

Africa and Democracy

by **Ida Magli**

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The West is uncertain about what to do in front of the "earthquake" that hit the North African countries. The uncertainty is justified by the fact that – for the first time – we are not sure that our lifestyle, our values, our social and political organization – "Democracy" in a word – would be the right recipe to solve all evils. Nobody dares to say it openly: for such a long time we were convinced that a democratic government was the only one worthy of a civil society; and all what we did was inspired by this conviction, also abroad.

Today the situation in Africa cannot be addressed with the psychological and cultural certainties of the past; on the other hand, the past of Africa forces us not to leave it to a total "do it yourself". The reason why we cannot rely on the taumaturgic power of Democracy are quite evident. To achieve Democracy we walked a long way for a long time; it is not possible for people to "jump" over centuries of religious, cultural, social and political history. It is not a question of learning to use a new instrument, as in passing from the camel to the car.

We must keep in mind that "democracy" means "equality"; it means being aware that each individual is a "subject", a free man who also is his own master. And we must remember that in no african Country we have this pre-condition for Democracy. The reason is obvious: in the islamic world women are not equal to men. The Koran says so: "Men have one degree of superiority above women (II,28)". All the social structure reflects the preeminence of men, with the rigid separation and distinction between pure/impure. Women are considered impure and therefore are given the task of cultivating the land, which also is "female" and therefore impure. In most of these countries women are the first ones to consider themselves inferior, and are condemned to infibulation, especially in Egypt and Somalia. This is causing a chronic illness at the uro-genital apparatus, and also gives psychic pathologies, instability and depression, which are cutting down their intellectual abilities and self consciousness.

Considering these objective data, our hope that in North Africa will arrive democratic governments is very weak. We must also take into account the state of scarce aggressiveness, the lack of interest in procreation, the submissive behavior of the european males (we will not

discuss here their cause). With the easy sop of a strike or a cortege, it is very easy to govern them "democratically". Probably we have too positive a judgment on democracy and we probably think that is much better than what it is. But the psychological state of mind of the *european* males is completely different from the behavior of the *african* males. We must not label as psychological passivity their inability to do something to get out of poverty in their own countries. This inertia seems so absurd to us, since their are living in countries that are so rich in raw materials that just exploiting them they would fulfill all their needs. They flee from their countries because they are dazzled by the richness, waste and unbridled pleasures that to them are the main character of Europe. But they are driven by a great passion; being muslim itself is a passion. So we must think a lot before deciding if we will do something and how.

Ida Magli

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