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State Building and State-Society Relations in Libya (1911 – 1969): An Examination of Associations, Trade Unions and Religious Actors

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For Martin and Alexander

Acknowledgements

A scholar of Libya is a wanderer, across its colonial and postcolonial past with fragments of those histories dispersed in North Africa and Europe, and the haunting knowledge that a part of this history has been irrevocably lost with the destruction of archives during the years of the Gaddafi regime. The development of this thesis has been an equally illuminating and frustrating experience – it was also deeply personal - in the labyrinthine corridors of Libya's past. Through this work, I have tried to construct an image of Libya's civic space during the period between the beginnings of Italian colonization and the downfall of the monarchy and to understand how Libyan society has contributed to the formation or (de)formation of the state. The majority of existing accounts relegate Libyan society to the background of momentous political and social changes. I wanted to find out how this agency operated in both constructive and deconstructive ways in the development of a Libyan state. During my wandering, I have become heavily indebted to a number of people who I cannot thank enough for their support and continuous faith in me. I am deeply indebted to the guidance of my supervisors Dr. Walter Armbrust and Dr. Jeorg Friedrichs, who have spent hours pouring over my work and who have challenged me to refine my ideas and critically question my evidence base. Dr. Eugene Rogan and Dr. Dawn Chatty have been instrumental in helping me define the focus of my research and overall approach. For this, I am extremely grateful to them. I am also very grateful to my former supervisor, the late Dr. Abdul Raufu Mustapha, whose unexpected death during the third year of my DPhil was a serious loss to me as well as to many other scholars of Africa. I hope this thesis contributes to honouring his memory.

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Abstract

This thesis is an examination of state-society relations in Libya during the period preceding the rise of Gaddafi in 1969. It addresses the roots of Libya's recurring state failure by examining the role played by Libyan social actors in state building during the period between 1911 and 1969. Three key periods in Libya's history are addressed: the colonial period under the Italians (1911–1943), then the years under the British Military Administration (1943–1951) and then the period as an independent monarchy (1951–1969). Three social actors are explored: associations or *jamʿiyyat*, trade unions, and religious groups. Based on Migdal (2004) and Saouli (2012), I approach state formation as a process, not as a finished outcome, and the state as a social field wherein social actors engage with one another as well as with state structures rather than a fixed entity. This approach allows a deeper understanding of the temporal dimensions of Libya's experience with state building as well as the different processes at play through which states are formed and (un)formed.

The thesis makes three key arguments. First, contrary to the majority of Western scholarship on Libya which ascribes Libya's "statelessness" to a failure to adopt modern state formation following independence, I argue that this linear view oversimplifies a much more complex local power dynamic among social actors, and between social actors and the state (colonial and postcolonial) that manifested itself in modes of cooperation and contestation that shaped Libya's experience with state building. This view of "statelessness" also suggests that divisions in Libya's social fabric are endemic which is not the case. Through a social history of the period in question, the thesis shows that while contestation among social actors before and after independence had been stronger than centralizing forces, this should be explained in context and in history. Second, I argue that

within non-Western societies where a normative notion of the modern nation-state was imposed but was adopted by local actors and adapted to social, cultural and historical realities that are local, it is within the civic space that society was empowered to shape the state in both constructive and (de)constructive ways, and that there is a pattern to how this shaping happens that is embedded within the history of those societies. Third, the thesis demonstrates that Libya's civic space has played a twofold role in state formation. On the one hand, it has actively contributed to the strengthening of resistance forces against colonialism, the development of state institutions and the domestication of state power as experienced in the Kingdom of Libya (1951 – 1969). On the other hand, because of societal differences, many of which resulted from aggressive colonialism, a short history of institutionalization and the entrenchment of fragmentation and regional differences, Libya's civic space manifested processes of localism or bonding and coalescing that occurred within groups which compromised the development of a Libyan state as in the case of the Tripolitanian Republic (1918 – 1922). The thesis demonstrates that state building can be compromised by contested state-society relations and that a state in the making would need to incorporate various forms of its civic space within its bureaucracies and overall model of government to ensure its local legitimacy and geopolitical unity.

Using a sociohistorical approach which includes primary data from archives in London, Rome and Tunis, as well as 80 semi-structured interviews, this research makes a contribution to a social history of twentieth-century Libya by exploring its civic space and its engagement with governing structures, colonial and independent.

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Glossary

ʿUmar al-Mukhtar (1858 – 1931): *Known as Libya's Lion of the Desert, he was a prominent figure in the Sanusi Sufi Order as well as the resistance movement against the Italian occupation in Barqa. In 1922, when the fascists came to power in Italy and launched a re-conquest of Libya, al-Mukhtar led the anticolonial resistance and was known for his mastery of guerrilla warfare. In a battle with the Italians in September 1931, he was captured and then hanged in front of thousands of fellow Libyans. Italians saw this as a step towards stemming the threat of local resistance in eastern Libya.*

The Sanusiyah (Also known as the Sanusi Order or Sanusi *tariqa*): *A Muslim Sufi religious order that was founded in 1841 by Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Sanusi. It was also a reformist movement that sought to draw its followers to the ways of early Islam. As a missionary order, it sought to convert the non-Muslim peoples of the Sahara and Central Africa to Islam. It spread from Barqa through a network of zawaya that were centers of education and prayer along caravan trading routes, and by the end of the nineteenth century, those routes extended from Benghazi to the northern edges of Chad and Sudan.*

Zawaya (plural), zawiya (singular): *A zawiya is an Islamic religious school and a meeting point for a group of followers of an Islamic society that coalesced around a person considered to have spiritual authority.*

***Corriere di Tripoli*:** *A daily newspaper published in Libya following the British occupation in 1943. The newspaper included articles about political developments at the end of the Second World War, news from North Africa and Britain. The newspaper was considered by some to be a vehicle for British propaganda.*

Sulayman al-Baruni (1870 – 1940): *A prominent Libyan statesman and resistance leader of Berber origins born in Jabal Nafusa in Tripolitania. He was educated in Tunisia, Egypt and Algeria and was elected to the Ottoman parliament in Istanbul following the Young Turk Revolution in 1908. He was a member of the minority Ibadi sect and it is alleged that he was interested in establishing an independent state for followers of the sect in Libya within Tripolitania. When the Italians launched a conquest of Libya in 1911, al-Baruni was dispatched by the Ottomans to Tripolitania; his resistance was concentrated in the western regions of Libya, while resistance in the east was organized under the leadership of Sayyid Ahmed al-Sharif al-Sanusi. He was also one of the founders of the Tripolitanian Republic in 1918 which later disintegrated in 1923.*

Sayyid Ahmed al-Sharif al-Sanusi (1873 – 1933): *A prominent political figure and a leader of the Sanusi order. His grandfather had founded the order in Barqa in the early 19th century. When the Italians conquered Libya in 1911, he led the resistance in the eastern region of Barqa. During the First World War, he initially maintained a neutral position between the Ottomans and the British but in 1915, when the Ottomans launched an attack on Sidi Barrani, 40 km across the border of Libya, he joined the war and launched an attack on Egypt. He was then defeated by an Egyptian-British army at the*

Battle of ʻAqaqir on 26 February 1916. Sayyid Ahmed was opposed by his cousin Idris al-Sanusi who blamed him for the war with the British. Sayyid Ahmed was banned from reentering Cyrenaica by the British and the Italians following this defeat. He left Libya to go into exile, first in Istanbul between 1918 and 1923, and then in Saudi Arabia until his death in 1933.

Giuseppe Volpi (1877 – 1947): *An Italian businessman and politician. He was governor of Tripolitania from 1921 to 1925 and was Italy's minister of finance from 1925 to 1928. Volpi oversaw the passage of a series of decrees that confiscated land held by Libyan resistance fighters and passed them on to Italian colonists. By 1925, these decrees provided 68,000 hectares for Italian colonists in Tripolitania. Volpi saw fascist colonialism as emblematic of the superiority of Italian culture, an approach that he referred to as the "politics of prestige".*

Italo Balbo (1896 – 1940): *An Italian airman, fascist leader and one of the main leaders of the March on Rome in 1922 that brought Benito Mussolini to power. He served as Governor General of Libya in 1933 overseeing the merging of Tripolitania, Barqa and Fezzan into one Italian colony. He commissioned the Marble Arch or the Arch of the Philaeni as a marking of the border between Tripolitania and Barqa.*

Rodolfo Graziani (1882 – 1955): *An Italian military officer known for his campaigns in Africa before and during the Second World War. He served in Eritrea and Libya before World War I and in Macedonia and Tripolitania subsequently. He became commander in chief of Italian forces in Libya from 1930 to 1934, governor of Italian Somaliland from 1935 to 1936 and viceroy of Ethiopia from 1936 to 1937 where he used poison gas against local rebels. He was later appointed as honorary governor of Italian East Africa (1938). Graziani was responsible for the organization of concentration camps in Libya well before the Second World War. Among the methods used to control the Libyan population was the confiscation of livestock to reduce the population to starvation and members of the notable families were deported to Ustica or continental Italy.*

Ramadan al-Suwayhli (1879 – 1920): *A prominent Tripolitanian resistance leader from Misrata. He was one of the founders of the Tripolitanian Republic (1918 – 1923). In 1916, his forces clashed with the forces of the Sanusi order when they tried to levy taxes from the population in Misrata.*

Idris al-Sanusi (1889 – 1983): *A Libyan political and religious leader who served as the Emir of Barqa and then as the King of Libya from 1951 to 1969. He was also the head of the Sanusi Order. In 1916 and after his uncle, Sayyid Ahmed al-Sharif al-Sanusi, was defeated by an Egyptian-British army, he led negotiations with the British and using the British as intermediaries, he secured two treaties in 1916 and 1917 with the Italians that helped him ensure the Order's control of most of Barqa. Following the al-Rajma Accord in 1920, he was given the title of Emir of Barqa and was asked to disband the Barqan army; he did not comply with this and eventually Italian - Sanusi relations fell apart when he* *agreed to the unification of Tripolitania and Barqa in 1922. He went into exile in Egypt between 1922 and 1951 and was later crowned King of Libya after independence in 1951.*

Bashir al-Saʿdawi (1884 - 1957): *A Libyan political leader from Khoms in Tripolitania. He received a traditional education at a Sanusi zawiya. Following the occupation of Libya by the Italians in 1911, he contributed to the formation of a resistance front in Tripolitania. After the ratification of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1912 between the Ottomans and the Italians, he went into exile in Syria and Saudi Arabia. Later, he led the exiles' movement in Syria and sought to bring different nationalist groups from Barqa and Tripolitania together via the Libyan Liberation Committee which was established in 1947. He led the Libyan National Congress Party.*

Libia: *A journal that documented fascist activities in Libya and was published in Tripoli.*

INTRODUCTION

A state in purgatory[1] and the roots of Libya's crisis

> "Libya isn't just at a crossroads. We are at a roundabout. We keep driving round in circles without knowing where to get off."
>
> *Libya's former Minister of Economy, Ali Kilani al-Jazi, October 2013*

Since the Arab uprisings in 2011, Libya has been locked in crisis, having gone from an uprising to an unravelling of its state institutions and social fabric.[2] After 42 years of Gaddafi's rule,[3] Libya is spawning a rise in scholarly interest in state building in post-conflict societies. While there is an expanding literature on Libya's revolution and the regional and international implications of its armed conflict (Brahimi, 2011; Wehrey, 2013; Capasso, 2013; Bassiouni, 2016; Fraihat, 2016), scholars have paid relatively limited attention to the pre-Gaddafi roots of Libya's political and social divisions and the role played by state-society relations in contributing to or preventing the development of a Libyan state. A series of articles published in *Majallat al-Buhuth al-Tarikhiyya* by the Libyan Studies Center in Tripoli call for a revisiting of Libyan history by Arab scholars and a departure from Western historicization of Libya's experience with state failure. An article published to announce the launch of the journal and the Center in Tripoli in 1979 notes serious limitations in scholarly engagement with the political history of Libya compared to other countries in Africa, a gap that has not been fully addressed in the last forty years and that this research seeks to fill. Mohammed al-Jerrari who founded the Center makes a trenchant statement arguing that "for Libya, we find no political history of any kind" (al-Jerrari, 1979: 9). Limited engagement has also resulted in a number of sweeping generalisations about the Libyan population and its history: "All we know about the rest of the country [outside Tripoli] is that it is an area inhabited by Bedouins who cannot be trusted and who do not want to settle anywhere and who do not obey any laws or follow any system." (al-Jerrari, 1979: 9) The article also rightly notes that historical analysis of Libya has focused on the history of the Romans and the Italians in Libya and less so on the experiences of the Arab Libyan population (al-Jerrari, 1979).

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[1] The title is taken from an article I wrote in 2013: "A State in Purgatory – Libya and the Logic of Statelessness", *The Libya Herald*, available at https://www.libyaherald.com/2013/12/01/opinion-a-state-in-purgatory-libya-and-the-logic-of-statelessness/ [accessed 10 February 2016]. In the article, I argue that Libya's history is the story of multiple rounds of state building and state unravelling but that there is a logic to this cycle that warrants unpacking through an analysis of Libyan history from a local perspective.

[2] On damage to the social fabric, see Elizabeth Allan (2014) 'The Struggle to Define Normal in Post-Gaddafi Libya', *Muftah*, available at: http://muftah.org/struggle-define-normal-post-Gaddafi-libya/#.VrosmXkVjIV [accessed 9 February 2016].

[3] For an analysis of the state of state institutions under Gaddafi, see Shariha, Jaber Emhemed Masaud, Bambang Supriyono, Mardiyono, Andy Fefta Wijaya and Soesilo Zauhar (2014). "Corruption in the Regime's Apparatus and state institutions in Libya during Gaddafi's Rule." International Refereed Journal of Engineering and Science (IRJES) Vol. 3(11): 1-3. Under the Gaddafi regime, Libya ranked last or second to last in the Arab region in four of Kaufman and Mastruzzi's five Worldwide Governance Indicators categories: government effectiveness, control of corruption, rule of law, regulatory quality, and voice and accountability.

A review of the literature shows three key contributions on state-society relations in Libya and its experience with nation and state building that should be noted and which have helped define the focus for this research. Lisa Anderson's study on the state and social transformation in Tunisia and Libya (1830 – 1980) examines the impact of modern state formation on political organization and social structure in Tunisia and Libya. She argues that in "neither Tunisia nor Libya was the appearance of the modern bureaucratic state a response to indigenous social forces". Instead, she holds that "the international environment, particularly the simultaneous challenge and model provided by European expansion, prompted the local rulers to reorganize their administrations" (Anderson, 1986: 270). While in Europe the interaction among social forces led to the development of political organizations, Anderson argues that in the "Third World" (Libya included), it was state formation that caused social structural transformation (Anderson, 1986: 270). In another article on "contested sovereignty" in Libya covering the periods between 1911 and

1922 as the formative years of Italian colonization in Libya, 1943 and 1951 when Libya was under the British Military Administration, and the present, Anderson concludes that Libya's current crisis is a manifestation of the consequences of a century of "international ambivalence, confusion and often duplicity about the international norms that govern statehood and sovereignty in the Arab world" (Anderson, 2017: 229). State failure in Libya, as explained by Anderson, could be interpreted as the result of an unsuccessful encounter between the Western-fashioned state model and local actors that were ill-prepared to adopt it. While this view is generally held by a number of other Western scholars of Libya (Vandewalle, 2012; Wright, 1969; St. John, 2014), this thesis demonstrates that it oversimplifies local power dynamics that shaped this encounter with modern state formation. The Libyan people were not passive recipients of the modern bureaucratic state. An analysis of state-society relations from the perspective of local actors during the period between 1911 – 1969 reveals a symbiotic relationship between state formation or unravelling, and Libyan society that merits closer attention.

Anna Baldinetti's study of the origins of the Libyan nation is a contribution to an understanding of the associational life of Libyans in exile and the development of Libyan nationalism in the diaspora. Baldinetti argues that the emergence of the Libyan nation as an "imagined community" took place through Libyan exiles in the Mediterranean region during the period of the Italian colonial occupation between 1911 and 1943. She explains that calls for a united Libyan nation were developed externally by Libyans in the diaspora and who formed associations and literary circles and contributed to the formation of political parties following independence (Baldinetti, 2010). Baldinetti's conclusion is similar to Anderson's; she argues that the failure of the Libyan nation is because in "the process of carving out the new and independent state of Libya, which was mainly determined by external powers … local political force had little impact" (Baldinetti, 2010:

144). Baldinetti, however, does not explain why those calls for unity were not successful in Libya after independence and why they failed to establish a Libyan state – Jason Pack reviews her book and rightly notes that "the reader is left wondering at the end of the work to what extent, if at all, the political bonds forged in exile actually came to replace traditional tribal and regional attachments when the exiles came home" (Pack, 2011: 44). Baldinetti, in fact, "conclusively debunks the hypothesis that the political organizations forged in exile influenced—in any meaningful way—the form acquired by the Libyan state at independence in 1951" and as such, she inadvertently demonstrates that Western geostrategic concerns and British 'Orientalist' conceptions of what type of political order was best suited to 'tribal Arabs' actually determined the key parameters of the Kingdom of Libya at its foundation" (Pack, 2011: 44). Baldinetti's work is useful in understanding the dynamics of Libyan associational life outside Libya but does little to explain why the "imagined community" struggled to materialize within Libya or if there was an "imagined community" within Libya itself. This thesis goes on to demonstrate that Baldinetti's analysis is incomplete, and that contrary to Baldinetti's conclusion, local political and civic forces in Libya did have an impact on Libya's experience with statehood in terms of its formation and unravelling. The dynamics of this engagement warrant close investigation.

A third contribution is by Ali Ahmida who rejects "Eurocentric" approaches to understanding state formation in modern North Africa and finds them unhelpful in understanding why certain changes did or did not take place at the local level. Ascribing Libya's challenges with state formation to a failure to adopt a Western or European model of statehood does not explain why, for instance, "non-capitalist relations of production persisted in Libya after the colonial period" as well as in addressing other historical discrepancies such as "why, for example, did the coastal towns – with the exception of

Tripoli – play an economic and political role subordinate to that of the hinterland tribes and peasants?" (Ahmida, 2002: 136). Ahmida rejects the "segmentary model" which was put forward by British social anthropologists such as E. E. Evans-Pritchard and Ernest Gellner which "assumes the existence of a tribal society comprised of homogeneous tribal segments" and where "in the absence of state control, order was kept through mutually deterring tribal segments in any clan that threatened to disrupt the balance of power" (Ahmida, 2009: 3).[4] He also rejects modernization theorists like Daniel Lerner "who viewed the modern Maghrib and the rest of the third world as composed of traditional societies that began to modernize under European colonialism" (Ahmida, 2009:4).[5] Ahmida, instead, calls for "the need to study the socio-political changes brought about by colonialism, resistance movements and the need for a new methodological agenda to recover the social history of Libya's indigenous society" (Ahmida, 2009: 141). What remains insufficiently analyzed then, is the role of the local population within Libya in determining their fate, and how local social forces shaped Libya's experience with state building.

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[4] It is worth noting here that Evans-Pritchard, who was posted as Political Officer to the British Military Administration in Barqa in 1942, had intended to write a history of "the development of the Sanusiya order among the Bedouin tribes of the country" (Evans-Pritchard, 1949: iii), and not to write a history of stasis as Ahmida suggests. That said, in Evans-Pritchard's description of how the tribes and the "Sanusiya organization" intersected does lend itself to the stasis that Ahmida describes; "So much was the Sanusiya organization based on the tribal system that the distribution of the lodges may be said to have reflected tribal segmentation, mirroring lines of cleavage between tribes and between tribal sections" (Evans-Pritchard, 1949: 71-72). Ahmida's argument is that such a structured tribal system never really existed and that approaching the history of political development of the Sanusiya through that lens limits our understanding of political and social development in Libya.

[5] In Lerner, David (1958) *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East.* NY: The Free Press, which is based on a survey of the radio listening habits of people conducted in six Middle Eastern countries (Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iran), David Lerner divided people in the sample into three categories; the traditional, the transitional and the modernized. The "modernized" was fashioned after American standards of openness and interest in the world and the transitionals were "our [the] key to the changing Middle East. What they are today is a passage from what they once were to what they are becoming. Their passage, writ large, is the passing of traditional society in the Middle East" (Lerner, 1958: 75). Lerner argued that exposure to media messages will, in effect, help Muslim societies transition from tradition to modernity. The study has been critiqued by a number of scholars. See Watt, D.C. (1961) "Reviewed Work: *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* by Daniel Lerner" The British Journal of Sociology. Vol. 12 (1). pp. 70 – 71; and Shah, Hemant (2011) *The Production of Modernization: David Lerner, Mass Media and the Passing of Traditional Society*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Contributions by Arab scholars on this period, mostly Libyan but also comprising those from Iraq and Egypt, have documented the emergence of organizations and movements led by local actors but the focus has been largely more empirical rather than interpretive, partly because of the difficulties experienced by the authors in locating the data itself. Muhammed Bashir al-Mughayribi's work *Watha'iq Jam'iyyat 'Umar al-Mukhtar: Safha min Ta'rikh Libiya* (The Documents of the 'Umar al-Mukhtar Association: A Page from Libya's History) (1993), for example, on the emergence and unravelling of the ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association is, according to the author, a documentation of the "political, cultural, social and sports activities of the national association in Libya since its establishment in Benghazi in 1943 until its dismantling in 1951 as well as the activities of its leaders until 1967" (al-Mughayribi, 1993: 5). He clearly states in the introduction to the book that this is not "an attempt to write a history of this association or a memoir, it is a documentation of activities that a historian could analyze and investigate" (al-Mughayribi, 1993: 5). More interpretive analysis is featured in al-Mukhtar al-Tahir Karfa's *al-Haraka al-ʿUmmaliya fi Libya 1943 – 1969* (2000) (The Workers' Movement in Libya 1943 – 1969) which documents the emergence of trade unions in Libya and places it within the context of political, social and economic changes that Libya went through during and following the Italian occupation. He argues that a trade union movement only emerged in Libya after independence because under the Italians workers were focused on resistance and not on building institutions or securing their rights as workers. This view, as argued in Chapter Four, is contested even within his own work. Another noteworthy contribution is by Salah al-Din Hasan al-Suri (1982) who documents political development of Libya following independence and argues that the period between 1952 and 1969 reveals features of continuity and change – while the three regions continued to show their own "regional particularism, different backgrounds and different systems", this gradually changed through joint collaboration on education and political initiatives to a form of social integration that contributed to the unification of Libya into one kingdom (al-Suri, 1982). This thesis demonstrates aspects of this social integration through its analysis of Libya's civic space as well as social contestation and argues that contestation among social actors remained stronger due to contextual political, social and economic factors which are discussed in depth in the empirical chapters.

Other works are focused on the documentation of the life and works of particular figures or events in Libya's history (Ahmad, 1934; al-Ashhab, 1956; al-Baruni, 1964; Fushayka, 1974). Some of them can be polemical such as Ali al-Dib's book *Mu'amaratt bin-Halim 'ala al Dimoqratiyya fi Libya 1954* (1996) (Bin-Halim's Conspiracy against Democracy in Libya 1954) which is a response to Mustafa bin-Halim's book *Safahat khalida min tarikh Libya al-siyasi: mudhakkirat rais al-wuzara Libya al-asbaq* (Eternal Pages from Libya's Political History: The Memoirs of the Former Prime Minister of Libya) and bin-Halim's documentation of the constitutional crisis that resulted in King Idris' dismantling of the legislative council headed by al-Dib in 1954.[6] A number of other important sources especially on the Ottoman period in Libya can be found in the journal *Majallat al-Buhuth al-Tarikhiyya* published by the Libyan Studies Center which includes rich analysis of key events in Libyan history, as well as interesting reflection pieces on why a revisiting of Libyan history is needed (al-Jerrari, 1979).

Historical accounts of Libya have also largely focused on its rulers: Vandewalle's account of the history of modern Libya focuses on why its rulers chose to pursue

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[6] The constitutional crisis was a result of a conflict between the legislative and executive councils of Tripoli in 1953 around the duties of the governor of Tripoli. The conflict escalated and resulted in an order by King Idris to dismantle the legislative council headed by al-Dib in 1954. A high court in Libya ruled in 1954 that this order was void and protests erupted in Tripoli in favor of and against this ruling. This was followed by the resignation of Muhammed Saqzeli's government and the appointment of Mustafa bin-Halim as prime minister of Libya. In his book, bin-Halim explains this crisis as a result of a personal animosity between al-Dib and the governor of Tripoli which al-Dib rejects in his response (al-Dib, 1996). The crisis also reveals some of the institutional teething problems that the Libyan government went through in its formative stages.

"statelessness" and even goes as far as to describe the Sanusi monarchy as an "accidental state". It was accidental because, again according to him, it was adopted from the West, while other accounts have emphasized (and often overstated) the role played by Libya's tribes (Evans-Pritchard, 1946; Peters, 1990; St. John, 2013). Those views fail to take into account examples of Libyan statehood such as the rise of the Tripolitanian Republic in 1918, and erroneously disregard the role played by local actors in shaping the Libyan state post-independence which this thesis analyzes through the lens of its civic space. A number of other works by Arab and Western authors focus on the emergence of the Sanusi order as a movement and the development of King Idris from a leader of a religious order to king of Libya (Ahmad, 1934; Evans-Pritchard, 1946; De Candole, 1990) while others focus on particular social groups such as the Jews of Libya (Simon, 1992; al-Ahwal, 2005).

Beyond and in addition to Libya's elite who had access to "international patrons", how have local actors engaged with one another as well as with Western actors during and following the colonial period?[7] How did Libyans influence their own history of statehood?[8] What does a bottom-up history of Libya's state-society relations look like? I argue that an analysis of state-society relations in Libya during the period between 1911 and 1969 can provide insights into Libya's experience with state building.

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[7] Mary Kaldor explains why it is important to interpret historical shifts through the lens of civil society and local actors rather than by focusing only on governments and political leaders. Referring to the revolutions of 1989 that resulted in ending communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe, she explains her reasoning as follows: "Western governments and most western scholars were totally taken by surprise when the 1989 revolutions took place. *This is because they studied the behaviour of states and political leaders rather than society*. Those of us who were engaged with opposition groups in Central and Eastern Europe expected something to happen although we did not know how or why. The same is true in Egypt. The youth groups who have coordinated the protests have not sprung from nowhere. They had been involved in campaigns like *Kifaya* 'Enough' or the April 6 facebook group. There have been numerous political initiatives for change – the Judges' Club, the National Association for Change started by Mohamed El Baradei, Workers for Change and Journalists for Change. Just as in Central Europe, television played a role in helping to cultivate a sense of being part of Europe, so Al Jazeera has helped to foster the idea of a Middle Eastern civil society" (Kaldor, 2011, my italics).

[8] Eugene Rogan highlights in *The Arabs: A History* that Arabs have not been passive subjects even under colonization: "For to say that the Arab world has been subject to foreign rules does not mean the Arabs have been passive subjects in a unilinear history of decline. Arab history in the modern age has been enormously dynamic, and the Arab peoples are responsible for their successes and their failures alike. They have worked with the rules when it suited them, subverted the rules when they got in the way and suffered the consequences when they crossed the dominant powers of the day." (Rogan, 2012: 7)

Research focus and questions

The overarching question in this research is this: how did state-society relations contribute to state building and/or state disintegration in Libya pre-Gaddafi? This engagement between state and society can take the form of cooperation and contestation and based on the empirical data collected for the research they can be analyzed on three levels: *relational* which addresses how state and society relate and engage with one another; *structural* which examines how society and state mutually contribute to the structuring of one another and finally, *transactional* which involves understanding what territorial and extra territorial transactions are involved in shaping state-society relations.

It is important to avoid definitional confusion here.[9] Following Migdal (2004) and Saouli (2012), I approach state formation as a process, not a finished outcome, and the state as a social field rather than a fixed entity. I define the state as a social field with the image of a coherent and defined territory that is also a manifestation of the actual practices of its multiple parts. I do not address state and society as separate entities as such but as closely connected and constantly evolving. Against the position that regards the interaction between state and society as mutually empowering and sees civil society as integral to state formation (Migdal, Kohli and Shue, 1994; Evans, 1995; Evans, 1997), it is the argument of this thesis that Libya is an example of a failure at state building that has resulted not only from its experience with modern state formation but also from local power dynamics that were influenced by economic, social and political contextual factors and that can only be understood via historical analysis. An analysis of Libya's civic space offers an arena within which those dynamics unfold. The view that “statelessness” is endemic to the Libyan context is thus heavily challenged, and instead, the thesis shows the importance of a contextualized analysis of Libya’s experience with state building *in time*.[10]

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[9] Definitions related to the theoretical framing are addressed in more detail in Chapter One.

Revisiting Baldinetti’s (2010) thesis that the Libyan nation was an imagined community born in exile but that it failed to take root because statehood was a foreign imposition on Libya, this thesis argues that locally, other than agreeing on the necessity of independence, an analysis of the civic space shows that there was limited agreement on a unified vision for Libyan nationhood or statehood as such and this explains how contestation between different visions only furthered institutional and political fragmentation. This can be attributed to Libya’s experience with modern state formation as per Anderson’s argument (1986) but it is also because social contestation was stronger than centralizing forces and the new state was not successful in addressing this contestation. This contestation as argued earlier must be understood in light of Libya’s experience with colonialism and in context. While contestation can be inherent in any state building process as is the case in other countries in the Arab World (White, 2013; Ayoob, 2009; Crowley, 2017), in the case of Libya, contestation trumped cooperation and led to the disintegration of postcolonial state structures.

This thesis also argues that an understanding of state-society engagement within the civic space can be an anchor to a state building process. Following Saad Eddin Ibrahim (1998), civil society is defined here as “the totality of self-initiating and self-regulating social formations peacefully pursuing a common interest, advocating a common cause or expressing a common passion, respecting the rights of others to do the same and maintaining relative autonomy vis-à-vis the state, the family, the temple and the market”

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[10] This is inspired by Paul Pierson’s call for placing social analysis in time. This means that there is a recognition that any particular moment is situated in a temporal context and that it is part of an unfolding social process (Pierson, 2004: 167).

(Ibrahim, 1998: 374). Those social formations can be both institutionalized and non-institutionalized, they can be territorial and extra-territorial. They include trade unions and associations, for example, which are institutions that often attest to a state's capacity to enforce law, as well as faith-based or religious actors such as churches and *zawaya* and transnational networks that may pre-date the existence of a state.[11] I approach civic space here within a view of state building as a longitudinal process of interdependencies between state and society that does not exist in a vacuum and where the state is a social field, as per Saouli's definition, and is influenced by the local, regional and international contexts.

Analysis of the engagement between state and society reveals a twofold role for Libya's civil society in state formation. On the one hand, the civic space born of a process of cooperation and contestation between civil society and state structures (colonial and otherwise) has actively contributed to the development of state institutions and the domestication of state power as experienced in the Kingdom of Libya (1951 – 1969). Associations like the ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association for example, although presenting an opposition to state policies at times, did bear witness to the existence of a state even in opposing it. On the other hand, because of internal differences, many of which resulted from the short history of institutionalization, aggressive colonialism and the entrenchment of fragmentation and differences, Libya's civil society led to a process of bonding that occurred within groups rather than towards the development of a Libyan state as the development and subsequent disintegration of the Tripolitanian Republic (1918 – 1922) shows. The thesis demonstrates that state building can be compromised by contested state-society relations and that a state in the making has to incorporate various strands of its civil society within its bureaucracies and overall model of government to ensure its local legitimacy and geopolitical unity. In Libya, the banning of associations and political parties under King Idris restricted the expansion of Libya’s civic space, prevented it from taking root, and contributed to the breakdown of the state.

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[11] In Chapter One, I explain how faith-based actors are included in the thesis as civic formations.

Methods

While the research employs the approach and the tools of a historian, it is a study that is largely shaped by the social sciences as will be later explained in Chapter Two of this thesis. The focus here is not on writing a history of Libyan civil society as such but to interpret it and account for Libya’s experience with statehood. Using primary data from archives in London, Rome and Tunis, as well as 80 semi-structured interviews with Libyans and Italians who witnessed the period between 1911 and 1969, many of whom are deeply involved in Libya’s present crisis. This research makes a contribution to a social history of modern Libya by exploring three social actors: associations or *jamʿiyyat*, trade unions and religious organizations, and their engagement with governing structures, colonial or otherwise. Civil society is analyzed here as a key variable in state formation within three spheres: the political, the social/cultural and the institutional, and by examining relational, structural and transactional dimensions of its engagement with state structures. Three main periods in Libya’s history and identity formation are addressed: first, its period as an Italian colony (1911–1943); second, the years under Allied occupation or the British Military Administration (1943–1951); and third, Libya’s time as a kingdom (1951–1969). Conclusions derived from an exploration of those periods can be used to illuminate patterns of fragmentation and state failure in Libya. The Gaddafi period is referred to but not covered in depth, largely in the interest of substantive focus but also because it was an era when all forms of civil society were prohibited in Libya (Emadi, 2012), although other formations of civic activism existed within the Libyan diaspora (El Taraboulsi-McCarthy, 2017).

Periodization

By focusing on the period between 1911 and 1969, this thesis does not argue that Libya's history only starts with Italian colonization. Hence, for example, the reference to the birth and spread of the Sanusiyah in North Africa in the early nineteenth century, which planted the seeds of what would later become the United Kingdom of Libya. Instead, it explores a complex period in Libya's history when divisions – religious, political and geographic – were predominant. A political chronology of the period shows that it is replete with transitions: the Italian colonization in 1911, the advent of the First World War in 1914 and the rise of fascism in 1922, the defeat of the resistance movement and the rise of Italian Libya in 1934, the Allied occupation of the Libyan territories in 1943, the United Nations mission in Libya in 1949, and the country's independence in 1951 under King Idris. This thesis takes 1911 as its starting point because it is the beginning of the Italian occupation of Libya, which resulted in a new dynamic of religious, social and political fragmentation across the three regions. In 1969, with the rise of Gaddafi and Arab nationalism, new forces were put into play, leading to the exodus of the remaining Italian population a year later back to Italy. It is also during the period between 1945 and 1967 that the Jewish communities of Tripolitania and Barqa fled Libya to populate the emerging state of Israel and other parts of the world, mainly Italy.

Geographic focus

This thesis focuses on two regions: Tripolitania and Barqa (Cyrenaica). While Fezzan has a rich history of its own, it was often interwoven within those of the other two. For example, Ottoman Libya saw Fezzan firmly tied to the political and economic spheres of the administration in Tripoli (Ahmida, 2009: 43). Fezzan also had a particular economic significance in Libya. It was always a meeting point for trade and transportation, and for the caravans that crossed the desert and connected the Maghreb to the Arab Mashreq, and the North African region with the Sudan. There were key trade routes through Fezzan which gave it a strategic location and status. It was so important for the economy and inter-regional trade that in the 16th and 17th centuries, travellers learned Arabic and even pretended to be Muslim in order to navigate those areas for trade and in search for natural resources (al-Hederi, 1979: 111). The Italian colonization, however, was destructive for the majority of the population and ended inter-regional trade and commerce between Libya and other parts of Africa, and within Libya itself (al-Barbar, 1990; Ibrahim, 1982). The colonization unleashed a wave of destruction that damaged the social fabric of Libya and affected communication in between its three regions; in the first year of the war, 6000 Libyans were banished to Italian islands and many were forced to flee to Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Chad, and Niger. At least half of Tripolitania was killed or banished and there were waves of internal displacement as well (al-Barbar, 1990).

Fezzan, with its ties to Chad and Niger, continues to possess a cultural specificity of its own. Because of this specificity and because its ties with Tripolitania have a history of their own as well, its narrative is touched upon in this study while the focus remains on Tripolitania and Barqa, not out of neglect of its importance but in an effort to maintain focus. Given its population composition and the need to conduct extensive fieldwork and archival research with a focus on its history, Fezzan during the same period warrants a study of its own.

The following section presents an overview of key junctures in Libya's history of state formation and state disintegration. The political chronology below serves as a general background to the empirical chapters' analysis of particular social actors and their engagement with the state.

A note on transliteration

Regarding the transliteration of Arabic names and titles, the thesis uses an abbreviated International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES) transliteration standard. *Ayns (ʿ)* and *hamzas (ʾ)* will be differentiated but long vowels or voluminous consonants will not be marked. This is to avoid confusion because of differences in the pronunciation of words in the Libyan dialect and other Arab dialects.

Political chronology: Libya's experience with state building and disintegration

The colonial period (1911–1943)

This section is divided into four parts. The first presents an overview of the conquest of Libya by Italy prior to and following the rise of fascism in 1922 and the second addresses the development of administrative structures by the Italian state in Libya. The two remaining sections give an overview of two stunted instances of state formation in Libya under Italian occupation, the Sanusi Emirate as manifest in the treaties of 1917 and 1920, and the Tripolitanian Republic in 1918.

Occupation and resistance

Between 1879 and the late 1890s, Italy, which had only achieved full unification in 1870, had acquired Eritrea and Somalia through piecemeal purchases and the use of military force. Both colonies were attempts to settle Italian immigrants on sponsored farms, but the majority of Italians were reluctant to migrate to them: "Eritrea and Somalia were far away, and worse still, they lacked relevant symbolic connotations" (Fuller, 2000: 122). Most Italians wanted a Mediterranean colony, one that had been part of the Roman provinces: “The emotional resonance of this wish was immediately tied to the need for a sense of national identity that could buttress the recently unified state, and it had only been exacerbated when French forces had seized Tunis in 1881” (Fuller, 2000: 122).[12] Tunisia would have been Italy’s first choice had it not been for the French colonization, because Tunisia had the highest concentration of Italians in North Africa, and, in the division of Africa among European powers, Italians had expected Tunisia to fall to them. It was Libya, however, that they ended up inhabiting as their *quarta sponda*, or “fourth shore”, and which became their most important colony in Africa (Curotti, 1973: 46). It was in the 1890s that Italy prepared for the conquest of Libya. According to Ahmida, “Italian banks, schools and newspapers began to flourish, especially in the city of Tripoli; powerful Jewish and Muslim merchants were contacted by Italian consuls in Tripoli as early as 1890” and in 1907, “the Bank of Rome became the vehicle for buying land, investing in trade, and employing key people to work for the Italian cause” (Ahmida, 2009: 105).

Shaken by the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, the Ottomans were unpopular in Libya at the beginning of the twentieth century. Libyan historian, Ahmed Sudqi al-Dajjani, documents the reign of Abdel Hamid II, the last Ottoman Sultan to exert control over the empire, and describes how it had a negative effect on Libya. Sultan Abdel Hamid’s fear of Western encroachment dominated his reign and corruption was prevalent in state institutions. Bribery spread and a number of secret groups emerged to fight his tyrannical rule (al-Dajjani, 2019). One of the earliest Libyan secret resistance organizations established in Libya emerged under Ottoman rule. The organization was established by Ibrahim Siraj al-Din, who was born in Saudi Arabia in 1856, travelled to Egypt, India,

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[12] Italy’s colonization of Libya was usually tied to its Roman identity, especially in fascist political discourse. In an article, for example, from the *Corriere di Tripoli* (a daily newspaper published in Libya following the British occupation in 1943) dated the 2nd of February 1943 and titled “Duce on the Loss of Tripoli”, Mussolini is reported to have asked the Italian people to bear the loss of Tripoli with “manly and Roman courage” and that he was “confident they would return to North Africa”.

Algeria and Tunisia, and then, after a visit to Benghazi, settled in Tripoli where he began forming political and philosophical circles. Siraj al-Din's discussions and seminars were popular among local people who would gather around to listen to him talk about the need to resist the European threat and the injustice of the Ottoman rule. A secret organization, as a result, emerged. According to Juma'a Attigah, "its membership structure was strict and so was the requirement to observe firmly its objectives, which could be summarised as 'resistance to corruption of the Turkish regime and opposition to the impending European threat and its ambitions'" (Attigah, 2011: 89). Members of the organization participated equally in its activities. Some were responsible for collecting information from the government and its circles, while others organized the military wing, spreading awareness among Arab soldiers, preparing and training them in their duties, recruiting new members by all available means and most importantly observing the Friday prayer that had also served as the organization's communications platform (Attigah, 2011: 90). Siraj al-Din was later arrested and died in prison in 1892, but movements for independence continued under Italian rule.

In terms of class composition, society in Tripolitania and Barqa was composed of three main classes in the period leading up to the Italian colonization of Libya. The elite, known as *al-Khassa*, were mainly composed of the Ottomans and they possessed decisionmaking capacity. They were about few hundred and their role was primarily to collect taxes and ensure that Tripolitania continues to be part of the empire. Another class, mostly composed of Libyan elite, known as *al-'ayaan*, included Libyan members of the military, traders, scientists and religious leaders. They controlled wealth and were left to their own resources as long as they pledged their allegiance to the Ottoman empire. Members of the military were known to compete with one another and some of them supported Italy and adopted Italian ways. As for the traders, they mostly preferred to migrate to other countries. The religious leaders migrated to Egypt, Turkey and Syria. Finally, the third class was that of the tribes and those were composed of Bedouin (mostly in Barqa) and non-Bedouin tribes (in Tripolitania). They engaged in vibrant local trade as well as a degree of inter-regional trade until this was disrupted by the Italian colonization in 1911.[13] The class composition also revealed different loyalties: loyalty to the Ottomans (in Tripolitania), loyalty to Arab nationalism (in Tripolitania and Barqa) and local loyalty to the Sanusiyya (mostly in Barqa) (al-Barbar, 1990). The second and third classes would continue to exist under Italian colonialism but their roles vis-à-vis the Italians would differ – the majority of *al ʻayaan* would migrate from Libya to neighbouring countries or would act as brokers between the Italian colonizers and the people, and the tribes would engage in the resistance, bonding locally and less so regionally, with the Italians restricting inter-regional trade.

Mustafa ʿUmar al-Tir also holds that the final years of Ottoman rule in Libya were largely negative although other analysts have documented economic and administrative developments during this period.[14] In 1907, Libya experienced a period of drought and famine. During that time, the Ottomans were levying more taxes from the Libyan people, and they slowly lost control of Libyan territory except for the coastal areas; the vacuum was filled by local forms of governance enhancing localism and local loyalties (al-Tir, 2013: 25). Italy's occupation of Libya was, nevertheless, met by fierce Libyan resistance. In Barqa, the resistance was under the leadership of the Sanusiyah, an Islamic revivalist movement which had begun in Hijaz in 1837 and emerged with the purpose of purging Islam of the "impurities" that had accrued over previous centuries (Obeidi, 2007: 38).[15] When the Italians launched an attack against Libya, the Libyans fought with the Ottomans against the invaders. According to Iraqi-born academic, Majid Khadduri, "it was the religious tie between Libya and the Ottoman Empire that prompted Libyans to fight with Ottoman forces, preferring to remain the loyal subjects of a Muslim ruler than to become Europeanized citizens under Christian rule" (Khadduri, 1963: 11). There were also practical reasons why Libyans rejected Italian rule in favour of Ottoman control. Italians were not interested in perpetuating the administrative bureaucracy that tied the province to the Ottoman Empire. The occupation, thus, faced strong resistance by "local administrators and clienteles who were threatened with the loss of Ottoman patronage" (Anderson, 1986: 34).

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[13] According to Ena'am Sharaf al-Din, methods of trade inside Tripoli were different from those used to trade with other regions in Libya. Within Tripoli, trade brokers were used and trade usually happened in markets and through people who were known to one another. Trade within Tripoli was on a daily basis whereas trade between Tripoli and other regions of Libya was bound by certain time frames and seasonal markets. Some of those markets took place by shrines and this offered protection for the traders and the customers (al-Din, 1998).

[14] This is somewhat contradicted in Abdullah Ali Ibrahim's analysis who holds that the period between the 1860s and the 1910s was one of general political stability in Tripolitania and Barqa under the Ottoman administration. Shifts in the administrative structures and social transformations undertaken by the Ottomans resulted in a stable political situation also led to the stabilization of the country's economy. People sought to be self sufficient depending fundamentally upon purely local modes of production. The local economic resources also enabled the provincial government to extract enough tax revenues to maintain itself and even to have a surplus which was transformed to the central government in Istanbul (Ibrahim, 1982: 210). For a comprehensive study on local and inter-regional economic exchanges in the period leading up to 1911, a good reference is Ibrahim, Abdallah Ali (1982) "Evolution of Government and Society in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica (Libya) 1835 – 1911. PhD Dissertation at the University of Utah. Unpublished.

In October 1912, a peace treaty was signed in Ouchy (near Lausanne) between Italy and the Ottoman sultan. The treaty was ambiguous; "the Sublime Porte did not relinquish its sovereignty over Tripoli while Italy rested its own claims to sovereignty on Italian law". This would later prove significant because "it meant, in effect, that the local population still considered the Sultan as its spiritual and political leader" (Vandewalle, 2006: 26). The resistance to the Italian occupation continued to be fierce:

> tribal shaykhs and Sanusi followers gave the Italians no respite and often inflicted heavy losses. The Ottoman Porte, encouraged by local resistance, sent a few able men such as Enver Pasha (one of the triumvirate who ruled Turkey), Mustafa Kemal (later the well-known Ataturk), and a few Arab

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[15] The role played by religious groups, Muslim, Christian and Jewish, in Libya's state formation, and how those three constituencies engaged with one another, is discussed in depth in Chapter Five of the thesis.

> army officers. Without native support, the Ottoman Porte could not have possibly continued to resist. (Khadduri, 1963: 11)

The brutality of Italian colonization against the local population was informed by negative racial attitudes towards the Libyan people, as John Gooch points out in his account of the 1911 Tripoli massacre:

> the unexpected degree of local resistance which the expeditionary force encountered quickly reached a bloody climax on Sciara Sciat on 23 October 1911, some six weeks after the initial landings, when in the course of an Arab and Turkish attack on the oasis two companies of Italian soldiers were taken prisoner and 250 of them were massacred in a Muslim cemetery, many being decapitated and castrated. Panic was followed by a violent reaction: many Arabs caught carrying guns or knives were summarily executed and several thousand were deported. Racial attitudes facilitated such actions: for most Italian soldiers and their officers, the uncivilised and 'brutal' inhabitants of the land they were seeking to conquer contrasted with the fertility of the country, and for many their fearlessness in the face of death was seen as evidence of their "bestialita". (Gooch, 2005: 1006)

Despite the brutality of the occupation, the resistance remained strong and as a result, Italy failed to control most of the Libyan territory "As a stalemate continued throughout 1912, the Italians held onto little more than enclaves along the Mediterranean coast. Even the largest of these – Tripoli – barely extended ten miles into the hinterland." (Vandewalle, 2006: 26). While the resistance was popular in both the eastern and western regions of Libya, there were families that collaborated with the Italians against the Ottomans. The Muntasir family of Misrata, a town east of Tripoli, welcomed the Italians. Ahmad Dhiya al-Din Muntasir, a member of the family, explains this in the following words:

> The Young Turks came and, because of their hatred of the partisans of Abd al-Hamid, pounced on our family. First, when there were the elections (for the reopened Parliament), I, who was elected deputy for the *sanjak* of *Khums* and Tripoli, was not confirmed by the Government of the Young Turks on the pretext that I did not know the Turkish language well while there were many others confirmed who knew less than I. Then I was unjustly dismissed as *qaimmaqam* of Tarhunah and they hired some

> murderers to kill my brother Abd al-Qasim, who was barbarically killed on the street, after protection had been promised to the murderer … Fortunately for us, we came to know Italy had decided to occupy Tripoli and my brother Salim and I joined with … the Banco di Roma … in denouncing publicly everything the Turks had committed against us. We offered them our cooperation in the occupation of the city of Tripoli. (Cited in Anderson, 2017: 230)

The Turkish forces in Tripolitania, having received orders from the Sublime Porte to return, were asked to leave arms and ammunition for the Libyan people under the leadership of Sulayman al-Baruni a Libyan political leader of Berber origins, who launched a resistance movement against the Italian occupation. Al-Baruni's resistance movement was concentrated in the western regions of Libya, while resistance in the east was organized under the leadership of Sayyid Ahmed al-Sharif al-Sanusi. With an allegiance to Turkey and with the onset of the First World War, Sayyid Ahmed Sharīf launched an attack on Egypt which failed, and he later retreated into a religious role and passed on the leadership of resistance to ʿUmar al-Mukhtar and Sayyid Muhammed Idris.[16]

Both al-Baruni in Tripolitania and al-Sharif al-Sanusi in Barqa tried to use Ottoman support in order to gain independence from the Italians, but they did so independently of one another. In 1913, the Sanusiyah were stamping their correspondence with the Italians as *al-hukumah al-Sanusiyah* or the Sanusi government. Al-Baruni sent a telegram to the foreign ministries of European powers designating himself as the "head of the provincial independent Government" and demanding that he is addressed "in all affairs concerning the following regions: Warfalla and the South of Tripolitania, the inhabitants of the coast, the Ajilat littoral to the Tunisian frontier, and all the mountain residents" (Cited in Anderson, 1986: 191).

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[16] Ahmed Sharif played a pivotal role in the resistance movement in eastern Libya by providing military leadership, engaging tribal leaders and preparing for battle. A detailed account of the military and spiritual leadership of Ahmed Sharif al-Sanusi is provided in Salim al-Kubti's documentation of his intellectual and military history in his *Ahmed Sharif al-Sanusi: Mukhtarat min Wath'iq Jihaduh al'Askari wa Dawroh al-Fikri* (2015).

In 1915, a famine hit Libya, resulting in the deaths of many Libyans (al-Tir, 2013: 26). Summary executions and other military tactics were enforced by the Italians to exert authority over Libya but they still failed to control much of the territory. In 1914. a garrison at Sabhah had been sacked and destroyed by Libyan forces and in 1915, the Italians were defeated in the battle of Qasr Bu Hadi which marked the end of Italian control in the hinterland. By the end of 1915, effective Italian rule over Libya was limited to Tripolitania's and Barqa's coastal cities (Vandewalle, 2006: 27). The Pact of Acroma in 1917 and the Accord of al-Rajma in 1920 contributed to the rise of the Sanusi Emirate in Barqa while the rise of the Tripolitanian Republic in 1918 in Tripolitania was another instance of state building in the Western region of Libya. Those instances testified to the Italian lack of capacity to control Libya on the one hand, and of the strength of the resistance in the eastern and western regions of Libya, on the other. They also revealed how those attempts at statehood and independence were focused on the regions they belonged to and not on developing a Libyan state as a whole. They both eventually broke down because of internal differences as well as lack of international support.

The trials and tribulations of Italian rule did not allow any space for Libyans to reflect on their identity beyond local allegiances to protect themselves from Italian aggression. In 1922, Benito Mussolini's National Fascist Party came to power in Italy, and subsequently launched what they called the *riconquista* of Libya and for a decade aggressively sought an active consolidation of Italian power. The result was that "over half the entire population and virtually all the educated elite of the province died or fled into exile" (Anderson, 1983: 67). Concentration camps were set up to defeat the resistance especially in Barqa. On the 20th of June 1930, the words of Marshal Badoglio to General Graziani reveal extremist views on fighting this war:

> As for overall strategy, it is necessary to create a signifcant and clear territorial separation between the controlled population and the rebel formations. I do not hide the significance and the seriousness of this measure, which might be the ruin of the so-called subdued population...But by now the course has been set and we must carry it out to the end, even if the entire population of Cyrenaica must perish. (Cited in De Grand, 2004: 132)

Large numbers of people were moved into concentration camps. Omar al-Mukhtar, the leader of the Sanusi resistance, was hanged in 1931 in front of 20,000 concentration camp inmates. In what Angelo Del Boca called "a small genocide", fifteen camps were set up that eventually absorbed half the population of Cyrenaica. The population of the province had been roughly 200,000 in 1911, during the Ottoman period; by 1931, it had declined to 142,000, with 20,000 in exile in Egypt and 40,000 dead. The Italian government even experimented with the use of poison gas in violation of the 7 June 1925 convention against chemical and biological warfare (De Grand, 2004: 132).

During the interwar period, and while the Egyptian, Tunisian and Palestinian nationalist movements were active on the ground, "the Libyans were fighting for their lives, less concerned with their definition of identity than with their survival" (Anderson, 1986: 67). Italian rule left Libya with "an infrastructure of roads, agricultural villages, and other public works" but without an "informed and politically active citizenry" (St John, 2003: 19). Writing on Italian attitudes to the walled city of Tripoli, Mia Fuller makes an even more scathing assessment of Italy's colonization of Libya: "While the government's social policies were not as blatantly destructive as its military ones, they left in their wake no truly durable infrastructure to match the olive groves, the roads and the sewage systems that were probably the most useful of Italian legacies" (Fuller, 2000: 122).

Using divide-and-rule policies, Italian fascism also hit hard at the emerging state structures in Barqa, Tripolitania and Fezzan. In Barqa, the fascists attempted to destroy the Sanusi order, “abolishing traditional tribal assemblies and weakening the authorities of established leaders” (St John, 2003: 19). In other places, they sought to dissolve local authorities, “replacing the precolonial administration with an exclusively Italian one in which the local population was not allowed to participate” (St John, 2003: 19). The exclusion of the indigenous inhabitants exacerbated existing regional fragmentation and prompted the Libyan population to focus inwardly on their region and locality. The repercussions of those policies on Libyan society and how Tripolitania and Barqa engaged with one another will be explained in the empirical chapters through an analysis of the civic space in both regions.

State colonization and administrative structures

The Italian occupation of Libya can be divided into two phases. The first phase is between 1911 and 1922 and the second, marked by the implementation of fascist policies in Libya, between 1923 and 1943. Italians faced strong resistance in Libya and as a result, a degree of autonomy and self-rule was granted between 1914 and 1922 through the pacts of Acroma and of al-Rajma, as will be explained later. In 1923, however, those policies were completely discarded and a new era of fascist policies was launched. The Italian fascist government declared that Libya was essential for settling Italian peasants and resorted to force in order to clear the land for settlement (Ahmida, 2009: 105).

