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SUSANNE EPPLE

**Dissertation abstract**

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Hiob Ludolf Zentrum für Äthiopistik  
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by Alessandro Bausi

in cooperation with

Bairu Tafla, Ulrich Braukämper, Ludwig Gerhardt,  
Hilke Meyer-Bahlburg and Siegbert Uhlig

## Dissertation abstracts

SUSANNE EPPLE 2010, *The Bashada of Southern Ethiopia: A Study of Age, Gender and Social Discourse*, Dissertation at the Institute of Anthropology and African Studies, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, defended on 22.05.2007

276 pp. appendices (glossary, tables, lists, photos, index)

Among the Bashada, a small group of agro-pastoralists living in the south-west of Ethiopia, individual misdeeds and wrong-doing, are expected, and seen as part of human nature. To stay on the 'right track' in life, as the Bashada say, especially children and adolescents, but also adults, need guidance both by their seniors, but also by their equals, i.e. their age-mates who are made responsible for each others' behaviour. Guiding others through advice, scolding and warning, but also through sanctions such as public reprimanding, whipping, cursing and social exclusion lays not only the wish to reintegrate wrong-doers. To re-establish social peace when it has been disturbed through is seen essential to keep also the supernatural in balance, as unresolved conflicts, incomplete performance of rituals is believed to cause disaster to the whole community.

In her thesis Susanne Epple has examined social roles males and females achieve or are ascribed to in the course of their lives and how social relations among kin and affinal relatives, as well as with neighbours and members of the same age-sets are established, and kept active in day-to-day life. Her research followed different dimensions: she explores the ideals of social roles and culturally expected behavior from male and female perspective through narratives and interviews on personal experiences of her informants. Besides exploring the cultural ideal, she also provides deep insights into the lives of several individuals, males and females of different ages, and allows them to speak about their personal and individual experiences, feelings, worries and hopes. Hereby she gives insight into the choices individuals can make throughout their lives, and also shows how people deal with the constraints set by the culture they live in. In her analysis of social relations she looks compares life in the nuclear and extended family with life in the community, i.e. neighbourhood and age-system. The Bashada have a rather simple age-system with age-sets ordered by seniority. Age-sets do not move through age-grades together, but rather serve to define the relationships and prescribe the behaviour between males who consider each other as equals (members of the same set), or senior and junior brothers (members of adjacent sets) in everyday and ritual context. Going beyond the usual focus on males to which most literature on age systems is limited, Epple

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explores also the worlds of males and females of different ages: children, adolescent, initiates and adults. In all domains the principle of seniority, but also the equality of age-mates is strongly emphasized, and the cultural expectations existent among males, transpire into the world of females, adolescents and children. By giving an insight into daily life in an age-set society from multiple viewpoints Epple therefore also offers a new perspective on East African age-set societies.

ISABELLA ABBONIZIO, *Musica e colonialismo nell'Italia fascista (1922–1943)*, Ph.D. Thesis, Rome Tor Vergata University, 2010 (in Italian).

The Italian colonial experience in Africa lasted approximately 60 years, from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. During the final two decades, Italian imperial politics were driven by the Fascist regime. Through Mussolini's powerful means of propaganda, imperial discourse pervaded all cultural fields, including music. Until the present time, the relationship between Italian music and colonialism has remained unexplored. After the fall of fascism, operations of "purification" were extensively pursued, and any involvement of Italian musicians, composers and musical institutions in the regime was denied. Moreover, the overall process of repression of the memory of Italian colonialism in the decades after Italy lost possession of its colonies exacerbated this trend. Music has therefore been a neglected theme in the field of colonial and postcolonial studies.

This dissertation is the first extensive analysis of the relationship between Italian music and colonial politics during the fascist period. The main sources examined are: archival documents, colonial newspapers and magazines, unedited documents and accounts, and published and unpublished music scores. Using an interdisciplinary approach, this thesis explores the phenomenon from four perspectives, namely: the export of the mother country's cultural identity into the colonies; the colonizer's attitude towards the African indigenous culture; the contributions of Italian colonial musical ethnography to the study of traditional African music; and the propaganda works created by composers during fascism.

The first two perspectives use Libya as a case study. During the Italian colonialism, Libya was considered the showcase of national rule. As concrete evidence of Italian domain, the Fascist government built prestigious opera theatres in Tripoli and Bengasi, the major Libyan coastal cities. As a prominent sign of cultural identity, Italians organized opera seasons which attracted both tourists and locals during the spring. In order to satisfy the Western desire for the exotic, colonial theatres also featured performances by North African companies presenting Arab music and dance, which carefully preserved the alluring blend of the exotic and the erotic.