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THE BEGINNINGS OF WESTERN EDUCATION IN ERITREA

Christine Smith-Simonsen

Traditional formal education in Eritrea was a task mainly performed in religious settings: in churches, monasteries and Koran schools. Western education, as introduced by European missionaries and Italian colonisers, was also to a large extent performed within religious settings. Along with the consolidation of Italian colonial rule in the area came an increased need for skilled workers. The development of a more secularized education was thus a result of colonial impact. According to the British, who took on the administration of Eritrea when Italy lost its African territories in 1941, Italian educational policies towards Eritreans had been of a general low standard and with a scope designedly narrow.¹ Although attention will be given to traditional schools, this article will focus mainly on the introduction of western education in Eritrea, and to what extent this was designed to meet colonial ends. Through the division of the Italian era into three different periods: colonization, consolidation and the Fascist period, the article will examine the establishment and growth of educational facilities, and how education was performed by missionary as well as government institutions.

Traditional Education in Eritrea

Eritrea was no tabula rasa concerning education before the arrival of Europeans to the region, both in its informal as well as formal sense. Literacy is connected to religion, and in the area to be named Eritrea, the population divided itself almost evenly between Christian and Muslim cultural backgrounds. Christianity was introduced to the area around 300 A.D., and became what was later known as the Orthodox, or Coptic, Church. This Church developed the liturgical language Ge'ez, from which today's Amharic, Tigre and Tigrinya originate. Formal educational institutions connected to churches, monasteries and mosques therefore had long traditions in the area.

Koran schools operated in both the highland plateau, the *kebera*, as well as in the lowlands and along the coast. Sessions would usually take place in the mosques, and the study of the Koran would be the main object of education. Other subjects would be reading and writing of Arabic. According to Giuseppe Puglisi, there were 88 permanent Koran schools in Eritrea in 1946, with a total of 3240 students.² He also reported the existence of 176 mobile schools, although these schools must have been more difficult to register, both regarding their operative status as well as the attendance of students.

The so-called Coptic schools, i.e. the Orthodox Church education, operated mostly in the *kebera*. Instruction would usually take place in the enclosure of the church. The teacher would be a monk or a learned man, *defana*, who would receive land or grain from the community for his services. Although a non-graded system, the instruction was divided into three main stages: elementary, secondary and higher, whereof the higher stages would take place in the monasteries. The aims of the Orthodox Church education were to prepare and train young individuals for the service of the church as priests, deacons, *defanas* and scribes; to teach and educate a very small number of the laity to read and write, and to preserve and transmit social and cultural heritage.

According to Adane Taye, traditional schools were discouraged by the Italians during the colonial period.³ However, they were not totally subdued. In his report on the state of the colony at the time of his retirement, Governor Ferdinando Martini listed 48 traditional schools. Unfortunately, he made no distinction between Muslim and Christian schools, as he referred to them only as scuole indigene.⁴

Only a minority of the population had the opportunity to benefit from these institutions, and the larger part of the population remained illiterate. Koran and Christian schools were not the only formal educational activity in the sense of a specific agenda and conscious division between student and teacher. Formal instruction was also connected to other purposes of the society, and often restricted to certain periods of a life-cycle. Initiation rites were common for both sexes, and were to mark the transition from one stage in life to another. Other specialized skills necessary to the subsistence of the society, such as hunting, organising religious rituals and the practising of medicine, also required formal education. Instruction would usually take place within the family or clan, and could vary in length from a few weeks to several years. Besides the formal education, there was the informal, commonplace socialising process of the young following the older, learning from examples and behaviour.

Under normal circumstances, education is related to the needs and demands of the surrounding society: how to survive and make a living. In this sense, African education matched African societies and produced personalities to fit African reality. Education was therefore not introduced as a phenomenon by Europeans, they only introduced a new set of institutions which partly replaced, partly supplemented what was already there. The crucial point of pre-colonial education, however, was its relevance to the local society. As this article will discuss, the introduction of western education was based on a different set of motives.

Western Education in Eritrea; Italian Efforts

Italian colonialism in Africa was set off by the purchase of land around the port of Assab in 1869 by the shipping company Società di Navigazione Rubattino. In 1882 the Italian Government bought all Rubattini properties in the area, and established a garrison. Further, Italian expansion towards Massawa and Asmara was to some extent encouraged by the British. The European powers were scrambling for Africa, and it was in Great Britain's interest to get a buffer against the expanding French in the south. The first period of Italian colonization of Eritrea was not without obstacles, however. Despite the military loss to the Ethiopians at Dogali in 1887, a foothold was quickly gained, but attempts to consolidate Italian presence were met with notable resistance.

It is likely that the initial smoothness of the occupation was due to the devastating local conditions at the time. During the period of 1888 – 1892, a substantial part of the population succumbed to famine caused by draught, locusts and Rinderpest. The situation may have caused delusory ideas as to the docility of the presumed colonial subjects, but when the Italians tried to settle on Eritrean land, the opposition turned fierce. Italy was in no financial position to embark on such an ambitious project as that of "the scramble for Africa." The military defeat at Adwa when trying to invade Ethiopia in 1896, in addition to the armed resistance of Eritrean peasants and landlords, broke the backbone of the Italian colonial adventure. They were forced to withdraw their settlement program and try to retain their territories, and pride, at the lowest possible cost. From the turn of the century, Italian policy on Eritrea turned from "colonia di popolamento to colonia di sfruttamento." Particularly the humiliating defeat at Adwa had brought about public and political claims of financial modesty if the colony was to be kept under Italian control.

Competing with these problems, the issue of educating the local population failed to top the agenda. Still, the expul-

sion of the Lazarists, which will be dealt with later, shows that Italian authorities were not entirely indifferent as to what influenced the Eritreans were exposed to. As evident from his records, the Italian governor Ferdinando Martini was against the introduction of western values and knowledge to the Eritreans.⁵ Neither was he in favor of the employment of locals in the colonial administration or in private enterprises. Instruction of the local population in this first period was therefore left to missionaries. At the turn of the century it became evident that, in spite of tight budgets, the colony was in need of educational facilities, at least for the European part of its population. Renato Paoli argued in 1908 that the still ongoing debates in Italy whether Eritrea was to be a colony of trade or a colony of settlement was futile, as it was unlikely for any Italian family, from either upper or lower middleclass, to want to remain in a colony where there were no possibilities for their children to get a proper education. If the authorities wanted Eritrea to be settled by Italians, they would necessarily have to change policy. If not, Paoli somewhat ironically added, Eritrea would appear as nothing but a mirror image of the *Madre Patria* "...beautiful indeed, but poor, elegant indeed, but illiterate."⁶

In 1905 the European population in Eritrea was estimated to be 3,949 inhabitants, whereof 2,333 were Italians. 966 were under the age of 20, whereof 754 were younger than 15, and the illiteracy rate within this group was 64 per cent. Of the remaining 2,983 European inhabitants there were 799 (27%) who could neither read nor write. Put together, these figures show a total illiteracy rate of 38 percent among the European population.⁷ The first government school for the European population opened in Asmara around the turn of the century. It was a secular school, and two teachers were sent for from Italy to tutor the classes. The premises soon proved inadequate, and in spite of tight budgets, a more suitable building was constructed in 1903. Another government school opened in Keren the same year, and in 1905, a third was established in Adi Ugri.

In the remaining two towns with a European population of any significance, Massawa and Saganeiti, there were already well established missionary schools.

In his *Diario*, Governor Martini expressed a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards the work of missionaries in the colony. Among others, he reported an incident regarding a Muslim woman who, after her husband's death fighting for the Italians, left her baby in the custody of the St. Anna sisters for three years. When the mother came to reclaim her child, the sisters refused, arguing that they would not leave a baptized child in the hands of a Muslim. Naturally, the rejection caused resentment in the local community, and Martini commented: "These missionaries do nothing but create trouble for the government, and put us in a bad position towards the indigenous population."⁸ As for the missionaries' efforts in the field of education, Martini expressed doubts regarding their competence. Still, due to the financial situation, he had little choice but to rely on their assistance: "...nobody would have desired the situation different more than I, but as I have stated already, the budget could not tolerate it; and between leaving the colony to become an illiterate chaos, or leaving elementary education in the hands of missionaries, there was no doubt what to choose."⁹

Governor Martini was equally sceptical towards missionaries teaching the local population. He did not approve of the idea of imposing Christianity upon other cultures, particularly since half the Eritrean population already was Christian. Martini stressed that religious propaganda was to be avoided, and that all beliefs were to be respected equally. Missionary schools should therefore relate to government programs.