In terms of state administrative structures and policies, the Italians, initially, had no administrative structure by which to organize their government of Libya. The Ministry of Colonies was not established until November 1912, by which time, as Anderson explains, the War, Naval and Foreign Affairs ministries, which had supervised the military and diplomatic operations of the war with the Ottoman Empire, had already established bureaucratic structures to control Libya (Anderson, 1986: 188). It was in January 1913 that the administrative system that had been devised by the War Ministry was adopted by its colonial counterpart. Tripolitania and Barqa "were separated and each assigned a governor with jurisdiction over both the civilian and military functions in the province" (Anderson 1986: 188).[17]

Following the implementation of fascist policies in Libya, a law was passed in 1934 that divided Libya for administrative purposes into four commissariats each of which was further divided into sections, departments, residences and districts. They were all staffed by Italian officials. These administrative structures determined the distribution of land to the Italian colonists (*Libia*, April 1940). The only regions where Libyans were allowed to hold posts were those with no Italian population, and in Italian-Libyan districts, Libyans acted as advisors to the local administration; "urban quarters and rural districts were administered by a *mukhtar,* nominated by the Italian provincial authorities and whose job was to assist the municipal or regional authority in relations with the natives". As for tribal populations, those "were placed under *shaykhs* on the basis of tribal sub-districts and they were responsible to the Italians for the order and security of the territories in which the tribe travelled" (Anderson, 1986: 221). Although Italians claimed that they wanted to destroy tribal structure and instead, create Libyan Muslim Fascists, "they in fact maintained the quarters, fractions and tribes as the only permissible organizational structure. They weakened the authority of the *shaykhs*: with neither responsibility nor prestige, they could do little more than try to keep their kin out of trouble, and many, in falling prey to Italian financial blandishments, did not even do that." (Anderson, 1986:

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[17] This division in administrative functions by the Italians is quite significant insofar as it informed different experiences for the Libyan population as well as the Italian settlers in each region. Perceptions of differences, administrative, social and cultural, are palpable in the interviews conducted with Libyans and Italians for the research as the empirical chapters will demonstrate.

221). There was a general reliance on Libyan labour as construction workers and as agricultural labourers but the provincial administration was exclusively Italian and "Libyans participated hardly at all in their own governance" (Anderson, 1986: 219).

In terms of settling the Italian population in Libya, it was quite slow at the beginning but following the rise of fascism and after Giuseppe Volpi took over as governor of Tripolitania in 1921, a series of decrees were passed stipulating that "all uncultivated land reverted to the state after three years and all land held by 'rebels' or those who aided them was to be confiscated". These decrees "provided 68,000 hectares for Italian colonists in Tripolitania by 1925 and between 1923 and 1932, 120,790 hectares in Barqa. In fact, over 68,000 hectares were expropriated outright in Barqa, including all the Sanusi holdings, most of which were waqf"[18] (Anderson 1986: 217). This was followed by a series of other decrees that were passed in 1928 providing a "new set of credits and subsidies" for the colonists which proved more successful in attracting Italian capital to Libya, so much so that "by 1933, half of the 202,000 hectares which were by then in the public domain in Tripolitania were under concession" and "worked by 1,500 families of colonists, mostly from Sicily, but also from the Italian ranks in Tunisia as well" (Anderson, 1986: 217).

Another key turning point in the settling of Italians in Libya was in 1933, when Italo Balbo was appointed governor and by which point the country had been pacified and was ready for more settlers. Families were settled in the Barqan Jabal-al-Akhdar; this was because of the fertility of the land there and because it was the stronghold of ʻUmar al-Mukhtar's forces. Four villages were established by 1935 and by 1940, there were 110,000 Italians in Libya. According to one account, by 1943 there were twelve villages in the eastern region of Libya and eighteen in the western region. Each village had houses, shops, schools, churches and restaurants (al-Tir, 2013: 32).

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[18] Waqf is a charitable Islamic endowment. It involves the transfer of a property from its owner to a charitable cause and its main characteristic is that it is permanent and irrevocable and its benefits are passed on from one generation to another (Abdulwahab, 2017).

State formation in Barqa

The Sanusiyah had already developed an infrastructure for a state by 1890 with leadership, an executive body, an educational system and even a conflict resolution or mediation structure. Ahmida describes their elaborate structure as follows:

> First, there were the Higher Majlis of the Ikhwan, or the senior *'ulama*, headed by al-mahdi's brother, Muhammad al-Sharīf, and the leading shaykhs of the *zawiya* in Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, Egypt, the Sudan and Hijaz. Majlis met once a year to decide the general policies of the order. After their meetings, the Mahdi would modify and then enact the decisions of the Majlis.
>
> The second Majlis was called *al-Majlis al-Khas*, or the private Majlis. It functioned as an executive body, meeting daily and supervising the application of the decisions of the higher Majlis. Among its duties were supervising university education with its religious and scientific schools, providing services to trade caravans and missionaries, collecting taxes and training the military. (Ahmida, 2009: 98)

As Italy entered the First World War, it realized that it could not control the Libyan territory and resorted to a form of shared governing whereby the Italians ceded some of their power to the Sanusiyah. This was a step forward in the consolidation of state formation efforts for the Sanusiyah in Barqa; it presented them with an opportunity to govern a defined territory, gain recognition from western actors and deepen political legitimacy with the local population. In April 1917, by the Pact of Acroma, Mohammed Idris, leader of the Sanusiyah, divided Barqa into two zones. The first zone was the coast, which was given to the Italians, whereas the second zone, the interior of Barqa, would be ruled by the Sanusiyah. Following the end of the First World War, Italy adopted policies that granted more autonomy to the local population and, in 1919, separate statutes were prepared for Barqa and Tripolitania: “each province had a separate parliament, a government council, and local councils intended to help the Italian administration govern the country in accordance with local traditions and customs” (Khadduri, 1963: 20).

In the accords of October 1920 (Accord of al-Rajma) and October 1921, Italy recognized Idris as the Amir of Barqa, granting him the right to bear arms and to have de facto control of the oases, the desert and the *djebel*. He was also given “a monthly stipend, and Italy agreed to police and administer the regions under Sanusi control” (Vandewalle, 2006: 28). With Idris’s expanded powers, the Tripolitanian Arabs met him at Sirte in December 1922, offering him the headship of the combined tribes of Tripolitania and Barqa (Gooch, 2005). This, however, was not to materialize. After accepting the appointment, Idris found himself in a difficult situation – “his advisors were divided on the matter” because it put them into conflict with the Italians and the Italians threatened that such an action would be considered a breach of the al-Rajma agreement that granted a level of autonomy to Barqa. Sayyid Idris, finding himself in a dilemma, went into exile in Egypt in 1922 (Vandewalle, 2006: 29). This is yet another instance where regional priorities clashed with national priorities, a tension that re-ermeges in Libya’s experience with state formation.

State formation in Tripolitania

The complexity of state-society relations and its impact on state formation in Libya is evident in the emergence and disintegration of the Tripolitanian Republic. This is another instance of state formation in Libya that preceded its independence in 1951. The case of the Tripolitanian Republic is also illustrative of the role played by international actors in diminishing the emergence of indigenous sovereignty in Libya. As Anderson summarizes:

> The life of the Tripoli Republic was short. Unlike the Sanusiyah, whose leader was championed by the British as an appropriately pliable spokesman for the Cyrenaicans on Egypt's Western frontier, the Republic had no international sponsor to intervene with the Italians on its behalf. The hostility of the Italians themselves to the Republic destined it to a checkered career of internal feuds over policy and resources and by the time the fascists came to power in Rome in 1922 its days were numbered. The resistance to the Italians ultimately failed – although not before the Libyans lost nearly half their number in a colonial war unmatched for its ferocity by anything experienced elsewhere in the Arab world – and with it died the Republic … The failure of Europe to recognize the Tripoli Republic in its day hastened its disappearance in fact and obscured its existence in history. (Anderson, 1982: 44)

Following the outbreak of the First World War, Italian control of Libya was precarious. Indeed, the resistance and guerrilla warfare continued until 1932, and it was only after the arrest and hanging of the resistance leader ʿUmar al-Mukhtar in 1931 that the Italian army managed to control the whole country (Re, 2010: 5). In Barqa, as mentioned earlier, leadership was in the hands of the Sanusiyah who, in 1916, entered into negotiations with the Italians and the British; in the following year, the autonomy of the Sanusiyah was recognized in the modus vivendi of Acroma. In western Libya, the Ottomans were still influential alongside Sulayman al-Baruni, who had declared himself head of an autonomous province in Jabal Nafusa. In Misrata, which was under Ottoman protection, control was in the hands of Ramadan al-Suwayhli, a Tripolitanian resistance leader who later became one of the founders of the Tripolitanian Republic. Al-Suwayhli had fought against the Italians in the Ottoman–Italian War and led a revolt of Libyan troops under Italian command in 1915, which later came to be known as the battle of Qasr Bu Hadi or Gardabiyyah. This war marked the end of Italian control of the interior of Libya and confined their occupation to "Tripoli city, the coastal towns of Kums, Benghazi and several other coastal regions in Barqa"; the Italians would not make any progress in controlling the interior of Libya for the duration of the war (Anderson, 1982: 47).

Towards the end of the First World War, Abd el-Rahman Azzam Bey,[19] an Egyptian who had studied medicine in England and was close to nationalist circles in Egypt and Tunisia, arrived in Tripolitania and acted as an advisor to Ramadan al-Suwayhli, after having facilitated negotiations between Idris in Barqa and the Italians and the British to secure their autonomy via the modus vivendi of Acroma which the Italians had signed in April 1917. This modus vivendi was welcomed in Tripolitania as a starting point for self-determination. What was needed, however, was "a broadly-based organization to represent Tripolitanian interests" as Anderson (1982: 51) put it. The Tripolitanian Republic was born in 1918 at a meeting of the region's notables in Misallatah, but it was not the broadly-based organization that was needed.

The choice of name for the Tripolitanian Republic, the first republic in the Arab world, was "less a reflection of the republican sentiments of its founders than of their inability to agree on a single individual to act as its head of state or Amir" (Anderson, 1982: 51). Whereas in east Libya there was almost always a consensus on the Sanusiyah for the leadership of the region, in western Libya this was not the case. This was the primary cause of the disintegration of the Republic. A Council of Four was established to act as the ruling body; the council was composed of Ramadan al-Suwayhli from Misrata, Sulayman al-Baruni from Jabal Nafusa, Ahmad Murayyid, a leader of the Tarhuna tribe in the southeast of Tripoli, and Abd al-Nabi Bilkhayr of Warfalla,[20] a tribe from the west of

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[19] An interesting account of the role played by Abd el-Rahman Azzam Pasha in Libya and Egypt and his interpretation of Arab nationalism is provided in Coury, Ralph (1998) *The Making of an Egyptian Arab Nationalist 1893 – 1936*. Reading, UK: Ithaca Press.

[20] The Warfalla tribe is a large tribal confederation with tribal groups, some of which consider themselves of Berber origins. It is predominantly, however, an Arab tribe. Intermarriage with Libyan tribesmen resulted in the Arabization of the region by the time of the Ottoman conquest in the 16th century (Ahmida, 2009).

Libya that has its stronghold in the town of Bani Walid.[21] The Egyptian, Azzam Bey, was the Council's secretary and an advisory group with 24 members was established to represent the regions and the interests of the province. The republic's headquarters were in Aziziyah.

According to Jacques Roumani, the newly born republic "demanded that Italy open negotiations for independence in the spirit of postwar Wilsonian principles of self-determination" (Roumani, 1983: 159). In a note (Letter No. 96) transmitted on 9 April 1919 to the Ministry of Colonies through the governor of Tripolitania, General Garioni, it was stated:

> The Tripolitanian nation [the republic declared] which has fought a violent war for its independence … demands that the Italian government let it govern itself … as is its natural right … The Tripolitanian nation declares its readiness to accept a formula that will preserve Italy's honor in international affairs as long as such a formula does not affect morally or materially the independence of Tripolitanians. (Cited in Roumani, 1983: 159)

In a letter to the Italian prime minister, Ramadan al-Suwayhli explained the significance of the republic: "Tripolitania, our homeland, is but a unit of the Muslim world which, as you know, underwent significant changes in recent years…" There were also others who pointed out "that the Arab race must find within itself the power to redeem itself and recover its ancient, glorious civilization, free from the unpropitious Turkish yoke as well as from Christian domination" (Roumani, 1983: 160). A contemporary historian described the republic as follows:

> It would be ignoring the facts to deny that such a form of independent government reflected the convictions and tendencies of the Tripolitanians.

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[21] According to Jacques Roumani, the republic took a "collegial form of government", representing something of a regional confederacy under the stewardship of four leaders: Ramadan al-Suwayhli (eastern Tripolitania), Sulayman al-Baruni (a former Ottoman senator from Tripoli with a Berber constituency in the west), Ahmad Murayyid (centre and coastal areas) and 'Abd al-Nabi Bilkhayr (eastern hinterland). They also vowed never to make peace with Italy (Roumani, 1983: 159).

> It would be wrong to judge it as an artificial phenomenon because it did respond to the great movement of Islamic awakening that began in opposition to the Young Turks in 1908. (Cited in Roumani, 1983: 160)

The Paris Peace Conference in 1919 revealed a gap between how the leaders of the republic perceived themselves and how they were perceived by European powers. Anderson highlights the discrepancy:

> The two sides met in April 1919, each operating under a fundamental misapprehension of the other's intentions. The Republic leaders were negotiating, or so they thought, as the equals of the Italians: Two independent governments were discussing disputed territory. The Italians, by contrast, viewed their talks with the Tripolitanian leaders as the inauguration of a system by which they would rule undisputed through the native chiefs. The misunderstanding was never resolved but the negotiations led to the announcement of the agreement of Khallat al-Zaytuna, named after the village outside Tripoli where the discussions took place. (Anderson, 1982: 52)

This agreement led to the development of the *Legge Fondamentale* (or *Statuto*) of June 1919. This was later extended to Barqa. The documents were a set of laws that provided for a special Italian-Libyan citizenship for Italians and Libyans and accorded citizens the right to vote in elections for local parliaments. They were exempted from military conscription and taxing powers were in the hands of the locally elected parliament. Positions in the local administration were to be filled by appointment by the Italian governor after nomination by a ten-man council, eight of whose members were Libyans selected by the parliament. The laws were a form of compromise for the leaders of the republic, who were under the pressure of limited means and an exhausted population, and the Italians. Nevertheless, within weeks following the *Statuto*, "mutual accusations of bad faith were exchanged" because both parties saw it as a temporary arrangement. Later, as noted by Azzam Bey, the Italians exploited the reliance of the leaders of the republic on Italian patronage to divide the ranks of the republic (Anderson, 1982: 53).

By 1923, the Tripolitanian Republic had fallen apart. Organizational weakness and lack of recognition by European powers, as well as internal differences that allowed the Italians to manipulate its leaders through their financial dependency, led to the republic's failure. Azzam Bey had left for Egypt, Ramadan al-Suwayhli was dead, and Sulayman al-Baruni left Libya in 1921, was later expelled from Tunisia, and, after travelling to France, Egypt, Turkey and Mecca, settled in Oman in 1924 as its finance minister (Anderson, 1982: 61).

Under the British Military Administration (1943 – 1951)

The Italian occupation ended in Libya in 1943 when the Allied Forces defeated the Italians and Germans in the North Africa campaigns during the Second World War. An article published in the *Corriere di Tripoli* on the 5th of February 1943, titled "Churchill in Tripoli" announced the victory of the British troops in the Second World War stating that: "The victory march which Rommel had planned for Alexandria has taken place instead in Tripoli". The article included a flamboyant description of the British victory over Italy and the Axis powers in Libya:

> A saluting base, draped with signal flags, had been erected beneath the frowning walls of the grim fortress. Troops of the Eighth Army lined the Square and stretched in disciplined routes up the broad stretch of Corso Italo Balbo. There were tanks, carriers, armoured cars, machine - gun lorries, field guns, ack-ack guns - all the mechanized might of the Army that is throwing the Axis out of North Africa.

This launched a period of intense civic and political activity in Libya as well as divisions on the future of an independent Libya. Baldinetti (2010) notes that while there was an agreement on independence, there was disagreement on the means for its attainment; “Three main tendencies can be discerned among these movements, those that accepted Idris al-Sanusi as Amir of a united Libya, those who were ready to accept a foreign mandate over the country for a transitional period until independence and those who dreamt of setting up a democratic, constitutional republic” (Baldinetti, 2010: 110).

The British Military Administration in Tripolitania and Barqa governed under the terms of the 1907 Hague Convention on the conduct of war. Laws and institutions that operated during the time of the Italian occupation were retained, although they were stripped of their “fascist and racialist aspects” (Wright, 1969: 192). Tripoli and Misrata were divided into three new provinces – Tripoli, eastern and central – with capitals at Tripoli, Misrata and Garian, respectively. Those provinces, divided into fifteen districts, came under the command of senior civil affairs officers with the rank of lieutenant-colonel under whom was a small British staff assisted by Italian and Libyan local advisory councils. The twenty-one *Municipii* in the towns and settlement villages continued to operate as per the Italian model. In Barqa, there were seven districts that were later reduced to three in place of the Italian provinces of Benghazi and Derna (Wright, 1969: 192). Some changes were instituted; nevertheless, the Italian lire and British pound were replaced by a new currency, the military authority lire. In Tripolitania, Italian courts continued to function because military and Italian courts had separately defined jurisdictions while shari‘a and rabbinical courts carried on with matters related to them. In Barqa, because there was no Italian administration capable of operating, the military courts in Barqa were “given jurisdiction over civil crimes, and civil courts became operational only in 1944” (Baldinetti, 2010: 115).

After twenty-two years in exile, Idris al-Sanusi returned to Barqa in 1944 calling for its independence. In 1946, he approved the formation of a National Front representing the townsmen and tribes of Barqa and they demanded British recognition of the Sanusi Emirate under his leadership. John Wright holds that while the older generation of dignitaries and tribal leaders was focused on the independence of Barqa alone, the younger generation was developing a wider, pan-Libyan nationalist outlook which included union with Tripolitania. The ʿUmar al-Mukhtar club founded in 1942 under the patronage of Sayyid Idris was a platform for their nationalist views (Wright, 1961: 196). Nevertheless, as explained later in the thesis, the ‘Umar al-Mukhtar club was always associated with Barqa and had much less influence and social buy-in in Tripolitania.

Because of the thrust of political and civic activities, by the autumn of 1946 the British had recognized the need to grant Barqa a measure of self-government under Sayyid Idris and, after touring the country, a five-member War Office Commission in January 1947 recommended a three-stage programme for independence under British guidance (Wright, 1961: 196). Barqa was well on its way to independence but the Tripolitanians, however, remained leaderless and this compromised their demand for independence. The United National Front, founded in Tripolitania in 1946 to oppose an Italian return, was the main advocate for Sanusi rule over a united Libya (Wright 1961: 196). Tripolitanian politics was deeply divided. “By 1947, there were seven political parties in Tripolitania” (Baldinetti, 2010: 116). The first party was established in 1945 which was al-Hizb al-watani (the Nationalist Party), which was “a revival of an earlier party of the same name, founded by ‘Abd al-Rahman ‘Azzam in 1919 in Tripoli”. This party, under the leadership of Ahmad Faqih Hassan, “was organized by a small group and was based on the premises of al-Nadi al-adabi (the Literary Club) which had been established in 1943. This and the other three existing clubs, Nadi al-‘ummal (the Workers’ Club), Nadi al-shabab (the Sporting Club) and Nadi al-nahda (the Reform Club) of Misurata, while ostensibly cultural and recreational associations, were in fact embryonic political formations” (Baldinetti, 2010: 117). Under the British administration, social clubs were allowed and those “became the only channels for public expression from the end of July 1943” (Baldinetti, 2010: 117).

An attempt at unity was made by Bashir al-Saʿdawi through the Libyan Liberation Committee (LLC) in 1947. Bashir al-Saʿdawi, leader of the exiles’ movement in Syria, sought to bring different nationalist groups from Barqa and Tripolitania together. According to Baldinetti,

> The LLC soon received the approval of the Nationalist Party, the Free National Bloc and the United National Front who all issued statements in favour of unity. The Egypto-Tripolitanian Union Party did not participate as it had poor relations with the other parties who contested the position of Ali Rajab, the party president, particularly as they had declared that all Libyans desired to form union with Egypt. […] The programme of the LLC included action for the independence of Libya, cooperation with the Arab League and maintenance of Libyan unity during the struggle for freedom. The fact that there were no clear references to Idris’ political leadership after the establishment of independence, resulted in the refusal of the Barqan National Front to join the LLC (Baldinetti, 2010: 128).

Attempts at unity were short-lived and internal divisions within the parties led to the failure of al-Sa‘dawi’s efforts; “The United National Front faced a schism in its executive committees. The president Salim al-Muntasir was accused of having ‘been bought by the Italians’ and other members also had a pro-Italian attitude. The Nationalist Party faced an internal split and the party branches in Zuwara, Zliten and Khoms separated themselves from the Tripoli branch. The Egypto-Tripolitanian Union lacked financial support and renounced the idea of a union with Egypt and embraced Bashir al-Saʿdawi’s programme” (Baldinetti, 2010: 131). In 1949, and after a number of negotiations and propositions by the big powers regarding the future of Libya, the General Assembly adopted United Nations resolution 289 which concerned the disposal of former Italian colonies and which led to Libyan independence (Baldinetti, 2010: 138).

Post-independence and the Kingdom of Libya (1951–1969)

In the period prior to its independence in 1951, Libya consisted of three separately administered territories: Barqa had limited self-government under the Amir who was advised by a British resident; Tripolitania was administered by the British; and Fezzan was under French military administration (Golino, 1970: 338). The Kingdom of Libya was influenced by twentieth-century efforts at state formation; this was evidenced in the Tripolitanian Republic (1918) and the Sanusi Emirate (1920), all of which sought to patch together a nation-state out of a former colony. Libyans living abroad also played a role along with other international forces (St John, 2003: 21).

The drawing up of the Libyan constitution reflected the variety of actors positioned to determine the fate of the Libyan state and, later, its failure. As Anderson notes, repeated foreign intervention contributed to shaping the competing definitions of the most desirable form of government and the best-suited political leadership within the country. This, however, resulted in a century of international ambivalence, confusion and, often, duplicity about the international norms that govern statehood and sovereignty in the Arab world. The first constitution of Libya was developed by a Provisional National Assembly under the supervision of the United Nations Commissioner, Adrian Pelt. A Dutch national, Pelt received guidance from the United Nations Council for Libya that included a variety of nationalities. It had representatives from Egypt, France, Italy, Britain, Pakistan and the United States of America, but only four Libyan members representing Barqa, Tripolitania, Fezzan and the non-Arab minorities (Golino, 1970: 339). Foreign influences spoke for the Libyans internationally while the Libyan people dealt with their domestic problems internally. In short, the monarchy did "little to resolve the dilemmas of identity and loyalty that Libya faced at independence" (Anderson, 1986: 68).

It was after independence in 1951, and with the unification of Libya as a federal kingdom under King Idris, that the beginnings of Libyan nationhood and statehood became clear, but it was not without challenges. The state was yet to achieve legitimacy in the eyes of the public, as Chapter Five of this thesis demonstrates. Manifestations of a national consciousness began to appear but local regional divisions persisted. A constitution was drafted and institutions started to emerge and expand; this process was later aided by the discovery of oil in 1959, which provided the money needed to finance these institutions. A civic life flourished hand in hand with a political one;[22] trade unions, associations and political parties emerged and the forging of a national consciousness as well as statehood seemed to be underway. According to the memoirs of Jumu'a Attigah, who was Chief Prosecutor under Gaddafi and has served as Deputy President of the General National Congress of Libya since 2012 and as Acting President of the General National Congress of Libya since the resignation of Mohamed Yousef el-Magariaf on 28 May 2013:

> Features of philosophical and literary Renaissance in Libya start significantly developing in the second half of the 1950s when a generation of intellectual pioneers embarks on their journey … stimulated by the rise in literacy and desire to overcome intellectual backwardness that had been bringing down the Libyan people over the long period of time of colonisation and oppression. The late 1950s was characterised by complete openness towards the *Mashreq* and increasing activities by Libyan students who started returning to Libya having completed their studies in Arab states, in particular Egypt and were bringing with them their academic qualifications, prominent intellectual influences and ideological currents that they wished to apply for the benefit and improvement of their country. Some intellectuals from this generation, however, could not go to study abroad for various reasons, such as poverty, but had, nonetheless, demonstrated outstanding ideas, determination and seriousness and

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[22] Chapter Three focuses on the rise of associational life in Libya following independence.

> contributed to the establishment of cultural life in Libya. (Attigah, 2011: 103)

The Gaddafi-led coup in 1969, however, brought the beginnings of this cultural and social flourishing to an end and a new era was inaugurated that destroyed the short-lived infrastructure of a Libyan state and nation.

The regional influence on the development of the Kingdom was strong. The role of Tunisia and Egypt has always been central, especially with the presence of strong tribal links across borders. Since the sixteenth century, the Jefara region, a triangular area stretching between the north-western regions of Libya and south-eastern regions of Tunisia, has been dominated by two tribal confederations: the Werghemma in the west and the Nwayel in the east. Divisions as a result of the French colonization of Tunisia and the Italian colonization of Libya disrupted relations, but both economic and cultural links continued to exist. There are also tribal connections between Libya's eastern Barqa and Egypt's western desert, particularly the shared lineage between the Awlad Ali tribe, which amounts to 750,000 people, and Libya's Ubaydat tribe; both have played key roles in Libya's war with Chad and the revolution of 2011 (El Taraboulsi, 2016).

The centrality of the regional context was also prominent in the rise of King Idris.[23] King Idris was the grandson of Sayyid Muhammad ibn Ali as-Sanusi or the Grand Sanūsi, who was born in Algeria but accumulated his knowledge and refined his Sufi teachings through his travels across the Arab world from Egypt to Morocco, Tunisia, Hijaz and Libya. This collective learning was later locally institutionalized in the *zawiya*, an Islamic school and the equivalent of a monastery. The Sanusiyah's birth in Libya came in 1843 with the establishment of the first *zawiya* in Barqa in the city of Bayda; this was to become the headquarters of the Grand Sanusi's teachings and from there it spread to other places, far and near. Indeed: "The response to his call was great and in a few years al-Jabal al-Akhdar was dotted with Sanusi *zawiyas*, and a number of them were founded in Egypt, Marmarica, Tripolitania, Fazzan, Southern Tunisia, Southern Algeria and the Sudan" (Ziadeh, 1958: 46).

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[23] Umar al-Mukhtar al-Wafi, a political prisoner under Gaddafi, presents a number of illustrative examples in his memoirs to show the extent to which the Egyptian influence was strong in Libya following independence. He recounts that in 1958, when he was a student at al-Shahat primary school, the American Embassy in Libya issued a magazine in Arabic called *al-Ma'rifa* (Knowledge) which was distributed for free in schools and government buildings and was popular with the student body. When the Egyptian teachers found out about this, they asked their students to stop reading the magazine and to prevent its circulation because they viewed it as an American propaganda tool. As a result, Libyan students tore the magazine and all students stopped reading it (al-Wafi, 2018: 33).

Thesis outline

The thesis is divided into three core contextualized empirical chapters and three framing ones. Each core chapter independently addresses the role of the civic space in state building as related to the local actor in focus. The research takes an empirical stance on the role played by tribal formations as well as population groups, and reports on them where they occur. Three main population groups are featured in depth in the research: Arab Libyans, Italians and the Jews of Libya. It is worth noting here that in referring to the "Jews of Libya" or the "Jewish population of Libya", the research does not seek to undermine the heterogeneity of this population which was composed of a majority that was Libyan and a minority that had European origin. It also comprised different socioeconomic backgrounds and regional loyalties. It does so for substantive focus and because the research also acknowledges that in the existing historiography of Libya, the Jewish population, both Libyan and European, was the subject of focused analysis that distinguished it from the rest of the population (De Felice, 1985; Goldberg, 1990; al-Ahwal, 2005). Chapter Five addresses the experience of the Jewish population of Libya in more depth especially within the civic space.

The role played by the Berber population[24] is also addressed but in a more limited manner, mainly through key leaders in the resistance against Italian occupation such as Sulayman al-Baruni. This is due to the scarcity of data on the roles they played during the period between 1911 and 1969 as a population group which could largely be attributed to their intermarriage with Arabs as argued by Ahmida (2009) and because of their geographic location: they were mostly located in the Nafusa Mountains in the western regions of the country.[25] As a population group, they warrant a separate study that addresses their engagement in state-society relations during the period in question.

Chapters

This thesis does not follow a chronological order in its examination of the history of Libya between 1911 and 1969, although there is an attempt to explore the evolution of each actor within the context of state-society relations that recognizes key historical and socioeconomic transitions during the period in question. The focus is mainly on the local actor addressed, and its engagement with other local actors as well as with other state structures. This is because, in certain periods, some actors were less active than others, or they did not exist. For example, Arab associations or *jamʿiyyat* were largely banned under Italian occupation and only existed in an informal fashion as is the case in the Literary Club which was established in Libya in the 1920s. Associational life in Libya became substantially more active under the British Military Administration and after independence when it developed alongside the emerging political life and trade unions. Moreover, the chapters overlap in the way they tackle different historical periods (Italian colonialism, British Military Administration and independence). The political chronology provided earlier in this chapter should serve as a background for the analysis provided in the empirical chapters within this study.

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[24] Two ethnic groups are described as Berber within the literature on Libya. The first one is the Amazigh, Ibadi Muslims, who inhabit the north and north-western regions of Libya, mainly the Nafusa mountain. They are also part of an ethnic group that spans parts of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisian, Libya, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad. The second group is the Touareg who are traditionally nomadic groups located around the oases of Ghat and Ghadames and inhabit the northwest and southwest corners of Libya (Abdulaziz, 2014: 7).

[25] Despite intermarriage, it is worth noting here that there was a perception of rivalry between Arabs and Berbers in the interviews conducted for this research as well as in a limited number of exchanges in the archival material consulted at the British National Archives. In a telegram from the British Embassy in Libya (Tripoli) to the British Foreign Office in Tunis, disturbances in Zuara, near the Tunisian frontier, are documented "in which two persons have been shot dead, one wounded and sixty arrested". This is described as "of purely parochial character originating from long-standing Arab-Berber rivalry" (British National Archives. Foreign Office. Political Departments: General Correspondence 1906 – 1966. (1958) "Disturbances in Libya Originating from Rivalry between Arabs and Berbers" FO 371/131792). al-Baruni was also always suspected of harbouring an interest in establishing an autonomous Ibadi province for the Berber population in the western mountains of Libya (St. John, 2014). This perception is addressed in the thesis but there is a need for wider historical and ethnographic research to understand the social base on which the Berbers could have operated to further their own interests or more national Libyan interests during that period of time.

Chapter One – Theoretical framework: Civil society and state-society relations in the Arab state

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework for this thesis. It presents an overview of key concepts and tensions in theories on the state in the Third World and explains the centrality of state-society relations to an understanding of Libya's experience with state formation and disintegration with a focus on its civil society. It calls for a more specific treatment of state-society engagement in state building; one that benefits from an examination of history and patterns of state formation and disintegration.

Chapter Two – Methodology

While the study is largely influenced by the social sciences, the resulting analysis contributes to a sociohistorical analysis of state-society relations in Libya. This chapter examines the challenges and opportunities presented by using a historian's methods in the research methodology. It discusses the various ways through which bias in the archival material consulted for this research was addressed. It is divided into three sections: first, an overview of why Libya's historiography is limited; second, why social history can contribute to filling this gap; and third, a discussion on limitations within this study and opportunities for social history as methodology in Libya's state building.

Chapter Three – Associational life in Libya: The civic space as cooperation and contestation

This chapter addresses various aspects of associational life in Libya during the period in question. It examines its development from a limited or constrained existence under the Italian occupation to its flourishing under the British Military Administration and for a limited period after independence. It describes the various ways associations represented a platform through which resistance to the Italian occupation was debated at the same time as the future of the Libyan state was both contested and discussed. The ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association is a particular instance through which Libya's civic space featured cooperation and contestation among local actors as well as between those actors and the independent state.

Chapter Four – Trade union activism: The civic space as institutional formation and disintegration

This chapter examines the growth of a trade union movement in Libya after independence and during the reign of King Idris as well as the role played by trade unions in the development of political parties. It is an exploration of the consolidation of Libyan political consciousness at the time, its local and regional origins, and its institutionalization alongside the emergence of political parties in Libya, and instances of its disintegration. Civil society, as seen through Libyan trade union activism, was critical to institutional development as is the case in the emergence of trade union confederations and to institutional disintegration because of entrenched divisions in state-society engagement under King Idris.

Chapter Five – Muslim and Jewish religious actors: The civic space as a site for national and transnational transactions

This chapter addresses the political and social roles played by religious actors, Muslim and Jewish, in the development and disintegration of the Libyan state. Muslim and Jewish groups are approached as the space within which local actors engaged with one another as well as with dominant state structures; Italian, British and Arab. They are also approached as actors in their own right within the wider spectrum of political contestations. Specific focus is given to the transactional aspects of those religious actors, nationally and transnationally, and the implications of national Muslim civic space tied to the Sanusi Order and transnational Jewish civic space on the development and disintegration of the Libyan state.

Conclusion: State building, localism and the dual role of Libya's civic space

This chapter identifies the theoretical and empirical contributions made by the thesis. It also addresses the role played by the civic space in state building and disintegration within the context of state-society engagement and suggests that civil society should be analyzed on three levels: the macro-level incorporating national and transnational transactions of local actors or society as related to the state, meso-level incorporating social and political aspects of cooperation and contestation among local actors and between local actors and the state, and at the micro-level incorporating institutional aspects of local actors. I argue that an understanding of how to incorporate civic space and its various aspects is an essential anchor to a state building process in Libya.

CHAPTER ONE

Theoretical framework: Civil society and state-society relations in the Arab state

Interest in the state within the Middle East only started to grow seriously among Arab intellectuals in the 1980s – “The state had emerged in the Arab World at a time when Arab intellectuals were not really paying attention to its development – they were mostly preoccupied either with the ‘Islamic *umma*’ or with ‘Arab nationalism’ but not with the territorial bureaucratic state as such.” (Ayubi, 2006: 4) Unlike the social and organizational developments in Europe from the sixteenth to the twentieth century which led to the emergence of the modern “state” in the West, modern state formation in the Arab world followed a different trajectory. As Lisa Anderson explains, decolonization following the Second World War “distributed this model [of the nation-state] throughout the territories of the declining empires, and membership in the new United Nations was open to all ‘peace-loving states’” (Anderson, 2017: 230).[26] The way through which the “nation-state” was distributed and applied also varied. Eugene Rogan here describes the varying ways through which the British and the French used the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 to apply the modern state system to the Arab world, with all Arab lands but central and southern Arabia falling under some form of colonial rule:

> In Syria and Lebanon, newly emerging from Ottoman rule,
> the French gave their colonies a republican form of

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[26] It is important to note here that while Anderson does state that the nation-state model was introduced to the Third World via Europe, she had clarified in her earlier work; *The State and Social Transformation in Tunisia and Libya (1830 – 1980),* that she does not hold that these states “were simply creations of capitalist Europe” (Anderson, 1986: 23). She argues that: “On the contrary, the character and vitality of the indigenous forms of authority at the moment of integration into the world economy and political system were in large measure to determine the effects of European influence, the stability and continuity of state formation, and the extent to which such development proceeded in step with economic transformations within the society” (Anderson, 1986: 23). What Anderson does not explain in her analysis is how this influence by indigenous forms of authority happened and what kind of effect has it had.

> government. The British, in contrast, endowed their Arab possessions in Iraq and Transjordan with the trappings of the Westminster model of constitutional monarchy. Palestine was the exception, where the promise to create a Jewish national home against the opposition of the indigenous population undermined all efforts to form a national government. (Rogan, 2012: 10)

With artificial borders and an imposed political process, “the colonial experience left the Arabs as a community of nations rather than a national community” (Rogan, 2012: 11).

Because of this exogenous nature of the modern European nation-state form to the Arab world, approaches to understanding the form and function of the state generally fall into two camps or categories. The first subscribes to the Weberian tradition of political sociology wherein the state is based on the Western experience with state formation and is conceptually an independent political organization with a monopoly on violence within a given territory (Anderson, 1986; Ayubi, 1995; Zartman, 2017). The other approach challenges or rejects this model in favour of a more bottom-up approach that emphasizes the role of local history and society in state formation in non-Western contexts (Ahmida, 2009; Das & Poole, 2004; Mamdani; 1996; Samatar & Samatar 2002; Migdal, 2004; Traboulsi, 2016). Nevertheless, as Turkish political scientist Ali Kazancigil argues, the persistence of the “state formula” as per the Weberian tradition[27] as integral to the global order makes it difficult to completely depart from the state as a model for social, economic and political organization. He questions why new formulas have not been invented even in countries where the concept of statehood may contradict those of the “native sociopolitical ethos" such as in Islamic states, for example.[28] Despite the fact that the modern state was imposed by colonial powers, its continuity can be attributed to "cultural diffusion" and to its adoption by the elites of postcolonial and non-Western countries [Kazancigil, 1986: 119 – 125].[29] While the state in the Middle East may lag behind some more developed cases, it is the case that "Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran and probably even Iraq" are "states of various types, with recognized, often demarcated, though frequently very permeable, boundaries" (Zartman, 2017: 948).

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[27] Weber defines the state as “a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory”. Physical force within the context of the state, according to Weber, is about power and that those active in politics always strive for power. The state, as a political institution, is a relation of men who seek to dominate men, a relation supported by means of legitimate violence. Hence, “For the state to exist, it has to force those who are ruled to comply with the claimed authority of those actually ruling.” (Weber, 1946: 132)

The persistence of the modern state formula has led some theorists like Adham Saouli in his book *The Arab State: Dilemmas of Late Formation (2012)* to highlight the limitations of various scholarly approaches to understanding statehood within the Middle East. He says:

> Some intellectuals have dubbed the Arab state as a Western fabrication or as an alien system imposed on a reluctant environment, or as an entity that lacks credentials associated with modern states. Others have portrayed the Arab state as a natural political entity – an expression of the national aspirations of different peoples – that has roots in the history of the region. (Saouli, 2012: 2)

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[28] In political Islam, borders exist between peoples rather than between lands and there is one single boundary between *dar al-harb* and *dar al-islam*, meaning the land of war and the land of submission. Within the land of Islam, there are no boundaries except for administrative convenience (Zartman, 2017: 937). It is worth noting here that there are Islamic theorists who instead of referring to *dar al-harb,* refer to *dar al-ahd* or the land of accord which is a reference to the Mecca period when Muslims where a minority in a land where the majority rejected the Revelation and where Muslims became responsible for calling people into the faith (Cesari, 2004).

[29] A collection of studies in an issue of *International Affairs* (2017) with a focus on the state in the Middle East concludes that states in this region "have an existence that matters and at the same time is characteristically vulnerable" but that despite its dysfunctional existence, the "Middle East state system is not on the brink of any major change, either in its components or in the regional order among them" (Zartman, 2017: 948). Those "imperfect states" are still "growing to extend their authority to their borders but commanding a sense of identity that is larger than their own operations". It also concludes that while "Weber's ideal state is a long way off", the model still persists and "most states are working at it" (Zartman, 2017: 948).

Saouli, instead, argues that what emerged in the Middle East following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire should be conceptualized as "social fields" rather than nation-states. Those social fields constituted the spheres of influence of the European encroachment on the Middle East and they are the social arenas where states form and de-form. He defines social fields as follows:

> European expansion neutralized Ottoman centralized power, providing local leaders with external opportunity to bid for power locally. European encroachment diffused a system of anarchy – an ordering principle of a system that lacks an overarching power – in the Middle East and this replaced the centralized Ottoman regime. Through competition, European powers carved spheres of influence forming what I define as "social fields". (Saouli, 2012: 5)

Saouli further defines social fields as the "territorial social arenas that structure relations among several social powers". Those social powers interact in cycles of domination and resistance in order to establish a ruling system that is based on a hierarchy as the first phase of state formation (Saouli, 2012: 5). In exploring those social fields, Saouli identifies two theoretical conditions to explore state formation in the Middle East and those are: "domestic power monopolisation" which is based on the ability and capacity of the ruling system to consolidate its power through coercion or other ideological or economic resources; and "external neutralization" which is derived from, or sustained by, the balance of power inherent within the international system. Arab states, according to this rationale, have aligned themselves with external states in order to neutralize threats to their survival (Saouli, 2012:5). Beyond the internal power politics that are largely co-opted by or resistant to external powers, more analysis is needed to understand how local actors contribute to or compromise a process of state formation and to identify the parameters within which external neutralization affects this state society engagement.

Saouli's approach is still inspired by the Weberian definition of the state even as it calls for a reconceptualization of the state in the Middle East as "states in late formation". The divergence in approaches to statehood within the Arab World that Saouli referred to leaves a scholar of the state in non-Western contexts in a confusing position. Selecting one approach risks an incomplete understanding of the development and in some cases (as in Libya and Yemen for example) disintegration of the Arab state. Although imperfect, the dominance of the state formula which requires at the very least some degree of monopoly on legitimate violence within a specific territory as per the Weberian tradition makes it difficult to completely reject this definition of the state altogether. In a similar vein, just looking at the state as a conceptually independent and compulsory political association which derives its legitimacy from impersonal rule of law (Anderson, 1986: 20) neglects the centrality of local history and modes of social organization that have played a critical role in adopting or challenging the state model and adapting it to its context.

In this chapter, I argue that much of the dissatisfaction with theories on the state in the Arab world or in countries located on the "periphery" of the global political system is linked to two tensions; *positionality* (center versus periphery) and *emphasis* (state versus society), and that this dissatisfaction can be addressed via a more specific treatment of state-society engagement in state building; one that benefits from an examination of history and patterns of state formation and disintegration according to its own dynamics and *in time*.

Paul Pierson's call for bringing "temporality" to bear on social analysis in his book *Politics in Time: History, Institutions and Social Analysis* (2004) explains the merits of such an approach. He argues that the significance of analyzing "variables" in the social sciences is distorted when they are taken out of their temporal context and holds that placing politics in time can enrich the "understanding of complex social dynamics"

(Pierson, 2004: 2). He bases his argument on three main points. First, social processes are path dependent which means that particular courses of action (political, economic and/or social), once introduced, are difficult to reverse and it is only by placing those processes in their temporal context that an analyst is able to identify those path dependencies and explain them. Second, identifying sequencing in social processes is also important because the temporal order of events can be a key determinant of its outcome. Third, because social causes and outcomes can also be slow and can take place over extended periods of time which requires an analysis of social processes as they unfold in order to better understand them (Pierson, 2004: 19 – 20). The temporal dimensions of state society engagement in Libya during the period in question are addressed in the empirical chapters and they also have a bearing on the theoretical framing discussed in this chapter.

I contend that, in the case of Libya, an understanding of the logic of how the state (colonial and postcolonial) and society engage with one another as traced through the development and disintegration of its civic space as well as a careful assessment of conflict and contestation within the civic space, and between social actors and the state are necessary to explain the opportunities and limitations of state building in Libya. I point out that the civic space is one within which state-society engagement is exemplified and that understanding the dynamics of this engagement is necessary to explain and theorize an anchor for state building in Libya.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section is an overview of key tensions in theories on the state in the Third World. The second section focuses on the case of Libya and the centrality of state-society relations to an understanding of Libya's experience with state formation and disintegration. The third and final section outlines the theoretical framework for this thesis and explains what is meant by civic space within the context of state building in Libya. It is worth noting that terms like "Arab World", "Third

World" and "peripheral states" are largely used interchangeably, not to imply that they are synonymous but because the literature on the state in the Arab world has used those terms to refer to the same region with authors using terms to emphasize particular aspects about this part of the world. With "peripheral states" and "Third World", the emphasis is usually on the existence of those states on the periphery of global economy while "Arab World" is a reference to the linguistic identity of the region.

Tensions in theorizing the state in the Arab World

The first tension in theorizing the state in the Third World is one of *positionality*; that is the question of whether analysis of the state is approached from the center or from the periphery. Lisa Anderson, for example, points out in her comparative study of state and social transformation in Tunisia and Libya (1830 – 1980), that while the Weberian bureaucratic state arose in Europe alongside economic and social changes such as "the appearance of capitalism, industrialist and working classes, class consciousness, and ideological politics" (Anderson, 1986:8); in the Third World, "elements of the modern bureaucratic state often appeared before the introduction of capitalist economic organization" (Anderson, 1986: 8). According to her, it is this delinking or separation in the context of the Third World or peripheral states that has contributed to defining the Third World's experience with state formation. In the case of Tunisia and Libya, the introduction of the modern bureaucratic state did not result from "indigenous social forces". Instead, "the international environment, particularly the simultaneous challenge and model provided by European expansion, prompted local rulers to reorganize their administrations" (Anderson, 1986: 270). Contrary to the European experience, "social structural transformation" in the Third World "is as often caused by state formation as it is its cause" (Anderson, 1986: 270). This view, however, is challenged by other theorists who reject the Weberian model as Eurocentric. Ali Ahmida, for example, argues that the modern Libyan nation-state is a "recent construction" and a "product of the colonial period and a reaction to its impact". He challenges theories of social change such as "state building, class formation and cultural resistance that ignore the internal dynamics of native social history" (Ahmida, 2009: 5). He also argues that "Eurocentric views of Maghribi society as unruly, segmentary, traditional or Asiatic assume change to have come from Europe – the 'rational', revolutionary and detribalized region that produced capitalist transformation" and it also suggests that "Europe has had a history that is dynamic, whereas North Africa has had a passive history, one composed of 'closed Muslim tribes' doomed in the face of progressive, capitalist Europe" (Ahmida, 2009: 4).

Another example of an approach to theorizing the state from the center is the "segmentary" model that was put forward by British social anthropologists E. E. Evans-Pritchard and Ernest Gellner and regards North African societies as composed of a number of fairly homogenous tribes (Ahmida, 2002: 132). The rigidity of the model is evident in Evans-Pritchard's description of how it operates:

> Primary tribal divisions split into secondary divisions and secondary divisions split into tertiary divisions and so on. Each of the smaller divisions is a replica of the larger ones and has the same preferential and exclusive rights in its lands, an encroachment on which by another division will lead to fighting. […] Each has within the tribal brand its special lineage markings. The members of each division also consider that they are descended from a common ancestor who, in his turn, is descended from the ancestor of the larger division of which they form a section (Evans-Pritchard, 1949: 55).

This model, argues Ahmida, as is the case in colonial literature, "perceives pre-colonial Maghrib society as an agglomeration of tribes or tribal states basically isolated from the larger social and economic structures of the region" (Ahmida, 2002: 133). Scholars of the segmentary model would, for example, view Libya's experience with state building as "a variation on the theme of 'statelessness' – that is the absence of a central state in both the early and modern periods" and ignore that "these so-called 'changeless tribal forces' produced a strong society with a dynamic social history" (Ahmida, 2002: 133). Ahmida identifies two deficiencies resulting from this approach in the literature on North Africa: the first is that the Eurocentric view of Maghribi society "assumes all change flows from Europe or the West" which "ignores diverse traditions of state formation in Africa and negates the voices of a fluid social history in Africa prior to the colonial period" and the second is the inadequacy of the literature in explaining "social transformation and the nature of politics in today's North Africa" (Ahmida, 2002: 133).

This tension between center and periphery has led to the rise of anthropological scholarly work that examines the state "from the margins" (Das and Poole, 2004). Veena Das and Deborah Poole called for "an ethnography of the state as embedded in practices, places and languages considered to be at the margins of the nation-state" (Das and Poole, 2004: 3). They described their analytical strategy as distancing themselves "from the entrenched image of the state as a rationalized administrative form of political organization that becomes weakened or less fully articulated along its territorial or social margins". Instead, they opted to "reflect on how the practices and politics of life in these areas shaped the political, regulatory, and disciplinary practices that constitute, somehow, that thing we call 'the state'" (Das and Poole, 2004: 3). Instead of developing studies on stateless societies or failed states or a top-down state that manifests itself at the local level, they called for a "rethink" of the "boundaries between center and periphery, public and private, legal and illegal" which constitute a challenge even for European states (Das and Poole, 2004: 4). The state, as seen through this approach, is not a fixed object, as Talal Asad puts it. Instead, abstraction, he argues, becomes a necessary "feature of both the state and the citizen because they are concepts in modern political discourse" (Das and Poole, 2004: 279).

The second tension, also related to *positionality,* is one of *emphasis*, that is a focus on the engagement between state and society and the degree to which one is emphasized at the expense of the other and the manner through which they engage with one another. There are two main trends in addressing this engagement. The first focuses on manifestations of the state at the local level with an emphasis on the state as maintaining order and, as argued by Das and Poole (2004), establishing and understanding the "administrative and hierarchical rationalities" that are linked to the political and regulatory apparatus of a state, as in the works of Ferguson and Gupta (2002) on state spatiality and local actors in India. Another trend emphasizes the role of local actors and how they contributed to the shaping of the state. Lebanese historian Fawwaz Traboulsi points out that defining the territory of the state within the Middle East was not only the result of external engineering, but that local and regional actors played a role in this as well. Existing borders in the Middle East tend to be ascribed to the Sykes-Picot agreement which was secretly reached in 1916 by representatives of Great Britain and France, through which most of the Arab lands under the rule of the Ottoman Empire were divided into British and French spheres of influence at the conclusion of the First World War. Under Sykes-Picot, the Syrian coast and much of modern-day Lebanon went to France while Britain took direct control over central and southern Mesopotamia, around the Baghdad and Basra provinces. Palestine had an international administration as other Christian powers, namely Russia, held an interest in this region. The rest of the territory in question—a huge area including modern-day Syria, Mosul in northern Iraq, and Jordan—would have local Arab chiefs under French supervision in the north and British in the south. In an article published in 2016 to reflect on the Centenary of the Sykes-Picot agreement, Traboulsi draws attention to the role played by local and regional actors in creating borders and divisions that had not been there under colonization:

> One of the paradoxes of colonial engineering in Syria, for example, is that the interests of the French political mandate, which separated Lebanon from Syria politically and administratively, clashed with its economic and strategic interests. This led to the economic and financial unification of the two entities (Syria and Lebanon) on the basis of having one currency, one bank, one customs system, one port and one economic capital which was Beirut. One of the paradoxes of the regimes of independence, and of its tragedies, is that what the French colonialists of 1920 had unified was later divided by the Syrian and the Lebanese and there was an economic boycott between the two countries in 1950. At least we are here in front of one division that cannot be blamed on Sykes-Picot! The stalemate takes place when the history of the century is studied from the perspective of the local or external responsibilities of Sykes-Picot's legacy. (Traboulsi, 2016, my translation)

Lisa Anderson addresses state-society engagement in the Third World with a focus on the cases of Libya and Tunisia. Using state formation or disintegration as her point of departure, she argues that “Social groups and interests demand representation in the government when the state has the capacity to extract, transfer and distribute resources within society. When such transfer or resources does not take place – when in other words there is no state, or what state there is chooses to neglect parts of its population – there is no demand for representation” (Anderson, 1986: 270). As a result, “the social structure reflects the primacy of local control over resources and of political autonomy” and that “the mutual absence of demands – for resources on the part of the state and for representation in decisions about distribution on the part of the rural population – permitted and fostered the maintenance of small scale, kinship-based organization” (Anderson, 1986: 270-271). Anderson is evidently addressing a lack of representation within the political sphere but what about the social and civic spheres? Ahmida calls for an analysis of Libyan civil society outside the state bureaucracy and extending it to non-Western contexts. Colonial policies and transformations, he argues, did not occur in a vacuum but against "a living and dynamic indigenous society with states, merchant corporations, clans, Sufi orders and political ideologies" (Ahmida, 2009: 142). He elaborates on this by giving examples from the Algerian, Moroccan and Libyan contexts:

> The weaknesses of the Algerian military state and its isolation from the larger Algerian society was the crucial cause for its quick defeat. Also, the collaboration of the Husayni and the Alawite elites with the French led the latter to pursue a policy of indirect colonization in the name of old precolonial states. However, despite colonial policies and the collaboration of the upper elite, the hinterland tribes and peasants resisted colonialism and so delayed its penetration of the interior as in the cases of Amir 'Abd al-Qadir in western Algeria (1830 – 1847), 'Abd al-Karim al-Khatabi in northeast Morocco (1921 – 1926) and the Libyan resistance (1911 – 1932). (Ahmida, 2009: 142)

An interest in state-society engagement has spawned ethnographies of the state such as Akhil Gupta's examination of discourses of corruption in India. According to Gupta, to examine the state ethnographically "involves both the analysis of the everyday practices of local bureaucracies and the discursive construction of the state in public culture" (Gupta, 1995: 375). This approach is a departure from seeing the state as a unified whole to a disaggregation of the state "by focusing on different bureaucracies without prejudging their unity or coherence". It also "enables one to problematize the relationship between the translocality of "the state" and the necessarily localized offices, institutions, and practices in which it is instantiated" (Gupta, 1995: 375). In his study on blurred boundaries and the discourse of corruption in India, Gupta argues that distinction between state and civil society "on which such a large portion of the scholarship on the state is based" need to be re-examined. Gupta uses the analysis of the discourse of corruption to question the utility of the state/civil society divide within the Indian context. He concludes that “the discourse of corruption turns out to be a key arena through which the state, citizens, and other organizations and aggregations come to be imagined. Instead of treating corruption as a dysfunctional aspect of state organizations, I see it as a mechanism through which ‘the state’ itself is discursively constituted” (Gupta, 1995: 376).

An attempt, also inspired by Gupta (1995), to bring in society in theorizing the state is Joel Migdal’s state-in-society approach which presents a new definition of the state instead of Weber’s widely used one and problematizes state-society engagement without assuming that the state is a separate unified entity divorced from society. He contends that:

> The assumption that only the state does or should create rules and that it does or should maintain the violent means to bend people to obey those rules minimizes and trivializes the rich negotiation, interaction and resistance that occur in every human society among multiple systems of rules. It posits a human society where one incredibly coherent and complex organization exercises an extraordinary hegemony of thought and action over all other social formations intersecting that territory. It provides no way to theorize about arenas of competing sets of rules, other than to cast these in the negative, as failures or weak states or even as non-states. (Migdal, 2004: 15)

According to Migdal, Weber’s ideal state when taken as “the normal state”, “obscures as much as it illuminates by continually measuring actual states against an ideal version of what states are or should be” (Migdal, 2004: 15). He suggests, instead, a definition of the state as a “field of power marked by the use and threat of violence”; one that is shaped by “the image of a coherent, controlling organization in a territory which is a representation of the people bounded by that territory” as well as “the actual practices of its multiple parts” (Migdal, 2004: 16). Migdal’s definition of the state is still influenced by Weber’s but it brings in society as a critical variable in the development of a state. The image of the state for Migdal is that of an autonomous, integrated and dominant entity that has control within a defined territory directly through its agencies or indirectly through other social organizations such as businesses, families and clubs "to make certain circumscribed rules" (Migdal, 2004: 16). State practices are the "routine performance of state actors and agencies" and those include visa, passports, taxes and so on. He also argues that a state's image and practices can be "overlapping, reinforcing or contradictory and mutually destructive" (Migdal, 2004: 16).

