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Sabatini, Gaetano; Strangio, Donatella

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A View on Africa: Italy, the Mediterranean, the Horn of Africa, 19th and 20th Centuries

Gaetano Sabatini
University of Roma Tre and ISEM - CNR
Donatella Strangio
Sapienza University of Rome

This issue inaugurates the 50th year of publication of *The Journal of European Economic History*, a milestone that the Editorial Board has elected to mark with a special issue on Africa, a geographical area so far touched on only marginally in the *Journal*. Since European economic history is now increasingly integrated with that of the neighbouring areas, we intend to offer deeper insights into Africa in future issues as well.

This issue is dedicated in particular to the relations between Italy and Africa in the colonial and post-colonial periods. It is common knowledge that Italy's colonial presence in Africa has peculiar features, not only its short duration (scarcely half a century) but also its geographical focus, which did not necessarily correspond to the areas where Italian communities were historically rooted. The colonial presence comprised North Africa in the later colonial period, with the occupation of Libya in 1911, whereas the Horn of Africa was the locus of the first phase of the expansion at the end of the nineteenth century and also of the extreme offshoot before World War II, with the conquest of Ethiopia in the mid-1930s.

In the essays presented here, along with some more specific insights attention is directed mainly to longer-term economic phenomena: the ways in which resources were exploited, continuing and innovating processes already under way in the pre-colonial period, but also the post-colonial legacy of the Italian presence as

regards the forms of work organization, the exploitation of raw materials, the diffusion of managerial know-how and the persistence of Italian communities of entrepreneurs and workers.

The essay by Gianluca Podestà, "Eurafrica. Vital Space, Demographic Planning and the Division of Labour in the Italian Empire: The Legacy of Fascist Autarky," opens the "Articles" section. Podestà deepens our knowledge on the economic and social organisation of Italian Africa, and in particular of the division of labour, established before World War II: Eritrea and the Addis Ababa area were destined to become industrial areas in Italian East Africa, as well as the main hubs for services, whilst the other Ethiopian territories would be characterised by mixed agriculture, i.e. both small farms and capitalistic production. This latter type was to become predominant in Somalia, where foodstuffs would be produced for the imperial market and where banana cultivation was developed both for the Italian market and for export. In Tripolitania, demographic colonisation would be combined with manufacturing and the service sector in Tripoli, whilst in Cyrenaica colonisation was largely prevalent.

Despite the apparent coherence of this organization, the construction of the Fascist empire, planned by Mussolini, should be studied not only in the light of economic and productive rationality but also from the ideological and symbolic perspective. In Mussolini's action, the two planes of myth and reality intersected constantly, and indeed the former was often predominant, since Mussolini's objectives were more political than economic.

North-South relations after decolonization have been investigated broadly by scholars of African history. In the essay "Of Capital and Power: Italian Late Colonial Policies in Eritrea at the Onset of the Federation with Ethiopia," Luca Puddu tests the validity of the neo-colonial thesis for the Italian case, analysing the relationship between the Italian government, Italian firms and African governments in Ethiopia and Eritrea after 1952, when British troops evacuated and the Federation of Eritrea and Ethiopia was formed.

The neo-colonial thesis held that metropolitan governments un-

dertook overt as well as covert strategies to preserve the dominant position of their multinational firms in the newly independent African nations. Historians of British Africa have partially revisited this thesis, suggesting a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between political and economic agents. Luca Puddu's article seeks to test these arguments for the Italian case, focusing on the early process of decolonization in Eritrea, where the former Italian colony transited from British to Ethiopian rule but Italian companies maintained the dominant position they had enjoyed for decades. The analysis of the relationship between Italian authorities, Italian companies and African administrations suggests that government intervention was crucial to bolster the position of Italian capital in the former colonial space, at least in the very first years of the Federation, and that this alliance was made possible by the subjugation of the needs of capital to those of Italian *raison d'état*.

An important role in the relationship between Italy and Africa was played by demographic dynamics, although this did not concern only the territories subject to colonization. Francesca Fauri's long-term study, "Shifting Tides: 120 Years of Migratory Flows between Italy and Tunisia," exploits new documentary sources to look at the economic reasons that drove Italians and Tunisians to emigrate, the economic impact of these flows, and the reactions of both countries' governments. Recently, given the increasing Tunisian immigration, Italy has stepped up economic aid and investment in order to create job opportunities for young Tunisians in their homeland and thus curb the departure of migrants towards the Italian coasts. In both cases, emigration has represented temporary relief from poverty and economic difficulties, but not a politically viable solution.

In the section "Notes", the essay "A case of its own? A Review of Italy's Colonisation of Eritrea, 1890-1941," by Morten Jerven, Donatella Strangio and Jacob Weisdorf, supplements the existing historiography on Italy's involvement in Eritrea with new archival documents that provide a deeper insight into the activities of private businesses and agricultural settlers during the colonial era, with par-

ticular emphasis on the Fascist period. The essay examines the impact of these activities on Eritrea's development, testing the findings against the main theories. In the early twentieth century, settler colonization was sporadic and small-scale, but in the 1930s Italian farmers and entrepreneurs settled in Eritrea in substantial numbers, to account for at least ten percent of the total population there. This kind of colonization prompted a proliferation of Italian businesses, neither typically "productive" nor "extractive," highlighting the Italian presence in Eritrea as a somewhat atypical example of short-lived but intense colonization.