As will be discussed later, Italian colonial authorities expelled all French missionaries in 1895. They were consequently replaced by an Italian order of Capuchins, which marked the establishment of the *Prefettura Apostolica* of Eritrea. Although the colonial administration still resided in Massawa at the time, the Capuchins settled their headquarters in Asmara. All estab-

lishments previously run by the Lazarists were taken over, including a printing press in Keren. However, no books designed for instruction of the local population were printed by the Italians in this period. Institutions run by French Charity sisters were taken over by Italian St. Anna sisters. This order had established themselves in the colony as early as 1886, opening a school in Assab in 1888. The St. Anna sisters were devoted to the instruction of the local population, and in the following years, they extended their activities to Asmara (1898), Saganeiti (1904) and Ghinda (1906).

In the early years of the Italian colonial period, the Capuchin fathers were mostly engaged in establishing educational facilities for the European population. However, measures had been taken on Italian initiative to educate the local population as well. In Massawa, there was a school and orphanage established in 1888, run by the Capuchin chaplain padre Buonaventura Piscopo. In Asmara, a military chaplain, padre Bonomi, had started giving instruction to the locals once the Italian troops settled there in 1889. Although never provided with much means, he kept on with this work until he died in 1927, reputed as a somewhat legendary figure in Asmara.

Due to illness and the insufferable heat, the St. Anna sisters closed their school in Assab. Accordingly, by the time Governor Martini left office in 1907, these were the existing educational facilities for Eritreans provided by Italians: Elementary schools for both sexes in Massawa, Ghinda, Saganeiti and Asmara, and orphanages in Asmara, Keren and Saganeiti. All of these were run by the St. Anna sisters, with financial aid from the colonial government. In addition, there was the school run by padre Bonomi. In general, the subjects taught were Italian, Amharic, Tigrinya and some rudimentary arithmetic and agriculture. Girls were mainly trained in domestic activities. Notably, some instruction in the Italian language was also given to the Eritrean ascaris enrolled in the colonial forces.

At the end of this first period of Italian colonial rule in Eritrea, Bruna Rinaldo recognized that the instruction of the local population had been neglected, although being one of the most important means to diffuse the language and culture of the colonizer. An understanding of the importance of controlling this process was beginning to manifest itself among Italian authorities. Accordingly, plans were being made for a government school in Keren for Muslim children exclusively, but this did not become a reality until the next period.

Consolidating Colonial Education

Governor Martini's leaving of office marked the beginning of a new period. Eritrea appeared as a consolidated colony, and there were few radical changes of policies until 1930, when Fascism entered the colonial field. The period was characterized by a steady growth of colonial infrastructure. Another feature was a general strengthening of Italian domination in Africa, and local resistance in these territories involved Eritrean *ascaris* enrolled in the colonial army. World War I had minor effects, except for an even tighter budget. Still, the number of educational facilities for the local population increased, presumably due to the growing need for *ascaris*, interpreters and trained personnel.

Some of the local Muslim chiefs and notables had already announced their interest in giving their children a western type of education. Martini reported that a school to this end was to be opened in Massawa at the initiative of the Commissariato Regionale, though financed by the local notables. As this happened towards the verge of his period as governor, he left the project to his successor. Marquis Salvago-Raggi, a career diplomat with experience from both Cairo and Peking, replaced Martini in 1907. The school opened in 1908, and was given the name "Ferdinando Martini." It was a bilingual school employing three teachers, one Italian, one Arab, and one local assistant who also mastered the Italian language. Besides Italian and Ara-

bic, the pupils were taught some rudimentary geography and arithmetic. The school was operative from October until June, and provided two separate courses: first and second grade. In 1908 the school enrolled 35 pupils whereof 30 completed the first grade and were promoted to the next. In 1913 enrolment rose to 60 pupils, but only 48 completed the course. The idea was to train children of merchants in order to facilitate commercial communication and, for those interested, the opportunity to work for the Italian administration as clerks or interpreters. At some point a third year was added, but the school remained exclusively for children of the Muslim population throughout the Italian administration. In 1929, the running of "Ferdinando Martini" was entrusted to the Capuchin fathers.

The school that is considered to be the first government school was the "Salvago-Raggi" school of arts and crafts in Keren, which opened on March 1, 1909. The school was originally for Muslim pupils only, but later this restriction was dismissed. According to the statutes, the purpose of the school was to: a) bring a new spirit of culture and civilization to the local population; b) give elementary instruction to the sons of chiefs who were later to succeed their fathers in the administration of villages and tribes; c) prepare young Eritreans for posts in either private or government administration; d) instruct Eritreans in various arts and crafts; and e) prepare pupils that could become good graduates for possible enrolment in the colonial army.¹⁰ Syllabuses were adopted on an ad hoc basis, and the schooling was scheduled to last three years, comprising subjects such as elementary Italian, arithmetic, geometry, geography, agriculture, Arabic and studies of the Koran. Training in arts and crafts comprised typing, telegraphy, blacksmithing and carpentry, in addition to physical and military training. Except for the teacher of Arabic, who was an Egyptian called from the Arab university Al-Azhar in Cairo, the teachers were all Italian. The results of this project were sufficiently positive to make way for two more schools of the same kind. In order to pro-

vide the same facilities for Orthodox Christians, the "San Giorgio" school of arts and crafts opened in 1914 in Adi Ugrä in the Seraye province. Schooling was scheduled to last four years, and provided elementary subjects, in addition to Italian, Amharic and Tigrinya. Practical training focused on typing, carpentry, telegraphy, and was also accessible to boys not belonging to the local nobility. Physical training and military exercise was compulsory.

The "San Michele" school of arts and crafts was established in October the same year, and was a school intended for the Catholic population of the Akele-Guzai region. Boarding was reserved for sons of Catholic local chiefs and notables. In addition, an unlimited number of local boys of all religious backgrounds were admitted as day pupils. Schooling was scheduled to last four years with an additional complementary course. Subjects taught were Italian, Tigrinya, arithmetic and some knowledge of history and geography. Courses in arts and crafts were mechanics, typing, saddlery, shoemaking, carpentry and tailoring, in addition to physical and military exercises. The teachers were Capuchin fathers, Italians as well as Eritreans, the former usually tutoring the higher classes. Although "San Michele" was a project initiated by the Vicariato Apostolico in Eritrea, and the administration entrusted to the Capuchin Fathers, it was placed under government supervision and had to adopt the prevailing official programs in order to gain financial support.

In sum, the first years of this period saw the establishment of government schools for Eritreans, each designed for a particular religious group. Except for the one for Eritrean Catholics, which enrolled orphans as well, these schools were initially meant for the children of the local nobility, but none of these restrictions lasted very long. Notably, being schools of arts and crafts, emphasize was laid on manual instruction, limiting theoretical subjects to a minimum.

The opening of these schools shows a growing concern for educational facilities for the local population. The issue of policies to this end was once brought up for debate at the Camera dei Deputati in Italy, where Foreign Minister Di San Giuliano stated that "...the character of the education given to the native has to be carefully considered so as not to cause any political nor moral inconvenience. The native, Eritrean as well as Somali, still possess an almost infantile mentality which makes it necessary to adjust the intellectual nourishment in a way that will not cause them any mental or moral imbalance."¹¹ In his opinion, it was imperative to keep western ways of thinking out of the educational programs for the colonial population, stating that it would not harmonize with traditional mentalities. To others, the introduction of western ideas through local education was perceived as an important civilizing mission.

Statutes were approved for each of the government schools, but there was no statement of a general policy until 1916, when a four page long *circolare* (circular) was distributed by Governor De Martino to the regional commissioners. This commander of the colonial troops, and all mission stations. This stated that the new generations of colonial subjects "...born under our flag..." should be taught to appreciate its benefits and admire its prestige.¹² This could best be done by offering public instruction in order to improve both their intellect and moral conduct. The circular stressed education as an important means of political influence. From then on, the commissioners of regions harboring a government school were to report every other month to the Office of Civil Affairs on the state of instruction, discipline and sanitary conditions. Commissioners were also asked to pay attention to traditional Muslim and Orthodox Christian schools, as well as private and missionary initiatives. The document only stated a few guidelines, but can still be interpreted as a sign of growing political awareness of the potential of public instruction of the colonial population.

On September 15, 1921, Governor Marquis Giovanni Cerina Feroni issued a general decree on education for Eritreans. In order to meet the need for trained personnel within commerce, industry and administration, instruction of the local population had to develop accordingly. Schools for Eritreans were to be divided into three categories: a) schools of arts and crafts; b) elementary schools, and c) one secondary school. The "Salvago Raggi" in Keren and the "San Michele" in Saganeiti would remain more or less the same, but the education at schools in arts and crafts should never exceed four years, which meant the end of the complementary course at "San Michele." The elementary schools comprised the various mission schools, in addition to the "Ferdinando Martini" in Massawa and the "San Giorgio" in Adi Ugri. According to article III, they were to teach Italian, the local language, arithmetic, geometry, geography, calligraphy, moral and physical training. The duration of elementary education was set to three years. In 1919 a school of agriculture had opened in Adi Ugri, but this project was discontinued by 1921. Agricultural training was to be given at the "San Giorgio," and some elementary gardening was to be taught in every elementary school, as was also local industries. Article XV stated that fees would be required for the admission to these schools, except for the ones of arts and crafts. As for a secondary school, it was still at a planning stage, and according to article IV, it was intended as a two-year course following the elementary school years, providing a few additional subjects.