Migdal underscores how this model of state-in-society reveals the paradoxical nature of the state. This is because the state is approached as "the powerful image of a clearly bonded, unified organization that can be spoken of in singular terms" as well as "practices of a heap of loosely connected parts or fragments, frequently with ill-defined boundaries between them and other groupings inside and outside the official state borders and often promoting conflicting sets of rules with one another and with 'official' law" (Migdal, 2004: 40). Conflict, according to Migdal is inherent to the state: "battles may be with families over the rules of education and socialization; they may be with ethnic groups over territoriality; they may be with religious organizations over daily habits" (Migdal, 2004: 50). He gives an example from the early twentieth century when "Mustafa Kemal of Turkey locked horns with religious organizations over whether men should wear hats with brims or without". He argues that "the issue was not as inconsequential as it may appear; the conflict was over who had the right and ability to make rules in that society" (Migdal, 2004: 50). Social control is, thus, necessary for the survival of the state, and this may put it in conflict with other social organization. As explained by Migdal;

> To enhance their strength and autonomy, states must increase their social control. But without the ability to mobilize human and material resources into specialized, task-oriented frameworks that come with already existing social control, states encounter grave difficulties in offering viable strategies of social survival to individuals throughout the country. Using a potpourri of sanctions and rewards,

> other social formations may organize resources into selective incentives constituting alternative strategies. In brief, leaders may find that despite all the seeming riches at their disposal, their organization, the state, lacks the wherewithal to dislodge people from existing strategies offered by organizations with rules different from the state's. (Migdal, 2004: 55)

The question emerging from this model is how, in societies wherein the state has not achieved predominance, have social actors contributed to the shaping of the state; in other words, granted that a degree of conflict is inherent to state-society engagement, how and what are the tools and modalities through which society can shape the state in "states of late formation" as Saouli puts it? I argue that, within non-Western societies where the notion of the state was born externally but was adopted by local actors and adapted to social, cultural and historical realities that are local, it is within the civic space, a space where forms of solidarity and difference emerge among social forces, that society is empowered to shape the state in both constructive and (de)constructive ways, and that there is a pattern to how this shaping happens that is embedded within the history of those societies.

Shaping the state at the local level: The case of Libya

Libya is an example of a country where the normative model of the modern European state has not achieved predominance. This has had direct implications on how concepts associated with statehood like "citizenship" are approached and understood. In Europe, the development of citizenship was linked to the growth of capitalist economies - "In Europe, the transformation of peasants into proletarians, subjects into citizens, personal rule into impersonal government all appeared to be linked with the growth of industrial capitalism and to be essentially irreversible", argues Anderson (Anderson, 1983:

18). That is why, Anderson explains, “most analysts in both the Marxist and Weberian traditions expected capitalism and bureaucratic rationality to triumph everywhere in essentially the same way” (Anderson, 1983: 18). In Libya, however, “citizenship” followed a different trajectory. To understand the development of “citizenship” within the context of Libya requires approaching it through an analysis of its local history and experience, not a European one. No Libyan citizenship was allowed under Italian colonialism - Libyan historian, Abdelmawla Saleh al-Harir, describes how a Libyan’s relationship to his country was defined and moulded by the colonizer, leaving him no options:

> Italian politicians, the instruments of the new Italian civilization, came with a monarchial decree to grant Libyans a second-class Italian citizenship. They came to tell the Libyan to shut his mouth, close his ears and obey orders. This means that there is no middle ground – either accept becoming a second-class Italian citizen or leave your camel and leave the new Rome barefoot and go anywhere else. (al-Harir, 1979: 87)

In the post-colonial period, as local civic movements, manifested themselves in a growth of associations, trade unions and the role of religious actors like the Sanusiyya, sought to define citizenship in the independent Libyan state, the concept remained ambigious especially to minority groups. Jewish and Amazigh Libyans continue to speak of a confusion regarding their identity. The words of an Amazigh activist in 2014 emphasized this identity confusion regarding his Libyan citizenship:

> I am not Libyan. I have a Libyan passport but this does not mean I am Libyan. […] I am Amazigh from Nafūsa and I have no belonging to Libya. I am not rejecting others. I respect them. If they want to call themselves Libyans, that is their choice. It is like the Scottish and the British. Maybe 45% of the Scottish do not have their independence now but they will have it later. Right now, with the conflict unfolding, there is nothing that brings us together in one

> nation. (Amazigh activist from Tripoli, personal interview, Naples, September 24, 2014, my translation)

A Libyan Jew who spent his childhood in Libya in the period prior to 1967 revealed similar sentiments about Libya's contested identity:

> During the Ottoman period, everybody was a minority. Arabs were minorities. Jews were minorities. There was not a national feeling because Libya was not a real state. It is not like Morocco and Egypt where you have six or seven centuries of monarchy. They had a defined territory. Libya is the land between Tunisia and Egypt. Libya is the result of the Ottoman Empire and the Italian colonization. [...] But the people of Libya are different from one another. In my opinion, the people of Barqa and the Jews of Barqa were very similar to the Egyptian people. In Tripoli, people are very similar to the Tunisians. (Libyan Jew from Tripoli who migrated to Rome in 1967, personal interview, Rome, October 7, 2014, my translation)

Today's international state building witnessed in Libya and other post conflict (also postcolonial societies) is a reproduction of the hasty drafting of constitutions and creation of nation-states at the beginning of the twentieth century. The aftermath of the Arab uprisings has resulted in a wave of international state building projects in Libya, Yemen, Iraq and even Syria, and a revival of the 'state'[30] in the social sciences, an interesting development for what was in the 1990s out of fashion and "somewhat suspect in mainstream social science" (Vu, 2010: 148). However, this revival of state building has neglected to acknowledge the inadequacy of the Western democratic nation-state lens when applied to non-Western, postcolonial nations. It also neglects that while bureaucratic models may have been taken from or inspired by the West, they were populated by aspirations and needs that were local. Local dynamics of cooperation and contestation greatly influenced the shape of those bureaucracies, how they functioned, their success as well as their failure.

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[30] The "state" had remerged as a term of interest for the social sciences as well as international development in the post 9/11 period and significantly, within the context of the "war on terror". See Call, Charles T. "The Fallacy of the 'Failed State'." *Third World Quarterly*. Vol. 29. No.8, 2008. pp. 1491–1507.

An overview of Libya's experience with state building and disintegration reveals three trends or features about this experience which render the Weberian model too narrow to understand the dynamics and challenges to state formation in this country, and because of the existing realities of the global order where the state model is dominant, too difficult to do away with altogether. Libya's experience with state formation can be described as cyclical, exogenous in nature and challenged by localism and regionalism as explained below.

Libya's experience with state building has been a cyclical one. Throughout its history, state formation was followed by state disintegration. Bureaucratic systems that were established by the Ottomans in Libya were destroyed by the Italian occupation. When the Italians formally assumed power in 1912, they did not perpetuate or expand the administration that had formerly tied the province to the Ottoman Empire; rather, as they established their own systems, which the Libyan population had no access to, the old bureaucratic structures slowly disintegrated and local leaders were left without their following. In Tunisia, the experience of the population was different: "the French under the guise of a protectorate retained, strengthened, and extended the bureaucratic administration of the local state" (Anderson, 1986: 8). The Italian colonial administration in Libya, unlike the French in Tunisia, did not extend "local administrative links" to the Libyan population (Anderson, 1986: 34). Libyans were thus barred from perpetuating the systems put in place by the Ottomans, maintaining their own following or having access to the new structures established by the Italians (except for members of the Libyan elite who were mostly educated in Italy or members of the Jewish population who, until 1967, acted as brokers of the engagement between the Italians and the Libyan Arabs).[31] This was one round of state formation followed by state disintegration.

In 1918, following the First World War, the Tripolitanian Republic was established – the first republic in the Arab world – under the leadership of journalist and member of the Ottoman parliament Sulayman al-Baruni. However, with little support and recognition from the international community, it fell apart in 1923. Another round of state formation and erasure commenced with the independence of Libya in 1951 when the United Kingdom of Libya was established. This, too, was followed by a wave of destruction when Gaddafi came to power in 1969 after a coup against King Idris. Gaddafi destroyed any bureaucratic structures that were established after independence and, following in the footsteps of Nasser in Egypt, civil society organizations were banned and political parties were disbanded. The hollowing out of the Libyan state was most perceptible following the uprising in 2011. Dirk Vandewalle reflects on Gaddafi's destruction of statehood in Libya:

> we should be concerned about what a post-Gaddafi transition will mean, given the fact that the man has hollowed out the Libyan state, eviscerated all opposition in Libyan society, and, in effect, created a political *tabula rasa* on which a newly free people will now have to scratch out a future. (Vandewalle, 2011)[32]

This short account of state formation and disintegration in Libya, however, is a top-down one and neglects the need to examine the role played by social actors in contributing to or abetting this process. When there was state building in Libya, how did it happen? And why did it not work? How did Libyans mobilize and how did they engage both with one another and with existing structures of government?

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[31] The empirical chapters of the thesis tackle these relations in depth and their impact on the Libyan people's capacity to engage in state building.

[32] There is another stream of literature on the Gaddafi period that is more apologetic than condemnatory. For example, Guy Arnold (1996) in *The Maverick State: Gaddafi and the New World Order* has criticized the "sheer scale of demonology" that was built up around Gaddafi and has impeded a more balanced account of his actions. He regarded Gaddafi as someone representing a small world power, a "maverick" leader who was denigrated and discounted by the West.

Another feature of state formation in Libya is that the Libyan nation-state did not emerge with domestic support. Instead, its emergence was fostered by interests that were external to Libyan society (Anderson, 1986). Because of the exogenous nature of state formation in Libya, as explained earlier, conceptions of modern state building born in the West are inadequate to the Libyan context. As Adham Saouli argues, state formation is a transformation from mediated rule, in which kings rule through local powers, to direct rule mediated by institutions expressing the mutual interdependence between the ruler and his dependents. What emerged in the Middle East at the beginning of the twentieth century were "social fields", where states are formed and eroded, and not states as defined by Weber.[33] Libya, like Lebanon and other states in the Middle East, is a state in "late formation", a concept clarified by Saouli (2006: 702-703): "Externally, this state came late in time relative to the emergence of European states, which structured the international state system. Internally, this state is at the early phases of formation, where authority is being constructed and reconstructed in ongoing rivalries between different forces attempting to monopolise power."

A third feature of Libya's experience with state building is the dominance of localism and the entrenchment of divisions within its social fabric. A number of factors contributed to those divisions; differences in the demographic composition and histories of each region as well as aggressive colonization which fed divisions between eastern, western and southern regions of Libya. The aggression of the Italian colonizers between 1911 and the Second World War did not allow Libyans to reflect on their own identity. Violations in Italian prisons and the spread of concentration camps in Libya have been documented as well as the banishing of hundreds of Libyans to Italian islands. According to Libyan historian, Ahmed Modallal, while the number of those banished is generally estimated at 400, it was later discovered by a researcher that looked at the identity cards of those who were exiled put the number at ten times as much (around 4000) to various Italian islands (Modallal, 1989). Libyans were not able to form a class of politicians and diplomats who had lived continuously within the country and who were able to bargain in favour of a Libyan nation. In interviews conducted with Libyans who witnessed the period of the monarchy, the issue of trust, or rather the lack of it, was reiterated a number of times. Following the Second World War, no member of the political elite had been in Libya for nearly two decades. As a result, Libya did not have representatives who could bargain with regional and international powers on its behalf, yet still have trust and "buy-in" from the indigenous exiled (or non-cosmopolitan) population.

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[33] Weber's definition here is used as an ideal definition of the state, which this thesis will seek to examine and problematize. According to Saouli: "Weber's definition represents an *ideal* model state, which, and specifically for the purposes of this study, helps us not only to contrast it with historical realities but also to theoretically problematise it in order to understand late-forming states. Defining the state is not a theoretically innocent enterprise. As a social organisation, state definition cannot escape the student's theoretical assumptions, his or her research aims, or, in some cases, their ideological biases. The state, accordingly, is seen to be the 'most problematic concept in politics' (Vincent 1987: 3)." (Saouli, 2012: 8)

Libyan leaders who led negotiations with Italy in the period preceding independence also set a negative precedent. Some of the Libyans interviewed called for a more nuanced approach to understanding exchanges between Libyans and Italians during the period of Italian colonization. One respondent who was part of the General National Congress in 2014 emphasized the need to look more "sympathetically" at cooperation, for example, between the Montasir family, one of Libya's wealthy families, and the Italian colonizers (Libyan politician from Tripoli, personal interview, Tunis, September 14, 2015, my translation). This respondent explained that, during the period of Italian colonization, communicating and cooperating with Italians was not an option. That said, Libyan politicians and diplomats were actively lobbying for their own region's or sect's interests rather than for national interests, and Libya's political elite was as fragmented as were its regions and population composition. The case of Sulayman al-Baruni is an example of this fragmentation and internal politicking in favour of group interests rather than national interests. al-Baruni, a Berber of the Ibadi sect, represented Tripolitania in the Ottoman parliament after 1908. Following the war between the Ottoman Empire and Italy, he returned to Tripolitania in 1916 as the Ottoman-appointed governor of Tripolitania, Tunisia and Algeria. But al-Baruni was always suspected of harbouring an interest in establishing an autonomous Ibadi province in the western mountains of Libya, a suspicion he and his daughter denied (al-Baruni, 1964). Although he had formerly sided with the Ottomans against Italy, his stance changed following the end of the First World War. With the promulgation of the *Legge Fondamentale* by Italy in 1919, which recognized the Tripolitanian Republic and Barqa, he visited Rome to join the celebrations for the announcement. St John has commented: “The Italian authorities in the belief that Baruni still harboured ambitions for an autonomous Ibadi province considered his adherence to the Tripoli Republic to be merely tactical” (St. John, 2014: 52).

Al-Baruni’s son, Ibrahim al-Baruni, was also sceptical of a unified national Libya. In a letter to the British Minister of Foreign Affairs dated 18 December 1947, al-Baruni emphasized the necessity of maintaining borders and boundaries within Libya, especially where Tripoli was concerned. His reasoning – that boundaries are essential to the prevention of warfare, and that the regions of Libya are as different from one another as the states of Europe are from each other, thus requiring clear borders to avoid war between them – is worth quoting at length:

> Due observance of topographical frontiers is an important factor in the solution of the difficulties arising out of the war, [and] the attainment of peace among the nations. For instance, the key to the successive wars between Germany, France and their neighbours lies in Alsace-Lorraine, and if a small neutral state was set up with international guarantees assuring its neutrality between Germany, France, Belgium and Switzerland, all difference between France and Germany would cease. Thus it would be possible for the Germans today to form a single state to be named “The United German State”. Likewise, Prussia, Denmark, Bohemia, etc. could form other buffer states with the observation of the natural boundaries

> which separate one region from another. The Security Council could thus solve the most serious of Europe's present day problems and could stop Russia from interfering in German affairs. We have quoted to you these examples to show the importance of the observation of natural boundaries in the prevention of war. It is the failure to do this with regard to Tripoli which has so complicated her case as also the mixture of blood between neighbouring tribes.[34]

Ibrahim al-Baruni did not support the emergence of a unified Libyan state. Rather, he suggested that:

> A body of British, French and Italian specialists in the topography of this country should be formed for the purpose of making a study of the maps of the country for the practical purpose of defining the true frontiers between Tripoli and the Fezzan. In this way it will be possible to determine the future of these three regions in a manner acceptable to their inhabitants. Truly we should like that this request be carried out before the appointment of a time for the referendum.[35]

Following independence, Libyan political movements emerged, but they still suffered from the fragmentation of the preceding period. The defining feature of how those movements related to one another was that "competition trumped collaboration" (Anderson, 2017: 10). Returning exiles, particularly those who had been in Egypt, played an active role in the formation of political parties and "by 1947 there were seven such parties in Tripolitania alone" (Anderson, 2017: 10). There was also lack of clarity about how an independent Libya would be realized:

> Almost all of these parties advocated independence but there was little consensus [on] how – or even where – this was to be realized. Three streams of opinion could be found in the proliferating political debate: advocates of Idris al-Sanusi as Amir of a united Libya, supporters of a constitutional republic, and those who saw a foreign mandate over the country as a feasible transition to independence. Within these trends were

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[34] British National Archives. Foreign Office. Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906 to 1966. Political: Egyptian. (1948) "Situation in Tripolitania. Italian Activities. Anti-Jewish Riots." Code 66, File 534. FO371/69421.

[35] British National Archives. Foreign Office. Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906 to 1966. Political: Egyptian. (1948) "Situation in Tripolitania. Italian Activities. Anti-Jewish Riots." Code 66, File 534. FO371/69421.

> divisions between the “separatists” who supported regional or provincial solutions and “nationalists” who advocated territorial unity. (Anderson, 2017: 10)

There were three main political parties. The Nationalist Party, established in 1944, presented itself as the political party representing the aspirations of the Libyan people across the country. Its platform, however, stood for the ascendancy of Tripolitania within a united and independent Libya. The Nationalist Party also called for a trusteeship of a united Libya under the administration of the Arab League. The second party was the United National Front, which was formed in 1946. It sought to enlist the support of Idris al-Sanusi by advocating a united and independent Libya, including Tripolitania and Barqa, under Sanūsi’s leadership. The third political party was the Free National Bloc, which was composed of dissident elements from the United National Front who were opposed to the extension of Sanusi’s influence to Tripolitania. The Free National Bloc called for the creation of a constitutional assembly to plan the future form of government in Libya. In addition to these three main parties, other political parties included the Egyptian-Tripolitanian Union Party, which called for the unity of Tripolitania and Barqa with Egypt, the Labour Party and the Liberal Party (St. John, 2014: 267).

The notables of the Sanusi order and tribal leaders from Barqa who formed the Jabha or the United National Front could not agree on how the Libyan government should be structured. Exiles clashed with notables who had worked with the Italians, such as Salim Bey Muntasir, who was appointed leader of the United National Front. The Nationalist Party leadership accused the National Front of cooperating with Italians and disagreed over whether Idris should be Amir of Libya (Anderson, 2017: 11).

This overview of Libya’s experience with state building shows the difficulty and, indeed, inadequacy of a purely Weberian approach to state building with an emphasis on territoriality and monopoly on violence on the one hand, and also of a more local approach to state building that sees borders as fluid and does not see territoriality as a necessity to conceptualizing the state, on the other. A Libyan state, locally-owned, as this thesis argues, can comprise aspects of both and is one where the civic space is deployed in favour of retaining the unity and integrity of a state in late formation.

Civil society and pathways to state formation

A revisiting of Libya's experience of state formation and disintegration through an examination of its civic space can illuminate the nature of state-society engagement and explain how the Libyan state has been formed and (un)formed through the lens of local actors. In this research and building on Migdal (2004) and Saouli (2012), I adopt Saouli's approach to statehood as a process rather than a fixed, uniform entity and his argument that what emerged in the Arab World following the Second World War were social fields and not complete states. I combine it with Migdal's definition of the state as including an image of a coherent organization in a defined territory and a set of practices than can be reinforcing, overlapping or mutually destructive. Thus, the definition of the state that I propose views the state as a social field with the image of a defined territory and that is also a manifestation of the actual practices of its multiple parts.

The thesis argues that it is within the civic space that the ways through which society contributes to the state in both constructive and deconstructive ways can be understood. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the term "civic" has its origins in the mid-16th century, from French *civique* or Latin *civicus*. It was used to refer to the civic garland or crown, which translates in Latin to *corona civica*, denoting a garland of oak leaves and acorns given in ancient Rome to a person who saved a fellow citizen's life.[36] Defining civil society is a difficult task. As argued by Saad Eddin Ibrahim,

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[36] See: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/civic

> It is only in the late 1980s and 1990s that the concept of "civil society" has found common usage, due to the collapse of the Berlin Wall and with it, totalitarianism in Eastern Europe and the former USSR. There have been other factors as well: the weakening of the nation-state, the failure or dismal performance of several development paradigms, the proliferation of multi-national corporations, the increase in numbers of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the springing up of democracies in all corners of the globe. The concept of civil society is now so much used – and so much overused - that there is a serious theoretical threat to its sharpness. (Ibrahim, 1998: 373)

Through an overview of the literature on civil society, one can identify two general trends in defining civil society; the first focuses on informal forms of organization such as kinship ties and patron-client relationships that hold a society together while the second views it as a system of voluntary organizations that empowers society to keep the state in check and often equates civil society with social capital (Ibrahim, 1998; Putnam, 1993). Robert Putnam, for example, argues that a region's strong economic system and political integration result from its successful accumulation of social capital which he defines as "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Putnam, 1993: 3).[37] This view has not been without its critics and Putnam's empirical analysis has been disputed by a number of scholars who see this association of civic community with positive economic development as overly simplistic and often erroneous (Fine 2001; Chatterjee 2004; Harriss, 2007). Most notably, Ben Fine sees social capital as an overly simplistic way used to explain aspects of social, cultural and economic performance while staying devoid of context (Fine, 2001: 190). He also saw the term itself as an "oxymoron" because all capital is an economic category and is itself social so the term "social capital" puts forward the notion that "some other form of capital is not social" which is incorrect (Fine, 2001: 15).

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[37] Putnam argues that governmental reform succeeded in northern Italy because it was supported by a florescence of "civic community" and that this is the main reason behind the economic strength of northern Italy in comparison with the southern part of the country (Putnam, 1993: 130).

There are also advocates of more specific and less generous definitions of civil society. Partha Chatterjee, most notably, in *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (2004), has rejected the view held by some analysts who expand the idea of civil society to "include virtually all existing social institutions that lie outside the strict domain of the state" (Chatterjee, 2004: 39) and instead has opted to define it as "the closed association of modern elite groups sequestered from the wider popular life of the communities, walled up within enclaves of civic freedom and rational law" (Chatterjee, 2004: 4). His contention is that civil society as an "ideal" continues to be a tool through which "interventionist political projects" are energized but that in its actual form, it is "demographically limited" (Chatterjee, 2004: 39).

While Chatterjee and Fine make strong arguments, they are largely influenced by the contexts they are referring to. Libyan civil society was not "demographically limited" as such but represented eclectic social forces that came from all walks of life and were at the heart of debates related to the political and cultural future of a Libya first seeking independence and, following independence, seeking statehood. As for Fine's criticism of "social capital" which is often associated with civil society, a discussion of the usefulness and limitations of "social capital" is beyond the scope of the thesis. This is primarily because the focus, here, is on "civil society" and the resources, that are associated with it.

Arab theorists and analysts have also adopted and rejected the term in a number of ways. Egyptian political scientist, Mustapha Al-Sayyid, confirms the view that the concept is overused, and continues to be highly contentious especially in non-Western contexts. For Middle Eastern scholars, the validity of the term itself inspired by Western experience is questionable. Instead, a number of Middle Eastern scholars argue that a definition that reflects the specific experiences of Islamic and Arab societies is needed (al-Sayyid, 1993). Analysis by Arab theorists and analysts on the state and evolution of civil society in the Arab world reveals a number of tensions. The first tension is one that arises between conceptualizing civil society as secular versus religious or Islamic. A second tension is between the structuring of civil society as indigenous thus reflecting the independence and authonomy of the state as opposed to viewing local civil society as part of a wider global and often Western network, especially where Western funding and influence are concerned. Finally, another tension is between the identity of civil society as local as opposed to an identity that is national and Arab. Needless to say, Arab public intellectual and political philosopher Azmi Bishara argues that the term "civil society" remains loaded with political, economic and social significance and that it should be approached in light of an understanding of the context of the Arab world and how it has evolved from more traditional forms of solidarity and community engagement to a more Westernized model of civic associations with boards and decisionmaking structures that are different from what is traditional and indigenous to the Region (Bishara, 2012).

A working definition for "civil society", adopted from Saad Eddin Ibrahim, is used in this thesis while recognizing its limitations:

> Civil Society is the totality of self-initiating and self-regulating volitional social formations, peacefully pursuing a common interest, advocating a common cause, or expressing a common passion; respecting the right of others to do the same, and maintaining their relative autonomy vis-a-vis the state, the family, the temple and the market (Ibrahim, 1998: 374)

Civil society is approached here in both its institutional and non-institutional formations, through an analysis of trade unions and associations, for example, which are institutions that often attest to a state's capacity to enforce law, as well as faith-based actors such as churches and *zawaya* and transnational networks that pre-date the existence of a state and the formation of civil society organizations inspired by Western models. While Ibrahim (1998) sees civil society as separate from the "temple", the centrality of faith-based "civic formations", as Ibrahim puts it, in the development of the Libyan state makes it necessary that faith actors are included in the thesis as core to civil society in twentieth-century Libya. The thesis will also look at shifts from more traditional forms of civic and community engagement to institutionalized forms that were largely adopted from Western models but adapted to Libyan interests and culture. The term "civil society" is thus used in an inclusive manner to incorporate various forms of social actors coming together to uphold a cause.

This research will explore various features of Libya's civic space as manifested in three main local actors: associations, trade unions and religious groups. An analysis of the data collected reveals three trends or aspects of civic space which will be explored: 1) *relational* aspects of civic society via an analysis of cooperation and contestation among different actors (local actors and state actors); 2) *structural* aspects via an analysis of the institutional consolidation and disintegration of local actors and 3) *transactional* aspects via an analysis of national and transnational exchanges related to civil society.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined existing tensions in theorizing on the Arab state and identified them as *positionality* (center versus periphery) and *emphasis* (state versus society). It makes the case for a more specific treatment of state-society engagement in state building; one that includes an examination of history and patterns of state formation and disintegration from the local perspective. An understanding of the logic of how state (colonial and postcolonial) and society engage with one another as traced through the development and disintegration of its civil society as well as a careful assessment of conflict within civil society and between civil society and the state are necessary to explain the opportunities and limitations of state building in Libya. The chapter argues that civil society is a space within which state-society engagement is exemplified and as necessary to explain and theorize an anchor for state building in Libya which has the potential to inform a society-centered approach to state building in divided societies in the Arab world. In the following chapters, Libya's civic space is explored through an examination of three local actors: associations or *Jam'iyyat*, trade unions and Muslim and Jewish religious groups, and their engagement with state structures, colonial and independent.

CHAPTER TWO

Methodology: Why a social history of Libya?

In 1965, the International Congress of African Historians convened in Dar es Salaam to discuss the state of African historical studies and the methodology of African historiography, and to find out if “African history was sufficiently African; whether it had developed the methods and models appropriate to its own needs or had depended upon making of the methods and models developed elsewhere” (Ranger, 1965: ix–x). Original African history, it was suggested, was to be developed from within Africa itself, and while there was an emphasis that African historiography needed to be more continental and less “parochial”, speakers saw hope and progress in the shape of the emergence of local studies. The Congress concluded that, in Africa, the interpretation of historical facts requires a viewpoint that was based on a thorough understanding of the nature of African society. Another conclusion was that an African philosophy of history must highlight the basis of African culture and stress its evolution through time (Ranger, 1965: 218–219). The proceedings and conclusions of the Congress in 1965 remain relevant today, and I argue can be applied to existing historiography of Libya.

During the period between 2011 and 2013, I travelled to Tripoli and Benghazi in an attempt to both understand and engage with Libyan civil society and political activists who played a role in the Revolution of 17 February 2011. I was humbled by the courage and intellect of the young activists I met and I was fascinated by the historical images of ʿUmar al-Mukhtar and other Libyan heroes I saw plastered on walls in Benghazi and Tripoli. Charles Tripp is right to argue that the crowds that revolted in order to reclaim public space became “performers of unstoppable power”, both “symbolically as well as materially” (Tripp, 2013: 185) and street art became an embodiment of this power. History was very much present in Libya’s present in 2011 and in debates about its future. I spent days at the library at the American University in Cairo poring over the established historical literature of Libya in an effort to explore the significance of those figures to Libya’s past and present. International conferences, at the time, spoke of a “new” civil society and the building of a Libyan state after decades of “statelessness”. I was guilty of co-publishing a study for the Gerhart Center at the American University in Cairo that made similar suggestions (El Taraboulsi et al., 2013). I found very little about Libyan society in scholarly works on Libya and in most of the Western literature on Libya the local population was virtually absent. Libyan historiography was clearly not sufficiently Libyan, or even Arab.

As this thesis demonstrates, the roots of civic and political consciousness are deeply interwoven in Libya’s struggle for independence and statehood. It hopes to contribute to addressing this absence of local histories of Libya, but it too has met with challenges, as will be explained later in this chapter. It is an examination of state-society relations in pre-Gaddafi Libya and is thus historical in nature, but it is largely informed by the social sciences in its overall approach. A contribution to a social history of Libya emerges, one that calls for further examination of Libyan history from a local perspective.

This chapter is divided into three sections: the first considers why Libya’s historiography is limited; the second discusses how a sociohistorical perspective can contribute to filling this gap; and the third sets out the both the limitations of this study and the opportunities for social history as a methodology in Libya’s state building.

Libya’s limited historiography

Authoritative accounts of Libya’s past are quite limited, especially when compared to neighbouring countries like Egypt or Tunisia, on which a substantive body of academic literature is readily available. In 1979, Muhammad al-Jerrari, founder of the Libyan Studies Center in Tripoli, notes that there is limited engagement with the political history of Libya compared to other countries in Africa. Existing analysis does not talk about the Arab Libyan people but is mostly focused on the history of the Romans and colonizers in Libya. There is a body of analysis on the history of Tripoli but even this history needs serious revisiting especially where archival material is concerned. Outside of Tripoli, he holds that there is no political history of any kind. According to al-Jerrari, all that is known about the rest of the country is that it is an area inhabited by Bedouins who cannot be trusted and who do not want to settle anywhere and who do not obey any laws or follow any system. He also points out serious limitations in an economic history of trade across the various regions, social history, cultural and religious history of the country (al-Jerrari, 1979). Since then and despite an expansion in scholarship on Libya by Arabs and Western researchers, existing analysis remains limited.

This is the result of three factors. The first is Gaddafi's emptying of Libya of its history, which was one of the means through which he sought to entrench his control of the Libyan state. Gaddafi's control of historical narratives in the period following 1969 was a means to provide political legitimacy for his regime and to appropriate tribal heritage as well as various facets of Libyan identity (Dumsay and Di Pasquale, 2012: 127). The second factor is Libya's experience with multiple rounds of colonialism that have augmented existing divisions between regions. The third factor is the dominance of Western histories of Libya, which has tended to produce a history of the colonization of Libya rather than a history written about Libya and the local population.

Detaching Libya from its past was part of Gaddafi's version of direct democracy and his restructuring of Libyan society. In terms of social and political control, the Libyan educational system was restructured to fit Gaddafi's political views. As Clare Morgana

Gillis has noted: “Gaddafi made his eccentric ideologies the very foundation of Libyan schooling, from the warped renderings of the past in history books to the opaque political theories in *The Green Book*, the Gaddafi treatise that formed the core of the Libyan curriculum” (Gillis, 2012: 105). A report on learning under Gaddafi issued by the Great People’s Committee of Education and Scientific Research during Gaddafi’s rule, confirms this view. It describes the post-1970 educational strategy as based on a philosophy derived from a number of sources, the *Green Book* chief among them (Committee of Education, undated).[38] Under Gaddafi, administrators and curriculum designers were members of the notorious revolutionary committees, and Libyan textbooks only included what was aligned with Gaddafi’s political worldview. Gillis has elaborated on this process of indoctrination in the educational system:

> Students didn’t read the full *Green Book*, instead absorbing the thoughts of the “Brother Leader” through companion textbooks for the mandatory “*Jamhiriya* studies.” … Lasting from ages 9 to 18, these courses formed the basis for education and civic life in Libya, but the *Jamahiriya* books were also largely incomprehensible. A text for 12 year olds, for instance, introduces the concept of “popular committees” – local government bodies under Gaddafi’s rule – that were “chosen by the masses”. The committees do not “make decisions”, the Jamahiriya book says, but instead “collect the decisions of the masses, which they took note of in popular meetings.” … Even subjects that did not seem political were treated as though they were. Geography, for example, was taught with maps that failed to show national borders in the Arab world, in keeping with Gaddafi’s exaggerated Nasserist ideology of pan-Arab unity. (Gillis, 2012: 106)

The other strategy used by the regime was intimidation. According to Hisham Matar, in the years between 1969 and 2011, Gaddafi’s regime made several violent incursions into Libyan universities, arresting pupils and faculty members and, most infamously in the 1970s, executing students who campaigned for academic freedom and leaving their bodies hanging at the gates of the university and in the gardens of Benghazi Cathedral (Matar, 2015). A parallel form of intimidation took place in countries where Libyans were in exile. Gaddafi supported the Irish Republican Army and planted the notorious revolutionary committees in Western countries, including Britain, where there was a significant Libyan population (El Taraboulsi-McCarthy, 2017). In the mid-1980s, in addition to being home to around 8,000 Libyan students, Britain was also home to one of the strongest opposition groups against Gaddafi, the National Front for the Salvation of Libya. The Libyan embassy in London was controlled by the revolutionary committees, Libyan students loyal to Gaddafi who maintained regular contact with the Libyan authorities. In March 1984, eight bombs targeting opposition groups exploded in Manchester and London, and a shot fired from the Libyan embassy on St James's Square in London killed Yvonne Fletcher, a British police officer on duty. Diplomatic relations between Libya and Britain, as a result, were broken off and not restored until 1999. These incidents directly impacted the lives of Libyans living in the UK. As described in an interview with a Libyan activist in London, the children of Libyan National Oil Company officials would walk the streets of London side by side with others whose parents belonged to the National Salvation Front, both of whom were suspicious of one another. There were also children and students who aligned themselves with the revolutionary committees and worked directly with the Libyan embassy in London (El Taraboulsi-McCarthy, 2017).[39]

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[38] The sources included the following: Cultural, social and religious heritage of the Libyan Arab society; the Third International Theory of the *Green Book* (1975); “The Great Green Charter of Human Rights of the jamahiriya Era”; the social prestige of intellectuals; the resolutions of the UN and other international bodies; the scientific and technological progress as well as the revolution in telecommunications and information and the modern education theory (Committee of Education, undated).

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[39] According to one respondent, Gaddafi had suspicion "planted in all of us". If they saw "Libyans right across … the street" they would wonder if they were spies or a threat to them. Therefore, British Libyans generally associated with one another cautiously. "In the 1980s there were assassinations, Gaddafi could get you anywhere and that was a fear we had", an interviewee said. She added: "There was lack of trust inside and outside Libya. … There were assassinations in two of the world's most secure places, London and Paris. … We were not safe." This mindset created an environment where any form of critical engagement with Libya's history was both difficult and dangerous (El Taraboulsi – McCarthy, 2017: 137)

Other factors that contributed to limited Libyan historiography are successive experiences with colonialism. At independence in 1951, Libya had not been ruled by Libyans since 900 BCE (Farley, 1971: 38). Moreover, its geography did not generally facilitate communication between the different regions, and this regional fragmentation has been reflected and reproduced within the political and cultural space as well as within the consciousness of its people (Ahmida, 2009). Administrations in the eastern and western regions of Libya were largely separate under the Italians and then the British. Needless to say, in 1951 when Libya became under its constitution a “free independent sovereign state” with a hereditary monarchy, the form of government was federal “reflecting the initial difficulties in the political integration of three provinces which had within a generally common historical background their own diverse experience” (Farley, 1971: 39). Clause 188 of the Constitution promulgated in 1951 stated that the “United Kingdom of Libya has two capitals, Tripoli and Benghazi” (cited in Farley, 1971: 39).

The third factor limiting scholarly engagement with Libya’s history is the absence of a body of authoritative accounts. Western scholarship on Libya is “generally inconsistent and scarce in comparison to that written on the other North African countries” (Baldinetti, 2010: 10). This, however, is not the case when assessing the period covering the rise of Gaddafi in 1969 up to the present, where the corpus has been described as enormous (Baldinetti, 2010: 10). Jewish histories of Libya include works by Renzo De Felice and Maurice Roumani. Notable works on the Italian colonization of Libya are by Angelo Del Boca, Federico Cresti and Massimiliano Crico. British anthropologists E.E. Evans-Pritchard and Emrys Peters wrote highly influential (although contested) studies. Others sought to document Libya’s experience with state and nation building, including Anna Bladinetti, Lisa Anderson, and Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, whose works significantly influenced this thesis. Other works include unpublished dissertations that focus on the history of the Ottoman period or British engagement in Libya. However, despite this body of work, a scholarly community of Libyanists is yet to emerge where these works are revisited and debated.

The limited existing accounts are in English, Arabic, French and Italian, and few are available in translation. A certain degree of linguistic proficiency is thus required. While my fluency in English, Arabic and to a lesser extent, French, exposed me to works from the Arab World and the West, I had to take a year of intensive Italian courses at the University of Oxford's Language Center in order to be able to access historical accounts on Libya, and archival material, in Italian. Nevertheless, accessing and reading material in the four languages did render data collection quite a lengthy and laborious process.

A sociohistorical approach to Libya's state-society relations: Research design and methodological approach

As explained in the introduction to the thesis, this study is an examination of state-society relations in Libya pre-Gaddafi. It addresses the roots of Libya's recurring state failure by examining the role played by Libyan civil society in state building during the period between 1911 and 1969. Three key periods in Libya's history are addressed: the colonial period under the Italians (1911–1943), the years under the British Military Administration (1943–1951) and then the period as an independent monarchy (1951–1969). Three local actors are explored: associations or *jamʿiyyat*, trade unions, and religious groups. Based on Migdal (2004) and Saouli (2012), I approach state formation as a process and the state as a social field rather than a fixed entity.

In order to investigate patterns and trends in state-society relations in Libya, the study is qualitative, aiming to assess various aspects of the lived experience of local actors addressed in the study and modes of their engagement with the state both colonial and independent. The study uses the methods of a historian because the focus of the thesis is Libya's past and is largely informed by the social sciences in order to theorize on the state in the Arab World.

A sociohistorical approach was used to inform the overall methodological framing for the study. This is because social history is the "history of society or more precisely of social structures, processes and trends" (Burns, 2006: 13). It is instrumental in bridging the gap between sociology and history, and it adopts methods from both of them; "it is the task of social history, and one quite within its scope, to obviate the increasing dangers of individualizing historicism, on the one hand, and those of a 'sociologism' which tends to incorporate and subordinate historical study, on the other" (Burns, 2006: 13). There is no methodological paradigm that governs the discipline as a whole (Fairburn, 1999). The interstitial space occupied by social history between two disciplines is definitive of it and was highlighted as one of its strengths in the founding statement of the journal *Social History* in 1976:

> Social history certainly has its masterpieces – Bloch, Braudel, Hobsbawm, E.P. Thompson – but none is a methodological paradigm for the discipline as a whole. Theirs are major contributions to the essential task of explaining total social process and analysing the whole range of forces promoting change and transformation, stability and continuity in past societies. They represent the peaks of a discipline which is still best characterized by the range of explanation it seeks and by the range of methods it mobilizes. (Burns, 2006: 21)

Christopher Lloyd ascribes the popularity of social history as a methodological framework to three factors: the first is the decline of communities and the desire to reconstruct them; the second is the breaking of new ground via a bottom-up history and the "politically oppositional character of much social history writing" (Lloyd, 1991: 180); and the third factor is the desire for "global comprehension – to see the local as enmeshed in the totality of world structures at all levels" (Lloyd, 1991: 180). All three factors have informed the selection of social history as the methodology for this study of state-society relations in Libya between 1911 and 1969.

Another factor is the emphasis placed by social history on “society”, an emphasis that aligns with the focus of this thesis on civil society in Libya in the pre-Gaddafi period. Social history “is generally concerned with the behaviour, actions, customs, desires and values of large aggregates of subordinate people” (Fairburn, 1999: 8). This focus, however, comes with a methodological challenge because “almost invariably”, “these people are inherently difficult for the social historian to understand since their cultures are so different from the one to which the social historian belongs” and “they usually generated few surviving records about themselves” (Fairburn, 1999: 8). This study has encountered, as I later explain, many of those methodological challenges.

The study uses a variety of methods in order to understand the nature of state-society relations during the period from 1911 and 1969 from the perspective of the local population and their lived experience. It uses an in-depth review of existing literature on Libya, extensive archival research and in-depth semi-structured interviews.

Literature review

A review of the existing literature on the history of Libya by historians from the Middle East and the West was necessary to provide a critical outline of developments as well as gaps and discrepancies in Libyan historiography. A discussion of existing historiography of Libya is included in the introductory chapter to the thesis in order to define the research gap and focus, and it is interwoven within the theoretical framework as well as empirical chapters. An effort was made to include literature written by Arabs as well as by Western historians and analysts of Libya. That said, because of the mixed quality of the work produced and the degree to which a fairly large amount of the literature is based on personal experiences or opinions, careful triangulation of those works with other existing material as well as in-depth interviews and archival resources was made in order to avoid bias as much as possible. The use of a variety of methods to collect data on the same issue was to cross-validate the evidence and to deepen the analysis. An in-depth analysis of the literature was also important in order to fill in gaps resulting from the data collection that would not have been filled otherwise. The majority of the respondents interviewed for this study lived and witnessed the period following the Second World War and through to 1969, it was just not possible to find witnesses for the period preceding the Second World War. An effort was thus made to use archival material and published literature to fill in the gaps related to the period between 1911 and the 1940s.

Archival research

In terms of archival research, I conducted extensive work, collecting about two thousand documents related to Libya, in places that have preserved records on the period between 1911 and 1969. I spent three months in Italy working at the archives of the Red Cross (Archivio Storico Croce Rossa Italiana), the Vatican Archives (Archivio Segreto Vaticano), the state archives (Archivio dello Stato) and the Diplomatic Historical Archives (Archivio Storico Diplomatico) in Rome. In Tunis, I spent a month at the Tunisian National Archives, and in London I paid regular visits to the British National Archives. Unfortunately, while the Libyan Studies Center in Tripoli houses archival material relevant to that period, I was not able to visit Libya due to the security situation. Nevertheless, it is important to note that between the end of 2011 and 2013, I visited Tripoli and Benghazi a number of times in my capacity as research manager at the American University in Cairo and through my work with the British Council. Those visits were essential to the development of my research and to building connections with Libyans from the eastern and western regions of Libya. I later used these connections to identify my respondents via a maximum variation purposive sampling process as I explain later in this chapter.

At the archives of the Red Cross,[40] I sifted through communication between the Italian consulate in Tripoli and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Italy on the situation of Italians in Libya following the end of the Second World War when it was under the British Military Administration. Those communications included records of patients who were transferred to hospitals in Italy from a hospital in Tripoli due to mental health problems experienced during the period following the Second World War and revealed aspects of the deteriorating situation for Italians in Libya under the British Military Administration.

The Vatican Archives[41] contained correspondences between the *mufti* in Libya and the Vatican as well as letters relating to the Italian army's engagement in the Second World War. The archives were populated with letters from mothers and brides of Italian soldiers who fought in the Second World War in North Africa and who have gone missing. They also included references to Libyan soldiers who joined the Italian army in the war in Ethiopia. A number of communications between the Vatican and the Apostolic delegation in Jerusalem and Cairo addressed the conditions of the Catholic Church in Tripolitania and Barqa following the Second World War and when Libya was under the control of the British Military Administration. There are also correspondences between the Vatican Information Bureau in Algeria and the Vatican in Rome about visits by the White Fathers to Italian prisoners in North Africa.

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[40] Archivio Storico Croce Rossa Italiana. Servizio Affari Internazionali (1908 -1972). No. A81.

[41] Collectanea Archivi Vaticani (52), Inter Arma Caritas, L'ufficio informazioni Vaticano per i prigionieri di guerra, Istituti da Pio XII (1939 – 1947), Uff. Inf. Vat. 736, prot. 0032017; Uff. Inf. Vat. 736, prot. 0032079; Uff. Inf. Vat., 736, prot. 0032064; Uff. Inf. Vat. 747, prot. 0038701; Uff. Inf. Vat. 1381, prot. 00337149; Uff. Inf. Vat., 517, fasc.1

The state archives[42] held correspondence between the municipalities in Benghazi and Tripoli during the fascist period and under the British Military Administration. They revealed the momentum of colonial state building as featured in the development of administrations for key villages like Bianchi, Giordani and Micca, the establishment of town halls for the residents and appointment of heads of new administrations for postal and electrical services, mostly in Tripolitania. They also revealed the degree to which Libyans were not included in those new administrations and the bureaucracy building process. Documents I found there did not reflect the situation of the Libyan people at the time or their engagement with the Italian population.

The Diplomatic Archives[43] held valuable correspondence relating to the emergence of communism in Libya as a threat to fascism as well as information on Bashir al-Saʿdawi, one of the leaders of Libyan independence who later founded the Libyan National Congress but was exiled under King Idris. I also managed to gain access to *Corriere di Tripoli* or *Tripoli Times* which was a daily newspaper (except Mondays) in Italian and English that was published following the British occupation in 1943. The newspaper included articles about political developments at the end of the Second World War, news from North Africa and Britain. The newspaper was considered a vehicle for British propaganda (De Felice, 1985). *L'Avennire Arabo* and *Libia* were two journals that were published by the Italians in Libya in the 1930s and were largely arms of fascist propaganda. These journals were written in both English and Arabic and covered various contemporary social, cultural and political affairs of Libya and the Arab region.

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[42] Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome, Ministero dell'Africa Italiana, Municipio della Libia, II 14 2/1; 12 2/1.

[43] Archivio Storico Diplomatico, Ministero Africa Italiana, Vol. II 1859 – 1945, 181/1; 181/41; 181/42; and Ministero Africa Italiana, Affari Politici 1880 – 1955, Cartone 30.

In Tunis, I had access to the Tunisian National Archives,[44] which contain correspondence relating to Libyans who sought refuge in Tunisia between 1911 and the 1920s as well as documents related to the situation of Libyan Jews. In London, the British National Archives hold valuable material on the state of the trade union movement in Libya in the 1950s, as well as on the rise of communism under Italian leadership in Libya.

In-depth interviews

Selecting social categories to focus on for this study was methodologically challenging; the overall objective of the research is to study state-society relations through the lens of three local actors. Confining the social categories to those actors (people active in associations, trade unions and religious groups) would have limited access to respondents who would have been able to comment or reflect on more contextual aspects of the period in question: socioeconomic concerns, political realities and cultural aspects of engagement among social actors. I thus opted for a more inclusive social category and interviews were conducted with people (Libyans—both Jews and Muslims—and Italians) who grew up in Libya, most of whom witnessed the period following the Second World War. The main determining factor for the selection of the sample was if they grew up in Libya and witnessed at least part of the period that is the focus of my research. Many of them, especially Libyans, are heavily involved in the politics of Libya today and because of the critical current situation, the anonymity of all respondents was secured. Over 80 interviews were conducted in English, Arabic and Italian. The sample included Italians, Libyans, British and Tunisians who had first-hand experience of being part of the changes in Libya's history (1911 – 1969) as civil society leaders and/or involved in politics. Some of the respondents were not involved in politics at all but were professionals, traders and farmers in Libya at the time. I am grateful for a fellowship at L'Orientale at the University of Naples which gave me access not only to archives in Italy but also to key Italian historians and witnesses of the 1947–1969 period in Libya.

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[44] Tunisian National Archives. "Tripolitaine". Serie A, Carton 280. Dossier 15.

Respondents fell into three categories. The first group included Libyan politicians who are members of the various governing bodies of Libya today and who grew up in Libya under the British and as a monarchy. Many of them reside in Tunis or Cairo and travel back and forth across the border to Libya. While they may be deemed part of the diaspora today, they lived and grew up in Libya during the period covered within the thesis, mostly following the Second World War and through the Gaddafi period. They only left Libya following the Arab uprisings of 2011 and so they are referred to in the thesis as Libyan and not Libyans in the diaspora.

The second category includes Italians who grew up in Libya and left in 1970 following the rise of Gaddafi. They have different professions in Italy today and some of them are in politics. Interviews were conducted in mainly in Rome, Bologna and Napoli. This second category was particularly well networked and connected from within; Italians who had lived in Libya are connected on social media and have developed their own associations in Rome such as the Associazione Italiani Rimpatriati dalla Libia (AIRL) which assisted me with accessing some of its networks and using its archives.

The third category includes Libyans who are of a younger generation and who are actively engaged in the civic and political scene today. They facilitated communication with their parents and grandparents and shared with me memories of what their grandparents thought of Libya's past. In general, all the Libyans I interviewed irrespective of the age group had a strong connection to their homeland. While young people saw civic engagement as a means to influence Libya's state building, the older generation had memories of a vibrant civil society in Libya in the period preceding Gaddafi and saw the path forward through influencing international engagement with Libya.

Limitations and challenges

Limitations in the thesis have resulted from three sets of challenges. First, difficulties in gaining access to and finding data; second, bias in the data collected which includes archival material and oral testimonies, and finally, my own positionality as an Egyptian Muslim researcher of Libyan ancestry and who is a scholar at the University of Oxford in Britain.

Regarding access to data, I found available resources on Libya's trade unions and associations to be exceedingly limited and replete with discrepancies. I am no exception, however. This has been the case even to those who have taken part in the founding of those organizations. A statement by Uthman al-Alem, one of the founders of the trade union movement in Benghazi, testifies to the difficulty of finding sources and, in turn, documenting the development of a trade union movement in Libya:

> Despite the fact that I witnessed the birth of the movement [trade union movement], I was hesitant for a long time to address this big task. This is because of the scarcity of material and sources needed to document the full history of the movement and its social and political role in this period of Libya's history. I tried to get in touch with others who participated in the growth of the movement with me, this is so they would provide me with whatever documents they had from that period but I have been unsuccessful. I also found out that the chaos committees (revolutionary committees) had broken into the headquarters of the confederation of trade unions in Benghazi and tampered with its archives, destroying its content. (al-Alem, 2009)

There is also no agreement on how or why the data has been destroyed. al-Mukhtaral-Tahir Karfa‘ (2000) ascribes the limited availability of data on trade unions to the fact that they could have been destroyed by the government during the monarchy or because unionists destroyed the documents they had so as not to risk getting accused of rebellion by the governments they were under (Karfa‘, 2000: 14). Moreover, the scarcity of data is uneven; while the history of Libyan Jewish associations is fairly well documented (al-Ahwal, 2005; Simon, 1992), it is quite limited otherwise. The dearth of available evidence and the contradictions within the existing sources limit a scholar's capacity to document and analyze various aspects of the development of associational life in modern Libya.

Another challenge in writing a social history of Libyan state-society relations is the inevitability of bias in the data collected. This bias applies to the archival material (mostly colonial correspondences) and to the oral testimonies I collected. Archives are not neutral spaces and as argued by Schwartz and Cook, archives, as records, "wield power over the shape and direction of historical scholarship, collective memory, and national identity, over how we know ourselves as individuals, groups, and societies" (Schwartz and Cook, 2002: 2). The archival material I collected from Italy, Tunisia and the United Kingdom was, largely, shaped by colonial interests and informed by the inequalities embedded within a colonizer-colonized engagement. None of the documents I accessed, as such, could be taken at face value or accepted as neutral. In this study, I do rely on oral testimonies in order to fill in gaps or address some discrepancies that would otherwise be left unaddressed. I am aware, however, that this is not without its challenges and that the use of oral testimonies is heavily contested. There is a controversy related to relying on oral testimonies in constructing a historical account and the degree to which it is a reliable source of information. Mahmood Mamdani describes how Yusuf Bala Usman, a historian at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) in Zaria, Nigeria and a postcolonial intellectual, addressed this issue. The discussion of his work is worth quoting at length:

> The debate among historians turned on the question of whether oral testimony could be as reliable a resource of historical information as written texts. Just how defensive

> were the oral historians is clear from the remarks of one of their doyens, Jan Vansina at the University of Wisconsin.[45] To Usman's great disappointment, Vansina cautioned his colleagues that oral sources "need to be examined in terms of the world outlook which informs them" so they may be purged of "distortions" and "colorings" so they merit a "certain amount of credence within certain limits". Usman wondered why such probing should stop with oral history. He wondered why the same critical approach "is not extended to the most widely used source of African history from the last five hundred years, namely the written records of European travelers, traders, missionaries, companies, governments and their agents. (Mamdani, 2012: 89)

According to Mamdani, then, "for Usman, all sources – not just oral but also written – were subject to bias. [...] The more important question was how to detect and deal with one's own bias" (Mamdani, 2012: 90). It is this bias, according to Usman, that is a definitive feature of writing history;

> This is a fundamental problem in the physical, natural and human sciences. It is the problem which makes the study of history and society far more profound and complex than the study of physical and natural phenomena. The person with a perception of history who is studying history has been produced and moulded by history. The very concepts he uses are historically determined and produced. And he is involved in looking at what has been produced and is moulding him. Unfortunately, some of our colleagues in the study of society and history, impressed with the precision and quantification of physical and natural sciences, run around and chase after the prestige of these other sciences. As a result that they give the impression that all you need is to develop better techniques and better computers, then you can reduce the study of history to the same level as the study of atoms. But, in fact, they will find that no matter how fine the techniques they introduce, the phenomenological fact that you are

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[45] See Vansina, Jan (1985). *Oral Tradition as History*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press. In the book, Vansina gives an assessment of oral tradition as a source of information in writing historical accounts. He argues that all messages are "social products" and as they are recorded in the present, they are shaped and influenced by the "social present". As such, an assessment of influences should be done by a historian in order to determine what those influences are and how they shaped the message (Vansina, 1985: 94).

> studying yourself cannot be removed. (Cited in Mamdani, 2012: 91)

Mamdani argues that a degree of self-reflexivity, then, is essential to writing good history (Mamdani, 2012: 92).

