**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**


**The social, cultural, and political impact of the British Military Administration on Libya, 1943-1951**


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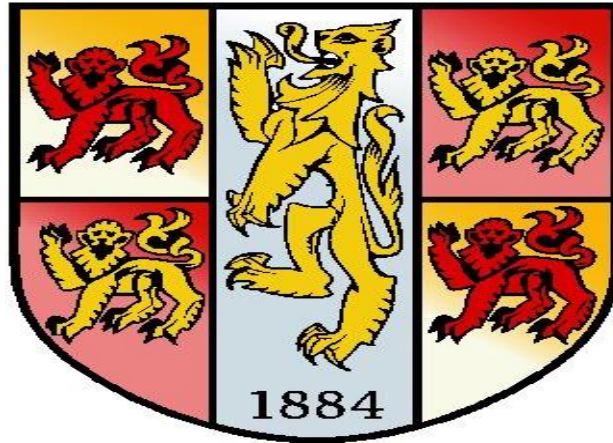**School of History, Welsh History & Archaeology**

**The social, cultural, and political impact of the British Military Administration on Libya, 1943-1951**

A thesis submitted to the University of Bangor partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

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Supervisor

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April 2018

# ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the impact of the British Military Administration (BMA) on social- cultural and political organisations in Libya during the period 1943 to 1951. The thesis is grounded on a careful reading of secondary literature which has been integrated into available official documents available in both Arabic and English archival sources, in addition to new oral data generated from interviews. Its main claim to originality lies in the light that these documents throw on our understanding of the BMA's impact on civil society in Libya.

The thesis adopts a case study approach focusing on specific themes to examine the BMA's impact on education, the press (specifically newspapers), and social, cultural and political organisations in Libya. These are viewed as key areas of concern in developing states since according to the secondary literature, including press debates at the time and available archival documentation, these organisations awakened people's interest in the right to self determination. It is argued that in addition to the major political and economic changes that took place in Libya during this period, it was also a time of revitalisation of social, cultural and intellectual activities, both within Libya itself and in its émigré communities in Egypt and Tunisia. The BMA was characterised by remarkable developments in education, and also saw unprecedented growth in the press and in cultural and voluntary organisations. These associations brought together groups of individuals to create civil society and provide the basis for the political organisations, which were later to evolve into Libya's first fully fledged political parties.

The transitional British administration succeeded in building a system that greatly improved access to education and educational standards for all throughout Libya, while at the same time creating an elite cadre of Libyans who would help administer the country. During British rule, the press also improved in both quality and quantity. The diverse range of publications in Arabic that emerged not only played an important role in covering Libya's journey towards independence but also awakened interest in issues relating to national identity. The social, cultural and political associations that flourished, both at home and abroad, made a major contribution to promoting this national movement by helping to create and shape the coherence and consciousness of Libyans as a nation. The stability that the BMA brought to Libya facilitated the growth of these social and cultural organisations which in turn underpinned the establishment of the political parties that would eventually assume responsibility for running the newly independent Libya.

The findings of the study show that the BMA in Libya enjoyed considerable success in shaping Libyans' attitudes towards the value of education, press freedom and civil society and in preparing Libya for independence. When the British left, the Libyans they had trained demonstrated their abilities in the fields of education and administration. While the British inculcated a national consciousness in the Libyans, it was also clear that Arab nationalism and Pan-Arab unity were also viewed as attractive political alternatives.

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# DEDICATION

To all those who believe in human values as a standard for dealing with others, regardless of their religious or ethnic background;

To all those who respect others, and have regard for the human spirit, and the rights of human beings to live in peace wherever they may be;

To all those who believe in democracy and respect and love for their fellow human beings and their homeland;

To all of them, everywhere in the universe, I dedicate this work.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# 1.CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

The British Military Administration (BMA) era represents an important part of the history of Libya as a nation.[1] This eight-year period from 1943 to 1951 left its mark on various political, socioeconomic and educational aspects of life in Libyan society. This investigation explores the impact of the BMA in Libya from 1943-1951, focusing on the role played by the development of education, press, and socio-cultural and political associations during that period and their link to fostering nationalism.

Amongst other things, this chapter provides a contextual overview of the BMA occupation of Libya in 1942-1951. It starts by presenting the background to the research question and then states the aim and objectives of this thesis. It then outlines the original contribution to knowledge made by this research and describes the limitations of the research and the problems that it presented. The focus then shifts to a discussion of the concept of nationalism followed by an examination of the meaning of nationalism in an Arab and Islamic context. The third section of this chapter addresses the socio-cultural and political factors that are thought to facilitate the creation of nationalism. The research methodology is then discussed, providing a rationale for the approach taken in this thesis to collecting primary and secondary data, in particular the decision to use oral testimony and the difficulties which this presents for the historian. The penultimate section of the chapter addresses historiography. The chapter concludes with a summary of the contents of the thesis, outlining how it has been organised.

## 1.2 The Focus Of This Thesis: The BMA In Libya

Following the Allied victory in World War Two (WW2),[2] the Libyans hoped that they would be able to secure their independence from Italy.[3] However, contrary to their

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[1] Applying the term 'Libya' to this North African territory is a fairly modern development. The origin of the term is ascribed to the Egyptians as far back as the third millennium; the Greeks used it to refer to the whole of North Africa, and the Romans to the region of Cyrenaica. In 1911, Italy adopted 'Libya' as the official name of the colony, which consisted of the Provinces of Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, and Fezzan. See: S. Raza, 'Italian Colonisation and Libyan Resistance: The Al-Sanusi of Cyrenaica (1911–1922)', *A New Journal of African Studies*, 9 (2012).
[2] The four major Allied powers in World War Two were the United Kingdom, the United States of America, the Soviet Union, and France.

hopes and expectations, Libya became subject to BMA[4] from 1943-1951 under a mandate from the United Nations.[5] For ideological reasons, the British government was eager to keep the Soviet Union away from the southern shores of Europe and, as a result, Libya's geographical location was viewed as being of key importance to Britain's strategy of having pro-Western regimes in the region.[6]

The BMA years proved to be a crucial period of transition for Libya and more broadly for the Arab world as a whole. The BMA helped to develop Libya's education system,[7] increasing its number of schools[8] and introducing new, more inclusive educational approaches intended to tap into the potential of all Libyan children, regardless of class or gender. Its policies also encouraged associational life by means of social and cultural activities, including the development of literary societies, cultural organisations and sports clubs. A generally liberal approach to press freedom substantially increased the diversity of local publications available and also helped to stimulate intellectual debate.

These social and cultural developments coincided with the development of a new type of political consciousness within Libyan society, its spread facilitated by returning émigrés and teachers from neighbouring Arab countries who brought with them the latest ideological tendencies.[9] By the start of the 1950s, the people's nationalist aspirations became reality when the United Nations declared Libya to be an independent nation state.

What distinguishes the rule of the BMA in Libya was that many Libyans regarded the British as allies who had rescued them from Italian rule, and as a result Libyan nationalists engaged in a peaceful political struggle which continued to characterise their behaviour throughout the eight years of BMA rule. For a historian, the BMA

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[3] E. E. Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, ACLS history e-book project, (New York, 2001), p.227.
P.Gifford, Libya: The creation of a client state *in:* Louis, R., *Ends of British Imperialism*, (New York, 2006), pp.503-527.

[4] The BMA was originally known as the British Military Government, the name change occurring on 10 March 1943. See: War Office to Mideast for Political Affairs, 10 January 1943, London, The National Archives, TNA FO 371/35660/ J647/77/66.

[5] P. Gifford, Libya: The creation of a client state, *in:* Louis, R., *Ends of British Imperialism*, (New York, 2006), pp.503-527.

[6] A. Pargeter, Anglo-Libyan relations and the Suez crisis, 5(2), *Journal of North African Studies*, (2000), pp.41-58.

[7] See L. D. Turner, The Impact of Western Education on the African's Way of Life, *in* Haines (ed), *Africa Today* (New York, 1968), pp.148-4.

[8] S. Alakad, *Modern Libya,* (Cairo, 1970), p.55.

[9] M. Taylor, Community development and the state, *in:* G. Craig and M. Mayo (eds), *Community Empowerment: A Reader in Participation and Development* (London, 1995), p.99.

period in Libya serves as a fascinating case study of how disparate groups of people can be encouraged unite to achieve a common political goal and the role that educational policy, the press and associational life can play in the creation of a national identity.

## 1.3 Aim And Objectives Of This Research

This study seeks to fill a gap in the research about the impact of the BMA in Libya, and how Libyan communities and the state itself were built by this transitional administration, whose policies helped to create a stable environment where socio-cultural organisations and nationalism flourished. Historians who have written about Libyan history have largely overlooked the period of the British occupation. Indeed, this era does not feature in Libya's own history curriculum, even at more advanced stages,[10] which largely focuses on the Ottoman Empire and the Italian occupation. As a result, Libyan students know nothing about this eight-year period of Libyan history under the BMA. Moreover, Libyan libraries carry few resources relating to it.[11]

This research, then, aims to contribute to the literature by bridging this gap in Libya's history, setting the BMA into the context of the other powers under which Libyans lived, namely, the Ottoman and Italian Empires. It seeks to understand the potential consequences (direct and indirect) of the socio-cultural developments during this period of national and political consciousness-raising that eventually led to Libya gaining its independence. It will highlight the ways in which the British occupation was entirely different from the previous regimes and will focus on how the Libyan people reacted to this new form of governance, which allowed them to pursue their own activities. These activities included forming voluntary organisations, many of which later developed into Libya's first political parties.[12]

The purpose of this research is to carry out a comparative, interpretive analysis of data concerning the BMA in Libya in 1943-1951. It compares the British perspective on this period with the views of Arab historians as a method of establishing possible

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[10] Telecommunication with M. Khalifa, 30 January 2016.
[11] Ibid
[12] H. Charles, Civil Society. http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/civil-society, accessed 18/3/2016 notes that the establishment of new democratic states following the fall of numerous dictatorships in recent times has produced "renewed interest in popular engagement in political life and everything else that relates to the way that political cultures or basic values and beliefs affect the way a state is governed". This has been accompanied by "growing interest in how strengthening civil society can contribute to conflict resolution".

similarities and differences between these two perspectives.

This research focuses on the role of the British in developing social, cultural and political activities in Libya during the period of their rule in the region, with particular emphasis on the educational and journalistic dimensions of this issue. Libya was never a part of the British Empire nor was it a colony; rather it was an occupied territory as a result of WW2. The main aim of this thesis is to explore the style of governance that emerged in Libya under the British during WW2 and immediately after this conflict, and the types of cultural activities and associational life that emerged during this period and the BMA's attempts to strike a balance between promoting Libyan culture and upholding best governance practices. It will also examine how the Libyans came to know about their rights and the impact that liberation had upon the lives of the people who were struggling for independence within their homeland and in exile abroad. In addition, it will focus in particular on the effects of these cultural activities and how they were channelled into organisations, including voluntary political associations. Finally, it will identify those factors that helped to influence the emergence of a distinctive Libyan cultural identity.

Accordingly, the aim of this thesis is to determine the extent to which the BMA supported the social and political evolution of Libyan society by encouraging Libyans to form associations in order to promote cultural and social activities. This aim is related to the following objectives:

1. To identify those developments that affected the lives of Libyans in Libya during the years of the BMA.
2. To trace the changing status of education in Libya during this period, examining the role which the BMA played in formulating educational policies and addressing the problems faced by the national education system.
3. To analyse the role of the official press in Libyan social life during this historical period, determining the extent to which its emergence and establishment influenced the development of a distinctive Libyan cultural identity.
4. To examine the socio-cultural, political and voluntary associations which were formed during the years of the BMA and consider the nature of the contribution that they made to enriching cultural life for the Libyan population.

In order to investigate how the BMA contributed to the development of culture and social life in Libya, four key areas are investigated, beginning with education. This is followed by an examination of the press, and then cultural clubs and libraries in Libya. Finally, this thesis considers political associations. All four of these areas were interrelated and made an equal contribution to learning, understanding and cooperation amongst Libyans. Cultural activities may initially have brought people together, but these associations then gave rise to both educational and political activities. The press functioned not only as a mouthpiece for such organisations but also promoted social and cultural activities and informed the population about new ideas and developments both in Libya and elsewhere in the Arab world.

## 1.4 Original Contribution To Knowledge Of This Research

As the historiography section illustrates, to date very little academic attention has been devoted to the history of Libya, especially that of the BMA period, which saw a series of important developments in the domains of education and the press together with the emergence of large numbers of social and cultural organisations and political movements in this North African country. This research draws on a broad range of English and Arabic primary and secondary sources, thus bringing new perspectives on existing academic knowledge regarding the demise of Italy's influence in its African colonies,[13] a subject which has also received limited coverage to date has received little attention from historians Although a small number of studies in Arabic have focused on Libyans' experience of social and cultural life during this period, no work in English has focused to any significant degree on education and social change in Libya under the BMA. Work on the emergence and growth of nationalist movements in other colonial contexts in general and in Libya specifically, has failed to explore the role played by educational policy, the press, associational life and the development of political and national identity.[14]

Moreover, this study addresses the day-to-day reality of the issues faced by the Libyan state under colonialism, closing the gaps in knowledge by using a broad range of sources, including oral history. It draws on material from interviews with Libyan scholars and with those who were involved directly in the social associations and the

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[13] G. H. Becker, *The Disposition of the Italian Colonies*, *1941-1951* (Geneva, 1952), p.231.
[14] R. Gonem, *The Development of Education in Libya in Recent Times*, p.12.

education system in Libya. In seeking to provide a more balanced view of history, this study has made a significant and original contribution to existing literature, providing a foundation and framework for future researchers who are hoping to focus on social, cultural and educational developments in Libya during the BMA period.

## 1.5 Nationalism and National Identity

This section provides a brief overview of some key concepts relating to nationalism and considers work on the links between education, the press and associational culture and nationality in the colonial context.

In *Imagined Communities,* Anderson suggests that the concept of so-called 'official' nationalism emerged following the formation of popular movements in Europe in the 1820s, considered models by American and French historians.[15] He further argues that historically nations arose during transitions, in which a fundamental cultural shift of some kind occurred. radically altering people's perceptions and frame of reference. In Western Europe, social change, scientific inventions and technological innovations and the rapid spread of ideas brought about the slow decline of old certainties.[16] Smith views nationalism is a function of modernity and the process of modernisation, in which education, technologies of communication and bureaucracy create the structure of the modern state.[17] Khleif argues that the origins of nationalism in European history are linked to the elimination of feudalism and the emergence of a new class order.[18]

Several authors have postulated that nationalist movements in developing countries were essentially anti-imperialist/anti-colonial in character, formed to challenge foreign rule and to demand the right to independence and self-governance.[19] As a result, as Hobsbawm recognised, many post-colonial states collapsed into chaos and disorder once often disparate tribal groups or ethnic communities no longer had a common enemy to fight in the form of a European oppressor.[20]

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[15] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* p.86.
[16] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.36.
[17] A. Smith, *Nationalism theory, ideology, history* (Cambridge, 2001), p.74.
[18] B. Khleif, *Language, Ethnicity and Education in Wales* (Bath, 1980), p.11.
[19] A. H. Birch, *Nationalism and National Integration* (London, 1989), p.4.J. Mayall, *Nationalism and International Socie*ty (Cambridge, 1990), p113; D. Norbu, *Cultural and the Politics of Third World Nationalism* (London, 1992), p.23.
[20] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, 1991), p.164.

While many writers agree that nationalism is a relatively modern concept, there is much less agreement about what nationalism is and what constitutes a nation or national identity.

According to Billig, nationalism involves the creation of the sense of a national identity for those who are said to inhabit or believe they deserve to inhabit their own nation state.[21] For Hobsbawm, nationalism involves demands for autonomy or independence in relation to a defined territorial area.[22] However, Guibernau notes that minorities within a state can maintain their language and culture, even if they do not have a separate, independent state.[23] Miller points to the example of the Kurds who are still considered a nation but have no national territory of their own, instead being scattered across many countries, such as Turkey, Syria and Iraq. Roeder also argues that nationalism is more than an entitlement for a people to govern themselves in their own territory. It also relates to the uniqueness of a specific people and the different elements involved in the process of the making of a nation state.[24]

Anderson regards nationalism as the most powerful civic motivator in the modern world, created by problems of insecurity within the socio-economic and political environment.[25] Within a state, an appointed representative governs the people under the broader concept of nationalism.[26] National interests bind the population to apply and practise given norms in their daily lives. The state gives rights to its people to make them a society.[27] The nationality of an individual within a state provides welfare through enhanced cultural and economic well-being and, in return, the state expects individuals to be loyal.[28]

Social and cultural identities can be categorised as either 'granted' or 'gained'. Nationality is a 'granted' identity meaning that it is not a natural, spontaneous identifier but something which is actively created within the socialisation process.[29] Social interactions amongst the people within a state provide them with a sense of

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[21] Billig, *Banal Nationalism,* p.24.
[22] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, 1991), p.6.
[23] M. Guibernau, *The Nation State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*. (Cambridge, 1996), pp.69-71.
[24] P. G. Roeder, *Where Nation-States Come From: Institutional Change in the Age of Nationalism* (Princeton, 2007) Available at: https://press.princeton.edu/chapters/s8553.pdf. Accessed on 7/10/2016.
[25] J. Anderson, *The Rise of the Modern State* (London, 1986), p.115.
[26] E. Kedourie, N*ationalism* (London, 1966), p.9.
[27] E. Kedourie, *Nationalism*, (Malden, 2000), p.1.
[28] H. Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origins and Background* (New York, 1967), p.16.
[29] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.44-45.

identification.[30] A sense of community emerges as a result of a combination of ideology and practice; this establishes further links amongst individuals and groups and ultimately creates a national identity.

Language, belief and culture are interwoven in arguments concerning nationalism because a common language, belief and culture can bind individuals together in a way that causes them to consider themselves to be a nation, regardless of ethnicity.

Billig observes that social scientists consider that social interaction amongst people who communicate in the same language can help to develop the framework of nationalism as they often seek to find their own identity politically.[31] However, he also notes that states can be monoglot, like Iceland, with its relative social and semantic homogeneity, or polyglot like India, with its vast diversity of languages, religions and cultures. Kedourie illustrates the different inter-linkages that may exist between language, culture and nation.[32] Thus, creation of the USA as a nation was based on a language (English) rather than religion.[33] In Switzerland, on the other hand, a sense of Swiss nationality holds together a multilingual state that does not threaten to fragment along linguistic lines.[34] Sometimes, language is recognised as a symbol of nationalist aspirations, as is French in Quebec, sometimes it is not.

Nations do not necessarily emerge from ethnic communities but common characteristics of ethnicity, such as culture, can be an enduring source of national identities.[35] Religious belief can have a key role to play in shaping nations and nationalism because of its close links to cultural practices and ethnicity. Sometimes, particular religious groups are involved in nationalist struggles, as in the case of Northern Ireland; sometimes, the same groups have no role to play, as in Scotland. The linkage between religion, language and national identity can change. Thus, when the Belgian state was founded in 1830, religious affinities seemed stronger than linguistic differences; more recently, however, the position has been reversed.[36]

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[30] B. William, *Personal Identity, National Identity, and International Relations* (Cambridge, 1990), p.52.
[31] Billig, *Banal Nationalism,* p.13.
[32] M. Stephen, *Language and Minority Rights* (London, 2012), p.61.
[33] A. Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood, Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (London, 2004), p.76.
[34] Billig, *Banal Nationalism,* p.23.
[35] D. Miller, *On Nationalism* (Oxford, 1999), pp.19-20.
[36] Ibid, p.4.

Anderson's highly influential *Imagined Communities* emphasises that one of the means by which national imagination is created and maintained involves rituals. Rituals, including everyday rituals (what Billig refers to as 'banal nationalism'), create a shared imagination, which subsequently develops into nationalism. Rituals of any type develop the population's thinking about the ongoing issues that a nation faces across all levels. Moreover, external threats and challenges further motivate people to maintain these rituals thus reinforcing the development of feelings of nationalism. Smith argues that ceremonial and symbolic characteristics play a decisive role in the success and durability of national identity.[37]

Nationalists prescribe rituals and ceremonies, including the adoption of parades, remembrance ceremonies, anniversary celebrations, coinage, flags, tributes to heroes and memorials dedicated to historical events because signs of this kind serve to recall cultural bonds and endorse shared identity and national unity. Anderson notes that Hegel had previously commented on how the reading of morning newspapers engage the majority of readers in a nation in routines, similar to those followed by people who say morning prayers.[38] Rituals and ceremonies bring people closer to one another and cultural bonds further strengthen identity.

## 1.5.1 Education And The Creation Of National Identity

Given the close links between national identity and socialisation, many authors have made connections between nationalism and education. According to Guibernau, from the nineteenth century onwards the spread of education played a key role in the creation of nationalism in Europe, due to its link with culture and identity. It was used in campaigns to develop national awareness and embed this ideology within communities.[39] Both Hobsbawm[40] and Gellner believe that certain political, technical, administrative and economic conditions are necessary for the emergence of a nation, including a modern educational infrastructure which helps people to adapt to rapid change.[41] For Billig, this rise in nationalism can also be linked to the emergence of industrialisation which brought with it a demand for standardised skills which was best dealt with by means of a centralised system of education which in turn helped to create

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[37] A. Smith, *National Identity* (London, 1991), p.162.
[38] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* p.36.
[39] M. Guibernau, *The Nation State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*. (Cambridge, 1996), p.69.
[40] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.44-45.
[41] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, 1991), p.10.

and reinforce the idea of a homogeneous nation state.[42] This education which is designed to foster development within a nation can take the form of provision of schooling for children and mass literacy campaigns aimed at adults.[43]

Feinberg asserted that education is linked more generally to the growth of nationalism because it gives individuals to means to understand concepts such as power and identity.[44] Educational policies can also be specifically framed to promote ideas of citizenship amongst a nation's children.[45]

Other authors have highlighted the key role that universities and higher education can play in the creation of nationalism. Bechhofer and McCrone note that students become more aware of Nationalist Theory and other nationalist movements, producing leaders who can inspire. Higher education also helps to create a professional cadre who are capable of designing the national agendas for those countries facing nationalist tensions.[46]

There is ample evidence of the importance of education in the rise of the twentieth century anti-colonial nationalist movements. Woddis maintains that education led increasing numbers of Indians to rebel against some of the norms and traditions of Indian life, and to develop an interest in political change.[47] This Westernised elite went on to play a leading role in the rise of Indian nationalism.[48]

Khapoya notes that the introduction of formal education in many parts of Africa has been recognised as having helped to broaden support for the nationalists' search for freedom.[49] Political activists who challenged the presence of colonial states and called for African independence demanded flexibility in the colonial education system that utilised political and moral nationalist thoughts established in Western teaching.[50]

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[42] Billig, p.22
[43] A. Smith, *Nationalism theory, ideology, history* (Cambridge, 2001), p.74.
[44] W. Feinberg, *Common Schools /Uncommon Identities, National and Cultural Difference*. (New York, 1998), p.49.
[45] U. Ozkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (Macmillan, 2010), pp.12-13.
[46] F. Bechhofer and D. McCrone, *National Identity, Nationalism and Constitutional Change*. (Macmillan, 2009), pp.20-21.
[47] J. Woddis, *An Introduction to Neo-Colonialism*. (New York, 1967), p.15.
[48] J. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2nd edn (Manchester, 1993), p.157.
[49] Khapoya Colonialism and the African Experience, *Journal of Pan African Studies*, 3 (2010).
[50] Khapoya, Colonialism and the African Experience, *Journal of Pan African Studies*, 3 (2010).pp.135-136.

Initially, in the nineteenth century, British churches sent Christian missionaries to Sierra Leone, where they helped with the settlement of liberated African slaves, known as the Recaptives.[51] These missionaries also established schools in almost every village that taught English. Large numbers took advantage of this opportunity to learn, with some becoming the Western-educated elites who went on to establish the framework for further development in African countries. The mass education system, together with this educated elite, provided fertile ground for the development of indigenous ideas about African emancipation and the future development of the continent.[52]

The colonial education system helped many Africans to develop social organisations, particularly in the late 1920s, when many educated Africans joined nationalist associations in East, West and South Africa.[53] After WW2, as nationalist sentiments spread, peoples throughout the African continent who had benefited from education during colonial rule demanded autonomy, with their leaders giving voice to these desires.[54]

Examining British educational policy in its overseas territories, Cleveland criticised this on the grounds that although it brought many material advantages to locals, it was designed primarily to serve British imperial and financial interests. Cleveland cites as evidence Lord Cromer's[55] educational policy in Egypt, which had been shaped by his experience in India. He believed that the growth of Western-style educational institutions—especially universities—would create groups of Egyptian intellectuals imbued with nationalist ideals and a sense of frustration over their inferior status.[56] Therefore, he implemented restrictive educational policies intended to confine Westernised graduates to studies in vocational institutes. However, this did not prevent the development of a cadre of Western-educated Egyptian intellectuals who subsequently led their fellow citizens to seek independence from Britain.

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[51] The Recaptives, also known as Liberated Africans, were Africans who had been rescued from slave ships by the British Royal Navy on the high seas after Britain abolished the slave trade. They were then taken back to Freetown (now the capital of Sierra Leone) where they were resettled.

[52] D. van den Bersselaar, *In Search of Igbo Identity. Language, Culture and Politics in Nigeria, 1900-1966* (Leiden, 1998). Available at: http://pcwww.liv.ac.uk/~dvdb/isoii.htm

[53] J. O. Sagay and D. A. Wilson, *Africa, a Modern History: 1800-1975* (London, 1978), p.370.

[54] P. Cammack, D. Pool, and W. Tordoff, *Third World Politics*: *A Comparative Introduction* (London, 1988), p.24.

[55] Lord Cromer was the colonial administrator in Egypt (1882-1914) and had worked in India for several years. W. L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Oxford, 1994).

[56] W. L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Oxford, 1994), p.101

## 1.5.2  The Press And The Creation Of National Identity

Both Anderson and Billig agree that printing changed the appearance and condition of the world and accordingly attribute the rise of nation-state to the importance of printing.[57] Hobsbawm notes that most modern scholars hold the view that standard national languages—whether spoken or written—cannot emerge as such until printing, mass literacy and mass schooling exist.[58]

Anderson claims that prior to the age of print, the Roman Catholic Church easily won every war against heresy in Western Europe due to the fact that it always had better internal lines of communication than its challengers.[59] By the end of the fifteenth century, however, the major centres of Europe had developed printing presses. The function of these presses was to print books on various subjects of importance, including law, medicine and science.[60] These publications also helped to spread new cultural and political ideas amongst intellectuals which contributed to growing debates about the rise of national consciousness. The development of newspapers followed later and these "made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways".[61] Eventually educated native elites increasingly began to challenge their domination by foreign powers and to resist occupation. This educated elite was able to take the lead, using the press to call for the expulsion of foreigners or to call for support for nascent liberation movements.[62]

Anderson and other authors have argued that printed materials and the media not only disseminate ideas about nationalism but also the idea of a nation itself in various ways, some direct, some indirect. The synchronous reading of daily or weekly newspapers can create the sense of a simultaneous national experience for people as they are made aware of events occurring in their own nation and elsewhere. When many citizens read the same thing about world affairs, such as financial crises, wars and alliances between different countries, essentially disparate occurrences can thus be bound together as

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[57] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* p.37. M. Billig, *Banal nationalism*, p.22.
[58] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, 1991), p.10.
[59] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.39.
[60] M. Guibernau, *The Nation State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1996), p.66.
[61] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* p.36.
[62] A. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (London, 1971), pp.65-67.

national experiences.[63] As Khleif notes, newspapers can influence people's minds through their writing, projecting themes of national interests,[64] developing and strengthening these ideas in successive articles. In this way, citizens come to understand different scenarios, framing them into their minds in national perspectives.[65]

Billig argues that editorial writers, feature-columnists and even reporters on business pages in newspapers often use the deictic 'we' as a means of referring to their readers. Sometimes, however, this also implies an overtly national 'us',[66] by highlighting the issues of national cultural interest.[67] There are other routine forms of homeland-making discourse used in newspapers. Billig highlights that the press contribute to the creation of nationalism by publishing the homeland news in its pages.[68] This presents the national home of readers as the context of utterance and places it at the centre of the universe.[69]

The intellectuals and the press play an important role in helping to promote discussion about national issues and in raising national awareness, adding their voices to the calls for complete, independent self-governance and the rejection of foreign powers.

Examples can be found from other colonial contexts in which the press has specifically been linked to a rise in national consciousness. According to Cleveland, for the most part Egyptians expressed their political opinions via the press and, in what may seem a paradox, journalism and the press flourished throughout the period of the British administration in Egypt. Most newspapers openly addressed the question of Egypt's relationship with Britain and also served as a discussion forum for the major cultural and social issues of the day.[70]

In Nigeria, the opinions of Ogbalu[71] were published in nationalist newspapers, one of which was owned by Azikiwe.[72] In one article in *Nigerian Spokesman*, the editor

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[63] Ibid

[64] B. Khleif, *Language, Ethnicity and Education in Wales* (Bath, 1980), p.28

[65] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* p.36.

[66] Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, p.114.

[67] F. Bechhofer and D. McCrone (eds), *National Identity, Nationalism and Constitutional Change* (London, 2009). Available at: http://www.institute-of-governance.ed.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/35939/chap1_intro.pdf.

[68] M. Billig, *Banal nationalism*. p.119.

[69] Ibid, pp.115-116.

[70] Cleveland, *History of the Modern Middle East*, pp.102-103.

[71] F. Chidozie Ogbalu (1927-1990). In the late 1940s the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) led protests against British rule. Ogbalu was an NCNC supporter and an advocate of Nigerian

accused the British of adopting an approach designed to eradicate the Igbo language in favour of English. In this editorial, he adopted the aggressive language then common amongst nationalists,[73] using this medium to defend Igbo which was considered to be an intrinsic part of national identity.

Nehru claimed that the advent and use of the printing press also gave a great stimulus to the development of indigenous Indian literature and languages.[74]

### 1.5.3 Associational Life And The Creation Of National Identity

It was frequently the case that associations originally formed for social or cultural reasons became the precursors for political parties with a nationalist slant. This was the case in Egypt during the first decade of the twentieth century.[75] The Umma party, founded in September 1907, had a moderate programme calling for co-operation with the British.[76] The Egyptian Reform Party, Hizb al-Islah, was founded next, followed by the nationalist party, in an effort to smooth the way for the British departure from Egypt.[77]

The anti-colonial British Indian Association was established in Calcutta, chiefly as a means of raising grievances with the government. It was also concerned with increasing political consciousness across India which led to widespread agitation in 1852.[78] This was one of the factors leading to the creation of the first pan-Indian national organisation—the Indian National Congress, founded in 1885.[79] During the 1920s and 1930s, British attitudes towards India began to shift, partly as a result of Gandhi's protests and the work of other nationalist leaders, such as Jawaharlal Nehru.[80] The Indian National Congress, headed by Nehru, became the focus of a campaign for Indians who wanted to see the end of British rule. After Britain gave self-rule to the

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independence from Britain. See: D. van den Bersselaar, *In Search of Igbo Identity. Language, Culture and Politics in Nigeria, 1900-1966* (Leiden, 1998). Available at: http://pcwww.liv.ac.uk/~dvdb/isoii.htm
[72] Azikiwe was very actively involved in the development of Igbo ethnic identity. See: Van den Bersselaar, *In Search of Igbo Identity.*
[73] Ibid.
[74] J. Nehru, *The Discovery of India.* (New Delhi, 2004), p.346.
[75] A. Adu Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism* (London, 1989), pp.71-72.
[76] P. M. Holt, *Political and Social Change in Egypt: from Ottoman conquest to the United Arab Republic* (London, 1968), p.321.
[77] Adu Boahen, *African Perspectives*, pp.71-72.
[78] J. Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (New Delhi, 2004), p.348.
[79] R. Sadana and V. Dalmia, *The Companion to Modern Indian Culture* (Cambridge, 2012), p.128.
[80] He became the first Prime Minister of India after independence.

Irish Free State in 1921, it became even more difficult to deny self-rule to India.[81] Subsequently, a range of measures was introduced that afforded India with increasing independence.

Similar societies, associations and political parties were formed in other parts of Africa, leading to campaigns against the colonial system.

### 1.5.4 Arab Nationalism

Breuilly contends that Arab nationalism can be understood as a kind of modern anti-colonial nationalism that originated as a separatist movement during the Ottoman Empire, viewing it as a unification movement that was anti-colonial in nature and a product of the encroachment of the industrial world into the Ottoman Empire. The interaction between Arab-Islamic ideas and Western thought in the nineteenth century during the Ottoman Empire, gave rise to thinking about religious reform and Arab nationalism in the Empire's eastern provinces.[82] Gellner also highlights the close links between Islamic reformism and Arab nationalism.[83] In contrast, Smith argues that there was little evidence of development of Arab nationalism across Arab territories, prior to World War I.

Similar to what occurred in many other non-Western nationalist movements, Arab intellectuals paved the way to unity and independence on the basis of a common cultural identity with Arab states sharing a common language and, to a large extent, a particular socio-political and religious legacy.[84] Drawing on Breuilly, Dawisha highlights the role of education in raising political consciousness among young Arabs and in the subsequent development of Arab nationalism. Intellectuals rather than politicians remained at the forefront of these movements which were initially inspired by European scholars and then transformed into a distinctive form of Arab nationalism.[85] These Arab intellectuals produced ideas that helped to bridge short-term differences among different Arab tribes. The prominent role of intellectuals was also

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[81] The National Archives, 'The end of the British Empire in India'
http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/empire/g3/cs3/background.htm#bullet1, accessed 12/12/2014.
[82] A. Dawisha, p.283; M. Ayoub, *Islam and the Third Universal Theory*: *The Religious Thought of Mu'ammar Al-Gadhafi* (London, 1987), p.105.
[83] E. Gellner, *Nation and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1984), p.43.
[84] J. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester, 1992), p.118.
[85] A. Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton, 2003), p.42.

evident in the policies that they devised, targeting education, culture and other areas focusing on Arab nationalism.

Some of the key figures testify to the importance of intellectuals in Arab nationalism.[86] Michel Aflaq's[87] ideas played a significant role in the development of Ba'athist thought and its political movement, the Baathist Party; his intellectual aspirations dominated Syrian and Iraqi politics for many decades. Sati al-Husri,[88] the Arab Fichte, designed an educational system that was intended to inculcate nationalist values in Arab youth in Iraq and Egypt before and after the Second World War.

According to Breuilly, in comparison with pan-Africanism, pan-Arab nationalism appears to be a powerful, coherent movement. He contends that one explanation may be that the Arabs are a nation bound together by language and, to some degree, religion, a fact that makes the intellectual basis of Arab nationalism more plausible than that of pan-Africanism.[89] Smith however maintains that both Islam as a religion and Arabic as a language have proved incapable of identifying a clear direction on the basis of ethnic or territorial norms of nationhood.[90] He argues that Arab nationalism remains a problematic concept due to the fact that in the Arab context the understanding of the term 'nation' varies demographically, geographically, historically and politically.

