Libya between History and Revolution: Resilience, New Opportunities and Challenges for the Berbers

Edited by

ANNA MARIA DI TOLLA - VALENTINA SCHIATTARELLA

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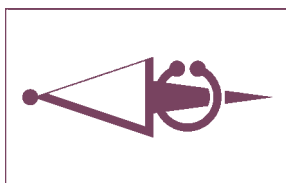
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Introduction

Anna Maria Di Tolla

Libya between Revitalisation New Opportunities and Challenges for the Berbers

The International Conference *Libya between History and Revolution: Resilience and New Narrations of Berber Identity* convened at the University of Naples "L'Orientale" was dedicated to the contemporary history of Libya. Its purpose was to understand a reality that is for the most part little known to the vast majority of the Italian public, and this despite colonization, its consequences, and the relations that have always existed between the two countries. Conversely, first the promotion of the colonizers' rationale, then the rhetoric of Qadhafi's regime, and finally the current representations closely related to terrorist emergencies, immigration, and war within and outside the Islamic world, are all well-known and documented.

Between the early nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, Western studies of Libya were firmly rooted in the colonial mentality of the time. This gave rise to a number of obstacles in the development of Libya as a modern country. First, colonial-era studies tended to consider the country somewhat extrinsically, in terms of a "passage" between the Arab East and the Maghreb, or as an outpost of the Ottoman Empire, and thus as a country "absent from history".[1] Moreover, colonialism and nationalism not only had a profound influence in shaping the political and social life of the country, but they also generated concepts and theories that underscored their rhetorical legitimacy.

The unique specificities and internal dynamics of Libya that would have favored a more natural development process in the country, have received scarce scholarly attention. Colonial historiography and nationalist analyses of modern Libya have focused overwhelmingly on Qadhafi, ignoring Libyan society and culture. However, Islamic Sufism, Ibadism, tribal military organization and oral traditions were crucial aspects in the fight against colonialism: the resistance left a powerful political and cultural heritage, which strengthened Libyan nationalism and reawakened strong ties with Islam and a range of social and cultural traditions.

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[1] R. Mantran, La Libye des origines à 1912, in G. Albergoni, et al., *La Libye nouvelle. Rupture et continuité,* CNRS, Paris, 1975, 15.

External factors have certainly influenced the country's internal developments over the past two centuries, but Libya has nonetheless had a history of its own, distinct from that of other neighboring countries. Italian colonialism constituted a break with the country's past with the creation of a liberal regime by the colonizers, which however did not bring any advantages to the colonized society. After World War II, Idris was recalled after escaping into exile, and the figurehead of the Sanusiyya was transformed into a monarch, with the express purpose of safeguarding the interests of the Western powers that emerged in the post-war period under the auspices of the United Nations. Cyrenaica, a rural society based on nomadism, was instrumental, under the banner of Islam and through the cohesion of the Sanusiyya, in allowing the country to achieve independence, albeit in an unusual manner. Tripolitania, even though it was an urbanized society, failed to provide a political structure to the country, also due to the social divisions that traversed the region, and to the presence of Ibadism.

The somewhat a priori solutions offered by the framework of nationalism are not enough to gain an understanding of all the aspects that were involved in producing Libya's independence. For example, the response of the Libyan populations to colonial occupation was for a long time analyzed primarily from the perspective of the Sanusiyya, considered the only organized opposition to the Italian invasion. Hence, this confraternity emerged as the fulcrum of Libyan nationalism and as a point of reference connected to the continuity of the anti-colonial struggle that led to independence. By contrast, for example, the role of the Republic of Tripolitania that was established in 1918 and its influence on the independence process were not taken into consideration.

Pelt[2] has underlined the historical importance of the fact that without the Republic there would not have been the conditions for either the Sirti agreement (which sanctioned the union with Cyrenaica) nor the *bay'a* (offered to the leader Idris of Sanusiyya), on the basis of which the fundamental principles for the unification of the country were established.[3] The failure of European countries to recognize the Republic of Tripoli, and its disappearance after only a short amount of time have largely erased its existence from history. While the Sanusiyya brotherhood was rewarded for its collaboration with Great Britain in Egypt with the recognition of its leadership in the country after the Second World War and Evans-Pritchard dedicated an interesting hagiographic text on the Sanusiyya (*The Sanusi of Cirenaica*), the "Republic of Tripoli", on the other hand, was left with neither

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[2] A. Pelt, *Libyan Independence and the United Nations: A Case of Planned Decolonization*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1970, 27.

[3] This is the el-Acroma agreement of 1916. To attempt a more diplomatic pacification in some areas of Cyrenaica, a fragile compromise was proposed, despite its ambiguity in proposing a modus vivendi between Italians and Libyans. However, this agreement succeeded in establishing, although for a relatively short time, a certain degree of tranquility in the region (A. Del Boca, *Gli Italiani in Libia. Tripoli Bel Suol d'Amore*, Mondadori, Milano, 1993, 334-341).

political power nor any apology in western literature. The short existence of the Republic of Tripoli, however, has proved to be very instructive, in Anderson's view, because it testifies to the historical tradition and foundations of European imperialism, as well as to the roots of Arab nationalism in Libya today.[4]

The popular claim that the Sanusiyya was the center of modern nationalism in Libya has in fact yet to be fully verified. Pelt has argued that the Libyan monarch, Idris, did not believe in Arab nationalism. In 1920, as part of the al-Rajma agreement, Idris was proclaimed *amir* (Prince) and recognized by Italy as regent of an autonomous territory in Cyrenaica after several years of negotiations. Del Boca argued that the event, rather than a triumph of anti-colonial nationalism, constituted in fact the complete denial of the ideals of the Sanusiyya for which Idris had fought for three generations.[5]

It is also often argued that the anti-colonial struggle united the tribes of Cyrenaica under the collective identity of the Sanusi, and led to their re-configuration as a state-like entity. Italian conquest and colonial expansion was a source of constant external pressure which provided the impetus for the previously headless tribal societies of Cyrenaica to merge into the (sedentary) state-like organization of the religious order of the Sanusi. However, such arguments may prove misleading in light of the fact that the fusion of the tribes of Cyrenaica with the Sanusians had already occurred during the second half of the 19th century – a transformation which was therefore already complete before the colonial period.[6]

Instead, many of the aspects and functions of the state were constituted directly by Idris al-Sanusi through diplomacy and collaboration with foreign powers - first Italy and Great Britain, and later, after the Second World War, with the active support only of Great Britain. Idris, unable to find a solution to the dilemma of extending the emirate of Cyrenaica to Tripolitania and aware of a compromise with the Italians, wishing to avoid exposure, left Libya in 1923 to seek refuge in Egypt. Guerrilla insurgencies began again soon after, and the rebels continued their struggle, albeit in a disorderly manner, until their only military leader, al-Mukhtar, was captured. The above should not be read as diminishing the importance of the role played by Idris, since without him independence would not have been granted quite so immediately; instead, the aim of the above is to emphasize the complexities that lay behind Libya's anomalous colonial experience.

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[4] L. Anderson, The Tripoli Republic, 1918-1922, in E. Joffe & K. McLachlan (eds.), *Social and Economic Development of Libya*, E. London, 1982, 43-65.

[5] With the agreement signed in er-Règima, about thirty kilometers east of Benghazi, the Italian government "delegated to the Emir es-Senussi the status of head of the autonomous administration of the oases of Augila, Gialo, Cufra and Giarabub, with the right to adopt Agedabia as its capital for the administration of these territories" (*Idem,* 415).

[6] E. Evans-Pritchard writes that "the long struggle accentuated the political functions of Sanusiya" (E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, Oxford University Press. Oxford, 1949, 104); J. Roumani, *The emergence of Modern Libya: Political, traditions and colonial change*, Ph.D. thesis, Princeton University, 1987, 12.

For most Libyans, colonialism, like for many others who suffered colonial rule, was a traumatic experience. As is stated by Kedourie,[7] there is no doubt that Europe was the origin and focal point of an immense obstacle that was produced wherever Europeans established their colonies, bringing deeply consequential divisions, imbalances and violence to the traditional societies that had existed in Africa. It is of interest to understand how the Libyans reacted to this obstacle and how the country's political traditions changed as a result of the colonial regime. These are difficult questions to answer, as it is impossible for us to conceive of the colonial experience. According to some studies, many Libyans implemented an anti-colonial policy by forming the resistance, and by becoming increasingly defensive of their traditions. This conservative attitude on the part of the Libyans, as Ahmida put it,[8] was in fact the indicator of the awakening of a national consciousness.

The resistance lasted twenty-one years out of a total of thirty-two of colonization (1911-1943) which also saw two world wars that had important repercussions for both the colonizers and colonized. In Libya, there was certainly not very much time for a nationalist elite to emerge and articulate a cohesive answer to colonization, as was instead the case in the neighbouring North African countries of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. As is argued by Ahmida,[9] the French were able to transform the segmentary North African societies they encountered, re-stratifying their original social structures, educating new elites, creating a new and disinherited urban and rural proletariat, and undermining traditional structures. In the exceptional case of Libya, the Italian colonizers conducted themselves in the country as if the indigenous other did not exist; this approach was further exacerbated with the arrival of the fascists, who put into practice the parallel development of the territorially integrated colony as an Italian province, while the local populations were completely abandoned to themselves. In this sense, Libyan society escaped the brunt of colonial impact, but was nonetheless embroiled in fundamental political changes, which affected the country's traditions and were of great significance in beginning the process of modernization. The problem we are faced with is the scarcity of theories produced from within to interpret the specific changes[10] that took place in Libya. Compared to other countries, only a handful of studies have been published on the colonial experience and its consequences in the political development of the populations of Libya.

The tribal systems of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania have always been unique for the region in terms of the type of segments involved, of the degree of segmentation and decentralization, and of the intensity of political competition between

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[7] E. Kedourie, *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*, World Publishing Company, New York, 1973, 23.

[8] A. A. Ahmida, *op. cit.*, 2.

[9] *Idem*, 3-4.

[10] J. Berque, *De l'Impérialisme à la décolonisation,* Les Éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1965, 15.

individuals and tribal groups. These specificities are crucial in the distribution of power, in maintaining the leadership model, and in managing political interests and tribal relations.

Historically, as Lacher and Labnouj[11] have argued, the key to understanding the Jebel Nafusa is the relationship between the Berber and Arab communities. Most Muslims in Libya belong to the Sunni Maliki tradition, but, primarily in Tripolitania, the Berbers are Ibadi Muslims. The Arabization of Amazigh communities has advanced more rapidly in Libya than in any other country of the Maghreb. The Berbers, who call themselves Amazigh, meaning "free man" and "noble man", comprise about ten percent of the Libyan population. They have a cultural heritage that pre-dates the Arab conquest of the seventh century A. D. and have developed a culture distinct from any Arab identity.

The Berbers, since ancient times, have been sedentary farming communities, while Arab tribes like the Zintan and Rujban proudly boast of their recent past as semi-nomadic pastoral tribes. While Arab communities have defined their identity and organization through tribal genealogy, in the Amazigh cities the notion of tribe simply refers to individual villages and the concept of tribal leadership is not used in local politics.[12] The Imazighen insist on their origins in North Africa, though some Berber groups trace their descent from the Arab tribes that arrived in North Africa with the Hilal invasion. These genealogies have evolved for centuries, with Amazigh groups associating politically and economically with the Arab tribes, often adopting the names and myths of the latter. Genealogy and identity are still important political aspects today. For example, the Zintans are a confederation formed by two large groups: the Awlad Bu al-Hui and the Awlad Dwaib. While most of the Zintans claim to be descendants of the Bani Salim Arabs, in the 1950s the Awlad Dwaib claimed instead to have Amazigh ancestors. Amazigh activists claim that Zintan, Rujban and small Arab tribes like the Harabas are in fact Arabized Imazighen.[13] The Arab communities consider "Amazigh" the communities that inhabit the mountain of Nafusa, a labelling that replaces the pejorative notion of *jbaliya* ("the mountain people"), which is instead used to counteract the recognition of the millenary history and culture of the Berbers.[14]

The social and cultural differences between the Arabs and the Berbers, however, have never led to fractures and fundamental political divisions between Amazigh and Arabs in the history of Jebel Nafusa. Alliances between the two communities were often based on common interests. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Arabs and Berbers clashed repeatedly over land and political

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[11] W. Lacher - A. Labnouj, Factionalism resurgent: The war in Jabal Nefusa, in P. Cole - B. McQuinn (eds.), *The Libyan Revolution and Its Aftermath*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2015, 258.

[12] *Idem*, 259.

[13] *Ibidem.*

[14] *Ibidem.*

supremacy, often allying themselves with external powers in their struggles. But such alliances and conflicts have always cut across divisions between Arabs and Berbers. The dynamics of the relations between Arabs and Berbers help to explain why the conflict that has been ongoing since 2011, has not involved these opposing communities, Arabs and Amazigh, as such.

Since the first years of Qadhafi's rise to power the Berber identity was considered a "vestige of imperialism", a question that prompted the division of the Arab world and for this reason he took several decisions aimed against the Berbers.[15] He claimed that the Berbers and Tuaregs were of Arab origin and spoke Arabic dialects, so had a policy of Arabisation which was strongly discriminatory. As Baldinetti argued, Arabic was instrumental in forging a Libyan national identity, and it was a power tool used by Qadhafi's regime.[16] Among discriminatory measures, place names were systematically Arabised, books in Berber and about Berbers were burned; law 24 forbade the Amazigh, including the Tuaregs, from giving their children non-Arab names, and cultural celebrations were banned. Under his regime, Amazigh activists were imprisoned or exiled.[17] The Amazigh communities joined in the National Front for the Salvation of Libya (NFSL), plotting to depose Qadhafi's regime. In 1984 the plot was discovered[18] and many Amazigh activists continued their opposition to the regime from abroad. Although the regime had local followers in the Jebel Nafusa, the Amazigh community has always been considered the stronghold of the opposition.

Since the fall of Qadhafi in 2011, Libya's non-Arab minorities, including the Berbers and Tuaregs, have begun to insist more intensely on the recognition of their identity. Since 2012, many new local associations have emerged with the aim of promoting the rights of the Amazigh peoples, and have played an essential role in many waves of political mobilization in the country.[19]

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[15] A. M. Di Tolla, I Berberi del Gebel Nefusa tra rivoluzione e identità culturale, in A. M. Di Tolla - E. Francesca (eds.), in *La rivoluzione ai tempi di internet: il futuro della democrazia nel Maghreb e nel mondo arabo,* Il Torcoliere, UNIOR, Napoli, 2012, 79-91; A. M. Di Tolla, I Berberi tra rivendicazioni, riconciliazione e transizione democratica in Nord Africa, in A. M. Di Tolla (ed.), *Percorsi di transizione democratica e politiche di riconciliazione in Nord Africa*, SEI, Napoli, 2017, 179-243.

[16] A. Baldinetti, Languages in Libya: Building Blocks of National Identity and Soft Power Tools, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 23/3, 2018, 418-439,
   https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2017.1391947

[17] Berberism & Berber Political Movements. Berbers of Libya, *Temehu*, n. d.: https://www.temehu.com/imazighen/berberism.htm; S. Chaker - Ferkal, M. Berbères de Libye: un Paramètre Méconnu, une Irruption Politique Inattendue, *Politique Africaine*, 125, 2012, 105.

[18] W. Lacher - A. Labnouj, *op. cit.,* 261.

[19] A. M. Dɪ Tolla, Berber-Amazigh Movements in North Africa: Identity, New Issues and New challenges, in A. M. Di Tolla - E. Francesca (eds.), *North Africa Transition and Emerging Actors. Berber Movements In North Africa: Identity, New Issues and New Challenges, Studi Maġrebini*, XV, Il Torcoliere, Napoli, 2017, 30-31.

While Qadhafi absorbed a large number of Tuaregs into his army as mercenaries during the uprising, many continued to endure the same historic marginalization as other minority groups.

After playing a fundamental role in the overthrow of Qadhafi in November 2011, the Amazigh were not offered any ministry positions within the National Transitional Council. In July 2012, a few Amazigh were elected to serve in the Libyan General National Congress (GNC), but the government rejected official recognition of their indigenous and Ibadi identity and of the Tamazight language, and showed little consideration for the status of Amazigh culture.

There is then a profound divergence between Libya's historical reality and its representations. The purpose of this Conference has thus been to investigate the reasons behind such unsolved/unsaid issues and to reveal the profile and morphology of a truly peculiar country which is however not yet perceived in its authenticity. What is emerging today is that history is seemingly repeating itself, as we are witnessing unprecedented reprisals in all regions of Libya, with the country torn apart by a multitude of militias, tribes and rival local groups that have emerged since the 2011 revolution and claim territory, oil and arms through the use of force, and all in spite of the initial promise of democratic governance.[20] Further investigation is necessary for a better understanding of Italy's role in the future of Libya in the broader context of the Mediterranean. Could this approach open up new lines of research? The Berber issue will offer a significant benchmark to test this suggestion.

This volume brings together papers by the scholars who took part in the conference which aim to provide insights into a range of crucial issues that have been inherited from colonial history and that affect contemporary events in Libya, as well as into some of the new challenges that face the country's Berbers.

The volume therefore offers a series of insights into a country, the political decisions that have shaped it, and the different ways these elements have been represented both from an internal and an external point of view. One of the key contributions of the book is to push the reader towards an interdisciplinary reflection on the Berbers in Libya and, more generally, in North Africa. Of all the countries in the region, Libya is the least studied. In addition, the Amazigh communities of Libya have traditionally received less attention than those of other neighbouring countries. To fill this gap in knowledge, the volume combines a set of historical contributions focused on colonial and postcolonial experience; a set of

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[20] W. Lacher, Families, Tribes and Cities in the Libyan Revolution, in *Middle East Policy*, 18/4, 2011, 140-154; W. Lacher, The Libyan Revolution and the Rise of Local Power Centres, *Mediterranean Politics. Maghreb,* 2012, 167-170,
http://www.iemed.org/observatori-en/arees-danalisi/arxiusadjunts/anuari/med.2012/lacher_en.pdf;
S. Merabti, Ruling in the Name of the Revolution: The Local Grounding of Non-State Armed Groups in Western Libya, *Inter disciplinary Political Studies* (IdPS), 5/1, 2019, 89-114.

contributions focused on the mobilization policy during the 2011 revolution; and, finally, a set of linguistic and literary contributions. The book also has the aim of bringing together researchers from various fields in order to address several questions concerning Libya, from history to international relations, from sociolinguistics to literature. The volume pays special attention to the role played by the Berber communities before and during colonization, and in the events which shook up the previously relatively stable countries of North Africa beginning in 2011.

The preparation process of this volume included one round of peer reviewing by anonymous readers to whom we are very much obliged for helping us in the difficult task of editing a book. Some differences in the spelling of names have been maintained where it seemed important to respect the individual character of each contribution. Our thanks are also due to Valentina Schiattarella, postdoctoral research fellow at the Department of Asian, African and Mediterranean Studies (DAAM), who helped us in the editing of the volume. We want to thank David Ginsborg and Sarah Pinto for their competence and patience in revising the English and French languages throughout the volume.

Contents of the volume

The book includes a number of contributions that cover some key aspects of Libya's history from the colonial period until the uprisings in 2011; in particular the role of the Berbers in Libya through the prism of the new opportunities and challenges that face them today and which were discussed during the three-day international conference *Libya between History and Revolution: Resilience and New Narrations of Berber Identity.*

The first two contributions offer some notes and witnesses from Libya, so to speak, from the ground, with the contributions by Francesco P. Trupiano (*Libya between History and Revolution. The Fall of Colonel Khadafy and the Western Military Intervention in Libya*) and Fathi Ben Khalifa (*The Political Situation of the Imazighen in Libya Imazighen Before and After 2011*). The latter is extremely valuable insofar as it adds a new perspective to a phenomenon – "the Arab Spring" – which is often understood as "Arab" in an exclusively ethnic sense.

The following section is on Libya and the Construction of a Political Identity: Chiara Pagano in her contribution, titled *Shall we speak of an Arab-Berber Libya? Towards an Interconnected History of Tripolitania's Social Groups* (*1911-1918)*, offers a critical approach to the colonial narrative produced on the history of Tripolitania's social groups during the so-called "liberal period" of Italian colonization, and refutes the Arabs vs Berber dichotomy. Federico Cresti in his paper, titled *Sulayman al-Baruni in Italy (1919-1920): From the Dream of the Berber Principality to the Italo-Tripolitanian Brotherhood*, and Antonio M. Morone (*Libyan Intermediaries on the Eve of Country Independence: The Case of the Bin Sha'ban family*), show how the positioning of Libyan actors with regard to

the development and enforcement of Italian colonial and post-colonial policies was marked by a spirit of intermediation, which provided more than one actor with a mechanism to cope with the transformed political situation and safeguard their positions of power. In her paper, Anna Baldinetti (*The Idea of a United Libya: Sulayman al-Baruni, Pan-Arabism and National Identity*) analyses the emergence and construction of a Libyan nation and nationalism, based on archival sources and the Arabic press of the time. In the section on Libya and the Italian Colonisation, the contribution by Maria Grazia Negro (*La colonisation italienne : une narration impossible*) analyses postcolonial literature in the Italian language and its uniqueness compared to the literary output of other countries, such as France and England. The total absence of a Libyan postcolonial production in the language of the former rulers has effects also on contemporary Italian identity, deprived of an important historical reservoir of memory and a narration of resistance to the mono-cultural colonial policy; In her contribution, Laura Trovellesi Cesana (*Journalisme, journaux et journalistes dans la construction du premier discours public sur la Libye*) discusses how the elitist character of the Italian participation in the "game" of the partition of Africa, reserved exclusively for the ruling classes, did nonetheless not prevent the propagation of a much broader popular consensus in favor of the war for the conquest of Libya. The dynamics that Italy experienced in building up public opinion in favor of the war are not detached from the creation of a first public discourse on Libya itself, nor from the formation of the idea of a nation-in-itself, reinforced by the representation chosen to define the Other. Silvana Palma in *The Role of Libya in the Construction of Italy's Collective Self-Portrait* claims that Libya represented a sort of laboratory where colonial culture and Italian national identity could take shape, influencing and reinforcing each other over time. In his contribution (*L'évolution de la carte de l'Afrique du nord-ouest antique. Le poids de l'histoire et de la géographie*), Mansour Ghaki, in the section of the volume dedicated to the history and representations of Amazigh Libyans, proposes a new reading of the historical development of the vast territory of Libya. To grasp the evolution in time and space of this vast region, it is necessary to resort to the most precise terminology possible and to a periodization that takes into account a regionalization that was sometimes pushed to the point of bursting. Marisa Fois (*Les ennemis de la Nation arabe. Les Berbères en Libye entre histoire et représentations*) suggests putting Libyan Amazigh claims into perspective and understanding how the national ideological discourse has challenged the concept of identity and Amazigh militancy. Ali Bensâad, in his contribution on the transition period in Libya (*Libye, les rentes d'une transition inaboutie*), discusses how the excessive prolongation of this period created the possibility for actors to take advantage of the uncertain context and take possession of the transitionary structures, turning them into instruments for furthering their own power. The article explains how the state of "permanent transition" has also allowed various militias to take root; these militias are not completely autonomous actors, but are

instead in a relationship of interdependence with both local political actors and foreign powers, and remain very permeable to extrinsic political developments and pressures.

In the final section of the volume, Socio-political and linguistic aspects of Libyan Berber, Luca D'Anna (nəḥne kull-na yad wāḥda: *The Mobilization of Amazigh Libyans in Revolutionary Rap*) investigates one of the lesser-known expressions of political dissent and revolutionary thinking during the Arab Spring, rap music. In his paper titled *Linguistic Unity and Diversity in Libyan Berber (Amazigh)* Lameen Souag offers an accessible introduction to internal variation in Libyan Berber and its broader implications. The paper *A Literary and Linguistic Analysis of Nafusi Berber Based on Past Works* is a co-authored by Anna Maria Di Tolla and Valentina Schiattarella. This study analyses the Berber variety spoken in the Jebel Nafusa, describing how past sources can be used as a starting point for further analysis, especially with the increased availability of audio recordings of this language. The conclusion to the contribution discusses some of the possible linguistic and literary implementations of this study. These studies offer novel contributions to the literature on the Berber and Arabic languages of North Africa.

The volume constitutes a rich body of contributions, and we hope that this book will be used as a springboard for broader historical studies, especially on the part of all those who are interested in Libyan societies, Berber or not, and we also hope that the volume will stimulate an important interdisciplinary turn in the field of Berber studies.

The Conflict in Libya. Notes and Witnesses

FRANCESCO PAOLO TRUPIANO

Libya between History and Revolution.
The Fall of Colonel Khadafy and the Western Military Intervention in Libya

The fall and tragic death of Muammar Khadafy have already been the subject of countless articles, editorials, books and seminaries; it is safe to say that all aspects of this subject have already been analyzed.

I have, therefore, little to add but my personal experience of over five years spent in Tripoli as the Italian Ambassador to Libya, from November 2004 to June 2010. An experience that I recounted in a book of memoirs published last year in Italian, by Greco&Greco, entitled *Un Ambasciatore nella Libia di Gheddafi* or, in English, "An Ambassador in Khadafy's Libya".

During this long period spent in Libya, I observed, witnessed, and sometimes participated in a range of events and situations, and met many interesting persons. In other words, I was able to gain experiences that, perhaps, could help better to understand the causes and circumstances that led, after 42 years of absolute power, to the fall and death of the dictator, but also, unfortunately, to dramatic further consequences for Libya, for the Libyan people and for the neighbouring regions – consequences that endure in the present day.

As with all stories, this one also needs to take a step back in time, to when the name "Libya" was not be found on any map. Under the Ottoman Empire, the territory of present-day Libya was divided into three *vilayet*: Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and Fezzan. In 1934, however, under the pressure of the then Italian Governor Italo Balbo, the Italian Government decided to merge the two colonies of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, naming the resulting territory Libya.

The new name was suggested by literary professors and historians who, apparently, found references to a "land of the Libi" in the Odyssey and above all in Book II of Herodotus' Histories.

I will not venture on the question of the identity of the "Libi" because it would be too risky for me to do so in the presence of so many highly qualified experts on this specific matter.

Instead, I will only briefly recall that it was from this historical reference to the "land of the Libi" that, only quite recently, in 1934, originated the new geographic and political name of "Libya".

Subsequently, after the Second World War, the new unitary name of the three former Ottoman *vilayet* was confirmed following independence, and was later inherited by the then Captain Muammar Khadafy after his successful coup – or, as he called it, his "Great Revolution", in 1969.

I have made this brief historic diversion to highlight the reason why, since the very beginning of his rule, maintaining the unity of his country was the main problem faced by the self-appointed Colonel Khadafy: maintaining unity among citizens most of whom thought of themselves principally as members of one of the hundreds of Kabilas and other more particular identities, and who, in any case, identified more as Cyrenaics or Tripolitanians than as Libyans.

In order to forge some sort of Libyan unity, Khadafy extensively deployed an anti-colonial ideology and set of policies. More specifically, this ideology was one of marked anti-Italianism, exemplified by the glorification of Omar al Muktar and of the Libyan people's heroic resistance against the Italian colonial forces, as well as by the continuous and vociferous compensation claims put forward for the damage inflicted to the Libyan people by Italian colonialism.

In reality, for the duration of his 42 years in power, Cyrenaica was always a source of serious concern for Colonel Khadafy; to the point that he repudiated his first wife and married a woman belonging to one of the most important Cyrenaic tribes in order to overcome, through a political marriage, the persistent hostility directed against him.

The origins of such resentment lay partly in recent historical events, as Khadafy had deposed from the Libyan throne King Idris, who was originally not only the political leader of Cyrenaica, but also the head of the orthodox Islamic sect of the Cyrenaic Senussia. There were also further economic, social and cultural differences that pushed the Colonel to always remain wary of Cyrenaica, to the extent that he had no hesitation in deliberately restraining the region's economic and social development.

In February 2005, on the occasion of my first visit to Bengasi, a senior local lawyer said the following to me: "Khadafy maintains Cyrenaica under his feet, but it is exactly here that the ground will slide away and throw him down".

At that time this sentence seemed to me little more than a fanciful wish: I did not realize that, really, it was a prophecy.

A prophecy, however, that had some real foundation in the situation in Libya during that time.

In a report that I sent to my superiors in June 2005, I wrote:

Behind a deceptive normality is hiding a dictatorial system based on a rigid and indisputable paternalism, aimed at self-perpetuation and, in any case, always ready to repress, from the very beginning, any form of dissent. A dissent that is due not only to the lack of basic freedoms but also to an increasing discontent which is spreading among large swathes of Libyan society. A discontent nourished by the continuous deterioration of the economic conditions of most Libyan families, increasing youth unemployment, and a new awareness of the external world due to access to international media and the internet.

In any case, the old lawyer's prophecy was already put to the test one year later, on the 16th of February 2006.

On the afternoon of that Friday, at the end of the customary prayers, the regime itself had organized a protest march in Bengasi in reaction to the allegedly blasphemous anti-Islam t-shirt that had unfortunately been displayed by an Italian Minister. Taking advantage of this occasion, a furious rebellion exploded in Bengasi, and subsequently spread to other cities in Cyrenaica. The number of casualties was quite high: according to conservative official data, among the demonstrators there were 14 dead and 200 wounded, plus an unaccounted number of arrests. To this, one had to add the burning and destruction of Libyan public buildings and, what is more disturbing to me personally, the complete ravaging of the building holding the Italian General Consulate, that put at risk the life of the Italian Consul General and his wife, as well as of four more Italian employees.

The regime was taken by surprise and was deeply shaken. In a few days, however, it was able to react, to reorganize its forces, and to restore its order. Khadafy, as usual, promptly attributed the responsibility of the events in Cyrenaica to the Italian provocation and to the hate held by the Libyan people against Italy for its colonial past and ongoing failure to pay due compensation for it.

In reality, what happened in Bengasi was clearly an attempt to rebel against the dictatorial regime. A rebellion carried out by real Libyan political opponents, by unemployed and underpaid Cyrenaic young men, as well as by veteran Libyan *Mujahidin* returning from their *Jihad* in Afghanistan and Iraq. A rebellion which also saw the wide participation of foreign unskilled workers, ready to be engaged in whatever venture of protest and violence.

Soon after, apart from the dismissal of Ministers and local authorities and the arrests and brutal repression of the most dangerous opponents, Khadafy tried to mend fences by calling "martyrs", in the Islamic tradition, the demonstrators who had died during the rebellion, and by sending the wounded to hospitals abroad.

However, the revolt put down in 2006 became a sort of tragic preview of the later one that, influenced and encouraged by the so called "Arab Spring" movements and revolts in Tunisia, in Egypt, and in other Arab countries, exploded, once again in Bengasi, on the 16th of February 2011, on the exact anniversary and

in commemoration of the previous one. And, this time, the old lawyer's prophecy was fulfilled.

With the substantial help of Western air bombing, this was a real revolution, whose final result was the fall and death of the hated dictator, but also, unfortunately, a civil war, the breakdown of the social structure of the country with the revival of the power of the various kabilas, the destruction of economic infrastructures, the penetration into the country of various groups of Islamic extremists, the disaggregation of the Libyan political and administrative structure with the appearance of various armed militias ruling their own territories and controlling all kinds of illegal traffics.

Speaking of the fall and death of Khadafy and the developments of the Arab Spring's revolution in Libya, I would like to concentrate on a specific point concerning the motivations and consequences of the international military intervention in Libya.

On the back cover of my book of Libyan memoirs, the editor asks a fundamental question: How it's possible that western powers intervened in Libya, with the clear although unconfessed aim of overthrowing Khadafy's dictatorship, while totally ignoring the question of "what next"?. In other words, intervening militarily and not taking into any consideration what would happen in Libya following the sudden disappearance of Colonel Khadafy and his "stateless society" called Jamahiriya. How was it possible that the lesson taught by the disastrous experience of Iraq, with the improvident and counterproductive measures taken by the then American "proconsul" Paul Bremer, failed to be learned at all?

And yet, Sarkozy, Cameron, Obama and, as far as Italy is concerned, Napolitano and Berlusconi, could not be unaware of Libya's conditions. They could not ignore the fact that, unlike in the Tunisian case where the consequences of the fall of President Ben Ali could in some way be contained by the country, this would not be so in the case of Libya following the sudden, traumatic fall of a regime that had controlled and ruled the country for 42 years with no Constitution, no real Parliament and Government, no political parties, no independent judiciary, no efficient administration, no free press, no free civil society.

Western political leaders could not have been unaware of the fact that, once Khadafy would suddenly disappear, total chaos would erupt in Libya, leading not only to the economic and social destruction of the country but also to inevitable wide repercussions for the stability and security of the North African, Sahel and Mediterranean regions.

During my long diplomatic mission to Tripoli, I frequently signalled such serious risks.

In March 2007, for example, I reported to my superiors the following considerations:

The Libyan system, lacking a real State structure, is so blocked institutionally and from the point of view of internal political balances, that any change at the top could intervene only after the disappearance, natural or political, of the Leader, who, although not holding any institutional office, is actually in possession of absolute power. But – I concluded – in the case of an unforeseen or unorganized disappearance of the sole Leader, the situation of the country is such that it is impossible to ensure an orderly change in power.

Again, in June and July 2008, I was particularly insistent on this point, underlining that, in a medium-term perspective, the regime was showing serious fragilities which owed to the lack of a sound institutional and administrative system other than the untenable "Government of the Masses" called Jamahiriyya.

Finally, in September 2009, when Khadafy celebrated 40 years in power, I reported the following to Rome:

Although at this moment Khadafy appears still solidly in power, problems could arise from his sudden demise, whether forced or from natural causes. In such a case, the Libyan "stateless society" would be totally unprepared, and would risk being overwhelmed. The regime might chaotically dissolve into thousands of Kabilas, clans, and power groups fighting each other. The country might even risk breaking up.

Certainly, I was not the only Ambassador in Tripoli to report in such terms on the situation in Libya. I am quite sure that my colleagues were doing the same. We have to presume, therefore, that the various Chanceries all over Europe and North America were informed and conscious of the situation.

However, in spite of such information, the Western leaders, particularly under the pressure and activism of the then French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, decided to intervene militarily in Libya.

The intervention, based on Resolutions 1973 and 2009 of the UN Security Council, was formally justified by the "necessity to protect the populations and the civilian zone threatened by Khadafy's forces". In theory, then, an intervention to defend human rights. In practice, putting aside the hidden agendas of the French and British Governments and, perhaps Sarkozy's personal one, an intervention which, in the end, resulted in having as its sole political goal precisely the one not envisaged by Resolution 1973, which is to say the removal from power and, perhaps, the physical disappearance of the dictator. And all this, without envisaging anything at all for the day after.

A "humanitarian war" the only certainty of which is that its primary victims have, in reality, been those same Libyans the UN Resolution proclaimed to want to save from Khadafy's vicelike-grip. A "humanitarian war" that made the human rights situation of Libyan citizens even worse.

Immediately after the intervention, after the bombing, after Khadafy's death, the international community forgot to defend the human rights of Libyans: what we witnessed instead was an escape from Libya.

Now, apart from countless international meetings, statements, resolutions, in New York, in Bruxelles and in other capitals Libya has been, in actuality, irresponsibly abandoned.

Abandoned to the absence of a real central power, to the lack of institutional and administrative preparation. Abandoned to its atavistic tribal struggles, to its antithetical private militias. Abandoned to the rapacity of a multitude of criminal gangs and traffickers in drugs, arms, oil, and human beings. Abandoned to the penetration of terrorism.

Former American President Obama has already publicly admitted that the major failure of his Presidency was not having thought a plan for Libya after the anti-Khadafy revolution. Perhaps, with regard to the other Leaders involved, it will be the Tribunal of History that will one day pass judgement on their responsibilities.

For the time being, the sentence passed by Pope Francis in February 2016, when ideas were circulating concerning a second international military intervention in Libya, still appear as if cast in stone:

> On the matter of the Arab Spring, the West must look self-critically at its own responsibilities. What eventually happened could have been guessed in advance. It would be necessary to think first of Libya and then of a military intervention. Before, there was only one Khadafy, now, there are fifty!

The heritage of Colonel Khadafy, who for 42 years ruled with an iron hand a "stateless society", is today another "stateless society", but, this time, without any real, strong central power. This persistent absence of a singular central power, authoritative and recognized not only at the international level but most importantly of all by the various Kabilas, opposing factions, and private armies, is the main factor in the chaotic instability and insecurity which reigns in the country. Instability and insecurity that affect North Africa, the Sahel, the Mediterranean, and therefore also Europe.

Nowadays, the international community shows more interest and concern regarding Libya, and many international meetings and conferences are continuously convened on the subject. But, in actuality, this is the situation: the High Representatives of the UN are proposing plans and programs but, unfortunately, the Organization is powerless and increasingly less influential. The European Union is devoid of leadership and pervaded by new nationalisms and populisms. The Arab countries each continue to support one of the sides involved in the Libyan power struggle in accordance with their particular interests. Putin is deploying his new Mediterranean high diplomacy. Trump is sending tweets. France is playing its cards both in Tobruk and in Tripoli.

Finally, Italy. I have to admit that, particularly in the last two years, although practically abandoned by the international community and the European Union, Rome has displayed a greater awareness of the Libyan situation and of the serious risks for the security, stability and political, economic and social equilibrium of Italy itself and the Mediterranean region that this situation entails. Although with some delays, hesitations, and mistakes, the Italian Government has intensified its dialogue with both Prime Minister Serraj in Tripoli and General Haftar in Tobruk; it has taken measures to better coordinate the control of the migration routes that cross the central Mediterranean; it has decided to send a first military contingent in Niger and has opened an Embassy in Niamey; it has launched international initiatives to face the situation in Libya and in particular the enormous migratory flow through the central Mediterranean. Among these initiatives, the recently envisaged "Quirinale Treaty" between Rome and Paris could – I hope – be of particular importance, looking to the future.

Today, however, apart from words of solidarity and praise, vague promises by the international community and the prospect of new agreements, the reality is that Italy is still alone in facing the Libyan crisis. However, a serious new danger has emerged recently: while the flux of migrants from Libya has been increasing again over the past few weeks, and a terrorist attack has hit the important oil terminal of Es Sider in Cyrenaica, and Tunisia is again embroiled in serious troubles, Italy appears to be primarily concerned with – and perhaps distracted by – one of the most polemical, controversial and uncertain electoral campaigns in recent history. And Italy, whatever Government sits in Rome, cannot afford to disregard Libya.

As a conclusion, I have to admit that, given the situation, I am rather disillusioned and pessimistic. As of today, I fear, I am unable to see, at least in the short and medium term, any clear prospects for peace and civil, economic, and social progress for my beloved, unfortunate Libya.

In 2018, I concluded my speech at the International Conference organized by the University of Naples "L'Orientale", with a note of disillusion and pessimism on the future outlook of Libya.

Since then, unfortunately, the Libyan crisis has not evolved positively at all. The country is still embroiled in a near endemic civil war involving, besides various private armed militias and criminal gangs, the two main political factions, headed respectively by Prime Minister Serraj in Tripoli, and by General Haftar in Tobruk, with their different extra-national supporters.

The international community, apart from the usual conferences, formal declarations and vacuous promises, has in fact forgotten Libya. Italy, in theory the third party most closely affected by the Libyan crisis, seems to concentrate its attention only to the issue of migration, disregarding the more complex political, economic and security aspects of the situation.

The last Italian government was apparently satisfied with the substantial reduction of the number of illegal migrants arriving from Libya. Even the number of migrants who drowned in the central Mediterranean was reduced by 50% in the first eight months of this year: nevertheless, it remains hard to accept that, in the same period, "only" 640 persons have died at sea escaping from the war in Libya and from its atrocities.

Maybe the publication of the proceedings of the Conference held in Naples in 2018 is not the most appropriate occasion in which to update our impression of the Libyan crisis: this would probably require another special Conference at "L'Orientale". In the meantime, I am forced to hold on to my gloomy pessimism for the future of Libya.

FATHI BEN KHALIFA

The Political Situation of the Imazighen in Libya Before and After 2011

Most readers will, I assume, be to some extent already aware of the history of the Libyan Amazigh people over the last century.

The Imazighen of Libya, were at the forefront of the resistance against European colonization. After decades of struggle, the new independent Kingdom of Libya was eventually established on December 24th 1951.

The Kingdom's Constitution, introduced in 1953, stated Libya's close ties to both the Arab world and the African continent, and introduced Arabic as the country's only official language; nothing within this Constitution mentioned the local identities contained in the country or recognized Libyan Tamazight language or culture.

Arguably, this is common procedure in attempting to establish the legitimacy of a monarchic regime based on ethnic and religious affiliation. Accordingly, despite Libya's location in North Africa, far from the Arabian Peninsula, its king could not but affirm to be the descendant of the Prophet Muhammad.

The military coup carried out by Gaddafi on September 1st 1969 led to a period of increased political violence for the Imazighen.

Under Gaddafi, the country had no constitution, and the State promulgated an exclusively Arab nationalist discourse, which created the context for a series of laws and policies that surpassed those of the most violent and repressive regimes that exist in the world today.

The official name of the country was changed from that of the Kingdom of Libya to "Libyan Arab Republic", and eventually to "Libyan Arab Jamahiriya".

None of Gaddafi's speeches and statements recognized either the Amazigh presence or their rights. His speeches incited hatred, violence and discrimination. Moreover, they distorted both the history and the reality of Libyan identity and culture.

Accordingly, the native Libyan language was banned; Amazigh leaders and intellectuals were arrested and killed, and the regime invested great sums in promoting a historical revisionism that would promote Arabism and present not only Libya, but the entirety of North Africa and the Sahara as uniformly Arab.

Gaddafi's speeches acted in lieu of a Constitution as the source of the laws he implemented. It was prohibited to speak, sing or study in Amazigh language, or to give Amazigh names to our children. Any child who carried an Amazigh name would be expelled from school until he or she took on an Arabic name.

All Libyan citizens carried Arab nationality instead of Libyan nationality, following a policy of Arabization which Gaddafi pursued with the avail of his forces in the military and intelligence services, as well as of his allies among the country's religious authorities. Unfortunately, a number of Amazigh also cooperated in helping to control and eventually break the Amazigh human rights movement.

Officially, Libya was an Arab state, a member of the Arab League, whose citizens only spoke Arabic, and any Libyan who did not accept this would be deprived of his or her citizenship according to Law 18 of 1982.

Therefore, as Libyan Amazigh speakers, we were faced with a choice: either accept the law, rejecting our Amazigh identity but earning the rights and status accorded to being a "good" citizen; or choosing to uphold our identity and language and lose all our rights as citizens.

Some of us chose the second, arguably harder option. The Libyan resistance movement against Gaddafi thus included a strong Imazighen presence. Unfortunately, despite their contributions, all opposition projects further ignored Amazigh rights, confirming both the political weakness of the Amazigh and the prejudiced character of many members of the Libyan opposition groups.

The same happened during and after 2011. Imazighen supported the revolution of February 17 since the very beginning, both politically and militarily. Hundreds died, many more donated money and other material support. As a result, the Libyan Imazighen became the targets of retaliation by Gaddafi's forces: Imazighen communities were attacked and terrible crimes were committed.

During the early stages of the revolution, the Imazighen contribution to the struggle against Gaddafi was widely praised by the Libyan opposition politicians and media, and even by politically involved singers. But as soon as the regime fell, there began to emerge worrying signs about the future of the community in the new Libyan political sphere. The first article of the temporary constitution of August 2011 (which was promulgated while Amazigh forces were still fighting alongside the other Libyan rebels) stated that the Arabic language would be the country's only official language. The official discourse of the revolution also changed, and the Imazighen came to be referred to as a minority who should fall in line with the will of the Arab majority.

In a repeat of history, the Imazighen's crucial military and logistical contribution was exploited, while their rights were politically marginalized. And again, the reasons were the political weakness of the Imazighen, and the widespread racism of the Libyan political classes.

The current situation of the Libyan Imazighen can be summarized as follows:

- The Imazighen have boycotted parliamentary elections since 2014.
- They also boycotted the elections for the Constitutional Commission of that same year.
- Imazighen have been excluded from the political dialogue sponsored by the United Nations, and are out of the current government.

Given the disastrous consequences of many of these elections and political initiatives, many Imazighen feel some pride not to have let themselves become involved in the chaos.

Article 2 of the constitutional draft was supported by the UN and International community for submission to a referendum, again states: Libya is a part of the Arab world, the Arabic language being the only language of the State. Article 193 stated that all articles of the Constitution may be changed in the future, except for article 2, which has apparently taken on a sacred aura of untouchability.

In terms of the political status of the Imazighen in Libya, then, there is little difference between before and after the events of 2011. The principal reason for this, in my view, is that the fundamental principles of the hegemonic political mindset in Libya has not changed and new results cannot be expected for an experiment carried out with the same tools and conditions.

Yesterday's Libya is the mirror image of today's; only the faces and names have changed.

It is true that today's Libya is under the threat of a new terror, that of al-Qa'ida and ISIS, but Gaddafi and his regime were as terroristic as al-Qa'ida and ISIS are today.

Gaddafi trained terrorists from all over the world in camps inside Libya. He supported terrorist groups in Europe (including, for example, the Italian Red Brigades) with money and weapons.

Civilian airplanes were hijacked and crashed in the 1980s on Gaddafi's orders, and Bin Laden simply copied the same tactic for his attacks on September 11, 2001.

Gaddafi blew up cafes and night clubs in the streets of Europe, the same way ISIS did later on by planning and implementing vehicle-ramming attacks against defenseless civilians in Europe.

Gaddafi and the Arabists and Islamists who control Libya today are thus arguably two sides of the same terrorist coin, reorganized under the slogan of "confronting colonialism and protecting the Arab nation and the Islamic religion".

It is also true that today's Libya is rife with corruption and poor administration. This too is in continuity with the past: Libya has been and continues to be the victim of financial corruption and illegal dealings. Libya was, and still is, a marketplace for weapons smugglers, oil brokers, and international depredation of Libyan resources and finances.

In the past, the names of the culprits were associated with Gaddafi's family and his supporters; today they are linked to the ruling elites and their international networks.

This is something endemic to all Islamist, anti-democratic Arab regimes.

Some may say that today the State is absent, and that it is the tribes that control Libya. This is also true, but Gaddafi also controlled Libya for 42 years by taking advantage of tribal dynamics and regional alliances. What is in place today is the Arab Islamist political method of control. It is enough to take one glance at the history of the region over the past few centuries to understand clearly how this game works.

Some may further say that the country is facing a serious problem of illegal immigration.

While this too is true, we should ask ourselves whether illegal immigration appeared in Libya only after 2011, or whether it was already preponderant earlier, in the 1990s, when Gaddafi exploited this human tragedy to put pressure on Europe, and by doing so was able to enter into highly advantageous negotiations with the former Italian government? We all remember the images of the former Italian Prime Minister kissing Gaddafi's blood-stained hands. And this is not dissimilar from the way many Italian businesses are conducting themselves today by making deals with human traffickers and criminal militia leaders.

As long as the world at large, and especially our historic neighbors – our Mediterranean neighbors – make deals with Libya while it remains a non-democratic, ethnicist and Islamist, corrupted and violent regime; as long our neighbors continue to forget that the cultures native to North Africa, after millennia of relations, have more in common with their own than does Arab Wahhabism; and as long as they continue to think of Libya exclusively in terms of conflicts, ideologies, and terrorism that have their origin in the Middle East, they are bound to suffer the consequences of the current situation as much as we ourselves do, for these outlooks are at the root of all of Libya's troubles.

As long as the international community continues to fail to help Libya to exit this spiral, we will all continue to suffer from the consequences of terrorism, uncontrolled immigration, smuggling, and corruption.

Libya is not solely an Arab country, nor is it a part of what they call the Arab world or Arab land, not in terms of history, not in terms of culture, nor of identity or geography: Libya is a Libyan country for all Libyan citizens. Islam in Libyan society is not like Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia or Afghanistan. It is just Libyan Islam.

The country needs help in overcoming the pitfalls of the Arabization of our culture, language, religion, and mentality, spurred on by the petro-dollars of the often undemocratic interests of the Gulf states.

Helping Libya is paramount if we are to achieve peace both in Libya itself and abroad.

We are faced with a precious opportunity to make up for previous political mistakes, and ensure peace and the pursuit of common interests within a democratic and secular Libya.

Today, the safest areas in Libya are those inhabited by the Imazighen; in part, these overlap with the wider strategic relevance for Italy, in terms of energy resources, of Western Libya, but also with the most important transit corridors for illegal immigration. The Imazighen communities are willing to engage with this matter, but lack the resources to do so. Furthermore, the Imazighen have not offered safe harbor to terrorist groups such as al-Qa'ida and ISIS. This is without doubt due to the respect that the Imazighen have for their land. Others have forfeited their culture, language and religion, becoming tools for the implementation of the policies of Arabism promoted by Wahhabi regimes. Recent history has shown them to be the enemies of peace and democracy, and to be bent on the eradication of local native Libyan culture.

What might be the solution to all of this?

As far as we can think of the situation in terms of a political crisis, the solution is to create a new democratic Libyan political road map, an agreement based on the recognition of Libya as a North African Mediterranean state that should be willing to respect the rights of citizenship, secularism, freedom, and of a free economy. We are currently working on a political movement based on Libyan identity and culture.

We simply ask the world to listen to our analyses, ideas, and views. We believe this is the right choice for all those who really want to help to bring Libya forward into the 21st century, and to ensure the stability of the region as well as international peace.

Libya and the Construction of a Political Identity

CHIARA PAGANO

Shall we Speak of an Arab-Berber Libya? Towards an Interconnected History of Tripolitania's Social Groups (1911-1918)

Berber studies and the construction of the "colonial library" on the Maghreb

Historically, research conducted by primarily European scholars on the complex relationship between Arab and Berber practices of belonging has been considered crucial in understanding North African societies. However, such research has also proved to be politically biased, as it developed within what Mudimbe has called the "colonial library", the writings on Africa produced by Westerners during the colonial era, which also consistently affected Africans' construction of their own knowledge of themselves.[1] With regard to the Maghreb, production of the "colonial library" began around 1830, with the French military occupation of Algeria.[2] At that time, European orientalists supported their respective governments' drive for colonial expansion by providing purportedly scientific justification for the production of an "imagined" Orient, described as an irrevocably "other" sum of actual or potential societies characterized by being backward, pre-modern, and inherently conflictive.[3] These adversarial descriptions of the internal plurality of African societies proved instrumental in governing complex local structures and dynamics of power.[4] Local cultures were studied and mobilized in order to emphasize difference, rather than to understand the multiple declinations of local

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[1] V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa. Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1988.

[2] S. Chaker, Réflexions sur les études berbères pendant la période coloniale (Algérie), *Revue de l'Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 34, 1982, 81-89.

[3] E. W. Said, *Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient*, Penguin Books, New York, 1991 [1st ed. 1978].

[4] P. Tiyambe Zeleza, The Inventions of African Identities and Languages: The Discursive and Developmental Implications, in O. F. Arasanyin - M. A. Pemberton (eds.), *Selected Proceedings of the 36th Annual Conference on African Linguistics: Shifting the Center of Africanism in Language Politics and Economic Globalization*, Cascadilla Proceedings Project, Somerville, 2006, 14-26.

societal functioning, accordingly providing European colonial governments with what Mamdani has called "authoritarian possibilities".[5]

One of the truisms that constituted the European "colonial library" on the Maghreb concerned the supposedly inherent opposition between the Arab and Berber groups that inhabited the region. This truism was sustained, among other things, by recalling classical Greek and Roman historiography in order to retrace the pre-Islamic origins of North African societies, and identify its native peoples. This served the purpose of justifying colonialism in the Maghreb both in terms of a "return" to former Roman territories, and as the liberation of subjugated North African native peoples from Arab and, later on, Ottoman invader.[6] European scholars' and travelers' understandings of North Africa accordingly led to the development of a "paradigmatic history" predicated on binary oppositions, and therefore "negate[d] the possibility of a plural rationality and history".[7] The fostering and later development of the field of Berber Studies contributed to this process. After having retraced the historical ties linking the 19th century descendants of the populations of pre-Islamic North Africa to the European heirs of the Roman Empire, the champions of the European "colonial library" reified "the existent differences between Berbers and Arabs in language, social organization and religious praxis in order to promote a divide and rule policy".[8]

The polarization of North African societies along the Arabs versus Berbers binomial axis was a by-product of the wider European colonial experience in Africa, which implied "radically new types of discourses on African traditions and cultures" that transformed "non-European areas into fundamentally European constructs".[9] By defining ethnic belongings in racial terms, often coupled with considerations concerning religious sectarianism, the field of Berber studies was

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[5] M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Colonialism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996, 21.

[6] See, among others, M. Galley - D. R. Marshall (eds.), *Actes du premier Congrès d'études des cultures méditerranéennes d'influence arabo-berbère*, Société nationale d'édition et de diffusion, Algiers, 1973; C. R. Ageron, Du Mythe kabyle aux politiques berbères, in AA. VV., *Le mal de voir. Cahiers Jussieu/2. Université de Paris VII*, Contributions to Orientalisme, africanisme, américanisme, Conference (9-11 May 1974), and Ethnologie et politique au Maghreb, Conference (5 June 1975), Union Générale d'éditions, Paris, 1976, 331-348; K. E. Hoffman - S. G. Miller (eds.), *Berbers and Others. Beyond Tribe and Nation in the Maghreb*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2010; B. Maddy-Weitzman, *The Berber Identity movement and the Challenge to North African States*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 2011.

[7] V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa…*, 280.

[8] B. Maddy-Weitzman, Is the Ethnic Genie out of the Bottle? Berbers and the 'North African Spring' Five Years on, in A. M. Di Tolla - E. Francesca (eds.), *Emerging Actors in Post-Revolutionary North Africa. Berber Movements: Identity, New Issues and New Challenges*, Special issue of *Studi Maġrebini*, Nuova Serie, voll. XIV-XV, Napoli, 2016-2017, Tomo II, 243-263.

[9] V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa…*, 14.

mobilized by colonial authorities in order to negate the existence of changing practices of group and individual identity-building, and to sideline the multiplicity of strategies that had informed the distribution of power and influence among group actors at a regional level prior to the advent of colonialism.[10]

As demonstrated by recent studies, Italian orientalists and colonial functionaries working in colonial Tripolitania were no exception to this trend: they followed the French precedent in describing the colony's historical inhabitants by drawing an opposition between Arabs and Berbers in ethnic and racial terms. The promotion of Berber studies by the Italian colonial authorities in the immediate aftermath of the occupation of Tripoli was certainly no coincidence. [11] This led to a forcibly polarized representation of Arab and Berber practices of belonging, which were actually complementary and syncretic, as was also the case for the rest of the Maghreb.

As articulated by Desai, the development of the "colonial library" was not a reflection of colonialism, but rather a constitutive aspect of the latter, and implied an "epistemological colonization"[12] that eventually engendered what Zubairu Wai considered the paradox of the invention of Africa: the power regimes that emerged from the colonial structure, not least through the mobilization of European knowledge capital, continued to affect Africans' own "notions of self-identity, discourses of otherness and ideology of alterity", even when questioned by Africans themselves, long after the end of colonialism.[13] Not surprisingly, every political articulation of Berber belonging has continuously generated anxiety among Libyans throughout history.

The Amazigh militias who took part in the civil war that began in February 2011, together with all the other anti-regime forces, progressively came to perceive the

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[10] G. Boëtsch, Arabes/Berbères. L'incontournable lecture raciologique du XIXe siècle, in H. Claudot-Hawad (ed.), *Berbères ou Arabes ? Le tango des spécialistes*, Non Lieu, Paris, 2006, 23-38.

[11] See D. Merolla, La lunga ombra dell'orientalismo tra studi africani e studi berberi in Italia, in *Incontri. Rivista europea di studi italiani*, 28/1, 2013, 68-82; F. Cresti, Due volte minoranza: i berberi ibaditi del *jabal* Nafūsa nella visione coloniale. Note sui documenti dell'Archivio storico del ministero dell'Africa italiana dall'inizio dell'impresa di Tripoli alla fine della prima guerra mondiale (1911-1918), in F. Cresti (ed.), *Minoranze, pluralismo, stato nell'Africa mediterranea e nel Sahel*, Aracne editrice, Ariccia, 2015, 21-61; F. Cresti, Conoscenza scientifica e politica coloniale: Francesco Beguinot, l'impresa di Tripoli e un progetto incompiuto di "Storia dei Berberi" (1911-1923), in A. M. Di Tolla (ed.), *La lingua nella vita e la vita della lingua. Itinerari e percorsi di studi berberi*, Special issue of *Studi Africanistici. Quaderni di studi berberi e libico berberi*, 4, Unior, Napoli, 2015, 171-196; C. Pagano, *Emergere ed evoluzioni di un discorso etnico nella Tripolitania coloniale: la questione berbera (1911-1923)*, Ph.D. Thesis, "Roma Tre" University, Rome, 2018.

[12] G. Desai, *Subject to Colonialism: African Self-Fashioning and the Colonial Library*, Duke University Press, USA, 2001, 4.

[13] Z. Wai, On the predicament of Africanist knowledge: Mudimbe, gnosis and the challenge of the colonial library, *International Journal of francophone studies*, 18/2-3, July 2015, 263.

ethnic variable as playing an increasingly relevant role in shaping the process of rethinking the national fabric of post-Qadhdhafi Libya. The Berber issue, therefore, became a concern for the authorities of the new State.[14] What had emerged as a colonial instrument of divide and rule has therefore continued to generate social fractures that have denied the option of conceiving Libyan society as an Arab-Berber one. The idea of an Arab-Berber Libya turned out to be incompatible with the homogenizing rhetoric which permeated public discourse after independence, both during Idris' monarchical regime and, later, during al-Qadhdhafi's pan-Arab regime.[15] Furthermore, Libya's nationalist elite, especially after al-Qadhdhafi's coup, systematically strove to channel Berber groups towards a homogeneous national identity, based on a combination of Arab, Islamic, and national territorial elements, with Berber culture relegated to the status of folklore, and Berber political claims for recognition accused of being the by-product of colonialism.[16]

The persistent role of ethnic categories originating in colonial domination in the hostile (re)shaping of Libya's political equilibriums requires us to critically re-examine the emergence of the Berber issue in Tripolitania's colonial history. It is necessary to think outside of the power-knowledge regimes of the "colonial library", and to challenge the sharp segmentation that results from binary representations of North African societies. With this in mind, this article will historically retrace what Katherine Hoffmann has defined as "Arab-Berber contact zones",[17] investigating the role played, and the political strategies displayed by both Arab and Berber group actors in colonial Tripolitania, prior to the Fascist suppression of all kinds of anti-colonial resistance.

Placing a novel emphasis not on the study of the history of Amazigh communities themselves, but on their interactions with State authorities and other

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[14] B. Maddy-Weitzman, Is the Ethnic Genie out of the Bottle? Berbers and the 'North African Spring' Five Years on', 245; W. Lacher - A. Labnouj, Factionalism Resurgent. The War in the Jabal Nafusa, in P. Cole - B. McQuin (eds.), *The Libyan Revolution and its Aftermath*, Hurst, London, 2015, 257-284.

[15] A. Baldinetti, Languages in Libya: Building Blocks of National Identity and Soft Power Tools, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 23/3, 2018, 418-439.

[16] See A. Baldinetti, Le istanze amazigh in Libia: la nascita di una società civile?, in A. Baldinetti - A. Maneggia (eds.), *Processi politici nel Mediterraneo: dinamiche e prospettive*, Morlacchi, Perugia, 2012, 231-250; A. Baldinetti, Identità nazionale e riconoscimento delle minoranze in Libia: le richieste della società civile, in E. Diodato - F. Guazzini (eds.), *La guerra alle frontiere d'Europa: incognite e prospettive nel Mediterraneo*, Carocci, Roma, 2014, 103-119. But also A. M. Di Tolla, I berberi del Gebel Nefusa tra rivoluzione e identità culturale, in A. M. Di Tolla - E. Francesca (eds.), *La rivoluzione ai tempi di internet. Il futuro della democrazia nel Maghreb e nel mondo arabo*, Università degli studi "L'Orientale", Napoli, 2012, 73-91.

[17] K. E. Hoffman, Internal Fractures in the Berber-Arab Distinction: From Colonial Practice to Post-National Preoccupations, in K. E. Hoffman - S. G. Miller (eds.), *Berbers and Others. Beyond Tribe and Nation in the Maghreb*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2010, 39-40.

local, regional, and international social forces, it is possible to shed light on the contribution given by Tripolitania's Berber groups to the regional anti-colonial struggle, together with their Arab allies. Accordingly, the idea that Tripolitania's Berber groups have historically been a somewhat intrinsically separate minority, in perpetual contrast with the Arab majority, can be refuted. I will argue that the Arab-Berber co-participation in organizing anti-Italian resistance proved instead strategic in laying the basis for the imagining of an autonomous and self-governing Tripolitania. I will also point out that, even when displayed within the framework of the so-called "Berber policy", the Italian colonial policy for coopting local leaders always eventually addressed either resistance, or intermediation fronts, which included both Arab and Berber colonial subjects. Accordingly, the emergence and subsequent abandonment of an ethnic rhetoric in a composite Arab-Berber colonial Tripolitania will be understood as an instrument of local political agency, either in terms of intermediation or resistance.

The internal plurality of Tripolitania's social space: from the Arab conquest to colonial penetration

Prior to the advent of Italian colonialism, Tripolitania had witnessed the gradual influx of Arab and Muslim groups from the Arabian Peninsula over the course of twelve centuries. From the 7th century onwards, the rise of Islam led to a rapid Islamization of Tripolitania, though this was not necessarily accompanied by an equally marked Arabization. A decisive acceleration in the Arabization process only occurred in the 11th century, when the Banū Hilāl tribes migrated to North Africa, soon followed by the arrival of the Banū Sulaym and Banu Ma'qil.[18] Already in pre-Islamic times, the Libu people mentioned in the historical accounts of Herodotus and Polybius were comprised of a plurality of local groups, often hostile to each other, such as the Getuli, Messili and Massesili, Numidians, Maures and Garamantes. Most of these peoples were only sporadically united in autonomous kingdoms, and often maintained pseudo-feudal relations with their Punic or Roman conquerors.[19] The kingdom of the Garamantes, which dominated central Sahara between 900 BC and 500 CE, constituting the first State in the history of the Libyan region, constituted an exception.[20]

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[18] W. Marçais, *Comment l'Afrique du Nord a été arabisée*, Larose, Paris, 1938, 171-192.

[19] R. Smith, What Happened to Ancient Libyans? Chasing Sources across the Sahara from Herodotus to Ibn Khaldun, *Journal of World History*, 14/4, December 2003, 459-500; S. T. Stevens - J. P. Conant (eds.), *North Africa under Byzantium and Early Islam*, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, USA, 2016.

[20] D. J. Mattingly, The Garamantes: the First Libyan State, in D. J. Mattingly - S. McLaren - E. Savage - Y. Al-Fassatwi - K. Gadgood (eds.), *The Libyan Desert: Natural Resources and Cultural Heritage*, The Society for Libyan Studies, London, 2006, 189-204.

The responses of the local populations to Arab occupation starting in the 7th century ranged from fierce resistance on one extreme, to integration in the ranks of the Arab armies on the other, as the latter swept across North Africa and over the Strait of Gibraltar into the Iberian Peninsula. Though frequent revolts did occur, pre-Arab North African dynasties also participated in establishing Islamic states and empires in the region.[21] In the case of Tripolitania, these Berber groups were able to escape complete political submission to the Arab caliphate, and often sought to maintain their autonomy by converting to Ibadi Islām rather than to the majoritarian Sunni doctrine. As a result, such groups were either confined to the Nafūsa mountains, or to the coastal city of Zwāra. Competition for pastures and access to markets among nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralists increased, opposing the newcomers to pre-existing local populations. However, a complementary relationship eventually developed between the pastoral economies of some groups, mostly in the lowlands (*Jafāra*), and the farming economy of the communities that inhabited the mountains.[22] The results of the processes of Arabization and Islamization, therefore, allowed for the continuation of certain pre-existing cultural specificities. It is possible to explain the survival to the present day of bilingualism in Tripolitania's Jabal (where Tamazight dialects coexist with Arabic), as well as of Ibadi Islam,[23] in this light. Ibn Khaldūn, in his *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, had already provided an account of the complex and changing dynamics of mutual exchange that characterized the Arab-Berber peoples of North Africa, showing a wide spectrum of practices of identity conversion, which were by no means unidirectional, but ranged instead from the Arabization of Berbers to the converse process of Berberization of Arabs.[24]

By the 15th century, the age of the North African Berber dynasties had come to an end, and in 1551 Tripolitania came under Ottoman rule. Throughout this period, the Arab-Berber populations that inhabited Tripolitania's hinterland, including those of the Jabal Nafūsa, maintained a *de facto* autonomous status, which only began to be seriously questioned in 1835, with the start of the second period of Ottoman occupation. Even then, the Ottoman Empire was forced to confront protracted resistance against its rule, led in the Jabal by Ghūma Bin Khalīfa al-

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[21] M. Brett, The Arab Conquest and the Rise of Islam in North Africa, in J. D. Fage (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Africa*, vol. II, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978, 490-555.

[22] G. A. de Calassanti Motylinski, *Le Djebel Nefousa. Transcription, Traduction Française et notes avec une étude grammaticale*, Leroux, Paris, 1898; A. de Calassanti-Motylinski, *Chronique d'Ibn Saghīr sur les imams Rostamides de Tahert*, Leroux, Paris, 1908; J. Despois, *Le Djebel Nefousa. Tripolitaine. Étude géographique*, Larose, Paris, 1935.

[23] O. Sahli, *Some social aspects of Fassato, a Nafusah Berber community in Western Libya*, M. A. Thesis, Kansas University, USA, 1970.

[24] W. MacGuckin (le Barone de Slane), *Histoire des Berbères et des Dynasties Musulmanes de l'Afrique Septentrionale par Ibn-Khaldun*, Imprimerie du Gouvernement, Algiers, 1852, III.

Mahmūdī, and by 'Abd al-Jalīl Sayf al-Nasr in the Fezzan, which was overcome only in 1858.[25] The North African provinces of the Ottoman Empire had always functioned as a regionally integrated system articulated in terms of "self-managed communitarism", which persisted during the 19th century as a legacy of *ancien régime* Ottoman cosmopolitanism.[26] Therefore, prior to Italian occupation, the Berber groups of Tripolitania were in fact segments of a stratified Arab-Berber society that, after 1835, was gradually absorbed into the political and institutional structures of the new Ottoman Nation-State. As explained by Nora Lafi, Ottoman imperial subjects were at the time provided with the administrative and institutional means to influence central policymaking:

> The old system was the object of strong collective investment, which reveals both the importance of the old channels of communication and of the mediation process for accommodating the new.[27]

The status of Berbers in relation to the Arab groups living in the same region was therefore determined by the proximity of their leaders to Ottoman power, and depended on political or religious considerations (Ibadi vs. Sunni Muslims) rather than on ethnic considerations – not dissimilarly from what determined the power relations between Arab groups.

The Berbers sharing of Maghreb's reformism and the anti-colonial movements

Starting from the second half of the 19th century, competition between the European imperial powers in Africa coincided with the Arab Renaissance (*al-Nahda*) and with the spread of the ideas of Salafi reformism throughout the Maghreb. Both were in opposition to, on the one hand, European colonial expansion, and, on the other, the uncritical acceptance of the dominant paradigm of Islam conveyed by the Ottoman Empire.[28]

Reformists in the former Ottoman provinces in North Africa, and also in Tripolitania, were thus able to confront the spread of European colonialism by

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[25] S. Hasan Sury, La dominazione ottomana in Tripolitania e Cirenaica (1551-1911), in S. Trinchese (ed.), *La Libia nella storia d'Italia (1911-2011)*, Mesogea, Messina, 2015, 45-48.

[26] U. Freitag - N. Lafi, Cosmopolitanism and conflicts: changes and challenges in Ottoman urban governance, in U. Freitag - N. Lafi. (eds.), *Urban Governance under the Ottomans. Between cosmopolitanism and conflict*, Routledge, New York, 2014, 7; 13.

[27] N. Lafi, Petitions and Accomodating Urban Change in Ottoman Empire, in E. Özdalga - S. Özervali - F. Tansug (eds.), *Istanbul as seen from a distance. Centre and Provinces in the Ottoman Empire*, Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, Istanbul, 2011, 74.

[28] B. Tlili, Les rapports Arabo-Turcs à la vielle de la grande guerre (1907-1913), *Cahiers de Tunisie*, 23/ 89-90, 1975, 33-140.

relying on complex "trans-imperial networks".[29] Ibadi groups, including the North African Berber élites, were actively involved in this process, in which pan-Islamic reformism was interpreted as a means of anti-imperial resistance.[30] Starting in the mid-1880s, Tunisian and Tripolitanian reformists, together with Algerian exiles in Tunisia, took advantage of the ambiguities characterizing the French protectorate's sovereignty to promote the birth of a pan-Islamic and anti-imperial regional network that was able to strengthen its ties with the reformist movements that had developed in Egypt and in the Muslim world at large.[31]

Young Maghribi Ibadis, educated in Tunisia's most important learning institutions, took an active part in the political and intellectual activities promoted by the Salafi groups that were gaining increasing momentum within the Protectorate. Among them, the future Ibadi leader of Tripolitania's resistance against Italian colonial penetration, Sulaymān al-Bārūnī, had the chance to experiment with anti-colonial themes and strategies targeting the authorities of the French Protectorate, long before the Italian occupation of Tripolitania.[32] The ideals of Salafi reformism not only strengthened the connection between Ibadi groups from the Maghreb, 'Omān, and Zanzibar, but also their connection with reformist Muslims, both Sunni and Shiite, in the Maghreb and beyond.[33]

Al-Bārūnī's adhesion to Salafi reformism, and his Ibadi political activism, also made him the target of the Hamidian regime's repression, costing him five years' imprisonment in 1900.[34] However, after the Young Turks' coup of 1908, his participation in the pan-Islamic and pan-Ottoman reformist movement earned him the election to representative for the Jabal Nafūsa in the newly reinstated

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[29] On North African trans-imperial and inter-colonial networks see A. Ghazal (ed.), *Frontier Geography and Boundless History. Islam and Arabs in East Africa: a fusion of identities, networks and encounters*, Special issue of the *MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies*, 5, 2005; J. A. Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration, c. 1800-1900*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 2012; M. D. Lewis, *Divided rule. Sovereignty and Empire in French Tunisia 1881-1939*, University of Califonia Press, Berkeley, 2013.

[30] C. Aillet, L'ibadisme, une minorité au cœur de l'Islam, *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, 132, Décembre 2012, 13-36; J. L. Gelvin - N. Green (eds.), *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 2014.

[31] A. Ghazal, *Islamic Reform and Arab Nationalism. Expanding the Crescent from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean (1880s-1930s)*, Routledge, New York, 2010; A. Ghazal, Tensions of Nationalism: The Mazabi Students Missions in Tunis and the Politics of Anticolonialism, *Journal of Middle East Studies*, 47, 2015, 47-63.

[32] A. Ghazal, An Ottoman Pasha and the End of empire. Sulayman al-Baruni and the Nerworks of Islamic Reform, in J. L. Gelvin - N. Green (eds.), *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 2014, 40-58.

[33] A. Ghazal, *Islamic Reform…*, 82.

[34] Z. al-Bārūnī (ed.), *Sulaymān al-Bārūnī. Safḥāt khalīda min al-jihād*, Matabia 'al-istiqlāl al-kubra, Cairo, 1964, vol. I, 8-30.

Parliament in Istanbul.[35] 'Abd al-Hamid II's decision to make Tripolitania, and especially its hinterland, the principal destination for reformist exiles, had in fact "exposed the [Arab-Berber] provincial population to the intellectual, political, and cultural avant-garde of the Empire, who brought to Tripoli the liberal ideas introduced elsewhere in North Africa".[36] By adhering to the call of Ottoman pan-Islamism, through the variant of Islamic reformism, North African Ibadi intellectuals had welcomed the Salafi theorists' plea for the abolition of the *madhāhib* (the different schools of Islamic law), and for the launching of a new phase of *ijtiād* (the effort for interpreting the sacred texts of Islam). These initiatives had the aim of eliminating or minimizing sectarian differences, in support of the unity of the 'Umma.[37] Al-Bārūnī played an active role in this process, and when the Italian interests in colonizing Tripolitania became clear, he returned from Istanbul to the Jabal Nafūsa with the aim of conscripting local soldiers to support the Ottoman Army in confronting the Italian invasion.[38] These events confirmed the commitment of the North African reformist forces to reinforce and make concrete the Ottoman reformists' vision concerning the future of the Empire in early 20th century.[39] In fact, in the aftermath of the Treaty of Lausanne of October 1912 – which marked the end of the Italian-Ottoman war over Tripolitania and Cyrenaica – the leaders of the Tripolitanian front met in al-'Azīziya to discuss whether to submit to Italy or continue resisting.[40] While some Arab and Berber notables opted for submission and started intermediating with Italian colonial authorities, Sulaymān al-Bārūnī decided to continue fighting against Italy. He could benefit from the support of local Berber leaders, but also of Arabic chiefs.[41]

Relying on the decree issued by the Ottoman Caliph two days before the signing the Treaty of Lausanne, which had granted autonomy to both Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, al-Bārūnī and his followers proclaimed the birth of a Tripolitanian

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[35] *Ibidem*; O. Kologlu, *500 years in Turkish-Libyan Relations*, Sam Paper, Ankara, 2007, 91-93.

[36] L. Anderson, Nineteenth-century Reforms in Ottoman Libya, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 16/3, August 1984, 325-326.

[37] A. Ghazal, The Other Frontiers of Arab Nationalism: Ibadis, Berbers, and the Arabist-Salafi Press in the Interwar Period, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 42/1, 2010, 106.

[38] F. Corò, Una interessante pagina di storia libica. Suleiman el Baruni, il sogno di un principato berbero e la battaglia di Asàaba (1913), *Gli Annali dell'Africa Italiana*, 1/3-4, 1938, 559.

[39] J. McDougall, Crisis and Recovery Narratives in Maghrebi Histories of the Ottoman Period (ca. 1870-1979), *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 31/1, July 2011, 138.

[40] A. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia. Tripoli bel suol d'amore (1860-1922)*, Oscar Mondadori, Milano, 2015 (III ed.), 199; Sulaymān bin Sa'īd al-Shaībānī al-Nafūsī, *Sulaymān Bāshā al-Bārūnī: 'Umma fī rajul*, Jamā'iyya al-Fatah, 'Omān, 2013, 42.

[41] Archivio Storico Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (ASDMAE), Archivio Storico del Ministero dell'Africa Italiana (ASMAI), *Africa* II, 150/14-55, Ottavio Ragni to Pietro Bertolini, Questione del Gebel. Situazione politica,19.01.1913.

