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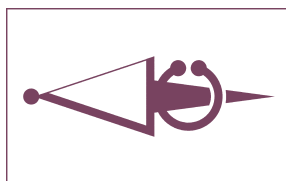
Quaderni di Studi Berberi e Libico-berberi

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

Edited by

ANNA MARIA DI TOLLA - VALENTINA SCHIATTARELLA



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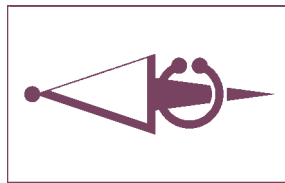
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Introduction

ANNA MARIA DI TOLLA

Libya between Revitalisation New Opportunities and Challenges for the Berbers

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pelt² has underlined the historical importance of the fact that without the Republic there would not have been the conditions for either the Sirti agreement (which sanctioned the union with Cyrenaica) nor the *bay'a* (offered to the leader Idris of Sanusiyya), on the basis of which the fundamental principles for the unification of the country were established.³ The failure of European countries to recognize the Republic of Tripoli, and its disappearance after only a short amount of time have largely erased its existence from history. While the Sanusiyya brotherhood was rewarded for its collaboration with Great Britain in Egypt with the recognition of its leadership in the country after the Second World War and Evans-Pritchard dedicated an interesting hagiographic text on the Sanusiyya (*The Sanusi of Cirenaica*), the "Republic of Tripoli", on the other hand, was left with neither

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The resistance lasted twenty-one years out of a total of thirty-two of colonization (1911-1943) which also saw two world wars that had important repercussions for both the colonizers and colonized. In Libya, there was certainly not very much time for a nationalist elite to emerge and articulate a cohesive answer to colonization, as was instead the case in the neighbouring North African countries of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. As is argued by Ahmida,⁹ the French were able to transform the segmentary North African societies they encountered, re-stratifying their original social structures, educating new elites, creating a new and disinherited urban and rural proletariat, and undermining traditional structures. In the exceptional case of Libya, the Italian colonizers conducted themselves in the country as if the indigenous other did not exist; this approach was further exacerbated with the arrival of the fascists, who put into practice the parallel development of the territorially integrated colony as an Italian province, while the local populations were completely abandoned to themselves. In this sense, Libyan society escaped the brunt of colonial impact, but was nonetheless embroiled in fundamental political changes, which affected the country's traditions and were of great significance in beginning the process of modernization. The problem we are faced with is the scarcity of theories produced from within to interpret the specific changes¹⁰ that took place in Libya. Compared to other countries, only a handful of studies have been published on the colonial experience and its consequences in the political development of the populations of Libya.

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

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

⁸ A. A. Ahmida, *op. cit.*, 2.

⁹ *Idem*, 3-4.

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

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

Historically, as Lacher and Labnouj¹¹ have argued, the key to understanding the Jebel Nafusa is the relationship between the Berber and Arab communities. Most Muslims in Libya belong to the Sunni Maliki tradition, but, primarily in Tripolitania, the Berbers are Ibadi Muslims. The Arabization of Amazigh communities has advanced more rapidly in Libya than in any other country of the Maghreb. The Berbers, who call themselves Amazigh, meaning “free man” and “noble man”, comprise about ten percent of the Libyan population. They have a cultural heritage that pre-dates the Arab conquest of the seventh century A. D. and have developed a culture distinct from any Arab identity.

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

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

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

¹² *Idem*, 259.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

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

Since the first years of Qadhafi's rise to power the Berber identity was considered a "vestige of imperialism", a question that prompted the division of the Arab world and for this reason he took several decisions aimed against the Berbers.¹⁵ He claimed that the Berbers and Tuaregs were of Arab origin and spoke Arabic dialects, so had a policy of Arabisation which was strongly discriminatory. As Baldinetti argued, Arabic was instrumental in forging a Libyan national identity, and it was a power tool used by Qadhafi's regime.¹⁶ Among discriminatory measures, place names were systematically Arabised, books in Berber and about Berbers were burned; law 24 forbade the Amazigh, including the Tuaregs, from giving their children non-Arab names, and cultural celebrations were banned. Under his regime, Amazigh activists were imprisoned or exiled.¹⁷ The Amazigh communities joined in the National Front for the Salvation of Libya (NFSL), plotting to depose Qadhafi's regime. In 1984 the plot was discovered¹⁸ and many Amazigh activists continued their opposition to the regime from abroad. Although the regime had local followers in the Jebel Nafusa, the Amazigh community has always been considered the stronghold of the opposition.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Contents of the volume

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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The International Conference *Libya between History and Revolution: Resilience and New Narrations of Berber Identity* convened at the University of Naples "L'Orientale" from the 15th to the 17th January 2018, was dedicated to the contemporary history of Libya. Its purpose was to understand a reality that is for the most part little known to the vast majority of the Italian public, and this despite colonization, its consequences, and the relations that have always existed between the two countries. Conversely, first the promotion of the colonizers' rationale, then the rhetoric of Qadhafi's regime, and finally the current representations closely related to terrorist emergencies, immigration, and war within and outside the Islamic world, are all well-known and documented.

This volume *Libya between History and Revolution: Resilience, New Opportunities and Challenges for the Berbers* brings together papers by the scholars (from both Italy and abroad) who took part in the conference. The aim of this collection is to provide insights into a range of crucial issues that affected the country as a consequence of its colonial history and informed the uprisings of 2011; the volume looks in particular at the role of the Berbers in Libya through the prism of the new opportunities and challenges that face them today and which were discussed during the three-day international conference.

Anna Maria Di Tolla is Associate Professor at the University of Naples "L'Orientale". She teaches Berber Language and Literature and Contemporary History of Berbers in North Africa. Since she got her PhD in African Studies, AMD has studied the issue of minorities and identity claims in North Africa, with special reference to the Berber Identity Movement. She is the author of several books and essays. Among her most recent publications is the edited volume *Percorsi di transizione democratica e politiche di riconciliazione in Nord Africa*, Editoriale Scientifica, Napoli, 2017. AMD is co-editor of the volume *Emerging Actors In Post-Revolutionary North Africa. Berber Movements: Identity, New Issues and New Challenges*, Studi Magrebini, XV, Napoli, 2016-2017.

Valentina Schiattarella is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Naples, "L'Orientale" and a Fulbright visiting scholar at the University of Colorado, Boulder. She earned her PhD at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris in 2015, with a dissertation on Siwi Berber. She has conducted fieldwork in Siwa (Egypt), where she has collected a large corpus of texts, which are contributing to the documentation of the Siwi language. Some folktales and narrations were published in her book *Berber Texts from Siwa. Including a Grammatical sketch*, Köppe, Köln, 2017.