It was not until 1926, when Governor Gasparini established the "Vittorio Emanuele III" in Asmara, that Eritreans were offered any education exceeding four years. The school offered four years of elementary education, and two years of superior courses. The Nigrizia Sisters were to teach the first four grades, while two secular teachers were to tutor the senior two. The teaching of local languages was taken care of by Eritrean teachers. No distinctions were made concerning religious backgrounds. Educational programs were based on those

in Italian elementary schools, with additional courses in Arabic, Amharic and Tigrinya.

In sum, instruction of the local population was clearly designed to produce a colonial labor force. This is evident from the subjects taught in local schools, all purposed to train the pupils in skills necessary for an employment within the colonial administration and enterprises, such as simple book-keeping, typing, and carpentry. Moreover, there was a growing consciousness of education as a means to diffuse Italian values and culture. This was not only to consolidate Italian domination, however, but also an expression of the general idea of education as a civilizing duty, an idea that colonial authorities shared with the missionaries.

The Nigrizia Sisters, who were running the "Vittorio Emanuele III," came to the colony in 1914 on invitation by the earlier mentioned padre Bonomi. He had been running a school in Asmara on his own initiative ever since his arrival in 1890. When the first Italian children arrived, he tried to mix them with his local pupils, but this project succumbed to a law that prohibited any such co-education. According to statutes, he thus had to tutor the Italian pupils in separate classes, and with a separate program. Padre Bonomi's school, although of a humble character, became quite popular among the local inhabitants of Asmara. Schooling was divided into four courses: The first was a preparatory course which the pupils would attend until they had acquired a sufficient knowledge of Italian, reading and writing. The following three courses provided the usual elementary subjects. In 1905 the school counted 150 pupils, whereof 20 Italians and 40 of other national origins. In 1913 the number had grown to 270. When Bonomi died in 1927, there were more than 300 pupils attending the school. There was nobody to continue his work, but some of his pupils were admitted to the newly opened "Vittorio Emanuele III," thus taken care of by the sisters he had invited thirteen years earlier.

Schools	Category	Enrolment	Orthodox	Muslims	Catholics	Protestants
"Ferdinando Martini"	Government	75	9	61	3	2
bilingual, Massawa						
"Salvago Raggi"	Government	106	10	67	29	-
artsan, Keren						
"San Giorgio"	Government	159	149	4	5	1
artsan, Adi Ugr						
"San Michele"	Government &	181	13	-	168	-
artsan, Saganeti	Catholic mission	656	462	83	90	21
"Giuseppe Sapeo"	Government	33	1	31	1	-
elementary, Assab						
Elementary school,	Government	30	21 (probably	7	2	-
Ghinda			Orthodox)			
Catholic mission	Private	826 boys				
schools		517 girls				
Evangelical mission	Private	565 boys				
schools		275 girls				
Adventists mission	Private	27 boys				
schools		24 girls				
Sum		3,504	1,019	267	1,658	501

Based on reports from the Ministero delle Colonie: *Statistica Generale delle scuole Coloniali anno 1930*

Table 1
Educational Facilities for Eritreans in 1930

In spite of the establishment of government schools, the larger part of educational facilities in the colony was in the hands of various missionary bodies. Much to the displeasure of Italian authorities, Swedish missionaries were among the most active, as will be dealt with later on. Catholic activities were taken care of almost exclusively by the Capuchin fathers. They were administering the Prefettura Apostolica of Eritrea, instituted in 1894 by decree of Pope Leo XIII. In February 1911, this institution advanced to a Vicariato Apostolico, i.e. an Italian diocese. In the same year, the old printing machine which the Lazarists had left in Keren was moved to Asmara, where they started to print textbooks designed for the local population. These were subsequently put to use in both missionary and government schools. In every village where a Catholic priest was stationed, some elementary schooling was provided. As padre Ezechia put it, "...every tree, every provisional tent serves as teaching premises."¹³ Usually, these village priests were of local origin, and the education they provided was essentially religious. Still, some training was given in reading and writing of the local language, and wherever the priest was capable, some Italian as well.

The Eritrean clergy was trained at the Keren Seminary. During the period from the arrival of the Capuchin fathers in 1894 until 1930, the seminary trained 84 priests. 34 of these were sent to Rome for further studies at the Pontificio Collegio Etiopico at the Vatican, which was established by Pope Benedict XV in 1919 to replace the old Hospice for Ethiopians, but for various reasons, only twelve completed their studies. Some were sent to the seminary at the Patriarcato Cattolico in Jerusalem. The seminary in Keren was later moved to Asmara, and altogether, 150 Eritrean priests were trained there during the Italian colonial period. However hard-working the missionaries were concerning the provision of educational facilities, the secular authorities were not always pleased with their presence and influence. Martini's reservations regarding missionary influence

was shared by Professor Ernesto Nelli. During the Congresso Coloniale held in Asmara in September 1905, he argued for a complete secularisation of education for both Italians and Eritreans, but he met with little response. Approving of the missionaries' civilizing work, the congress agreed unanimously on recommending further collaboration.

There were no regulations concerning educational facilities run by private or confessional institutions until 1928 when, complying with a government decree, all schools and educational programs had to be approved by the colonial government. Lessons in the Italian language had to be given at least six times a week, and all instruction was to be given in Italian, or the vernacular, if the pupils were of Eritrean origin. Under no circumstances would any foreign language be accepted as language of instruction. In case of violation of these regulations, the school would be closed.

As will be discussed later, these regulations were probably designed mainly to control foreign missionary bodies. In spite of occasional frictions, relations between Italian Catholic missionaries and secular authorities were good, particularly as they shared several mutual goals and interests. When examining some of the Catholic missionaries' own records, they appear to have been quite helpful in the consolidation of Italian influence. "With our schools we propagate our language, and with the language the Italian mind, art, science, the Italian civilisation; we are here to destroy a world of ridiculous and damaging superstitions, and to prepare the future workers of the colony."¹⁴

Decrees and regulations are one thing, practice another. In a letter to the director of civil affairs, the commissioner of Massawa made complaints about the material state of the government schools for the local population. Even the most elementary equipment was either missing or in bad condition. Considering the economic situation, it is likely that this was a problem that haunted government schools throughout most of the Italian colonial period. Enrolment and local scepticism

were other problems, something which "Salvago-Raggi" in Keren experienced in the initial years. Having experienced the religious propaganda of the missionary schools, the local population was distrustful as to the purpose of this new project, in fear of religious propaganda being imposed on their children. Additionally, there was an aversion specific to the local culture against certain trades, making it unsuitable for pupils from the upper social strata to attend these courses.

In general, pupils tended to prefer theoretical courses to practical training. In 1918, the commissioner in Keren wrote a report to the colonial government on the matter. He found Eritrean clerks to be unreasonably well treated, something that gave white collar jobs high prestige, thus causing the "...by nature idle and weak native" to avoid any manual training.¹⁵ To a certain extent, the schools were competing with both private and official bodies for the attention of young Eritreans. The commissioner of Adi Ugri complained about the fact that on several occasions various offices and agencies had employed pupils from "San Giorgio" without any pre-examinations. Often these pupils had been expelled from the school, or they had not yet completed their education.

Drop out was a problem in general. According to Puglisi, the number of Eritrean pupils enrolled in the school year 1927-1928 was to 2,928. Of these 1,143 were Muslims and 673 Orthodox. The remaining 1,112 were probably Catholics. Supposing the population to have been approximately 300,000, and on the understanding that the school age population constitutes 20 per cent, it follows that approximately 5 per cent of the school age population received some education.¹⁶ On the other hand, from records of "San Michele" from the school year 1919-1920, it appears that there were 40 boarding pupils and 32 day-pupils enrolled that year. Nine of the boarders, and 21 of the day-pupils never completed the course. This amounts to a drop-out rate of 42 per cent, a figure that is likely to have been the norm.

Educational policies were decided and regulations issued after the actual establishment of the schools, enforced by the various problems and conflicts that emerged along the way. This underscores the idea that these schools were instituted not so much for the purpose of educating Eritreans in their own right, but rather as a means to train cheap labor for the growth of administration and colonial enterprises. As noted, pupils were often employed before finishing their schooling.