While I do share Usman's skepticism about the reliability of archival material alone at the expense of oral testimonies and I have sought to ground my analysis in the literature in addition to archival sources and oral testimonies, I am also aware of the need for self-reflexivity and an acknowledgement of my own biases and assumptions made about me by the respondents. Reflecting on my own position within the research is the third challenge I encountered in writing this study.

In terms of my own biases, I started this research following the flourishing of the civic landscape in the Arab World during and after the Arab uprisings that started in Tunisia in 2011. I was actively involved in the protests that culminated in the Egyptian 25 January Revolution and I have been fortunate, through my career, to have had a chance to witness first-hand the repercussions of other revolutions in the Arab World right after they happened. In addition to Egypt, I was in Libya and Tunisia a number of times between 2011 and 2013, and in Yemen in 2013 and I observed the optimism that came within the civil society landscape in those countries as well as the frustration that resulted from the failure to realize the dreams of freedom and social justice associated with those revolutions. I saw the Arab World as a manifestation of a transnational civic space or "global civil society" within which individuals mobilise across borders on issues of global public interest (Kaldor, Moore and Selchow, 2012; Keane, 2013). This means that, like many other scholars, I saw societies changing states and did not take note of the symbiotic relationship between both. The civic space, to me, was, simply put, a force for good and for change within a society. Those assumptions were contradicted and challenged throughout the process of writing this study and the analysis of the civic space that I put forward in an effort to theorize on state-society relations in Libya and the Arab World highlights the contradictions inherent within state-society engagement.

As the scholar writing this study, I, too, was subjected to a number of assumptions and biases. My identity as a Muslim Egyptian scholar from a British university did both facilitate and block access to data, especially where oral testimonies were concerned. As an Egyptian with a Libyan surname, I had access to Libyan respondents who were generous with both their time and information to me but in 2015, when Egyptian airstrikes against Islamist targets in Libya caused civilian casualties, this readiness to provide me with data and testimonies waned.[46] Another instance where my identity affected my access to respondents was when I was interested in interviewing Libyan Jews, many of whom now reside in Rome. Initially, there was a perceptible suspicion as to why an Egyptian would wish to interview Italian and Israeli Jews of Libyan origin. Despite the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in 1979, the popular stance remains largely against the peace treaty but also against a reigniting of a war with Israel.[47] I rented a room around Piazza Bologna in Rome which was close to the synagogue where Libyan Jews went to pray and got to know the community there until I managed to get access to many of its members and gain their trust. As a scholar, the politics of my country or the people I belong to are divorced from my research.

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[46] Egypt initially denied participating in the Libyan air strikes and instead provided bases in Egypt from which Emirati planes struck Islamist militias in Tripoli in late August 2014. The Egyptian government first publicly acknowledged conducting airstrikes in Libya in February 2015, as a reaction to the beheading of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians by Libyan Islamic militants known as the Tripolitania Province of the Islamic State. On February 15, 2015, sources reported that Egyptian airstrikes hit two locations, the *Bab Shiha* neighborhood and the Jabal al-Akhdar Industrial Co.'s former headquarters, in east Derna, killing, in the process, at least seven civilians (New America, 2018).

[47] See Mohie, Mostafa (2018). "40 years on: What did Egyptians make of peace with Israel?" Mada Masr. Available through: https://madamasr.com/en/2018/10/05/feature/politics/40-years-on-what-did-egyptians-make-of-peace-with-israel/ [Accessed: 31 Jan. 2019] The article describes the popular sentiment surrounding the peace treaty four decades after Egypt signed the Camp David Accords with Israel as divided between a rejection of the treaty and a rejection of going to war. It also points out discrepancies between official records and actual popular sentiments towards Israel.

Eventually, I developed a close rapport with many of my respondents and they were happy for me to go back to them with follow-up questions. I also encountered the wider history of North Africa through the lens of Libya’s own experience. A local history of Libya, however, has been elusive at times, and I am left with the feeling that there are parts of it that I must have missed while putting this account together. Despite limitations within my work, I hope that it constitutes progress towards a reclamation of Libyan history for the Libyan people. The future of Libya’s past requires a revisiting of that past, to understand the roots of fragmentation today and how local actors contributed to or undermined the Libyan state.

Conclusion

This thesis is an examination of state-society relations in pre-Gaddafi Libya and is thus, historical in nature but it is largely informed by the social sciences in its overall approach. A contribution to a social history of Libya emerges, one that calls for further examination of Libyan history from a local perspective. It hopes to contribute to addressing an absence of local histories of Libya that has been caused by a deliberate emptying of Libyan history by the Gaddafi regime, Libya’s traumatic experience with multiple rounds of colonization which further augmented entrenched divisions, and the dominance of Western histories of Libya. The process of developing this thesis and identifying patterns and trends in state-society relations in Libya has met with a number of challenges that includes the scarcity of available data, biases in the archival material and oral testimonies and finally, as is the case with all historical works, the positionality and biases of the author herself.

CHAPTER THREE

Associational life in Libya: The civic space as cooperation and contestation

> The history of associational life in Libya is one of fits and starts, and not of cumulative development. Libya moved away from its community-based and traditional associations without developing convincing organizational alternatives that are capable of generating a new associational dynamic.
> (Wannas, 2000: 82)

The history of associational life in Libya is, indeed, one of fits and starts. It is an important one because it is a space through which different forms of solidarity and contestation among social forces can be understood and analysed. It is also a space where power is visible: under colonialism, associations are an arm of oppression and resistance, and in postcolonial Libya, they are a quest for statehood and an identity. The boundaries of localism are revealed through an analysis of the emergence and decline of associational life in Libya. As discussed in the previous chapters, localism dominates Libya's past because translocal engagement and exchange was restricted under colonialism. In this chapter, it becomes clear that those boundaries are tested and stretched in the postcolonial period. An observer of the civic space in independent Libya sees the potential of an emerging translocal or transregional solidarity especially where women-led associations are concerned, although it remains short-lived.

According to Mustafa Umar al-Tir, with the exception of Islamic *zawaya,* mosques and charities, Libyan associations or *jam'iyyat* existed in a restricted fashion under Italian colonization and then expanded following independence. There is evidence of the existence of a few associations in Libya during the Ottoman period, such as an association for women and another political association (al-Tir, 2013), but associations, in general, especially those that had political interests, were not allowed to operate during the Italian occupation because they would have empowered the Libyan resistance (Italian historian of Libya, personal interview, Rome, 23 December 2014).[48] Moreover, there are no records of the number of associations that existed during and following the end of Italian colonization, and other than within Italian and Jewish communities, only a few community-based formations are known to have existed, such as the Literary Club which was founded in 1920 and focused on Arabic literature and culture[49]. The production of Libyan literature during the colonial period, however, remained limited and most discussions focused on Arab literature from other parts of the region (al-Faituri, 2012: 132). While the existence of associations during the colonial period was limited within Libya, it flourished for Libyans in exile. In the 1920s, the activities of Libyans in exile shifted from collecting arms, money and supplies to support the resistance in Tripolitania and Barqa, to developing political associations in other Arab countries like Egypt and Syria, and those platforms were used to call for the independence of Libya (Baldinetti, 2010: 69).

As a result of the scarcity of available data, there are only fragmented accounts of the development of associational life within Libya during and following the Italian occupation.[50] This lacuna in the literature has led scholars and analysts of Libya to conclude that the country never really had an active civic life other than in the form of religious-based *zawaya* related to the brotherhood of the Sanusiyah. It also led to the perception that there was no Libyan agency as such, except within the diaspora or in the form of the armed resistance movement to the Italian occupation. This chapter hopes to fill that gap in the literature and demonstrates that both perceptions are largely erroneous and that there is a record, albeit fragmented, of flourishing civic engagement in Libya especially in the few years following the end of Italian colonization.

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[48] It is worth noting here that while associations were restricted during the Ottoman period, other forms of civic awareness and solidarity manifested themselves within the printed press. In 1866, a newspaper called *Tarabulus al-Gharb* was issued under the wali Mahmud Nadim and then another newspaper called *al-Taraqi* was issued in 1897 under the walī Namiq Pasha and those newspapers were led by Libyan intellectuals and activists who would later play a significant role in the resistance movement against the Italians (al-Sharīf, 2013: 267). Following the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, there was a flourishing of the Libyan press that was engaged not only in the politics of Libya but also of the Ottoman empire such as *Dar al-Khilafa* which included articles by Sulayman al-Baruni.

[49] Ahmad Faqih Hasan, who founded *al-Hizb al-Watani* or the Nationalist Party in Tripolitania in 1945, had founded the Literary Club in 1920. The Club had a programme that included "the presentation of conferences in Arabic literature and Islamic culture, the establishment of a library, which specialized in literature, and the organization of evening courses teaching Arabic literacy" (Baldinetti, 2010: 117). The Club was later banned by the Italians in 1922. The Literary Club was reestablished in 1943 and was "soon concerned with the national issue, later transforming into the Nationalist Party in 1945 and boasted 1,800 members" (Baldinetti, 2010: 117).

This chapter is a contextualized examination of the relational aspects of the civic space in Libya via an analysis of modes of cooperation and contestation among different social actors with a focus on local associations and state actors, colonial and independent. It explores the development of associational life in Libya during and after the Italian occupation and examines the various roles played by associations in Libya: as a political socialization[51] or propaganda tool used by Italians to attract the Libyan population and wherein Libyans had limited to no agency, and as political and social platforms through which debates by Libyans on the future of Libya took place. There were also Jewish associations that were a vehicle for charity both locally and transnationally but those will be discussed more fully in Chapter Five within the context of religious groups and transnational networks.

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[50] The scarcity of available documentation of Libyan associationism could also be the result of the demonization of the sector by Gaddafi's representatives and loyalists during the Gaddafi period. In *Monazzamat al-Mujtma' al-Madani: Musalsal al-akadhib al-Kubra*, Salih Ibrahim al-Mabruk, describes civil society organizations as "a series of big lies". He says: "The attempt to poison the *Jamahiriyya* with expired sedatives is a dangerous transgression. It is a strategic transgression in order to demolish the *Jamahiriyya* regime in Libya. This attempt has become lately an active project that started with non-governmental organizations, friendship associations and the increase in calling for the establishment of a civil society. Those are, in fact, all calls against the *Jamahiriyya* regime" (al-Mabruk, 2002: 23).

[51] By political socialization, I am referring to a process that is designed to affect how a person supports or rejects a system. It is "learning to adapt to the political system in which one lives", and this occurs "not just through formal education, but through experience and participation" (Warleigh, 2001: 621; Heater, 1974; Almond and Verba, 1963; Dawson et al., 1977).

The first part of this chapter focuses on the development of Italian associations in Libya. It shows how Italian associations were created to function as an arm of the colonizer in an effort to manipulate and control the Libyan population.[52] Archival material and interviews with Italians and Libyans for this research show that those associations were largely unsuccessful in effectively attracting wide swathes of the Libyan population but there is evidence that they may have inspired the development of Libyan associations following the end of the colonial period. This lack of success can be attributed to cultural, social and language differences and, of course, to the brutality of the Italian colonization of Libya. However, another important factor that led to the stunting of the colonial socialization process was that Italians never invested in the institutional infrastructure of Libya.[53] If they had invested in Libyan institutions, they might have been able to infiltrate the cultural barriers. While in Tunisia, for example, the French built on the institutions left behind by the Ottomans (Anderson, 1986), using them to their advantage to the extent that French became the language of instruction beginning with the second year of primary school; in Libya, however, the Italians never invested in the education of the Libyan population (Pretelli, 2011; Karfa', 2000; al-Faituri, 2012).[54] While a number of prep schools were established by the Italians, Arabic was only taught for the first three years as a foreign language and the official language used was Italian.[55] Schools were mostly established in cities thereby neglecting other areas. In the fascist period, an Islamic school was established to graduate experts in the Islamic faith and teachers of the Arabic language and to alleviate concerns by the Libyan population regarding the degree to which Italians respected the Islamic faith and Arab customs and traditions. That said, there is a view that the school was established for political reasons. It was to attract Libyan students away from migrating to Egypt and al-Azhar University[56] where they would join an opposition movement to Italian colonization (Karfa', 2000:43). George L. Steer, a British intelligence officer, visited Libya in 1939 and described how colonial rule in Libya has limited "the growth of an Arab educated class, elsewhere the centre of Arab political development. There are only about 120 Arabs at the one higher secondary school in Tripoli" (Steer, 1939: 165).

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[52] Colonialists in North Africa sought to extend their control by managing and engineering social spaces. A fascinating study on psychiatry in French North Africa, for example, shows how near the turn of the twentieth century, French psychiatrists sought to control discussions about normality and pathology in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. Richard Keller argues that parallel to the expansion of the French settlement in North Africa, "psychiatrists carved out a new role for themselves as they sought to extend their discipline's authority to a new terrain" (Keller, 2007: 3). In the 1880s, they lobbied for the "establishment of colonial asylums as a key component of France's imperial project in North Africa" (Keller, 2007: 3).

[53] This is contrasted by the comparatively significant investment in education made during the Ottoman period especially in Tripoli. According to Libyan historian, Salah El-Din al-Suri, education in Tripoli between 1835 and 1911 was not confined to religious or Islamic education. This period witnessed the opening of schools that taught mathematics, sciences, social science as well as French in addition to Arabic and Turkish. Successful and outstanding students got scholarships to go to Istanbul to further their education. There were plans to expand further but those were disrupted by the Italian-Turkish war. Private schools also emerged during this period of time such as Maktab Erfan and Maktab Mahmud Shawkat and others. They received support from the government and also relied on the fees they received from the students. There were also Italian and French schools. French schools were run by French Catholic missionaries and Italian schools were run by the Italian government. Religious schools also continued to receive support from the state (al-Suri, 1983: 227).

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[54] According to Pretelli, educational policies in the Italian colonies were inherently racist and "progressively reduced the access of indigenous populations to education". Racism was visible before and during the fascist era; "This sort of institutionalised racism was a peculiarity of Italian Fascism: under pre-fascist Italy, and in other colonised countries such as Kenya and Algeria, racism was embedded in everyday practice rather than made explicit in written norms (Barrera 2003a, 2008)" and "while in African colonies ruled by other European powers educational provision for native populations was improved in order to foster new local administrations, fascist Italy reduced the number of schools and assigned all aspects of colonial power to the ruling white populations (Labanca 2008b, 50–51)" (Pretelli, 2011: 276).

[55] al-Faituri sees this lack of investment as a form of subjugation. He writes: "I grew up in a country occupied by an enemy that insisted on converting it into an Italian Christian land and to convert its people into second rate citizens without an identity, without rights and without a past. To that end, Italy prevented Libyans from learning their language and literature except in primary school in order to create a generation that was ignorant, backward and happily subjugated by its colonizer" (al-Faituri, 2012: 132, my translation).

[56] Al-Azhar University is a university located in Cairo, Egypt, considered a central Sunni religious teaching university for Sunni Muslims around the world. The terms "al-Azhar Mosque" or "al-Azhar University" are sometimes used interchangeably by Egyptians to refer to "the complex of associated institutions" (Brown, 2011). The Mosque was built in the tenth century by the Shi'a Fatimid dynasty and in 1961, an extensive university was added to it. According to Nathan Brown, "In addition to higher education, a national network of schools is overseen by the institution; with something like two million students, it teaches students a combination of a secular and religious curriculum." (Brown, 2011)

The second part of the chapter explores the birth and development of Libyan associations and the kind of role these associations played in shaping Libya's social and political consciousness. This chapter draws on interviews conducted with Libyans from Tripoli and Benghazi, who witnessed the birth and demise of the monarchy. They reveal a pride and nostalgia for the flourishing of Libyan associations and what they symbolized – namely, an active cultural, social and political life in Libya following the end of the colonial period, one that was concerned with the future of Libya as an independent state but one that was also deeply divided and in conflict.[57] While this pride is coloured by a frustration at the situation of Libya today, it reveals elements of a history that remains inadequately documented.

Associations, here, are approached as sites wherein different modes of cooperation and contestation are revealed among key social forces as well as between Libyan social forces and the state, colonial and independent. The emerging civic space shows aspects of continuity and change: There was an impressive growth in political and social awareness within Libyan social forces and the beginnings of a national consciousness that built on a rejection of and resistance to colonialism and there was also a shift from informal forms of association to more formalized structures. The chapter shows that this emerging consciousness was aggressively attacked by the colonial state and restricted (until eventually silenced) by the independent state. It also shows how this growth in political awareness was composed of divided alliances with limited platforms for discussion and deliberation over the future of the country and it failed to contribute to the consolidation of a common objective other than independence. Social forces were generally more centrifugal than centripetal. The result was the failure of social forces to engage in the state building process through the civic space. This later contributed to the unravelling of the Libyan monarchy.

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[57] Writing in 2007 while Libya was still under Gaddafi, Khaled Mattawa discusses this nostalgia towards associational life in Libya and highlights how it is influenced by restrictions on civic life by the regime. He describes how the ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association was Benghazi's "first civic organization after the end of Italian colonization" and that it "can [could] only evoke deep nostalgia among the country's intellectuals, suffering under the cynicism of the Qaddafi regime" (Mattawa, 2007: 265). Named after a Libyan hero, ʿUmar al-Mukhtar who fought against Italian colonialism, the Gaddafi regime, while acknowledging his heroism, was unhappy about his popularity. In 1976, his remains were removed from Benghazi and interred close to where he was hanged by the Italians. His mausoleum was later destroyed in an effort to eliminate memories of him (Mattawa, 2007: 266).

Indeed, Libya's active civic and political life at independence was confronted by significant hurdles. Libya was described as "a bowl of dust" by Benjamin Higgins of the UN Technical Assistance Mission to the country in 1952. There were limited natural resources available, no institutional infrastructure to build on and work with, and a very small percentage of the Libyan population was educated. It is estimated that, in 1949, 90 per cent of the population in Libya was illiterate and that there were only about twenty university graduates in the entire country.[58] No national university existed and there were few schools, other than those for Italian colonists (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1960: 8). In addition to contextual difficulties, contestation among those associations as well as between this vibrant associational life and the state reveal a civic space that was deeply divided by region and locality.

The ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association, which emerged in 1943 when Libya was under the control of the British Military Administration, is a case in point. Established in Egypt in 1942 by Assaad Ben Amran, a Libyan leader who sought to create a platform for Libyan students, workers and soldiers living in Egypt, the organization was later moved to Benghazi following the end of Italian colonization. In Benghazi, it expanded its work to include sports, education, workers' rights, and political participation (Qineyber, 2016). Interest in associations went hand in hand with independence and the establishment of the

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[58] Extreme poverty in the 1940s in Libya would have also contributed to the lack of focus on education. Former Libyan political prisoner, Umar al-Mukhtaral-Wāfi, argues in his memoirs that schools were not popular in Libya because of the deterioration of the economy and because parents preferred to keep their children at home to help them with livelihood needs. Child labour, he argues, was quite common then. (al-Wāfi, 2018: 22).

United Kingdom of Libya (al-Mughayribi, 1995; Wannas, 2000), and this interest was as deeply political as it was social. The ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association displayed the interconnectedness between the social and the political in Libya at the time, and it played a critical political role in debates related to the shaping of the new Libya. It remained, nevertheless, deeply associated with Barqa both politically and socially. Its development and decline reveal aspects of cooperation and contestation in Libya's civic space.

The colonial period (1911–1943): Italian associations, segregation of spaces and propaganda

The overriding feature and function of Italian associations in Libya during the colonial period was propaganda. With the exception of communist associations, Italian associations were a space wherein Italians could strengthen themselves as a community and continue to connect to their homeland as well as a means through which the Libyan population could be controlled and their resistance mollified, all in the service of whichever regime was in power in Italy. Archival material at the Società Dante Alighieri[59] shows Italy's interest in engaging the local community as part of the "civilizing mission" in Libya through a form of cultural integration which, in reality, as explained in this chapter, was a form of cultural subjugation. Its mission statement as inscribed in most correspondences related to Libya was: "per la diffusione della lingua e della cultura italiana fuori del Regno", that is "to disseminate the language and culture of Italy outside the monarchy." From the very beginning of its colonial project, Italy understood the importance of religion to the Libyan people and tried to use religion in order to achieve its ends. They tried to argue that there was no contradiction between practicing Islam as a faith and accepting the transition of authority from Ottoman rule to the Italians (al-Husnawi, 1984). This manifested itself in practical ways. For example, during the month of Ramadan, brothels and pubs were shut down and celebrations were held for the Muslim population. The Italians even facilitated the paperwork for Libyans to go to pilgrimage in Mecca. Mosques were allowed to function as independent bodies under the management of Islamic waqf. The Islamic Zawaya were allowed to continue to function. The Italian government built new mosques and renovated old ones such as the Mosque of Sidi al-Shinshan in Tripoli and the mosque of Sidi Abdelsalam in Zliten and Sidi Raf'I in Bayda (al-Suri, 1998: 450). Italians also maintained and enhanced the role of sharia courts in Libya. This resulted in the development of close rapport between those Islamic court judges and Italian leaders (al-Suri, 1998: 453).

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[59] Italian emigration in the beginning of the 20th century was recognized as a major resource for Italy, "in the form of money transfers from abroad and savings brought back by return migration" and that "Italians abroad were regarded as outposts of one large nation that stretched beyond the geographical borders, which further encouraged thinking in terms of an almost 'spiritual' concept of *italianità*" (van Kessel 2012: 22). The Dante Alighieri Society, created in 1889, was tasked with the promotion of the Italian language and culture at home and abroad. The initial focus was on Italians themselves and to teach them to speak and write Italian, then it extended its activities to include the care of Italian emigrants abroad and "the prevention of '*snazionalizzazione*' or the 'denationalisation' of the Italian diaspora". There was concern about the illiteracy of Italian emigrants and the fact that often they only spoke their local dialect (van Kessel, 2012: 21).

During the fascist period, the institute's Comitato Di Tripoli and the Comitato Di Bengasi corresponded regularly with the headquarters in Rome and with the Fasci Italiani All'Estero about the capacity to reach out to the local Libyan population.[60] From 1935 onwards, there was a focus on winning the local population to fascism. In Tunisia, the propaganda campaign targeting the Arabs dates back to 1936: it was during that year that the Italians undertook large-scale distribution of pamphlets in Arabic, which aimed at depicting the Italians as protectors of Islam in the world and at describing the benefits of Italian colonization. Copies of the books *Italy in her Colonies* by Shaykh Muhammad Nur Bakr and *Muslim Ethiopia: My Experiences in Islamic Lands* by Tayasir Zabiyan al-

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[60] Archivio Storico Dante Alighieri. Comitati esteri, f.99E, Cairo 1945-1949, letter dated 17 April 1946. An in-depth account of the Society's role in promoting Italian culture in the colonies can be found in van Kessel, T. M. C. (2011). *Cultural promotion and imperialism: the Dante Alighieri Society and the British Council contesting the Mediterranean in the 1930s*. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam.

Kaylani were distributed. Another publication, released in Cairo in 1936, described Mussolini as the protector of Islam in Libya (Baldinetti, 2011: 414). Thus, during the fascist period, Libya became a construct essential to Mussolini's rhetoric of building an Italian empire and restoring to Italy its glory. Following the downfall of fascism, the focus was on consolidation and the protection of Italian interests in Libya, except for communist associations which as argued later continued to link to Libyan political groups and associations in an effort to show support for Libyan independence. Their influence is worthy of attention especially insofar as they contributed to the emergence of a trade union movement in Libya.

For fascist associations, attempts at engaging the local population were by no means intended to put the Libyan population and the Italians on the same footing. As evidenced later in this chapter, there were clear perceptions of differences between developed and "civilized" Italians, and Libyans.[61] The spaces each population inhabited were different and heavily demarcated as differences between the shape and form of an Italian village and a Libyan village later described in this chapter clearly demonstrate. This segregation of spaces did have repercussions on the Libyan population's capacity to coalesce on a national vision because it added another layer of division to the already existing regional differences discussed in the introductory chapter. With already existing regional divisions, the Italian colonization exacerbated local divisions within the regions thereby fragmenting the capacity of the population to develop a common imagination of what an independent Libya would look like. Perceptions of those regional differences emerge quite prominently in the interviews conducted with both Libyans and Italians for this study, albeit with exceptions. To understand the role and function of Italian associations in Libya during the colonial period and their impact on the Libyan population, it is important to see them through the lens of the social, economic and political contexts as discussed below.

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[61] The Italian racial laws passed in 1937 are an example of how those differences were made law. Those laws were mainly directed at Italian Jews as well as at the indigenous populations of the colonies. In Ethiopia, the laws were particularly significant to how relations between Italians and Ethiopians were to be managed. As argued by Barrera, long before the colonization of Ethiopia had taken place, it is significant that Italy's highest colonial authorities had already set up segregated brothels. In July 1935, Mussolini ordered his ministries to prepare a plan of action to avoid the development of half-castes (mulatti) in Oriental Africa (Barrera, 2002). The need for segregation between Italian men and Libyan women was not needed because of the Libyans' adherence to the Islamic faith which forbids intermarriage between a Muslim woman and a non-Muslim man but perceptions of Italian supremacy to the indigenous population were definitely there.

Aspects of life during the colonial period

The social and economic landscape in Libya during the colonial period was characterized by inequality, mirroring the experience with colonialism of other North African nations (Karfa‘, 2000; al-Faituri, 2012). However, extreme inequalities in Libya were further compounded by a succession of natural disasters. Droughts, famines and plagues hit Libya in the years preceding and following the Italian colonization.

A study on the social implications of poverty in Libya by Mostafa Umar al-Tir highlights the years of drought that Libya had gone through both in the period leading up to, during and following the Italian colonization of Libya: 1856, 1859, 1879, 1897, 1907, 1915, 1926, 1935, 1947 and 1948 were all years during which Libya was plunged into food security crises. In 1915, because of a famine resulting in high Libyan mortality rates, it came to be known as the year of steel (*zinco*) in the Libyan dialect. The reference to steel is because Italians, at the time, dug deep graves in which to bury the dead bodies *en masse*. They then placed the remains of military equipment and steel panels from the First World War over the graves before covering them with dust (al-Tir, 2013: 27).

The effect of the droughts was not uniform across Libya's regions; some regions suffered more than others. The droughts that hit Libya in 1947 and 1948 are a case in point; they were more intense in the western region than in other parts of the country.

Many people migrated to the eastern part of Libya and interviews with Libyans who lived through these years describe Libyans from Tripolitania having been made to live on charity because there were limited job opportunities in the eastern region following the end of the Second World War. At the time, both Tripolitania and Barqa were under the control of the British Military Administration, so the British distributed monthly assistance to the Libyan people, mostly in the form of grain, known locally as *qattaniyya*. During 1947–48, there was also a plague of locusts, which destroyed crops and aggravated the famine. People then developed ways to collect and cook the locusts. There were also a number of diseases that spread during the years of drought, such as measles and different eye infections such as trachoma, which caused blindness as well as anaemia (al-Tir, 2013: 27).

Throughout the colonial period, the Libyan population had limited opportunities to receive an education and no serious investment in Libyan educational institutions was made (al-Faituri, 2012). According to Pretelli (2011), in 1913, the Ministry for the Colonies limited the education of Libyan children to the primary level. This is because "many politicians and observers shared a belief in training the indigenous population for manual jobs and not providing them with 'intellectual arms' through education" (Pretelli, 2011: 278). The following year witnessed "the segregation of Italian and local children in the schools". Italian children were to be taught in standard Italian schools resembling their counterparts in Italy, while Libyan children were to be "'assimilated' by means of a number of institutions: their traditional Koranic schools; new Italian-Arabic schools, which provided a three-year programme of Italian language and history, as well as Koran and Arabic classes, supervised by the Italian authorities and intended for selected Libyan children; last but not least, a Scuola di Cultura Islamica (higher Islamic school) was to train the personnel for Muslim religious, legal and educational institutions, although this was only actually established in 1935" (Pretelli, 2011: 278). A more conciliatory approach was used following the First World War, which included the involvement of local elites in the administration and the development of secondary schools. However, Pretelli argues that Italian efforts regarding education were tightly constrained by the military difficulties arising from Libyan rebellion after the occupation (Pretelli, 2011: 278). In 1921, there were only 1525 Libyans enrolled in Italian-Arabic schools in Tripolitania and this increased to 4931 about 10 years later (Cresti 2001:124; Pretelli, 2011: 278).

For the Libyan population, work opportunities were thus severely restricted under Italian colonialism. During the fascist period, working conditions were regulated in Tripolitania and Barqa according to the Italian labour code for Africa. The code protected the hours of work, holidays, social insurance and apprenticeships for Italian workers onl. Similarly, while Italian labourers and their families were insured against unemployment, sickness and accidents, Libyan labourers were insured only against accidents (Norman, 1965: 18). Ahmed Fagih, the Libyan novelist and playwright, documents this scarcity of options in his novel *Maps of the Soul* (2014), in which the protagonist reflects on his severely disadvantaged state under the occupation:

> Every Libyan had to look for his daily wages as a labourer on the farms the Italians established, on the ground stolen for grazing. No work, no resources, no livelihood remained to native countrymen except in the Italian settlements, where it was generally the lowliest jobs available such as porters, janitors or night watch men. If that failed, a Libyan was forced to work as a policeman or soldier in the army, so long as the possibility of facing one of his own family on the battlefield no longer existed. (Fagih, 2014: 87)

About 80 per cent of the Libyan population lived in rural areas. Half of this population were settled; half were nomadic. Migration between rural and urban areas was restricted. The biggest cities were Tripoli and Benghazi, and it was not possible to migrate from rural to urban areas during the period of Italian colonization. The Italians allowed only those they needed to work for them to enter Tripoli during work hours, but even then, the Libyan workers still had to live outside the city. A Libyan respondent who witnessed the final years of the Italian occupation described how Libyans were a “minority” within the public space in Tripoli, which was heavily dominated by Italians and Jews. Libyan workers developed caves and temporary houses outside the city, these were termed *campo* (camp) by the Italians (al-Tir, 2013: 36-37). Residents of these settlements went to the city solely to work.

The Libyan village was very modest in terms of its elements and the activities of its inhabitants. There were three types of Libyan villages: those near the coast and in the lands close to the coast; those in the mountains; and those located around oases. A Libyan village typically contained a mosque and a small school composed of two or three rooms. Few other amenities were available. Homes in villages near the coast were built out of palm trees. These villages also had nomadic tents known locally as *beit al sha'r* (“house(s) of hair”), which were common in other parts of the Arab world. There were also homes made out of fabric. Villages built in the mountains included caves that were carved out of the stone. Homes were usually close to one another and streets were narrow and small. Villages built around springs and oases were composed of houses constructed from mud; their streets were narrow, and houses were usually composed of one or two floors. Women would be located on the first floor while men and children occupied the streets and the ground floor (al-Tir, 2013: 36-37). In the village, job opportunities were limited to tilling the land or herding cattle and livestock. Crafts were limited to the making of clothes. The elite in the village were also small in number, being the landowners and the owners of cattle and livestock. There were also some traders and civil servants, such as teachers and police. The remaining residents (who constituted the majority) were the poor. There was limited access to cash and people generally bartered to meet their needs. Villages that had resources and utilities were owned by the Italians (al-Tir, 2013: 36-37).

In urban areas, trade was prominent. Libyan traders, however, were few compared to the Jews and Italians. Following the end of Italian colonization, it was easier to trade in Barqa because the Italian population had left the eastern region. In the cities, there were crafts and some small factories as well as hospitals, cafes and restaurants. The big factories were located in Tripoli and were owned either by Italians or by Jews. Muslim Libyans held only menial jobs such as porters or office boys (al-Tir, 2013: 37).

The Italian village was different. From the beginning of the colonial period, Libya was described as a "potential peasant's paradise" in Giolittian newspapers, with the suggestion that two things were needed to realize that dream: first, liberation from "the barbarous Turkish yoke", and second, a little hard work (Segre, 1972). One Italian respondent, who was born in a village near Tripoli, recollected:

> My father went to Libya when he was 23 years old as an engineer. This was in 1927 or 1928 when the Italian government decided to distribute uncultivated land to the Italian people living in Libya. The land was uninhabited and had no trees and no houses. (Italian born in Tripoli, personal communication, Rome, 24 October 2014, my translation)

Later in the interview, he commented that:

> When it came to the land that was taken from the Libyan people and given to the Italians, the Italian government gave its owners money in return. I did inquire about this later and found that the money they were given was a fair amount. (Italian born in Tripoli, personal communication, Rome, 24 October 2014, my translation)

This account is contradicted in the literature on Libya, but it reveals how Italians in Libya may have perceived or explained their colonization of Libya to themselves. According to Federico Cresti, a historian of Italians in Libya, the expropriation of property and land, passing from Libyan to Italian hands, was done by force. The use of force, he argues had even started before the March on Rome and the rise of Fascism (Cresti, 2011).[62] In an interview with him, he held that:

> All the properties of the Sanusis and the rebels were confiscated by the Italians. There were expropriated at the beginning of 1920. All the estates were taken away and sometimes given to Italian colonists. (Italian historian of Italians in Libya; personal communication, Naples, 24 September 2014, my translation)

In addition to the dispossession of land, the Italians organized the forced displacement of Libyans in an effort to separate and segregate those who were opposed to the colonization from those who had come to accept it. In March 1930, General Rodolfo Graziani launched an unprecedented number of forced displacement waves on the Libyan population. The Italians sought to create a well-defined territorial separation between rebel formations and the submissive population even if it meant the destruction of a whole population, especially in Barqa (Cresti, 2011). There is evidence that they also tried to confine the populations released from prison within identifiable spaces in order to better control them: Umar al-Mukhtar al-Wafi, a political prisoner during the Gaddafi period, recounts how his father told him that the Italians asked released prisoners to live in areas identified by them and in close proximity to one another for a period of time in order to ensure that they did not return to armed resistance against them (al-Wafi, 2018: 24). Land appropriation was, nevertheless, idealized by the Italian settlers and divested of its colonial implications. One respondent described the village nostalgically as a safe haven in which Libyans and Italians could live together:

> In 1927 or 1928, 14 kilometres away from Tripoli, my father got a piece of land and he was an engineer so he knew how to cultivate land (trees, irrigation and so on). He set up an ideal village in that area and I was born in that village in 1934. That is why I speak Arabic. I lived with Libyans and in a Libyan community and that is why I even speak the dialect. I used to

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[62] Cresti reports that in 1928 Marshal Pietro Badoglio stated that he would not give respite to Libyans who had not submitted to Italian colonization “neither to him nor to his family nor to his herds nor to his heirs” (Cresti, 2011, my translation)

> take care of the animals in the village with the Libyan children. (Italian born in Tripoli; personal communication, Rome, 21 September 2014)

In this particular case, exchanges between the respondent, an Italian born in Libya, and Libyans after independence crystallized in the form of an association. The same respondent related the story of the birth of an association of farmers:

> We put together an association of farmers. In 1962 or 1963. We had a voting process for the jam'iyya [association] (14 kilometres from Tripoli). I was the vice president and I was asked to go to the nazir [headmaster] and ask him for things. … I walked in and we had a meeting. The nazir had studied in Florence, but he did not recognize me as Italian. He asked me who I was, and then asked me about my tribe. I mentioned the popular tribe in my village. He was not entirely convinced. I then gave him my Italian name. And he was very surprised. … The Arabic language opened doors for me. (Italian born in Tripoli; personal communication, Rome, 21 September 2014)

Interviews with Libyans did not confirm the existence of such joint associations and there is no documentation of them in the literature. This indicates that, even after independence, they were the exception rather than the rule. Within Tripolitania, Italian settlers either lived in the centre of the city (urban) or cultivated lands in nearby areas, creating their own villages (rural). This was linked to a socioeconomic dimension, since most Italians who migrated to Libya came from underprivileged backgrounds, and so they were mostly farmers interested in cultivating land. According to one respondent, the closest analogy to the village was the kibbutz:

> There was a village and my father was in charge. It was like a kibbutz, in the sense that it was a self-sustaining village, where we grew tobacco and olives. (Italian born in Tripoli, personal communication, Rome, 31 October 2014, my translation)

Within the village, there were also the Italian school and the church. There was little need to go beyond the walls of the village; it was functionally a gated community isolated from the world outside. The lifeblood of these villages was the institutions within; these institutions regulated and allowed for minimal interaction or integration between the different groups in Libya. For instance, Libyans who went to the Italian school were a privileged minority and came from advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, and the overwhelming majority of them were men – cultural and religious differences, as described by respondents, did not allow Muslim women to go to the Italian schools.

In the city, the role played by the Italian school was central. One respondent related how he was born in Tripoli and how his father moved there in 1914 as an employee of the Italian government within the Tribunal. He described the school as the locale in which "Italians, Libyans, Jews" formed a "community" within an educational system:

> Mainly Libyan boys came to the Italian school and there was also the Libyan school that was administered by the Italian government. And there was also the religious school but that was not administered by the Italian government. (Italian born in Tripoli, personal communication, Rome, 22 October 2014, my translation)

Another respondent, who attended and then later headed an Italian school in Tripoli, described the system as follows:

> Under the Italian occupation, Italians organized many schools for Italians and Arabs. And usually, in the Italian school, they taught Arabic and, in the Arab school, they taught Italian. Usually the Arab school would be divided between boys and girls. Italian schools were always mixed. The Italians also organized schools for Jewish students because there was a big community of Jews there. (Italian born in Tripoli, personal communication, Rome, 28 October 2014, my translation)

This view of a community of Libyans, Italians and Jews is contradicted in the accounts of the Libyans interviewed for this thesis and in the literature as mentioned earlier (Pretelli, 2011; al-Faituri, 2012). If a community did exist, it was in a very limited form as, at the end of the Italian colonial period, 90 per cent of the Libyan population were illiterate. Furthermore, one Italian respondent described how there was limited social engagement with the Libyan population. According to him, there were very few incentives for communication primarily because they occupied different spaces:

> We had no interaction with the Libyans because we lived in a village and within the village, there was a school and the village was a desert land so no one had lived there. Just imagine, Libyans were a small population living in a land that was four times the size of Italy. Arabs were not into agriculture. It did not mean a thing to them. They did not know what agriculture was. (Italian who moved to Tripoli at the age of eight, personal communication, Rome, 28 October 2014, my translation)

He described the life of an average Libyan during that period:

> They had a small garden within their homes and made enough vegetables and went to the market once a week and exchanged things with one another. In that period, we had nothing to do with Libyans and they had nothing to do with us. (Italian who moved to Tripoli at the age of eight, personal communication, Rome, 28 October 2014, my translation)

He further commented on the lack of interaction between Libyans and Italians in socioeconomic terms:

> All people are alike. If you were an employee and had a salary at the end of the month, you felt yourself a big person. And if you saw someone from another class, you looked down upon them. It was normal. Europeans were a step or two ahead of the Libyan people. There was no possibility for integration. (Italian who moved to Tripoli at the age of eight, personal communication, Rome, 28 October 2014, my translation)

This was confirmed in the interviews conducted with the Libyans. A Libyan woman from Misrata, who lived during the King Idris period, described her engagement with Italians then as "aloof" and saw this as a continuing trend from the colonial era:

> There was limited engagement between Libyans and Italians even after independence. They just remained fascist. I remember visiting an Italian in a village near Tripoli and she was very distant towards me. Relations between Italians and Libyans were always sensitive. (Libyan from Misrata, interview via phone, 20 February 2018, my translation)

Italian colonization gave birth to a new Libyan elite that was formed of two strands. The first comprised Libyans who were educated in Cairo or Tunis and returned to Libya, or those who had benefitted from an education in Italy, spoke Italian and had access to Italian circles. One notable example is Hassan Bey, the son of Mohamed Fekini, who had died in battle in 1920 between the Arabs and the Berbers and who was one of the icons of Libyan resistance against Italian colonization in 1911. Hassan Bey studied in Tripoli, Cairo and Damascus, but also in Turin, and he had close ties with prominent Italians. Following his death at Berber hands, he was eulogized on the floor of the Italian Senate by Italian political theorist Gaetano Mosca (Ben-Ghiat, 2011). Another strand of elite Libyans comprised those in exile. Anna Baldinetti (2010), as mentioned earlier in the research, has documented the role played by Libyan exiles in building Libyan nationalism and forging ties that were different from tribal or kinship ties.

Another feature of the socioeconomic landscape was loyalty to *region*, which resulted from the limited capacity to connect the eastern and western regions of Libya to one another. This does not mean that there was no engagement between the eastern and western regions of Libya; people from Tripolitania and Barqa intermarried and people moved and traded across the country, albeit in a limited fashion due to the poverty discussed above. Limited engagement between the eastern and western regions of Libya was reiterated in most of the interviews. This limited engagement was emphasized more by Italians than by Libyans whose parents' generation witnessed the Italian colonial period. Fewer Italians maintained a presence in Barqa than in Tripolitania;[63] according to accounts by Italians who lived in Libya, the *Italiani di Tripoli* and the *Italiani di Bengasi* had limited engagement with one another. They ascribed this to the specificity of each region and its greater cultural proximity to neighbouring countries than to other parts of Libya: Barqa was closer to Egypt than it was to Tripolitania in their accounts. According to one respondent, an Italian who moved to Tripoli at the age of eight and witnessed the transition of Libya from an Italian colony to a country under the control of the British Military Administration, there was a perceived feeling of distrust between Tripolitania and Barqa that was expressed through the need to police one another:

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[63] It is important to note that, according to the 1936 census, the number of Italians per 1,000 natives was highest in northern Barqa, "lying in the range of 200–300 in Benghazi, 100–200 in Derna and Apollonia, 50–100 in Barce and Tobruk, and below 10 in Agedabia", while in Tripolitania, Italians were in the range of 200–300 only in the district of Tripoli and Sugh El-Giumaa, and otherwise below 50 per 1,000 natives (Pan, 2011: 115). In 1943, however, Italy moved the majority of its population from Barqa to Tripolitania; consequently, very few remained in Barqa.

> Yes, I'll tell you what. Policemen in Tripoli were from Barqa and policemen in Barqa were from Tripoli. That means something. (Italian who moved to Tripoli at the age of eight, personal communication, Rome, 28 October 2014, my translation)

The regional differences were partly the result of the demographic composition, which differed from one region to the other and influenced interactions with the Italian community who felt less accepted by Muslim Libyans than by Berbers and Jews. The population in the east was more nomadic than that in the western region. In 1931, for instance, it was estimated that a quarter of the native population in Barqa lived in houses while three-quarters lived in tents. In Tripolitania, 50 per cent lived in houses, 45 per cent in tents and 5 per cent in the mountains (Pan, 2011: 112).

In the literature on Libya, these differences have been ascribed to a geographic disconnect. According to Ahmida, because Libya is a desert country without rivers, communication presents a challenge across its regions. Examining the map of Libya, it is significant to see how even along the Mediterranean coast in the Gulf of Syrte, the desert faces the sea, "forming a natural barrier between Tripolitania and Barqa" (Ahmida, 2009: 2). Those barriers were further solidified by the land's dry climate: "rainfall is scant and inconsistent" and only five percent of the entire land is fit for cultivation, "limiting settled agriculture to the coast of Tripolitania, parts of the Jfara plain and western mountains, the Marj plain in Barqa, and the oases of Fezzan and Barqa up to the middle of the century" (Ahmida, 2009: 3).

It would be wrong, however, to consider these divisions as representative of a fundamental disconnect between the regions. There were exceptions. One of the respondents, a Libyan from Benghazi, described how in her case, as well as that of her parents' generation, there were instances of marriage between Libyans from the eastern and western regions:

> Communication and movement between the regions under the Italian occupation was difficult but there were examples of exchanges between eastern and western regions of Libya. We had more in common as Libyans from the east and the west than with the Italians… My husband was from Misrata and I was from Benghazi. My father accepted and my uncle rejected the idea. We ended up married. (Libyan from Benghazi, interview via Skype, 10 February 2017, my translation)

Even more important was the kind of population who lived in each region; in Barqa, it was mostly Arabs with strong cultural and societal affinities to Egypt;[64] while in Tripolitania, it was a mix of Berbers,[65] Muslim Libyans and Jews (Pan, 1949: 102). Consequently, there were different attitudes towards the Italian and British colonial powers.[66]

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[64] At independence, the influence of Egypt is clear within the Libyan legal system. Some laws, such as the private schools law in Libya, were replicas of the Egyptian law (Foreign Office. Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906 to 1966. Political: Egyptian. (1948) "Situation in Tripolitania. Italian Activities. Anti-Jewish Riots." Code 66, File 534. FO 371/6942).

[65] According to Chia-Lin Pan, the people of Libya are of prehistoric nomadic Berber origin, but the Arab conquests of Libya during the fifth and seventh centuries resulted in "extensive admixtures of Arab and Berber stock"; he cites Tunisian historian Et-Tigiani, who wrote in 1307 that "there remained on the coast of Tripolitania only some very small groups of pure Berbers who were never mixed with Arabs" (Pan, 1949: 102). For more information on the population composition of Libya see Pan, Chia-Lin (1949).

[66] It is interesting to see how the population composition and the different historical experience that each region in Libya had later influenced their views and attitudes towards one another and towards external actors. In a correspondence between the British Embassy in Libya (Tripoli) and the Foreign Office in London dated 1960, a report for the year 1959/1960 on the work of the British Council in Libya prepared by the Acting Representative, Mr. R. A. Simcox, Barqa is described as a more fertile ground for the Council's work than in Tripolitania. Barqans are described in the correspondence as "naturally more receptive". This could be explained in terms of the rise of oil development projects in the 1960s in Barqa which made the socioeconomic situation there more favourable for the activities of the British Council. It could also be because of the Sanusī Order's cooperation with the British which then influenced attitudes of the Libyan population in Barqa favourably towards the British if compared to Tripolitania (Foreign Office. Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906 to 1966. Political: Egyptian. (1948) "Situation in Tripolitania. Italian Activities. Anti-Jewish Riots." Code 66, File 534. FO 371/69421).

The politics of Italian associations: At the crossroads between fascism and communism

A history of the birth, expansion and end of Italian associations in Libya is connected to the political space within which they operated as well as the rise and fall of the Italian colonial project. The political space for the Italian population in Libya during and following the colonial period was largely informed by two main ideologies: fascism and communism. Fascist associations focused on the consolidation of the Italian empire and represented the soft power through which the Italian government sought to reach out, mollify and control the Libyan population. Communist associations were anti-fascist, upheld the cause of liberating Libya from the throes of colonialism and there is evidence that they communicated closely with Libyan political groups. Both associations, fascist and communist, failed to gain a strong Libyan following but Communist associations had some limited influence on the Libyan resistance and did contribute to the development of Libyan trade unions as evidenced in the next chapter.

Fascist associations

The development of fascist associations is embedded within the overall Italian colonial project in Libya. Claudio Segre argues that the colonization of Libya brought lustre to the fascist regime in Italy in several ways. First, a modern, intensively colonized Libya provided a strong card in the fascist bid for Mediterranean hegemony and African empire.[67] Second, the Libyan example of large resettlement projects provided hope for those affected by unemployment in Italy. Third, the colonization resonated with many patriotic Italians who wanted to see Italy's power as an empire grow globally (Segre, 1972). Italy saw Libya as an outlet for its overpopulated peninsula. An elaborate settlement plan was put together for its people, largely Sicilians, to be transported to land "which had been readied with farms, houses, and entire villages, complete with hospital, church, courthouse, and assembly hall" (Norman, 1965: 16). The lands, however, were taken by the Italian government by confiscating them from Libyans who were executed or exiled because of their political activity or resistance to the occupation. In other instances, land was expropriated at nominal rates. According to a British survey of the impact of these policies on the Libyan population:

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[67] It is worth noting here the context within which Italy developed an interest in Libya as a colony. In the 19th and 20th centuries, mass emigration from Italy was quite common. Most Italians migrated to the American continent or to Western European countries but North Africa also became home to a large number of emigrants. In 1911, 12,000 Italians were living in Morocco, 33,153 in Algeria, 34,926 in Egypt, and 88,082 in Tunisia (Montalbano, 2018). Because of the large number of Italians living in Tunisia, Italy saw the French occupation of Tunisia as a “shameful national defeat” but in another way, the presence of a large Italian community in Tunisia legitimised Italian colonial ambitions in Libya. Montalbano (2018)

> […] the Italian rule was on the whole detested by the Libyan population, in spite of considerable material benefits. The crushing of local political aspirations, the Italianization of education and officialdom, the relegation of Libyans to a status inferior to that which they had enjoyed for centuries, were all essential features of that rule. (Norman, 1965: 16)

The Italian colonial period from 1911 to 1943 presented, as pointed out earlier, a violent instance of settler colonialism; it witnessed the destruction of the local bureaucratic administrations that existed in Libya at the beginning of nineteenth century when it was a quasi-independent Ottoman province (Anderson, 1986: 10). Indeed, that period was shaped "by memories of upheavals, wars, defeats and resistance" – so much so that it is estimated that "at least half a million Libyans died in battle, or from disease, starvation or thirst. In addition, 250,000 more Libyans were forced into exile in Chad, Turkey, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Algeria and Tunisia" (Ahmida, 2009: 1). Libyan refugees in those countries still faced significant hardships and restrictions in what they could do. For example, documents at the Tunisian National Archives show that during that period, high

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argues that the Italian community in Tunisia supported Italians in their war in Libya in the hope that this would enhance their status as migrants in North Africa. He argues that a substantial amount of social, cultural and even financial support was offered by Italians in Tunisia to their countrymen in Libya.

commanders of the French troops in Tunisia passed a resolution that restricted the ability of Tripolitanians, particularly those from Misrata (who were considered sympathizers with the fascist regime), to work in Tunisia and limited their movement to areas of military control in the south of Tunisia and in Gafsa and Gebes. Libyans experienced, therefore, restrictions both in their own country and in other countries in the region.[68] Alongside the violence, the Italian colonizers, particularly during the fascist era (1922–1943) and primarily during the period between 1937 and 1943 when the Italian population had expanded in Libya and the resistance was mostly crushed, tried to appeal to the Libyan population socially and culturally by establishing Italian associations in Libya, mainly in Tripoli. In Italy, Arabic was included in some of the major universities from 1932, such as the Palermo Royal College, Rome Royal College, Sacred Heart Catholic School in Milan and others in Napoli, Catania and Genoa (*L'Avvenire Arabo*, August 1932). At the same time, however, the Italians stunted any efforts towards the foundation of Libyan institutions that could have fed into an indigenous Libyan civil society.

Establishing Italian associations was at the heart of the regime's soft power and their plan for the demographic colonization, as well as the resettlement of Italians in Libya which expanded with the rise of fascism. According to an article published in *Libia*, a journal that documented fascist activities in Libya and was published in Tripoli, "the demographic colonization of Libya represented a very important and significant realization of the fascist regime"; it was a means by which to affirm the fascist regime's dedication to the development of the black continent – *continente nero* – by a white population – *popolazione bianca* (*Libia*, 1940). That tension would manifest itself in political, social and cultural exchanges between the Libyan and Italian populations. Achievement within the agricultural and education sectors was testimony to what the

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[68] Tunisian National Archives, Serie A, 1911, Canton 280, Dossier 15, 134.

Italians perceived as their civilizing mission in Libya, a narrative that informed many fascist practices in Africa. Achievements, however, were reaped by the Italian settlers and not shared with the indigenous population as confirmed by existing literature (Anderson, 1984; Ahmida, 2009) and interviews with Libyans for this research. To the Italian colonizers, this was Rome's path towards the future: "*e Roma che ha indicato la strado dell'avvenire*" ("Rome charting the path to the future") (Palloni, 1940).

The colonization was gradual and went through phases. For the first decade of colonial rule, Italian control over Libya was limited because Italians were faced with fierce resistance in Barqa by the Sanusiyah and by the forces under the leadership of Mohamed Fekini in Tripolitania (Del Boca, 2010). In documents housed at the Archivio Storico Diplomatico and Archivio dello Stato in Rome, Italian officials in colonial Libya emphasized Italy's interest in maintaining good relations with the Muslim population in Libya, even as they sought to crush dissent, particularly in the eastern regions of the country. The strategy was to win the hearts and minds of the Libyan population in order to better control it. In 1912, Domenico Caruso, director of civil affairs, described the plan:

> Since the Italian occupation has profoundly affected local economic conditions, this has raised the expectations of the *indigeni* as regards to increased values of their estates, that even for as worthy a goal as the regeneration and rehabilitation of the city, we could not ignore or disappoint them without giving rise to ill feelings and protests that would definitely be harmful to our cause …
>
> In creating a system for determining compensations owed to the owners of expropriated real estate, we aimed for a considerate and precise method … so as not to create discontent among the *indigeni*, who … are extremely pleased by the increase of the value of their properties which has followed from our occupation …[69]

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[69] Archivio Centrale dello Stato, *fondo*, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 1912, busta 6/442, fascicolo 190: Decreto relative al piano regolatore della Citta di Tripoli, 20 March 1912 (Cited in Fuller 2000: 127).

Accounts by Libyans, as well as historical documents of the period, reveal the falseness of this “precise method” (Anderson, 1984; Ahmida, 2009). Under the governorship of Giuseppe Volpi, it was slow and was tied to agricultural colonization, which at first was “limited to small-scale experimental programs on state land grants near Tripoli for nearly a decade”; by 1923, however, Italians had full control of the agricultural zone in Tripolitania, and by the end of the decade they controlled the Jabal Akhdar in Barqa (Fowler, 1973). Volpi’s approach was a gradualist one. Because of colonization’s financial burden on the Italian government, Volpi was not interested in mass peasant colonization, instead offering land to Italian investors. However, this failed to attract capital investment to Tripolitania, and those who invested in Libya hired cheap local labour instead of bringing families from Italy. In 1928, two years after Mussolini’s first visit to Libya, the De Bono laws included legislation to “increase subsidies to private concessionaires and to require them to settle colonists on their lands”. As a result, in 1929, “some 455 families, totalling 1,778 members, were settled in Tripolitania”; four years later, “the number had increased to 1,500 families with about 7,000 members” (IAC, 1947).