Emirate, whose Emir was Sulaymān al-Bārūnī himself. The decision was immediately notified to the Foreign Ministries of all the principal European governments:

> J'ai l'honneur de Vous informer que le Gouvernement Ottoman a donné l'autonomie absolue aux tripolitains. Maintenant les montagnards et le sud ont décidé de continuer la lutte pour leur indépendance à outrance. J'ai l'honneur de me designer comme chef du Gouvernement indépendant provisoire que nous avons formé. Je Vous prie, Monsieur le Ministre, d'admettre la réalité de notre Gouvernement et de m'adresser toute affaire concernant les régions suivantes : Vourfella et le Sud de la Tripolitaine, les habitants de la côte, littoral Adjilat jusqu'aux frontières de la Tunisie et tous les montagnards.[42]

The activities of the Italian military occupation that began in December 1911 along the coast and in the immediate hinterland of Tripoli had indeed aimed at obtaining control of some of the major caravan trade junctions so as to jeopardize the support brought by the pan-Islamic network to local resistance fighters. By the time the Italian-Ottoman peace agreement had been signed, the Jabal had remained the last channel linking the Tripolitanian rebels with Tunisia,[43] and thus became the pivotal center for Arab-Berber resistance in Tripolitania. Furthermore, the leaders of the Tripolitanian resistance profited from the Jabal's strategic positioning not only in obtaining the support of clandestine pan-Islamic networks that smuggled weapons and provisions across the border to aid anti-Italian resistance, but also in attempting to draw some advantage from the competition between the Italian and French colonial projects.[44]

For instance, reacting to the Italian decision not to recognize the Tripolitanian Emirate, al-Bārūnī assured his allies that had the Italian colonial authorities not changed their mind, he would have asked the French Government for recognition, and that he was willing to accept a French protectorate over Tripolitania if it meant

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[42] Translation: "It is my privilege to inform you of the Ottoman Government's decision to concede complete autonomy to the people of Tripolitania. The inhabitants of the mountains and of the southern regions have decided to continue their struggle for independence until the end. I have been honoured with appointment as Head of the provisional Autonomous Government, which we have formed. I urge you, Minister, to concede the reality of our government, and to address to me all matters concerning the following regions: Vourfella and Southern Tripolitania, the inhabitants of the coast, the Adjilat coastline up until the frontier with Tunisia, and all of the country's mountainous regions", ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 150/14-55, Sulaymān al-Bārūnī to Antonio Di San Giuliano, 31.12.1912.

[43] L. Tuccari, *I governi militari della Libia (1911-1919)*, Tomo I, Ufficio Storico dello Stato Maggiore dell'Esercito, Roma, 1994, 33-34.

[44] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 150/14-55, Ufficio informazioni del Comando del Corpo di Stato Maggiore a Ministro della Guerra e Ministro delle Colonie, *Promemoria*, n. s., 23.01.1913.

ousting the Italians.[45] This strategy succeeded in convincing the Italian Minister for the Colonies, Pietro Bertolini, to open negotiations with the Tripolitanian resistance front. Al-Bārūnī's deftness in dealing with international and trans-imperial equilibriums of power allowed him to convince the Minister for the Colonies to conduct these talks between Tunis and Marseille, instead of in Tripolitania.[46]

As noted by Amal Ghazal, al-Bārūnī represented a paradigmatic model of the cosmopolitan Muslim reformist of the early twentieth century. Educated in Tunisia, Egypt and Algeria, elected to the Ottoman parliament in Istanbul, he returned to Tripoli to fight the invading Italians. He was indeed a member of the minoritarian Ibadi sect, but he was also a modernist reformer, a pan-Ottomanist, and would later become a pan-Arabist.[47] It was no coincidence that the requests for recognition of the Tripolitanian Emirate presented by al-Bārūnī's spokesmen, Mūsā Qrāda and 'Alī al-Shanta, to Bertolini's emissaries in Marseille, Gianbattista Dessì and Count Sforza, transcended the areas inhabited by Ibadi and Berber groups. These included economically and politically strategic territories, traversed by the trans-Saharan trade routes that, starting from Ghat and Ghadāmis, crossed Tripolitania to reach the Mediterranean.[48] In fact, the anti-Italian revolt aspired to underline its ability to transcend the borders of the Jabal Nafūsa, reaching out to include the whole region. To further demonstrate this, in early January 1913, al-Bārūnī sent a new telegram to the French and English consuls in Tripoli, attaching a letter in which five notables of the Warfallah groups, from the eastern part of the region, declared their loyalty to the autonomous Emirate of Tripolitania, and reaffirmed the desire to defend the independence of the region alongside the Nafūsa rebel groups.[49]

Despite it being evident that both the Tripolitanian resistance front and the colonial intermediaries included Arab and Berber local groups and leaders simultaneously, the fact that the leadership of the Tripolitanian resistance front fell to al-Bārūnī, and that the Jabal Nafūsa was the front's main stronghold, made it so that, in Rome, the requests for Tripolitanian autonomy were categorized as part of a Berber and Ibadi agenda.

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[45] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 150/14-55, Ministero delle Colonie, *Estratto - Notizie raccolte dall'Ufficio Politico-Militare di Tripoli e Trasmesse da Comando del Corpo di Occup. Di Tripoli con nota 9529 del 29.12.12.*

[46] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 150/14-55, Consolato Generale di Tunisi a Ministero delle colonie, 20.2.1913; Di San Giuliano a Ministero delle Colonie, 20.2.1913; Consolato Generale di Marsiglia a Ministero delle Colonie, 23.2.1913.

[47] A. Ghazal, An Ottoman Pasha and the End of empire…, 40.

[48] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 150/14-55, Sulaymān al-Bārūnī to Antonio Di San Giuliano.

[49] M. S. Gamoudi, *Le printemps du Jabal Nafusa*, Med Ali Editions, Sfax, 2010, 85.

The elaboration of the Italian "Berber policy"

The Italian authorities' tendency to label the rebellion in Tripolitania in ethnic terms was consistent with the interpretative categories that had been produced until then within the scope of the European "colonial library" on North Africa. While the pan-Ottoman and trans-imperial mobilization against European colonialism was in the making, the development of colonial knowledge worked instead towards countering this ongoing process of Imperial integration by cataloguing the colonial society according to closed and mutually adversarial groups. The participation of Italian orientalists in the European debate concerning the origins of the North-African peoples dated back to the end of 1880s,[50] and had led to their participation in the production of the European "regime of truth"[51] concerning the hostile relation between Arabs and Berbers in the region. At the same time, and especially between 1884 and 1905, the Italian military repeatedly started to develop plans for the "Libyan venture",[52] promoting preparatory initiatives of economic, diplomatic and geographic intervention in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.[53]

It has been argued that Italy was extremely unprepared to exercise colonial rule over the populations of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica when its navy landed in Tripoli, since it lacked the necessary preliminary knowledge of these territories.[54] Nonetheless, archival documents show that by 1902 the Office for Colonial Affairs of the Italian Foreign Ministry, directed by Giacomo Agnesa, together with the Army and in coordination with the General Consulate in Tripoli, was in fact actively collecting information and intelligence on the Libyan territories and their populations,[55] as well as on the strategies adopted by the neighboring colonial powers in their efforts to control their respective territories of influence.[56]

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[50] F. Borsari, *Geografia etnologica e storica della Tripolitania, Cirenaica e Fezzan con cenni sulla storia di queste regioni e sul silfio della Cirenaica*, Ermanno Loescher, Turin 1888; G. Sergi, *The Mediterranean Race: A Study of the Origin of European Peoples*, Walter Scott, London, 1901; E. Griffini, Le tribù berbere dell'Africa settentrionale, *L'Esplorazione commerciale*, 18-19, 1903.

[51] Here I refer to Michel Foucault's definition of "regime of truth" as "system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements, [in] a circular relation to systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which redirect it" (M. Foucault, La fonction politique de l'intellectuel [1976], in D. Defert - F. Ewald (eds.), *Dits et écrits. Vol. II: 1976-1988*, Gallimard, Paris, 2001, 113-114).

[52] N. Labanca, *Oltremare. Storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2002, 109-110.

[53] R. Mori, La penetrazione pacifica italiana in Libia dal 1907 al 1911 e il Banco di Roma, *Rivista di studi politici internazionali*, 24/1, January-March 1957, 102-118.

[54] N. Labanca, *La Guerra italiana per la Libia (1911-1931)*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2012, 111-117.

[55] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 101/2-23, *Promemoria per l'invio di notizie al Colonnello Garioni (Comando del corpo di Stato Maggiore)*, Tripoli, July 1903.

[56] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 101/2-23, *La Libia e le regioni confinanti: notiziario (1905)*.

All these initiatives were organic to the colonial project and, together with the participation of Italian orientalists in the European scientific networks working on the North African colonies, also resulted in the regional circulation of colonial strategies first experimented by French colonial administrators in Algeria. The latter had promoted a pro-Berber ethnic policy, thought to be integral to divide and rule strategies, and were taken up as an example by Pietro Bertolini, the Italian Minister for the Colonies, when confronting the resistance in Tripolitania in the aftermath of the treaty of Ouchy. In particular, in late 1912, the idea of promoting a "Berber policy" emerged as an extension of Minister Bertolini's "indigenous policy", also referred to as the "chief policy". From Bertolini's perspective, the Italian "Berber policy" aimed at involving al-Bārūnī and his followers in a decentralized administrative system, which was being elaborated in order to govern the colony by relying on the cooperation of indigenous chiefs, alongside Italian "local residents". In so doing, Bertolini was once again inspired by the system of the *contrôleurs civils* that had been adopted by the French authorities in Protectorate Tunisia.[57]

The possibility of elaborating a strategy centered around ethnicity, however, was already implicit in Francesco Beguinot's involvement in documenting the Berber dialects of the region, starting from Zwāra. The work of the Italian Semitist preceded the occupation of Tripoli. Beguinot had in fact started studying the Berber languages of Tripolitania while working as a member of the archeological mission organized by the Italian Foreign Ministry in 1911, led by Salvatore Aurigemma.[58] In 1913, right after the emergence of al-Bārūnī's resistance front, Beguinot was appointed director of the first Italian class of Berber studies, which was inaugurated by the Ministry for the Colonies immediately after it had assumed control of the "Istituto Orientale di Napoli".[59] These developments followed the *Abadhia* report, penned by Prime Minister Giolitti's adviser, Enrico Insabato, who was writing from Cairo at the end of 1911.[60] The report retraced the origins and peculiarities of Ibadi Islam.[61] According to Insabato, because the majority of the

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[57] G. Biasutti, *La politica indigena italiana in Libia. Dall'occupazione al termine del governatorato di Italo Balbo*, PhD thesis in History of Africa, Centro Studi Popoli Extraeuropei "Cesare Bonaccossa" Università di Pavia, Pavia, 2003, 81-82; S. Berhe, *Notabili libici e Funzionari italiani: l'amministrazione coloniale in Tripolitania (1912-1919)*, Rubettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2015, 113-127.

[58] Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS), Ministero Pubblica Istruzione, Direzione Generale Istruzione Universitaria, Fascicoli Professori Universitari (III serie), b. 43, f. 23, *Beguinot Francesco*.

[59] F. Cresti, Due volte minoranza…, 40.

[60] For an account of Enrico Insabato's activities in Cairo concerning the Italian colonisation of Libia see A. Baldinetti, *Orientalismo e colonialismo. La ricerca di consenso in Egitto per l'impresa di Libia*, Istituto per l'Oriente "C.A. Nallino", Roma, 1997.

[61] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 109/1-1, E. Insabato, Report titled *Gli Abadhia*, Cairo, 21.12.1911.

Berber groups in Tripolitania were Ibadi Muslims, Italy could have profited from a *fatwa* issued in 1895 by Mohammed Kamel, the son of the Mufti of Tripoli, which had labelled "the inhabitants of Tripoli and of the mountains of Barberia" as "heretics".[62] The Italian colonial authorities could have used the so-called *Fatwa Kamelia* to indirectly undermine local resistance, pushing the local Sunnis to raid the Ibadis in case of war. In fact, since the latter were among the most important supporters of the Young Turks in the region, this would have provided Italy with both an opportunity to weaken Ibadi resistance, and with a way into the logics that actually governed the local competition over power.[63] Insabato's suggestion was thus intended to provide the Italian government with a tool to promote the policy of a specific religious minority that could be considered instrumental in countering the anti-Italian resistance in Tripolitania at large. This did not contrast with the pro-Islamic policy that Italy had previously fostered with anti-British and anti-French purposes. Insabato, in a draft of a report concerning the Italian "Islamic policy", wrote that Ibadi groups "are of strict interest to what we can define as the local Islamic policy of France and Italy", whose aim was "to know, comprehend, and pander to the multiple local declinations of Islam practiced by colonial subjects".[64] He concluded that "specific formulation of a pro-Islamic policy" would have allowed Italy to finally obtain its "Place in the Sun".[65] Use of the Ibadi-Sunni divide thus immediately came to the fore in colonial strategies for controlling Tripolitania. Within this context, Tripolitania's Berber groups also progressively emerged as a politically relevant ethnic minority in Italian colonial strategies of divide and rule. In particular, the strategic area of the Jabal Nafūsa became a sort of laboratory in which a plurality of intermediation strategies were experimented with, leaning on what Ahmida has defined as Tripolitania's state of latent civil war.[66] This resulted in presenting local political and social conflicts as resulting from historically deep, perpetual ethnic conflicts.

The transformative role of Indigenous agency

As al-Bārūnī himself specified to the colonial Governor of Tripolitania, Ottavio Ragni, the region's local conflicts did not reflect a dichotomous opposition between Arabs and Berbers, but rather a regional competition for the control of

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[62] Insabato's traduction of the *Fatwa Kamelia* was attached to the report *Gli Abadhia*.

[63] E. Insabato, Report titled *Gli Abadhia*.

[64] Insabato distinguished Italian Islamic "regional policy", from a "general Islamic policy that stands outside and it is above these local policies", ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 109/1-1, *Insabato: Politica musulmana 1911-1925*, n. d. see also E. Insabato, Gli Abaditi del Jebel al-Nefusa e la politica islamica in Tripolitania, *Rivista coloniale*, 13/3, 1918, 77-93.

[65] *Ibidem.*

[66] 'A. A. Ahmida, *The Making of Modern Libya. State Formation, Colonization, and Resistance*, Sunny Press (2nd ed.), New York, 2009, 131.

strategic areas, such as the Jabal Nafūsa, and the coastal city of Zwāra. Historically retracing the practices of self-government that had characterized the history of Tripolitania's hinterland, ever since the pre-Islamic era, al-Bārūnī attributed the claims to autonomy propounded by the Tripolitanian resistance, to regional specificity, rather than to an ethnic agenda linked to an alleged inherently Berber attitude of rejection of central authority. According to al-Bārūnī, the advent of the second period of Ottoman domination had led to the integration of the Jabal into the broader politics of Tripolitania:

> Most of the peoples of these districts and especially those of the Jabal have long inhabited Tripolitania, and enjoyed independence most of the time. The only government that could dominate them was, for religious reasons, that of the Ottomans, who alone had managed to conquer this country in a definitive way, which is why historians assert that Tripolitania belongs to Turkey.[67]

While recalling the pre-Islamic origins of the settlement of some of the most important families of the plateau in the rebellious region, al-Bārūnī further explained:

> Writing such things is not in opposition to our purpose, because while they are private historical accounts, the [resistance] war is a service that is made to the public instead, and through which we intend to defend the rights of Tripolitania's people.[68]

Notwithstanding al-Bārūnī's declarations, and even though Arab and Berber groups jointly organized Tripolitania's local resistance, Italian colonial authorities continued to work towards using ethnic strategies to fragment the rebellious front.

However, more than simply an external factor in the control and management of the local equilibriums of power, the Italian indigenous policy eventually proved to be instrumental to local notables' strategies for competing with their regional adversaries. Claiming ethnic specificity, for instance, could provide those groups that were able to appropriate the vocabulary of the colonial authorities with bargaining tools through which to obtain control over a given locality. Governor Ragni realized these potential repercussions of Bertolini's "ethnic policy", and he feared that these might serve al-Bārūnī's interests better than those of the Italian authorities.[69] Therefore, he suggested that the only viable solution to the problem

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[67] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, Brano storico privato, fragment attached to a letter of Sulaymān al-Bārūnī to Ottavio Ragni, 16.3.1913.

[68] *Ibidem.*

[69] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 150/14-55, Ottavio Ragni to Pietro Bertolini, *Questione del Gebel. Situazione Politica*, 19.1.1913.

of the "Berber element" would be military.[70] Ignoring Bertolini's agenda, Ragni then sent General Lequio's troops to Assàba, on March 1913, quashing al-Bārūnī's autonomist movement.[71] Al-Bārūnī then sought refuge in southern Tunisia, where other refugees from the Jabal also converged.[72]

It was only then that the Ibadi leader of Tripolitanian resistance openly appropriated the rhetoric of ethnicity which had been at first employed by the Italian colonial authorities to describe Tripolitania's resistance movement: he needed a new strategy to bargain for local control over the Jabal Nafūsa from a position of weakness.

In April 1913, al-Bārūnī sent the Italian consulate in Tunis his conditions for accepting Italian authority over Tripolitania. As was the case during the prior negotiations in Marseille, he continued to ask for either regional autonomy, or for a special administration (*idāra mukhtāra*) to be established in the lands of Tripolitania, which included "Surmān, Ajilāt, Zwāra, the Arabs of Najade, those of al-Haūd, al-Assal'a, until Uazin, and from Mizda to Gadames; the Orfella, Fezzan and Ghat".[73] Had the colonial authorities welcomed these conditions, al-Bārūnī would have been ready to accept an Italian protectorate over Tripolitania. He also requested a certain degree of fiscal autonomy from Italian control; the opportunity to recruit local administrative and military personnel without Italian interference; a guarantee of Italian non-interference in religious affairs, and the exemption from taxation for the inhabitants of the Sahel and Jabal for a two-year period. None of his requests had any strong connection with a specific ethnic or religious belonging. However, during his negotiations from Tunis, al-Bārūnī began to refer to the territories whose independence he was negotiating as "Berber territories". And yet, the resistance leader also continued to explicitly include territories that were also inhabited by Arabs. No direct reference was made, instead, to the Ibadi-Maliki divide in the sense of granting the Ibadis a special status, but on the contrary, the request was made for the two religious groups to be treated equally, and al-Bārūnī identified "Arab and Italian" as the official languages for the autonomous territory, not even mentioning the Berber language.[74]

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[70] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, Situazione *generale a tutti il 5 febbraio [1913]*, Report from Ragni to the Ministry of Colonies, cit. by F. Cresti, Due volte minoranza…, 35.

[71] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 122/1-6, Clemente Lequio to Minister of the Colonies, *Relazione sull'azione politica esercitata durante le operazioni della Colonna del Gebel e sulle condizioni politiche del paese attraversato*, 12.5.1913.

[72] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 125/2-18, A. M. Sforza to Ministero delle Colonie, 30.11.1913.

[73] Archives Nationales de Tunisie (ANT), E550/30-15, dossier 175, *J. B. Dessis*, Gouvernement Tunisien Sureté Publique, Note 17.5.1913.

[74] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 150/14-55, Giovan Battista Dessì a Pietro Bertolini, 29.4.1913, X.

Despite all of this, Bertolini chose to pursue the negotiations he had begun with the Tripolitanian refugees in Tunisia in keeping with the ethnic policy he had devised. He decided to ask Francesco Beguinot to join the Italian emissaries in Tunis,[75] who eventually accepted al-Bārūnī's conditions. The Minister for the Colonies, in fact, considered that "an unsuccessful attempt [to defeat al-Bārūnī's rebellion], or even an only partial success, would put" the Italian colonial authorities "in an even more regrettable position than the present one in Tripolitania, in Italy and abroad".[76]

Once again, defeating the local rebellion in Tripolitania was thought to be necessary within the frame of the Italians' competition with the French colonial authorities in neighbouring Tunisia, and accordingly, of their efforts to claim a position as a colonial power in the Mediterranean for Italy. The promotion of a "Berber policy" was inspired more by the circulation of colonial models at a regional level, than by a real assessment of local dynamics of power in the colony. This would result in giving local notables wide margins for appropriating the themes and vocabularies of the "indigenous policy", and for them to pursue their own strategies by intermediating with the colonial power, wherever this might have been seen as the best option for obtaining resources and power.

The First World War and the Arab-Berber vision of a self-governing Tripolitania

On the eve of the First World War, the appropriation of the "Berber policy" by indigenous agents had started to produce consequences that had not been foreseen by the Italians. By the fall of 1913, the French, British and Italian intelligence forces began documenting how, while negotiating with the Italians in keeping with Bertolini's Berber agenda, al-Bārūnī had actually taken advantage of his temporary exile in Tunis to intensify his contacts with prominent representatives of the Young Tunisians movement (most notably 'Abd al-Azīz al-Thālbī, Muhammad al-Jaībī, but also Muhammad and 'Ali Bash Hanba); he had also been able to leverage on the support of Ibadi groups from the Algerian Mzab and from the Tunisian island of Jarba, who at the time were highly active participants in the anti-colonial groups of Protectorate Tunisia.[77] These events reconfirmed how the Maghrebi reformist and anti-colonial movements continued to follow the political line set in Istanbul; but they also highlighted the constant involvement of key personalities in the local resistance movement from both the Arab and Berber communities in Istanbul's strategies for restoring Ottoman influence in the region. These events have often

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[75] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 150/14-55, Pietro Bertolini to the Consolato generale d'Italia a Tunisi, 8.5.1913; ANT, E550/30-15, dossier 178, *Comte Michel Sforza*, Gouvernement Tunisien Sureté Publique, Note 15.5.1913.

[76] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 122/1-6, Pietro Bertolini to Paolo Spingardi, 14.2.1913.

[77] C. Pagano, *Emergere ed evoluzioni…*, 205-216.

been underestimated in the literature. The new phase of the North African uprising against the forces of the European Entente has most often been described purely as a result of the international crisis engendered by the First World War.[78] Contrary to such a reading, the reorganization of Tripolitanian resistance preceded the outbreak of the First World War by about a year, and it was certainly independent of the Italian decision to join the War, which occurred only in May 1915.[79] Moreover, this new phase of armed uprising, which eventually came to include also most of the groups that had previously accepted Italian rule, was never just an 'Arab revolt', but was instead comprised of Arab-Berber armed groups from the outset. In fact, when the Ottoman Empire proclaimed the *jihād* against the Entente Forces, on November 1914, it also sanctioned the political and conceptual equation between pan-Islamism and anti-imperialism, managing to involve a plurality of local forces by mobilizing either religious belonging and/or anti-colonial instances.[80]

Tripolitania, together with Tunisia, and Egypt, became strategic in the promotion of regional pan-Islamic mobilization, to the extent that recent studies have begun to speak of Libya as part of the "Southern front of the Great War".[81] The crucial role of Tripolitania in these dynamics should in fact not be surprising, given that its anti-Italian mobilization, as Anna Baldinetti has argued, had historically constituted the first example of an anti-colonial resistance movement expressly and entirely inspired by the discourse of Pan-Islamism.[82]

By the summer of 1914 the Italian army had managed a series of victories against the local resistance, leading to the "Miani expedition" and to the occupation of new outposts in the Fezzan. These successes persuaded the Italian authorities that they had once again successfully strengthened their position in the region.[83] However, the rebellion in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica's had not actually been defeated. Rather, the leaders of the anti-Italian resistance had dissimulated their

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[78] A. Del Boca, *Gli Italiani in Libia…*, 261-317; N. Labanca, *La guerra italiana…*, 133-138.

[79] S. Berhe, Neutralità in Italia e guerra in colonia: il primo conflitto mondiale in Libia (1914-1915), in G. Orsina - A. Ungari (eds.), *L'Italia Neutrale*, Rodorigo editore, Roma, 2016, 345-355.

[80] M. Abdelmoula, *Jihad et colonialisme. La Tunisie et la Tripolitaine (1914-1918)*, Éd. Tiers-Monde, Tunis, 1987, 34-38.

[81] S. Berhe, Il fronte meridionale della Grande Guerra: la Libia come teatro del primo conflitto mondiale, *Nuova Rivista Storica*, 101/3, 2017, 797-828.

[82] A. Baldinetti, *The Origins of the Libyan Nation. Colonial legacy, exile and the emergence of a new nation-state*, Routledge, USA-Canada 2009, 39; B. Tlili, *Crises et mutations dans le monde islamo-méditerranéen contemporain (1907-1908)*, vol. 1, Publications de l'Université de Tunis, Tunis, 1978, 174 e ss.; S. Bono, Solidarietà di musulmani d'Asia per la resistenza anti-coloniale in Libia (1911-12), *Annali della Facoltà di scienze Politiche. Materiali di Storia* 9, a. a. 1983-84, 31-38; S. Bono, Solidarietà islamica per la resistenza anticoloniale in Libia (1911-12), *Islàm. Storia e Civiltà*, 22/7, 1988, 53-61.

[83] A. Del Boca, *Gli Italiani in Libia…*, 217-229; L. Tuccari, *I governi militari…*, 93 and ff.; P. Soave, *Fezzan: il deserto conteso (1842-1921)*, Giuffré editore, Milano, 2001, 236 and ff.

reorganizational efforts by distracting the colonial authorities with exhausting negotiations. Meanwhile, Ottoman authorities had encountered many difficulties in attempting to reaffirm their influence, however indirect; nonetheless, they continued to constitute an alternative interlocutor for most of Tripolitania's local leaders. Sulaymān al-Bārūnī, considered by the contemporary historiography as the head of the Berber resistance on the eve of the Great War and throughout the conflict, instead ensured that the movement continued to adhere to a strongly pan-Islamic and pro-Ottoman line.

In July 1914, Istanbul had hosted a pan-Islamic congress whose participants, al-Barūnī included, voted to take advantage of the war to reignite an anti-Italian *jihād,* by supporting the spread of the Sanusi call for resistance in Tripolitania through the Fezzan.[84] The leader of the Tripolitanian resistance was therefore able to lean on pan-Islamic rhetoric in order to coordinate the local Arab-Berber forces more effectively, also including the Sanusi groups of Cyrenaica and the Fezzan, to the detriment of Britain, France and, above all, Italy.[85]

These events followed the reigniting of the rebel groups' attacks against Italian garrisons in Tripolitania's hinterland. This forced the new Minister for the Colonies, Ferdinando Martini, to decide to withdraw the Italian Army from the Fezzan at the beginning of November 1914, with the aim of employing all the armed forces in maintaining control of the coastal areas of Tripolitania.[86] This gave the Tripolitanian element of the new pan-Islamic insurrectional movement the opportunity to reoccupy the Jabal Nafūsa in December 1914. A new autonomous government was then established, under the leadership of Shaykh Sūf al-Mahmūdi, and with the support of Arab-Berber groups of both western Tripolitania and eastern Tunisia.[87]

Al-Bārūnī instead remained in Cyrenaica, in an attempt to persuade the Sanūsi leader, Ahmad al-Sharīf, to join the Ottoman-sponsored *jihād.*[88] The reactivation of the pan-Islamic network was also made possible thanks to the logistic, military and diplomatic support obtained by Wilhelmine Germany.[89] Its mobilizing force was such that the Sanusi forces of Fezzan and Cyrenaica, by November 1915, finally welcomed Istanbul's call to join the pro-Ottoman forces against Italy, which had officially entered the war by May 1915 on the side of Great Britain and France.[90]

[84] A. Del Boca, *Gli Italiani in Libia…*, 262.

[85] H. Mashīkhi, *Siyāsī, Ibādī, Maghribī: Sulaymān al-Bārūnī (1873-1940)*, JMS Plus, Tunis, 2013, 91-110; Sulaymān bin Sa'īd al-Shaībānī al-Nafūsī, *Sulaymān Bāshā al-Bārūnī…*, 48-55.

[86] L. Tuccari, *I governi militari…*, 120-122; 132; 180-181.

[87] C. Pagano, *Emergere ed evoluzioni…*, 250-261.

[88] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 150/14-58, Ministero degli esteri to Ministero delle Colonie, 12.09.1914.

[89] Y. M. Choueiri (ed.), *A companion to the History of the Middle East*, Blackwell, 2005, 240.

[90] A. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia…*, 310-317.

This came as a surprise to the Italian colonial authorities. The provincialization of Tripolitania's resistance, its interpretation in ethnic terms, together with the Italian belief that, following the peace of Ouchy, the vaster Italian-Ottoman conflict had been replaced simply by a conflict against localized resistance groups, prevented the colonial authorities from fully understanding the revolt in Tripolitania. They failed to realize how that local rebellion was part of a broader trans-imperial, pan-Islamic and anti-colonial network that had continued to recognize in the Ottoman imperial authority the guarantor of its unity.

Starting from 1915, the leader of Nalūt, Khalīfa Bin 'Askar, drawing on pan-Islamic ideas rather than on ethnic solidarity, led a number of Arab and Berber notables from western Tripolitania and from the militarized territories of southern Tunisia in promoting a new wave of uprising against the authorities of the French Protectorate. This uprising lasted until 1918,[91] and in the meantime, revolt quickly spread to eastern Tripolitania as well. Following the battle of al-Qardabīya, a number of deserters from the irregular forces of eastern Tripolitania, guided by Ramadān al-Shatāwī al-Suwāhīlī, openly sided with the rebel front.[92] In the area around Misrāta, starting from 5 August 1915, al-Suwāhīlī inaugurated the third attempt at autonomous self-government in Tripolitania following those of Muhammad al-'Abīd in Fezzan, and of Shaykh al-Sūf in the Jabal.[93]

The civil war in Tripolitania and the metamorphosis of the use of ethnicity

Following an initial stage of resistance against the Italian colonial authorities which saw all the forces taking part in the rebellion unite under the banner of pan-Islamism, by early 1916 the competition for political offices in the new self-proclaimed autonomous government of the region among Tripolitania's local notables eventually re-emerged. This resulted in a new phase of regional civil war, involving primarily the Jabal Nafūsa and Zwāra. Some of the Jabal's local notables, such as the Berber leaders Sassi Khzām and Yūsuf Karbīsh, and also a number of Arab groups, such as the Nuwā'il, began to oppose al-Mahmūdī's leadership, claiming a role of leadership in the new autonomous government.[94] This led to a new displacement crisis in Tripolitania, which once again had its fulcrum in the Jabal. The flux of refugees was not only directed towards Tunisia

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[91] M. Abdelmoula, *Jihad et colonialisme…*, 85-93.

[92] On the battle of al-Qardabīyya see 'Ahmad 'Atīyya Medellel, *Qardabīyya*, Markaz dirasa jihād al-lībīyyn didd al-ghāzū al-iītālī, Tripoli 1990; A. Del Boca, *La disfatta di Gasr Bu Hàdi. 1915: il colonnello Miani e il più grande disastro dell'Italia coloniale*, Mondadori, Milano, 2004.

[93] L. Anderson, Ramadan al-Swayhli: Hero of the Libyan Resistance, in E. Burke III (ed.), *Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East, 1750-1950*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1993, 122-123.

[94] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 122/10-84, Sāssī Khzām, Sultān Bin 'Abd Allah Bin Sha'bān, Yūsuf Bin Salam Kharbīsh, Harb Effendi Bin Nasr to Governo di Tripoli, 22.5.1916.

but also toward the Berber-majority coastal town of Zwāra.[95] The Arab-Berber forces hostile to the al-Mahmūdī government sought refuge in the city, and asked the Italian authorities to provide them with the military and logistic support they needed to reverse the balance of power in the Jabal to their own advantage. The local leader of Zwāra, Sultān Bin Shaʿbān, had sided with the Italians, allowing them to occupy the town in May 1916.[96] For Bin Shaʿbān, obtaining Italian military support proved instrumental in overcoming his local rival, the anti-Italian rebel ʿIssa Abū Sahmīn already in 1912. Accordingly, he continued to oppose the anti-Italian forces' attempts to occupy Zwāra.[97]

Nevertheless, it would be misleading to interpret the alliance between Bin Shaʿbān and Sassī Khzām as a proof of the existence of a compact "Berber front" that would also include Khzām's allies, Mūsā Qrāda and Yūsuf Kharbīsh. In fact, apart from al-Bārūnī, another important Berber leader from the plateau, Khalīfa Bin ʿAskar, was instead a strong supporter of al-Mahmūdī's government and of the North-African *jihād*, and was therefore imprisoned by Khzām and Bin Shaʿbān's ally, Muhammad al-ʿAbīd, in December 1915.[98] The objective of the alliance between Khzām and Bin Shaʿbān was thus to regain control over territories that the two notables perceived as their respective appurtenance, to the detriment of local rivals.

Nevertheless, the new Governor of Tripolitania, Giovanni Ameglio, resorted again to the "Berber policy" to approach the so-called "Zwāra front". Already in the autumn of 1915, Ameglio suggested to the Ministry for the Colonies to subscribe to the French periodical *Les Archives Berbères*, published in Rabat, in order to send copies of it to the Government in Tripoli. He considered it imperative to study "the Berber issue" more deeply, so as to be able to "examine to what extent and how the existing dualism between the Arab and Berber races can be exploited to our advantage".[99]

In the spring of the following year, Ameglio explained his understanding of the pro-Berber strategy to the Ministry for the Colonies as follows:

> Continuing support for the Berber-Ibadi party, centered in Zwāra, aiming at indirectly governing, for now, all Berber countries through [the support] of loyal chiefs, salaried by us.

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[95] *Ibidem*.

[96] A. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia…*, 324.

[97] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 122/10-85, Giovanni Ameglio to Ferdinando Martini, *Relazione sulla situazione politica della Tripolitania occidentale*, 3.2.1916.

[98] C. Pagano, *Emergere ed evoluzioni…*, 283.

[99] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 132/2-9, Giovanni Ameglio to Ministero delle Colonie, 7.10.1915.

[…] We will provide the Jabal's notables with what they have requested from us from Zwāra, essentially, ammunition and funds for the payment of *shuyūkh* and irregular gendarmes […]. Since the strength of the Berbers lies in the degree of their unity, and the results so far obtained by their war-effort […] should be ascribed to their compactness, the government will try to avoid provoking any further division by only strengthening […] Sassī Khzām's party.[100]

These archival documents display an undeniable transformation in the Italian colonial authorities' understanding of the "Berber policy" after Italy's joining of World War I. Previously intended as an instrument for coopting al-Bārūnī resistance's front, the new Berber policy became instead an instrument for maintaining the support of the intermediaries based in Zwāra, during a period in which Tripoli's government had lost all control over the hinterland.

The Tripolitanian republican experience

In late 1916 al-Bārūnī returned to Tripolitania, heralding a message of pan-Islamic unity and anti-colonial struggle from the Sultan, with the aim of ending the regional conflict that was tearing apart the rebel front in western Tripolitania and the Fezzan.[101] Because the intrinsic universalism of such a pan-Islamic appeal was essentially incompatible with particularistic requests for the recognition of a special status for Ibadis and/or Berbers, al-Bārūnī abandoned any rhetoric centered around ethnic or religious minority status. In December 1916, he proclaimed the establishment of a second government in the Jabal, which replaced the one led by al-Mahmūdī.[102] He also conferred government offices to Muhammad Fākīnī and al-Hādī Ku'bār, who had previously sided with the Italians with the aim of countering the Barunian leadership, but had also held institutional positions in the previous Ottoman administration. Moreover, following Istanbul's call for the *jihād*, they had once again fallen in line with the anti-Italian forces.[103] The pan-Ottoman nature of al-Bārūnī's second government demonstrates how previous leveraging of Berber or Ibadi status had in fact been used as a political tool for negotiating local privileges with the Italian authorities, within the frame of a larger dynamic of regional competition for power.

Nevertheless, the new Minister for the Colonies, Salvatore Colosimo, also decided to pursue the "Berber policy": in early 1917, he commissioned Beguinot

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[100] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 122/10-86, Giovanni Ameglio to Ministero delle Colonie, *Situazione in Tripolitania*, 8.4.1916.

[101] C. Pagano, *Emergere ed evoluzioni…*, 286-288.

[102] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 150/14-59, Giovanni Ameglio to Ministero delle Colonie, 14.12.1916.

[103] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 122/10-84, Giovanni Ameglio to Ministero delle Colonie, *Situazione della Tripolitania al 1° gennaio 1917*.

with a "History of the Berbers".[104] Furthermore, in a report sent to the ministry for the Colonies we read that Beguinot had come to believe that "the Berber element […] can be usefully opposed to the Arabic element, according to the old adage "divide and rule". [105] The Italian scholar accordingly advised the colonial authorities that promoting the "Berber policy" would have required the colonial administration to take all the "necessary measures to reinvigorate [the Berbers'] ethnic consciousness, and especially the use of language".[106]

Such a policy was however never adopted by the Italian colonial administration, because it was incompatible with the policy of limiting indigenous schooling to primary education.[107] Nevertheless, after the end of the First World War Italian orientalists did not abandon the idea that it was necessary to culturally sustain the promotion of an ethnic policy. Indeed, the post-war Commission charged with examining the state of education in the colonies proposed to favor the study of the Berber language in Tripolitania's Berber-majority areas.[108] The colonial authorities of the time however had to reject this proposal because al-Bārūnī himself, when questioned about the proposed creation of schools for the study of the Berber language, answered that it would have been useless since "the Berbers themselves are uninterested in the study of their language as they find it more useful to learn Arabic".[109]

Al-Bārūnī, in fact, had fully appropriated the international pan-Islamic rhetoric that also inspired Tripolitanian patriotism. Accordingly, in the aftermath of the conflict, the experiments in self-government that had emerged during the war in Tripolitania found a regional synthesis in the first Republican experience of North Africa: the Republic of Tripolitania (*al-Jumhūrriyya al-Tarābulsiyya*). As a matter of fact, al-Bārūnī was among the chiefs that, during a meeting held in el-Qussbat on the 15th of November 1918, proclaimed the birth of the Republic. [110] The prospect of reuniting the entire regional resistance front in order to claim autonomy for Tripolitania had always been the only consistently shared objective of the

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[104] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 132/3-27, Gaspare Colosimo to Direttore del R. Istituto Orientale di Napoli, 10.1.1917.

[105] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* II, 132/3-27, Giacomo Agnesa to Ministero delle Colonie, *Promemoria circa la relazione sui berberi del Gebel Nefusa*, n. d.

[106] *Ibidem.*

[107] F. Cresti, La formation pour les musulmans de Libye à l'époque coloniale, ou les supposés dangers de la modernité, *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée* [En ligne], voll. 101-102, July 2003, available online from May, 12 2009, http://remmm.revues.org/53.

[108] C. Pagano, *Emergere ed evoluzioni…*, 324-328.

[109] ASDMAE, ASMAI, *Africa* III, Regia Soprintendenza Scolastica della Tripolitania, Anno scolastico 1918-1919. Relazione finale a S.E. il Governatore della Tripolitania, luglio 1919,174.

[110] 'Amrū Saʻīd Baghnī, al-Jumhūriyya al-Tarābulusiyya, *Al-Shahīd*, n. 2, 1981, 36-58; L. Anderson, Jumhūriyya Tarābulus (1918-1922), *Al-Shahīd*, 11, 1990, 185-215; M. Rijani Ryan, al-Jumhūriyya al-Tarābulusiyya (1918-1923), *Revue d'Histoire Maghrebine*, 69-70, 1993, 95-117.

various articulations of the revolt movement. It also proved instrumental in overcoming internal disagreements, and countering the strategies of ethnic, religious and tribal divide and rule experimented by the colonial power.[111]

In the aftermath of First World War, the Peace Conference held in Versailles sanctioned the decline of a number of century-old Empires, including the Ottoman. This laid the basis for the articulation of a new proto-nationalistic rhetoric in the former Ottoman North African provinces, in which no space had been given to ethnic distinctions. Before the idea of a Libyan nation emerged, the Tripolitanian Arab-Berber *jihād* that had taken place between 1912 and 1918 had already identified Tripolitania as the common *waṭan* ("the homeland") that it was necessary to fight for.

Conclusions

Examining both the emergence of the ethnic issue in colonial Tripolitania during the "liberal" phase of Italian colonization, and the vicissitudes that the rebellion in Tripolitania underwent in the same period, allows us to grasp the complexity of the local social and political scenario. The Arab-Berber elites of the time proved to be able to orientate subsequent metamorphoses of their anti-colonial rhetoric by placing more emphasis on different elements within a wide spectrum of political logics at different times, depending on the contingent strategy they considered more convenient at any given juncture. Ethnic and religious identities were intermittently and functionally displayed within more complex regional and trans-imperial dynamics of both solidarity and competition. This was also true for the Italian authorities' strategies of colonial control. Even in the post-war years, the latter continued to resort to ethnicizing strategies in order to fragment and then destroy that same Arab-Berber political elite, which was in fact the first to imagine Tripolitania in terms of an autonomous homeland, whose independence it was imperative to defend.

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[111] *Ibidem.*

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a critical approach to the colonial narrative produced on the history of Tripolitania's social groups during the so-called "liberal period" of Italian colonization, and refutes the Arabs vs Berber dichotomy. The interactions among local group-actors, both in their reciprocal relations, and in those involving colonial authorities, will be analysed without emphasizing cultural differences, focusing instead on the political interests of these groups and/or their leaders. The paper will make clear how ethnic and religious identities were intermittently and functionally displayed within more complex regional and trans-imperial networks of both of solidarity and competition. Accordingly, the paper will argue that Tripolitania ought to be considered a shared Arab and Berber milieu, in which representing in ethnic and religious terms the conflicting dynamics that characterized the social and political landscape was instrumental to both the colonisers' efforts for controlling the colony, and the colonized's strategies of political mobilisation.

FEDERICO CRESTI

Sulayman al-Baruni in Italy (1919-1920): From the Dream of the Berber Principality to the Italo-Tripolitanian Brotherhood

Introduction and biographical notes (c. 1870-1919)

Sulayman al-Baruni played a particularly important role during the first decade of the colonial occupation of Libya: from the landing of the first Italian troops in Tripoli (on October 5th 1911) until the end of the First World War, he was one of the main animators of the resistance against the Italian occupation.

The figure of al-Baruni is a keystone in the historiographical myth of Libyan nationalism established during Gaddafi's rule: together with the other members of the quadrumvirate of the Tripolitanian Republic of 1919 (Ramadan al-Shitiwi al-Suwayhili, 'Abd al-Nabi Bilkhayr and Ahmad al-Murayid), he was considered one of the "lions" of the anti-colonial resistance and one of the fathers of the republican ideal, to which the Libyan *jamahiriyya* made direct reference.[1]

A brief overview of al-Baruni's life provides the context in which to understand the documents analyzed below.[2] Sulayman al-Baruni was born in the *Adrar n Infusen* (in arabic *Jabal Nafusa* or *Jabal al-gharbi*, the Western mountain range inhabited by Berber groups, called *Gebel* by the Italians) of Tripolitania, and specifically in Jadu, around 1872.[3] A member of one of the most prominent families of the religious intelligentsia of the region, and a follower of Ibadism, he began his studies under his father 'Abdallah, and later traveled to Tunisia, Egypt

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[1] Shortly before the outbreak of the last Libyan revolution, his portrait was displayed in the hall of heroes of the Libyan nation inside the National museum (*mathaf al-saraya al-hamra*) in Tripoli, not far from the relics of 'Umar al-Mukhtar (see fig. 1).

[2] On the life of al-Baruni, see in particular M. Custers, *Sulaymān al-Bārūnī, an Ibāḍī pan-Islamist*, MA Thesis, University of Leiden, 1972, very precise until 1908.

[3] "Verso il 1872 [around 1872]" (F. Corò, Suleiman El Baruni, il sogno di un principato berbero e la battaglia di Asàaba [1913], *Annali dell'Africa italiana*, I, 3-4, 1938, 958). In the entry dedicated to him in the second edition of the *Encyclopédie de l'Islam* (Brill, Leiden-Paris, 1965, 1070-1071), L. Veccia Vaglieri omits the date of birth. The date of reference for his biographers varies between 1870 and 1872.

(where from 1892 to 1895 he studied at al-Azhar in Cairo) and Algeria.[4] A crucial part in his education was played by a stay in the Algerian M'zab, a group of Saharan oases about six hundred kilometers south of Algiers, a region inhabited *ab antiquo* by a majority of Berber population.

Upon his return to Tripolitania, at the end of the nineteenth century, al-Baruni was accused by the Ottoman government of subversion and conspiracy. Following a number of trials, he was incarcerated for the first few years of the 20th century, then released but sentenced to confinement, part of which he spent in a guarded residence in Tripoli, and was then eventually amnestied. But in light of new suspicions on the part of the Ottomans, in 1906 he took refuge in Egypt, where he opened a printing house and published a newspaper whose distribution was forbidden in the Ottoman provinces.[5]

A particularly important phase of his political career began in 1908 following the rise to power in Istanbul of the *Ittihad-ve teraqqi gemiyyeti* (Union and progress committee) which forced Sultan Abdülhamit II to reinstate the Constitution. Parliamentary elections were held that same year, and all the provinces of the empire sent delegates to Istanbul. Sulayman al-Baruni was elected to represent the Berber mountain district and, since the Constitution explicitly set out understanding Turkish as an essential requirement for sitting in parliament, he later claimed to have learned its rudiments in a very short time.

During his parliamentary stint in Istanbul, al-Baruni came into contact with the members of the Union and progress committee: he became closely connected to the group, to the point of asserting in 1911 that he was its representative in Tripolitania. In those years he pleaded in parliament for the reinforcement of the military defenses of the Libyan provinces, threatened by an ever-looming Italian intervention.

He was in Jadu at the time of the first landing of the Italian troops in Tripoli, and in close connection with the commanders of the Ottoman garrison, he organized the resistance of the Libyan population and the recruitment of volunteers, who were trained with the help of Turkish officers.[6] On the 26th of October 1911, he was among the commanders of the volunteer forces at the battle of Sidi al-Hani, following the attack to the Italian lines at Shara al-shatt and the massacre of some detachments of *Bersaglieri*. During the period of the Italo-Turkish war, which officially ended with the peace treaty signed in Ouchy on October 18th 1912, Al-Baruni tightened relations with one of the main representatives of the Union and

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[4] L. Veccia Vaglieri, La partecipazione di Suleimàn el-Barùni alla guerra di Libia, *L'Oltremare*, VIII, 2, February 1934, 70. The source of the biographical information reported by Veccia Vaglieri is al-Baruni himself, in an interview granted to a Damascus newspaper.

[5] *Ibidem*.

[6] See fig. 2.

Progress Committee who he had already met in Istanbul, Enver Bey, who was then commanding the Imperial troops against the Italians in Cyrenaica.

Another important chapter of al-Baruni's political activity began following the Peace Treaty of Ouchy.

On the basis of the declaration issued as a preliminary act of the treaty, stating the recognition by the Ottoman sultan of the autonomy of the Libyan provinces,[7] on the 8th of November 1912 al-Baruni proclaimed the birth of a National government (*hukuma wataniyya*, or Republic of Yefren, from the name of its capital, located in the Berber mountains), whose territory included the Berber region and much of Western Tripolitania. The republic's existence was rather brief, ending with the occupation of Yefren by Italian troops on the 27th of March of the following year.[8]

Refusing to accept the occupation, al-Baruni crossed the border into Tunisia accompanied by part of the Berber population. He spent some time in the south of the country, and then in Tunis, from where he left for Europe and later for Istanbul, where the Ottoman government had appointed him a senator. In August of that year, the *Teshkilat-ı mahsusa* (Special Organization) was established in Istanbul, reporting directly to Enver, who then held the post of Minister of War. This body engaged in espionage and secret operations, and it is probable that al-Baruni was one of its members.[9]

At the outbreak of World War I he was sent to Cyrenaica with the task of convincing Ahmad al-Sharif, the *shaykh al-kabir* of the Sanusi brotherhood, to direct action against Egypt: according to the plans of the Ottoman general staff, the Sanusis should have acted in support of the troops under the leadership of German senior officers who were preparing the attack against the Suez Canal.

Arriving some time between the end of August and the beginning of September 1914 in Amsaʻad, the armed camp where the Sanusi forces were concentrated, al-Baruni came into conflict with Ahmad al-Sharif, who had him imprisoned. After various vicissitudes, he returned to Istanbul in December of the following year. From there he was again sent to Libyan territory in the fall of 1916, but this time to

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[7] The sultan's *irade* (decree) addressed to the populations of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, states: "In order to revive peace and prosperity and avail myself of my sovereign rights, I grant you full and complete autonomy. Your country will be governed by new laws and special provisions, which you will take part in drafting so that they may correspond to your needs and your customs" (from the text of the decree in T. W. Childs, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy and the War over Libya (1911-1912)*, Brill, Leiden, 1990, 248).

[8] A few days earlier (March 23rd 1913), in al-Asabaʻa, the Italian expeditionary force had defeated the army of the republic.

[9] I was unable to find probative documents in this regard. Yusuf Shatwan, a former deputy for the Benghazi district, was a member of the *Teshkilat-i mahsusa*, whose main exponents were later responsible for the Armenian genocide (R. Simon, *Libya between Ottomanism and Nationalism*, K. Schwarz Verlag, Berlin, 1987, 175).

the west, in Tripolitania, named governor by the sultan: the Sublime Porte had in fact decided to return the country to its control, invalidating the Treaty of Ouchy.[10]

During the last two years of the war, the Turkish-Libyan forces of Tripolitania (whose leadership al-Baruni shared with Turkish and German officers) continued to fight actively against the Italian forces, who were barricaded in the coastal strongholds of Tripoli, al-Khums and Zuwara. The Turks and Libyans besieged and contained the Italians, but were unable to defeat them definitively.

When in the last months of 1918 the fate of the war turned definitively in favor of the Entente powers, the Ottoman government had no choice but to declare itself defeated and sign an armistice.[11] However, the main political leaders of Tripolitania, including al-Baruni, refused to lay down their weapons; instead, they assembled in al-Qusabat and declared the birth of the *Jumhuriyya al-Tarabulusiyya* (the Tripolitanian Republic) on the 16th of November 1918. As mentioned in the opening to this paper, together with Ramadan al-Shitiwi al-Suwayhili, 'Abd al-Nabi Bilkhayr and Ahmad al-Murayid, Sulayman al-Baruni was a member of the quadrumvirate appointed to lead the young republic.

The republic had a very short life. In addition to the rivalry between some of its main leaders, the survival of the republic was undermined by the withdrawal of the Turkish-German forces, which until then had supported the war operations with their weapons' supplies and logistical organization. The end of the war in Europe had allowed the Italian government to redirect some of the troops previously engaged on the northern borders of the peninsula to the Libyan territories: were the fighting to resume, this time between the Italian troops and the "rebels" of the Tripolitanian republic, the military outcome seemed decidedly favorable to Italy.

In this situation, some members of the quadrumvirate opened negotiations with the Italian government, and after a few meetings in Khallet al-Zaytun in April 1919, an agreement was reached leading shortly afterward to the proclamation of the Statute (or Basic Law, *al-qanun al-asasi*) for Tripolitania on the 1st of June 1919.

The statute provided a special citizenship status and wide civil rights to the native population, with large measures of administrative autonomy for the territory, recognizing Italian control in a form similar to a protectorate: among other things, provisions were made for the formation of an elective parliament, tasked mainly with financial management, and the creation of a modern school system within the framework of wider economic improvements as part of the planned introduction of measures to modernize the country.[12]

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[10] The sultan had granted him the title of governor of Tripolitania, Tunisia and Algeria (*idem*, 229).

[11] The armistice was signed in Mudros on the October 30th 1918.

[12] *Legge fondamentale per la Tripolitania. Al-qanun al-asasi li'l-qathar al-tarabulusi* (1 June 1919, printed text in Italian and Arabic), in ASMAI, *Libia* 122/22, fasc. 196. The Fundamental law (which al-Baruni defines as "Dustur", i.e. Constitution), granted Italian citizenship (of a special kind) to all those born in Tripolitania, stated the equality of all citizens before the law and listed the

With the proclamation of the Statute, the war ended: an amnesty was issued for all those who had fought against Italy, and the main exponents of the Tripolitanian Republic became members of a council of government (in fact, salaried members of the colonial government), while waiting for parliamentary elections to be called. Sulayman al-Baruni was also included in the amnesty, freeing him of the hefty bounty that the Italian government had previously put on his head. In June 1919 moved to Tripoli and came into close contact with the colonial government, but did not accept to hold any office: he still considered himself an Ottoman senator (and citizen), regardless of the provisions concerning colonial citizenship that, according to the Statute, formally made him an Italian citizen.

Most interpretations of al-Baruni's thought and political activity have presented him as subscribing to the dream of establishing a Berber principality,[13] as one of the protagonists of the pan-Islamist movement in North Africa[14] and, finally, as mentioned above, as one of the "lions" of Tripolitanian proto-nationalism in his role as a leading member of the ephemeral *Jumhuriyya al-Tarabulusiyya*.

Over the last few decades, there has been an increase in academic attention towards Sulayman al-Baruni, focusing mainly on the period of his participation in the anti-colonial struggle, up to the end of the First World War.[15] One of the less studied periods of his life however is that between the proclamation of the Tripolitanian Statute and his definitive departure from the country in November 1921. The short biographies dedicated to him in more generalist volumes in fact make no mention of this period,[16] or at most treat it

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fundamental civil and political rights of the citizen (individual freedom, inviolability of the home, inviolability of property, right to compete for civil and military positions, active and passive electoral rights, right to petition the national parliament, etc.). Among other things, it guaranteed respect for religion, local principles and customs, and the freedom of the press and of assembly. According to the fundamental law, the government would have been constituted by a governor appointed by the king and by a local parliament elected by the population.

[13] F. Corò, *op. cit.*, 957-969.

[14] An "Ibāḍī pan-Islamist", as in Custers' definition (1972, *op. cit.*) .

[15] Among other essays: M. H. Custers, *op. cit.*, 1972; J. E. Peterson, Arab Nationalism and the Idealist Politician: the Career of Sulayman al-Baruni, in J. Piscatori - G. S. Harris (eds.), *Law, Personalities and Politics of the Middle East. Essays in Honor of Majid Khadduri*, Westview Press/The Middle East Institute, Washington, 1987, 124-139; A. Ghazal, An Ottoman Pasha and the End of Empire. Sulayman al-Baruni and the Networks of Islamic Reform, in J. L. Gelvin - N. Green (eds.), *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 2014, 40-58; S. Ben Saʿīd al-Shaībānī al-Nafūsī, *Sulaymān Bāshā al-Bārūnī: ʿUmma fī rajul*, J. al-Fatah, Omān, 2013. See also A. Baldinetti, Italian colonial rule and Muslim elites in Libya: a relationship of antagonism and collaboration, in M. Hatina (ed.), *"Ulama" in the Middle East*, Brill, Leiden, 2009, 96-103.

[16] "Suleiman al-Baruni (1870-1940) [...] returned to Tripolitania on October 8th 1916 following a decree from the Ottoman sultan who had appointed him governor of Tripolitania. When Tripolitania was occupied again by Italian troops in 1922, al-Baruni left and was later denied re-entry" (A. Ghazal,

with some inaccuracy. [17] In turn, essays mainly based on Arab sources – generally secondary sources and hagiographic memoirs – totally disregard his contacts with the colonial government and instead insist on his role as an Ottoman agent even after 1919. An example of this is an essay by Amal Ghazal, which argues that: "al-Baruni's activities shortly after 1919 indicate that he, like many others at the time, still had faith in an Ottoman future: he was assisting the new Turkish government in Ankara in its activities of interference in Tripolitania". [18]

The article by Laura Veccia Vaglieri in the second edition of the *Encyclopædia of Islam*, though extremely succinct, seems more precise:

> [After the proclamation of the Statute] two movements […] emerged, one aiming at an agreement with Italy which would have meant complete independence, and the other, represented especially by the Berbers, favorable to collaboration with Italy by the application of the Statute. Al-Bārūnī, who supported the latter course, gave his support to the Italian government, although his ultimate aims still remained the formation of a Berber amīrate in the western Djabal with access to the sea. [19]

This paper aims at analyzing the position of Sulayman al-Baruni towards the new politics of colonial Italy after the First World War, by looking at a number of archival documents and interviews concerning his stays in Italy in 1919 and 1920.

Sulayman al-Baruni in Rome

In just a few lines, a paragraph of "Il Popolo d'Italia" of November 15th 1919 announced the arrival in Rome of Sulayman al-Baruni: "The Tripolitanian notable El Baruni arrived today in Rome and took lodgings at the Hôtel Excelsior. Tomorrow he will hold a long conference with the President of the Council the Hon. Nitti".

The Other Frontier of Arab Nationalism: Ibadis, Berbers, and the Arabist-Salafi, IJMES, 42/1, February 2010, 116).

[17] "A member of the ruling Council of Four of the 1919 Tripoli Republic, he later rallied to the Italian cause after the promulgation of the Legge Fondamentale and visited Rome to join in the celebration that surrounded its announcement […]. Baruni ended his career in Libya despised by other republican leaders who held him responsible for Italian gains. In November 1921, Suleiman Baruni left Libya for the last time" (R. Bruce St John, *Historical Dictionary of Libya*, Scarecrow, Lanham, 2006, 30, *a.v. Baruni, Suleiman*). Al-Baruni did not travel to Rome for the celebrations of the Tripolitanian statute, also because there were no such celebrations in Rome.

[18] A. Ghazal, An Ottoman Pasha…, 49. The chronology of this essay seems in some cases erroneous, stating that al-Baruni "in the spring of 1913 was appointed to the Chamber of Deputies" (he was actually elected senator in 1913) and that he left Tripolitania for the last time in 1923 (which he actually did in November 1921) (*Ibidem*, 48-49).

[19] L. Veccia Vaglieri, al-Bārūnī Sulaymān, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd ed.), I vol., Brill, Leiden-Paris, 1960, 1071.

Al-Baruni's journey to Rome followed his request to the government of Tripolitania to travel to Constantinople in order to bring his family back home. His journey would take him through Italy, and Governor Vittorio Menzinger, considering it useful for the development of the country's colonial enterprise, urged the ministry for the Colonies to receive him with all honors.[20]

After his arrival in Rome, the newspaper "Il Messaggero" sent a reporter to interview him: the interview was published a few days later.[21] Enrico Jacchia, the author, recalled in the first part of his article the role of the "powerful leader of the Abadites and the Berbers" in the resistance against the Italian occupation after 1911, his long struggle against Italy and its political and military action on the side of the country's enemy during the First World War. After a brief biographical sketch, the journalist pointed out that enmity between al-Baruni and Italy had in fact ceased, and that he had recently played an important role in the pacification of Tripolitania thanks to his influence "among the rebel tribes", to the great advantage of the Italian cause.

Al-Baruni's conversion (or rather, the fact that someone "who was once a bitter enemy of Italy" had taken on a "friendly attitude") – the article continued – occurred after the end of the war and the signing of the armistice which was followed by the exit of the Turks from the Libyan scene. The negotiations with the representatives of the Italian government and the subsequent granting of the Statute, promulgated by the governor of Tripolitania, General Vincenzo Garioni, had convinced him that the new course of Italian politics in Tripolitania would be profitable for the internal peace and development of his country, leading him to become its staunch defender.[22] Jacchia cited previous statements by the interviewee:

> Two great forces – he wrote – will defend the Dustur as parents! The first of these is H.M. the King who sought to grant the Nation its Statute, astonishing all of Europe and earning the sympathy of the whole Islamic world; the second is the Tripolitanian Nation, which had suffered the miseries of war, hunger, and a thousand other hardships to achieve the granting of the Statute.
> Anyone who dared to attack the Statute [...] will be rejected by the Nation and pushed on the right path by the King with his sword! Whoever plays with the Dustur will come to resemble the one who plays with a snake and ends up injected with his

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[20] ASMAI, *Libia* 150/15, 62: Menzinger to Rossi, 4.11.1919. After arriving in Naples, al-Baruni was accompanied on a visit to Rome and Turin. He was again in Italy from December 1921 until the end of January 1922, and between November and December 1922 (E. De Leone, *La colonizzazione dell'Africa del Nord*, Cedam, Padova, 1960, II vol., 492, 511).

[21] E. Jacchia, Gli effetti della Costituzione in Tripolitania (Nostra intervista con El Baruni), *Il Messaggero*, Rome, November 20th 1919, 3.

[22] "From the day of the signing of the Fundamental Law for Tripolitania, he showed himself to be a loyal cooperator and a valid advisor to the government of the colony, eager to do nothing other than work for the benefit of our country", *ibidem*.

poison and killed. [...] Keep this in mind, then, you who have asked remain in the shadow of this Dustur! Take care not to transgress it, be you superior or subordinate officers. The Tripolitanian Dustur does not allow for any kind of reduction! The fall after the ascent is a shame! Slavery after liberty is ruin![23]

The interview was conducted through the translation of Major Romeo Borriello, "able connoisseur of the Arabic language" and "valiant artillery officer, twice decorated, instructed by the political office of Tripoli to accompany the Arab leader in his journey across Italy".[24]

A physical portrait of al-Baruni follows his short biography, and includes some religious notes: Major Borriello, faced with a small delay in al-Baruni's arrival, states that he is carrying out the evening prayer and that, while not a fanatic, he follows the rites most strictly and does not allow for exceptions or concessions to Western skepticism. The protagonist of the interview then finally makes his ingress, "almost olive-colored, with very dark, sparkling and intelligent eyes, an aquiline nose, of medium height, with robust and well proportioned limbs. He wears European style clothes [...] and the traditional fez".[25]

After some a short exchange of pleasantries, al-Baruni replies to the first question ("Do you think that the benefits brought by the Statute have penetrated the soul of the Arab people?"):

> The whole country [...] knows now that this is a concession of great value, that might ensure the interests, prosperity, and happiness of the people now and in the future. And the people are indeed so convinced, that all hostilities against Italy have ceased [...]. Even in the most distant regions the spirit of the new law has now penetrated everywhere and complete pacification is about to take place across the land [...]. The Italian government has only to loyally follow the path outlined by the Constitution. Do this, and you will have all of our trust.[26]

It is true, he admits, that not all the population is perfectly able to understand the matter, and ready to welcome the Statute: while the inhabitants of the coastal regions would immediately have been able to do so, it would have taken more time for the populations of the interior to reach the same level of maturity. The task of the Italian government should be to assist the Arab nation "as a teacher or elder brother", advising and suggesting the path to follow: "The fundamental law [...] has in fact created in my country the feeling that Italy is its valid, able and prescient elder sister. Italy will thus have to help her weaker, unenlightened and less capable brother of Africa".

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[23] *Ibidem.* The source is not quoted.

[24] *Ibidem.*

[25] *Ibidem.*

[26] *Ibidem*.

First of all, in al-Baruni's view it is necessary to create schools and spread education:

> One must think that in the past, the few Arabs in possession of a certain education had lived in Turkey and occupied the offices of government. The masses had only a religious education: very much in one sense, but too little in another. Now the new law sanctions the creation of schools and makes attendance compulsory: this is why we will grow future generations that will have received the right education and will be aware of all the duties and rights of the citizen. And this, of course, can only bind us even more to your country.[27]

Al-Baruni also sees it as necessary to develop commercial and industrial relations:

> First of all, we need to develop our means of communication. Roads and railways are scarce in our country. Italy must build them [...]. Tripolitania needs everything. If the government will study the situation carefully and do its best to provide, we will be grateful, and not just in words.
>
> Before, mutual mistrust made it impossible for us to cooperate. Distrusting the Arabs, the Italians did not invest much capital in our country; and for our part - because, let it be said, we did not trust the Italians - we did not risk exposing money that we feared we would lose. As a result of this mutual distrust, commerce and industry in our country were far from prosperous. But today, with the new law, we finally have trust. Arabs and Italians have been drawn together and fertile ideas of prosperity and happiness for both will arise from an assiduous and loyal relationship.[28]

The change in al-Baruni's position, after his seven-year struggle against the Italian forces, seemed astounding to Italian observers: rather abruptly, within a few months, he had passed from the declaration of the independence of Tripolitania in November 1918 to the acceptance of the colonial situation in March of the following year.

Tripolitania from the end of the First World War to the Statute

In order to gain a better understanding of the reasons that had brought al-Baruni to support the Statute, it is worth looking in more depth at the events that took place during the last months of 1918 and first half of 1919 within the anti-Italian resistance, which had at one point seriously threatened colonial control of the country during the war.

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[27] *Ibidem.*

[28] *Ibidem.*

The armistice of Mudros and the capitulation of the government in Istanbul had not put an immediate end to the hostilities in Tripolitania.[29] The war in Libya continued and the leaders of Tripolitania did not consider themselves defeated. The proclamation, in the middle of November, of the *Jumhuriyya al-Tarabulusiyya*[30] gave ample demonstration of this. Within the quadrumvirate in command of the newly formed republic, Sulayman al-Baruni represented the north-western region, from the Mediterranean to the Jabal Nafusa and the margins of the Sahara: there he had fought, in addition to the Italian army, also against the forces of other rival Tripolitanian leaders, strengthening his hegemony over the region with his victories.

The Tripolitanian republican project had also been stimulated by Wilson's 14-point speech (issued on the 9th of January 1918)[31], and by the declarations of the Italian military command in Tripoli in the second half of that year, stating that the future of the colony had to be decided with the agreement of its population.[32] Combining with the various autonomist movements that were flourishing in the country at the time, the republican ideal found its highest expression in the proclamation of the *Jumhuriyya* in al-Qusabat, on the 16th of November 1918, prompted by Sulayman al-Baruni and 'Abd al-Rahman 'Azzam.[33]

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[29] A. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia. Tripoli bel suol d'amore 1860-1922*, Mondadori, Milan, 1993 (I ed. Laterza, Bari 1986), 358-359. The commanders of the Ottoman troops in Tripolitania were ordered to cease-fire at the end of November 1918 and the last Turkish soldiers left the country only during October of the following year (R. Simon, *op. cit.*, 178-180).

[30] L. Anderson, The Tripoli Republic, 1918-1922, in E. G. H. Joffé - K. S. Maclachlan (eds.), *Social and Economic Development of Libya*, Menas Press, London, 1982, 43-66; S. Behre, *Notabili libici e Funzionari italiani: l'amministrazione coloniale in Tripolitania (1912-1919)*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2015, 264-272.

[31] The Fifth point of this declaration proposed an absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon the principle that the interests of the populations had equal weight with the equitable claims of the colonial governments. The influence of the Wilson declaration must also be taken into account when looking at the debate within the colonial powers on the future of the colonies and on the rights of indigenous peoples at the end of the First World War (F. Cresti, What Future for Italian Libya? The Debate on Colonial Policy, 1918-1920, in S. Lorenzini (ed.), *Ideas of Empire after the First World War. Identity and Citizenship in Colonial Empires. Comparativ*, 6/XXVI, Leipziger Universitäts Verlag, 2016, 73-89).

[32] It is difficult to say whether the aspirations for autonomy were also influenced by the political debate in Italy, which, according to a new trend in the post-war period, was moving towards the recognition of wider rights for indigenous peoples and a less authoritarian form of government open to their participation (*ibidem*). According to Enrico De Leone (*La colonizzazione…*, 483) this question can be answered in the affirmative, since the al-Qusabat proclamation occurred after it became clear to the "rebels" that the Italian government would not resort to its army.

[33] 'Abd al-Rahman 'Azzam, an Egyptian, was educated in England. During the First World War he travelled to Libya, becoming Ramadan al-Suwayhili's advisor. He fled to Egypt with Idris al-Sanusi in January 1923 and many years later, in 1945, was elected first general secretary of the Arab League.

With regard to the ideal of Tripolitanian independence, al-Baruni could without doubt claim to be one of its precursors. At the end of the first Italo-Turkish war, following the Ouchy treaty and the abandonment of its former Libyan provinces by the Ottoman empire, the proclamation of the aforementioned *hukuma wataniyya* in Yefren was announced to the "respectable Commander of the Italian army in the city of Tripoli" with these words:

> In order to implement the desire of the majority of the population of the coast of Tripoli, of all the inhabitants of the *Jabal al-gharbi* and of the south of Tripoli up to the Sahara and Fezzan, and in order also to apply the text of the firman of the Sultan, which clearly grants independence to the people of Tripolitania, it was decided to accept the independence. I was commissioned [...] to proclaim this independence and to organize a government based on the law of the Koran and on codes inspired by civilization and progress that will be modulated on those of civilized nations [...].[34]

Most scholars seem to agree that the proclamation of the republic in al-Qusabat was not the result of a precise ideological determination, but rather of the impossibility of reaching an agreement on who was to preside over the new institution. The establishment of a quadrumvirate and of an advisory council (*majlis al-shura*) of 24 members representing the regions and tribes of the country, was, therefore, an expedient. The Quadrumvirate and advisory council gathered extremely different personalities who were often embroiled in bitter rivalries:[35] it was hoped that the creation of a republic would serve to absorb the disintegrating pressures of the tribal potentates, who risked triggering a civil war, by finding a balance between the political groups of the country.[36] According to the perspective of a number of colonial historians, the republic was seen as an "artificial Turkish-German creation of war",[37] functional to future developments in peace negotiations,

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[34] ASMAI, *Libia* 150/14, 59: Governo della Tripolitania, Ufficio politico-militare, *Notizie su Suleimán el-Barúni*, n. 4, 39. As R. Simon has pointed out (*op. cit.*, 385, n. 30), the sultan's decree did not speak of independence (*istiqlal*) but of autonomy (*muhtariyet*).

[35] The list of the committee members is cited in S. Behre, *Notabili libici e Funzionari italiani...*, 254. One of al-Baruni's brothers, Yahia, was its vice-president, while the president was Muhammad Suf al-Mahmudi, one of his rivals. Muhammad Fikini, of the Rujban tribe, was also part of the committee, and another of al-Baruni's bitter enemies. Two key positions within the committee were held by al-Suwayhili partisans: 'Azzam was the secretary and Mukhtar Ku'bar (another rival of al-Baruni) the treasurer. In the context of cross enmities which proved to be fatal for the republic, the strongest dispute was between al-Suwayhili and Bilkhayr, which led to the assassination of the former in 1920.

[36] S. Behre, *Notabili libici e Funzionari italiani…*, 269.

[37] G. Mondaini, *Manuale di storia e Legislazione coloniale del Regno d'Italia*, Rome, Attilio Sampaolesi Editore, 1927, 424. Following a similar interpretation, the republic "was viewed as a coalition of chiefs rather than a true state, [and] seems to have been a tactical measure aimed at

regardless of the political ideas that had flourished and spread in the country over the previous few years.

The *quadrumviri* did in fact govern their respective territories autonomously, and the republic did not appear to be the result of a concordant political plan. Ramadan al-Suwayhili, who controlled Misrata and the surrounding region, while 'Azzam effectively served as the ideologue of his regime, appeared to be the strongest member of the quadrumvirate from an economic and military point of view: he had inherited the weapons and money of the Turkish-German base in Misrata, and aspired to rise to the rank of national leader, extending his hegemony over the whole of Tripolitania. However, he had to compete with several other equally ambitious actors, none of whom was willing to give way, as demonstrated by the subsequent clashes and infighting.

The supporters of the republic were confident that they could enforce their desire for independence during the peace negotiations by reference to the Wilsonian principles of self-determination,[38] but the evolution of the post-war period proved unfavorable to their project. Demonstrations of military strength by Italy (after the end of the war in Europe, an entire assault division was transferred to Tripolitania, totalling a presence of more than 70.000 soldiers[39]), pacification measures and diplomatic negotiations allowed the colonial government to obtain the acceptance of Italian rule over Tripolitania within the framework of a Fundamental Law, or Statute.

The negotiations involving all members of the quadrumvirate culminated on the 21st of March 1919 at Qal'at al-Zaytun with the signing of the final text of the Statute on the basis of reciprocal concessions. The return of the Italian war prisoners and the progressive pacification of the territory would have been met on the Italian side with the establishment of new administrative rules: the local population would be awarded significant institutional participation in the government of the country, whilst the authoritarian and repressive colonial administration of the previous period would have been suppressed. The benefits of the Statute thus seemed rather reciprocal: the Italian government, faced with a very difficult internal situation due to the economic and social consequences of the war, avoided the need to undergo a new military

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gaining concessions from the Italians" (R. Coury, "Arabian Ethnicity" and Arab Nationalism: the case of Abd al-Rahman Azzam, *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, 25, 1988, 63).

[38] Even the *shaykh al-kabir* of the Sanusiyya, Ahmad al-Sharif al-Sanusi, thought that the Wilsonian doctrine could offer support for obtaining the autonomy of Cyrenaica during the peace conference (ASMAI, *Libia* 140/3, 19: Rodd to Agnesa, 1.11.1918). See also E. A. V. De Candole, *The Life and Times of King Idris of Libya*, Mohamed Ben Ghalbon, Manchester, 1990, 35-36; F. Cresti, Una questione di famiglia: la ṭarīqah al-Sanūsiyyah tra Aḥmad al-Šarīf e Muḥammad Idrīs (Libia, 1914-1918), *Oriente Moderno*, 98, 2018, 2; L. Anderson, *The State and Social Transformation in Tunisia and Libya, 1830-1980*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1986, 206.

[39] O. Gabelli, *La Tripolitania dalla fine della guerra mondiale all'avvento del fascismo*, 2 voll., Airoldi, 1939, I vol., 202; E. De Leone, *La colonizzazione…*, 482.

operation in the colonies, while many of the exponents of the republic obtained substantial appanages, maintaining power and large room for acting on their own initiative. As for the Tripolitanian leaders, as mentioned already, the decision to pursue a peaceful settlement was influenced also by the consideration that, after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire and its allies, any further war effort on their own part was undermined by the lack of arms supplies.[40]

Al-Baruni, the Statute, and the colonial Government: an ambiguous relation

Al-Baruni's prominence during the negotiations was viewed with unease by many Italian officials, mainly due to the leadership role he had assumed during the war.[41] In fact, though other members of the *Jumhuriyya* had fought on the enemy side, al-Baruni had been in charge of the governorship of the country, following appointment by the sultan in 1916. In addition, his position as a member of the Ottoman senate could only raise suspicions. But was he in fact still an Ottoman senator after the end of the war? According to some, he was no longer entitled to bear this position, having disobeyed the sultan's order to return to Istanbul after the armistice.[42] However, the Ottoman government had not taken any official measure in this regard and al-Baruni himself, in his correspondence with the Italian government authorities, continued to sign himself: "Sleman El Baruni, former governor of Tripolitania, Senator of the Ottoman Empire".[43]

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[40] It is useful, from an historiographical point of view, to compare the new Italian policy leading to the proclamation of the Libyan Statutes with the changes in the indigenous politics of the imperial powers at the same time, in particular with the French policy towards the Algerian colony (F. Cresti, *What Future for Italian Libya?...*, 73-75, 78; On colonial citizenship, see V. F. Renucci, L'accession des indigènes à la citoyenneté entre assimilation et réformisme : les mesures légales prises par l'Italie et la France en 1919, in M. Ganzin (dir.), *Sujet et citoyen. Actes du colloque de Lyon (Septembre 2003)*, PUAM , Aix-en-Provence, 2004, 393- 420.

[41] It is worth remembering that during the war a 10,000 lire price was set on al-Baruni's head (an amount lower, truth be said, than the 20,000 promised for that of Ramadan al-Suwayhili). Anywhere, all previous punitive measures against the leaders of the "rebellion" were revoked by Governor Garioni in the first months of 1919 (ASMAI, *Africa* III, 137, 61a/bis).

[42] This was the opinion held by Osman Fuad, great-grandson of Sultan Murad V and his representative in Tripolitania since May 1918, questioned in this regard by Governor Garioni (ASMAI, *Libia* 159/14, 3: Garioni to Ministry of Colonies, 19.4.1919). This insubordination could be explained by the misunderstandings and rivalries that in the last years of war had opposed al-Baruni to the Ottoman military hierarchies: in particular, to Nuri Pasha, who since the beginning of 1917, despite al-Baruni's role as governor, became the real centre of power through the control of war supplies and the prestige that derived from his family membership (R. Simon, *Libya between Ottomanism..*, 231. Nuri was the brother of Enver, the minister of war and the sultan's son-in-law). After the arrival of Osman Fuad, al-Baruni was ceased to be governor.

[43] ASMAI, *Libia* 150/15, 62: Baruni to the Government of Tripolitania, 10.2.1921. Al-Baruni's right to "the title and emoluments of a senator" were only revoked in 1922 by the government of Ankara (E. De Leone, *La colonizzazione*…, 511).

