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Abstract

In recent years, studies on the cultural aspects of colonial rule are having more and more success. Through them, in an Orientalist perspective, we can understand important aspects of the motherland’s identities and of the colony too. In this perspective my work would investigate about the image of Ethiopia shown to the Italians during the colonial war of 1935-1936.

Through its propaganda the Fascist regime spread an image of the african otherness functional to the Italian’s domain, and this image left legacies in Italian culture even after the fall of fascism. Studying the fascist cultural production can help us to understand interesting aspects related to the Italian colonial model and these aspects are still not enough developed by the colonial historiography.

In the specific case I will try to show how fascism has organized and represented the colonial discourse through a particular cultural product, namely the Institute LUCE newsreel (“cinegiornale”). The Istituto LUCE was an organ of the fascist State wanted and built by Mussolini which had the task of producing photos and videos, to spread across the nation news about the life of regime.

The “cinegiornale” was a short film about 3 minutes, which had to be screened compulsory in all Italian cinemas; through the autocinema (truck with tools to show films) it reached even the most remote rural centers and, during the colonial period, the lands of the Empire.

This form of State culture was created to bring the fascist power and its myths to the masses. These newsreels were called to relate current events through the lens of the regime. Study the production of the Istituto LUCE during the war in Ethiopia can help us to better understand the Italian colonial ideal model, the gap between this image and the reality, and the orientalist construction of a representation of the african otherness functional to domain.

In my work, examining archival records, visual products and magazines, I will describe the organization of Reparto Africa Orientale Istituto LUCE (Institute LUCE East Africa division) and the rules that the Fascist government gave him to show the African war in a way useful and functional to the myth of fascist empire.

Then I will analyze some content that emerge from the newsreels and from the photographic production of the Istituto LUCE in Ethiopia between 1935 and 1936, which shows the orientalist construction of the african otherness which must help to define the identity of the new Italian wanted by fascism. Finally, I examine the spread of these documents in the lands of the Empire.

So I’ll try to describe the fascist colonial discourse and the tools with which this has been spread among the Italian masses and among colonized people.

Keywords: Italian colonialism, colonial culture, newsreel, LUCE.

Gianmarco Mancosu (Cagliari, 1985) from 2012 is PhD candidate at University of Cagliari, with a research about fascist colonial culture. In 2011 he did an internship to the Italian embassy in Ethiopia, where he started his research about Italian colonial history. From 2013 he collaborates with the Istituto LUCE in Rome.