Aflaq like some other Arab nationalist scholars considered religion, specifically Islam, to be central to arguments about nationalism, arguing that in principle this religion and Arab nationalism are linked, although this may not be followed in practice.[91] Others, however, consider religion as subordinate to Arabism.[92] Bazzaz, for example, maintains that Islam is not a necessary element in the creation of Arab nationalism, pointing to the

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[86] Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, pp.118-119.
[87] Michel Aflaq (1910-1989) was a Syrian philosopher, sociologist and Arab nationalist. Born into a middle-class family in Damascus, Aflaq studied at the Sorbonne. His most notable works were *The Battle for One Destiny* (1958) and *The Struggle against Distorting the Movement of Arab Revolution* (1975).
[88] Sati al-Husri (1882-1968) was born to Syrian parents living and working in Yemen. Al-Husri learned Turkish and French before studying Arabic, and went on to study in Europe where he was exposed to the competing intellectual strands of European nationalism. He is considered a leading figure of Arabism and the mentor of several pan-Arab political parties formed in the twentieth century. A. Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton, 2003), p.49.
[89] J. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, p.149. M. Kramer, "Arab Nationalism: Mistaken Identity," *Daedalus*, Summer 1993, pp.171-206.
[90] A. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1994), p.143.
[91] Al-Salem criticised the pan-Islamic movement on the grounds that governments in the Arab world have acted in ways which run contrary to the basic precepts of Islam. For example, although Islam calls for rich Muslims to distribute their wealth among the members of society so that there would be no poor or needy, this equal distribution of wealth among all Muslims does not exist in practice.
[92] Ayoub, *Islam and the Third Universal Theory*, p.112.

fact that Arab Christians make up nearly one fifth of the total populations of Syria, Jordan and Sudan, and half the population of Lebanon. The Arab League itself asserted that accepting the theory that Islam is an essential element in defining Arab nationalism would disqualify millions of non-Muslim Arabs from standing under this banner. Moreover, Islam as a message has been spread to all people. It is therefore not an exclusively Arab or eastern religion, but universal. If every Muslim in Asia, Africa, and Europe is to be considered a brother to the Arab Muslim in the religious sense, this means that all of them share the same nationality, suggesting a further lack of understanding of nationalism.[93] Al-Housri goes further, arguing that "neither religion nor the state nor a shared economic life are the basic elements of a nation, and nor is common territory."[94]

This relationship between Islam and nationalism as a general concept was one of the key issues to which the state ideology in Libya paid a great deal of attention, especially under the regime of former Libyan leader, Gaddafi. He considered Islam to be the most significant political and cultural weapon against imperialism and Western intellectual domination but as Bruce stresses he vacillated between considering Islam as a global religion and viewing it as the national religion of the Arabs alone, seeing Arab and Islamic identities as being intrinsically linked.

### 1.5.5 The Emergence of Libyan Nationalism

Belhaj notes that outsiders have long helped to transmit the new ideas and knowledge which have influenced cultural developments in Libya, even more so when they decided to settle in Libya.[95] As early as the thirteenth century, the Egyptian scholar, Issael Al-Biyatti, taught in Tripoli and Cyrenaica in addition to numerous other itinerant scholars from Tunisia, Morocco, and Syria who had travelled to Libya to share their knowledge, education, and culture, disseminating ideas of freedom and *Ummah*.[96] These foreign visitors included scholars such as Fakih Abu Al-Hassan and Muhammad Bin Ibrahim Al-Kadaloussi. The latter passed through Libya returning from *Haj* (pilgrimage) in

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[93] Abd al-Rahman Bazzaz هذه قوميتنا[*This is Our Nationalism*], (Beirut, 1967), p.188.
[94]
[95] Belhaj, *Education in Tripoli in the Ottoman Era,* p.92.
[96] Scholars who came to Libya from other Arab countries include the *Fakihs* Abu Muhammad Abdullah Bin Abdelkarim-Elramari, Abu Alabbaset Jajami, and Abu Abdullah bin Ibrahim Abimuslim Alkabbassi. See: A. M. Tijani, رحلة التجاني[*The Travels of Tijani*] (Tunis, 1958), p.157.

Mecca, settled in Tripoli and became a judge there.[97]

However, according to Omar, the Ottomans ruled Libya with a heavy hand, paying no attention to education, social organization or cultural development.[98] This meant that signs of cultural renaissance were not seen until the late nineteenth century, when the Libyan writer Abdulaziz Al-Issawi was the first to establish close ties with other writers and intellectuals outside Libya, acting as a representative of al-Mahdi al-Sanusi, who was the leader of the Sanusiyya movement at that time.[99]

Khadduri argues that the occupation by the Western Powers made a major contribution to the creation of Arab nationalism in Libya. As was the case in other Arab countries in North Africa, the Ottomans supported North African national religious movements. Therefore, religion was one of the most potent factors contributing to the rise and spread of nationalism in North Africa and the principles of Libyan nationalism were intrinsically linked to religious organisations. Unlike Arab nationalism in the Eastern Arab world, Libyan nationalism supported the leading Muslim power and accepted Islam as the basis of state building.[100]

Moussa contends that the cultural and religious similarities created by Islamic civilisation in North Africa helped to forge close links amongst Arab Muslims. These affinities, produced by a core cultural and religious unity, led them to defend each other as a single community (a concept known as *Ummah*) against any foreign intervention.[101] Altalise argues that the Middle East in general, and Egypt in particular, acted as the centre for exchanging new cultural developments and intellectual activity amongst the *Ummah* and it is not surprising that Libya was affected by what was happening in these neighbouring countries.[102] According to Alshaibane, the Libyan students who had studied in Egypt and Tunisia played a key role in transferring new culture and intellectual trends to Libyan society.[103]

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[97] Tijani, *The Travels*, p.228.

[98] Omar, *The History of Cultural Activity and Education in Libya*, p.108.

[99] Also known as the Grand Sanusi (1787-1859), Sanusi was an Algerian scholar, who studied in Fez (Morocco), spent time in Cairo, and then settled in Hijaz (Mecca) in 1820. Two decades later he moved to Libya. See: A. M. Almasrati, الصلات بين ليبيا وتركيا التاريخية والاجتماعية[*Historical and Social Ties between Libya and Turkey*], (Tripoli 1968), p.99.

[100] M. Khadduri, ليبيا الحديثة [*Modern Libya*] (New York, 1966), p.10.

[101] T. Moussa, نضال الليبيين في بلاد الشام 1925-1950 [*The Libyan Political Struggle in the Levant, 1925-1950*] (Tripoli, 1983), p.86.

[102] K. M. Altalise, رفيق شاعر الوطن [*Rafiq, Poet of the Homeland*] (Tripoli, 1971), p.35.

[103] O. T Alshaibane, تاريخ الثقافة والتعليم في ليبيا [*Culture and Education in Libya*] (Tripoli, 2000), p.226.

The reformist movement in Libya was led by intellectuals and educated people. It was a progressive movement that was influenced by the demands of the Arab nationalist movements which had emerged in the Middle East and gained a foothold in Tripoli through magazines and newspapers. According to Shukri, these periodicals included *Al-Manar* [The Beacon], a newspaper launched by Muhammad Rashid Rida in March 1898 in Egypt, and the journal *Al-Muayide* [The Supporter], written by one of the leading religious figures of *Al-Nadha* (the Arab awakening), Muhammad Abduh. Both focused mainly on the reformist approach of Al-Afghani[104] on religious issues and published coverage of social and political problems in the region. Therefore, the emergence of nationalism was closely linked to the fact that Libyans read such articles regularly.

Almasrati argues that other intellectuals were influenced by the reformers Abduh and Al-Afghani, included Ibrahim Seraj al-Din, Ali Ezakouzi, Ahmed Bin Ouyidane, Hassan Ouyidane and Muhammad Alboussiri. These men emerged as the leading intellectuals in Tripoli and were featured in the press calling for legal and economic reform, urging Arabs to accept capitalism.[105]

According to Brocin, Tripoli offered fertile soil for the development of the reformist movement, as it was one of Libya's most developed cities, both socially and economically.[106] One of the key aspects of this movement was its opposition to traditional Islamic laws in the light of the growth of capitalism within Arab societies. This movement was opposed by feudalists and tribal leaders due to their own self-interests.[107]

Whilst Abduh and Al-Afghani advocated modernisation, the Sanusiyya movement wanted a return to the fundamentals of Islam and rejected the influence of Western culture in Libya. Due to this crucial difference in approach, the Sanusiyya did not accept the reformists. They believed that modernisation came at the cost of adherence to traditional Islamic laws, and would have been likely to withdraw their support for the reformist movement; hence it said little about modernisation and capitalism.

The nationalist movement was less strong in Cyrenaica, where it faced pressure from

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[104] Shukri, *Birth of Modern Libya,* p.403.
[105] Almasrati, *Historical and Social Ties between Libya and Turkey*, p.89.
[106] Brocin, *The History of Libya*, p.246.
[107] Ibid.

other influences. [108] The first underground organisation with political aims was established in Tripoli in 1883 by Ahmed Al-Nab Ansari, Hamza Dafer, and Ibrahim Serajal-Din. Following the French occupation of Tunisia in 1881, and the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, its goal was to push for reforms which would prepare Libya for the threat of a similar European occupation, especially given the problems being faced by the Ottoman Empire. Henceforth, despite its lack of radical inclination, this organisation was to reject the centuries-old link between Arab countries and the Ottoman Empire.[109]

When Libya fell under Italian occupation in 1911, despite their best efforts, the Italian authorities were unable to prevent the circulation of magazines such as *Al-Resala* [The Message], *Al-Hilal* [The Crescent Moon] and others, which informed Libyans about current intellectual trends and helped them to understand and read about events in neighbouring Arab countries.[110] Libyan intellectuals were eager to gain access to these publications, even more so when the nationalists asserted that their Italian colonisers planned to cut off all links between Libya and other Arab countries. When the Italian authorities imposed strict new laws affecting all printed matter, Libyan intellectuals were forced to seek other means of communication.

The editor-in-chief of *Majaltlibya,* Omar Fakhri Al-Mhishi, distributed magazines and newspapers from other Arab countries, especially Egypt, secretly through his contacts in Libya. Muhammad Bourkssis, owner of a nationalist bookshop in Benghazi in 1929, also imported books and periodicals from Egypt. These publications were full of articles on Arab history and nationalism, the idea of Pan-Arab unity and the Arab struggle against imperialism.[111] When the Italians banned anti-fascist books and publications, he continued to circulate these clandestinely. This suppression of cultural activities and the press continued from 1928 until the Italians were defeated in WW2. It was not until Libyans were allowed to publish their own newspapers in the period following this conflict that it became clear to what extent they had succeeded in staying abreast of cultural and intellectual developments, despite the difficult conditions that the country

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[108] Omar, *The History of Cultural Activity and Education in Libya*, p.120.
[109] Brocin, *The History of Libya,* p.345.
[110] Juhaidar, *Khalifa Muhammad Al Tales*, p.45.
[111] M. El-Mogherbi, التنشئة الاجتماعية من أطفال المدارس في الجماهيرية الليبية [*The Socialisation of School Children in Libyan Arab Jamahiriya*], (Trípoli, 1978), p.33.

had endured.[112]

It is clear that the press and publications that came to Libya from neighbouring countries played a significant role in the rise of nationalism. These publications reported events in neighbouring countries and elsewhere in the world, especially news about liberation movements that called for the expulsion of colonialists and the replacement of the foreign power by a national government and an independent state with its own flag and anthem. This increased awareness of nationalism among Libyans and helped to develop nationalist sentiments among the Libyans.

## 1.6  Research Methodology

This research investigating the BMA in Libya uses a qualitative approach which includes a case study, systematic analysis, and oral history to achieve the aim and objectives of this thesis. The researcher used data from a range of primary and secondary sources for each of the aspects of this study, combining data from oral testimony gathered by interviews, Arabic newspapers printed during the period under study and archival collections. Earlier historical accounts from primary and secondary sources were compared with sources that have been recently released and critically assessed. Most of the published material on Libyan culture, press and politics and the role of the BMA was written in Arabic rather than English. These Arabic materials were translated into English by the researcher himself.

### 1.6.1  Primary Sources

The main archival sources accessed by the researcher are housed in the Libyan Centre for Archives and Historical Studies which is based at Tripoli University.[113] It was established in 1977 with the aim of collecting material related to the Libyan struggle against Italian colonization and carrying out research on this historical period. The Centre possesses over one million items, including 70,000 images, over 15,000 historical documents and oral history recordings.[114] The Tripoli archive holds records

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[112] Assawi, *The Art of the Press*, pp.115-116.
[113] Formerly known as the Libyan Research and Study Centre for the Struggle against the Italians it was renamed in 2008, after Libya and Italy signed a Friendship Accord. For more about this friendship accord, see: Ronzitti. N, The Treaty on Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation between Italy and Libya: New Prospects for Cooperation in the Mediterranean, *Bulletin of Italian Politics* 1(1), 2009, 125-133.
[114] http://libsc.org.ly/mrkaz/index.php

and files which also contained many letters, appeals and communications from Libyans to the administrative officials (British and Libyans) about matters of local interest.

The researcher also made use of the National Library in Benghazi. Established in 1972, it houses Libya's main collection of academic publications (some 150,000 volumes), theses and local periodicals. It also contains rare books, several decades of reports issued by the Libyan authorities and official correspondence between Libyan political leaders about political activities. Unfortunately, many of the documents that were previously stored in the archive were lost during the 2011 Revolution and its aftermath, or as a result of negligence by officials.

In addition to this official correspondence in the Libyan archives, there were many items of personal correspondence between Libyan politicians and intellectuals. Often these were more informal expressions of individual opinions, particularly on the issue of independence and on negotiations intended to settle disputes between political parties in Tripoli and Cyrenaica. Although much of this correspondence dealt with the issue of national unity, it also provided insights into developments in education and the media under the BMA.

Information from the Libyan archives was supplemented by material from the National Archives at Kew, London. These included Cabinet Office (CAB) minutes, files and reports concerning the working party delegation sent to Libya by the War Office (WO). The Records of the Colonial Office (CO) were also consulted, in particular the Chief Administrator's Annual Reports concerning the future of Italian colonies. These reports were usually concerned with social, cultural, political and economic developments in Libya especially with the activities of local political actors. Foreign Office (FO) documents and reports were also useful, including the Report on the Libyan Press Delegation to London, and correspondence between BMA officials and the FO regarding civil service matters in occupied territory.

Other valuable sources of information were the reports on political activities in Libya, the Annual Reports produced by the Chief Administrator of the BMA of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, correspondence between the Civil Affairs Agency in Cairo and its Tripoli branch, as well as the monthly political intelligence reports. These documents, written by UK government officials and civil servants, provide further evidence on British perspectives on official policy during the BMA period in Libya. Clearly, primary resources of this kind "are not written with a view to inform historians or political

scientists" but "are facts in themselves not merely the representation of facts".[115]

Newspapers published in Libya during the BMA period were also considered to be a useful primary source. Most of these are now available in digital format while original hard copies can be found in the Libyan Centre for Archives and Historical Studies. Two types of newspapers were considered: those published under the aegis of the BMA, such as *Tarablus Al-Gharb* [West Tripoli], and those published locally by Libyans such as *Al Akbar* [The News]. These provided British and Libyan perspectives on the period under study.

Although periodicals constitute an important source in this research, Thompson notes that a number of factors can undermine the validity of newspaper accounts as historical evidence. First-hand accounts cited by historians may be inaccurate at source since they are based on the personal perceptions of events by eyewitnesses reported by journalists.[116] This process of re-presentation of events may involve, for example, unintentional misinterpretation of the original account by a reporter or deliberate journalistic bias for political purposes or to appeal to the tastes of local readers. Furthermore, editors may choose to deliberately omit or play down the political or cultural significance of events or even report events that never happened, particularly if they are subjected to personal intimidation.[117]

## 1.6.2 Secondary Sources

The secondary material used in this study largely took the form of books and journal articles written in both English and Arabic by Arab researchers (Libyans, Tunisians and Egyptians) who discussed the BMA period in Libya from various perspectives. The major emphasis of these publications was on BMA policy towards Libyans and the impact that the British administration had on cultural, social and political life in Libya at the time. Most of these secondary sources were accessed in the UK at the libraries of Bangor University, Newcastle University, and Northumbria University, and in Libya at the Universities of Tripoli and Sabha and the UNESCO Library.

## 1.6.3 Oral Testimony from Interviews

Thompson argues that historians examining oral evidence are able to draw on the

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[115] P. Burnham, P. Gilland *, Research Methods in Politics* (London, 2004), p. 166.
[116] P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past* (Oxford, 200), p.120.
[117] P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past* (Oxford, 200), p.120.

experience of scholars from other disciplines including economics, politics, and sociology. Social scientists in particular have developed methods of using oral evidence from interviews to supplement other sources.[118] Abrams argues that oral history exists in four forms: the original interview, the recorded version of this, the written transcript, and the historian's interpretation of the interview material.[119]

Thompson points to the fact that many historians still generally feel happier citing a published document rather than a taped interview. This preference has been formed in part from their knowledge that as far back as WW2, taped and filmed evidence have been faked, and that new digital technology provides even greater opportunities for distortion.[120] However, according to Samuel and Thompson, oral history can be a powerful means of constructing people's story, showing how memories are not only a means of representing the past but also understanding their continuing historical force in the present.[121] Oral history can provide the means to give voice to underprivileged minorities and bring recognition to spoken cultures.[122] As such it can offer new avenues of understanding of a research topic.

However, oral history has its own specific limitations and weaknesses as a primary source, and can present some practical and methodological difficulties. Abrams emphasises that individual memories recovered through oral history are not wholly reliable but some of the details they provide reconnect with the reality of the history of communities through the recounting of events.[123] Thompson suggested that oral testimony evidence needed to be validated in the same way as other historical documents by ensuring its authenticity, and considering its provenance and the identity of the author and his role in society.[124] Furthermore, the sample of interviewees may not have been representative of opinions and experiences during 1943-1951 and it is possible that other informants with more relevant experiences were not located. For these reasons, information from the interviews was cross-referenced with copies of correspondence, and published materials to gain insights into the impact of BMA policy

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[118] P. Thomson, *The Voice of the Past* (Oxford, 2000), p.119.
[119] L. Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London, 2000). p.9
[120] Thomson, *The Voice of the Past,* p.125. The Secretary-General of the Libyan civil service highlighted problems of validity of the oral testimony in the National Library of Libya in 2008. http://www.aljazeera.net/news/cultureandart/2009/11/12/
[121] R. Samuel and P. Thompson, *The Myths we Live by* (London, 1993), p.20.
[122] Ibid, p.2.
[123] Abrams, *Oral History Theory, p.79.*
[124] Thomson, *The Voice of the Past,* p.199.

and how this was perceived at the time by Libyans. [125]

The researcher approached participants with the assistance of a number of lecturers from Tripoli University who suggested potentially useful informants from different backgrounds who had been involved in education or taken an active part in establishing social and political organisations in the period 1943-1951. Following Samuel and Thompson's suggestion that interviews should focus, first and foremost, on the participant's role as eyewitness, exploring their particular experiences and personal perceptions of the times in which s/he lived,[126] the researcher conducted interviews with a number of Libyan participants to obtain information about the events that happened during the period of study (1943–1951). These included Mukhtar Alasoud,[127] Mahfoud Alturke,[128] Ahmed Ali, Hamad Alsalme, Mohammed Saeed Alakecat,[129] Salaam Mubarak[130] and Mohamed Khalifa.[131] Ali Mustafa Misrati, who had been a member of *Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi* (the National Congress Party) in Tripoli in 1948, was unavailable to participate in the interview due to poor health. The former Minister of Information and Culture (1964–1967), Khalifa Al-Tlesi, who would have been a useful source of information, unfortunately died in 2010, just before this study started. All interviews were conducted in Arabic (the first language of both the researcher himself and all participants).

Thompson emphasises that the oral historian must prepare adequately before conducting an interview.[132] Thus, in this study, a semi-structured interview approach was used, with the researcher devising an interview guide consisting of a series of prepared opening

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[125] Thomson, *The Voice of the Past* (Oxford, 2000), p.265.
[126] Samuel and Thompson, *The myths we live by* (London, 1993), p.62.
[127] Mukhtar Alasoud (1931-2012) studied under both Libyan and Italian education systems. He was a teacher and founder member of the Tripoli Union Sports and Social Club, and a Libyan TV presenter. He was interviewed on 15 June 2011.
[128] Mahfoud Alturke was born in Tripoli in 1932, and received his early education in Qur'anic and Italian schools in Libya. He was interviewed on 1 July 2011.
[129] Mohammed Saeed Alakecat was interviewed on 22 September 2015.
[130] Salaam Mubarak was born in 1931 in southern Libya and began studying the Qur'an and Arabic aged five. He entered Misrata elementary school during the Italian era, when his father moved there from Fezzan. He later moved to Tripoli in 1945, and was amongst the first cohort to study there in the modern secondary school system under the BMA. He remembered helping to remove debris from the school building which had been bombed during the war with his fellow students in order to make it ready for reopening. He was interviewed on 1 July 2011.
[131] Mohamed Khalifa lectures in modern and contemporary Libyan history at Sabha University and holds a PhD from the University of Nilian, Libya. He was also Head of Cultural Affairs at the Libyan Embassy in Sudan 2009-2013. He was also Vice-President of the Sudanese Libyan Brothers Association in Sudan. He was interviewed on June 2012.
[132] Thomson, *The Voice of the Past* (Oxford, 2000), p.225.

questions concerning the informant's (interviewee's) role in encouraging social, cultural and political activities during the time they were students, teachers or young parents, and their opinions or views on the BMA's policies.[133] These questions were then followed by a freer discussion with each interviewee and leading questions were avoided,[134] with participants being encouraged to talk freely about their recollections of events that happened during the BMA era in Libya, while the researcher focused on taking notes.

Conducting the interviews proved to be both challenging and time-consuming. Firstly, it was necessary to travel to Tripoli and Benghazi and some of more remote areas of Libya. Also, accessing information from older interviewees may be difficult, as memories may fade with age. According to Thompson, after the age of 30, an individual's immediate memory begins to show a progressive decline.[135] This can be exacerbated by the fact that the past event may no longer be relevant to "the needs and the interests of the living people which normally stimulate remembering and recalling".[136] This was reflected in the fact that it took many hours to obtain the relevant information from the participants. The interviews were sometimes carried out in piecemeal fashion, allowing informants time for breaks, meaning that sometimes two visits were required to complete the interview.

The greatest problem encountered by the researcher came from the Arab Spring events in 2011 which profoundly affected the research process, effectively bringing this project to a standstill for a long time. The original intention was to conduct more interviews and access additional archival material in libraries in various Libyan cities, especially Benghazi University. However, the seriousness of the security situation in Libya, over which the researcher had no control, meant that it was simply not feasible to travel in order to conduct further interviews or consult extra material.

The study also benefitted from discussions focusing on the BMA period with Libyan academics in their university offices or public places, such as *Nadi-Tthad* (Tripoli Union Sports and Social Club). Interviewees included Dr Mohamed Almahde (Sabha

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133 Thomson, *The Voice of the Past,* p.225.
134 Thomson, *The Voice of the Past,* pp.138-229.
135 Thomson, *The Voice of the Past,* p.136.
136 Ibid, p.143.

University); Dr Fasel Mousa (Sabha University and the Centre for African Studies); Dr Mohamed Ali (Head of Arabic and Cultural Department, Sabha University).

### 1.6.4 Data Analysis

King argues that archival research as a technique has lost much "of its privileged position as a taken-for-granted historical method" [137] and that it is critical while analysing this material to draw on other alternative forms of evidence and to consciously deploy these to determine its potential and limitations. [138] This need to access and evaluate diverse and often contradictory interpretations of events is now of central importance to the disciplinary identity of history. Therefore, this research adopts a comparative triangulated approach to data collection. Archival investigation served as the main source of information, with recently released and newly discovered sources being compared with existing archive material. However, the researcher did not rely solely on the reports and correspondence written by British or local staff affiliated with the BMA, or on the Libyan archive sources since it is assumed that all these sources reflected a particular local perspective that would produce a particular bias, affecting their objectivity.

In order to arrive at a more reliable and valid interpretation of available sources, data from archival sources has been supplemented by other forms of information from Libyan and non-Libyan primary and secondary sources relating to the British Administration in Libya, including oral testimony from semi-structured interviews, to help ensure the validity of the interpretations of various archival documents and accounts. It is acknowledged that oral testimony has its own inherent problems, as previously noted.

## 1.7 Historiography

There is a general lack of historiography of Libyan history, and as Bravo, Davite and Jalla note, this is particularly true of the country's fate under Italian colonialism and particularly during the 1940s because "so far only scattered fragments have been available" and "many experts find it difficult to put their expertise into writing, let alone

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[137] M. King, 'Working with/in the Archives', in S. Gunn and L. Faire (eds) *Research Methods for History* (Edinburgh, 2012), p.13.
[138] King, 'Working with/in the Archives', p.13.

write a book or organise an adequate circulation of what they had written".[139] Kelly confirms the paucity of published studies concerning the demise of the Italian colonies.[140] Lemselaty also points to the lack of work concentrating on socio-cultural developments in Libya in the twentieth century generally, and specifically during the period being examined in this study.[141] This research aims to address these gaps by exploring the impact of the BMA in Libya from 1943-1951 and focusing on the role played by the development of education, press, and socio-cultural and political associations during that period.

Although a number of Arab and Western sources were identified that address these themes, none attempts to cover more than one of them. In addition, none have chosen to focus exclusively on the links between Libya's socio-cultural and political life and the project of nation-building, solely discussing this in a fragmentary and secondary manner.

The vast majority of western historiography considers the resistance in Libya, particularly that in Cyrenaica, as a 'nationalist' struggle, having been influenced by Edward Evan Pritchard's work. Pritchard served as a political officer in the BMA of Libya in 1942, taking part in discussions concerning the future of Libyan independence and the role to be played by the leader of the Sanusiyya, Idris Al-Sanusi.[142] Pritchard's work reflects the British position vis-à-vis this movement, stressing that during the Ottoman period the tribes in Cyrenaica had seen themselves as a nation as a result of the Sanusiyya while the anti-colonial struggle during the Italian period highlighted the political features of the religious order.[143]

Anyone wishing to evaluate the effect of nationalism on the establishment of the Libyan state cannot do so without consulting four key works, the first being Majid Khadduri's book, *Modern Libya: A Study in Political Development,* which is still considered to be the only organic work on Libyan nationalism. While it remains an invaluable reference work, it mainly analyses the international political evolution of independent Libya during its first decade of existence and pays little attention to the period of Italian

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[139] A. Bravo, L. Davite and D. Jalla, Myth, impotence, and survival in the concentration camps. In R. Samuel and P. Thompson, *The myths we live by* (London, 1993), p.96.
[140] Kelly, '*Britain, the United States, and the End of Italian Empire in Africa 1940–52*', p.51
[141] N. Lemselaty, *Political Orientalism in Libya in the First Half of the Twentieth Century* (Tripoli, 1982).
[142] Muhammad Idris al-Mahdi al-Sanusi (1889-1983) was the grandson of Muhammad ibn Ali al-Sanusi, the founder of the Sanusi Order. He became the first King of Libya on 24 December 1951.
[143] E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica* (Oxford, 1949).

occupation prior to WW2.[144]

Lisa Anderson acknowledges that her work is mainly a comparative study from the perspective of a social scientist rather than a historian, the emphasis of which is on "the structures of social and political organization" in Libya.[145] Her study constitutes a useful starting point for work on the formation of nationalism and state building in Libya as it combines literature from both Italian and Libyan perspectives. Anderson claims that state formation in Libya began in the second half of the eighteenth century, as a result of the reforms undertaken by the Ottoman government. This led to the formation of a new state bureaucracy and the weakening of the traditional social organisation, which had been based on the tribe.[146] She views the Ottomans' role as a positive one, maintaining that the Italian colonial administration destroyed Ottoman institutions while failing to develop its own bureaucracy. As a result of this, she argues, kinship regained prominence as the political frame of reference after independence in 1951.

Ali Abdullatid focuses mainly on Libya's social transformation in the nineteen century, prior to the Italian occupation, but also analyses resistance to and collaboration with the Italian occupation from 1911 to the end of armed resistance against the Italian regime with the death of the resistance leader Omar Al-Mukhtar[147] in 1931. He viewed this as the period in which national identity emerged. Abdullatid argues that the Sanusiyya movement progressively gained political substance and developed the infrastructure of the Libyan state. However, he claims that this politicisation was not simply a post-war development and traces its beginning to the fact that the founder of the Sanusiyya order

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[144] Khadduri was born in Mosul (Iraq) in 1909 where he lived until he left to study at the American University in Beirut (Lebanon) in 1928, receiving his degree in 1932. He followed this with a PhD in International Law and Political Science in 1938. From 1939 to 1947 he worked for the Iraqi Ministry of Education. He was a member of the first Iraqi delegation to the United Nations in 1946. See: M. Khadduri, ليبيا الحديثة [*Modern Libya*] (New York, 1966).

[145] L. Anderson, *The State and Social Transformation in Libya and Tunisia, 1830-1980* (Princeton, 1986), p.12.

[146] Tribe is defined here as "a system of social organisation which includes a social group, groups of villages, districts, or lineages, and normally includes a common territory, language, and culture. The elements constituting a tribe may or may not be co-ordinated by formal or centralised political power. Ideally, the term implies a large element of solidarity based on strongly shared primary sentiments. Such solidarity becomes contractual as the tribal organisation becomes more formally organised". See: J. Gould and W. L. Kolb, *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences* (Glencoe, Illinois, 1964), p.729.

[147] Omar Al-Mukhtar is a national hero, often described as a Libyan martyr. Originally a teacher of the Qur'an in a Sanusiyya *Zawiya*, following the Italian invasion, he led the Libyan resistance, commanding a small but mobile force of Bedouin guerrillas. He supplied effective leadership and evaded capture for some 20 years. Following his eventual capture, the Italians publicly executed him by hanging in September 1930. See: M. Almatardy, جهادا ليبيين في نصف قرن [*Fifty Years of Libyan Jihad*] (Tripoli, 1991), p.53.

had focused on the need for good education as a means of resisting the invasion of North Africa by foreigners especially Europeans.[148]

Dirk Vandewalle examines the formation of modern Libya from its independence until the military coup in 1969. He also analyses relations between Libya and the West, particularly the United States, during this period until Libya re-joined the international community in December 2003 by agreeing to put a halt to its efforts to obtain weapons of mass destruction.[149] Although the foreign interventions in Libya were more intrusive in the pre-independence era, Vandewalle views these as being instrumental in the development of the Libyan state and concludes that their impact has been mixed but overall more negative than positive. However, he focuses more directly on economic development rather than socio-cultural themes.

In addition to these four key works, Scott L. Bills' book, *The Libyan Arena,* examines Anglo-American plans for North African decolonisation following WW2. [150] The disposition of Italy's former colonies, Libya, Eritrea, and Somalia, became the responsibility of the Council of Foreign Ministers, a body of representatives from the four major powers with a vested interest in the region, namely, Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Bills focuses on the events preceding the UN discussions that led to the creation of the modern Libyan state, making it a useful source on this period specifically. He argues that the four Allied powers ultimately played a positive role in securing Libyan independence but fails to analyse in any depth how they helped to prepare Libyans to administer their independent state.

As its title suggests, Al-Zawi's book-length study, *The Libyans' Jihad in Exile: 1924-1952,* focuses on the experiences of Libyan émigrés, particularly those who went to Egypt. As a result of the Italian occupation, many Libyans were forced to leave their homeland, preferring to live in the neighbouring countries of Chad, Syria, Tunisia, Sudan and Egypt where the respective authorities provided assistance. After the Italians were expelled by the British forces, this allowed the Libyan exiles to return. The British were clearly interested in using the skills, abilities and capabilities of Libyan refugees who had been educated for the good of their fellow Libyans and the BMA employed

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[148] A. Abdullatid, *The Formation of Modern Libya* (New York, 1994), pp.100-173.
[149] D. Vandewalle, *Libya since 1969: Qadhafi's Revolution Revisited* (London, 2008).
[150] S. L. Bills, *The Libyan Arena, the United States, Britain, and the Council of Foreign Ministers 1945-1948* (Kent, 1995).

many in jobs in administration.[151] This study sheds light on the major role that these exiles played in establishing social, cultural and political organisations and involving their fellow Libyans in these activities during the time of BMA. Al-Zawi agrees with Khadduri's opinion that Libyans, especially those who joined and participated in political groups across the various parts of Libya, made great efforts to achieve national unity after WW2.[152]

Another book by the same author, *Jihad of Heroes in Tripoli*, was originally published in Cairo in 1944, where he lived in exile for many years. This is considered to be the most detailed source concerning the Libyan resistance against the Italians, an anti-colonial struggle which Al-Zawi frames in nationalist terms, claiming it was fought for *Alwatan* (the nation). However, the book's accuracy has been questioned by some Libyan historians since Al-Zawi was living in Egypt when he wrote this work, meaning he could not have been an eyewitness to the events he describes. Nonetheless, this work is still used as the main local reference by anyone writing about Libyan anti-colonial resistance. [153] Both of Al-Zawi's books view foreign interference in Libya's development in largely negative terms, with some exceptions for those cases where foreign states played a role in securing independence from the Italians.

In relation to the development of the education system in Libya, Fuad Shukri's book *The Sanusiyya, Religion and State* focuses specifically on the Sanusiyya *zawiya* and its links to Sufi lodges and Islamic education.[154] His work explores the Islamic influence on Libyan education from the establishment of this movement in the eighteenth century by the founder, Imam Muhammad ibn Ali Al-Sanusi in 1787, to the defeat of Italy in Libya in 1943 during WW2. He posits that Islamic teaching, and in particular Sufism, had a positive impact on encouraging and then shaping the development of educational institutions and practices in Libya. Islam is seen by Shukri as a domestic, Libyan force that is also inherently linked to and shaped by external actors. Shukri maintained close links with Libya where he had strong connections with Sanusiyya elements, when he was Director of Education in Egypt, and later became advisor to the Libyan politician

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[151] T. Al-Zawi, جهاد الليبيين فى ديار الهجرة [*The Libyans' Jihad in Exile: 1924-1952*] (London, 1985).

[152] Al-Zawi, جهاد الليبيين فى ديار الهجرة [*The Libyans' Jihad in Exile: 1924-1952*] (London, 1985).

[153] T. Al-Zawi, جهاد الابطال في طرابلس الغرب [*Jihad of Heroes in Tripoli]* (London, 1984), p.20.

[154] M. F. Shukri, السنوسية دين ودولة [*The Sanusiyya, Religion and State*] (Cairo, 1948). *Zawiya* is also the Arabic term used to refer to a place where children were taught basic literacy skills. Later these lodges served as part of the resistance movement against the Italian invasion of Libya.