This led to the emergence of a rather ambiguous situation,[44] as was pointed out by the Ministry for the Colonies, whose representatives saw it as "odd that an Italian subject", who would become an "Italian citizen as a result of the Statute", could at the same time maintain his position as a senator of the government of Constantinople.[45]

Al-Baruni's position seemed unclear also to many of the officials who were required to deal with him. For example, following the Italian commissioner in Constantinople's request for clarification on this matter, the ministry for the Colonies stated elliptically that al-Baruni, "one of the notables who took part in the negotiations with the […] Government of Tripolitania, for the pacification of the colony", had taken up residence in Tripoli following the issuing of the Statute, but held in fact no official office, despite being "in continuous relations with the local government".[46]

It is difficult to pinpoint the real reasons that persuaded al-Baruni to accept the proposals of the Italian government: it seems evident, however, that his adherence to the Statute was not unconditional, despite his enthusiastic statements in the Roman interview. This is demonstrated by the repeated references to his "Nation" (be it Tripolitanian or Arab), which underline a clear dualism between this Nation and the Italian one. No trace or reference to the Tripolitanian or Arab Nation was to be found in the text of the Statute, but it seems clear that in al-Baruni's mind the two elements remained irreducible and irreducibly separate: with time and fruitful collaboration (the use of Italian capital and technology to bolster the development and economic progress of the country in exchange for an internationally recognized dominant role for Italy) a rapprochement, a harmony of purpose between the two Nations could be achieved – stated al-Baruni – but this would by no means entail the dissolution of the first (the Arab, or Tripolitanian nation) into the second. Conversely, from the point of view of the Italian government, the Statute was the instrument for the elimination of

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[44] This ambiguity did not seem to worry Governor Menzinger, while it was reason for perplexity for the ministry for the Colonies, whose officials stressed that "it is necessary that [Sulayman al-Baruni] takes a precise and well defined attitude towards Italy [...]. He cannot remain in the current state of hybridism and uncertainty [...]. While we appreciate the delicacy of his position, linked to a moral and political past that cannot be suddenly expunged, he must nevertheless provide us with sufficient elements of guarantee that will allow us to evaluate exactly his intentions and his thought" (ASMAI, *Libia* 150/15, 62: Rossi to Menzinger, 3.11.1919).

[45] E. De Leone, *op. cit.*, 491.

[46] ASMAI, *Libia* 159/14, 3: Theodoli to the Italian High Commissioner in Constantinople, 8.10.1919. Al-Baruni was not among the eight Tripolitanian leaders who, after the proclamation of the Statute, became part of the interim Governing Council, which included the main leaders of the *Jumhuriyya* with Ramadan al-Suwayhili at its head: according to De Leone, this showed the weakness of al-Baruni and his lack of credit among the leaders of Tripolitania, so that, knowing that he could no longer rely on "the rebel chiefs with whom it was not easy for an Ibadi to find credit", he sought support and help from the colonial government (E. De Leone, *op. cit.*, 490, 492).

this dualism: through the granting of Italian citizenship, extended to all those who were "born in Tripolitania on the date of [...] the decree [establishing the Statute]",[47] any other kind of national belonging was excluded.

In the interview cited above, this contradiction is not perceived by the interviewer, while al-Baruni affirms all along the existence of the Tripolitanian Nation as the basis of the Republican project: he therefore denies that either the Republic or the Nation have been erased by the recognition of the sovereignty of the king of Italy and of external domination, which undoubtedly retained its colonial character, whatever its constitutional guarantees.

If this interpretation of al-Baruni's thought is correct, the subsequent statement about the suffering endured by the Tripolitanian Nation in order to achieve the Statute appears much clearer. Such an affirmation apparently lacks any historical grounds (whatever the aims of its different leaders, it is impossible to argue that during the previous seven years the Libyan resistance had fought for a Statute); but it makes sense if taken to mean that the Statute is a victory for the Tripolitanian Nation, the result of its resistance and struggle, and not a gift from the Italian government.

A statement along such lines was far from the reality perceived by the Italians: the liberal political forces that decided to pursue peace by means of the Statute (against the continuation of war invoked in particular by the Nationalist party) considered it to be a "chivalrous concession of peace" on the part of Italy, as the country refused to use the force of its "powerful army" in Libya and instead elected to follow the path set out by by the "democratic ideals [... which] had been among the most suggestive and effective coefficients of heroic deeds [of First World War]".[48] This very concept was reiterated by the Minister for the Colonies:

> Italy, which emerged larger and more powerful from its victorious war effort, could have used the force of her Army against the rebels with inevitable success, but preferred to follow the path of clemency and loyalty indicated by her traditions.[49]

An interview published by the Damascus newspaper "Alif-Ba'" more than a decade later, where al-Baruni recalls his participation in the events in Tripolitania,

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[47] Article 1 of the Statute of Tripolitania.

[48] G. Mondaini, *Manuale di storia e legislazione*, I vol., 425. In another paragraph Gennaro Mondaini affirms that "the chivalrous act of offering peace, while having at its disposal a powerful army that would surely have been victorious, was not a procedure that could be understood by the Arabs in its true essence" (*ibidem*). Mondaini was among those who had helped define the new colonial policy as a member of the Post-war Commission set up by the Italian government in 1918.

[49] Colosimo [Minister of Colonies] to Garioni, 1.6.1919: this passage pertains to the message accompanying the decree of the Tripolitanian Statute and was published by *Il Messaggero* on the same date (G. De Meo, I risultati della nuova politica in Libia. Corrispondenza da Tripoli, *Il Messaggero*, 1.6.1919, 3).

shows how his own interpretation of the origins of the Statute differed radically from such a vision. He stated:

> Since the American Government insisted on resolving the Oriental issue according to the points of Wilson's message, the Italians were forced to open peace talks with the Republic, negotiations that lasted for a long time and underwent several interruptions, and during which they tried, in vain, to advance with their strength. Finally, the Italian Government and the National Republic reached the agreement that granted the country […] internal independence on the basis of a "Fundamental Statute".[50]

In fact, even though none of the forty articles of the Statute cited "internal independence", it is not impossible that over the course of the negotiations between Garioni and the Tripolitanian leaders, the matter was left indeterminate, intentionally or not, as was already noted at the time by colonial historiography:

> In the norms of the Statute there was nothing formally contrary to our sovereignty [...] but no clear answer was given to certain questions: [...] was the Statute freely granted by the dominant power, or was it won from it?[51]

Based on the official Italian documentation, the answer could only have been that the reading of the post-war Libyan events presented by al-Baruni in his interview on *Alif-Ba'* was tendentious and did not correspond to reality,[52] or that on another occasion al-Baruni had (instrumentally?) confused administrative autonomy and independence.[53] Ruling out other hypotheses, it seems clear that al-Baruni's idiosyncratic adherence to the Statute was based on quite a few subtleties, or maybe on some fundamental misunderstandings, which were probably shared by the Tripolitanian nationalists and ignored by the Italian government:[54] to sum up, two very different visions of the political and military situation opposed one

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[50] L. Veccia Vaglieri, La partecipazione…, 73.

[51] O. Gabelli, *op. cit.*, 241-242.

[52] Veccia Vaglieri's reaction is very meaningful in this sense: following Baruni's statement that "[the Italians] tried, but in vain, to advance with their forces", she inserts the following note: "Here el-Barùni is wrong: the forces for a strong offensive were already gathered in Tripolitania, but nothing was done: the government preferred the negotiations" (*op. cit.*, n. 16, 73).

[53] See above, note 34.

[54] These contradictions also reflected in subsequent historiography, as is clear from this erroneous statement by Majid Khadduri: "Italy agreed to recognize this regime [i.e. the Tripolitanian Republic] and a statute was issued […]" (M. Khadduri, *Modern Libya. A study on political development*, Johns Hopkins, Baltimore, 1963, 21). In fact, during the negotiations some of the members of the *Jumhuriyya* repeatedly asked for its recognition, but the request was not accepted by the Italian counterpart: this would have denied any sense to the Statute, since the recognition of the *Jumhuriyya* would have meant the independence of Tripolitania.

another during the negotiations, so that the two sides set themselves very different objectives in the application of the resulting Statute.

Between Rome, Constantinople, and Naples: al-Baruni's love for Italy

After this long circumlocution, we must return to our main subject: al-Baruni's travels and interviews in Italy.

At the current stage of my research, I have not yet been able to pinpoint exactly what were his contacts with the institutions and with the Roman political forces: however, he certainly had at least one meeting with the Minister for the Colonies Luigi Rossi,[55] and perhaps also further contacts with other politicians.

The presence in Rome of the Tripolitanian notable did not draw much attention in the press. Apart from the brief announcement reported by *Il Popolo d'Italia*, neither the *Corriere della Sera* nor *Avanti!*, two of the most important Italian newspapers of the time, made any mention of it: this is understandable given the political atmosphere of those days in the country, with the looming general elections to be held on the 16th of November, the day after al-Baruni's arrival in Rome.

The elections were to take place at a time of increasing polarization within the country in the wake of the crises provoked by the world conflict and the evolution of international relations, while in the background fascism began its progressive rise.

On the international scene, post-war peace talks were still underway: Austria had signed the peace treaty in Saint-Germain just over a month earlier (on the 11th of September), but the fate of the Ottoman empire had not yet been determined. The already troubled domestic Italian politics of the second half of 1919 was shaken further by strikes protesting the high cost-of-living, while the political scene was dominated by the issue of Fiume, which had been occupied by volunteers under the command of Gabriele D'Annunzio on the 12th of September, placing Francesco Saverio Nitti's ministry in a delicate predicament.[56] The strengthening of the fascist movement was demonstrated in October in Florence with the movement's first mass demonstration after the foundation of the *Fasci di combattimento* which had taken place on the 23rd of March of the same year in Milan.

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[55] Luigi Rossi (1867-1941) was minister for the Colonies during the first Nitti government from the 23rd of June 1919 to the 14th of March 1920, and again from the 15th of June 1920 to the 4th of July 1921 during the fifth Giolitti government. Al-Baruni's meeting with Rossi is documented by the photograph published in this article (ASMAI, *Libia* 150/15, 61) which bears the following inscription on the back: "Photograph taken at the Ministry on the occasion of El Baruni's visit to Rome in November 1920".

[56] Formed in June after the resignation of the Vittorio Emanuele Orlando government, due to the bankruptcy that followed the outcome of the Paris peace conference.

The atmosphere of serious political and social instability that hung over Italy in those months, and certainly must have made an impression also on the Tripolitanian visitor, did nonetheless not seem to impinge on his optimistic vision of the future: in another interview during his second stay in Italy, a few months later,[57] al-Baruni reiterated his full support for the Statute and the political stand adopted by the Ministry for the Colonies and colonial government in Tripoli, as well as his profound friendship with Italy, which he went so far as to call love.[58]

As in the previous interview, Major Borriello acted as interpreter, but this interview took place in Naples, where al-Baruni arrived from Istanbul (and from where "the women of his harem" – the journalist wrote – were about to leave for Tripoli)[59], and where he visited the Oriental Institute.

The interview once more opens with the usual pleasantries and with a statement by al-Baruni ("I love Italy very much, but I like no city as much as Naples") which surprised the interviewer:

> I cannot tell why these words make me think of the Libyan war and of the part played in it by Suleiman El-Baruni, who was our greatest enemy in those days. My sudden reminiscence is too antithetical to the words [… of] the Libyan pasha [...]. Perhaps El-Baruni has guessed my thought. He stares at me with eyes that flash with cunning.

The interviewee continues:

> Yes, we are good and sincere friends now. I come from Constantinople, where I have seen how the French and English troops behave towards our poor Muslim brothers, and I cannot fail to compare this to the behavior of the Italians in Libya, in Turkey, everywhere. We were mistaken or, better, we were deceived at the time of the Libyan war. Italy is a great country of civilization. We now have no grudge towards Italy, but only gratitude. The Constitution that was spontaneously and liberally given to Tripolitania, persuaded even the last of the skeptics. With Italy, not under Italy, we will go forward, towards civilization, in a continuous trajectory of progress that will bring both countries immense economic and moral benefits. You cannot begin to imagine what a deep sense of gratitude lies in our hearts for what Italy did in favor of Turkey at the Paris conference. We Muslims will never forget it... You must say this, write it in your newspaper, repeat it to everyone! It is a

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[57] R. D'Elia, Conversando con Suleïman-El-Baruni, *Il Mezzogiorno*, 25-26 March 1920. A clipping of the interview, which took place at the Hôtel de Londres, in ASMAI, *Libia* 150/15, 60.

[58] The use of the word "love" in political discourse is curious, and can perhaps be explained in terms of marking a reversal of the feelings of hatred in the post-war psychological situation: similarly, Minister Colosimo in an interview stated that "our post-war program is based on a policy of love and not of struggle" (O. Gabelli, *La Tripolitania…*, 181).

[59] The *harem* was composed of his wife, mother-in-law, and three of his sons (E. De Leone, *op. cit.*, 490).

profound, true, indestructible gratitude: the kind of gratitude that arises in the soul when it feels mortally offended by someone and sees that a friendly person comes to our aid...

The statement about the deception during the war is disconcerting: if interpreted literally, it would entail the repudiation of all anti-colonial resistance from 1911 to 1918, of the positions held by al-Baruni during that period, and of his responsibilities as a high representative of the Ottoman government. But it would certainly be mistaken to read literally a sentence pronounced during an interview that, appearing in this form following translation from the Arabic, may not correspond to the words that were actually pronounced:[60] however, it would not be surprising if the statement had been a simulation or dissimulation to reach consensus, as a form of *captatio benevolentiae*, given al-Baruni's experience as a politician, accustomed to the use of the press as a means of propaganda.

The Neapolitan interview accentuates al-Baruni's conciliating and commendatory tones regarding the Statute, no longer presented as a victory of the Tripolitanian Nation, but as a "constitution spontaneously and liberally given to Tripolitania" by Italy. No line of the interview presents al-Baruni as a member of the Arab or Tripolitanian Nation, but only as a Muslim ("We, Muslims"…). The Neapolitan interview thus arguably expresses a less nationalist and a more panislamist feeling, dwelling largely on the new developments in the Ottoman capital, where al-Baruni soon intends to return and where, he states:

a great crime is being committed. The powers of the Entente have occupied Stambul: this is a new and frightening calamity that is about to beset the world. Until the present day, three hundred million Muslims had lived in peace and did not fret excessively if they saw some of their land be occupied by foreigners, because they were confident in the knowledge that they had a Caliph, who was their father living in Stambul, the protector of their religion, who could welcome all the exiles flowing from every corner of Islam to Constantinople to enjoy the tenderness of this good father and find respite thanks to the piety of the Government and the generosity of their Muslim brothers. But now the armed forces of the Entente have occupied that land of exile and hope, they have taken possession of the holy capital of Islam, they have reduced in captivity the Caliph, who is the shadow of God on earth.

This event will have:

great and disastrous repercussions. It seems that Europe underestimates the threat of a general Islamic movement, or, to be more exact, Europe considers it unlikely. And yet... a great inferno can often originate in just a small flame or a single spark; a

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[60] At any rate, the interviewer stressed that al-Baruni "speaks slowly as if dictating, allowing the interpreter to translate his speech nearly word for word".

flood may sometimes arise from the breaking of a tiny dam; the ruin of a state is sometimes a revolt that at first does not seem to be too serious![61]

The interviewer then points out that the victorious powers plan to respect the status as Caliph of the head of the Ottoman lineage. Al-Baruni replies bitterly that this way the caliphate is "reduced to a personal sinecure by gracious concession of the Entente". He then attempts to retort to the following observation ("But you, the Arabs, have you not always maintained that the Caliph must be Arab, just as the Prophet was an Arab?") in a rather convoluted way:

These are internal matters [...]. Here, the matter at hand is the Caliphate, rather than the Caliph.
Do you remember the times of Abdul Hamid?... All of Arabia was in turmoil; Yemen was in perpetual war with the Sultan's troops [...]. Then we could fight each other because we knew that the bases of the Caliphate, which are the bases of all Muslim life, still held fast. We knew that, for one reason or another, no power in Europe thought to deny us our religious rights, which are basically the same as our political rights. Now things have changed. Europe is mistaken if it imagines that Muslims can tolerate a Caliph appointed with the intervention, however indirect, of a Christian state, or subject to the sovereignty of any European state, or resident in a territory occupied by a foreign power, or finally placed in a position with no means of defense. He would be a little sultan, like any tribal emir: he would no longer be the Caliph of all of Islam! [...] The matter of the Caliphate and its seat cannot be resolved in any way other than by an undertaking by the whole Muslim world, which, if it sees its capital destroyed, must rebuild it in a safer place. But this reconstruction will require painful tribulations and terrible wars, with great sufferings for Europe, and especially for those who will be recognized by the Mohammedans as those truly responsible for the destruction of the haven of their Caliphate. [...] France and England: the latter especially. Superb and contemptuous, England repeats the refrain: *Rule Britannia*... but forgets that we are three hundred million, scattered throughout the world, from India to Morocco, and we are all followers of the Koran, which certainly requires us to treat with benevolence and justice those who do not fight our religion and do not drive us away from our homes, but also forbids us from sympathizing with those who fight our faith, banish us from our homes, and help our enemies.

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[61] The same passage, almost verbatim, is found in a *memorandum* in French sent previously by al-Baruni to the *Hauts Commissaires de l'Entente* in Istanbul: "Il semble que l'Europe n'attache pas d'importance à un mouvement musulman général, si cela a lieu, ou bien qu'elle le juge improbable, malgré qu'elle sait que l'origine d'un incendie est une simple étincelle, que la source d'une inondation est dans les petites goutte de pluie les plus fines et que la cause de l'effondrement des États disparus est dans une révolution n'ayant aucun caractère grave au début" (*Première* [sic] *mémoire présenté par Soileiman el Barouni…* cit. *infra*, 4).

At this point, al-Baruni resumes his expressions of gratitude and friendship on the part of the Muslim world towards Italy:

> That's why we feel gratitude for Italy. Italy showed sympathy for Islam, supported our points of view at the Paris conferences; she made the allies understand the importance of dealing with our interests... We will always remember this.
> - What will you say of Italy, returning to Tripoli?
> - The peace made with Italy is sincere. I will only work to strengthen the feelings of sympathy that now bind us forever. With these sentiments, I will return to my country. I will be grateful if, through your newspaper, you shall make this known to your country, for which, I am sure, a great and brilliant future lies ahead.

Italy and Islam, or the Italian friendly attitude towards Islam and the future of Tripolitania according to al-Baruni

In this second interview, as we can see, al-Baruni again states how he is confident in a future of prosperity and peace for his country thanks to the agreement with the Italian government, but this time he focuses mainly on the events surrounding the international post-war negotiations and the situation in the Orient.

In order to make best sense of his speech, it is worth remembering that the French General Franchet d'Esperey had entered Istanbul after the armistice, on the 8th of February 1919. The French occupied part of Syria and Cilicia and the province of Adana, while British troops occupied the Dardanelles and other strategic points along the Black Sea coast; Italian detachments had landed in Antalya on the 29th of April 1919. The occupation of Istanbul to which al-Baruni referred to was not, however, that of February 1919, which emphatically publicised by the European press for its eminently symbolic character,[62] but the actual military occupation of the whole city decreed by the Supreme Allied Council on March 1st 1920: on the 16th of that same month, British troops had taken control of all the city's districts, arresting and deporting the main exponents of the Turkish national movement who had begun to organize their opposition against the dismemberment of the empire.

At the outset of 1919, while al-Baruni was in Istanbul, alarming news arrived from Paris regarding the future of the capital of the Ottoman Empire and the caliphate: in early January rumors spread of an agreement among the Entente powers according to which Constantinople and the Straits would remain under military occupation and the seat of the Ottoman government would be transferred

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[62] Franchet d'Esperey had entered Istanbul on a white horse (offered by the Greek community of the city) repeating the gesture of Sultan Mehmet II, who had entered the ancient capital of Eastern Christianity in 1453 inaugurating the era of the Muslim domination (B. Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, Oxford University Press, London, 1968, 211).

to somewhere in Anatolia's interior, while the sultan would continue to reside in his ancient capital, keeping the Caliphate under the control of the Entente. Following these rumors, al-Baruni sent reminders and petitions to the governments of the Entente countries.[63] In these letters, an abundance of Koranic quotations and *ahadits* announced the revolt of all Muslims against the measures that threatened the survival of a sovereign and independent caliphate and the security of its headquarters (which among other things required the control of the Straits by its armed forces). In fact, news of the Entente's intentions had provoked widespread protests across many Muslim countries, which were taken by al-Baruni as clear evidence of the awakening of a pan-Islamist movement.

In a letter sent to the editor of the Istanbul newspaper *Ikdam* which was then published, al-Baruni expressed his opinion on the political events that had taken place during the period of his stay in the Ottoman capital before returning to Italy. Faced with the rapidly spiralling disagreements between on the one hand the sultan-caliph and his government (who were practically being held prisoner in Istanbul by the occupying powers) and on the other the nascent Turkish national movement under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (which had established the headquarters of its representative committee in Ankara on the 27th of December 1919), al-Baruni presented a resolute defense of the caliphate as the common heritage of all Muslims, opposing the claim that the caliphate and Istanbul were issues that strictly regarded the Turkish nation:

> The Muslims of the world have entrusted the Caliphate and the relics of their Prophet to the Ottoman imperial family, from the day when the Sultan Selim assumed the Caliphate until the present: how is it now possible for our dear Turkish brothers to decide by themselves on the question of the caliphate and its seat with their adversaries, the powers of the Entente, in a way that does not satisfy [all] Muslims [...]? How can the illustrious Turkish ulamas approve of them doing this so willfully? And how could Mohammed Uahid ed-Din (the current Sultan of Turkey), the only custodian of this precious treasure (the Islamic Caliphate), approve of this?[64]

It is clear that al-Baruni did not share in the aims and intentions of the Turkish nationalists (who a few years later would establish the Republic of Turkey and

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[63] "Première [sic] mémoire présenté par Soleiman el Barouni aux Hauts Commissaires de l'Entente à Constantinople au sujet de la question du Khalifat Islamique (6 March 1920); Memoriale presentato alla Commissione Interalleata di Costantinopoli riguardo agli Stretti" (undated, signed: "Suleiman el Baruni della Tripolitania Senatore ottomano"); Lettre adressée aux Représentants des Nations libres dans les Parlements d'Italie, de France, d'Angleterre et des Etats-Unis d'Amérique (undated). These documents are gathered in a booklet (*Constantinople, les musulmans et l'Europe: Notes par Soleiman el Barouni*) published in Naples in 1920.

[64] Lettera inviata al Direttore del giornale turco Ikdam e pubblicata dal giornale stesso, 29 gennaio 1920, in *Constantinople, Les musulmans et l'Europe…*, 13.

abolish the caliphate): instead, he opposed the Turkish-nationalist perspective in light of his own panislamist views, criticizing the "Turkish brothers, who demonstrate how they do not appreciate the value of the strength of Islam [...] and defend Constantinople only in the name of Turkey with the aim of saving the graves of their ancestors and the monuments of the city".[65]

And he continues: from the time of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, the companion of the Prophet, and of the other saints martyred under the city walls, from the era of Sultan Mehmet who conquered the city and his successors who brought to it the relics of the Prophet, "Constantinople is neither Turkish, nor Arab, nor Indian, but it is only the Islamic capital of the Caliphate of all Muslims".[66]

Read in this context, al-Baruni's appreciation of the "Italian behavior" during the peace negotiations expressed in the Neapolitan interview, derives from the position the Italians adopted on the issue of the fate of Constantinople and of the future of the Ottoman Empire, which contrast with that of Great Britain and France. During the peace conference, Italian Prime Minister Nitti declared in favor of Turkey's sovereignty over Constantinople:[67] he reiterated this position during the London conference, which began on the 12th of February 1920, where he expressed many doubts regarding the desirability of entrusting Thrace and an important part of the Anatolian coastal territories to Greece.

Conclusion: from opposition to collaboration to failure. What happened to the "powerful Chief of the Berbers"?

There is something missing from al-Baruni's interviews and which deserves instead to be mentioned: with the exception of one line at the start of the first interview which describes al-Baruni as the "powerful chief of the Berbers", there is no other reference to the Berber minority or the issue of the autonomy of the Berber region in Tripolitania, on which, on the contrary, much ink had been spilled during the early years of colonial occupation.[68]

For their part, the Italians had shown great interest in the Berbers of the *Adrar n Infusen* since the beginning of the colonial occupation: in addition to the obvious political implications of earning the Berbers' sympathy in terms of the control over the country, this interest also led to an important cultural outcome with the

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[65] *Ibidem*.

[66] *Idem*, 14.

[67] The Italian position on the future of the Ottoman Empire supported "the maintenance of Ottoman sovereignty in all predominantly Turkish regions [...]. Turkish sovereignty will be preserved on Constantinople and on its territory. Constantinople will be the capital" (quoted in L. Micheletta, *Italia e Gran Bretagna nel primo dopoguerra*, Jouvence, Rome, 1999, vol. I, 127).

[68] See in this regard F. Cresti, Due volte minoranza: i berberi ibaditi del *jabal* Nafūsa nella visione coloniale, in F. Cresti (ed.), *Minoranze, pluralismo, stato nell'Africa mediterranea e nel Sahel*, Aracne, Ariccia, 2015, 21-61.

establishment in 1914 of the first chair of Berber language in Italy at the Oriental Institute of Naples.[69] Italian interest in the Berbers continued after the war: in 1919, the Post-war Commission charged with dealing with colonial issues had stated the right of colonized peoples to study their own history and their own native language: the colonial government of Tripoli was instructed to encourage the study of the Berber language in the schools that would be opened in the Berber region.[70] After his transfer to Tripoli following the promulgation of the Statute, al-Baruni was questioned by an Italian official, and did not show himself at all favourable to this project. The official reported the following:

> Sleman Bei El Baruni, himself a Berber, upon being questioned about the opportunity of setting up Berber language schools, did not hesitate to answer that this institution would be totally useless, because the Berbers themselves would not devote themselves to the study of their language, finding it more useful to learn Arabic instead.[71]

As already mentioned, during his stay in Naples, al-Baruni visited the Oriental Institute and probably met Francesco Beguinot, who held the chair of Berber studies: however, in neither interview did al-Baruni mention any Berber specificity or affirm his belonging to the Berber minority, asserting instead only that to the Muslim world, or the Arab and Tripolitanian Nation. Perhaps, at the time of his visits to Italy, the dream of a Berber principality (assuming that he ever had such a dream in the first place) were no more than a memory of youth in the thought of the "powerful leader of Abadites and Berbers", and were no longer of great relevance, due to his panislamist stance and the course of events in both his country and the Muslim world after the end of the First World War.

The adhesion of al-Baruni to the new political course inaugurated by the colonial government with the signing of the Tripolitanian Statute can be seen as a turning point in his political life: from armed opposition to the acceptance of a colonial situation. Was this purely an instance of opportunism? Or maybe of political realism? Rachel Simon has already pointed out:

> the readiness of the [Libyan] notables to cooperate with whoever was the ruling power in the region when they realized that resistance was futile. […] The notables'

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[69] F. Cresti, Conoscenza scientifica e politica coloniale. Francesco Beguinot, l'impresa di Tripoli ed un progetto incompiuto di "Storia del Berberi" (1911-1923), in A. M. Di Tolla (ed.), *La lingua nella vita e la vita della lingua. Itinerari e percorsi di studi berberi* […] *Scritti in onore di Francesco Beguinot*, Unior, Naples, 2016, 179.

[70] Ministero delle Colonie, *Relazione della VII sezione della Commissione del Dopo-guerra (questioni coloniali)*, Camera dei Deputati, Rome, 1919, 136.

[71] ASMAI, *Africa* III, 37: Regia Soprintendenza scolastica della Tripolitania, *Anno scolastico 1918-1919. Relazione finale a S. E. il Governatore della Tripolitania* (July 1919), 174.

loyalty was not open-ended: they were ready to cooperate with the Italians as long as the conditions necessitated this and so long as they gained benefits from it for themselves and their tribes.[72]

Anna Baldinetti in turn argues that: "The hypothesis that ambivalence was a feature of the relationship of most Muslim notables with the Italian colonial authorities seems plausible; they always oscillated between collaboration and antagonism".[73]

In the case of al-Baruni, once the hope of definitively asserting independence had faded, the prospect of a protectorate over Libya by Italy was not entirely excluded from the objectives of his struggle. In fact, as early as November 8th 1912, shortly after the signing of the treaty of Ouchy, he had invited two distinguished Italian prisoners, Count Sforza and Cavalier Sanfilippo, who were about to be released, to:

> become ambassadors to the Italian Government of the desires of the populations [i.e. those of the Gebel] that aspire to either absolute independence, or should this not prove possible, to a protectorate similar to that exercised over Egypt by England.[74]

Some time later, having fled to Tunisia following the battle of al-Asaba'a, while negotiating with the Italian government for the return of the Berber population that had been exiled from their villages, he proposed as a counterpart to the Italian emissaries one of three conditions:

> Autonomy of the Gebel and of the coastal plain with its capital in Marsa Zuàga: if this is not acceptable, a form of protectorate similar to that exercised over Egypt by England. If also this proposition is rejected, we request at least the concession, for the aforementioned territories, of some special privilege and greater independence than that accorded to other districts.[75]

From this perspective, it does not seem implausible to suggest that al-Baruni had accepted some form of Italian protectorate over Tripolitania in light of the impossibility that armed resistance would succeed. It thus became plausible, even for "he who was once a bitter enemy of Italy", to back the Statute, which effectively promised a form of protectorate and a degree of autonomy for the native populations unparalleled in any of the colonial empires. If pushed a little further, the Statute could even be considered a victory for the Tripolitanians after years of

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[72] R. Simon, *Libya between Ottomanism…*, 219.

[73] A. Baldinetti, *The Origins of the Libyan Nation*, Routledge, London-New York, 2010, 58.

[74] ASMAI, *Libia* 150/14-55 (*Suleiman El Baruni 1912-aprile 1913*): GT-UPM, *Notizie su Suleimán el-Barúni*, 13.

[75] *Idem*, 17. See also MC a Consolato di Tunisi, 25.1.1913; A. Baldinetti, *The Origins…*, 57.

armed struggle: the triumphant armed entry into Tripoli of the knights of the *Jumhuriyya* on the day of its proclamation seemed to demonstrate that victory, rather than the acceptance of a peace offered by the colonial government in order to end the bloodshed. In the same vein, following the promulgation of the Statute, Sulayman al-Baruni cut the long hair that had decorated his head for many years: he had promised at the beginning of the war that he would not cut it until the Italians had been expelled from Libya.[76]

By choosing to go down the more realistic path of compromise, and also with an eye to the course of the post-war negotiations in Paris, Sulayman al-Baruni probably estimated that Italy in its 1920 state might be the lesser enemy of the Islamic world, compared to the other colonial powers (France and Great Britain) that were dismembering the Ottoman Empire and threatening the very reality of the caliphate.

At any rate, only a short time after al-Baruni's travels in Italy the situation changed dramatically. After the first few months, when an atmosphere of conciliation had prevailed in Tripolitania following the promulgation of the Statute, there was a spike in incidents and divisions among the Tripolitan leaders, among whom an increasing tendency to prefer independence started to progressively take hold. In the meantime, the personal feuds between some of the leaders of the *Jumhuriyya* further exacerbated the already tense situation: in the context of an ongoing clash between the militias of Ramadan al-Shitiwi al Suwayhili and 'Abd al-Nabi Bilkhayr, the former was murdered at the end of August. The colonial government (which had seen the replacement of the main supporter of the Statute, General Garioni, with less determined officials), had for its part proved incapable of implementing the most urgent measures, such as the convening of political elections and the formation of a parliament, further stoking the country's internal rivalries. Nobody but al-Baruni seemed still to think that the application of the Statute would place the country on the path towards peace: several groups from the Tripolitanian camp formed a Central reform committee (*hayat al-islah al-markaziyya*), and in a meeting of the chiefs held in Gariyan in November 1920 proposed the creation of an autonomous emirate which would abandon the Statute.[77] Al-Baruni was invited to the meeting, but he refused to attend, stating that his position as an Ottoman senator prevented him: and in any case, he opposed the establishment of an emirate.

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[76] See fig. 3. See also *Il Giornale d'Italia*, n. 38, 14.2.1922: *Dichiarazioni di El Baruni* ("[al-Baruni] submitted to us [...] in 1919, finally cutting his long hair which he had grown after swearing to never cut it again until the Italians had left Tripolitania [si sottomise a noi […] nel 1919 tagliandosi finalmente la lunga chioma ch'egli si era fatto crescere giurando di non reciderla più finché gli Italiani non avessero abbandonato la Tripolitania]", in ASMAI 150/15, 61.

[77] A. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia…*, 369-373.

Instances of a true civil war shook the country at the beginning of 1921: in March, clashes between Berbers and Arabs began in earnest, with the former being forced to abandon their villages in the Jabal Nafusa to the forces of the Reform Committee. According to some, al-Baruni, who was sent on several occasions to intervene as a conciliator between the parties by the colonial government, was gravely responsible for much of the tragic turn of events: his prestige between the Berbers was shaken, and many government officials of the ministry for the Colonies interpreted his actions as directed by personal ambition and in opposition to Italian interest.

Faced with this chaotic and uncontrollable situation, various political groups in Italy became increasingly convinced that conciliation on the basis of the Statute could no longer be pursued, and that forceful action was required in Tripolitania, with the resumption of military operations.[78] The main actor in this turn was the new governor, Giuseppe Volpi, who arrived in Tripoli in August 1921.

The antipathy and disagreements between al-Baruni and the new governor, who considered him a dangerous intriguer,[79] manifested quickly. When in December 1921 al-Baruni asked for permission to embark for Italy, and from there to travel to Istanbul, arguing that he was an Ottoman citizen, the governor agreed: al-Baruni set sail for Syracuse on the 22nd December 1921. He never again obtained permission to return to Tripoli, despite his repeated requests.

Some time later, al-Baruni stated that his interdiction from returning to Tripoli was due:

> to the bad way I was received by Count Volpi [... who instead of following the path of conciliation] had preferred to resort to a strong manner and had taken military measures of a demonstrative nature which made me understand that there was nothing to hope for from that man. Then I retired.[80]

On the 26th of January 1922, with a surprise action decided by Volpi, the colonial troops occupied Qasr Ahmad (Misurata Marina), on the coast east of Tripoli, and in the following months began the "reconquest" of Tripolitania, in which Colonel Rodolfo Graziani distinguished himself for his leadership. Thus, the last governments of liberal Italy shot down the final chances for a peaceful

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[78] O. Gabelli, *La Tripolitania…*, 91-98.

[79] Volpi's judgment of al-Baruni was very cutting: "I consider this notable as one of the most pernicious elements of our politics in Tripolitania, and I believe that our situation will still have to suffer for his excessive ambitions and his spirit of intrigue" (Volpi to MC, 22.12.1921, in ASMAI 150/15, 61); "I consider him an individual with whom every understanding is useless or harmful, due to an absolute lack of moral capacity to maintain any pact despite the fact that he can be denied neither ingenuity nor skill" (Volpi to MC, 28.6.1922, *ibidem*).

[80] Garagnani, Una conversazione a Parigi con Suleiman El Baruni, *Il Paese*, 90, 15 aprile 1922 (ASMAI 150/15, 61).

resolution of the Tripolitanian question, definitively reneging the Statute and the friendship between Italy and Tripolitania, for which al-Baruni thought it had been worth struggling during the last few years of his presence in Libya.

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ABSTRACT

Sulayman al-Baruni played a particularly important role during the first decade of the colonial occupation in Libya: from the landing of the troops in Tripoli till the end of the First World War, he was one of the main animators of the resistance against the Italian intervention. A muslim of Ibadi confession, he belonged to one of the most important families of the *Adrar n Infusen* (the Berber mountain) region and was elected deputy of the Ottoman parliament after the seizure of power by the Union and Progress Committee in 1908. Closely related to Enver Pasha, one of the most prominent figures in Ottoman politics of that period, in 1913 he was appointed senator in Istanbul. During the First World War he was charged with promoting the intervention of the Libyan forces alongside the central Empires against Italy and its allies.

The interpretations of his thought and political activity have made him one of the followers of the Berber principality dream, one of the protagonists of the pan-Islamist action in North Africa and, finally, one of the "lions" of Tripolitanian proto-nationalism as a leading member of the ephemeral *Jumhuriyya al-Tarabulusiyya* of 1918.

This paper aims at analyzing the position of Sulayman al-Baruni towards the new politics of colonial Italy after the First World War, trying to understand it through some archival documents concerning his stays in Italy in 1919 and 1920.

Fig. 1 - Sulayman al-Baruni's half-length portrait (undated: ca. 1938?) displayed in the *Mathaf al-saraya al-hamra* of Tripoli along with the portraits of the leaders of the *Jumhuriyya al-Tarabulusiyya.* Photo: Federico Cresti, 2010.

سليمان البارون في جولة تفتيشية في أدوار الجهاد ضد الغزو الايطالي
سنة ١٩١٢م. بمنطقة العقيبة

Fig. 2 - Sulayman al-Baruni as condottiere of the anti-Italian Resistance, 1912 (Tripoli, *Mathaf al-saraya al-hamra*). Photo: Federico Cresti, September 2010.

Fig. 3 - Sulaiman al-Baruni in a photograph (signed and dated 25 *muharram* 1335 [21 November 1916]) sent to the *qadi* of Zuwara and the Awlad Issa kabyle with a message summoning to participate in the meeting in Aziziyya for the proclamation of the return of Tripolitania under the Ottoman government (ASMAI, *Libia* 150/14-58: Governo della Tripolitania, Ufficio politico-militare, *Notizie su Suleiman el-Barùni*, all. 2).
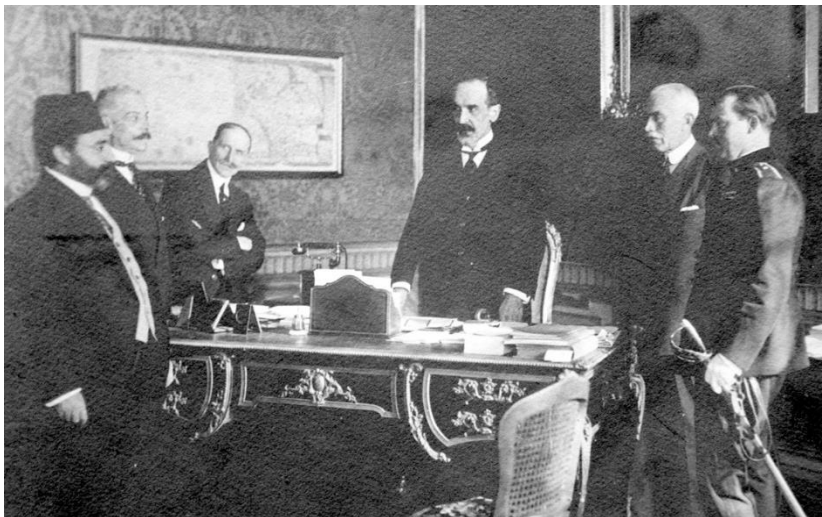
Fig. 4 - The Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs, Luigi Rossi, and others high officials receiving al-Baruni in Rome (november 1920). On the right, Major Borriello, his interpreter during the travels in Italy (ASMAI, *Libia* 150/15-62).

Antonio M. Morone

Libyan Intermediaries on the Eve of Country Independence: The case of the Bin Sha'ban Family

The independence of the Federal Monarchy of Libya was proclaimed on December 24, 1951, after almost ten years of British military administration in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica and French occupation of Fezzan (1943-1951), and after more than thirty years of Italian colonial rule (1911-1943). The period following World War II was decisive and fundamental in defining the shape of the new Libyan State and the country's post-colonial power dynamics. In the available literature, Libya's independence has been analyzed and understood above all as, on the one hand, a process of decolonization from above, mediated by the United Nations and in the context of the retreat, if not collapse, of the Italian colonial system, and, on the other hand, as a struggle between Libyan independentist forces and the external interference of the old colonial powers (Italy, United Kingdom and France) or of the new superpowers, especially the United States.[1] This paper intends to underline the colonial attitude of Italy immediately after the fall of Fascism and during the early years of the Republic, and the international competition for the domination of Libya between the end of the Second World War and 1949. In this year, the so-called Bevin-Sforza Compromise was rejected by the General Assembly of the United Nations, leading to the failure of the attempt to divide Libya among Italy, the United Kingdom, and France. Only as a consequence

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[1] J. Bessis, *La Libye contemporaine*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1986; G. P. Calchi Novati, Mediterraneo e questione araba nella politica estera italiana, in F. Barbagallo (ed.), *Storia dell'Italia repubblicana*, vol. II, Einaudi, Torino, 1995; A. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia*, Vol. 2: *Dal fascismo a Gheddafi*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1986; F. Cresti - M. Cricco, *Storia della Libia contemporanea. Dal dominio ottomano alla morte di Gheddafi*, Carocci, Roma, 2012; N. Labanca, *Oltremare. Storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2002; M. Khadduri, *Modern Libya. A Study in Political Development*, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1963; M. Djaziri, *État et société en Libye*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1996; G. Rossi, *La questione delle ex colonie italiane dopo il trattato di pace: 1947-1949*, Giuffrè, Milano, 1980; D. Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006; R. B. St. John, *Libya. From Colony to Revolution*, Oneworld, Oxford, 2008; J. Wright, *The Emergence of Libya*, Silphium Press, London, 2008.

of this event, we argue, did Italy for the first time declare itself favorable to the independence of colonized countries. However, such colonialist plans for Libya were not just an expression of external interference, but also involved the intermediation of groups of notables who often moved within a regional rather than a national horizon. Although after 1949 the projects for the re-colonization of Libya were set aside and the legitimacy of the country's independence ceased to be questioned, the fact that the various elites who had intermediated at various regional levels with the European colonial powers had become ensconced at the head of the new independent state led to a fragmentation of political power in the country. This encouraged considerable ongoing external interference in Libyan affairs, and fostered the prevalence of conservative projects for the new independent Libyan society.

Abroad in Africa, the former colonial intermediaries, the native authorities of the British Empire and the *chefs* of the French Empire's administrative districts, tried to defend their positions of power in a political and social framework that was undergoing rapid change. However, in most cases, it was the new political forces inspired by nationalism that prevailed. In Libya, history took the opposite course: the nationalists were the main losers in the decolonization process, while a multifaceted alliance of conservative elites, led by Idris al-Sanusi in the name of Islam and privileging a localist political agenda, was able to take control of the newly independent State. The struggle between nationalists and conservative forces in the country and their respective international supporters on the eve of Libyan independence has been decidedly less studied compared to international competition over the country.[2] This paper broadly discusses the paradigm of Libyan intermediaries in relation to the country's transition towards independence, and points out a specific case study of political intermediation in Western Tripolitania that is related to the Berber speaking Bin Sha'ban family. The political engagement of this group is analyzed from the perspective of intermediation (rather than collaboration), arguing that colonial subjects that served under European rule strategically acted in the interest of improving their authority and their own personal welfare or social status.[3] In this regard, the historical trajectory of the Bin Sha'ban proves their ability to encompass the changing political scenario and to

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[2] Regarding political competition in Libya, see L. Anderson, *The State and Social Transformation in Tunisia and Libya, 1830-1980*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1986; A. Baldinetti, *The Origins of the Libyan Nation. Colonial legacy, exile and the emergence of a new nation-state*, Routledge, London, 2010; S. Hasan Sury, A New System for a New State. The Libyan Experiment in Statehood, 1951-1969, in A. Baldinetti, *A Modern and Contemporary Libya: Sources and Historiographies*, Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, Roma, 2003.

[3] B. N. Lawrance - E. L. Osborn - R. L. Roberts, *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 2006, 6.

secure (or improve) their status, relying upon the enhancement of their Berber ethnicity.

The international struggle over Libya

Italy's defeat in World War II and its loss of dominion over its African colonies, instead of leading to a rapid settlement of the question of the status of the former Italian colonies, gave rise to a long and complex political and diplomatic process that lasted until the late 1940's. Article 23 of the peace treaty signed in Paris on February 10, 1947, forced Italy to give up its colonies and hand over all decisions concerning them to the four victorious powers (the US, the USSR, France, and the UK), which were given a year from the date of the treaty's ratification to reach a solution; otherwise the colonial dossier would pass to the UN, as in fact happened in September 1948. Many factors played against the idea of a possible "return of the colonies to Italy", starting from "the hostility of the Arabs, the strenuous opposition of Ethiopia and, above all, the lack of reliability of Italy until its political orientation and its place in the international system were clarified".[4] Italy had lost its status as a colonial power, experiencing this diminution of its international role as a vexation, an injustice, which the new republican ruling class tried to remedy throughout the post-war period, up to 1949. Italy's defeat during the Second World War did not mean the outright end of Italian colonialism, nor did it bring about the independence of Libya, Eritrea and Somalia. On the contrary, during the post-war period, there was an "overabundance and competition" of different colonial policies that can be referred back to Italy, Great Britain and France.[5] Italy's staunch efforts to regain its overseas possessions, including Libya, were constantly opposed by Great Britain and France's attempts to topple Italian influence and transform their respective military administrations in civilian trusteeship administrations. European colonial competition for Libya also influenced the clash between the Libyan nationalists, which had grown rapidly under the British Military Administration (BMA), and the various groups of notables that were willing to broker with the different European powers.

The real turning point in the complex affair of the settlement of the status of the former Italian colonies came on May 18, 1949, when the UN General Assembly failed to approve the Bevin-Sforza Compromise, which would have divided Libya into three different trusteeship administrations: an Italian mandate for Tripolitania, an English mandate for Cyrenaica, and a French mandate for Fezzan. The negative swing vote in the UN General Assembly was specifically that of the representative of Haiti. More generally, the reasons for the lack of approval were due to an

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[4] G. P. Calchi Novati (ed.), *L'Africa d'Italia. Una storia coloniale e postcoloniale*, Carocci, Rome, 2011, 360-361.

[5] A. M. Morone, *La fine del colonialismo italiano. Politica, società e memorie*, Le Monnier, Firenze, 2018, 5.

international system that was undergoing rapid and decisive change, in which direct colonial rule was increasingly distant from the logic of indirect influence that was beginning to characterize what developed into the Cold War. After the failure of their last attempt to restore a colonial regime in Libya, Italy and Great Britain then declared their readiness to support its independence. Minister Sforza spoke before the UN's Political Committee on October 1, 1949 to pledge Italy's commitment to immediate Libyan independence. Compared to the colonial remonstrances of the immediate post-war period, it was a true diplomatic about-face that however still pursued "a tactical aim", under the belief that Italian influence in Libya could still be furthered through (and not against) independence:[6] Italy was now trying to secure its influence over the independent Libya by supporting their closest intermediaries, such as the Qaramanli, the Muntasir and the Bin Shaʿban families.

The solution of an independent Libya organized as a federal State under the kingship of Idris al-Sanusi promised to serve a conservative project which had been realized through an unlikely alliance between the various sources of Western influence and the interests of various regional notables. The grandson of the founder of the Sanusi Order, Idris al-Sanusi, was born in 1890 and was educated in al-Kufrah. In 1922, Idris escaped the Italian military campaign in Libya and took refuge in British-ruled Egypt, while Sanusi resistance in Cyrenaica lasted until 1931. In 1947, Idris returned from exile and was suddenly acclaimed as leader of Cyrenaica. Great Britain took advantage of its good relations with the Sanusi Order and proclaimed the autonomy of Cyrenaica on July 1, 1949 under the rule of Emir Idris al-Sanusi. In terms of international law, "Cyrenaica could not have either de facto or de jure recognition as a State" since any decision about the former Italian colonies necessarily had to pass through a UN vote.[7] However, in political terms Idris's role was greatly strengthened, clearly to the detriment of the nationalists, but above all also with regard to other local notables. For its part, the UK was able to gain a leading role in relations with what would soon become the country's new ruling class. France, among the three European powers directly involved in Libya, was certainly the one that manifested the greatest resistance to the political change triggered by the failed approval of the Bevin-Sforza Compromise. This was also due to the fact that it was suffering the consequences of this rejection without having directly taken part in it. Like the colonialist plans of Italy and Great Britain, France's had hinged on the support of local notables, specifically the Saif al-Nasr

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[6] G. P. Calchi Novati, La sistemazione delle colonie italiane dell'Africa Orientale e i condizionamenti della guerra fredda, in A. Del Boca (ed.), *Le guerre coloniali del fascismo*, Laterza, Rome-Bari, 1991, 533.

[7] Archivio Storico-Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (hereafter ASDMAE), Rome, Affari Politici (hereafter AP), Uf. III, b. 742, note signed by Finzi, first President of the Appeals Court, May 11, 1950.

family, and especially Ahmed Saif al-Nasr: France had relied on them to administer the region and discourage the penetration of nationalist ideology.[8] However, the train of events forced France in Libya and elsewhere in Africa to "negotiate formal domination in exchange for lasting influence".[9] By exploiting their link with France and leveraging their historical collaboration with the Sanusiyya, the Saif al-Nasr became the leaders of the new independent Fezzan.

The dynamics of settling the status of the former Italian colonies moved toward a rapid solution when a two-stage agreement was reached at the UN General Assembly. Resolution no. 289 of November 21, 1949 called for Libya's independence, officially proclaimed on December 24, 1951. It was, as stated, a conservative independence, a "lively but contradictory compromise between different foreign interests and national aspirations", cobbled together through the forms of a federal State.[10] Such an institutional structure left ample powers to the governments of the three federated regions, and by virtue of this, was a compromise that managed to bring together the political interests of the various local notables with the various European policies of interference in the country. It was Idris himself who "used all his personal influence and authority to persuade the Tripolitan leaders to support federalism, without which Libyan unity would probably never have been achieved".[11]

The center of gravity of the new state was to be found in the figure of Idris, who, as must be remembered, before being King of the federal monarchy of Libya, had been, and then continued to be, the head of the Sanusi Order. In fact, Islam was the lowest common denominator on which to establish a conservative pact among the different regional notable leaders: for this reason, the sense of identity provided by Islam was much more important in Libya than it was for the States that succeeded the Ottoman Empire in the Arab Orient.[12] In the framework of Idris's conservative project, religion became his main tool for overcoming the particularism of the country's many regional affiliations or *qabila* ties in order to build the new Libya: "Islam was institutionalized as a source of political legitimacy

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[8] F. Cresti, Il nazionalismo libico a Tripoli durante l'amministrazione militare britannica: note su Ahmad e 'Ali al-Faqih Hasan e sul Blocco nazionalista libero, *al-Kutlah al-wataniyyah al-hurrah* (1945-1949), *Oriente Moderno*, XXIV, 2/3, 2005, 390.

[9] P. Nugent, *Africa Since Independence. A Comparative History*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2012, 49.

[10] Y. Martin, La Libye de 1912 à 1969, in AA.VV., *La Libye nouvelle. Rupture et continuité*, Éditions du centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris, 1975, 45.

[11] M. Khadduri, *Modern Libya. A Study in Political Development*, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1963, 319.

[12] L. Anderson, Religion and State in Libya: The Politics of Identity, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 483, January, 1986, 65.

and the Constitution [...] sanctioned the sacredness of the monarchy".[13] At the time of independence, the challenge was to transform into a shared political and cultural reality what had been an artificial invention of colonialism, by bringing together in the Libyan colony three regions with specific and partly divergent histories: while for the nationalists this challenge was to be won by constructing a tightly-knit Arab nation, for the conservatives it was a matter of preserving areas of local autonomy and power within the broader framework of Islam and Idris's recognized role as a nodal point for the various regional notables.

Idris's ascent to the throne therefore marked the defeat of the nationalists, and for a section of the Libyan population Idris's return to Libya, after his years of exile in Egypt, was not experienced as an authentic liberation, but rather as a conservative restoration. With the elections of March 1952, the first of the newly independent Libya, the nationalists who opposed Idris had hoped, if not to overturn, at least to restore a balance in the situation that might be favorable to them. Tripolitania elected 35 seats out of 55 total deputies, while the rest were divided between Cyrenaica (15) and Fezzan (5). The results delivered the parliament and the country firmly into the hands of the conservative power system linked to Idris. The 1952 elections had in fact confirmed the long-time fears of the nationalists regarding the possibility that the electoral test might reveal itself to be a democratic trap: "The majority of people who went to the polls voted for individual personalities, and not for parties or policies at all".[14] Although the nationalist parties had made reference to the Arab League, and to ideas, passions and slogans of the broader pan-Arab movement, the capacity for political and social mobilization of modern nationalism remained limited among Libyans. The vote was characterized by a political and often conceptual horizon that did not supersede clans, reputations or bonds of patronage. In Tripoli, where the nationalists could count on a greater following among the mobilized urban workers who had demonstrated and gone on strike several times against foreign interference, the election result was indeed different and marked a "resounding victory",[15] as the British documents of Bashir al-Saʿdawi's National Congress define it. However, the nationalist victory in Tripoli was not enough to influence the result at the national level, although it was, somewhat paradoxically, the warning signal that persuaded Idris to ban political parties and expel Bashir al-Saʿdawi and other nationalist intellectuals and politicians from the country, using the pretext of a few protests that followed the vote. Evidently, such an initiative

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[13] A. Baldinetti, Islam e Stato in Libia dal secondo periodo ottomano alla Jamahiriyya (1835-1969), in A. Baldinetti - A. Pitassio (eds.), *Dopo l'impero ottomano. Stati-nazione e comunità religiose*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2006, 231.

[14] The National Archives, Kew, London, Foreign Office, b. 371, f. 97269, secret report on the elections signed by G. P. Cassels, March 17, 1952.

[15] *Ibidem*.

immediately emphasized the conservative character of the regime, but also underlined its need for self-defence and conservation, which perceived political parties as an element of social change adverse to the classes on which it instead based its consent.

The Bin Sha'ban family's case of intermediation

Italian colonial rule had forbidden its Libyan subjects from forming all kinds of associations, especially of a political sort; the British Military Administration (BMA), on the contrary, fostered the liberalization of Libyan society and allowed the formation of the first political associations, with the aim of making them into the British' own referents and political interlocutors. At the same time, the Italians also began to support and finance individual notables, families or associations which were willing to support the idea of Italy's return to Libya. The Ministry of Italian Africa, Ministero dell'Africa Italiana (MAI) in Italian, which was only closed down in 1953, played a prominent role in disseminating funds and building up political allegiances. The creation of nationalist associations and parties marked a significant political change in the relationship between Italy and Libya, even if it was not a change genuinely inspired by the former, but rather a strategy implemented in response to the political liberalization triggered by the British occupants. The relative autonomy and freedom that Libyans experienced under BMA rule soon became a contested space between different groups, associations and parties and their respective plans for the future of Libya in partnership with different foreign handlers.

The competition between the United Kingdom and Italy to win the support of the most influential Libyan intermediaries (both in terms of individuals and of groups) was mirrored not only by the eruption on the country's political scene of the Libyan nationalists, but also by the increasing competition between Libyan intermediaries to hold on to the most important and valuable positions in a state and society in transition. While the young nationalists were part of the broader networks of pan-Arabism and pan-Africanism and supported the independence and strong unity of the Libyan nation-state, the different groups of notables who intermediated with Italy, Great Britain or France favoured a parochial and conservative vision of political power that could safeguard their position in society on the basis of their ties with a *qabila*, family, or Islamic brotherhood, or of a specific colonial relationship (as was the case for the *askaris*, the African soldiers serving in the armies of many European colonial powers).

On the Libyan side, the struggle for independence was understood for the most part in terms of the competition between two different ideas of State and society: the unified and progressive plans of the nationalists on the one hand, and the alliance among regional or local conservative hierarchies of notables on the other. The claim to power and legitimacy of these notables was often due to historically

entrenched economic and political factors, such as the control of the trans-Saharan trading routes, the agricultural production (olive growing and pastoralism in particular), and commercial activities in the urban centers; but in other cases, they also stemmed from connections to "noble" Muslim and Ottoman lineages or familial links with important Islamic Orders, such as the Sanusiyya. It was therefore not surprising that in the 1940s a point of convergence for the different fractions and currents that existed among Libyan notables was found in Idris al-Sanusi, who headed the Order first established in Cyrenaica in 1843 by Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Sanusi.

In this complex scenario, the elements that fostered and facilitated intermediary roles were many and varied. Among others, shared ethnicity was a powerful tool through which to conduct negotiation. The case of the Bin Sha'ban, a Berber-speaking family from the city of Zwara. Ibrahim Bin Sha'ban was the son of Sultan, who since the early stages of the colonial occupation of Western Tripolitania had been a precious ally of Italy in the city.[16] Ibrahim was one of the most prominent members of the Bin Sha'ban family; as such, after having served as administrative chief (*capo-cabila*) during colonial rule, he was imprisoned in 1943 by the British for his closeness to Italy. After he was released following the end of the Second World War, his political career was closely linked with that of Salim al-Muntasir, who was one of the most prominent figures in another family that had acted as intermediaries for Italy since the beginning of colonial rule, and had undoubtedly help to facilitate Italian rooting in Tripolitania.[17] In 1946, Ibrahim Bin Sha'ban was part of the leading group of the United National Front (UNF) which, under the leadership of Salim al-Muntasir, aimed "to unite and create an independent Libya under the constitutional rule of Idris al-Sanusi and with the support of Great Britain".[18] The Front represented the more conservative bloc of Tripolitanian society, and it gained its main followers from among notables, *shaykhs*, traders, and some Jewish circles. The UNF simultaneously fostered relations with Great Britain and Italy: from the Libyan perspective, the most profitable position was to have relations with all the main players in the Libyan game, the British Administration, Italy and Idris al-Sanusi.[19]

The situation changed rapidly during the spring of 1948, when the Four Power Commission (FPC) landed in Tripoli on 6 March 1948. During its 40 days of investigation in Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan, the FPC "recognized that

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[16] S. Berhe, *Notabili libici e funzionari italiani: l'amministrazione coloniale in Tripolitania (1912-1919)*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2015, 218-219.

[17] L. Anderson, *The State and Social Transformation…*, 126.

[18] A. Baldinetti, *The Origins of the Libyan Nation…*, 118.

[19] F. Cresti, La rinascita dell'attività politica in Tripolitania nel secondo dopoguerra secondo alcuni documenti britannici (dicembre 1945 gennaio 1949), in F. Cresti. (ed.), *La Libia tra Mediterraneo e mondo islamico*, Giuffrè, Milano, 2006, 233.

Libyans were virtually unanimous in their desire for freedom from foreign rule"; but it also nevertheless concluded that Libya could not be reputed to be economically "self-supporting" and was "thus not ready for independence".[20] Apart from the great resentment that this decision produced in Libya, the perspective of a further period of foreign rule over Libya, as well as the increasing rapprochement between Italy and the United Kingdom, lead the various Libyan players to review their positions. The UNF faced a "schism" inside its executive committee: president Salim al-Muntasir and Ibrahim Bin Shaʿban were both accused of having been "bought by the Italians".[21] According to Italian records, there is no doubt that the Italians invested both propaganda and monetary support in trying to win over both Libyan notables; on the other hand, however, their potential engagement with the Italians could have been intended as an instrument through which to maintain a position of strength in a constantly shifting scenario: faced with the close relations between the United Kingdom and Idris al-Sunusi, Salim al-Muntasir and Ibrahim Bin Shaʿban could at best aspire to come second in any relations with the British Administration, while intermediation with Italy had the potential to be more fruitful. Relations with Italy also appeared promising with a view to counteracting the rise of Libyan nationalists in Tripolitania under the leadership of Bashir al-Saʿdawi: the latter, after years of exile in Syria and Egypt, in 1948, looking forward to the arrival in Libya of the FPC, had transferred the offices of Libyan Liberation Committee from Cairo to Tripoli with the support of the Egyptian government and the Arab League.

In 1949, the failure of the Bevin-Sforza Compromise and the consequent Italian and British willingness to grant Libyan independence once again revolutionized the scenario. According to Italian archival documents, Abdallah Bin Shaʿban, son of Ibrahim, had been sent to New York at the expense of the Italian government in November 1949 to witness the final act of the long and complex diplomatic negotiations over Libya at the General Assembly of the United Nations, and to praise the Italian support of Libyan independence and its postcolonial commitment to help (and influence) the new State. In fact, resolution no. 289 of November 21, 1949 put an end to the international dispute over Libya through arranging for its independence by the end of 1951. Upon his return from New York, Abdallah stopped off in Tunis where, according to Italian documents, he had a series of discussions with the French authorities, from whom Abdallah presumably requested aid "for the Berbers, who will always be mistreated as a minority no longer protected by Italy, against a Tripolitan government made up mainly of Arabs, who had always been traditionally hostile to the Berbers. In the past, the Italians had protected loyal Berbers who had fought for them against the Arabs, saving the Italians from potentially calamitous predicaments, especially during the

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[20] R. B. St. John, *Libya. Continuity and Change*, Routledge, London, 2011, 33.
[21] A. Baldinetti, *The Origins of the Libyan Nation…*, 131.

First World War, when Italian forces were about to be driven back into the sea by the onslaught of the rebellious Arabs. However, following the end of the war, Italy had showed no gratitude to the Berbers, and had in fact elevated into positions of power the leaders of Arab factions that had not always been faithful to the Italian cause, as in the case of a number of members of the treacherously pro-British al-Muntasir family. Given these conditions of the Tripolitan Berber people, it is advisable to rely on the Berber brothers of Tunisia and the French authorities in order for the former to prepare themselves to resist the expected hostilities of the Tripolitan and pro-English Arab government".[22]

The author of the document, senior MAI official Gaetano Chapron, linked Bin Sha'ban's attitude to a "resentment for the pre-eminence afforded by the Italians to Salim al-Muntasir", who had given a secondary role to the Bin Sha'ban family. The senior official also confirmed that what was reported in the document "were veiled threats in the same vein as those spoken by Ibrahim Bin Sha'ban in a conversation he had with me when he was in Rome".[23] According to an information report from 1950 (considered "reliable" by the Italian Ministry of Defence), it was even assumed that the Bin Sha'ban were in favour of "a French occupation of Zwara, Nalut, Jado and Yefren [...] in their desire to unite with the Berbers of Tunisia".[24] In actuality, the agreement on the settlement of the Tunisian-Tripolitan border in 1910 between French rulers in Tunis and Ottoman authorities in Tripoli had already produced a considerable enlargement of French-Tunisian space at the expense of Tripolitania.[25] In this regard the Bin Sha'ban's strategy took for granted France's long lasting interest in increasing its influence across the border region.

The document clearly shows a representation of the Berber identity and its history centred on ethnicity, in correspondence with the colonial astuteness that had helped shape and construct it as part of its strategy of domination. Recourse to ethnicity made it possible to create a minority discourse among the relevant communities of Western Tripolitania, as was the case with the city of Zwara, where the Berber language was spoken alongside Arabic. While in the pre-World War II period Berber identity (and from the point of view of colonial power a possible Berber policy) had been cultivated as a negotiating asset to broker in the context of a war that opposed Libyans to Libyans and not only colonizers to colonized, in 1949 a similar bargaining logic re-emerged, in which the ethnic and minority arguments were updated to suit the new political context and the competing

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[22] ASDMAE, AP, Uf. III, 1946-50, b. 52, secret note signed by Chapron, November 24, 1949.

[23] *Ibidem.*

[24] ASDMAE, AP, Uf. III, 1946-50, b. 52, anonymous report attached to the letter from General Gian Carlo Re to the Defence Chief of Staff, February 15, 1950.

[25] E. Rossi, *Storia di Tripoli e della Tripolitania dalla conquista araba al 1911*, Istituto per l'Oriente, Roma 1968, 336. See also M. Abdelmoula, *Jihad et colonialisme. La Tunisie et la Tripolitaine (1914-1918)*, Éd. Tiers-Monde, Tunis, 1987, 78.

colonial hierarchies of the European powers - which, regarding Libya in general, were Italy and England, but included French interference along the border with Tunisia and Fezzan. In fact, another Italian document, dating from just over a year later, reports that in the first months following Libya's independence, France (while doing everything in order not to give up its positions in Fezzan) "tried to attract into its orbit the Berber group of Jebel [al-Nafusa] and the Ghibla nomads".[26] This kind of policy was in direct contiguity with the French strategy in Fezzan of exerting influence through close relations with the Saif al-Nasr family.[27] Exercising influence on the population of Fezzan up to Nafusa and Zwara was evidently a strategic aim for France in the context of controlling a border area with Tunisia and Algeria through which contact was being made between the nationalist movements in the French colonies and their Libyan, Egyptian and Arab counterparts in the Middle East, and which later saw "the illegal passage of arms destined for the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN)", which transformed Libya into its rear line.[28]

From the Berber perspective, therefore, what this implied was the continuation of a strategy of intermediation, which could hardly be understood as an objective in itself, but rather ought to be seen as a means to achieve other objectives. Reading the above document between the lines, it emerges clearly that the real competition was between the Bin Sha'ban and the Muntasir families, who were vying against each other to occupy as many positions of power within the new State and its institutions as they could. It was certainly no coincidence that the Bin Sha'ban came immediately after the UN's final decision on the independence of Libya, when the issue was no longer that of the colonial resurgence of Italy, Great Britain and France, but rather that of the competition among Libyan notables scrambling to define their respective roles, positions of power and institutional positions in the new State. Turning to France was therefore a tactic to attract Italy's attention in away from the competing Muntasir family, and to try to mobilize part of the material and symbolic resources that Italy was preparing to deploy to support Libya's post-independence "development", and which evidently the Bin Sha'ban considered to be flowing towards the Muntasir family in alarming proportions.

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[26] ASDMAE, AP, uf. III, 1951-57, b.818, express telex no. 2981/784 from Conti to the MAE, April 10, 1952.

[27] M. Ouannes, L'administration française au Fezzan et la nature de ses rapports à la famille de Seif-En-Nasr, in M. Ouannes - P. N. Denieuil (eds.), *Une histoire méconnue. Les relations libyco-françaises au Fezzan de 1943 à 1956*, Cérès Éditions, Tunis, 2012, 123.

[28] ASDMAE, AP, uf. III, 1959-62, b.40, f. 17, express telex no. 10/4 from Mondello to the MAE, January 3 1959.

Conclusions

If the main goal of intermediation was to secure a position of power in a changing society, the vicissitudes of the Bin Shaʿban family and in particular those of Ibrahim, testify to the success of this strategy, especially when contrasted with the claims of the nationalists and, at the same time, the concurrent intermediation of the Muntasir family. In 1951, Ibrahim Bin Shaʿban became the Minister of Communications for the government led by Mahmoud al-Muntasir, grandson of Selim. Then, in 1954, under the Bin Halim government, Ibrahim Bin Shaʿban became Minister of Education, and then Minister of Defence following a reshuffling of the cabinet at the end of the same year. In conclusion, the positioning of Libyan actors with regard to the development and enforcement of Italian colonial and post-colonial policies was not at all one of passive reception, but was instead clearly marked by a spirit of intermediation, with which more than one actor tried to cope with the changing situation in order to safeguard their positions of political power. This was the case for the nationalists and the established hierarchies of local notables. By shifting its attention to Libya, Italy, together with Great Britain and France, contributed significantly in making sure that a conservative regime took over independent Libya, and thus ensured the victory of the older, conservative echelons of notables over the young pan-Arabic progressive nationalists. Intermediation did not therefore only provide important levers through which to exercise their influence over a newly independent Libya for Great Britain, Italy and France alike, but it was in fact decisive in acquiring the economic and symbolic resources that helped produce the definitive affirmation of the more conservative groups of the country over the new progressives. It appears clear that through their relations with Italy, the Bin Shaʿban family were able to reinforce their respective positions of power within the frame of a logic of self-preservation.

Furthermore, we have seen how Berber identity was invoked and framed in terms of ethnicity and of a minority oppressed by the Arabs in relation to the process of political bargaining. While colonial knowledge had produced ethnic identities in order to divide and rule over its subjects, the case of the Bin Shaʿban family shows the ability of post-colonial subjects to reverse this logic and utilize colonial ethnic labels to gain advantages in bargaining with foreign authorities. An interpretation framing the anti-colonial struggle in Western Tripolitania in terms of political and socio-economic interests that were beyond the agenda of Islamist mobilization was first formulated by the Libyan historian Aghil al-Barbar.[29] Libyan

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[29] A. M. Barbar, *The Tarabulus (Libyan) Resistance to the Italian invasion: 1911-1912*, Ph.D. Thesis University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1980; A. M. Barbar, *Economics of Colonialism: The Italian Invasion of Libya and the Libyan resistance 1911-1920. A Socio-Economic Analysis*, Markaz Jihad al-Libyin, Tripoli, 1992.

resistance to Italian occupation did not form a "unique religious front",[30] but it instead contributed to a rising process of territorial grounding of political agency which – as Chiara Pagano has demonstrated in her work – combined with the strategic use of discourses of ethnicity in order to mobilize people and bargain with foreign counterparts.[31] Similar dynamics emerged during the Libyan transition to independence, thus demonstrating the Libyans' ability to understand, manipulate and reinterpret colonial categories to their advantage.

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[30] M. Lahmar, Libyens et Italiens en Tripolitanie (1911-1928). Quels territoires d'allégance politique?, in Abdelhamid Hènia (ed.), *Être notable au Maghreb. Dynamique des configurations notabiliaires*, Maisonneuve & Larose, Paris, 2006, 130.

[31] C. Pagano, *Emergere ed evoluzioni del discorso etnico nella Tripolitania coloniale: la questione berbera (1911-1923)*, PhD thesis, Università degli studi di Roma Tre, 2016/2017 a. y. See also F. Cresti, Les Ibadites du Djebel Nefusa dans la vision coloniale italienne. Les débuts de la 'question berbère' en Libye (1911-1913), in V. Assan, B. Heyberger and J. Vogel (éds.), *Minorités en Méditerranée au XIXe siècle. Identités*, 2019, 85-104; F. Cresti, Il nazionalismo libico a Tripoli durante l'amministrazione militare britannica: note su Ahmad e 'Ali al-Faqih Hasan e sul Blocco nazionalista libero, *al-Kutlah al-wataniyyah al-hurrah* (1945-1949), *Oriente Moderno*, XXIV, 2/3, 2005; V. Assan - B. Heyberger - J. Vogel (eds.), *Minorités en Méditerranée au XIXe siècle. Identités, identifications, circulations*, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, Rennes, 2019.

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ABSTRACT

This paper broadly discusses the transition to the independence of Libya and points out a specific case study of political biography in Western Tripolitania that is related to the Berber speaking Bin Sha˚ban family. The political engagement of this group is analyzed from the perspective of intermediation (rather than collaboration), arguing that colonial subjects that served under European rule strategically acted in the interest of improving their authority and their own personal welfare or social status. In this regard, the historical trajectory of the Bin Sha˚ban proves their ability to encompass the changing political scenario and to secure (or improve) their status, relying upon the enhancement of their Berber ethnicity.

ANNA BALDINETTI

The Idea of a United Libya: Sulayman al-Baruni, Pan-Arabism and National Identity

This article discusses the emergence and construction of the idea of a Libyan nation among Libyan exiles in the Mediterranean region from the 1920s until independence. Highlighting the contributions of Sulayman al-Baruni to the debate the article demonstrates how the influence of pan-Arabism in the theoretical elaboration of a "Libyan nation-state" led to the prevalence of identifying the Libyan nation as an Arab nation, thereby disregarding the Berber component.

Exiles and Sulayman al-Baruni in the Fight against Colonial Rule

My use of the term "exile" denotes all those who fled Tripolitania and Cyrenaica as a consequence of the Italian colonial occupation between 1911 and the end of colonial rule in 1943. This exile involved many countries, mainly Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria, but also Turkey, Palestine, Chad, and Niger. It is extremely difficult to know the exact number of exiles for a number of reasons. First, no census data from the period exist on nomadic tribes. Furthermore, currently available data are not uniformly reliable. Italian diplomatic documentation gives partial figures for returning exiles only, and it is a legitimate suspicion that the authorities had some interest in overestimating the numbers of returnees in order to demonstrate the success of Italian colonial policies. Libyan sources, on the other hand, are based on oral histories, and thus are not perfectly reliable. Second, exiles frequently migrated between different countries, sometimes after being expelled, other times in order to reunite with members of their families or tribes, or to seek work. Therefore, while it is not possible to provide an exact figure, it can be surmised that a large proportion of the Libyan population was affected by these displacements.

Through the experiences undergone during exile, new structures of loyalty and solidarity among the Libyan diaspora were formed. This process was essential as it replaced the traditional roles played by ethnic membership, tribal

loyalties, kinship, brotherhood bonds, and affiliation with the pre-colonial Ottoman provinces.[1]

Sulayman al-Baruni offers us a prime example of how the experience of exile, which did not follow a linear trajectory but was characterised by migration from one country to another as well as by intermittent returns to the homeland, contributed to the shaping of a new political culture which foreshadowed the union of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica as a new political entity. Sulayman al-Baruni was born around 1870 in the Jabal Nafusa into a prominent Berber Ibadi family. His father had been a leading figure among the Ibadis of the Mzab (Algeria), of Jerba and also among many non-Ibadis of north-western Tripolitania. Al-Baruni studied at the most prestigious Islamic universities in North Africa: the Zaytuna in Tunis and later at al-Azhar, in Cairo. He was arrested several times and accused of plotting against Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid II to establish an independent emirate in the Jabal Nafusa, with the aim of re-establishing the traditional power of Ibadi imams and amirs.[2] But as Amal al-Ghazal rightly points out, "There is no evidence in the writings, career, or thought of al-Baruni that he was guilty".[3] It is worth noting that some recent literature in Arabic on al-Baruni argues that his activity and thought during this period must not be interpreted, as claimed instead by colonial sources, as a quest to affirm the "Berberness" of the area, but instead as an attempt to highlight the "Maghribness" of Islam.[4]

After returning to Cairo in 1906, he founded the printing house Matbaʿat al-Azhar al-Baruniyya and the newspaper *al-Asad al-Islam*, which published three issues between August 1907 and April 1908. Despite the fact that publishing house printed and disseminated many works on Ibadism,[5] what emerges from *al-Asad al-Islam* is that during this period al-Baruni favoured pan-Islamism, understood as the

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[1] For a detailed discussion of the term "exile" and a general outline of the exile during Italian colonial rule see A. Baldinetti, *The Origins of the Libyan Nation. Colonial Legacy, Exile and the Emergence of a New Nation-State*, Routledge, London-New York, 2010, 4-7; 53-54.

[2] For a general outline of al-Baruni's life and political activities, see J. E. Peterson, Arab Nationalism and the Idealist Politician: the Career of Sulayman Al-Baruni, in J. Piscatori - G.S. Harris (eds.), *Law, Personalities and Politics of the Middle East*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1987, 124-139; L. Veccia Vaglieri, al-Baruni Sulayman, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, CD-ROM Édition, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 2001; in Arabic: I. Abu Yaqzan, *Sulayman al-Baruni Basha fi atwar hayatihi*, al-Dar al-'Umaniyya, n. p. 1956; H. Mushaykhi, *Siyāsī, Ibādī, Maghribī: Sulaymān al-Bārūnī (1873-1940)*, JMS Plus, Tunis, 2013.

[3] A. Ghazal, An Ottoman Pasha and the End of Empire: Sulayman al-Baruni and the Networks of Islamic Reform, in J. Gelvin - N. Green (eds.), *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2013, 47. For a precise discussion of al-Baruni's charges and arrests, see M. Custers, *Sulaymān al-Bārūnī, an Ibāḍī pan-Islamist*, unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Leiden, 1972, 25-28.

[4] See for example Mushaykhi, *Siyāsī, Ibādī, Maghribī…*, 26.

[5] M. Custers, *al-Ibadiyya. A Bibliography. Second*, *revised and enlarged edition*, Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim, 2017, 123-126.

unity of Muslims within the frame of allegiance to the Ottoman Empire.[6] In 1908, after the Young Turk revolution, he was elected deputy of the Ottoman parliament for the Jabal Gharbi district.