In 1932, the Ente di Colonizzazione della Cirenaica was established to facilitate state land grants in Jabal Akhdar. The commission provided the colonists with technical assistance, administered state aid, and marketed their crops until they repaid the debt (Fowler, 1973). A turning point in the colonization of Libya was the governorship of Italo Balbo from 1934 until his death in 1940. He assumed office after the destruction of the Sanusi resistance so that “for the first time in over two decades of occupation, the Italians could concentrate on the economic development of Libya” (St John, 2014: 52). In Italy, because of economic and social issues – “A negative balance of trade combined with a strong lira aggravated Rome’s chronic unemployment problem” (St. John, 2014: 52) –

there was more support in the 1930s for the colonization of Libya. It is significant that over the winters from 1931 until 1935 there was up to 15% unemployment of agricultural workers, a rate higher than that among industrial workers (St John, 2014: 52). Mussolini was also less interested in the costs of colonization than in the prestige associated with the projects: "A modern, highly colonized Libya promised a strong card in its bid for Mediterranean hegemony and Africa empire" (St John, 2012: 52).

In 1938, Balbo revealed his plan for the *Ventimila*, which was to settle 20,000 colonists each year for five consecutive years. A respondent described the settling process as follows:

> In 1938, 20,000 Italians moved to Libya. Each of the families received a house with a piece of land and they were scheduled to be owners of the land in 20 years. The government was selling them slowly and the families were paying the government back over the years in instalments. In 1939, another 10,000 Italian farmers went to Libya. There were poor people and my family was one of them. (Italian who moved to Tripoli at the age of eight, personal interview, Rome, 28 October 2014, my translation)

Italians who moved to Libya at the time were predominantly poor and de facto fascist (Italian who moved to Tripoli at the age of eight, personal interview, Rome, 28 October 2014). In 1940, after two waves of mass migrations, there were around 110,000 Italians living in Libya, 40 per cent of whom were "agricultural colonists" (Fowler, 1973). Propaganda painted the colonies in Africa in fascist colours. African colonies were a second chance for proletarian Italy and an outlet promising a good life (Segre, 1972). Italo Balbo led much of the effort and in 1938 he personally oversaw the sailing of 20,000 peasants to Libya.

Until 1943, the concentration of Italians was limited in Barqa because of the fierceness of the resistance there. According to one respondent, the land in Barqa was better suited to agriculture:

> So, when Italians occupied the country, they found that the place was fit for agriculture, but it was against the interests of the Libyan inhabitants. When the Italians occupied Benghazi, Italian families were attacked so they left and moved to Tripolitania. (Italian who moved to Tripoli at the age of eight, personal interview, Rome, 28 October 2014, my translation)

Resistance in Barqa was directly related to the presence of leadership and after ʿUmar al-Mukhtar, all resistance was finished. Nevertheless, perceptions of Barqa as being unwelcoming to colonists persisted even after the death of al-Mukhtar in 1931. The death of ʿUmar al-Mukhtar was perceived as a watershed moment in the success of the Italian colonization of Libya and more stability for the Italian settlers was made possible, especially in Tripolitania (Italian who moved to Tripoli at the age of eight, personal interview, Rome, 28 October 2014, my translation).

Italians interviewed for the thesis reflected on the 1930s and their families' stance on Fascism in somewhat ambivalent terms, which perhaps was because they were influenced by the downfall of the fascist movement and Italy's current problematic encounter with its past. The restricting effect of Fascism on the development of Libyan organizations was not lost on them. Indeed, Libyan organizations were strictly forbidden during the fascist period (Italian born in Tripoli, personal communication, Rome, 22 October 2014; Candreva, 2016).

Mussolini established a number of associations in Libya that sought to win Libyans to fascism, an approach that won some Libyans while the opposing small communist movement, established by Valentino Parlato,[70] failed to win over more than a few Libyans. Parlato confirmed in an interview in Rome in 2015 that his activities in Libya were mainly confined to the Italian population with very limited input from the Libyans because of a perceived incompatibility between Islam and communism (personal interview, Rome, 12 September 2015, my translation).

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[70] More information on fascist associations and organizations is available through: http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/fascismo_res-597f3c63-8b74-11dc-8e9d-0016357eee51_(Enciclopedia-Italiana)/ [accessed 26 January 2015]. On Valentino Parlato's endeavour to establish a communist party in Libya under the British occupation, see Parlato, Valentino, "Così, a 16 anni in Libia, sono diventato comunista." ("So, At the Age of 16 in Libya, I Became a Communist."): http://eddyburg.it/article/articleview/15729/0/153/

Italian associations in Libya were largely an arm of the Italian state, except for the communist organizations which, as noted above, commanded limited influence within Arab circles. The fascist period witnessed the expansion of a civic space in Libya engineered by and for the Italian population who had settled in the country. Only a small fraction of this space attracted the Arab Muslim population, since organizations were established to spread Italy's cultural capital in Libya and to help consolidate its presence across the Mediterranean. For Italy, the significance of its wish to expand in Libya (and to successfully settle there) was twofold. On the one hand, it had a domestic relevance: "the need for a sense of national identity that could buttress the recently unified state". Thus, "the symbolic capital derived from the taking of Libya aided Italy's enthused politicians in their making of Italy" (Fuller, 2000: 124). On the other hand, Italians had an ambivalent attitude towards Libya – it is worth noting that a genuine interest in the country persists among Italians today – and a desire to dominate it for self-glorification: "Governments aside, though, Italian behaviours and policies seem to have been genuinely ambivalent, combining a sincere affinity for many aspects of the land and its inhabitants with systematic oppression in some areas" (Fuller, 2000: 125).

Under Balbo, a number of associations were established in Libya as part of an Italianization project of its people, with a particular emphasis on youth. Balbo looked at the Libyan population as composed of Christian Italians and Muslim Italians and regarded them as "the founding elements of the fascist empire" (Loschi, 2011). It is against this background that branches of fascist organizations in Italy, such as the Opera Nazionale Balilla (or National Youth Organization), were founded in Libya. The purpose of these organizations was to "socialize" youth in fascist ideology. The Opera Nazionale Balilla was founded in Italy in 1926 and was divided into two gender-segregated age groups. Boys between eight and 13 were known as Balilla, and those between 14 and 18 were called Avanguardisti (Kertzer, 2014). In Libya, Gioventù Araba del Littorio was founded in 1935, and by military and cultural instruction it targeted Arab youth. It was mandatory to receive at least one year of instruction there before applying for Italian citizenship. The Associazione Musulmana del Littorio, based in Tripoli and established in 1939, was another association targeting Muslim Libyan youth and inducting them into fascist ideology. Students were taught Italian as well as courses in fascist culture, sports and other studies that prepared them for taking up certain professions. The Italian Cultural Circle (Circolo Italia) generally targeted the working classes and was mentioned several times in the interviews as having been highly propagandist. The Libyan Economic Front was a larger front but less active than the other associations. It was open to Libyans and Jews as well as to Italians. Libyan participation in these organizations was always limited.

According to the Consul General in 1940,[71] these were the numbers of Libyan students enrolled in various activities, although it is not clear what percentage of the students listed below was Libyan:

Combat (*fasci di combattimento*)	11,500
Universities (*fascisti universitari*)	225
Gioventù Italiana del Littorio (GIL) (Italian Youth of the Lictor)	13,548
Women fascists (*donne fasciste*)	1,628
Agricultural activities (*massari rurali*)	1,020
Fascist Association for Schools (*Iscritti all'Associazione Fascista della Scuola*)	465
Fascist Association for Railway Workers (*Iscritti all'Associazione*	300

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[71] *Libia*, March 1940, "Alcuni Aspetti sull'Attivita del Partito in Libia".

Fascista dei Ferrovieri)	
Fascist Association for Public Workers (*Iscritti all'Associazione Fascista del Pubblico Impiego*)	1,090
Workers for State Industries (*Addetti alle Aziende Industriali dello Stato*)	1,500
Workers at various associations for combat and arms *(iscritti alle vari associazioni combattertisti che ed a reparti d'arma*)	3,536

It remains unclear how Libyans were regarded in fascist organizations; nor is it clear what kind of benefits they received. In a novel by Ahmed Fagih about a Libyan who joins the Italian army, military cooperation with the Italians is presented as socially frowned upon:

> In the years following the end of the resistance, some people had come forward to work for the Italian military as spies or guards, but after the conscription drives had begun for the campaign against Abyssinian lands,[72] everyone avoided entering the Italian military, because there wasn't an Arab Muslim who wanted to willingly fight and die in a war the Italians were waging against an African people, half of whom were Muslims. (Fagih, 2014: 75)

Interviews conducted with Italian Libyans brought out that Libyans who joined the fascist movement did receive benefits, such as a lesser form of Italian citizenship. However, the limited scale of participation by Libyans in fascist groups was also pointed out. Archival material and correspondence demonstrate a desire on the part of the Italian government to overemphasize Libyan participation as a symbol of the success of the fascist regime in Libya. What is clear is that Libyan participation was largely limited, but that it was somewhat bigger in fascist organizations than in communist ones. This is because communism was perceived as anti-Islamic by the Libyan population.

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[72] This is a reference to a colonial war from 1935 to 1939. The war was fought between the armed forces of Italy and those of the Ethiopian Empire, also known as Abyssinia. The Italians won the war with an army that included Libyan fighters; some Libyans joined willingly, while others were conscripted. An interesting account of this war is documented in Ahmed Fagih's novel *Maps of the Soul* (2014).

Communist associations

Communist activities were led by Italians in Libya, initially as a counterforce to fascism in Italy, and later as a consolidated movement calling for an independent Libya following the downfall of Italy in the Second World War. They secured limited Libyan support, with leaders like Enrico Cibelli and Valentino Parlato, both of whom were expelled by the British in the 1950s because of their activities and association with communism. In the 1940s, one can divide the Italian community in Libya into two groups: Those upholding what remained of fascism under the leadership of former colonial fascist officials linked to the old regime such as Admiral Fenzi with a political programme that sought to bring Libya under Italian trusteeship and which was supported by the Catholic clergy in Libya, and Cibelli's group which called for the immediate independence of Libya. Under the British Military Administration, the position of Italians in Libya was greatly weakened and attempts at continuing the associational life they had prior to 1943 were rejected by the British; Luigi Candreva describes in his work on communist activities in Libya between 1947 and 1951 how there were attempts by anti-fascist groups to get official recognition for their activities in Tripolitania from the British but that they were rejected (Candreva, 2016).[73] Italian communists and socialists sought to establish a United Front, a network of associations, to strengthen their presence in Libya but they were denied anything but a verbal recognition from the British government. The life of the

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[73] Candreva explains this as an attempt by Italians to protect some of the "rights they have earned from their presence in Libya for thirty years". He describes how Italians saw themselves as a minority besieged by a hostile Arab population towards which they had feelings of guilt for the oppression of the colonial past and that they generally felt an aversion to the British who rejected any form of collaboration with them to retain some of their privileges (Candreva, 2016).

Front, as a result, was brief and it soon had to unravel because of a fear that it would be accused of crimes that the British Military Administration would condemn under the old fascist penal code (Candreva, 2016). In correspondence from the British Military Administration dated 13 February 1948,[74] Cibelli's communist movement which was "supporting Arab independence" is described as "receiving little support". In another report on communism in Libya,[75] the British Military Administration stated that it was confined to Tripoli and based on "a few able hardworking men in key places". The limited support may be explained by Libya's Islamic identity, which was perceived to be incompatible with communism.

According to reports by the British Military Administration, the communist movement made "limited progress" but did seek to penetrate Arab trade unions, which started to become prominent in Libya. The communists had Jewish sympathizers, probably through connections with the Soviet Consulate in Tunis, but, in general, the Jewish population remained influenced by Zionism rather than communism. During these Cold War years, the communist movement in Libya nevertheless secured its position in the press, particularly in *Corriere di Tripoli*.

The British Military Administration[76] was wary of Soviet interference in Libya and thus kept a close eye on communist activities in Libya. In correspondences related to the issue, a number of key institutions through which communism operated in Libya were identified and those included the Italian Popular Democratic Front, the Italian Association for the Progress of the People of Libya (APPL),[77] the Italian Cultural Circle and the Libyan Economic Front. The Italian APPL was led by Cibelli and was composed of "an active fellow-travelling group of white intellectuals and traders". It also supported Arab independence and presented itself as open to all – Arab, Jewish and Italian – arguing for the necessity of a harmonious existence among the different populations of Libya as the future of the country (Loschi, 2011). It was decidedly oriented towards the independence of Libya and supported calls made by Libyan nationalists and the Libyan Liberation Committee headed by Bashir Sa'dawi.

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[74] British National Archives. Foreign Office. Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906 – 1966. Political. Egyptian. General. "Situation in Tripolitania. Italian Activities. Anti-Jewish Riots" (1948) FCO 371/69421.

[75] British National Archives, Foreign Office. Foreign Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Information Research Department: General Correspondence (PR and IR Series) "Communist Activities in Eritrea and Tripolitania" (1949) FO 1110/212.

[76] British National Archives, Foreign Office. Foreign Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Information Research Department: General Correspondence (PR and IR Series) "Communist Activities in Eritrea and Tripolitania" (1949) FO 1110/212.

The Italian Popular Democratic Front (Fronte Democratico Popolare per la libertà, la pace, il lavoro) was an anti-fascist coalition, composed of the Italian Communist Party (Partito Communista Italiano) and the Italian Socialist Party (Partito Socialista Italiano), which came together in preparation for Italy's elections for its first republican parliament. Its adversary was mainly the Christian Democracy Party (Democrazia Cristiana), which eventually won the elections and formed a government that did not include either party. The Front had a branch in Libya and sought to rally both Arab and Italian support. Its general direction was towards Arab independence. All activities, however, were stifled by the British Military Administration; they were not allowed to expand. This led to a resurgence of fascist ideology in Libya after the Second World War, which was probably tolerated by the British because they thought that a return to fascism could push Arab nationalists towards the British (Candreva, 2016).

Finally, while communist associations, according to Candreva, showed more awareness and sensitivity to the Libyan population and championed their cause for independence, their influence remained limited and is rather difficult to quantify. The Italian communists did seek to overcome cultural and ethnic differences such as via their correspondence with Sa‘dawi, but they failed to integrate the Libyan population within their institutional leadership. This made it possible for their opponents to argue that they were no different from the Italian fascists and that they too had expansionist interests (Candreva, 2016).

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[77] Later, one of the APPL proponents, Giacomo Marchino, was appointed by the UN in the Commission of the Ten to assist Adrian Pelt with the Libyan transition to independence. This led to the temporary growth of the APPL in Libya. In 1950, it published its first and only news bulletin which was dated April 1950 and reported on the development of the association with branches in a number of villages that included Marconi, Olivetti, Bianchi, Micca and Tigrina. Each village had a branch of the association with its own executive committee (Candreva, 2016).

Libya under the British Military Administration and following independence (1943–1969): Libyan associations and a thwarted national consciousness

Libyan associations expanded following the end of Italian colonization with the transfer of Libya (Tripolitania and Barqa) to the British Military Administration and through the rise of the monarchy but were largely brought to a halt under King Idris because of their political role. Women’s associations, as the chapter later demonstrates, continued to operate and flourish with rising regional and international interest in a generation of civically engaged Libyan women. Muftah al-Sharif (2010), a historian of Libya and one of the founders of its trade union movement in 1950s Benghazi, ascribes the birth of political parties in Libya to Arab associations in the period preceding the Gaddafi coup, as well as to nationalist movements and youth activism within Libya and in the region, mainly Egypt and Tunisia. The ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association, for example, is an interesting case in point as later discussed in this section. It emerged in Cairo as a club of former combatants against the Italian occupation. In 1943, it was formally established in Benghazi and then a branch of it was established in Derna. In 1950, a law for associations was passed and this was followed by a law for journalism; as a result, the ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Club became the National Association, although it continued to be referred to as the ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association. It was mostly composed of and run by young Libyans. In June 1950, members of this ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association ran for parliament in Barqa and consolidated substantial power; this later contributed to its unravelling in July 1951 when restrictions were made on civil society by the monarchy. This association and many others became influenced by Arab nationalist movements, especially in Egypt (al-Sharif, 2010: 110; Baldinetti, 2010).

Scout groups were particularly popular in the period following the end of Italian occupation. The ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association recognized the importance of scout groups and their voluntary activities especially in instilling the values of service to the community in the hearts and minds of young Libyans. For the Association, scout groups were a means through which the reconstruction of Benghazi was possible after it emerged from the years of War, which had destroyed its infrastructure and left it in poverty (al-'Eneizi, 2011). An attempt was made by the Association in 1944 to establish a Libyan scouts team but was not met with success. The idea was raised again in 1947 when the Association sent a request to the British Military Administration regarding the establishment of a Libyan scouts team and this time it was successful. The people of Benghazi supported their scouts team; they donated money, food and equipment, especially when the team members made trips outside Benghazi. The Benghazi scouts team was later dismantled in 1951 when the ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association also unraveled. Another scouts group was later established in Benghazi 1955 by Mansur al-Kikhiya who coordinated with 'Ali Khalifah al-Zaidi who had founded a scouts group in Tripoli in 1954 (al-'Eneizi, 2011).[78]

There were also a number of clubs run by the Jewish population of Libya. They existed in Tripoli in the 1940s and included clubs such as Ben Yehodah and the Makaby club. Under the Italian occupation, some Jews joined the clubs and associations of the Italians. Most Jewish associations were largely dependent on funds from individual donors in the region and beyond. The clubs were deeply entangled in the political upheavals of the time; some, however, made clear statements about not taking on a political role after the creation of Israel, and especially during the 1948 Arab–Israeli War. While most Libyan Jews supported the establishment of the state of Israel, some of their associations and clubs explicitly announced their support for the National Libyan Front and its struggle for independence from Allied colonization (al-Sharif, 2010: 80). Very little is documented in the literature on Libya regarding these clubs. Chapter Five of this thesis addresses Jewish civic life in more detail.

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[78] In the memoirs of Libyan political activist and historian, Ibrahim al-Hangari, he states that the founder of the scouts movement in Libya was an Egyptian teacher called Sa'ad Shitta who was one of his school teachers in Tripoli. When his teacher passed away, al-Hangarī insisted on attending his funeral in a scout's uniform in honor of his teacher's memory before his body was flown back to Egypt for burial (al-Hangari, 2016: 59). While it is difficult to determine the authenticity of the information, the role of regional contributions, especially that of Egypt, in the development of the scout movement in Libya has been supported by a number of authors (al-'Eneizi, 2011; al-Badri, 2019).

Aspects of life following independence

In the period following the end of Italian colonization, shifts within the socioeconomic landscape were largely shaped by shifts in the political landscape. Libya at independence was poor and underdeveloped. Chief economist Benjamin Higgins of the UN Technical Assistance Mission to Libya in 1952 ascribed the poverty to natural disasters as well as to Italian practices in Libya: “Libya is in some respects an overdeveloped rather than an underdeveloped country”. He explained that:

> the present problems of drought, erosion, and drifting sands are the product of past error of overcutting, overgrazing, over-irrigation, and over-tilling, followed by abandonment. There is ample historical evidence that in the past Libya was more heavily wooded, more fertile, more productive than it is today, capable of not only supporting its own population but of producing an export surplus as well. Libya is in this sense a gigantic “dust bowl” and the economic problem is one of arresting decay rather than initiating growth in a country which has never realized its potential. (Norman, 1965: 12)

In the postcolonial period, Libyans acquired increasing control of their natural resources and institutions, although there was frustration towards the British Military

Administration because Libyans did not have enough control over their destiny (al-Mughayribi, 1993: 18). Frustration with the British Military Administration was conveyed in a letter dated 22/12/1946 directed from the ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association to a British research committee sent to Barqa to examine complaints made against the administration by the Libyan people and published in a journal called *Barqa al-Riyadiyya* (later known as *al-Watan*) issued by the association. The letter states that:

> It's been four years since Libya was liberated from colonization and the British Military Administration has taken control of the country. The administration has not engaged Libyan nationalists in the management of the country's affairs and has led the country in a very disappointing way leading to its regression, and it has made several mistakes […] so much so the people are now living under the yoke of poverty and the difficulties of making a livelihood. They suffer from serious economic and social problems (al-Mughayribi, 1993: 18).

The letter lists nine main causes of frustration and those include dividing the country into two and creating barriers and limiting trade between them; preventing the export of Libyan goods and limiting the establishment of Libyan businesses while creating opportunities for international businesses to thrive; not addressing high unemployment and not compensating families for the damage that they incurred during the war; not addressing shortages in hospitals and doctors; and not creating means of communication between the administration and the Libyan people (al-Mughayribi, 1993: 18-20).

Failing to give more authority to the Libyan people does not mean that Italians were still in control. There was a reduction in the leverage of the Italian population and their control of major entities in the cities of Tripoli and Benghazi. In a communication at the Croce Rossa Italiana (Italian Red Cross),[79] dated 15 October 1954 and titled "The

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[79] De Benedichis (1954, October 15). "The Repatriation and Hospitalization of the Demented", Archivio Storico Croce Rossa Italiana. Servizio Affari Internazionali (1908 – 1972). Rome, No. A 81.

Repatriation and Hospitalization of the Demented", the Italian Consul De Benedichis painstakingly describes the deterioration of the psychiatric hospital of Fesclum in Tripoli. The *telespresso*, described as "urgent", was between the Italian Consulate in Tripoli and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome. De Benedichis relates the gradual regression in services at the hospital, citing two key turning points: first, the "occupation of Tripoli" by British troops in 1942; and second, Libya's independence in 1951 when formal "administrative" linkages with Italy were severed.

According to the correspondence, exchanges of patients had been taking place between the Manicomio di Palermo, a psychiatric hospital in Palermo, Sicily, and the hospital of Fesclum. These exchanges of patients receded after independence. In 1952, for instance, 37 Libyan patients were sent back to Libya from Palermo. Italian patients were sent back to Italy because the Italian staff at the hospital of Fesclum was being replaced as part of the "arabization of positions", and the care provided for the Italian patients had severely deteriorated. De Benedichis describes how Italian patients were living *in premiscuità* with Arab patients who had been entrusted to the care of Arab nurses and doctors. Ship and train tickets, as well as other correspondence, demonstrate that the route of return was through Naples, and from there to Rome and Palermo and other Italian regions.

The correspondence sheds light on the shifting situation of the Italian population in Libya[80] across three key periods: under Italian colonization; under the British Military Administration; and following independence. Tripolitania and Barqa were under the British Military Administration in the period between 1942 and independence in 1951. In the early 1960s, there were still around 35,000 Italians living in Libya (*Enciclopedia Motta*, 1969).

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[80] There were two distinct generations of Italians in Libya: the first generation who settled there with the Italian colonization in 1911; and a second generation who was born there and considered it their home or an extension of the homeland.

Italians were still a familiar part of the community, particularly in Tripolitania, but their political presence was frowned upon. In 1948, Admiral Fenzi, president of the Italian Representative Committee and a lobbyist for an Italian trusteeship of Libya, "protested" against the Cairo-printed "barbarity pamphlets". These were circulated in Tripoli to the dismay of the wider Italian population. The pamphlets included pictures of ʿUmar al-Mukhtar in chains as he was led to execution, and of Libyan victims from 1911. The British Military Administration protested to the Libyan Liberation Committee that the pamphlets were an "embarrassment" to the administration. It concluded that the pamphlets were about "sharp electoral practice but unlikely to cause breach of peace";[81] indeed, no attacks were launched against the Italian population in Libya, except against Jewish Italians in 1948, 1956 and 1967, concurrently with the establishment of the State of Israel and major political events related to it thereafter.

In 1951, Libya became independent and the government of King Idris "assumed control of former Italian property which it claimed in negotiations leading to independence"; this included "the ungranted or undeveloped portions of the colonial domain and, implicitly, the abandoned agricultural settlements in Barqa". As with the situation in Tripolitania, "the question of property rights of the agricultural colonists" remained unresolved (Fowler, 1973). In 1956, the Italo-Libyan Accord affirmed "the resident Italian citizens' full rights of ownership to property in Libya under the law and invalidated claims to such property brought before the British Administration" (Fowler,

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[81] British National Archives. Foreign Office. Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906 – 1966. Political. Egyptian. General. "Situation in Tripolitania. Italian Activities. Anti-Jewish Riots" (1948) FCO 371/69421.

1973). Nevertheless, within a year of the accord, around 4,100 Italians left Tripolitania due to uncertainties about their future (Fowler, 1973).

Following independence, there was a boost in education in Libya. According to a report from 1959 on progress in Libya since independence, the educational system is described as largely based on that of Egypt with rising demands for the Libyanization of the curriculum. The first ten years of independence witnessed the opening in 1957 of an Anglo-Libyan school in Tripoli which was jointly financed by the Libyan Government and the British Council, and is a "British-type school which will eventually lead to university entrance" (F.S. 1959: 64). The school made about 50 per cent of its places available to Libyans and in 1959 had about 200 pupils, including a small boarding section. The University of Libya was opened in Benghazi in 1956 and a College of Sciences opened in Tripoli one year later with a total enrolment of 300 undergraduates (F.S., 1959: 64).

Associations in postcolonial Libya: Cooperation, contestation and contradictory loyalties

The growth of Arab nationalist sentiment in Libya was slow when compared to other parts of the Arab world. The existence of non-Arab Berbers and the strong links to the Ottoman Empire prior to the First World War, as well as the fear of European colonization, were factors that contributed to the strengthening of Libya's Islamic identity at the expense of its Arab loyalties. Ottoman support for the Libyan resistance to Italian colonialism led to what some have described as "reverse Arab revolt" (Khalidi et al., 1991). In addition to the resistance towards Arabist sentiments, there was also resistance to influence from Libyan nationalists who lived in the diaspora. Baldinetti has argued that the emergence of the Libyan nation occurred in exile and through associations run by Libyans, Egyptians and Tunisians abroad. She maintains:

> Although the exile associations were the first associations to imagine the future of their country in terms of a modern nation that was in need of the construction of a national identity based on a common territoriality and a shared language and culture, they all failed to have an impact on the formation of the new Libyan state at the moment of independence. (Baldinetti, 2010: 9)

Arab nationalism, however, flourished after the Second World War, and above all with the rise of Nasser in Egypt. This was the “transcendental ideology of the age” and liberation from colonial rule was the common wish of the Arab populations by the 1940s (Rogan, 2012: 349). This led to the discrediting of old nationalist politicians who still maintained ties with the former colonizers. Eugene Rogan describes this break with the past as follows:

> The old nationalist politicians, and the kings they served, were discredited for their failure to make a clean break from British imperial rule. A host of radical new parties, ranging from the Islamist Muslim Brothers to the Communists, vied for the allegiance of a new generation of nationalists. The young officers in the military were not immune to the political ferment of the age. The younger generation questioned the legitimacy of Arab monarchies and the multiparty parliaments installed by the British, instead showing more enthusiasm for revolutionary republicanism. (Rogan, 2012: 349)

The spread of Arab nationalism also resulted in the emergence of new political aspirations that were strongly opposed to Western or international influence:

> Most people in the Arab world believed that they were united by a common language, history and culture grounded in the Islamic past, a culture shared by Muslims and non-Muslims. They wanted to dissolve the frontiers drafted by the imperial powers to divide the Arabs and build a new commonwealth based on the deep historic and cultural ties that bound the Arabs. They believed that Arab greatness in world affairs could only be restored through unity. And they took to the streets, in their thousands, to protest against imperialism, to criticize their governments failings and to demand Arab unity. (Rogan, 2012: 349)

According to the memoirs of Mustafa bin-Halim, who served as prime minister under King Idris, there were two key political currents at the time, both of which influenced the more politicized civil society organizations. The first political camp was a unionist one. It saw Libya, with its three regions of Tripolitania, Barqa and Fezzan, as a unified monarchy under King Idris as the first king of Libya, with a constitution and a democratic parliamentary system. The stronghold of this camp was the Umar al-Mukhtar Association, with its two branches in Derna and Benghazi. The second political camp was federalist. It called for a federal union of the three regions under the leadership of King Idris, while ensuring that each region had its separate army and foreign policy (Bin-Halim, 2011: 20). The National Front, composed of members of the Sanusi family and tribal leaders, emerged out of this political camp. In 1947 the National Front became known as the National Congress. Anderson has described the politics stemming from these two camps:

> The competing ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Club was founded by members of Barqa's urban intelligentsia, most of whom had grown up in exile, mainly in Egypt, and were imbued with an Arab nationalism that supported a united independent Libya, and took exception to the "reactionary and unconstructive attitude" of the National Front: The Front privileged a Sanusi Emirate; the Club gave priority to unity. Foreshadowing his later impatience, when Idris returned to Barqa in November 1947 (and with British support), he dissolved all political organizations and demanded a united front. (Anderson, 2017: 11)

The king himself, according to bin-Halim, was not opposed to a federal union but had a preference for Barqa:

> King Idris was wary of anything Tripolitanian and very comfortable with anything Barqan. In the period of resistance, some mistakes were committed that led King Idris to feel that way. One of the biggest mistakes was in August 1940, when an army under Sanusi leadership was put together. While thousands of Barqans volunteered to join the army, the number of those that joined from Tripolitania was not more than forty. (Bin-Halim, 2011: 20)

In the postwar environment opposition to the Italian presence was itself mainly political and led by political parties like the Hisb and Kutla parties, which called for the expulsion of Admiral Fenzi. The British Military Administration was cognizant of the disturbances that might occur if the quest for Italian trusteeship were realized: "it would undoubtedly lead to widespread disturbances which would require military forces to quell them far in excess of those available in the territory", and "loss of life" on the Italian and British sides was expected (Bin-Halim, 2011: 20).

The Italians continued lobbying for their presence in Libya throughout the 1940s and 1950s. In another letter, the British Military Administration relates how Italians were "playing with fire", especially as small sums of money were given to the *mutilati*, or ex-Italian soldiers in Libya. The money was given by the Italian Repatriation Representative, Dottore Chapron, who was later replaced by Dottore Pediconi. Such activities raised suspicion on the British and Libyan sides. On the other hand, key Libyan nationalist leaders like Bashir al-Saʿdawi emerged and fought fiercely against both the Italian and the British presence in Libya. In 1952, however, al-Sa‘dawi was sent into exile in Cairo. A report from the *Chicago Tribune* (13 February 1952) describes his exile as follows: "Libya's strongest anti-Western leader, Beshir Bey al-Sa'dawi, 71, was whisked out of bed early today and flown into exile for agitating against the verdict of the election which defeated his National Congress Party. The plane headed for Cairo."

Following independence, cooperation within communities peaked and charitable activities were popular (al-Mufti, 2012: 70). A school opened in Benghazi, an initiative of Mohammed Al 'Alem Ohyo, who had worked for a bank during the Italian occupation and who became a leader of educational programmes in Benghazi. The school had two classrooms to accommodate around 72 children (al-Mufti, 2012: 90). In Derna, there were community-led groups that collected donations to support the Algerian revolution and theatre groups staged plays about the Algerian resistance to the French occupation (al-

Wafi, 2018).[82] Libya witnessed the emergence of political parties, trade unions, and civil society organizations that had both developmental objectives and political ones. Traditional civil society organizations – *zawaya* and *waqf* – were retained and modern civil society organizations were established. While the number of young Libyans who joined Italian associations was low, al-Mufti views the engagement of Libyans in Italian associations and clubs as a vehicle through which their experience with working with associations and being part of a team was shaped (al-Mufti, 2012: 43). In the words of a Libyan whose mother led a civil society association for women and who witnessed the period of King Idris:

> This was a period of stability. There was a constitution and there were institutions. Civil society organizations started to emerge. In addition to big organizations that had a political role such as the ʿUmar al-MukhtarAssociation, there was the *Nahda* Association for women and there were women leaders such as Hamida el-Eneizy and Hamida bin ‘Amer. Those organizations were important; they connected the people to the king and the state. (Libyan from Benghazi, interview via Skype, 12 June 2015)

Associations contributed to the shaping of a Libyan national and political consciousness. They revealed forms of cooperation among social actors as well as between social actors and the state as well as deep political contestation regarding the shape and form of the new Libyan state. The expansion was, however, challenged by divisions within the political landscape: “The first general elections were held in February 1952; the National Congress Party, led by Sa‘dawi, campaigned against federalism and was defeated. Sa‘dawi himself was then deported and the King abolished political parties for what turned out to be sixty years” (Anderson, 2017: 12). In addition to political parties, associations that had political roles were also abolished, whereas organizations without a political role survived during the monarchy and well into the Gaddafi period. The emergence of trade unions and political parties will be addressed in the next chapter, especially within the context of negotiation and the means by which a political settlement was reached in post-independence Libya.

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[82] Following the end of the Italian occupation, an effervescence of community-led activities was witnessed, many of those were not institutionalized as such but show a growing political and social awareness especially a growth of Arab nationalism. al-Wafi recounts how Derna was an “Arab city in every sense of the word. It was a city that engaged with all the issues of the Arab World at the time. During celebrations of the Egyptian Revolution, one felt that Derna was a city in Egypt. If Nasser gave a speech, you would be able to listen to it in every coffee shop or store and every home had a radio […] Egyptian songs were very popular at the time even more so than Libyan songs and the movie theatre there only showed Egyptian movies” (al-Wafi, 2018: 41 – 42).

Cooperation: The case of Libyan women's associations

An analysis of the emergence of women's associations in Libya shows how they constituted social forces that cooperated with one another to establish a movement that focused on the education and the overall empowerment of Libyan women. This cooperation, however, was far from linear or unobstructed. It had a perceptible local, regional and international character. It was also faced with social and cultural obstacles against which this movement had to struggle in order to exist.

A study by Fatma Ghandur, Lecturer at the School of Journalism at the University of Tripoli, documents the emergence of a Libyan women's movement following the end of the Italian colonial period, and the establishment of a number of associations that focused on the education of women and girls as well as other activities, many of which were regional and imbued with the expanding influence of Arab nationalism such as collecting donations for Algerians who were injured or the families of those killed in the Algerian resistance to French occupation (Ghandur, 2011). Libyan historian, Salim al-Kubti, also points out the significance of the spread of Arab nationalism in Libya during this period of time and how it engendered

> […] an intellectual, national, cultural and social product, and a movement that sought to elevate Libya as a nation and this included newspapers, magazines, activities, lectures, projects and a margin of freedom as well as an interest in

> what was happening in the world, close and far […] The Arab as an individual was looking for a freedom that he lost within and was not aware that his first enemy was within as well. (al-Kubti, 2016: 23, my translation)

The emergence of women's associations in Libya was deeply Libyan; they sought to carve out an identity that was Libyan, and often also Arab. Those associations, as noted earlier, had a strong international as well as regional flavour as evidenced in exchanges between the British Embassy in Beirut and the Foreign Office in London.[83] The international nature of some of those associations goes to show that international and regional political and social forces continued to play a role in the Libyan social space, even after the end of Italian colonization. In both Tripoli and Benghazi, a number of Libyan women leaders as well as non-Libyans or foreign-born Libyans established associations that sought to create a solidarity among women in Libya and serve the wider community. In Tripoli, a number of associations emerged such as the Women's Renaissance Society or *jam'iyyat al-nahda al-nesa'iyya* which was established in 1958 and had about 200 active members. It focused on charitable activities that included the distribution of food and clothing for the poor. The Society also ran classes for illiterate women as well as sewing classes. Organizations that had a focus on the training of teachers also emerged such as the Women's Teacher Training College which had an Egyptian headmistress and ran a six-year course for girls who had completed their primary level education. There were also committees and associations that were established by non-Libyans such as the Community Services Group of Tripoli which was established by Helen Campbell, wife of the American Consul, in 1962. The Group focused on providing children with clothing. It had about 110 members, mostly American, but it also included other nationalities. Benghazi also had its associations and societies such as the Mother and Child Welfare Center which was run by a Libyan doctor and his Greek wife and the Benghazi Teacher Training College whose headmistress was a Libyan called Mrs. Gaddafi and which had about 450 girls enrolled. There was also the International Women's Club of Benghazi which was founded in 1958/1959 and which had about 189 members representing twelve nationalities, including 30-40 foreign born Libyans. The Club had no headquarters but they met once a month at the Benghazi Sailing Club and once a month at the members' homes. It aimed to promote social, artistic and cultural relations.

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[83] British National Archives. Foreign Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Information Research Department. General Correspondence (PR and IR Series) (1963) "Women's organizations: reports of visit by Miss E. Waller (Women's Affairs Officer in Beirut) to Syria, Algeria, Libya, Bahrain, Kuwait, Aden, Sudan, and Iran." FO 1110/1732.

A number of Libyan women leaders emerged who galvanized the civic engagement of Libyan women and heralded what was to become a women's movement in Libya. In the memoirs of Aida al-Kubti, Libya's first television presenter, compiled by Fatma Ghandur, Ghandur gives an account of the development of radio stations in Libya. Her account covers the formative period in which Italians established the first radio stations early on after their occupation of Libya, and through the 1930s when Libyans who were able to speak Italian joined those radio stations to a flourishing of Libyan figures, particularly women, in Libyan radio stations and television after independence with the launch of the Monarchy's radio and television organization; *iza'at al-mamlakka al-Libiya* (Ghandur, 2018). Ghandur sees women's active participation in those stations as linked to their political participation and agency towards an independent Libya despite cultural restrictions that saw women's participation in the radio as unacceptable (Ghandur, 2018: 11).

According to Ghandur, Saliha Zafir al-Madani led the first association for women in Tripoli in 1957. She also started a newspaper called *Tarabulus al Gharb* and was the first Tripolitanian woman to speak on the radio. In an address made to Libyan women in 1949 on the radio, she said:

> No doubt, this is a happy occasion for you as you listen to the first Tripolitanian woman to speak on the radio. My dear sisters and daughters, the first topic I wish to talk to you about is to encourage you to learn. My dear sisters and daughters, please work hard to get an education and do not listen to regressive and discouraging voices (Cited in Ghandur, 2011: 14)

This focus on education provided the incentive for Libyan women from the eastern, western and southern regions to support the education of women. This was made possible by the presence of educators from across the Arab world, particularly Egypt, who flocked to Libya during the King Idris period to teach at Libyan schools and universities. Saliha al Madani, in her interview with Fatima Ghandur, recounts how she was inspired to start the first association for women in Tripoli through her interaction with multiple teachers:

> […] I forgot to mention to you my Palestinian teacher, Nafeesa Jarallah. I used to visit her and she helped me become a good teacher. She used to teach at a center for educators in the late 1950s. I remember our passion, as women, for knowledge. I would walk very long distances – we couldn't afford public transportation – and we would wake up at 6AM, pray and get ready for work by 7AM and finish by 7PM. We used to pray the evening prayer at school. There were multiple classes given to reduce the illiteracy of women. […] Teaching was on a voluntary basis and we were not paid well into the 1960s (Cited in Ghandur, 2011: 16).

Al-Madani mentioned that the first meeting for her association in 1957 was in secret because of the opposition of King Idris to the emergence of associations at the time that may have had political agendas. The association, however, did establish itself and continued to function, according to her account, without an approval from the government (Ghandur, 2011: 16). Associations also emerged in Benghazi such as the one that was established by Aisha Saeed Zareeq and others who were part of the women's movement. Hameeda al Eneizy, also known in British circles at the time as the "Mrs. Pankhurst" of Benghazi,[84] led the establishment of a girls' scout movement in Libya in 1960, the revival of the first women's union in 1965, and the establishment of the women's association in Benghazi in 1954, which had joint activities with other Arab countries as well as the international community (Ghandur, 2011: 2).

Documents consulted at the British National Archives confirm the centrality of women's organizations to a flourishing of women's civic engagement. They show an openness to a more international outlook on women's engagement in the public realm, albeit within a more conservative Arab framework,[85] with cooperation with Western and American women's organizations. In a correspondence between Miss Waller from the British Embassy in Beirut and Mrs. Ann Elwell from the Information Research Department at the Foreign Office dated June 15, 1963, Miss Waller made a number of interesting remarks about her encounter with Libyan women.[86] She described how Libyan women, many of whom had been educated abroad and now back in Libya, were emerging fast, and mentioned that the prime minister's wife, Mrs. Fekini, was a Cambridge educated feminist. According to Miss Waller,

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[84] British National Archives. Foreign Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Information Research Department. General Correspondence (PR and IR Series) (1963) "Women's organizations: reports of visit by Miss E. Waller (Women's Affairs Officer in Beirut) to Syria, Algeria, Libya, Bahrain, Kuwait, Aden, Sudan, and Iran." FO 1110/1732.

[85] A report by Mrs. W. H. G. Fletcher, dated 1956, in a correspondence between the British Embassy in Benghazi and the British Embassy in Tripoli shows that Libyan society still maintained a conservative nature where women were concerned. In the report, Mrs. Fletcher says: "The local press pays continual lip service to women's emancipation […] The most conservative elements are to be found in the middle and better paid lower classes. […] The eighty-year old Omar Pasha al-Kekhia, until recently President of the Libyan Senate, has a fifty-year-old son as well as a baby son. He told me that his wives could not be allowed to leave the house even to return a visit which HM Queen Fatima had done them the honor to pay." [British National Archives. Foreign Office: Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906 – 1966. Africa: Libya. (1956). "Position of Women in Barqa". FO 371/119713] In another archival source, a memorandum titled "The Position of Women in Libya" from the British Embassy in Tripoli to the Foreign Office in London dated April 20th, 1961, the author writes that "It is surprising in view of the differences between the two towns in other respects that the position of women seems to be somewhat better in Benghazi than in Tripoli. One would expect, for example, that the presence of a large colony of Italians in Tripoli would have stimulated the emancipation of Libyan women. But this is not the case and indeed while for the younger generation, the dress and customs of European women in the towns must present a goal to be emulated, the general feeling remains one of contempt or at best, indifference" [British National Archives. Foreign office and Foreign Commonwealth Office. Information Research Department. General Correspondence. (1961). "Libya: paper on the position of women and articles on trade unionism in Arabic." FO 1110/1367]

> Girls are beginning to find employment in teaching, in offices, factories and the telephone exchange. Nursing, as in most Arab countries, is the Cinderella of the professions, in spite of excellent training facilities available. Purdah is loosening up under the influence of foreign Arab teachers and Libyan girls educated abroad.[87]

She also believed that:

> Libya may have a long way to go in the emancipation and education of women but the needs are acknowledged and striking progress is evident. A few outstanding women, mostly educated abroad, are leading the way, and a new generation of girls is passing through the schools. In 1950/1951, there were 3,649 girls at elementary level only; in 1959/1960, over 20,000 at elementary level, 305 at the intermediate level and 78 at secondary. There are about 50 girls in the University (24 in the science faculty at Tripoli and 25, 15 and 1 in the arts, commerce and law faculties in Benghazi).[88]

The correspondence also described that Libyan women were developing an interest in international organizations and "outside help and influence", and that three Libyan women, for example, participated in the Afro-Asian Women's Conference in Cairo in January 1961. Miss Waller's description of her encounter with Libyan women leaders may well have been colored by the fact that she was a foreigner and thus, it would be expected that most of her meetings would have been set with Libyan women who had received an education in the West, particularly the United Kingdom. It is important that the international reach of Libyan women's associations is not overstated but based on the correspondence and the interviews conducted for this research, it should be acknowledged.

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[86] British National Archives. Foreign Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Information Research Department. General Correspondence (PR and IR Series) (1963) "Women's organizations: reports of visit by Miss E. Waller (Women's Affairs Officer in Beirut) to Syria, Algeria, Libya, Bahrain, Kuwait, Aden, Sudan, and Iran." FO 1110/1732.

[87] British National Archives. Foreign Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Information Research Department. General Correspondence (PR and IR Series) (1963) "Women's organizations: reports of visit by Miss E. Waller (Women's Affairs Officer in Beirut) to Syria, Algeria, Libya, Bahrain, Kuwait, Aden, Sudan, and Iran." FO 1110/1732.

[88] British National Archives. Foreign Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Information Research Department. General Correspondence (PR and IR Series) (1963) "Women's organizations: reports of visit by Miss E. Waller (Women's Affairs Officer in Beirut) to Syria, Algeria, Libya, Bahrain, Kuwait, Aden, Sudan, and Iran." FO 1110/1732.

Documents at the British National Archives also show an international, particularly British, interest in the civic engagement of women in Libya and the status of women as a whole. Benghazi-born, Khadija al-Jahmi, another Libyan woman leader and editor of *al-Mar'a [The Woman]* magazine, was invited to the United Kingdom by the Foreign Office for a visit in the period between the 23rd of September and the 9th of October 1965. The impressive programme of arrangements made for her by the Central Office of Information on behalf of the Foreign Office demonstrates the high level of interest by the British in women's organizations in Libya at the time as well as the existing momentum for civic engagement by those organizations. The programme for her visit included visits to women's organizations in London, Liverpool and Manchester as well as with members of parliament and the women's police at Scotland Yard.[89]

Contestation: The case of the ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association

According to Libyan historian Mohammed al-Mufti, the ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association was and continues to be synonymous with the entire sector that emerged during the period of the British Military Administration (al-Mufti, 2012: 16). The Association, under the leadership of Mustafa ben Amer, who was educated in Italian schools in Libya and was bilingual (al-Mufti, 2012: 121),[90] and the poet, Ibrahim Usta Omar, was instrumental in getting Libyan youth to participate in imagining the new Libya. Predominantly composed of youth, the organization was critical of tribal and regional allegiances and championed the image of a unified Libya as the future of the country; it was "arguably, one of the first truly nationalist movements in Libya prior to independence" (Baldinetti, 2010: 124). Many of the organization's members had been educated in Egypt and were influenced by the growing wave of Arab nationalism. They also witnessed the emergence of the Arab League and wanted to see Libya join it as an independent nation. In 1949, when, with British consent, King Idris announced the independence of Barqa under his leadership, members of the ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association proclaimed: "No independence without unity."

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[89] British National Archives. Foreign Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Information Research Department. General Correspondence (PR and IR Series) (1963) "Women's organizations: reports of visit by Miss E. Waller (Women's Affairs Officer in Beirut) to Syria, Algeria, Libya, Bahrain, Kuwait, Aden, Sudan, and Iran." FO 1110/1732.

The first statute for the Association framed it as an educational and cultural association and did not include any political references. It had a cultural branch that published newspapers and periodicals and ran programmes to fight illiteracy and its sports branch promoted sports in Libya by establishing clubs and federations in the country. The Association had Jewish members despite Muslim-Jewish tensions in 1945 and in 1948 when the State of Israel was born (Baldinetti, 2010: 125). The Association had strong cultural programs:

> The ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Club, was one of the few groups and political parties in Barqa and Tripolitania which also had well-defined cultural programmes. In the summer of 1943, the association opened a summer school for young people in Benghazi who, due to the Italian occupation and Second

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[90] Mustafa ben Amer was also an educational inspector in the British Military Administration. He later resigned in 1946 in order to be able to criticize the Administration more freely and became president of the Association, launching a new era for political activities by the ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association (Baldinetti, 2010: 125).

> World War, had not been regularly attending school. The following year, an evening school for workers was also opened, moreover, Arabic courses were organized for French or English-speaking Jewish young people. (Baldinetti, 2010: 125)

In 1943, the Association published a newspaper called *al-Barqa al-Riyadiyya* which later become known as *al-Watan* in 1946. The birth and fall of the Association, however, highlights the deep links between civil society organizations in Libya and the political complexity of a state in the making. According to a Libyan who witnessed the emergence of the Association in the 1940s:

> Look … the idea behind the Association was political from the start but it emerged as a cultural and sports organization because there was a fear that if it was openly political, the British would not grant them a license. (al-Mufti, 2012: 121)

It is this aspect of the organization that eventually led to its dismantling. One of its founders, Ibrahim Usta Omar, saw the organization’s role as contributing to the plurality of political life following independence, and he cited Egypt as an example of a country where there was political opposition and active political debates relating to the future of the country:

> It may be said that we espouse a different approach to reach our goal. I agree with this but other Arab countries provide a good example in political plurality. Egypt has multiple political parties and organizations. They are all in agreement on national goals and are only different with regards to the means and tools of implementation.
>
> The plurality of political parties does not mean that the people of Libya are divided. In fact, the plurality of political parties emerged in democracies because this is the only way a people can reach their goals and protect their rights. If only one entity represented the people, a country becomes a dictatorship and a dictatorship would later lead to failure. Even if unintended.… We seek a democratic era based on freedom of association and freedom of thought. We cannot experience this unless there exists a plurality of ideas to strengthen the people and enhance competition over the protection of rights. (al-Mufti, 2012: 21)

This plurality did not develop into a national consciousness. Instead, as the case of the ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association shows, contestation between different political visions led to the silencing and disintegration of this emerging consciousness. The ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association was firmly opposed to British control of Libya, representing a strong nationalistic trend. In a speech commemorating the Libyan hero ʿUmar al-Mukhtar by Muhammed al-Sabri, a member of the governing board of the Association, al-Sabri gives a scathing condemnation of the British Military Administration:

> Tell us Umar [ʿUmar al-Mukhtar], what would you have done had you been with us in body and soul? You rose in arms against those who wanted to rule the country alongside the nationalists. Those were the [Italian] colonizers and you refused to see any future other than of a free country led by a free people. Now, what would you make of those allies [the British] who we supported like lions in difficult times and welcomed them[91] to our country joyfully but they now have a monopoly over our country and have rendered us strangers in our land, deprived of its riches? (al-Mughayribi, 1993: 45)

The Association's opposition to continued Western engagement in the form of British and American interests in Libya during the period of King Idris, however, conflicted with its proclaimed support for the legitimacy of the king. King Idris relied on the support of Western nations to build the country. One key aspect of Libya's independence was the centrality of international and Western actors in determining the shape and constitutive elements of this independence. This led to a conflict between the Association and King Idris, especially in 1947 with the dissolution of all political parties and the formation of the National Congress by a Sanusi decree;

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[91] The *Corriere di Tripoli*, dated the 5th of February 1943, gives a description of the Libyan population's reaction to Churchill's arrival to Tripoli as follows: "All this time, there has been immense excitement among the Arab population of the Old City who although they were restrained from encroaching on the route of the procession, had crowded the side streets and were clambering on piles of stones to see what was going on. […] But when they discerned the figure of Mr. Churchill standing in his car and smiling, acknowledging the cheers of the troops, it was impossible to restrain them"

> In December 1947, the dissolution of all political parties and the formation of al-Mu'tamar al-Watani (the National Congress) caused a split within the ʿUmar al-Mukhtar club. The Derna branch wished to respect the Sanusi decree, while the central branch in Benghazi adopted a critical position, and argued that the national question could not be a prerogative of the party but conversely it concerned all people. (Baldinetti, 2010: 126)

The Association also expressed its opposition to particular policies by the Libyan government. In an article published by *al-Watan* on the 1st of May 1951, the Association criticized the budget set by the government for the period between 1950 and 1951. The article is titled: "A Government's Budget or a Disaster for the People?" The article describes how upon perusing the published budget, the author was reminded of two things:

> First, it reminded us of the trip made by the Finance Minister to London a few months ago which we asked him about but we have not yet received a reply regarding the purpose of this visit. The objectives remain a secret until the budget was announced and revealed the fact that it was another colonial conspiracy that is designed in Britain and implemented in Libya to destroy the economic and financial foundations of the country.
>
> Second, we had mentioned the resignation of some British ministers a few days ago and their defiance to the policies of their party because they regarded some of the fiscal policies as harmful to their country. They preferred to resign than to stay and help implement a policy that would harm their nation. We remembered those and laughed loudly at our crazy memory that does not distinguish between people and places and that regards all people and places as equal (al-Mughayribi, 1993: 260).

Another feature of the ʿUmar al-Mukhtar association was its limited engagement with political movements in the western regions of Libya. Despite its cooperation, albeit limited, with Al-Saʻdawi's National Congress in Tripoli, it was an organization that continued to be associated with Benghazi and the cities of Libya's eastern regions. It was confined to urban centres and it failed to build coalitions with opposing political groups or to appeal to young people from Bedouin and rural communities (al-Mufti, 2012: 20).

The Association was dismantled in 1951. This is usually ascribed to a decision made by the prime minister Mohammed Saqzeli, who sought to stem the threat of the organization's capacity to hold protests against the government. Protests had broken out against the government because an unidentified dead body had been found at a hospital in Benghazi. That said, historians hold that it was the animosity between Idris and the Association that led to its dismantling (al-Mufti, 2012: 287).

Conclusion

Associational life for Libyans was consolidated into formal structures in the period following the end of Italian colonization (al-Mughayribi, 1995; Wannas, 2000). Those associations drew on the spirit of resistance and solidarity among Libyans during the colonial period. In the case of Libya under Italian colonialism, apart from communist organizations (which had only a very limited influence and impact in Libya), Italian associations were largely an arm of the Italian state and failed to carve out a wide social base in Libya. Italian associations – including those that explicitly targeted and welcomed the Libyan population – had limited success in attracting Libyans. That said, the model used in Italian associations later contributed to the development of Libyan associations that adopted this model and infused it with Libyan culture and nationalistic aspirations.

Libyan associations expanded following the end of Italian colonization with the transfer of Libya (Tripolitania and Barqa) to the British Military Administration and through the rise of the monarchy but were largely brought to a halt under King Idris because of their political role. There is evidence that women's associations continued to operate nevertheless. Women associations show that spaces of cooperation between different social actors were possible and that a carving out of a translocal national identity was in the making, while the ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association is an interesting case in point as it demonstrates the divisive nature of political contestation on the development of a national consciousness and a vision for the Libyan state post-independence. The civic space, as seen through the lens of associational life in Libya, is a site for cooperation and contestation. An analysis of it shows an impressive growth in political and social awareness within Libyan social forces and the beginnings of a national consciousness but that is shut down by the colonial state and restricted, until eventually silenced by the independent state. It also shows how this growth in political awareness was composed of divided alliances with limited platforms for discussion and deliberation over the future of the country and it failed to contribute to the consolidation of a common objective other than independence. The ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association, although a nationalistic platform, was always associated with the eastern region of Libya at the expense of the country as a whole. Social forces were generally more centrifugal than centripetal and so was the civic space that emerged from it. Perhaps, given the chance to flourish, an association like ʿUmar al-Mukhtar would have managed to consolidate strong roots in all regions of Libya but as the chapter demonstrates, it expansion was cut short and so was its potential.