Bashir al-Sadawi.[155] In 1949, Shukri joined the Libyan Liberation Committee,[156] and was a member of the Tripoli delegation to the United Nations.[157]

Shukri's book remains the most important reference work in Arabic on the Sanusiyya movement and its struggle under Italian colonialism. He argued that the Sanusiyya formed a nucleus of resistance to the Italian colonial regime. As the nationalism fostered by unified resistance to the Italians gained adherents, however, the religious fervour of devotion to the movement began to wane, particularly after the Italians destroyed Sanusi religious and educational centres during the 1930s. Nonetheless, King Idris,[158] the monarch of independent Libya, was the grandson of the founder of the Sanusiyya movement, and this status gave him the unique ability to command respect from the disparate parts of his kingdom.[159]

Shukri's other book, *The Birth of the Modern State of Libya*, also focuses on Sanusiyya and the pro-Libyan independence activities in which the author was engaged prior to the Libyan cause being taken up by the United Nations. This activity focused on cultural and social aspects, especially education in Quranic schools, as a first step, and then went into making schools available to children. He also participated in the negotiations between Libyans in Tripoli and Cyrenaica concerning the unification of these separate provinces, giving him an insider viewpoint.[160] Pelt describes Shukri as the primary author of the Tripoli Memorandum concerning constitutional development that was addressed to Idris Al-Sanusi. According to Pelt, the document was clearly the product of an astute political mind and although it was presented on behalf of Tripoli it was largely inclusive enough to accept the Cyrenaican claims.[161]

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[155] Bashir al-Sadawi (1884-1957) was born in Homs, east of Tripoli. In 1937, he was appointed adviser to King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, founder of modern Saudi Arabia. In 1946, he returned to Tripoli to play a major role in Libya's attempts to obtain independence, founding the National Congress Party in 1948. In 1951, following independence, King Idris expelled al-Sadawi to Lebanon for his involvement in political activities. See: R. M. Coury, *The Making of an Egyptian Arab Nationalist: The Early Years of Azzam Pasha, 1893-1936* (London, 1998), p.200.

[156] Its aim was to bring together different nationalist groups from both Tripolitania and Cyrenaica and to act as an intermediary among the parties.

[157] British Military Administration of African Territories, Cairo. Tripolitania: Monthly political intelligence summaries, 12 August 1948, London, The National Archives, WO 230/206.

[158] Muhammad Idris al-Mahdi al-Sanusi (1889-1983) was the grandson of Muhammad ibn Ali al-Sanusi, the founder of the Sanusi order. He became the first King of Libya on 24 December 1951.

[159] M. F. Shukri, السنوسية دين ودولة[*The Sanusiyya, Religion and State*] (Cairo, 1948).

[160] M. F. Shukhri, مبلاد دولة ليبيا الحديثة, وثائق تحريرها واستقلالها[*The Birth of the Modern State of Libya: Edited Documents concerning Independence*] (Cairo, 1957).

[161] A. Plet, *Libyan Independence and the United Nations: A Case of Planned Decolonization* (New Haven, 1970), p.489.

As its title suggests, Omar's book, *The History of Cultural Activity and Education in Libya, from the Beginning of the Islamic Conquest to the Ottoman Era*, offers a general survey of culture and education in Libya since Ancient Greek times, through to the advent of Islam, and later the Ottoman and Italian regimes, ending with the BMA. Omar agrees with Shukri in that that the Sanusiyya movement played a major role in spreading education in Libya, especially religious education in its early stages. Some other subjects were later included, such as mathematics and science. He also confirms that the Sanusiyya was a religious movement and played a prominent role in the Libyan resistance, with most of its leaders being members of the Sanusiyya, including Ahmad al-Sharif and Omar al-Mukhtar. Omar's work provides a panoramic overview of socio-cultural and educational trends, but, due to the scope of the work, he is unable to offer any detailed historical analysis of these topics. Though Omar does not discuss the education polices implanted by BMA and their impact in depth, he mentions in passing the growth of Libyan education at that time and role played by Libyan intellectuals in independence.[162]

Said's 2004 doctoral thesis on *Cultural Life in Libya* specifically explores the history of cultural activities in Libya but is largely dependent on Arabic material and adopts an Arab perspective. Said shares the views of Omar and Shukri, highlighting the role played by the Sanusiyya movement in introducing religious education throughout Libya. He also notes its major impact on the Libyan resistance against the Italians. However, he does not provide a balanced judgement of the historical facts, seeing the BMA as a foreign occupying force, ignoring the fact that its policies supported Libyans to actively develop socio-cultural organisations. Said also places significant emphasis on the role of the returning Libyan émigrés.[163] Although he acknowledges the existence of the schools introduced by the BMA, he does not discuss the longer term impact of their educational policies and their crucial importance in preparing Libya's youth to occupy administrative positions when power was finally transferred. He does not include any detailed discussion of the role that the press played in disseminating ideas and policies.

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[162] A. M. Omar, *The History of Culture Activity and Education in Libya from the beginning of the Islamic Conquest until the Ottoman Era*. (Beirut, 1971).
[163] M. K. Said, الحياة الثقافية في ليبيا [Cultural Life in Libya], unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nelan (2004).

The second key theme that emerges in the historiography of related literature is the development of the press in Libya, with two works being of particular note. Ali Mustafa Almasrati's,[164] *Fifty Years of the Press in Libya: An Analytical Study* is considered one of the very few publications to have dealt with the history and development of the Libyan press. His book traces the history of the Libyan press from its emergence in 1866 during the Ottoman era, through the ups and downs of the Italian colonial phase, starting in 1911, until the end of the Second World War and the beginnings of literary journalism in Libya. Mustafa argues that the Italian occupation represented the worst time in Libya's press history since only Italian publications were allowed. He also highlights that, under the BMA, more liberal attitudes not only allowed the press to flourish but free expression. For the first time in Libya, the newspapers were involved in political events and they provide details about political activities including the establishment of political parties.[165]

Louba's work, *The Libyan Press: Political Affiliations and Economic and Social Trends* addresses the development of local newspapers in Libya and their political affiliations and the role they played in spreading public awareness among citizens. While Mustafa described the whole period under the BMA as the Golden Age of the Libyan press, Louba argues that the BMA's policies with regard to press freedom initially followed similar lines to those of the Italians, in that they deprived Libyans of the right to develop their own publications. He concludes, however, that the BMA was the only foreign power that gave Libyan citizens the right to publish newspapers, and pays tribute to the large number of publications which appeared during the eight years of their rule. [166]

Louba's study confirms the fact that the quantity and quality of Libyan newspapers was the result of the BMA's policies because it responded to citizens' demands for the right to publish their own newspapers. Even though the BMA temporarily suspended

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[164] Ali Mustafa Almasrati was born in Alexandria, Egypt, where his family had fled during the Italian invasion of Libya. He is well-known Libyan intellectual and political activist and has written about Arabic fiction, heritage, history, translation, and the Libyan community in exile. After obtaining an education degree from the Faculty of Arabic at Al-Azhar University in 1946, he then taught at a school for Coptic Christians in Shubra. He was arrested after joining demonstrations demanding the withdrawal of colonial rule from Egypt. In 1948, he joined the Libyan National Congress Party and was one of the dissenting voices demanding the end of colonial rule. In 1960 he was elected a member of the Libyan House of Representatives. See: Ali Mustafa Al Masrati, http://www.alwasat.ly/ar/news/culture/49283/
[165] A. M. Almasrati, صحافة ليبيا في نصف قرن ، عرض ودراسة تحليلية لتطور الفن الصحفي لليبيا [*Fifty Years of the press in Libya: an analytical study*]. 1st edn (Beirut, 1961).
[166] K. A. Louba, *The Libyan Press: Political Affiliations and Economic and Social Trends: 1943-1952* (Benghazi, 2008).

publication of some newspapers such as *Al-Watan* during the transition period, fearing that Libyans might rebel against their policies, suspensions of this type were usually short-lived and newspapers were allowed to resume publication.

Karfa is one of the very few researchers to have dealt with the history of the Libyan labour movement as a form of political association in *The Labour Movement in Libya, 1943-1969.* Again, this theme is explored against the backdrop of foreign intervention or interference, with Karfa arguing that the Americans, French and British were actively involved in the distribution of publications on trade union affairs in the colonies, where they helped to create unions annexed to the Federation of Free Trade Unions in Brussels in 1949. There is no doubt that the quest to establish workers' movements in Libya was intended to strengthen the free Union, [167] rather than advocating for workers' interests and improving their living conditions. Despite this rather selfish motivation, an environment was created in which the labour movement in Libya was able to flourish.

This study focuses largely on how the activities of the labour organisations created opportunities to educate the labouring class in Libya. The movement was founded by Bashir bin Hamza, in Tripoli in 1947, and initially its membership included large numbers of port, transport and workshop workers, before it quickly expanded its base into the broader population in the 1950s. The organisations provided possibilities for learning and development in the evening. The pre-eminent strength of the labour organisations gave labourers an education that was on a par with that found in other walks of life. The book does not examine those policies that were implemented to establish these activities.

## 1.8  Overview of the Thesis

Following this introductor chapter one that provides a general road map of the study and establishes the organising principles of this work, this thesis is divided into the following chapters.

**Chapter Two** traces the political history of Libya, providing the context for the work on the BMA period. It also briefly addresses the social, economic and political consequences of WW2 on Libyans. The chapter goes on to outline the history of education and the role of the education provided by religious institutions, in particular

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[167] M. T. Karfa, الحركة العمالية في ليبيا[*The Labour Movement in Libya, 1943-1969*] (Tripoli, 2000).

the *masjid* (mosque), and *zawiya*, in addition to the history and role of the press and social and political organisations pre-1943. This chapter thus provides a historical context for the main areas focused on in this thesis, namely, education, the press, and social and political organisations during 1943-51.

**Chapter Three** focuses on education under the BMA (1943-1951). Education plays a pivotal role in society and its development given that exposure to systematic teaching allows individuals to achieve their potential in life and society. Education also aims to pass on values about cultural heritage and instil ethical human behaviour. The educational process must also fulfil the needs of the community, as it is linked to economic development and civic education. This chapter traces the educational policies implemented by the British during this period, and how they focused on education as a tool to achieve significant development in Libya. It also assesses the impact of these educational policies on the various communities in Libyan territory. The concluding section discusses the different types of educational institutions in Libya during the BMA and the provision which they offered, highlighting the cultural effects of political education in Libya and the difficulties faced by the national education system, and how these were overcome.

**Chapter Four** analyses the press in Libya under British rule (1943-1951), exploring the extent to which the BMA years in Libya stimulated the development of newspaper journalism and the ways in which this impacted on cultural and political affairs in Libya. It also examines the BMA's attitudes towards the press in Libya, the types of censorship and regulation to which this was subjected and the degree of freedom it was allowed, offering a close analysis of the key newspapers, both Libyan- and BMA-owned, which emerged and their links with cultural and political organisations.

**Chapter Five** examines the growth of voluntary associations in Libya during British rule (1943-1951), discussing how cultural centres, voluntary organisations and literary and sporting clubs formed part of the community development process designed to build a strong civil society. Special attention is paid to the Omar Al-Mukhtar Association, which was the first of these organisations established in Benghazi with an overtly political agenda. This chapter also examines the importance of cultural and sports clubs in the provinces of Tripoli and Cyrenaica, and the growth in popularity of the various associations aimed at improving the lot of Libyan working men, including the Workers' Club. The chapter also explores the BMA's policies towards these non-

political organisations and the extent to which these hindered or encouraged their growth within Libya. It concludes by considering libraries, another community cultural resource, and the role which they played in promoting literacy.

**Chapter Six** considers the emergence of political parties in Libya during the period 1943-1951, charting how cultural organisations gained an increasingly political focus, and the reaction of the BMA to this shift. The main political parties in Cyrenaica and Tripoli, Libya's two principal regions, are discussed together with their ideological stance and the role which they played in the struggle for Libyan unity and the country's eventual independence. **Chapter Seven** reflects on the impact of the BMA's stay in the occupied territory of Libya, reviewing the evidence concerning the extent to which this affected participation by Libyans in education and cultural life, as well as politics, and analyses the approach to governance that was adopted by the BMA.

## 2. CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL HISTORY

## 2.1 Introduction

Although a number of researchers have discussed particular issues regarding the liberation of Libya from the Italians, to date there has been no comprehensive investigation regarding how Libya became a state. The socio-political and cultural renaissance that Libya witnessed under the British rule did not grow arbitrarily but was the result of a range of different contributory changes in the broader evolution of its social and cultural life.

For the society and culture of a nation is always affected and influenced by other factors of a political and economic nature and Libya was no exception to that rule.[168] Amongst the many different developments that helped to shape a new and modern way of life in Libya were a series of political changes, which helped to create new systems and opened the gates to civil and political freedom.[169] Economic developments led to increased prosperity in the Libyan economy, growth in local businesses and flourishing agricultural, trade and craft activity. This, in turn, meant increasing incomes for Libyans and the creation of entrepreneurs and merchants brought skilled and unskilled jobs to the local population. Libyans aspired to a modern lifestyle, acquiring education and training by integrating these businesses into the local community.

This economic recovery wrought tremendous changes in the lives of the Libyan people including the promotion of activities within communities such as debates about the political situation in Libya and other Arab countries, sports activities and social clubs.[170] The members of a society strongly believe that their contributions can make a difference because of participatory culture.[171] The aims of this chapter are to provide the context for the 'real' work on the BMA period. The chapter will deal firstly with the background and the political history of Libya from the time of the Ottoman Empire until the beginning of WW2 military operations in Libya. The focus then shifts to the impact of this conflict on Libya, politically, economically and socially. The chapter will then

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[168] Said, *Cultural Life in Libya*, p.51.
[169] S. Al Syria, ليبيا والغزو الثقافي الإيطالي [*Libya and the Italian cultural invasion*] (Tripoli, 1983), p.109.
[170] A. I. Almacergi, ذكرياتيفي نصف قرن من الاحداث الآجتماعية و السياسية [Memories of fifty years of social and political events] (Tripoli, 1980), p.52.
[171] H. Jenkins, R. Purushotma, M. Weigel, K. Clinton and A. J. Robison, *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture* (Cambridge, MA.; London, 2009).

outline the history of education in Libya and will briefly discuss the development of *zawiyas* in Libya and how their role was expanded with the emergence of the Sanusiyya *zawiyas*.[172] It will then discuss education, press, and social and political organisations pre-1943. The key theme of this chapter will be the impact of these areas on Libyans themselves prior to 1943. The chapter will also provide a clear picture of the political, social, and cultural background to Libyan history, prior to its occupation by the British Military Administration (BMA).

## 2.2  The Political History of Libya Pre-WW2

Libya was part of the Ottoman Empire[173] (after Tripoli was taken from the Knights of St. John of Malta[174]) from 1551. In the period 1711 to 1835, it was controlled by the Qaramanli dynasties but then came under the control of the Ottoman Empire once more until 1911, when the Italians invaded. Initially, under Ottoman control, administration was dealt with by a few senior officers and army commanders but soon local assistance was needed to deal with the administration. The Ottomans attempted to develop Libya and increase connections with the other sections of the Empire.[175]

Between 1876 and 1909 Libya was on the receiving end of a number of both internal and external political changes, which caused numerous difficulties. With regard to the external situation, it was difficult for the Ottoman Empire to protect Libya from the advance of the European empires. Following the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the Mediterranean gained in significance to the European powers, because it represented the shortest sea route to India.[176] This led to Egypt becoming a British protectorate in 1882, Algeria falling to the French in 1830 followed by Tunisia in 1881 and Chad in 1900, together with the Italians advancing from the north.[177] This European influence, rather than Ottoman domination, was to play a key role in the formation of Libyan nationalism and the other North African countries.

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[172] Also, known as the Grand Sanusi (1787-1859), Sanusi was an Algerian scholar, who studied in Fez (Morocco), spent time in Cairo, and then settled in Hijaz (Mecca) in 1820. Two decades later he moved to Libya. See: A. Obeidi, *Political culture in Libya: a case study of political attitudes of University students*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Durham (1996).

[173] L. Anderson, 'Nineteenth-Century Reform in Ottoman Libya', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16 (1984), 326.

[174] Anderson, 'Nineteenth-Century Reform in Ottoman Libya'.

[175] R. Simon, *Libya between Ottomanism and Nationalism: The Ottoman Involvement in Libya during the War with Italy 1911-1919,* (Berlin, 1987), p.1.

[176] E. Gordon, The Mediterranean Problem, *American Geographical Society*, 28(1), (1938), p.101.

[177] J. Wright, *Libya: a modern history,* (Maryland, 1982), p.20.

Like other European states, Italy wanted to build an empire outside European,[178] with the result that it entered a new era of expansionism,[179] resulting in the occupation of Eritrea in 1890, followed by Somaliland in 1905.[180] Initially, Italy was interested in Tunisia, which was closer, had more money and already had a large Italian population.[181] However, following France's capture of the country, the two European states agreed in secret that Italy would be allowed to capture Libya instead.[182]

Italy declared war on the Ottoman Turks on 29 September 1911 and Italian warships attacked and subsequently took control of the coastal cities of Tripoli, Benghazi, Derna, Homs, and Tobruk which became part of the Italian Empire in 1911 on the 11 October 1911.[183] However, the attempt at imperialist expansion was more difficult than the Italians had expected. It took them over thirteen years to expand their power beyond the coastal cities because of Italy's involvement in WW1 after 1915.[184]

In the period from 1911 to 1922, when Mussolini rose to power, the Republic of Tripolitania was established on 16 November 16 1918 due to the considerable influence of General Maitland Wilson (who became popular after WW1).[185] Sulayman Al-Baruni (previously a member of the Ottoman parliament born in Jabal Nafusa) became head of the Republic, accompanied by Ramadan Al-Suwayhli (of Misrata), Tahir Al-Merayid (of Tarhuna), and Abdu Al-Nabi Bilkhayr (of Warfalla). Italy and its allies were informed about the creation of the Republic[186] but despite being victorious in WW1, Italy was facing extremely serious problems politically, economically and socially on the domestic front[187] and could not send any reinforcements to enable it to control Libya.[188] As a result, it had to sign the Swani Ben Adam Accord with the Tripolitania leaders in 1919,[189] which brought an end to the Tripolitanian conflict between the Arabs

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[178] A. Malvezzi, 'Italian Colonies and Colonial Policy', *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs*, 6 (1927), 233.

[179] R. Bosworth, *Italy the least of the great powers: Italian foreign policy before the First World War*, (Cambridge, 2005), p.133.

[180] H. Tate, 'The Italian Colonial Empire', *Journal of the Royal African Society* 40 (1941), 148.

[181] Bosworth, *Italy the least of the great powers,* p.135.

[182] E. De Candole, *The Life and Times of King Idris of Libya*, (Manchester, 1990), p.15.

[183] Bosworth, *Italy the least of the great powers,* p.165.

[184] A. Al-Zawi, جهاد الابطال في طرابلس الغرب [*Jihad heroes in west Tripoli*] (London, 1984), p.20.

[185] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p.18.

[186] D. Vandewalle, *A History of Modern Libya,* (Cambridge, 2006), p.27.

[187] Wright, *Libya,* p.31.

[188] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p.17.

[189] In 1919, the Italians decided to end the war against Libya as a result of the failure of their military repression due to the Libyan National Resistance. Thus, an Italian delegation headed by Major General Tardini met for negotiations with tribesmen including Ramadan Al-Suwayhli and Mohammed Tintosh in

and Italians, formally recognising the sovereignty of King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy over Tripolitania. A local parliament was established and the Italians agreed to share the governance of Libya with the native authorities.[190]

On 31 October 1919, Cyrenaica received a constitution like that of Tripolitania and in April 1921, its parliament held its first meeting with Sayyid Safi al-Din as president. Tribal sheikhs formed the elected members of parliament which met five times before being closed down in March 1923.[191] Following this, Muhammad Idris Al-Mahdi Al-Sanusi, the leader of the Sanusi, signed the Al-Rajma Agreement on 25 October 1920, being granted the status of Emir and the honorific title of "Highness" by the Italians. He became leader of the autonomous administration of the interior of Cyrenaica, which comprised the inland oasis of Jaghbub, and the towns of Awjila, Jalu, and Kufra. He was also given the right to treat Ajdabiya as his residence.[192] However, problems emerged when Al-Sanusi wanted to include Tripolitania in his Emirate and during a meeting of Tripolitanian and Cyrenaican representatives in late 1922 in Sirt, he was offered all Libya as his Emirate.[193]

Libyan dreams of independence under Al-Sanusi's leadership ended when Mussolini changed the conciliatory policy for one of pacification by military might.[194] He ordered Libya's new governor, General Luigi Bongiovanni, to re-take Tripolitania, Fezzan and then Cyrenaica by force. Operations began in March 1923 in Tripolitania due to the continuing tribal warfare between the Tripolitanian leaders[195] but it was to take a further decade before the total occupation of Cyrenaica due to domestic security problems in Italy.[196] After Al-Sanusi was informed of this change in policy, war broke out again across all of Libya[197] and stating that he was suffering from ill health, he left for Egypt and did not return until late 1944.

Tripoli. These began in March 1919 and concluded with the Swani Ben Adam Accord on June 1, 1919. This permitted Libyans access to Italian administrative posts. The leaders of the national movement were also free to establish national and cultural organizations under the provisions of the agreement. See: S. Magbari, ليبيا بين الحركة الوطنية والنظام الملكي [*Libya between the National Movement and the monarchy*] (Cairo, 1969), pp.376-381.

[190] M. F. Shukri, السنوسية دين و دولة [*Al-Sanusiyya, A Faith and A State*] (Oxford, 2005), p.308.

[191] E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, (Oxford, 1949), p.148.

[192] Shukri, *Al-Sanusiyya*, p.311.

[193] Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, p.153.

[194] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p.20.

[195] Ramadan Al-Suwayhli lost his life invading Warfalla on 20 August 1920 A. Al-Zawi, جهاد الليبيين فى ديار الهجرة [*The Libyan Heroic Jihad in Exile*] (London, 1985), p.400.

[196] Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, p.156.

[197] Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, p.156.

A number of key tribal chiefs followed suit but other began a resistance movement.[198] One of these was Omar Al-Mukhtar, who led bands of Bedouin guerrillas against the Italians. His effectiveness with this small but highly mobile force made the Italians pursue him for nearly a decade.[199] However, the Sanusi resistance was brought to an end by his execution on 16 September 1931 and things then began to stabilize. Other leaders and their followers were either captured or exiled to neighbouring countries, including Egypt, Tunis, Chad, and Sudan. Some went to Syria, waiting to return to Libya. Most of these Libyan émigrés settled in Egypt where there were some 14,000 in 1939[200] but eventually they became too concerned with earning a living to become involved in political activities. In his book entitled *Popski's Private Army*, Vladimir Peniakoff[201] described these Libyan exiles as 'destitute and nearly without cattle. They were semi-nomadic and very miserable'.[202] A few maintained the fight against the Italians.[203] Egypt gave in to Italy's demands, urging Libyan émigrés to restrict their political involvement, which proved disappointing to a large number of them.[204]

Despite this, several committees were set up, one later becoming the Tripolitanian Committee under the leadership of Ahmed Al-Suwayhli,[205] who worked alongside the Tripolitanian-Cyrenaican Defence Committee, created in 1928 in Damascus by Bashir Al-Sadawi and Omar Shinnib. These two men found that the Italians had committed atrocities in Libya and subsequently published their findings in newspapers exposing the brutality of the Italian regime to the world.[206]

When Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935, this damaged relations between Mussolini's state and Great Britain[207] and prompted Libyans, both inside and outside Libya, to see this as a chance to regain their rights, denied to them for over thirty years. When WW2 seemed

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[198] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p.23.

[199] Ibid., p.24.

[200] Wright, *Libya*, p.45.

[201] Vladimir Peniakoff was born in Belgium of Russian parents. He was educated in Belgium and England before working in France, including a brief period in the French Army. He then immigrated to Africa, working as an engineer at a number of Egyptian sugar mills. When war broke out in 1939 he volunteered, at the age of 42, for service in the British Army. In 1940 he was granted a commission in the Libyan Arab Force and his knowledge of the area and fluency in Arabic meant he often operated behind enemy lines. See: V. Peniakoff, *Popski's Private Army,* (London, 1953) http://www.flamesofwar.com/Portals/0-org/Documents/Popski.pdf. Accessed 26/4/2015.

[202] V. Peniakoff, *Popski's Private Army*, p.26.

[203] Al-Zawi, *The Libyan Heroic Jihad in Exile*, p.125.

[204] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p.26.

[205] Al-Zawi, *The Libyan Heroic Jihad in Exile,* p.16.

[206] Shukri, *Al-Sanusiyya*, p.549.

[207] Ibid., p.553.

imminent and it appeared that Italy would fight alongside Germany against Britain[208], this further encouraged Libyan émigrés to consider how best to take advantage of this situation and free Libya from Italian control. Therefore, soon after the start of WW2 in September 1939, the leaders of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica put aside their differences and joined together to achieve liberation for Libya, organising a conference at which they could discuss any possibilities for independence occasioned by this international conflict.[209]

After Italy entered WW2 on 10 June 1940, although the leaders of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica had agreed to work together at the Alexandria conference, they were unable to reach an agreement regarding a policy to help Britain's war efforts.[210] The Tripolitanian leaders were convinced that the Axis Powers would be victorious and feared upsetting Italy.[211] Later they realised that they had made a mistake. The Cyrenaican leaders however were keen to make a stand against Italy. As Al-Sanusi noted:

> This opportunity was regarded as our chance to shoot the last arrow against our country's enemy. If we succeeded, the country would be recovered; if we failed, nothing would have been lost, since our country was already in the hands of the enemy.[212]

The British military authorities based in Egypt had thought about getting the support of Libyan émigrés and asked Al-Sanusi to raise 'The Sanusi/Libyan Arab Force' from Libyans in exile in Egypt and neighbouring countries.[213] After consulting with Colonel Bromilow, Al-Sanusi invited the leaders of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania to a meeting in Cairo on 8 August 1940 to discuss helping the British forces.

Tripolitania's two main leaders, Ahmed Al-Suwayhli and Tahir Al-Merayid, arrived late to a pre-meeting on 7 August 1940, not long after General Maitland Wilson had finished speaking. They declined to take part in the talks, signing a declaration that Al-Sanusi was the Emir of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.[214] Before agreeing to fight for the Allies, they demanded a concrete commitment from Great Britain that Libya would be

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[208] Khadduri, *Modern Libya,* p.27.
[209] Wright, *Libya*, p.45.
[210] Ibid., p.29.
[211] Wright, *Libya*, p.45.
[212] Interviewed on 31 August 1961 Khadduri, *Modern Libya,* p.29.
[213] Wright, *Libya*, p.45.
[214] Al-Zawi, *The Libyan Heroic Jihad in Exile,* p.134.

granted independence in the future.[215] All the other assembled Libyans (Aoun Souf, Abulqasem Al-Baruni,[216] and Al-Tahir Al-Zawi), together with AbdulRahman Azzam Pasha (first Secretary-general of the Arab League 1945-52) agreed that they did not want to simply replace one occupying force for another, and wanted this condition in place.[217]

The attendees put their trust in the British Government, as this stated that it wanted to see the Libyans fighting alongside the British Army under the Sanusi Emirate banner and to see their country liberated from its Italian colonisers.[218] The Sanusi Force expected to be funded by the British authorities[219] and asked for the creation of a provisional government under the control of the Al-Sanusi Emirate to manage Libyan affairs with Al-Sanusi dealing directly with the British Government concerning political, financial, and military affairs.[220] Although Al-Sanusi was verbally assured of Libyan independence, he did receive any official written guarantee from the British authorities of full independence post-WW2, and the statement from Prime Minister Eden did not include any promise that this territory would no longer be under Italian control, leading to criticism from the peoples of both Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.[221] One further criticism was the implication that Al-Sanusi's leadership was supported by the British government.[222]

The Tripolitanian émigrés found out that only the Cyrenaican leaders had taken up the offer, and worried that Al-Sanusi was taking decisions without consulting the Joint Advisory Committee,[223] the Tripolitanians split into two camps regarding this matter. Opposition to Al-Sanusi's leading the whole of Libya came from a group headed by Al-Suwayhli and Al-Merayid who refused to join an army under Al-Sanusi's leadership. A second group, mainly made up of eastern Tripolitanian émigrés, trusted Al-Sanusi and

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[215] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p.30.
[216] It may be Isa El Baroni who signed his name in the letter which was sent from the Tripolitania Committee to O.E.T.A in Cairo on 15 November 1942. See: War Office: Middle East Forces; Military Headquarters Papers, Second World War. Western Desert. Committee of Tripolitania Chieftain in Cairo: Offer of assistance, TNA, WO 201/428.
[217] A. I. Almacergi, ذكرياتى فى نصف قرن من الاحداث الآجتماعية و السياسية [*Memories of a half-century of social and political events*] (Tripoli, 1980), p.172.
[218] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p.31.
[219] Wright, *Libya*, p.46.
[220] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p.31.
[221] Wright, *Libya*, p.47.
[222] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p.36.
[223] Al-Zawi, *The Libyan Heroic Jihad in Exile*, p.132.

consequently became part of 'the Libyan Arab Force'. [224] In October, 1943, the Tripolitanian Committee was formed from opposition groups located in Egypt and included Al-Suwayhli, Al-Merayid, Souf, Al-Baruni Mohamed Tewfik Al-Ghiryani, and Mohamed Al-A'essawi Abu Khanger.[225]

According to Al-Zawi, the Committee was officially named in October 1943, but the Committee posted a letter to the British Authorities at the General Headquarters in Cairo almost a year earlier on 15 November 1942, offering congratulations on their recent success in the Western Desert. In also offered them help 'in clearing away our enemy from Tripolitania'[226] suggesting that some of the Tripolitanian prisoners of war who had learned to use Italian weaponry during their Italian army service should be given arms that had been taken from the Italians, and then dispatched to Tripolitania under the leadership of the British. This would expand the forces along all of southern Tripolitania, with the British forces operating in the coastal flat lands. Moreover, would not create a huge financial burden for the British.[227] Brigadier George Davy objected to this proposal[228] not only because precious time would be needed to put in place much needed elements such as transportation, but also because he questioned whether capable leaders could be found from the tribes.[229] After carefully considering the Tripolitanian Committee's proposal, the Middle East Commander-in-Chief, General H.R. Alexander, rejected it.[230] Davy's reasons for rejecting the proposal were as follows:

> 1-It would take around two or three months for the proposal to be effectively put into operation and this would mean that it was not in enough time for it to be of any substantial value. 2- It was not possible to deal with the transportation problems. 3-The plans already in place were aimed at effectively clearing up the

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[224] De Candole, *The Life and Times of King Idris*, p.65.

[225] This Committee existed until Libya became independent on 24 December 1951. The aims of the Tripolitania Committee were as follows: Consider Libya a united country from Egypt in the east to Tunis in the west, and from the Mediterranean Sea in the North to Sudan in the South. (2); Anti-colonial policy. (3); Endeavour to make Libya an issue of the Arab League's policies. (4); Claim unconditionally full independence and overall unity. See: Al-Zawi, *The Libyan Heroic Jihad in Exile,* p.16.

[226] Tripolitanian Committee to Group Captain Domvile, Cairo, 15 November 1942. Middle East Forces; Military Headquarters Papers, Second World War. Western Desert. Committee of Tripolitania Chieftain in Cairo: Offer of assistance. TNA, WO 201/428.

[227] Ibid.

[228] G. Davy to Lord Glenconner, Cairo, 18 November 1942, Middle East Forces; Military Headquarters Papers, Second World War. TNA, WO 201/428/G/TR/199.

[229] Ibid.

[230] H. R. Alexander to Lord Glenconner, 23 November 1942, Middle East Forces; Military Headquarters Papers, Second World War TNA, WO 201/428/M. O/3194.

location in question. 4- Causing a revolt could not be justified when one took into account the likely post occupational and post-war repercussions.[231]

It can be argued that there were other reasons for the proposal being rejected, given that the Tripolitanians had previously declined to help the Allies when the African situation looked less favourable in 1940.[232] Sheikh Al-Zawi claimed that the British Authorities had contacted the Tripolitanians before the Libyan Arab Force was created under Al-Sanusi but they had declined to offer help unless the British would give an official pledge to restore Libyan independence. They responded that their offer consisted of solely giving soldiers a salary[233] and the Tripolitanians rejected this.

In order to minimise the Committee's disappointment at not being able to participate actively involved in the ousting of the Italians, Lord Glenconner suggested to the Eighth Army that the Libyan Arab Force should be utilised to control inhabited areas and stop any looting resulting from the withdrawal of the Axis Forces from Tripolitania.[234] Brigadier Davy made it clear that although the British Government would be happy for this assistance, unlike Cyrenaica, Tripolitania would be strictly viewed as occupied enemy territory and tasked the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration to implement this policy.[235]

## 2.2.1 The Beginning of WW2 Military Operations

After Italy formally became involved in WW2 on 10 June 1940 and France capitulated on 17 June, British interests took a different focus regarding the Mediterranean and the situation there. The same was true for British interests in the Middle East and East Africa, particularly since Britain's lines of communication with the Far East via the Suez Canal were already under threat. The British had to change the route of their merchant ships from the Mediterranean towards the Cape of Good Hope. After the threat against Tunisia and Algeria had vanished from the western boundaries, Italian troops, which had massed in Libya and Ethiopia, then threatened Egypt, British Somalia and Sudan.[236] However, the principal objective of the Italian forces based in Libya

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[231] G. Davy to Lord Glenconner, 22 November 1942, TNA, WO 201/428/M. O/3197.
[232] De Candole. *The Life and Times of King Idris,* p.67.
[233] Al-Zawi, *The Libyan Heroic Jihad in Exile,* p.131.
[234] Lord Glenconner to G. Davey, 26 November 1942, TNA, WO 201/428/G/TR/229.
[235] G. Davy to Lord Glenconner, 27 November 1942, TNA, WO 201/428/MO/3197.
[236] S. M. Nadim, حرب افريقيا الشمالية 1940-1943 [*the North Africa war 1940-1943*] (Bagdad, 1974), pp.18-9.

