



Aethiopia 15 (2012)

International Journal of Ethiopian and
Eritrean Studies

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Dissertation abstract

Musica e colonialismo nell'Italia fascista (1922–1943)

Aethiopia 15 (2012), 303–304

ISSN: 2194–4024

Edited in the Asien-Afrika-Institut
Hiob Ludolf Zentrum für Äthiopistik
der Universität Hamburg
Abteilung für Afrikanistik und Äthiopistik

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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 19th century through the mid-20th 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examined are: archival documents, colonial newspapers and magazines, unedited documents and accounts, and published and unpublished music scores.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.

During the government of Italo Balbo, Libyans were given the opportunity to cultivate and disseminate their cultural traditions. At Radio Tripoli, the Arab EIAR (Italian Radio Broadcasting), daily broadcasts in Arabic featured Islamic celebrations and events, as well as traditional music performed by renowned North African musicians. The history and the musical broadcasts of this Italian colonial Radio are reconstructed, revealing an original, and in some ways controversial output of the Italian presence in North Africa.

This dissertation also investigates the role of musical ethnography during the Italian colonialism. For a long time the study of the relationship between musical ethnography and colonialism was not considered relevant to the Italian case. In fact, only a few contributions were published during that period, strongly influenced by racial prejudice and lack of a specific methodology of transcription and analysis. Nevertheless, Italian musical ethnographers received an important stimulus for the study and knowledge of indigenous traditions: unedited accounts, debates and planned projects reveal the interest for extra-national musical practices. Moreover, some of the contributions produced during that period were the only sources available on the musical traditions of the African regions occupied by Italians, almost until the end of the last century.

The final chapter of this dissertation deals with the propaganda musical works produced by Italian composers during fascism. In the mid-1930s, the Italian regime turned colonial politics into an aggressive campaign against Ethiopia resulting in an intensification of Imperial propaganda. Since that period, the regime fostered colonially inspired artistic works through competitions, festivals and exhibitions in order to obtain the consent among intellectuals and musicians. In this way, the regime asserted control over artistic production. The musical life was strongly affected by propaganda for the Empire. Many composers answered the regime's call, creating a wide range of works. A number of symphonies, chamber music work and operas, composed during the last decade of the Italian rule, share the topics of colonial discourse: imperialism, heroism, exoticism, slavery, primitivism, and civilizing missions. This dissertation focuses on two uncommissioned stage works spontaneously created by two prominent Italian composers for the Imperial Propaganda: Adriano Lualdi's ballet *Lumawig e la saetta* (1935-1937) and Alfredo Casella's «mistero in un atto» (Mystery Play in One Act) *Il Deserto tentato* (1937).

This dissertation carefully demonstrates that music extensively contributed to the Imperial Propaganda, explicitly supporting the regime's African enterprise in the same way as literature, cinema and architecture did. Through this research, colonial theatres, ethnographical studies and projects, and propaganda scores are finally brought to light, providing a new contribution to the study of Italian colonial discourse and revealing a previously undisclosed chapter in the history of Italian music.