The importance of pan-Islamic identity, which prevailed over the narrower and more local Ibadi ethnic-religious identity, is evident in al-Baruni's position vis-à-vis the Italian occupation. As soon as the Italian troops disembarked in Tripoli, Sulayman al-Baruni, following Ottoman directives, started recruiting volunteers to bolster the ranks of the resistance. He emerged as one of the latter's main leaders at the conference in al-'Aziziyya, which followed the Treaty of Lausanne, and in October 1912 brought together the most important Tripolitanian chiefs and notables to discuss their position regarding the Italian occupation. The Treaty had ratified the peace between Italy and the Ottoman Empire, and the Sultan had granted full autonomy to the provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. Al-'Aziziyya marked the first split among the Tripolitanian chiefs and tribes facing colonial occupation: on the one side there were those who accepted the occupation, including a large number of notables from the Jabal who submitted themselves and their tribes to Italian authority; and on the other were those who were resolved to continue with the resistance. Al-Baruni was among the latter. Even though, as clearly attested by the Italian colonial documentation, these different attitudes did not represent a fracture along ethno-religious lines, the Berber-Ibadi tribes and chiefs, including al-Baruni, were the most determined not to submit.[7]

Al-Baruni, referring to the Ottoman firman granting independence to Tripolitania, opened negotiations with the Italian authorities in November 1912 and requested autonomy for the Jabal and the western coastal plain, with the administrative centre located in Marsa Zuwaga, an ancient Ibadi centre. Alternatively, he wished to establish a protectorate based on the British model in Egypt; or as a final and least preferred possibility, he hoped for the concession of special privileges to the area.[8] It seems that the Minister of the Colonies was inclined to agree to the constitution of a Berber province with special status and governed by its own elective chiefs, but the colonial officers in Tripoli opposed this solution because the provision would have satisfied only al-Baruni and a few other chiefs.[9] The imposition of colonial occupation on the Jabal, following the battle of

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[6] 'A. M. al-Misrati, *Sihafat Libiya fi nisf qarn*, Dar al-kashshaf, Beirut, 1960, 118-126.

[7] ASDMAE: ASMAI *Libia* 150/14, Governo della Tripolitania, Ufficio politico-militare, Notizie su Suleiman al-Baruni, 1916, typescript, 8.

[8] ASDMAE: ASMAI *Libia* 150/14, Governo della Tripolitania, Ufficio politico-militare, Notizie su Suleiman al-Baruni, 1916, typescript, 13-17.

[9] ASDMAE: ASMAI *Libia* 150/14, Ragni to Ministero delle Colonie, 23 March 1913; F. Corò, Una interessante pagina di storia libica. Suleiman el Baruni, il sogno di un principato berbero e la battaglia di Asàaba 1913, *Gli annali dell'Africa Italiana*, 1/3-4, 1938, 962-967.

al-Asaba'a on the 23rd of March 1913, dissolved what Francesco Corò, a colonial officer and scholar, called "the dream of a Berber principality".[10]

Sulayman al-Baruni and other notables emigrated to Tunisia. The waves of departures of Libyan exiles correlated with different periods and stages of colonial rule. The first wave occurred with the initial stages of the Italian occupation of Tripolitania in 1911, and the first country of destination was Tunisia. This first wave of migration to Tunisia concerned the tribes of the areas of al-'Ajilat, Nalut, Fassato, and Zuwara: it was mainly a movement of nomads and of the poorest social strata. The Italian authorities, concerned about the number of Tripolitanians in Tunisia, tried to persuade the exiles to return through the mediation of a few loyal notables and the promise of important offices in the colonial administration. A preferred interlocutor for the Italians was al-Baruni, who was allegedly promised a separate district for the Berbers and was entrusted with the task of writing a monograph on the Jabal Gharbi for the colonial authorities, intended as an account of the living conditions of Arabs and Berbers.[11] It must be underlined here that Ibadis had been identified by Italy as potential facilitators of colonial rule. Enrico Insabato, who had been the main agent of the pro-Islamic policy facing the occupation of Tripolitania,[12] argued that:

> The Abadites are destined to become a major economic and political force in our colonies, due both to their aspirations to independence, and because, if we can find a way of drawing them into the orbit of our interests, they could serve as an instrument of commercial penetration and of exercising political influence in all the other Abadite districts of the Muslim world.[13]

There is evidence that al-Baruni was in touch with the Italian authorities and tried to convince a number of Libyan exiles to return to Tripolitania.[14] The motivation for the subsequent shift in his conduct can be explained by the observation that:

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[10] *Idem,* 960.

[11] ASDMAE: ASMAI *Libia* 122/1-8, Relazione del conte Sforza in Tunisia, 23 November 1913, 45-48.

[12] Beginning in 1903, E. Insabato planned the means by which Italy would be able to carry out what he called the "penetration into the Muslim Orient" and which, by attracting the sympathies of the Muslims themselves, would have led them to support the Italian colonial policy. For a detailed discussion of Insabato's activities and writings, see A. Baldinetti, *Colonialismo. La ricerca di consenso in Egitto per l'impresa di Libia*, Istituto per l'Oriente C.A. Nallino, Roma, 1997, 33-70.

[13] E. Insabato, *Gli Abaditi del Gebel Nafusa e la politica islamica in Tripolitania*, Istituto Coloniale Italiano, Roma, 1918, 19.

[14] ANT: E 550/30-15, Mohammed Benkhalifa to M. Blanc, Gabes, 27 May 1913.

the loyalty of the notables was not open-ended: they were ready to cooperate with the Italians as long as the conditions necessitated this and as long as they gained benefits from such negotiations for themselves and their tribes. Once the political and military situation changed, the local leaders cast off the Italian yoke.[15]

Ambivalence was a feature of the relationship of most Muslim notables with the Italian colonial authorities; they always oscillated between collaboration and antagonism. In Tunisia, al-Baruni was in touch with a number of important figures among the Young Tunisians, such as Amor Guellaty, Chadly Darghout, and Mehmed Zeki,[16] but in those years his allegiance was to the Ottoman Empire and with the Ottoman re-involvement in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania during the First World War. In October 1916, at the request of the Sultan, Sulayman al-Baruni, "who was in Istanbul in virtue of his appointment to the Chamber of Deputies", returned to Tripolitania as governor of Tripolitania, Tunisia, and Algeria.[17]

It was after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire that al-Baruni came to consider Arab unity, intended as "a political unity defined by Islam, Arabism, or a conflation of both, to be the best alternative to shattered Ottoman order and a safeguard against the European colonial order in the region".[18]

Pan-Arabism and the Quest for an Independent, United Libya

During the 1920s, following the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the beginnings of fascist colonial rule in Libya, a second large wave of emigration began to take place. During the first decade of Italian occupation, exiles had been mainly involved in collecting weapons, money, and supplies in support of the ongoing primary resistance in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica; now, the patterns of the Libyan exiles' activity changed: they began to form political associations, using these new platforms to issue calls and make plans for the formation of an independent nation – though at this stage the vision of what this would look like was considerably different from what was ultimately implemented with the establishment of the monarchical state after independence.

Due to its geographical proximity to Cyrenaica, as well as its own internal political developments, and its involvement with the resistance,[19] Egypt became the first centre of the political activity of the Libyan exiles. The first association of Libyan exiles based in Egypt association, the *Jam'iyya khayriyya li-khatt Libya*

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[15] R. Simon, *Libya between Ottomanism and Nationalism. The Ottoman Involvement in Libya during the War with Italy (1911-1919)*, Klaus Schwarz Verlag, Berlin, 1987, 219.

[16] ANT: E 550/30-15, Note, Gouvernement Tunisien, Sûreté Publique, Tunis, 12 April 1913.

[17] R. Simon, *Libya...*, 229-232.

[18] A. Ghazal, An Ottoman Pasha…, 51-52.

[19] For a general overview of Egyptian solidarity at the beginning of occupation see A. Baldinetti, *Orientalismo e Colonialismo…*, 125-152; see also M. G., *al-Mawqif al-sha'bi al-misri min harakat al-jihad fi Libiya*, Markaz jihad al-libiyyin li-l-dirasat al-ta'rikhiyya, Tripoli, 2003, 147-235.

(Charity Association for the Libyan Region), formed in 1924, was sponsored by the Sanusi family, but its later political activism was mainly led by Tripolitanians. Again in 1924, another association, *Jam'iyyat ta'awun jaliyyat Ifriqiyya al-shamaliyya* (The Cooperative Society of Northern African Exiles) was established in Cairo; apart from Libyans, this association also included Moroccans, Tunisians, and Algerians amongst its members. In January 1925, a third association was established. It was named *al-Rabita al-Tarabulusiyya* (The Tripolitanian Bond) by analogy with *Jam'iyyat al-Rabita al-Sharqiyya* (The Society of the Eastern Bond) which had been founded in 1922. This Egyptian association aimed at fostering the ties between the Eastern Arab peoples. These early associations had the support of the Egyptian nationalists of the Wafd and of other nationalist parties and leaders. Among them was 'Abd al-Rahman 'Azzam, future first general secretary of the Arab League, who had also previously been involved in the anti-colonial struggles of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.[20]

'Abd al-Rahman 'Azzam, unanimously considered by historians to be one of the first Arab nationalists, resided in Libya between 1915 and 1923, and was therefore in close proximity to the *mujahidin*. 'Azzam arrived in Cyrenaica from Egypt in December 1915 in order to connect with Nuri Bey and a group of Ottoman officials who were intending to form a Sanusi army to fight the British. After the Sanusiyya signed the Pact of Akrama in 1917, 'Azzam and Nuri Bey shifted their focus to Tripolitania, where they sought to establish a centralised authority.[21] 'Azzam was one of the main promoters of the Tripolitanian Republic (*al-Jumhuriyya al-Tarabulusiyya*), which was announced on 16 November 1918 at Misurata in Tripolitania, following the initiative of a number of Ottoman officials and several local notables. The Tripolitanian Republic was an important attempt at overcoming the tribal divisions in Tripolitania, and was able to hold a strong stance during negotiations with the colonial authorities; moreover, it was the first formal republican government in an Arab-majority country.[22] Although Libyan historians tend to emphasise its role as an expression of a unified nationalist Tripolitanian movement, in actuality this aspect seems to have been limited. The effort to establish the Tripolitanian Republic foundered very soon, and its failure must be largely attributed to the intertribal conflicts for leadership which resumed in 1920.

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[20] On the early political associations in Egypt, see A. Baldinetti, *The Origins of the Libyan Nation…*, 71-74.

[21] For a detailed description of Azzam's role in Libya see R. M. Coury, *The Making of an Egyptian Arab Nationalist. The Early Years of Azzam Pasha 1893-1936*, Ithaca Press, Reading, 1998, 95-228.

[22] L. Anderson, The Tripoli Republic, 1918-1922, in E. G. H. Joffé - K. S. McLachlan (eds.), *Social and Economic Development of Libya*, Middle East and North African Studies Press, Wisbech, 1982, 43-79.

From the pages of *al-Liwa' al-tarabulsi*, which was published between 1919 and 1923, and was the main organ of the *Hizb al-islah al-waṭani* (National Reform Party), formed after the promulgation of the Fundamental Laws, ʿAzzam called for unity in the anticolonial struggle in the name of a Tripolitanian nation (*'umma*) linked to the Arab one. His appeals had no effect either on the resistance or on the production of a theorical elaboration of "the nation" in those years. Although being described as "a newspaper of the people",[23] *al-Liwa' al-tarabulsi* was actually read by very small groups of elites, and ʿAzzam's ideas of a new national identity, which were influenced by the Egyptian experience, often came across as hollow because they did not reflect the situation on the ground in Tripolitania.

ʿAzzam's ideas had an influence on the first associations of Libyan exiles based in Egypt, but these first groupings had limited scope and were lacked concrete and well-defined political programmes. In addition, these associations and organisations often lacked coordination. By the late 1920s, mainly through the *al-Lajna al-tanfidhiyya li-l-jaliyyat al-tarabulusiyya al-barqawiyya* (The Executive Committee of Tripolitanian and Cyrenaican Communities, ECTCC), established in Damascus, some exiles had initiated a process of political advancement. Their struggle started to veer towards obtaining the independence of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica from Italian colonial rule. In early 1929, the ECTCC drew up its first manifesto entitled "National Covenant of the Tripolitanian and the Cyrenaican People". This ought to be considered the country's first national charter, as it was explicitly stated that the nation which was being referred to, with the term *'umma*, was formed by Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. The charter sought to:

1) Set up a national government to be led by a Muslim, chosen by the community (*'umma*), who would exercise sovereignty over Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.
2) Convene an assembly to draft a constitution for the nation.
3) Elect a committee responsible for making key reforms.
4) Introduce Arabic as the sole official and educational language.
5) Safeguard Islam and the country's local traditions.
6) Administer the *waqf* properties through the election of an Islamic commission.
7) Grant general amnesty for all those accused of political crimes.
8) Improve relations with the Italian authorities.[24]

The aims of the charter reflected the demands that Libyans had advanced during the conference of Gharyan in November 1920,[25] and the negotiations which

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[23] al-Misrati, *Sihafat Libiya*, 157.

[24] Mithaq qawmi li-l shaʿb al-tarabulsi al-barqawi, in M. F. Shukri Muhammad Fu'ad, *Milad dawlat Libiya al-haditha. Watha'iq tahririha wa-istiqlaliha*, Matbaʿat al-iʿtimad, Cairo, 1957, vol. 2, 644. For a detailed account of ECTCC's activities, see A. Baldinetti, *The Origins of the Libyan Nation…*, 77-89.

followed in 1922. There were clear similarities with comparable initiatives in other Arab countries that were subject to League of Nations mandates.

The ECTCC stated that the nation, understood to be the traditional '*umma* (the term *waṭan* used by Arab nationalists to indicate the nation, or sometimes homeland, was not in use yet), had to be considered as one unified territory which was geographically and historically known as Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. Accordingly, this early document does not mention the word Libya to indicate Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, taken as an integral territory; instead, the charter's terminology referred to a "Cyrenaican-Tripolitanian nation".[26]

From the early 1930s the activities of the associations of Libyan exiles reached larger audiences, as members were invited to take part in various Arab or Islamic conferences throughout the Middle East, such as the Islamic Congress in Jerusalem in 1931. Libyan exiles were increasingly able to make their voices heard as they appropriated the rhetoric and ideologies of the other political movements that existed throughout the Arab-Muslim world. The Libyan cause came to be widely endorsed by Arab nationalist circles, and the exiles' growing nationalist activity and debates were mirrored also in the press. In particular, the Egyptian weekly magazine *al-Rabita al-'arabiyya* became a discussion forum for the various communities and groups of Libyan exiles. The magazine was published by *Jam'iyyat al-rabita al-'arabiyya* (the Arab Bond Society). Founded in 1936, the Society promoted Arab unity mainly through cultural activities, which reflected "the salon/hafla tradition of Egyptian cultural interaction".[27] The periodical, whose stated aim was to be the voice of the Arab nationalist movement and to establish a link between Egypt and other Arab countries, paid particular attention to the Libyan cause from its very first issues, both by publishing general articles on Italian policy and by dealing with specific questions connected to the Italian occupation. The rivalries which opposed the peoples of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, both among the resistance movement in the region and also among the exiles, were reflected in the discussions that developed in the *al-Rabita al-'arabiyya* magazine, which devoted a regular section to this issue, entitled *al-Qadiyya al-tarabulusiyya*.

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[25] The Conference of Gharyan was promoted by 'Abd al-Rahman 'Azzam, with the purpose of stopping intertribal conflict. The Conference took place in Jabal Gharyan in November 1920 and brought together the most influential Tripolitanian notables and chiefs. The appointment of an important committee concluded the conference. The committee, *Hay'at al-islah al-markaziyya* (Central Reform Committee), had the task of entering negotiations with the Italian government for the implementation of the Fundamental Laws of 1919 and the election of a local government elected by the people under a Muslim chief with religious, civil, and military powers.

[26] A. Baldinetti, *The Origins of the Libyan Nation…*, 82-83.

[27] I. Gershoni Israel - J. P. Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation*, *1930-1945*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, 24.

Despite the name, the periodical section was nonetheless concerned with Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.

Although voicing different points of view, the discussion on *al-Rabita al-ʿarabiyya* also highlighted existing commonalities, demonstrating that the Libyan question was only one part of a greater Arab nationalist cause. Sulayman al-Baruni played a vocal part in the debate: in a series of articles published in *al-Rabita al-ʿarabiyya* between 1937 and 1938, responding to Shakib Arslan, it clearly emerges how the principles of unity and nationalism penetrated the exiled Libyan population, and how Sulayman al-Baruni considered the struggle against the Italians fought by both the Tripolitanians and the Cyrenaicans as a uniting cause.

Shakib Arslan, a leading personality of that peculiar current of Arab nationalism which scholars have termed "Islamic nationalism" or "Islamic internationalism",[28] had previously always endorsed the Libyan cause, but had increasingly adopted a conciliatory position toward fascist policies in Libya due to his contacts with Mussolini.[29]

Arslan distanced himself more and more from the Libyan anti-colonial struggle. In a conference held in Damascus in 1937, he allegedly reconsidered his previous position on the Libyan issue and, in general, on all subjects regarding North Africa. He argued that the majority of the inhabitants of North Africa were not Arabs and that Arab unity should be limited to Asia. These statements provoked indignation and harsh reactions among Libyans in different countries. In Syria, the Libyan exiles' association responded to Arslan with a report arguing that while not all the inhabitants of North Africa were ethnically Arab, they were all effectively part of a grand nation (*waṭan*) based on *qawmiyya ʿarabiyya* (Arab nationalism) and *waḥda ʿarabiyya* (Arab unity). The report also argued that many of the inhabitants of North Africa had originated from the Arabian Peninsula; these two geographic areas had shared a common history since the Umayyad period. Moreover, they shared the religious link of Islam.[30] Similarly, Sulayman al-Baruni, who had initially attempted to soothe the controversy and disappointment caused by Arslan's statements among Libyan exiles,[31] believed that the exiles were fighting for the same national issue (*qadaya waṭaniyya*), which was intrinsically linked to

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[28] On the different labels given to Arslan see A. Salvatore, Dilemmi e opzioni dell'internazionalismo arabo-islamico dinanzi alla politica araba di Roma negli anni trenta. Il caso di Šakīb Arslān, *Oriente Moderno*, 10/1-6, 1991, 75-76 and note 1, 99-100; For an interpretation of its activities as Islamic internationalism see A. Colás, "Internationalism in the Mediterranean", *The Journal of North African Studies*, 3/1, 1996, 226-227.

[29] A. Baldinetti, *The Origins of the Libyan Nation…*, 97-102.

[30] T. Bin Musa, *Kifah al-libiyyin al-siyasi fi Bilad al-Sham, 1925-1950*, Markaz jihad al-libiyyin didda al-ghazw al-itali, Tripoli, 1983, 116-17. The report is reproduced on pages 257-259.

[31] 'Sulayman Basha al-Baruni yuʿlinu al-bira' min al-amir Shakib Arslan', *al-Rabita al-ʿarabiyya,* 72, 1937, vol. II, 30-4.

the Arab unity (*waḥda arabiyya).*[32] In the debate, which had at its core the question of whether the Maghreb was to be considered part of the Arab nation, the Algerian reformer Ben Badis, probably in an attempt to reconcile the two positions, made a distinction between Arab unity as an idea and Arab unity as a realistic political achievement; he momentarily excluded the Arabs of the Maghreb from the latter due to colonial rule.[33]

Al-Baruni's position also reflected the Salafi nationalist discourse. As Amal Ghazal argues, this discourse was articulated in the interwar period and was probably a response to the colonial rule which often adopted policies that divided the population along sectarian and ethnic lines, and "drew many Ibadis closer to Sunnis. Because North African Ibadis are Berbers, also turned many Berbers into Arabist Salafis".[34] During this period, al-Baruni divided his time between Iraq and Oman. Banished from Tripolitania by the Italian colonial authorities from December 1921, following a stay in France and the Hijaz, al-Baruni arrived in Oman in 1924. Oman at the time was divided into the Sultanate of Muscat, ruled by Sultan Faysal b. Taymur, and the Imamate of Oman, in the interior, ruled by Imam Muhammad b. Abdullah al-Khalili. Al-Baruni served both rulers: from 1924 to 1929 he acted as financial adviser of the Imam and chairman of a council of ministers, and then served as an adviser to the Sultan in Muscat from 1938, after spending a few years in Baghdad.[35] Al-Baruni made attempts to unite the divided country and suggested both rulers pass reforms to modernize their respective state institutions.

During his time in Oman, al-Baruni's ideas, which "were probably the first and last attempts at modernization experienced by the Ibadi community during the twentieth century",[36] were largely ignored; Khalid M. Ali has argued that this was probably because they were alien to both Ibadi scholars and tribal leaders.[37]

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[32] 'Radd al-Baruni Basha ʿala al-amir Shakib Arslan', *al-Rabita al-ʿarabiyya*, 92, 1938, vol. II, 26-33.

[33] B. Fayyad, Khilaf Sulayman al-Baruni maʿa Shakib Arslan' hawla al-wahda al-siyasiyya al-ʿarabiyya wa mawqif ʿAbd al-Hamid Ben Badin min-hu, *Majallat al-mustaqbal al-ʿarabi*, 454, 2016, 117-128.

[34] A. Ghazal, The other frontiers of Arab nationalism: Ibadis, Berbers and the Arabist-Salafi press in the interwar period, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 42/1, 2010, 105-122.

[35] A. M. ʿA. Qinawi, Sulayman al-Baruni Basha wa nashatuhu al-siyasi fi al-mahjar, *Majallat Kulliyat al-Adab Jamiʿat Qariyunis*, 35, 2011, 1-38.

[36] K. M. Al-Azri, *Social and Gender Inequality in Oman: The Power of Religious and Political Tradition*, Routledge, New York, 2013, 28.

[37] *Ibidem*. Recently, the role played by al-Baruni on Omani society at the time and the impact of his ideas on the modernization of the country have been more positively acknowledged in Oman, see for example: Oman Studies Center, Sultan Qaboos University *al-Nadwa al-duwaliyya, Sulayman Basha al-Baruni wa hudhura fi al-thaqafa al-ʿUmaniyya 10-11 Yulyuū 2012. Buhuth al-Nadwa*, Jamiʿat al-Sultan Qabus, Markaz al-Dirasat al-ʿUmaniyya, Mascat, 2013; S. S. Shaybani - S. A. al-Baruni, *Sulayman Basha al-Baruni Umma fi rajul*. Maktabat Khaza'in al-Athar, Barka', 2017, 3rd ed.

However, during that period, al-Baruni's main concern continued to be the struggle for the attainment of a national Libyan territoriality. Besides campaigning through his writings, al-Baruni also tried to get as near as possible to Tripoli,[38] and envisaged initiatives to free his homeland from Italian occupation. In September 1939, al-Baruni, on behalf of the exiles scattered in "Tunis, Algiers, Egypt and Damascus", addressed a letter to the French Foreign Minister and Resident General in Tunisia and to the French Minister for War asking for French support to "make easy the way to their national unity". His plan was to use French help to raise an army comprised of about 20,000 Libyan exiles from Tunisia, Algeria and Syria, "to be ready to march when Italy declares her entry into the war on the German side".[39] Although the Sultan of Oman, as reported in British diplomatic documentation, considered al-Baruni "too old for active work",[40] the French authorities considered al-Baruni as a possible interlocutor and in June 1940, a few months before his death, the French general officer in command of North Africa approached him to "go to Algiers to undertake certain works in connection to Libya".[41] His death,[42] however, deprived al-Baruni of any chance of continuing to play an active role in the fight for a new Libyan political entity; nonetheless, by the end of the 1930s, the principles of unity and nationalism had become widespread among the exile population, and Tripolitania and Cyrenaica were considered as a single subject that demonstrated all the features of a "national struggle".

Conclusion

In conclusion, over the course of the 1930s, a range of associations constituted by Libyan exiles began to imagine the future of their country in terms of a modern nation. This required the construction of a national identity based on common territoriality and on a single shared language and culture, i.e. Arabic.

This new national image, which was shaped and strongly influenced by encounters and comparisons with the experiences of other Arab countries, was an attempt to find an alternative to the old political systems that had collapsed due to

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It must be said that al-Baruni's Omani period has not been investigated in detail by scholarship in any European language, and there is not yet a complete biography of al-Baruni in any European language.

[38] *IOR/L/PS/12/2990*, The Political agent in Muscat to the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, Muscat, 19 September 1939.

[39] *IOR/L/PS/12/2990*, Letter from Sulayman al-Baruni to the French Minister and Resident-General at Tunis, Musca 21st September 1939.

[40] *IOR/L/PS/12/2990*, The Political agent in Muscat to the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, Muscat, 19 September 1939.

[41] A. Ghazal, An Ottoman Pasha…, 54.

[42] al-Baruni died on the 30th of April 1930 in Bombay, where he had arrived a few days earlier together with the Sultan of Muscat, probably in order to obtain "expert medical advice". *IOR/R/15/6/450*, Report from the Intelligence Bureau House Department, Department of India, 11th May 1940.

colonial occupation, and it attempted to overcome the historical separation of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. The altered political and social mapping of the region also led al-Baruni to prioritise Arab unity over Ibadi and Berber identity. Throughout this period, there is no specific reference to the Berbers in the claims of any of the associations set up by the Libyan exiles.

Beginning in the 1920s, Egyptian nationalists consistently influenced the political activity of the Libyan exiles, and contributed to the development of the latter's political culture through their direct and indirect support of the exiles' associations. It remains an open question whether Egyptian nationalists supported Libyan demands for independence because they recognised a shared idea of a "Libyan" nation, or whether their support was an act of solidarity articulating an agenda of "Arab unity", a unity which would be led by Egypt.

The outbreak of the Second World War hampered further developments of Libyan nationalism and caused fractures within the exile communities. The events of the war and its aftermath contributed to the re-emergence of divisions between Tripolitanians and Cyrenaicans, divisions which were reflected in the political parties formed in Tripolitania after 1945.[43] But it is worth noting that the *LLC Hay'at tahrir Libiya* (The Libyan Liberation Committee, LLC) was established in 1947 with the aim of bringing together the different nationalist groups, both from Cyrenaica and Tripolitania. In its first memorandum, addressed to the Council of Ministries in March 1947, the LLC mentioned Berbers directly.[44] The memorandum, which asked for the unification and independence of Libya, stressed that this "united Libya" was characterized by an Arab identity forged by the Arabic language which had facilitated the intermixing and interlinking of Arabs and Berbers.

Ultimately, the process of carving out the new and independent state of Libya was mainly determined by external powers, while local political force had little impact. Independent Libya was strongly marked by regionalism; besides the administrative regionalism which characterised the new state, it quickly became clear that the newfound feeling of national unity was meaningless to the majority of the population, with the exception of the Tripolitanian political class. Thus, the binomial of Arabism and Islam became the watchword for the construction of a new national identity. This binomial did not take into consideration the Berbers and other minorities groups in the country and denied them any official recognition. The Law on the Arabic Language, promulgated in 1952 just a few months after independence, institutionalised Arabic as the official language of the state in

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[43] On this period, see A. Baldinetti, *The Origins of the Libyan Nation…*, 110-130.

[44] TNA: PRO WO 230/206, Libyan Liberation Committee, Note addressed by the Libyan Representatives to the Foreign Ministers of the Four Big Powers, March 1947.

accordance with Article 186 of the Constitution.[45] In fact, the 1951 Constitution, whilst formally guaranteeing the equality of citizens without discrimination on religious, ethnic, or linguistic grounds, and the freedom "to use any language in private transactions or religious or cultural matters or in the Press or any other publications or in public meetings" (Article 24), did not grant any particular rights to the country's minorities.[46]

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[45] On the institutionalization of Arabic as the official language in Libya at independence, and the following Arabisation policies, see A. Baldinetti, Languages in Libya: Building Blocks of National Identity and Soft Power Tools, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 23/3, 2018, 419-421.

[46] M. Khadduri, *Modern Libya: A Study in Political Development*, The John Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1963, 141-179, 342-362.

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ABSTRACT

The paper, based on archival sources and Arabic press, addresses the emergence and construction of a Libyan nation and nationalism, particularly among Libyan exiles, in the Mediterranean region from the 1930s until independence. Since the 1930s, associations of Libyan exiles in Tunisia, Syria and Egypt began to imagine the future of their country in an attempt to find an alternative to both Italian colonial occupation, and the older previous political system, which had collapsed in its wake.

I discuss how the influence of Pan-Arabism in the theoretical elaboration of a "Libyan nation-state" led to referring to the Libyan nation as an Arab nation. The paper stresses the contribution of Sulayman al-Baruni to the debate. Particular attention is devoted to a series of articles published in 1937 by al-Baruni in *al-Rabita al-ʿArabiyya*. This weekly Egyptian magazine was an important instrument in giving voice to different points of view on the Libyan question. I argue that al-Baruni's stress on an Arab-Islamic identity probably aimed at appeasing and overcoming the divergences between Tripolitanians and Cyrenaicans concerning the "imagined" future Libyan nation.

(Upon independence, the Arabism-Islam binomial became the watchword for the construction of a new national identity. This binomial did not include the Berbers and other minority groups and denied them any official recognition).

Libya and the Italian Colonisation

MARIA GRAZIA NEGRO

La colonisation italienne : une narration impossible

La littérature postcoloniale en langue italienne présente des caractéristiques marquantes qui la rendent unique dans le cadre des autres productions postcoloniales :[1]

1) Elle émerge au début des années 90 du siècle dernier avec des écrits principalement autobiographiques, en grand retard par rapport à la fin de l'expérience coloniale. Ce décalage d'environ une cinquantaine d'années peut s'expliquer au niveau historique par la chute brutale du fascisme en septembre 1943 et le renoncement forcé aux possessions coloniales à la suite de la signature du Traité de Paris le 10 février 1947. Les colonies italiennes n'ont donc pas vécu la période de décolonisation, comme c'est le cas par exemple de l'Algérie ou de l'Inde, c'est-à-dire le temps des luttes des populations colonisées contre les colonisateurs, où la littérature occupe une place importante et devient une arme de combat.

2) Au début, elle apparaît de manière fragmentaire dans le cadre de la littérature de la migration et se mêle avec les écrivains transculturels en démontrant immédiatement une prise de conscience thématique-expressive et une maîtrise parfaite de la langue.

3) Il faudra une quinzaine d'années pour qu'un *corpus* organique de romans se forme, en établissant donc vers 2005 l'émergence officielle d'une littérature postcoloniale en Italie. Ces romans ne s'affranchissent qu'en apparence du genre autobiographique, qu'ils proposent sous d'autres formes, à travers le jeu subtil des renvois distinctifs de la fiction et de l'autofiction.

4) Elle se décline souvent, mais pas uniquement, comme écriture féminine.

5) Elle se manifeste comme un rhizome (dans l'acception donnée au mot par Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari et reprise par Édouard Glissant), qui se multiplie et qui se disperse dans les nombreuses formes de différents témoignages : écrivains nés dans les ex-colonies qui ont immigré en Italie et

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[1] M. G. Negro, *Il mondo, il grido, la parola. La questione linguistica nella letteratura postcoloniale italiana*, Franco Cesati Editore, Firenze, 2015, 45-50.

ensuite ailleurs ; Italiens nés dans les territoires coloniaux qui, une fois revenus en Italie, ont dénoncé les abus de la colonisation ; enfants de Somaliens, Ethiopiens et Érythréens nés en Italie ; enfants de couples mixtes nés dans les ex-colonies et installés ensuite en Italie, démontrant la complexité du discours postcolonial italien.

6) Elle se présente comme un témoin muet pour certaines colonies (Libye et Chine) et comme témoin tardif et non-organique pour d'autres (Albanie, Dodecanese, Grece, Slovenie).

Nous arrivons ainsi au cœur de mon intervention : malgré une domination italienne relativement longue et organique, nous n'avons aujourd'hui aucun témoignage postcolonial direct de la Libye, c'est-à-dire qu'aucun écrivain libyen n'a thématisé des souvenirs coloniaux vécus en première personne ou à travers des narrations familiales dans un texte littéraire écrit en italien. L'écrivain italien Amara Lakhous, d'origine algérienne, pose la question de l'absence d'attestations postcoloniales de la Libye sous la forme d'une série de questions, qui invitent les Italiens à « s'inquiéter ».[2]

Il faut d'abord enquêter sur les causes de ce mutisme pour détecter ensuite quand même des témoignages indirects, qui nous permettent de reconstruire la narration de l'occupation italienne.

Grâce à l'apport des historiens, nous sommes capables de mieux éclairer les raisons de ce silence: la cruauté de la domination italienne qui, avec massacres, déportations et internements d'une grande partie de la population, a provoqué un véritable génocide de Libyens ;[3] la fermeture des écoles publiques en 1911, qui a privé d'éducation une génération entière de Libyens ; l'analphabétisme diffus dans la population locale compensé par la diffusion de la littérature orale (particulièrement poèmes épiques et poésie) ; la surexposition propagandiste de la mémoire de la domination italienne du côté libyen (je pense à l'utilisation nationaliste de la lutte de résistance anticoloniale faite par Gheddafi ; à la *jalaa* de 1970, c'est-à-dire l'expulsion définitive des italiens par le Colonel ; au financement en 1980 du film *Omar al-Mukhtar. Lion of the Desert* ; à ses discours au peuple

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[2] A. Lakhous, Maghreb, in A. Gnisci (éd.), *Nuovo Planetario Italiano. Geografia e antologia della letteratura della migrazione in Italia e in Europa*, Città Aperta Edizioni, Troina (EN), 2006, 155.

[3] N. Labanca (éd.), *Un nodo. Immagini e documenti sulla repressione coloniale italiana in Libia*, Lacaita, Manduria, 2002 ; M. T. al-Jerary, Damages Caused by the Italian Fascist Colonization of Libya, in R. Ben-Ghiat - M. Fuller (éds.), *Italian Colonialism*, Palgrave Macmillian, New York, 2005, 203-208 ; E. Salerno, *Genocidio in Libia. Le atrocità nascoste dell'avventura coloniale italiana 1911-1931*, Manifestolibri, Roma, 2006 ; C. Di Sante - S. H. Hury (éds.), *L'occupazione italiana della Libia. Violenza e colonialismo (1911-1943)*, Arti Grafiche Picene, Ascoli Piceno, 2009.

libyen en 2011, qui l'incitait au *jihad* contre les rebelles encore au nom et en souvenir de la défaite de la colonisation italienne).

L'historien et politologue Ali Abdullatif Ahmida nous rappelle que les témoignages autobiographiques écrits par les Libyens qui ont vécu directement le colonialisme sont difficiles à trouver, précisément à cause de l'analphabétisme diffus dans la population locale au temps de l'occupation italienne, alors que les attestations orales liées à la poésie populaire sont plus nombreux.[4] En 2014 a été publié à Tunis, traduit en français par Kamal Ben Hameda, un témoignage oral important des souffrances endurées par le peuple libyen : *Le livre du camp d'Aguila*. Il s'agit d'un chant de tourments et d'humiliations, en trente strophes brèves, dicté par le *shaykh* Rajab Bou Houaiche al-Mnafi, poète et résistant, à l'un de ses compagnons de captivité, lors de sa détention dans un camp de concentration érigé par les troupes de Mussolini. Al-Mnafi est un membre de la Confrérie Sanusiyya, à laquelle appartient aussi le chef de la résistance Omar al-Mukhtar, et il arrive en 1932 dans le camp fasciste de détention après une marche forcée de 400 km dans le désert. La voix du poète nous rapporte en écho également les mots d'autres détenus du camp de El Agheila, leurs blessures et leurs souffrances face à la barbarie fasciste : l'arrachement aux terres, la douleur physique et mentale, l'avilissement, la mort des compagnons, la perte de toute dignité. Voilà deux citations de ce poème, d'où émerge l'impuissance devant le génocide de son propre peuple et sa propre condition d'esclavage :

> Mon seul tourment
> la perte de nos jeunes
> les fascistes les ont cueillis
> comme dattes mûres
> nos jeunes sans cesse se soulevaient
> et contre tout criminel faisaient front
> eux la fleur de nos familles.
>
> [...]
>
> Je leur obéis comme un esclave
> auparavant
> j'étais digne et respecté
> mon séjour dans ce camp
> m'a dérobé la vie
> si faméliques
> nous tenons à peine debout
> pourtant nous devons

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[4] A. A. Ahmida, When the Subaltern Speak: Memory of Genocide in Colonial Libya 1929 to 1933, *Italian Studies*, 61/2, 2006, 175-190.

soulever des charges si lourdes
comme bagnards forts et agiles.[5]

« ما بي مرض » / « Mon seul tourment » : il s'agit d'un refrain répété vingt-six fois dans le bref poème, articulé selon un schéma métrique précis et un rythme constant, qui nous rappelle sa matrice orale, en provenance des chants bédouins du désert libyen. De même, la structure prosodique, avec un vers divisé en trois hémistiches, au lieu des deux de la lyrique arabe classique, et la présence du dialecte libyen particulièrement évident avec les noms des tribus et du bétail, confirment l'origine orale de ce poème.

Pour bénéficier de reformulations littéraires écrites sur la présence italienne en Libye nous devons recourir aux écrivains de la communauté juive et aux Italiens nés dans l'ex-colonie, mais il est évident que ces témoignages, très importants, ne peuvent pas guérir cette blessure profonde et ce vide de voix locales qui nous décrivent la colonisation du point de vue des colonisés.

En ce qui concerne la communauté juive, je cite rapidement un groupe d'écrivains de la communauté séfarade et leurs romans écrits en italien : David Gerbi, *Costruttori di pace. Storia di un ebreo profugo dalla Libia,* 2003 ; Arthur Jorno, *Il ribelle*, 2003 ; Victor Magiar, *E venne la notte. Ebrei in un paese arabo*, 2003. Déjà à commencer par les titres de ces romans, on comprend bien que la focalisation de la narration reste l'histoire de la présence juive dans un pays arabe, mais les pages dédiées à l'enfance des écrivains rendent bien l'ambiance de Tripoli dans les années 30 et 40 du siècle dernier. Il en ressort la description d'une ville dynamique, cosmopolite, multiconfessionnelle, avec les lieux de loisirs typiquement italiens, comme le stade et le cinéma, mais aussi avec les difficultés de l'apprentissage scolaire de l'histoire coloniale.[6]

En ce qui concerne les Italiens nés dans l'ex-colonie, non appartenant à la communauté juive, je cite rapidement un groupe d'écrivains qui, comme les précédents, consignent à l'écriture autobiographique leurs souvenirs de Tripoli, cette fois du temps du fascisme jusqu'à la *jalaa* : Paola Hoffmann, *La mia Libia*, 1990 ; Luciana Capretti, *Ghibli*, 2004 ; Luisa Pachera, *Tripoli 1970: allontanati dalla nostra vita*, 2010 ; Alma Abate, *Ultima estate in suol d'amore*, 2010. Dans ce cas aussi, la focalisation reste l'attachement à un pays vécu comme le sien, la nostalgie d'un monde multiculturel et l'arrachement du départ définitif de la Libye. De nouveau, il en ressort la géographie classique d'une ville coloniale, avec les maisons Incis édifiées par le fascisme pour les fonctionnaires, avec le quartier

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[5] R. B. Houaiche Almnafi - K. Ben Hameda, *Poème du camp d'Aguila*, Elyzad, Tunis, 2014, 30 et 26.

[6] Pour une analyse plus détaillée de ces écrivains, voir D. Comberiati, Identità ibride. Scrittori ebraico-libici di lingua italiana, *Zapruder. Brava gente. Memoria e rappresentazione del colonialismo italiano*, 23, 2010, 98-105.

résidentiel italien de la Cité Jardin, avec le marchand de glace sicilien, mais avec assez peu de Libyens comme figures individuelles (à l'exception du roman de Hoffmann).

Aussi, dans la littérature libyenne contemporaine le souvenir de la présence italienne est bien présent comme l'attestent par exemple les romans d'Ibrahim al-Koni. En particulier, dans le recueil de contes *Waṭan al-ru'ā al-samāwiyya*, paru en traduction italienne en 2007 (*La Patria delle visioni celesti e altri racconti*), entre les atmosphères magiques du désert et les passionnantes traditions touareg, se dégagent des aperçus historiques d'une incroyable cruauté : les résistants libyens morts de faim à cause des dévastations italiennes ; la dissémination des mines italiennes dans le territoire; le barbelé et les fourches patibulaires répandus partout; la bataille sanglante de Cufra; les massacres aveugles effectués par les Italiens; les pendaisons commandées par Balbo ; les prisonniers avec la corde déjà au cou obligés à regarder leurs femmes brûlées vivantes ; les violences sexuelles sur les femmes locales et d'autres terribles tortures.[7] La figure de Graziani prévaut par sa malveillance, bien condensée dans le dialogue fondé sur la loi du plus fort qu'il entretient avec le chef de la résistance libyenne Omar al-Mukhtar et qui rappelle le discours entre Athéniens et habitants de l'île de Milos, contenu dans la *Guerre du Péloponnèse* de Thucydide:

> « Sais-tu combien de soldats nous avons et combien sont par contre les forces dont
>   tu disposes ? »
> « Oui, je le sais, dizaines de milliers, et mes hommes seulement quelques centaines. »
> « Sais-tu de quel équipage nous disposons ? »
> « Oui, je le sais, le plus moderne. »
> « Pensais-tu nous battre avec tes hommes et avec ton équipage ? »
> « Non, je savais que je ne pouvais pas y arriver. »
> « Pourquoi nous as-tu combattus, alors ? »
> « Je n'ai accompli que mon devoir. »[8]

Gheddafi, lors de sa visite officielle en Italie en 2009, portait, épinglée sur son uniforme, une photo du héros anticolonial,[9] témoignant à quel point encore aujourd'hui les histoires entre les deux pays sont entremêlées. Mais quels souvenirs de la domination libyenne sont restés dans l'imaginaire italien contemporain ? Je citerai à présent trois évènements, détecteurs du refoulement qui caractérise la

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[7] I. al-Koni, *La patria delle visioni celesti e altri racconti*, Roma, edizioni e/o 2007, respectivement pages 92; 190; 199; 200; 207; 225; 230; 245.

[8] *Idem,* page 197: notre traduction.

[9] https://www.corriere.it/politica/09_giugno_10/gheddafi_foto_provocazione_ccc2daa4-55b6-11de-8b38-00144f02aabc.shtml

narration coloniale libyenne dans la construction de l'identité italienne contemporaine :[10]

1) Je traduis le commentaire d'un lecteur, Monsieur Sosio, publié sur le site du journal *Il Giornale* après la signature entre Berlusconi et Gheddafi en 30 août 2008 du Traité de Bengasi sur l'immigration et sur la coopération entre les deux pays, qui prévoyait aussi une compensation monétaire de la part de l'Italie pour l'occupation militaire du passé :

> Je suis né tout de suite après la guerre, mais de ce que j'ai appris de l'école, de l'histoire, de mes lectures, de mon père et des vieux du village, il semble que les Italiens, dans cette colonisation, n'ont fait que du bien et rien d'autre. Après, ceux qui étaient restés là-bas pour faire progresser les Bédouins, Gheddafi les a pillés de tous leurs biens et il les a renvoyés en Italie comme des réfugiés. Maintenant, c'est à nous de les rembourser ? Je crois que cette fois le sens des affaires du Président [*du Premier Ministre Berlusconi*] a complètement raté.[11]

Comme le fait remarquer Chiara Ottaviano, la lettre de Monsieur Sosio résume bien la pensée de la plupart des Italiens qui, généralement divisés sur tout entre fascistes et antifascistes, entre catholiques et laïcs, entre droite et gauche, partagent dans la vision idéalisée du passé colonial une unique page historique de mémoire commune.[12]

2) Déjà dans les années 30 du siècle dernier, circulait un témoignage direct des cruautés de la domination italienne en Libye écrit par un jeune danois, Knud Holmboe, qui traversa toute l'Afrique du Nord d'ouest en est en voiture. Son livre *Desert Encounter. An Adventurous Journey through Italian Africa,* publié en 1931, fût interdit en Italie. Il sera traduit en italien avec le titre *Incontro nel deserto* et ne sera publié qu'en 2005 par la maison d'édition Longanesi.

3) Le destin de ce livre rappelle celui du film *Lion of the Desert*, du metteur en scène Mustapha Akkad, que j'ai mentionné précédemment. Ce film narre la résistance libyenne contre le fascisme italien conduite par le chef Omar al-Mukhtar. Le film, réalisé en 1980, fût interdit en Italie pour « diffamation des Forces Armées italiennes » selon les mots du Premier Ministre Giulio Andreotti. En 1987, dans une projection publique du film à Trento, intervint la DIGOS (c'est-à-dire la police qui s'occupe du terrorisme et du maintien de l'ordre public) pour

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[10] A. M. Morone, Asimmetrie postcoloniali: le relazioni italo-libiche tra storia e memoria, in F. Sinopoli (éd.), *Postcoloniale italiano. Tra letteratura e storia*, Novalogos, Aprilia, 2013, 174-190.

[11] http://storieinmovimento.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Zap23_2-Zoom1.pdf

[12] C. Ottaviano, Riprese coloniali. I documentari Luce e la «Settimana Incom», *Zapruder. Brava gente. Memoria e rappresentazione del colonialismo italiano*, 23, 2010, 10.

confisquer les bobines du film. En 2003, le Ministre des Biens Culturels Giuliano Urbani n'octroya pas d'autorisation pour la diffusion du film sur la RAI (la télévision d'État). Le film a été projeté, enfin, sur une télévision privée, Sky, le 11 juin 2009, après la visite officielle de Gheddafi en Italie. En 2009, à la suite de cette rencontre, la réalisation d'un autre film fût bloquée : *Dhulm: Years of Torment*, du metteur en scène syrien Najdat Anzour. Le scénario de ce film était fondé sur un texte de Gheddafi concernant la déportation de cinq-cents Libyens dans les îles Tremiti survenue en 1911 (*dhulm* en arabe signifie « noir, obscurité »). Grâce à Naman Tarcha, alors assistant réalisateur, l'unique tronçon resté du film est visible sur Internet.[13]

Voilà donc quelques exemples du refoulement de l'occupation libyenne dans l'Italie contemporaine. L'absence presque totale d'une littérature postcoloniale produite par des écrivains libyens malheureusement ne fait que renforcer ce mur d'obstination, qui empêche l'Italie non seulement de prendre conscience de son propre passé, mais aussi de lire les évènements contemporains qui lient encore les deux pays, comme l'immigration, en termes néocoloniaux.[14]

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[13] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NkFbzDieEJw
[14] A. M. Morone, La Libia, crocevia migratorio. Nuove e vecchie dinamiche dal 2011 al 2014, in L. Ciabarri (éd.), *I Rifugiati e l'Europa. Tra crisi internazionali e corridoi d'accesso*, Edizioni Libreria Cortina, Milano, 2015, 59-79.

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Résumé

Le cadre général de cette intervention fait référence à la littérature postcoloniale en langue italienne et à son unicité par rapport à la production littéraire d'autres pays, comme la France et l'Angleterre.

Dans ce cadre on constate immédiatement l'absence totale d'une littérature postcoloniale libyenne en langue italienne, malgré la longue domination de notre pays. Après avoir analysé les causes de ce mutisme, l'intervention se focalise sur les rares témoignages directs de la colonisation italienne (tradition orale) et sur les narrations indirectes (écrivains de la communauté juive nés dans l'ancienne colonie, anciens colons italiens, auteurs libyens contemporains qui thématisent dans leurs *œuvres* la violence des dominateurs).

L'absence totale d'une production libyenne postcoloniale dans la langue des anciens dominateurs a des effets aussi sur l'identité italienne contemporaine, privée d'un important réservoir historique de mémoire et d'une narration de résistance à la politique coloniale mono-culturelle.

LAURA TROVELLESI CESANA

Journalisme, journaux et journalistes dans la construction du premier discours public sur la Libye

Introduction

La littérature historique (en particulier les recherches italiennes) a accordé une attention particulière à l'occupation italienne en Libye de 1911/1912, en référence à l'extraordinaire couverture médiatique qui lui a été accordée par la presse nationale.[1] L'intérêt de la presse italienne à promouvoir le dessein expansionniste de l'Italie libérale et sa détermination à proposer l'action de la conquête comme un moment de partage national ont favorisé la formation croissante d'une opinion publique nationale[2] qui n'a aucun précédent dans la brève expérience du nouvel État unitaire. Ainsi, notre recherche prendra en considération les particularités de la presse italienne dans ce contexte historique pour en comprendre les raisons de son action.

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[1] La discipline historiographique, qui a produit des œuvres importantes à deux périodes différentes, entre les années 70 et 90 du XXᵉ siècle et la première décennie du XXIᵉ siècle, a été complétée par les contributions importantes de certains historiens du journalisme qui ont fourni à la recherche scientifique des pistes d'investigation et des sources documentaires inédites. Cf., entre autres : G. Farinelli - E. Paccagnini - G. Santambrogio - A. I. Villa, *Storia del giornalismo italiano. Dalle origini ai nostri giorni*, Utet, Torino, 1997 ; V. Castronovo - N. Tranfaglia (éds.), *Storia della stampa italiana*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1976-1994 ; Vol. 2 : *La stampa italiana del Risorgimento* (A. Galante Garrone, *I giornali della Restaurazione 1815-1847*, F. Della Paruta, *Il giornalismo dal 1847 all'Unità*) ; Vol. 3 : *La stampa italiana nell'età liberale* (V. Castronovo, *Stampa e opinione pubblica nell'Italia liberale*, L. Giacheri Fossati - N. Tranfaglia, *La stampa quotidiana dalla Grande Guerra al fascismo 1914-1922*) ; G. Gozzini, *Storia del giornalismo*, Bruno Mondadori, Milano, 2000 ; P. Murialdi, *Storia del giornalismo italiano. Dalle gazzette a Internet*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2006 (Nuova ed.) ; M. Forno, *Informazione e potere. Storia del giornalismo italiano,* Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2012, G. Tartaglia, *Un secolo di giornalismo italiano. Storia della Federazione nazionale della stampa italiana,* Mondadori, Milano, 2008, vol. 1 (1877-1943).

[2] Cf., entre autres : C. Di Sante, La stampa e la guerra di Libia*,* in M. Severini (éd.), *L'Italia e la guerra di Libia*, Associazione di Storia contemporanea e Società pesarese di Studi storici, Pesaro, 2012, 57-75 ; M. Pincherle, La preparazione dell'opinione pubblica all'impresa di Libia, *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento*, LVI, 1969, f. III, 450-482 ; M. Tesoro, Stampa e opinione pubblica in Italia al tempo della guerra con l'Impero ottomano, *Il Politecnico*, LV, 1990, 4.

Les conditions arriérées du pays ont conditionné les processus évolutifs des médias et leur rôle dans la société touchée par de profonds changements. Dans la première décennie du vingtième siècle, le système de l'édition italienne luttait encore pour se libérer du modèle qui avait caractérisé la période du *Risorgimento*.[3]

L'absence de définition de la figure du journaliste, la difficulté à considérer les nouvelles comme une valeur économique nécessaire au développement d'un système d'édition moderne structuré selon une logique de marché sur le modèle existant en France et en Angleterre, les problèmes liés à la recherche des ressources ainsi que le retard technologique, l'héritage des États pré-unitaires entravant la création de marchés non régionaux, la lenteur de l'intégration politique de la population (suffrage universel masculin institué en 1912), l'hétérogénéité culturelle, sont des éléments qui ont empêché le développement d'une presse d'information, même dans un contexte de transformation. Tous ces éléments ont alimenté les débats au sein de la catégorie alors naissante des journalistes et les dynamiques de la guerre de Libye ont constitué un banc d'essai pour la définition de leur identité professionnelle et la bataille pour la liberté de presse.

En effet, dans ce contexte, l'attitude de la presse s'est caractérisée, d'une part, par la contiguïté avec la classe politique (qui a joué un rôle prépondérant dans le soutien à la presse, et donc dans son contrôle, par des formes de financements directs, indirects et dans certains cas cachés) et par la qualité des investissements privés des grands groupes industriels intéressés par la presse principalement pour se doter d'instruments de pression politique en faveur d'intérêts spécifiques et, d'autre part, par la recherche d'une modernisation du journalisme pour le public, avec des avant-gardes plus repérables dans les journaux milanais tels que *Il Secolo* et *Corriere della Sera*.[4]

La presse a également joué un rôle de premier plan dans la propagation du *sentiment* colonialiste, mais le très vaste consensus populaire que la guerre pour la conquête de la Libye enregistrait dans le pays était déterminée par d'autres facteurs qui agirent dans l'espace public. La conquête du territoire d'outre-mer a été caractérisée par une grande mobilisation visant à la construction d'une « nouvelle Italie » à l'époque où l'Europe vivait la saison de sa mondialisation.[5]

Le virage belliciste représentait bien plus qu'une conquête (tardive) d'un territoire d'Outre-mer. Autour de ce défi se mesuraient des processus internes au pays, comme l'apparition des premières esquisses d'un système capitaliste

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[3] P. Murialdi, *op. cit.*, 55 : « le journalisme italien de la période du *Risorgimento* s'est développé avec une forte connotation politique et reste avant tout une vraie activité politique. La figure du journaliste assume donc des traits particuliers et il est rare que l'engagement politique ne prévale pas sur celui professionnel. Les journaux sont des instruments de lutte politique et d'agrégation de consensus. De plus, les meilleurs périodiques ont une empreinte formatrice » (notre traduction).

[4] *Idem*, 76-87.

[5] E. Gentile, *Ascesa e declino dell'Europa nel mondo, 1898-1918*, Garzanti, Milano, 2018.

industriel, qui ont mis en évidence l'étroite corrélation entre les banques et les industries, la politique et les médias.[6]

Sur le choix interventionniste, on peut mettre en évidence les anciennes et les nouvelles familles politiques, les relations entre l'État et l'Église, dont les effets ont duré bien au-delà de la période du conflit italo-turc, après l'implication du « Banco di Roma » en tant qu'instrument de pénétration pacifique en Tripolitaine et en Cyrénaïque, déjà matérialisée en 1907 avec l'ouverture d'une première succursale à Tripoli.[7]

Avec la nouvelle guerre coloniale, l'armée avait activé une puissante machine de propagande, vécue comme une occasion de rédemption après la défaite d'Adua, pour conférer pour la première fois à l'imaginaire collectif un sentiment identique à celui construit autour de la figure du soldat, symbole de la nouvelle patrie.[8]

La conquête coloniale a traversé aussi les mouvements féministes italiens. Le débat circulant dans l'espace public à travers les magazines féminins et la représentation des femmes dans la presse trouva un reflet cohérent dans le registre patriotique de la « Mère », à la fois dans sa dimension familiale, donc domestique, et dans sa dimension publique en tant que « Mère de la Patrie », car mère de soldat, combattant pour la « nouvelle Italie ».[9]

Il s'agissait donc d'une mobilisation extraordinaire[10] qui a eu lieu dans l'espace public d'une manière qui sera amplifiée dans le régime fasciste à venir.

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[6] Cf. A. Aruffo, *Il colonialismo italiano da Crispi a Mussolini,* Datanews, Roma, 2007; D. Mack Smith, *Storia d'Italia dal 1861 al 1997*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2007 ; F. Cammarano, *Storia dell'Italia liberale*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2000 ; A. Lepre - C. Petraccone, *Storia d'Italia dall'Unità a oggi*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2012.

[7] Cf., entre autres, A. D'Alessandro, Il Banco di Roma e la guerra di Libia*, Storia e Politica*, VII/3, 1968, 491-509 ; L. De Rosa - G. De Rosa, *Storia del Banco di Roma*, Banco di Roma, Roma, 1982-1984, voll. 1-3 ; R. Mori, La penetrazione pacifica italiana in Libia dal 1907 al 1911 e il Banco di Roma, *Rivista di studi politici e internazionali*, XXIV/1, 1957, 102-118.

[8] N. Labanca, *La guerra italiana per la Libia* 1911-1931, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2012; V. Nocentini, *Il palcoscenico della guerra di Libia. Protagonisti, retorica, nazione*, 1911-1912, PhD, Columbia University, 2013, 55-73 et 98-138. B. Vandervort, *Verso la Quarta sponda. La guerra italiana per la Libia 1911-1912*, Ufficio Storico Esercito, Roma, 2014.

[9] A. Forti Messina, *La guerra spiegata alle donne, L'impresa di Libia nella stampa femminile 1911-1912*, Biblink editori, Roma, 2011 ; S. Bartoloni, *Donne di fronte alla guerra,* Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2017 ; C. Papa, *Sotto altri cieli, L'Oltremare nel movimento femminile italiano (1870-1915)*, Viella, Roma, 2009.

[10] A. Schiavulli, *La Guerra lirica. Il dibattito dei letterati italiani nell'impresa di Libia (1911-1912)*, Pozzi, Ravenna, 2009 ; S. Romano, *La quarta sponda. La Guerra di Libia 1911/1912*, Longanesi, Milano, 1977 ; R. Reali - A. Ricci, Libia: confini, relazioni e conseguenze di una guerra coloniale, in *La Grande Guerra, L'Italia e il Levante*, Archivio Centrale dello Stato, De Luca Editori D'Arte, Roma, 2018, 43-50.

La guerre contre l'empire ottoman et la nouvelle Italie encore en construction

En 1911, l'entrée en guerre de l'Italie, unifiée depuis seulement cinquante ans, contre l'Empire ottoman marque l'aboutissement d'une ambition qu'elle poursuivait depuis près d'une trentaine d'années, à savoir rejoindre les autres puissances européennes dans la « ruée vers l'Afrique » engagée tout au long du XIXᵉ siècle. Une ambition à deux visages, puisqu'elle est destinée autant à affirmer la place de la nouvelle nation italienne sur la scène internationale qu'à renforcer l'idée collective d'une communauté encore en construction.

C'est sur la nécessité d'assurer un territoire d'outre-mer jugé nécessaire par les classes dirigeantes que se confrontent en réalité les différentes parties constitutives d'un pays né du *Risorgimento* : l'État, la politique, l'économie, le modèle de société, l'idée de peuple. La conquête de la Libye par le Royaume d'Italie est, en effet, l'une des étapes les plus complexes de l'histoire post-unitaire. Bien entendu, la longue phase de préparation de ce conflit est également motivée par des intérêts économiques, déjà caractéristiques des premières incursions en Afrique et considérés par les classes dirigeantes comme la réponse au spectaculaire retard de l'Italie dans les premières décennies qui suivirent l'unification.

Le caractère élitiste d'un choix et le très vaste consensus populaire

Il est intéressant de remarquer que le caractère élitiste de la participation italienne au « jeu » du partage de l'Afrique, exclusivement réservé à la classe dirigeante, n'empêchera pas pour autant la propagation d'un très vaste consensus populaire en faveur de la guerre pour la conquête de la Libye. Les recherches historiques ont montré que le rôle de la presse a été un facteur clé dans le virage belliciste. Pour certains, il a représenté le détonateur d'un mécanisme savamment activé au fil du temps.

La propagande nationaliste a joué un rôle non négligeable, ayant trouvé ses principaux moyens d'expression dans les magazines et les journaux, de *Il Regno* fondé en 1903 à *L'Idea nazionale* qui publie la première fois le 1ᵉʳ Mars 1911, anniversaire de la défaite d'Adua, après la naissance de l'Association nationaliste italienne en décembre 1910.[11] Cependant, comme indique Castronovo,

> accanto e certamente più delle infiammate campagne giornalistiche e della mobilitazione 'piazzaiola' dei circoli e dei fogli nazionalisti – fu la grande stampa d'informazione a svolgere in effetti un ruolo di rilievo, almeno nel creare un clima sempre più pressante di orientamenti politici e di opinione pubblica suscettibile di per sé di affrettare e anche di forzare i tempi della decisione governativa di intervento in Libia.[12]

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[11] Che cosa si vuole dalla Tripolitania?, *L'Idea nazionale*, 1ᵉʳ mars 1911.

[12] V. Castronovo, *La stampa italiana dall'Unità al fascismo*, Laterza, Bari, 1970, 192-193 ; trad. par l'A. : « à côté, et certainement plus des campagnes journalistiques enflammées et de la mobilisation de rue, des cercles et des pamphlets nationalistes, c'est la grande presse d'information

Les dynamiques que l'Italie expérimentait dans la construction d'une opinion publique favorable à la guerre sont fortement liées à la mise en place d'un premier discours sur la Libye et de la formation d'une idée de nation, renforcée par ailleurs par la représentation de la définition de l'Autre, de la différence.

L'omniprésence attribuée à la presse italienne au début du XXᵉ siècle serait cependant mieux ciblée dans le processus qui détermina la naissance d'un espace public où prend forme une pensée dominante qui écarte les voix dissidentes, en les reléguant dans le périmètre de l'antipatriotisme. Si l'opinion publique trouve habituellement son expression dans la dialectique entre grands courants la plupart du temps opposées, celle qui prend forme dans le pays dès la première tentative d'expansion coloniale italienne jusqu'à la guerre en Libye ne se nourrissait que d'une seule pensée.

Dans le pays naissait le profond sentiment que cette guerre avait pour but de construire définitivement la nation, que la nouvelle grande Italie était sur le point de devenir une réalité reconnue de tous comme l'écrivait Pasquale Villari dans son article publié le 24 Octobre 1912, sur le *Corriere della Sera*. Pour l'historien,

> la guerre menée en Libye a été la première guerre pour laquelle l'enthousiasme fut vraiment manifeste dans la nation tout entière, dépassant, à son avis, de loin le consensus sur les batailles qui portèrent à la naissance de l'État unitaire.

La conquête des territoires de l'Afrique du Nord, écrit encore Villari,

> a concerné tous les niveaux sociaux : l'aristocratie et la bourgeoisie, les gens de la campagne et de la ville, le Sud de l'Italie aussi, peut-être même plus que le Nord. Le clergé lui-même (...) a béni nos soldats de l'autel (...).

La formation d'une opinion publique nationale, un long processus déterminé par plusieurs facteurs

La construction du consensus autour d'un double objectif – la poussée sur le levier identitaire lié à la conquête d'un territoire de l'autre côté de la frontière – fut un processus qui commença bien avant que les voix des nationalistes ne se lèvent à l'intérieur de la société italienne.[13] Un long processus déterminé par plusieurs facteurs.

Parmi ceux-ci, les activités éditoriales des sociétés géographiques et d'exploration, nées elles aussi en Italie entre 1867 et 1880, ont joué un rôle

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qui a joué un rôle important, du moins dans la création d'un climat toujours plus pressant d'orientations politiques et d'opinion publique qui eut la possibilité d'accélérer et même de forcer le moment de la décision du gouvernement d'intervenir en Libye ».

[13] D. Grange, Peut-on parler au début du XXᵉ siècle d'un « parti colonial » italien?, in *Fonti e problemi della politica coloniale italiana*, Atti del Convegno Taormina-Messina, 23-28 octobre 1989, Mibac, Ufficio centrale per i Beni Archivistici, Roma, 1996, vol. I.

important : la première était la *Società geografica italiana*. Plus tard nous trouverons la *Società di Esplorazione Commerciale in Africa di Milano* et la *Società Africana di Napoli*, avec la dénomination de *Club Africano*.[14]

En général, il s'agissait de sociétés consacrées à des explorations scientifiques dans des domaines inexplorés du monde, qui orienteront bientôt leur horizon vers des territoires jugés intéressants d'un point de vue économique et commercial. Les associations nées en Italie auront un caractère encore plus envahissant dans la société en propulsant la perspective de l'expansion coloniale si on les compare aux associations les plus anciennes présentes dans les autres pays européens. Toutefois comme dans les associations européennes, qui avaient changé d'horizon avec l'entrée dans les listes des fondateurs et des investisseurs des grands noms de la finance et de l'industrie, de la même manière, les sociétés italiennes ont été animées par les Pirelli, Erba, Rossi, Gondrand, Rubattino.[15]

Le changement de mission des sociétés géographiques en Europe est dûment enregistré par Guidetti, qui affirme :

> (l') obligation morale induite par la supériorité sur les peuples primitifs, barbares, misérables de faim et de maladie : la concrétisation technico-scientifique de la rationalité occidentale ne permet plus de douter, fixe les paramètres d'évaluation de la civilisation et de ses itinéraires obligatoires.[16]

Si, selon Natili, les activités de ces associations seront caractérisées par l'action en tant que groupe de pression sur la classe politique et la société en faveur d'une exploration organisée,[17] on peut ajouter que la présence continue des protagonistes de la vie parlementaire et politique, même de premier plan, dans les conseils d'administration des plus importantes sociétés italiennes aura un grand poids dans la tentative de concrétiser la perspective coloniale, déversée ensuite dans l'espace public à l'aide de différents instruments.

C'est encore Natili qui souligne comment l'action de la *Società geografica italiana* en particulier se jouera entre la politique et l'opinion publique, où elle exercera sa stratégie coloniale et c'est dans ce cadre que les idéaux, politiques et économiques, à l'origine de l'expansionnisme colonial italien doivent être recherchés.[18]

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[14] D. Natili, *Un programma coloniale ; La Società geografica Italiana e le origini dell'espansione in Etiopia 1867-1884*, Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento italiano, Serie II: Memorie, vol. LVI, Gangemi Editore, Roma, 2008.

[15] M. Guidetti (éd.), *Il passaggio del secolo e la Grande Guerra*, in AA.VV., *Storia d'Italia e d'Europa*, vol. 7, Jaca Book, Milano, 1983.

[16] AA.VV., *Storia d'Italia e d'Europa*, 72-76.

[17] D. Natili, *op. cit.*

[18] *Ibidem.*

Le premier discours public sur la Libye, les *topoi*

En effet, au cours des trente années de débats parlementaires à partir de 1881, l'année de la soi-disant « perte » de la Tunisie, jusqu'à la déclaration de guerre à l'Empire ottoman du 27 Septembre 1911, les activités des sociétés d'exploration ainsi que leurs affaires intérieures ont trouvé écho dans l'hémicycle de la Chambre des députés et du Sénat du Royaume, où prennent forme, bien avant la possibilité de la guerre, les idées de pénétration pacifique dans les territoires libyens, mais aussi les *topoi* qui ont marqué le premier discours public sur la Libye.

Topoi que l'on peut retrouver dans les activités éditoriales des sociétés citées et dans les rapports des organes d'information. Le recours au journaliste-amphibie – une personne qui fournissait gratuitement et de manière intéressée des correspondances politiques de Rome – était une pratique répandue.[19] Dans une sorte de circularité dynamique, générée par plusieurs champs apparemment distincts, les raisons de la conquête descendirent dans l'espace public.

Le mythe de Rome, qui réapparaissait dans les territoires d'Afrique du Nord sur les ruines d'un passé défini comme « fécond » pour ce territoire,[20] montrait que la Libye, après tout, n'était pas un territoire inconnu. Au contraire, les traces évidentes et diffuses de l'âge classique suggéraient l'inévitabilité d'un retour. Le retour à ces terres aurait coïncidé avec la reconquête de l'ancienne splendeur, rendue possible grâce au labeur assidu des Italiens, qui arrivés là-bas – et qui n'étaient donc plus obligés d'émigrer loin – auraient travaillé avec sacrifice à côté des populations autochtones libérées du joug ottoman. Des territoires fertiles mais pas encore productifs les attendaient en raison de l'incapacité des indigènes.

Une idée forte se propagea dans l'espace public et marqua les années précédentes le conflit italo-turc : il s'agissait d'attribuer au peuple libyen la volonté de se libérer de « l'oppresseur ottoman » ; les libyens seraient donc prêts à se ranger du côté des libérateurs italiens qui renouaient ainsi avec les idéaux fondateurs de l'État unitaire, qui célébrait en 1911 ses 50 premières années, ce qui justifiait donc une intervention militaire. Idée qui s'est révélée être une erreur stratégique dans les opérations de conquête militaire. Les classes dirigeantes, si attentives depuis les premières tentatives d'élargir l'orientation des mécanismes de l'information et de la propagande, furent-elles victimes de la pensée dominante ou plus probablement en payeraient-elles consciemment le prix ?

À cheval entre le XIXe et le XXe siècle, une importante production éditoriale reflétait l'objectif de l'expansion coloniale. En peu de temps de nombreux journaux virent le jour : *Il Giornale delle Colonie, L'Espansionista, La Rivista d'Africa.* Les magazines s'étendent aussi aux plus jeunes.

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[19] M. Forno, *Informazione e potere, Storia del Giornalismo italiano*, 32.

[20] M. L. Musso, Prima della Grande Guerra: esplorazioni e archeologia in Libia in età giolittiana, in *La Grande Guerra. L'Italia e il Levante*, Archivio Centrale dello Stato, De Luca Editori D'Arte, Roma, 2018, 51-56.

Ces publications ont contribué à la détermination d'un discours public à la suite duquel ont été ajoutés les travaux des soi-disant voyageurs-propagandistes. Parmi eux, beaucoup plus tard, nous retrouvons des journalistes envoyés à Tripoli pour suivre les événements de la guerre : Giuseppe Bevione de *La Stampa* de Turin, Giuseppe Piazza de *La Tribuna*, Enrico Corradini pour *L'Illustrazione Italiana*. Dans leurs rapports, quelques mois avant le déclenchement de la guerre, ils avaient loué la fertilité des territoires libyens.[21] C'est grâce à cette vaste activité éditoriale que la Libye, presque inconnue des italiens, sera transformée en imaginaire collectif en quelques décennies seulement, passant de terre inconnue à « terre promise ».[22]

Le contrôle de la presse et le genre de journalisme

Le colonialisme de l'Italie libérale marque l'action gouvernementale et diplomatique.[23] Le contrôle presque obsessionnel de la presse par les gouvernements de Royaume d'Italie était une constante. Dans les décennies qui ont suivi l'unification, les journaux ont assumé un rôle d'une importance disproportionnée pour les gouvernements, ayant été identifiés comme le vecteur des efforts des classes dirigeantes pour transformer le pays en un État moderne et efficace, même si, pour cette période, comme le souligne Forno,[24] on peut parler d'une expression plutôt modeste du journalisme d'information.

Bien que l'article 28 du Statut Albertin de 1848 ait affirmé et reconnu la liberté de la presse et que l'édit suivant en réglementait l'exercice, la non-uniformité du territoire post-unitaire ne permit pas sa correcte application. Les dispositions concernant la répression des abus possibles ont été bien plus déployées que les garanties pour la liberté de la presse. Il faudra attendre le 28 juin 1906 pour que la pratique de la saisie préventive soit abolie. En 1873, le tirage total de 555 journaux, revues et magazines publiés en Italie, caractérisés par conséquent par une forte dimension territoriale, n'a pas encore dépassé les 800.000 exemplaires, exactement 797.520.[25] Le taux d'analphabétisme est encore élevé (69% avec des taux très élevés dans certaines régions du Sud). La population atteint les 26 millions.

La possession (directe ou indirecte), comme l'acquisition de la première agence de presse *Stefani*, et le contrôle des journaux comptait énormément, en particulier pour les 29 gouvernements qui s'alternèrent de 1881 à 1911. Sur la possession et le contrôle des journaux, les politiques créèrent des structures de surveillance – comme celles du Ministère de l'Intérieur – et allouèrent des ressources détournées

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[21] A. Del Boca, *La nostra Africa nel racconto di cinquanta italiani che l'hanno percorsa, esplorata e amata*, Neri Pozza, Vicenza, 2003.

[22] A. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia. Tripoli bel suol d'amore 1860- 1922*, vol. 1, Laterza, Bari, 1986.

[23] N. Labanca, *Oltremare Storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2007.

[24] M. Forno, *op. cit.*

[25] P. Murialdi, *op. cit.*, 70.

et même cachées destinées à la presse. Cette approche a souffert d'une vision hégélienne de l'opinion publique (les classes dirigeantes éduquent l'opinion publique parce qu'elle est passionnelle et irrationnelle), plus proche de l'esprit de la Restauration que de celle d'une société libérale.

Cette approche a déjà fait ses preuves dans la représentation à l'intérieur de l'espace public des défaites de Dogali et d'Adua présentées comme preuves de l'héroïsme des soldats tombés à cause des traîtres indigènes. Les manifestations laïques et les messes pour les victimes de Dogali étaient l'un des signes les plus frappants du nouveau climat de conciliation entre l'État et l'Église. En outre, ils se sont avérés décisifs pour propager un message bien précis.

Radicalisation du débat public pour ou contre la patrie

Dans le pays, une radicalisation des confrontations entre ceux qui étaient favorables et ceux qui étaient contraires à l'expansionnisme colonial se déclencha. Le débat dichotomique pour ou contre la patrie, avec la prédominance de l'esprit patriotique, devint stratégique à l'époque de la guerre libyenne. Comme le dit Nani, sans l'aide de grands et petits intellectuels et d'une grande partie de la presse, l'élaboration et la diffusion de cette lecture des faits auraient réduit la probabilité de succès dans l'opinion publique.[26]

Il est opportun de rappeler que le journalisme de cette saison s'est révélé être un véritable instrument de militantisme politique. Les journalistes de l'époque ne vivaient pas de leur écriture, et il en sera ainsi pour longtemps encore, bien au-delà de la signature du premier contrat de travail national en 1911. L'activité journalistique était dans la plupart des cas une activité secondaire, visant le plus souvent à soutenir des ambitions politiques. Les journaux étaient un simple instrument de lutte. Les lignes éditoriales ainsi que la disparition ou la naissance de nouveaux journaux suivaient l'évolution de la politique.

L'arrivée au pouvoir de la Gauche historique, ainsi que les scandales financiers, ont eu des effets sur les journaux et les journalistes. Même les oppositions socialistes et catholiques étaient représentées dans l'espace public à travers la presse. Le front laïc fut victime de saisies et de censures. Depuis les années 80 du XIXᵉ siècle, plusieurs journaux circulèrent sur le territoire italien. La naissance d'*Avanti!* date de 1896. Le front catholique était également présent dans le panorama de l'édition. Le processus de rapprochement de la vie politique caractéristique des premières années du XXᵉ siècle a favorisé la création en 1908 d'un premier *trust* de journaux catholiques suite à la dure répression de la fin de siècle contre les journaux dits « intransigeants ».[27]

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[26] M. Nani, *Ai confini della nazione, stampa e razzismo nell'Italia di fine Ottocento*, Carocci editore, Roma, 2006.

[27] P. Giovannini, *Cattolici nazionali e impresa cattolica (1907-1918)*, Edizioni Unicopli, Milano, 2001.

Le *trust* s'est avéré être un front compact de soutien au virage colonialiste après la participation du Banco di Roma comme instrument de « pénétration pacifique » en Tripolitaine et Cyrénaïque, déjà matérialisée en 1907 avec l'ouverture le 15 avril d'une première filiale à Tripoli de Barbarie.

L'*Osservatore Romano*, né à Rome le 1ᵉʳ Juillet 1861, après sa promotion en 1870 à organe officiel du Saint-Siège, a été forcé, lui aussi, de se distancier du trust, en particulier, du *Corriere d'Italia* qui, dans la fureur de la campagne pro-Libye, avait été jusqu'à comparer la conquête libyenne à une croisade chrétienne contre les « infidèles » et la prise de Tripoli à la bataille de Lepanto,[28] même si, depuis le déclenchement de la guerre italo-turque, non seulement le journal rapportait à ses lecteurs des actualités ponctuelles et constantes sur l'évolution du conflit, mais il fut aussi obligé de se défendre contre les accusations de la presse libérale sur son soutien à la guerre de Libye.[29]

Au début du XXᵉ siècle seulement trois quotidiens *Il Secolo* et le *Corriere della Sera*, tous deux nés à Milan et *La Tribuna* de Rome – tirent environ 100 000 copies. Il y a un abîme entre les tirages des journaux les plus répandus en Europe et celui des principaux journaux italiens.[30] Le *Petit journal* de Paris en 1867 a atteint à lui seul les 300 000 exemplaires. Encore au début du siècle, c'est un peu plus de la moitié des Italiens qui savent lire et écrire, bien que persistent des différences entre le Nord et le Sud. La population atteint désormais les 32 millions d'habitants. Le droit de vote était passé de 1.9% en 1861 à 8.3% en 1909. Pour le suffrage universel masculin, il a fallu attendre les élections de 1913. Et pourtant, en 1908, 170 journaux sont publiés en Italie.[31]

Un effort concentrique, donc, de plusieurs protagonistes et de plusieurs outils de propagande ont permis la mise en place d'une stratégie de communication qui, avec le déclenchement de la guerre, a été orchestrée selon une savante régie, grâce au film Kodak qui raconte l'histoire avec les images, à travers le moyen le plus moderne et imaginatif : le cinéma, avec les cartes postales vidéo des familles de soldats qui saluaient leurs proches depuis le front et la réalisation d'un jeu de société comme le « Jeu de l'oie » de la guerre italo-turque.[32]

Ainsi, le *Corriere della Sera* et *Il Secolo* compterons parmi les journaux qui ne se sont pas alignés avec la campagne de Tripoli, et ils se déclareront en faveur d'une intervention quelques semaines seulement avant le début des opérations militaires, bien que le *Corriere della Sera*, premier journal italien par son nombre d'exemplaires, mettait en garde le 27 Janvier 1911, dans un article en première

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[28] M. Forno, *op. cit.*, 63-66.