CHAPTER FOUR

Trade union activism: The civic space as institutional formation and disintegration

According to the former director of the Arab Labour Organization, Ibrahim Kouieder: “The beginnings of unionist activism in Libya was when the port workers in Tripoli and Benghazi protested against the Italian occupiers, calling for equal rights to those enjoyed by Italian workers in terms of social care and medical care. Those protests eventually bore fruit” (Kouieder, 2017). In 1935, Mussolini announced the emergence of the first Arab Libyan union through an initiative by the Italian government. The union was for the owners of livestock which was an important source of income for the Libyan population. This was to absorb the anger of the Libyan population towards the fascist government and this became a step forward for the Libyan population to claim their rights (Karfa’, 2000: 84). This, however, was of little significance when Libya was under Italian colonization, because free labour activity was severely restricted for the Libyan population and the focus was mainly on resistance (Karfa’, 2000). In fact, the first independent Libyan trade unions were established years later in 1949 and those were the Dock Workers’ Union of Tripoli by Salem Shita (Orr, 1966), and the Dock Workers’ Union of Benghazi by Ragab al-Nayhum, father of the Libyan author and philosopher Al Sadeq al-Nayhum (Kouieder, 2017). An indigenous movement of Libyan trade unions thus emerged after the Second World War and following the end of the Italian occupation. This marked an active Libyan civic and political consciousness, albeit one riddled with internal politicking and divisions. Divisions between unions in the eastern and western regions of Libya revealed a deep localism and a fragmented civic space. Nevertheless, there were attempts to unify and further institutionalize both camps under the umbrella of a confederation of unions for the whole of Libya, but this was later stunted by Gaddafi's coup.

As elsewhere in North Africa, trade unions in Libya can be analysed as social and political actors in their own right as well as spaces within which different political forces manifested themselves. In the case of Libyan trade unions (as will be argued in this chapter), that they were active social actors was crucial to their survival and helped secure a valued position for trade unionists within Libyan communities. Karfa' describes Libyan workers as one of the "most resisting social groups to colonization". According to him, more than any other social group, they were more connected to the negative social and economic situation in Libya during and after the colonial period and, as a result, they were "one of the groups most expressive of a nationalistic spirit" (Karfa': 2000:11). Attempts to restrict the expansion of unions under King Idris, however, demonstrate the weakness of the emerging Libyan state and the frailty of the political settlement that led to the birth of the monarchy and that was crafted internationally without the development of loyalty or trust among local political forces.

An examination of the history of trade unions in Libya as a social actor in relation to the state; colonial and independent, reveals two key features or dimensions. First, their local embeddedness and representativeness of the challenges faced by Libyan workers and their communities and second, their connectedness to the Arab region's political and social causes. Those features of trade unionism in Libya have allowed them to contribute to the development of the independent state as primary upholders of resistance and independence from colonialism, as well as act as a challenger to the emerging state by contesting its political legitimacy and continued links to Western actors.

With regards to their regional embeddedness, trade unions in North Africa have always exchanged expertise and provided support to one another. Tunisia's experience with trade unionism is particularly relevant to that of Libya. According to one respondent, a Libyan historian: "The workers' union in Tunisia supported the workers' union in Libya, there were exchanges at the institutional level and we benefitted from one another" (Libyan historian, born in Benghazi, currently based in Egypt, interview via Skype, 20 October 2017). In Tunisia, trade unionism goes back to the early twentieth century. Established by Mohammed Ali al Hammi (1890–1928), founder of the General Federation of Tunisian Workers (UGTT) in 1924, it was later consolidated by Farhat Hached (1914–1952). Hached learned union activism and organization within the French Confédération Générale du Travail for 15 years before leaving to re-establish the UGTT in Tunisia in 1946 (Omri, 2013). Thus, the UGTT was founded ten years prior to independence and it played a major role in the struggle for Tunisia's independence (Bishara, 2014: 2). The UGTT was such a powerful political actor that, in 1978 and 1985, it openly opposed Tunisia's leadership and the regime's economic policies, and it even engaged in militant activities (Bishara, 2014: 2). Following the uprisings of 2011, as well as representing workers' concerns in the post-Ben Ali period, the UGTT emerged as a national actor and assumed a mediating role between various political parties, in the process helping to mitigate a political crisis in Tunisia (Bishara, 2014: 6).

Trade unions can also be vehicles for repression. The Egyptian Trade Union Federation is the product of the post-independence regime. Created by President Gamal Abdul Nasser in 1957, unions were established to control and manage workers' discontent and to protect Nasser's regime: "Under Nasser, rank and file workers were given economic benefits, including job security, in exchange for their political quiescence. Within the framework of a state-dominated economy, unions played no collective bargaining role but were rather used as instruments for political control" (Bishara, 2014: 2).

In Libya, trade unions began in a manner similar to the Tunisian example, but later shifted to the Egyptian model under Gaddafi. A historical overview of the emergence and shifts within trade unionism in Libya throws light on the institutionalization and development of civic and political consciousness in Libya, as well as on its disintegration as a result of entrenched political and regional divisions and the continued international interference in Libyan affairs.

With regards to the local embeddedness of trade unions in Libya, it is significant that under King Idris, while the Libyan government at the time was able to successfully restrict the rise of political parties, it was unable to eliminate the influence of trade unions. Trade unions, as will be discussed later, commanded popularity and the trust of Libyan communities. As Kouieder explains:

> It is clear that, having achieved independence, the Libyan monarchy was able to easily restrict the emergence of political parties because they did not have deep roots in the Bedouin Libyan community, except for urban areas and cities like Tripoli and Benghazi. As for trade unions, those had stronger and deeper roots than those of political parties. Unions also had brave leaders who played an important social role in Libya. (Kouieder, 2017, my translation)

Trade unionism questioned the legitimacy of the emerging state because, while the government of the Kingdom of Libya may have been recognized by international actors and by virtue of a political settlement that made Libya a sovereign independent state, the state lacked sufficient political legitimacy in the eyes of the Libyan people. The Monarchy's forbidding of political activities by banning political parties and organizations that had a nationalistic or political role like the ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association only compromised its legitimacy further.[92] Libyans were, at that time, still questioning and carving out their identity as a nation and its relation to state institutions. It was, moreover, a time fraught with both continued international engagement in Libya and a wave of anti-Western Arab nationalism spreading through the various regions. The words of King Idris to Adrian Pelt, UN High Commissioner for Libya, in October 1951 reveal this division in Libya's emerging identity as an independent state and anticipate the difficulty in securing public support for a "middle ground" political position:

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[92] Libyan writer and historian, Ahmed al-Faituri, writes about how the censoring of Libyan society through the banning of political activities was the Monarchy's Achilles heel. In the Libyan newspaper, *al-Wasat*, he writes: "The monarchy in Libya, like most of the ruling regimes at the time, prevented the establishment of political parties and organizations, and punished all those who contributed to their establishment, even in secret. This marked the death of the system that separated cultural activities and

> Mr. Commissioner, you must not forget that Libya, in addition to being first an Arab country, is also a country that overlooks the Mediterranean. It has always been connected to the ancient Greeks. Spiritually and politically, we gravitate towards the East and particularly towards sacred places for Islam. However, financially, we will always have connections to the West. This means that our policies will always be in the middle ground. (Cited in Al-Sharīf, 2011: 5)

This chapter examines the growth of a trade union movement in Libya after independence and during the reign of King Idris as well as the role played by trade unions in the development of political parties. It is an exploration of the consolidation of Libyan political consciousness at the time, its local and regional origins, and its institutionalization alongside the emergence of political parties in Libya, and instances of its disintegration. The civic space, as seen through Libyan trade union activism, was critical to institutional development as is the case in the emergence of trade union confederations and to institutional disintegration because of entrenched divisions in state-society engagement under King Idris.

This chapter examines the dynamics of consolidation and compromise of trade unions in Libya with a focus on how unions constituted a space where state legitimacy was contested, particularly under the Kingdom of Libya between 1951 and 1969. State

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their institutions from political action […] which shows that tyranny and control do not only have a cultural dimension but, more importantly, a social dimension. The religious reform ideology [Sufism] was not decisive in the issue of political domination but it was the social issue that was most decisive, therefore Libya was a cornerstone in preparation for a military coup similar to the Gamal Abdel Nasser coup in Egypt and Houari Boumediene in Algeria." (al-Faitouri, 2019) legitimacy is here broadly defined as referring to the relationship between government and governed, or to the processes and structures of government as related to the body politic. The process of legitimation can be the result of political claims or of values that allow the government to be accepted by the governed (Rodney, 1990). In order to understand the dynamics of engagement between the Libyan people and state institutions, the trade union movement is explored in this chapter, including its links with Arab civil society. As social actors, trade unions and associations provided spaces for engagement between a fledgling state and a public that was in the process of developing a Libyan nation. The emergence of a trade union movement in Libya went hand in hand with the expansion of Arab associations both inside and outside Libya in the period following the end of Italian rule in 1943.

The chapter points out that, while the emergence of the Kingdom of Libya was a milestone in Libya's state and nation-building history, regional divisions and internal politicking persisted, and that these divisions rendered Libya's state and civic institutions fragile. The trade union movement provides, on the one hand, evidence of the consolidation of a local civic space through which Libyans were negotiating their nationhood and citizenship. On the other hand, it reveals the weakness of the fledgling state that was still crafting its legitimacy out of international (primarily Western) and, to a lesser extent, local support. The political settlement that led to the unification of the three regions of Barqa, Tripolitania and Fezzan under the federal monarchy of Libya did not entrench King Idris as the legitimate leader of the Libyan kingdom. Moreover, as will be discussed, the discovery of oil in 1959 was both a blessing and a curse. It provided the funds needed to build institutions, but it rocked the nation-building project as regional and international interests flocked to Libya.

To fully grasp the sociopolitical role played by trade unions in Libya, it is important to first understand the context within which they emerged. The next section presents an overview of the circumstances that led to the emergence of the Kingdom of Libya as well as the key factors and challenges that threatened the legitimacy of the nascent state.

The Kingdom of Libya: Contested legitimacies and the difficulties of state making

In his proclamation of independence, King Idris connected the unity of Libya to its past and to the sacrifices of its population:

> In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, … we joyfully proclaim to the noble people of Libya that, in fulfilment of their endeavours and of the United Nations Resolution of 21st of November 1949, our beloved country has with the help of God attained independence. … At this blessed hour, we are mindful … of our heroes of the past. We invoke the dew of God's mercy and reward upon the souls of our righteous martyrs and we salute the sacred banner the legacy of our fathers and the hard-earned symbol of our unity in the hope that the new era which dawns today will be for our country an era of well-being and peace. (Cited in Farley, 1971: 38)

While Libya's regions are indeed united by a shared history of colonialism and bravery of resistance, Libya's rise as an independent kingdom was the result of a difficult political settlement, whereby, in addition to the local fear of another round of colonialism, international and regional forces thrust a divided Libya towards unity. While those divisions are common to postcolonial contexts, divisions within Libya's civic space presented another layer of challenges, as will be later discussed in light of its trade union movement. There was also the challenge of standing the test of time. Because of the coup by Gaddafi, the divisions were not given a chance to heal, nor could roots develop to secure the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of the Libyan people.

S.M. Lipset argues that legitimacy “involves the capacity of a political system to engender and maintain the belief that existing political institutions are the most appropriate and proper ones for the society” (Lipset, 1959: 24). R. Collins expands on this definition by stressing that legitimacy is also connected to the loyalty of political groups to the political institutions (Collins, 1995). In Libya, political groups were divided across regional and ideological fault lines, and continued Western influence rocked the legitimacy of fledgling Libyan institutions. In the period prior to the independence of the Libyan state in 1951, Libya consisted of three separately administered territories: Barqa had limited self-government under Idris, who was advised by a British resident; Tripolitania was administered by the British; and Fezzan was under French military administration (Golino, 1970: 338).

The United Kingdom of Libya (later the Kingdom of Libya) was riddled with these divisions, and it was structured by extraneous twentieth-century efforts at state formation whereby former colonies became nation-states without a local state-building process to inform them. While there were contributions to state building by Libyans in the diaspora, who joined other international forces in the state-building process, indigenous state building was for the most part eclipsed by other regional and international actors (St John, 2012; Baldinetti, 2010; Anderson, 2017). This eventually led to a legitimacy crisis that marked the end of the Libyan monarchy and the rise of Gaddafi’s dictatorship.

The succession of events that led to the emergence and downfall of the Libyan monarchy highlights the complexities of crafting state legitimacy in a divided society and touches on the dynamics through which local, regional and international actors contribute to and compromise statehood. A number of scholarly works point out various facets that drive the development and compromise of legitimacy (Fukuyama 2004; Leftwich 2010). According to a study on state building, peace building and service delivery in fragile states, state legitimacy can be approached from four dimensions (Ndaruhutse, 2011). The first is “geographical legitimacy”, which refers to a situation in which citizens live in a state by virtue of its geographic familiarity and belonging, irrespective of whether or not it is effective in delivering services. The second is “constitutional legitimacy”, which refers to citizens’ perceptions that the rules of the game are fair, such as whether the state is unitary or federal. The third is “political legitimacy”, which concerns whether the government is accepted by the public. The forth is “holistic legitimacy”, which refers to a state that is effective (or not) at delivering services and guaranteeing civil liberties. There are states in which service delivery is not necessarily associated with civil liberties, such as Botswana and Cuba. In such cases the government may have legitimacy, but the state may not. In the case of Libya, the emergence of the Libyan monarchy falls short of fulfilling these legitimacies to any appreciable degree.

While the political settlement may have provided the groundwork for government legitimacy, it failed to provide the foundations of trust between the Libyan people and state institutions. In the wake of Italian and British colonialism, Libyans saw themselves wielding little ownership over their government institutions. Needless to say, according to Haider (2010):

> State legitimacy can derive from a range of sources including the effectiveness of public institutions in their performance of various functions such as service delivery; and their degree of representation and accountability. Legitimacy does not derive solely from effectively functioning institutions, however. Such institutions must resonate with societies in order for them to be considered legitimate. (Cited in Ndaruhutse, 2011)

The continued presence of Western influence in Libya detracted from the legitimacy of institutions born under King Idris. It also detracted from the sense of ownership that Libyans had over their country and their fate following independence. This is not to say, however, that there was no Libyan agency in determining the course of events. During the 1920s and 1930s, Libyan notables in exile in various parts of the Arab world who opposed Italian rule actively organized and militated against the Italian occupation, albeit with limited success. A Tripolitanian-Barqan Defense Committee, for example, was established in Damascus, and groups of emigres established themselves in Tunis, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf and Egypt. At the time, Idris was exiled in Cairo, where he maintained relations with the British authorities during the interwar period (Anderson, 2017: 8). Following the Second World War, foreign engagement in Libya widened the rift between its regions; it did not seek to unify the Libyan population around the new state. This rift was exacerbated by difficulties in reconciling differences between the Libyans themselves, as the overview of the emergence of trade unionism in Libya in this chapter demonstrates.

The trade union movement that emerged is an instance of local civic mobilization towards the reclamation of ownership of those fledgling institutions, as well as the development of the beginnings of citizen activism and belonging. However, this mobilization emerged in a weak state and was divided from within. This was due to a number of international, regional and local factors which include the following:

International confusion

International confusion regarding sovereignty in Libya eroded the legitimacy of the country's state institutions. The perception of Libya as a state engineered by external forces was emphatically stated in an interview with a leader of the Amazigh movement in Libya:

> Like Barqa, you know, it is a very huge region with so many tribes, and historically, it has always been in conflict but who united them? It was from outside. Unity came from outside Libya. The Sanusis are not from Barqa, they are from outside, from Algeria. They came and founded that movement

> of Sufism … But you see, there is always an external force, nothing from within. (Amazigh activist from Tripoli, personal interview, Naples, 24 September 2014)

Each of the colonial powers had a different set of interests in controlling one of Libya’s regions. Between 1943 and 1948, the British were concerned principally about Egypt’s border and their wartime promises to Idris. They cared little about anything beyond Barqa; therefore, they were, in the words of a contemporary observer, “the chief advocate of a divided Libya, for the Sanusi issue presents one of the major obstacles to the establishment of unity” (Anderson, 2017: 9). The British were indeed willing to entertain the possibility of Italian trusteeship for Tripolitania, and the Italians lobbied for such an outcome, restoring contact with local notables who had served in the colonial administration, and going so far as to pay administrative and police salaries that were in arrears. The idea of divided sovereignty gained traction. It was supported by France which hoped to retain the administration of Fezzan and secure control of the bordering French colonial territories in the Sahara (Anderson, 2017: 9).

By 1949, the case had been turned over to the newly formed United Nations. British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin and Italian Foreign Minister Carlo Sforza proposed that trusteeships be granted to Britain in Barqa, Italy in Tripolitania and France in Fezzan (H.G., 1952: 195). Protests, however, broke out in Tripolitania and the Bevin-Sforza plan was foiled. The resolution was defeated in the UN General Assembly by one vote – that of Haiti. Ambivalence about Libya’s fate would have lasted longer had the USSR not volunteered to take the trusteeship for Tripolitania. It was then that “the Western powers, realizing that the territory would be a strategic asset in the looming Cold War, moved to support independence, since a sovereign government could enter international treaties that would permit military basing agreements” (Anderson, 2017: 9). As the first US Ambassador to Libya observed, “the United States, with its ideals of liberty and self-rule, had lent vital support to this action. In addition, there was the vital American interest in the maintenance of an air base in Libya" (Anderson, 2017: 9).

Libya's state structure attempted to accommodate the historical differences between its eastern, western and southern regions by incorporating political representation from the three regions within its governing structure:

> Libya became independent on December 24, 1951, under a constitution finally adopted, thanks to the diligent work of UN Commissioner Pelt, the previous October. It mandated a government only a United Nations committee could have designed: a federal monarchy, headed by King Idris, aided by a prime minister and council of ministers also responsible to the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of a bicameral legislature. The Senate of the Upper House, consisted of eight representatives from each of the three provinces. Half of the senators were nominated by the King, who also had the right to veto legislation and to dissolve the lower house. Each of the provinces had autonomous provincial governments and legislatures; and indeed issued visas for travel across provincial borders, which was particularly inconvenient in light of the fact that Tripoli and Benghazi served alternately as the national capital. (Anderson, 2017: 12)

Regional interests

Regional powers were also interested in the division of Libya; Egypt, for example, was interested in gaining territory in Libya. The Egypto-Tripolitanian Union Party was thus established in 1946, capitalizing on the powerful influence of Arab nationalism, and it had a programme to unite Libya with Egypt under the Egyptian crown. Abd al-Rahman Azzam, the Egyptian activist who had advised the Tripoli Republic, had been appointed as the first secretary general of the new Arab League in March 1945, and he was key to lobbying in favour of this new effort.

At the first meeting of the Four Powers in September 1945, the Egyptians presented a proposal that the people of Libya should decide whether they wanted independence or a union with Egypt. If they chose union, as the Egyptians expected, Libya would be placed under a trusteeship that would be assigned to the care of Egypt or the Arab League: "This proposal died in the British Foreign Office, which did not consider the future of Barqa and Tripolitania a matter of Libyan or Arab opinion so much as a strategic element of British policy in the Middle East" (Anderson, 2017: 9).

In 1947, Azzam and the Arab League reverted to backing the liberation of Libya through the establishment of the National Council for the Liberation of Libya, led by Bashir al-Sa'dawi. Al-Sa'dawi had been the leader of the Libyan exile community in Syria before being appointed in 1938 as advisor to Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud in the newly created Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The leadership of the National Council for the Liberation of Libya included Ahmed Suwayhlī, as well as Mahmud al-Muntasir who came from a family that had been longstanding rivals of the Suwayhlī clan. The National Council was designed to serve as an intermediary among the main political parties, but it had limited success. Azzam and al-Sa'dawi's efforts failed when Barqan supporters of a monarchy refused to cooperate because Idris did not trust Al-Sa'dawi (Anderson, 2017: 11).

Local economic woes

In addition to the political challenges that rocked the newly founded kingdom, independent Libya faced a number of economic challenges that were inherited from the colonial period and the long neglect of the Libyan population.

Italian policies had denied the Libyan people their right to their land and to livelihood opportunities. Until 1911, industries in Libya were mostly traditional focusing on the production of textiles, rugs, gold and olive oil and some of those products were exported overseas. Inter-regional trade was seasonal but present and significant. The *holafa'* plant was produced widely in Libya and was one of its important exports; in 1910, the value of exports of this plant amounted to GBP 100,000. Those businesses were led by

Libyans. After the Italian colonization, industries were run and funded by Italians and Italian workers were employed in those factories; according to data from 1938 by the Italian Economic Association, on existing industries in Libya and the number of workers, 80% of factories were owned by Italians and 37% of craftsmen were Italian (Karfa', 2000: 31-33). According to Karfa', because of those policies, there were waves of migration from Libya to neighboring countries and to Turkey. Many unemployed Libyans were made to join the Italian army or to relocate to cities and seek jobs for Italians at very low wages. Those policies led to an increase in the number of bedouins because farmers had no livelihood opportunities when their lands were taken away by the Italian colonizers. Under the Italian colonization, Libyans carried the heavy weight of declining employment opportunities and a rise in prices because economic resources were monopolized by the Italian population while "Libyans lost their land and their livelihood" (Karfa', 2000: 30-31). Italian policies weakened local trade for Libyans and ended inter-regional trade with serious implications on the social fabric. Libyans in Barqa and Tripolitania were forced to retreat locally rather than expand beyond their regions.

Later under the British Military Administration, there were still challenges for Libyans to find work. According to Libyan unionist, Uthman al-Alem:

> The economic situation was poor in Libya in the period preceding independence. There were very few job opportunities available for Libyan workers. Those opportunities were limited to working in foreign military bases under the British Military Administration; a British military base in Tobruq and an American one in Tripoli. Libyans were made to work for meagre pay to make ends meet. Trade unions then changed all of this. (al-Alem, 2009, my translation)

The absence of skilled labour that would have been able to help construct the foundations of Libya's economy was a challenge. The British still resorted to Italian labour in the period following the Second World War, and little was done to include Libyans in the workforce:

> During the first six months of the occupation there was sufficient unskilled manpower, consisting mainly of rural Arabs who could only be hired for manual work at certain seasons and who were unaccustomed to continued disciplined labour. However, there was a lack of skilled artisans since many Italians had either returned to Italy or retreated with their army to Tunis. Early in June the Labour Director went to Tunis to negotiate their return. Thereafter, the labour force mounted steadily, the principal employer in Tripolitania being the British administration. (Norman, 1965: 23)

With a weak economy and lack of a skilled workforce, Libyans were forced to remain dependent in one way or another on foreigners. At independence in 1951, British officials estimated the national per capita income to be from $30 to $40, which was much lower than in other areas of the Middle East. Living standards in Libya were close to subsistence levels, and in periods of drought they fell below even this level, leading to high mortality rates, particularly among children and the elderly. The system of monetary wages was poorly developed because of the predominance of agriculture geared to pastoralism. Hence, the issue of wages was important chiefly in the cities. More than 80 per cent of Libyans are estimated to have been directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture for a living (Norman, 1965: 24). This was soon to change.

Before the discovery of oil, Libya was referred to as the poorest country in the world. Its main products were peanuts, almonds, hides and skins, wool and animal hair, castor seed, esparto grass and olive oil. Scrap metal from the military equipment used in the battles of the Second World War was also exported for income (Norman, 1965: 13). The discovery of oil was a dramatic turning point. The first significant oil strike was in 1959, and by 1965 Libya became the eighth largest producer of petroleum in the world. The development of the oil industry, however, was expensive: oil companies invested about $1.3 billion in exploration and production infrastructure, and the overall expenses amounted to about $400 million a year, of which one-third was spent in Libya for payrolls, goods and services (Norman, 1965: 17). These shifts were mirrored in the state of the labour force and trade unions: the oil wealth necessitated and provided an opportunity for the development of an active trade union movement, but at the same time it led to political divisions over the management of Libya's recent wealth which exacerbated already existing divisions. There were other adverse effects of the discovery of oil:

> An increase in migration from rural areas to cities and as a result, agricultural projects were neglected. Inflation was another outcome of the discovery of oil. The oil industry also attracted a large number of trained and educated Libyans which meant that other sectors were unable to expand because of the lack of an available workforce. This also resulted in importing a large number of foreign workers which led to social challenges. The large number of foreign workers put pressure on public infrastructure and because everything happened so quickly, the negative effect of those factors doubled. (Bin-Halim, 2011: 348)

Having discussed key contextual international, regional and local challenges of the Kingdom of Libya, the next section explores the emergence and decline of Libya's trade union movement, with a focus on the eastern and western regions of the country. Three phases are explored: first, that of the Italian occupation; second, that of the British Military Administration; and third, the period of the monarchy.

The colonial period (1911–1943): A trade union movement born in captivity

The colonial period contributed to both the circumventing and the birth of trade unions in Libya. While the Italians established the first trade unions for Italians in Libya, they created conditions that prevented Libyans from working, and they enforced regulations that favoured the Italian workforce over the Libyan one. The next section explains how Italian colonialism had this twofold role.

Italian circumvention of trade unions

Under the Italian occupation, working conditions for Libyan labour were regulated and governed by the Italian labour code for Africa, and the regulations were the same for both Tripolitania and Barqa.[93] Those regulations were crafted to cater for the needs of Italian rather than Libyan workers: “They were intended mainly for the protection of Italian workers as to hours of work, holidays, social insurance, apprenticeship, etc.” (Norman, 1965: 18). The Italian labour code entrenched advantages for Italian workers and the exclusion of Libyan workers from the labour force (Martin, 1967). There were differences between Italian and Libyan workers, for example, regarding insurance: “Italian labourers and their families were insured against unemployment, sickness and accident, but Libyan labourers were insured only against accident” (Norman, 1965: 18).

There were decrees that contributed to the emergence of a Libyan trade union movement, but these were largely ineffective because of Italian domination. In April 1935, Libyans were given representation in corporate economic councils. The Royal Decree of 9 January 1937, no. 70, announced the creation of Libyan trade unions. However, these decrees and regulations were of little significance because of the Italian occupation and restrictions on labour activities. Yolande Martin, a French academic writing in the 1960s, emphasized the necessity of placing the decrees within the economic and political context created and largely controlled by the occupation:

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[93] While unionism was prominent and popular in Italy in the period preceding fascism, Italians did not extend their activities to Libya until well into the fascist period. In the period between 1911 and 1922, there were no trade union activities in Libya related to the Italian workers or the Libyan workers. That is, except for resolution number 688 which was issued on the 25th of May 1913 whereby the Italian authorities applied Italian regulations related to workers to the Italian workers in Libya (Karfa’, 2000: 54). In 1926, the first regulation related to union confederations was issued in Libya. Then others in 1926 and 1927. In 1934, this was the beginning of a trade union movement for Italians in Libya. Italo Balbo put the foundations of union organization in Libya in a meeting that brought together fascist workers and fighters in Tripoli and in 1935, the terms were clarified further (Karfa’, 2000: 55). Those regulations allowed Italians to form unions and associations to increase productivity. An approval from the governor was required to start a union. Participation and ability to start those unions was confined to the Italian population and Arabs were not permitted to start their own unions (Karfa’, 2000: 56).

> We must not delude ourselves as to the real scope of these decrees. They must be placed in a given political context, that is to say, a period of totalitarian regime in which freedom of association is already stifled in Italy and thus has even more difficulties to be born and to exist in the colonized countries. (Martin, 1967: 280)

Indirect contributions to the birth of trade unions

An indirect contribution to the birth of trade unions for Libyans was exposure to the importance and usefulness of unionism.[94] According to Uthman al-Alem, Sheikh Ragab al-Nayhum, who founded the first trade union in Benghazi, was influenced by his experience of working as a sailor on Italian ships and communicating with Italian workers; the latter explained to him the role and opportunities provided by trade unions in protecting their rights and ensuring they had adequate social and medical care. As al-Alem recounts:

> Sheikh Ragab al-Nayhum was born and bred in Benghazi … He learned how to read and write at the hands of preachers in mosques, as was the case with Libyan children at the time. He also learned how to speak Italian while working as a sailor on Italian ships. He also spoke some English which allowed him to open up to different cultures around the world. … The majority of European sailors were members of trade unions. After listening to their accounts, Sheikh al-Nayhum succeeded in inviting a number of his fellow sailors to establish the first trade union for port workers in Benghazi in 1949. (al-Alem, 2009)

Sheikh al-Nayhum galvanized a popular trade union movement in Benghazi, a movement which later gained traction in Tripoli. He became the secretary general of the confederation of trade unions of Libya and served on the board of the Arab Trade Organization.

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[94] This view is rejected by Karfa’ (2000) who holds that accounts relating expertise derived from Italian trade unions are incorrect because the Italians did not allow Libyans to participate or join Italian unions and as such it is unclear from where expertise would have been derived (Karfa’, 2000: 112). The argument here is that those influences or contributions were indirect and through exposure.

Another contribution was made by Dr Enrico Cibelli, who was once a fascist and later became a communist. Cibelli was born in Naples in 1899 and spent three years in Italy's colonies as District Commissioner in Eritrea and Somaliland, as President of the Civil and Criminal Tribunal and later as State Attorney in Asmara, and then as Director of Economic Affairs in Tripoli. His conversion from fascism to communism remains a mystery to most analysts. For some, he was an intelligent man who helped the Libyan trade union movement a great deal, but for others he was unscrupulous (Martin, 1967: 281). Karfa' argues that Cibelli sought to develop unions for Libyans in order to develop structures for new unions that comprised Libyans and Italians and thus, remove racial barriers, and to further his political interests which included protecting the interests of Italians who remained in Libya and decreasing the animosity and hatred towards Italy especially after the Bevin-Sforza plans for Italy to return to Libya (Karfa', 2000: 116). He first created an Italian Political Association for the Advancement of Libya during the period of the Italian occupation. Its slogan was "Libya for the Libyans", and its membership was open to the Libyan population. Cibelli had a notary office in Tripoli, which enabled him to engage with key political forces in Libya, and it was through this office that he began to take an interest in the fate of the Libyan people and to make contact during his frequent trips to Italy with Italian communists; this then led him to the creation of trade unions:

> Cibelli's labour activity began gradually. Even though he was Tripoli's most prominent attorney and notary, he conscientiously took up cases for poor people who he eventually decided to help on an organized basis. It is likely on his frequent trips to Italy, the Communists there had persuaded him to unionize Libyan labour. (Norman, 1965: 27)

According to Ibrahim Fergiani, an owner of a bookstore in Tripoli in the 1960s, "the Libyan labour movement sprang from the fascist Dopolavoro (After-work) organizations which on the expulsion of fascism were revived by the Italian communists under the leadership of Dr. Cibelli. They organized both Italians and Arabs but most of the leaders were Communist" (Norman, 1965: 27). The Cibelli Association was later transformed into the Tripoli Union of Libyan Workers, but at that time 80 per cent of its members were Italian,[95] the two most important groups being the Union of Libyan Mechanics, who worked with the British army, and the port workers, mainly the dockworkers, led by Mohamed Buras, who later became one of the leaders of the Libyan trade unions with Ibrahim Fergiani and Mohamed Dachil. All these men were trained partly in Tunisia and partly in Tripoli (Martin, 1967: 281). Later in 1947, Cibelli in partnership with Ali bin Uthman, a Libyan unionist, established a number of trade unions for Libyans such as a union for transportation headed by Ali bin Uthman and Mohammed Saad, a union for airports headed by Ibrahim al Arabi, a union for tobacco headed by Mohammed al-Benghazi and a union for bakers headed by Mohammed Shibani. It is important to note that those unions were headed not by workers but by business leaders such as Ali bin Uthman had his own business of transport, Mohammed El Shibani who had his own bakery in Tripoli, and Mohammed Abu Ras who traded in fish.

It is important not to overstate Cibelli's influence. As discussed in the previous chapter, communism was not popular in Libya because its tenets clashed with Islamic principles, and because circumstances at the time did not accord workers' rights or equal opportunities to Libyans.

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[95] Karfa' argues that Arabs were not allowed to join the executive boards of Cibelli's unions and that this shows the racist approach that Italians had despite the fact that Cibelli did try to eliminate those differences (Karfa', 2000: 113).

Under the British Military Administration (1943–1951): A slow rebirth of trade unions

Under the British Military Administration, all fascist legislation and decrees were abolished, but the emerging trade union movement remained and developed slowly during the years of British occupation. Karfa' argues that the existence of trade unions during the period between 1943 and 1947 was largely limited (Karfa', 2000). In 1943, a Labour Office was set up in Tripoli under a Director of Labour with the rank of major. He was assisted by a number of Italians of the Italian Labour Office who had remained behind after the Italian occupation ended. Initially, the Labour Office was more concerned with the needs of the military than with those of the people or the British administration, but it soon shifted focus to setting regulations for the labour force. The Director of Labour could not at once set up a labour exchange, but had to operate as liaison officer between the Assistant Director of the Army's Pioneer and Labour Section and the administration. At first, he acted as the expert on problems of wage rates, labour resources, and legislation. Later, he acted as an executive to enforce necessary legal and administrative decisions (Norman, 1965: 23).

The British sought the advancement of Libyans to managerial posts in education, the police, the army and the judiciary to ensure that Italian control in Libya was weakened (Martin, 1967: 281). Italians, however, remained employed because of the skills they possessed:

> A leader of the Italian colony complained that the British depressed Italian wages to the Arab level instead of raising Arab standards to the Italian level. … By 1953, however, Italian workers were being paid more than Libyans, owing partly to their generally superior labour skills. (Norman, 1965: 23)

The situation of the Italian population after the Second World War was uncertain. They had lost many of their former privileges and they were slowly being replaced by

Libyan labour. Later in 1955, the African Department in the British Foreign Office wrote a message to the British Embassy in Rome describing the deterioration of the economic situation of the Italian population in Libya:

> You may like to know that the Italian Government have decided to send an expert to Libya to investigate the position of the Italian settlers there, with the object of suggesting ways and means of improving their lot, and of deciding which of the areas farmed by Italians are worth trying to improve. This decision taken on August 3 by a Ministerial Committee which met, under the Chairmanship of the President of the Council, to review the position of Italians in Libya.[96]

The message also stated:

> On August 5, the semi-official Messaggero devoted most of a leading article entitled "Italians Abroad" to the same subject. Despite their years of hard work, the plight of the settlers, said the Messaggero, was now desperate. Their most urgent need was for financial aid from the mother country. Unfortunately, however, the problem had recently become political as well as economic. The article then went on to describe the decision of the United Nations Tribunal on which Mr. Graham reported in his dispatch no. 122 of July 9. Although the decision did not affect private Italian property, owners had to prove that they had acquired such property legitimately, which, because of the way in which the land had originally been granted, was often very difficult for them to do. The Tribunal's high-handed decision had its origin in the 'poisonous xenophobe propaganda' which had for some time been wide-spread among the local population, and it paved the way for further high-handed decisions in the future. A loan, therefore, would only be effective if it were accompanied by Libyan guarantees of secure tenure and by a change in Libyan public opinion. Otherwise, the result was bound to be that many of the settlers would pack up and return to Italy. If they do so, not only would a harsh blow be dealt to international solidarity, but the Libyan economy, to which Italian workers had contributed, and could contribute, so much would suffer incalculable damage.[97]

Because of the absence of Libyan skilled labour, the British were sometimes forced to invite Italians who resided in Tunisia to assume positions in Libya (Martin, 1967: 281).

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[96] Foreign Office. Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906 to 1966. African. Libya. (1955). Italian Community in Libya. FO 371/113944.

[97] Foreign Office. Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906 to 1966. African. Libya. (1955). Italian Community in Libya. FO 371/113944.

An Italian population thus continued to live in Libya under the British Military Administration, but their number had dropped from about 110,000 in 1940 (Metz, 1989: 30) to a quarter of that figure:

> According to official statistics in 1959, there were only 26,038 Italians left in Libya, most of them in Tripolitania and less than 200 in Barqa. Over sixty percent of the artisan enterprises and small industries depended on Italians. There were about 3,600 Italian workers in private firms and 1,000 at the British and American bases. (Norman, 1965: 24)

The British sought to build the capacity of Libyans to develop their trade unions and labour regulations. In 1943, decrees were passed that specified conditions of labour and the wages of Libyan workers in the following categories: skilled labour (masons, mechanics, motor engineers, blacksmiths, miners, carpenters and foremen); general workers and dockers; agricultural workers; and farm boys under sixteen years of age. Another decree accepted the contracts of Libyans working in bakeries (Norman, 1965: 18). Libyan labour leaders received advice on trade union organization from an official sent to them by the British Labour government. Union activity was thus encouraged and Assistant Labour Commissioner William Carter gave trade unions advice on organizational problems. The last British Labour Commissioner in Tripolitania was Hamilton Brown, previously mayor of Tripoli (1946–1948), who, from February to August 1953, undertook the twofold task of acting as Director of Labour and operating the Labour Exchange (Norman, 1965: 25).

Post-independence (1951–1969): Institutional consolidation, politicization and disintegration

The period following independence witnessed both the consolidation as well as politicization of trade unions in Libya. It also witnessed a number of challenges that threatened the continuity of these unions and bore witness to the weakness of the Libyan monarchy. Although the expansion of unions was later curtailed under King Idris when ongoing mobilization became perceived as a threat to the stability of the fledgling state, the evidence for these restrictions is mixed and it is difficult to establish the exact date of Idris' curtailment of the unions because there was no decree announcing the end of unions in Libya. Ibrahim Kouieder, former director of the Arab Labour Organization, emphasizes that there was no interference by the Libyan government in the development of unions, a view contradicted by others. According to Kouieder:

> Following independence, trade unions were united around the country and a general confederation of trade unions in Libya emerged. It is important to note here that the Libyan government under King Idris never interfered in the trade union movement and that the government allowed trade unions to organize themselves and defend their members. Trade unions played a national role in all the events that the country went through as well as those of the Arab world. Unions also participated in popular protests against nepotism and colonialism. This was all lost under Gaddafi. (Kouieder, 2017, my translation)

Another argument is that King Idris' move against unions took the form of not granting licences to Libyans who wished to start new ones, particularly those who may have been engaged in political activity. A Libyan historian who was born in 1955 but whose elementary school teacher sought to establish a union for teachers and was imprisoned for his political activism, recollected: "Unions continued to exist, many of which without any legal approvals from the government at the time. The king couldn't for instance dismantle the Workers' Union. It was very strong but he prevented the establishment of new ones." (Libyan historian, born in Benghazi, currently based in Egypt, interview via Skype, 20 October 2017)

The post-independence phase can be divided into two stages: consolidation and politicization. Both stages may have intersected at multiple points during independence, but it is instructive to look at the processes inherent in each.

The consolidation of unionism in Libya

The consolidation of unionism in Libya took place through two channels. The first was through the issuing of labour laws, while the second was through the grouping of unions into confederations in the eastern and western regions of Libya, and later for the whole country.

With regards to the issuing of labour laws, according to al-Alem, Libyans saw independence as an opportunity to use the laws that had been enforced by the British Military Administration and which allowed the establishment of non-governmental organizations and associations in order to put pressure on the Libyan government to issue a new labour law:

> Because of this pressure, the government invited experts from the International Labour Organization to draft a new law. The new law was eventually passed and it included the freedom to establish trade unions, the freedom to strike, restricting the number of work hours and banning child labour. (al-Alem, 2009, my translation)

Ibrahim Fergiani and Mohammed Dachil worked hard to prepare a constitution for each category of labour to qualify for recognition under the new law. The Tunisian and Sudanese labour constitutions were used as models and in 1951 the first Libyan labour law was published. When the law went into effect, they were ready to register 24 unions, according to Dachil. This left no room for Cibelli’s unions, so they had to join the rival federation of Libyan Labour Unions (Norman, 1965: 29). Cibelli was later deported following independence. This accelerated the rise of the Federation of Libyan Labour Unions (FLLU). By the end of 1951, the FLLU had absorbed most of the independent unions and had joined the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). In 1952, the FLLU became the Libyan General Labour Unions, as it is still known today (Norman, 1965: 29).

According to one account, the new labour legislation only applied to Tripolitania and it specified conditions of work involving all employers and employees concerned in a labour contract, including government. It excluded occasional workers, domestics, and farm workers, except those employed in the operation, upkeep and repair of agricultural machinery. The law provided for a working week of 48 hours for workers getting a weekly or bimonthly wage, and a work day of eight hours for those paid by the day. Overtime pay had to be only ten percent above normal pay, which was insufficient. No weekly day of rest was formally provided; custom and religion rather than law operated. The law specified twelve consecutive days of vacation for workers paid monthly, and six consecutive days for workers paid by the day, week or fortnight, after one year of continuous employment; but many were in fact deprived of paid holidays because of the lack of steady work (Norman, 1965: 30). This account is, however, somewhat contradicted by one of the founders of the trade union movement in Libya, Uthman al-Alem, who regarded the new labour law as applicable to the whole of Libya and not only to Tripolitania:

> Because of the new labour law, there was support from the government to trade unions. The official number of hours was limited to eight and putting in extra hours at work entitled you to double the pay for those hours. In terms of health care, social security was established and this invigorated whole communities. Intellectuals and teachers volunteered to give literacy classes to workers. (al-Alem, 2009, my translation)

The second channel through which the consolidation of trade unions was made possible was through the establishment of confederations. According to al-Alem, the expansion of trade unions in Libya was tied to the growth of nationalistic sentiments in the period following the end of Italian and British colonialism. Unionists sought to capitalize on the momentum and consolidate the unions further into confederations. In recounting his experience of contributing to the establishment of a trade union movement in Benghazi, al-Alem recalled:

> We agreed that Libya is recovering from Italian colonization and British trusteeship, and now that it is independent, its youth and men who have received some education and possess national awareness should invest in a renaissance for the whole of Libya. (al-Alem, 2009, my translation)

Two confederations of trade unions emerged, one in Tripoli and the other in Benghazi. With the emergence of these confederations, however, the role of trade unions became more politicized, and regional divisions manifested themselves in two opposing directions; one representing the eastern region of Libya and the other representing the western region.

The politicization of unionism

The first feature of the politicization of trade unions was the emergence of two opposing camps. According to al-Alem, the confederations of Tripoli and Benghazi had opposed political orientations. The confederation of trade unions of Tripoli, which was headed by Salem Shita, gravitated towards the West, while the confederation of trade unions of Benghazi, led by Ragab al-Nayhum, cooperated and worked closely with the Federation of Arab Trade Unions, which was headquartered in Cairo. This difference in political orientation created a conflict between the two camps (al-Alem, 2009), which manifested itself in other conflicts between individual unions representing different camps:

> There was a conflict between two important unions; the union of the bakers and the union of mechanics. The elections for the union of mechanics were run twice. The first round ousted its leader Ibrahim Ben Amer, a traditional man who wanted to please the state even at the expense of the workers. Instead, a union member was elected to take his place but he later resigned. Elections were run a second time and had satisfactory results. The executive branch included active unionists led by Ali Al-Sa'dāwī. … As for the union of bakers, the leadership of the union of bakers split into two camps and

> elections were held to resolve the crisis. The first camp was led by Ibrahim Hamad who sided with Salem Shita, and the other camp was led by Hamdy Taqtaq who supported al-Nayhum against Shita. … Despite state interference in favour of the Tripoli camp, the conflict was resolved in favour of Hamdy Taqtaq and the al-Nayhum camp. (al-Alem, 2009, my translation)

This division between the two camps shows up in correspondence about Libya. In the period following independence, the British were particularly interested in supporting the development of strong ties with trade unions in North Africa as a means to balance and influence the politics of the region. In a letter dated 9 April 1957 to G.F. Blumer, Labour Advisor at the Foreign Office, A. Greenhough stated:

> The factors reported by Hird illustrate the possible value of a visit by Salem Shitta to the United Kingdom. This is a point which I have made during the last two years and which I felt you might like to put before the I.P.D. once again. I do not think it is too much to say that we have helped bona fide trade union movements in both Sudan and Lebanon, and we ought to really try and do something of the same kind of thing in Libya.[98]

The politicization of trade unions in Libya was perceptible through its leaders and members. Also notable was the influence of regional, especially Egyptian, political forces and movements. In another letter, dated 17 May 1957, Greenhough informed Blumer about how his proposal had been declined:

> Brash replied on 25th April under reference J.T.2181/1 turning down the proposal. I am now wondering, however, whether you would like to have another look at the suggestion in the light of the comments made by Barber in his letter 2186/1 of 10th May. It seems reasonably clear that my impressions concerning Shitta and his movement away from the Egyptian influences are proving reasonably accurate, and a visit to the country during, say, the next six months might do much to consolidate bona fide developments with Western influences.[99]

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[98] British National Archives. Foreign Office. Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906 – 1966. Africa: Libya. (1957). “Trade Unions in Libya”. FO 371/126074.

[99] British National Archives. Foreign Office. Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906 – 1966. Africa: Libya. (1957). “Trade Unions in Libya”. FO 371/126074.

In a letter dated 25 March 1957 from Hird to Greenhough, two reflections are made on the influence of Nasser on the unionist movement in Libya:

> Salem Shitta and Mohamed Saad (the latter being the Treasurer of the Libyan General Workers Union) were delegates to the ICFTU African Regional Conference in January. You may be interested in the following comments about them which I have received from the Embassy in Libya: 'Salem Shitta has been an admirer of Nasser but is at the same time anti-Communist and lately his admiration has seemed to cool off. Since the Suez affair he has been outspokenly anti-British and anti-French. Before going to Accra in January he tried unsuccessfully to have his Yellow Fever inoculation done at the Wheelus in order to avoid going to the British Military Hospital. Mohammed Saad is friendly, intelligent and educated. He may shortly be going to Brussels to work in the ICFTU Secretariat there.'[100]

The British kept a close eye on trade unions in North Africa, including Libyan trade unions and their leaders, in an attempt to secure their loyalty to the British government. Political differences between trade unionists in the region were seen as an opportunity to consolidate British influence by exploiting divisions. In another letter from Hird to Greenhough, this close examination of the politics of trade unionism in North Africa in favour of British interests is clear:

> It is not unusual of course for Arab Trade Unionists to be highly critical of British and French action in Egypt. The interesting point is that, in spite of his annoyance with the West, Shitta has allegedly not become more pro-Nasser. According to Barber's letter of August 10 to you the ICFTU saw the time coming when he might have to be forced into declaring his hand. I wonder how they now rate him – and whether this might not be the tactical moment to press him to say where his loyalties lie. The Egyptian Trade Union movement and the Arab Federation of Trade Unions have been so busy of late forging fraternal bonds with Communist States that Shitta may have seen a bright enough red light.[101]

Suspicions about collaborating with the West grew in the period following independence. Unionists in Tripoli soon grew wary of the relationship between Salem

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[100] British National Archives. Foreign Office. Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906 – 1966. Africa: Libya. (1957). "Trade Unions in Libya". FO 371/126074.

[101] British National Archives. Foreign Office. Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906 – 1966. Africa: Libya. (1957). "Trade Unions in Libya". FO 371/126074.

Shita and the West. There were strong sentiments against the West and its complicity with Zionism. As a result of this aversion, the Tripoli camp of trade unions slowly gravitated towards the Benghazi camp and established the Professional Union of Workers in Tripoli, which opposed Salem Shita's cooperation with the West (al-Alem, 2009).

The second feature is the impact that trade unions had on the political sphere. Politicians sought the support of trade unionists in elections (al-Alem, 2009) and, while there was an attempt to keep unions independent of politics and government, most workers were members of parties. About 90 per cent were in the National Congress Party, and the other ten per cent were members of the El Kotla or Bloc Party. Dachil and Fergiani eventually left the federation they had helped to organize because the unions lent themselves to political purposes such as those mentioned above (Norman, 1965: 28). Bashir al-Sa'dawi, the leader of the Congress Party, favoured a unitary rather than federated Libya of Tripolitania, Barqa and Fezzan; a strong pan-Arab nationalism; and closer ties with Egypt and the Arab League. He had the support of Cibelli, by then the leading communist in Libya, until the latter was deported to Italy in November 1951 (Karfa', 2000: 135)[102]. He could also count on a number of Tripolitanian trade unionists including Salem Shita, as well as numerous anti-foreigner groups and other disaffected elements. Since al-Sa'dawi was not a Libyan national, he too was deported and his party outlawed when the elections of February 1952 occasioned disorder resulting in over 100 casualties in and around Tripoli. Many of his adherents, however, still remained loyal for some time afterwards (Norman, 1965: 28).

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[102] According to Karfa', trade unions were heavily invested in conflicts within political parties. Political leaders sought the support of trade union leaders in the campaigns. Bashir al-Al-Sa'dāwī is an example of this and his leadership of the National Congress Party which benefitted from trade union support. Trade unionists were also members of political parties. Karfa confirms al-Alem and Norman's analysis. He also argues that those conflicts were more about people rather than the best interest of the workers (Karfa', 2000: 135).

The third feature was the growth of an anti-colonial trade unionist movement. This was also made possible through the discovery of oil. According to al-Alem:

> The sixties witnessed the discovery of oil which came hand in hand with the rise of public activism for the working class. This led activists and workers to organize themselves and ask for their rights, preventing companies from favouring foreign workers to domestic workers. Intellectuals and journalists focused on workers' rights and put pressure on the Libyan government to claim their fair share of profit from the oil trade. (al-Alem, 2009, my translation)

Strikes and riots were organized by Libyan oil workers against British and American companies in Libya and their policies that favoured Western over Libyan workers. In 1963, for example, they rioted against the U.S. firm Bechtel Brothers which was building a pipeline for the Oasis Oil Company. It had set up a camp in the desert in which 90 American and 35 British employees, living in a trailer camp were separated from the 590 Libyan workers who were put in a tent camp. Following the beating of Libyan workers by American employees, Libyan workers attacked the non-Libyan camp and caused a total damage that was estimated at $30,000.14 (Bini, 2012: 3).

The expansion of American and British oil companies "introduced a series of changes which had profound social and political consequences". In 1961, Esso Libya built a port in the town of Marsa el Brega on the Mediterranean to ship the crude oil it extracted from Zleten. This was followed in 1965 with the building of a refinery to process the oil. According to Elisabetta Bini, this decision "transformed Esso's presence in Libya and, with it, its social and political relations with the Libyan population and oil workers". She argues:

> With the construction of the refinery, Esso established a training center for Libyans, in order to meet the higher demand for technicians and engineers. At the same time, it built a company town for the growing number of American employees involved in managing and running the refinery. Whereas in the past Esso could rely on a pool of engineers

> and geologists that could move monthly between the company’s domestic and international affiliates, with the refinery it needed a more permanent and more skilled workforce to live and work in Marsa el Brega. By transferring employees’ families to Libya, Esso also aimed at increasing workers’ productivity (Bini, 2012:4).

Racist policies, nevertheless, persisted and segregation was still common. Marsa el Brega had been the site of an Italian concentration camp for Barqan resistance forces and was now used as an oil field where Libyan workers’ rights were being exploited. The town had been abandoned after being destroyed by Axis and Allied forces during the Second World War. Libyans, however, continued to compare the two camps and in an article published in the Barqan newspaper *Al Zaman* in 1963, a journalist defined Marsa el Brega as an “empire” and living conditions of Libyan workers as “concentration camp conditions” (Bini, 2012: 5).

This anti-colonialist movement also manifested itself in a form of solidarity with other Arab countries. In the 1960s, the Union of Port Workers in Benghazi boycotted French and British ships to stand in solidarity with Egypt. This was a reaction to the detaining of an Egyptian ship, *Cleopatra*, in Europe because the French authorities accused the Egyptians of smuggling weapons to aid revolutionaries in Algeria. Another example is that of the Libyan workers’ support of the visit by the Algerian Liberation Front to Benghazi in 1962. Trade unions in Benghazi organized wide protests in support of Algerian independence and Arab unity (al-Alem, 2009).

The final feature of the politicization of trade unions was the growth of activism and resistance to Western influence on the Libyan monarchy. Hamilton Brown, the last British Labour Commissioner in Tripolitania, witnessed two strikes by Libyan workers: “one against Esso Standard and the other against Birra Oea, both of which were, on the whole, won by the workers” (Norman, 1965: 25).

The Benghazi dock strike in April 1965 is particularly illustrative of the growing mobilization of Libyan workers and the failure of the government to meet their needs and demands. The British documented the strike in their exchanges. It is unclear from the exchanges what motivated the workers to go on strike but what is clear is that the government's reaction showed a skewing in favour of Western interests in Libya at the expense of Libyan labourers, as well as limited communication between the leaders of trade unions in Libya at the time and the workers:

> To the best of my knowledge the dockworkers at Benghazi first refused to work a German ship into the port on 16 March. All manner of pressure was exerted to persuade them to return to work. The Minister of Labour and the Trade Union leader, Rajab Naihum, addressed them without effect. A representative of the German Embassy spoke to them explaining that there were gifts for Libya in the ship. They remained unmoved. Finally, on 26 March the Muhafidh spoke to them. He tried to tell them that the German ship was just the same as British, Greek and other ships on which they were working. They replied that if it were discrimination he was worrying about (or words to that effect) they would settle that by working no ships at all. From that day till 1 April there was a total strike.[103]

The Libyan government's reaction was not favourable towards the Libyan workers on strike:[104]

> The Government re-acted strongly, dismissed the dockworkers and brought in labour from surrounding places. The unemployed workers roamed the town, being continually moved on and prevented from gathering. Heavy police guards were put on the dock gates and the docks were patrolled. The unit of the Mobile Strike Force of CYDEF stationed at Benina was moved into town.[105]

Later in the correspondence, the reaction by the workers demonstrates growing discontent with continued Western interests in Libya:

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[103] British National Archives. Foreign Office. Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906 to 1966. North and East Africa: Libya. (1965). Benghazi Dock Strike. FO 371/184251.

[104] In 1956, a State of Emergency Decree banning strikes was introduced by the Libyan government as a response to successive strikes by a number of unions. In 1959, the decree was rescinded, although the government continued to seek to control strikes and protests by workers (Bini, 2012).

[105] British National Archives. Foreign Office. Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906 to 1966. North and East Africa: Libya. (1965). Benghazi Dock Strike. FO 371/184251.