The scarce economic resources of the colony never allowed for any high standard of education, including facilities for the European part of the population. Still, teachers, and particularly the missionaries, were praised for their work by other colonial officers: "The system of instruction is based on proper pedagogic criteria. It stays clear of any shallow education, and tends towards giving the pupils a sound intellectual and moral instruction, with a true Italian spirit."¹⁷ Italian sentiments were indeed present in the contents of both instruction and textbooks, where the virtues and values of the *Madre Patria* were clearly emphasised. Physical, disciplinary and military training was another important feature, with a pronounced purpose of preparing youngsters for enrolment in the colonial troops. Local education therefore appears as something designed mainly to benefit the colonizers. Notably, the establishment of local education may also be seen as an effort to meet the demands of the various ethnic groups, designing one school for each of them, but as the lion's share of educational activities were carried out by missionaries, the result was that the bulk of the pupils were exposed to either Catholicism or Protestantism. In sum, the extent of education offered was low, and the high dropout rates made the enrolment figures shrink. The entry of Fascism to the colony was to change the situation in many ways.

The Entry of Fascism into the Field of Colonial Education

During the economic crisis in the 1930s, the Italian economy was severely strained. At the same time, imperialistic policies and efforts were strengthened. This was also marked by the entry of Fascism into Italian colonial politics. The thirties were indeed to be a turbulent decade for the Italian African territories, particularly the Italian invasion of Ethiopia followed by occupation and terror regime. Additionally, there was the social aspect of Fascist aggression, particularly expressed through the racial discrimination which developed in the final act of Italian colonial rule. To what extent did the entry of Fascism into colonial politics have an impact on the extent and contents of local education?

There are two classical interpretations of the nature of Fascism: One is the argument of the contemporary Benedetto Croce that Fascism was an unforeseeable and temporary departure from the progressive policies pursued by liberal governments from Cavour to Giolitti. The other is the more pessimistic view that Fascism was the revelation of hidden, but crippling, defects of public life in Italy.¹⁸ At the end of World War I, Italy was in a position of severe economic strain and social and political unrest. In 1919, Mussolini founded the first *Fascio di Combattimento*. The success of this movement was limited, its politics somewhat indecisive and populist. In 1921, however, the movement transformed into a political party. On October 28, 1922, Mussolini staged his "March on Rome." The next day, King Vittorio Emanuele III asked him to form a new ministry. Although Mussolini came to power partly by receiving parliamentary endorsement, democracy was not promoted by Fascism. In the late 1920s, Mussolini managed to dissolve the parliament. Power was now vested in the Fascist party and its Duce.

Fascism was a highly nationalistic movement, and aimed at regaining Italy's ancient greatness. Somewhat contradictory,

Fascism was characterized by both traditionalism and futurism. At the same time as basic values were promoted and traditional ways pursued, there was a great interest in everything modern; technical devices, activism, velocity and audacity. Further, Fascism was characterized by moralist and militarist attitudes, particularly expressed through ideals such as loyalty, heroism, and the spirit of self-sacrifice. This spirit was expressed through maxims like *credere, obbedire, combattere* (believe, obey, fight), and through detailed norms for common behavior, such as the abolition of the hand-shake which gave way to the ancient Roman salute. Political values within Fascism were mostly tied to the idea of a national community. The "new state" was to be an integrated, harmonic and uniform society. Fascism claimed to be the answer to the profound economic and social crisis that was haunting Europe at the time. The new order of society promoted by Fascism was corporatism, or the idea of an entire state built on organizations covering various social functions, primarily within the sphere of production. The social element within this transformation of society was the idea of promoting social justice. In fact, many reforms concerning general social security were carried out during the Fascist regime.

Contrary to Nazism, anti-semitism was not an essential issue within Fascist ideology until an introduction of racial legislation in 1938. Racial policies were initially based on a growing consciousness of problems concerning relationships between Italian men and local women in Italian colonial territories. A decree issued in 1937 prohibited all relations of conjugal nature between Italians and their colonial subjects. The prohibition included sexual relations with any person from a population with traditions, lifestyles, and social and legal practices analogous to those of the local populations in Italian East-Africa. Another difference between Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy relevant to this article is the fact that Italy was like thirty to fifty years behind Germany in respect of industrialization. Regarding the problem of illiteracy, this had virtually vanished in Ger-

many by 1900, whereas in Italy it was still a problem in some parts of the country. Statistics in 1931 showed the level of literacy rate among Italians aged six years at roughly 90 percent in the north, 79 percent in the centre, but only 61 percent in the south and on the islands.¹⁹ It is important to keep this in mind when studying the status of educational facilities in the colonies, as it is likely that the Italians would seek to sort their own illiteracy problems before making an effort to solve those of their colonial subjects.

In 1931 a new set of regulations were issued regarding schools for Eritreans. "Vittorio Emanuele III" was confirmed as an elementary school, as were also "Ferdinando Martini" in Massawa, "Giuseppe Sapeto" in Assab and "San Michele" in Saganeti. "Salvago Raggi" in Keren was to continue as a school of arts and crafts, while "San Giorgio" in Adi Ugri was to concentrate on agricultural instruction, as courses in arts and crafts at this school had been discontinued during the last years due to lack of training personnel. By compensation, a new school of arts and crafts was to open the following year in Agordat in the western lowlands. Boarding at the artisan schools had ceased, mostly due to economic reasons, and there were no longer any preferences regarding the pupils' religious backgrounds.

The regulations set elementary education to four years of schooling, and artisan education to three years, divided between elementary subjects and manual training. The fourth and fifth year at "Vittorio Emanuele III" was to function as some sort of middle-school, and was the only education exceeding elementary school offered to the local population. According to the decree, a diploma from this school should be required in order to get employment as typists, interpreters, or clerks of various kinds. This was never carried out, however, as the shortage of trained personnel was too severe to request any diplomas from local employees. Regarding private schools, the decree confirmed the need for supervision and control of these. The decree of 1928 had permitted various vernaculars as language of instruc-

tion. Now this permission was to be granted the Koran and Christian Orthodox schools exclusively. All other private schools, run mostly by confessional institutions, were obligated not only to teach Italian, but also to employ it as language of instruction. The clause indicates a growing desire on the part of the Italians to control all western influence on the local population, and to make it as Italian as possible.

Except for this new obligation, the decree did not add much. A more interesting testament of the ideas of this period is revealed in a subsequent criticism of the decree, presumably set forth by Andrea Festa, the man who was to be Italian educational policy in Eritrea in persona in the years to come. When evaluating the contents of the subjects taught in the elementary schools, he claimed that many of the subjects presented were of little use or interest to the local pupil. He particularly regarded the Italian historical period of Risorgimento as an unfortunate topic to teach the young Eritreans, probably because of the struggle for unity, freedom and nation-building that characterized that period in Italian history. Eritreans should only to be taught reading, writing and rudimentary mathematics, and instruction in arts and crafts should only be given as far as it was in the interest to the colonial economy. Altogether, the idea was that education for Eritreans should be mainly practical, and it became increasingly evident that education of the local population served only to satisfy the needs of the colonial state.

In November 1932, the colonial government established a central office for the supervision of all schools in the colony, government as well as private, for Eritreans as well as Europeans. Andrea Festa was appointed as its director, having long experience from the educational field in Libya, another Italian colony. His task was to ensure that the education was in accordance with the principles of the fascist regime. By 1933 he changed the 1931 regulations, reducing educational programs for the local population to a minimum. In Festa's opinion, edu-

cating the locals was a *penetrazione civile* that all colonial powers should embark on, as a duty owed to what he perceived as their lesser subjects. The idea was to "...raise their sense of dignity without awakening their pride; to gain their obedience without lowering them to a state of humiliating and barren slavery."²⁰

Festa was not the only one. At the turn of the decade, several voices came forward announcing their opinion as to how educational policies in the colonies should be carried out. In a temporary pedagogical periodical, Enrico DeLeone presented the school as a political instrument of moral penetration. According to him, the school should not only offer simple instruction in common knowledge, it should educate the local population. However, it was important to be aware of the political character of this kind of work. If not taking precautions accordingly, social unrest would be the result. Naturally, there could never be any uniform policy, as religious, economic and ethnic relations would differ throughout the various regions and colonial territories. If one wanted to influence the population of a colony or impose an assimilation policy, it would require prudence and a thorough knowledge of the ethnic groups and their conditions.

DeLeone warned against a too westernized education. Experience had already shown how what he called "pseudo-intellectual natives" would leave their land and families in search of employment. Reality would never match their expectations, thus making them an easy prey to social unrest. Education should therefore aim at attracting the locals into the orbit of economic interests of the colonizer in order to avoid present or future frictions between the two groups. Likewise, education should be cautious not to alienate the pupils from the local rural environment, something which would create a mass of social misfits, too educated to return to work in the fields, too ignorant to fit in with the colonizers, among whom they would find but limited and poor occupations. The school should not risk being a vacuum, void of contents of any inter-

est or relation to local reality. Educational policy had to be progressive, one had to think forward. In line with these ideas the Minister of Colonies in 1927, Luigi Federezioni, wrote that twenty years thereafter, the "natives" would be what Italian educational institutions had made them.

