Selasse seeks to historicize the Italian colonial legacies and to assess the post-colonial challenges of peace and democracy, while Teclhai-manot Gebreselassie and Mohamed Abbas Sufi examine the impact of the Italian colonial policy in the identity-reformulation process among ethnic groups.

The second panel opens with Shiferaw Bekele's survey of the challenges of creating nationalism in Ethiopia in the 20th century and its failures. Equally bleak in denouncing the failures of the political *élites* and of the state-building processes all over the post-colonial Horn of Africa is Tekeste Negash, whose pessimist warnings that bode ill for the future are tempered by the other participants. Most of them believe, with Donald Crummey, that the time has come for an intellectual recognition of the shared recent experiences of the people of the Horn facing trans-national goals, through the engagement of indigenous intellectuals as well as of foreign scholars.

The second Session – “*Legal Systems in the Contemporary Horn of Africa*” – focuses on the social and cultural transformations inside the colonized societies (G. Barrera, F. Declich, L. Favali, F. Locatelli) affected by the many interlocking legal systems – the so-called “*diritti indigeni*”, Muslim law and colonial law. The conference convenors recognize that law represented the cutting edge of colonialism in its attempt to control the subjects and to shape their attitudes. The detailed investigations presented demonstrate also the patterns of change and continuity in the social life of the subjects. Nevertheless, the influence of modern law continues to have a meaningful presence in the post-colonial period, due to the constitutional charters adopted by the newly independent nation states. Their evolution testifies to the socio-political engineering processes within the nation states (V. Piergigli).

The second working-day began with the third Session – “*The Horn of Africa between Past and Present*” – where the complex past of each country in the Horn has been revised from a *longue durée* perspective, in order to assess the colonial legacies in the actual societies in conflict (I. M. Lewis, E. Aden Ismael). The political and historiographical critique of the legitimacy of identities, of political institutions, as well as of the public use of history stand out remarkably. In particular, P. Gilkes explains the relevance of “*mythico-history*”, while Tsehai Berhane Selassie reflects on the colonial practice of inventing names for place and peoples.

Last, but not least, the fourth Session – “*The Horn of Africa and the International Arena*” – explores the international political dimension of the Horn. G.P. Calchi Novati and H. Marcus highlight the role of Italy in the post-colonial period and R. Reid identifies the patterns of regional conflict from the XVIII century to the present day. Special mention is merited by the sophisticated enquiry of Lee Cassanelli into the diasporas of the people of the Horn and the contribution of trans-national communities to their homelands.

Since the end of the Cold War the countries of the Horn have been involved in tensions with their state and non-state complexities. There is still deep concern about the possibilities for a stable response to the challenge of peace and democracy and the mechanisms by which this may be achieved.

Conferences

Therefore, it has been important to examine once again the most prominent features of ruptures, stability and change. Particularly debated has been the issue of the nature of nationalism and statehood, which opened up a creative dialogue among the participants. Not all the overviews were gloomy. Reviewing critically post-colonial states, many of the speakers invoked for the near future a “bottom-up” approach in the institution-building process that emphasizes decentralized powers. Among the conference themes, its major findings were in fact the new basis for closer North-South co-operation, and this formed a natural bridge to the concluding remarks, what is usually called grounds for hope, strategies for renewal.

Federica Guazzini