> On 27 March home-made bombs were thrown at the homes of the American and German consuls. Very little damage was done and quite a number of persons were subsequently arrested in connection with these incidents.[106]

The clash was later resolved with work resuming on the German ship on 31 March. The new labour continued to work at the harbour. On 1 April, the port was back to normal and some of the old dock labourers returned and were allowed to start work again.[107] The correspondence also pointed out the tension surrounding the strike and the condition of the labourers at the dock:

> The Strike was unpleasant while it lasted, and the situation was tense. It adds to the growing reputation of Benghazi for being difficult and truculent. It is also generally supposed that these wretched day labourers must have been subsidized from elsewhere to be able to hold out as long as they did.[108]

Conclusion

The emergence of trade unions in Libya reveals shifts in state-society relations and the difficulties of institution building in Libya following the end of colonialism. While the Kingdom of Libya was a milestone in Libya's state and nation-building history, localism, regional divisions and internal politicking persisted and these divisions led to a legitimacy deficit within Libya's state institutions and how they were connected to Libyan society. There were also clear difficulties in reconciling the differences of the Libyan political elite; those for and against unity continued to collide, in the process eroding the beginnings of Libyan statehood.

The trade union movement bears witness to the strength and centrality of the local civic space through which Libyans were developing their statehood. On the other hand, however, it reveals the weakness of the emerging state in the making that was still crafting its legitimacy with a strong dependency on international and, to a lesser extent, local support. The political settlement that led to the unification of the three regions of Barqa, Tripolitania and Fezzan under the federal monarchy of Libya did not provide strong foundations for King Idris to become the legitimate leader of the Libyan kingdom. Western presence in Libya compromised the legitimacy of institutions born under King Idris. It also detracted from the sense of ownership that Libyans had over their country and fate following independence. The trade union movement that emerged is an instance of local civic mobilization towards the reclamation of ownership of these fledgling institutions as well as the development of the beginnings of citizen activism and belonging. The civic, however, remained deeply localized as the failure to develop national confederations bears witness to. It was not absorbed within government institutions and could not develop itself into national institutions either.

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[106] British National Archives. Foreign Office. Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906 to 1966. North and East Africa: Libya. (1965). Benghazi Dock Strike. FO 371/184251.

[107] British National Archives. Foreign Office. Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906 to 1966. North and East Africa: Libya. (1965). Benghazi Dock Strike. FO 371/184251.

[108] British National Archives. Foreign Office. Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906 to 1966. North and East Africa: Libya. (1965). Benghazi Dock Strike. FO 371/184251.

CHAPTER FIVE

Muslim and Jewish religious actors: The civic space as a site for national and transnational transactions

> *Ses zaouias, qui font pâlir le firmament, sont des*
> *Étoiles éclairant la nuit noire,*
> *Vers elles se diriges, infatigables, les caravans*
> *Venant des pays les plus lointains.*
>
> Muhammad el-Hechaichi, 1896 (el-Hechaichi, 1901: 681)[109]

The Tunisian traveler, El-Hechaichi, who explored Libya and the Sahel in 1896/97 (Haarman, 1998: 10) here compares the spread of the Sanusi *zawaya* [110] to stars guiding caravans in the desert. The poem connects the spread of the Sanusiyah, a Sufi movement originally founded in Mecca, to trade routes in Libya, particularly the road between Benghazi and Wadai, marking, as will be explained in this chapter, both spiritual and secular dimensions of the movement. Dennis D. Cordell describes this route as "the most important avenue of trade to eastern Sudan in the late nineteenth century" (Cordell, 1977: 21). Indeed, the volume and reach of trade on this road was substantial. Nahum Slousch estimates that in 1907 "imports worth £240,000 and exports valued at £304,000 passed through the port of Benghazi" (Cordell, 1977: 21). Trade crossed the borders of Libya to neighbouring countries where "goods entered and left the route bound to and from Tripoli and Egyptian ports south of Benghazi" (Cordell, 1977: 21). With the trade of goods, the Sanusiyah movement spread further across North Africa and its trade routes were known for their safety even for strangers (al-Ashhab, 1952: 41). Until the Italian invasion of

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[109] My translation: "His *zawiyas*, which pale in the firmament, are / Stars illuminating the dark night, / Directed towards them are tireless caravans / Coming from the most distant countries."

[110] A *zawiya* is an Islamic religious school and a node in a network of followers of an Islamic society that coalesced around a person held to have *baraka* and authority.

Barqa in 1912, the Sanusiyah presented a central mode of spiritual, social and political organization in the eastern regions of Libya, and, despite restrictions forced on them during the period of Italian colonization, a history of inter-regional trade contributed to the development and survival of the movement and constituted an important element in the foundation of the Kingdom of Libya in 1951.

It would, however, be wrong to assume that the crowning of Idris al-Sanusi as the first king of Libya in 1951 was a smooth transition from the *zawiya* to the regal palace in Benghazi. King Idris was met with challenges very similar to those faced by any leadership in Libya today. The key challenge was to gain buy-in from the different regions of Libya – that is, to cultivate legitimacy for his leadership in a country with deep social and economic divisions – and this challenge persisted throughout the period of the Libyan monarchy. While the Sanusiyah were a popular order in Barqa where they commanded respect and leverage, and they traded across Libya and widely in Africa, they still had a smaller following in Tripolitania (H.G., 1952: 193). Its reach to other countries in North Africa was wider than its national one. This can be attributed to the significant differences in the population composition between Barqa and Tripolitania. While the eastern region was predominantly of Arab Muslims, the western region encompassed multiple population groups and included Italians, Jews, Arabs and Berbers. Thus, the history and trajectory of the development and evolution of the Sanusiyah in Barqa was different from its development in Tripolitania.

Alongside the Muslim population, Libyan Jews were among the oldest inhabitants of Libya (De Felice, 1985: 1), and they too played an important role in Libya's state formation (and disintegration) both in their own right as Libyans and through their engagement with the Muslim population. Libyan Jews shared similar customs and traditions with the rest of the population, so much so that strangers would have been unable to distinguish them from others in terms of language or dress (al-Ahwal, 2005: 24). Moussa Haddad El Taraboulsi in an article in the Egyptian *Shams* newspaper in 1945 asserted that religious and sectarian conflict is unknown to Libya. Nevertheless, despite the engagement with Libyan Muslims, al-Ahwal argues that they remained self-isolated and did not immerse themselves with the rest of the community which made the Jewish quarters retain their religious, social and cultural distinctiveness as a “Jewish settlement” (al-Ahwal 2005: 24). At the beginning of the 1900s, there were about 44 synagogues in Tripoli, “indicating a fervent Jewish life and a deeply religious community” (Luzon, 2016: iv). In 1903, according to the Alliance Israélite Universelle, there were 14,000 Jews living in Tripoli, 2,000 in Benghazi and 4,480 in other areas between the two cities (Roumani, 2009: 1). According to the 1931 census, more than 26 per cent of the population in Tripoli was Jewish (London, 1979), but those numbers continued to shrink following the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and, later, following the Six-Day War in 1967.

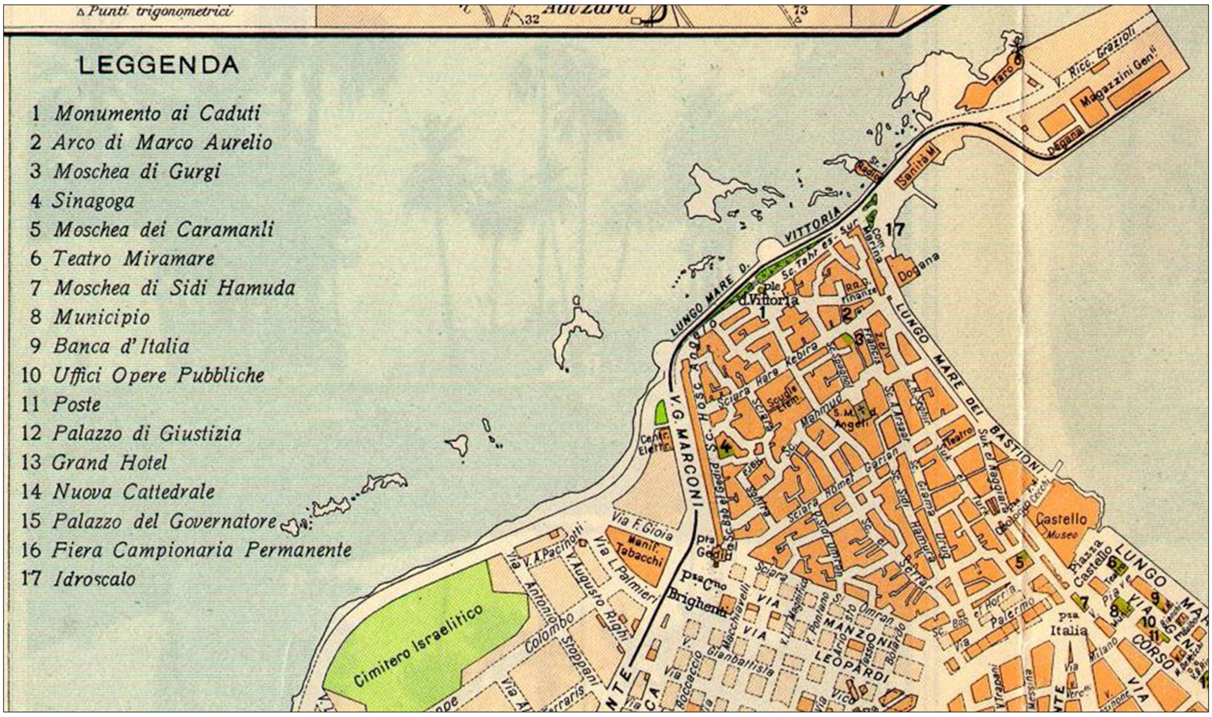
Punti trigonometrici
LEGGENDA
1 Monumento ai Caduti
2 Arco di Marco Aurelio
3 Moschea di Gurgi
4 Sinagoga
5 Moschea dei Caramanli
6 Teatro Miramare
7 Moschea di Sidi Hamuda
8 Municipio
9 Banca d'Italia
10 Uffici Opere Pubbliche
11 Poste
12 Palazzo di Giustizia
13 Grand Hotel
14 Nuova Cattedrale
15 Palazzo del Governatore
16 Fiera Campionaria Permanente
17 Idroscalo
Magazzini Gen.li
Dogana
Sanità M.
Lungo Mare d. Vittoria
Lungo Mare dei Bastioni
V. G. Marconi
Sciara Hara Kebira
Castello Museo
Manif. Tabacchi
Cimitero Israelitico
Via Manzoni
Via Leopardi
Pza Italia
Via Colombo
Corso

Figure 3.1: Map of Tripoli (1930) – The Jewish Hara

Source: Private Collection of Jewish Italian-Libyan respondent

The Jews of Libya occupied an interstitial space between two different populations; Libyan and Italian.[111] There were demographic, cultural and political reasons for this. When the Turco-Italian War broke out in 1911, Jews living in Libya "almost unanimously supported Italy" and many of them in both Tripoli and Benghazi actively participated in the occupation (De Felice, 1985:40).[112] Maintaining communication with the Italians was strategically relevant to the Jewish population because for the Jewish masses, it meant that "they would no longer be inferior and subject to the Muslims" and particularly for the economic and cultural elite who were already familiar with the Italian language and culture, it meant that they could distance themselves from the "more traditional Libyan society" (De Felice, 1985: 27). In the period following the war, Jews constituted one-third of the urban population (i.e. in the metropolitan towns), and in other, non-metropolitan towns they made up between 9 and 33 per cent of the population. This meant, first, that there were hardly any Jewish settlements in rural and/or nomadic groups, and, second, that they were mostly a market population and so involved primarily in trade and negotiations with the Arab and Italian populations (Goldberg, 1974: 621). Skill in the Italian language was also higher within the Jewish community than in the Libyan (De Felice, 1985: 69).[113] As such, some members of the Jewish population played the role of mediators between the Italian Christian and Libyan Muslim populations, until this process was disrupted as a result of the imposition of the Racial Laws[114] in 1938 and the establishment of Israel in 1948, which dramatically altered their position (Roumani, 2009: 12) and their interests. According to a Libyan Jew who left Libya in 1967 and later acquired Italian citizenship: "When the Italians arrived, the Jews were the part of the population they could communicate with. Some of the Jews had European origins. The Jews were mediators between the Italians and the Arabs." (Libyan-Italian Jew, personal interview, Rome, October 2014, my translation) This could be an overgeneralization because the Jewish population cut across different classes and socioeconomic backgrounds: for example, they were affected differently by the Racial Laws, as an interview with a Libyan Jew[115] indicates:

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[111] Jews had stronger bonds with the Berber population of Libya than they did with the Arabs. In the words of a Jewish Libyan who left Libya in 1967: "In all of Africa, there was a special bond between Jews and Berbers. Those were the people living inside the earth. But Jews, Arabs and Muslims lived together [outside the city] and you could understand the differences through symbols they used. Muslims would use the hand of Fatima as a symbol and Jews would use fish to ward off the evil eye. In some homes, you would find both."

[112] According to De Felice, "the Italian ships which bombarded Tripoli in preparation for the landing had on board two local Jews who, with their knowledge of the city, showed the Italians the main targets" (De Felice, 1985: 41). As for Benghazi, there were instances of collaboration; "One of the notables of the Benghazi community, Joseph Aboub-Bouaron, was known to have persuaded Arabs to surrender; other Jews collaborated with the landing troops, guiding them into the hinterland and contacting Arab leaders in the interior to persuade them to cease resistance and to convince them of the Italians' 'civil and peaceful' intentions." (De Felice, 1985: 41)

[113] As documented by De Felice, the 1931 census shows that, overall, only 4.6 percent of the indigenous population of Libya spoke Italian. The percentage was higher in cities. In Benghazi, for example, 34.5 percent of Arab males spoke Italian and 1.6 percent of females. In Tripoli, the figures were 29.2 percent

> Poor people never really noticed a difference after enforcing the Racial Laws. There was a heightened awareness, however, among the wealthy Jews and the Jews of European origin who lived in the Italian neighbourhoods. This is because when they tried to go to the Italian clubs, they were suddenly not allowed in. If you lived in the Old Quarter with the poor, life was normal and you did not see a difference. (Libyan-Italian Jew, personal interview, Rome, November 2014, my translation)

While there were efforts by the Italian colonial state to integrate the Jews of Libya with the Jews of Italy, a report by Alberto Monastero who was appointed Italy's special commissioner to the Libyan Jewish community in 1929 highlights the differences between

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and 2.6 percent. For Jews, there were 67.1 percent male and 40.8 percent female Italian speakers in Benghazi, and 43.8 percent and 29.7 percent in Tripoli (De Felice, 1985: 69).

[114] The Racial Laws were a set of laws promulgated by fascist Italy from 1938 to 1943 to enforce racial discrimination against the Italian Jews as well as Jews who were inhabitants of the colonies. The impact of these laws in Italy was quite sudden. According to David Kertzer (2014), "On September 1st, the Italian government revoked the citizenship of foreign-born Jews who had become citizens after 1919. It ordered all Jews who were not citizens to leave the country within six months. The following day all Jewish teachers – from elementary school through university – were fired. Christian children could not be taught by Jews. Nor would Jewish children be allowed to attend public schools at any level. … For the purposes of these 'racial laws', Jews were defined as those born of parents of the 'Jewish race' even if they might 'profess a religion different from Judaism'."

the Jews of Libya and Italian Jews.[116] He says: “It is nonsense to assume that you can assimilate Italian Jews with the Jews of Libya. The difference between them is big. Italian Jews are a minority in Italy but they are members of an elite and are at the same level of education of other Italians. Their cultural and intellectual lives are the same.” He emphasized that nothing tied the Jews of Italy to the Jews of Tripoli except for the religious tie. Their customs and traditions were different (al-Ahwal, 2005: 169). It is also significant that some Libyan Jews joined the Arab resistance against the Italian occupation. For example, Raphael Luzon, a Jew who grew up in Benghazi and experienced the pogrom that followed the 1967 Six-Day War, describes how his father’s grandfather fought in Misrata with Ramadan al-Swayhli against the Italian colonization (Luzon, 2016: 32).

Despite the shrinking numbers of the Jewish population in Libya following the foundation of Israel, their engagement with the Muslim population poses important questions about Libya’s path towards state formation: what does the engagement between Libya’s Jews and Muslims as religious actors at key junctures in the history of Libya and the Arab world reveal about Libya’s state-society relations? In the previous chapters, an analysis of the role played by Libya’s trade unions and associations revealed deep historical, ideological and regional divisions within its civic space that were co-opted by international ambiguity and failed engagement in Libya, contributing to the erosion of the emerging Libyan state. What kind of impact did faith-based actors have on state building in the Libyan monarchy, arguably a successful instance (other than the short-lived Tripolitanian Republic) of state building in the history of Libya?

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[116] Those differences are also highlighted in Renzo De Felice’s study of the Jews of Libya. He argued that: “Even the richer, more cultured and ‘modern’ Libyan Jews had much more in common with the Libyan Jewish mass than with metropolitan Jews [Italian Jews]. They dressed like Europeans, adopted Italian culture, sent their children to Italian schools, lived outside the *hara,* mixed in colonial high society, and practiced a religion shorn of the originally Arab superstitious common among traditional and unlettered Jews, despite all this, they remained *Libyans*, psychologically and morally linked to local traditions and expressions” (De Felice, 1985: 83).

This chapter examines the politics of religion and state formation in Libya in the period between 1911 and 1969. It focuses on Libya's two main religions at the time: Islam (Sufi and Sunni), and Judaism. While most existing analysis on Libya tends to address each religion separately (Khadduri, 1963; Ahmida, 2009; De Felice, 1989; Roumani, 2009), this chapter addresses the political and social roles played by religious actors, Muslim and Jewish, in the development and disintegration of the Libyan state. Muslim and Jewish groups are approached as the space within which local actors engaged with one another as well as with dominant state structures; Italian, British and Arab. They are also approached as actors in their own right within the wider spectrum of political contestations. Specific focus is given to the transactional aspects of those religious actors, nationally and transnationally, and the implications of national Muslim civic space tied to the Sanusi order and transnational Jewish civic space on the development and disintegration of the Libyan state. Ibadism,[117] a sect of Islam that is neither Sunni nor Shia, also exists in Libya, mainly in the Nafusa mountains as well as in the islands of Djerba in Tunisia. However, it will not be addressed in this chapter because, while most of its adherents are Amazigh, the role of the faith itself in Libya's state and nation building remains difficult to determine through the interviews conducted, and there are limited resources that address it in depth in the context of Libya. The limited role of Ibadism was referred to in one of the interviews with a Libyan journalist who witnessed the rise of the Libyan monarchy. His response also problematizes a tension between religion and nationalism, and the degree to which the Sanusiyah as a religious philosophy constituted the foundation of the Libyan state, an issue that is contrary to generally held views about the emergence of the monarchy and which will be discussed later in this chapter:

> Let me mention an incident recounted to me by the Libyan poet Rajab al-Majri. He said: "When I was the Minister of Justice in the monarchy, an

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[117] A special issue of *The Muslim World* journal addresses Ibadism: see Al-Kharusi (2015).

> Amazigh delegation came to me, requesting to have an Amazigh judge. I told him that we are a Muslim country and there is no space here for sectarianism or factionalism." I believe that religion basically had no political role at that stage, with the exception of the Muslim Brotherhood and what emerged from it, and therefore no religious doctrine such as Ibadism had any role to play. The Libyan state as a whole was dominated by national movements and nationalist ideology with a secular dimension. One of the reasons for Amazigh movements is the fact that what the Amazigh sent is the Arab awakening, that we all belonged to one Arab nation. It was from this that the Amazigh drew their spirit and not from Ibadism as a religious doctrine, and until now the Amazigh movement is more focused on having their language recognized, which is more about nationalism, not religion.

To avoid definitional confusion, the thesis uses Laurence Iannaccone's definition of "religion", one which he adapted from Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge, as "any shared set of beliefs, activities, and institutions premised upon faith in supernatural forces" (Iannaccone, 1998: 1466). The definition incorporates ideational, discursive, institutional and informal dimensions of religion; as such, it is flexible enough to include both institutional and informal manifestations of religion for the Libyan population.

The politics of religion in Libya: Identity and resistance

Despite the tangible and sociocultural manifestations of Libya's Islamic identity, there is a wider sociopolitical reality of Libya's experience with religion in the period preceding Gaddafi. Libya's experience was largely defined through two religions, Islam and Judaism, and each religion corresponded to defined spaces, institutions and codes of engagement within and across the two religious communities. Each community was governed by its own codes of social, economic and even political organization. It is also important to note that Catholicism was used as an ideological tool by the Italian colonizers to create a cohesive colonial society against the indigenous population. A review of the role of religion in Libya, beginning with the Italian occupation and through independence, reveals two broad features of Libya's experience with religion. This should serve as a background to a contextualized analysis of the role of religion in state formation in Libya. These features are religion as identity and religion as resistance.

Religion as identity

The history of Arab domination of Libya bears witness to the strength of its Islamic identity; despite half a century of Berber resistance to Arab domination, there emerged two key elements in Libyan culture in this period: the Muslim religion and the Arabic language (Farley, 1971: 33). There is also evidence of vast Islamic endowments in Libya during the pre-Gaddafi period. In her analysis of the legal status of Islamic endowments under Italian colonialism, Claudia Gazzini identifies 44 major endowments in Tripoli in 1911 and comments that, following the Italian occupation, the confiscation of these endowments by the Italians was "the exception, not the rule" (Gazzini, 2010: 2). This argument conflicts with practices of the Italians in Barqa; Evans-Pritchard held that in 1930 with all pacts between the Sanusi order and the Italians getting revoked, the Sanusi endowments in Barqa were all confiscated. According to the Italian Royal Decree that sought to destroy the economic and political foundations of the Sanusiyah movement, the "existence of the order was incompatible with the existence of the state [i.e. the Italian state, or colony, in Libya]" (Evans-Pritchard, 1946: 851) – testimony to the strength of the Sanusi order as a resistance tool. Interviews conducted for this research confirm the existence of vast endowments during and after Italian colonialism, even if they were greatly weakened at the time of independence.

The centrality of Islam to Libyan identity and politics has been emphasized by a number of analysts and historians of Libya (Anderson, 1986; Ahmida, 2009; Pargeter, 2009; St John, 2012). "Libya has been, is, and will be an Islamic state", maintains Ronald

Bruce St John (St John, 2012: 6); and Lisa Anderson describes the role of religion in the modern politics of Libya as “unusual among the countries of the Muslim Arab World”, because, unlike other Arab states “whose twentieth-century monarchs and military leaders have usually professed various shades of secular nationalism”, Libya, since independence, has been ruled “by governments attached to an often idiosyncratic but nonetheless explicit interpretation of Islamic imperatives” (Anderson, 1986: 62). It is this Islamic identity that is not only the definitive feature of Libya, but is also, according to Anderson, what makes the country unique.

Islam is not only part of Libya’s sociocultural DNA; it is also at the heart of its legislation and institutions. For example, as noted by St John, the 1951 Constitution of Libya stated that Islam was the religion of the state; civil and *sharia* courts existed side by side in Libya throughout the monarchical period; and the 1953 statute establishing the Supreme Court specified that at least two Islamic experts be appointed as judges (St John, 2012: 6).

For the Jewish population, religion was also a central identity marker. Roberto Saviano, an Italian journalist and writer, emphasizes this point in his introduction to *Libyan Twilight* (2016), a memoir about an Arab Jew from Benghazi:

> From then [586 BCE] until 1967, the year in which *Libyan Twilight* begins, Jews have contested each new conqueror in North Africa. They fought with the Berbers against the armies of Mohammed, contributed to the growth of the region during the Ottoman empire and Italian colonization and mixed with the local population. However, they have always maintained their own traditions and a strong bond with their ancient faith. … We can look to the fascist era, when three Jews were publicly flogged after refusing to keep their stores open during Shabbat. (Luzon, 2016: iv)

However, the establishment of Israel in 1948 and the process of migrating Libyan Jews to populate the new state bear witness to their transnational links to Jewish groups and organizations in Europe and the US and to their contested sense of belonging to Libya.

Their exodus was not a political decision by the state but the result of the ramifications of the Arab-Israeli conflict within the Libyan context. This disconnect between the well documented popular rejection of the Libyan Jews support of the establishment of the State of Israel, and the emerging Libyan state's more pragmatic approach to the importance of the Jewish population to Libyan economy is evidenced in the description of a conversation between Sir Alec Kirkbride from the British Legation in Tripoli and Mahmud Montasser, Libya's first Prime Minister, in 1952 about his general position on the Jewish community in Tripoli:[118]

> I was struck by his [Montasser's] moderation on this issue. He thought that the Jewish community was of value to the country economically but doubted whether the Zionists (or Israelis) would permit them to live here in political peace. If the local Jews were to become a political problem, the sooner they moved to Israel, the better for all concerned.

In the meeting with Kirkbride, Montasser also stated that "he would not tolerate the persecution of minorities" and that "the Jewish population would be protected and would enjoy the same rights as other Libyan citizens". Nevertheless, the state was not able to contain the public discontent towards the establishment of the State of Israel and could not provide safeguards for the Jewish population in Libya. A law was also passed in 1961 concerning the sequestration of the property of Israelis in Libya; it stipulated that "all property and possessions in Libya belonging to bodies or individuals residing in Israel or belonging to them by reason of their nationality or working on their account are placed under sequestration."[119] In 1967, more than 4000 Jews departed from Libya as a result of the anti-Jewish riots in Tripoli during the Arab-Israeli Six Day War of June 1967. This was preceded by another wave of exodus in 1949 – 1951 during which 30,000 Libyan Jews migrated to Israel following the establishment of the State of Israel (Simon, 1992: 4). The period between 1911 and 1969 witnessed several instances of civic engagement by Libyan Jews that were of a transnational nature as well as focused on their own communities within Libya. A study on the Jews of Tripoli by Khalifa al-Ahwal (2005) argues that Libyan Jews used Jewish associations and charities to support the migration of youth to populate the newly established State of Israel and that this contributed to their "isolation" from the rest of the population (al-Ahwal, 2005).[120] While they effectively transferred their nationalistic aspirations to Israel by dedicating themselves to the new state, this had contributed to divisions within their civic space in Libya, as will be discussed later in this chapter. Jewish identity politics was influenced by a contested sense of belonging to Libya and by engagement between Jews in the different regions of Libya as well as between Jewish Libyans and Italians, and Jewish Libyans and the Arab Muslim population.

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[118] Correspondence between Sir Alec Kirkbride from the British Legation in Libya (Tripoli) and Roger Allen at the African Department, the Foreign Office in London, dated 2nd of January 1952. British National Archives. Foreign Office: Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906 – 1966. Africa: Libya. (1952) "Position of Jews in Libya." FO 371/97329.

[119] British National Archives. Foreign Office: North and East African Department and Successors. Social Matters. (1970). "Welfare of Jews." FCO 39/673.

Religion as resistance

Arabization expanded with the spread of Islam and expressed itself in the form of resistance to Western colonization. Arabs forged alliances with the Berber inhabitants who converted to Islam and this allowed them to secure control of the area that later became Libya. Thus, in the fifteenth century, when the Ottomans emerged as a power in Anatolia and expanded to North Africa, they were able to rule Libya not as Turkish colonizers, but as "Muslim caliphs". Their policies were inherently Islamic and this "made their subjects, regardless of whether they were Turks or Arabs, feel at home under their rule" (Khadduri, 1963: 7). As mentioned in Chapter Three, however, not everyone felt at home and Libya witnessed the emergence of an opposition, albeit limited, to Ottoman rule in the form of secret organizations (Attigah, 2011).

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[120] In the introduction to the book, Ahmed al-Desouki describes this isolation in negative terms. To him, it was a form of "self-discrimination or auto-segregation" and indicative of "an illusion of supremacy and a choice that controlled their minds. The Jewish *hara* continued to be a strange anomaly within their areas and they were famous for diseases that were not prevalent in other places and they deliberately looked for international backing to preserve this uniqueness or distinction and in order to create a political body for the Jews in Palestine, one that had international recognition" (Desouki in al-Ahwal, 2005: 9).

This modus vivendi did not exist in a vacuum. Islam was associated with a violent struggle for independence from Western colonial forces that were, essentially and explicitly, Christian. The Islamic identity of Libya is often interpreted as the engine behind its resistance to Western forces. Ali Abdullatif Ahmida describes the significance of the "political and cultural legacy of the resistance" and how it "strengthened all-Libyan nationalism and gave the Libyan people prodigious examples of legendary heroes and martyrs". He also relates how "those active in the resistance emphasised an anti-colonial culture, which led to a conservative reaction in the revival of strong attachments to Islam and the clan". As a result, "Islam and nationalism became synonymous" (Ahmida, 2009: 2).

Italians in Libya emphasized Catholicism as a mode of presence and assertion of power in their own way. There was a strong religious subtext to the Italian colonization that contributed to the formation of Libya's Islamic identity as resistance. The Italian Franciscan mission in Libya offered support to colonial forces, and the colonization was later supported by the Lateran Agreements between Pope Pius XI and Mussolini (Kertzer, 2014). The Lateran Agreements of 1929 launched a period of cooperation between the Roman Catholic Church and the Italian state under Mussolini, providing what Renzo De Felici described as the "years of consensus" for Mussolini between 1929 and 1936.

Interviews with the Italians of Libya confirmed the central role played by the Church. The Church was described as a "social space as well as a spiritual one" (Italian born in Tripoli, personal interview, Rome, 24 October 2014, my translation) and as a form of social organization it was inherently distinguished from that of the Arab Muslim population. In this manner, the social was also political. A respondent described the relationship between Catholicism and Islam in Tripoli in the 1930s as follows:

> There were many mosques and the Muslim religion was considered with caution – the Italian government did not want to interfere in religious issues. On another hand, you must know that there was a religious Italian festival called the Corpus Domini or the Body of God. In that occasion and under the Italian administration, there were big processions in the streets of Tripoli. The Libyan government under Idris maintained that tradition. We could have our festivities in the streets of Tripoli because the government of Idris was very tolerant. (Italian born in Tripoli, personal interview, Rome, 22 October 2014, my translation)

An effort was made by the Vatican and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to strengthen the Catholic presence, because by strengthening the Church they were strengthening the Italian colony in Libya. Churches catered for the Italian population, as well as for expatriate populations from Malta and Spain. Minimal engagement with the Libyan population kept those spaces foreign and exclusive to non-Libyans. This led to less communication and less common ground with the local population. On the Italian Church, a respondent recalled:

> The Italian Church was only dedicated to the Italian people in Libya and there was a community from Malta in Tripoli and they were very religious. … The Libyans came to the Catholic Church only on occasions of marriage and when they were invited and so on. Or in funerals … When my father died, many Libyan friends came to the funeral and to the church.

Another respondent said:

> As a Christian, I was amazed that we were in a Muslim country and the Church insisted on having the procession of the Corpus Domini outside the church. This was my thought when I was 14 or 15 and this was the year 1959 and 1960. It did not seem right to have such an ostentatious spectacle out in the streets of Tripoli. Why not keep it inside the church? This was a show and the church was located in the centre of the city. (Italian born in Tripoli, personal interview, Rome, 31 October 2014, my translation)

For many members of the clergy, the Italian occupation was a reclamation of Africa for Christianity from Arab invaders (Tonizza, 1924: 2). It is worth noting here that the first Franciscan mission in Tripoli was in the seventeenth century (Tonizza, 1924: 4), long before the colonization of Libya in 1911. Correspondence between the Vatican and the administration in Libya, as well as the narratives of Italian-Libyan respondents, confirm the view that Catholicism was central to Italian colonial identity as much as Islam was central to Libyan resistance.

The Sanusiyah and the emergence of the Libyan monarchy

In order to understand the significance of the Sanusiyah to Libya's state building following independence, it is necessary to present an overview of the birth of the religious philosophy and its development during the colonial period and in the period leading to independence.

The birth of a "Sanusi State" in Libya

The establishment of the first *zawiya* by the Grand Sanusi was in Bayda in 1843 (Evans-Pritchard, 1946: 844). To the Ottomans, the Sanusiyah, a politico-religious Sufi order based in Barqa, was an enigma. There were two scenarios possible for its existence under the Ottomans. First, "it could have been an ally or instrument in an Ottoman inspired Pan-Islamic campaign or a partner agent in ruling an isolated and unfamiliar province"; second, it "could just as well have attempted to assert its own power in the province, or perhaps even challenge caliphal authority by declaring its leader the awaited Mahdi" (Le Gall, 1989: 91). It was the British occupation of Egypt that placed the Ottomans and the Sanusiyah in the same camp, and some exchanges "lend credence to the received wisdom that Ottoman–Sanusi relations were predicated upon a common fear of

British and French imperialism in Western Sudan and the Chadian Basin" (Le Gall, 1989: 95).

There is conflicting evidence regarding Ottoman–Sanusi relations. It is not clear, for example, whether Sanusi *zawiyas* were exempt from taxation or not. While Evans-Pritchard presented a cooperative image of Ottoman–Sanusi dealings, Le Gall argued that there was no proof of tax exemption (Le Gall, 1989: 96). There is a middle ground argument, however, that finds its source in the work of Khadduri (1963). One can argue that under Ottoman rule a multi-level governance system was established for the purpose of the Ottomans administering their own system; and another system would be administered through tribal networks. Thus, there were two layers of governance: an overall Ottoman one, and an internal one which was left to local tribes while "the Ottoman Porte was satisfied with an annual tribute" (Khadduri, 1963: 7).

Khadduri's argument makes sense in light of Nicola Ziadeh's (1958) analysis contending that there was little communication between the Ottoman colonizers and the indigenous population. She states that, in the period between 1835 and 1911, 33 *walis* ruled the territory and that each governor probably ruled for about a year, which did not allow them time or space to get acquainted with the province they governed. The period of Ottoman rule preceding Italian colonization was also fraught with rebellion, both from within the ranks of the Ottomans themselves and by the people. In 1885, a Turkish regiment rebelled because soldiers had not received their salaries on time. In addition, the country was exposed to famines and droughts, probably sometime between 1871 and 1872 when "almost all sorts of crops failed". In 1850, a cholera epidemic in Tripoli led to the death of 800 people in three months as well as emigration to Tunisia and Malta. After the epidemic, the population of Tripoli was down to 5,000. There were substantive administrative developments between 1860 and 1870 under Nadīm Pasha and 'Ali Rizā

Pasha. Three courts were established: criminal, civil and commercial. A printing press was founded, and an official gazette, *Tarabulus Gharb*, was launched. And, in 1888, the *wilāya* of Tripoli was separated from the *sanjak* of Benghazi.

As a structure, a *zawiya* was a constellation of buildings, each performing a role: “The buildings included a mosque, houses for the Grand Sanusi, the Ikhwan, the students and workmen, ovens, workshops for leather works, carpentry, smithry, book-binding, armoury and rooms for teaching and storage.” The zawiyas followed a clear system and hierarchy. Each zawiya also had a small army to defend it and students were taught archery and self-defense (al-Ashhab, 1952: 45). Libyan historian Salim al-Kubti describes the zawiya as a world of order, arrangement and accuracy. According to him, it was a mix of the religious and the worldly and there, you found young students and men memorizing the Qur’an and repeating the prayers at dawn and dinner with faith and dignity, learning fiqh, hadith and language, and carrying out public service: agriculture, industry and carpentry (al-Kubti, 2015).

Ziadeh adds that the *zawiya* was “well-defended, with about 400 rifles and 200 swords, besides arms for 3000 men, which were stored in about twenty rooms … According to Sayyid Ahmad al-Sharif, al-Mahdi owned 50 rifles to which he attended in person” (Ziadeh, 1958: 105).

An account by Mrs Rosita Forbes, who visited Jaghbub in 1920, describes it as follows: “Jaghbub is not a political or mercantile centre, like Kufara or Jalo. It has all the dreaming peace of a little university town, only its dons are reverend grey-bearded sheikhs in flowing white *jerds* over grass-green or indigo-blue robes” (cited in Ziadeh, 1958: 108). The land surrounding the *zawiya* was “considered its *haram* [sanctuary] and on entering it people can enjoy a protection of the *zawiya* provided they adhered to the rules of the community, which were Sanusi teachings essentially” (Ziadeh, 1958: 115).

The estates of the Sanusi order were all in the form of Islamic endowments established by tribes and individuals “in the love of God”, and these were “made in perpetuity and were inalienable”. The *zawiya’s* governance system was administered as follows: the sheikh of the *zawiya* was “the legal administrator of its properties” and the revenues of one “could not be used for the upkeep of another”; any surplus resources “over religious and charitable expenses of a lodge were paid into a central pool” (Evans-Pritchard, 1946: 844).

Later, each part of Libya had its own *zawiya*. From 1843 to 1856, *zawiyas* spread in the Jabal Akhdar and Tripolitania, and between 1848 and 1855 they spread to al-Haraba, Misurata and Mizda (Ziadeh, 1958: 99). Their influence varied; there was more support for the zawiyas in the eastern region of Libya. Located at “crossroads, on the coast and near wells” (Ziadeh, 1958: 112), the *zawiya* was the nucleus of the Sanusi state. The reach of these institutions extended beyond the borders of what would later become Libya: “The Jaghbub period, extending from 1856 to 1895, representing three years of the life and work of the Grand Sanusi and thirty-nine years of al-Mahdi’s active life, saw the expansion into Egypt, southern and western Barqa, Tripolitania and Tunisia” (Ziadeh, 1958: 99).

Evans-Pritchard describes the distribution of the *zawiyas* as placed according to a “politico-economic plan” intended “to form a network embracing the whole tribal system of Barqa, and the principal lodges have been built at the centers of tribal life” (Evans-Pritchard, 1946: 846). They were strategically located: “[W]here the Greeks and Romans and Turks found it convenient or essential to build villages and posts was where the Sanusiyah established its lodges” (Evans-Pritchard, 1946: 847). Thus, George Joffe argues that “in terms of the historical record and of Islamic constitutional law – the Sanusi order really did act as a government in control of a vast desert region and that something approximating to a 'Sanusi state' did exist there" (Joffe, 1996: 26).

At the end of the nineteenth century, the *zawiyas* "provided the Sanusi leaders with the political solitude which they needed and afforded them a seat, which was far from the influence of the Ottomans, and away from the French and Egyptian interference". The networks established by these *zawiyas* were also transnational: "[C]onnections and contacts with Sanusi *zawiyas* in Barqa, Tripolitania, the Egyptian Desert and the Sudan could be more or less effectively maintained" (Ziadeh, 1958: 100).

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the *zawiyas* became more independent and had acquired political status as a result of Italian occupation. Other forms of civic or political life were not permissible for the Arab population; associations and clubs were run by Italian colonizers; and Arabs were not permitted to engage in political parties or civil society, except for the Sanusi order and the *zawiyas* and *awqaf.*

The trade routes were the space within which the Sanusiyah expanded their reach and influence with local communities, conducting exchanges within Libya and across the borders with other parts of North Africa. The Benghazi–Wadai road served an entire region that is today "southern Libya, eastern Chad, western Sudan and parts of the northern Central African Republic" (Cordell, 1977: 22). Members of the Sanusi order carried out several activities and resolved a number of problems within their communities. These included:

> regular communication concerning the conditions of supply and demand; the rapid dispatch and transport of merchandise; the creation and maintenance of bonds of trust between the many traders and middlemen included in the commercial network and the initiation of regular credit arrangements vital to the flow of trade; the foundation of an efficient system of arbitration and adjudication of business disputes; and the creation and continuation of an authority structure backed by the power necessary to maintain order and respect for contractual and judicial rulings. (Cordell, 1977: 22)

Unsurprisingly, the Sanusi order has been described as the “most influential socio-religious movement in North Africa and the Sahara during the second half of the nineteenth century” (Ahmida, 2009: 85). Its influence, however, was mostly concentrated in the east and it was not held in very high regard in the urban western regions of Libya: “In Tripolitania, it had limited success – 18 lodges in 1920 – but only among the Gibla and Syrte semi nomads” (Ahmida, 2009: 85). Its spread in Tripolitania was limited for two main reasons. First, the Ottoman bureaucracy created “an urban salaried *ulama* class” that feared the spread of Sufi Islam, and, in turn, the loss of their influence on their communities. Second, “Tripolitanian *ulama* looked down at the ‘tribal’ Sanusi order contemptuously, as in the case of Shaykh Tahir al Zawi, the Alim and historian, who claimed superciliously that the Barqa of the Sanusi had no science or culture” (Ahmida, 2009: 86).

Sanusi resistance and state building (1911 – 1951)

Khadduri opines that the peace treaty between Italy and the Ottoman Sultan in 1912 that marked “the legal transfer of sovereignty from Ottoman to Italian control in accordance with International practice seemed meaningless to Muslims” because they fought “the war not in the name of Ottoman sovereignty over Libya but in the name of Islam” (Khadduri, 1963: 11). According to Anderson, however, Khadduri is wrong here: The Ottomans accorded the provinces autonomy but did not transfer sovereignty to Italy. This is an important difference because it meant that the Libyans could aspire to independence for nearly a decade before Italian sovereignty was formally recognized by the League of Nations. After the peace treaty was signed and the Ottoman Porte granted full autonomy to Tripolitania and Barqa, the war between Libyans and Italy continued unabated. Under the leadership of Ahmad al-Sharif and later Omar al-Mukhtar, the Sanusi order in Barqa continued its resistance, often resorting to guerilla warfare when it could not offer organized resistance.

The notable role played by the Sanusiyah in resisting the Italian occupation was a channel through which a religious order became a weapon for Libyan nationalism, although, as mentioned previously, this nationalism was rooted more in the eastern regions of Libya than in Tripolitania where the population composition was different and the resistance was not as fierce. Muhammed Fouad Shukri, in his 1948 book *al-Sanusiyah: Din wa Dawla*, emphasizes the fluidity of the lines of demarcation separating religion from the state in the Sanūsi's religious philosophy:

> Western analysts used to consider the Sanusi order as a religious Sufi sect, and nothing else. The Italians spent years supporting this myth with any means made available to them. This was in the hope that people's minds will be distracted from thinking about the true origins of Sanusiyah, and to acknowledge that as long as the Sanusi order represented Sufism, they were far from being interested in anything else other than religion and spirituality; the Sanusis did not seek to meet the demands of life and this world. This was to deprive the Sanusis from the aspiration to rule and to build the future of a Muslim state, one which the Sanusi order sought so hard to develop. The Italians and their followers neglected the fact that Islam does not distinguish between the affairs of religion and the world, and does not separate between religious beliefs and the state. In their long history, the Sanusi order never only focused on matters of worship without looking at the conditions of the people around them. The Sanusi brotherhood took it upon themselves to guide the people until they were freed from the constraints of ignorance and enjoyed the gift of knowledge.

It is notable that some Libyans emphasized the secular rather than religious dimensions of the Sanusiyah. In an interview, a Libyan journalist[121] who witnessed the rise of King Idris to power commented:

> I do not think that Sufism or religious ideology, in general, and even the Sanusiyah, as such, were the foundations of the Libyan state. I consider the leader and founder of the modern Libyan state, Idris al-Sanusi, to be a secular man, although in his old age, he became very religious. I would like

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> to point out that Idris al-Sanusi lived his youth in Cairo, the regional city that was then full of intellectual renaissance and revolutionary and secular ideas. Idris was well connected with these circles and had a literary salon and poetry books. (Libyan journalist from Benghazi based in Cairo, interview via Skype, 8 February 2018, my translation)

Most respondents interviewed for the research, however, saw King Idris as a “man of faith”, a view that does not necessarily contradict the more secular aspects of his political role in Libya. Libya has always been fraught with political contestations, locally, regionally and internationally; and religion, as will be argued, has played an important role in their unfolding and in the development of a multi-tiered structure of governance in both formal/institutionalized and informal ways.

After the First World War, Italy’s situation weakened, and, as a result, it adopted policies that granted more autonomy to the local population. Italian rule in Libya inherited a rather problematic state structure. Anderson relates how, in the middle of the First World War, it became clear that the Ottoman Empire could no longer “provide a genuine alternative to the Italian regime in Libya”; consequently, the Libyan elite attempted to establish local governments. This, according to Anderson, “constituted the only genuine attempt to forge national sentiment on a local level before independence after World War I, and both the efforts themselves and their ultimate failure illustrated the ambiguities of local Libyan nationalism” (Anderson, 1983: 66).

The Sanusi resistance continued unabated, and it is also worth noting how the *zawiyas* were later one part of diplomatic negotiations with the Italians. In 1916, for example, when the Italians were failing to consolidate their hold on Libya, they drew up a truce via the Modus Vivendi of Acroma on 14 April 1917, which declared, in Article 5, that the Sanusi *zawiyas* formerly occupied by the Italians were to be restored to the order and would also be exempted from taxation. The Italians would even pay the sheikhs’ salaries. In 1920, the Accord of al-Rajima replaced the Pact of Acroma and reaffirmed the order's rights to the endowments. In 1921, another agreement, known as the *sistemazione definitive della zaouie*, saw the Italians "hand over 500,000 Lire as indemnity for lodges destroyed by their action during the war" in addition to paying the salaries of the sheikhs of the lodges. All of these agreements "were made by the Italian delegates *ad referendum*" under the responsibility of the central government in Rome (Evans-Pritchard, 1946: 848).

In 1919, separate statutes were prepared for Barqa and Tripolitania, and "each province had a separate parliament, a government council, and local councils intended to help the Italian administration govern the country in accordance with local traditions and customs". A joint Libyan–Italian army was even developed, and on Italy's payroll (Khadduri, 1963: 19–20). This liberal policy was, however, dispensed with in 1923 with the rise of fascism.

Despite the multi-governance system, Libyans still struggled for independence, and the Sanusi order from the eastern region was solicited to lead. Italian control of Libya was always precarious, especially during and after the First World War; in 1915, Sulayman al-Baruni returned from Istanbul to become governor of Tripolitania and continued lobbying for independence from Italian occupation, which had only managed to control Tripoli. As a result, a national convention was held in November 1918, which announced the establishment of the Tripolitanian Republic; this was later recognized by Italy in 1919. The Tripolitanian leaders, who now included Bashir al-Al-Sa'dawi, however, kept pushing for independence and wanted to offer the leadership of Tripolitania to Sayyid Idris who led the Sanusi order in Barqa. Italy rejected the idea, and under the new governor of Tripolitania, Giuseppe Volpi, the country was recaptured and fell under Italian control. In Barqa, the Sanusi Emirate was consolidated and Sayyid Idris was granted the "title of Amir" (Khadduri, 1963: 22). Later, the resistance movement would be led in Barqa by Sayyid Omar al-Mukhtar, a member of the Sanusi order, and in Cairo by Sayyid Idris.

The resistance against Italian occupation was fierce until the capture of ʿUmar al-Mukhtar in 1931. After that, the rebellion was brought to an end. According to an Italian who was born in Benghazi in 1934, and who had learned about the conflict between the Italians and the Sanusiyah from his family which had moved to Benghazi in 1912:

> With the death of Omar al-Mukhtar, the rebellion ended. His death had already been decided even before his trial. We all thought it was a big mistake to kill him. Even the Italians respected him. If they didn't kill him, he would have rebelled against them. He was a very courageous man (Italian from Benghazi, personal interview, Rome; November 2014).

The heroism of ʿUmar al-Mukhtar continues to live in Libyan and Arab memory today as a symbol of resistance to Western colonialism. According to Nassar and Boggero (2008):

> Only in 1931, after 20 years of fighting, ʿUmar al-Mukhtar was finally captured. With a few thousand men, he had faced a colonial army of as much as 20,000, with airplanes and modern weapons. His guerrilla techniques, based on small-scale, swift attacks, followed by his retreating and vanishing in the desert angered the Italians to the point that they resorted to the worst methods. The fascists bombed their enemies with poison gas, inaugurated a policy of ethnic cleansing of the interior – which drove out a population of 100,000 – hit their holy cities, expropriated the zawiyas, expelled the religious leaders. Finally, they resorted to cutting the supply lines with the construction of an enclosure wall – an endeavour of enormous proportion and cost. In September 1931, he was captured. After a mock trial, ʿʿUmar al-Mukhtar was executed, publicly hanged as a bandit in front of his own people at the camp of Soluch.

It was the outbreak of the Second World War that was a turning point in the fate of Libya: because Italy was so weakened by the war, it could not maintain its colonies. Libyans were, however, still divided, and regionalism manifested itself in divergent political alliances with the Allies and the Axis powers. Idris and his followers allied themselves with the British, while many Tripolitanians believed that the Axis powers would, in the end, prevail. Idris agreed to assist in the organization of a native force of exiled Barqans to accompany the British army into Libya. The British called this force the "battalions of Sanusi Arab tribes", angering the Tripolitanian exiles in Egypt, who then refused to support the Barqan war effort. The situation worsened when in 1942 Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden pledged in a speech to the British parliament that "at the end of the war the Sanusis in Barqa will in no circumstances again fall under Italian domination" (Anderson, 2017: 8). Eden neglected to mention the fate of Tripolitania, deepening the gap between the western and eastern regions of Libya. Any hopes for unity were compromised.

The negotiation process at the United Nations revealed the depth of the fragmentation: one of the Libyan delegations, known as the Association of Libyan Ex-Servicemen, expressed their rejection of a unified Libya under Sanusi leadership. Their representative, Abdel Salam Sellabi, said that they would not accept a political settlement that put Tripoli under Sanusi control. He also asserted that the Tripolitanian people would resort to any means possible, including the use of force, to make sure that this would not happen. The Sanusiyah were described as having a "bad reputation for being backward and anti-democratic" (al-Sharif, 2010: 33). Later, they had to settle for unity for fear of another round of colonization, but the divisions remained.

Libyan independence in 1951 established the beginnings of a Libyan state dominated "by tribal shaykhs and urban notables", and "the monarchy faced the heavy task of building nationhood and interacting with the international system" (Ahmida, 2009: 77). Islam as manifested in the Sanusiyah order remained the bedrock of Libyan independence from waves of colonization, providing the only form of sustained leadership for the Libyan people. Needless to say, King Idris would later found what is arguably the closest Libya got to a state and a nation. In 1952, Tripoli was still very cosmopolitan and had "approximately, 20,000 Italian, 5,000 Jewish and 2,000 Maltese permanent residents, apart from the British and United States garrisons" (H.G., 1952: 194). It also had British, French, Dutch and Spanish consulates. Barqa was predominantly Arab and Muslim –

Italians had been evacuated from there in the course of the campaigns between 1940 and 1942.

Political contestation and state disintegration post-independence (1951–1969)

The significance of this shift from opposing Idris to supporting him is important because it was not only religion that rallied Tripolitanians around him. Instead, it was the more secular and civic manifestations of the Sanusiyah that paved the way for some form of consensus around the new king. An interview with a Libyan journalist who witnessed the rise of King Idris throws light on the nuances of this shift:

> In Tripolitania, Idris was rejected as a leader of Libya from the early days of the Italian occupation, but at the same time there was an acceptance of the idea of his leadership of Libya. In more than one instance, they pledged allegiance to him such as in Gharyan in 1920. The acceptance of the idea of leadership is striking because he was rejected. An acceptance of Idris as the leader of Libya and a political leader in the western region was difficult, because the Tripolitania, at the time, had a number of religious leaders and regions and influence and, beyond that, the housing density and agricultural community there were very strong. Those leaders entered into conflicts and reached an armed clash for leadership which was probably one reason why a consensus was formed around Idris. (Libyan journalist from Benghazi based in Cairo, interview via Skype, 8 February 2018, my translation)

Indeed, by announcing an independent state in Barqa in 1949, Idris proved himself to be capable of what his Tripolitanian counterparts were incapable of achieving: namely, independence. In the words of the Libyan journalist:

> The fact that Idris was eventually accepted as a leader is more important than the fact that he was rejected, … the declaration of the independent emirate of Barqa was a tactical political move that contributed significantly to his acceptance by the parties that rejected him in Tripolitania.

Political expediency paved the way for the acceptance of Idris by Tripolitanians. Karim Mezran, whose father served in the UN committee led by Adrian Pelt, described it as follows:

> The federal monarchy was a strange choice for a poor country like Libya. It meant that bureaucracy would be cumbersome but for Tripolitanians, it was the lesser of two evils [colonialism or unity under Idris]. Tripolitanians were divided among themselves and they were not able to secure a republic so they compromised, although reluctantly. They Tripolitanian elite compromised and sold it to the public through the religious argument, saying that Idris was a pious man and that they trusted his leadership. (interview via Skype, 3 May 2018)

Mezran has described this reluctant acceptance of Idris as a manifestation of neither Libyan nationalism nor Arab nationalism; rather, it was a combination of trust based on Idris's known piety and a strong desire to maintain the unity of Libya instead of facing another round of colonialism:

> It is clear from the discussion that whatever legitimacy the king enjoyed was based on neither Libyan patriotism nor Arab nationalism but on a deal between Islam and unity, and between the two main regions. The king made no secret of his primary loyalty to Islam and to Barqa and of his distrust of political ideologies of all sorts. This feeling was deemed to lead to an authoritarian revolution. In fact, soon after independence, in 1953 the king outlawed all political parties, press freedom was rejected and only government newspapers were allowed. Although it always contained a careful representation of all the major tribes and notables, the country's parliament was reduced to little more than a rubber stamp for what the king and his *diwan* (royal household) decided. The king gradually consolidated his power. He played personalities against each other, maneuvered various factions and cliques, and imposed limitations on various organs of the state. He often trespassed his constitutional limits and meddled even in purely administrative matters. He carefully endeavored to see the cabinet subordinated to the palace, the Parliament to the cabinet, and the provinces gradually weakened and subordinated to the cabinet. (Mezran, 2001: 60)

In addition to the political realities that placed the Libyan people at a crossroads between an acceptance of Idris, on the one hand, and colonialism, on the other, Mustapha bin-Halim who served as prime minister of Libya between 1954 and 1957, lists in his memoirs a number of reasons, both religious and secular, why there was an eventual acceptance of Idris as a ruler. These include: the closeness of the Sanusi family to the Prophet Muhammad’s way of life; the fact that the Sanusi family were known for their piety and adherence to Islamic Sharia; and the Sanusi record of activism and resistance against the Italian occupation (Bin-Halim, 2011: 98).

