

The Europeans were already present in Africa before the nineteenth century because of commercial reasons. The coasts were used for the "slave trade" and to facilitate travel to India but the early explorations of the interior of the continent occurred only after 1815. Mainly missionaries of various churches who had the task of civilizing the "barbarians" people of Africa carried these out. At this point two were the crucial events that changed radically the relation between Europe and Africa.

First was the "Geographical Conference of Brussels", organized by King Leopold II of Belgium in 1876, which lay the ideological foundations of the conquest of the African continent, used then by all European powers to justify their "imperialist" enterprises.

Then there was the international "Berlin Conference", commissioned by the German Chancellor Bismarck and France, where Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Austria-Hungary, Denmark, Sweden, Russia, Turkey and the United States took part to regulate the navigation and the commerce along the rivers Congo and Niger, but in fact the real goal was to give to white peoples overseas, the European powers, the right to sovereignty over the African continent. For this reason the Congress conventionally marks the start of the scramble for Africa.

Most of the boundaries that exist today in the former colonies are artificial creations of Western hegemony. What impact has their definition on the current political situation of these countries?

Antar Marincola: "It is clear that these borders arose within colonialism, and it's true that once they are in place one can grow fond of them and one does not question them. And why? Because to 'trespass' is far more complex.

For one to 'trespass' it means to undergo a challenge, and so to expose oneself when you have power is one thing, but having to question the borders that have been instrumental to Western colonialism, means to rethink what it meant to Africa before colonialism and after colonialism. This issue is very complicated. So, what did they do in Somalia? They left the borders where they were because they thought "There are already 4 or 5 different languages and religions; and if we were to eliminate the borders there would be even more confusion". The confusion becomes the most interesting element concerning the discourse on openness, but certainly for a disciplinary and power discourse it becomes the element they must always fight."

It is clear that the "explorations" were not merely done by European governments for scientific and humanitarian purposes but that these aggressions were driven by political and economic interests.

After few years of its formation, the unified Italy started soon to have expansionist goals. Italian colonialism had two faces, one during the liberal period (1882-1921) and the other during the fascist one (1923-1943). In 1869 the Lazarist father Giuseppe Sapeto purchases on behalf of the Genoa shipping company Rubattino the Bay of Assab (Eritrea) from the local sultans. This is the first Italian outpost in Africa. After some years, in 1882, the Italian state buys from Rubattino the rights on Assab, which is officially proclaimed Italian colony.

The most substantial Italian colonies were Eritrea (1882-1947), Tien-tsin in Cina (1902-1947), Italian Somalia (1889-1908), Libya (1911-1943), Catelorrizzo, Rodi and the Dodecanese islands (1912-1943), the Saseño islands and Capo Linguetta in Albania (1920-1943), Italian Ethiopia (1936-1941) and Albania (1939-1943). In addition, we shall remember the occupation of Slovenia and Croatia (1941-1943).

miserable conditions in which they were forced to work, all this by brutally simplifying their role. In addition "beyond the 'warrior traditions' attributed to the Eritrean population, which reflects one of the most stainless prejudices of colonial Italy, it is symptomatic the aseptic enunciation 'Italian presence in Africa' to characterize the 'normality' of the page' colonial Italy therein including the fascist occupation of Ethiopia of 1935-41 . . ."

F) THE CASE OF RODOLFO GRAZIANI MEMORIAL

In many Italian cities, streets, squares, theatres, cinemas recall our colonial past without any kind of contextualization. Brutal generals are still celebrated as the saviors of the country.

Monuments are built to rehabilitate fascism in public memory. In August 2012, a monument in memory of Rodolfo Graziani has been inaugurated in Affile, in the province of Rome. Graziani, Benito Mussolini's military commander, also called the "Executioner of Libya" or "the Butcher of Ethiopia" is the fascist General author of the ruthless repression of the anti-colonial revolt and who decided, among other atrocities, to bomb Red Cross hospitals and to sprinkle mustard gas on the unarmed Ethiopia populations, going against the Geneva Convention, causing the death of thousands of people and the destruction of lands. In 1950 he was sentenced to 19 years, of which he served just four months.

In the Affile town hall's web site Graziani is listed in the "Famous people of Affile" page. In the article to him dedicated, clearly devoted to commemorate the "good" fellow citizen, is written that "Graziani was able to direct his every act for the good of the homeland through the inflexible moral rigor and meticulous fidelity to duty as a soldier that distinguished him from belonging to the ranks of ignoble or to the large category of the many who only pursued the logic of self-interest."

As to say if you obey to the nation everything is allowed, even to kill thousands of people. It's not by chance that on the top of the mausoleum is written "Patria e onore", e.g. "Homeland and pride".



Picture of Rodolfo Graziani Memorial taken in Affile in August 2013

Many Affile citizens are fascist nostalgic. It occurred again this summer when an event was organized, on the 29th of June in honor of Graziani, by the association named after him. "Manipulators" of one hundred people, including the major Ercolo Viri (re-confirmed as mayor after the election campaign on May 2013 with votes up to the 62% of the population of Affile), took part in the conference organized in Affile entitled "Our countryman". At their arrival Roman greetings (Saluti romani) have been performed in front of the mausoleum. Nothing is missing: guests, dinner and a closing party at Radimonte (the public park that is hosting the fascist mausoleum).