(estimated by British intelligence to be about 215,000[237] in summer 1940) was to take British positions in the Western Desert of Egypt, and eventually the Suez Canal.[238]

Marshal Rodolfo Graziani asked for postponement of the operation due to administrative problems and an insufficient water supply but Mussolini forced him to move the Italian Army. He did so, moving eastwards across the Egyptian frontier on the 10 September 1940. On 13 September, the Italians took up a position 60 miles past the frontier post of Sollum; four days later they encamped at Sidi Barrani, enabling the British to make up the time they needed so badly.[239]

General Wavell, the Commander of British Forces in the Middle East, launched a counter-attack on 9 December in Egypt, making the most of the Italian troops being stationary and within two months Cyrenaica fell into British hands for the first time. By nightfall of 10 December, Sidi Barrani had been captured by the Army of the Nile. Bardai, the first inhabited place in Cyrenaica, was captured on 5 January 1941, followed by Tobruk sixteen days later, then Derna before 30 January and Benghazi the following month, on 6 February 1941.[240]

The military operations in Europe had a significant impact on the British war in Cyrenaica. After Greece fell to the Italians on 28 October 1940, this not only threatened Allied positions in the Middle East, but also put extra strain on Britain when it decided to mobilise troops to help its ally.[241] Wavell halted military operation in Cyrenaica so that British Forces would be fully prepared for transfer to Greece and the order was given for troops who were veterans of the Sahara war to be withdrawn. Wavell had been given reassurance that there was no longer a threat to the British Forces in Egypt.[242]

Following the withdrawal of these units to the Greek campaign on 6 February 1941, General Erwin Rommel received orders to assist the Italians in Libya by commanding a campaign there and immediately set about attacking the British forces on 31 March 1941.[243] Consequently, the British forces were overrun, leading to the loss of Benghazi

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[237] Ibid., p.24.
[238] Wright, *Libya*, p.44.
[239] Nadim, *The North Africa war*, p.26.
[240] Rodd, *British Military Administration,* pp.2-3.
[241] War Office, 'Report on the action of the 2nd Armoured Division during the withdrawal from Cyrenaica', March-April 1941, TNA, WO 106/2149.
[242] A. M. Al-Qalal, سنوات الحرب والأدارة العسكرية البريطانية في برقة 1939-1949 [*The Years of War and the British Military Administration in Barca 1939-1949*] (Benghazi, 2003), p.50.
[243] Al-Qalal, *The Years of War*, pp.51-3.

in the first week of April. Shortly afterwards, all of Cyrenaica, except for Tobruk, was evacuated.[244]

This failure to retain Cyrenaica led the Imperial General Staff to make changes to the Army command and on 5 July 1941, General Sir Claude Auchinleck took over from Wavell. He quickly made significant changes that had a considerable impact in the following months. The Nile Army was unified with the Western Desert force, becoming the Eighth Army.[245] On 18 November 1941, Auchinleck led these troops against the German Afrika Corps across the Egyptian border. On 9 December, the British reached Derna and subsequently re-took Benghazi on 24 December, reaching Agedabia by 10 January 1942. With new reinforcements Rommel was able to reach Tripoli, retreat to El-Agheila, and later capture Antelat. The British quickly withdrew, evacuating Benghazi on 21 January and by 4 February 1942 a line had been drawn up at Gazala.[246]

On June 29, Rommel advanced to El-Alamein in Egypt against the Eighth Army, with the two forces attacking and counter-attacking each other for two months. That August, Prime Minister Winston Churchill[247] visited the British forces in the Middle East and ordered new commanders to be appointed. These were Generals Harold Alexander and Bernard Law Montgomery.[248]

Montgomery put his own plans in place to destroy the Axis Forces and remove them for once and for all from North Africa. To meet this target, he made changes to his military command and created a comprehensive training programme enabling night time attacks in minefields. He also trained combat pilots, held meetings and got to know his troops while stockpiling weapons, equipment and supplies.[249]

On the 23/24 October, the Eighth Army began its offensive at El-Alamein and by 2 November, the Afrika Corps had been destroyed and Britain was pursuing the Axis forces. Mersa Matruh was occupied with no resistance on 8 November, and three days later, Axis forces were totally evacuated from Egypt. Tobruk was then captured on 13

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[244] War Office, 'Report on the action of the 2nd Armoured Division', March-April 1941, TNA, WO 106/2149.
[245] Al-Qalal, *The Years of War*, p.55.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Rodd, *British Military Administration*, p.7.
[248] Al-Qalal, *The Years of War,* p.67.
[249] Nadim, *the North Africa war*, pp.152-53.

November, Derna two days later, and Benghazi, then Corps headquarters, fell to British forces on 20 November 1942.[250]

The victory was aided by a number of factors, including both the planning of British military command and the contribution of the Libyans, who worked silently behind enemy lines helping both pilots and soldiers, and even smuggling them into the British camps. Al-Zawi notes that the British commander, Major Vladimir Peniakoff, commented: 'if it had not been for the Libyan tribes of Cyrenaica, victory would not have been this easy, and all the members of the British Eighth Army owe their lives to the Arabs of Cyrenaica'.[251]

The main responsibility for administration of the countries conquered by the Allies was taken by the Allied governments.[252] Thus Cyrenaica came under the control of the British Military Government. On 10 March 1943, this became the 'British Military Administration' (BMA), with the assurance that Cyrenaica would no longer be under Italian domination.[253] The British Government stated that its policy was not one of imposing government on people unwilling to be under its rule.[254] Despite this, General Montgomery stated on 11 November 1942 that until the end of WW2, Cyrenaica would be under the administration of the British forces. However, although a peace treaty was concluded between the warring powers, this did not mean an end to the hostilities in North Africa.[255] A warning was given to the military government to avoid any debate about the political future of the North African territories and not to make any declarations with regard to this matter[256] but to be firm, just and considerate of the interests of the Libyan population when ruling. Moreover, Libyans were requested to follow the BMA's orders, behave in an orderly fashion and take advantage of the peace that they had not enjoyed for many years.[257]

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[250] Rodd, *British Military Administration,* p.9.
[251] Al-Zawi, *The Libyan Heroic Jihad in Exile,* p.320.
[252] Washington to R. Campbell, 7 September 1943, TNA, FO 371/35217/U4132/3646/G.
[253] War Office to Mideast for Political, 10 January 1943, TNA, FO 371/35660/ J647/77/66.
[254] Foreign Office, 'Memorandum of general principles for guidance of British representatives in discussing with representatives of European Allied Governments arrangements for the civil administration of liberated Allied territory', London, June 1943, TNA, FO 371/35217/3646.
[255] Wright, *Libya*, p.47.
[256] R. Taylor to G. MacKereth, 14 January 1943, TNA, FO 371/35660/J647/73/66.
[257] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p.43.

The BMA attempted to resurrect the traditional tribal authority and use tribal leaders to resolve disputes, [258] which did not please the better-educated younger generation. However, Cyrenaica did gain some benefits, as its people were not only liberated but land was restored to its former tenants. Moreover, fears that the Italian government would annihilate the local Libyan population so that Italian settlers could live were removed.[259] The Italians who had settled in Tripolitania were evacuated by the Fascists before the British arrived. [260] Before military operations ended in Tripolitania, Montgomery (who was based in Ajdabiya) announced the British Military Government and clarified that the terms 'Tripolitania' or 'territory' included the previously Italian domains of Misrata and Tripoli, in addition to the four Western subdivisions of Murzuq, Brak, Houn and Ghat.[261]

All citizens living in this territory were warned not to disturb the peace, put the safety of British government forces or their Allies in jeopardy, or to aid the enemy, following the orders they were given. As with Cyrenaica, the existing laws, customs, rights, and properties were to be completely respected in accordance with International Law, as far as war allowed. Additionally, all official were to remain in post and perform their duties faithfully.[262]

Montgomery formally entered Tripoli at the head of the Eighth Army on 23 January 1943 following the surrender of the province by the Italian vice-governor of Libya, the Prefect of Tripolitania, and the Mayor of Tripoli. After the defeat of the Axis forces in North Africa, all conquered areas were to be administered by the Allied countries.[263] Montgomery confirmed that hostilities against the German and Italian armies were over, and that Libyan civilians should live a normal life. At the same time, he banned the carrying of arms in Tripoli.

Tripolitania then became the centre of the BMA, and the province was administered as though it was still an occupied enemy territory under martial law.[264] The British had gained experience from their successful campaigns in Eritrea, Italian Somaliland,

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[258] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p.46.

[259] Ibid., p.47.

[260] *The Times*, 31 January 1945.

[261] B. L. Montgomery, 'Tripolitania, British Occupation, Military Legislation, Proclamations 1-11', 15 December 1942, TNA, WO 201/429, p.4.

[262] B. L. Montgomery, 'Tripolitania, British Occupation, Military Legislation, Proclamations 1-11', 15 December 1942, TNA, WO 201/429, p.5.

[263] G. Washington to R. Campbell, 7 September 1943, London, TNA, FO 371/35217/U4132/3646.

[264] R. Taylor to G. Mackereth, 14 January 1943, TNA, FO 371/35660/J647/73/66.

Madagascar, and Cyrenaica and, consequently, 80 well-trained officers from the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration, with expert knowledge of Tripolitania's geography, history, its system of government and its agricultural and mineral resources, were sent to Tripoli. The changeover, led by M.S. Lush, the deputy chief political officer, occurred without any problems.[265]

The British administration, as is usually the case for an occupying power, abided by and applied the existing Italian law, making any changes deemed necessary for needs of the military or inhabitants.[266] Unlike their counterparts in Cyrenaica, the Italian civil servants in Tripolitania who had remained after the Italian troops had withdrawn, served alongside the British Authorities.[267]

Although the Libyans were grateful for the end to 30 years of Italian tyranny and oppression, they were upset by the British policy as they had expected an Arab administration.[268] In August 1943, during a demonstration in Tripoli City a petition was given to Brigadier T.R. Blackley asking that Italian officials who were still being employed to deal with local matters should be replaced by local official working for the same wages.[269] The British administration was also concerned about the farms in Tripolitania that had been run by Italian colonists[270] however, local peasants continued to work this land[271] and to produce much needed food for the region.

Following the conflict, economic and social conditions were negatively affected in Libya. However, Tripolitania had suffered relatively little damage and destruction during the war[272] and was in better condition than Cyrenaica.[273] On 15 December 1942, Montgomery declared that under the British Military Authority an exchange rate of 480 lire against the pound sterling would operate.[274] On 14 August 1943, this exchange rate was then decreased to 455 lire.[275]

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[265] *The Times*, 27 January 1943.
[266] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p.48.
[267] C-in-C. Middle East to War Office, 11 March 1943, TNA, FO 371/35660/J1147/73/66.
[268] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p.48.
[269] Rodd, *British Military Administration*, p.288.
[270] Taylor to Mackereth, TNA, FO 371/35660/J647/73/66.
[271] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p.49.
[272] Wright, *Libya*, p.45.
[273] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p.49.
[274] B. L. Montgomery, 'British Military Government, Tripolitania, Proclamation No7', 15 December 1942, TNA, FO 371/35669/4856/555/66.
[275] C-in-C. Middle East to War Office, 14 August 1943, TNA, FO 371 /35669/J487/555/66.

## 2.2.2 The Consequences of WW2 for the Libyan People

Libya's enforced entry into WW2 had a number of negative political, economic and social consequences for the country's civilian population.

As mentioned previously, Italy's defeat ended more than thirty years of political domination of Libya in 1943 and the whole of the northern area of Libya initially came under British command.[276] After WW2, however, Libya's fate was discussed on an international stage since in addition to Britain and Italy, both France and the US also had interests in Libya.

France then had other regional possessions in Africa, and wanted control of southern Libya which bordered these African colonies. Mindful of the strategic importance of Libya, the US Government also wanted to increase its military presence in Libya, by setting up military bases there. In 1947, the report of the Four Powers Committee of Investigation concluded said that: establishing an 'American Air Base in Mellaha on the soil of a previous Italian colony under Temporary British Administration was in complete violation of the Italian Peace treaty and the joint declaration of the Governments of the USSR, UK, USA, and therefore this agreement cannot have the force of law'.[277] On 17 May 1945, Mellaha became Wheelus Air Base which remained its name until 1951, when the US government agreed to rent the air base for a 20 year period from the government of Libya.[278]

On 8 May 1949, the Bevin-Sforza Plan was agreed between the Foreign Ministers of Britain and Italy, Ernest Bevin and Count Carlo Sforza, and this was intended to give Libya its independence after 10 years. During this time, Tripolitania was to be placed under Italian trusteeship, Cyrenaica under British and Fezzan under French.[279] Libya's strategic position had become clear to the European powers. Britain saw Libya as a critically important line of defence for protecting the Suez Canal: Italy's defeat had stopped Graziani from getting to the Suez Canal, which could have ended the British Empire. This was confirmed by Ernest Bevin in a statement he gave to the Foreign Ministers Conference on 14 May 1946, when he stated: 'the British Empire considers

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[276] M. M. Mufti, الأيام الطرابلسية [*Tripoli's Days*] (Tripoli, 2008), p.277.

[277] M. Al-Shaniti, قضية ليبيا [*The Case of Libya*] (Cairo, 1951), p.180.

[278] *Air Force Magazine*, January 2008.

[279] Almacergi, *Memories of fifty years*, p.314.

the special strategic interests related to the security of the communications vital interests and must safeguard against any attack that might come from the western desert'.[280]

As previously noted, the south of Libyan territory, Fezzan, represented an important base for France, so that it could strengthen its military presence and strengthen its control over its African colonies. Italy was also trying to regain its lost position and argued that it had a legitimate right in Tripolitania which formed an indivisible element of the Italian Empire. As *La Quarta Sponda* (the Fourth Shore), Tripolitania formed the fourth side of an Italian quadrilateral, the other three sides being Bari, Trisete and Durazzo on the Adriatic coast.[281] These conflicting interests led to a bitter conflict between the colonial powers, each of which was determined to maintain access to and utilise Libyan land for support positions.

During WW2, there had been ever-growing differences between Cyrenaica's and Tripolitania's leaders which led to formation of two opposing camps: the Cyrenaica group, which was in favour of an Emirate under Al-Sanusi; and the Tripolitania group, which wanted independence and unity prior to any involvement in the question of how the country would be governed.

Libya finally came under British administration until the United Nations General Assembly awarded Libya its independence in 1951.[282] However, the effects of WW2 did not impact upon the Libyans' moral strength; in fact, the opposite happened, and it seemed to re-energise Libyans. They became more open-minded and more aware of important realities that were the foundations for coalitions. They also became members of political parties and demanded national rights. The Tripolitania Committee, established in October 1943, stood for absolute independence for a unified Libya, free from foreign interference in its affairs.[283]

The conflict between the Axis and Allied powers for control of the Suez Canal and oil in the Middle East caused significant damage in parts of Libya. It badly affected Libyans' livelihoods, especially in Cyrenaica, although there are few exact statistics to evidence this. The backbone of the Libyan economy was agriculture and livestock, both

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[280] Al-Shaniti, *The Case of Libya*, p.181.
[281] M. Moore, 'Fourth Shore, Italy's Mass Colonisation of Libya', *Journal of the Royal African Society*, 39 (1940), 129.
[282] C. Collins, Imperialism and Revolution in Libya, *MERI Reports*, No. 27, Middle East Research and Information Project, (1974), pp.3-22.
[283] Al-Zawi, *The Libyan Heroic Jihad in Exile*, p.99.

of which were heavily affected by the military operations – during the conflict, agricultural land was burned, water wells destroyed and farmers fled their land which was not fit to live on. Some 60% of the olive and almond trees were destroyed and considerable numbers of livestock had died.[284]

Al-Janzouri described the economic effects caused by the conflict:

> It nearly completely destroyed the way of live, with decreased demands for the agricultural products, which were the main source of the livings of the people in the villages as well as farmers. The handicraft industry in the city ran out of raw material, particularly the textile industry. Those who obtained raw material from the black market would not make enough income to cover the needs to support their families; the markets were depressed even for other, less needy workers, such as shoemakers and loaders.[285]

Light industries were also very badly affected, and the tools industry was completely destroyed in Cyrenaica. This damage was twofold: firstly, the war destroyed any possibility of modern technical industrial development being introduced to Libya and; secondly, unemployment became an everyday occurrence, with jobless people walking the streets.

Libya's harbours also suffered considerable damage and the lack of shipping operations meant there were no imports or exports.[286] Privately owned buildings were destroyed in air raids in addition to schools and hospitals.[287] Eighty-five per cent of the buildings in Tobruk were destroyed and the same fate met 60% of those in Benghazi.[288] This level of destruction meant many people became homeless and ill as a result of exposure to the elements and there were few schools to teach children. The administration tried to deal with this crisis by issuing proclamation 349,[289] which meant that war damages had to be paid to estates and to landlords' destroyed buildings. The British Military Administration in Tripolitania spent £62,000 alone in 1944–45.[290]

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[284] C. G. Segre, الشاطئ الرابع [*Fourth Shore: The Italian Colonisation of Libya*] (Tripoli, 1987), p.235.

[285] A. Al-Janzouri, رحلة السنوات الطويلة [*The Journey of Long Years*] (Benghazi, 2000), p.79.

[286] H. Michelle, العلاقات الليبية الأنجليزية [*Anglo-Libyan Relations*] (Cairo, 1970), p.135.

[287] A. J. Steele-Greig, تاريخ التعليم فى إقليم طرابلس [*History of Education in Tripolitania*] (Tripoli, 2005), p.41.

[288] J. Hamdan, الجمهورية العربية الليبية [*Libyan Arab Republic*] (Cairo, 1973), p.47.

[289] *Tarabulus el-Gharb*, 14 January 1947, Tripoli, Libyan Centre for Archives and Historical Studies

[290] Ibid.

One of the few positive impacts was that some classic handicraft and domestic industries flourished once their Italian competitors had left. In addition, it is testament to the entrepreneurial spirit of the Libyans that they learnt how to take apart destroyed tanks and sell their parts, creating a trader class that dealt in military equipment.

The minefields created by both armies had a very negative impact upon the Libyan economy and its people and some are still in existence today. Some 10,000 square meters mainly in the towns of Al-Boweirat, Al-Qadahiyyah and Abu-Njeim (about 27% of the cultivated land area there) was mined.[291] This caused a loss of 125,000 livestock animals, in addition to damaging Libya's ability to be involved in geological surveys concerning potential oil fields, thwarting plans for future development.[292] In terms of the human cost, over 500 lives had been lost by the end of 1945, as well as 700 individuals disabled.[293] This had a powerful impact on Libya's manpower, meaning that individuals who would otherwise have been able to contribute to Libya's economy became dependent upon it.

When the Allies withdrew from Cyrenaica the locals who had fought against the Axis forces were persecuted. Some 300 Libyans were executed by the Italians in the town of Al-Marj in March 1942. [294] Meanwhile, around 17,000 Libyans who had fought alongside the Italian army surrendered to the Allied forces and had to spend four years in British jails in Egypt as prisoners of war, inflicting suffering on their families. Civilians suffered psychological effects and the lack of security led to the looting of both public and private belongings.[295]

One further impact of WW2 was the level of civilian displacement with a mass exodus of inhabitants from Cyrenaica to Egypt, while others moved to the south of Libya to seek refuge:

> At the start of the war, a number of Maltese and Jews were shipped by the Royal Navy Fleet to Alexandria, the nomads who wanted to leave with the withdrawing British forces were transferred by road, the Administration

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[291] K. Al-Segayre, تقرير عن أضرار مخلفات الحرب العالمية الثانية [*Report of the Damages of WW2*] (Geneva, 1981).
[292] Ibid.
[293] Ibid.
[294] Shukri, *Al-Sanusiyya*, p.565.
[295] M. F. Al-Sarraj, ذكريات و خواطر [*Memories and Reminiscence*] (Tripoli, 2005), p.272.

arranged for their stay in Cairo. They were settled in Burj Al-Arab near Alexandria, some of them joined Libyan Arab Force.[296]

## 2.3 Education under the Ottoman Empire

Prior to Ottoman rule, the traditional Islamic method of education had prevailed in Libya, carried out in religious schools (known as *zawiya* or *kotab*),[297] some of which were attached to mosques. Pre-elementary education had been established in Libyan cities to teach young children to read, write and understand recited Qur'anic or Classical Arabic.[298] Ottoman schools (*madrassah*) were founded as early as 1553, shortly after the Ottoman forces had taken Tripoli. In the larger mosques, groups of boys would be taught to read Classical Arabic and memorise the Qur'an.[299] Older students focused on Islamic studies, which included Qur'anic interpretation (*tafsir*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Sunnah[300] and Arabic grammar, as well as other subjects such as Sufi mysticism, poetry, astronomy, history, arithmetic and algebra.[301] The educational methods varied in accordance with the instructions of the supervising sheikh but typically included small seminar discussions or tutoring on a one-to-one basis.[302] These schools spread throughout North Africa, with a high concentration specifically in Tunisia. The earliest recorded example in Libya was Al-Montaseria madrassah in Tripoli. The successful graduates from these schools could proceed to complete their studies at Al-Azhar in Egypt, Al-Zaytouna in Tunis, Al-Qarawīyīn[303] in Morocco, or at secondary schools in Syria.[304]

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[296] Michelle, *Anglo-Libyan Relations*, p.130.

[297] *Zawiya* were originally founded by Muslims when they first came to Libya in 642CE for the purposes of imparting education to the local population in cities and villages. They spread along the Libyan coast from the city of Zoara until they reached Alexandria (Egypt), one of the most famous zawiyas in Libya being known as 'The Palace of Tripoli'. Boys and girls were taught to read and recite the Qur'an whilst a programme of Islamic education was available for older students, who could also consult the libraries of Hadith and Fiqh. *Hadith* refers to the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad whilst *Fiqh* refers to Islamic jurisprudence. See: Sheikh, The development of education in Libya in modern times, pp.115-116; and M. Belhaj, 1911-1835 التعليم في العهد العثماني الثاني]Education in Tripoli in the Ottoman era] 1st edn (Tripoli, 2000), p.53.

[298] One of these, known as the Turgut Pasha mosque, still exists in Tripoli. See: Belhaj, *Education in Tripoli,* p.24.

[299] A. J. Steele-Greig, *History of Education in Tripolitania from the time of the Ottoman Occupation to the Fifth Year under British Military Occupation* (Tripoli, 2005), p.11.

[300] The teachings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad.

[301] Belhaj, *Education in Tripoli*, p.48.

[302] M. Alsayed, *The History of the Arab Maghreb Countries* (Alexandria, 2000), p.64.

[303] Al-Qarawīyīn in Fez, Morocco, was built in 859 AD as an educational institution and students are still taught there today.

[304] Alshaibane, *Culture and Education in Libya*, p.228.

The French occupation of Algeria in 1830,[305] Tunisia in 1881 and Chad in 1900,[306] which was seen as a direct threat to the Ottoman regime.[307] The effectiveness of the French educational system in the neighbouring countries of Algeria and Tunisia, highlighted the defects of the educational systems implemented in Libya by the Ottomans, causing the authorities to introduce some changes.[308] Governor Amin Basha[309] encouraged all the residents of Tripoli to obtain an education, arguing that the religious education offered in *zawiyas* did not fulfil the needs of Libyan peoples.[310]

As far as educational structures are concerned, administrative offices and schools were mandatorily established in 1859 in every Libyan village or town.[311] However, the costs for this were not borne by the state; rather, citizens themselves were responsible for generating sufficient funding to operate schools.[312] Study at primary school lasted three years, with an extra year if required.[313] The subjects included in the curriculum were Arabic, principles of mathematics, writing and reading.[314] Academies (*al-roshdia*)[315] were established to provide a secondary stage of education lasting a further three years, and these reflected a new approach to learning modern sciences and Turkish, the language of Ottoman administration. These were founded and directly supervised by the Ottoman military administration. Each academy had two sections: one taught a civilian curriculum, the other a military curriculum but both followed the same teaching methods. Students who met entry standards were admitted to the section of their choice. Admission to an academy depended on fluency in Turkish, the social status of the child's parents, physical fitness and successful completion of primary education.[316]

Five academies were established in Libya situated in Tripoli (1895), Cyrenaica (1895), Khoms, Murzuq (the capital of Fezzan) (1887) and Darnah. All of the teachers were

[305] The French occupation of Algeria lasted from 1830 to 1962. Tunisia became a protectorate of France (1881–1956) by treaty rather than by outright conquest, as was the case in Algeria.
[306] Wright, *Libya: a modern history,* p.20.
[307] Khadduri indicates that the Ottoman Empire also supported North African national movements against European invasion, and this support was fundamentally linked to religious matters.
[308] Alsayed, *History of the Arab Maghreb Countries*, p.67.
[309] Amin Basha was Ottoman Governor of Tripoli from 1842 to 1847. See: Belhaj, *Education in Tripoli*, p.63.
[310] Mahjoub, 'Pages of the history of education in Libya', p.19.
[311] Ibid.
[312] Al-Gamati, *The Development of Educational Management,* p.78.
[313] Belhaj, *Education in Tripoli*, p.66.
[314] Omar, *The History of Cultural Activity and Education in Libya,* p.160.
[315] Alalem, *Contemporary Socio-Political History of Libya,* p.127.
[316] Omar, *The History of Cultural Activity and Education in Libya,* p.180.

Turkish nationals, and the language of instruction was Turkish.[317] Students studied history, Turkish and Arabic as well as geography and Islamic studies.[318] In general, the academies failed to achieve their goals, largely due to staffing problems since many of the military officials employed as teachers failed to attend to teach students.[319]

The Ottomans introduced Turkish and made it compulsory in Libya instead of Arabic, bringing teachers from Turkey to teach the language. This was a key reason why the Libyans remained alienated under the Ottoman Empire, meaning that even when the Italians invaded Libya, there was little support for the Ottoman cause amongst the general masses. It is surprising that the Ottomans, being Muslim, should have chosen to ignore the fact that Arabic, as the language of the Qur'an, could have served as a binding force between the Turks and Arabs.

In 1843, Muhammad Bin Ali Sanusi established the Zawiya Al-bayda (White Zawiya) in the area of Libya known as Al-Jabal Al-Akdhar (the Green Mountain), which was to be the first step of the Sufi Islamic revival movement that emerged in Libya during the second half of the nineteenth century when the Sanusiyya zawiyas flourished there.[320] Libya became one of the three main areas within the Arab world where religious reformist orders evolved. These included the Wahabiyya order in the Arabian Peninsula, the Mahdiyya movement in Sudan, and the Sanusiyya order in Libya.[321] The emergence of al-Sanusiyya has been described as "an Islamic phenomenon, religious in its fundamentals, social in its effects, and political in its consequences".[322] Its principles were based on the idea that every Muslim must obey Allah, the Prophet Muhammad and the *ulama* (clergy); the Qur'an and the Sunnah alone are the basis for the believer's life.[323] Politically, the Sanusiyya called for an *imama* [a supreme Islamic governing body] and *jihad* [holy war]. The Sanusiyya established a substantial number of *zawayas* in Equatorial Africa during the late nineteenth century. These were used to resist the French. This resistance movement was focused on the Lake Chad region while in Libya the Sanusiyya fuelled the resistance movement against the Italians.

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[317] Al-Gamati, *The Development of Educational Management*, p.79.
[318] Steele-Greig, *History of Education in Tripolitania*, p.17.
[319] Al-Gamati, *The Development of Educational Management*, p.84.
[320] A. Pasero, *Fascism and the Bedouin of Cyrenaica*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Reading (1994), p.37.
[321] M. El-Mogherbi, *Tribalism, Religion and the Challenge of Political Participation (*Cairo,1992), P.24.
[322] J. Roumani, "Libya and the Military Revolution" in Zatrman, I. W. (ed), *Man, State and Society in Contemporary Maghrib* (New York, 1973), p.346.
[323] Simon, *Libya between Ottomanism and Nationalism*, p.50.

Although it is difficult to find exact numbers, according to Shukhri, eighty-nine zawiyas were spread throughout Libya, with forty-nine of these being situated in the province of Cyrenaica. [324] The most famous of these zawiyas were established in Al-Bayda, Benghazi, Al-Kassrine, Al-Aryane, Anajila-Oujla and Aolad-Mssous. Of the ten zawiyas established in the province of Tripoli, the most famous of them, namely Etrourate, Boumahdi, Elamamira, and Abu-Rafa, gained a reputation for delivering quality education to students who later made significant contributions in the field of education. [325] The twenty-two zawiyas founded in Fezzan extended from Jaghbub to Ghat and from Ghadamis to Kufrah, the most important Sanusiyya Zawiya being in Ghadamis and Mezda. [326]

The zawiyas differed in their teaching methods, for example, the Zawiya established by Muhammad Bin Ali Sanusi in 1856 in the desert oasis of Jaghbub became known as a centre of excellence[327] where in addition to the traditional Qur'anic education which places heavy emphasis on memorising Islamic scriptures by heart, humanities and sciences were taught.[328] At a time when the vast majority of the Libyan population were illiterate, the fact that eighty students from a single tribe graduated as Qur'anic reciters within one year was seen as a highly significant achievement.[329] In addition, alumni of the Jaghbub zawiya went on to become scientists, poets, and writers.[330]

Although Kufrah became the main base for the Sanusiyya in 1894, Jaghbub maintained its reputation as a centre for spiritual development but it is important to see the zawiya there also as a hub of cultural and educational activity. Its library included some eight thousand volumes of manuscripts relating to religion and the sciences[331] which had been imported from Egypt, Hejaz (Saudi Arabia), Tunis and Marrakech, and it was open for consultation by anyone wishing to study. [332] Social and cultural activities included

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[324] Shukhri, *The Birth of the Modern State of Libya,* p.62. Pasero reported 66 *zawiyas* in Tripoli and Cyrenaica. See: Pasero, 'Fascism and the Bedouin', p.36.
[325] A. M. Omar, *The History of Cultural Activity and Education in Libya*, *from the beginning of the Islamic conquest to the Ottoman era* (Beirut, 1971), p.117.
[326] Ibid.
[327] Omar, *The History of Cultural Activity and Education in Libya*, p.120
[328] N. A. Ziadeh, *Sanussiyah: A Study of a Revivalist Movement in Islam* (Leiden, 1958), p.83. For an explanation of the important role by Qur'anic recital in Islamic culture, see: 'Qur'an', http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t243/e275, accessed 12/12/2014.
[329] M. T. Al-Ashhab, السنوسي الكبير ، [*The Grand Sanusi*] (Cairo, 1965), p.48.
[330] Evans-Pritchard, *Sanusi*, p.24.
[331] Evans-Pritchard, *Sanusi*, p.17.
[332] M. O. Alhashashi, رحلة الحشائشى إلى ليبيا [*The Journey of Alhashashi to Libya*] (Beirut, 1965), pp.151-152.

seminars on poetry and other types of artistic endeavours.[333]

The religious teaching in the zawiyas contributed not only to the Islamic revival in Libya but also led to a renaissance in social and cultural life and political activities in the country, as the following examples show. Having learnt the Qur'an by heart in his own home in Ghadamis, sheikh[334] Muhammad Azzedine then travelled to Tunis to continue his studies at Al-Zaytouna mosque.[335] After qualifying to teach Arabic, he then travelled to Egypt where he made contact with scholars at Al-Azhar University.[336] After returning to Libya, he became a teacher,[337] giving lessons in mosques and teaching the most advanced students in his own home, where he also amassed a library of significant numbers of manuscripts and volumes about Islamic history.[338]

Other Libyan graduates from Al-Azhar University included sheikh Abdel Jawad who became a clerk in the Court at Darnah during Italian rule, later working as a teacher and journalist, and sheikh Abdel Karim-Azouz who was appointed as a judge in Darnah in 1929. One of his students, the poet Ibrahim Usta Omar,[339] went on to become a leading intellectual in the cultural movement in Libya under the BMA.[340] However, the education provided in some religious centres, particularly in the zawiyas, created barriers between the Bedouin tribes[341] and other civilizations, especially those of Europe which the Sanusiyya leaders saw as a threat and rejected.[342] However, they maintained

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[333] M. T. Al-Ashhab, برقة العربية الأمس واليوم ، [*Arab Cyrenaica today and tomorrow*] (Cairo, 1948), pp.56-59.

[334] In this context *Sheikh* is an honorific title used for an Islamic scholar.

[335] Also known as Ez-Zitouna, this Mosque situated in the Tunisian capital was founded in 860 and was a renowned centre of learning and intellectual pursuits, attracting scholars from all over the known world. See M. J. Deeb 'Al-Zaytuna' in J.L. Esposito. *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Modern Islamic World* 4th edn (Oxford, 1995).p.374.

[336] Al-Azhar mosque was founded in 972 in Cairo during the Fatimid era by Gawhar al-Skelly, the military commander who conquered Egypt in 969. Later, as Al-Azhar University, it became one of the most important educational institutions in Egypt, and is considered to be the best in the Islamic world for the study of Sunni Islam, and *sharia* law. See the official website of Egypt State Information Service. http://www.us.sis.gov.eg/en/Story.aspx?sid=1385, accessed 27/01/2015.

[337] E. M. Abu-Deib, شاعر من ليبيا أحمد قنابة [*Ahmed Kanaba: A Poet from Libya*] (Beirut, 1986), p.23.

[338] B. K. Yusha, غدامس ملامح وصور [*Ghadamis*] (Beirut, 1973), p.62.

[339] Ibrahim Usta Omar (1907-1951) was a native of Darnah, who studied in Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Transjordania, making contact with intellectuals there. After becoming a member of the Committee for the Defence of Cyrenaica in Tripoli, he returned to Darnah to continue his pro-independence political activities, becoming head of the local branch of the Omar Mukhtar Association. In addition to being recognised as one of Libya's leading poets, he served as a judge in Darnah.

[340] Other notable *sheikhs* included Abdul Rahman Adibani, Abdelkader Alhasade, Muhammad Kaloussi and Muhammad Salem Bin Omran who were responsible for providing education in Darnah.

[341] According to Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi*, p.99, the tribes of Cyrenaica saw themselves as a nation.

[342] M. A. Al-Trabolssi, درنة الزاهرة ، [*Flourishing Darnah]* 1st edn (Darnah, 1999), pp.290-292

close contact with other Islamic countries which were not anti-European.[343]

The first Libyan underground organization was created in Tripoli in 1883, clearly indicating that the nationalist leaders there had been influenced by the principles and tendencies of the leading figures of the Arab renaissance including Jamal Uddin Afghani,[344] Muhammad Abduh[345] and Abdul Rahman Al-Kawakibi.[346] The aims of this organization were solidarity with the nationalist movements in making radical reforms to address the challenges posed by the European threat. These were intended to improve all aspects and levels of cultural and economic life, by spreading education and progress amongst the tribes of the Sahara in the province of Tripoli.[347]

By 1902 the number of zawiyas in Cyrenaica had risen rapidly to forty-four and when the Italians invaded Libya in 1911, the majority of the people living in this region joined the Sanusiyya Zawiya movement against the invasion, led by the resistance leader Omar Al-Mukhtar.[348] Although this movement was characterised by a number of negative aspects, one of its positive points was its emphasis on education which was intended to influence cultural life in Libya. For many Libyan people, poetry remained the sole means of expressing their wishes and aspirations of the in the period from the end of the nineteenth century until the 1950s.[349] The zawiyas that flourished in Libya in the period 1843-1858 formed the beginning of education programmes for adults in rural Libya. UNESCO experts confirmed this opinion, noting that the beginning of the adult education movement in Libya did not start in 1953, when the UNESCO project was established in Fezzan, or in 1951[350] when the independence of Libya was declared, but in 1843, when the first zawiya was founded in Al-Bayda. An interest in education

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[343] T. Alhajery, *Literary Life in Libya* (Cairo 1962), pp.28-29.

