

Between Languages and Cultures.

Intercultural Communication between the Italians and Sudanese

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Introduction

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With this volume we open the Comint series dedicated to the intercultural dimension of communication. As director of the intercultural communication laboratory LabCom (<http://www.unive.it/labcom>), I am particularly pleased with the birth of this series as it bears witness to the growing interest in this issue at a national and international level (of which the fundamental support of the Directorate General for Italian Citizens Abroad and Migration Policies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is proof).

The innovative representation of three languages (Italian, English and Arabic) in this volume is further testimony to the effort that we have made to broaden intercultural reflection for an international audience and to valorise multilingualism. In doing so, there is also a presence of and fruitful interaction between differences.

To this satisfaction, we add information specific to Sudan, a multilingual, multiethnic, multitribal country with a strong attachment to cultural roots and traditions that coexists with a lively push toward the future and internationalisation.

It is an extremely fascinating country due to its complexity and cultural stratification.

Sudan is huge (if we think that only the region of Darfur is more or less the size of France). Within it, diversity, multicultural cohabitation and intercultural encounters are the rule, while raising communicative barriers and obstacles are the exception.

That being said, we were aware of the difficulties in reaching more remote areas of the country, and of the linguistic barriers concerning certain social groups in the periphery. As these would have limited the outcomes of the interviews which formed the basis of our work, we concentrated in the capital area, Khartoum, and its twin city across the river, Omdurman. We tried to differentiate the profiles of interviewees to the fullest extent possible in terms of age, social background, ethnicity and cultural roots.

Some other key points to understand this volume are that:

- the ideal audience to whom this volume is addressed is generic: subject specialists but also, and above all, common people who for

various reasons (work, personal connections, life choices, simple curiosity), are specifically interested in relations between Italy and Sudan. For this reason, we used a reference model born in the academic world (Balboni 1999, 2007; Balboni, Caon 2015), but have kept a non-academic communicative style that facilitates reading by 'non-professionals';

- its purpose is to focus on some key points of intercultural communication and it does not presume to be exhaustive; the interviews, although oriented to offer the most diversified overview possible, cannot map the infinite nuances of human behaviour: as we will say several times throughout the chapters, it is not cultures that communicate but people, each with their own original way of reworking cultural stimuli and conditioning.

On the basis of these premises, the result of this work is presented in the chapters that follow. We hope that they offer some food for thought, not only regarding the culture of 'others', but also regarding our own habits, with the aim of relativising them and seeing both their value and partiality.