[29] Di che cosa ci si accusa?, *Osservatore Romano*, Roma 25 Novembre 1911.

[30] P. Murialdi, *op. cit.*

[31] G. Tartaglia, 2008, *op. cit.*, 2-174.

[32] Un « jeu de l'oie » reprend également la propagande militaire de la guerre italo-turque, Collezione Ciompi, 1912, reproduit dans *La Grande Guerra. L'Italia e il Levante*, Archivio Centrale dello Stato, De Luca Editori D'Arte, Roma, 2018, 155.

page : « Il faut que la chaîne d'accidents s'arrête, que ce soit le dernier, que nos affaires à Tripoli prennent une autre tournure ».[33]

La guerre italo-turque, un banc d'essai pour le journalisme « patriotique »

Cependant, pour la presse, qui a joué un rôle fondamental dans le choix interventionniste, la guerre italo-turque a été un banc d'essai. Le journalisme « patriotique » est ainsi obligé de se repenser. Il expérimenta la pratique de la censure militaire et la rupture avec la presse étrangère ; il enregistra les premières réclamations contractuelles et les effets des fusions d'éditions.

L'agitation interne à la catégorie au cours de la même période avait enregistré une forte activité associative locale et la naissance en 1908 de la Fédération de la presse.[34] Le journalisme, bien qu'en ébullition pour tenter de devenir de plus en plus indépendant du pouvoir politique et économique, était encore loin de se présenter aux lecteurs sans fort conditionnement.

Le militantisme de la presse l'a transformé en un outil de défense des intérêts de l'Italie contre les autres puissances européennes durant la guerre qui se menait aussi par l'intermédiaire des journaux sur la scène internationale.[35] La presse étrangère aussi a suivi avec grand intérêt le conflit italo-turc.

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[33] Cependant, comme le dit Murialdi, la contribution la plus importante du *Corriere della Sera* se trouve à la troisième page (P. Murialdi, *op. cit.*, 113-114 : c'est celui de Gabriele D'Annunzio). Son texte *Canzoni d'Oltremare* est la pointe la plus haute et la plus effrénée de la vague de rhétorique qui, à travers les journaux, envahit le pays. En comparaison, le fameux discours de Pascoli, intitulé « Le grand prolétaire » proposé et publié dans *La Tribuna* en novembre 1911, semble une « piètre exhortation » (nous traduisons).

[34] Parmi les fondateurs de la Fédération nationale de la presse officiellement créée en 1908, en pleine saison Giolittienne, on trouve plusieurs journalistes/politiques : Filippo Meda, Claudio Treves, Leonida Bissolati. Salvatore Barzilai, en est le président, plusieurs fois député et futur ministre du gouvernement Salandra, qui présenta à plusieurs reprises à Giolitti, fermement opposé à toute initiative en faveur de la presse, les protestations des journalistes envoyés au front qui avaient formé le Syndicat des correspondants de l'Union de Tripoli. Après Barzilai, la Fédération nationale de la presse a été dirigée par Andrea Torre, ancien responsable de la rédaction romaine du *Corriere della Sera*, à qui Albertini avait délégué le traitement de la ligne filo-tripolitaine du quotidien, et député à cinq reprises et plusieurs fois ministre dans les gouvernements Nitti. Les présidents suivants incarnèrent également la double dimension politique et journalistique : Alberto Bergamini, fondateur de *Il Giornale d'Italia* et Roberto Bencivenga. (L. Albertini, *Epistolario 1911-1926. Dalla guerra di Libia alla Grande Guerra*, vol. 1, Mondadori, Milano, 1968, 11 ; G. Tartaglia, 2008, *op. cit.* ; G. Tartaglia, *Il giornale è il mio amore. Alberto Bergamini inventore del giornalismo moderno,* Edizioni All Around, Roma, 2019).

[35] Guelfo Civinini du *Corriere della Sera* et Mario Bassi de *La Stampa*, envoyés à Tripoli, ont été récompensés par une médaille de bronze à la fin de la guerre, pour s'être unis spontanément aux forces combattantes sur la ligne de tir (v. Medaglie al valor militare a due giornalisti per la campagna di Libia, *Bollettino della Federazione della stampa*, a. VI/6 du 25 Juin 1915, 3, in G. Tartaglia, 2008, *op. cit.*, 130-131).

C'est aussi à partir de la comparaison avec les journaux étrangers que le journalisme « patriotique » a été au centre d'un débat déchirant parmi les journalistes. Une dure confrontation qui s'est terminée par la distanciation des journalistes étrangers opérant en Italie par les collègues italiens. Une rupture qui s'est manifestée ouvertement avec la naissance en 1912 à Rome de l'*Associazione della stampa estera.*[36]

De plus, selon Tartaglia, la présence d'un journalisme si fortement idéologique finit cependant par perturber les opérations militaires et poussa les autorités à promouvoir des mesures strictes de censure et de contrôle des journalistes.[37] À bien peu servirent les actions de protestation des journalistes pendant la guerre contre la censure du personnel de l'armée et leurs demandes répétées d'amélioration du service télégraphique pour la transmission des rapports depuis le front.[38] Cependant, l'expérience au front spécialisa d'une certaine manière la figure du journaliste avec la naissance de l'envoyé spécial remplaçant le poste occasionnel du « rédacteur itinérant »[39] et ouvrit une timide réflexion sur la définition de leur rôle dans la société.

Parmi les grands envoyés spéciaux en terre libyenne, on retrouve des personnalités déjà impliquées ou projetées dans la dimension politique après le conflit italo-turc, comme Corradini, déjà mentionné ci-dessus, figure importante du nationalisme italien. Il sera sénateur et, de 1925 à 1929, membre du Grand Conseil du fascisme ; Ernesto Vassallo, envoyé spécial des journaux catholiques sera député pour le Parti populaire italien de 1919, nommé sous-secrétaire aux Affaires étrangères dans le premier gouvernement de Mussolini et premier Podestà de Caltanissetta ; Corrado Zoli, un des protagonistes de l'expédition à Fezzan, sera nommé gouverneur de l'Érythrée en 1928 ; Giuseppe Bevione, rédacteur de *La Stampa* de 1904, déjà interprète dans les colonnes du journal de Turin des voix favorables à la conquête, aura une longue carrière politique et journalistique ; il sera directeur du *Il Secolo* de Milan (1923-1926) ; Luigi Federzoni, sera une figure de proue de la période fasciste et il deviendra le président de l'*Istituto fascista dell'Africa italiana* de 1937 à 1940.

Ces profils révèlent le lien entre la politique et le journalisme et, en particulier, comment ce domaine représentait à nouveau un vivier de recrutement ou la voie d'accès utilitaire à la formation des classes dirigeantes. L'Italie coloniale de la saison libérale verra beaucoup de ses protagonistes se ranger du côté de l'Italie

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[36] *Ibidem.*

[37] *Ibidem.*

[38] D'octobre 1911 au 15 juillet 1912, 200 000 télégrammes privés furent envoyés et reçus, parmi ceux-ci 7557 télégrammes destinés à la presse, dont 1790 furent bloqués par les autorités (Voir « L'ufficio stampa e censura a Tripoli », *Bollettino della Federazione della Stampa*, a. V, n. 4 de 25 avril-5 mai 1914, cité in G. Tartaglia, 2008, *op. cit.*, 132).

[39] *Ibidem.*

impérialiste du régime fasciste. La dictature de Mussolini a amplifié dans l'espace public de nombreux *topoi* des premiers discours sur la Libye.

Conclusion

L'occupation de la Tripolitaine et la Cyrénaïque représentait non seulement une occasion pour le jeune Royaume d'Italie d'entrer sur la scène internationale avec la dignité d'une puissance coloniale et un geste militaire fortement favorisé par des intérêts financiers et commerciaux formés à l'intérieur des nouveaux systèmes de pouvoir nationaux qui, comme nous avons essayé de montrer, se déplaçaient sur un échiquier caractérisé par des rôles politiques, économiques et financiers indistincts, mais elle représentait aussi la première grande occasion de formulation d'un discours public où le peuple et les classes dirigeantes pouvaient se reconnaître. On peut donc affirmer que ces faits ont marqué la naissance d'une opinion publique nationale dont l'élément constitutif était un sentiment collectif nourri par l'esprit colonialiste.

Dans la constitution de ce *sentiment*, la presse italienne, qui naissait au même moment, tout comme le nouvel État et la nouvelle classe dirigeante, a joué un rôle décisif bien que nettement inférieur par rapport aux pouvoirs politiques et financiers, mais d'autre part elle semblait confuse, à quelques exceptions près. Cette « aura » d'ambiguïté dans laquelle baignait la formation de la première opinion publique italienne perdura durant des décennies et ce jusqu'à aujourd'hui, laissant visible la trace du discours public non résolu sur le rôle des Italiens en Libye.

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RÉSUMÉ

Le caractère élitiste de la participation italienne au « jeu » du partage de l'Afrique, exclusivement réservé à la classe dirigeante, n'empêchera pas pour autant la propagation d'un très vaste consensus populaire en faveur de la guerre pour la conquête de la Libye. Le degrés élevé d'omniprésence attribué à la presse italienne au début du XXe siècle, cependant, serait mieux ciblé dans le processus qui déterminât la naissance d'un espace public dans lequel pris forme une pensée dominante qui écartât les voix dissidentes en marge, en les reléguant dans le périmètre de l'antipatriotisme. Les dynamiques que l'Italie expérimentait dans la construction d'une opinion publique en faveur de la guerre ne sont pas détachées de la création d'un premier discours sur la Libye et de la formation d'une idée de nation en-soi renforcée par ailleurs par la représentation choisie pour définir l'Autre. Toutefois, pour la presse, qui joue un rôle désormais reconnu comme capital dans le choix interventionniste de l'Italie, la guerre italo-turque est un véritable banc d'essai.

SILVANA PALMA

The Role of Libya in the Construction of Italy's Collective Self-Portrait

Introduction

During Italian rule in Libya, myths and *topoi* came into being or were reinforced that would later support and accompany not only our colonial enterprises but also a certain idea of Italianness that is still very much alive in the news and in cultural-political endeavors – and fiercely preserved by political and government censorship overseeing the construction (or denial) of historical memory in Italy. The myth of Rome and that of the soldier-settler were at the very heart of the so-called "civilization of the plough" – which was also the subject of a column regularly appearing in the magazine *Libia* in the 1950s. Along with the myth about the one-of-a-kind and good-natured Italian colonizer, they have endured over the years thanks to a too often politicized archaeology, as well as by extolling the virtues of Italian architecture and infrastructure in Libya.

Acts of censorship and glaring omissions, stubbornly pursued until very recent years, have served the same purpose – with such effectiveness that one may wonder how many in Italy today are aware that poison gases banned by the Geneva Protocol were also used in Libya against civilians, as well as for "testing" and repressive purposes. How many know about the concentration camps, the decimation of the Cyrenaic people, the atrocities of the "reconquest", and the deportation of Libyan men, women and children to Italy? How many, even among Italian students, know that the twenty-year war in Libya was the longest ever fought by Italy and that for about twenty years Italian "domination" did not go far beyond the coast? How many Italians have heard about Shar al-Shatt? Or about the Arab revolt of 1914-15 and the many Italians imprisoned in Libya?

Yet Libya has carried greater weight than East Africa in Italian history and colonial rule. Already in 1885, at the time of the landing in Massawa, foreign minister Mancini justified the enterprise claiming that in the Red Sea were "the

keys to the Mediterranean".[1] Moreover, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Libya represented an extraordinary laboratory for the construction of unity and identity in newly unified Italy.

And while Italy had joined the "scramble for Africa" with the landing at Massawa in 1885, it was only with the 1911 Italo-Turkish war that the country set out to become a colonial power. It is no coincidence that the Ministry of the Colonies was established in 1911 (and in the same year the Istituto Orientale of Naples, formerly under the Ministry of Education, was placed under direct control of the Ministry of the Colonies, thus becoming the official teaching institution for the Oriental languages and colonial subjects needed by its students to improve upon their general knowledge and professional skills).[2]

The significance of the Italian venture in Libya went well beyond its military and political achievements. With its exaltation of the glorious past of ancient Rome, the military claims, the exaltation of war as a means to national prestige and power, and colonial expansionism as an outlet for emigration no longer in a foreign land, it was a far more complex and vast phenomenon of cultural processing involving the construction and consolidation of national conscience and identity within a political, social and cultural *milieu* deeply marked by nationalism.[3] A dominant theme running throughout Italian politics and society, Libyanism summarized its characteristics with an extraordinary pervasive force.[4]

The civilization of the plough – and other myths

From the outset, Italian imperialist and colonial expansionism took Romanness[5] and empire as its foundation myths – invoking them to legitimate both a destiny of power and supremacy and a civilizing mission. They would underpin Italy's venture overseas for its entire duration, and eventually became reality with Fascism when, at the height of Romanisation of the country's culture, on May 9, 1936, the Empire was proclaimed and its reappearance "on the fatal hills of Rome" officially announced.

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[1] See Mancini's reply to his opponents who claimed that the Mediterranean should be the main focus of Italian expansionist policy in P.S. Mancini, *Discorsi parlamentari di Pasquale Stanislao Mancini,* Tip. della Camera dei deputati, Roma, 1893-97, vol. VIII, 162-190.

[2] Royal decrees, September 8, 1911, no.1165 and no. 1166.

[3] *L'Idea Nazionale*, leading organ of Italian nationalism, was launched in 1911 and, certainly not by chance on March 1st, the anniversary of the battle of Adwa.

[4] F. Mazzei (ed.), *Nazione e anti-nazione*. Vol. 1: *Il movimento nazionalista da Adua alla guerra di Libia (1896-1911),* Viella, Roma, 2015; P. S. Salvatori (ed.), *Nazione e anti-nazione*. Vol. 2: *Il movimento nazionalista dalla guerra di Libia al fascismo (1911-1923)*, Viella, Roma, 2016.

[5] Romanness itself was a much older phenomenon. See A. Vauchez - A. Giardina, *Il mito di Roma. Da Carlo Magno a Mussolini,* Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2000. Other colonial powers such as France had employed the myth of Rome during wars of conquest in Tunisia e Algeria. See M. Bénabou, *La résistance africaine à la romanisation*, La Découverte, Paris, 1976.

The "epic of the return",[6] which began to spread soon after unification, turned the North African lands facing the Mediterranean into the object of a claim based on historical rights going back to Roman times. "Tripolitania and Cyrenaica – wrote Corradini in 1911 – are all the legacy that remains for us Italians from Rome's empire on the northern coast of Africa".[7]

A wide array of dissemination channels aided in the popularization of the ideology of return, from the press, literature, cinema (e.g. *Cabiria* and *Scipio Africanus: The Defeat of Hannibal*), the arts, and schools to decidedly more popular and immediately accessible means such as newspaper illustrations or postcards. A good case in point is a drawing by Fortunino Matania, one of the greatest Italian illustrators of the twentieth century. Published in the immediate aftermath of the landing in Tripoli, the drawing portrays an Italian sailor holding the Italian flag in one hand and the dagger of a Roman legionary, whose skeleton emerges from the newly re-conquered ground, in the other. The image was easy to understand and was massively circulated thanks to being reproduced as a postcard in Christmas 1911.[8] The caption allowed an unequivocal reading: "Italy wielding the sword of Rome".

Archaeology was destined to play a fundamental role in this context.[9] Throughout the Italian occupation, and amid rare dissenting voices, such as Arcangelo Ghisleri's, calling for the demythization of Romanness, archaeology provided useful tools to support economic and military objectives, until it seamlessly meshed with fascist policies, and excavation work became linked to the regime's propaganda program.[10] A case in point is the link between excavation work and tourism. In the 1930s, after the "pacification" years, Libya became not only a land of emigration but also an important national and international showcase for the Italian "colonizing talent". To this end, the development of tourism industry and improving infrastructure in Libya – highlighting and selling the contrast between modernity and backwardness – played a significant role in the construction of Italian identity, now fuelled by the perception that Italians had of that land, by its actual transformation into the Italian "fourth shore", as well as by the contrast between Italian modernity and the primitiveness of the Libyans.

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[6] M. Munzi, *L'epica del ritorno. Archeologia e politica nella Tripolitania italiana*, L'Erma di Bretschneider, Roma, 2001.

[7] E. Corradini, *L'ora di Tripoli,* Treves, Milano, 1911, 193.

[8] Initially featured in the British publication *The Sphere*, it contained Christmas greetings for the troops in Tripolitania.

[9] On the complex interactions between archaeology and politics in Libya, see M. Munzi, *L'epica del ritorno…*, and also M. Barbanera, *L'archeologia degli italiani*, Editori Riuniti, Roma, 1998.

[10] Archaeology continued to play a political role in the post-colonial period (see M. Munzi, *La decolonizzazione del passato: archeologia e politica in Libia dall'amministrazione alleata al regno di Idris,* L'Erma di Bretschneider, Roma, 2004).

The archaeological excavation campaigns strongly promoted by the fascist regime thus offered an effective contribution also to the tourism industry while promoting Italy's imperial image.[11]

The references to the past and to Rome's historical right to the "fourth shore", which would in fact lead to considering Libya an extension of Italy, – summed up in itself, in particular, also that of Rome's colonization of those lands, which once yielded abundant harvests but were now in the hands of incompetent Arabs and no longer bearing fruit. Libyan lands were repeatedly described as a sort of Garden of the Hesperides – a promised land for Italy's imbalance and demographic issues that would soon become Italian farmers' ultimate fantasy and the target of their aspirations.[12]

As a matter of fact, despite several documented traces of Roman farming practices,[13] the idea that Libya had been colonized by the Romans was also part of an artificially constructed myth used to support Italy's historical claim to Libya. It seems proven, in fact, that unlike other regions in North Africa, Tripolitania never experienced Roman agricultural colonization. The documented traces are rather:

> the result of an eminently mixed culture – a blend of Libyan, Punic, Greek and Roman elements. […]. Neither colonial foundation – Munzi asserts – nor allotment of fields has affected Tripolitanian cities and farmland, nor were the Libyan-Punic aristocracy supplanted in their possessions by subjects of Italic origin.[14]

Nevertheless, the most popularized aspect of the myth of Romanness was tied to the exaltation of the Italian farmer and settler's ability to cultivate, enhance and "redeem" the Libyan land in light of his descendancy from the Romans. The country:

> lacks the support of civil society institutions, and in which trade is non-existent; without public or private works; living almost exclusively off a land they are unable

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[11] On the Fascist tourist policies in colonial Libya see F. Dumasy, Entre exotisme et fascisme. Les caractères locaux du tourisme à Tripoli de Libye, 1922-1940, in C. Zytnicki - H. Kazdaghli (éds.), *Le Tourisme dans l'empire français : politiques, pratiques et imaginaires (XIXᵉ-XXᵉ siècle). Un outil de la domination coloniale?*, Publications de la Société française d'histoire d'Outre-mer (SFHOM), Paris, 2009, 255-270. On the development of tourism and its role in Libya see also B. Spadaro, *Una colonia italiana: Incontri, memorie e rappresentazioni tra Italia e Libia,* Mondadori, Milano, 2013. As for the image of the Libyan colony during the Thirties in two of the main Italian tourist magazines of the time, see S. Berhe, Un impero di carte: l'immagine della Libia nelle riviste turistiche 'Le Vie d'Italia' e 'Libia', *Clio@Themis*, 12, 2017, 1-14.

[12] On colonial imaginaries and the war in Libya, see G. Proglio's extensive work, *Libia 1911-1912. Immaginari coloniali e italianità*, Mondadori, Milano, 2016.

[13] Some detectable traces in the lexicon as in the case of the word *rumi*, which in Arabic indicates a valued variety of olive oil, from *rumiyah*, "Roma".

[14] M. Munzi, *L'epica del ritorno*, 124.

to cultivate […] when famine comes, not so much because the rains did not fall in abundance or did not fall in time, but because of their inexperience in farming, because of inadequate tools; the time has come for this decrepit Arab people, who was already in a very weakened state, cast out of the human consortium like any primitive people.[15]

In the typical bombastic rhetoric of the time, Tripolitania first and then Libya became the land where Italians' cleverness and industriousness would achieve new heights, so much so "that the boundaries between fecundity and sterility, between life and death, will be chased away, far away, and all will be life and fecundity. The desert will be divided into gardens and farms".[16]

Thus, from the very beginning, the construction of Italianness also called for the ability to reinvent the territory – one of the most effective ways of proclaiming Italian superiority and civilization over indigenous barbarism and backwardness and a leitmotif not only of the colonial and colonialist discourse but also of a large part of Italian self-representations that has endured to this day.

It should not come as a surprise then that in the 1950s, a scientific journal such as *Libia* – a quarterly of Libyan studies edited by the Arabist Gino Cerbella – featured a regular column by Domenico Catitti titled "The civilization of the plough".

Together with the section titled "Craftmanship" (edited by Giuseppe Costa), it was devoted to the achievements of Italian labor the world over, which reflected "the brilliance, industriousness, intelligence, perspicacity, will, tenacity, style, art, technique, sentiments, and aesthetic standards of *our race* [my italics] [like] a luminous prism of the purest crystal".[17]

The full exaltation of *Italian genius* – nowadays one of the more frequently employed *topoi* of national self-representation – went hand in hand with adamantly proclaiming Italians' belonging to a specific racial group.

An article was published during Fascism, on the eve of the invasion of Ethiopia, whose title closely echoed that of Catitti's column. The article suggested that what was about to happen was not a military aggression but a workers' initiative. By evoking the "civilization of labor"[18] at the time of a military campaign, it indirectly reaffirmed the myth of the uniqueness of Italian colonialism, which exported its workforce to Africa bringing well-being and progress rather than exploitation and domination. This argument was repeated over and over again, lending support to the typically Italian myth of colonialism "with a human face". The quality of Italy's achievements and improvements in the overseas territories was repeatedly

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[15] E. Corradini, *L'ora di Tripoli…*, 70.

[16] *Idem*, 52.

[17] D. Catitti, La civilta dell'aratro, *Libia*, 2/4 (October-December), 1954, 78.

[18] V. Rastelli, La civiltà del lavoro verso l'Impero, *Il Solco fascista*, August 11, 1935.

recalled in Republican Italy, too – starting in the immediate postwar period with the claim for the return of its colonies, which ended up interweaving nationalist stances with the racism inherent in the idea of "civilization".

The Italo-Turkish war was a defining moment of Italian nation-building, not least because it provided the opportunity to shift the focus away from the internal fractures that hindered national unity.

Among the most serious challenges facing the country was the so-called "southern question" arising from the deep economic, political and social rifts between North and South.

Due to its widespread backwardness and weaknesses, Southern Italy was at the center of a complex process of Othering[19] and insistently approached, both scientifically and in literature, as racially different from the North.

In fact, Southern Italy had long been regarded as an "elsewhere", as well as a Grand Tour destination by those chasing exotic dreams in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They were dreams of wild and luxuriant nature, beautiful landscapes, and traces of the Greek-Roman past but also of a colorful humanity stuck in backwardness and immobility, experienced as part of a long-gone era and portrayed in endless visual and literary representations (however stereotyped and formulaic and still to this day shaping European opinions about Southern Italy).[20]

In post-unification Italy, the South ended up representing the country's internal elsewhere, an anthropological elsewhere that was no longer the object of exotic dreams, but rather the focus of studies and theories of key figures of Italian positivism. Criminologists, anthropologists, sociologists of the caliber of Cesare Lombroso, Giuseppe Sergi, Alfredo Niceforo, Raffaele Garofalo, Enrico Ferri, and Scipio Sighele contributed to the construction of a racialized South and southern "diversity", viewed as inferiority. These were not isolated views. Their theories, shared and circulated by journalists, intellectuals, doctors, politicians, became part of the collective imaginary of the time.

Thus, a barbaric Southerner took shape, biologically inferior and, unlike the Northerner, not of Aryan but of Negro-African origin and therefore prone to violence, crime, laziness, idleness and vagrancy. Sexually and emotionally excitable as well as irrational, the southerners were, in a word, regarded as primitive, akin to Orientals[21] and Africans.

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[19] A recent contribution to the enormous amount of writing on Italian southern question is that of N. Moe, *Un paradiso abitato da diavoli. Identità nazionale e immagini del Mezzogiorno*, L'Ancora del Mediterraneo, Napoli, 2004.

[20] On Naples, for example, see G. Galasso, Lo stereotipo del napoletano e le sue variazioni generali, in G. Galasso, *L'altra Europa. Per un'antropologia storica del Mezzogiorno d'Italia*, Guida, Napoli, 2009, 151-198.

[21] E. Augusto Berta wrote of "Muslim submissiveness" and "primordial life", among other things, to describe the Sardinians to his readers (see *Gazzetta del Popolo*, 1899, no. 17 and no. 18). At the

The campaign of Libya fostered a change in perspective and the movement of the "frontier" from South to West, across the Mediterranean, and hence the creation, as argued by Lucia Re, of:

> an imaginary, racially different and inferior "other" [which] finally allowed for an Italian identity to come together as never before […] as ethnically "one people", through which the profoundly disintegrating *internal* differences of race, gender, class, and religious belief that threatened the very notion of a united Italy were at once repressed, forgotten, and surpassed.[22]

From this point of view, then, the war of conquest marked a decisive turning point in the political-cultural process of self-representation of post-unification Italy. The war allowed for a shift of the repertoire of stereotypes and the "ideology of civilization" from Southern Italy to Libya, together with a racially based nationalist and imperialist reconceptualization of the country, well ahead of the theories and racist legislation of the fascist regime.[23] From this perspective, "the Libyan war thus constitutes the clearest evidence of the embarrassing long-term continuity between Liberal and Fascist Italy".[24]

National identity was constructed in opposition to Libyan Otherness – used as a mirror for defining the Italian Self, reducing southern diversity and bridging the gap with the other European powers (a process that will appear particularly evident in the years to come within the Libya Italian community: it is in Libya that Italian settlers, at least those of the upper and middle classes, will be able to build their own "whiteness" and, with it, define and delimit the rights of citizenship).[25]

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time there were also references to positive qualities such as patience, their sense of sacrifice or imagination, which, however, ended up portraying nothing more than the "good savage" and therefore reinforcing, albeit indirectly, the Otherness and substantial wildness of the Southerners.

[22] See the rich and dense essay by L. Re, Italians and the Invention of Race: the Poetics and Politics of difference in the Struggle over Libya, 1890-1913, *California Italian Studies Journal*, 1, 2010, 1.

[23] On the perceived divide between North and South see A. Wong, *Race and the nation in Liberal Italy, 1861-1911. Meridionalism, Empire, and Diaspora*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2006. On racism and the construction of the Italian "imagined community", with special reference to visual material, see the extensive work of G. Giuliani, *Race, Nation and Gender in Modern Italy: Intersectional Representations in Visual Culture*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2018. On Italian internal racism see also R. N. Welch, *Vital Subjects. Race and Biopolitics in Italy, 1860-1921*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2016.

[24] L. Re, Italians and the Invention of Race…, 8.

[25] On the internal articulation of Italian society in Libya and its relations with the local population see B. Spadaro, *Una colonia Italiana*, Le Monnier, Milano, 2013. The book highlights the self-perception of Italian middle-high bourgeoisie who in Libya had the possibility of building a new class and "race" identity. See also N. A. Nannini, Tripolitaliani. Autorappresentazioni dei rimpatriati dalla Libia, *Zapruder*, 23, 2010, 124-131.

Arabs were alternately portrayed as miserable ragamuffins ("an assorted lot of beggars", "swarming", "human garbage, not even bestial"),[26] "their offspring left to their own fate"[27] and waiting to be rescued by Italians; as lazy and ignorant "Arabs are not hardworking",[28] or rebel, treacherous, barbaric; "not men but dogs" (D'Annunzio, *Le canzoni delle gesta d'oltremare*). The image of the Arab – born out of domineering thinking, founded on stereotypes and resting on ignorance – broke into the Italian political-cultural imaginary through a multiplicity of voices, gazes and narrative genres (from journalism, literature, and poetry to anthropological investigation and visual representations), until a shared repertoire of stereotypical images emerged underpinning consent to the overseas campaign and, with it, to the idea of national community.[29]

Such racist and negative constructs of Arab identity did not vanish or weaken during the years of Mussolini's pro-Islamic policy[30] nor with the end of colonial rule, insomuch as their traces can be found even in our vocabulary. Such is the case with the word "Bedouin", which is used disparagingly by both adults and children in Italy as a synonym for "stupid", or "uncouth" at best. The term and its derogatory meaning are considered acceptable by Italian dictionaries to indicate a

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[26] E. Corradini, *L'ora di Tripoli*, 70.

[27] *Idem*, 74.

[28] G. Bevione, *Come siamo andati in Libia*, Bocca, Torino, 1912, 22.

[29] See for example I. Da Ros (ed.), *Lettere di soldati veneti alla Guerra di Libia (1911-12)*, Grafiche De Bastiani, Godega S. Urbano, 2001, and S. Bono, *Morire per questi deserti. Lettere di soldati italiani dal fronte libico (1911-12),* Abramo ed., Catanzaro, 1992. The Italian troops' racist stereotypes about Arabs are the best example of the nation's sentiment. They emerge not only from the variously disparaging descriptions but above all from the amazement at the value and courage of the "enemies" ("Arabs fight like heroes"; "these damned Arabs have some guts", see Bono, *Morire per questi deserti,* pages 81 and 41) which is acknowledged by some, albeit with great reticence. Sometimes they even acknowledge that "they are people, too" (*Idem*, 63).

[30] The relationship between Fascism and Islam was a complex one. The pro-Islamic policy adopted by Mussolini in the 1930s is generally considered wavering and contradictory, nevertheless some fascist intellectuals of the time went so far as to theorize doctrinal affinities between Fascism and Islam (see for instance G. Tucci, Il Fascismo e l'Islam, *La Vita Italiana*, May 1937, 597-601) while Italian press in some cases began to write about superiority of the "Arab race" over not only Jews but also other colored peoples. In general, however, it can be said that the Mussolinian pro-Islamism of the 1930s, put in place after the "reconquest" of Libya and especially after the Ethiopian war, was born of purely pragmatic reasons: the occupation of Ethiopia was presented as an "opportunity for redemption" of Muslims against the oppression of the *negus* government while in Libya Mussolinian pro-Islamism aimed to counter Franco-English hegemony in the Mediterranean (E. Galoppini, *Il fascismo e l'Islàm*, Edizioni All'Insegna del Veltro, Parma, 2001). According to R. De Felice, the "Arab card" was considered "a currency of exchange in case a gap had opened for effective negotiations for a general Mediterranean agreement between Rome and London" (see R. De Felice, *Il Fascismo e l'Oriente. Arabi, ebrei e indiani nella politica di Mussolini*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1988, 21).

"person who is rough and uncultivated in appearance, with uncouth, unrefined manners, or dressed in strange, unkempt clothes".[31]

But significantly more disparaging practices still persist, even in the press. On June 13, 2009, on the occasion of Qaddafi's visit to Italy, the *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* – one of the highest-circulation newspapers in Southern Italy, catering to medium to highly educated readers – published an article by Giuseppe Giacovazzo.[32] Introducing the reader to the historic nature of the visit (also emphasized in the title "Qaddafi's Arrival: Coming to Terms with History"), Giacovazzo wrote:

> The other night, in the hills of Fasano, a criminal was killed. For years he had been terrorizing towns and villages in the countryside. Thefts, robberies, extortion, and even murder. They shot him dead outside his house. Three bullets, the kind you use for wild boar hunting. Never before was this much glee seen in the eyes of the peasants of Valle d'Itria. A great sigh of relief: "They killed Gaddafi!" That's how they called him. That is how the Libyan Colonel is still seen among the common folk. The outer layer in a media build up that is rooted in a distant past. Libya has suffered this ignominy since 1911, when it was seized from the Turks. Back then, in Locorotondo, the two local parties that sided with Giolitti or Salandra amid vote rigging and stabbings were mockingly called Senussi and Bedouins.
> Now Muammar Gaddafi has landed in Rome, an old photograph sewn on his chest, portraying the national hero of the Bedouins [...].

The writer cannot help but rely on a racist stereotype to introduce to his readers the highest Libyan authority at the time, but he does not expressly identify it as such, nor does he make any effort to research or explain it to his readers. Rather, he simply offers it as an example of "stratification of the media", which his article and the newspaper itself actually contribute to reinforcing. The anecdotal reference, perhaps meant to be amusing or even "brilliant", adopts a clearly disparaging register. Variously racist images of the "other" are re-circulated through the association, albeit indirect, of Gaddafi with a criminal and of the Senussi and Bedouins (as if these were two peoples) with thieves and criminals - not to mention the uncalled for, offensive description of Omar el Mukhtar ("the hero of the Bedouins").

The negative, racist image of the Libyan Other is contrasted with that of the good-hearted Italian, which, as in any process of identity formation, is also constructed through differences, and through the invention and devaluation of the Other. Deeply rooted in Italian collective consciousness, this image is, according to

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[31] http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/beduino, last accessed January 2018.

[32] Giuseppe Giacovazzo Italian journalist, long-time managing director of the newspaper *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*, and politician. He was twice appointed Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Del Boca, "an everlasting legend"[33] harking back to the Libyan campaign, in which Italian soldiers are portrayed as opposing war and reluctant to commit acts of violence and oppression, ready to show solidarity and to help the helpless. This myth is complementary to that of the presumed peaceful and industrious Italian "civilizing" efforts in Africa, and Libya in particular.

Contrary to what Focardi says,[34] the depiction of the myth in literature and the arts did not start in the immediate aftermath of WW2. Although it was effectively reinforced during that period, it had its roots in the colonial wars, and the Italo-Turkish war in particular, following military defeats such as the battle of Adwa and, above all, the revolt and massacre of Shar al-Shatt. It was then that the country's newspapers and illustrated magazines disseminated images that, rather than portraying the dead or scenes of war, showed Italian soldiers being kind to the natives, or generously donating their bread and food rations to hungry children in Ethiopia[35] and Tripoli[36] in particular, thereby transmitting a "sanitized, domesticated memory" of the Italian colonial enterprise.

Those images were a means of deflecting public attention from the country's dramatic military losses, as well as from the atrocities that, despite propaganda efforts to describe it as a "walk in the park" had marked the Libyan campaign from the very beginning.[37]

The press succeeded in reassuring the public by exploiting the communicative potential of drawings and photography, whose meaning could be read easily even by illiterate people (one need only think of the growing importance of Aldo

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[33] A. Del Boca, *Italiani brava gente?*, Neri Pozza, Vicenza, 2005, 50.

[34] F. Focardi, *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano. La rimozione delle colpe della seconda guerra mondiale*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2013.

[35] S. Palma, The Italian Iconography of Adwa: a Domesticated Memory, in Abdussamad H. Ahmad - R. Pankhurst (eds.), *Adwa Victory Centenary Conference (26 feb -2 mar 1996)*, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, 1998, 491-500.

[36] See for instance the photograph on the front page, "Il cuore dei nostri soldati", which was published, not unexpectedly, on Christmas Eve. The caption reads: "Soldiers distribute their bread rations to hungry Arab children", *L'illustrazione italiana*, December 24, 1911.

[37] Extraordinarily similar images were recently circulated, for example on the occasion of the *Restore Hope* peace mission to Somalia in 1992, in the midst of the scandal about Italian troops' abuses and violence against the Somali civilian population. See the image of an Italian parachutist in the act of feeding a Somali child: http://eafairsoft.com/missione-ibis-somalia-1992-1994/ (last accessed May 2018).

A few years later, the Governmental Commission of Inquiry submitted a report to Prime Minister Romano Prodi confirming serious incidents in Somalia and also reporting on "gross attitudes, the expression of a subculture that the Armed Forces must reject in principle". Especially condemned were "the frequent mockery of Somalis and the display in certain units of Nazi and Fascist symbols and slogans".

See: Violenze in Somalia accuse ai comandi, *La Repubblica*, May 27, 1998: http://www.repubblica.it/online/fatti/somtort/rapporto/rapporto.html (last accessed May 2018).

Molinari's drawings for *L'Illustrazione italiana* or Achille Beltrame's for *La Domenica del Corriere*), or reporting trivial news in unprecedented bombastic tones. As noted by Gioacchino Volpe, "competing on imagination and sesquipedalian titles, they would often lose all sense of proportion".[38] Count Werner van den Steen de Jehay, Belgium's ambassador to Rome, ironically reported in his correspondence with the foreign minister Julien Davignon that it felt like "a new Iliad, with explosions every day, at noon in the morning, and at six o'clock in the evening".[39]

Amid a few dissenting voices, the Libyan campaign became a sprawling epic that, for the first time, involved all media, visual and literary, and reached every social class in the country, even the most backward. Among the reassuring stories that ended up occupying much space in the press of the kingdom, were especially heartbreaking tales such as Fatma's, "the daughter of the regiment".

A "stark naked [and] abandoned" girl apparently aged four was found during the battle of Shar al-Shatt by an Italian *bersagliere*[40] who adopted her. Despite being wounded, the soldier "comforted her, and in mother-like manner covered her with his own brand-new shirt, sent by his own mother". The story of Fatma, who was entrusted to the Red Cross and immediately sent to "a shelter for abandoned children, where [she would] receive the care that her parents had never given her", became one of the hypermediated episodes of that war of conquest, once again useful for exemplarily highlighting "the piety and generosity shown in these days by Italian troops".[41]

The figure of the soldier, a long-time protagonist of Libyan colonial events, emblematically served to exalt that of the good-natured and generous Italian – thus also contributing to "making the Italians", a task that had begun during the Risorgimento, and to building "national character" in a country that, having arrived late at unification, lacked colonial consciousness but lacked national consciousness even more.

Several influential people across the country expressed their outrage in those years when that noble and generous image was questioned due to (mainly foreign) press accusations that Italians were responsible for atrocities and massacres. In *La grande proletaria si è mossa* (The great proletarian has risen!), the speech he gave at the Teatro Comunale di Barga on 21 November 1911, Giovanni Pascoli forcefully evoked the Italian soldier's image of meekness and generosity of spirit: "Oh slandered army! Who has not seen, at least once, our handsome, armed youths

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[38] G. Volpe, *L'impresa di Tripoli, 1911-12*, Sansoni, Roma, 1946, 74.

[39] A. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia. Tripoli bel suol d'amore 1860-1922*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1988, 144.

[40] Italian infantry soldier recognizable by his plumed hat.

[41] *La Stampa*, La figlia del reggimento, November 4, 1911, 2; *Idem*, November 7, 1911. 2.

dividing their mess tins and ration bread with poor old men? Who has not seen, at least once, one of our dear boy soldiers with a baby held to his neck?"[42]

In Pascoli's national-socialist and decidedly interventionist speech there was room for the image of a feminized and maternal Italy, the "great Proletarian" that the need to achieve freedom from poverty and the exploitation of Italian labour in foreign lands had prompted to expand overseas. The Libyan campaign was thus not a violent and predatory act of conquest; rather, it was prompted by a need for emancipation, in which the figure of the Roman soldier-settler was once again the protagonist, a bearer of culture and progress among "slothful, lazy" peoples.

The themes employed by Pascoli in his socio-political speech, which was also disseminated across schools throughout the Kingdom, would feed the country's colonial narrative for years to come. The occupation of Libya, and more generally Italian colonial expansionism, were a different experience compared to other contemporary colonialisms, largely because they were linked to demographic and labour issues that also mitigated its aggressiveness.

In fact, just a few days before Pascoli gave his speech, the member of Parliament Maffeo Pantaleoni had openly suggested genocide as a way of disrupting Libyan Resistance to Italian occupation: "The current mongrelized population, the result of interbreeding among the filthiest human races, must be rejected and destroyed, and replaced with good Italian blood".[43]

Twenty years later, when policies were put in place against rebels in Cyrenaica that were to a degree genocidal, the same determination was evident in the words of Pietro Badoglio "[...] our path has now been set and we must follow it even if the entire population of Cyrenaica were to perish".[44]

Yet the gallows, the atrocities and the massacres, when not denied, were regarded as occasional necessities. Italians' good-natured colonial rule, their industriousness, and the interracial relationships based on collaboration, ended up becoming *topoi* that are still to this day among the more implacably evoked. This narrative, fed by the Libyan campaign and constantly reaffirmed by Italian politicians and the press – and for decades by historiography, too – ended up becoming a sort of tenaciously defended hegemonic tale, spread even in comic books, such as those of Hugo Pratt, one of the world's leading Italian comic artists.[45]

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[42] G. Pascoli, *La grande proletaria si è mossa*, Zanichelli, Bologna, 1911, 19. English translation by Adriana M. Baranello, https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6jh07474. His speech was more widely circulated after being published in *La Tribuna* on November 27.

[43] *Popolo*, newspaper, Gallipoli, November 19, 1911, quoted in A. Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia. Tripoli bel suol d'amore 1860-1922*, 153.

[44] Archivio Centrale dello Stato, *Carte Graziani*, b.1, f. 2, subf. 2.

[45] In the graphic novel *Gli scorpioni del deserto*, one of the most famous stories of Pratt (published in 1969 and up to 2001), set in North Africa during World War II, the character of Omar

Starting with the publication of *L'Italia in Africa*,[46] a monumental work in 40 volumes and a form of "State revisionism"[47] that is most probably unique on the European scene, over the years academic and popular historical discourse have remained largely impervious to progress and new insights in historical studies,[48] and more or less explicitly anchored to the myth of Italian colonialism as different and humane. That same myth of Italian colonialism as different and humane continues to be part of a widespread culture and unshakeable collective self-representation, staunchly defended by the State almost to the point of abusing history through various forms of censorship[49] or apologetic reconstructions that, over the years, have affected all the media – and cinema in particular.

In 1953, charges of "defamation of the Italian armed forces" were pressed against Guido Aristarco, editor of the journal *Cinema Nuovo*, and Renzo Renzi, a screenwriter, when the latter merely wrote about a possible storyline for a future film, *L'armata s'agapò*, which would recount some not very flattering events associated with the Italian occupation of Greece during World War II. The film was "put on trial", although it did not exist. As for Renzi and Aristarco, they were arrested, tried and imprisoned.[50]

Far better known, at least to historians of colonialism, is the case of *Lion of the Desert* (1981), a film by Mustapha Akkad that was subject to censorship in 1982. With an exceptional cast and strict adherence to the facts, the film was a re-enactment of the epic story of Omar al-Mukhtar, the hero of the Libyan resistance to Italian rule. Regarded as being "detrimental to the honour of the Italian army", it was banned from being broadcast in Italy (and is still unavailable in video stores),

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al-Mukhtar's nephew appears. Hassan Beni Muchtar is described as a mercenary on the British payroll in 1940 only because "They pay me much more than the Italians", and he had "expensive vices". The meaning being also that if Libyans sided with Italy's enemies, it was certainly not motivated by political-ideological considerations, but rather by greed (see S. Palma, The image of Italian Colonial Africa in Comics and Graphic Novels, in P. Bertella Farnetti - C. Dau Novelli (eds.), *Images of Colonialism and Decolonisation in the Italian Media*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2017, 169-191).

[46] Ministero degli Affari Esteri - Comitato per la documentazione dell'opera dell'Italia in Africa, *L'Italia in Africa*, Roma, 1955-1981; A. Morone, I custodi della memoria. Il Comitato per la documentazione dell'opera dell'Italia in Africa, *Zapruder*, 23, 2010, 24-38.

[47] A. Del Boca (ed.), *La storia negata. Il revisionismo e il suo uso politico*, Neri Pozza, Vicenza, 2010, 12. On *L'Italia in Africa* and the debate surrounding it in recent years, see S. Palma, Colonial archives, memory and political culture in Italy. The Italo-Eritrean historical heritage, *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, 2, 2018, 26-28.

[48] M. Lenci, Dalla storia coloniale alla storia dell'Africa, *Africa*, 2, 2003, 207-218.

[49] On how Republican Italy's institutional politics of memory, with regard to the country's colonial history, were also implemented through control of the archives, see S. Palma, Colonial archives…, 23-40.

[50] G. Oliva, "Si ammazza troppo poco". *I crimini di guerra italiani 1940-1943*, Mondadori, Milano, 2007.

to the point that in 1987 a public screening in Trento was interrupted by the Digos (a state police special operations division), charges were pressed against the organizers, and a trial followed. It was only on the occasion of Qaddafi's visit to Italy, in June 2009,[51] that the film was finally broadcast in the country. But even then, it was broadcast on Sky, a pay-TV platform with fewer than one million subscribers, rather than on the public service TV stations.

The same censorship, for the same reasons, affected *Fascist Legacy,* a BBC 1989 documentary about fascist Italy's war crimes in Africa and the Balkans, which also drew strong protests from the Italian ambassador in London, Boris Biancheri.

A major box office success of the time was, unsurprisingly, *Mediterraneo* (1991), directed by Gabriele Salvatores. The film, which won considerable acclaim both in Italy and in the US, depicted Italian soldiers at war in Greece as caring, helpful youths, perhaps a tad naive, skilled in the art of getting by without resorting to arms, and mostly inclined to play football and woo Greek women.

In 2006 Mario Monicelli, one of the grand masters of Italian cinema, presented Italians with the same interpretation in an equally successful film, *Le rose del deserto* (*The Roses of the Desert*), where a caricatured version of the Italian venture in North Africa portrayed the Italian soldiers, once again, as good-natured and virtually harmless.

More recently, research on Libyan deportees in Italy, commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of an Italian-Libyan cooperation agreement and strongly urged by Qaddafi's Libya,[52] had to face challenges and objections. Censorship was first imposed on the terminology used in the agreement itself, where a basic word like "deported" was replaced with the weaker expression "forcibly removed from their homeland and their families",[53] and later affected the outcome of the scientific cooperation program. Indeed, its findings were discussed during workshops held on the islands that used to host Liberal and Fascist-era confinement colonies (the Tremiti Islands, Ustica, Ponza, and Favignana). The workshops – as Labanca rightly pointed out – were never brought to public attention, nor were they advertised in the national press.[54]

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[51] During his first official visit to Italy in June 2009, Colonel Qaddafi got off the plane with a photograph of the Libyan hero – an emblem of the anti-colonial struggle and of the memory that Italy wiped out – pinned to his uniform.

[52] This and other initiatives were part of bilateral agreements presented in a *Joint statement* signed on July 4, 1998 in Rome by the Italian and Libyan foreign ministers, Lamberto Dini and Omar Mustafa El Muntasser.

[53] The text of the *Joint statement* is in attachment in G. Rossi, La collaborazione culturale tra l'Italia e la Libia, oggi, *Rivista di Studi Politici Internazionali*, 2/2000, 295-297.

[54] N. Labanca, Perché ritorna la 'brava gente'. Revisioni recenti sulla storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana, in A. Del Boca (ed.), *La storia negata…*, 97.

Survivals and memory gaps

In recent years, when Italy's colonial past and the events in Libya resurfaced on official occasions – not surprisingly endorsed and funded by "returning" right-wing cabinets – it was only to reactivate a "memory" that could once again disseminate symbolic-mythological readings and universes linked to colonial and fascist themes and propaganda. A case in point is the impressive exhibition on the fascist "founding cities" launched in 2002 at the monumental complex of San Michele a Ripa, in Rome, and sponsored by the Lazio Region under the patronage of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities. The title itself, *Constructed Metaphysics*,[55] was a highly evocative oxymoron. Much of the exhibition space was devoted to the farming villages built in Libya in the 1930s to accommodate the thousands of Italian settlers who were allotted expropriated land.[56] It marked the re-emergence of the "civilization of the plough" and Italy's peaceful civilizing efforts – an Italianness void of cruelty, racisms and oppression but prodigal of achievements, development and generous transformations.[57] The initiative remained, thus, a historiographically lost opportunity for a reflection on the contribution that the architects of the time gave to the fascist and imperial Italy's identity-building through the use of space in Italy as well as in Africa, where symbolic geographies and ideologies of racial segregation governed the planning of the Italian colonial cities.[58]

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[55] R. Besana - C. F. Carli - L. Devoti - L. Prisco (eds.), *Metafisica costruita. Le città di fondazione degli anni Trenta dall'Italia all'Oltremare*, Touring editore, Milano, 2002.

[56] On Italian settlement in Libya see F. Cresti, *Oasi di italianità. La Libia della colonizzazione agraria tra fascismo, guerra e indipendenza (1935-1956)*, SEI, Torino 1997; F. Cresti, *Non desiderare la terra d'altri. La colonizzazione italiana in Libia*, Carocci, Roma, 2011.

[57] Two years later, a grandiose exhibition on the Askaris was held, first at the Vittoriano in Rome (a venue of high symbolic and historical value), and then in Bologna. Askaris, the indigenous colonial troops deployed by Italians during the wars of African conquest, were celebrated for their loyalty to Italy. Their loyalty was regarded as a sign of the "legitimate" presence of Italians in Africa as well as of its strength and the value of its "civilizing" efforts (see S. Palma, Il ritorno di miti e memorie coloniali. L'epopea degli ascari eritrei nell'Italia postcoloniale, *Afriche e Orienti*, 1, 2007, 57-79). Surprisingly, also this event, whose explicit intent was celebratory in nature, was organized and sponsored by members of the government in 2004 and in particular "wanted by the MP, General Luigi Ramponi (who spent his childhood in Eritrea, as he was the son of an officer in charge of cartography from Adwa to Gondar), who in 2004 was President of the Defence Commission of the Chamber of Deputies and President of the Centre for Defence and Security Studies. Promoted by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence, the Ministry for Italians Worldwide, the Army General Staff and the Centre for Defence and Security Studies, the exhibition was launched with a solemn ceremony, during which a laurel wreath was deposited at the Altare della Patria. A picket of Lancieri di Montebello was in attendance, as well as minister Mirko Tremaglia, senators Alfredo Mantica and Franco Servello, and ambassador Emanuele Pignatelli, who in 2004 was the Italian diplomatic representative in Eritrea". *Idem*, 60.

[58] Among the many writings, see M. Fuller, *Moderns Abroad: Architecture, Cities and Italian Imperialism*, Routledge, London, 2009.

Two years later Deputy Prime Minister Gianfranco Fini expressed the same certainties on the Italian positive role in Libya in a public speech, stating that:

> There is no doubt that over the course of the last century, colonialism has been one of the most difficult issues affecting relationships between different peoples and between Europe and, in this case, North Africa. But, and of course this is my personal opinion, when it comes to Italian colonialism, I believe we need to be well aware of the fact that others in Europe should be ashamed of dark pages in their history because we, too, have our responsibilities, but Italians brought to Libya not only roads and employment, but also their values, civilization, and laws that are a beacon for humanity as a whole, not only for Western culture.[59]

The same belief had been shared by the press a few years earlier. An article by Pietro Radius on the Adwa centenary celebrations was published in *Famiglia Cristiana,* a popular Catholic weekly and one of the nation's leading news outlets at the time, with more than three million readers. In closing the article, the author remarked:

> Did Italy really [...] deserve to become, in the [...] memory of Africa, the symbol of defeated colonialism? Or should other countries, such as England and France, play the part of the bad guys? [...] Italy was not yet colonialist a hundred years ago. Colonialism is a strategy of aggression.[60]

With his rhetorical questions Radius was actually reiterating a widespread and long-lasting belief, so firmly established as to be repeated by Gianfranco Fini, a State representative, even in the aftermath of the first agreements aimed at resolving the colonial dispute between Italy and Libya.

Besides, only generic and hasty statements in the media came with the ratification of the Treaty of Benghazi in 2008; certainly not the end of the silences and omissions that for decades have enveloped the Italian colonial page in Libya.[61]

Instead there is the risk that the colonial past may reappear in another guise in government policies, such as those provided for in the *Treaty of Friendship and Partnership* (2008) with Qaddafi's Libya. Among other things, Libya has been turned into the gatekeeper of Italian racist policies, policing immigration from

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[59] Thereby erasing, as Del Boca later emphasized, several hundred thousand casualties due to deportations from Cyrenaica, the use of poison gas, the concentration camps, and the deportation of civilians to Italy (see E. Salerno, *Genocidio in Libia*, Manifesto Libri, Roma, 2005, 10-11).

[60] *Famiglia Cristiana*, XIII, 1996, 69.

[61] According to N. Labanca, this period of "oblivion" can be divided in six phases, beginning with the fascist "reconquest" of Libya in 1932, when silence on the campaign was imposed and the regime focused on propagandizing Italian accomplishments (N. Labanca, *La guerra italiana per la Libia. 1911-1931*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2012, 207-226).

Africa through violence and internment camps – where migrants are often detained until they die (Italy even supplied the body bags) – built on the same land and often on the same sites as the Italian colonial concentration camps for Libyan patriots. Just as in the colonial period, Italy has chosen to let the Other do its "dirty" work: first the Spahis (like the Eritrean Askaris and the Somali Dubat) were enrolled as cannon fodder in the colonial wars of conquest against Africans; today their updated versions are financed and entrusted with stopping sub-Saharan migratory flows

Not even in 2011, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the unification of Italy, was the country's history in Africa – which actually accounts for sixty of those one hundred and fifty years – mentioned in the celebrations, nor was it the cause for reflection. This is even more surprising if we consider that 2011 was also the year in which the country, despite many doubts, participated in the war against Libya – a war justified within the framework of the so-called *humanitarian wars* (an indecent oxymoron) – thus "celebrating" the centenary of the 1911 invasion.

Shortly before being appointed prime minister, center-left politician Enrico Letta released a statement in support of the US/NATO war in Libya. His incredible words are worth mentioning: "It is those who oppose the international intervention in Libya who are warmongers; certainly not us, we are the peacemakers".[62] Once again, Italy's civilizing mission (now termed "pacification") was invoked to justify a war that guaranteed that Western countries – and especially Italian ENI – would have access to the precious energy resources of a balkanized region.

Furthermore, the 2011 war saw the re-emergence of the lexical, ideological and discursive colonial repertoire. In both political and journalistic language, the Libyans were once again portrayed as hordes of savages (e.g., with the persistent use of the term "tribe", which has a profoundly negative connotation, especially in the Italian press), awaiting the peace-making and "civilizing" intervention of the West – and of Italy in particular, by virtue of the "shared past".

Nonetheless, in the analyses as well as in the chronicles of the conflict, the attention was substantially focused on Westerners and Italians rather than on the protagonists of the revolt and on Libyan civil society. Now as then, Libya is not considered a historical subject but rather one of the terms of the confrontation within a war that was configured as that of order, of which Italy and the West were bearers, versus chaos. One of the major outcomes of humanitarian intervention was thus to reactivate the ancient ethnocentric division between "us" and "them".

But, after all, the "Orientalist" and essentially Eurocentric gaze had already emerged aplenty on the occasion of Qaddafi's visit to Italy, during which it seemed as though he was the subject of a media contest for best folkloric representation.

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[62] M. Dinucci, Al via la nuova missione in Libia, *Il Manifesto*, November 19, 2013.

Conclusions

Amid omissions, forgery, forgiveness and denial, contemporary Italy's self-portrait seems all too similar to 1911-12 – a longevity favoured not only by the omissions and denial that accompanied the history of the Republic and are only partly discussed here, but also by the lack of trials for major Italian war criminals and the fact that in the decolonization period, Italy did not have to deal with any armed or negotiated confrontation with Libya nor with the other countries it ruled, unlike other colonizers. Thus, the country was prevented from dealing with its colonial past and facing the inevitable tearing and agony of self-questioning that elsewhere in Europe marked the confrontation-conflict with the peoples struggling for self-determination and independence. The loss of the colonies following the defeat in World War II caused the country to "suffer" decolonization and live it as the result of a confrontation between whites, which in turn allowed the continuity of the idea of a different and good-natured colonialism.

Furthermore, the failure of de-fascistisation in the Republican period – in the ministries, in the State apparatuses, in the Universities – and the prolonged inaccessibility of public archives have in turn contributed to a tenacious and long lasting memory control.

It then becomes easier to understand how it took sixty years following the war in Ethiopia, as well as several parliamentary debates and a thirty-year controversy – which in 1995 involved the entire national press surrounding the debate between the historian Angelo Del Boca (who based his argument on some archival documents) and Indro Montanelli (who contended on the basis of "I was there") – before the Italian government would officially shed light, through one of its ministers, on an important aspect of the country's colonial past. That was the use of gas as a chemical weapon, which historians were aware of for years, even if not in detail. In 1996 the Minister of Defence, General Domenico Corcione, admitted that Italy used chemical weapons in Ethiopia in violation of the Geneva Agreement of 1925 (written response dated 7 February 1996 to the Parliamentary interrogation no.4 -13103 of 6 September 1996).[63]

Apparently different the Libyan case: the claims of Qaddafi's Libya since the time of the coup d'état and the denunciation of the harshnesses suffered during the Italian rule, led the Italian government to commission with great confidentiality an investigation to two Italian scholars (Francesco Castro and Luigi Goglia) who were allowed access to the documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and of the ex-Ministry of Italian Africa. The research confirmed the accuracy of the Libyan accusations, but it was never made public.

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[63] On the use of poison gas, see A. Del Boca, *I gas di Mussolini. Il fascismo e la Guerra d'Etiopia*, Editori Riuniti, Roma, 1996.

Many years later, following Libyan requests on the occasion of political agreements, a commission specially appointed by the government in 1988 selected documents relating to Libyan deportees to Italy kept in Italian archives and handed them over in photocopy to a Libyan delegation. Neither the quantity nor the quality of that documentation is yet known.[64]

In reality, as we have partly discussed, there have been many opportunities to rethink the colonial past, but Italy has either missed or deliberately ignored them. Not even the expulsion of twenty thousand Italians from Libya in 1970 triggered a serious reflection on the past.

What is left of that memory today is entrusted to the names of streets and squares – "via Tripoli", "via Tobruk", "viale Libia" – about which little is known and even less questioned.[65] And while the country tenaciously continued to cultivate the myth of the "good Italians",[66] a shrine to a war criminal was built in Affile. On August 11, 2012, slumbering consciences and dormant awareness were not awakened when amid general indifference a memorial was inaugurated and dedicated to General Rodolfo Graziani, responsible for a long series of crimes against humanity and still remembered as "the Butcher" in Libya and Ethiopia.

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[64] M. Missori, Una ricerca sui deportati libici nelle carte dell'Archivio centrale dello Stato, in *Fonti e problemi della politica coloniale italiana*. Atti del Convegno internazionale (Taormina-Messina, 23-29 ottobre 1989), Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali-Ufficio centrale per i beni archivistici, Roma, 1996, 253-258.

[65] An entire district of Bologna was built during the 1911-12 Italo-Turkish war. Its main road is still called "via Libia". Residents call the area "Cirenaica", although most are not aware of the origins of its name, as reported by local blogs and institutional websites during celebrations for its centenary. See for instance Marco Poli: "In Bologna, when we hear the word Cyrenaica, we think about our neighbourhood, not about a region in Libya":

http://www.marcopoli.it/dblog/articolo.asp?articolo=117 (last accessed December 2017).

[66] Many contemporary historians and Africanists have written about the persistence of the myth of the "good Italians" in Italian national consciousness, among which D. Bidussa, *Il mito del bravo italiano,* Il Saggiatore, Milano, 1994, and A. Del Boca, *Italiani brava gente?*, Neri Pozza, Vicenza, 2005. For a recent non-Italian contribution on the "culture war" of the past decades, see Aram Mattioli, *Viva Mussolini!*, *La guerra della memoria nell'Italia di Berlusconi, Bossi e Fini*, Garzanti, Milano, 2011. The same myth of Italians as different and humane was invoked once again in 2003 by the press and by Italian authorities in the aftermath of the massacre of Nāṣiriya, in Iraq, where on November 12, seventeen Italian soldiers died in a suicide attack at the hands of the Iraqis (the first in a series of attacks against Italian armed forces that would last until 2006). The country reacted with outrage and dismay and "produced the umpteenth revival of one of the founding *topoi* of our colonialism, the list of the virtues of the 'good Italian': the friendliness towards the population, [...] the smiles, [...] the light weapons, the small attentions typical of a certain style, the dispensed medicines, kindness towards children and the friendship towards some local ras". (M. Nani, Il lutto, la nazione, la storia. Nassiriya dal cordoglio all'orgoglio, *900*, X (2004), 168); not to mention those who, just days before the first anniversary of the massacre, suggested that the fallen Italians should be canonized (Facciamo santi i caduti di Nassiriya, *Libero*, November 4, 2004, 2).

Despite protests in New York and reports by the BBC, and *El Pais* in Spain, there was no public outrage in Italy.[67]

The close relationship between colonial culture and nation-building is not exclusive to Italy, but Italy is probably the only country to have suppressed, or at any rate not acknowledged, the weight of sixty years of unitary history coinciding with its colonial past.

And even when it is recalled, it is surprisingly believed that Italy should be compensated for having exported work without collecting revenues. More than a predatory act of conquest, an unfortunate adventure. Or at least that is what Italians have been led to believe.

Alongside the gaps in school textbooks[68] and the hasty explanations, there is nonetheless a narrative that found its place even in publications for children and young people: "We spent thirty years on a sea of oil, and we didn't notice: what a joke our Libyan history was". Thus wrote in 1969 Paolo Bugialli, a historic name in Italian journalism, for the young readers of *Corriere dei Piccoli*.[69]

That reading definitely stands the test of time: in 2011, Paolo Mieli, one of the most authoritative and influential voices in history popularization, wrote an objective review of Federico Cresti's book on Italian colonization in Libya.[70] His opening line was: "No colonization ever had worse luck than the Italian one in Libya".[71]

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[67] *Corriere della Sera*, September 30, 2012.

[68] Amid continuity, silences, omissions and ambiguity, the decolonization of Italian school textbooks can be considered fully achieved very late, in the 1990s, and even today it is still possible to trace a fundamentally Eurocentric reading of the colonial page. On the case of Libya, see N. Labanca (ed.), *La Libia nei manuali scolastici italiani (1911-2001)*, IsIAO, Roma 2003.

[69] *Corriere dei Piccoli*, no. 42, October 19, 1969.

[70] F. Cresti, *Non desiderare la terra d'altri…*

[71] *Corriere della Sera*, February 22, 2011.

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ABSTRACT

Libya has played a far more important role in Italian colonial and post-colonial policy than the Horn of Africa. It has also represented a sort of laboratory where colonial culture and Italian national identity have taken shape, influencing and reinforcing each other over time.

This paper aims to explore what E. Said would call the "ideas, forms, images and imaginings" produced in and about Libya, and their persistence in Italian collective memory.

Even though there is no longer room in Italian historiography for the myths and misconceptions that fed the construction of the country's collective identity during and after the colonial period, outside academia some images and themes have surfaced and resurfaced over time and have persisted to date, to the point of influencing recent national policies.

History, Representations and Transition in Libya

MANSOUR GHAKI

L'évolution de la carte de l'Afrique du nord-ouest antique. Le poids de l'histoire et de la géographie

La contribution traitant de la carte de l'Afrique du nord-ouest et de son évolution durant l'Antiquité dans un colloque traitant de « La Libye, passé, présent et futur » peut surprendre. Est-il nécessaire de remonter si loin pour comprendre la situation présente ? L'histoire est un tout et il est aussi évident que la géographie occupe une place importante dans l'histoire puisqu'elle détermine souvent le mode de vie et son évolution, les productions, les besoins donc les échanges, etc. Le cas de la Libye actuelle pour être saisi n'échappe pas à son histoire et à son environnement physique et humain ; il s'inscrit dans une entité, l'amazighité, confrontée au fil du temps antique à l'influence égyptienne, aux rapports avec l'Afrique saharienne et subsaharienne, à l'installation grecque dans sa partie orientale, à l'occupation punique et romaine en Tripolitaine. Les périodes historiques successives ont certes marquées le pays et l'Afrique du nord en général, elles ne semblent pas avoir bouleversé des constantes telles que les divisions entre l'est et l'ouest, entre le littoral et l'arrière-pays immédiat ou plus ou moins lointain, entre les régions sédentaires puis citadines et les zones demeurées tribales et plus ou moins nomades, entre la vie dans les plaines et celle des habitants des montagnes, etc.

L'idée est d'essayer de préciser l'évolution de la carte durant près de deux millénaires, la période antique, d'expliquer dans la mesure du possible cette évolution et de voir ce qui unit cette région et ce qui la régionalise ; cette régionalisation évolue en s'accentuant jusqu'à devenir une absence d'unité.[1] Le poids de l'un et de l'autre de ces deux phénomènes s'explique certes par l'histoire, il trouve ses arguments dans le mode de vie, l'environnement et les influences extérieures.

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[1] I. Thébert, Romanisation et déromanisation en Afrique : histoire décolonisée ou histoire inversée ?, *Annales, Histoire et Sciences sociales*, 3/1, 1978, 64-82.

La terminologie

Au fur et à mesure que se dévoile pour les sources littéraires grecques et latines la réalité africaine et que des rapports politiques, humains et économiques s'établissent et se renforcent, les termes utilisés aussi bien pour qualifier le pays que ces habitants se multiplient et se précisent; si au tout début, les sources utilisèrent les termes génériques, Libye et Libyens, elles vont aller plus vers le détail en parlant de maures, de numides, libyens (au sens de sujets de Carthage), de nomades qu'ils vont distinguer des sédentaires ; à des moments précis, il sera même question de plus en plus de noms de tribus.[2]

Hérodote écrivait :

> Je viens d'indiquer les Libyens nomades qui habitent le long de la mer. Au-dessus d'eux, à l'intérieur des terres, se trouve la Libye des bêtes sauvages... Mais au couchant du lac *Tritonis* les libyens ne sont plus nomades et n'ont plus les mêmes coutumes... ce sont des libyens cultivateurs... ils ont des maisons et sont appelés *Maxyes*.[3]

Au cours de la deuxième moitié du 1er millénaire avant J. C., la régionalisation entraine une meilleure identification des populations habitant l'Afrique du nord-ouest ; la liste des tribus ira en s'allongeant même s'il n'est pas toujours aisé de situer avec un minimum de précision leurs territoires.[4] Si dans le cas du nord, il semble qu'il y avait un minimum de stabilité des populations sédentaires, les populations nomades qui vivaient dans la partie centrale et sud de toute la région, souvent à quelques encablures du littoral et aux environs immédiats des cités installées sur la côte dans le cas de la Tripolitaine et de la Cyrénaïque, étaient difficilement localisables à moins d'accepter de leur attribuer de vastes territoires. La nature même du mode de vie, nomade ou semi-nomade, d'une grande partie de ces tribus, fait qu'elles se déplaçaient sur un espace parfois très grand en empiétant parfois sur le territoire de tribus voisines.

Ce sont les maures, les numides et les africains qui furent influencés par la civilisation phénicienne-punique, puis romaine. Les relations entre les cités grecques et les tribus autochtones vivant dans ce qui est devenu la Cyrénaïque furent limitées et ne laissèrent presque pas de traces, tandis que les rapports avec l'hellénisme touchera presque toute la région.

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[2] M. Ghaki, Quels sens faudrait-il donner aux termes autochtones, libyen, libyque, libyphénicien, numide et maure ?, in A. M. Di Tolla (éd.), *Studi berberi e mediterranei. Miscellanea offerta in onore di Luigi Serra*, *Studi Maġrebini*, n.s. 3, 2005, 35-42.

[3] Hérodote, IV, 191.

[4] J. Desanges, *Catalogue des tribus africaines de l'Antiquité classique à l'Ouest du Nil*, Université de Dakar, Dakar, 1962. Y. Modéran, *Les Maures et l'Afrique romaine (IVe-VIIe siècle)*, EFRome, Rome, 2003.

Occultés durant des siècles le toponyme, « Libye », et l'ethnonyme, « Libyens », reviennent sur le devant de la scène au XIXe siècle ; rivalité entre les deux grandes puissances coloniales de l'époque, la France et la Grande Bretagne, aboutit à la colonisation de l'Egypte par la Grande Bretagne et au protectorat de la Tunisie par la France ; cette dernière continuant à prétendre occuper le Fezzan considéré comme étant un prolongement « naturel » de l'Algérie française ; resté en suspens la région située entre l'Egypte et la Tunisie ; l'Allemagne puis l'Italie rivalisèrent pour occuper ce territoire qui finit par échouer à l'Italie. C'est l'Italie coloniale qui remettra « à la mode » le nom « Libye ». Les frontières coloniales qui deviendront celles des états-nations reposent sur une recherche d'équilibre entre les puissances coloniales, elles ne tiennent que très partiellement de la réalité géographique et historique ; elles généreront des problèmes et seront un facteur d'instabilité et d'incohérence interne à chaque pays et entre les pays voisins.

La périodisation

L'étude de l'évolution de la carte de l'Afrique du nord-ouest durant l'Antiquité pose entre autres les problèmes de la périodisation de l'histoire de la région et de la terminologie utilisée par l'historiographie. Parler de « périodes » et utiliser des dates précises pour les fixer n'exprime pas la réalité souvent complexe ; ainsi est-il question de « la période phénicienne-punique » entre 814 av. J. C. (date retenue pour la fondation de Carthage) et 146 av. J. C. (date de la destruction de la métropole punique et de la naissance de la première province romaine, *Africa*) ; on parle aussi de « l'époque romaine » qui commencerait en 146 av. J. C. et se termine en 429 par l'invasion vandale.

Or la période phénicienne-punique devrait réellement commencer avec les premières fondations sur le littoral africain, *Lixus* et *Utica* et qui dateraient selon les sources de 1100 av. J. C. ; si 146 correspond bien à la destruction de Carthage, cette date ne signifie en rien la fin de la civilisation punique qui va se maintenir jusqu'au début du second siècle après J. C.

Qualifier la période qui s'étend entre 146 av. J. C. et 429 de « romaine » ne tient pas compte de données importantes comme la différence entre une période romaine caractérisée par la paganisme et une autre qui voit le christianisme devenir une réalité et ce dès le IIIe s. Elle ignore les décalages dans le temps entre une province mise en place en 146 av. J. C., *Africa* et qui demeurera romaine jusqu'à l'invasion vandale et les deux maurétanies qui ne verront le jour qu'au milieu du premier siècle après J. C. et qui échapperont en grande partie à Rome au milieu du IIIe siècle suite aux révoltes des maures.

Ces découpages ignorent la « période charnière » qui couvre les deux derniers siècles du premier millénaire av. J. C. et une partie importante du Haut empire et qui est multiculturelle par excellence, y coexistent plusieurs langues et alphabets (libyque, punique, grec et latin), des croyances multiples, des rites et une

architecture funéraires différents et une organisation administrative et politique complexe, le poids de la tribu, la royauté et son despotisme, un mélange de la cité-état punique, de la *polis* grecque, de la *res publica* romaine et de titres et fonctions numides attestés dans une cité numide importante, Dougga. [5] La conséquence évidente est que les cartes établies pour illustrer des « périodes historiques » reflètent rarement la réalité.

Les frontières

Les frontières sont de deux types ; celles qui sont politiques, aux tracés plus ou moins clairs et les « frontières » culturelles qui débordent les premières et les relativisent. L'organisation administrative, le découpage en régions, territoires et provinces entrainent la mise en place de frontières internes à un pouvoir politique, il est ainsi question de « territoires » dirigés par des représentants du roi dans le cadre plus large du royaume numide ; [6] à l'époque romaine, des pagi [7] seraient hérités d'une organisation administrative pré romaine, attribuée à Carthage ; les provinces romaines d'Afrique, elles-mêmes sont « internes » à l'empire ; la vraie frontière étant le *limes.*

Les frontières politiques

Durant la période antique, il est question de :
- La frontière entre le monde punique et le monde grec distinguant la Cyrénaïque de la Tripolitaine et qui est matérialisée par l'autel dédié aux frères *Philènes* auxquels Carthage vouait un respect pour leur sacrifice.
- Au lendemain de la destruction de Carthage, se met en place la première province romaine *Africa* ; elle est délimitée par la *fossa regia*, dite aussi « le fossé de Scipion » qui en fut le réalisateur ; son tracé est en grande partie connu puisqu'il sera borné plus tard. [8] Pour la période libyco-punique, il est question des « fosses phéniciennes » délimitant la frontière qui sépare le territoire dépendant de Carthage et où il est question de « libyens sujets de la métropole punique » du reste occupé par les « numides voisins de Carthage » ; le tracé des « fosses phéniciennes » est inconnu.
- Vers le milieu du premier millénaire avant J. C. apparaissent les royaumes maure et numides. La « frontière » entre le royaume maure et celui numide des

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[5] M. Ghaki, La périodisation de l'histoire de l'Afrique du nord antique, in A. M. Di Tolla (éd.), *Langues et littérature berbères : Développement et standardisation*, *Quaderni di Studi Berberi e Libico-berberi*, 3, L'Orientale, Napoli, 2014, 72-81.

[6] M. Ghaki, L'organisation politique et administrative des Numides, in *À la croisée des études libyco-berbères*, *Mélanges Galand*, Paris 1993, 89-102. G. C. Picard - A. Mahjoubi - A. Beschaouch, « Pagus Tuscae et Gunzuzi », *CRAI*, 1963,124-130.

[7] G.-C. Picard, Le pagus dans l'Afrique romaine, *Karthago* XV, 1969-1970, 3-12.

[8] N. Ferchiou, Fossa Regia, *Encyclopédie Berbère*, 19, 1998, 2897-2911.

Masaessyles est située au niveau de l'oued Moulouya[9] tandis que la frontière entre les deux royaumes numides demeure difficile à situer. Le royaume de Syphax qui avait pour Capitale Cirta, devait occuper un espace de loin plus grand que celui de Gaia. La politique territoriale de Massinissa lui a permis, durant la première partie du second siècle avant J. C., avec « la bénédiction de Rome » d'agrandir le territoire de son royaume au dépend du territoire punique.

- Durant la guerre entre Rome et Jugurtha, la Moulouya n'est plus une limite du royaume maure puisque celui-ci gagne des territoires vers l'est. Elle le redeviendra lors de la création des deux provinces de Maurétanie.
- A l'époque romaine, un *limes* s'installe entre les provinces romaines et le reste ; ce *limes* permettait à Rome à la fois d'empêcher les tribus nomades d'entrer dans le territoire de l'empire, de contrôler les entrées sur son territoire et surtout de percevoir des taxes sur les marchandises de toute nature qui entraient dans l'empire.

Les « limites » culturelles

Parler de « frontières culturelles » pose un problème puisqu'il s'agit le plus souvent d'acculturation, de degré d'intégration et surtout de comportements des uns et des autres par rapport à leur culture d'origine que vis à vis des influences culturelles « étrangères » ; l'individu et, plus souvent, le groupe se retrouvent dans une situation de mélange culturel fait de la coexistence de données appartenant à deux civilisations, parfois plusieurs.

Ces limites sont le plus souvent le résultat d'échanges humains dans la durée ; elles ne sont pas nécessairement le résultat d'une politique émanant d'un pouvoir central. La diffusion de la civilisation phénicienne punique qu'est la punicisation des autochtones est évidente à partir du IIIe siècle avant J. C., elle se renforce durant les siècles suivants et à une époque où la Carthage punique a disparu. Le système politique phénicien punique repose sur plusieurs facteurs qui ne militent pas en faveur d'une diffusion «organisée» de la civilisation : la cité-état, l'armée faite essentiellement de mercenaires, le fait que, basée sur le commerce maritime, Carthage, les autres cités phéniciennes puniques aussi, a tourné le dos au continent et ne s'y intéressera réellement qu'au lendemain de la première guerre (241 av. J. C.) et de la révolte des mercenaires et des libyens (241/237 av. J. C.). Au contraire, Rome par sa politique coloniale a répandu la civilisation romaine ; elle a indirectement encouragé les Africains à « se romaniser » pour jouir des avantages du statut de « citoyen » ; ceux qui servirent Rome, les vétérans en premier, ont obtenu la citoyenneté ; par contre Rome n'a rien pu faire contre la diffusion du christianisme.