[344] Popularly known as Al-Afghani (1838-1897), he was a political activist and Islamic ideologist who during the late nineteenth century worked towards Muslim unity, Arab modernization, and stressed resistance against European colonialism. See: A. Amin, *Leaders of reform in the modern era* (Cairo, 2011), p.6.

[345] Egyptian reformer and Muslim apologist, Abduh (1849-1905) was a student and friend of Al-Afghani. Although deeply influenced by him, he was less interested in political activism, concentrating more on religious, legal and educational reform. See: Amin, *Leaders of reform*, p.7.

[346] Al-Kawakibi (1855–1902) was a Syrian author and supporter of Pan-Arab Islamic solidarity, whose thoughts and writings continue to be relevant to the issues of Islamic identity and Pan-Arabism. His criticism of the Ottoman Empire eventually led to calls for the sovereignty of the Arab Nations. Al-Kawakibi died in 1902 of "mysterious" causes, his family alleging that he had been poisoned by Turkish agents. See: Amin, *Leaders of Reform*, p.69.

[347] Brocin, *The History of Libya*, pp.254-256.

[348] Pasero, 'Fascism and the Bedouin', pp.37-38

[349] Alhajery, *Literary Life in Libya*, p.32

[350] O. Al-Kayak, مراكز الثقافة في المغرب من القرن السادس عشر إلي القرن التاسع عشر [*Lectures on the centres of culture in Morocco from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century*] (Cairo, 1958), p.117.

amongst older people convinced UNESCO experts to return to Libya in 1953.[351]

The zawiya of Ahmed Al-Zarok in Misrata is one of the oldest seats of learning in Libya, and attracted students who had already studied the Qur'an elsewhere.[352] The library there included many manuscripts related to different branches of knowledge, either compiled by Al-Zarok himself or brought back from his travels abroad, in addition to the books written by the fakihs (scholars) or those who were taught there including Ahmed Bin Galbon and Sheikh Ramadan Abu Turqi. [353] The Alasmari Zawiya, founded in Zliten in the fifteenth century, had boarding facilities for students and gained a very good reputation for its educational activities. It still exists today as Asmari University and has maintained its reputation for producing religious scholars and social scientists in Libya.[354] The zawiyas situated throughout Tripoli played a key role in preserving Libya's Arab Islamic identity when this was under threat from other cultures such as the Italian occupation. [355] Even when the physical structure of the zawiya was not present, its spirit as a centre for disseminating; knowledge remained alive, for example, one former student of the Alasmari Zawiya, sheikh Muhammad Al-Siferani, opened up his own home in Benghazi as a school for students and scholars of Islam in 1936.[356] It can be seen that that the zawiyas played a crucial role in preserving Libya's religious heritage as well as disseminating ideas and learning and served as a catalyst for cultural renaissance and for reflection on Libya's cultural heritage.

## 2.4 Education under Italian Rule (1912–1939)

The Treaty of Lausanne, signed at Ouchy on 18 October 1912, ended the Italo-Turkish War and also brought an end to the Ottoman Empire's rule over Libya,[357] leaving the Italian forces to continue their invasion. Given the delay which Italy experienced in pacifying Libya, it was some time before a full Italian education system was

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[351] A. Mohammed, محو الامية وتعليم الكبار [*Illiteracy and the education of older people*] (Tripoli, 1966), pp.4-5.

[352] A. F. Khashim, أحمد الزروق والزروقية ، دراسة حياة وفكر ومذهب وطريقة [*Ahmed Azzarouk: Study of a Life, Philosophy and Doctrine*] (Tripoli 1980), pp.172-173

[353] A. M. Alsharrif and M. Ettawir, دراسات في تاريخ المكتبات والوثائق والمخطوطات الليبية [*Studies in the History of Libyan Libraries, Documents and Manuscripts*] (Misrata, 1987), pp.32-33

[354] Ibid.

[355] T. A. Alzye, معجم البلدان الليبية [*Dictionary of the Libyan Territories*], 1st edn (Tripoli, 1968), pp.150-157

[356] A. Alsabke, استقلال ليبيا بين الدول العربية وجامعة الدول العربية [*Independent Libya amongst the Arab countries and in the Arab League*] (Cairo 1990).

[357] C. Lucas, *The Partition and Colonization of Africa* (Oxford, 1922), p.110.

implemented.[358] Initially the Italians sought control of strategic locations or places of commercial importance.[359] However, Italian schools had already been established in Libya during the Ottoman reign, with the help of Italian Catholic missionaries.[360] The continuous efforts by these missionaries, including their educational efforts, helped the Italians to expand their colonisation of Libya.[361] Christians who had settled in Tripoli in 1864 opened a mixed elementary school for Christian children, who were few in number at that time.[362] The first school for boys opened in 1881, where the languages of instruction were Italian and French. The Italian government supported this school financially, through its consulate in Tripoli, and student numbers began to rapidly increase. In 1888, the school was placed under the direct supervision of the Italian government.[363] Another elementary school for boys followed in Benghazi in 1888, providing a curriculum and syllabus similar to those of the Italian schools.[364] In 1890, a third elementary school was established in Khoms by the Italian community; this was also placed under Italian government supervision in 1902.

Italian education consisted of three different stages: kindergarten, elementary and secondary. The Italian system of education was considered to be far superior to Ottoman education, as it offered different specializations and granted admission to both genders.[365] Even though the Ottoman State objected to the Italian education system, Turkish officers preferred to send their sons to Italian schools.[366] The increase in the number of Italian schools reflected the growing numbers of Italian immigrants arriving in Libya, having been encouraged to move there by their government as part of its plans for colonisation. Schools were largely confined to areas of commercial influence, until Italian forces entered Libya in 1911.[367]

Prior to the military invasion, Italy had already been taking steps to achieve its aim of

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[358] The decline of the Ottoman Empire presented new opportunities to the European countries which aimed to begin securing influence in the region by spreading European culture and education through North Africa, including Libya. See: Omar, *The History of Cultural Activity and Education in Libya*, p.180.

[359] J. C. Gray and L. Silberman, *The Fate of Italy's Colonies*. (London, 1948) p.44.

[360] Steele-Greig, *History of Education in Tripolitania,* p.17.

[361] Omar, *The History of Cultural Activity and Education in Libya,* pp.250-252.

[362] Ibid., p.255.

[363] Ministry of Education, تطور التعليم في ليبيا من العهد العثماني حتى وقتنا الحاضر [*Historical Study of the Evolution of Education in Libya from the Ottoman Era until the Present Time*] (Tripoli, 1974), p.11.

[364] R. Gonem, تطوير التعليم في ليبيا في العصور الحديثة [*The Development of Education in Libya in Recent Times*]. (Tripoli, 1972), p.119.

[365] Steele-Greig, *History of Education in Tripolitania,* p.18.

[366] Alshaibane, *Culture and Education in Libya*, p.246.

[367] Ibid.

controlling Libya. It had established free schools in Tripoli and Benghazi to attract young Libyans in an attempt to positively influence their attitudes towards Italian culture. With the initiation of the occupation, the Italian government continued to encourage mass immigration of Italian citizens to Libya and implemented a programme of Europeanization of culture and education.

## 2.4.1  Italian Education Policy in Libya

The education policy adopted by Italian regime set clear limits for educational priorities. This entailed neglecting higher education in particular, meaning that there was no chance for Libyans to enter higher education unless they went to Egypt or Tunisia.[368] In 1914, a law came into force establishing Italian schools for Arabs which offered pre-elementary education and were supervised by Italian government inspectors. Libyans became increasingly concerned that the Italians' promise to bring new education system to Libya as a replacement for the failing Ottoman education system would not be fulfilled.[369] In addition, educational efforts were targeted on what were viewed as strategically important urban areas, with the result that some regions such as Fezzan, witnessed no establishment of schools, except in the last decades of Italian rule.[370] This policy of neglect was even more strictly enforced under Mussolini in 1922.[371]

The other important element of educational policy during this era was the adoption in all Libyan schools of the same curriculum that was taught in Italy, which meant that Libyan boys learnt Italian language, history and geography before they learnt their own.[372]

The school curriculum and the contents of textbooks played a vital role in the overall process of Italianization. For example, one book began:

> Italy offers you a great deal, it protects men, property and religion. Rome ruled the world in the old ages, Libya flourished under Roman rule. God give me increasing love to Italy, my second home [...] I love Italy, great love, long live

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[368] Omar, *The History of Cultural Activity and Education in Libya,* p.167.
[369] Gonem, *The Development of Education in Libya*, p.130.
[370] Al-Gamati, *The Development of Educational Management,* p.107.
[371] Ibid.
[372] Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*, p.205.

Italy, let us salute the beautiful Italian flag which is our flag too. Long live the Duce of Italy Benito Mussolini.[373]

It became clear that education was being used as part of the colonial agenda by attempting to impose Italian cultural on the local inhabitants, a cultural invasion following the military invasion. The main aim of education was to serve colonial interests, without any consideration for the wishes of the Libyan citizens or of the developmental needs of their occupied country.[374] Perhaps not surprisingly, the most distinctive characteristic of education during the first period of Italian rule (1911–1922) was instability, with local citizens openly rejecting what was being offered due to the lack of trust in the new administration.

Instead of providing educational programme, the Italians were interested in other sectors,[375] causing the press to remind them about their promises to the Libyans. As the newspaper *Al-Liwa Al-Tarablusi* [Tripoli flag] commented, since the heralds of modernisation (i.e. the Italians) claimed they had come to help Libyans and educate their children, they should have done as they promised, teaching them according to the values of their own traditions and religion.[376] The implication was clear: they had failed to introduce an education system suited to the Libyans.[377] Changes were later made to the method of delivering elementary education and secondary education was split into two stages, one lasting three years, the other, two. Two types were introduced, technical and general, with the latter serving as the qualification for entering higher education. Just six Libyan students were enrolled in secondary schools during the academic year 1921–1922 while the total number of non-Arab students was 232.[378] By 1939, the number of Libyan students enrolled had risen to 134.[379]

By early 1922-1923, the number of schools across Libya had reached 88, with 66 Qur'anic schools and 14 elementary schools, secondary and technical schools

[373] M Rolancli, طلينت الافارقةحكوميا ودينيا وتعليمين في المستعمرات الإيطالية [*The Italianisation of Africans: Governmental Regional Education in Italian Settlements 1890-1937*] translated into Arabic by al- Qadie al-Mhayishi, (Tripoli, 1988), p.155.

[374] Omar, *Cultural Activity in Libya,* p.258.

[375] B. R. Reilly, 'Report by the War Office Working Party on Tripolitania', 8 March 1947, TNA, FO 1015/129.

[376] *Al-Liwa Al-Tarablusi,* 1 September 1919.

[377] Ibid.

[378] M. Jerary, 'The Libyan Cultural Resistance to Italian Colonization', in A. Baldinetti (ed.), *Modern and Contemporary Libya: Sources and Historiographies* (Rome, 2003), p.18.

[379] Al-Gamati, *The Development of Educational Management,* pp.113-115.

accounting for the remainder.[380] The total number of students in all schools and stages in Libya was 645 in 1911-1912; by 1921-1922, this number had reached 3,559 students including all Libyans (Muslims and Jews)[381] and Italians in preparatory, secondary and technical schools, indicating a five-fold rise in the number of students within a decade. Whilst the numbers of Arab students enrolled in elementary school had rapidly increased, there had not been any corresponding increase in their numbers at secondary school. By contrast, the number of Italian students in secondary and technical schools had risen sharply, suggesting that the colonial authorities did not intend to allow Arab students to compete for the jobs in civil administration.

Table 2.1: Number of students enrolled in educational establishments (Libya 1911–1921)

| School | 1911 | 1914 | 1918 | 1920 | 1921 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Italian Elementary | 373 | 1,947 | 2,066 | 2,319 | 2,363 |
| Arabic Elementary | 99 | 725 | 779 | 571 | 611 |
| Technical and Trade | 119 | 124 | 179 | 215 | 243 |
| Secondary | 54 | 226 | 289 | 342 | 342 |
| Total of students | 645 | 3,022 | 3,273 | 3,447 | 3,559 |

Source: Steele-Greig, *History of Education in Tripoli,* p. 81.

Table 2.1 demonstrates the growing numbers of students in Libya being educated through the medium of Italian and following an Italian syllabus over the course of the first decade of occupation, showing how serious the Italian authorities were about promoting their own language and culture in the occupied territory.[382] Having to learn through the medium of another language obviously disadvantaged the Arabic-speaking local population who, in addition, were presented with a curriculum which focused on a culture which was largely alien to their Arab Islamic heritage. The Italians had no interest in providing an education which might have served to heighten the national consciousness of the Libyan people.

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[380] Ministry of Education, *Historical Study of the Evolution of Education in Libya,* p.13.
[381] There were some 30,000 Jews in Tripoli, and 4,500 in Cyrenaica. Some were settled by the Roman Emperor Vespasian, others fled from Spain at the end of fifteenth century. See: Gray and Silberman, *The Fate of Italy's Colonies*, p.43.
[382] The Italians stressed their language as medium of instruction in the schools. Steele-Greig, *History of Education in Tripoli,* p.81.

During the second stage of the Italian occupation (1922–1943), shortly after Mussolini's fascism regime[383] came to power in Italy, attempts were made to speed up Libya's cultural integration into Italian national territory.[384] The collapse of liberal government in Italy and the emergence of Italian fascism affected the situation in Libya. As a result, colonial policy towards Libyan citizens became openly hostile to their Arab Islamic culture.[385] All centres of Islamic instruction were closed, including the Jaghabub zawiya, and these properties were confiscated for use by the Italian authorities. They refused to license centres of Islamic instruction and Qur'anic schools, thus removing them from the educational system. This closure of all schools run by the local Libyan community, except for the elementary schools and the colleges teaching traditional Arab handicrafts[386] in Tripoli and Benghazi, meant that graduates previously employed as teachers there were forced to seek menial jobs.[387]

In 1936, there were 54 primary schools using Arabic as the medium of instruction, and no secondary schools;[388] only three Jewish schools remained,[389] while 44 schools representing all stages and specialisations followed the same curriculum as that taught in Italian schools. New equipment and furniture went to the Italian schools while the schools for Arabs were totally neglected, leaving them without the means or facilities to offer an adequate education to students.[390] In 1939, under anti-Semitic laws, Mussolini's Fascist government banned all Jewish teachers from working in government-funded schools in the country and prevented the teaching of Hebrew, even in Jewish schools.[391]

Mukhtar Alasoud[392] was able to give an insight into the degree of control the Italian school management exerted over Arab teachers working in Italian schools. His teacher

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[383] The rise of fascism appeared to confirm Weber's gloomy predictions concerning the demise of liberal values in the modern world. See: R. Bellamy, *Liberalism and Modern Society*, (University of Virginia, 1992), p.217.
[384] T. Chenntouf, 'The Horn and North Africa, 1935-1945: Crises and Change', in A. Mazrui and C. Wondji (eds), *Africa since 1935,* vol. 8 (California, 1993), p.38.
[385] Interview, Alakecat, 22 September 2015.
[386] Jerary notes that the authorities had declared that the indigenous population should only be permitted to study traditional handicrafts and were to be excluded from undertaking technical education. Jerary, *The Libyan Cultural Resistance,* p.19.
[387] A. Alfanish, *Libyan Society and Its Problems* (Tripoli, 1967), p.37.
[388] Ibid.
[389] Steele-Greig, *History of Education in Tripolitania,* p.28.
[390] Alfanish, *Libyan Society and Its Problems*, p.38.
[391] Steele-Greig, *History of Education in Tripolitania,* p.29.
[392] Mukhtar Alasoud (1931-2012) was born in Alshate. After elementary education at Qur'anic school, he moved to Italian school. When Tripoli secondary school opened, he and a fellow student were selected to work as teachers. He was interviewed in person on 15 June 2011.

stopped wearing *libs arabiya* [traditional Arab dress][393] in favour of Italian clothes at work after being instructed by the Italian inspector of education to do so. Arab teachers were also monitored in the classroom by Italian supervisors to ensure they cooperated in implementing Italian policy which also required both staff and pupils to perform the Fascist salute.[394] However Mr Alasoud also remembered that there was resistance on the part of teachers and a form of collaboration between them and their pupils in subverting the system:

> Our teacher was asked to praise the Italian regime during the lessons to the Libyan pupils. [He] took the whole class of pupils into his confidence and asked one of the trustworthy students to stand near the door and shout if the school supervisor appeared to check on the teachers. This would warn [him] to change the subject of the lesson by erasing what was on the blackboard and writing one of the topics on the official curriculum.[395]

Since the Italian government needed to provide secondary education which would allow the sons of its officials, whether civilian or military, to continue their studies in Libya, education during this period was designed to reflect the interests and intentions of the Italians residing in Libya.[396] This period witnessed a substantial growth in numbers of Italian schools, while provision of schools for the indigenous Arab population expanded more slowly. This type of educational policy had commonly been implemented by colonial powers who deliberately limited educational opportunities for citizens as a means of controlling their development, all the while exploiting the colony's resources. In this respect, the Italians were not exceptional, but it could be argued that they applied this policy more stringently than other colonisers.[397]

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[393] Although there are regional variations in dress, for men this would typically have consisted of drawstring pants, a long chemise, and *faramla* [waistcoat].
[394] Interview, Alasoud, 15 June 2011.
[395] Ibid.
[396] Ibid.
[397] Ibid.

Table 2.2: Percentages of Arab and Foreign Students in Education (Libya 1921-1939)

| Academic year | Arabs | Percentage | Foreigners | Percentage | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1921-1922 | 767 | 19% | 3,249 | 81% | 4,066 |
| 1925-1926 | 1,826 | 36% | 5,732 | 64% | 7,558 |
| 1930-1931 | 4,387 | 42% | 5,936 | 58% | 10,323 |
| 1934-1935 | 6,382 | 34% | 12,389 | 66% | 18,771 |
| 1938-1939 | 7,524 | 37% | 12,811 | 63% | 20,335 |

Source: Adapted from Said, *Cultural Life in Libya.*

The number of Italian students enrolled in state schools had reached 3,000 by 1924, and by 1939, this figure had quadrupled. In contrast, the Arab student population numbered 6,010.[398] Above table provides a clear idea of the ratio of Arab to foreign students enrolled in educational institutions in Libya for the period covering 1921 to 1939, highlighting the great disparity between the distribution of indigenous Libyans and foreigners within the educational system. Although there were more Libyans in the population, as table 2.2 demonstrates, the numbers of students decreased over the years whilst the numbers of non-Libyans increased. Moreover, the costs of this education were being covered by taxes paid by the Libyan citizens. Education was directly overseen by the Italian Ministry in Rome; its policies being implemented in Libya by Italian administrators who effectively controlled every aspect of the education system. There was no evidence of policies aimed at spreading scientific knowledge and technical expertise, or raising levels of literacy amongst the indigenous population, both of which were needed if Libya was to have a chance of development. Education can thus be viewed as part of a concerted campaign to assimilate Libyan citizens, depriving them of their cultural identity as Arab Muslims and transforming them into subjects of the Italian Empire.[399] This policy can be compared with that which was practised by the Italian administration in Somalia which took a different approach to education. Since Christian missionaries were responsible for education there, the Italian rulers did not

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[398] Said, *Cultural Life in Libya,* pp.100-101.
[399] Jerary, *The Libyan Cultural Resistance,* p.25.

interfere in their educational activities.[400]

## 2.5 The Libyan Press Pre-1943

One of the traditional functions of the press has been to inform citizens about what is happening within in the local community, the nation as a whole or elsewhere in the world. In addition to its information function, the press can also play a political function, either criticizing or supporting the actions of those in power.

The first newspaper, or perhaps it would be more accurate to refer to it as a news-sheet, appeared in Libya in 1860 during the Ottoman era. *Al-Munakb* (The Prospector) was essentially a hand-written information sheet, produced by foreign consuls in French, which at the time served as a lingua franca for diplomats and European traders in Tripoli.[401] It was distributed to a small number of individuals, and focused on world affairs and the political activities of diplomats. Since it was not subject to any interference from the Ottoman regime, it served as a means for the members of the European community to share information which was of value and interest to them.[402]

The first recognizably new print newspaper to be published regularly in Libya was the weekly *Tarablus Al-Gharb* [West Tripoli] that was launched on 20 September 1866 and was written in both Arabic and Turkish. This was the second Arabic language newspaper to appear in the Arab world and only the fourth newspaper within the whole Ottoman Empire.[403] It was not until 26 August 1897 that the next Arabic newspaper appeared, a political broadsheet entitled *Al-Tarake* [The Morning Star].[404] *Majalt Al-Adab* [The Arts Magazine], the first monthly non-political magazine, appeared one year later in 1898, each issue consisting of over 20 pages of articles written in Arabic about aspects of agriculture, geography and nature.[405] Thus, there were some small numbers of newspapers and magazines aimed at different readerships available by the end of the Ottoman era in Libya.

In addition, the Italian community had started to publish its own newspapers in Tripoli in order to defend their own interests, rights and future political ambitions in Libya. A

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[400] Gray and Silberman, *The Fate of Italy's Colonies*, p.73.
[401] C. Souri Au-Hoebrechts, *La Presse Maghrebine* (Paris, 1969), p.31.
[402] A. M. Almasrati, *Fifty years of the Press in Libya*, 2nd edn (Misrata, 2000), p.27.
[403] M. Nage and M. Nore, *Western Tripoli* (Tripoli, 1973) p.198.
[404] K. Altalise, *The History of Tripoli* (Tunis, 1985), p.233.
[405] A. Marwa.*The Arab Press, its Inception and Evolution* (Beirut, 1961), p.74.

twice-weekly Italian-language four-page newspaper *Il Giornale di Tripoli* [The Journal of Tripoli] was launched by the Italian journalist, Luigi Genazzi, in 1908. A year later, a similar newspaper called *L'Eco di Tripoli* [Tripoli Echo] was first published by proprietor and journalist Gustave Arbib in 1909 but then closed down in 1912 by the Italian government. The Banco di Roma was responsible for the financing and creation of *L'economista* [The Economist], another four-page, weekly broadsheet, printed in Italian which launched in 1910. As the title suggests, it focussed on news relating to economics, finance, commerce, banking, railways and investment. This, along with two other publications entitled *La Stella D'Oriente* [Star of the Orient] (1910) and *Il Progresso* [Progress] (1910), was closed down in 1911.[406] All these newspapers were aimed only at the Italian community and catered for merchants and traders, indicating that the Italians already had major business and commercial interests in Libya.

During periods of relative stability in Libya, cultural activities such as the publication of newspapers and involvement in cultural and voluntary organizations flourished. The first of these periods lasted from 1908 when the new Ottoman Constitution allowed those in the countries of the Ottoman Empire to engage in social activities until the Italian invasion of 1911.[407] The second began in 1919 with the start of the truce between the Italians and the Libyans and lasted until the Fascists came to power in Italy under Mussolini in 1922.[408] The third period stretched from the mid-1930s to WW2. During each of these three periods, both the press and cultural associations played a vital role in encouraging cultural activity.[409]

Although education and cultural activities were available for Libyans in the *zawiyas* and elsewhere within the community, the existence of these opportunities needed to be made known and the ideas which were discussed there needed to be more widely circulated and publicly debated, with the press providing the most reliable channel for this to take place. However, cultural events can only be promoted if piece exists in society.

Beginning with the press, a number of newspapers were launched in Libya during the aforementioned periods under Ottoman Empire. The first of these factors related to the

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[406] Assawi, *The Newspaper Industry*, pp.146-147.
[407] A. M. Almasrati, أعلام من طرابلس [*Flags from Tripoli*] (Tripoli, 1955), p.174.
[408] S. Magbari, ليبيا بين الحركة الوطنية والنظام الملكي [*Libya between the National Movement and the monarchy*] (Cairo, 1969), pp.376-381.
[409] M. Bin Halim, ليبيا انبعاث امة. سقوط دولة [*Libya the rise of nation and the fall of the state.*] (Berlin 2003), p.45.

numbers of students returning from Al-Azhar University and Al-Zaytouna Mosque who, after completing their education there, took the initiative to set up newspapers in Libya, drawing on their experience of the Egyptian Press.[410] In addition, there was the impact of the deportees who had been expelled by Sultan Abdul Hamid II.[411] During his sultanate, many military officers and staff had been exiled to Africa due to his growing fear about their political activities and those who came to Libya played a significant role in establishing the Press.[412] They had experience of writing newspaper reports and Libyan publications took these individuals on as journalists. By 1908, a number of publications had been established in Libya including *The State* newspaper in Tripoli, the *Arts Journal*, the *Islamic Trades Journal* and other publications which offered good quality articles about Libya and the Italian rulers, written by scholars and intellectuals.[413]

Another group who contributed to the growth in the press were the self-taught intellectuals, who had acquired their cultural knowledge by reading books from private libraries owned by Libyans who would allow local people access to these collections to improve their knowledge.[414] This was the case of Ahmed Al-Nab Ansari[415] in Tripoli whose son, Muhammad, started to publish a newspaper entitled *Al-Kashaf* (Searchlight) in early September 1908. Ansari's library played an important role at that time and still exists today.[416]

Libyans would go to the libraries in Tripoli, Zleitin, Misrata and Benghazi city to find out about developments taking place in the country. These libraries contained not only books and manuscripts but also magazines and newspapers, published in other Arab countries such as Egypt and Syria.[417] Literary journals were also imported into Libya and reading this high quality critical writing which was published very regularly had a

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[410] Almasrati, *Fifty Years of the press in Libya*, p.4.
[411] Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1842-1918) was the 34th Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. See: Said, *Cultural Life in Libya*, p.89.
[412] Said, *Cultural Life in Libya*, p.89.
[413] Almasrati, *Fifty Years of the press in Libya*, p.9.
[414]These included Ahmed Al-Zarok's library, housed in the Misrata zawiya, the Alasmari library in Zliten, a library in Jaghbub and the Awqaf Library in Benghazi. See: Alsharrif and Ettawir, *Studies in the History of Libyan Libraries*, pp.55.
[415] Ahmed Al-Nab Ansari's (1840-1918) family had originally come from Andalusia to Libya in the late-fifteenth century, following the expulsion of the Muslims from Spain. He was a prominent intellectual, having authored several books, most notably *Al-Manhal Aladb*, a history of Tripoli. During the sultanate of Abdul Hamid II, the Ottoman authorities exiled him to Istanbul, where he died. See: M. A. Khafaji, *The Story of Literature in Libya and the Arab World* (Beirut, 1992), p.26.
[416] Shukri, *The Birth of Modern Libya,* p.39.
[417] Almasrati, *Flags from Tripoli*, p.174.

good effect on younger scholars, who themselves went on to contribute to professional journalism.[418] The declaration of the Ottoman Constitution in 1908 was a key factor in encouraging the press since the government no longer imposed any kind of censorship which motivated writers and critics to play their role in contributing to newspapers. The best example was *Al-Tarake,* a journal,[419] which became a cultural forum for authors and critics.[420] Newspapers were also concerned about social issues, in particular about the problems of those unable to earn a living.[421] It also published articles on low standards of morality and raised the problem of the damage caused by alcoholism.[422]

Following the Italian invasion in 1911, censorship was imposed on the newspapers that had been publishing during the Ottoman regime and Arab newspapers printed in Tunisia and Egypt were banned from Libya.[423] As previously noted, in 1917, a truce was called between Libya and Italy,[424] followed by two separate agreements, namely, the Swani Ben Adam Accord signed in Tripoli (1919), and the Accord of Al-Rajma signed in Cyrenaica (1920),[425] and the declaration of a government of national unity under the supervision of Italy helped to restore stability in Tripoli and Cyrenaica.[426] This paved the way for the emergence of new newspapers such as *Al-Liwa Al-Tarablusi* [Tripoli flag] which was launched on 9 October 1919 as the mouthpiece of national reconciliation.[427]

The Italians agreed to constitute Arab assemblies, and blamed the delay in implementing this on the Libyans themselves.[428] In Tripoli, most journals followed the same path as *Al-Tarake* during the periods of political reform.[429] The most dominant

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[418] Almasrati, *Fifty Years of the press in Libya,* p.8.

[419] This journal was launched on 26 June 1897. See: K. A. Louba, *The Libyan press: Political Affiliations and Economic and Social Trends: 1943-1952* (Benghazi, 2008), p.35

[420] I. A. Abu Al-Qasim, (م1911-1957) المهاجرون الليبيون بالبلاد التونسية [*Libyan Refugees in Tunisia, 1911-1957*] (Tunis, 1992), pp.153-154.

[421] Ibid.

[422] *Al-Tarake*, 11 April 1907.

[423]Mohammed Saeed Alakecat, born in 1941, is a well-known Libyan historian and poet. In 1975 he became general director of the Foundation for the press in the Ministry of Information. A former Libyan ambassador in Saudi Arabia till 2010, he has authored more than 100 books on poetry and history. He is now the president of the Libyan National Struggle Front. He was interviewed on 22 September 2015.

[424] Alsharrif and Ettawir, *Studies in the History of Libyan Libraries*, p.37.

[425] A. Lisa, *The state and social transformation in Tunisia and Libya, 1820-1980*, (Princeton, 1986), p.208.

[426] M. Aelchenaite, قضية ليبيا [*The Issue of Libya]* (Cairo, 1951), p.86.

[427] The National Reconciliation party was founded in 30 September 1919.

[428] *Al-liwa al-tarabulsi*, 1919.

[429] This newspaper, the first popular political newspaper in Tripoli, was launched on June 26, 1897. Owned by *Sheikh* Muhammad Busayri, this weekly periodical lasted for one year, then stopped

aspect of these press articles was their hostility to Italian policy and while most articles were simply edited, sometimes whole pages were withdrawn by the censors.[430] The Italians administration was controlling the newspapers, and the people (Italians and interpreters) who were the employees of censor committee or board, their job was to read and check the publications prior to publish. The censors used their power effectively to ban those newspapers who were not responding with the rules and laws of censors.

The editors of any newspapers which published articles targeting those in the Italian administration were initially prosecuted and if they failed to make changes, their publication was banned.[431] However, this did not stop other journals from appearing. Awad Bou Nakhila launched *Al-Watan* [The Homeland] in Benghazi in 1920, giving indications of the growth of nationalist sentiments. In addition to carrying news articles, the magazine carried pieces by and about poets and authors[432] which reflected different opinions on Libyan identity, making it clear that the press was independent.[433] The newspapers presses were located in Tripoli and Benghazi, the published newspapers used to reach everywhere in whole Libya (Fezzan, Tripoli and Cyrenaica) respectively. All the Libyans were the audiences for published newspapers.

The editor-in-chief of *Majalt Libya* (the Libyan Magazine), Omar Fakhri Al-Mhishi, held overtly nationalist attitudes, and worked indirectly to reflect broader Arab opinion about the cause of Libya, channelling this to Libyans through his own magazine. After the Italian authorities banned books entering Libya from other Arab countries in 1928, Al-Mhishi regularly published articles in other Arabic language magazines and newspapers condemning this policy[434] but maintained a balance when writing articles in his own journal to avoid harassment from the Italian authorities. *Majalt Libya* also acted as a bridge between Libyan readers and Western culture, and some of the contributors who had been influenced by Italian culture, such as Mahdi Albouri, made attempts to introduce aspects of Western culture to Arab readers. Albouri published a series of articles focusing in particular on the history of Italian art, introducing readers to this

publication, returning again in 1908 during the era of Governor Namik Pasha. See: Almasrati, *Fifty Years of the press in Libya*, pp.54-55.

[430] Almasrati, *Fifty Years of the press in Libya*, p.44.

[431] Ibid.

[432] M.M. Juhaidar, خليفة محمد التليسى. ناقداً وأديبا [*Khalifa Muhammad Al Tales*] (Misrata, 1986) ‏،p.41.

[433] A. M. Assawi, فن صناعة الصحافة ماضيه وحاضره ومستقبله [*The Art of the press: Past, Present and Future*], (Tripoli 1984), p.249.

[434] Alsabke, *Independence in Libya among the Arab countries and the Arab league*, p.160.

through the medium of Arabic.[435] In addition, *Majalt Libya* became a forum for the exchange of ideas and opinions, with Libyan critics expressing their opinions about articles which had appeared, correcting mistakes and offering alternative viewpoints. One example regards an article penned by Suliman Al-Hadad, entitled "The origin of the tribes in Darnah".[436] Abdelkarim Jabril responded with another article which stirred up controversy among critics regarding the origins of the Al-Abbidat tribe, and leading to a flurry of replies from readers.[437]

*Majalt Libya* represented the intellectual renaissance and the sense of shared cultural identity in the provinces of Libya. Even though it was published in Benghazi, its journalists and correspondents came from many different Libyan cities including Darnah and Tobruk, as well as the rural areas, and the provinces of Tripoli and Fezzan.[438] A number of female journalists and authors also published articles and worked in the magazine, with the writing of Hameda Tarkhan, Khadija El-Jahmi, Huria Ahmed and Fawzia Othman making frequent appearances during the period 1936-1940.[439] By the start of WW2, the following daily newspapers were available: the Italian-language *Corriere di Tripoli* [Tripoli Post] and the Arabic-language *Barid Cyrenaica* (Cyrenaica Post).[440]

## 2.6  Associational Life in Libya Pre-1943.

The Libyans were not aware about cultural associations because of continuous suppression by those who had ruled them. During their long rule, the Ottomans limited cultural activities in Libya and did not make and significant contribution towards their development. When the Italians took the control of Libya in 1911, harsh steps were taken to control the people and hence the Libyans were unable to establish cultural associations unless the respective authorities gave their permission. Some Libyans put forward requests to establish social and cultural association but these were declined, particularly during the rule of the Fascists. The Italians effectively sabotaged any

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[435] *Majlt libya,* October 1937.
[436] Assawi, *the Art of the press,* p.110.
[437] *Majlt libya*, October 1937.
[438] Cyrenaican journalists included Ahmed Rafik Elmahdiwi, Abdelkarim Jabril, Abdessalam Muhammad Salem Omran, and Slimane Al-hadad. Others from Tripoli and Fezzan included Ahmed Esharef, Kassem Fikri, Muhammad Asharrif Elghadamissi (a judge in Ghadamis) and Ahmed Ettargui.
[439] Hameda Tarkhan (1892-1987) was born in Benghazi and led the women's movement in Libya. She was the first director of a school for girls during the BMA, and established the first Women's Association in Libya. See: Assawi, *the Art of the press,* p.155.
[440] N. Ziadah, برقة الدولة العربية الثامنة [*Cyrenaica, the Eighth Arab State*] (Beirut, 1955), p.70.

attempts to allow activities which involved the formation of clubs or cultural associations until signing of the Swani Ben Adam Accord (1919) which allowed Libyans to start working in government offices with the Italians. For the first time, the leaders of the national movement were also free to establish national and cultural organizations under the provisions of this agreement.[441]

Ahmed Hassan Al-Faqih[442] founded Al-Nadi Al-Adabi Tripoli Literary Society in 1920[443] with an initial membership of five and became its first elected Chairman.[444] The society put on seminars concerning history, art and cultural subjects[445] and its stated aims were such as to support writers; to publish books about art and culture; to sell these books to generate revenue, and finally to establish small educational centres with libraries for older people who were unable to join learning classes during day time or who missed the opportunity to joining schools or learning class before 1943.[446]

The society was unable to achieve all its objectives due to a lack of resources but did set up a night school where volunteers offered lessons to illiterate adults[447] while youngsters were given the opportunity to learn in schools or zawiyas instead of joining night time library clubs.