Following the creation of the kingdom and international recognition of its sovereignty, political differences among the Libyan elite contributed to the fragmentation of the fledgling monarchy. There was particular tension between the monarchy’s apparent pro-Western stance, and the anti-colonial fervour exhibited by Libyan politicians and government officials at the time. The experience of Libya’s prime ministers following independence bears witness to the instabilities of the new kingdom and the clashing political interests. One set of interests wished to eliminate foreign influence in Libya. Abdel Qadir Badri, who was appointed prime minister in June 1967 following the 1967 Arab–Israeli War, sought to liquidate foreign bases in Libya. He also wanted to impose a ban on petroleum exports to the United Kingdom and the United States. He was, however, made to resign in October 1967 because of a political backlash against him within Libya (St John, 2014: 51).

Abdel Hamid Bakkush, who replaced Badri, lasted less than a year: he was prime minister from October 1967 to September 1968. While studying law at Cairo University in 1957, he developed an interest in liberal Arab nationalist politics. When he became prime minister, he attempted to modernize Libya’s armed forces and its bureaucracy. However, he was soon frowned upon by others because of the “nature and speed of his reforms”, and he was made to resign (St John, 2014: 51). With short-lived contributions from political leaders and persistent divisions, Libya was weak as a state from within, despite the international recognition of its independence.

In addition to persistent divisions over policies, the monarchy's openness to cooperation with the West aroused discontent, especially as Arab nationalism, at the heart of which was rejection of Western dominance, continued to gain prominence. As Rashid Khalidi has commented:

> Arab Nationalism, like most other Middle Eastern nationalisms, was a child of the intellectual atmosphere of the nineteenth century and one of many responses to the process of incorporation of the world into a single system with Europe at its center which that century witnessed. ... Arab nationalism in its fully developed form represented an expression of identity and of group solidarity within the projected new format of the nation-state by an amalgam of old elites and new social forces at once desirous of seeing their society resist control by outside forces and deeply influenced by the example and the challenge of the West. (Khalidi, 1991: 1364)

Mustapha bin-Halim argues that it was the fear of the West, especially the British, that made King Idris gravitate towards them:

> Because of what King Idris knew and witnessed first-hand about Britain's cunning, he believed that the British had an astounding capacity to mess with the people's lives and that they got rid of whoever opposed their policies. That is why he tried to avoid any confrontation with Britain's officials. Instead he treated them with kindness and patience. He overlooked their mistakes to avoid their evil conspiracies and in order to protect the country from their wrath. Here, there was a contrast between the King's approach and mine. Although I agreed with him that Britain's policies in the Middle East were based on cunning, conspiracies and deception, I did not see any point of dealing with them kindly. Instead, I knew that the best way to work with Western countries, in general, and Britain and the United States of American, in particular, was through multiple channels of cunning and extortion and indirectly threatening their interests via cooperating with their competitors in Eastern Bloc. (Bin-Halim, 2011: 81, my translation)

Bin-Halim explains that King Idris was uncomfortable with such measures because of his religious beliefs and, although he implicitly agreed with them, he soon feared the consequences of gravitating towards the Eastern Bloc as opposed to collaborating with the British and the West. Idris, according to bin-Halim, was also supported by a Libyan public that had respect for the British and considered them a strong ally (Bin-Halim, 2011: 81).

Several measures taken by the Idris government contributed to the downfall of the monarchy. Mezran states that the most serious *coup de grace* occurred in December 1962 when the Libyan constitution was amended and the political status of the provinces was abolished. The provinces were turned into large administrative units with a Wali (governor) and an administrative council. In April 1963, the federal system was abolished in favour of a unitary system[122] and the powers of the king were "abysmally amplified" (Mezran, 2001: 62). This led to a breach of trust between the people and the king. Shifts within the constitution were also of an "Islamic" nature. According to Mezran:

> Many changes were made to alter many "secular" aspects of the constitution and make the whole document look more Islamic. Article 40 of the revised constitution now recited that "sovereignty shall belong to God, and by the most high God's will it shall be entrusted to the nation from which all powers stem"; the same article, in its previous form only stated "sovereignty is vested in the nation...". This article was modified in accordance with the traditional classical Islamic thesis on the divine origin of every authority according to which "supreme power cannot derive but from God, and can only be founded upon his will, because no man as such has the right to govern another man". (Mezran, 2001: 62)

Another shift was in Article 44 which went from the original "the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Libya is vested in the nation. By the will of God the People entrust it to King Mohammed Idris s el Mahdi al Sanussi..." to the new version "Subject to what has been provided in art. 40, sovereignty shall be vested by the nation, in trust with the King Mohammed Idris" (Mezran, 2001: 62).

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[122] Mezran states that the argument provided by the government for the abolition of the federal system was that the "unity of the provinces under a single authority would in the long run lead to the unity of the people of Libya, reduce the costs of running the state, and eliminate bureaucratic red tape". He, however, identifies two main factors behind the abolition of the federal system. First, the oil companies: "Oil was by then flowing, and the oil companies did not want to deal with federal and state regulations simultaneously". Second, the individuals associated with the palace: "The King had on more than one occasion offered to resign and was little interested in the accumulation of power. But to individuals such as the Shalhi brothers, particularly al Busairi and, after his death, Omar – both of whom had assumed pivotal positions in the palace – a unitary system would concentrate power in their hands, and therefore they encouraged the king to bless the modification of the political and economic structure" (Mezran, 2001: 69).

According to Mezran, the “symbolic change” resulting from the rewording of articles in the constitution indicated that only God is above the king, which was “a clear breach of the pacts negotiated by the King with the other parties representing the various strands of the Libyan elite” (Mezran, 2001: 62). Another problem was the Islamization of the constitution:

> The more secular aspects of the constitution were rejected in favor of a more traditional Islamic version. Slowly but decisively the King embarked into a project of modification of the negotiated identity into an Islamic one that was more consonant to his Sufi traditionalist vision. In this way Libya’s foundations were to lay in the religion and Islam was to become the main identity of the nation. All of this comported that, by the beginning of the 1960s, politics in Libya had become the assertion of “family, factional, tribal and parochial interests”, and government positions were eagerly sought after for the influence in awarding contracts they afforded. (Mezran, 2001: 69)

Later, in 1969, this pro-Western openness contributed to the unravelling of the monarchy. The Gaddafi coup posed as a rebellion against this pro-Western stance. According to Alia Brahimi:

> The monarch was head of the Sufi Sanusiyah order, and his administration’s liberal, pro-western stance permitted the sale of alcohol, a secular legal code, and the presence of British and American bases on Libyan soil. When Gaddafi seized power in 1969, he closed down churches, flew the green flag of Islam, evicted western military forces, introduced *hudud* penalties, and even equated the sporting of the western-style tie with wearing the emblem of the cross. However, it was not long before the sharia, as a guide to social and political organisation, was supplanted by *The Green Book*, shifting the theoretical locus of sovereignty from God to the so-called revolutionary masses. Gaddafi accused the religious establishment of paganist tendencies, declared that there was no need for intermediaries between man and God, and argued that invoking the hadith (as opposed to the Quran) was tantamount to heresy. (Brahimi, 2017)

A tension between King Idris ’s religious philosophy and emerging state institutions in Libya engendered another layer of political contestation. According to Mustapha bin-Halim, King Idris understood his leadership role not according to the

Libyan constitution but according to Islamic Sharia. In an Islamic state, the leader is obliged to run the affairs of the people according to the laws of the Quran and Sunnah, and he is supposed to enforce those rules even if they disagree with the decisions of the government. The Libyan constitution was also ambiguous when it came to defining the role of the king. On the one hand, it stated that authority resides in God and that the nation was the source of authority, and on the other hand, it stated that leadership was entrusted to King Idris. Bin-Halim believes that King Idris may have misunderstood the authority granted to him by the constitution. As a result, “The King, increasingly, used his direct authority over the years until he became the source of all authority in Libya by the mid-sixties” (Bin-Halim, 2011: 97).

Anderson argues that political freedom and the independence of state institutions were compromised under King Idris because of loyalty to kinship and tribal politics:

> By 1960, the contradiction had led to crisis. The king felt obliged to issue a letter to the heads of department throughout the state administration complaining that “matters have come to a climax, as have deafening reports of the misconduct of responsible state personnel in taking bribes – in secret and in public – and in practising nepotism. The two evils which will destroy the very existence of the state and its good reputation both at home and abroad, as well as the squandering of the [country’s] wealth in secret and in public.” Nepotism is only evil, of course, when non-kin criteria for favour or advantage (such as the formal equality, achieved competence, and objectively assessed merit associated with the bureaucratic state) are being violated. (Khoury and Kostiner, 1990: 296–297)

Mustapha al-Tir, however, interprets these instances of nepotism differently. He sees them as tied to political affiliations rather than to tribal imperatives:

> Under the Monarchy, a number of parliamentary elections were held. There were accusations of forgery and it was clear that every time, the government deliberately and using different means, made sure that those who were pro-regime won the elections. Nevertheless, there was always one or two candidates in the House of Representatives that clearly belonged to the opposition. (al-Tir, 2013: 269)

Another factor that contributed, albeit marginally, to political contestation under King Idris was the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya. They too had a strong anti-Western and anti-colonial position. According to Mahmoud Al-Nakou', one of the founders of the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood, the movement emerged in Libya in the 1940s when three members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood – Ezz Al-Din Ibrahim, Mahmoud Al-Sharbini and Jallal Saada – escaped to Libya after being suspected of involvement in the assassination of Egyptian Prime Minister Mahmoud Al-Nuqrashi Pasha. The three were granted asylum by Idris al-Sanusi. More activists came to Libya after the 1952 Free Officers Revolution in Egypt. There were branches of the Muslim Brotherhood in Tripoli and Benghazi, and they coordinated their positions; in the 1950s they operated in secret due to the law passed by the monarchy banning political activism (Chernitsky, 2012). According to Mezran, "The Muslim Brotherhood never really played a major role in Libya. They were a branch of the Egyptian one and never really got to spread in the country." (interview via skype, 3 May 2018) After the 1969 military coup and the rise to power of Gaddafi, the organization in Libya stopped its activity, although it did not disband (Chernitsky, 2012).

It is worth noting that alongside the openness to collaboration with the West, King Idris was also willing to cooperate with African and Arab countries. For example, Libya's foreign policy at the time supported exchanges with Chad. According to Mohammed Sharīf Jako, a Chadian author, King Idris supported Arab-Chadian relations to ensure that Chad remained connected to the Arab and Islamic world. The king supported the building of schools and the role of memorizing the Qur'an inside Chad, and he provided a number of services needed by the Chadian people. Libyan institutes and universities continued to receive hundreds of Chadian students – at the expense of the kingdom – especially those interested in studying the religious sciences and Arabic language at the Islamic University in the city of Bayda (Jako, 1989). Moreover, the king also supported the Algerian revolution and struggle for independence. According to the memoirs of Mustapha bin-Halim, Idris instructed him to liaise with the French government and seek to bring peace to the Algerian people (Bin-Halim, 2011).

"Nostro emancipazione":[123] Identity politics, the synagogue and the Libyan Jewish community

Renzo De Felice, citing historian Ismail Chemali, describes Libyan Jews as among the oldest inhabitants of Libya (De Felice, 1985: 1). They were also a sizable population, particularly in urban areas: the 1931 census shows that more than 26 per cent of the population in Tripoli was Jewish (London, 1979). Libya, however, had the smallest general population in all of the Maghreb countries and also had the smallest Jewish communities if compared to the Jewish communities of Morocco or Tunisia. At the turn of the 19th century, there were around six thousand or seven thousand Jews in Libya, and by the mid twentieth century, there were around thirty-five thousand Jews (Goldberg, 1990: 4). The Jews of Libya were a diverse group of people of European and Arab ancestry. Some were old inhabitants of North Africa, while others had resettled in Libya after having been expelled from Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[124] In the fourteenth century, an anti-Jewish campaign led by zealous missionaries and political rivals produced devastating results for the Jewish population of Spain. Anti-Jewish attacks and legislation, as well as a growing number of Jewish converts to Christianity, disrupted the security of Iberian Jewry; consequently, many relocated to Libya (Assis, 2004).[125] Thus, the civic space of the Jewish community in Libya from its very genesis had multiple strongholds, and local and transnational networks.[126] As this section will argue, the particularity of Jewish identity in Libya lay in how it was deeply rooted in the local context. Jews were traders, merchants and artisans, and they had more than 44 synagogues in Tripoli alone (London, 1979). At the same time, the Jews of Libya were deeply international. The establishment of Israel and the process of migrating Libyan Jews to populate the new state bear witness to their transnational links to Jewish groups and organizations in Europe and the US, as well as to their contested sense of belonging in Libya. While they effectively transferred their nationalistic aspirations to Israel by dedicating themselves to the new state, this contributed to the fragmentation of statehood at home. A conversation with a Libyan journalist who lived in Libya in the 1950s highlights the divisive effect of the establishment of Israel on relations between Muslims and Jews (European and Arab) in Libya:

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[123] Translation: "Our emancipation." This phrase was repeated a number of times by respondents belonging to the Libyan Jewish population in Rome. It has its origins in the Zionist movement.

[124] The Edict of the Expulsion of Jews was passed in 1492. It declared that no Jews were allowed to remain within the Spanish kingdom, and that only Jews who wished to convert were welcome to stay. The reasons given for the expulsion within the Charter were stated as follows: "You know well or ought to know, that whereas we have been informed that in these our kingdoms there were some wicked Christians who Judaized and apostatized from our holy Catholic faith, the great cause of which was interaction between the Jews and these Christians, in the cortes which we held in the city of Toledo in the past year of one thousand, four hundred and eighty, we ordered the separation of the said Jews in all the cities, towns and villages of our kingdoms and lordships and [commanded] that they be given Jewish quarters and separated places where they should live, hoping that by their separation the situation would remedy itself.[…] And since we are informed that neither that step nor the passing of sentence [of condemnation] against the said Jews who have been most guilty of the said crimes and delicts against our holy Catholic faith have been sufficient as a complete remedy to obviate and correct so great an opprobrium and offense to the faith and the Christian religion […] and so that there will not be any place where they further offend our holy faith, and corrupt

> Imperialist Europe, led by the United Kingdom, resolved to solve the chronic Jewish problem by adopting the Zionist project and the

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those whom God has until now most desired to preserve, as well as those who had fallen but amended and returned to Holy Mother Church, the which according to the weakness of our humanity and by diabolical astuteness and suggestion that continually wages war against us may easily occur unless the principal cause of it be removed, which is to banish the said Jews from our kingdoms." [Source: Translation by Edward Peters based on the fullest version of the text, *Documentos acerca de la expulsion de los Judios*, edited by Luis Suarez-Fernandez (Valladolid: C.S.I.C., 1964), no. 177, pp. 391-395]

[125] For a more detailed account of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century persecution and expulsion of Jews from Spain, see Assis (2004).

[126] The role of the Jewish Agency (founded in 1929) in building the state of Israel is a case in point. Its mission statement today reads: "The Jewish Agency strengthens Jewish identity by bringing Israel to you by means of local Partnerships and *shlichim* (emissaries). Building meaningful connections between Israeli and global Jewish communities bolsters Jewish inclusiveness and unity. Our *shlichim* and local educators don't just teach Israel, we *are* Israel!" For further information, see: http://www.jewishagency.org/israel-your-community/program/275 [accessed: 25 April 2016].

> establishment of a Jewish state. Initially, they visited the Green Mountain in Libya as a possible place for this artificial state but then they settled on Palestine. The expulsion of the Jewish citizens, first European then Arab, to Palestine happened after the Balfour Declaration. A Jewish state was established in the world and it had the latest security and intelligence. … It was not easy to uproot people and establish a state all of a sudden, especially since Judaism is a religion that emerged in the region. In Libya, there was no mention of any clashes between the people of the same country, whether they were Jews or Muslims until the emergence of the European project to displace Jewish citizens and relocate them to Israel. Before this, there was no distinction between the Libyan Jew and the Muslim, even the most famous Libyan artists were Jews, and there is a prominent Jewish Libyan poet called *Bouhliqa*, his book of poetry was printed by the University of Benghazi early seventies of the last century. (Libyan journalist from Benghazi based in Cairo, phone interview, 18 February 2018, my translation)

Jewish identity politics, as this section reveals, was influenced both by a contested sense of belonging to Libya and by engagement between Jews in the different regions of Libya, between Jewish Libyans and Italians, and between Jewish Libyans and the Arab Muslim population.[127] This section provides an overview of the specificity of this community, especially if compared with the other two religious communities of Libya. The synagogue as a local faith-based actor was less important than Jewish regional and transnational networks, or American, British and French funders, such as the Jewish Agency and the American Joint Distribution Committee, an organization that raised funds in order to support the migration of Jews from North Africa to Israel.[128] From the 1940s onwards, most of the Jewish population of Libya was looking outside the borders of Libya for a home. For them, state building and nationhood did not lie in Libya. As the fortunes of the Jews of Libya shifted from representation to repression, their presence in Libya emphasized the expansion of networks rather than institutions.

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[127] Harvey Goldberg's fascinating book *Jewish Life in Muslim Libya* (1990) is a key reference on the daily life of Jews in Libya. It addresses the cultural life of Jews in Libya from the turn of the nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century. Despite ideological rivalries and religious differences, he reveals extensive similarities in customs and traditions between Muslims and Jews in Libya, thus, indicating prolonged and close contact and exchanges between those social groups, particularly in rural areas where economic interdependencies led to more cultural and social engagement.

[128] A correspondence between Anthony Royle from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, dated 14 July 1970, to Sir Henry d'Avignor-Goldsmid at the House of Commons in the United Kingdom included a report from the American Joint Distribution Committee about the state of the Jewish community in Tripoli. The report points out that the Committee had its headquarters for overseas operations in Geneva and that it received its funds in the United States through the United Jewish Appeal. The report also stated that outside the United States, the Committee had the "active cooperation of: The Jewish Trust Corporation for Germany Ltd. of England, the Central British Fund, United Jewish Relief Agencies (Canada), Campana Unida de Argentina, Campana Unida (Uruguay), Comitee Auxilier de Joint (Brazil),

The Libyan Jews' identity politics

Under the Ottomans, the Jewish community of Libya had been allowed to flourish. An Ottoman decree in 1865 had granted the Jewish community of Tripoli power and the right to representation by a rabbi (De Felice, 1985: 9). Maurice Roumani describes the Ottoman conquest of Libya as having given "new life and impetus to the Libyan Jewish community" (Roumani, 2009: 3). During that period, the community had around 69 rabbis, rabbinic judges, and representatives at the imperial court. Throughout the country,

> in urban centers and small towns, the community built a network of communal agencies that helped the poor, cared for the sick and provided religious education from an early age until adulthood. The community built and maintained 21 synagogues, 21 *yeshivot* (religious schools of higher learning), and nineteen centres of worship and study housed in private homes, something the host families regarded as an honor and a privilege. (Roumani, 2009: 3)

Despite the strength of their community, there are reasons to believe that the Jews of Libya experienced the same societal divisions as the rest of the Libyan population. One respondent, when asked about the existence of a Libyan national identity during and following the Second World War, described existing divisions:

> A Libyan nation with a unified identity? No. I think people from Libya love their country … There are always feelings of loss. … But Italians were with Italians and Jews were with Jews. The ethnic, in the end, was more

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and other communities in Latin America, United Jewish Overseas Relief Funds (Australia) and others" (British National Archives. Foreign Office: North and East African Department and Successors. Libya. Social Matters. (1970) "Welfare of Jews." FCO 39/673).

> important than being Libyan. (Jewish Italian born in Tripoli, personal interview, Rome, 1 December 2014, my translation)

For Libyan Jews, the anchor was a Jewish identity that aspired to the *Aliyah* (immigration of Jews to the land of Israel) and later manifested itself in the Zionist movement of the nineteenth century and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. According to Charlotte London, writing for the *Jewish Week* in 1979:

> When the State of Israel was proclaimed, those fervent Zionists (among whom most of the Libyan Jews could be numbered) who had not already left, illegally went to build up the new State. Most now live in Natanya and the South Tel Aviv suburb of Bat Yam, as well as on a number of moshavim. The late Minister of Agriculture in Rabin's government, Khalon, was raised in one. Others fled to Italy, since Libya was once an Italian colony and the Jews felt an affinity with it. About 2,000 live in Rome where they have their own synagogue, 1,000 are in Milan and there are small pockets living in Florence and Leghorn and a few other towns. (London, 1979)

Although it is difficult to determine from the literature the exact percentage of Libyan Jews who actively sought to settle in Israel, interviews with Libyan Jews who moved to Israel and to Italy suggest that while most saw Israel, not Libya, as their true homeland, there were exceptions. An Italian Jew whose parents left Libya for Italy in 1967 stated: “Israel was a strategic choice for us but there were divisions in the family about moving there. My mother wanted to go to Israel and my father didn’t. He took us to Rome and promised to go to Israel but that didn’t happen.” (Personal interview with Libyan-Italian Jew, Rome, October 2014)

Herzl’s first meeting with the Libyan Jewish population reportedly took place in Constantinople in 1892, but there is no evidence of further meetings between the founder of the Zionist movement and the Jews of Libya. There followed, however, “an exchange of letters sent by Jews from Tripoli and Benghazi during the period 1900–1904 to the Zionist Congresses of Vienna” (Roumani, 2009: 8). The first Libyan Zionist organization was founded in Tripoli in 1912 and was led by Elia Nhaisi, a correspondent of the Florence-based Jewish weekly newspaper *La Settimana Israelitica* (later known as *Israel*). Later, leadership of the organization passed to the community and it was called Ora Vesimha (Light and Joy). However, this organization was short-lived: “the people elected to the executive committee were apathetic, while community leaders showed a lack of interest” (Roumani, 2009: 9).

The Italian colonization of Libya made these differences in identity all the more apparent. Instead of providing Libyan Jews with protection and ridding them of poverty as they had hoped, Italians brought their own craftsmen and traders and thus rendered many members of the Jewish community unemployed (al-Ahwal, 2005: 359). Maurice Roumani describes how the colonial government lacked familiarity with the cultural norms of the Jews of Libya: “While they initially approached Libyan Jews as if they resembled their Italian counterparts, the Italian authorities quickly realized how different these Jews really were.” As a result, “friction quickly developed between the two sides despite the open welcome the Libyan Jews gave the Italian occupation of Libya in 1911” (Roumani, 2009: 6). While the colonial government made attempts to Italianize Libyan Jews, these attempts were unsuccessful. For example, reform of the rabbinate was advocated by Nhaisi, but this was quickly rejected by local rabbis who argued that an “Italian rabbi was not qualified to lead the community because he knew very little about the customs and rituals of Libyan Jews” (Roumani, 2009: 7). Thus, the Libyan Jewish community during that period was destabilized and different factions “divided along political lines and personal differences”. It was only later that Zionism, the pressures of Italian assimilation, persecution and fear of the rise of Arab nationalism thrust them to unite as a single front (Roumani, 2009: 7).

In 1911 when Italy occupied Libya, Jewish and Islamic courts were suspended but they returned to action later. The Islamic courts were back before the end of 1911 and the

Jewish courts in 1912. In 1913, a judicial system was set by the Italians in Libya. Personal disputes should be settled in Jewish and Islamic courts but conflicts between Libyan Jews that were related to family rights and civilian matters could be reviewed by a Jewish court and an Italian court. Conservative Jews were against this while more progressive Jews were in favour of it. This was later amended in 1916 and it became privy to Jewish courts alone with a final signature by the governor of Tripoli. Jews who were double nationals were only allowed to resort to Jewish courts for religious conflicts (al-Ahwal, 2005:159).

Key transitions in the region that changed the fate of the Jewish population of Libya include the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, the Egyptian Revolution of 1952, and the Six-Day War of 1967 between Israel and Egypt, Jordan and Syria. There were also the pogroms of 1945 and 1948. One respondent, born in Tripoli in 1967, recalls how that year was a turning point for her family: “People in Libya were excited about Nasser and started to express their solidarity with other Arab countries that were at war with Israel, and so …, we suffered from persecution.” As a result, “Israel was a strategic choice for us.” (Jewish Italian born in Tripoli, personal interview, Rome, 1 December 2014, my translation)

Between the 1940s and 1967, Libya was the battleground for two nationalisms (in addition to colonialism and, formerly, fascism): Arab nationalism and Zionism. An Italian Jew whose parents grew up in Libya described this clash as follows: “All the Jewish population in Libya was with Israel. The problem with Libya is that in the twentieth century, there were two nationalisms: Arab and Jewish. Zionists connected Israel with the idea of Jewish emancipation.” (Libyan-Italian Jew, personal interview, Rome, October 2014) Roumani ascribes the souring relations between Arabs and Jews to a number of factors that included “the worsening economic situation; speculation by some Jews that caused inflation, thus increasing poverty; the rise of Libyan nationalism; the return from Egypt of Libyan nationals; and growing nervousness by Libyans over independence”

(Roumani, 2009: 46). Former cooperation between the Jews and the Italian colonizers was still fresh in Arab Libyans' memories, and "debates over the return of the Italians, Zionist activities of the Jewish community, and British accommodation of the Jews turned bitter" (Roumani, 2009: 46). [129] There were, nevertheless, other forms of cooperation between Jews and Muslims within communities and rivalry and tension, as argued by Goldberg, should not be considered the only form of social interaction (Goldberg, 1980).

Because of the rise of Arab nationalism, there was a growing tension between Libyan Jews and Arabs.[130] The situation for young Jews was particularly difficult according to a Libyan Jew who witnessed the ramifications of the clash of nationalisms in Libya:

> It was a difficult situation for youth. Arab boys wanted to be nationalistic and the targets were Jews of the same age. I would walk with my sister and I would defend her if somebody attacked. When I moved to Italy, I still retained the habit of looking around just in case. (Libyan-Italian Jew, personal interview, Rome, October 2014)

The 1940s witnessed the beginnings of the Jewish exodus from Libya. An Israeli of Libyan origin who witnessed the Jewish mobilization during this period recollected:

> After 1940, people were sent to Libya in order to be able to organize the Aliya. This was all in preparation for 1948 and my mother learned Hebrew at the time. The flag of Israel was becoming popular in Libya. The organization of the Aliya sent teachers to Libya and the teachers became teachers for others. At the time, the Jewish people were very poor and had

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[129] According to al-Ahwal, there were instances in which Jewish people encouraged Libyan fighters to drop their weapons and stop resisting the colonization and instead, strike agreements and agree on terms for defeat and as a result, "Libyans placed the Jewish population as friends of the Italian colonizers and not worthy of respect. As a result, the Jews became enemies to the Libyan people" (al-Ahwal, 2005: 69).

[130] Those ideological tensions had an impact on cultural and social exchanges between Jews and Muslims in Libya. An interesting contribution on Jewish-Muslim rivalry in Tripolitania was made by Harvey Goldberg (Goldberg, 1980) who argues that despite the existence of rivalries, there were other forms of "harmonious relations" between the two groups "whether in terms of a religious tradition (Goitein 1971) or arising from the dynamics of daily interaction (Rosen 1972)". At the level of social intercourse, there are examples of social cooperation rather than competition. For example, "Jewish women in Tripoli in the middle of the last century would bring the *tfina* to be warmed in the ovens of Muslim homes in case their own fires went out on the Sabbath" (Goldberg, 1980: 167).

> nothing to lose. … Those who remained in Libya were the ones who had money. In 1967, all Jews left Libya. Around 6,000 moved to Italy and 3,000 moved to Israel and those that remained in Italy were the ones who could afford it. (Italian-Libyan-Israeli Jew, personal interview, Rome, November 2014)

The 1967 war was a particular turning point for the Jews of Libya. Writing in 1979, Charlotte London described the attacks experienced by the Jews of Libya at the hands of the Arab Libyans:

> And, more recently, at the time of the Six-Day War of 1967, 18 Jews were killed, including two whole families – some thrown from the balconies of their homes – and several disappeared. Their property was destroyed and the remainder were interned in camps "to protect them from the violent mobs," it was said. Yet another tragic episode in the already tragic history of a once great community. (London, 1979)

It is important to note, however, that their exodus was not to flee persecution by the monarchy but rather to flee the growing tension between the Jews and Arab Libyans caused by the rise of Arab nationalism and the tension of the Six-Day War. A Libyan–Italian Jew who witnessed this period commented:

> When the war began in 1967, we were persecuted. It was not an institutional form of persecution because the Libyan army and the State did not persecute us. It was the people. Libyans from the countryside were poor and they came to towns and attacked us. King Idris tried to protect us and put us in army camps so we would be protected. (Libyan-Italian Jew, personal interview, Rome, October 2014, my translation)

Nevertheless, the exodus of the Jews of Libya happened under King Idris and not Gaddafi. Regional shifts and the establishment of Israel contributed to the context within which this exodus took place. A journalist who lived and covered Libya in the 1960s described the context for the exodus:

> Gaddafi expelled the Italians, not the Jews. The real exodus of the Jewish population happened with King Idris. After 1948, there was an extensive group of Zionist Jews who had been there even before the creation of the State of Israel. They had been travelling back and forth to Europe and so were familiar with the idea. They started civil society groups and sports

> groups and so on. Before the creation of the State of Israel, a lot of Libyan Jews went to training camps in different places and some even went to Palestine. They worked with the Jewish community there. [Personal interview with Italian journalist. Rome. 24 September 2015]

Members of the Jewish Libyan community in Rome seemed to agree that Israel was an "emancipation" for Libyans Jews and that most of the Jewish population in Libya supported the new state of Israel. While "discrimination was not institutional", as one respondent put it, it was clear that Arab Libyans were joining the Arab nationalist camp: "There were no laws that said that Jews were second class citizens. It was the behaviour of the people that was the problem." (Jewish Italian born in Tripoli, personal interview, Rome, 1 December 2014, my translation)

Divergent experiences for Libya's Jews: Generational and gender differences

It is important to note that the Jewish community of Libya should not be approached as a single unit of analysis – it had regional, class, ideological and even cultural differences, just as was the case with the rest of the Libyan population. The Jewish community in Libya, according to De Felice, was "substantially secluded from that of Tripoli", which was more forward-looking and developed (De Felice, 1985: 9). A respondent described regional differences among the Jewish population: "In my opinion, the people of Barqa and the Jews of Barqa were very similar to the Egyptian people. In Tripoli, people were very similar to Tunisians. The food they eat … everything." (Jewish Italian of Spanish origin, born in Tripoli, personal interview, Rome, 4 December 2014)[131]

There were divergent experiences for Libyan Jews. According to a journalist who lived and reported on Libya in the 1960s:

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[131] The respondent's family moved from Spain to Libya at the beginning of the twentieth century.

> The Benghazi Jews were one thing and the Tripoli Jews were another, and there was animosity between them. … There was also the Jewish community in the mountains and those were looked down upon by the Jews of Tripoli and Benghazi. Italian Jews believed in fascism and were ideologues. Mussolini's lover was Jewish and so the Jews generally saw Mussolini as their friend. This was until the passage of the racial laws in 1938. (Italian journalist who worked in Libya, personal interview, Rome, November 2014, my translation)

Generational and gender differences determined the experience of Jews during the period of political upheaval in North Africa and the Arab world. A Jewish Italian woman recounted her parents' divergent experiences about growing up and living in Libya:

> There is a generational and gender dimension to it. The year 1967 was a different experience to my mother and my father because my mother was a woman and my father was a man. For both of them, it was painful to leave their home. I still see my mother and how confident and happy she is to speak to Arabs in the Libyan dialect. But in her case, the memory and the pain are alive because as a Jewish woman, it was difficult for her to live in an Arab country. She told me how she was made to get married only to be respected within the Arab Muslim community. She was very beautiful and was afraid … She was only 17 and had to get married to feel safe and respected. (Libyan-Italian Jew, personal interview, Rome, October 2014)

She highlights that her father's experience was very different from that of her mother:

> My father's story is different. As a man, he had much more freedom. He was involved with Italians, Arabs and Jews in business. He had his own car and his own business and girlfriends. Much more free. He really missed Libya. When I think of my father, I think of him as an Arab man who died with a lot of pain and the feeling that he's been rejected by his homeland. However, for my mother, she thinks they [Arabs] did her a favour because she was free in Italy but her memories are still alive. It doesn't matter how good the fish is. She always says: "This is nothing like Tarabulus…" (Personal interview with Libyan-Italian Jew, Rome, October 2014)

The variations within the Libyan Jewish population were both regional and economic. According to the Ottoman census of 1911, the total population of Libya was 523,176, with 29,761 people living in Tripoli. More than a third of the population in Tripoli (8,509) were Jews. Another 5,673 Jews were scattered throughout the towns of

Tripolitania. This urban population was, generally, poor and received support from within the Jewish community "by taxes imposed on kosher ritual slaughter, by the sale of *mitzvot* in the synagogues, or by donations of rich members of the community" (Roumani, 2009: 7). As for those in Tripoli, they lived in the *hara* (Jewish quarter) in "self-imposed isolation" and were subject to "conditions of economic and social deprivation" (Roumani, 2009: 7). This was not the case for the small minority of foreign Jews originating from Italy, Holland, Spain and Austria, nor for a select number of local Jews "who sought the association of foreign nationals and were influenced by European culture which they regarded as a springboard for personal advancement" (Roumani, 2009: 8).

Thus, there were also distinctions between European Jews and Arab Jews – De Felice noted that "the drama of Libyan Jewish life was summed up in the contrast intensifying from decade to decade between Foreign Jews … and the mass of Libyan Jews". According to him, the first group was "dynamically oriented to the outside and the future", while the latter was "inward-looking and almost immobilized by tradition" (De Felice, 1985: 14). Jews of Arab origin and those of European origin had different cultural practices and distinguished themselves from one another.

Jewish associations, transnational networks and drivers of division

The Jewish community was inherently transnational, actively linking the Jewish populations in Europe, North America and later Israel to one another. Interviews conducted with Israeli-Libyan Jews reveal their dedication to the state of Israel. An Israeli-Libyan Jew described the Zionist movement in Libya as follows:

> In the Jewish faith, there is the *sadaqqa*. That is why the Zionist movement received a lot of funds. One of my friends shut down his business and put all the money he had to buy food and aid for the Jewish population. We also

> received money and funds from outside Libya (Italian-Libyan-Israeli Jew, personal interview, Rome, November 2014).

According to one respondent, “There were a number of American and French associations helping the Jews of Libya. An American Jewish committee provided education and health services in Libya. And the aim of the Jewish Agency was to send as many people as possible to populate Israel.” (Jewish Italian born in Tripoli, personal interview, Rome, 1 December 2014) Before his death, Herzl suggested to Vittorio Emmanuele III, the Italian king, that European Jews should settle in Barqa, which led to the setting up of a Commission of the Jewish Territorial Organization “to examine the Territory Proposed for the Purpose of a Jewish Settlement in Barqa”. Although a report was submitted, the idea was not taken up by the Zionist Organization (Roumani, 2009: 9).

This transnational identity was manifested in the links between European and American organizations and the Jews of Libya, especially where the emergence and populating of the state of Israel was concerned. According to a respondent:

> There were French associations and the American Joint. The aim of Jewish agencies was to send as many people as possible to Israel. Those associations could only operate until 1948 or 1950 and then it became illegal to go to Israel via boat from Libya. (Libyan-Italian Jew, personal interview, Rome, October 2014)

An Israeli citizen of Libyan origins commented that American organizations were also important: “They had a very important base in Tripoli. On the 4th of July, they invited all the community to see their shows. Some Jewish girls also married American and British military personnel.” (Italian-Libyan-Israeli Jew, personal interview, Rome, November 2014) Wealthy Libyan Jews also contributed to the development of new roots for Libyan Jews in the State of Israel. According to the same respondent: “The Naoum family, for example. They were well connected and intelligent. They made *sadaqqa* and funded the transition of Jews from Libya to Israel." (Italian-Libyan-Israeli Jew, personal interview, Rome, November 2014)

The transnational nature of the Jewish community was also manifest in the activities of Jewish associations and charities in Libya.[132] In 1935, the number of Jewish poor was 1099 families which was the equivalent of 5000 people: about a third of the Jewish population at the time. By the end of 1935, another 400 families were added to this list raising the overall number of needy Jews to 7000 people which was about half of the Jewish population at the time (15000 total) (al-Ahwal, 2005: 99). Rich Jews from within Libya and from Europe, as a result, engaged heavily in charity. They established homes for the poor which provided them with food, medication and clothing. A number of Jewish charities emerged to provide assistance to the poor such as *jam'iyyāt eed al fteer* and another for the blind. There was also the *ben yahouda* association that had branches in Tripoli and other locations. This organization sent assistance to the Jews of Jerusalem and Spain. Those funds were collected from traders and craftsmen and businessmen and constituted 5% of their annual income. To ensure that the funds arrived in time, rabbis had employees that were given the task of following up on the payments based on records available in religious buildings (al-Ahwal, 2005: 25).

Jewish women played an important role in the fundraising activities. Rachel Simon elaborates on Jewish women's fundraising activities:

> Jewish women in the urban and rural regions of Libya were active throughout the period in the traditional collection of donations for welfare activities. They did this for causes related to the general public and for particular groups (e.g., women, students, inhabitants of specific towns in Libya or Palestine). Some of the traditional funds were run almost exclusively by women. Thus, for example, mainly women

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[132] For a comprehensive account of Jewish charities in Tripoli, see: al-Ahwal, Khalifa Muhammad Salim (2005) *Yahud madinat Tarabulus al-Gharb tahta al-hukm al-itali*, 1911 – 1943. (The Jews of Tripoli under the Italian Colonization) Tripoli: Markaz jihad al-libiyyin li-l-dirasat al-ta'rikhiyya.

> donated to Our Mother Rachel Treasury, which financed Sephardic yeshivot in Jerusalem. Female collectors regarded it as a special honour to be responsible for this operation, and even old and fragile women did not let this opportunity be wasted. These women went out to collect contributions on the eve of every New Month, believing that it would protect them in their daily life (Simon, 1992: 162).

This was not only in Tripoli but also included other countries like Italy where for example Becca Arbib managed to raise funds for poor people in return for lectures she delivered at Italian universities.[133] Dar Arbib which was established in 1908 by Fartony Arbib, the wife of Vittorio Arbib was a charitable organization that focused on the poor. In 1912, more women joined this association from the families of Levi, Nunis Vais, Nahum, Silva and Hajjaj. It focused on Jewish women in the city of Tripoli and their cultural and social development. It included the delivery of training courses on crafts such as tailoring. This association cooperated with other associations and charities for youth and the poor (al-Ahwal, 2005: 103).

Under the Italian colonization, membership of Jewish women's organizations in Libya consisted mainly of women with an Italian background. They focused on strengthening their Italian identity and improving the conditions of Jewish women in Libya. Those organizations mainly targeted “the lower classes, whose cultural and social contacts with the Italian world were weaker and whose outlook was more traditional. Still, it is [was] quite possible that by opting to go to these workshops, the more traditional Libyan Jewish women showed that they, too, wanted to become more involved in a modernized, Italianized environment” (Simon, 1992: 167).

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[133] Rachel Simon argues that the role of Jewish women in associations and welfare activities was quite limited. A bigger role was played by upper class and upper-middle class women and those roles benefitted both men and women (Simon, 1992: 161).

Under the British, the Tripolitanian women's organizations were in contact with the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO). In mid 1944, a branch of WIZO was established in Tripoli and was composed of two divisions. The first was the "regular" WIZO, which had some “operational difficulties due to personal conflicts among its members” and the second was "Young wizo," which “included about thirty young women” (Simon, 1992: 168). With the spread of Zionism, women's organizations became a means through which the community was prepared to migrate to Israel until the establishment of the independent kingdom of Libya in 1951 when Zionist activities were outlawed (Simon, 1992: 168). Activities organized by Libyan Jewish women virtually ceased in the 1950s (Simon, 1992: 168).

Jewish faith-based actors were, therefore, international actors with funds mobilized across and within borders to sustain their existence. Of their strongholds, the synagogue may have been of lesser importance than the local and cross-border networks of Libyan and even non-Libyan Jews. The existence of these networks compromised the trust necessary for collective state building with other groups in Libya. It also meant that they were less able to invest in local infrastructure.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the politics of religion and state formation in Libya over the period between 1911 and 1969. It focused on Libya’s two main religions at the time: Islam (Sufi and Sunni) and Judaism. While existing documentation of Libya’s history tends to address each religion separately, this chapter has explored how each religion represented a mode of social and political organization that was distinct and different from the other; it has also considered the nature of the civic space owned by each, the degree to which they engaged with one another, and the role they played in the emerging Libyan state under King Idris.

The chapter makes two arguments. First, the emergence of the Kingdom of Libya did not resolve deep political and regional divisions it inherited from the colonial period; instead, it was an act of political expediency in an effort to avoid another round of Western colonialism. The significance of the shift in Tripolitania from opposing Idris to supporting him is important, because it was not just the religious aspects of the Sanusiyah that secured the buy-in of the western region of Libya but rather the more secular and civic manifestations of the Sanusiyah that paved the way for some form of consensus around the new king. This consensus was, however, fragile, and the civic space commanded by the Sanusi order was always stronger in Barqa than in Tripolitania. Despite international recognition of Libya’s sovereignty, differences between the eastern and western regions of Libya, relating to each region’s experience both of colonialism and of the rise of the Sanusiyah, contributed to the fragmentation of the emerging monarchy. Moreover, this was compounded by a tension between the monarchy’s apparently pro-Western stance and the rising anti-colonial fervour exhibited by Libyan politicians and government officials at the time.

In an impassioned statement, Mustapha bin-Halim speaks of mistakes that were made under King Idris that paved the way for the Gaddafi coup to succeed in dismantling the emerging Libyan state:

> We all made mistakes, beginning with King Idris and all the way to every member of the last royal government. We were wrong when we neglected to support our constitutional state institutions and to expand our political parties and independent unions. We were wrong when we did not work hard on raising the awareness of the public about how to work and cooperate with state institutions. If we had not made those mistakes, the coup rebels would not have found excuses to rebel and the public would not have supported them. (Bin-Halim, 2011: 102)

The second argument of this chapter is that the Jewish community showed similar divisions to the Muslim community in terms of their attachment to regionalism or localism. The Jews of Tripolitania distinguished themselves from those of Barqa. Moreover, the civic space of the Jewish community in Libya had, from its very genesis, multiple strongholds, most notably networks that were local and transnational, especially after the establishment of Israel in 1948. Interviews conducted with Libyan Jews, many of whom later secured Italian or Israeli citizenship, reveal that the process of migrating Libyan Jews to populate the new state of Israel bears witness to their transnational links to Jewish groups and organizations in Europe and the US and to their contested sense of belonging in Libya. While they effectively transferred their nationalistic aspirations to Israel by dedicating themselves to the new state, this contributed to the fragmentation of statehood at home. Their transnational links contributed to the heightening of anti-Western and anti-colonial sentiments among the Libyan population, and these ultimately led to the rise of Gaddafi. Jewish identity politics, as this chapter has revealed, was influenced by a contested sense of belonging to Libya and by engagement between Jews in the different regions of Libya, between Jewish Libyans and Italians, and between Jewish Libyans and the Arab Muslim population.

CONCLUSION

State building, localism and the dual role of Libya’s civic space

This thesis has sought to recast scholarly engagement with Libyan history in the period preceding the rise of Gaddafi (1911 – 1969) in a way that rejects a number of dominant approaches to the documentation of its experience with state building. The first approach is one that ascribes stasis to Libyan society and, more specifically, holds that “statelessness” is endemic to Libyan society and history. The second approach is one that focuses on the history of western actors (mainly Italian or British) in Libya and relegates Libyan society to the background of historical analysis. Finally, the third approach is one that confines Libyan history to a historicization of Libyan resistance leaders without documenting the experiences of Libyan social forces and actors.

Through a sociohistorical analysis of state-society relations in Libya (Barqa and Tripolitania) during the period in question, this thesis has demonstrated that accounts of Libya’s “statelessness” subscribe to Weberian definitions of the “state” without taking into account the specific experience of Libya and other postcolonial countries’ experience with state building. This thesis, instead, suggests that a more appropriate analysis of state building in Libya is made possible by approaching state formation as a process, not as a finished outcome, and the state as a social field wherein social actors engage with one another as well as with state structures rather than a fixed entity. Based on Migdal (2004) and Saouli (2012), this approach allows a deeper understanding of the temporal dimensions of Libya’s experience with state building as well as the different processes at play through which states are formed and (un)formed. This approach also allows an understanding of path dependence and the degree to which processes such as the effects of colonialism are continuous rather than detached from their continuing effects (Pierson, 2004).

Through an examination of the development of associations, trade unions and religious groups, the thesis demonstrates that existing historical analysis of Libya generally overlooks local power dynamics that played a role in Libya's experience with state building. It argues that Libya's recurring failure at state building is not only the result of its experience with modern state formation as a postcolonial country but that it is also the result of societal divisions that warrant a contextualized understanding of the dual (and often contradictory) role of its civic space, and its capacity to contribute to the consolidation of statehood while at the same time threatening it via a manifestation of divisions both political and social. Because of societal differences, many of which resulted from aggressive colonialism, a short history of institutionalization and the entrenchment of fragmentation and regional differences, Libya's civic space manifested processes of localism or bonding and coalescing that occurred within groups which compromised the development of a Libyan state as in the case of the Tripolitanian Republic (1918 – 1922).

Libya's history, as the thesis shows, is one in which social divisions have been stronger than centralizing or unifying forces but those divisions, I argue, must be understood in context and in time. A locally-owned state building project must acknowledge those divisions and incorporate a complex civic space within its make-up. In analysing the role played by each social actor during the period between 1911 and 1969, the thesis emphasizes relational, structural and transactional aspects of Libya's civic space as related to the state; colonial and postcolonial. While civil society has actively contributed to the development of state institutions and the domestication of state power as is the case in the growth of a local political consciousness via Libyan associations and labor laws through its trade unionist movement, Libya's civic space was both a reflection of and a contributor to a localism and a process of bonding within groups within a particular region rather than on a national level which all three local actors addressed in this thesis attest to. This thesis has demonstrated that state building can be compromised by divisions within the civic space and that a state in the making has to develop channels in order to successfully integrate its civic space within its bureaucracies and overall model of government. This is to ensure the local legitimacy of the established government and geopolitical unity.

In the case of associations, Chapter Three has shown that Libyan associations actively contributed to the emergence of political parties in the period following the end of the Italian occupation in 1943. Muftah al-Sharif, a historian of Libya and one of the founders of its trade union movement in Benghazi in the 1950s, sees the birth of political parties in Libya as firmly tied to the development of Arab civil society organizations in the period preceding the Gaddafi coup, as well as to nationalist movements and youth activism within Libya and in the region, mainly in Egypt and Tunisia. The ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association, for example, is both political and civic. With roots in Cairo as a club of former combatants against the Italian occupation, it was formally established in 1943 in Benghazi and then a branch of it was established in Derna. It was mostly composed of and run by young Libyans. The ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association played a key role in supporting resistance movements in Libya and in other parts of North Africa and later, this association and many others were heavily influenced by Arab nationalist movements, especially those emerging out of Egypt (Al-Sharīf, 2010: 110). The chapter also points out that there were a number of clubs run by the Jewish population of Libya. They existed in Tripoli in the 1940s – clubs such as Ben Yehodah and the Makaby Club. Most Jewish associations were largely dependent on funds from individual donors both within North Africa as well as internationally as Chapter Five of the thesis demonstrates. While a number of those clubs opted not to take on a political role after the creation of the State of Israel and especially during the 1948 Arab–Israeli war (Al-Sharif, 2010: 80), interviews conducted for this research showed that the majority of Libyan Jews supported the establishment of the State of Israel.

That said, in actively shaping and being shaped by the political landscape following the end of the Italian occupation, Libyan associations manifested many of the divisions within Libya's civil society, and bore testimony to the difficulties of state building and securing unity for Libya's three regions. The memoirs of Mostafa bin-Halim, who served as prime minister under King Idris, identify two key political currents at the time. The first political camp was a unionist one. It saw Libya, with its three regions – Tripolitania, Barqa and Fezzan – as a unified monarchy under the leadership of King Idris with a constitution and a democratic parliamentary system. This camp was supported by the ʿUmar al-Mukhtar Association whose foothold was in Barqa, the eastern region of Libya and which was largely influenced by the ideals of Arab nationalism adopted from Egypt. The second political camp was the federalist one. It called for a federal union of the three regions under the leadership of King Idris, while ensuring some form of autonomy for each region (Bin-Halim, 2011: 20). The localism of Libyan associations was also revealed through the federalists' limited engagement with political movements in the western regions of Libya.

In the case of Libya's trade unions, as discussed in Chapter Four, an indigenous movement of Libyan trade unions emerged after the Second World War and following the end of the Italian occupation. This movement also experienced divisions between unions in the eastern and western regions of Libya. While the issuing of labour laws was a direct contribution to the consolidation of statehood, those attempts at consolidation were thwarted by a division between Tripolitania and Barqa in political aspirations. The success of issuing a labour law was matched by a failure to combine trade unions from the eastern and western regions into a confederation to represent the whole of Libya. Confederations of Tripoli and Benghazi had opposing political orientations. The confederation of trade unions of Tripoli, headed by Salem Shita leaned towards the West while the confederation of trade unions of Benghazi, led by Ragab al-Nayhum, worked closely with the Federation of Arab Trade Unions which was headquartered in Cairo. This difference in political orientation created a conflict between the two camps (al-Alem, 2009). Attempts to unify both camps were later prevented by Gaddafi's coup.

The notable role played by the Sanusiyah in resisting the Italian occupation was a channel through which a religious order became the nucleus of a post-independence Libyan state, as discussed in Chapter Five. However, this nationalism was still rooted in the eastern regions of Libya, more so than in Tripolitania where the population composition was different and the resistance was not as fierce. Indeed, it was by announcing an independent state in Barqa in 1949 that Idris proved himself to be capable of achieving what his Tripolitanian counterparts were not. He was eventually accepted as a leader although he had initially been rejected by Tripolitanians. Following the emergence of the kingdom and international recognition of its sovereignty, political differences among the Libyan elite resulted in the fragmentation of the emerging monarchy. There was a particular tension between the monarchy's seeming pro-Western stance, and the anti-colonial sentiments of Libyan politicians and government officials at the time. There was a cost for opposing the government's direction though – Abdel Qadir Badri, for example, who was appointed prime minister in June 1967 following the 1967 Arab–Israeli War, sought to liquidate foreign bases in Libya but he was made to resign in October 1967 because of a political backlash against him within Libya (St. John, 2014: 51).

Another faith-based actor is the Jewish community in Libya which from its very genesis had multiple strongholds, networks that were local and transnational. They were rooted in the local context; they were traders, merchants and artisans and had over 44 synagogues in Tripoli alone (London, 1979). At the same time, they were deeply international. The emergence of the State of Israel and the process of migrating Libyan Jews to populate the new state bear witness to their transnational links to Jewish groups and organizations in Europe and the US and to their contested sense of belonging in Libya. While they effectively transferred their nationalistic aspirations to Israel by dedicating themselves to the new state, this contributed to divisions of statehood at home. Moreover, the Jewish community showed similar divisions to the Muslim community in terms of their attachment to regionalism or localism. For example, the Jews of Tripolitania distinguished themselves from those of Barqa.

The thesis shows that an understanding of Libya's experience with state building can only be undertood through an analysis of its experience with state formation and disintegration in time (Pierson, 2004) and by engaging with the complex dynamics of state-society engagement. As argued by Conrad and Stange (2011), understanding a country's experience with state building is only possible through an analysis of its "complex historical genealogies", especially as a postcolonial context where "legal traditions, political structures, and societal cleavages can only be understood when taking into consideration these countries' colonial pasts" (42). Moreover, the thesis argues that debates within the social sciences on state building need to shed the transfer or static approach (embedded in the Weberian ideal type of modern statehood) to a more process-oriented one that is embedded in deep historical analysis that takes into account interdependencies and power negotiations between local social actors and regional and international actors. Libyan civil society (associations, trade unions and faith-based actors) were used in the thesis the locale within which modes of cooperation and contestation between state and society are examined, and manifestations of this engagement at the level of structural change as well as shifts in political consciousness are explored.

Future research: A social history of the Gaddafi period

The period following the death of Gaddafi in 2011 has witnessed a rise of citizen activism in the form of associatons and other forms of solidarity among Libyans as well as a rise in militias and armed groups. There has also been a marked international and regional engagement in Libya with adverse consequences to its unity and social cohesion. Existing analysis focuses on the current period of conflict without an examination of the Gaddafi period. Moreover, the Gaddafi period usually gets reduced to a single unit of analysis without in-depth analysis of various stages of its development and shifts in state-society relations during Gaddafi's forty years in power. For future research and to build on this thesis, I suggest a social history of the Gaddafi period to address this gap in historical analysis and to understand the dynamics of the current conflict through a historical lens.

A potential space for an examination of state-society relations during the Gaddafi period would be schools and universities and with a particular focus on the politics of trust within those spaces and between society and the state. In 2011, when the protests broke out against Gaddafi, he resorted to attempting to control this space. David Kirkpatrick reported that:

> The crackdown by the government of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi against the rebels trying to unseat him has extended even into Tripoli's schools, where students talk about visits from military officers warning them to watch only state television, payments of 200 Libyan dinars a day to attend pro-Qaddafi rallies and their fears that confiding in the wrong friend may mean interrogation by the secret police (Kirkpatrick, 2011).

Interviews I conducted in early 2012 with Libyan students revealed that Libyans felt excluded by witnessing how their nation was identified and equated with Gaddafi. This alienation was articulated by a participant from Tripoli: “Our sense of nationalism was hurt because when I traveled outside, people identified Libya with Gaddafi. I used to hate this Libya of Gaddafi. I used to hate it and not feel it was my country.” Respondents genuinely felt that their narratives were excluded from the state-building process following the downfall of Gaddafi. People I spoke to in Benghazi and Tripoli also identified a trust deficit as an issue that would prevent state and nation building from taking root, and they related how Gaddafi used the divide-and-rule method to solidify his power. According to them, he planted the seeds of distrust within the people by instituting a police state. Mentioning Gaddafi or the regime in public was likely to get entire families imprisoned without trial. As a result, a culture of fear dominated the country, and people felt they could not trust one another.

In the post-Gaddafi period, there was a spike in trust as people united against the regime. However, divisions have returned, so much so that there are divisions even within the three main regions of Libya (Fasanotti, 2017). As Libya’s political landscape gets reshaped, a social history of Libya’s civic space during the Gaddafi period could contribute to an understanding of current blockages to state formation.

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