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[9] R. Rebuffat, Moulouya, *Encyclopédie Berbère*, 32, 2010, 5092-5095.

Quels sont les éléments unificateurs de la carte ?
- La géographie : la délimitation de la Libye est relativement naturelle : depuis le désert de Libye jusqu'à l'Atlantique, et entre la mer Méditerranée jusqu'aux confins du Sahara.
- L'ethnie qui est au fil du temps un mélange composé d'un noyau « local » qui remonte aux origines de l'homme, d'apports orientaux, méridionaux et méditerranéens, est stabilisée durant le Néolithique.
- Les croyances : tous les libyens sacrifiaient aux astres le Soleil et la Lune, tout en ayant développé régionalement et parfois même localement des pratiques religieuses souvent en rapport avec l'écologie et le mode de vie ; ces croyances furent ainsi en rapport avec les éléments naturels et le climat; Le cultuel évoluera par endroits pour donner un panthéon souvent local, parfois régional ; c'est au contact des autres civilisations et durant l'époque historique qu'apparaitront de vrais panthéons hiérarchisés comprenant des dieux et des déesses.[10]
- La langue libyque qui fait partie de la branche africaine de la famille afro-asiatique et qui est toujours présente à travers les parlers depuis Siwa, en Egypte jusqu'au littoral atlantique et entre le littoral kabyle et le nord du Niger et du Mali.
- L'écriture libyque est aussi un facteur commun à la Libye antique même si elle demeure introuvable en Cyrénaïque.
- Le funéraire dans ses deux aspects, rites et architecture, est commun, à l'origine et à toute la région ; l'attitude vis à vis du mort se caractérise par l'inhumation souvent collective et la position fléchie et latérale du corps ; tandis que les formes des tombes que sont le tumulus, le dolmen et la bazina, se rencontrent dans presque toute l'Afrique du nord-ouest et jusqu'aux zones sub-sahariennes.[11]
- Rome et la civilisation gréco-romaine ont été un facteur d'unité pour une large partie de la région puisqu'y était appliquée durant des siècles la même civilisation à partir d'un centre politique, idéologique et socio-économique.

Quels sont les facteurs de régionalisation de la carte ?
- Facteur d'unité, la géographie apparait aussi comme un élément important dans la régionalisation ; l'espace est trop grand d'où l'isolement de contrées les unes par rapport aux autres ; ces régions s'individualisent aux contacts d'autres cultures voisines : le littoral avec les iles méditerranéennes, l'extrême est avec l'Egypte et l'Orient, l'extrême ouest avec le sud de l'Espagne, le sud en général

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[10] M. Ghaki, L'évolution du cultuel chez les Libyens, *Awal*, 40-41, MSH - Paris, 2010, 145-160.
[11] F. Paris, Les sépultures du Sahara nigérien du Néolithique à l'Islamisation, coutumes funéraires, chronologie, civilisation, *Études et Thèses*, Orstom, Paris, 1995.

avec l'Afrique saharienne et sahélienne, etc. Hérodote écrivait : « Ce pays est habité par quatre nations, et d'autant que je puisse le savoir, il n'y en a pas d'avantage. De ces quatre nations, deux sont indigènes et deux sont étrangères. Les indigènes sont les Libyens et les Ethiopiens. Ceux-là habitent la partie de la Libye qui est au nord, et ceux-ci celle qui est au midi ; les deux nations étrangères sont les Phéniciens et les Grecs ».[12]

- Le mode de vie se caractérise par une division nette due au climat entre sédentaires et nomades ; une partie importante du territoire, celle méridionale, restera isolée, ne subira pas les influences « étrangères » et demeurera fermée à l'évolution que connaitra la partie nord ; le sud nomade gardera une organisation tribale, une économie basée sur l'élevage et le commerce de divers produits provenant de l'Afrique saharienne et sahélienne.

- Les apports étrangers n'atteindront pas toute la population et détermineront des différences régionales ; la partie touchée par les civilisations punique, grecque et romaine est à des degrés différents. Il faut distinguer, quand il s'agit d'acculturation, les centres urbains de la campagne ; les plaines et les plateaux des régions montagneuses parfois d'accès difficile et surtout d'un intérêt économique limité.

- L'histoire qui installe des frontières politiques et culturelles pour des périodes relativement longues a finalement le plus déterminé la carte et ses divisions. Le cas le plus frappant est celui de l'est libyen qui portera le nom de Cyrénaïque.[13] Dès le VIIe av. J. C., la région est partagée en deux, d'un côté le territoire phénicien punique, de l'autre la partie grecque ; la frontière étant l'emplacement de l'autel dédié par Carthage aux « frères *Philènes* ». Comment fut fixé cet endroit ? La légende rapporte que pour résoudre le problème de la frontière et mettre fin à un conflit larvé, Carthage et Cyrène décidèrent que chacune et à un jour précis fasse partir deux coureurs et que le point de rencontre serait la limite du territoire de chacune ; les coureurs se rencontrèrent à la limite entre la Petite syrte et la grande or la distance entre le point d'arrivée pour le départ de Carthage est six fois plus longue que celle entre Cyrène et le fameux point de rencontre ; contesté par les grecs, ce résultat devint l'objet d'un litige, les coureurs carthaginois eurent le choix entre admettre avoir triché ou accepter de mourir sur le lieu ; la légende dit que les frères *Philènes* acceptèrent d'être sacrifiés.[14] La conséquence est évidente : une partie de la Libye actuelle aura un parcours historique et de civilisation différent du reste de la région. La Cyrénaïque dans sa partie maritime fut donc grecque, elle formera avec la Crête une province romaine à part et elle sera à un moment sous la domination

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[12] Hérodote, V, 197.

[13] C. Sintes, *La Libye antique*, Gallimard, coll. « Découvertes Gallimard Archéologie », 2004.

[14] S. Gsell, 1913, *Histoire ancienne de l'Afrique du nord*, tome 1, Hachette, Paris, 1913, 450-454.

égyptienne. Sur le plan culturel et contrairement au reste de l'Afrique du nord-ouest, en dehors de cités grecques, sa population fut et demeurera nomade ; la Cyrénaïque n'a pas livré d'écriture libyque et n'a pas subi la moindre influence phénicienne-punique.

- L'autre exemple de division profonde fut l'installation des phéniciens sur le littoral et la pénétration de la civilisation punique ; les relations que les phéniciens puniques établissent avec les autochtones auront des conséquences sur la carte puisqu'une partie de la population autochtone sera punicisée ; on n'a toujours pas rencontré d'écriture libyque sur le littoral nord-africain et dans la partie nord-est de la Tunisie actuelle, régions « occupées » par la civilisation punique et par conséquent par l'écriture punique. L'influence punique relativement tardive se concentre sur la Numidie, elle ira en s'affaiblissant au fur et à mesure que l'on avance vers l'ouest et que l'on s'éloigne du littoral et des milieux urbains.

Les royaumes maure et numides[15]
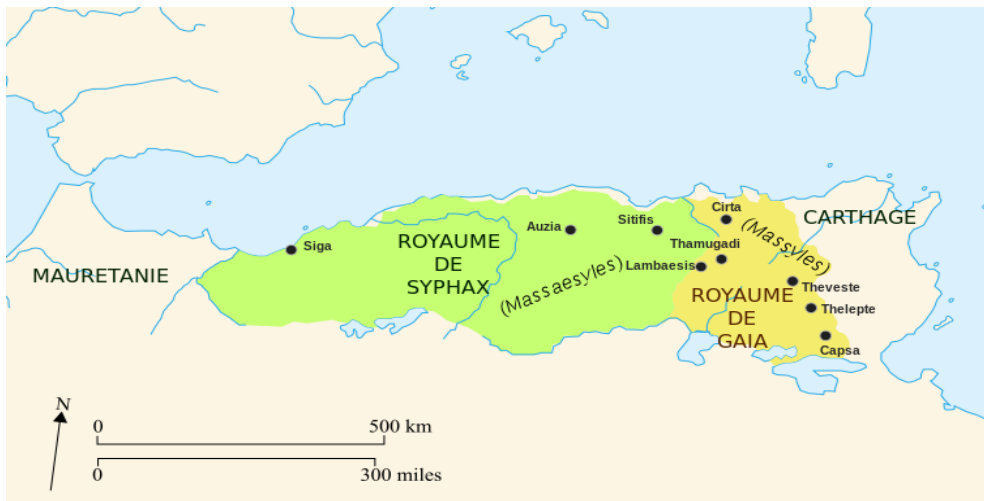
Les royaumes numides vers 220/210 av. J. C. La défaite de Carthage et de son allié Syphax entraine la disparition du royaume de ce dernier et son rattachement au royaume de Massinissa (bataille de Zama 202 av. J. C.)

Si nous ne connaissons pas avec précision quand naissent les royaumes numides et maure, il est possible de situer au début de la deuxième moitié du premier millénaire des faits historiques qui illustrent des changements profonds dans la

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[15] E. Smadja, Modes de contact, société indigènes et formation de l'état numide au second siècle av. notre ère, in *Modes de contacts et processus de transformation dans les sociétés anciennes, Actes du colloque de Cortone*, CEFRome 67, Rome, 1983, 685-702.

société, mutations qui vont aboutir à une organisation sociale et politique basée sur la royauté ; parmi ces changements, on pourrait retenir le rôle de Carthage qui aurait encourager la naissance de royaumes ne serait-ce que pour avoir des vis à vis, l'évolution d'une partie de la société autochtone vers une vie citadine, une ouverture sur la Méditerranée et les peuples méditerranéens, etc. Avec la naissance des royaumes, des frontières s'installent entre les monarchies entre elles et entre elles et le territoire punique ; une partie importante du littoral méditerranéen échappe ainsi à la gestion directe de Carthage, même si la maîtrise de la mer et du commerce maritime demeurent réservés aux puniques.

Rome en Afrique[16]
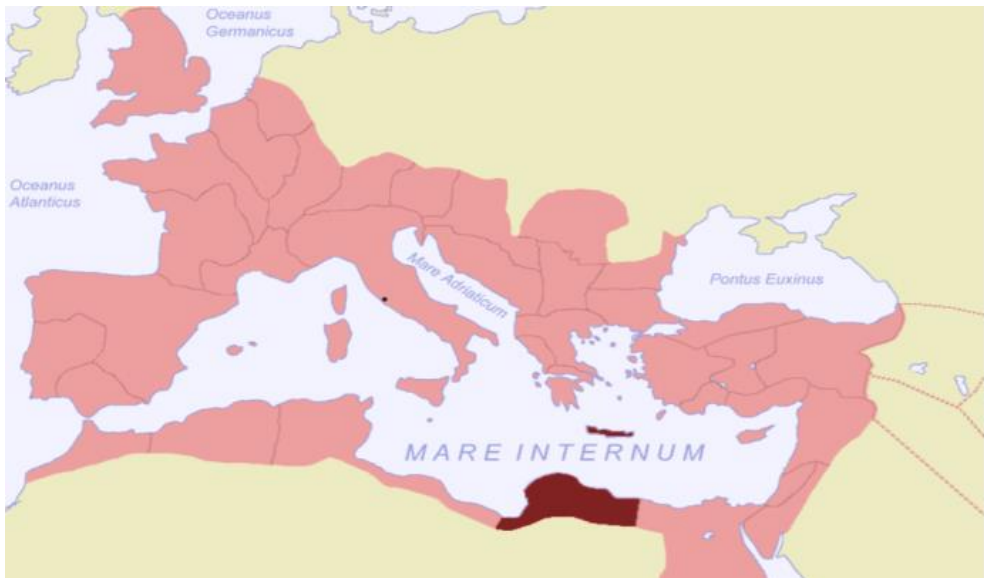
Les provinces romaines. La Cyrénaïque et la Crête formant une province unique

La création des provinces romaines en Afrique commence en 146 av. J. C. par la naissance de la province *Africa* et se termine par la création des deux provinces maurétaniennes vers le milieu du premier siècle après C. Deux siècles séparent donc les deux évènements ; la conséquence évidente est le décalage dans le degré de romanisation.

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[16] J. Desanges, L'Afrique romaine et libyco-berbère, in C. Nicolet, *Rome et la conquête du monde méditerranéen*. Vol. 2 : Genèse d'un empire, Nouvelle Clio, Paris, 1978, 627-656. C. Lepelley, *Frontières et limites géographiques de l'Afrique du nord antique. Hommage à Pierre Salama*, *Actes de la table ronde* 2-3 mai 1997, La Sorbonne, Paris, 1999. C. Hugoniot, *Rome en Afrique, De la chute de Carthage aux débuts de la conquête arabe*, Flammarion, Paris, 2000.

Les provinces étaient « protégées » par une frontière discontinue, faite essentiellement de postes frontières placés à des points névralgiques, des lieux de passage « naturels » et habituels pour les hommes et les marchandises ; des taxes étaient exigées pour l'entrée dans le territoire romain. Le *limes* a évolué en fonction des moments et des exigences de sécurité, il servait surtout à contrer les nomades qui se déplaçaient en groupe et pouvaient constituer un danger pour les pâturages, les terres cultivées et le système romain lui-même. En installant des vétérans le long du *limes*, Rome les chargeait de surveiller le territoire tout en leur permettant de se fixer puisqu'ils deviennent propriétaires d'un lopin de terre.

La domination romaine bouleverse la carte ; un *limes* marque le territoire « romain » et le distingue du reste ; il était souvent franchi par l'armée romaine essentiellement pour « contrer » les tribus nomades ; même divisé en provinces, ce territoire n'en est pas moins uni car soumis à une organisation, des lois et un mode de vie unique puisque provenant d'un pouvoir politique, administratif, social et culturel centralisé ; la bureaucratie romaine était la même quand il s'agit de gérer telle ou telle province ; ce qui pouvait faire une différence c'est le degré de « romanisation » des habitants et leur statut juridique. L'époque romaine ne fut que partiellement un facteur d'unité car le décalage dans le temps de la gestion romaine a fait que la partie orientale (*Africa*, Numidie et Tripolitaine), Rome y est présente plus de cinq siècles, fut de loin plus profondément romanisée.

Les problèmes pour l'empire romain en Afrique commencent dès le milieu du troisième siècle suite aux révoltes des tribus maures et surtout à cause du christianisme qui minera la civilisation romaine païenne de l'intérieur ; l'affaiblissement de l'emprise romaine sur l'Afrique fut facilité par les « invasions barbares » qui toucheront de nombreuses provinces et obligeront l'empire à mener plusieurs guerres sur plusieurs fronts au même moment ; la réforme de Dioclétien cherchera à colmater les brèches et le nombre de provinces africaines passa de trois à six. L'accalmie fut courte.

Des troubles marquent profondément le IVe siècle et aboutissent en 429 à l'invasion vandale.

- Carthage est pillée par des soldats révoltés en 310.
- Le schisme donatiste se déclenche en 312.
- La révolte de circoncellions (340-350) encouragée par le donatisme créera des foyers de contestation et fera reculer l'administration romaine.
- Révolte de *Firmus* (371-375).
- Révolte du comte d'Afrique *Gildon* le frère de *Firmus* (397-398).

Ces évènements de natures diverses, en apparence, s'inscrivent tous dans une logique, la contestation politique, idéologique et sociale du pouvoir romain. Ils illustrent l'affaiblissement de Rome et « annoncent » la fin d'une période et d'un monde.

Miné de l'intérieur par le christianisme et sur ses frontières par les invasions des peuples du nord et de l'est, l'empire romain perdit du terrain sur presque tous les

fronts ; en Afrique, le système lui-même basé sur la *Res publica* s'affaiblit ; la cité païenne voyait les monuments qui la caractérisaient s'effondrer quand ils ne sont pas récupérés et réaffectés au christianisme ; les monuments de loisir n'étaient presque plus fréquentés et l'espace public lui-même n'était plus respecté.

La période byzantine ne redressera pas la situation ; pour se « protéger », le pouvoir byzantin n'hésita pas à monter des fortifications en démantelant ce qui restait debout des monuments publics païens. La carte de l'Afrique du nord-ouest, intégrée dans l'empire byzantin semble retrouver une certaine unité ; vue de près, elle est en fait éclatée et le pouvoir central byzantin ne semble plus avoir une réelle emprise sur les populations et les territoires.

Conclusion

Au fil du temps et à chaque grande étape de l'histoire, l'Afrique du nord-ouest se verra dotée d'appellations multiples : Libye, Maghreb, Berbérie, Afrique du nord, etc. ces divers noms sont certes le fruit de données historiques, ils sont aussi et surtout dus à des lectures de cette histoire.

Deux constantes permettent de saisir l'évolution de la carte :

- La première donnée humaine et de civilisation prend ses sources dans la civilisation libyenne qui se maintient tout en s'ouvrant aux civilisations punique, romaine, grecque, chrétienne ; le résultat est une période libyco-punique suivie d'une époque afro-romaine et d'un christianisme africain qui donnera des « pères de l'église ». L'amazighité caractérise donc et permet de distinguer l'Afrique du nord-ouest du reste des pays du bassin occidental de la Méditerranée.

- La seconde caractéristique est une régionalisation qui va en s'accentuant jusqu'à aboutir à un éclatement. La carte telle qu'elle se présente aujourd'hui est faite d'états-nations aux frontières tracées dans l'essentiel par la colonisation. Les frontières politiques d'aujourd'hui sont une source de problèmes parfois de conflits entre les états-nations ; ces frontières ne sont pas ethniques, encore moins culturelles. Le passé antique de la Libye actuelle ne permet pas de parler d'une entité politique et culturelle caractérisée par une histoire commune et unificatrice ; les périodes historiques des premiers siècles de l'islamisation et de l'arabisation ont en partie unifié culturellement la Libye ; l'époque coloniale , fruit d'un équilibre momentané entre les puissances coloniales a « crée » une Libye encore plus complexe en y intégrant une partie du Sahara.

Les frontières d'aujourd'hui rendent encore complexe les situations sociopolitiques des états-nations ; si durant l'Antiquité, la division reposait surtout sur le mode de vie, la géographie et les influences dues à l'installation de civilisation « étrangères » à la région, la situation d'aujourd'hui a créé une instabilité intérieure des états-nations, des animosités entre eux et des ingérences étrangères qui alimentent la division quand elles ne génèrent pas un danger qui remet en question l'existence même de certains de ces états.

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RÉSUMÉ

La Libye telle que définie par les Grecs couvre un vaste territoire « naturellement » délimité par le Nil, le rivage atlantique, la Méditerranée et le Sahara. Cette unité géographique l'est aussi par des données humaines et culturelles. L'évolution historique créera au fil des siècles, sinon des millénaires des frontières politiques et de civilisations. Pour saisir l'évolution dans le temps et dans l'espace de cette vaste région il est nécessaire de recourir à une terminologie la plus précise possible et à une périodisation qui tienne compte d'une régionalisation parfois poussée jusqu'à l'éclatement.

MARISA FOIS

« Les ennemis de la Nation arabe ».
Les Berbères en Libye entre histoire et représentations[*]

Introduction

À la fin de l'été 1958, un télégramme de Tripoli, adressé au ministère des Affaires étrangères de Londres, annonce la nouvelle des troubles survenus à Zouara, à la frontière tuniso-libyenne. Le bilan officiel est de deux morts, un blessé et six arrestations, bien que d'autres sources indiquent six victimes. Le document se concentre également sur l'intervention de l'infanterie libyenne visant à soutenir la police et sur le fait que le wali a dissous le conseil municipal de Zouara.[1]

Cet évènement a représenté l'une des nombreuses frictions ayant eu lieu au cours de ces années, alors que la Libye, indépendante depuis 1951, vivait une phase d'ajustement et une situation interne complexe, également affectée par le contexte international. La monarchie héréditaire du roi Idriss Ier, au moment de l'indépendance était en effet l'un des pays les plus pauvres du bassin méditerranéen, avec une population d'un peu plus d'un million d'habitants répartie sur un vaste territoire et dont 42% étaient nomades ou semi-nomades. [2] Parallèlement, la Libye demeurait un acteur important de la scène méditerranéenne, toujours objet de l'intérêt international, et ce en particulier depuis la découverte des champs pétrolifères. Les liens avec l'Occident se matérialisaient principalement par l'existence des bases militaires de Wheelus concédées aux États-Unis, d'El Adeur et El Benina détenues par la Grande-Bretagne, ainsi que par les concessions pétrolières accordées surtout à ces deux puissances et à la France. L'exploitation

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[*] La recherche a été conduite dans le cadre d'un projet financé par le Fonds national suisse de la recherche scientifique (165585 ; 2016-2019).

[1] The National Archives, Kew, London (TNA). Foreign Office (FO) 371/131792, African Department, Libya. Disturbances at Zuara, originating from Arab/Berber rivalry. Confidential from Tripoli to Foreign Office No. 314, 09.09.1958.

[2] J. Lindeberg, *A General Economic Appraisal of Libya prepared by Mr. John Lindberg, Expert appointed by the Technical Assistance Administration of the United Nations*, UN, New York, 1952, 5-6.

des gisements de pétrole, dont l'extension s'est développée à partir de 1955, faisait de la Libye le cinquième producteur du monde après les États-Unis, le Venezuela, l'Iran et l'Arabie saoudite.[3]

À l'époque du télégramme, des traités d'alliances militaire et financière avaient été signés avec la Grande-Bretagne (1953) et les États-Unis (1954). De plus, des négociations avec l'Union soviétique (1955) avaient été menées et le traité avec l'Italie (1956) était entré en vigueur. Ainsi, la Libye se trouvait à la croisée des chemins, avec d'un côté les anglo-américains, les soviétiques et les italiens et, de l'autre, le monde arabe. En effet, avec la crise de Suez de 1956, le pays avait ouvertement exprimé sa position pro-arabe et son soutien à l'Égypte de Nasser, ainsi qu'à la Tunisie et au Maghreb arabe en général, perçus alors comme de nouveaux alliés.[4]

Nous noterons que le télégramme de 1958 relevait le lien entre le conflit armé et la longue rivalité arabe-berbère, « de caractère purement paroissial »[5], et exprimait des craintes sur l'exploitation de la situation par les contestateurs de la monarchie. Finalement, la situation est rapidement rentrée dans l'ordre,[6] comme si, bien au-delà d'une simple rivalité, la relation entre Arabes et Berbères n'existait pas, presque passée sous silence. Sous le règne d'Idriss, le nationalisme panarabe a reconnu les Berbères comme la nouvelle Libye arabe et sunnite indépendante. Par la suite, le silence vis-à-vis de la question amazighe a réellement marqué les quarante-deux années du régime de Kadhafi, rendant la situation libyenne similaire à ce qui s'est passé dans le reste de l'Afrique du Nord.[7] En réalité, la revendication de l'arabité, apparue aussi avec la naissance de la Ligue arabe en 1945, a été légitimée par les indépendances nord-africaines et l'adhésion de chaque pays à la Ligue, ainsi que par des Constitutions qui ont reconnu, dans leurs premiers articles, l'Islam comme religion d'État et la langue arabe comme langue officielle. Au moment de l'indépendance, le choix d'une langue officielle a constitué l'un des premiers « actes symboliques fondateurs de la souveraineté »[8] à travers le processus d'arabisation, qui a pris des formes différentes selon les pays. En Tunisie par exemple, le but de Bourguiba consistait à « tunisifier » la société et il a, en

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[3] Documents Diplomatiques Suisses (DDS), dodis.ch/33795, Changement de régime en Libye : instauration de la « République arabe libyenne », 12.09.1969, 4-5.

[4] TNA, FO 371/126023, Confidential. Graham to Llyod, Annual review for Libya, Tripoli, 22.01.1957.

[5] TNA, FO 371/131792, African Department, Libya. Disturbances at Zuara, *cit.*

[6] TNA, FO 371/131792, Confidential Outward Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office, September 10, 1958 - TNA, FO 371/131792, Secret Telegram, British Embassy in Libya, Tripoli, 17.09.1958.

[7] Pour une vue d'ensemble de la question berbère en Afrique du Nord, M. Fois, Il Nord Africa tra contestazione politica e culturale. Il caso berbero, in L. El Houssi (éd.), *Minoranze in Nord Africa e in Medio Oriente tra tradizione e modernità*, *Ricerche Storiche*, 1, 2018, 55-72.

[8] B. Droz, *Histoire de la décolonisation au XXᵉ siècle*, Seuil, Paris, 2006, 310.

même temps, conduit un processus de « déberbérisation ».[9] En Algérie, une révolution culturelle a été menée en vue de l'arabisation, considérée comme la première étape visant à surmonter l'expérience coloniale.[10] Ainsi, ce processus d'arabisation est devenu un « objectif révolutionnaire »[11] et a rendu la langue arabe obligatoire, en premier lieu dans la sphère administrative, puis dans les domaines juridique, scolaire et économique. Au Maroc, les premières années du règne de Mohamed V ont été marquées par divers épisodes de dissidence berbère, démontrant le mécontentement général à l'égard d'un projet d'État essentiellement arabe. En effet, bien que le processus linguistique ne se présentât pas comme linéaire, il ne laissait pas suffisamment de place à la langue berbère.[12]

Dans le cas libyen, l'arabisation et l'unité de l'État après l'indépendance se sont avérées plus difficiles en raison de l'unification des trois territoires historiquement divisés, Fezzan, Cyrénaïque et Tripolitaine, à laquelle l'Italie avait procédé pendant la période coloniale. Le gouvernement italien, après quelques études et recherches visant à approfondir sa connaissance des Berbères, avait cherché à définir une politique d'administration et de contrôle des régions berbérophones différente de celle du reste du territoire.[13] En effet, tout comme dans le cas des colonies françaises, les Berbères étaient considérés comme un instrument permettant d'administrer et de gérer les territoires occupés de manière plus efficace, notamment grâce à l'application d'une hiérarchie raciale.[14] Dans le contexte de la décolonisation et de l'indépendance de la Libye, ils ont été considérés – comme d'ailleurs toutes les minorités en général – comme un élément perturbateur qui mettait en péril la stabilité politique. Pour cette raison, pendant les années de Kadhafi, leur rôle a été délégitimé.

« Les ennemis de la Nation arabe »

Dans la nuit du 1ᵉʳ au 2 septembre 1969, en l'absence du roi Idriss qui se trouvait dans un lieu de cure en Turquie, un groupe de jeunes officiers libyens s'est emparé du pouvoir […]. Ce coup d'État semble avoir été exécuté sans effusion de sang. En annonçant par radio [leur] réussite, ses auteurs déclarèrent avoir formé un "Conseil

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[9] G. Grandguillaume, L'arabisation au Maghreb, *Revue d'aménagement linguistique*, 107, 2004, 18.

[10] M. Fois, *La minoranza inesistente. I berberi e la costruzione dello Stato algerino*, Carocci, Roma, 2013, 109.

[11] *El Moudjahid*, 29 avril 1970.

[12] G. Grandguillaume, *Arabisation et politique linguistique au Maghreb*, G.-P. Maisonneuve-Larose, Paris, 1983.

[13] F. Cresti, Due volte minoranza: i berberi ibaditi del *jabal* Nafūsa nella visione coloniale, in F. Cresti (éd.), *Minoranze, pluralismo, stato nell'Africa mediterranea e nel Sahel*, Aracne, Roma, 2015, 21-61.

[14] J. Despois, *La colonisation italienne en Libye : problèmes et méthodes*, Larose, Paris, 1935.

de la révolution"[15] porte-parole d'« […] une Libye révolutionnaire, socialiste […], pays qui luttera contre le colonialisme et le racisme et aidera les pays colonisés ».[16]

La République arabe libyenne, proclamée par les forces armées en septembre 1969 au nom de la volonté populaire, visait la mise en place d'un gouvernement démocratique et progressiste, ainsi que la garantie du socialisme et de l'unité arabe. Cette perspective permettait de dépasser les antagonismes régionaux en plaçant l'unité nationale au centre d'un projet politique plus ample. Le coup d'État a été comparé à une lutte de libération, établissant une relation directe avec les guerres de décolonisation.[17] Une nouvelle Constitution, dont le préambule proclamait que le peuple libyen faisait partie de la Nation arabe et qu'il s'était battu pour éliminer tous les obstacles potentiels, a remplacé celle de 1951. En outre, depuis l'avènement du nouveau régime, la situation a également changé pour les Juifs.[18] Comme communiqué au Comité international de la Croix-Rouge, « ceux-ci feraient l'objet d'intimidations de la part des militaires libyens. Ils devraient subir des perquisitions à leur domicile et d'autres humiliations. Certains furent arrêtés, puis relâchés. D'autres se trouvent encore en prison, soi-disant dans l'intérêt de leur propre sécurité ».[19]

À l'origine du nationalisme de Kadhafi, l'union du monde arabe faisait certainement partie de ses mots-clés. Inspiré par l'idéologie de Nasser, il reconnaissait la composante islamique comme une partie essentielle de l'arabisme.[20] En 1973, la Révolution populaire a vu son origine à Zouara, ville des émeutes de la fin des années cinquante. Elle présentait un programme en cinq points qui, outre le fait de supprimer les structures politiques existantes et d'améliorer l'orientation populaire de la révolution, incluait des mesures visant à

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[15] DDS, dodis.ch/33795, Changement de régime en Libye : instauration de la « République arabe libyenne », *cit.*, 1.

[16] *Idem*, 3.

[17] F. Dumasy - F. Di Pasquale, Être historien dans la Libye de Kadhafi. Stratégies professionnelles et pratiques mémorielles autour du Libyan Studies Center, *Politique africaine*, 125/1, 2012, 129-130.

[18] Archives fédérales suisses (AFS), Berne, E2003A#1980/85#798* Communautés juives en Libye. Ambasuisse, Tripoli, Télégramme n. 39, 23.09.1969.

[19] AFS E2003A#1980/85#798* Communautés juives en Libye. Situation des Juifs en Libye, Lettre du Département politique fédéral au Comité international de la Croix-Rouge, Genève, 03.10.1969.

[20] Pour une analyse sur le point de vue de Khadafi v. M. Cricco - F. Cresti, *Gheddafi. I volti del potere*, Carocci, Roma, 2011. Sur l'histoire de la Libye, v. F. Burgat - A. Laronde, *La Libye*, PUF, Paris, 1996 ; D. Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006 ; A. Baldinetti, *The Origins of the Libyan Nation. Colonial Legacy, Exile and Emergence of a New Nation-State*, Routledge, London / New York, 2010 ; F. Cresti, *Non desiderare la terra d'altri. La colonizzazione italiana in Libia*, Carocci, Roma, 2011 ; F. Cresti - M. Cricco, *Storia della Libia contemporanea*, Carocci, Roma, 2015, 2 ed.

accélérer l'élimination des opposants au régime, l'armement des citoyens et la suspension des lois de l'État. La mobilisation est venue de la base.[21] Tout au début, il s'agissait de construire « la communauté imaginée », pour utiliser les mots de Benedict Anderson.[22] Comment ? À travers une sorte de classement des différentes composantes de la société, dont on trouve un exemple concret dans le Livre Vert. Ce dernier constitue le fondement de la réflexion qui aboutira à la création de la Grande *Jamāhīriyya* arabe libyenne populaire et socialiste, instaurée en 1977 par Kadhafi. En proposant une troisième voie alternative au bipolarisme, dans la section sur les fondements sociaux de la troisième théorie universelle, le Livre Vert analyse la notion de minorité et son rôle au sein de la société libyenne, en distinguant deux types de minorités.[23]

> Qu'est-ce qu'une minorité ? Quels sont ses droits et ses devoirs ? Comment le problème des minorités peut-il se résoudre en partant des principes généraux de la Troisième Théorie Universelle ?
> Il n'y a que deux types de minorités.
> Celles qui appartiennent à une nation qui leur fournit un cadre social, et celles qui, n'appartenant pas à une nation, forment elles-mêmes leur propre cadre. Ces dernières accumulent les traditions historiques qui doivent permettre, à terme, par le jeu de l'appartenance et de la communauté de destin, de former des nations.
> Il est clair que ces minorités ont des droits sociaux qui leur sont propres. Toute altération de ces droits par une majorité constitue une injustice. Les caractéristiques sociales sont inhérentes et ne peuvent être ni octroyées, ni confisquées. Quant à leurs problèmes politiques et économiques, ils ne peuvent être résolus qu'au sein d'une société populaire dans laquelle les masses détiennent le pouvoir, la richesse et les armes. Considérer les minorités comme étant politiquement et économiquement minoritaires, relève de la dictature et de l'injustice.[24]

Toutefois, paradoxalement, ce discours n'a pas eu d'application concrète. En effet, les droits sociaux n'étaient pas reconnus, et aucune tutelle n'était assurée. Les Imazighen étaient plutôt considérés comme « ennemis de la Nation arabe et instruments du colonialisme et [de] l'impérialisme ».[25] Dès le début, le régime de

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[21] D. Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006, 100-102.

[22] B. Anderson, *L'imaginaire national. Réflexions sur l'origine et l'essor du nationalisme*, La Découverte, Paris, 1996.

[23] Le Livre Vert a été publié en trois parties (entre 1976 et 1979) : la première s'intéresse à la politique, la deuxième à l'économie et la troisième à la société, son organisation et ses objectifs.

[24] M. El Khadafi, *Le Livre Vert. La solution du problème de la démocratie, « le pouvoir du peuple ». La solution du problème économique, « le socialisme ». Les fondements sociaux de la « troisième théorie universelle »*, Centre mondial d'études et de recherches sur le livre vert, Tripoli, 1999, 155.

[25] S. Chaker - M. Ferkal, Berbères de Libye : un paramètre méconnu, une irruption politique inattendue, *Politique Africaine*, 125, 2012, 107.

Kadhafi a mené une politique très dure à leur égard, et ceci sur plusieurs domaines. Le système éducatif, par exemple, a été conçu entièrement en arabe, sans aucune mention du passé berbère dans les manuels d'histoire nord-africaine. De même, l'usage de la langue berbère a été prohibé dans tous les lieux publics et les toponymes berbères ont été arabisés. Au sein de la famille, une loi (n° 24-1994), en vigueur jusqu'en 2007, interdisait le choix de noms berbères pour les nouveau-nés. Le peuple libyen a toujours été décrit comme un bloc monolithique, caractérisé par la langue arabe et la religion islamique, sans stratifications ni différences. L'ibadisme a d'ailleurs été réprimé. Les enquêtes statistiques ont également été interdites, fait qui, comme partout ailleurs en Afrique du Nord, rend difficile l'évaluation démographique de la population berbérophone.[26] Celle-ci est concentrée dans l'ouest du pays, en particulier à Zouara, au sud-ouest de Tripoli dans le Djebel Nefoussa, ainsi que dans les oasis de Ghadamès, Ghat, El-Foqaha, Sokna et Augila. Le refus de reconnaissance exprime un désir d'homogénéisation et de contrôle social et territorial.

Si « l'écriture de l'histoire a pu être un élément du système complexe de compromis et de négociation entre différents acteurs et entre des mémoires hétérogènes »,[27] l'approfondissement de l'histoire libyenne du point de vue des Berbères et la reconstruction de leur contribution s'avèrent d'autant plus compliqués, notamment en raison du choix du régime de cacher d'une manière ou d'une autre leur existence. Pendant des décennies, les sources les plus importantes sur les berbérophones ont été d'ordre linguistique, en particulier du côté italien, conséquence directe des intérêts coloniaux et des liens historiques.[28] Après les

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[26] Compte tenu de l'absence de recensements linguistiques, on l'estime à un peu plus de 10 % de la population globale, dont la grande majorité se situe dans le binôme Zouara-Nefoussa, v. S. Chaker - M. Ferkal, *op. cit.*, 108.

[27] F. Dumasy - F. Di Pasquale, *op. cit.*, 128.

[28] Pour plus de détails, voir les travaux des linguistes italiens, notamment F. Beguinot, Gli studi berberi dal 1919 al maggio 1922, *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, 9, 1922, 382-408 ; G. Buselli, Berber Texts from Jebel Nefûsi (Žemmâri Dialect), *Journal of the Royal African Society*, 23/92, 1924, 285-293 ; F. Zanon, Contributo alla conoscenza linguistico-etnografica dell'oasi di Augila, *Africa italiana,* 5, 1933, 259-270 ; F. Beguinot, *Il Berbero Nefûsi di Fassâṭo*, Istituto per l'Oriente, Roma, 1942 ; L. Serra, Testi berberi in dialetto di Zuâra, *Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli,* 14, 1964, 715-726 ; L. Serra, I dialetti berberi orientali (Rassegna degli studi e prospettive di ricerca), *Atti del Sodalizio Glottologico Milanese*, 21, 1979, 23-34 ; L. Serra, "Il contributo italiano agli studi di berberistica, *L'Universo: rivista di divulgazione geografica*, 64/5, 1984, 634-642 ; L. Serra, Studi di berberistica, *Gli Studi africanistici in Italia dagli anni '60 ad oggi, Atti del convegno*, Roma, 25-27 giugno 1985, Istituto italo-africano, Roma, 1986, 207-226 ; V. Brugnatelli (éd.), *Fiabe del popolo tuareg e dei Berberi del Nordafrica*, Mondadori, Milano, 1994. Pour une reconstruction historique de la question berbère dans la politique italienne pendant les premières années de la présence italienne en Libye, v. F. Cresti, 2015, *op. cit.* En ce qui concerne les études francophones, voir, dans le domaine de la géographie, J. Despois, *Le Djebel Nefousa (Tripolitaine). Étude géographique*, Larose, Paris, 1935 ; D. Bisson - J. Bisson - J. Fontaine, *La Libye. À la découverte d'un pays. Tome 1. Identité libyenne ; Tome 2. Itinéraires*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1999.

soulèvements de 2011, la question berbère a trouvé un nouvel élan – en Libye mais aussi en Tunisie – concrétisé par un débat très vif et des nouvelles recherches.[29]

Révolutions et résistances. Influences internationales

L'approche du gouvernement libyen à l'égard de la question berbère ou, en d'autres termes, celle de la majorité à l'égard de la minorité, relevait du déni. Les seuls espaces d'expression possibles étaient à l'étranger, et ce grâce aux contacts et aux influences internationales. Tout d'abord, le printemps berbère de 1980 en Algérie a donné de nouvelles impulsions. Il a représenté la première manifestation publique dans ce pays contre le gouvernement du parti unique du Front de libération nationale (FLN), seul détenteur du pouvoir depuis l'indépendance, et avait pour objectif la reconnaissance de la diversité linguistique et culturelle. Les manifestations en faveur de la langue à l'Université de Tizi Ouzou, en Kabylie, ont démontré que « la revendication berbère n'était pas le fait d'intellectuels isolés – « résidus du colonialisme » – mais bien une aspiration largement diffusée au sein de la population berbérophone ».[30] La résistance des militants des territoires du Djebel Nefoussa et de Zouara, de nature essentiellement culturelle, a probablement été influencée par les contacts avec des militants Kabyles, ainsi que par la participation des exilés au Front national pour le salut de la Libye (National Front for the Salvation of Libya, NFSL). Créé en 1981, il s'opposait au régime depuis l'étranger ; son objectif visait un gouvernement constitutionnel et démocratiquement élu.

De plus, le panberberisme ou panamizighité – sentiment d'appartenance à la composante berbère – a trouvé dans le Congrès Mondial Amazigh (CMA) l'une de

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[29] Suite aux changements depuis 2011, de nouvelles études sont apparues. Voir, par exemple, B. Maddy-Weitzman, *The Berber Identity Movement and The Challenge to North African States*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 2011 ; A. M. Di Tolla, I Berberi del Gebel Nefusa tra rivoluzione e identità culturale, in A. M. Di Tolla - E. Francesca (éds.), *La rivoluzione ai tempi di internet: il futuro della democrazia nel Maghreb e nel mondo arabo*, Il Torcoliere, UNIOR, Napoli, 2012, 79-91 ; Y. Sawani - J. Pack, Libyan constitutionality and sovereignty post-Qadhafi: the Islamist, regionalist, and Amazigh challenges, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 18/4, 2013, 523-543 ; B. Maddy-Weitzman, A turning point? The Arab Spring and the Amazigh movement, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *Minority politics in the Middle East and North Africa: the prospects for transformative change,* 38/14, 2015, 2499-2515 ; A. M. Morone - C. Pagano, Les Berbères du Jebel Nefousa dans la Libye post-Kadhafi : une perspective historique, *Libyan Affairs*, 1/2, 2016, 128-157 ; K. E. Hoffman, Navigating the Border: Amazing Minorities from Libia in Tunisia during the 2011-2012 Uprising, in M. Carboni - G. Sistu (éds.), *Mobility and Minorities in Africa*, Aracne, Roma, 2018, 149-171 ; A. Baldinetti, Languages in Libya: Building Blocks of National Identity and Soft Power Tools, *The Journal of North African Studies*, 23/3, 2018, 418-439.

[30] S. Chaker, *Berbères aujourd'hui*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1989, 35.

ses expressions concrètes.[31] En s'inspirant de la Déclaration des Nations Unies de 1994 sur les droits des peuples autochtones, le CMA a réuni de nombreuses associations berbères. La conception du CMA, présentant les Berbères comme un peuple transnational, était aux antipodes du discours nationaliste soutenu par les différents pays après l'indépendance.

L'internationalisation du débat a également pu exister grâce aux associations de la diaspora et au réseau web, qui, compte tenu des restrictions imposées par le régime, représentait l'un des seuls moyens d'expression et contribuait à la diffusion d'une identité multiple. À cet égard, deux exemples peuvent être mentionnés, à savoir le site *Tawalt* (« mot » en tamazight), né en 2001 en tant que forum devenu ensuite une plate-forme pour la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel, et le Congrès libyen amazigh (CLA), fondé à Londres en 2002. En 2005, ce sont précisément les Berbères vivant hors de la Libye qui ont dénoncé la violation systématique des droits linguistiques et culturels auprès du Haut-Commissaire des Nations Unies aux droits de l'homme, ce qui démontre à quel point les voies de contestation étaient externes.[32]

2011 : une rupture radicale avec le passé ?

La désintégration de l'État en Libye, avec les changements survenus en 2011, a représenté paradoxalement l'accomplissement de l'idéologie de la *Jamāhīriyya*, qui donnait le pouvoir au peuple. Inspiré par des principes révolutionnaires, Kadhafi avait montré un profond scepticisme quant au concept d'État.[33] D'un autre point de vue, la reconnaissance, de la part de l'ONU, du Conseil national de transition en tant que le seul représentant légitime de la Libye, a proclamé la fin de la *Jamāhīriyya*.[34]

Les mobilisations populaires de 2011 et la fin des régimes autoritaires ont de leur côté ouvert la voie à la revendication amazighe, qui a alors trouvé un élan nouveau et une place différente, comme l'a affirmé le président du Congrès Mondial Amazigh pendant le Forum Permanent des Nations Unies sur les droits des peuples autochtones :

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[31] Fondé en 1995 à Saint Romain de Dolan en France, le CMA a organisé sa première conférence en 1997, dans les îles Canaries. Pour plus de détails, voir le site officiel du CMA, https://www.congres-mondial-amazigh.org.

[32] Pour plus de détails, A. Baldinetti, Le istanze amazigh in Libia: la nascita di una società civile?, in A. Baldinetti - A. Maneggia (éds.), *Processi politici nel Mediterraneo: dinamiche e prospettive*, Morlacchi Editore, Perugia, 2009, 231-250. Sur le rôle des sites web, M. Lafkioui, Interactions digitales et construction identitaire sur les sites Web berbères, *Études et Documents Berbères*, 29/30, 2011, 213-233.

[33] D. Melfa, Forme e problematiche della statualità nel Maghreb. Note introduttive, in D. Melfa (éd.) *Statualità e periferie nel Maghreb contemporaneo*, Aracne, Roma, 2018, 11.

[34] J. Jurado Anaya, « La Seconde Jamahiriyya » libyenne : l'échec d'une stratégie de survie, *L'Année du Maghreb*, VIII, 2012, 215.

[…] c'est naturellement et avec enthousiasme que les Amazighs participent très activement aux protestations populaires en cours, afin de mettre fin au règne des régimes despotiques et tyranniques et instaurer des États de droit et la démocratie.[35]

Les médias ont montré les drapeaux amazighs brandis de Zouara jusqu'à Tripoli, donnant un message très clair. Ainsi, le débat, qui n'était jusqu'alors possible qu'à l'étranger ou sur le web, a pu trouver une place au sein de la complexe société libyenne, principalement en raison de l'implication militaire du Djebel Nefoussa. L'espoir résidait dans le fait que l'importance historique, culturelle et linguistique des Amazighs pouvait être reconnue, et que leurs droits pouvaient être assurés.[36]

Dès août 2011, le projet de Constitution provisoire a permis de franchir une première étape, notamment avec son article 1, qui affirme que : « L'Arabe est la langue officielle, en garantissant les droits linguistiques et culturels des Amazighs, des Tabous, des Touaregs et des composantes de la société libyenne ». Cependant, le Congrès national amazigh libyen (CNAL)[37] a exprimé ses doutes et a rejeté l'article susmentionné, considéré comme discriminatoire et « en nette contradiction avec les bases de formation d'États démocratiques, civils, pluriels, modernes et justes ; […] avec les principes de base des droits de l'Homme et des traités internationaux ».[38] De plus, ce congrès a exigé que la langue amazighe soit considérée comme langue officielle au même titre que l'arabe.[39]

En réalité, le travail à faire est encore important, même si l'on tient compte du chemin déjà parcouru au cours des dernières décennies par les autres pays nord-africains. Si l'on peut tirer des leçons de ce qui s'est passé en Algérie et au Maroc – où les Berbères ont été confrontés à leur gouvernement respectif au cours des dernières décennies –, les moments de crise de l'État ont conduit à la reconnaissance, quelquefois partielle, de la langue berbère. Ce fait est confirmé par le projet de Constitution de 2011 et son article 2, consacré à l'identité et la langue, qui affirme que :

> L'identité libyenne se base sur des principes inclusifs et diversifiés ; les Libyens sont fiers de leurs éléments sociaux, culturels et linguistiques et la Libye est considérée comme une partie du monde arabe et musulman, de l'Afrique et du bassin méditerranéen.

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[35] Belkacem Lounes, Président du Congrès Mondial Amazigh à la Xe session du Forum Permanent des Nations Unies sur les droits des peuples autochtones, New York, mai 2011.

[36] *Ibidem*.

[37] Pour plus de détails, v. A. Bensaâd (éd.), La Libye révolutionnaire, *Politique africaine*, 125, 2012.

[38] Art. 1 Communiqué du premier Congrès national amazigh libyen.

[39] Art. 2 Communiqué du premier Congrès national amazigh libyen.

Les langues parlées par les Libyens ou d'une partie d'entre eux, y compris Arabe, Amazigh, Tuareg et Tubo, sont considérées comme un patrimoine culturel et linguistique et constituent un atout commun pour tous les Libyens. L'État garantit de prendre les mesures nécessaires pour les protéger, préserver leur originalité et développer leur enseignement et leur utilisation par ceux qui les parlent.

Les Amazighs de Libye ont rejeté ce projet par la voix du Haut Conseil des Amazighs. Ce dernier, en 2013 a décrétée une période de désobéissance civile, qui s'est concrétisée dans une série de protestations contre l'attribution des sièges de l'Assemblée constituante. Après la menace de boycotter les élections, de fermer les routes principales et les ports, les représentants de la communauté berbère ont bloqué le terminal gazier de Zouara, ville encore une fois protagoniste.[40]

Sans doute, le défi de la reconstruction du pays, la concurrence entre légitimité politique – strictement liée aux urnes – et légitimité révolutionnaire, le rôle des milices et les fragmentations locales ont influencé l'approche amazighe.[41] Aujourd'hui, il s'agit d'une situation en cours de développement, mais la position des membres du Haut Conseil des Amazighs reste inchangée. Selon eux, le projet de Constitution est « basé sur la discrimination raciale en violation flagrante du droit international et des principes démocratiques »,[42] vu qu'il prévoit « deux catégories de citoyens ».[43]

Conclusion

Le débat sur le rôle des Berbères en Libye est toujours animé et d'actualité. Historiquement, les minorités dans leur ensemble ont été considérées comme un problème, représentant l'une des principales raisons de l'absence de consolidation de l'État-Nation. Après les mobilisations de 2011, il est apparu clairement qu'elles constituaient « un précieux indice de la pluralité politique et culturelle » dans les sociétés de l'Afrique du Nord.[44]

Bien qu'il s'agisse d'une question indéniablement politique, elle va au-delà de cette seule arène et atteint d'autres contextes comme la langue, l'éducation et la religion. Une question qui, comme nous l'avons vu, dépasse les frontières nationales et géographiques. Elle y puise une plus grande force et une résonance internationale qui, bien qu'elle ne propose pas de « solution » à court terme, assure

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[40] S. Haddad, Insécurité, exclusion et blocage politiques dans une Libye fragmentée, *L'Année du Maghreb*, 11, 2014.

[41] S. Haddad, La sécurité, « priorité des priorités » de la transition libyenne, *L'Année du Maghreb*, IX, 2013.

[42] https://www.congres-mondial-amazigh.org/2018/12/22/libye-projet-de-nouvelle-constitution, consulté le 5 janvier 2019.

[43] *Ibidem*.

[44] B. Stora, *Le 89 arabe, réflexions sur les révolutions en cours, dialogue avec Edwy Plenel*, Stock, Paris, 2011, 144.

la persistance du débat. Trois communiqués récents du CMA de 2018 en sont la preuve.

Le premier rapporte la motion du VIIIe congrès à Tunis en octobre 2018, qui donne un aperçu de la situation des Berbères en Afrique du Nord. En ce qui concerne la Libye, le document souligne que, dans le territoire du Fezzan, plusieurs dizaines de familles sont privées de documents d'identité et, par conséquent, de liberté de circulation, et que l'accès aux services publics de base leur est interdit. Pour cette raison et « conformément aux conventions internationales, le CMA demande instamment aux autorités libyennes de délivrer des documents d'identité aux membres de ces familles sans délai ». De plus, le CMA attire une nouvelle fois l'attention sur la Constitution, qui « ne peut en aucun cas ignorer la question amazighe » et met en garde contre le « risque réel de division et de partition du pays ».[45]

Le deuxième document est une lettre que le CMA, à nouveau, émet à l'occasion de la journée internationale des droits de l'Homme, dans laquelle il dénonce « le racisme institutionnel et les multiples violations des droits historiques des Amazighs dans tous les pays de Tamazgha et de la diaspora ». Se concentrant sur le cas de la Libye, la lettre critique « les différents groupes arabo-islamiques qui, actuellement actifs dans ce pays, s'accordent tous pour exclure l'amazighité du pays. Le projet de Constitution actuellement en discussion fait totalement abstraction de la culture amazighe autochtone ». Dans la conclusion, le CMA « recommande vivement aux Amazighs de Libye d'exercer sans tarder leur droit à l'autodétermination et d'accélérer sa mise en œuvre dans leurs territoires ».[46]

Le troisième document est une lettre du CMA et de l'Organisation de la Diaspora Touarègue en Europe (ODTE) au Haut Conseil des Amazighs et au Conseil social suprême des Touaregs de Libye, déclarant le soutien à la cause et l'engagement à s'opposer à un changement qui ne peut être considéré comme tel si celui-ci ne reconnaît pas les droits de tous les membres de la société (voir *Annexe 1*).

Il apparaît clairement qu'il s'agit de documents à forte valeur politique, mais ils peuvent néanmoins nous donner l'image d'un débat toujours en cours et d'une histoire encore en évolution.

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[45] https://www.congres-mondial-amazigh.org/2018/10/28/motion-du-viii-congrès-du-cma-à-tunis, consulté le 5 janvier 2018.

[46] https://www.congres-mondial-amazigh.org/2018/12/10/journée-mondiale-des-droits-de-l-homme, consulté le 5 janvier 2018.

Annexe 1
Lettre au Haut Conseil des Amazighs et au Conseil social suprême des Touaregs de Libye[47]

Depuis la fin du régime de Kadhafi, la Libye traverse une situation incontrôlée avec l'apparition d'une multitude de milices armées. La plupart de ces groupes se sont constitués à partir du système dominant mais se livrent à une lutte féroce pour le contrôle du pouvoir. Chaque groupe tente de s'imposer par la force, semant la mort et la désolation.

Dans ce contexte de chaos généralisé, vous, Amazighs du nord et du sud de la Libye, peuple autochtone de ce pays, vous vous êtes mis volontairement à l'écart de cette folie meurtrière, en restant dans vos territoires respectifs. Malgré cela, vous n'avez pas été épargnés par les agressions violentes, subissant des pertes humaines, les déplacements forcés et la destruction de vos biens. Chaque groupe a tenté de vous imposer sa loi, de vous dominer et de faire de vous des étrangers chez vous.

Aujourd'hui, ce processus se poursuit sur le plan politique à travers un projet de Constitution décidé sans vous et contre vos droits et vos intérêts. En disposant unilatéralement que « la Libye fait partie de la nation arabe » et que « la langue arabe est la langue de l'État » et que pour les autres langues libyennes « on verra plus tard », les promoteurs de ce projet choisissent de maintenir la Libye à l'écart de la marche de l'Histoire. En effet, les autres pays du nord de l'Afrique renouent progressivement avec la dimension amazighe de leur identité après avoir constaté l'impasse dans laquelle les ont plongés des idéologies rétrogrades et totalitaires. Le projet de Constitution qui vous est imposé aujourd'hui, vous marginalise, ignore vos besoins et veut vous maintenir dans un statut de citoyens de seconde zone. Ce projet est par conséquent anti-démocratique, raciste et illégal.

D'autres articles de ce projet de Constitution, notamment ceux relatifs aux droits des femmes, à l'accès à la nationalité libyenne et à l'exercice des pouvoirs, ne tiennent compte ni de l'histoire, ni des valeurs socioculturelles des Amazighs, ni de leurs droits fondamentaux en tant que peuple autochtone, notamment leur droit internationalement reconnu

> d'être autonomes et de s'administrer eux-mêmes pour tout ce qui touche à leurs affaires intérieures et locales, ainsi que le droit de maintenir et de renforcer leurs institutions politiques, juridiques, économiques, sociales et culturelles distinctes.

Aujourd'hui, il est scandaleux et incompréhensible que des milliers de Libyens Kel-Tamacheq soient privés de la pleine citoyenneté libyenne alors que des personnes originaires de pays arabes accèdent quasi-automatiquement à la nationalité libyenne. Il s'agit là d'une discrimination raciale grave et absolument intolérable !

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[47]   https://www.congres-mondial-amazigh.org/2018/12/30/lettre-du-cma-et-de-l-odte-aux-amazighs-de-libye, consulté le 5 janvier 2018.

Face à un environnement plus que jamais hostile et oppressant, et aux incertitudes liées aux bouleversements géopolitiques dans la région, le Congrès Mondial Amazigh (CMA) et l'Organisation de la Diaspora Touarègue en Europe (ODTE) tiennent à exercer leur devoir de vous alerter et de vous demander instamment d'unir vos forces et de faire front par tous les moyens aux dangers qui menacent votre survie individuelle et collective. Prendre votre destin en main comme le propose le Haut Conseil des Amazighs de Libye qui a décidé d'élaborer et de mettre en œuvre une Constitution propre à vous et à vos territoires et de vous doter de gouvernements locaux, nous semble être la voie à suivre. Cette voie légitime et conforme au droit international, est la seule garante de votre avenir.

Le CMA et l'ODTE vous expriment leur soutien fraternel le plus total et se tiennent à votre disposition pour vous appuyer, notamment au niveau international, par tous les moyens légitimes dans la quête de vos droits, de votre liberté et de votre dignité.

Tudert i Tmazight g Libya ! Vive Tamazight en Libye !

Paris, 18/12/2968 – 30/12/2018
P/le CMA   P/l'ODTE
Le Bureau Mondial   Abdoulahi Attayoub, président

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<div align="center">RÉSUMÉ</div>

Historiquement, les minorités dans leur ensemble ont été considérées comme un « problème », représentant une des principales raisons de l'absence de consolidation de l'État-nation. Après les mobilisations de 2011, il est apparu clairement qu'elles constituaient un indice de la pluralité politique et culturelle de l'Afrique du Nord. L'article

propose de mettre en perspective les revendications amazighes libyennes et de comprendre comment le discours idéologique national a contesté le concept d'identité et le militantisme amazigh.

ALI BENSAÂD

Libye, les rentes d'une transition inaboutie[*]

Cet article s'intéresse à la transition en Libye. Il aborde comment celle-ci, en se prolongeant excessivement, est devenue, de ce fait, génératrice de rentes pour des acteurs qui, à la faveur du contexte d'incertitudes, ont conquis des structures de transition, s'y sont enkystés et en ont fait des instruments pour tenter de prolonger leur pouvoir. Comment ces acteurs n'ont pas intérêt à une clarification de situation qui réduirait leur place à l'échelle de leur réelle représentativité et préfèrent un exercice institutionnel fictif fait de marchandage et de cooptation pour préserver les positions acquises dans les incertitudes de l'insurrection ou de la deuxième guerre civile, une sorte de « rente de transition ».

L'article explique ainsi comment ce contexte a permis au PJC (Parti de la Justice et de la Construction), vitrine politique des Frères Musulmans, de conquérir la présidence du HCE (Haut Comité d'État) et d'autres positions alors qu'il est très minoritaire.

Il s'intéresse au paradoxe de la ville de Misrata, lieu d'origine des plus grandes figures de l'islamisme du pays, mais pourtant celle qui leur oppose la plus grande résistance ainsi que le désarroi d'une ville victime de cet état de « transition permanente ».

Il s'intéresse à l'émergence de Serradj comme le produit inattendu des querelles des élites du pays et comment à défaut de pouvoir gérer une transition, celui-ci s'est attelé à son tour, à se construire un pouvoir et des réseaux, à partir de sa position dans cette transition.

Enfin l'article explique comment l'état de « transition permanente » a également permis aux milices de s'enraciner, que celles-ci ne sont pas des acteurs complètement autonomes mais sont dans un rapport d'interdépendance avec les acteurs politiques locaux et puissances étrangères et qu'elles restent très perméables aux contextes et pressions politiques. La communauté internationale peut les faire reculer et faire reculer leurs parrains comme elle l'a fait chaque fois qu'elle a adopté des positions fermes accompagnées de mesure. Dans un pays où manque un recours national, l'ONU reste une figure morale respectée.

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[*] Cette article a été publié au 2018 sur *Monde Afrique*, dans cinq volets.

Les Frères Musulmans, une minorité agissante au cœur des réseaux de pouvoir

Sur la scène politique libyenne, les bouleversements et les retournements d'alliance se succèdent sans cesse et sont toujours plus inattendus. Alors que cette éventualité était des plus improbables, Souihli, un des leaders de Misrata, la ville-bastion révolutionnaire, a été évincé de la présidence du HCE (le Haut Comité d'État) en avril 2018. Mais ce qui était encore plus inattendu, c'est l'élection, à sa place, d'un Frère Musulman, Mecheri. Sitôt élu, celui-ci, sans en référer aux membres du HCE, s'adresse au chef du parlement de Tobrouk pour lui déclarer son entière disponibilité à négocier, sans conditions, confirmant le complet retournement politique des islamistes qui, il est vrai date déjà de quelque temps. Tournant le dos à leur stratégie antérieure, l'affirmation pacificatrice des Frères Musulmans libyens au travers de leur vitrine politique le PJC (Parti de la Justice et de la Construction) est aujourd'hui évidente, et leur a même coûté cher : 150 de leurs cadres, surtout des « lettrés », désapprouvant l'engagement de leur parti dans les accords de Skhirat, ont d'un bloc quitté le parti ou ont été contraints à le faire, ouvrant la voie à une hémorragie continue. Celui-ci est sociologiquement, aujourd'hui, surtout un parti de commerçants comme le sont la plupart de ses cadres dirigeants à l'instar de son secrétaire général Mohamed Sowan ou de son homme fort et puissant argentier, le richissime homme d'affaires Abderazak Laaradi, une des plus grosses fortunes de Libye, édifiée du temps de Kadhafi et dans sa proximité, notamment par l'attribution de marchés publics.

Au-delà du cas particulier de cette élection et au-delà du cas particulier du PJD, ces successifs retournements deviennent la norme du jeu politique libyen et le rendent illisible. Mais ils ne sont en rien erratiques et relèvent peu d'un « esprit nomade ». Ils sont surtout le résultat de la dérive d'une transition qui a trop duré et a connu trop de contrecoups, où des acteurs ont acquis des positions institutionnelles à la faveur du contexte d'incertitude et d'instabilité généré par l'insurrection et qui, pour préserver leurs positions de pouvoir, se sont enkystés dans ces institutions qui deviennent le lieu de luttes sourdes en vase clos, déconnectées des rapports de force du terrain. Et de ce fait, peuvent faire émerger toutes les combinaisons, même les plus improbables.

De fait, rien ne prédisposait le PJC à la conquête de la présidence du HCE, une représentativité normalement au-dessus de ses forces réelles. Il a régulièrement été mis en minorité aux différentes élections, érodant toujours plus son capital de voix : législatives de 2012 et 2014, municipales, conseil pour la constitution. Il ne dispose pas de plus d'une quinzaine de sièges sur les 115 que compte le HCE. Et même si des membres du HCE, comme hier du CNG (Congrès National Général), étiquetés « indépendants » sont en fait liés ou proches du PJC, le meilleur score de celui-ci pour le vote dans cette instance, celui de l'année dernière, a réuni tout au plus 25 suffrages. Il connait une désaffection grandissante que ne nient pas ses propres dirigeants qui ne manquent pas de s'en inquiéter. Signe de cette crise, au

moment même où se déroulaient les élections, le représentant du PJC au Conseil Présidentiel, Abdeslam Kajman, annonçait son retrait du parti, après bien d'autres cadres qui n'y voient désormais plus une garantie pour leur carrière politique. Malgré tous ces handicaps, le Frère Musulman El Mecheri est élu. Apparatchik sans charisme, il est l'élu au CNG de la ville de Zaouia, ville au passé frondeur et qui fut naguère un fief de la gauche marxiste.[1]

Qu'est ce qui a donc rendu possible cette élection ? Au-delà du sens de la combine et du clientélisme où les islamistes excellent autant que les autres acteurs, elle est le résultat de la conjonction d'un facteur structurel et d'une conjoncture. L'élément structurel qui a pesé depuis ses débuts sur la révolution, c'est le poids surdimensionné des islamistes dans les réseaux de pouvoir. Quasiment seuls à bénéficier d'une culture partisane et d'une organisation structurée, connectés aux réseaux internationaux au contraire des autres insurgés dont l'horizon était le plus souvent local, les islamistes ont fortement investi dès le début les structures politiques et militaires naissantes et y ont pris une place disproportionnée par rapport à leur place légitime. C'est à partir de ces positions de pouvoir qu'ils ont compensé leurs successives déconvenues électorales par la construction de réseaux d'influences dont l'efficacité s'est décuplée proportionnellement à la fragmentation grandissante du pays. L'élément conjoncturel, comme ce fut le cas dans d'autres élections, c'est une « transaction » qui a lieu cette fois avec les élus du Sud, le Fezzan, au HCE, dans un contexte où ces derniers veulent monnayer en postes et en opportunités d'affaires l'intérêt stratégique que suscite le Fezzan dans l'affrontement entre le pouvoir de Tripoli et celui de Tobrouk.

La débauche d'énergie pour investir des structures de pouvoir censées être provisoires, est remarquable. Alors qu'au Fezzan se déroule l'épisode le plus long de la guerre entre Toubous et la tribu Ouled Slimane, les réseaux d'influence de cette région, eux, se sont transportés à Tripoli pour peser sur des nominations notamment celle probable du successeur de Moussa El Kaouni, vice-président du Conseil Présidentiel où il représentait le Sud et dont il avait démissionné depuis plus d'un an ainsi que celle, sans cesse différée, du gouverneur militaire du Fezzan, convoité par le Touareg, ancien militaire, Ali Kena.

Cette focalisation sur des structures de transition est une des causes principales de l'enlisement de la transition, ces structures devenant, pour les acteurs qui les investissent, et pas seulement les islamistes, des positions de pouvoir qu'ils utilisent et qu'ils tentent de pérenniser pour assoir et prolonger le leur. C'est ce qui

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[1] L'évolution de cette ville s'inscrit dans celle des villes arabes et l'illustre, démentant une spécificité libyenne rétive à la modernité politique. Cette ville a été jusqu'aux années 70 un fief des courants de gauche, notamment marxistes, avec notamment la famille Bechti qui a donné une dynastie d'opposants dans un large prisme, allant de communistes à imams contestataires de gauche. Comme ailleurs dans le monde arabe, une féroce répression par Kadhafi et un profond bouleversement sociologique notamment un puissant exode rural, dont est issu d'ailleurs l'actuel élu El Mechri, ont érodé les bases sociologiques de ces mouvements politiques.

donne par ailleurs une pertinence à la stratégie de Ghassane Salamé d'organiser des élections pour sortir de ce « provisoire qui dure ». Peu d'acteurs, et encore moins chez la population, en contestent la pertinence. Il y a une réelle lassitude vis-à-vis du provisoire de structures « de transition » qui finissent par se juxtaposer, se contester la légalité et au final se survivre pour mieux se nuire mutuellement et bloquer le pays à l'image des trois gouvernements[2] et deux parlements qui se superposent et se disputent la légitimité. Mais elle suscite tout à la fois, chez les mêmes, une perplexité quant à sa faisabilité. La question est en effet celle des conditions de sécurité loin d'être réunies pour crédibiliser ces élections. Et surtout pour en faire respecter le résultat.

Beaucoup d'acteurs n'ont pas intérêt à une clarification de situation qui réduirait leur place à l'échelle de leur réelle représentativité et préfèrent un exercice institutionnel fictif fait de marchandage et de cooptation pour préserver les positions acquises dans les incertitudes de l'insurrection ou de la deuxième guerre civile, une sorte de « rente de transition ». C'est la mobilisation de cette rente, qui n'est pas spécifique au PJC, qui a permis à celui-ci, très minoritaire pourtant, de conquérir la présidence du HCE et d'autres positions. Tenter de reproduire cette rente de position par des accommodements entre acteurs reste la pratique prisée par ces acteurs installés. C'est ainsi qu'avant l'élection au HCE, et ne croyant absolument pas en ses chances d'accéder à sa présidence, le PJC voyant d'un mauvais œil le processus onusien de sortie de transition sur lequel il ne peut avoir de prise, organise début avril à Tunis, avec l'appui discret d'En Nahda et de l'Algérie, une réunion des partis contestataires de ce processus où il se retrouve aux côtés d'islamistes radicaux comme le CGIL (Groupe Combattants Islamiques de Libye) qui le combattent. Or, avec l'élection inattendue d'El Mechri, le PJC, minoritaire, se retrouve au cœur du dispositif institutionnel libyen et comme un de ses principaux maitres d'œuvre et garants du processus onusien alors même qu'il avait cherché à le court-circuiter.

Confrontés à un contexte régional très défavorable avec notamment une hostilité viscérale du puissant voisin égyptien et la désaffection d'une partie importante d'une population libyenne où, par ailleurs, leur ancrage était déjà moins fort que partout ailleurs dans le monde arabe, les Frères Musulmans libyens du PJD se vivent sous une « menace existentielle » qui les autorise donc à toutes les concessions à condition qu'elles ne remettent pas en cause leurs positions de pouvoir acquises. Cette « normalisation » continue cependant à buter sur l'obstacle égyptien et sa phobie des Frères Musulmans. Lorsque l'Égypte prend la mesure à la fois de la difficulté de Haftar à s'imposer comme unique alternative mais aussi son incapacité à négocier, enfermé dans la bulle de ses prétentions, elle décide, tout en continuant à en faire son homme, de s'ouvrir à ses opposants. Le général Mahmoud

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[2] En 2018, en Tripolitaine, à côté du gouvernement de Serradj, Ghweil le premier ministre qui l'a précédé, a tenté de remettre en selle un autre gouvernement.

Hegazy, en charge du dossier libyen, constitue pour cela un comité de quarante personnalités de l'Ouest dont certaines sont farouchement hostiles à Haftar. Mais il en exclut absolument les FM et tous ceux susceptibles d'avoir un quelconque lien avec eux.

Les Frères Musulmans se rabattront alors sur l'Algérie grâce à un improbable axe Algérie-Qatar qui s'est constitué autour des conflits qui ont secoué le Sud libyen[3] et qui va ouvrir à l'Algérie l'accès aux islamistes libyens pourtant particulièrement hostiles à l'Algérie qui avait activement soutenu le régime de Kadhafi jusqu'à sa chute et même au-delà, en accueillant la famille du dictateur. Le contact se fait via le Qatar où vit le libyen Ali Sallabi, un proche d'El Karadaoui et autorité morale chez les Frères Musulmans et les islamistes libyens, et qui servira d'intermédiaire. Il sera relayé par Ghannouchi, obligé de l'Algérie qui l'avait accueilli en exil entre 1989 et 1991. C'est ce dernier qui abrite et parraine plusieurs rencontre entre Ali Sallabi et Ouyahia alors directeur de cabinet du président Bouteflika, avant de devenir son premier ministre. L'accès d'un cadre des Frères Musulmans, Abdelkader Touhami, au poste de responsable des services de renseignement libyen du gouvernement de Serradj, renforce leur relation à l'Algérie en y rajoutant une réponse aux préoccupations sécuritaires de celle-ci, d'autant que Touhami est originaire du Fezzan, la région frontalière avec l'Algérie et celle qui l'inquiète le plus. C'est pour cela que la première visite à l'étranger du Frère Musulman El Mecheri en tant que président du HCE, le 23 mai, sera consacrée à l'Algérie.

La main largement tendue à Haftar par le nouveau président du HCE, au-delà de ce qu'elle peut signifier de désir de réconciliation, suscite chez les autres acteurs une suspicion sur ses réelles finalités. Le scénario d'un arrangement au sommet pour le partage du pouvoir, sur le mode de celui intervenu en Tunisie entre Nahda et Nida Tounes, et qui n'a pas pu se faire entre Haftar et Misrata, scénario envisagé par plusieurs chancelleries et sur lequel s'est particulièrement penchée l'Égypte sans succès, ce scénario tenterait le PJD qui se verrait bien en substitut de Misrata sinon comme le troisième partenaire d'une relation triangulaire au sommet. De fait, la veille des élections, le secrétaire général du PJC, Mohamed Sowan, fait une

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[3] Contre les émiratis qui soutiennent les Toubous, le Qatar, allié alors de Tripoli, tente de se positionner dans cette région stratégique en soutenant les Touaregs alors que l'Algérie qui avait complètement perdu pied en Libye, n'avait plus comme fil dans ce pays que ces mêmes Touaregs, la communauté des Kel Ajjer, qui se répartit des deux côtés de la frontière avec des relations de parenté croisées. Le Qatar qui s'était acheté les services de connaisseurs de la question Touareg comme le mauritanien Mustapha Limane Chaffei, sorte de mercenaire du renseignement, ne pouvaient risquer les capacités de nuisance des Algériens qui avaient l'avantage du terrain. Mais les algériens eux-mêmes étaient affaiblis dans leurs capacités opérationnelles par la guerre dans leurs services qui a frappé leurs meilleurs connaisseurs de la région comme le général Hassan mis aux arrêts. D'où un mariage de raison entre services (Sur Mustapha Limane Chaffei, lire A. Bensaâd, Aux marges du Maghreb, des tribus mondialisées, *Méditerranée*, 116, Presses de l'Université de Provence, décembre 2011, 25-34).

déclaration étonnante et inattendue où il glorifie Haftar et surtout ses hommes armés en poussant jusqu'à les qualifier de « martyrs ». C'est pourtant le même qui, auparavant, l'avait excommunié alors que Abdelkrim Laaradi, l'argentier du parti, finançait l'opération « Fajr » qui a chassé de Tripoli le parlement élu où le PJC avait encore plus reculé, et l'a contraint à se réfugier à Tobrouk. Opération qui a constitué le point de départ du schisme de l'autorité politique et de la deuxième guerre civile et qui a accentué la fragmentation du pays. Cette soudaine glorification de l'ennemi absolu d'hier s'apparente bien à une « parade nuptiale » en direction de Haftar. Nul doute que le PJD veut aller encore plus loin que les réconciliateurs qu'il combattait hier, jusqu'à probablement accepter de gouverner avec le Maréchal Haftar et avec l'essentiel des conditions de ce dernier. De fait, lors des négociations de Skhirat, El Makhzoum du PJD qui avait réussi à prendre la tête de la délégation, avait accepté intégralement la dite « version 4 » de l'accord émanant pour l'essentiel de la délégation de Tobrouk et faisant la part belle à ses revendications et qui, entre autre, évacuait la question de la primauté de l'autorité politique sur le militaire, c'est-à-dire préservait la position de Haftar. Pour dégager la voie vers un accord plus équilibré, Al Makhzoum sera débarqué et la rupture consommée entre les islamistes du PJC et le reste de ce camp dit révolutionnaire.

Misrata, une place forte économique et révolutionnaire, gagnée par l'incertitude

La ville qui a incarné la résistance à Kadhafi et la lutte contre l'État islamique est aujourd'hui minée par le désarroi et les divisions. Le meurtre du maire de la ville qui incarnait le courant civil et était la figure haï de l'islamisme et sur les raisons duquel règne une omerta, a ajouté à ce désarroi et affaiblit le courant civil qui a initié la réconciliation. La ville paie, à sa façon, par l'usure, ce processus de transition qui n'en finit pas avec ses multiples retournements.

La perte de la présidence du HCE par le Misrati Souihli, même si elle doit pour une part à un début d'usure[4] du crédit d'une personnalité par ailleurs charismatique et issue d'une famille dynastique symbolisant une part de l'identité libyenne, elle est aussi symptomatique à la fois des divisions de la ville et du recul de son influence qui ont facilité la manœuvre du PJC. La distance prise par une partie de la ville avec Serradj, même si elle se manifeste sous forme de « neutralité », érode encore plus son influence tout en fragilisant également celui-ci.

Sortie exsangue de la bataille de Syrte qu'elle a engagée quasiment seule et qui lui a coûté plus de 700 morts et 3.000 blessés pour une ville de 400.000 habitants, la ville en est surtout sortie gagnée par le doute et des incertitudes qui ont fissuré son consensus, accru les clivages et les concurrences. L'amertume des Misratis est

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[4] Élu en 2012 au CNG pour une circonscription de Misrata avec 20.000 voix et en première position, il n'en a recueilli pour le parlement en 2014 que 3.000 et en cinquième position, il est vrai avec un fort taux d'abstention à l'échelle nationale.

grande face une communauté internationale qui s'est faite pressante pour les pousser à une bataille qui concernait les intérêts de celle-ci, à savoir le danger d'une enclave de l'EI à quelques encablures de l'Europe, mais qui sur-sollicitait leurs capacités. Une sur-mobilisation autour de Syrte, exploitée par Haftar, pour prendre de force, et par surprise, le croissant pétrolier qui lui a donné une stature et un rôle appuyé aujourd'hui par les mêmes européens.

Avec son poids symbolique, militaire et économique, le rôle de la ville de Misrata a été déterminant dans l'enclenchement d'un processus de réconciliation qui a abouti aux accords de Skhirat. Sa division est aujourd'hui une menace pour la stabilité.

C'est elle qui, la première, avait tourné le dos aux logiques de guerre, dès les élections municipales d'avril 2014 qui avaient permis d'élire une équipe sur une ligne de réconciliation. Dès avant son installation qui sera retardée par le déclenchement de l'opération « Fajr » en août, cette équipe avait entrepris des contacts avec les localités adverses même si ces initiatives buteront sur les tensions attisées par des milices minoritaires radicales, essentiellement islamistes. Près d'un an après, ce seront également des milices misraties, les deux principales, El Mahjoub et El Halbous, qui, lassées par le piétinement de la guerre, lancent un appel à la paix civile et s'engagent dans un processus de réconciliation avec leurs ennemis les plus irréductibles, les « Zintanes ». L'équipe municipale est ainsi confortée et les populations désinhibées dans l'expression de leur volonté de paix. Cet appel marque surtout la rupture entre miliciens révolutionnaires et islamistes.