Those who were involved in writing in newspapers, articles or books played a tremendous role in the growth of cultural activities, which was to pave the way for future development of the cultural infrastructure of the Libyan community. In addition to the Literary Society, the Reform Club played a major role in targeting people who were interested in learning to read and write basic Arabic.[448] Like the Literary Society,

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[441] S. Magbari, ليبيا بين الحركة الوطنية والنظام الملكي [*Libya between the National Movement and the monarchy*] (Cairo, 1969), p.376.

[442] Ahmed Hassan al-Faqih (1894-1975) was born in Tripoli and was active in a wide range of cultural and social activities, linked to his political concerns. He later established the National Bloc political party in 1946. See: M. M. Gibran, أحمد الفقيه حسن [*Ahmed Hassan al-Faqih. His life and literature*] (Tripoli, 1976), p.33.

[443] Tripoli Literary Society was established in 1920 by two brothers, Ahmed Hassan al-Faqih and his brother Ali Hassan al-Faqih. This was the first civilian project under the Italian authorities who later closed it down. It was re-opened during the BMA in 1943, serving as the basis of a political party. Interview, Alakecat, 22 September 2015.

[444] Muhammad Al-Mahrook, Abd Al-Rahman Al-Kalhood, Abdul Aziz Al-Riqlay and Mustafa Al-Sarraj.

[445] Gibran, *Hassan al-Faqih.* p.39.

[446] 'A statement of the Literary Society - Tripoli in 1943', Tripoli,Ahmed Al-Nab Ansari Library, Division of documents and manuscripts.

[447] Gibran, *Hassan al-Faqih,* pp.32-33 lists these volunteers as Ali-Atturki, Ali Bahri, Muhammad Shoukat El-Mabrouk, Mustapha El-Alaki and Muhammad El-Masrati.

[448] Interview, Mokhtar Alasoud, 28 July 2011.

the Reform Club also had volunteer teachers who played a similar role.[449]

However, all cultural associations were banned during Mussolini's regime (1922-1943) and Libyans were once again excluded from both political social and cultural activities.[450] Libyan writers and intellectuals were not permitted to promote the Arab way of life in their works which significantly affected cultural development among the Libyans.[451] However, their volunteers continued to teach in spite of the warnings issued by the Italian authorities.[452]

The attitude and conduct of the Italians led many Libyans to migrate from 1923 onwards to Tunisia, Syria and especially Egypt.[453] Many émigrés settled in the capital and they were welcomed and supported there by representatives of the British government who maintained a positive approach towards these Libyan exiles. The centre of Libyan social, cultural and religious activities effectively shifted to Cairo where Libyan émigrés not only created cultural associations which brought Libyan exiles together for certain activities but they also engaged in anti-Italian propaganda.[454] A large number also attended University in Egypt, and when they later returned to Libya, they made a significant contribution to establishing cultural organisations there.[455]

Italian harassment of those involved in cultural activities continued until the period of relative stability started in the mid-1930s, when colonial authorities started to overlook the cultural activities that had emerged in Libya. As a result of this policy, two volunteer teachers, Ibrahim Usta Omar and Muhammad Jebril, founded a Literary Society in Darnah in 1934.[456] The city's judge, Abdelkarim Azouz, joined the other

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[449] A. M. Almasrati, جمال الدين عبد الله [*Jamal al-Din Abdullah, 1881-1963*] (Tripoli, 1977), p.176 lists these volunteers as Abdullah Jamal Eddine Elmiladi, Taher Bash, Ali Siala, Muhammad Duhni Kaabazi, Ali and Ahmed Al-Faqih Hassan, Muhammad Shoukat El-Mabrouk, Ali Haider Essaati, Muhammad Ali Elmajrab, Ahmed Kanaba, Muhammad Elbahi, Muhammad El-Masrati, and Kheiri Bash Imam Ibrahim Dukduk.

[450] M. Khadduri, *Modern Libya: A Study in Political Development* (New York, 1966), p.81.

[451] Bin Halim, *Libya: the rise of nation and the fall of the state,* p.45

[452] Gibran, *Hassan al-Faqih*, p.36.

[453] Al-Zawi, *The Libyans Jihad in Exile*, p.142

[454] Chenntouf, 'The Horn and North Africa, 1935-1945: crises and change' p.38.

[455] Interview, Alturke, 1 January 2011.

[456] S. Abdul Baset, ديوان البلبل للشاعر إبراهيم الأسطى عمر[*Works of the Poet Omar Ibrahim Usta*], 1stedn (Alexandria, 1967), p.26 lists these members as: Muhammad Kwider-Elhassadi, Mustapha Bukshim, Abdel Hafid Bugrara, Khali Faissa, Asaad Elharbi, Mustapha Bin Saoud, Ahmed Bugrara, Muhammad Saryouka, Ahmed Jebril and Ahmed Ennawissri. Ibrahim Usta Omar became a noted poet, using his verse to encourage Libyan resistance against Italian occupation. In addition to supporting the club, he donated radios so that members could listen to transmissions, especially news bulletins.

members of the thriving Society in late 1934.[457] Two other members, Abdel Hafid Bugrara and Yunis Buswik, were the wealthiest merchants in Darnah and put their libraries at the disposal of Society members, and increasing numbers of members turned the Society into a forum for intellectuals in Darnah.[458]

## 2.7 Political Organisations Pre-1943

The Committee of Union and Progress[459] was established in Tripolitania in 1908, and this liberal reform movement attracted some Libyans in Tripolitania who were calling for democratization and reforms.[460] The Committee operated as an underground organization which called for citizens to reform society along more democratic lines.[461] Although it was established mainly to achieve political ideas, it also had an educational function, since it placed great emphasis on disseminating ideas circulating elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire concerning political and social reform. It can be viewed of part of a broader movement in Tripolitania which was interested in new scientific and cultural developments, with a keen interest in trying to understand the world around them.[462]

However, it only found partial acceptance within the province of Cyrenaica, because the influence of the Sanusiyya movement effectively prevented all of its activities.[463] Due to its attitudes, this organization was accused of attempting to convert Libyan Arabs into becoming Ottoman citizens. This prompted Sanusiyya supporters to respond by creating their own organization in Benghazi in 1910 called Al-Hizb Al-Arabe [the Arab Party]. This was opposed to the agenda of the Committee of Union and Progress.[464]

During Italian Rule, Hizb Al-Asslah Al-Watani [the National Reform Party] appeared soon after new national legislation was promulgated in Tripolitania in 1919. This party aimed to protect the rights of citizens as stated in the legislation, and argued for the implementation of these laws, specifically to usher in the reforms needed in the country. They launched a newspaper called *Al-Liwa Al-Tarablusi* [Flag of Tripoli] which was

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[457] Interview, Alakecat, 22 September 2015.

[458] *Majlt libya*, October 1937, p.14

[459] This organization was initially founded as a secret society under the name of the Committee of Ottoman Union in 1889 by a group of medical students led by Abraham Satrova and Abdullah Cevdet. It became a political organization in 1906 during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

[460] M. Hussein, الدولة العثمانية والشرق العربي [*The Ottoman Empire and the Arab Middle East 1514-1914*] (Cairo, 1990), pp.247-248.

[461] Belhaj, *Education in Tripoli*, pp.132-133.

[462] Belhaj, *Education in Tripoli*, p.134.

[463] Shukri, *The Birth of Modern Libya*, p.423.

[464] Ziadah, *Cyrenaica, The Eighth Arab State* (Beirut, 1955), pp.76-77.

used to publicise its views and to criticise Italian policy. It was subsequently prohibited by the Italian authorities.[465] The Fascist party rapidly dissolved all the agreements that had been drawn up between Libyans and first Italian regime in Libya. This forced the Libyans to shift their centre of political and cultural activities to Egypt. However, the British, who were then the rulers of Egypt, accepted Libyan émigrés in Egypt, allowing them to carry on with their political activities.[466] This group would eventually return to their homeland to start a cultural renaissance and work to build an independent unified nation known as Libya.

## 2.8  Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the political and cultural history of Libya in the decades preceding WW2 in order to set the scene for the detailed analysis of the BMA period which constitutes the major emphasis of this thesis.

As this chapter has demonstrated, over the course of its history Libya has been colonised by numerous foreign powers due to the value of its geographical location. After centuries of Ottoman rule, the Italians occupied Libya in 1911 as part of their imperialist ambitions, an occupation which lasted for almost three decades. A campaign of resistance led to the Italian government revisiting their policy concerning Libya and Mussolini made all possible efforts to assimilate the Libyans.[467] However, despite concerted attempts by these colonial powers to eliminate Libyan cultural identity, through various means over the course of the decades dedicated individuals and inspiring movements succeeded in maintaining Libya's cultural traditions and its Arab Islamic characteristics. The suppression of their culture by the Italian colonizers made Libyans place added emphasis on the importance of education to ensure this heritage was not forgotten, and Sanussiyah zawiyas helped to fill a gap, serving not only as places of Qur'anic instruction but also a social and cultural resource for the entire local community. In addition, the press and associational life all played a key role in ensuring the continuity of Libyan culture.

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[465] R. M. Coury, *The making of an Egyptian Arab nationalist: the early years of Azzam Pasha, 1893-1936.* Reading, 1998, p.202.
[466] T. Chenntouf, 'The horn and North Africa, 1935-1945: crises and change', p.38.
[467] C. H. Kraeling, 'Now and Then in Libya', *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* 80, (1960), p.106 http://www.jstor.org/stable/595585, Accessed: 11/12/2014

As Europe prepared for war, Libyans at home and in exile perceived that the best chance for liberation from colonial domination lay in Italy's defeat in a larger conflict and opted to fight alongside the British army against the Axis powers. North Africa turned into a major theatre of operations and the deadly conflict left its mark socially, economically and politically on Libya. Even though the country remained occupied territory under the BMA, the Allied victory in January 1943 was seen as a turning point in Libya's fortunes. Against a backdrop of growing demands by other Arab countries for independence post-1943,[468] nationalist sentiments grew among Libyans and calls increased for self-determination and independence.[469]

At the start of the twentieth century, a generation emerged which was able to contribute in various way to promoting cultural movements within the country in the wake of WW2.

Although initially the activities of these individuals were relatively small scale, their longer term effects were considerable as they sowed the seeds for more widespread cultural activities and more sophisticated artistic achievements in Libya in the pre-Independence era.[470] While celebrating the cultural identity of Libya, these clubs and societies also provided a space in which it was possible to foster the deeper and more politically oriented sentiments of nationalism which underpinned the demands for independence.

The chapter which follows will focus on education in Libya during the BMA. Undoubtedly education is of key importance culturally and in preparing individuals to contribute to creating a modern and egalitarian society. The educational process must be compatible with the goals of the community with educational programmes being derived from the cultural identity of a nation. The education system in any society is directly linked with the socio-economic and political system. This is due to the potential of education to act as an instrument of support for the political system, although history

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[468] The French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon was a result of the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916), signed between Britain and France during the First World War. Two years after the war the British gained control of most of Ottoman Mesopotamia (Iraq) and the southern part of Ottoman Syria (Palestine and Jordan), while the French controlled the rest of Ottoman Syria (modern Syria, Lebanon, Alexandretta and other portions of southeastern Turkey. The French mandate of Syria lasted until 1943, when two independent countries emerged from the mandate period, Syria and Lebanon, in addition to Hatay which had joined Turkey in 1939. French troops left Syria and Lebanon finally in 1946. See: T. Moussa, نضال الليبيين في بلاد الشام 1925-1950 [*The Libyan political struggle in the Levant 1925-1950*] (Tripoli, 1983), p.84.

[469] Almagrabe, *Documents of the Omar Al-Mukhtar Association*, 1edn (Cairo, 1993), p.128.

[470] T. Moussa, نضال الليبيين في بلاد الشام 1925-1950 [*The Libyan political struggle in the Levant 1925-1950*] (Tripoli, 1983), p.84. Kraeling, 'Now and Then in Libya', p.106.

has also shown examples where the education system has helped to nurture a counter-culture to the prevailing ethos of the ruling regime. Chapter Two will examine how the BMA focused on education as a tool for creating significant development in Libya.

# 3. CHAPTER THREE: EDUCATION IN LIBYA UNDER THE BRITISH MILITARY ADMINISTRATION

## 3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted some key developments in social-cultural activities that occurred under various administrations in Libya. It also explored those factors that helped the Libyans to preserve these activities during times of conflict and colonization, both within their local communities and in exile abroad. This chapter will focus on the educational reforms introduced in Libya under the BMA and evaluate the effect these had on Libyan society.

Education is considered to lie at the heart of a nation's life,[471] and has been referred as "the first and most urgent issue of our time",[472] since the quality of an educational system has a direct influence on the cultural level of its citizens.[473] The role of education in knowledge creation is firmly established, and it must be encouraged in order to promote the individual's drive for independent thinking, creativity, sustainability and self-initiative.[474] It is highly influential in promoting the cultural life that helps to establish social cohesion among groups.[475]

According to Kedouri,[476] the purpose of education is not to transmit knowledge, traditional wisdom, and the ways devised by a society for attending to common concerns; rather, its purpose is wholly political as it serves to bend the will of the young to the will of the nation. Schools are instruments of state policy, like the armed forces, the police, and the Exchequer. As is the case in other societies, Libya's educational system has always reflected the ideology of the ruling political regime. As Libya moved towards independence, the contribution of education and its social role also increased in importance because of its external aims.[477]

In the developed world, the growth of industry and the widening of democracy during

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[471] D. Hopwood, *Egypt, Politics and Society, 1945-1981* (London, 1982), p. 141.

[472] J. A. Hobson, *The Crisis of Liberalism* (Brighton, 1974), p. 112.

[473] R. Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London, 1961), p. 125.

[474] A. Alfanish, *Higher Education in Libya* (Benghazi, 1990), p. 81.

[475] A. Green and K. Troup, *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth-Century History and Theory* (Manchester, 1999), p. 35.

[476] Kedouri, *Nationalism,* p. 78.

[477] A. Al-Gamati, *The Development of Educational Management in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya* (Tripoli, 1978), p. 52.

the nineteenth century necessitated a major reorganisation of elementary, secondary and higher education, with changes in the types of institution and the styles of education being offered. This also led to a debate about the purposes of education that focused on two issues: "the idea of education for all, and the definition of a liberal education".[478] As this chapter will document, this debate occurred much later in Libya, due to its lack of development.

This chapter will examine the approaches adopted by the BMA towards education in Libya, considering in particular the provision of training for teachers both within Libya and abroad and the strategies adopted to increase literacy levels throughout Libyan territory. It will also assess the impact of the BMA's educational policies on improving educational opportunities and developing community cohesion.

## 3.2  Education under the BMA (1943–1951)

The BMA's first step was to sub-divide Libya into smaller administrative units. Tripolitania was divided into three, named the Western District (with Tripoli as capital); the Eastern District (Misrata)[479] and the Middle District (Gerian).[480] Cyrenaica was similarly divided into Benghazi, Al-Jabal Al-Akhdar [the Green Mountain] and Darnah.[481] British Army officers were then selected to run departments and appointed to judicial and administrative posts[482] with support from local staff.[483] BMA general headquarters consisted of five departments (Finance, Income and Accounts; Commerce and Provisions; Jurisdiction and Legislation; Police; and Health), all of which were headed by British officers.[484]

Reilly's report noted that there were differences between Cyrenaica and Tripolitania. The population of the latter region was three times larger than that of neighbouring Cyrenaica, with Tripoli alone having nearly 120,000 inhabitants, making it two and a

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[478] Ibid, p. 140.

[479] B. L. Montgomery, 'Tripolitania, British Occupation, Military Legislation, Proclamations 1-11', 15 December 1942, London, The National Archives, TNA, WO 201/429, p. 4.

[480] T. Blackley, 'Note on Tripolitania municipality', 18 November 1943, London, The National Archives, TNA, WO 230/192/27/A/2.

[481] Office of the Legal Advisor, BMA Tripolitania, 'Tripolitania and Cyrenaica', 18 November 1943, London, The National Archives, TNA, WO 201/2396.

[482] M. Henry, *English-Libyan Relations* (Cairo, 1970), p. 123.

[483] Office of the Legal Advisor, BMA Tripolitania, 'Abolition of municipalities', 29 October 1943, London, The National Archives, TNA, WO 230/192/27/A/2.

[484] Reilly, 'Report of recommendations by the War Office Working Party on Tripolitania', 8 March 1946 London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 1015/129, p. 3.

half times the size of the population of the Cyrenaican capital, Benghazi. He acknowledged, however, that both these Libyan regions had suffered equally at the hands of the brutal Italian occupation. Although they had claimed to be bringing a new civilised administrative system to Libya to replace Ottoman rule, in truth, the Italians were only interested in their own people and not the indigenous population who they viewed as uneducated. They confiscated the fertile lands of the Arabs [485] and Mussolini's government threatened that it was going to eradicate the indigenous population in order to make room for more Italian settlers.[486]

During WW2, the Cyrenaicans had played a much more significant role in assisting the Allies and the region had suffered major damage during the conflict while Tripolitania had remained largely unscathed. *The Times* noted that most of the Italian settlers in Cyrenaica had been evacuated by the Fascists prior to the arrival of the British army which was not the case in Tripolitania.[487] Khadduri claimed that the people of Cyrenaica not only gained their freedom from Italian rule but their land was also restored to its former Libyan tenants. [488]

The Foreign Office originally argued that the Italian civil servants working in administrative posts needed to be retained for a certain period as direct employees of BMA to assist with the transition[489] so that it could manage the ongoing details of the projects and other matters of common interest. In 1947 the Libyan newspaper *Al-Watan* [the homeland] criticised the BMA for continuing to employ Italian civil servants in administrative jobs. [490] Civilian employees consisted of Libyan Arabs, Italians, and expatriates. However, it realised that Libyans would need to be trained so that in time they could take responsibility for their own affairs as an independent state.

As part of this policy of training Libyan Arabs during the transition period to prepare for greater administrative responsibility, initially, at least, the BMA treated the two regions differently and began to appoint Libyan nationals to administrative posts in Cyrenaica first. Individuals were encouraged to fill positions with well-defined

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[485] Reilly, 'Report by the War Office Working Party on Tripolitania', TNA, FO 1015/129.
[486] Khadduri, *Modern Libya* , p. 47.
[487] *The Times*, 31 January 1945.
[488] Khadduri, *Modern Libya* , p. 47.
[489] Foreign Office, 'Notes on meeting held in Secretary of State's Office, Paris', 6 September 1946, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 371/57187/U7083/106/79.
[490] *Al-Watan,* 26 December 1947.

responsibilities such as directors and judges[491] and to take up high positions in the government offices.[492] A civil service staffed by the indigenous population was originally instituted in Cyrenaica and then in Tripoli a year later.[493] Although the new laws promulgated by the BMA gave Libyans access to administrative posts previously denied them by former rulers[494], this led to bitter division within the occupied territory and claims by the people of Tripolitania about BMA favouritism towards Cyrenaica.[495] Later, memories of this were one of the factors that caused Tripolitanians to lack faith in Al-Sanusi's leadership.[496].

Initially about 350 Libyans took up administrative posts in the regions and a further 100 in the towns but this number increased year on year until it accounted for 80 percent of the posts in 1951 and increased dramatically after young men returned home from studying in Egypt and Britain.[497]

Both Italian and BMA policies were aimed at uniting the regions to form one country. However, unlike the Italians, the BMA revived the former tribal system, restoring the authority of the tribal sheikhs,[498] making them responsible for settling disputes among the people under their authority.[499]

Libyans (both Arabs and Jews) represented on the advisory bodies set up by the BMA in 1943, began to demand the establishment of schools to educate the people of

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[491] Foreign Office, 'Notes on meeting held in Secretary of State's Office, Paris', 6 September 1946, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 371/57187/U7083/106/79.

[492] Foreign Office, 'Note on policy in Libya', 14 September 1946, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 371/53525/J8997/1008/866. Al-Zawi, *The Libyans' Jihad in Exile*, p. 320. This policy which was implemented by the British in occupied territory in Libya was the same one that they followed in their colonies in Africa and Asia. See: Cammack, Pool, and Tordoff, *Third World Politics*, p. 17.

[493] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p. 43.

[494] M. Khadduri, *Modern Libya A Study in Political Development* (Maryland, 1963), p. 43.

[495] Al-Zawi, *The Libyan Heroic Jihad in Exile*, pp. 62-3

[496] B. R. Reilly, 'Report by the War Office Working Party on Tripolitania', 8 March 1947, TNA, FO 1015/129.

[497] Khadduri, *Modern Libya,* p. 59.

[498] The British also adopted an entirely a different approach to that of the Italians in Somalia, where they introduced significantly improved education for the population and expanded medical facilities. Somalis were also given the opportunity to be trained in different civil service departments, such as the police, strengthening the administration. The British also established Islamic Sharia courts and planned to involve tribal representatives in secular law. This introduced different Somali sects in all areas of the administration. Although initially there was tribal opposition to the education system, the BMA made this accessible to all, taking the risk of introducing girls' education. This shows that the BMA in Libya used its experience of governance in other African countries for the betterment of the Libyans. See: S. Kelly, 'Desert Conquests: Early British Planning on the Future of the Italian Colonies, June 1940–September 1943', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 50 (2014), p. 1015.

[499] Al-Gamati, *The Development of Educational Management*, p. 55.

Tripolitania in order that they might govern themselves.[500] The BMA grasped the urgency of addressing the weaknesses of the existing education system by implementing a policy of community education which developed new ways and means to educate Libyans. This proved to be an important factor in bridging the gaps between general Libyan population and BMA governance. It can be argued that whilst the BMA managed the schools in Libya, it created a long-term education policy intended to allow everyone access to education for their children.

The BMA initially identified key educational issues in Libya and prioritised these when developing the education system. The following subsections evaluate the importance of this policy which was intended to tap into the potential of Libyan children. It led to an increase in the number of schools in Tripoli and Cyrenaica, making education more accessible to children and proving attractive to Libyans. The BMA's reputation was further enhanced when it developed opportunities for female education in Libya for the first time. Baumeister argues that introducing female education was seen as a vitally important step to help females to develop their full potential and their capacity for rational thought and judgment. Education was also viewed by feminist campaigners as an important step towards extending the vote to women. By enabling women to develop their rational faculties, education would give them a foundation for autonomous action, and once rationality and autonomy had been obtained, they could not be denied the vote.[501]

### 3.2.1 Dealing with the Aftermath of the Conflict

The BMA commenced its educational efforts soon after warfare in Libya ceased in January 1943, and the schools prepared to resume their activities. Initially, the British faced many problems, such as a shortage of schools, scarcity of trained staff and a lack of suitable buildings to start their education campaign.[502] Mr Ali recounted that many schools had been damaged during the conflict; others had been originally commandeered for accommodation for British troops and then used to house Italian and

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[500] Kelly, 'Desert Conquests', p. 1019

[501] A. Baumeister, *Liberalism and the 'Politics of Difference'* (Edinburgh, 2000), p. 18.

[502] Interview, Salaam Mubarak, 1 July 2011. Mr Mubarak was born in 1931 in southern Libya and sent to study the Qur'an and Arabic aged five. He then attended Misrata Elementary School during the Italian era, when his family moved there from Fezzan. He moved to Tripoli in 1945 and started secondary school a year later, being amongst the first cohort to study in the modern secondary school system under the BMA. He remembers helping with his fellow students to remove the debris from the school which had been bombed during the war in order to make it ready for reopening.

German prisoners of war. Still others had been ransacked by locals who stole doors, windows, and other miscellaneous items to try to rebuild what was left of their homes before British troops entered Tripoli. [503] The Annual Report 1947 by the Chief Administrator promised that the BMA would provide funds to construct schools and begin to attract back greater numbers of students.[504] During the 1943/1944 academic year, some 50 schools opened their doors in Tripolitania and 20 in Cyrenaica, taking in students from diverse educational backgrounds, whose schooling had been interrupted by the war.[505]

In 1943, BMA appointed an education officer and made him responsible for conducting a comprehensive survey of the schools and equipment in the territory. The report recorded a total of 106 schools (54 Italian and 52 Arab) open throughout all the provinces of Libya.[506] Most of the former Italian teaching staff had left, especially those who were pro-Fascist. Those who remained were appointed by the BMA to work in education and other fields. There were also some 8 brothers and 22 nuns from Catholic missionary orders.[507] In order to fill vacancies, many teachers were recruited from other professions, including architecture, law, industry and commerce, and after undergoing training, they proved to be as skilled as those who had been teaching. The report also claimed that the first year's timetable for studies had been successful, that the students had been enthusiastic and that the teachers had remained committed and worked with the students. The BMA realised that even greater challenges lay ahead.[508]

### 3.2.2  Preparing for Change

In order to ensure that Libyans would be ready to adequately fill the necessary positions in an independent country, the BMA took a number of measures to facilitate this. Firstly, it attempted to fill the gaps in educational qualifications, providing young Libyans with the opportunity to study and obtain certificates for different categories of education. In addition, the BMA offered jobs to those Libyans who had appropriate qualifications,

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[503] Interview, Ahmed Ali, 25 June 2011. Mr Ali was born in Tripoli in 1930.
[504] Blackley, 'Annual Report 1947', TNA, FO 1015/143, p. 65
[505] Reilly, 'Report by the War Office Working Party on Tripolitania', TNA, FO 1015/129, p. 27. Shukri, *Birth of Modern Libya*, p. 403.
[506] Chief Administrator, 'Annual Report on the BMA of Tripolitania', 1943, pp. 65-68.
[507] Many Italians left Libya following the defeat of their forces but some of those who had owned farms, businesses or worked in government departments preferred to stay. Relatively large numbers of Italians remained in Libya till 1971. See: Gray and Silberman, *The Fate of Italy's Colonies*, p. 51.
[508] The Chief Administrator, 'Annual Report on the BMA of Tripolitania', 1943, pp. 65-68.

training them to be able to take over administrative jobs and avert threats in the future. In short, the BMA made efforts to fulfil the promises it had made to the Libyans.

The BMA paid particular attention to education in Libya, realising its potential to play a major cultural, economic and political role in the region. It also recognised that a new policy was required to rectify the defects and shortages created under the previous regimes if Libya was to produce the home-grown talent needed to transform the country. The British recognised there was an urgent need to ensure that Libya could produce a cohort of citizens who were adequately qualified to take responsibility for administration in the commercial and agricultural sectors.[509] The Annual Report by the Department of Education in Libya for 1944 noted that many Libyans had benefited from training that enabled them to take over civil service posts left vacant in different departments due to the departure of Italians and other nationalities.[510] In addition, individuals were needed who would be able to fulfil the requirements for developing Libya's physical infrastructure and ensuring its national advancement. An entirely new and innovative education system was required which would produce results rapidly, efficiently and in the most cost-effective manner.[511] It was also acknowledged that this system needed to be one which would be appropriate to the Libyan context. As noted previously, this focus on education, and the BMA's active participation in educational affairs, represented a significant shift from the approach taken by previous regimes.

From the outset, the BMA sought all possible means to promote education. This is because the Colonial Office in London was committed to regarding education as an important element. In addition, British liberal values can be said to have played a role in guaranteeing that the BMA kept its promises towards the Libyans.[512] Moreover, it was under the guidance of a British government which was firmly committed to a policy of free compulsory liberal education in its administrative territories and the BMA was obliged to act accordingly.[513] Lord Rennell of Rodd considered two possible scenarios for the education system. Given the geographical position of Tripolitania and its

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[509] O. El Fathaly and M. Palmer, *Political Development and Social Change in Libya* (Lexington, MA, 1980), p. 27.

[510] 'Annual report by the Department of Education in Libya, 1944', Tripoli, National Centre for Archives and Historical Studies, File 7/20, Document No. 345, p. 56.

[511] A. Salah al-Din, *The Portal in the Management and Organization of Education* (Cairo, 1974), p. 34.

[512] I. Bradley, *The Strange Rebirth of Liberal Britain* (London, 1985), p. 68.

[513] It can be argued that the BMA's policy of providing free education to Libyans reflected the policy adopted in Great Britain, where free compulsory education was originally provided for 5- to 10-year old children and later raised to 14 in 1900. See J. L. Irwin, *Modern Britain*, 3rd edition (London, 1994), p. 87.

connections with Europe, it could be based on the European system and include the teaching of a second language in addition to Arabic. Alternatively, it could follow the traditional Arab school system, enlarging the curriculum to include other subjects such as arithmetic.[514]

An initial meeting attended by five British officers was convened in Tripoli on 5 June 1943, with the following agenda:

> (1) To determine the main steps necessary for local people to enter education; (2) To specify the number of schools to be re-opened; (3) To estimate the budget required for the re-opening of schools; (4) To develop suitable syllabi and prescribed study books.[515]

The BMA immediately went about applying the conclusions reached by the group, one of which was to set up an appropriate administrative structure to enact any changes required. Secretariats of Education were created for Tripolitania and Cyrenaica respectively, with similar administrative structures: (A) Elementary Education (to be supervised by a Libyan inspector), (B) Financial Affairs, Scholarships and Literacy Campaign (to be headed by a British official), (C) Secondary Education (under a British official and a Libyan assistant).[516] A British consul would be solely responsible for all scientific issues, while the director of education, who would be Libyan, was to have oversight of financial and administrative affairs. The post of English Language Inspector was also established.[517]

The group also concluded that a report needed to be commissioned, drawing on British and regional expertise, which would assess the current situation and then make recommendations regarding the reform of the entire Libyan education system.[518] The educational commission was headed by A. J. Steele-Greig, who was assisted by sheikh Kamal Alhamali, a Libyan national. In additional, regional expertise was added from Palestine, since the British had decided that the Palestinian education system might serve as an appropriate model, given their experiences there. The commission thus also included Ahmed Effendi Khalifa, an inspector of schools in Palestine who had studied

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[514] Rodd, *British Military Administration*, p. 290.
[515] Al-Gamati, *The Development of Educational Management,* p. 50.
[516] S. Alakad, *Modern Libya* (Cairo, 1970), p. 55.
[517] Said, *Cultural Life in Libya,* pp. 112-113.
[518] Said, *Cultural Life in Libya,* p. 67.

in the United Kingdom and obtained a bachelor's degree from the University of London. A delegation of Palestinian teachers also arrived to deliver lectures on learning and new developments in teaching methodology to the Libyan school teachers.[519]

The commission spent six months finalising the report and recorded its observations for the Director of Education at BMA Headquarters.[520] In his report, Steele-Grieg noted that, wherever possible, students were already attending those schools which had been re-opened (following the outbreak of war, all schools in Libya had been closed). He also observed that morale amongst teaching staff was generally high, but they needed guidance and training. The report further highlighted that this was the first time that teachers had worked without being supervised by the Italians.[521] The Commission also highlighted the following priorities:

- To establish a form of education which would produce well-disciplined individuals with good habits, and which was more originated towards practical and technical skills, as opposed to concentrating on theoretical information.

- To develop vocational and technical schools to prepare technicians.

- To promote schools teaching humanities and literary studies to prepare students who could fill posts requiring a high level of fluency in English.

- To develop primary schools better suited to rural life.

- To address the problem of the lack of educational provision for girls.[522]

The commission recognised the need for a change in emphasis in the reformed system. The new policy was to concentrate on literacy skills (writing and reading) and the basics of mathematics and to decrease theoretical education, focusing instead on expanding industrial, commercial and agricultural education. It was noted that the education system was meant to enable individuals to develop their capabilities in order to participate actively in the social, cultural and economic life of their country, and it concluded that "For some people, vocational or industrial education, with a concentration on facts rather than thoughts and conclusions, would be better and more

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[519] Steele-Greig, *History of Education in Tripolitania*, pp. 49-50.
[520] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 27 August 1943.
[521] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 2 October 1943.
[522] S. Waheb, *Educational Administration: The Effects of the Past and Future Demand in Arab Countries* (Tripoli, 1973), p. 9

useful than theoretical education".[523]

Other than highlighting the need to introduce the study of English as a foreign language as a subject,[524] the Commission made few specific suggestions on actual curriculum or syllabus content, leaving these to be worked out in detail at a later date. It did however recognise that religious education needed to feature in the curriculum and that this it would "conform to traditional social values and encourage local traditions, such as religious studies and morals, as a large part of the educational programmes".[525] This was in clear contrast to the previous enforcement of a Eurocentric Christian ethos in the Italian system and a rejection of Libya's Arab Islamic heritage.[526]

The most obvious difference between Italian and British policy is that the latter, unlike the former, was centred primarily on the needs of Libyans and of their country, in particular the need to train Libyans to participate in administration at various levels with the long-term aim of independence. In this respect, although the British carefully organised and implemented the Libyan education system, their approach to the occupied territory of Libya was not like that adopted elsewhere in Africa by other European colonial rulers such as the Belgians in the Congo or the Portuguese in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea,[527] where even educated Africans were denied entry to administrative posts. The fact that the British policy had been devised to ensure that Libyans would be capable of entering administrative posts managed to convince those were sceptical about their motives and tribesmen who were initially hostile because of their traditions.[528]

Educational syllabi will always reflect the philosophy of any ruling regime. However, whilst the educational philosophy in the British colonies was still based on a Western perspective (as shown in this case, for example, by their concern to ensure educational provision for girls),[529] due consideration was also given to the inherited culture of the

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[523] Blackley, 'Annual Report 1947', TNA, FO 1015/143, p. 44.
[524] Steele-Greig, *History of Education in Tripolitania*, pp. 49-50. Alasoud observed that although initially English was intended to be a compulsory subject and was taught in schools, it was not forced on the pupils in the way Italian had been. Interview, Alasoud, 15 June 2011.
[525] J. O'Brien, *The Development of British Educational Policy* (Beirut, 1978), p. 167.
[526] T. Abdelrahman, *British Educational Policy in the Arab States* (Amman, 1983), p. 57.
[527] M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, 1996), p. 86.
[528] Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, p. 77.
[529] Females benefitted from greater educational opportunities than had previously been the case, especially in Tripoli. This was due, in part, to an English woman, who was the principal of a girls' school, and to the support offered by many Egyptian women who had married Libyans and tried to nurture female

local regions. In practical terms, this meant that, in keeping with the policy they followed elsewhere, British staff in Libya were always assisted by a local expert with an in-depth understanding of local culture, traditions and history.[530]

The Commission also put an emphasis on equal participation in education. Schooling was to be made available for children in both urban and rural Libya, and the possibility of establishing a boarding school system supervised by adequate staff and management was considered as a way to facilitate education for students from outlying districts. The Commission also insisted that girls were not to be excluded.[531] The development of girls' education was an important aspect of the BMA educational policy and one which did not gain the support of the whole of Libyan society, especially in the region of Cyrenaica. Initially, the Bedouin there would not accept girls' schools since it ran counter to their traditions and customs. However, the authorities eventually convinced them and the issue was successfully resolved, representing a remarkable cultural step forward in Libya.[532] Female education was a first push to motivate young females in Libyan and to instil in them a feeling of confidence and self-reliance.