DeLeone suggested that school programs should be divided into four different categories: two urban ones; one for the local nobility and one for the masses, along with two rural ones: one for the sedentary population and one for the nomadic. The local nobility should receive an education equivalent to primary school in Italy, as they would have the possibility to continue their education in complementary schools. For the others, education should consist of a limited number of theoretical subjects, in addition to the training in arts and crafts in the urban schools, and agricultural training and animal care in the rural ones. He specifically stressed the point that knowledge of the Madre Patria should concentrate on the present, i.e., no reference to ancient history, "...glorious though it may be," as it had no relation whatsoever to local reality.²¹ DeLeone also explained why education of the local population by no means should be compulsory. Because of the continuous movements, especially of the nomadic and semi-nomadic populations, such a regulation would exist only on paper. This would have been politically unwise as it would create in the local population a sense of how easy the laws and regulations of the colonizer might be circumvented. DeLeone's views on the matter may not have been particularly Fascist, considering his opinions on assimilation policies, and particularly his reluctance to promote the glories of the Madre Patria. Still, he was well aware of the need to limit the possibilities of the local population in order to maintain colonial superiority.

Another expert commenting on the connection between education and colonial rule was Professor Mininni Caracciolo. Like DeLeone, he stressed how applying a European system of education without taking into consideration the local environ-

ment, had caused much damage to both the local population and the colonial power. However, although "...the educated native is more difficult to govern than the ignorant one," he was in favour of local education lest it compromised colonial domination. His idea of education was the "...useful implementation of peaceful penetration and moral conquest."²² These documents and statements give an impression of a more conscious attitude towards education than had been the case in the previous periods. Education was now regarded as a duty in correspondence with the idea of "the white man's burden." Still, education was first and foremost an opportunity to promote the interests of the colonial regime. Notably, all topics were efficiently withheld which might give the pupils ideas of independence and revolt. In sum, the attitude towards the local population was characterised by racial discrimination and an explicit need to control whatever influence the colonial subjects were exposed to.

In 1934, Andrea Festa's new regulations were approved, determining education for Eritreans to four years of elementary school with additional courses of arts and crafts. The two year complementary course at the "Vittorio Emanuele III" was reserved for the pupils from the various elementary schools who had distinguished themselves. The idea was that the pupils attending this school should become the only ones to receive employment as teachers, interpreters, and clerks of various kinds. However, statistics on enrolment of students show a scarce attendance, their number varying from none in the year 1928-29 to 38 in 1933-34, whilst only ten in 1939-40.²³ One reason for this low attendance was the Italian reluctance towards the idea of local pupils getting further education. Professor Albera on the other hand, claimed that the desire of an immediate earning, together with the mistaken belief that the elementary courses were on an adequate educational level, to have been the most valid explanation of the phenomenon.²⁴ In that case, Italian colonial authorities and enterprises must have been of the same

opinion, since Eritreans would often be hired as teachers or clerks after only four years of elementary school.

In 1934, educational facilities for Eritreans were as listed in Table 2. Government schools were six in number. In addition, there were 323 Eritreans of various religious backgrounds enrolled in other government schools, namely the elementary schools in Asmara, Massawa, Keren, Adi Caieh and Adi Ugi. The rest were run by the Catholic mission, and for the most part, these were reserved for Catholics. Enrolment figures are listed, not so much to tell how many Eritreans attended school, as to see how the various religious groups were represented. The Muslims are the least represented, whilst the Orthodox Christians top the list. Probably, this division was due to the fact that most of these schools were situated in areas mainly inhabited by Orthodox Christians. Initiatives had been taken by the government to meet Muslim demands through the schools in Massawa, Keren and Agordat. However, the figures show that the Orthodox were present in these schools also, even numerically superior in the case of "Salvago Raggi," originally designed for Muslims only. Another interesting aspect is the number of Protestants attending "Vittorio Emanuele III." Although sources give no information regarding this phenomenon, it was probably due to the closure of all Protestant mission schools only two years earlier.

One might say that ideas and prospects regarding education for Eritreans seemed poor on paper, but reality was probably even poorer. Even Andrea Festa himself, when visiting the schools, admitted that courses in arts and crafts at the "Salvago-Raggi" were nothing but a joke. As the contemporary historian Piccioli put it: "Fascism made the colonial school a powerful weapon of moral conquest"; moral in this sense meaning loyalty to the colonial power.²⁵ What the little children learned in school they would bring home, thus spreading the ideas and attitudes set out by Fascist policy. A British officer, Gandar Dower, reported after his arrival in East-Africa right

Source: Ministero delle Colonie. *Statistica Generale delle Scuole Coloniali*: January 1, 1934.

Schools	Category	Enrolled	Orthodox	Muslims	Catholics	Protestants
"Ferdinando Martini"	Government Elementary	118	15	93	10	-
Massawa						
"Salvago Raggi"	Government Artisan	232	111	103	8	-
Keren						
"San Giorgio," Adi Ugi	Government Agriculture	242	221	18	3	-
"San Michele," Saganeti	Government Elementary	255	82	8	165	
"Vittorio Emanuele III"	Government	1038	747	111	110	70
Asmara	Elementary & Medium	48	4	41	4	-
Scuola di Agordat	Government Artisan	59	3	55	1	-
"Giuseppe Sapeto," Assab	Government Elementary	16	-	-	16	-
Kindergarten, Asmara	Private Catholic	47	-	-	47	-
"San Giuseppe," Asmara	Private Catholic	62	-	-	62	-
Scuola Interna, Keren	Private Catholic	60	-	-	60	-
Seminary Keren	Private Catholic	58	-	-	58	-
Scuola Indigna, Adi Uri	Private Catholic	29	-	-	29	-
Scuola Privata, Asmara	Private Catholic	103 boys				
Scuola Parrocchiale, Asmara	Private Catholic	79 girls	27	-	155	-
Asmara	Private Catholic	2,446	1,211	429	738	70
Sum						

Table 2
Educational Facilities for Eritreans in 1934:

after the collapse of Mussolini: "Under the Italians, native education served a political purpose... The text-books, expensively produced, were written in Italian, and glorified the Duce on almost every page. Military service was lauded. Boys were encouraged to become "little soldiers of the Duce"; the Fascist salute was compulsory, and at the morning hoisting of the flag, Italian songs were sung."²⁶ Naturally there were many Eritreans, especially among those better off, who did not submit to these conditions. A number of these succeeded in making their way to Ethiopia where they could receive a more substantial schooling at the Imperial court. Several were also sent abroad for further studies by Emperor Haile Sellassie. Soon, Italian imperialism put an end to this as well.

The Italian warfare in Ethiopia was indeed characterized by a ferocity that has to be ascribed to the Fascist regime. The decision to conquer Ethiopia had been taken in 1934, when Mussolini himself outlined the motives, the goal, and the means of the operation. Briefly stated, the motive was to eliminate the threat imposed on Italian economic interests by the ongoing modernizing processes undertaken by the Emperor; the goal was to gain complete political control over Ethiopia; and the means were everything available, including a dreaded poison gas banned by the League of Nations. In early May 1936, shortly after the Italians had captured Addis Abeba, Mussolini pronounced his policy of pacification through terror. All resistance was to be crushed immediately, even on mere suspicion. All prisoners of war were to be shot on the spot, and all rebel areas, or wherever rebels were located, were to be sprayed with poison gas; the inhabitants indiscriminately killed, their villages destroyed and their property looted. The slogan was "no power to the rases." The result of this ruthless policy was continuous confrontation and a persistent resistance, even though so many had been mutilated or massacred, and most of the elite either killed or forced into exile.

Most of these actions took place outside Eritrea, but had an obvious impact on Eritrean everyday life as well. In Eritrea, all school buildings constructed in brick were confiscated for use as hospitals during the initial phase of the war. This included a few of the schools for Eritreans as well. Instruction would continue in provisional locations, but for the greater part, school activity lay fallow these months. When the schools re-opened, there was a notable increase of enrolment. This had been encouraged by the authorities, and measures were taken to meet the needs of the enlarged mass of students. Within a short period of time, several new schools opened. Most of these were small village schools, but in June 1939 "Carlo Scalera" opened in Acra, close to Asmara, a school the size of the "Vittorio Emanuele III." Most schools were run by Catholic missionaries, but there were also lay Italians as well as locals teaching the Eritrean children.