Mais derrière la scène institutionnelle et militaire, dans cette ville industrieuse aux vieilles traditions commerçantes et urbaines, c'est le rôle des entrepreneurs qui sera fondamental. Directement à travers leurs élus dans le conseil municipal où ils sont la catégorie sociale la plus représentée et à travers également le « conseil des entrepreneurs », un des lieux de pouvoir dans la ville. L'identité de la ville reprenait ainsi le dessus.

Misrata est en effet une ville industrieuse aux vieilles traditions commerçantes et urbaines avec une population originaire de tout le pourtour méditerranéen dont une forte minorité, le tiers de la population, Kouloughlie ainsi que des Tcherkesses venant directement du Caucase ou par le détour de l'Égypte et de la Turquie. Ses négociants, dont certains ont une origine maltaise, crétoise et plus que souvent turque, sont connectés à des réseaux à l'échelle de toute la Méditerranée. Mais c'est surtout à l'intérieur du pays que la diaspora misratie domine l'activité économique, y compris et surtout à l'Est, là où se trouve le gouvernement rival de Tobrouk et où, en dehors de l'élevage pastoral, elle est en position de monopole dans tous secteurs d'activités confondus. Aux côtés de ses entrepreneurs, Misrata, au travers du clan des lettrés El Mountasser, a alimenté le corps bureaucratique de tous les régimes sans exception, depuis les Ottomans jusqu'à Kadhafi, en passant par les italiens et la monarchie senoussie. Même éloignés du pouvoir, ils sont dans tous ses rouages et ses antichambres, constituant une sorte de « bureaucratie

profonde ».[5] C'est cette double rationalité à la fois bureaucratique et entrepreneuriale qui a fait des misratis les premiers opposants aux dérives de Kadhafi après avoir soutenu son arrivée au pouvoir avec un espoir de modernisation. Celui-ci les éradiquera de l'armée où, en plus de l'exécution de plusieurs officiers dont son compagnon d'armes Omar El Mahichi, plus aucun misrati n'accédera au grade d'officier supérieur. Cette répression explique aujourd'hui leur crispation sur leurs milices et leur revendication d'une « refondation de l'armée » qu'ils opposent à une « restructuration de l'armée » qui verrait revenir les anciens militaires du régime. Elle explique leur phobie du général Haftar. La personnalité de ce dernier et ses ambitions démesurées ont beaucoup joué dans le ralliement des misratis à l'opération « Fajr ». Le désarroi de la ville et ses divisions privent la Libye d'un acteur majeur de la stabilisation. C'est cette situation qui avait permis à des acteurs misratis, islamistes radicaux, comme le chef de milice Salah Badi ou l'ex chef de gouvernement Ghweil, d'occuper fictivement une place politique et militaire centrale à Tripoli alors que leur poids était très faible à Misrata même.

Une ambiguïté a longtemps plané sur l'identité politique de la ville, surtout depuis l'insurrection qui a chassé Kadhafi. Elle est en effet le lieu d'un véritable paradoxe politique qui dit, en fait, la richesse de la ville. Elle a été souvent et hâtivement assimilée aux islamistes, notamment le PJD, et constitue effectivement la base arrière de celui-ci. Et pourtant, elle y oppose la plus forte résistance. De fait, les principales figures de l'islamisme sont issus de la ville : le secrétaire général du PJC (Mohamed Sowan), l'argentier et véritable homme fort du PJC (Abderazak Laaradi), le guide de la confrérie des Frères Musulmans en Libye jusqu'en 2017 (El Kebti), le libyen le plus haut placé dans la direction internationale de la confrérie (Ali Sallabi), et le dirigeant de la milice radicale El Marsa (Salah Badi). L'activisme de ces derniers est ainsi particulièrement marquant et bruyant dans la ville. Mais en complet décalage avec leur représentativité. Ils n'ont réussi à avoir aucun député aux deux élections législatives et ont arraché un seul siège sur neuf au conseil municipal. La véritable force militaire de ce bastion de la révolution est non islamiste et se structure autour de deux milices, les plus puissantes du pays, El Halbous et El Mahjoub, alignant respectivement un effectif permanent de 6.000 et 2.000 hommes et pouvant le tripler en situation de conflit. C'est elles qui, en mettant fin à leur engagement dans l'opération « Fajr », ont contraint islamistes et radicaux du CNG à s'engager dans le processus de Skhirat. Bien qu'il y ait un fort sentiment d'identification locale qui contraint l'expression publique de divergences, l'hostilité aux islamistes, toujours présente, connait une exacerbation. Ali Sallabi a encore une fois été conspué en se rendant à Misrata en fin décembre et en a été quasiment chassé. Mais surtout, fait nouveau dans le paysage libyen, un mouvement anti-islamiste « éradicateur » et

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[5] Le pouvoir des misratis ne se mesure pas au nombre de leurs ministres.

s'assumant comme tel, « le bloc volonté nationale », s'est structuré autour de l'ex ministre de l'intérieur en 2012, Fawzi Abdelali. Ce dernier, à l'origine de la création des Hauts Comités de sécurité et des Boucliers dans les différentes régions du pays, fut pourtant l'un des anciens compagnons de route des islamistes, celui qui les avait alors aidés dans leur structuration notamment militaire. Rompant avec un consensus au nom de l'homogénéité locale qui laissait libre cours à l'activisme des islamistes, « le bloc » n'hésite plus à risquer la confrontation direct avec eux. Ainsi, après leurs menaces sur la visite de l'ambassadrice française dont l'annulation a surpris la ville, pour la visite du ministre algérien Messahel, c'est « le bloc » qui s'est mobilisé par ses seuls moyens pour en assurer la sécurité, le but était de démontrer le peu de représentativité des islamistes. Cette hostilité aux islamistes se fonde sur l'argument d'une volonté hégémonique et leur propension à l'entrisme dans toutes les structures, et le reproche d'une stratégie duplice. Après avoir construit un rapprochement avec les révolutionnaires et pesé dans le sens de la radicalisation de la loi d'exclusion qui a éliminé la majeure partie des élites dont les précurseurs de l'opposition à Kadhafi mais qui, par un artifice, les a préservés,[6] ils cherchent aujourd'hui à s'entendre avec Haftar et l'ancien régime en tournant le dos à leurs alliés d'hier qui les ont remis en selle.[7] La ville de Misrata a été un terrain particulier de cette stratégie qualifiée de duplice. En 2014, dès l'installation du conseil municipal, les islamistes, déçus par le résultat des urnes, se sont alliés avec certains radicaux pour constituer un « conseil de notable et sages » de la ville. Il fera alors une guerre d'usure violente au conseil municipal, allant jusqu'à murer son siège, lui reprochant d'avoir engagé des concertations pour la réconciliation soutenues par les entrepreneurs conscients qu'un enclavement de la ville, même puissante et victorieuse comme elle l'était alors, serait fatal à cette ville entreprenante dont la puissance économique tient surtout à son rayonnement national. La réconciliation avec les Zintan était encore plus stratégique. Au-delà du fait que les deux villes incarnent emblématiquement chacun des deux camps en conflit, elle leur est vitale dans leur rapport à la capitale, pas tant sur le plan militaire où dominent les milices de Tripoli mais en terme d'influence sociale,

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[6] Les islamistes avaient poussé à une radicalisation de la loi d'exclusion politique en pesant pour son élargissement à toute personne ayant occupé une fonction dans les structures de l'État depuis l'arrivée de Kadhafi au pouvoir, ce qui a conduit à l'élimination de tous les opposants historiques qui avaient pu, au début de l'arrivée de Kadhafi au pouvoir, soit rester à leurs postes technocratiques élevés ou même l'accompagner à ses débuts prometteurs avant de passer à l'opposition. La loi a ainsi éliminé la plupart des élites politiques y compris les promoteurs du soulèvement contre Kadhafi. Par contre les islamistes y ont échappé car la plupart soit ont fait leur apprentissage politique à l'étranger soit avaient intégré la fondation de Seif al-Islam Kadhafi, « La Libye demain », sorte de gouvernement parallèle destiné à le préparer à la succession et qui n'a pas été considérée par cette loi comme un lieu de pouvoir formel, pour les préserver.

[7] La plupart des islamistes, particulièrement les FM et les Madakhila, engagés dans un processus de ralliement à Kadhafi et d'entrisme, s'étaient opposés au soulèvement. Il a fallu attendre l'appel d'El Kardaoui sur Al Djazira, pour qu'ils s'y joignent.

celle-ci étant vecteur du poids économique. Pour les Misratis, leur éloignement de la capitale et l'affaiblissement des Zintan plus proche, laisserait libre cours à celui des Amazighs. Toutes deux par ailleurs se méfiant des minorités notamment chez les Zintan où le courant nationaliste arabe est influent, représenté par Djouili, actuel commandant militaire de la région Ouest où se trouve précisément le pays Amazigh. Les islamistes et le « conseil de notable et sages », menés par l'ancien secrétaire régional du PJD, dorénavant dissident, ont alors violemment attaqué ce rapprochement avec les Zintan et criminalisé le conseil municipal. Mais dans un retournement complet, trois ans après, au mois de mars de cette année, ils prennent de court le conseil municipal et ses alliés pour les devancer chez les Zintan avec une offre de réconciliation plus ouverte. Au-delà de la stratégie islamiste cherchant à se désenclaver à tout prix, l'enjeu est le rapport de force dans une ville dont le désarroi relance les compétitions entre acteurs politiques. Mais il n'est pas exclu que ces reconvertis de la dernière heure de la réconciliation, préparent en fait une autre guerre pour mettre en difficultés Serradj et le processus onusien. Exclu de Tripoli par les milices soutenant Serradj, les islamistes et radicaux misratis pourraient être tentés de chercher une nouvelle alliance militaire avec les Zintanes dont le retour à Tripoli bute sur le refus ferme de la milice de Ghenioua El Kikli, soutien de Serradj et originaire de Kikla qui a été détruite par les Zintan.

Serradj, l'inconnu et ses nouveaux réseaux de pouvoir citadins tripolitains

L'émergence inattendue de Serradj comme président est une autre illustration de la perversion du processus de transition, dès ses débuts, par les élites censées le conduire. Serradj ne fut jamais imposé par l'ONU à Skhirat comme le prétendent aujourd'hui ses détracteurs. Beaucoup de négociateurs en témoignent. Serradj a fini par émerger car chaque camp s'est évertué à récuser ses propres candidats potentiels dans une bataille d'ambitions personnelles se neutralisant. Tous les candidats potentiels ayant été éliminés dans un jeu de massacre par les rivaux de leur propre camp, la candidature de Serradj, non prévue dans le casting, a alors été glissée par un vieux routier de la diplomatie pour trouver une issue. Dépourvu de traits saillants et de charisme, non identifié politiquement par ses pairs, descendant d'une vieille famille urbaine, qualité rassurante alors que les identités dites tribales sont mobilisées dans la compétition politique, Serradj passera par effet de surprise dans ce qui était devenu un champ de ruines d'ambitions.

Décrié par ses adversaires et une partie importante de l'opinion comme un homme sans charisme, n'arrivant ni à prendre des décisions ni à les imposer, il est assurément un homme non préparé à une telle fonction mais cette représentation qui en est faite tient aussi à ce qu'il s'applique à éviter les positionnements clivant. Il aura en tout cas eu pour mérite de ne pas participer à aggraver les clivages d'un pays et d'une société fragmentés et pour défaut d'être mesuré mais sans savoir ou pouvoir porter une telle parole dans l'atmosphère de conflictualités violentes qui domine le pays. Mais lui aussi, maintenant, peut-être à défaut de pouvoir gérer une

transition, s'est attelé à son tour à se construire un pouvoir à partir de sa position dans cette transition. Il s'est créé autour de lui un réseau de solidarité socio-territoriale basé sur les vieilles familles citadines de la capitale et que les Tripolitains nomment « El Haya'a etarabloussia » et qu'on pourrait traduire par l'establishment tripolitain. C'est une sorte de lobby des élites urbaines de la capitale, sur le mode des *beldis* tunisois, et qui croise, dans une solidarité trans-partisane, bourgeois lettrés et fortunés sans rattachement partisan ou anciennement inscrits dans les réseaux de l'époque royale, des dignitaires kadhafistes, des adeptes soufis et bien sûr des FM. Ces derniers, du fait de l'accaparement de structures postrévolutionnaires, se sont posés à la confluence d'alliances d'intérêts entre ces élites qu'ils fructifient pour élargir leur influence dans des milieux qui ne leur sont pas acquis. Le FM Sadat El Badr, président du premier conseil local de la ville à sa libération, en était un des principaux pivots jusqu'à sa mort il y a deux ans. La chambre de commerce et d'industrie de Tripoli, vieille institution datant de 1928, présidée par l'adepte soufi Salem El Garoui, en est un des lieux symboliques au point qu'une des plus grosses fortunes de Tripoli mais originaire de Misrata, le richissime Mohamed El Raït, n'a pu y trouver la place qu'il convoitait et qu'il a dû créer une union de toutes les chambres à l'échelle nationale qu'il préside, pour faire contrepoids à la chambre tripolitaine. L'actuel Ministre des affaires étrangères Mohammed Siala est un des plus représentatifs de ce faisceau d'intérêts entre ces élites. Haut fonctionnaire kadhafiste et un des concepteurs des fonds d'investissements libyens, c'est lui qui, pendant l'insurrection, sera mandaté par Kadhafi pour tenter d'engager la discussion avec l'Otan. Pourtant, à la chute de celui-ci, il ne subira aucune déconvenue et son fils continuera à diriger la banque libyenne au Qatar, bénéficiant de la protection des FM et de Sadat El Badr particulièrement, au titre de cette solidarité des élites urbaines tripolitaines mais aussi des stratégies islamistes de clientélisation de personnalités indépendantes.

Ces réseaux ont, en tout cas, insufflé un brin de vie culturelle à cette ville qui en était désertée depuis le règne de Kadhafi, en organisant vernissages et concerts de malouf. Par ailleurs, depuis la fin de l'opération « Fajr » en été 2014, la vie à Tripoli, en dehors des actes de délinquance qui se multiplient à la périphérie, est normale. On y veille même bien plus et bien plus bruyamment qu'à Alger. Cafés et places publiques sont animés jusqu'au petit matin alors que les écrans géants y diffusent les plus importants matchs internationaux. Il y a une proportion, plus qu'élevée de cafés, restaurants et salons de thé dans les nouveaux commerces qui foisonnent. Leur dense fréquentation et leur tout relatif mais tout nouveau raffinement, traduit une véritable frénésie de vie. Tripoli n'a rien d'une ville « islamisée ». Elle est même beaucoup moins austère que du temps de Kadhafi. On rencontre dans les salons de thé, aux côtés des hommes, des femmes en groupe et des couples avec des jeunes filles non voilées. Dans le quartier de Souk El Djouma'a, c'est une milice islamiste réputée pour son rigorisme qui surveille un des plus huppés restaurants de la ville où officient chefs et serveurs marocains et où

se pressent les familles dans leur diversité. Sur les tables trônent des bouteilles qui pastichent tout le design des bouteilles de champagne et qu'on ouvre pareillement en faisant sauter le bouchon. Sauf qu'elles ne contiennent que du jus de fruit. Elles disent à elles seules cette ambivalence entre un conservatisme toujours très fortement prégnant et la frénésie de vie qui saisit les libyens, notamment les jeunes, et comme l'argent est le liant accommodant entre les deux.

Les milices, un rapport d'interdépendance avec les acteurs politiques locaux et les puissances étrangères

Serradj reste certes, comme tous ceux qui l'ont précédé d'ailleurs, sous l'hypothèque des milices. Mais il a réussi à transformer en sa faveur le rapport de force milicien dans la capitale en expulsant les milices islamistes radicales qui le contestaient. Bien sûr cela le rend probablement plus dépendant des milices acquises à sa cause. Mais il serait plus juste de parler d'interdépendance. Les milices n'ont pas de puissance par elles-mêmes, elles prospèrent et déclinent en fonction du contexte politique et de l'appui des acteurs politiques locaux et puissances étrangères, notamment régionales, qui les mobilisent et les instrumentalisent. Elles ne font pas l'agenda politique, elles contribuent à le réaliser. Les mutations du paysage sécuritaire de la capitale ont ainsi vu des milices balayées quand elles se mettaient au travers d'un processus politique et d'autres se renforcer quand elles l'épousaient. Aucune milice, quel que soit son importance, n'a de poids par elle-même mais pèse seulement au travers d'un système d'alliance. Et s'il y a bien eu un processus de concentration des milices qui a abouti à quatre formations miliciennes qui dominent la scène sécuritaire de la capitale, chacune des grandes formations miliciennes qui ont dominé ou dominent actuellement Tripoli, est elle-même un conglomérat de petites milices qui n'ont pas forcément la même sensibilité. Sentir l'odeur de l'herbe à un carrefour tenu par des miliciens affiliés à une formation milicienne islamiste ou en rencontrer qui sont ivres, n'est pas exceptionnel. Une des deux plus importantes milices, celle de Kara, « El Rada'e » est en fait constituée d'au moins 23 milices identifiables qui ne partagent pas toutes l'orientation salafiste madkhaliste de Kara. L'autre milice importante, « les révolutionnaires de Tripoli », a toujours une direction bicéphale (Haitem Etajouri et Hachem Bichri). Toutes les recompositions d'alliances restent ainsi possibles et les milices restent très perméables aux contextes et pressions politiques.

Les milices qui s'opposaient aux négociations de Skhirat, une partie essentielle des islamistes, une fois l'accord conclu, ont été contraintes, sous sa dynamique, a en prendre acte et surtout à accepter l'entrée de Serradj et conclure un « pacte de non-agression » avec les milices le soutenant. La mise en demeure de l'ONU et les sanctions de l'UE contre les présidents des deux parlements[8] qui s'étaient

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[8] Le CNG élu en 2012 et basé à Tripoli et la Chambre du Parlement élue en 2014 et basée à Tobrouk.

rencontrés à Tunis pour dénoncer cet accord, avaient tonné comme un coup de semonce et semé la panique au sein des milices. La majorité des chefs des milices de base s'était sentie menacée et a fait pression sur ses chefs pour souscrire une sorte de charte d'honneur garantissant un pacte de non-agression entre milices. C'est ce qui a permis à Serradj de rentrer en toute sécurité à Tripoli alors que les milices qui lui étaient hostiles semblaient les plus fortes. Cela montre que les pressions et poursuites judiciaires internationales peuvent affaiblir les seigneurs de guerre rétifs et pousser leurs relais à s'en éloigner.

Bien que les milices islamistes radicales disposaient d'une occupation de terrain et d'un rapport de force militaire initialement plus favorables, et même si elles ont pu mettre en difficulté les milices soutenant Serradj en fin 2016, elles ont fini par être balayées et disparaitre complètement de Tripoli. L'effacement progressif du gouvernement Ghweil et l'épuisement de ses ressources mais surtout la baisse des tensions et interventions extérieures grâce à l'intensification des concertations internationales et régionales et les difficultés et le repli sur la scène internationale du Qatar dont les liens sont avérés avec ces milices depuis 2011, ont affaibli progressivement ces dernières. Le coup de grâce leur a été donné avec une facilité déconcertante au milieu de l'année 2017. La plupart de ces chefs qui tenaient le verrou sécuritaire de la ville sont aujourd'hui réfugiés en Turquie. Le déplacement de ressources a également favorisé des retournements d'alliance qui ont facilité la défaite de ces milices comme le passage de la milice de Bougra du côté des milices soutenant Serradj. C'est elle qui, estimant n'avoir pas eu le juste butin dans la nouvelle alliance victorieuse, va attaquer, vainement, l'aéroport en janvier 2018. C'est le jeu d'alliance qui fait les rapports de force miliciens, aucune milice ne dispose aujourd'hui à Tripoli de suffisamment de force pour avoir une stratégie indépendante.

L'effondrement totale et sans résistance du groupe de Abdelkrim Belhadj, le GCIL (Groupe Combattants Islamiques de Libye), dont le poids sécuritaire a longtemps été dominant dans la capitale, même face aux puissants Misratis, alors que sa force propre est très faible, illustre comment ce sont les positions institutionnelles arrachées dans la transition et le jeu d'alliances qui façonnent la puissance milicienne. Ce groupuscule qui n'était même pas audible dans les milieux islamistes radicaux depuis son ralliement à Kadhafi au début 2000 et qui a encore moins réussi à avoir un ancrage social, y compris après la révolution, avait réussi pourtant à s'emparer des principaux appareils sécuritaires. Belhadj est devenu gouverneur militaire de Tripoli, Khaled Cherif vice-ministre de la défense et surtout dirigeant de la « garde nationale » qui quadrillait tout le centre de Tripoli alors que Abdelwahab Gaïd contrôlait au Sud un corps de « Grades Frontières ». C'est à partir de ces positions et soutenus par le Qatar et la Turquie, qu'ils ont réussi à tisser un système d'alliance avec des milices et à les clientéliser. Face aux urnes pourtant, aucun du groupe ne réussit à se faire élire et Belhadj a été battu de façon humiliante en ne récoltant que quelques dizaines de voix dans l'est de la

capitale supposé être son fief. Abdelwahab Gaïd, l'exception, s'est fait élire dans le fief de sa tribu au Fezzan où le critère tribal a été partout déterminant. Le groupe a certes soutenu la réconciliation, mais la sienne, celle du statu quo d'une transition figée en sa faveur pour sécuriser les prédations permises par la guerre. Ce groupuscule réduit qui n'a pas su se reproduire et dont la combativité s'est émoussée dans l'accumulation de fortunes, n'a même pas su exfiltrer et garder son précieux trésor de guerre, les trente personnalités de l'ancien régime qu'il détenait (parmi lesquelles l'ex premier ministre et le responsable des services, Senouci). Faible et sans forces propres, ce groupuscule a tenu d'une main de fer Tripoli et mystifié chancelleries et acteurs politiques locaux qu'il a terrorisés grâce à la perpétuation de structures sécuritaires transitoires qu'il s'est accaparées et transformées en réseau d'influence.

Le rapport de forces milicien n'en est pas encore pour autant figé entre les quatre milices victorieuses. Une fracture, non encore active, se dessine d'ores et déjà entre les deux milices qui ont bénéficié le plus des largesses de Serradj, « Rada'e » de Kara et « les révolutionnaires de Tripoli » d'une part et de l'autre « Ennaouassi » et la milice de Ghenioua El Kikli. Les quatre puisent directement dans les ressources de l'État pour se servir et pour élargir leur influence. Haitem Ettajouri a ainsi pris en charge en Europe ses blessés pour deux millions d'euro et offert le pèlerinage aux parents des victimes en se servant directement dans le budget et les quotas réservés à cet effet par les ministères concernés. Cette distribution de générosités puisées dans les structures étatiques est indicatrice de la capillarité entre milices et État et de son infiltration par celles-ci, présageant ainsi d'une possible évolution mafieuse. Mais dans un double mouvement, elles cherchent également à se doter d'une interface politique, indiquant la probabilité de leur intention de jouer un rôle politique autrement que par l'usage direct des armes. Ghenioua El Kikli a ainsi une sorte de porte-parole et des représentants civils, non issus de sa milice, parmi lesquels son beau-frère. La milice « Ennaouassi » multiplie les affichages publics avec des personnalités de l'AFN (Alliance des Forces Nationales) qui se font le relai de ses intentions.[9] C'est Haithem Tajouri qui, fort de son capital de prisonniers dignitaires de l'ancien régime ravis à Belhadj, tente de jouer sur les rapports de force politiques en les liant au devenir de ses prisonniers et se fait ainsi utile à Serradj et à lui-même. Depuis le Ramadan de l'année dernière où il a multiplié les réceptions des dignitaires de la tribu des Megherha, il est engagé dans un long processus de négociation avec cette tribu pour obtenir, si ce n'est son ralliement, au moins sa neutralité vis-à-vis de Serradj. Il s'agit de la tribu dont est issu Senouci le puissant patron des services de Kadhafi, tribu importante par sa démographie et surtout par l'extension de son terroir au Fezzan notamment sur les routes de transit entre Sahel et rivages méditerranéens. La complexité tient à ce qu'elle est également la tribu dont est issu Benaï, le plus

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[9] Alors que cette milice s'affiche comme salafiste et que l'AFN est identifiée comme « libérale ».

important relai militaire de Haftar au Sud, les deux, Senouci et Benaï, sont même issus de la même fraction, les Brakis. Un basculement de ceux-ci bouleverserait le rapport de force au Sud et plus globalement entre Haftar et Serradj et permettrait à Haitem d'accéder ainsi à un rôle politique et à une position dans l'État déterminants. Cela interroge sur la position de Serradj vis-à-vis des milices. En est-il otage ? S'il fallait répondre oui, il ne le serait pas plus, voire il le serait moins que son rival de l'Est, Haftar. On peut en faire la mesure comparative par le poids de chacune des milices Madkhali, dans chacun des deux camps. La milice « Rada'e » de Kara qui est la milice Madkhali à Tripoli, connait une grande ascension. Efficace et intransigeante contre le crime et l'insécurité, elle a gagné de l'estime chez les Tripolitains, sur laquelle elle capitalise pour s'imposer sur le terrain de la moralisation de la vie publique et des mœurs et investir le champ religieux. Celui-ci reste toujours très diversifié à Tripoli. Les Madakhila à l'Est ont au contraire obtenu de Khalifa Haftar, contre leur engagement, un monopole formel sur les mosquées qui explique que ces dernières soient devenues à Benghazi la cible des attentats des islamistes radicaux. La milice Madkhali « El Tawhid » est une pièce maitresse du dispositif militaire de Haftar. Auto-dissoute formellement pour conforter l'image d'« Armée Nationale », elle a en fait essaimé dans toutes les unités tout en conservant sa structure et a surtout étendu son influence jusqu'à la hiérarchie de la dite armée. La saisie en janvier 2017 d'une cargaison d'ouvrages venus de l'Égypte alliée et contenant notamment des ouvrages du Nobel égyptien Naguib Mahfouz, au motif d'une « invasion culturelle », « contraire aux valeurs islamiques », puis en février 2017, l'interdiction faite aux femmes de voyager seules et de leur imposer un tuteur homme, ont révélé l'influence acquise par cette milice.

L'état de « transition permanente » a également permis aux milices à la fois de s'enraciner et de connaitre pour une part une évolution criminelle qui les détache graduellement de leur identité originelle quand celle-ci avait pu être politique ou idéologique. Elles imposent ainsi un contrôle autoritaire de leur territoire pour en faire une base de négociation de positions de pouvoir et pour y puiser directement des ressources. Mais elles construisent également, dans leur intérêt, des réseaux de clientèle qui facilitent l'accès aux ressources e leur assurent des appuis et des relais, en contrepartie du maintien d'une forme d'ordre et de sécurité voire de services et de redistribution de prébendes. Des milices négocient ainsi des postes de travail et des services pour les territoires qu'ils « protègent » en usant de leur force auprès du gouvernement. Même si c'est sur le mode mafieux, elles se construisent une légitimité dans un contexte où la difficile émergence d'une autorité centrale laisse la primauté aux légitimités locales. Elles participent ainsi de ce localisme surtout dans les petites localités mais aussi dans les grandes villes. Si les milices de Misrata ont dû quitter la capitale en novembre 2013 alors que leur force et leur degré d'organisation étaient supérieurs à celui des autres milices, ce n'est pas par la force militaire mais sous la pression de manifestations pacifiques

des populations locales où elles n'avaient pas d'ancrage.[10] Toutes les milices sont aujourd'hui tripolitaines et même enracinées dans des quartiers spécifiques, en rapport souvent avec leur chef, y compris quand elles rayonnent en dehors. Pour Kara de « Rada'e », c'est Souk El Joumoua, pour Ghenioua El Kikli c'est Bou Slim et pour Haitem Tajouri des « Révolutionnaires de Tripoli », c'est Tajoura. A Tajoura même, c'est un assemblage de 5 milices, chacune contrôlant une partie du quartier. Il y a donc un enracinement local, de solides clientèles, des réseaux de relais et une légitimité locale aussi pervertie soit-elle. Si les milices sont également un produit pervers de cette transition prolongée, une sortie de transition ne peut les ignorer et il serait illusoire de vouloir les effacer. Il s'agirait plutôt de contenir cette légitimité et de la réduire à sa réalité de réseau en la contournant, en l'érodant et en la transformant.

La nomination à la tête de la région militaire de l'ouest (de Tripoli jusqu'aux frontières tunisiennes) et celle du centre (de Tripoli à Adjedabia), de deux chefs, à la fois militaires de carrière et appartenant aux deux puissantes villes militaires (Zintan et Misrata), qui ont été tous deux partisans de la réconciliation notamment entre les deux villes[11] et leur apparente maîtrise du terrain,[12] pourrait, sans affronter les milices, initier un processus de réinstitutionnalisation militaire qui encerclerait celles-ci de fait. Le « recyclage » de beaucoup d'entre-elles, notamment les milices de base qui alimentent les grandes formations miliciennes, est possible. Déjà on en voit qui se reconvertissent dans le marché juteux de la sécurité et de la protection qui aura de beaux jours devant lui surtout en cas de stabilisation politique comme ça l'est d'ailleurs un peu partout dans le monde y compris dans les pays stables d'occident. Ce processus s'était d'ailleurs engagé spontanément au lendemain de l'insurrection, même à échelle réduite, mais c'est les acteurs politiques qui, devant l'aiguisement des luttes de pouvoir, en leur faisant appel, ont renflouées les milices.

Enfin l'expérience en Libye a montré que chaque fois que la communauté internationale adoptait des positions fermes accompagnées de mesure, elle faisait reculer politiques et seigneurs de guerre belliqueux. S'il y a chez les libyens, quasi-unanimement, une phobie de l'intervention étrangère, les institutions internationales,

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[10] Revenues à Tripoli en 2014 lors de la campagne militaire « Fajr », les milices de Misrata ont gardé une présence discrète à Tripoli : une partie de la milice Halbous (la brigade 301) est en dehors de la ville à sa limite sud-ouest, face aux Ouerchefanah qui constituaient une menace sur Tripoli, une partie de la milice Mahdjoub, est fondu dans le corps de protection des ministères.

[11] Le Zintani Djouili, gouverneur de la région Ouest a été ministre de la défense du premier gouvernement nommé par le CNT (Conseil National de Transition) et le misrati Haddad avant de participer à la direction du corps militaire chargé de la libération de Syrte, a été le chef de la puissante milice El Halbous dont il a démissionné pour protester contre l'opération « Fajr ».

[12] L'opération pour la libération de Syrte a été menée avec un grand professionnalisme ; l'élimination rapide de la milice Ouerchefenah par Djouili et sa prise en charge de la frontière tunisienne quoiqu'accompagnée d'exactions à l'égard des Amazighs et non dénuée de calculs de prédation sur les ressources transfrontalières.

particulièrement l'ONU, gardent une crédibilité, probablement parce que manque un recours national. L'ONU reste une figure morale y compris pour les acteurs qui peuvent critiquer à un moment donné une décision qui ne leur est pas favorable.

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article s'intéresse à la transition en Libye. Il aborde comment celle-ci, en se prolongeant excessivement, est devenue, de ce fait, génératrice de rentes pour des acteurs qui, à la faveur du contexte d'incertitudes, ont conquis des structures de transition, s'y sont enkystés et en ont fait des instruments pour tenter de prolonger leur pouvoir.

L'article explique comment l'état de « transition permanente » a également permis aux milices de s'enraciner, que celles-ci ne sont pas des acteurs complètement autonomes mais sont dans un rapport d'interdépendance avec les acteurs politiques locaux et puissances étrangères et qu'elles restent très perméables aux contextes et pressions politiques.

Socio-Political and Linguistic Aspects of Libyan Berber

Luca D'Anna

nəḥne kull-na yad wāḥda: The Mobilization of Amazigh Libyans in Revolutionary Rap

Introduction: social media and protest music during the Arab Spring

Recent years have witnessed an increased attention toward the expression of political dissent and mobilization in Arab youth culture, especially in the aftermath of the spectacular events that took place in 2010-2011 and were collectively labelled as the "Arab Spring". In the aftermath of those events, special journal issues were devoted to Arab graffiti,[1] and forms of poetry performed during the uprising also received some attention.[2] But in addition to these more traditional ways of expressing dissent, the importance of the role played by social media in the events of 2011 was stressed to the point that the Arab spring was sometimes defined as a "Facebook Revolution". The risk that an uncritical focus on the role of new media might replicate old orientalist stereotypes was felt by a number of concerned scholars in the immediate aftermath of the Arab Spring:

> And it is here once more that the focus on "new media", instead of helping break up orientalist bias, might provide them with a new nest, this time located right at the core of the latest discussions within the sociology of media and communication. This development is reflected in the idea itself of a "Facebook revolution" that has been coined and propagated to define the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt […][3]

Academia was torn between cyber-utopians, who insisted on the idea of a Facebook revolution, and cyber-skeptics, who denied the role of social media altogether.[4] While the question, posed in such way, is probably of limited interest,

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[1] *Romano-Arabica XV. Graffiti, Writing and Street Art in the Arab World*, Editura universităţii din bucureşti, Bucharest, 2015.

[2] R. Bassiouney, *Language and Identity in Modern Egypt*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2015, 317-325.

[3] A. Salvatore, New Media and Collective Action in the Middle East. Can Sociological Research Help Avoiding Orientalist Traps?, *Sociologica*, 3/5, 2011, 2.

[4] *Idem*, 6.

the role of social media should be framed within a broader sociological perspective, which also takes into consideration the role of more traditional networks (mosques, universities, trade unions).[5]

In the years that immediately followed the events of 2010-2011, the theoretical framework in which the Arab Spring and the role of social media were analyzed and understood was further refined. Comunello and Anzera suggest a useful Decalogue that summarizes the knowledge we have gained from sociological research so far:

1) Social media cannot cause a revolution, but may become useful tools for recruitment and organization.
2) The actual role of social media depends on their accessibility to the population.
3) Inspiration to hit the streets and confront the repressive machine of the regime cannot come from the media.
4) The hierarchical nature of leadership cannot easily adapt to the horizontal architecture of social media networking.
5) Social media are a useful means to organize protest movements, but they are also employed by the regimes.
6) Shutting down internet services and cellphone coverage is usually a bad choice for authoritarian regimes.
7) While cyber-enthusiasm is probably scientifically groundless, it is important to continue researching the role of social media in political activism and the struggle against dictatorial regimes.
8) In the countries that went through political upheavals of 2011, the role of social media will probably be crucial in the coming years.
9) Social media are reshaping the public sphere.
10) When analyzing the role of social media in a revolutionary event, it would be wise to analyze their influence on the single components of the revolutionary arc.[6]

Compared to the attention given to social media, the role played by music in shaping the imaginary of the Arab Spring has been, for the most part, neglected,[7] even though "studying the role of song and music in political struggles is crucial to

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[5] *Ibidem*.

[6] F. Comunello - G. Anzera, Will the revolution be tweeted? A conceptual framework for understanding the social media and the Arab Spring, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 23/4, 2012, 465-466.

[7] According to Valassopoulos and Mostafa, popular music, together with movies, poetry and theatre, contributed to shape the "word" and "image" of the Egyptian Revolution (A. Valassopoulos - D. S. Mostafa, Popular Protest Music and the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, *Popular Music and Society*, 37/15, 2014, 642).

understand how the popular and political interact".[8] This is even more surprising if we consider the fact that during the Egyptian Revolution, for instance, protestors started chanting the slogans of Tahrir Square almost immediately. In Egypt, the early months of 2011 witnessed a flourishing of new politically committed bands and a return to the stage of older artists (or of their patriotic songs), resulting in the emergence of the popular musician as a political actor.[9]

According to Valassopoulos and Mostafa, popular music in Egypt during the Arab Spring followed a two-way path: "the events on the ground impact[ed] the music and the music respond[ed] and articulat[ed] the story and progress of the revolution and its influence on people's lives".[10] Egyptian protest music did not break with the past; on the contrary, the songs and slogans of the 1952 Revolution were successfully adapted to the new circumstances, as is made evident from the number of old patriotic songs that were rearranged and sung in Tahrir Square and throughout the country.[11] A similar phenomenon was not completely absent in Libya, where, for instance, the song *yā blād-ī* (*Oh country of mine*) by Fuad Gritly recalls the title of the Libyan national anthem.[12] The Libyan music scene during the 2011 Revolution presented, however, some original traits with respect to Egypt (the best-studied case), which will be the object of the present paper. Thus, the next section analyzes the case study of Ibn Thabit (*Ibn Ṯābit*) and his revolutionary rap. The following section provides an analysis of the structure and *topoi* of Ibn Thabit's songs, while the last section before the conclusions focuses on the way in which Libyan Amazigh are referred to and addressed in his songs, in an attempt to mobilize them for the revolutionary cause. As a partial disclaimer, it should be pointed out that the present paper deals with the way in which rap music was used to mobilize the Libyan Amazigh in the fight against Gaddafi. This implies the presentation of quite a binary contrast between a right and a wrong side, the latter being, of course, Gaddafi. In describing the different strategies used by the rapper to achieve this goal, his words will be reported and translated verbatim, even though they offer a simplified version of a much more complex reality, an analysis of which is beyond the aim of this paper.

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[8] J. Massad, Liberating Songs: Palestine Put to Music, in R. L. Stein - T. Swedenburg (eds.), *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2005, 177.

[9] A. Valassopoulos - D. S. Mostafa, *op. cit.*, 650.

[10] *Idem*, 650-651.

[11] *Idem*, 645.

[12] Gritly's song is not, however, a protest song, but it was composed as part of the theme of the Libyan TV show *Dragunov* (2014) (see L. D'Anna, Dialectal Variation and Identity in Post-Revolutionary Libyan Media. The Case of Dragunov (2014), in R. Bassiouney, *Identity and Dialect Performance. A study of Communities and Dialects*, Routledge, London-New York, 2018, 321-340). The Libyan national anthem we refer to is the pre-Gaddafi one, which was readopted by the country after the fall of the regime.

"The revolution will be live": the case of Ibn Thabit (Libya)

Ibn Thabit represents an interesting case study of a talented rapper who was also active on social media (such as Facebook and Twitter) during the Libyan Revolution. Not many personal details are known about him. Ibn Thabit describes himself as an ordinary Libyan, not as a leader of the Revolution, who simply puts into music what his fellow citizens are afraid or not allowed to say.[13] The massive employment of social media by the protagonists of the political and musical scene in 2011 allows us to retrieve the original feelings that moved their actions by just scrolling down their public profiles. Ibn Thabit, in an interview published by *The Guardian*, said: "I put out my first revolutionary song one week after Ben Ali fled Tunisia; it asked whether the revolution would spread to Libya. My answer in the song, and the answer from Libyans on the ground, was yes, the revolution was coming".[14] On his Facebook page, his first song is dated January 27th, 2011, and is accompanied by this brief comment, written in Libyan Arabic:

سئلني واحد كانهم الليبيين ما يقلبوهاش على معمر قلت فكره اندير منها أغنيه

Someone asked me whether the Libyans will revolt against Muʕammar [i.e. Gaddafi], I said this is an idea for a song[15]

The song he speaks of above is *as-suʔāl* (*The Question*), in which Ibn Thabit voices the question asked by an anonymous interlocutor and then rewords it beautifully, asking whether his fellow citizens will show the same courage shown by their ancestors in their struggle against the Italian invaders and by Tunisians and Egyptians in the recent revolutionary events. Thus, from the very beginning, there is, an important difference between Libyan protest music and its Egyptian counterpart. While the Egyptian songs were born out of the protests in Tahrir Square, Ibn Thabit released his first song three weeks before the outbreak of demonstrations in Libya. In doing so, he openly defies the repressive machine of Gaddafi's regime and actually tries to directly influence the events himself. He places the upcoming Libyan revolution in a natural sequence with the Tunisian and Egyptian ones, the echoes of which are particularly evident in his first song. In the following verses, for instance, the memory of Libya's past resistance against the Italian aggression is blended with the revolutionary struggle then was happening in Tunisia:

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[13] https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/mar/01/rapping-against-gaddafi-hip-hop-libya, last accessed on April, 7th 2018. Ibn Thabit had allegedly released an anti-Gaddafi song, *The Coward*, in 2008, but in this case the date on the YouTube video does not confirm his claim (the song, however, might just have been deleted and uploaded again).

[14] *Ibidem*.

[15] Translations from Arabic are not always literal, due to the difficulty of rendering some concepts and constructions in English.

hal sa-iqāwmū l-aʕdā zeyy-mā qāwmū ždūd-na?
hal sa-yuḏḥū zeyy-mā ḏḥū fī ġarb ᵓḥdūd-na?

Will they resist the enemies as our ancestors did?
Will they sacrifice, as they did at our Western borders (i.e. in Tunisia)?

awwəl ḥāža igūl-l-ək əḥməd ṛabb-ī kān-ək ḥayy
əḥməd ṛabb-ī, law mūš li-n-nafṭ əl-blād mā-fī-hā šey
u-yumkən hīkkī xēr bāš yəgallbū-hā ʕalā ṛās-hā
zeyy-mā dārū fī tūnəs, taḥiyya hādi xāṣṣa!

First they tell you thank God that you're alive
Thank God, if it weren't for oil there would be nothing in this country
Maybe it would've been better if there hadn't, we would've rebelled sooner
As they did in Tunis, special hail to them!

ʕa-l-aqall ʕand-nā l-xubza u-l-xubza rxīṣa
ṣūm! damm əš-šahīd mā-təgdər-š tgīs-a
šinu ʕuḏr-ək, təstanna fī sayyəd-nā ʕīsa
u-d-dawla əllī žanb-nā lazzət raʔīsa?[16]

At least we have bread, and bread is cheap
Fast! The martyrs' blood has no price
What's your excuse, are you waiting for our Lord Jesus
While the nation next to us ousted its president?

After his first appearance on YouTube, Ibn Thabit released a second song on February 14ᵗʰ 2011, three days before the outbreak of the Revolution. The song, *Nidāʔ li-šabāb Lībyā* (*Calling the Libyan youth*), explicitly calls upon Libyans to hit the streets and start a revolution (the structure of Ibn Thabit's song will be analyzed in next section). In this case also, the Egyptian and Tunisian examples are clearly referred to by the rapper, who ironically capsizes one of the catchphrases that could be heard in the Libyan streets in the days preceding February 17ᵗʰ, namely "Libya is not like Egypt and Tunisia":

gāl-ək Lībyā mūš zeyy Maṣr u Tūnəs
ēh lā š-šuhadā əllī mātū sābiqan akṯər min Māṣr u Tūnəs
nisbət əl-baṭāla akṯər min Maṣr u Tūnəs
nisbət ʕadad əl-fuqarā fī Lībyā akṯər min Maṣr u Tūnəs[17]

[16] The three excerpts are from Ibn Thabit, *as-Suʔāl* (*The question*), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_9pBiwS2lI, last accessed on April, 8ᵗʰ 2018.

[17] Ibn Thābit, *Nidāʔ li-šabāb Lībyā* (*Calling the Libyan youth*), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aojjN96r2dk&t=33s, last accessed on April 8ᵗʰ, 2018.

They tell you Libya is not like Egypt and Tunisia
Yeah no, the martyrs more martyrs died than in Egypt and Tunisia
The unemployment rate is higher than in Egypt and Tunisia
The poverty rate is higher than in Egypt and Tunisia

The song ends with the call

gēr maṭlūb yā xū-y ǝnn-ak ᵓtdīr ǝllī ʕalē-k
[…]
hādī hīya l-furṣa ǝllī tmannēt bi-tžīk
bāš tʕīš ʕalā rižlē-k u mūš ʕalā rkābī-k

It is required, my brother, that you do what you have to do
[…]
This is the chance you hoped would come to you
To live standing on your feet, and not on your knees.

These songs, especially since they were released before the outbreak of the demonstrations, showing considerable courage, consecrated Ibn Thabit as the rapper of the Revolution. It is at this point that, as anticipated in the title of this paragraph, the Revolution goes live in Ibn Thabit's rap, which sometimes comments upon the events, sometimes tries to anticipate them. As he admitted in the interview mentioned above, the artist was in close contact with the revolutionaries fighting against Gaddafi's regular army, who even told him which of his songs they would play before each battle. The timing of Ibn Thabit's musical production, thus, is of great interest: his songs either provide support for the ongoing battles or try to pave the ground for the upcoming ones, as in the case of *al-Ǧabal al-Ġarbī* (*The Western Mountain*), which will be analyzed later.

Analyzing the different levels of artistic expression in Middle Eastern and North African popular culture, El Hamamsy and Soliman make the following distinctions:

1) artistic street engagement, 2) artistic street assimilation, and 3) artistic street mobilization… In the first category, art is produced by the people and for the people, spontaneously and reflexively, to address a certain need as it arises. In the second category, the street is deployed by an artist-agent in an attempt to engage with the people, empower them, and document the moment… In the third category, art is taken to a higher level of consciousness-raising, mobilization, and social criticism, and the goal here is to ensure the continuation of the revolution, constantly reminding the masses that what was achieved is considerable but not yet complete.[18]

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[18] W. El Hamamsy - M. Soliman (eds.), *Popular Culture in the Middle East and North Africa: A Postcolonial Outlook*, Routledge, New York-London, 2013, 252.

There is, of course, a clear difference between the Egyptian and Libyan case. In Egypt, the artists were part of the street movement that ousted the regime. In Libya, the demonstrations soon degenerated into civil war, so that the artist, while being (by his own admission) an ordinary Libyan, producing music that engaged with the people, met their needs and documented the Revolution, did not actually take part in the events (until July, when he was deployed on the Ǧabal Nafūsa).[19] El Hamamsy and Soliman's third category, that of social criticism aimed at ensuring the continuation of the revolutionary process, is only sketched in Ibn Thabit's production. The song *Lā šakk* (*No doubt*), released with the Benghazi rapper MC SWAT on September 28th 2011 (when Tripoli had already been conquered by the revolutionary forces but Gaddafi was still continuing the fight from Sirt), warns Libyans against those who want "to steal the revolution". Soon after Gaddafi's death, however, Ibn Thabit announced his withdrawal from the scene. Not a professional singer, he motivated his decision by saying that his goal had been met and his part in the fight fulfilled, although he continued to be active on his official Twitter profile.[20] It was the Benghazi rapper MC SWAT who continued to describe the painful contradictions of post-2011 Libya. The song *Istiġlāl* (*Exploitation*), released on April 17th 2017, painted a disenchanted image of a country moved by self-interest and torn apart by infighting.[21] Following the release of the video for the song, the artist received a number of death threats, forcing him to leave the country as an undocumented migrant. Ironically, it was Ibn Thabit, from his Twitter profile, who divulgated the news, posting a picture of MC SWAT on the boat that would get him to Italy, on August 5th 2018.

Following this concise and partial description of the Libyan rap scene during and immediately after the 2011 Revolution, the next section analyzes in more detail the typical structure of Ibn Thabit's songs.

Notes on the structure of Ibn Thabit's rap

As explained above, after having been consecrated as the rapper of the Revolution, Ibn Thabit continued to provide support for the revolutionary cause through his music, released on different platforms, but mainly on YouTube, where everyone could listen to it and download it for free. His songs, at this point, began echoing the main developments on the battlefield. The sequence of the three songs *Benghazi II* (April 7th 2011), *Misrata* (April 18th 2011) and *al-Ǧabal al-Ġarbī* (*The*

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[19] Ibn Ṯābit, however, did not actually take part in the armed fight against Gaddafi's regime. His role in the military effort to bring down Gaddafi's regime is not clear from the sources at our disposal, yet it appears that he did not limit himself to songwriting.

[20] http://revolutionaryarabrap.blogspot.com/2011/12/ibn-thabit-libyas-leading-rapper.html, last accessed on April 12th, 2018.

[21] MC SWAT, *Istiġlāl*, last accessed on April 9th, 2018.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apKxg1moN-U

Western Mountains, May 2nd 2011), for instance, loosely follows the slow progression of the revolutionaries from Eastern Libya to Tripolitania.

United by a common purpose, most of Ibn Thabit's songs also share many similarities in their inner structure, with a series of recurring themes:

1) An initial statement, in which the addressee (whom the song intends to support) is mentioned and praised. The addressee is usually either a town (Benghazi, Misrata, Tripoli) or a section of Libyan society (e.g. Libyan women, the Libyan youth).

2) Mention of the crimes or vexations committed by Gaddafi against the addressees.

3) Praise of the addressees, with a mention of their qualities and the contributions they made to the Libyan society.

4) (Call to action).

5) Videos containing graphic content, as the songs were released after the outbreak of the Revolution, when footage from the battlefields and the resisting towns began to be available.

Let us compare, for instance, the incipits from three songs, namely *Benghazi II*, *Misrata* and *Ānisat aṯ-Ṯuwwār* (translated into English as *Mrs. Revolution*).

> *Benghazi II*[22]
> (Speaking)
> *xēr yā Benġāzī? l-ġunyā l-axīra mūš sādd-nā, ndīrū wāḥda ždīda nšīlu mən əl-klām əl-awwəl*[23]
> *Benghazi part two* (in English)
> (Rapping)
> *Benġāzī yā Benġāzī ənti gāʕda ʕa-lsān-i, tawwa əd-dənyā kull-hā taʕrəf əl-maqāṣid wa-l-maʕānī*
>
> What's up Benghazi? The first song was not enough, let's make another one, quoting our first words
> Benghazi part two
> Benghazi oh Benghazi you are still on my tongue, now the entire world knows the goals and the meanings (of the Revolution)

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22 Ibn Thabit, *Benghazi II*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFdTYSdAr_A, last accessed on April 10th 2018.

23 The reference is here to a previous rap song by Ibn Thabit, called *Benghazi*, released in 2009. The music of the new song is the same, and the lyrics often refer to the old ones.

Misrata[24]
(Speaking)
yā ʕbād Lībyā, nəbbī nəḥkī-l-kum ʕalā mdīna yā rāžəl ḥəlwa zeyy əs-sukkər zeyy l-ʕsəl zeyy š-šəklāta ʕa-l-galb
yā Mʕammar əṭlaʕ mən Miṣṛāta yā kalb!
əllī təbbī-h təlgā-h fī Miṣṛāta: tārīx-ha maʕrūfa, ʕulamā-ha maʕrūfīn, abraz təžāra l-əl-blād, ašhar mužāhidīn, aḥlā tanḍīm, kull-a təlgā-h fī Miṣṛāta.
(Rapping)
hādī əllī nəbbi nətkalləm ʕalē-ha fi galb-ī ḥāṭṭ-hā
glūb əš-šaʕb əl-lībī kull-hā tawwa fī Miṣṛāta

Libyans, I want to talk to you about a town, oh man, sweet to the heart like sugar, like honey, like chocolate
Muʕammar leave Misrata, you dog!
Whatever you want, you can find it in Misrata: its history is known, its ʕulamāʔ are known, the most prominent commerce in the country, the best organization, all of it you find in Misrata.
This (city) of which I want to talk, I have placed it in my heart
All the hearts of the Libyan people are now in Misrata.

Ānisat aṯ-Ṯuwwār[25]
(Speaking)
wāḥda li-l-marʔa l-lībiyya, bāš əl-ʕālam kull-a yaʕrəf gīmət-hā, u-šinu gaddmət li-t-tawra
lā mā-nsēnā-kum-š, Rabb-ī yəʕʕzz-kum u-yaḥfaḍ-kum u-igawwīkum, Allāh ibārək fī-kum
(Rapping)
xallī nabdā bi-taḥiyya kbīra li-ummahāt aš-šuhadā əlli damm-hum kān daxīra li-l-ḥurriyya [...]

One for the Libyan woman, so that the entire world may know her worth, and what she brought to the Revolution.
No we haven't forgotten you, God exalt you and protect you and strengthen you, God bless you
Let's start with a warm greeting to the mothers of the martyrs, whose blood was the ammunition of freedom.

As is made evident from the brief excerpts quoted and translated above, the songs share a very similar structure, which is not usually limited to the incipit. Going back

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[24] Ibn Thabit, *Misrata*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JkUcGhoy6RI&t=6s, last accessed on April 10th 2018.

[25] Ibn Thabit, *Anisat aṯ-ṯuwwār* (*Ms. Revolution*),
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylrZ0JzjQr8&t=67s, last accessed on April 11th 2018.

to one of Ibn Thabit's most famous songs, *Nidāʔ li-šabāb Lībyā* (*Calling the Libyan youth*), its opening lines describe in detail the situation of Libya, while the final call invites young Libyans to hit the streets. In the middle of the song we can find the other typical elements of Ibn Thabit's songs. Gaddafi's crimes against his own people, for instance, are vividly portrayed in the following lines:

> *əl-klām əllī txarrəf fī-h u l-āyāt əlli tḥarrəf fī-həm*
> *bi-mawādd ət-taʕlīm ət-talāmīd txarrəb fī-həm*
> *fulūs əš-šaʕb tharrəb fī-həm hādī sulṭat əš-šaʕb?*
> *muḥāḍarāt l-əṣ-ṣbāyā, tšawwəh fī sumʕat əš-šaʕb!*

> The words you make up, the verses (of the Quran) you twist,
> With didactic materials you ruin (our) students
> You steal the people's money, is this the power of the people?
> Conferences for girls? You ruin the people's reputation!

From this perspective, the memory of the Abū Salim massacre is evoked in most of Ibn Thabit's songs and it is, for the artist, the chief among all of the crimes committed by Gaddafi.[26] The final call to action reported above, thus, starts with these powerful words:

> *əllī nāwī išūf nihāyət-a fī ḥyāt-a*
> *lā budda ikūn mustaʕidd an yuḍḥī ᵊḥyāt-a*
> *yuḍḥi damm-a bāš yətxalləs mən hamm-a*
> *zey š-šahīd əllī fī Bū Slīm əllī šinu danb-a?*
> *əllī māt fī l-fāḍī, əllī māt yā nār-ī*
> *ʕala mmālī-h tī-lā šuhādā yā ġālī!*

> He who wants to see his [Gaddafi's] end in his lifetime
> must be willing to sacrifice his life,
> to sacrifice his blood to rid himself of his torment,
> like the martyr in Abū Salim. What was his sin?
> He who died in vain, he who died - how awful for his parents!
> No, they are martyrs, my dear!

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[26] Abū Salīm is a maximum-security prison in Tripoli, which mostly housed political prisoners during Gaddafi's regime. After repeated human rights violations, approximately 1.270 political prisoners were killed there in 1996, and their bodies were never returned to the families. The families of the victims created a number of associations. In 2011, shortly after the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, a human rights lawyer who was negotiating with the government, Fathi Terbil, was arrested in Benghazi and charged of plotting against the regime. The demonstrations that followed his arrest started what would then become the 17th February Revolution.

The last missing element, i.e. the praise for the addressee, is also exemplified in *Nidāʔ li-šabāb Lībyā*. In this case, the addressee is the Libyan youth and, by extension, the entire Libyan people:

> əš-šaʕb əl-lībī šərīf, əš-šaʕb əl-lībī nḍīf
> əš-šaʕb əl-lībī lammā yətšannəž iwəllī rdīf
> iwəllī mahbūl. əš-šaʕb əl-lībī dū uṣūl
> əš-šaʕb əl-lībī iṣallī u-isalləm ʕala r-rasūl

> The Libyan people are noble, the Libyan people are clean
> the Libyan people, when they get angry, become terrible,
> become crazy. The Libyan people have roots
> the Libyan people pray and send peace to the Prophet.

Nidāʔ li-šabāb Lībyā thus perfectly exemplifies the format of Ibn Thabit's songs. The rapper, despite his attention to the artistic form of his message, aims primarily to move his audience and involve them in the ongoing struggle, which explains his meticulous attention to details, especially when enumerating the injustices suffered at the hands of Gaddafi.

Calling the Amazigh

Having analyzed in detail the structure of Ibn Thabit's songs, in this paragraph we will now focus on a particular case study that of a specific song addressed to the Libyan Amazigh. In doing so, we are not going to investigate the Amazigh's own perception of the ongoing conflict, but rather the way in which Libyan Arabs (exemplified through a popular rapper, Ibn Thabit) described Amazigh. The Amazigh perspective, here, is seen through the eyes of the Arab other, with all the implied risks of misrepresentation and cultural assimilation. The context in which the song was composed and released must also be taken into account, since it undoubtedly influenced its genesis and overall tone. The song, *al-Ǧabal al-Ġarbī* (*The Western Mountain*), was released on May 2nd 2011. The reference in the title is, of course, to Ǧabal Nafūsa, in Tripolitania, where the most Libyan Amazigh (excluding the Tuareg) are concentrated. The genesis of the song can be placed at a particularly delicate stage during the Libyan military conflict that followed the demonstrations in February 2011:

> By April, a stalemate had developed, and there was concern that rather than a democratic revolution, the civil war might yield a Libya that was permanently divided and in an ongoing conflict, much like Korea. The stalemate was broken by the entrance of a new group into the anti-Gaddafi coalition: the Berbers of southwest Libya, who in early June began a rebel offensive in the Nafusa Mountains. By mid-June, these rebels had taken several key towns in the mountains, and were advancing on Tripoli from the west, with the support of NATO. A month later, the rebels were only 50 miles from Tripoli, and by

the end of July, after intensifying their attacks, the western rebel forces had taken every one of Gaddafi's outposts and strongholds in the western mountains.[27]

Ibn Thabit thus addresses the Libyan Amazigh in a historically delicate moment, in which their contribution is deemed necessary to win a war that risked otherwise to be perceived as a conflict between Eastern and Western Libya. All these elements need to be taken into consideration when analyzing the lyrics of the song, reported and translated below:[28]

mā ʕand-ī wa-lā farg bēn əš-šarg wa-l-ġarb
əllī idāfəʕ ʕala arḍ-a ʕand-a l-ḥagg fī-l-ḥarb
swā ənn-a kān mən Nālūt, mən al-Gəlʕa mə-z-Zəntān
əl-Amāzīġī fī Yefrən aw l-ʕarbī fī-r-Rəžbān.

ər-riyānī əlli lagb-a əš-šībānī kull-ha nafs əl-klām
lammā iṭayyrū quwwāt əl-gəddāfi nafs əl-aʕlām
ḥattā gəddām əš-šāša dīma nafs əl-aʕlām

neḥne kull-nā yad wāḥda gədd-mā iḥāwəl ifattən fī-nā
wagfa wāḥda ṭalʕa wāḥda əš-šaʕb əl-lībi Allāh iʕīn-a
u əlli iḥārəb fī-nā u-yəštəm fī-nā Allāh ihīn-a
u əlli igūl-l-ək hādī fitna gūl-l-a: šīn daxl-ək fī-nā?

mā yəsəmʕu fī-ž-žbəl li-lə-ṛṣāṣ u-ṣ-ṣyāḥ
u-ənta mgaʕməz fī-l-marbūʕa mādd rižlē-k u murtāḥ
mūš bʕīd b-nəktešfū-h
baṛṛā ənta tzagzəg li-muʔammar tawwa nžū-k

Yefrən w-Allāh, mūš ġāyəb ʕalē-hum al-gatəl
āxər ḥāža alfēn u-tmānya əllī yəbbī idawwər əl-maṯəl
lammā inūḍu inūḍu marra wāḥda yā āna l-ᵃʕyūn-ī
mā-tatwaqqaʕ-š aqall mən hīkkī mən aḥfād əl-Bārūnī.
bi-n-nisba l-hum nafs əl-ḥāža əd-dəbbāba wa-d-daww
mā-yagdəru izaʕʕū ḥattā šāʕra fī Kābāw
nafs əl-qəṣṣa fī-r-Rəžbān, nafs əl-qəṣṣa fī-z-Zəntān,
nafs əl-qəṣṣa žīb-l-i žəbəl Nəfūsa fī ayyin kān

arāḍī-ha səmḥa tuzraʕ fī-hā l-kərmūs
u tuzraʕ fī-hā t-trīs əlli ḥārbū zey lə-wḥūš

ət-tyūs yəbbū yarkbu əž-žbəl u mā-gədrū-š
u rā-h taḥsəbū-ha sahla ʕārfīn-kum mā-taʕrfū-š?

škūn qbīlat əb-Bxābxa, škūn əl-Grādiyyīn,
škūn ət-Tāġma u lə-Mʕāni, škūn əm-Mšušiyyīn?
mūš bṣāra lammā igūlū-l-ək nantaṣir aw namūt
gūl-ī-l-a l-əlli ʕa-l-burkān žāy mən žəbəl taʕ Nālūt?

[...] bi-tamsaḥ bī-nā?
gūl əlli bi-tgūl-a [...] wa-l-mayya rā-hu hne r-ružūla
bi-n-nisba li-klāb muʕammar šinu mā-zāl bi-tžū-na?
tawwa iṣīr fī-ku zeyy mā-ṣār fi-maʕrakət əṭ-ṭāḥūna

bi-llāhi nibbī wēn-kum yā Tarhūna u Ġaryān
əllī imūtū hādū xūt-kum kēf tgūlu žərdān?

əlli yəbbi yəfham-a fətna xallī nwaḍḍəḥ əṣ-ṣūra
əl-fatwā žət mən Ġaryānī āmā ṣādəq fī Tāžūra[29]
mmāla šīnu tgūlū ʕalā l-xaṭəf u-l-iġtiṣāb
bālki mā-təndrū-š ġēr ifūt əḍ-ḍabāb
mā-fī-š əllā l-Gərdāfi[30] *əlli nibbū nantaqmū mənn-a*
əlli tədʕī-l-nā bi-n-naṣər hādī akīd yā ḥənna
aṣəl šīn mā-zāl mən sənn-a
mūš bʕīd tawwa iṭīḥ
yā-rēt ižībū-h ḥəyy u nəžəldū-h mlīḥ
ᵊnḥākmū u-nəšənngū-h u-nḥuṭṭū rāṣ-a fī ṣūniyya
yugʕud ġēr rās zeyy Wādi r-Rūmiyya.[31]

I make no difference between East and West (of Libya),
Whoever defends his land has the right to wage war.
Whether he is from Nalut, from al-Gelʕa, from Zintan,
The Amazigh in Yefren, or the Arab in al-Rejban.
The same goes for ər-Riyānī, whose last name is əš-Šībānī,
When they chase Gaddafi's forces [they share] the same flags,
In front of the screen, the flags are also the same.

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[29] The reference is here to the famous *fatwa* by al-Ṣādiq al-Ġaryānī in which he declared that fighting Gaddafi was a duty for Libyans (February 28th 2011).

http://www.aljazeera.net/news/arabic/2011/2/28/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%BA%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%AC-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B0%D8%A7%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%A8, last accessed on April 15th 2018.

[30] The name Gaddafi was often distorted in *Gərdāfi* (*gərd* "monkey") by the revolutionaries.

[31] Ibn Thabit, *Western Mountains (of Libya)*,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfeixCk2XLo&t=123s last accessed on April 12th 2018.

We are all one hand, no matter how he [Gaddafi] tries to divide us,
One stand, one fight, God help the Libyan people,
and humiliate whoever fights us and insult us,
and to those who say this is *fitna*, say, what do you have to do with us?
The sound of bullets and cries they hear on the Mountain,
While you are stretching your legs in your sitting room, relaxed,
We will discover it soon
Skip over to Muʕammar, we are coming for you!

Yefren, I swear, they are not strangers to death,
The last time was in 2008, for those seeking examples,
When they rise, they rise once, oh what I have seen,
Don't expect less than that from the descendants of al-Bārūnī.
For them, the tank and the *Dāyū*[32] are the same,
They (i.e. Gaddafi's forces) couldn't unsettle even a hair in Kābāw,
Same story in al-Rejban, same story in Zintan,
Same story in – give me any place on Ǧabal Nafūsa.

Their land is beautiful, and the fig tree is grown there,
And men are raised there also, who fight like wild beasts.
Fools wanted to climb the mountains and they couldn't,
Do you think it's easy, we know you don't know.

Who is the tribe of the Bxābxa, who the Grādiyyīn,
who the Tāġma and the Mʕāni, who the Mšušiyyīn?
It's no joke when they tell you we either win or die[33]
Tell it to those who are riding the explosion down the Mountain of Nalut!

Do you really think you will wipe us out?
Say what you have to say […] and water, we have courage.
As far as Muʕammar's dogs are concerned, are you still coming at us?
Now you will be faced with the same fate as in the battle of Ṭāḥūna.

By God, I want you, Tarhuna and Gharyan,
Those who are dying are your brothers, how can you call them rats?[34]
For those who want to understand this as *fitna*, let me explain the picture,
the *fatwa* came from al-Gharyani, the trustworthy, in Tajura.
So, what do you say of kidnappings, of rapes,
maybe you don't know, let the fog clear away.

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[32] The reference is here to cheap Daewoo cars still used in Libya (the Korean company closed in 2000 due to bankruptcy).

[33] This is the famous motto of Omar al-Mukhtar (1861-1931), hero of the Libyan Resistance against the Italian invaders.

[34] The term *žerḏān* "rats" was often employed by Gaddafi to designate the revolutionaries.

It's only Gaddafi from whom we seek revenge,
to those who pray for our victory we say, it is certain, grandma,
how long can still be left of his age,
he will fall soon,
I wish they would bring him alive and so we could whip him good,
So that we could judge him and hang him and put his head on a plate,
And so that he remains headless, like the statues of Wadi Rumiyya.

The opening lines of the song allow us to situate it, as mentioned above, in a particularly delicate context, in which the author perceives the risk of the emergence of a divided Libya as one that must be avoided at all costs. Thus Ibn Thabit opens his song by saying that he makes no difference between East and West, advocating for a united Libya.[35] From there, the discourse of unity transcends the traditional division between Cyrenaica and Tripolitania and embraces the two main ethnic groups of the country, Arabs and Amazigh. The "sameness" of the Libyan Arabs and Amazigh, then, constitutes the main theme of the first part of the song. From this perspective, the idea that the Revolution might constitute a *fitna* "trial, temptation"[36] is repeatedly rejected, not only in this song. In a previous (and less famous) song, *Lībyā hiya* (*Libya is*), in fact, the same call to unity and rejection of the idea that the Revolution is a *fitna* is spelled out in different words:

Lībyā fī-hā šuʕūb u-qabāʔil lākən rāfʕīn nafs əl-aʕlām
kān ʕa-l-Gəddāfi rā-h əyyām-a maʕdūdāt
əlli yəbbī ifattən fī-nā rā-h mā-fī-š imkāniyyāt
lā žihawiyya lā ʕunṣuriyya lā qabaliyya
āh nwaḍḍəḥ-ḥā l-ək bi-l-luġa l-amāziġiyya…

Libya has different peoples and tribes but when they fly the same flag
Gaddafi's days are numbered,
Those who want to divide us have no chances
No regionalism, no racism, no tribalism
I'll explain it to you in Tamazight…[37]

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[35] It is worth reminding the reader that the geographical area we call Libya was politically unified by the Ottomans only at the beginning of the 20th century. D. Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya*, Second Edition, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 21.

[36] The term gradually acquired the sense of a seduction or enticement that brings division in the community of believers (see D. B. Cook, Fitna in early Islamic history, in K. Fleet - G. Krämer - D. Matringe - J. Nawas - E. Rowson (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*. Last accessed on April 12th 2018 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_27151).

[37] This sentence is followed by lines in Tamazight (Ibn Thabit, *Lībyā hiya* (*Libya is*), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Axcbkzx2kIA, last accessed on April 13th 2018).

From this theme, Ibn Thabit switches to another *topos* of the narration concerning the Amazigh Resistance, i.e. their military prowess. The rapper, who was deployed in a non-combat position on the Ǧabal Nafūsa two months after the release of this song, vividly depicts the courage and military strength of the Libyan Amazigh. Ibn Thabit then skillfully links their bravery to the heritage of Sulaymān al-Bārūnī (1870-1940), hero of the early resistance against the Italian invasion. Though Al-Bārūnī, an Amazigh born in Ǧabal Nafūsa and belonging to an Ibadi family,[38] the heritage of his deeds is nonetheless considered to be shared between Libyan Arabs and Amazigh. Mentioning him thus serves to strengthen the idea of unity between the two ethnic groups, especially in confronting a common enemy. The establishment of a connection between past and present, moreover, is a defining trait of protest music. Valassopoulos and Mostafa, commenting on this phenomenon in the Egyptian musical scene, write that "It is precisely at the crossroads where music both articulates and memorializes the connection between past and present injustices that it becomes dangerous and revolutionary".[39] Ibn Thabit makes great use of this rhetorical device in his songs, starting from the first one (*as-Suʔāl - The question*), in which he asks *hal sa-iqāwmū l-aʕdā zeyy-mā qāwmū ždūd-na?* "Will they resist the enemies as our ancestors did?". And trying to stimulate the pride of the Libyan people, in his second song (*Nidāʔ li-šabāb Lībyā - Calling the Libyan youth*) he tells his addressees not to call themselves descendants of *muǧāhidīn* if they do not join the fight against Gaddafi (*mā-tgūl-š aḥfād ǝl-mužāhidīn* "Don't say (we are) grandsons of the *muǧāhidīn*").

The song *al-Ǧabal al-Ġarbī* (*The Western Mountain*) revolves around the two themes of unity and of the military prowess of the Libyan Amazigh. In *Lībyā hiya*, an additional element is sketched, namely the fact that the Amazigh people have been in Libya for centuries (even though Ibn Thabit does not venture to say that their presence precedes the Arab one), as proved by the very existence of their language:

> *ḥnē aškāl u alwān lākǝn kull-nā lībiyyīn*
> *ǝllī ihīn min-nā wāḥǝd rāh ihīn ǝl-malāyīn*
> *yǝbbi igūl mā-fī-š amāzīġ hādū lī-hum snīn*
> *suʔāl ʕa-s-sarīʕ hādī l-kalimāt mǝnnīn?*[40]

We have different looks and different colors but we are all Libyans
and whoever insults one among us insults millions.

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[38] A. Baldinetti, Italian Colonial Rule and Muslim Elites in Libya: a Relationship of Antagonism and Collaboration, in M. Hatina (ed.), *Guardians of Faith in Modern Times: ʿUlamaʾ in the Middle East*, Brill, Leiden / Boston, 2009, 96.

[39] A. Valassopoulos - D. S. Mostafa, *op. cit.*, 647.

[40] This verse is then followed by lines in Tamazight.

He says there are no Amazigh when they have lived here for years.
A quick question: where are these words from then?

After presenting the two songs in which the Libyan Amazigh are directly (*al-Ǧabal al-Ġarbī*) or indirectly (*Lībyā hiya*) addressed, it is possible to evaluate the perspective from which Ibn Thabit creates his perception of them and on which he builds his discourse. In order to do so, however, it is useful first to remind the reader of the situation of the Libyan Amazigh under Gaddafi's regime. The regime portrayed Libya as an ethnically homogeneous country,[41] where the discussion of minority issues was not allowed in public. According to the official discourse of Gaddafi's regime, the contemporary "Berbers" were an Arab tribe who had reached Northern Africa a long time ago and whose Arabic language had been particularly corrupted through the centuries. According to Gaddafi, the authentic Amazigh tribes had long ceased to exist, while the contemporary Berbers were Arab tribes arrived over land (*barr barr*, whence the name "Berber") from Yemen.[42] The existence of the Amazigh / Berber ethnic group, thus, was an invention of Western colonialism, the aim of which was to divide Libya (and other North African countries).[43] Even representatives of the Libyan Academy of the Arabic Language (*Maǧmaʕ al-luġa al-ʕarabiyya al-lībiyya*), with whom I was able to discuss the question of Tamazight, upheld (or were forced to uphold) the same version. The denial of the very existence of an ethnically distinct group in Libya (apart from the Tebu in the southern part of the country) translated into extremely restrictive measures against the employment of Tamazight in public. The infamous Law 24 forbade the Libyan Amazigh from using their language in public and giving their children Amazigh names for a quarter of a century, until it was lifted in 2007 under the influence of Gaddafi's son, Sayf al-Islām.[44] From that moment and until the outbreak of the February 17th Revolution, Gaddafi's attitude toward the Libyan Amazigh was fickle to say the least, alternating harsh attacks (which described Amazigh activists as traitors) and shy attempts at reconciliation.

This brief introduction is interesting because it helps us to put Ibn Thabit's words in perspective. The aim of this analysis is not to question the genuine good intentions of the rapper, who later joined the Amazigh themselves on the Ǧabal Nafūsa in their fight against the regime. The discourse of homogeneity offered by *Lībyā hiya* and *al-Ǧabal al-Ġarbī*, on the contrary, specifies that Libya is indeed one, but it includes different *šuʕūb wa qabāʔil* "peoples and tribes". In *al-Ǧabal al-*

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[41] B. Maddy-Weitzman, *The Berber Identity Movement and the Challenge to North African States*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 2011, 140.

[42] *Idem*, 141.

[43] http://mediterraneanaffairs.com/ethnic-minorities-the-main-challenge-for-the-libyan-stabilization, last accessed on April 14th 2018.

[44] B. Maddy-Weitzman, *op. cit.*, 141.

Ġarbī, moreover, he says that everyone has the right to fight the regime, *ǝl-Amāzīġī fī Yefrǝn aw l-ʕarbī fī-r-Rǝžbān* "the Amazigh in Yefren or the Arab in al-Rejban". These points were amongst the greatest points of controversy between Gaddafi and the activists of the CMA (*Congrès Mondial Amazigh*). In a letter addressed to the Libyan dictator by the CMA leader Lounès, the Libyan Amazigh are said to have been let down precisely by the fact that Gaddafi imagined a "Libya for Libyans", but the only identity he was willing to include in this "Libyanness" was the Arab one.[45]

Where Ibn Thabit's discourse falls short is in recognizing the injustices suffered by the Libyan Amazigh at the hands of the regime and their general marginalization within the Libyan society. In a politically charged rap that aims to stir the conscience of its listeners, thus, a recognition of the Amazigh presence in Libya is little more than a long overdue act. The act itself, however, does not stem from the recognition of the specific kind of repression and persecution suffered by the Libyan Amazigh within their own country. This is especially true if we compare the two songs quoted above with the rest of Ibn Thabit's production, which is usually extremely detailed in listing the crimes committed by Gaddafi against the addressees of his songs. A discourse of unity and homogeneity that does not seek reconciliation through the acknowledgement of past injustices, thus, risks to be an involuntary attempt at cultural assimilation.

Conclusion

This paper provided an analysis of one of the most prominent rappers that animated the Libyan scene throughout the February 17th Revolution, with a particular focus on his approach to the issue of Amazigh in Libya. As evident from the moment in which Ibn Thabit's *al-Ġabal al-Ġarbī* (*The Western Mountain*) was released, his dealing with the Amazigh question in Libya is, at the very least, partially instrumental to bringing about their auspicated role in the then ongoing conflict. In other words, Ibn Thabit composes this song and releases it at a moment in which the help of the Amazigh was desperately needed to win the war, but he includes them in his vision of a culturally diverse post-Gaddafi Libya, although he does so with all of the shortcomings highlighted at the end of the previous section.

One of the limitations of the present paper consists in the fact that it only offers one point of view, namely that of Ibn Thabit. It would be extremely interesting to investigate how the Libyan Amazigh received his message. During the conference at which this paper was originally presented, for instance, the discussion that followed my presentation was extremely interesting. Some of the Libyan Amazigh in attendance, in fact, showed a certain disappointment, stating that their help was requested and promises were made during the war, yet the Arab ethnic majority

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[45] *Idem*, 142.

tried to marginalize them again soon after Gaddafi's fall. The inclusive discourse of a common "Libyanness", thus, was accused of opportunism, even though statistical surveys would be needed to ascertain whether these opinions are really representative of the feelings of the Libyan Amazigh in post-Gaddafi Libya.

At the same time, politically connoted rap and hip-hop music in the MENA region and its contribution to the Arab Spring also deserves the attention of researchers, in order to understand an important aspect of the multifaceted social background from which the events of 2011 developed.