Traditionally, women were not considered to be strong and hence were kept within the household, as mothers, daughters and wives. In addition, they were regarded being temperamental and sensitive and were not deemed capable of carrying the responsibility of leadership or decision-making.[533] Most importantly, the concept of family honour was linked to women who were seen as a potential source of shame. The honour of men of the family was viewed as being easily damaged and nearly irreparable, and depended on the conduct of their women. Thus, while Libyan men formed a society organized into recognizable groupings that operated in the public sphere, women remained at home, in the private sphere.[534] This situation started to change when the first girls' school were opened in Tripoli in 1946, with others following in Cyrenaica, Benghazi

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education. This led to the establishment of a teacher training college for women in 1950, resulting in a dramatic increase in the numbers of female teachers. See: I. M. Al-Shan, المرجع للعلوم التعليمية, [*Dictionary of Education*] (Benghazi, 1978), p.540.

[530] A. Taha, *Educational Policy in the British Region*, p.70.

[531] Reilly, 'Report by the War Office Working Party on Cyrenaica', London, TNA, WO 230/222. During Italian rule, there was no attempt to develop education for Libyan girls which remained virtually non-existent. See: Gray and Silberman, *The Fate of Italy's Colonies*, p.47.

[532] Blackley, 'Annual Report 1947', TNA, FO 1015/143, p.45.

[533] A. Mustafa, 'Ideology, Value Changes, and Women's Social Position in Libyan Society', in E. Warnock Femea (ed) *Women and Family in the Middle East: New Voice of Change* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), p.122.

[534] C. Helen, *Libya: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1987. Available at: http://countrystudies.us/libya/ accessed on 22/12/2016.

and Darnah. However, girls' education in Libya initially faced another obstacle, since the shortage of women teachers resulted in the introduction of mixed classes, with girls up to the age of nine being taught in boys' schools, which some parents disliked.[535]

The Commission reached a number of other conclusions regarding the steps necessary to ensure its policy aims would be met. The first of these was that, in the shorter term, in order for the new educational policy to be coordinated across Libya as a whole, the schools had to be under the direct supervision of the BMA, even if they were not supported financially. Hull observes that, once established, Departments of Education in British colonies had a large measure of independence from London and, in fact, once the reforms had been implemented, the BMA left the operation of most schools to private initiative but supervised them by through a system of grants-in-aid and periodic inspection. [536] The British government in London, especially the Department of Education, encouraged native languages in African schools but also introduced English as a language at intermediate school level. The BMA applied a similar approach in Libyan occupied territory.[537]

In addition, it was agreed that all teachers needed to be trained in modern effective teaching methods and that to cope with future demands for higher level teaching, some teachers would need to undertake further study themselves. Closely linked to this was the fact that to execute this educational policy effectively in the longer run and facilitate its future development, staff who were trained in social research methods, management, economic modelling and financial methods, and educational theory would be required.

The proposal was to provide training for practising Arab teachers in the second year of the BMA, i.e. 1944. Some 76 participants took part in the first training session, and a further 77 in the second. Of the 45 trainees who were sent for training in 1945, only half passed the assessment, indicating some of the difficulties to be faced. [538] Some secondary school teachers were sent to take a course at the Institute of Education, London University; the headmaster of Zavia Secondary School took a vocational course in London while a primary school teacher was enrolled in the School of Oriental and

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[535] Blackley, 'Annual Report 1947', TNA, FO 1015/143, p.45.
[536] Hull, *Modern Africa: Change and Continuity*, p.48.
[537] L. D. Turner, 'The Impact of Western education on the African's way of life', in Haines (ed), *Africa Today* (New York, 1968), pp.148-4.
[538] Steele-Greig, *History of Education in Tripolitania,* pp.52-53.

African Studies, London University, to assist in the study of the Berber language.[539]

In addition to providing training targeted at teachers, the BMA embarked on a mass literacy campaign which began in 1945.[540] Courses lasted five or six weeks, and nearly 1,000 people attended, coming not only from Tripoli, but travelling from all over the country. This demonstrated the depth of the Libyan people's commitment to education. Those who had attended then motivated others in their community to learn. The programme thus not only benefitted many people beyond the original group of trainees but was also seen to be a successful part of a broader attempt to encourage political engagement amongst Libyans which remained extremely important to the BMA.[541]

### 3.2.3 Minority Communities

A report issued in 1944 noted the dire shortage of schools, alerting the BMA to the need to attempt to remedy this situation as quickly as possible in order not to disappoint the Arab parents who had placed their trust in the new administration's ability to deliver the provision it had promised. At the same time, there was a need to accommodate the needs of the two other minority communities in Libya, namely the Italians and the Jews.[542] Both groups had indicated that secondary education was their highest priority; hence, provision was made available to meet their demands. School enrolment figures for that year overall rose from 4,889 to 15,226, and in comparison, to the previous year there were 3,140 more Arab students and 1,913 more Jewish students enrolled. However, 164 fewer Italian students enrolled, reflecting the major demographic and social shift occurring in the former colony. Exam results for the Italian and Jewish students showed that by the end of the year, 85 per cent of students had been promoted to higher classes, remarkable results given that they had resumed their education after a gap of four years.[543] The issue of schooling for the Libyan Jewish community returned when the Secretary of the London Committee of Deputies of British Jews wrote to the Foreign Office asking permission for the Jewish authorities in Benghazi to open

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[539] Blackley, 'Annual Report 1947', TNA, FO 1015/143, p.35.
[540] Ibid.
[541] Steele-Greig, *History of Education in Tripolitania,* pp.57-58
[542] Despite anti-Semitic laws passed by Mussolini's regime, at the start of the 1940s, some 25 percent of the population of Tripoli was Jewish. However, in February 1942, German troops fighting the Allied Forces in North Africa arrived in the Jewish quarter of Benghazi and deported more than 2,000 Jews across the desert to labour camps where over a fifth of them perished. See: K. M. S. Ahwal, *Jews of Tripoli of the West under Italian Rule (1911-1943)* (Tripoli, 2005), p.190.
[543] Annual Report on the BMA of Tripolitania, 1944, pp.34-35.

independent schools.

Schooling for Jewish children in Cyrenaica was conducted in Arabic, where religious instruction conducted in Hebrew. However, the Libyan Jewish communities in Benghazi and smaller townships wanted to conduct all their education in Hebrew.[544] He argued that since Arabic had been introduced in the schools in Cyrenaica for Libyan Muslims, this established the precedent for Hebrew to be used in Libyan Jewish schools.[545] A War Office representative rejected this suggestion on the grounds that it would be likely to create unrest and noted that the Jewish community was already failing to cooperate with BMA's policy educational policy. He reminded him that "the Jewish minority had lived amicably with its Arab neighbours for centuries" and that this would be viewed as an "assertion of the Jewish minority's racial and cultural distinctions".[546] It was also pointed out that reasonable opportunities were offered for the Libyan Jewish children to receive instruction in Hebrew in the schools attended by Arab children.[547] In addition, the BMA also offered some separate classes for Jewish children in Benghazi with a high percentage of hours of teaching in Hebrew[548] but these arrangements were refused by the majority of the Jewish community. The War Office representative argued that since the Jewish community had declined to take advantage of the facilities offered, they had little grounds for their complaint.[549]

When Mr Brotman persisted with his request, he was assured a meeting would be arranged with Major Reid at the War Office.[550] There is no account of this meeting ever having taken place and the Libyan Jewish community was soon to have more pressing concerns.

### 3.2.4  Contentious Tribal Issues

By 1946, enrolment in government schools had increased by more than one-third, while the number of pupils enrolled in Qur'anic schools had more than doubled.[551] In the region of Cyrenaica, there were 26 schools, all of which were supported by the

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[544] A. G. Brotman to F. K. Roberts, 2 June 1944, TNA, FO 371/41528/J2041/2041/16.
[545] Ibid.
[546] E. C. S. Reid to R. Parr, 9 June 1944, London, TNA, FO 371/41528/J2119/2041/16.
[547] Ibid.
[548] Ibid.
[549] F. K. Roberts to A. G. Brotman, 22 June 1944, TNA,  FO 371/41528/J2119/2041/16.
[550] On behalf of the Foreign Office, A.V. Coverley-Price wrote a letter to Major Reid at the War Office asking about his availability for and confirmation of a meeting between the War Office and Mr Brotman.
[551] Lt. Col. F. H. Anderson to Civil Affairs Branch GHQ, 28 April 1947, London, TNA, WO 230/29/11596/113/CA.

administration and tribesmen. These schools were intended for children aged four to six years, and their aim was to teach writing, reading and Islamic religion. The administration had also started to open rural boarding schools, which were intended to provide a solution to some of the difficulties which pupils in small villages and isolated areas faced when attempting to attend school.[552]

Table 3.1: Arab pupils in government and Qur'anic schools, 1938 vs.1946

| Type | Italian 1938 | BMA 1946 |
|------|------|------|
| Arab pupils in government schools | 7,524 | 10,224 |
| Arab pupils in Qur'anic schools | 7,973 | 16,180 |
| Total | 15,497 | 26,404 |

Source: TNA, WO 230/29, No 11596/113/CA

Some religious scholars initially urged parents not to send their children to BMA schools, largely on the basis of their recent experience with education under Italian Occupation.[553] They feared that the British system would adopt the same approach as the Italians had done before them and would fail to value the study of Arabic and the Qur'an, and that consequently, this would weaken the Islamic identity of Libyans. The scholars also suspected that the aim of the BMA schools was ultimately, like that of their Italian counterparts, to impose a Eurocentric white Christian culture and attempt to erase their Arab Islamic cultural heritage.[554] However, the BMA proved all these accusations groundless when they not only accepted that Arabic should be taught as compulsory language but also recruited well-qualified teachers from Egypt and Palestine to teach this subject.[555]

Another of the contentious issues which arose in relation to the proposed educational reforms was the BMA's decision to implement two different curricula in Libya. Al-Qalal notes that in Cyrenaica, the Egyptian syllabus was used, while in Tripolitania, the

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[552] T. Blackley, 'Annual Report of Tripolitania, 1st of Jan to 31st of Dec 1946', 31 December 1946, TNA, CO 537/3512/25207/2/47, p.7.
[553] Hamad Al-Salme was interviewed on 27 June 2011. He was born in Tubruq, moved to Albayda during the Italian era, and later relocated to Benghazi to attend secondary school.
[554] Interview, Alasoud, 22 June 2011.
[555] Interview, Al-Salme, 27 June 2011.

Palestinian syllabus was introduced when Palestine was under British mandate[556] but gives no further details about the reason why a unified syllabus was not introduced in both territories. Moreover, this differentiation between Tripolitania and Cyrenaica was not only limited to education system but was also extended to currency.[557] New currency notes issued by the BMA had been introduced in Tripolitania in 1943[558] while the Egyptian currency (the Egyptian pound) was in circulation in Cyrenaica in 1944.[559]

Libyan intellectuals and leadership were worried by these developments which they perceived to be part of an unstated policy, reflecting doubts about Libya's future as a unitary state. The introduction of separate currencies in particular was viewed as part of a plan for the partition of Libyan territory. In particular, they feared the restoration of Italian colonial in Tripolitania and the possibility that Cyrenaica would be brought under British trusteeship or assimilated into Egypt in return for rights of access in the Sudan for the British. British policymakers appeared to be adopting a systematic approach that would promote their strategic interests in Cyrenaica in preparation for some role there, even if Italy was to be returned to Tripolitania.

During a visit to London, one of Tripolitania's leaders, Bashir Sadawi,[560] raised this issue directly with the Foreign Office and called for the unification of Tripolitanian and Cyrenaican currencies, as one of a number of measures that would help to restore the dwindling confidence that the Tripolitanian people had in the BMA. The then Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, himself stated that the currency issue was of fundamental importance and had to be resolved after the future of the territory itself had been determined. In his view, the British government was not in a position to enact such fundamental changes as this might be seriously misconstrued internationally.[561]

It can be argued that this decision by the BMA reflected a lack of understanding and

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[556] Al-Qalal, *The Years of War*, p.370.
[557] P.W. Adshead, 'Annual report of the Controller of Finance and Accounts, for the period 1st January 1944 to 31st December 1944', 1 July 1945, TNA, FO 371/46113/J3352/150/66, p.101.
[558] Treasury Chambers, London to G. Ward, 29 March 1943, TNA, FO 371/36592/W4836/99/49.
[559] Treasury Chambers, London to P. S. Scrivener, 26 September 1944, TNA, FO 371/41522/J3391/518/66.
[560] Bashir al-Sadawi (1884-1957) was born in Homs, east of Tripoli. In 1937, he was appointed as adviser to King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, founder of modern Saudi Arabia. In 1946, he returned to Tripoli to play a major role in Libya's attempts to obtain independence, founding the National Congress Party in 1948. In 1951, following independence, King Idris expelled Bashir to Lebanon due to his involvement in political activities. See: R. M. Coury, *The Making of an Egyptian Arab Nationalist: The Early Years of Azzam Pasha, 1893-1936* (London, 1998), p.200.
[561] E. Bevin to J. C. Penney, 3 February 1949, TNA, FO 1015/114/J922/1514/122G.

awareness and needed to have been more carefully thought out before implementation since it proved to be divisive, with the population of Tripolitania making their discontent known. The Cairo-Tripolitania Committee based in Egypt even circulated a pamphlet which accused the BMA of depriving children in Tripoli and the adjoining areas of education.[562] This effectively represented the first real challenge to the BMA's authority and might almost be interpreted as the Libyans testing the waters to see how the British would react.

As a result of the BMA's actions concerning currency and education system and its attitude when concerns had been voiced about this, the people of Tripoli held demonstrations. This provided Libyans with the opportunity to make their voices heard but at the same time gave the British a clear indication of the depth of feelings of the people in the occupied territory. It can also be argued that British wished to demonstrate their strong belief in democracy by responding to the voice of the masses.

Perhaps sensing the importance of this reaction, the BMA agreed to constitute an Advisory Board in 1947 to discuss this issue and resolved to carry out the wishes of the Tripolitanian people by implementing the Egyptian curriculum, subject to some modifications, in both regions with effect from 1948.[563] The BMA's conciliatory response clearly impressed one of the interviewees, Mahfoud Alturke,[564] a teenager living in Tripoli at the time this issue arose. He commented:

> The BMA raised the standards of education, and did not force its own agenda in education. This is due to the fact that the majority of Libyans demanded their own style of education at which they succeeded. The BMA listened to them and considered their wishes. [565]

The War Office remained concerned about education in Libya, and continued to

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[562] Unsigned reply to the pamphlet published in September by the Cairo-Tripolitania Committee, 1946, London, TNA, WO 230 /211, p.3.

[563] Al-Qalal, *The Years of War*, p.370. The most important amendments to the curriculum involved replacing the syllabus for history and geography with appropriate Libyan content. Unfortunately, this took longer than expected and *Al-Fajr Al-Libye* [Libyan Dawn], 1 April 1948, p.1 drew its readers' attention to the fact that Egyptian rather than Libyan history was being taught in BMA schools, and claimed that Libyan students knew more about the history and geography of Egypt than of their own country. According to Kabta, some students who later attended Libyan Universities remained ignorant about their own history and were unaware that the Italians had executed the national hero, Omar Al-Mukhtar in 1931, believing he had been thrown out of an aeroplane. See S. Kabta, Libyan University (1955–1973), http://akhbaarlibya.com/ar/news.php?id=20549 accessed 03/08/2011.

[564] Mahfoud Alturke was born in Tripoli in 1932, and received his early education in Qur'anic and Italian schools. He was interviewed on 1 July 2011.

[565] Ibid.

monitor progress there, sending a commission led by Lt. Colonel Bernard Reilly from Britain in 1947 to evaluate the teacher training which had been undertaken.[566] Those teachers who had been trained in 1946 were examined, and those who did well were awarded with gifts, such as books. [567] As a result of this visit, a number of recommendations to improve educational facilities and training were brought before the administration which supported all the proposals submitted. These included:

- Augmenting numbers of teaching staff with a view to reducing class sizes from 50 to 40.

- Employing foreign teachers to deliver secondary education.

- Implementing a scheme for training apprentices in the various departments of the Administration.[568]

In Cyrenaica, the War Office Commission praised the BMA for the progress made in primary and elementary education as the number of pupils rose to 7,000 in 1946, which was twice as many as under the previous Italian regime. This rise in pupil numbers was clearly due to the establishment of four boarding schools which accommodated Bedouin children. However, the Commission criticised the BMA for some deficiencies, such as:

- The low standard of teaching and the impossibility of finding qualified teachers within the territory

- The absence of secondary education

- The absence of technical education

- The limited extent and quality of female education.[569]

During the Italian era, the Libyans had been banned from going beyond primary education and the Working Party stressed the need for improvements at secondary

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[566] The Working Party delegation which visited Cyrenaica was under the aegis of the War Office and led by Sir Bernard R. Reilly, the former Governor of Aden. Members of the delegation included J. A. De Condole Hamilton, F. C. Newton, and J. S. Crum. See: E. Shinwell, 'Tripolitania', 8 March 1949, London, The National Archives, CAB 129/33/CP (49) 55.
[567] T. Blackley, 'Annual report of Tripolitania, for the period 1st January to 31st December 1947', TNA, FO 1015/143/, p.44.
[568] Blackley, 'Annual report of Tripolitania, for the period 1st January to 31st December 1947', TNA, FO 1015/143/, p.9.
[569] Reilly, 'Report by the War Office Working Party on Cyrenaica', London, The National Archives, TNA, WO 230/222, p.33.

level.[570] It was further proposed that £26,040 was used to increase adult education, providing specialist instruction for Libyans in subjects such as carpentry, electricity, plumbing, agriculture, and printing. This training was required to create individuals with better technical qualifications.[571] An annual subsidy of £6000 was also made to Qur'anic schools in Cyrenaica[572] together with funding for repairs to school buildings and girls' education. Libya clearly could not pay for all the expenses involved, simply because it had no resources to meet this expenditure. The War Office Working Party concluded that a long-term policy was needed, since the withdrawal of British administrative and financial support at the end of the period of the BMA coupled with the granting of immediate independence without extra help and guidance would lead to the failure of many governmental services. A form of close tutelage within some form of trusteeship was recommended which would be welcomed by both Al-Sanusi and large number of Cyrenaicans.[573] These reports from the War Office Working Party mission provide evidence that education was still one of the major priorities for the British administration.

The Education Advisory Committee selected 100 young male trainees from the many applications received on the basis of the criteria of qualifications and interviews by the heads of departments. Most of these were from rural districts and under 20, and besides learning a trade, they received lessons in English, mathematics and commercial subjects which would enable them to fill the vacancies in various departments in the administration. They received an honorarium during their training.[574]

For the next two years (1947-1948), the administration put greater efforts and resources (including materials, books and facilities) into designing new teacher training courses so that the Arab teachers could attain higher levels, and train students who would be involved in the affairs of future governments.[575]

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[570] Reilly, 'Report by the War Office Working Party on Tripolitania', TNA, FO 1015/129, p.28.
[571] Reilly, 'Report by the War Office Working Party on Tripolitania', TNA, FO 1015/129, p.29.
[572] Reilly, 'Report by the War Office Working Party on Cyrenaica', TNA, WO 230/222, p.35.
[573] Reilly, 'Report by the War Office Working Party on Tripolitania', TNA, FO 1015/129, p.39.
[574] Blackley, 'Annual Report 1947', TNA, FO 1015/143, pp.44-45.
[575] Steele-Greig, *History of Education in Tripolitania,* p.53.

Table 3.2: Primary schools in Tripoli and Cyrenaica, 1943–1951[576]

| SCHOOL YEAR | NUMBER OF SCHOOLS | NUMBER OF STUDENTS | NUMBER OF TEACHERS |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1943–1944 | 69 | 6,448 | 201 |
| 1944–1945 | 100 | 10,310 | 331 |
| 1945–1946 | 116 | 12,571 | 378 |
| 1946–1947 | 130 | 15,135 | 459 |
| 1947–1948 | 140 | 17,637 | 587 |
| 1948–1949 | 166 | 24,804 | 763 |
| 1949–1950 | 181 | 27,763 | 889 |
| 1950–1951 | 193 | 32,109 | 1,024 |

Source: Al-Gamati, *The Development of Educational Management,* p. 42

Table 3.2 illustrates the growth in numbers of schools, students and teachers in less than a decade. The number of schools multiplied by 180 per cent in the space of just eight years, whilst student numbers increased five-fold over the same period. Considering the distribution of schools, students and teachers between the Cyrenaica and Tripoli regions (The number of schools in Tripoli increased by 68 per cent during that period, compared to the 83 per cent increase in Cyrenaica. The difference might be due to a policy shift in Cyrenaica, or perhaps local reasons, for example, peoples' acceptance of the education system or the fact that the BMA gave equal importance to Arabic which forced them to increase enrolment in education. Cyrenaica reached 98 per cent enrolment as opposed to 80 per cent in Tripoli. This reflects BMA's approach to the former region of attempting to raise the region's educational and cultural levels after long years of neglect, first by the Ottomans and then the Italians. Tables 3.4 and 3.5 not only show the great increase in educational provision that occurred during the British rule, in terms of the numbers of schools, students and teachers, but give an idea of the increase in funding for education which was required to achieve this.

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[576] According to education policy, students were expected to complete six years of compulsory primary stage education. If successful, they then transferred to the elementary stage for three years. This was followed by a further 3 years of secondary schools to gain a certificate equivalent to GCSE in the UK before moving onto higher education.

**Table 3.3**) as the British administered both, we can see that the policies adopted were balanced.

The number of schools in Tripoli increased by 68 per cent during that period, compared to the 83 per cent increase in Cyrenaica. The difference might be due to a policy shift in Cyrenaica, or perhaps local reasons, for example, peoples' acceptance of the education system or the fact that the BMA gave equal importance to Arabic which forced them to increase enrolment in education. Cyrenaica reached 98 per cent enrolment as opposed to 80 per cent in Tripoli. This reflects BMA's approach to the former region of attempting to raise the region's educational and cultural levels after long years of neglect, first by the Ottomans and then the Italians. Tables 3.4 and 3.5 not only show the great increase in educational provision that occurred during the British rule, in terms of the numbers of schools, students and teachers, but give an idea of the increase in funding for education which was required to achieve this.

Table 3.3: Elementary schools in Tripoli and Cyrenaica, 1943–1951[577]

| SCHOOL YEAR | TEACHERS | | STUDENTS | | SCHOOLS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Cyrenaica | Tripolitania | Cyrenaica | Tripolitania | Cyrenaica | Tripolitania |
| 1943–44 | 48 | 146 | 2,300 | 4,835 | 20 | 50 |
| 1944–45 | - | 256 | 3,257 | 8,152 | 28 | 79 |
| 1945–46 | 134 | 267 | 4,303 | 9,104 | 33 | 80 |
| 1946–47 | 193 | 301 | 6,690 | 10,143 | 38 | 85 |
| 1947–48 | 221 | 335 | 6,472 | 11,537 | 49 | 85 |
| 1948–49 | 290 | 519 | 7,094 | 17,379 | 52 | 106 |
| 1949–50 | 350 | 609 | 7,408 | 19,233 | 57 | 125 |
| 1950–51 | - | 694 | 9,150 | 23,188 | - | 134 |

Source: Ministry of Education, Annual Report, Libya, pp. 36-41

In an article entitled, 'Future of Cyrenaica', published in October 1948, the British newspaper *The Times* praised the efforts of the BMA in Libya, noting that the elementary schools had opened, qualified Egyptian teachers had been recruited and selected students were being sent to Egypt and the University of Khartoum[578] in Sudan

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[578]After Britain gained dominance in Sudan in 1898 as part of a condominium arrangement, Lord Kitchener proposed the founding of a college in memory of Gordon, who had been killed in the Battle of Khartoum. When the Gordon Memorial College opened in 1902 it only offered primary education. A

to obtain university degrees and training in special branches of administration.[579]

This approach was meant to service the needs of the future administration, and the BMA provided opportunities to strengthen the education system using trained personal from the different educational institutions. This also reflects the BMA's intention to develop communities through education enabling them to participate later in activities within Libya.

The annual report of the BMA showed that whilst progress had continued in 1948, this was considerably less than the Education department had hoped for. The main problem restricting development was the scarcity of trained teachers and lack of school equipment with equipment needed for studying science being in particularly short supply. In response, the BMA recruited 42 male and 10 female teachers from Egypt, and procured school equipment which was not available locally from Egypt.[580] Furthermore, the BMA continued to take these measures until enough Libyans were properly trained as teachers, also bringing in teachers from Palestine and Sudan to make up the shortfall.[581]

Egypt played an important role in many ways while Libya was recovering from the effects of decades of educational neglect. As previously noted, the Egyptian curriculum was eventually introduced in both Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. When Tripoli High School, the first BMA secondary school in Libya, re-opened in October 1946, an Egyptian committee specially delegated for that purpose was brought in to examine students and provide certificates for successful candidates wishing to matriculate.[582] Egypt also remained the most favoured destination for those wishing to pursue further studies due to its long-standing reputation for academic excellence, so much so that

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fully equipped laboratory for bacteriological analysis was added in 1905, with donations from Sir Henry Welcome, an American-British pharmaceutical entrepreneur and archaeologist. By 1906, the college was offering training courses for assistant engineers, land surveyors and primary school teachers. In 1924, it incorporated courses in *sharia*, engineering, teacher training, clerical work, accounting and science. The Kitchener School of Medicine, the first medical school in Sudan, was established, followed by the School of Law in 1936. In 1947, the college was affiliated with the University of London as the first overseas participant in its 'special relationship' scheme, with the first graduates to receive University of London degrees completing their courses in 1950. The following year, Gordon Memorial College was formally renamed University College Khartoum, which incorporated the Kitchener School of Medicine. See http://www.uofk.edu/about-uofk/historical-background. Accessed 17/11/2015

[579] *The Times,* 'The Future of Cyrenaica', 23 October 1948.
[580] T. Blackley, 'The annual report by the Chief Administrator on the BMA of Tripolitania during 1 January-31 December 1949', London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 371/80864, p.30
[581] T. Blackley, 'The annual report by Chief Administrator on the BMA of Cyrenaica during 1 January-31 December 1948', London, The National Archives, TNA, WO 222/215, p.8.
[582] Annual report of the Ministry of Education, Libya, p.48

when the local newspapers reported the re-opening of schools in Tripoli under the BMA the major point they made was that at 13, students would begin secondary school, and after four years, they would be eligible to attend university in Egypt or elsewhere.[583] Another local newspaper, *Al-Fajr Al-Libye* [Libyan Dawn], constantly urged the British administration to send more Libyan students abroad to pursue higher education.[584]

One of the interviewees, Hamad Alsalm, recalled the 'Egyptianization' at his secondary school which opened in Benghazi in November 1948.[585] Although his family lived in Al-Bayda, Hamad and his eldest brother went to Benghazi to enrol, staying with relatives as there were no boarding facilities. When he started his studies, he discovered that: "My Arabic book came from Egypt and so did my maths book. Most of the staff who taught me were Egyptian, even my English teacher was Egyptian!" Another interviewee remembered that small libraries of Arabic books were imported from Egypt and established in most schools.[586]

After teachers were brought from Egypt to staff the first secondary school to re-open in Tripoli, the Chief Administrator for the province enigmatically commented "Two of the previous year's teachers were not asked to return the following year".[587] Elsewhere, a comment on the situation at Zawiya secondary school[588] could be interpreted in a number of ways: "The Egyptian teacher who taught English returned after his summer holidays".[589] However, since competent English teachers were in very short supply, working conditions were difficult and the salaries on offer were low, this is likely to suggest that his return meant one less problem for the administration to deal with.[590] Although officially English was meant to be a compulsory subject, due to lack of staff expertise and growth in student numbers the administration often turned a blind eye when inspectors found that classes in this subject were not being taught, particularly in

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[583] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 7 November 1944, T. Blackley, 'Annual report of Tripolitania, for the period 1st January to 31st December 1947', TNA, FO 1015/143/, p.9.
[584] *Al-Fajr Al-Libye,* 1 April 1948, p.1.
[585] Blackley, 'Annual report Cyrenaica 1948', TNA, WO 222/215, pp.7-8.
[586] Interview, Alsalme, 27 June 2011.
[587] Blackley, 'Annual report Tripolitania 1949', TNA, FO 371/80864, p.30.
[588] Zawia is a city situated 50 kilometres away from Tripoli.
[589] Blackley, 'Annual report Tripolitania 1949', TNA, FO 371/80864, p.31.
[590] *Al-Watan* published many articles about the financial problems faced by teachers, and demanded that the BMA should consider raising their salaries. *Al-Watan,* 26 December 1948.

rural areas.[591]

The rural areas in general continued to be a cause for concern. It was noted that in one district only 16 per cent of 300 students had been able to obtain pass marks in the end of year examinations. This was often due to extremely poor attendance which had a number of causes. Occasionally this was due to a lack of commitment on the part of parents and/or pupils but more often it resulted from the distance which pupils needed to travel to schools or the fact that children were needed to help with agricultural work.[592]

### 3.2.5  Preparing for the Future

The occupying force can be said to have helped to develop Libyan communities, with both officials of the Colonial Office in London and Christian missionaries being proponents of community development. The missions in Africa particularly promoted education for indigenous communities. The 1944 report clearly emphasised the need for training and the British government implemented its recommendations concerning community development in the African region.[593]

There were far fewer secondary schools than elementary schools in Libya and these were centred in the urban areas of the Tripoli and Cyrenaica regions. The secondary stage of education (*thanawi*) lasted for four years or five years and typically students started at 13 and finished at 18 years.[594] The Annual Report by the Chief Administrator mentioned that this was intended to be the stage at which students learned the subjects that would give them the skills necessary to qualify for administrative and vocational posts. At schools where the teachers were suitably trained, students who were successful would be eligible for university studies, usually in Egypt or Tunisia.[595] Students attending secondary school could learn different subjects and engage in various cultural activities, such as drama and social gatherings. Arab teachers also often participated in such extracurricular activities, which greatly enhanced the educational experience, and had a positive influence on students at what was seen as a critical stage of their education.

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[591] Blackley, 'Annual report Tripolitania 1949', TNA, FO 371/80864, p.30.
[592] Ibid.
[593] Midgley, Hall, Hardiman, and Narine, *Community Participation, Social Development and the State*, p.17.
[594] 'Annual report of the Ministry of Education, Libya', p.49.
[595] Blackley, 'Annual Report 1947', TNA, FO 1015/143, p.45.

The BMA also saw competition in sports as an important as part of education. Arab pupils showed little interest in swimming but football proved to be an immediate success. Inter-school competitions were held between teams from the two provinces and a sports meeting held in Tripoli in May 1947 proved to be a huge success for boys, staff, and the audience who filled the stadium. Praising the benefits of physical education, the Chief Administrator of the BMA remarked: "It created a spirit of rivalry −not comparable to the standard of British sporting instinct− but it was hoped this would improve over time".[596]

When the first secondary school in Libya, Tripoli High School, was re-opened in October 1946, Arab students in Libya had effectively been deprived of education above the primary level for more than 30 years under Italian occupation.[597] The school was established in the same building in the Dahra district of Tripoli where the Supreme Islamic School had been in 1936 and given its popularity, morning and evening shifts were introduced for classes.[598] The Arab teachers were responsible for teaching English during the evening shifts. Some of the notable staff at the school included Moses Abashoty, Moner Taibi, who later became a presenter on the BBC World Service, and Nasr al-Din al-Assad, who was responsible for preparing students to study for higher degrees in Arabic language and literature.

According to Gamati,[599] the first cohort of students who graduated from this school went on to play a leading role in the political activism that led to Libyan independence. Most of these students became members of political parties, such as *Al-Kutla Al-Wataniyya Al-Hurra* [the Free National Bloc] or *Al-Hizb Al-Watani* [the National Party], which later united with *Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi* [the National Congress of Tripoli] and was led by Bashir al-Sadawi.[600]

On the political stage, major changes were about to occur in Libya. In 1949, Idris Al-Sanusi proclaimed the independence of Cyrenaica. Blackley noted that this decision was taken against the wishes of the Libyan people, especially the students, who had rejected

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[596] Ibid.
[597] K. A. B. Al-Gamati, 'Tripoli Secondary School in 1946: The Generation that Built an Independent Libya',http://www.akhbarlibyaonline.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=35194&Itemid=55 Accessed 09/11/2010.
[598] Ibid.
[599] Khalil Abdul Bari Gamati was born in Tripoli in 1933; he is now retired and devotes his time to researching the history of Libyan education. He was interviewed on 28 June 2011.
[600] Ibid.

this decision on the grounds that Libya should be a single entity.[601] When Al-Sanusi also accepted the position of Emir of Cyrenaica, this set-in motion the process of uniting the historic regions and Libyan independence became a real possibility. Establishing a local education system remained the priority of BMA[602] and became increasingly urgent after a United Nations' resolution in 1951indicated that Libya would become an independent country.