The Italians themselves were quite pleased with the increased enrolment, believing "local prejudice and superstition" to have been overcome by the civilizing processes of Fascism; but the flooding of pupils to the schools was a mixed blessing. Besides, enrolment numbers and statistics were not trustworthy, and even if some were correct as to the number of pupils initially enrolled, they never told of the enormous number of drop-outs. On July 24, 1936, shortly after the proclamation of Italian sovereignty over Ethiopia, yet another set of regulations were issued regarding the school system, stating that what had been the procedure in Eritrea in the last five years, was now to be applied to Ethiopia as well. The regulations enabled the establishment of a government school for girls which was realized in 1937. In 1941, there were approximately 25 elementary government schools in Eritrea.

Fascist attitudes became even more evident in the years to come, continuously limiting the opportunities of the local pupils. As put by Andrea Festa: "The instruction provided by the prevailing four year-program ... is sufficient as far as I am con-

cerned, to secure for the masses an adequate training for both the demands of the natives and for our own needs."²⁷ The Minister of Colonies, Giuseppe Bottai, stressed how the whole issue was a political matter and that there was a need to moderate the education of the locals, government as well as private. "Native" culture should be kept within well defined limits, which was why the concept of instruction should be kept separate from the concept of education. Il Duce stated that it would be useless and dangerous to give the locals degrees or diplomas. During the Fascist period military instruction of the young Eritreans intensified, and eventually, an organization of young militant Eritreans was instituted, called the pre-ascaris. Military instruction would be given during school hours and in the afternoon.

The number of Eritrean teachers was increasing but there was no specific teachers' training until 1939. Books were rare, and therefore most teaching was done with the help of blackboards and by memorizing. The classrooms were too crowded for any substantial learning to take place, and there were many drop-outs; presumably only one out of five students remained in these schools until the end of the school year. Work possibilities for Eritreans were deteriorating as well. The Italian invasion of Ethiopia had caused a great influx of Italians to the colony. After a while the surplus of Italian labor was so great that Europeans living in the colony had problems finding employment. It was illegal to employ an African in any sort of work that could be executed by an Italian, and the only occupations open to Eritreans outside their own community were those of office messengers, porters, stevedores, house- or outdoor servants, odd-jobs, and soldiers in the colonial forces.

On the eve of the Second World War there were about 25 schools for locals in Eritrea, but according to Richard Pankhurst, only 16 of them were open, presumably because of problems with the mobilization of teachers.²⁸ Although education for Eritreans never had been given high priority during the Italian

period, there is little doubt that it deteriorated to virtually nothing during its last years. According to Tekeste Negash, Eritrea was effectively colonized only between 1935 and 1941.²⁹ This may seem a short span of the colonial period viewed as a whole, still beyond doubt the one having the greatest impact on Eritrean society. Not only because of the great influx of Italians to the area, and the measures taken to westernize its infrastructure, but because of the heavy toll laid on Eritrean pride and self-esteem through the enforcement of a color bar.

Throughout the Fascist period of Italian colonial rule in Eritrea, measures were taken to shape up educational regulations and programs for the local population, but in effect, this only served to restrict whatever educational facilities there had been so far. Indeed there was a growth in the number of schools and of enrolled students, but the drop-out rates tended to equalize the increase. In addition, severe strains were put on the contents of education, decreasing to a minimum the level of knowledge offered to the Eritreans. Neither the Italian rule nor Fascism was to last for much longer, however. World War II brought the end to both the Fascist regime in Italy and to the Italian colonial adventure. During the spring of 1941 British forces, supported by Ethiopian and Eritrean deserters, invaded Eritrea and forced the Italian authorities to leave the country.

Western Education in Eritrea; French and Swedish

Efforts

The first European to introduce western education in the area to become Eritrea, was the French Lazarist, who had been engaged in educational activities in the territory since 1840. In 1891, the French Charity sisters opened a girls' school in Massawa with financial support from the Italian colonial government. Other establishments operated by the French were a seminary in Agrur and a seminary and an elementary school in Keren, where they also kept a small library and a printing press with Ge'ez letters. Also in Keren, the French Charity sisters ran

an elementary school for both genders. The pupils were mostly orphans or children from poor families.

The relationship between French missionaries and the Italian colonial government deteriorated in the early years of the 1890s. The Italians felt their colonial ambitions were threatened by the French presence in the bordering territory of Djibouti. This was particularly expressed through grievances over the French reluctance to teach their students the Italian language. In a letter to the Eritrean governor dated April 27, 1893, the Foreign Minister claimed that the French Lazarists were supported by France and the Vatican, both considered political enemies, thus making every converted Eritrean a propagator of their influence. The Eritrean governor, General Oreste Baratieri, stated in a report on school activities in 1894 that the education offered by the French Lazarists was not compatible with Italian aims, that is, the spread of the Italian language and culture in order to consolidate their colonial supremacy. Allegedly, the French missionaries were not focusing only on religious work, and the report claimed that they clandestinely contacted the Italians politically. In September that same year, Baratieri communicated to the Italian Foreign Minister that the substitution of French missionaries by Italian would imply an appreciable influence on the organization of instruction of the local population. As a result of negotiations between Italy and the Vatican, the French Lazarists and Charity sisters were expelled from the colony on February 4, 1895. In 1898 they settled in Ethiopia only to be thrown out once again after the Italian invasion in 1935.

After the expulsion of the French missionaries, Ferdinando Martini suggested that the Swedish missionaries present in the territory might be asked to leave as well. The Swedes were also reluctant to teach Italian in their schools, but they did not represent any political threat, and were thus left in peace for some time. Martini even came to admire their work: "Notably, the Swedes perform true work of civilization indeed. An Eritrean

having attended their school, or converted to their faith, is simply not recognizable: he becomes educated, clean, and with a certain sense of dignity not to be found among Eritreans educated by the Capuchins."³⁰

The Swedish Evangelical Mission, *Evangeliska Fosterlandsstiftelsen*, had arrived in Massawa in 1861. The initial idea was to penetrate into Ethiopia, but they had to turn back due to ongoing persecutions of Catholic and Protestant missionaries by Negus Tewodros. They managed to keep a foothold in Eritrea, however, and when they from 1885 onwards were under the protection of the Italian presence, they extended their field of action. In 1890 they established a station at Belesa, then at Zazzege in 1891 and in Adi Ugi in 1905. By 1907 they ran several elementary schools; in Asmara, Adi Ugi, Zazzege, Belesa, Baraza, Himberti, Kullucu, Ghinda, Monkullo and Assab. The first four were ordinary elementary schools, some with the possibility of boarding, while the rest were evening schools. Subjects taught were Tigrinya/Tigré, Amharic and German, and in some of the schools a little Italian as well. Other subjects were history, geography, arithmetic. Initially, Amharic had been the only African language employed as language of instruction in the Swedish mission schools, but already in 1889 the Swedes chose to apply the local vernaculars instead. There were objections at first. Amharic was regarded as a more appropriate *lingua franca*, and the local clergy considered it not only audacious, but right out blasphemous to translate The Word of God into a language "...used by women quarrelling in the kitchen." The Swedes also published books, grammars as well as religious literature, the first published in 1896. The books were published in Tigrinya for the mission stations in the *keberesa*, and in Tigré for the Eastern Slope. Ge'ez letters were employed when printing Tigré and Tigrinya, but when the Swedish missionaries in 1903 started their literary work among the Kunama, they chose to employ Latin letters instead. Arabic or Ge'ez letters would have been a natural choice, considering the immedi-

are neighboring ethnic groups. The Kunamas were practicing traditional religion, however, and therefore considered to be an easier "prey" for missionaries to convert than Muslims and Orthodox Christians. The choice of Latin letters when constructing a written Kunama language might therefore have been a means to keep the Kunama from being influenced by Arabic or Orthodox Christian culture, and thus easier to control. The Swedes seem to have been the first to translate the Bible into the vernaculars, and probably the first to print any kind of books in the Eritrean vernaculars. Renato Paoli, when visiting the colony in 1908, was quite impressed by their publication efforts. Notably, there was no such Italian initiative in the colony at the time. According to Giuseppe Puglisi, the linguistic work carried out by Swedish missionaries was to be of great philological importance to the further development of Tigrinya as a literary language.

Even though the Swedish Evangelists officially enjoyed the benefit of Italian protection, the relationship was not the best. Protestants and Catholics have long traditions of contention, but in this particular case, the fact that the Swedes made no effort to teach their students Italian was the main cause of conflict. Additionally, the Orthodox Church refused to accept the presence of Protestants. Those who converted to Protestantism were consequently excommunicated, thus isolated from their community. Further persecution was prevented only because of the presence of Italian authorities, a somewhat peculiar situation since the Italians resented the presence of Protestants almost as much as did the Orthodox Church.