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Ibn Thabit, *Benghazi II*;
Ibn Thabit, *al-Ǧabal al-Ġarbī* (*The Western Mountain*);
Ibn Thabit feat. MC SWAT, *lā šakk* (*No doubt*);
Ibn Thabit, *Lībyā hiya* (*Libya is*);
Ibn Thabit, *Misrata*;
Ibn Thabit, *Nidāʔ li-šabāb Lībyā* (*Calling the Libyan youth*);
Ibn Thabit, *as-Suʔāl* (*The question*);
MC SWAT, *Istiġlāl* (*Exploitation*).

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates one of the lesser-known expressions of political dissent and revolutionary thinking during the Arab Spring, rap music. It focuses on the Libyan musical scene and its most famous revolutionary rapper, Ibn Thabit, whose songs were the soundtrack of the February 17th Revolution. Composed and sung in Libyan dialect, Ibn Thabit's rap is a call to action addressed to all Libyans, including the Amazigh ethnic minority. The second part of the paper focuses on the way in which the Libyan Amazigh, who were subjected to violent repression under Gaddafi's rule, were portrayed and addressed by an ethnically and linguistically Arab singer, in an attempt to involve them in the struggle against the regime.

LAMEEN SOUAG

Linguistic Unity and Diversity in Libyan Berber (Amazigh)

Introduction

This article is intended as a non-technical introduction to internal variation in Libyan Berber[1] and its broader implications. Like Arab identity, Amazigh identity tends to be closely bound up with language. However, like Arabic, Berber is far from homogeneous, and mutual comprehensibility across different regions can be very limited. Understanding this cross-regional linguistic variation is important in order to predict, or plan, the future of Berber in Libya in a context of increasing institutionalisation and urbanisation.

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[1] A terminological note may be necessary here. "Berber" is the most widely used term in Western academic literature both for the language and for the ethnic grouping. In Arabic, the term (*barbar*) has acquired negative connotations, including a perceived (and perhaps etymologically correct) link with "barbarian", and is generally considered unacceptable in modern contexts; in English, it does not have the same connotations. "Amazigh" or "Mazigh" is the ethnonym traditionally used by many but not all Berber-speaking groups, and promoted by activists; it is increasingly accepted even in areas where it had not been used in the pre-colonial period, and will be used here consistently to refer to ethnic identity or political activity and its results. "Tamazight", the feminine of "Amazigh", is often used to refer to the language as a whole, or specifically to the varieties of central Morocco; however, most Libyan varieties put language names in the masculine, so this term will be used here only in reference to other countries.
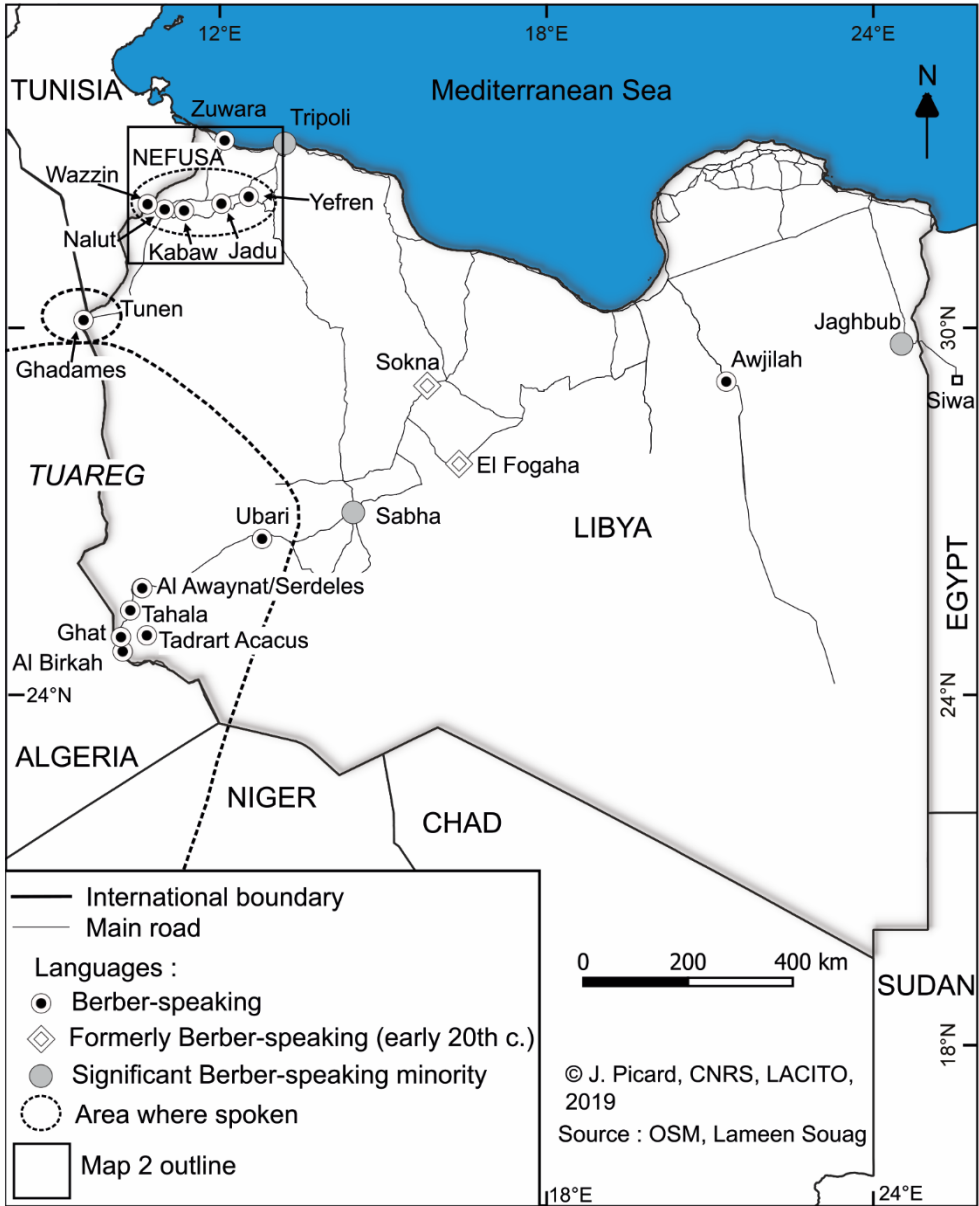
Fig. 1. *Berber in Libya*

Distribution

Except for some Tubu areas in the far south, it is probable that every habitable part of Libya has been the domain of Berber speakers at some point (Múrcia Sànchez 2010; 2011). By the time Arabic speakers first reached power, in the 7th century, the language had already begun its long retreat; the coastal towns were largely Latin or Greek-speaking, with possible survivals of Punic in some areas. The interior of the country, however, remained largely Berber-speaking at least until the arrival of the Banu Sulaym in the 11th century. As a result of the uneven course of language shift and conquest, Berber-speaking communities were gradually reduced to an archipelago of language islands, often with little mutual contact, in a sea of Arabic.

Within modern Libya, Berber-speaking communities are concentrated primarily along the western edge of the country; see Figure 1. Demographically, the most important traditionally Berber-speaking region in Libya is the western part of the Nefusa Mountains, southwest of Tripoli (Beguinot, 1942; Ashammakhi, 2017). This consists of a 200-km-long chain of dozens of predominantly Berber-speaking settlements, running from Wazzin on the Tunisian border in the west via Nalut (Lalut) and Jadu to Yefren and Al-Qalaa in the east, sporadically interrupted by Arabic-speaking settlements of which the largest is Zintan. Geographically and linguistically, the Nefusa Mountains are continued across the Tunisian border by the Matmata range, whose Berber-speaking villages are fewer and more scattered (Hamza, 2007; Gabsi, 2003; Ben Mamou, 2005). On the coast 100 km to its north, the port of Zuwara preserves Berber in an otherwise Arabic-speaking region (Mitchell, 2009; Serra, 1970; Gussenhoven, 2017); it is the only coastal town in Libya to have done so. Further inland, 250 km southwest of Nalut, a smaller, more isolated Berber-speaking town is found: the oasis of Ghadames, and its satellite Tunen (Lanfry, 1968; Lanfry, 1973; Kossmann, 2013).

The next most important is the vast but sparsely populated Tuareg area of southwestern Libya, starting around Ghadames itself and continuing south to the Niger border. The largest settlements of the region are Ghat (Nehlil 1909), on the Algerian border, and Ubari further east; smaller Tuareg settlements are scattered through the Akakus Mountains near Ghat. This area represents the northeastern edge of a much larger Tuareg sphere extending as far east as Mali and as far south as Burkina Faso. The continuity of Tuareg has been partly interrupted since the early 20th century by colonial powers' imposition of fixed national borders; nevertheless, substantial immigration of Tuaregs from Mali and Niger during the Qaddafi era has helped maintain mutual connections.

Further east, only scattered remnants attest to the formerly country-wide distribution of Berber. In central Libya, Berber survived into the early twentieth century in two oases of the Jufra district: Sokna, near Waddan, and El-Fogaha further south (Sarnelli, 1924; Souag, fc; Paradisi, 1961a). It is, however,

effectively extinct today; only a few elderly semi-speakers remain at Sokna (Sεid n Yunes, 2010). In Cyrenaica, the town of Awjila in the Jalu oasis stands alone as the only long-term Berber-speaking settlement (Paradisi, 1960; Paradisi, 1961b; van Putten, 2013). While language loss is clearly ongoing, some younger members of the community are attempting to maintain the language (Souag - van Putten, 2015). The much younger settlement of Jaghbub, on the Egyptian border, includes some traditionally Berber-speaking families with roots in nearby Siwa (Souag, 2013: 16); it is unclear whether the language they brought with them is being maintained.

An ethnographically oriented focus on Berber-speaking communities in their traditional lands, however, paints a misleading picture of the present. Modern-day Libya is one of the most heavily urbanized countries in Africa, and a very substantial number of Berber speakers today live in cities outside these areas. It remains to be seen whether the language will be maintained for long periods in predominantly Arabic-speaking larger cities, but in neighbourhoods with strong concentrations of Berber speakers, its survival is at least a possibility. A map of the distribution of Berber today can hardly be considered complete if it leaves out Tripoli.

Understanding variation

The patchy distribution and long history of Berber across Libya has led to substantial variation. Even within the relatively compact region of the Nefusa Mountains, the central dialects of Jadu and Lalut show some striking – and inadequately documented – differences from the peripheral varieties of Yefren and Wazzin, despite a long history of mutual interaction. A much greater gap separates this dialect group from Tamahaq (Tuareg) further south, linguistically much closer to other Tuareg varieties beyond Libya's borders. Smaller varieties limited to individual oases – Ghadames, Awjila, formerly Sokna and El-Fogaha – carry little political or demographic weight, but diverge drastically from the norms of either dialect group in ways that reflect a long history of linguistic conservatism.

A pioneering attempt to quantify these differences was made by Blažek (2010), who examined lexicostatistical cognacy rates between Berber varieties on the 100-word Swadesh list, yielding the tree in Fig. 2.

(a) Tree-diagram depicting the Berber dialect continuum based on average values in the glottochronological test.
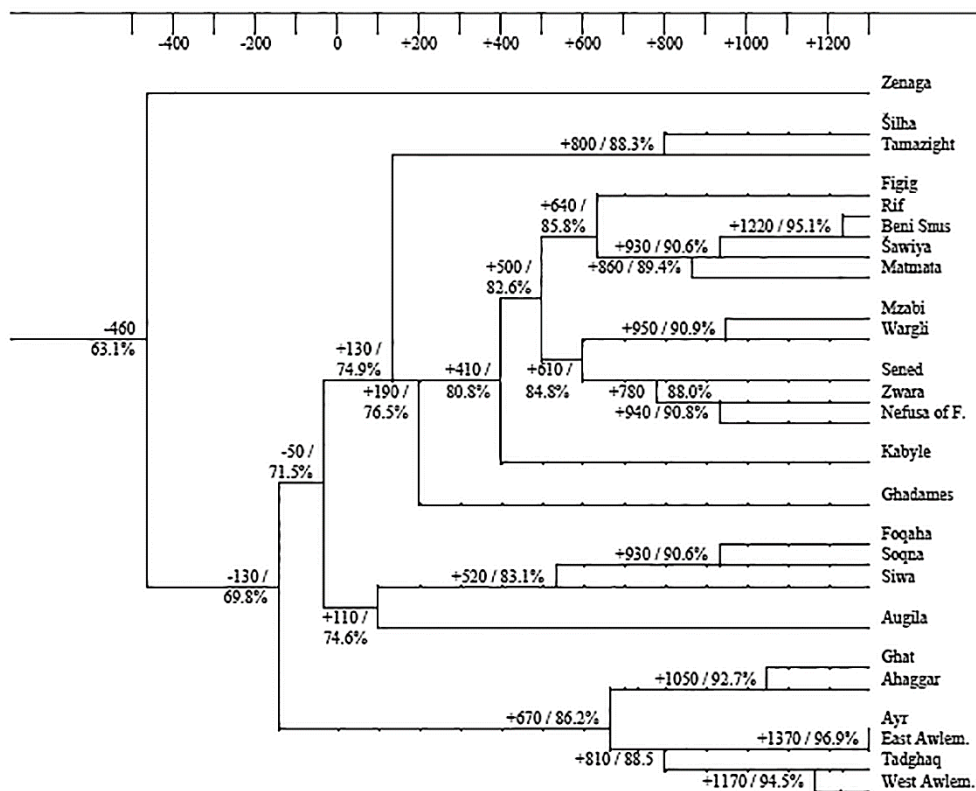
Fig. 2. *Berber lexicostatistical family tree according to Blažek (2010)*

He found that Zuwara and Beguinot's Nefusi shared about 91% of these words, as did Sokna and El-Fogaha – a level of divergence comparable to French vs. Italian. The different Tuareg varieties inside and outside Libya shared an average of about 86% of their Swadesh vocabulary – less than Romance. The common ancestor of all Libyan Berber varieties would date back to 130 BC or so, making them as different from one another – on this particular measure – as the Germanic languages. However, despite its usefulness as an indicative measure, this method is a misleading guide to synchronic similarity, whose results should not be taken to characterise the present-day situation as a whole. It takes no account of morphology, a relatively conservative domain in Berber. Within the lexicon, Arabic loans are specifically excluded due to Blažek's diachronically oriented interests, although such loans are frequent even within basic vocabulary and have the effect of increasing mutual intelligibility. Even for diachronic purposes, the tree model Blažek imposes on the data is misleading, since no effort is made to identify or isolate the effects of intra-Berber contact.

By supplementing published data (cited above) with "grey data" from social media – notably, the invaluable resources found on Facebook groups for Libyan Amazigh youth (Halasa, 2015) – it is now possible to form a general picture of Berber-internal variation not only across Libya but even, to a significant extent, within the northwest, an area whose diversity is very poorly described in existing literature. This variation is far from negligible, as illustrated by the following table (retranscribed, sometimes with ambiguities caused by the use of an Arabic-script transcription):

	Ghat	Ghadames	Nalut	Kabaw	Jadu	Yefren	Zuwara	Wazzin	Awjila
hand	*ăfus*	*ofəss*	*ufəs*	*ufəs*	*ufəs*	*fus*	*əfus*	*fus*	*afus*
sun	*tafukk*	*tofət*	*tufut*	*tufut*	*tufut*	*tfuyt*	*tfuyt*	*tfuyt*	*tafut*
son	*rur*	*tarwa*	*təṛwa*	*təṛwa*	*təṛwa*	*məmmi*	*məmmi*	*məmmi*	*iwi*
year	*awătay*	*aẓăggas*	*suggəs / sukkəs*	*suggəs / sukkəs*	*suggəs*	*asəggʷas*	*asəggas*	*asəggʷas*	*ašəwwaš*
donkey	*ižiḍ*	*aẓeḍ*	*(a)ziṭ*	*(a)ziṭ*	*aziṭ*	*aɣyul*	*aɣyul*	*aɣyul*	*aziṭ*
figs	*azarăn*	*ălmətk*	*imətšan / imətšən*	*imətšan / imətšən*	*imətkən*	*imətšan*	*iṃətšan*	*imətšən*	*?*

Table 1. *Lexical variation across Libya*

Inspection of Table 1 (as well as Table 3) reveals a clear lexical divide within the Nefusa Mountains area between two main dialect groups, portrayed in Fig. 3: "core" Nefusi, in Nalut, Kabaw, and Jadu (blue), vs. "peripheral" Nefusi, in Yefren to the east, Wazzin to the west, and beyond the mountains proper in Zuwara to the north (green). Ghadames aligns with "core" Nefusi in many respects, despite important grammatical differences, while "peripheral" Nefusi rather closely matches the Matmata varieties of southern Tunisia (not shown in the table) and the Zenati subgroup of Berber more generally, notably including Tashawit (Chaouia) in Algeria and Tarifit (Rif) in Morocco. Ghat, standing in for Libyan Tuareg, is naturally much closer to non-Libyan Tuareg than to any non-Tuareg Libyan Berber variety, while Awjila stands out as not especially close to any other Libyan or non-Libyan variety.
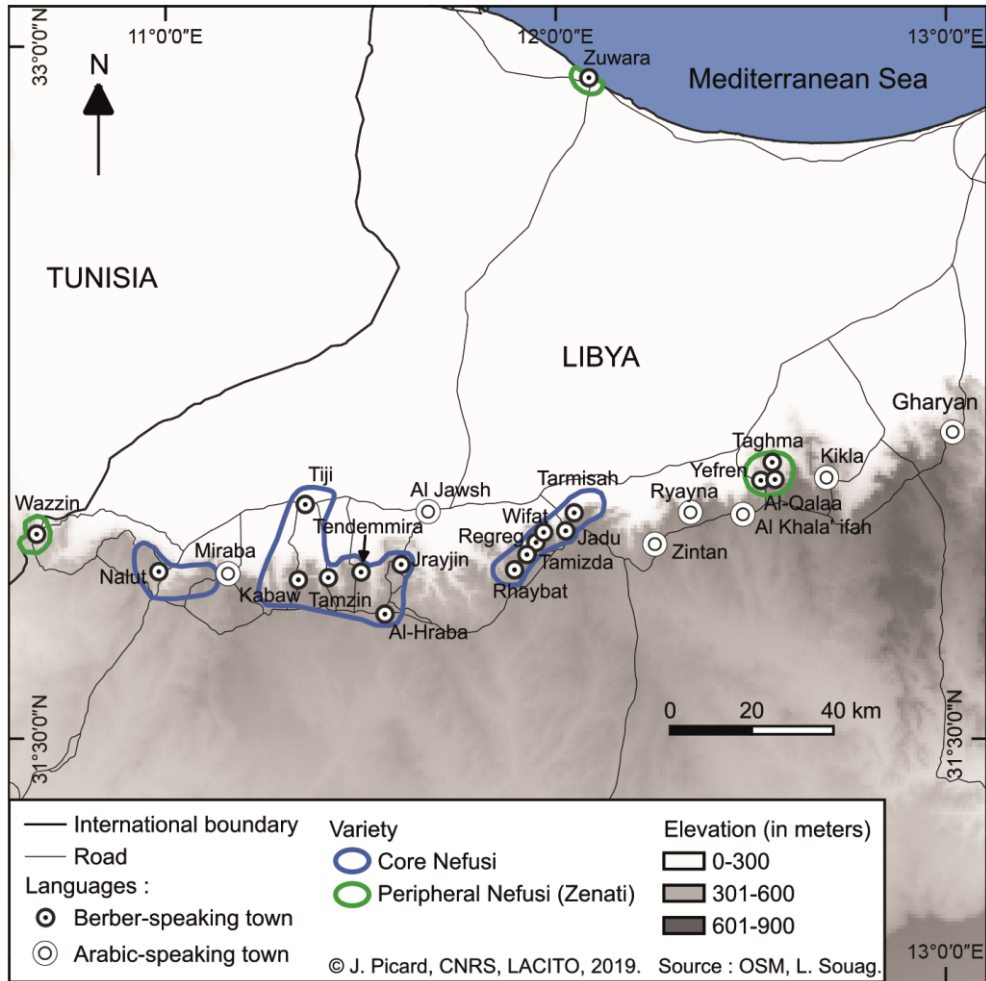
Fig. 3. *Linguistic variation in the Nefusa Mountains*

Viewed in a historical perspective, this situation mostly seems to reflect two major linguistic expansions: Zenati and Tuareg (Souag 2017). The relative homogeneity of Zenati varieties in Morocco and Algeria, and the much greater variation among varieties with Zenati characteristics further east, suggests that the Zenati expansion started somewhere in southern Tunisia or northern Libya and proceeded westwards. Nevertheless, traits shared with Zenati are prominent as far east as Sokna and Siwa; at least in Siwa, these traits are unlikely to reflect continuous transmission since antiquity (Souag, 2013: 27), suggesting that speakers of Zenati or some close relative may have moved east as well. The Tuareg expansion likewise seems to have proceeded from southwestern Libya and southern Algeria towards the south and west, although over the past few

decades immigration has mainly been in the other direction. Apart from these two expansions, however, Libya has at least two main relict areas where traces of earlier Berber-internal diversity survive. A variety ancestral to Awjila must have split from all the rest very early on, although even in the middle of inland Cyrenaica its isolation was not complete (traces of later Zenati influence can be observed in Awjili). The traits shared by core Nefusi with Ghadames reflect early shared developments in a region then as now somewhat insulated by its geography from exogenous linguistic changes; however, the later arrival of Zenati varieties along the periphery of the Nefusa Mountains would lead to substantial restructuring of core Nefusi, bringing it closer to other northern Berber varieties. Tuareg has similarly had an impact on Ghadames, though a much less prominent one.

   Viewed synchronically, however, it is more convenient to reduce the variation within modern Libyan Berber to a one-dimensional diagram, in which each variety listed is, by and large, more similar to the ones preceding and following it than to any variety further afield, and more likely to be mutually intelligible:

- Fezzan (Sokna, El Fogaha) – effectively extinct
- "Peripheral" Nefusi = Zenati (Zuwara, Yefren, Wazzin)
- "Core" Nefusi (Nalut, Kabaw, Jadu)
- Ghadames
- Tuareg = Tamahaq/Tamajeq/Tamasheq (Ghat, Ubari…)
- Awjila

   The division drawn here between "peripheral" and "core" Nefusi, while clearly justified by lexical data, is not so clearly reflected in terms of identity or folk classification. Even prior to the Amazigh identity movement of the 20th century, speakers of both shared the traditional glottonym and ethnonym *Maziɣ*, corresponding to "Amazigh" elsewhere, and cognate to Tuareg *Amahăɣ*; this term is not documented as a language label in the smaller varieties of Ghadames, Awjila, or the Fezzan towns. Moreover, their frequent contact with one another assures a greater degree of mutual comprehensibility than found between more widely scattered varieties. To some extent, their long-standing contact has worked to erase the deep-rooted genetic differences between them, making it more feasible to conceptualize the varieties of the Nefusa Mountains as a single language than a diachronic perspective would suggest.

Demographics

   There is no census data on languages spoken in Libya today or within the past several decades. An initial approximation can be produced by looking at population data for Libyan towns known to be predominantly Berber-speaking (World

Gazetteer 2012) and combining this with best guesses as to the proportion of Berber-speaking population in these towns. The basis for the figures given by *Ethnologue* 21 (Simons - Fennig 2018) is unclear, but presumably not entirely arbitrary. Side by side, these two methods yield the following:

	Extrapolated from 2012 town populations	Ethnologue 21 (mixes data from 2001 and 2016)
Fezzan	0	0
Peripheral Nefusi	70,000	222,000
Core Nefusi	70,000	
Ghadames	8,500	10,000
Tuareg	47,000	17,000
Awjila	5,000	2,000
Total	*200,500*	*241,000*

Table 2. *Population data*

While the specific figures differ substantially, the ranking of varieties is the same: Nefusi > Tuareg > Ghadames >> Awjila. Both sets of figures, however, should probably be considered as substantial underestimates, since no usable data is available on the situation in Tripoli and other large urban centres; as noted above, a substantial proportion of Libyan Amazigh live in such cities, outside of their traditional territory, like most Libyans.

Towards institutionalisation

In the past, interregional linguistic differences had little practical impact. The fall of Qaddafi in 2011, however, made it possible to seriously envision an institutionalisation of Amazigh as a language of the state, and Amazigh activists' demands for this have become increasingly influential. At the same time, independently of the much-contested state apparatus, activists have taken their own measures to introduce their language to broadcasting, to the classroom, and to local administration. Their progress has been fairly rapid. In 2012, a textbook was privately published for use in primary schools, *Adlis nnu* (Madi 2012), and Amazigh radio stations were launched in Zuwara and Yefren, while Berber-language broadcasts featured on the Qatar-based rebel satellite station Libya Al Ahrar TV. The next year, a specifically Amazigh station, Ibraren TV, was launched. In 2013, the General National Congress passed Law No. 18 (Ministry of Justice 2013), giving "all linguistic and cultural components" (specified as Amazigh, Tuareg, and Tubu) the right to optional classes for their language, and requiring the

Ministry of Education to provide textbooks and teachers for this purpose, and the Ministry of Higher Education to establish research-focused and historical centres and councils dedicated to preserving and developing their cultural and linguistic identity. As of 2018, Amazigh classes are still expanding in the northwest, and even Awjila has occasional Berber-language local radio broadcasts. One question that this raises is standardization: given the linguistic variation found across the country, to what extent are books and media created in one area accessible elsewhere? Comparing *Adlis nnu* to the available data on this variation illustrates that the difference between the language to be taught at school and the language spoken by the pupils is far from negligible, even in the Amazigh heartlands of the northwest.

Fig. 4*: Adlis nnu, p. 35*

Lexical standardization

Examining p. 35 of *Adlis nnu* for concreteness, we find only three words or morphemes that appear to be common to all documented Libyan Berber varieties: *sl* "hear, listen", *d* "and, with", *n* "of". Another eight vary across the country but seem to be consistent across the northwest, although data on lexical variation is limited there: *t-...-d* "you sg. (subj.)", *ɣs* "want", *rni* "add", *sn* (f. *snt*) "two", *aqqa* "piece", *ifarisn* "pears", *tiẓurin* "grapes", *tiyni* "dates". At least another eight words, however, are known to vary even within the northwest: *ẓr* "see" (vs. Jadu *ecbeḥ*), *fk* "give" (vs. Zuwara, Yefren *uc*), *ijjn* f. *ijjt* "one" (vs. Jadu *udjun*), *way* "yes" (vs. Jadu *hi*, Zuwara *a*), *adffu* "apple" (vs. Jadu *tteffaḥ* < Arabic), *imṭkan* "figs" (see above), *tiznbaɛ* "oranges" (< Arabic, like Jadu *burdgan* and Yefren *llim*, but less immediately recognizable as such). Even at a first grade level, it can safely be assumed that all readers of this textbook will encounter words unfamiliar to them and probably to their parents too. Standardizing Libyan Amazigh – or even creating enough familiarity with each other's varieties to ensure full mutual comprehensibility – is a non-trivial task. While students in the northwest could be familiar with as much as 79% of the words on this page, depending on their town, Tuareg ones will recognize only 46%, and Awjili ones no more than 30%.

Geographical variation, however, is not the only source of unfamiliarity. Three words on this page are likely to be equally unfamiliar to *all* Libyan readers not exposed to usage in other countries: *tagzzumt* "lesson", *tis 7* "seventh", *agadz* "market". Another two were chosen despite being unfamiliar to all readers in the most populous regions of the northwest: *kraḍ* "three", *sḍiṣ* "six". The motivation in each case is clear: avoidance of Arabic loans (all higher numerals are borrowed from Arabic in Zuwara and the Nefusa Mountains). As in Algeria and Morocco, the creation and promotion of neologisms has been seen as an essential part of language planning, primarily intended to replace words recognizable as Arabic borrowings. In the words of Intissar Younes Issa, an instructor at Yefren (Thorne 2014), "before we would say '*hammam*' (bathroom), from Arabic, but now people are saying '*abdus*.' Even '*cugina*' (kitchen), which comes from Italian ('*cucina*'); now we say '*anwal*'". The choice of which words to avoid is motivated largely by whether they are recognizable as Arabic, but how are their replacements chosen? In *Adlis nnu*, the neologisms are often clearly recognizable as Moroccan rather than Algerian, as with both *agadz* and *tagzzumt*; this reflects the author's lengthy stays in Morocco, but perhaps also the greater accessibility of Moroccan Amazigh materials in Arabic (Algerian Amazigh dictionaries are usually in French, which is less widely spoken in Libya). Nevertheless, both Algerian and Moroccan Amazigh teachers have been recruited in places such as Zuwara; it remains to be seen which set of neologisms will win out.

For the time being, the linguistic purism observed in Libyan Amazigh texts is hardly reflected in spoken discourse, even in formal settings. Amazigh public speeches – frequently uploaded on YouTube – more often show massive use of Arabic lexical items in a Berber grammatical matrix. The desire to avoid borrowings, if present, seems to be outweighed by the desire to ensure audience comprehension, in a country where political life was obligatorily in Arabic until rather recently. In a speech made by the ex-fighter Anwar Najaa at the opening of a hotel in Kabaw, for example, the following passage is not too unrepresentative (Arabic words italicized):

> *Elqahwet meckelet basiṭa*; assu, *ma ca Allah*, tedwel *funduq*, *yaɛni funduq* af elmestwa n *lmenṭqet…*
> The *cafe* was a *simple matter*; today, *what God has willed!*, it has become a *hotel*, ie a *hotel* at the *level* of the *area......* (Damja 2014, 13:46)

Time will tell whether this is to change as education makes people more familiar with the proposed replacements.

Grammatical standardization

Lexical variation, however, is far from being the only issue at stake. All Libyan varieties share a substantial core of common grammar (modulo some phonetic variation), including:

- Gender markers: m. sg. *a-*, f. sg. *ta-*
- Plural suffixes: m. *-n*, f. *–in/-en*
- Core subject agreement:
  - 1sg. *-ɣ/-ʕ*, 2sg *t-...-d/t*, 3msg *y-*, 3fsg *t-*, 1pl *n-*, 2mpl *t-...-m*, 2fpl *t-...-mət*, 3mpl *-n*, 3fpl *-nət*
- Core prepositions: genitive *n*, dative *i*, inst. *s*
- 3-way division of core aspect/mood system:
  - unmarked, perfective, imperfective (aorist, preterite, intensive)

Yet the varieties spoken in different regions vary significantly in some basic functional items and their selectional properties, presenting textbook writers with some hard choices. Several of the personal pronouns vary significantly, as do demonstratives. Negation poses a particularly complex set of issues. In most varieties further west, negated verbs are marked not only by a preverbal negator, but also by a special negative form of the stem; in many varieties, a postverbal negative marker also follows. None of these three traits applies uniformly across Libyan varieties, as illustrated in Table 3.

	2mpl	2fpl	negation
Sokna	*kəniw*	*kən-iti*	*ngi* + plain verb
El-Fogaha	*əkni*	*əkni*	*nk* + plain verb
Zuwara	*nə-knim*	*nə-knim-at*	(*wə*) + negative verb + *š*
Yefren	*knim / kənniw*	*kamm-itin*	*mi* + plain verb
(Core) Nefusi	*šək-wən*	*šək-wənt / šək-mət*	*wəl* + plain verb + *š*
Ghadames	*šək-wen*	*šək-maten*	*ak* + negative verb
Tuareg	*kăw-ăn-ed*	*kăm-ănătš-ed*	*wər* + negative verb
Awjila	*kəmm-im*	*kəmm-im-ət*	plain verb + *ka*
Adlis nnu	?	?	*ul* + plain verb

Table 3. *Functional item variation across Libya*

Happily for intercomprehensibility, *Adlis nnu* was able to avoid the 2nd person plural pronoun, but negation could hardly be avoided. For the latter, surprisingly enough, *Adlis nnu* opts for a combination not attested in any spoken Libyan variety – a compromise between attested Nefusi usage (*wəl* + plain verb + *š*) and Standard Moroccan's *ul* + negative verb.

Variation in core morphology is also found, notably at the level of case ("state") marking through nominal prefixes. Most Berber varieties in Algeria and Morocco have a minimal case system, with the marked case (*état d'annexion*) appearing for postverbal (*in situ*) subjects, objects of prepositions, and in some varieties also right-dislocated topics. In Libya, only Tuareg retains the full system, and most regions have lost it entirely:

- Zuwara (probably also Yefren[2]): segmental – only objects of prepositions, not postverbal subjects
  - Forms: m.sg. *a-* vs. *wə-*, f.sg. *ta-* vs. *tə-*, m.pl. *i-* vs. *i-*, f.pl. *ti-* vs. *tə-*
- Tuareg: vowel only – both objects of prepositions and postverbal subjects
  - Forms: *a-* vs. *ă-*, *ta-* vs. *tă-*, *i-* vs. *ə-*, *ti-* vs. *tə-*
- All other documented varieties (Jadu, Sokna, El-Fogaha, Awjila, probably Wazzin[3]): no segmental case marking

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[2] F. Buzakhar, *Netc d tidt mak jujfxt*, Yefren, Ifran Media, 2007, a partly bilingual autobiographical text from Yefren, provides a number of clear examples of case marking after prepositions; contrast e. g. *fesrexten assa* "I hung them out today" (p. 12) with *teẓṛid aṭu wwassa* "have you seen the wind of today?" (p. 11). Postverbal subjects do not seem to show any marking, e.g. *ygur aṭu* "the wind is gone" (p. 13), *d teqqim tajujeft* "and the dream remains" (p. 59), but no unambiguous minimal pairs have been observed in the text.

[3] I thank "Wazen24" (on Facebook) for the following examples: *yused anẓaṛ* "rain came", *eqqimeɣ swadd n anẓaṛ* "I sat under the rain". The latter appears to contain a fossilized state marker on "under", but "rain" is left unmarked for case.

- *Adlis nnu*: segmental case marking for objects of prepositions, strongly SVO basic order (making the situation of postverbal subjects unclear)

From a strictly Libyan perspective, case marking is very much a minority feature, difficult for speakers from other areas to learn and unlikely to form part of a bottom-up koine. From a wider perspective, however, its usage is favoured by its predominance in Algeria and Morocco, in both of which it appears as part of the standard language; it also seems to be present in the textbook author's own (Yefren) variety. *Adlis nnu* accordingly makes use of case marking; but textbook usage alone will not necessarily be sufficient for this system to be acquired by primary school students.

Future prospects

The survival of Berber in western Libya is not in question. In the Nefusa Mountains and the port of Zuwara, it not only remains widely spoken at home, but is rapidly expanding to more public domains from which it had been excluded in Qaddafi's time. Among the Tuareg, it appears to be broadly stable, although more data would be desirable. In Ghadames, the situation is less clear, but no immediate indications of endangerment seem to be reported. Further east, however, Berber's prospects are grim. The small varieties of the central Fezzan have to all intents and purposes already disappeared. In Awjila, its transmission from parents to children has already been interrupted, and ongoing efforts to revitalise it may well have come too late to be effective. The massive differences between Awjila Berber and the varieties of the northwest – along with the political disputes separating east from west – make it difficult for this region to take advantage of textbooks published elsewhere.

In the northwest, however, the shift from a language forcibly confined to the home to a language of public communication has been progressing steadily since 2011, although its long-term future depends on wider political trends across Libya and internationally. In Morocco and Algeria, the officialization of Tamazight has consisted mainly of the use of the largest Berber varieties of each country (Tashelhiyt and Kabyle, respectively), combined with the massive use of neologisms intended to replace Arabic or French loanwords. *Adlis nnu* suggests that Libya is on a similar path, with an emergent "official Amazigh" language consisting essentially of peripheral Nefusi (Zenati), somewhat adjusted in the direction of compromise with Moroccan linguistic norms and liberally sprinkled with puristic neologisms. Demographically, northwesterners form a clear majority of Libyan Berber speakers, to a much greater extent than speakers of Tashelhiyt in Morocco or Kabyle in Algeria; it may safely be assumed that this area will play the key role in developing any Libyan standard. If Berber speakers further south decide to make greater use of their language in the public sphere (and if the opportunity to do so remains open), there may be some prospects in Libya for a polycentric

Amazigh language rather than a unified standard, as suggested by the wording of the GNC's Law No. 18, which distinguishes "Amazigh" from "Tuareg"; both Morocco and Algeria make some room for the use of region-specific varieties, and Libya today is substantially less centralized than either. In such an event, however, a northwestern variety would remain *primus inter pares* at least.

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ABSTRACT

   This article is intended as a non-technical introduction to internal variation in Libyan Berber and its broader implications. Like Arabic, Berber is far from homogeneous, and mutual comprehensibility across different regions can be very limited. Libya's current situation makes linguistic fieldwork rather difficult to undertake. Nevertheless, by supplementing published data with "grey data" from social media, it is now possible to form a general picture of Berber-internal variation across the country. After 2011, such interregional linguistic differences, formerly of little practical importance, raise questions of standardization in the context of efforts to make Amazigh a language of the state. By looking at how textbooks produced in this context fit into the documented linguistic variation on the ground, it becomes clearer how emergent standards are likely to be received across different regions.

ANNA MARIA DI TOLLA - VALENTINA SCHIATTARELLA

A Literary and Linguistic Analysis of Nafusi Berber Based on Past Works[1]

Introduction

This article analyses the variety of Berber spoken in the Jebel Nafusa, Libya, and illustrates how past sources can be used as a starting point for further analysis, especially if more audio recordings of this language are made available.

The paper is structured as follows: after a brief introduction on the language of the Nafusi people and on the region they inhabit, we will offer an analysis of the texts (both narrative and descriptive) at our disposal. Most of these texts have been used here to conduct a linguistic analysis on the forms and functions of demonstratives as found in the variety spoken in Fassato. We will discuss some potential avenues for the linguistic and literary implementation of this study in the conclusion.

In North Africa today, Berber, or Amazigh (Afro-asiatic phylum) is spoken – alongside dialectal Arabic – by almost half of the population of Morocco, by 30% of Algerians, and by small communities spread across different countries, including Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Niger, Mali, and Mauritania. Berber is characterized by a great internal diversity, which has led many scholars to argue for the existence of different Berber "languages", insisting on the diversity of each of them relative to others.

The Berber linguistic area is not continuous, as it is characterized by small communities of speakers who often live in relatively isolated locations near Arabic-speaking areas. Moreover, migration and, more recently, growing urbanization have caused changes in the linguistic distribution in some regions of North Africa.

In this paper, we will analyze the variety of Berber spoken in the Jebel Nafusa, in Tripolitania (Libya), where the Berber speaking area is known to have featured a significant degree of linguistic continuity until 2011. After that year, when

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[1] This contribution has been written by A. M. Di Tolla from p. 273 to p. 278 and Valentina Schiattarella from p. 278 to p. 290

Qaddafi's longstanding regime came to an end and the – still ongoing – civil war began, many Berbers from the Jebel moved to Tripoli or to South Tunisia. It is thus very difficult to get a clear picture of the current situation of the Berber community living there today. Chaker and Ferkal (2012)[2] estimate, with caution, that the overall Berber population in Libya constitutes 10% of the country's population, with a large concentration in Zwara on the coast and in the Jebel Nafusa in the interior.

The Jebel Nafusa is a mountainous area that extends from the region of Matmata, near Gabes in Tunisia, and reaches the coast not far from Misrata, in Tripolitania.[3] To the West, the territory is quite arid, while there are watercourses that run down into the main valley. Olive cultivation represents a major source of income for the region's economy. The name of the region refers to the ancient populations who had settled this territory, the Nafusa. The toponym of Jebel Nafusa (*Drar n Infusən*) has also been extended to the area between Wazzin and Yefren since the Nafusa were also dominant among the tribes that lived in that area. This region gained a modicum of fame through Ibrahim b. Sliman aš-Šammakhi's manuscript *Iɣasra d ibridən di Drar n Infusən* (Villages and itineraries of the Jebel Nafusa), published between 1884 and 1885, and which described the territories of Yefren, Fassato and Nalut (as attested by de Calassanti Motylinski).[4]

Today, when talking of the Jebel Nafusa, we refer primarily to the main centers of Nalut (or Lalut), Kabaw, Fassato, Yefren and Wazzin. Fassato (in Berber Fasaṭu), located 225 km south-west of Tripoli, includes the capital Jadu and the villages of Mezzu, Jemmari, Termisa, Ušbari (which is near Talat Numiran), Indebas, Timezɣura (located on the range's summit), Wifat, Regreg and Temezda (these last five villages lie along the same road), Ujlin, Tmuget (the latter is uninhabited today, but is visited often due to the water source located there), Igennawen, Šekšuk (located at the foot of the mountain range).

A network of Berber villages and some small towns forms a single block, traditionally unified by language ties and by the Ibadi tradition. The Jebel Nafusa is a region with a high concentration of ancient mosques, many of which are partially built underground. Their distinctive feature is the absence of minarets; in this regard, they resemble the Ibadi mosques in the Mzab villages in Southern Algeria. In Ibadi writings, the region is described as being full of sacred sites and sanctuaries, and numerous books were written as guides to pilgrims. The area is also characterized by fortified warehouses, known as *iɣərm*, which are made up of agglomerates of citadels, with granaries placed inside a defensive wall.

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[2] S. Chaker Salem - M. Ferkal, Berbères de Libye : un paramètre méconnu, une irruption politique inattendue, *Politique Africaine*, 1, 2012, 105-126.

[3] J. Despois, *Le Djebel Nefousa. Tripolitaine. Étude géographique*, Larose, Paris, 1935.

[4] G. A. de Calassanti Motylinski, *Le Djebel Nefousa. Transcription, Traduction Française et notes avec une étude grammaticale*, Leroux, Paris, 1898.

Before the arrival of Islam, the area was inhabited mainly by Jews and Christians. Following the adoption of Ibadism, the local Berbers became separated from the Sunni Arabs around them, and, at the same time, came into contact with the other Ibadi communities found in the Mzab (Algeria), Jerba (Tunisia), and Oman. Not only did the Jebel Nafusa Berbers play an important role in the development of Ibadi theology, but they also integrated the practices of Islam into many aspects of their culture, developing a rich literature and creating a distinctly Ibadi identity in North Africa. A number of religious poems, orally composed in the region around the beginning of the nineteenth century, have survived until the present day, such as, for instance, those collected by Serra in Mezzu and published in 1986, as we will see in more depth later.

A number of important Berber manuscripts played a key role in the development of the Ibadi literary tradition. Furthermore, the translation into Arabic of these manuscripts constituted an important contribution to the commentaries on Ibadi catechism (*'aqīda*), a combination of faith and basic education.[5]

During the period of Italian occupation, the Nafusi people were quick to display their hostility towards the colonizers. Although Ottoman rule came to an abrupt end with the Treaty of Lausanne, which granted sovereignty over Libya to the Italians, the Berber population of the Jebel Nafusa continued to resist the latter. One of the leading figures of the resistance who distinguished himself in the struggle against Italian colonialism was the Berber Sulayman al-Baruni (1870-1940). The strong pressure exercised by the Italians on the Berber leaders and the populations of Tripolitania caused disunity and rivalry between Arabs and Berbers, and the resistance in the Jebel Nafusa was eventually annihilated.[6]

Both during Italian colonial rule and after independence in 1951, the Berber language was not given official status. Following Qaddafi's rise to power in 1969, state repression of the language intensified, especially after the Cultural Revolution of 1973. The use, teaching, and dissemination of Berber through the media were constitutionally forbidden and considered as attempts to deny the Arab identity of the State, thus qualifying as betrayal, a capital offense. Until the 2011 revolution, the language was not openly spoken: it remained absent from the country's public culture, as well as from education and the government, and could not be taught, printed or transmitted.

In Libya, in recent years the development of research on the Nafusi language and literature is thus of course due to scholarly interest, but it has also, in large part, been enabled by the dynamism of the cultural associations active in the territory of the Jebel.

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[5] A. M. Di Tolla, Ibāḍī 'aqīdas in Berber, in E. Francesca (ed.), *Ibadi Theology. Rereading Sources and Scholarly Works.* Studies on Ibadism and Oman 4, Georg Olms Verlag Hildesheim, Zürich / New York, 2015, 115-128.

[6] A. Del Boca, *Gli Italiani in Libia*, Laterza, Rome / Bari, 1986-1988.

The Nafusi Language

Nafusi, like many other varieties of Berber, does not present a linguistic unity, but instead features phonetic, morphological, syntactic and lexical differences from one village to another.

When it comes to the classification of varieties of Berber into subgroupings, placing Nafusi proves to be somewhat problematic, because, on the one hand, it retains very archaic features, and, on the other hand, it also shares certain characteristics with the Zenata group and with the variety spoken in Ghadames (Libya). For this reason, Kossmann (forthcoming) proposes to consider Nafusi as a non-Zenatic language, which was nonetheless certainly influenced by neighboring Zenati varieties, and that can be probably linked to the variety of Berber spoken in Ghadames.

As mentioned before, Nafusi can in turn be further divided into two main subgroups: on the one hand, the variety spoken in Fassato, Nalut and Kabaw, and the other, the variety spoken in Yefren. The Yefren variety seems to share more features with the variety of Berber spoken in Zwara and, in general, with the languages that are usually considered to be part of the Zenata group.[7]

19th and 20th century research on Nafusi

The most indicative sources on Libyan Berber focus mostly on linguistic aspects. Francesco Beguinot was the first Italian scholar to publish an extensive grammar on the variety spoken in Fassato, the first edition of which was published in Rome in 1931[8] and then republished in 1942.

While the Berber dialects of Algeria, Morocco and the Sahara area have been the subject of extensive research, with a number of important works on these varieties having been published over time, Nafusi, which holds a crucial place in Berber linguistics, is still not very well known, especially in the case of the variety spoken in the Eastern part of the region. Several works on the language have nevertheless made it to the present day and are still the objects of study.

In 1890, René Basset provided a rich collection of folktales in his *Loqman Berbère:*[9] each tale is included in different versions and in different varieties of Berber (for a total of 23 covered varieties). These folktales were for the most part collected by the author during his visits to the region, but the collection also includes material provided to the author by other scholars. That is why Basset's *Loqman* also contains ten folktales collected by de Calassanti Motylinski, which were translated by aš-Šammakhi in Nafusi (tales n. 3, 9, 11, 17, 22, 26, 30, 36).

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[7] K. Naït-Zerrad, Djebel Nefousa / Adrar n Infusen : Langue, *Encyclopédie berbère*, XXXIII, Peeters, Paris / Leuven, 2012, 5363-5368.

[8] F. Beguinot, *Il Berbero Nefûsi di Fassâṭo. Grammatica, testi raccolti dalla viva voce, vocabolarietti*, Rome, Istituto per l'Oriente, 1931 [2nd edition revised, 1942].

[9] R. Basset, *Loqman berbère*, Leroux, Paris, 1890.

In addition to the tales included in this collection, in 1898, de Calassanti Motylinski, encouraged by R. Basset, also asked his friend aš-Šammakhi to write an overview on the Jebel Nafusa. A first version, using Arabic characters, was published in 1885. In 1898, Motylinski published a version of the manuscript using Latin characters and translated it into French. In his work, he also included some grammatical notes at the beginning, and a glossary at the end.

Buselli, Beguinot's pupil, was the first to publish texts collected through the oral telling of a speaker from Jemmari. The same speaker was later also consulted by Beguinot. Buselli's first seven texts are short folktales where the protagonists are animals,[10] while the other seven[11] are texts related to religion. These texts tell of the healing powers of sheikhs and holy women who live in the region. From among these holy women, who were often associated with prodigies and magical powers, Buselli collected the story of Nanna Tala. A different episode of Nanna Tala's life is also present amongst the texts collected by Provasi.[12]

The collection of texts put together by Beguinot is the longest: it contains ten folktales of different kinds (featuring human characters associated with magical powers, or animals which represent the vices and virtues of men). The final text in the collection[13] is divided into five parts and contains a description of the region, its economy, geography, mosques, and resources. These texts were collected by Beguinot based on his work with two speakers: one from Jadu and one from Jemmari (the latter being the same speaker consulted by Buselli).

The texts collected by Cesàro[14] consist solely of folktales transcribed from the same speaker, years before they were published. They were part of a collection of texts Cesàro had prepared and then lost. The two tales in his collection are introduced by some brief notes by Cesàro on the style and contents of the tales, which follow the traditional patterns of North African folktales, where the message conveyed has a clear pedagogical aim.

Provasi collected his texts in 1969, recording four native speakers of Nafusi. The texts he presented were followed by a glossary that included both words found in the collected texts and others obtained though questionnaires. Provasi's collection is comprised of twelve narrative texts and twelve ethnographical texts. The former include short songs (the first of which was composed in Yefren, but according to the author was known throughout the region) and folktales. Most of

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[10] G. Buselli, Testi berberi del Gebel Nefûsa, *L'Africa Italiana*, Bollettino della Società Africana d'Italia, 1, 1921, 26-34.

[11] G. Buselli, Berber texts from Jebel Nefûsi (Žemmari dialect), *Journal of the African Society*, 23, 1924, 285-93.

[12] E. Provasi, Testi berberi di Žâdu, *Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli*, 23, 1973, 503–505.

[13] F. Beguinot, *op. cit.*, 202-206.

[14] A. Cesàro, Due racconti berberi in linguaggio nefûsi, *Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli*, 3, 1949, 395-404.

these tales have also been found in Arabic[15] or belong to the Hausa oral tradition.[16] The ethnographic texts found in the collection are shorter and concern mainly agriculture, house chores and traditional ceremonies (wedding, birth, circumcision).

Finally, in 1986 Serra[17] published two short Ibadi poems by the Berber poet Abu Falgha, which he had collected years earlier following Beguinot's indications as to the existence of these short compositions. The two *qaṣīda* were narrated by Ḥaji Musa ben Sasi, who knew them by heart. Their contents are about religion, the loss of values and faith, and the author's disappointment. They also contain exhortations to follow the precepts of Islam in order to benefit of the joy of the afterlife. The second *qaṣīda* is dedicated to the five pillars of Islam.

A text-based analysis of Nafusi: demonstratives in old and new data

The following analysis focuses on the form and functions of demonstratives. It will be based on the varieties of Nafusi spoken in Jadu and in Jemmari.

At the end of this section, we will take a very brief look at the variety spoken in Yefren, where demonstratives differ from those found in the Western varieties.

For the aims of this paper, we will only consider narrative texts, taken from the collections published by Beguinot (which includes data from Jadu and Jemmari), Buselli (Jemmari), Cesàro (Jadu) and Provasi (Jadu).

The manuscript transcribed by de Calassanti Motylinski, though interesting from a linguistic point of view, will not be taken into account here, due to the uncertainty of its origin. It is likely that the author, aš-Šammakhi, used terms from different varieties, to create a language which could be as pure as possible, but *de facto*, not understandable by most speakers from the region.[18] Aš-Šammakhi's brief folktales included in the *Loqman Berbère* have not been considered partly for the same reason, but also the shortness of each text does not allow for a study of the use of demonstratives.

Following a brief overview of the general functions of demonstratives, and some notes on demonstratives as they are specifically used in Berber, we will analyze the functions of "proximal" and "distal" adnominal and pronominal demonstratives in the written texts mentioned above.

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[15] E. Provasi, *op. cit.*, 504.

[16] *Idem*, 509.

[17] L. Serra, Su due poemetti berberi ibāḍiti, in L. Serra (ed.), *Gli interscambi culturali e socio-economici fra l'Africa Settentrionale e l'Europa Mediterranea*, Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Amalfi, 5-8 dicembre 1983, Istituto Universitario Orientale, Napoli, 1986, 521-539.

[18] F. Beguinot, *op. cit.*, Preface.

Demonstratives and their functions

Demonstratives serve different functions in various languages: "First demonstratives are deictic expressions serving specific syntactic functions… Second, demonstratives generally serve specific pragmatic functions. They are primarily used to focus the hearer's attention on objects and locations in the speech situation… but they may also function to organize the information flow in the ongoing discourse".[19]

All languages have at least two contrasting demonstratives,[20] one used to indicate the proximity of an entity that is close to the deictic center, and one that instead marks the distance of the referent, which is positioned far from the speaker. Some languages are "person-oriented", where the position of the addressee is considered the reference point. Demonstratives sometimes serve to mark the determination of a referent, especially in languages without definite articles, and some use the same form when the demonstrative functions as a pronoun or as an "adjective". This might make it difficult to argue that they belong to two different categories: "all demonstratives are referential in their own right, although they may be semantically coreferential with the adjacent noun".[21]

Clitics are very common in a number of languages across the world, while pronominal demonstratives are almost always independent, even though sometimes the presentative can be a clitic.[22]

From a pragmatic point of view, demonstratives serve to focus the attention of the addressee on the situation of the speakers, especially when they function as anaphoric devices, where they are used to follow the participants from the previous discourse.[23]

The use of demonstratives to point to elements in the discourse is also important. These referents sometimes do not exist in the exterior world, they only exist in discourse, such as, for example: "that's false" where "that" refers to the proposition that has been uttered[24] and not to a specific referent. Finally, demonstratives can have a "recognitional use", usually possible with adnominal demonstratives that have no referents in discourse or in the situation. They are "specifically used to mark information that is discourse new, hearer old and private. Private information is information that speaker and hearer share due to common experience in the past".[25]

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[19] H. Diessel, *Demonstratives: form, function, and grammaticalization*, Typological studies in language, John Benjamins, Amsterdam / Philadelphia, 1999, 2.

[20] *Ibidem.*

[21] M. Mithun, The Grammatical Nature and Discourse Power of Demonstratives, *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*, 13, 1987, 187.

[22] H. Diessel, *op. cit.*, 23.

[23] *Idem*, 96.

[24] *Idem*, 101.

[25] *Idem*, 106.

Demonstratives sometimes function as a way "to focus the attention of the audience on a specific event, time, place, or character", as explained by Mithun[26] for Tuscarora. Distal demonstratives, on the contrary, are used to refer to important entities, far from the reference point. When characters are presented, demonstratives can be used to link them, as well as to provide more information on a precise entity.[27]

Demonstratives in Berber

Demonstratives in Berber languages are quite different in their forms and functions, with some elements found in almost all languages.

In Kossmann's[28] overview on Berber, demonstrative pronouns are listed as belonging to one of two kinds: those referring to definite entities and those which refer to non-definite identities.

For adnominal demonstratives, Berber mostly uses clitics that mark a difference between proximity and distance, such as in Western Tarifit (*-u*: proximal; *-in*: distal) or Figuig (*-u*: proximal, *-ənn*: distal and anaphoric). Touareg Iwellemmeden features two types of determination, one where the clitic is attached to the noun (1) and one where a demonstrative pronoun, with a deictic, follows the noun (2):[29]

(1) *aləs=di* "The man, close to you"
(2) *aləs w-a* "The man here"

Most Berber languages also feature an anaphoric demonstrative, like in Ghadamsi: *anṭfa l-i* "le garçon en question" (the aforementioned boy); *əddrari-yid* "les garçons en question" (the aforementioned boys)[30] or in Kabyle: *argaz-nni* "this man" (aforementioned).[31]

In the case of Kabyle, a more thorough analysis has shown that *-nni* does not serve a solely anaphoric function, because it can appear after a noun cited for the first time.[32] Mettouchi's analysis suggests that demonstratives play an important

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[26] M. Mithun, *op. cit.*, 188.

[27] *Idem*, 192.

[28] M. Kossmann, Berber, in Z. Frajzyngier - E. Shay (eds.), *The Afroasiatic languages*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012.

[29] *Idem*, 73.

[30] J. Lanfry, *Ghadamès : étude linguistique et ethnographique*, Fichier de documentation berbère, Algeria, 1968, 355.

[31] A. Mettouchi, Démonstratifs et construction de la référence en kabyle, in A. Mettouchi (ed.), *Parcours berbères, Mélanges offerts à Paulette Galand-Pernet et Lionel Galand pour leur 90e anniversaire*, Berber Studies, 33, Köppe, Köln, 2011, 471.

[32] A. Mettouchi, Anaphoricité et appel à l'attention partagée dans un conte oral en kabyle (berbère), in P. -G. Borbone - A. Mengozzi - M. Tosco, *Loquentes Linguis*, *Studi linguistici e orientali in onore di Fabrizio A. Pennacchietti*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 2006, 499-507.

role in discourse and that sometimes what is usually referred to as anaphora, is instead a way to mark shared attention between the speaker and the hearer, on a specific referent.

Some languages (namely, Siwi but probably also Sokna, El Fogaha and Awjila[33]) also include special suffixes that agree according to the gender and number of the addressee.

Demonstratives in Nafusi

The system of demonstratives in Nafusi (mainly as presented in different sections of Beguinot's grammar), is the following:

	Proximal	Distal
Adnominal	*uh, uha*[34]	*ih, iha*
Pronominal		
SG.M	*wuh wuha*	*wih, wiha*
SG.F	*tuh, tuha*	*tih, tiha*
PL.M	*yuh, yuha*	*yih, yiha*
PL.F	*tyuh, tyuha*[35]	*tyih, tyiha*
Manner	*siha, sih, sah, saha, sahen*	
Locative	*dah, daha*	*dus*
Approximate locative	*ssiah, siah*	*ssius*
Presentative		
SG.M	*akwu*	*aktwi*
SG.F	*aktu*	
PL	*aktiwha*	

For the purposes of this article, we will mainly focus on the functions of adnominal and pronominal demonstratives. Pronominal demonstratives agree in

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[33] See L. Souag, 2014a, Siwi addressee agreement and demonstrative typology, in Catherine Taine-Cheikh (ed.), *StuF*, 67/1, *Berber in typological perspective*, 2014, 25-34 and L. Souag, The development of addressee agreement on demonstratives, *Diachronica*, 31/4, Benjamins, Amsterdam / Philadelphia, 2014b, 535-563.

[34] The presence of two different forms (with or without the ending *-a*) seems to be linked to dialectal variation: if we consider the texts by Beguinot collected from a speaker from Jemmari (texts n. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12) and those by Buselli, we can notice that, apart from some occurrences in Beguinot's text n. 7, only the form with *-a* is used. This data should be nevertheless confirmed by other speakers, for two reasons: 1) the speaker consulted by Beguinot and Buselli is the same, so we only have data from the same person, 2) Cesàro's texts collected from a speaker from Jadu also show a predominance of the form with *-a* over the form without this suffix. Beguinot's texts from Jadu, on the contrary, show a striking preference of the use of the demonstrative without *-a*.

[35] G. A. de Calassanti Motylinski (1989, 20) also gives the forms: *aiouh* "ceci"; *aih*: "cela", but does not mention the forms with *-a*.

gender and number with the noun they refer to, while adnominal demonstratives are invariable. As for the presentative demonstratives, in Beguinot's texts the only attested form is the singular masculine (proximal and distal).[36]

Provasi notices the presence of distal and proximal demonstratives with a suffix *-n: ihən* for the adnominal demonstrative; *wuhən; tihən* for the pronominal demonstrative.

He remarks that, with the exception of the manner demonstrative *sahən*, these forms were not recorded by Beguinot.[37] The *n* is an infix with plural forms: *ai**n**yuh* / *ai**n**huha* / *ai**n**yiha*.

Examples of such demonstratives are very rare and only found in one of his texts.[38] The author states that these forms are only used by younger generations and considers them as innovations (his texts were collected in 1969):

u_táli əlmalə́k   **ihə́n**   aɣr-ə́s   agnáw
then   king.SG.M   DEM.DIST   at-3SG   slave.SG.M
That king had a slave.[39]

More data is needed to verify whether there are functional differences with respect to the forms without *-n*.

Functions of the proximal demonstrative uh / uha
Proximal demonstratives in Nafusi are *uh / uha* and do not agree in gender and number with the noun they refer to. Deictic proximity is only one of the possible functions coded by this demonstrative, as its use in discourse demonstrates how the deictic center sometimes is no longer the location of the speaker and the hearer but shifts to the referents in discourse.

uh / uha are often used in the texts for exophoric function, where "the hearer's attention [is] on entities in the situation surrounding the interlocutors".[40]

In the following example, the city is not visible, but the demonstrative makes clear that the protagonist is referring to the place where she and her addressees are.

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[36] We wish to thank here Ismail Duga, Mohammed Shinnib and Madghis Bouzakhar for the data they gave us on demonstratives in the variety of Jadu and Yefren. Transcription, glosses and translation of the examples have been adapted by the authors.

[37] E. Provasi, *op. cit.*, 510.

[38] *Idem*, 509-512.

[39] *Idem*, 512.

[40] H. Diessel, *op. cit.*, 95.

In this case, the referent is not visible but is anchored in the speech situation of the referents (symbolic use[41]):

tə-ml-ás   nəč   bába   lḥákəm
3SG.F-say.PFV-IO.3SG   IDP.1SG   father.SG.M   governor.SG.M

n   ləmdínət   **uh**
of   city.SG.F   DEM.PROX
*She said: "My father was the governor of **this** city".*[42]

Even if accompanied by a demonstrative, the referent is not necessarily present or visible in the situation:

mammó   dak-i-ssaḥáfṭ-an
who   IO.2SG.M-REL.SBJ-teach.PFV-REL.SBJ

əssyást   **uh**?
politics.SG.F   DEM.PROX

tuḥ   tazҫunít   af   ššəríʕat
DEM.PROX.F   division.SG.F   on   law.SG.F
*Who taught you **this** good way? This is a division based on the law.*[43]

Moreover, especially in narrations, this demonstrative refers to "a location that only exists in the imagination of the interlocutors"[44], and is referred to as "deictic projection" using Lyons's terminology:[45]

aya   a-n-ugur-út   d   brid   **úha**
come_on   IRR-1PL-go.AOR-PL   with   road.SG.M   DEM.PROX

d   iyidí   mlu-n-ás   aya   a-n-ugúr
and   others   say.PFV-PL-IO.3SG   come_on   IRR-1PL-go.PFV

d   brid   **úha**
with   road.SG.M   DEM.PROX

[41] *Idem*, 94-95.

[42] F. Beguinot, *op. cit.*, 189.

[43] *Idem,* 196.

[44] H. Diessel, *op. cit.*, 95.

[45] J. Lyons, "Deixis and Anaphora", in T. Myers (ed.), *The Development of Conversation and Discourse*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1979, 88-103.

*"Let's go towards **this** road" and the others replied: "Let's go towards **this** road".*[46]

ɣámmaṭ	taṭṭawin-ə́nn-ək	ad-ʕazzm-áɣ	ɣəf-ə́k
close.IMP	eye.PL.F-of-2SG.M	IRR-make_magic.PFV-1SG	on-2SG.M

a-t-áf-əd	iman-ə́nn-ək	s
IRR-2SG-find.AOR-2SG	REFL-of-2SG.F	with

də́nnəg	əlžəzírət	**uh**
on	island.SG.F	DEM.PROX

*Close your eyes. I will perform some magic, you will find yourself on **this** island.*[47]

The same happens with other types of referents, as in the following example where the snake is clearly present only in the frame of the narration:

mammó	a-y-ks-ə́n	ttuɛabán	**úha**
who	IRR-SBJ.REL-take.AOR-SBJ.REL	snake.SG.M	DEM.PROX

af	yəll-ís	n	əlmúlk
on	daughter.SG.F-POSS.3SG.M	of	king.SG.M

ad-as-yə́-fk	zəgní	n	əlmaḥkəmt-ə́nn-əs
IRR-IO.3SG-3SG.M-give.PFV	half	of	empire.SG.F-of-3SG

*The one who will take **this** big snake from the king's daughter, he will give him half of his empire.*[48]

Pronominal proximal demonstratives are often used as discourse deictics: the co-reference is not of the same kind as that of anaphoric demonstratives with an aforementioned noun. In fact, in this case, demonstratives refer to an entire proposition.

They usually appear at the end of a text, when the speaker is offering a summary or comment on what he has said before:

túha	tanfúst	n	Nánna	Zúra
DEM.PROX	story.SG.F	of	Nanna	Zura

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[46] F. Beguinot, *op. cit.*, 170.

[47] *Idem*, 165.

[48] *Idem*, 174.

d   limám   n   Tihárt
and   imam.SG.M   of   Tihart
This *is the story of Nanna Zura and the Imam of Tihart.*[49]

In this tale, the fox suffers from an injustice on the part of the jackal, so it takes revenge and asks the lion to break the jackal's leg. *wuha* refers to this episode, explained just before by the storyteller:

wúha   ləkfá-nn-ək,
DEM.PROX.M   reward.SG.M-of-2SG.M

wə́lli   a-y-gg   əlxér
REL   IRR-3SG-M-do.PFV   good.SG.M

ad-t-i-láqa   əlxér   d
IRR-DO.3SG.M-3SG.M-meet.AOR   good.SG.M   and

wə́lli   á-y-gg   əššárr
REL   IRR-3SG-M-do.PFV   bad.SG.M

ad-t-i-láqa   əššárr
IRR-DO.3SG.M-3SG.M-meet.AOR   bad.SG.M
This *is your reward. Those who do good things, will find good things. Those who do bad things, will find bad things.*[50]

Functions of the distal demonstrative ih / iha

As is the case with proximal demonstratives, distal demonstratives do not agree in gender and number with the noun they refer to. Apart from indicating distance from the speaker, distal demonstratives also have other functions within discourse.

The main function of *ih / iha* is to mark anaphora, when a referent has already been mentioned before.

In this example, the use of the demonstrative indicates that the speaker is referring to the aforementioned camel:

yə-ml-ás   alɣə́m   **ih**   bárra
3SG.M-say.PFV-IO.3SG   camel.SG.M   DEM.DIST   outside

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[49] G. Buselli, 1924, 289.

[50] F. Beguinot, *op. cit.*, 196.

ad-t-šə́bəḥ-əd   aktwí di birg(ə)n-ə́nn-əs
IRR-2SG-see.AOR-2SG PRES in tent.SG.M-of-3SG
That *camel told him: "Go see him, there he is in his tent".*[51]

Distal demonstratives are usually used not only to mark co-reference, but also in cases when the storyteller wishes to keep track of the characters[52] and when a particular given referent is crucial for what follows. In the example above, several animals are introduced by the storyteller and they all interact with one another, but the camel is the only animal that shows the protagonist what he is looking for.

The demonstrative can also refer to a noun which can be deduced from the context. In the following example, *meat* appears for the first time, but it is a referent that one can easily deduce from the context, as the lion is slaughtering a goat for his meal:

si i-ɣə́rrəs   di-s i-šbə́h-t
when 3SG.M-slaughter.IPFV in-3SG 3SG.M-see.PFV-DO.3SG.M

mámmək i-ttə́gg
how   3SG.M-do.IPFV

baʕd ə́lli i-tɣádda   s isán **ih**
the REL 3SG.M-have_lunch.PFV with meat.PL.M DEM-DIST
*While the lion was slaughtering it, (the porcupine) looked at how he was doing it. After he had eaten from **that** meat…*[53]

The variety of Nafusi spoken in Yefren: some preliminary notes

As a first attempt to provide some information on the variety of Nafusi as spoken today in Yefren,[54] we will present some additional data, through a brief comparison, which will mainly concern demonstratives.

The following data comes from a six-minute-long recording of a speaker from the Yefren region and from an elicitation session with another speaker. Though data is very scarce, it is already possible to underline some interesting differences, such as, for example, a partially different set of independent pronouns:

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[51] *Idem*, 152.

[52] H. Diessel, *op. cit.*, 103.

[53] F. Beguinot, *op. cit.*, 152.

[54] In this article, we have decided to focus only on data collected starting from the 19th century. For a brief overview and some references on the language spoken in the Middle Ages, see K. Naït-Zerrad, *op. cit.*, 5368-5369.

Independent pronouns

	Yefren	**Fassato**
1	*nəč / nəš*	*nəč*
2M	*čək*	*šək*
2F	*čəm*	*šəm*
3M	*nətta*	*nit*
3F	*nəttat*	*niyət*
1M	*nəččin*	*nəččən*
1F	*nəčəntin*	*nəččənt*
2M	*knim / kənniw*	*šəkwən*
2F	*kəmmitin*	*šəkmət / šəkwənt*
3M	*nətnin*	*nitən*
3F	*nitəntin / nətninat*	*nitənt*

And the residual presence, in Yefren[55], of the state opposition in nouns, which is still visible in some contexts, namely when a noun follows most prepositions:

*g ammas n **tməzgida*** "in the middle of the mosque" (ABS: ***taməzgida***)
*s **wawal**-ənsən* "in their language" (annexed state) (ABS: ***awal***)
*udi n **uzəmmur*** "the oil of the olive" (ABS: ***azəmmur***)
*taddart n **tməṭṭut*** "the house of the woman" (ABS: ***taməṭṭut***)
*taddart n **tsədnan*** "the house of the old women" (ABS: ***tisədnan***)

It seems that the state alternation is only visible in some contexts and no longer productive for the arguments of a clause.

More importantly for our discussion, demonstratives also display different forms in Yefren, and they maintain a distinction between genders in the singular and (except for the presentative) in the plural:

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[55] K. Naït-Zerrad, *op. cit.*, 5367.

	Proximal	**Distal**
Adnominal		
SG.M	*wəd / wədha*	*wəd-din*
SG.F	*təd / tədha*	*təd-din*
SG.M/F	*ayəd*	
PL.M	*yidha / yidhat*	*yid-din*
PL.F	*tidha / tidhat*	*tid-din*
Pronominal		
SG.M	*wəd / wədha*	*wəd-din*
SG.F	*təd / tədha*	*təd-din*
SG.M/F	*ayəd*	
PL.M	*yidha / yidhat*	*yid-din*
PL.F	*tidha / tidhat*	*tid-din*
Manner	*sa / saha / sahat*	
Locative	*da / daha / dahat*	*din*
Approximate locative		*din yayət*
Presentative		
SG.M	*aktwa*	*aktwa-din*
SG.F	*aktta*	*aktta-din*
PL	*aktya*	*aktya-din*

Demonstratives can follow a noun with a possessive clitic:

taməzgid-ə́nn-aɣ   **təd**
mosque.SG.F-of-1PL   DEM.SG.F
This (our) mosque.

A suffix *-ha*, which recalls the presentative *h(a)* present in many Berber varieties (see Souag 2014b for an overview) is only used with proximal adnominal and pronominal demonstratives, as well as with manner and locative demonstratives. According to the speakers, the difference when *-ha* is suffixed is linked to the fact that the speaker puts emphasis on that particular entity, but we do not have enough data to confirm his intuitions with linguistic evidence. In this regard, Mettouchi analyses the presence of *h* in distal demonstratives (*dihin*, *dihinna*) in Kabyle as opposed to the forms without it (*dinna*) when the addressee is taken as a witness: "Le formant '*h-*' est sans doute le même qui entre dans la composition des présentatifs (*h-i-t*, *h-a-t*, 'voici!'), et qui apporte la dimension de prise à témoin".[56] Further data are thus needed for Nafusi, in order to understand whether this opposition also occurs in this variety of Berber.

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[56] A. Mettouchi, 2011, 472.

When alone, the adnominal or pronominal demonstrative is opposed to the same demonstrative followed by *din* to express distance:

atə́rras   **wə́d(ha)**   yə-ččú
man.SG.M   **DEM.SG.M**   3SG.M-eat.PFV
This man ate.

atə́rras   **wə́d-din**   yə-ččú
man.SG.M   **DEM.SG.M-DIST**   3SG.M-eat.PFV
That man ate.

When pronominal, the demonstrative is followed by the predicative particle *d*, no longer attested in Fassato:

wəd   d   uwwa-k
DEM.SG.M   PRED   brother.SG.M-POSS.2SG.M
This is your brother.

Conclusions

This paper constitutes a first attempt at a reanalysis of old sources for Nafusi Berber, with the aim of valorizing the data we already possess, and, at the same time, understand what is still missing and thus what needs to be done for further research. The paper has also had the objective of raising awareness of the lack of adequate documentation on many Berber varieties, especially those spoken in Libya.

From a literary point of view, in the first part of the paper we described the sources in our possession and the kind of texts they include. While we do have material in Nafusi, this is mostly comprised of folktales and descriptive narrations. A broader selection of texts, belonging to different genres, would undoubtedly benefit our knowledge of Nafusi, not only from a linguistic point of view.

As for the linguistic part of the paper, we chose to focus our attention on demonstratives, taking into account the fact that information on many other aspects is still lacking, especially with regard to syntax and pragmatics; these are parts of a language's grammar that need to be researched through the use of audio recordings. The lack of audio recordings is a major obstacle when working on prosody and intonation, for example.

Together with other devices, demonstratives play an important role in discourse, when it comes to managing how information is conveyed to the addressee and how referents are presented or reactivated by the speaker on the basis of shared knowledge and shared imagination between the speaker and the addressee.

Based on written texts provided by different authors, the paper has illustrated the entire system of demonstratives in Nafusi Berber, focusing mainly on the functions of adnominal and pronominal demonstratives.

The system of demonstratives in Nafusi seems to be quite simplified when compared to other languages, where specific medial/anaphoric demonstratives are present: in Nafusi, only proximal and distal demonstratives are attested. Thanks to the analysis of narrative texts, we have been able to list some functions of proximal and distal demonstratives. Proximal demonstratives serve for exophoric use, when the speaker refers to something which is external from the discourse, or is found in the imagination of both the speaker and the addressee. Proximal demonstratives also function in discourse deixis, where they refer to a proposition, rather than a noun. Distal demonstratives are, on the contrary, mainly used for anaphora. Not all mentioned referents are reactivated by the anaphoric demonstrative: this suggests that their function is also that of establishing a new topic or of promoting that particular referent to a special status for the continuation of the narration. The final section of the paper constitutes a very brief introduction to demonstratives as they are encountered in Yefren, which seem to be quite different from those found in the West.

List of Abbreviations

ABS	Absolute state
AOR	Aorist
DEM	Demonstrative
DIST	Distal
DO	Direct object
F	Feminine
IDP	Independent pronoun
IMP	Imperative
IO	Indirect object
IPFV	Imperfective
IRR	Irrealis
M	Masculine
P	Plural
PASS	Passive
PFV	Perfective
PL	Plural
POSS	Possessive
PRES	Presentative
PROX	Proximal
REFL	Reflexive
SBJ.REL	Subject relative clause verbal form
SG	Singular

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the variety of Berber spoken in the Jebel Nafusa, Libya, and illustrates how past sources can be used as a starting point for further analysis, especially if more audio recordings of this language are made available.

The introduction to the article offers a brief account of the history and geography of the Jebel Nafusa and of the texts that are currently available to scholars of the language. The second part of the article offers a linguistic analysis of demonstratives and their functions in Nafusi. The aim of the article is to show how more in-depth studies can be carried out based on texts collected in the past, but also to underline the necessity to learn more about this variety of Berber, and especially about the specific variety spoken in Yefren.

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Francesco Paolo Trupiano was born in Palermo. He was Ambassador of Italy in Tripoli (from November 2004 to June 2010) and then in Athens. During his diplomatic career he served in Rome and abroad at the Italian Embassies in different European and African countries as well as, for two mandates, at NATO in Bruxelles. He wrote a book titled *Un Ambasciatore nella Libia di Gheddafi* (An Ambassador in Khadafy's Libya). In this book, he recalls the five and a half years of his mission in Tripoli. Without being a systematic diary, the book collects annotations, impressions, observations and reflections on events, circumstances, and people.

The International Conference *Libya between History and Revolution: Resilience and New Narrations of Berber Identity* convened at the University of Naples "L'Orientale" from the 15th to the 17th January 2018, was dedicated to the contemporary history of Libya. Its purpose was to understand a reality that is for the most part little known to the vast majority of the Italian public, and this despite colonization, its consequences, and the relations that have always existed between the two countries. Conversely, first the promotion of the colonizers' rationale, then the rhetoric of Qadhafi's regime, and finally the current representations closely related to terrorist emergencies, immigration, and war within and outside the Islamic world, are all well-known and documented.

This volume *Libya between History and Revolution: Resilience, New Opportunities and Challenges for the Berbers* brings together papers by the scholars (from both Italy and abroad) who took part in the conference. The aim of this collection is to provide insights into a range of crucial issues that affected the country as a consequence of its colonial history and informed the uprisings of 2011; the volume looks in particular at the role of the Berbers in Libya through the prism of the new opportunities and challenges that face them today and which were discussed during the three-day international conference.

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