Matteo Nardozi's paper, "The Economic Policy of the Italian Administration in the Eritrean Colony during the Early 1920s: The case of the Asmara Chamber of Commerce," constitutes a further exploration of Italian economic strategies in the Horn of Africa, discussing the brief history of the Eritrean Chamber of Commerce in the early 1920s, at the beginning of the Fascist period. The advent of Fascism did not immediately change the liberal approach to colonial policy, since the regime had no specific views on the matter until the conquest of Ethiopia in the mid-1930s. The Chamber of Commerce of Asmara, which was supposed to be an independent representative of the economic and commercial interests of the companies of Italy's "first-born" colony, fell victim to the rigid ideological control of the new regime rather than to any new colonial policy.

The essay of Massimo Bucarelli, "Mediterranean security challenges, terrorist threats and energy issues: Italy and the Libyan crisis of the 1980s," focuses on a completely different context both geopolitically and chronologically, namely the period of tensions between Italy and Gaddafi's regime in Libya at the end of the Cold War. Until recent times, historians have not paid a great deal of attention to Italy's role in the Libyan-US clash caused by Gaddafi's support for international terrorism in the mid-1980s, owing to the lack of relevant and reliable sources. Now the accessibility of the archive of former Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti (1919-2013) provides significant documentation and sheds new light upon one of the more critical moments for Italian foreign policy towards Africa, with the

escalation of the Libyan-US crisis, which culminated in 1986 with Libya's launch of missiles against the Italian island of Lampedusa. This episode impacted enormously on the political and economic initiatives Italy had been patiently pursuing in Libya, posing the political dilemma between loyalty towards the US and the need to protect Italian national, strategic and economic interests in the Mediterranean region.

Finally, the three essays collected in the "Problems" section investigate the economic context of the North African area, between the colonial and post-colonial eras, and examine some aspects of the migration's phenomena between Africa and Europe.

The essay "Economic Policies in Spanish Morocco and the Case of the Electric Cooperative: A Venture for a Nationalistic Strategy" by Antonio M. Morone and Federica Ferrero deals with the history of the *Cooperativa Industrial Hispano-Marroquí*, an electric company founded in 1928 in Tetouan, whose shareholders were Christians (Spanish), Jews and Muslims, the latter holding the majority of shares. In the general framework of Spanish economic policies in its Moroccan colony, the study demonstrates how the Cooperative actually acted as a financing instrument for *al-Iṣlāḥ*, the first Moroccan nationalist party, founded in 1936. It investigates the role that this enterprise played in the development of the Moroccan nationalist movement and illustrates the role that economic strategies played in the political process of the Moroccan transition to independence.

The essay by Vittorio Caligiuri and Gaetano Sabatini, "From Political Independence to Economic Dependence: The Different Trajectories of Stabilization and Adjustment in Morocco and Tunisia during the 1980s," examines the economic policies of Morocco and Tunisia in the post-colonial era. The authors analyse some of the factors in the structural redefinition of the economy in the two countries in the 1980s, and the onset of these processes in the broader context of the reorganization of the international economic system in the late 1970s. From this perspective the Tunisian and Moroccan cases, often treated as similar, instead display a series of significant differences,

although they can be interpreted as complementary. In Morocco, the intervention of the IMF and World Bank was prompted by the objective of guaranteeing debt service, which resulted in a policy of austerity and an investment blockade, with lasting effects that called the very effectiveness of the intervention into question as early as the 1990s. In Tunisia, given its different structure of GDP and balance of trade, the interventions of the two international financial institutions came later, when a good many stabilization measures to deal with the ongoing current account crisis had already been adopted by the government and the two institutions had managed, through the use of sectoral loans, to transform a support intervention into a process of structural adjustment. The social and political effects of these measures cast doubt on the effectiveness of such interventions in southern Mediterranean countries and on their underlying assumptions.

The essay "Africa: Migrations Between Perceptions and Data Production in the Long Run" by Elena Ambrosetti, Sara Miccoli and Donatella Strangio reviews the literature on African migrations, observing first that migrations (forced or voluntary) have constituted an ever-present phenomenon in the history of the continent, greatly accentuated by colonialism and the slave trade, whose heavy legacies are still evident in contemporary Africa. The article also discusses the perceptions of Europe by Africans and assesses the state of the art in the production of data on migrations and how the data is used in the light of contemporary conceptual and methodological issues.

In summary, the common feature of these interdisciplinary contributions, in the fields of history, political science, economics, demography, international cooperation and finance, can be described as the effort to understand the presence of Italy in Africa and its relations with the continent, transcending the traditional sharp division between the colonial and the post-colonial periods and focusing on the factors of continuity, particularly in the context of economic strategies, the dynamics of migration and the international geopolitical framework.