In 1912, another Swedish missionary society, Bibeltrognä Vännen, had established themselves in Eritrea, operating in Addi Kunzi, Kozzen and Asmara. The Seventh Day Adventists, also a Protestant society, arrived in the colony in 1907, and established a school in Asmara. The Swedish Evangelical Mission was the most active, having established a total of eight stations around the colony, namely Asmara, Zazega, Belesa, Adi Ugri,

Keren, Gheleb, Kulluko and Ausa-Kunama. Both Swedish societies were operative in Ethiopia as well, where their educational work was so highly esteemed that the Regent, Ras Tafari, went out of his way to visit Stockholm on his European tour in 1924. On that occasion he remarked that "...of all missionaries (the Swedes) have best known how to win the affection and trust of my people."³¹

By 1916, the Swedish Evangelical Mission had a total of 1,250 students; approximately one third were females. Boys' schools were organized into four years of primary education, followed by a three year post-primary program. For girls, education lasted three years and was designed to make them good housewives. According to Angelo Piccioli, enrolment in Swedish schools fell drastically during the decade following 1922, from 1,400 students to only 400 in 1932. One of the reasons for this decline was the opening of the "Vittorio Emanuele III" in 1926.

Records tell of repeated incidents of distrust and confrontations between Swedish missionaries and the Italian colonial government. In 1916, Italian authorities closed the two Swedish mission stations in the Kunama area, allegedly for reasons regarding public order. Apparently, the colonial government suspected the Swedes of anti-Italian propaganda in connection with the ongoing World War I. The stations were reopened in March 1917. In 1924 frictions blazed again, sparked by rumours regarding the forthcoming visit of Ras Tafari to Stockholm. Once the Stockholm newspapers had dropped the news, the Italian chargé d'affaires in Stockholm telegraphed the Foreign Office in Rome, stating that the Swedish Foreign Office denied any knowledge of the matter, thus making the whole business suspicious. The Italian Foreign Office's subsequent investigation of the matter concluded that there was likely to be a connection between Ras Tafari and the Swedish missionaries, supported by the latter's government, an alliance disproved by the Italians. They found that students having attended

Swedish missionary schools often showed a closer attachment to Ethiopia than Eritrea, and that the best students would leave for Addis Abeba to be employed in high administrative positions. To the Italians, it seemed as though the Swedes were trying to gain influence with the Ethiopian Imperial court at a time when the Regent was in a process of Europeanizing Ethiopian public instruction.

The colonial government was aiming at giving an Italian character to the local population. Since the Swedish missionaries' presence and work did not correspond with this idea, their residence permits were restricted, and the admission of missionaries to the colony severely controlled. Furthermore, a number of the Swedish missionary schools were closed. Another precaution taken to curb any damaging Swedish activity was to curtail all contact between mission stations in Eritrea and Ethiopia. Still, some Eritreans managed to cross the border clandestinely, accompanied by Swedish missionaries. According to Tekeste Negash, the Italian suspicion was not overrated. The majority of the Eritrean students was either part of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, or had once belonged to it. The close connection between church and state in Ethiopia meant that the highly religious education carried out by the Swedish mission tended to stress the Ethiopianness of the Christian Eritrean students.

By the entry of Fascism into colonial politics, the conflict between Swedish missionaries and Italian colonial authorities climaxed. In 1932 all Swedish mission schools were closed, and in 1935, all missionaries of foreign origin were ordered to leave the colony, and their properties were confiscated by the Italian government. The Swedish reverend Andersson remarked on the occasion that there was really not that much to confiscate, as many of the buildings owned by the Swedish missionaries were already rented by the Italians; some of them as warehouses and some as hospitals, serving the Italian army fighting in Ethiopia. Andersson believed the ongoing war to have been the trig-

gering factor of the expulsion, particularly since Sweden had been most ardently against Italian aggression in Ethiopia.

On December 6, 1935, Governor Badoglio issued the decree expelling the Swedes, granting only two Protestant reverends, one of them Italian, permission to stay behind in order to take care of the Swedish properties. In sum, there is little doubt that the Italians had always been reluctant to allow the presence of foreign activity in their colonial territories. Still, the ultimate expulsion may be seen as an expression of how Fascism had strengthened the Italian desire for full control of their territories and colonial subjects. Naturally, these foreign bodies being Protestant may have played a hand, but if that had been the main motive for the Italian malcontent, it is likely that the expulsion would have come at an earlier stage.

Designedly Narrow Scope?

According to the British, who took control of the colony in 1941, Italian efforts regarding education for the local population had been characterized by a general low standard with a scope designedly narrow. Malvezzi De'Medici explained this lack of initiative by pointing to the ethnic diversity of the Eritrean population. According to him, the variety of ethnicity, language, religion, social conditions and degree of development made a uniform educational organization impossible. Another impeding feature was the lack of adequately populated centres.³² Gaspare Colosimo reported in 1918 that the imposition of a European system of instruction upon Eritrean habits and mentality was neither desirable nor practicable due to the lack of a regular attendance. Many ethnic groups within the Eritrean population were nomads moving according to seasons, and among the settled population, children were often required at home or in the field, which made regular attendance difficult. Yet, there was an expressed scepticism towards education of colonial subjects which, along with the lack of financial com-

mitment, were more likely to explain the Italian reluctance to develop local educational facilities.

Sources are both fragmentary and questionable regarding enrolment, but most likely there were less than 1 per cent of the total Eritrean population that received any instruction in Italian government schools. Both the number of schools and enrolment of pupils increased notably during the last decade of Italian rule, that is, after the entry of Fascism into colonial politics. On the verge of the Second World War, there were 24 governmental schools for Eritreans in the colony, as opposed to only four 15 years earlier. Most of these schools were opened after the annexation of Ethiopia to Italian East-Africa. This sudden burst of development was presumably due to the need of Fascism to spread its ideas and values, but also to the influx of resources to the territory in the wake of the invasion. Still, one should be careful to attribute this drastic change of educational activity to Fascist policies only. The first incident of marked increase of enrolment occurred in 1926 with the establishment of "Vittorio Emanuele III" in Asmara, which was before Fascism manifested itself in colonial educational policies. Notably, there were also the traditional schools, vested in local cultures and religions, and Eritreans may therefore not have immediately caught on to the idea of western education. The local demand for western education was probably something that would keep pace with the increasing extent of interaction between the colonizers and the colonized, particularly in the form of cultural influence imposed by the former.

Evidently, the procurement of educational facilities was a matter of economy. For many years, the Italians were far too busy keeping their colonial foothold in Africa in general, for the issue of local education to top the agenda. Notably, the educational situation in the Madre Patria was yet a problem to solve, even as late as 1931. In 1909, education was made compulsory for the European section of the colonial population, but this was merely in order to entice Italian settlement in the

territory. The procuring of adequate education for Italian citizens in the colony remained a problem throughout the entire period of Italian colonial rule, although conditions slightly improved in the last decade. Confronting these problems, it is likely the Italian authorities would sooner serve their own before attending to their "lesser subjects."

After the takeover of the British Military Administration, hereafter referred to as the BMA, Major Kynaston-Snell was charged to adjust educational facilities for the local population. In January 1943, the BMA gathered some 30 Eritrean men who had received three or four years of Italian instruction, and who had been teaching before. An evening course was prepared for them in which organization, teaching methods and ways of keeping discipline were taught. This was to mark the reopening of the schools in the colony, starting off with 28 elementary schools for the Eritrean population. In 1951, the student body had risen to approximately 13,400 students, distributed among 97 elementary, 14 intermediate and 2 secondary schools. In addition, a Teachers' Training College was founded in 1947 for the formation of an Eritrean teacher body. Adane Taye considers the British to have undertaken a positive educational policy, still, much of the initiative was left to the Eritreans themselves. The local population had to signal their interest in education, and only then would the BMA intervene with the necessary material and resources. In fact, compared with the amount spent on the Italian population, the BMA spent only a third on educational facilities for the Eritreans.

A pamphlet edited by the British Information Services in 1950, stated that the elementary educational organization for Eritrean children on a vast scale started with the British occupation. It is, however, quite symptomatic that this large-scale development came in the post-war phase, a development that coincided with that of other British territories. The increase in investment in education from the 1950s onwards only masked the very low level at its departure. In sum, as far as the develop-

ment of educational facilities is concerned, the Italian case does not differ to any notable degree from those of the other colonial powers. In general, missionary societies were the first to introduce western education in Africa. Colonial authorities would generally not enter the field until early 1900, as education for the locals was often given less priority when developing the infrastructure of consolidated territories. For the greater part, government interests emerged with the need for local labour, accompanied by a growing awareness of the need to control the European influence on the local population. The extent of educational facilities differed to a more noticeable degree. The Belgian territories topped the list as far as elementary education was concerned, followed by the British and the French. Italy, along with the Portuguese, was probably at the very bottom of this list. However, both Italy and Portugal were countries of small means at the time, something which would naturally reflect on the colonial infrastructure.

Colonial education was generally seen as a civilising duty at the time, but the Italian policymakers perceived education merely as an instrument for enhancing colonial rule. According to Tekeste Negash, the Italians were conscious of the impact western education would have on the locals, and therefore limited it to a minimum in order not to jeopardize their colonial supremacy. In this respect, the best would have been not to make any effort in the educational department at all, but western education had already been introduced by the various missionary societies, and it became increasingly important for the Italian colonial authorities to control the influence their colonial subjects were exposed to. Yet, local schools were also established to meet practical demands. As ironically pointed out by the commissioner in Keren, Italian colonial officers were always touched with pride when hearing the little Eritrean children master the Italian language, whilst they would never take much interest in learning any local languages themselves. Throughout their period as colonizers, the Italians relied on

local interpreters. Even though much to their displeasure, being well aware of the vulnerable position this would put them in, they never managed to change this tendency.

The establishment mainly of schools of arts and crafts was to meet the need for trained workers. This failed to some extent since the local population was more interested in theoretical instruction than manual training, presumably because there was a general stigma connected with manual labour. White collar jobs were regarded as having much more prestige. Moreover, it appears as though the courses in arts and crafts did not offer many genuine skills to the trainees anyhow. The idea of education as a civilising mission was clearly present in the textbooks employed. The contents were generally designed to teach the young Eritrean the most elementary knowledge of the modern world, and those subjects were most emphasised that related to the kind of jobs available to Eritreans. Through the emphasis laid on Italy's historic accomplishments and the good things Italian presence had brought about, the books also revealed the more underlying motives of local education, that is, the manifestation of Italian colonial domination and the justification of Italian presence in Eritrea.

Another important factor was the imposing of Italian as the only language of instruction, not only as a means to spread the language of the dominator, but also to manifest Italian culture and supremacy. Traditional schools were excused, the main scope being to halt the influence of foreign missionary societies. The Catholic missions were also interested in the limitation of foreign activity, competing with the Protestant missions for the Eritrean souls. Naturally, the main scope of the missions in the colonies was the spread of Christianity. This may seem futile as the greater part of the population at the time already was Christian, but the Catholic mission regarded both the Orthodox Church and the Protestant mission as spiritual opposites. The establishment of schools and religious instruction was, along with medical assistance, considered the most important means

in order to hamper the influence of religious opponents. As part of the missionary work, emphasis was laid on the training of an Eritrean clergy, which in turn would be of assistance in the instruction of the local children, and in the spread of the Catholic faith. In fact, the training of priests was the only education beyond complementary level available to the Eritreans.

Italian authorities and the Catholic mission seemed to get along rather well. In fact, the relations between church and secular authorities were probably better than they had ever been in the *Madre Patria*. In metropolitan Italy, state and church had always been political enemies, whilst in the colony they seemed to more or less share the same goals. Due to the low density of Italians in the colony, and even more important, the lack of financial assets, both institutions would profit from a cooperation. All schools for the European part of the population were entrusted to the Catholic mission from 1923 onwards. This enabled the mission to introduce religious instruction at a very early stage, something which was not possible in metropolitan governmental schools due to the Lateran treaties, stipulated in 1929.

Colonial authorities seemed more reluctant to leave the instruction of locals entirely in the hands of the Catholic mission, but cooperation proved mutually beneficial in this department as well. The authorities wanted the spread of the Italian language, and the mission needed financial support in order to establish schools. Still, missionaries had to abide by government educational policies, and some of the schools would remain under lay authority, the government employing both local and Italian seculars as teachers. This was presumably in order to meet the local conditions, as many parents would have been even more reluctant to send their children to Italian schools if the staff had been exclusively Catholic.

The entry of Fascism into colonial educational policies seems to have had a more marked impact on the contents of local education, rather than on the extent. Whereas the increase

of schools was based on a general development, the change to a more articulate policy was clearly coloured by the features of Fascism. This was particularly manifested by the school director at the time, *Andrea Festa*. The ideas and motives were mostly the same, only now they were pronounced with an aggression not previously present. *Festa* was plain in his statements, leaving little doubt about his idea of education as a means to meet colonial purposes. Rearranging local educational facilities, he reduced its content to a minimum, and stressed instead the importance of military training. The most crucial change regarding local education, however, was marked by the annexation of Ethiopia to the Italian East-African Empire, after which Eritrea experienced a quantitative improvement of educational facilities. Unfortunately, this did not imply any qualitative changes. On the contrary, it seemed to rather deteriorate what there had been before. Overcrowded classrooms, lack of textbooks and other material, in addition to a severely restricted syllabus, left little room for any substantial education.

Important to notice is the fact that educational policy, as carried out in Eritrea and Somalia, was different from the one applied in Libya. Libya was regarded as a colony for immigration rather than for exploitation, and consequently there was a higher rate of immigration to that territory. In addition, the Italians found it easier to apply a uniform policy and organization of schools in Libya where the local population was more homogeneous concerning religious background, and where schools more similar to the European system had long traditions.

In most of colonial Africa, secular authorities did not intervene in the field of local education to any notable extent until early 1900. In this respect, the Italians did not differ much from the other colonial powers. Regarding the policies developed, however, the Italians stood somewhere in the middle. Like the French, they were anxious to impose their own culture and values upon the local population. The British, on the other

hand, were more preoccupied with the preservation of the various traditional societies. This was particularly evident regarding the employment of language of instruction. The British made an effort in developing facilities in order to employ the vernacular in the instruction of the local population. In line with the idea of cultural preservation, colonial officials stationed in British territories were expected to master some of the local language. The French and the Italians also published books in the vernaculars, but the overall idea was still that of spreading their own language, which, in the Italian case, was mainly in order to train skilled personnel. Moreover, books printed in the vernaculars were generally edited by missionaries as a means to spread Christianity.

Unlike the French, both the British and the Italians depended on missionaries to carry out the educational work. In both cases, this was mainly for practical and economic reasons. Both were also anxious not to provoke the Muslim population in their territories, which in the Italian case led to the establishment of government schools designed for the children of Muslim chiefs and notables, whilst in British Muslim areas, there was hardly any education provided for the locals at all. Regarding girls' education, the British reported after their takeover that there had been no such education undertaken by the Italians. This was not entirely true, as both Catholic and Protestant missions had provided some instruction for girls ever since the occupation in 1890. There was also a girls' school established in 1937. The instruction given was mainly practical, and the girls attending were mostly orphans taken care of by the missions anyway. Notably, the local population was probably not interested in having their daughters instructed by the Italians, particularly not in Muslim areas, and it is likely that there was no substantial western education for African women anywhere at the time.

Italy never carried out any pronounced policy of assimilation: Eritreans were not blessed with the dubious opportunity

to become an *assimilé*, *assimilado* or *evolué*, like the local population in French, Portuguese and Belgian territories. The only group compatible to such a description in Italian colonies was the so-called *meitici*, persons of mixed Eritrean-Italian origin. Still, their case was different, as they were granted Italian citizenship with all the privileges implied if recognized by their Italian parent. Persons of mixed origin within French territories had to earn their metropolitan citizenship. The British, on the other hand, did not grant citizenship to their colonial subjects no matter their background or achievements. In many respects, British racial attitudes were of a rougher character than that of the Italians, as the British practiced segregation policies such as the enforcement of color bars long before the advent of Fascism into Italian colonial politics. When the British took over the administration of Eritrea, it was to take four years before the racial laws of 1937 were abrogated, and it was not until 1952, at the advent of the Eritrean-Ethiopian union, that *meitici* were registered in the census as regular Eritrean inhabitants.

Concluding Statements

As in most of Africa, the path to educating the local population was laid down by missionaries, and then followed by secular authorities through policy making and financial grants. Their scopes were somewhat different, the missionaries aiming for the spread of Catholicism, and the government aiming for good workers, but they co-operated on one joint scope: the spread of Italian civilization and culture.

It would be a difficult task to estimate the impact and repercussions the introduction of western education has had on Eritrean society. Negative repercussions are easily found, such as the heavy toll laid on Eritrean self-esteem and identity through the general devaluation of the local cultures. Yet, the Italian colonial period was relatively peaceful, and with the exception of the last six years, the Italians never had the resources to undertake any major changes in the territory, neither for good nor

for bad. Until the invasion of Ethiopia, the percentage of Italians present in the colony was low, and could hardly have had much effect on Eritrean daily life. The Italians were usually criticized for not having provided the local population with more schools. On the other hand, this may have been for the better, as it minimized the negative and disruptive effects that western education often had on local societies.

The standard of Italian education for Eritreans may be concluded as having been relatively low, but if excluding the years of Andrea Festa, there is less reason to claim the scope to have been designedly narrow. The extent of educational facilities, however, can easily be established as having been at a minimum. According to the Briton Newman Polson, the Italians had always feared that Europeanizing of the local population would eventually have a detrimental effect on colonial supremacy. Polson added, somewhat ironically, that if trouble did come to Italian East Africa, he would not believe it to be the result of over-educating the locals.

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