Constant attempts were still being made to encourage enrolment in elementary education school despite contending with the usual day-to-day problems. Inspectors were failing to conduct the required number of visits to each school due to difficulties caused by, for example, weather and transport issues. [603] British Foreign Office representatives mandated to monitor the educational facilities during their visit to the Libyan territories during the academic year 1949-1950 arrived during the summer vacation when the schools were closed. [604] In another initiative to encourage more families to send their children to school, in 1950 the Department of Health under the BMA organised a number of lectures on health education in schools, and two English teachers from Malta came to help with the development of the curriculum.[605] Ahmad Ali remembers that the schools were also visited by doctors from the BMA to check the pupils' general health and the condition of their teeth. In addition, health visitors dispensed vitamins, and checked the pupils' hair for head lice infestations which were very common among the students.[606]

In addition, the programme for preparing the next generation of leaders was stepped up. When the first cohort of students graduated from Tripoli Secondary School, they were subsequently sent by the BMA to Al-Azhar University for higher education. Another group of studied at Halwan College in Egypt for another four years before gaining admission to one of the country's universities.[607] A further 18 students from various secondary schools were sent to attend courses at higher educational institutions in Egypt

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[601] Blackley, 'Annual report Tripolitania, 1949', TNA FO 371/80864, p.32
[602] Dr A. E. Morgan to A.H. Sheffield, 10 May 1950, London, The National Archives, Council reference 310/10E, FO 1015/481, p.18.
[603] T. Blackley, 'Annual report of Tripolitania, for the period 1 January to 31 December 1950', London, The National Archives, TNA FO 1015/800, p.35.
[604] Blackley, 'Annual report of Tripolitania, 1950', TNA FO 1015/800, p.35.
[605] 'Second annual report of UN representative', 1950, Tripoli, National Centre for Archives and Historical Studies, p.36.
[606] Interview, Ali, 25 June 2011.
[607] Blackley, 'Annual report of Tripolitania, 1949', TNA. FO 371/80864, p.32.

and three students were sent to the United Kingdom for English courses organised by the British Council.[608] English language courses were popular and were held three times a year, lasting four months each.[609]

The BMA not only created educational opportunities through schools but also encouraged Libyans to attend evening classes to learn English as their second language. Courses took place three times a week for three months. Students were recruited from all trades and professions and from various nationalities but were mainly European. In November 1949, around 642 students were enrolled on courses. The percentage of beginners passing the examination remained higher than in advanced courses, even though the level of English was generally rising among the local population.[610]

In 1950, English evening classes continued to attract local people: 581 students registered for the spring session (March to June 1950) and a record figure of 800 students enrolled in the winter session, starting mid-October. Five levels of instruction included 32 classes lasting one hour, three times a week. Teachers were mostly Maltese and Palestinian and were assisted by two female teachers from the British Army Children's School (St. George's School).[611] The combined results of the examinations held in June 1950 are presented in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Results of the English language examinations held in June 1950.[612]

| SCHOOL LEVEL | NUMBER OF STUDENTS SITTING THE EXAM | NUMBER OF STUDENTS OBTAINING A PASS[613] |
|---|---|---|
| Beginners | 66 | 51 |
| Elementary | 141 | 67 |
| Intermediate | 126 | 73 |
| Advanced | 100 | 44 |
| **TOTAL** | **433 (100%)** | **235 (54%)** |

The administration also selected three Libyan teachers to be sent to Cairo for long-term

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[608] Blackley, 'Annual report Cyrenaica, 1948', TNA, WO 222/215, p.7.
[609] Blackley, 'Annual report of Tripolitania, for the period 1 January to 31 December 1947', 1947, TNA, FO 1015/143, p.46.
[610] Ibid.
[611] Blackley, 'Annual report of Tripolitania, 1950', TNA, FO 1015/800, p.36.
[612] Ibid, p.37.
[613] To obtain a pass, students were required to pass both written and oral tests.

training. In addition, six students were selected for higher training on the basis of their academic performance: three from Tripoli Secondary School, and three from the nearby schools. After following a course of English, all six were sent to Victoria College in Alexandria "long regarded a symbol of British cultural and political prestige in the Middle East".[614] All their expenses were paid for by the administration.[615]

As the demand for more schools increased, BMA opened two nursery schools in Tripoli in 1950 and trained nursery teachers were made responsible for its management.[616] However, the BMA was not wholly consistent in its school policy, since although it opened three kindergartens, one each in Tripoli, Zavia and Khoms, these were solely for the children of British troops, Libyan children not being allowed to attend.[617]

The BMA did attempt to develop vocational and technical schools although the scarcity of funds proved to be a major obstacle.[618] The concept of vocational education was not a new one. Apprenticeships had long been known and were formerly adopted as a practice by the Islamic Arts and Crafts Guild in Tripoli during the Ottoman era in 1889, and this organization had continued to supervise this type of education. The Guild's School of Islamic Arts and Crafts continued to play a role until British troops occupied its site in 1943, halting education. However, soon after the conflict ended in Libya, it was refurbished and its syllabi and educational methods were revised, allowing students to resume their technical and vocational studies. Another technical college was opened in Benghazi (1947–1948)[619] where students followed two-year-long courses after the completion of elementary school and could learn a variety of trades including mechanic, electrician, and tailor.[620] In Tripoli in 1948-1949, a training centre aimed at creating a technical and clerical cadre for Libya was established with the assistance of the International Labour Organization, an agency of the United Nations.[621] It offered a one-year training course for students who had completed the elementary stage of schooling, and later, the duration of study was extended to two years to cover general industrial

[614] S. Raafat, 'Victoria College - Educating the Elite 1902–1956' *Egyptian Mail*, 30 March 1996 http://www.egy.com/victoria/96-03-30.php accessed 12/12/2014.
[615] Blackley, 'Annual report Tripolitania, 1949', TNA FO 371/80846, p.32.
[616] Blackley, 'Annual report of Tripolitania, 1950', TNA, FO 1015/800, p.36.
[617] Blackley, 'Annual report of Tripolitania, 1950', TNA, FO 1015/800, p.36.
[618] Correspondence from Radley to Reid, 1950.
[619] Technical and vocational education in Libya, 1966, p.3.
[620] Technical and vocational education in Libya, p.3.
[621] Foreign office to Tripoli, 7 February 1950, London, The National Archives, TNA FO 1015/566.

education. Another technical/agricultural college was established with American assistance in Al-Marj in 1950, where the duration of study was four years after the student had received an elementary certificate.[622] Accommodation for student boarders was created, with priority for admission given to students from agricultural backgrounds. The opening of a new training college for men was planned for October 1950[623] and another for women by late November 1950.[624] According to the Annual Report for Tripolitania UNESCO agreed to pay the salaries of the colleges' staff, while the administration paid other costs, including making a technical workshop available for instructional purposes.[625]

It is not clear whether these planned developments ever came to fruition. In May 1950, Dr Morgan of the British Council contacted the Foreign Office with a request for funding and assistance with finding suitable locations for a group of Cyrenaican teachers and students to obtain the training they required in Britain. In his reply, Mr Sheffield, who had responsibility for Administration of African Territories, assured him that British officials were committed to assisting and improving the education system in Libya but that the Secretary of State had on this occasion declined his request "due to the changing scenarios in Libya".[626]

The British were pioneers in introducing community development, mainly since due to British self-interest and the fact that the principles of colonial rule were based upon a metropolitan approach that called for the development of civilisation. The BMA approach was to bring all Libyans (Arabs and Jews) together through social interaction.[627]

Thus, Britain attempted to transfer core its cultural values to the Libyans through community development. This resulted in many Libyans being trained meaning that by the time the country gained independence, they were ready to deal with the issues of governance in the various fields of administration, After the BMA left Libya, its policy

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[622] Al-Gamati, *The Development of Educational Management,* p.143.
[623] Tripoli to Foreign Office, 18 October 1950, London, The National Archives, TNA FO 1015/568.
[624] Education Department Tripolitania, 27 February 1950, London, The National Archives, TNA Ed/1/1. FO 1015/566.
[625] T. Blackley, 'Annual report of Tripolitania, for the period 1st January to 31st December 1949', TNA, FO 371/80864/J1011/7, p.34.
[626] A. H. Sheffield to Mr. Morgan, 12 May 1950, FO 1015/481. Later correspondence shows that due to Mr Morgan's persistence, six weeks of training was finally agreed upon for the Cyrenaicans.
[627] R. Bailey and M. Brake, *Radical Social Work* (London, 1975), p.130.

remained in place in the education system, and the then government was able to build on this and open the doors to higher education for the Libyans. In the monarchical period, post-independence, the Libyan government regarded education as a continuing challenge. One of their first steps was to issue Education Law No. 5 in 1951. This gave everybody a right to education making this "compulsory and free in the elementary schools, and free through every stage of education all over Libya." Libya's two main universities were established in Tripoli and Benghazi in the period 1952-1953.[628]

## 3.3 Conclusion

The BMA's policy was quite different from that of the Ottoman and Italian systems. Firstly, it aimed to be socially inclusive and to maximise participation in education. The extent to which it was successful in this aim can be measured at least in part by the statistical evidence. The BMA drew on its experience of education in India, and applied a similar language policy in Libya, introducing English as a compulsory subject in middle schools. At primary level, the curriculum was taught in the local language. The implementation of educational policy was strictly monitored. The education system which had been developed in India was maintained in all the colonies by the Department of Education in London.

It is important to discuss why the BMA placed emphasis on the education system in Libya. This is due partly to the fact that BMA recognised the needs of the Libyans, but was also influenced by the 1930 Education Act that was introduced in the United Kingdom. The British government believed that it was very important to instil liberal values and to maintain these through good governance. As previously noted, the former administrations did not consider education from the Libyan perspective, thus dividing the community whilst the British approach was entirely different as it stressed community development. This approach also postulated the importance of the Libyan share of the existing public services and further extending the scope of services at lower expense. A similar analysis regarding the British approach towards the colonies has been put forward by Gray and Silberman.[629]

This desire by the British to use education policy to create a more cohesive, participatory and egalitarian society can also be seen in their mass literacy campaign,

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[628] S. A. Hajjaji, ليبيا الجديدة [*The New Libya*] (Tripoli, 1967), p.84.
[629] Gray and Silberman, *The Fate of Italy's Colonies*, p.54.

and in their attempt to address the urban-rural divide by developing primary schools better suited to those who lived in isolated areas and instituting boarding schools. They also began to address the problem of the lack of educational provision for girls by convincing the tribal people to allow their daughters to be educated, a major social achievement. Unlike previous administrations they involved the Libyan Arabs in decision-making and on key issues, such as the type of education curriculum they wanted, the BMA listened to and heeded the wishes of stakeholders, namely the parents.

The British also attempted to create a meritocracy in which access to education and ultimately to social success was not based solely on class or ethnicity but depended on talent, ability and a desire to learn. The British approach towards education was different as the administration did not force the Libyans to learn English, but created opportunities for the citizens to take part. Once they had enough learners, then they exploited the potential of these learners, and those who shown positive attitudes were benefitted. The British Empire extended the educational opportunities in the colonies services along with public services. Obvious similarities can be seen with the education systems of Pakistan and India. The BMA's educational policy quite clearly also aimed to produce an academic elite – only a tiny proportion of Libyans were rewarded with the coveted prize of secondary and higher education – but this was not for the purposes of simply perpetuating the BMA but to develop a class of educated people who would help to lead and administrate an independent Libya after BMA. The inclusion of the teaching of compulsory school subjects in Arabic further helped the Libyans to strengthen their education system. It can therefore be concluded that the education system helped to strengthen communities on the one hand and also improved relations between the Libyans and the BMA. The majority of the Libyans joined educational campaigns and took part in the activities designed to contribute towards nation building. In addition to this policy, the contribution of the Libyan émigrés should not be overlooked, as they played a major role in encouraging people to participate in cultural and social activities working within the community to raise awareness and unify people behind one goal, namely the building and unity of the country.

The British were, perhaps, less successful in terms of developing higher educational infrastructure which would prepare citizens with practical and, above all technical, skills, but ironically, these skills were to come to the fore after Libyan independence, when oil was discovered there in the mid-1950s. In addition, whilst focusing on the pressing

educational needs of the Arab majority, they overlooked the concerns being expressed by the sizeable Jewish minority in Libya. Closer examination of those concerns, described as an "assertion of the Jewish minority's racial and cultural distinctions" might have alerted the British to a broader shift taking place within Libyan society and in the Middle East as a whole. For the Jewish minority's previously 'amicable' relationship with its Arab neighbours was about to come to an abrupt end.

Along with educational policy, the press plays an important role in the social and cultural life of a society and fulfils many different cultural functions. The following chapter will examine the relationship between the Libyan press and broader cultural and political developments under the BMA, highlighting issues such as censorship and the freedom of the press and the nature of the relationship between the Libyan press and the BMA.

# 4. CHAPTER FOUR: THE PRESS UNDER BRITISH RULE

## 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on education in Libya, under BMA rule. This chapter examines the role of the press during British rule. Newspapers present materials in different sections that reflect the interests of the public, offering the public access to socially useful information.[630] Originally the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century press used to publish accounts of public meetings, presenting the opinions of those present on such occasions.[631] Particularly at times of national crisis, the press play a vital role, not only in satisfying the public's appetite for news of setbacks and triumphs, but also in offering them a welcome distraction. The press has also been used by governments as a powerful propaganda tool in wartime for controlling civilian morale and bolstering national unity; it can be used to help garner support or manufacture consent from citizens in times of crisis. In peace time, the printed press and other forms of media can be used to help smooth the path to social change.[632]

For historians, examining the discourse used by journalists in news making and storytelling can be a useful means of identifying prevailing political ideologies and viewpoints and understanding how popular opinions were formed. Interrupted print runs of specific newspapers or missing issues can also indicate evidence of attempts at external control of the press, necessitating the exploration of matters relating to censorship or regulation. Editorial comment can provide insights into how the press itself conceived of its role within society at that time.[633]

The press which first appeared elsewhere in North Africa during the time of the European colonial governments was the product of the indigenous literati elite in most Arab countries, whereas in Libya it was created by foreign settlers in the early nineteenth century under Ottoman rule.[634] This chapter begins by tracing the development of the press in Libya during the years of the BMA. It will identify the various types of publications which existed and the different roles which they played in

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[630] P. Cole and T. Harcup, *Newspaper Journalism* (London, 2010), p.5.
[631] J. Harrison, *News* (London, 2006), p.110.
[632] A. S. Alshariff, *Literary Press in Libya: World War Two to the 1990s* (Tripoli, 2000), p.107.
[633] K. Williams, *Understanding Media Theory* (London, 2003), p.39.
[634] Said, *Cultural Life in Libya,* p.217.

Libyan society. During the years in which the British were in Egypt, journalism there experienced something of a Golden Age and played an immensely important role in Egyptian cultural and political life.[635] The British government's policy was to promote the freedom of the press, with the liberals opposing any attempts to limit what they saw as being a key democratic value. Ensuring that the press freedom enjoyed by British citizens was also extended to those who they governed in Egypt was seen as a central tenet of keeping British values intact and this attitude directly strengthened the press in Egypt.[636]

This chapter will explore whether the years of the BMA in Libya provoked a similar Golden Age of newspaper journalism during the period under study (1943-1951) and to what extent this impacted upon cultural and political affairs in Libya. In addition, it will examine the BMA's attitudes towards the press in Libya, which consisted of the BMA's own publications and the national newspapers published by private individuals, and the types of censorship and regulation to which these were subjected and the degree of freedom they were allowed. This chapter will also explore the different functions which the Libyan press played, the extent to which Libyans were able to develop their own abilities in terms of journalistic practice and printing to operate independently, and the degree to which they can be said to have benefitted from the democratic attitudes of the BMA.

## 4.2 Emergence of the Arab Press, 1943-1951

In spite of the precarious existence of Arabic-language publications during the Italian era, it was the press that served as a stimulus for intellectual life amongst the Arab population of Libya. During the period under study, in addition to the Italian regime's propagandist newspapers, Libyan nationalists were also producing a wide range of Arabic-language publications. A range of factors contributed to the emergence of these magazines and newspapers.

The first of these factors relates to the fact that new intellectual trends were emerging together with political parties that reflected a diverse range of political and social ideologies. The subsequent political tensions helped to fuel the emergence of a group of people desperate to engage in that ideological conflict and get their voices heard by

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[635] L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, p.102.
[636] I. Hargreaves, *Journalism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2005), p.29.

writing about their ideas in articles in magazines and newspapers.[637] Many, if not all, of the political parties published their own newspaper; thus *Al-Watan* served as the mouthpiece for *Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar*, *Al-Istiqlal* [Independence] was published by the Youth League in Benghazi, whilst *Jasr Al-Huria* [Brigade of Freedom] served the interests of the Tripoli-Egyptian Union Party. There were many others.[638] The political struggle led to an outpouring of journalistic activity, which not only helped contributors to hone their writing skills, but also helped to create an audience of educated readers for these publications and involved students in editing the articles.[639]

Among the Libyan Arab population, the articles in *Al-Watan* helped to make citizens aware of the fact that previously they had been deprived of their freedom of speech. Most of the contributors to these publications were amateur authors and literary critics, who wrote for love not money.[640] During this period, there was also a greater degree of cultural openness to other Arab countries. Libyan intellectuals had established close ties with authors in other parts of the Arab world and they exchanged magazines and books.[641] A typical example is Alhadi Ibrahim Almashriqi[642] who maintained an extensive correspondence with a group of scholars in Algeria who sent copies of the Algerian newspaper *Al-Bassaer* [Insights] as a gift from their collective. At the same time, the number of Egyptian newspapers available in Libya was on the increase, with the regular appearance of publications such as *Al-Hilal* [The Crescent], *Al-Rislah* [The Message] and *Al-Thaqafa* [Culture]. These newspapers were originally published in Egypt and intended for an Egyptian audience.[643] However, they played a major role in the consciousness-raising and acculturation of Libyan citizens, particularly the younger generation.[644] The journalists, who were scholars from neighbouring countries, were in

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[637] A. Miloud, النشاط الثقافي في ليبيا خلال فترة الاستقلال [*Cultural activity in Libya in the era of independence*] (Cairo, 1988), p.115.

[638] Alhadi Ibrahim Almashriqi to the scholars' collective in Algeria, 11 June 1948, Tripoli, Centre for Historical Studies of the Libyan *Jihad*, Hadi Al-Masheargy File, Document 6. This provides details of the student contributors to these newspapers.

[639] Almashriqi to the scholars' collective in Algeria, Tripoli, Centre for Historical Studies of the Libyan *Jihad*, Hadi Al-Masheargy File, Document 6.

[640] Almasrati, *Fifty Years of the Press in Libya,* p.42.

[641] I. A. Salim, *Culture in Libya: Origins and Evolution 1866-1911* (Benghazi, 1992), p.87

[642] Alhadi Ibrahim Almashriqi (1907-2007) was a Libyan author who wrote many books about Libyan and Algerian history. He participated in the resistance against the Italian occupation of Libya and took part in cultural activities there during the BMA era. He was a member of the Omar Al-Mukhtar Association from 1953 to 1955 and also provided support for the Algerian revolution. See: Ahram http://www.ahram.org.eg/Archive/2007/11/7/WRIT2.HTM accessed 16/4/2015.

[643] Almasrati, *Fifty Years of the Press in Libya*, p.47.

[644] Almashriqi to the scholars' collective in Algeria, Tripoli, Centre for Historical Studies of the Libyan *Jihad*, Hadi Al-Masheargy File, Document 6.

close contact with Libyan writers. This helped improve their awareness of various social and political activities, and it brought the Libyan people news about what was happening elsewhere in the world and forged links of solidarity among the progressive forces in Arab countries.

The press was the only channel to connect the Libyans to the outside world, providing them with political, cultural and literary news, through translation, stories reproduced from the Arab press of other countries, or contributions from readers. As a result of what they had read in articles from the Arab and foreign press, many article writers informed Libyan intellectuals about events abroad, among them was an article published by *Tripoli* magazine entitled: "A stream of literary products" by the critic Mahmud Abdelmajid Elmuntassir. His article showed that the difficulties caused by war had not stopped literary production in the countries of the Middle East, especially Egypt and Syria. Books published by Arab publishers such as Dar Al-Maarif, Dar Al-Kutub and Al-Istiqama in Egypt and Sader in Lebanon were reviewed by Elmuntassir who drew comparisons between different publications by Arab and Western critics. The article also referred to Brackenbury, who offered translations of *Resalat Al-Ghufran* [The Epistle of Forgiveness] by the classical poet and philosopher Abul ʿAla Al-Maarri and a translation of Mahmud Kamel's book (*Alajnihat Azzarkae* – [Blue Wings]. Both books were printed by Dar Al-Maarif in Egypt[645] and from the above it is clear that some Libyan critics were in close contact with Middle Eastern critics, and they used to share different aspects of intellectual life. The article urges Libyan critics to keep up with intellectual currents followed by their colleagues in the Middle East, who had ample outlets for publishing their work due to the quantity of Arabic publications in both Egypt and Lebanon.

Another factor which also helped to facilitate the spread of nationalist ideology in the press was the close relationship between some of those advocating Libyan nationalism and BMA officials. The British authorities called this newspaper their Arabic newspaper.[646] This contributed to the smooth running of press affairs, and to the overtly pro-nationalistic character of much of the coverage in the press, including the newspapers published by the British Information Office itself. In 1950, with an eye on

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[645] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 3 February 1945. Tripoli, Libyan Centre for the Archives and Historical Studies (LCAHS).
[646] Information office British residency, Benghazi, 1 May 1950.

the future fate of the Libyan media under independence, a delegation of six Libyan journalists working in the press and on the radio were sent to Britain to find out more about working practices at some of the best-known British publications.[647]

## 4.3 Newspapers Printed During British Rule in Libya 1943-1951

The BMA laid great importance on the role of the press in ensuring that the population should be given clear information, due to the heightened international political tensions at the time. The BMA's aim was to deepen people's understanding of the main goals of the new political system. This led to a transitional phase in newspaper publication which witnessed a marked increase in the quantity and quality of the journalistic output, and it was this period of intense and fruitful activity in the press that distinguishes this period from what went before and what was to follow. Many writers emerged to take advantage of this opportunity to express themselves freely, and there was a substantial increase in newspaper coverage of both cultural and intellectual issues. Those writing in the press during that period used their creativity to express their aspirations concerning nationhood and to raise awareness about social problems in a politically committed manner.[648]

Newspapers published in Libya during the years of the BMA were of two types. The first were the official government newspapers, printed by the British Bureau of Intelligence. These undertook the task of publishing information about the movements of officials in the British government and, in addition, disseminated propaganda on behalf of the British government and its allies regarding their policies at the economic, social and cultural level. These newspapers principally aimed to inform the population about new staff appointments in Libya both foreigners and Libyans.

The newspapers which fulfilled these functions were *Tarablus Al-Gharb, Benghazi,* and *Barqa Al-Jadida*.[649] Secondly, there were the Libyan nationalist newspapers intended to

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[647] These included Munir Burchan, editor of *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, Ahmed Alhsaury, Director of the BBC Arabic World Service in Tripoli, Suleiman Ali, reporter for the *Egyptian Times,* Abdel-Rahman Dukduk and Muhammad bin Suweid, BBC Arabic World Service in Benghazi, and Awad Zaqhob, editor of *Barqa Al-Jadida* [New Cyrenaica] from Benghazi. Central Office of Information, 'Report on the Libyan Press Delegation to London', 14 May 1950, London, The National Archives, TNA FO 953/729, TF 3/100.
[648] Interview, Mukhtar Alasoud, 26 June 2011.
[649] Confidential, Office of the British Residency, Benghazi, 1 May 1950, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 953/732/108012.

stir up nationalist sentiments among the local population and to serve the Libyan national cause by reporting on political, economic and social concerns. The nationalist newspapers were privately owned, but were still subject to regulation by the authorities.[650] All of them were politically affiliated and tended to give more space specifically to coverage of intellectual and ideological debates. Among those that used the written word to tackle important political issues were *Al-Watan, Liwa Al-Huriya* [The Banner of Freedom] and *Shualat Al-Huriya* [Beacon of Freedom]. Some other newspapers and magazines aimed to tackle cultural issues, such as *Omar Al-Mukhtar*, and *Al-Fajr Al-Libye*, *Almaraa* [Woman] and *Libya Magazine*.[651]

These national newspapers enjoyed much greater freedom than they had been allowed by the previous government but still faced censorship on occasion from the official authorities. They used their newfound freedom to raise issues and, in some cases, to strongly criticise those in power concerning the political and economic situation. Thus, the press played a key role in publicising issues that needed attention and educating different groups in Libyan society to enable them to make informed decisions.

In the period after WW2, the development of the Libyan press was concentrated in the provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, particularly in their respective capitals, Tripoli and Benghazi. During the BMA period, there was no press in the largely desert province of Fezzan.[652]

### 4.3.1  Government Newspapers in Cyrenaica Province

All the government newspapers were under the direct administration of the BMA, which established its own newspapers for the purpose of communicating its policies to the Libyan people who appreciated having access to this form of media.[653] This section presents the characteristic features of the various BMA-owned newspapers.

*Benghazi* was the first newspaper to be printed in Libya following WW2. The BMA initially contacted young Libyans in Benghazi to manage a bureau to deal with the situation in Libya during the war, in addition to supporting the British government and its allies. These young Libyans were also responsible for launching and running a

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[650] Interview, Alakecat, 22 September 2015.
[651] K. A. Louba, *The Libyan Press: Political Affiliations and Economic and Social Trends: 1943-1952* (Benghazi, 2008), pp.144-145.
[652] United Nations, 19 June 1950, Benghazi, National Library, Division of Records and Archives, unclassified document, p.3.
[653] Louba, *The Libyan Press*, p.143.

propaganda campaign intended to win over the local Arab population to the Allies. The bureau was founded in March 1943 under the leadership of John Reid,[654] who worked side-by-side with local youths.[655] Having evaluated the weaknesses of the Libyan resistance during the colonial period and the reasons for the failure of so many uprisings against the Italian invaders, these young people were determined that the newspapers would be overtly nationalist and serve to raise Libyan consciousness about nationhood. Thus, after the first two issues of the newspaper, the young Libyan staff stopped publishing war-related news and instead declared that their newspaper would focus on the Libyan cause rather than praising BMA policies. When it was initially printed, the newspaper was solely intended to disseminate essential information to its readers, but later it began to focus on topics of social and economic importance, including women's issues, changes to the educational system and civil rights.[656] *Benghazi* came out three times a week, with a total circulation of 850 copies in 1945[657] which increased to 1,200 copies in 1946, and reached 1,250 copies by 1948.[658]

Having demonstrated their solidarity with the Allied forces during the war, the young Libyans wanted urgent reforms and they did not describe themselves as being anti-British but rather pro-Libyan nationalism. In one article, Ali Falak, a member of the Administrative Council in *Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar*, wrote the following:

> Now, as we celebrate the end of war, we declare our solidarity with the Allies until victory is seized. This will not prevent us from acknowledging the truth that we have seen no change in this country. We are at war, and that prevents our leaders from immediately making the necessary reforms, but these are matters of great importance for which we must make the time.[659]

The article in question clearly indicated that the Libyans saw Britain as an ally and a positive alternative to the Italian occupation; hence, the Libyans would not oppose British reforms after the war ended in Libya, especially since they did not believe that these reforms would adversely affect the local population and their demands for rapid

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[654] John Reid was the BMA Public Information Officer for Cyrenaica, and was based in Benghazi 1945-48.
[655] These included Raouf Bin Amer, Mehdi Almutaride and Mahmud Makhluf.
[656] Almasrati, *Fifty Years of the Press in Libya,* p.48.
[657] 'Annual Report by the Chief Administrator of the BMA of Cyrenaica for the period 1 January 1945 to 31 December 1945'. London, The National Archives, TNA, WO 222/215, p.23.
[658] T. Blackley, 'Annual report by the Chief Administrator of the BMA of Cyrenaica for the period 1 January to 31 December 1948', London, The National Archives, TNA WO 222/215p.32
[659] *Benghazi,* 21 April 1943.

reform. The publication of this article in a government newspaper indicated that Libya was undergoing a transformation after the repression it had suffered under Italian rule. Under British rule, there was to be a greater degree of freedom, illustrating the difference between the two colonizers and their respective attitudes to the Libyan people.

This article clearly contains a call for change in the status quo of Libya's position and shows that these young Libyans were well aware of the importance of the outcome of the conflict in relation to the future of their country. It also makes it clear that in return for their support of the Allies, the Libyans were expecting something in return for their efforts.

In late 1945, *Benghazi* was renamed *Barqa Al-Jadida* and referred to by the BMA as "their Arabic newspaper."[660] It was published by the British administration, with Saleh Abobasir[661] as Editor-in-Chief. A typical issue of the newspaper carried local official information on the first page, followed by a full page of international news whilst the remaining pages were devoted to a variety of political affairs, social issues, arts, literary reviews and creative writing. This government newspaper placed its greatest emphasis on international and local political developments and was deeply concerned about their impact on Libya's future.[662]

Government newspapers in Cyrenaica were used to discuss different political trends in the country and for publishing information about activities within the province. Commenting on the launch of the magazine *Omar al-Mukhtar* issued by Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar in August 1943, *Benghazi* stated:

> We warmly welcome our national newspaper and greatly praise those responsible for it. We urge our readers to support it and learn from it, and we hope they are successful amongst the Levantine press.[663]

This was a reference to the solidarity which existed among the nationalist elements at the beginning of the period. *Barqa Al-Jadida* had followed the path of *Benghazi* in

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[660] Office of the British Residency, 'Confidential', Benghazi, 1 May 1950, London, The National Archives, TNA FO 953/732/108012.

[661] Saleh Abobasir (1925-1973) was born in Benghazi, and after studying in Italian schools, moved to Egypt to study at Al-Azhar. In 1944 he returned to Benghazi, became Editor-in-Chief of *Cyrenaica* and wrote in many of the Libyan newspapers at that period. He went on to become a member of the Libyan House of Representatives in 1953-1955.

[662] *Barqa Al-Jadida* also carried coverage of the Arts in Libya in 1945.

[663] *Benghazi*, 6 August 1943.

remaining loyal to Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar. However, in 1947, this association showed it was hostile towards the BMA, as evidenced in attitudes reflected in its publication. When British military police questioned Libyan citizens who had documents relating to the association, the newspaper showed its support by publishing articles declaring that the documents were not secret or illegal, but had been reproduced openly in *Barqa Al-Jadida* and *Barqa Al-Riyadiyya* (Cyrenaica sports) newspapers.[664]

*Barqa Al-Jadida* also demonstrated its support for the Association's viewpoint during the negotiations between Tripoli and Cyrenaica in January 1947, when some of its articles reported that if these negotiations failed this might negatively affect public opinion and the attitude of the political parties in Tripoli. *Barqa Al-Jadida* also published a statement expressing its solidarity with the Tripoli front and thanking the Association and the young people of Cyrenaica for playing a pivotal role in encouraging the unity and independence of Libya. It praised their spirit of nationalism, together with their demands for their rights to be recognised and for Libya to join the Arab League.[665]

Since *Barqa Al-Jadida* was a government publication, it was expected to adopt the BMA's point of view. Coverage in the newspaper told readers that the BMA supported Libya's territorial unity; however, the political tensions that arose in the aforementioned negotiations suggested the opposite. At the conference of foreign ministers held by the major powers in April 1946, Great Britain advanced the idea of strengthening Libya by putting the regions of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica under its tutelage. By the end of the same year, the British had replaced this idea with a plan to place Tripolitania and Fezzan under international tutelage; however, Cyrenaica was to come under British authority, making it a base for protecting Britain's colonial interests as it had lost its power elsewhere in the Middle East, due to the liberation movements that were then sweeping across the region.[666]

Negative reactions to the failure of these negotiations made the BMA attempt to combat the feelings of despair that prevailed in Libya. The press was one of the methods used to suggest that the British had not been responsible for the failure of the negotiations. Published articles bore the signatures of some the most famous members of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar, including Ibrahim Usta Omar. Prior to this event, the newspaper had

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[664] *Barqa Al-Jadida*, 1 January 1947.
[665] *Barqa Al-Jadida*, 2 February 1947.
[666] Brocin, *The History of Libya*, pp.256-257.

aimed to give voice to all the different points of view put forward by the political tendencies. However, in January 1947, the emergence of a rift between the political parties in the province of Cyrenaica became evident in the pages of *Barqa Al-Jadida*.[667]

The April 1950 issue of *Barqa Al-Jadida* was the last to be published under the aegis of the British Bureau of Intelligence[668] and an article entitled 'The *Barqa Al-Jadida*' written by the Bureau of Publication's attaché to the government of Cyrenaica was printed in the newspaper on 5 May 1950.[669] It confirms that Cyrenaica was to become a fully independent state. The issue also gave the following as the aims of the publication:

- Working under the flag of national rule and contributing to the struggle for the country's freedom

- Raising the quality of its journalism and range of subject matter

- Responding to readers' questions and comments, investigating their problems and finding solutions

- Acting as a link to promote understanding between the government and the people, by exchanging points of view which are of public interest.[670]

The newspaper also said that it intended to support moderate tendencies, on the grounds that extremism posed a great danger to Cyrenaica and was to be avoided at all costs, and it refused to publish any extremist points of view. It also cautioned against succumbing to blind nationalism and flawed ideas, the main source of which was greed. Articles also urged members of the political organizations and state agencies not to imitate European systems.[671] This position reflected the moderate attitudes of the government of Cyrenaica, and it appeared that *Barqa Al-Jadida* had become its official mouthpiece.

As a result, it was often critical of coverage which appeared in *Al-Watan*. Thus, it responded when *Al-Watan*, which was particularly sensitive to issues relating to Arabic, condemned a speech made by the Prime Minister of Cyrenaica at the start of the new school year about learning English, in which he voiced his opinion that English was

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[667] *Barqa Al-Jadida*, 22 June 1950.
[668] Head of Chancery, 'Confidential', Benghazi, 16 March 1950, London, The National Archives, TNA FO 953/732/108012.
[669] T. S. Russell to Information Office, British Residency, Benghazi, 'Confidential', 3 May 1950, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 953/737/108012.
[670] *Barqa Al-Jadida*, 2 July 1950.
[671] *Barqa Al-Jadida*, 23 April 1950.

being promoted to the detriment of Arabic.[672] *Barqa Al-Jadida* defended the Prime Minister, explaining that English was widely spoken throughout the world, and that no one would dare to deny its crucial importance.[673]

*Barqa Al-Jadida* also denounced stories printed in *Al-Watan* about the numbers of foreign employees in *Al-Maref* [the Ministry of Education], referring to this coverage about foreign employees as nonsense. It pointed out that there were only a few foreign staff employed there and these were technicians and experts who needed to be hired for their specialist knowledge and skills.[674] Their function was to help to strengthen the educational programme and prepare Libyans to take over the management of the education system.

Even though *Barqa Al-Jadida* actively defended the BMA and later the Cyrenaican government, it never suggested extreme measures for tackling issues, instead often using articles to clarify misunderstandings or to respond to accusations of misinformation. With the exception of Saleh Abobasir and Ibrahim Usta Omar, it was difficult to identify the writers who contributed to this newspaper, since most articles were published under pseudonyms, often intentionally symbolic. However, readers would have easily been able to determine the attitudes of these key figures as reflected in their writings, and their political tendencies were always moderate on nationalist issues. Thus, when Ibrahim Usta Omar blamed the Cyrenaican government for the failure of the negotiations over Libyan unity, he did not criticise the policies of Idris al-Sanusi as being the cause. Although Saleh Abobasir was an employee of the BMA, he was also a nationalist activist, and his articles published between 1946 and 1947 in *Al-Masri* [The Egyptian] clearly showed his hostility towards British rule.[675]

*Barqa Al-Jadida*'s nationalism was evident in an article which it published following the signing of the British Cyrenaica treaty by Idris Al-Sanusi, when it stated that "Last year, Britain granted partial autonomy, but only now does Cyrenaica have the authority to assert its autonomy".[676] It noted that Cyrenaica still did not enjoy the right to enter into agreements, but that this was a step in the right direction until the whole country gained full independence. This confirms that *Barqa Al-Jadida* was a pro-government

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[672] *Barqa Al-Jadida*, 25 June 1950.
[673] *Al-Watan*, 27 June 1950.
[674] *Barqa Al-Jadida*, 8 August 1950.
[675] *Barqa Al-Jadida*, 23 April 1950.
[676] *Barqa Al-Jadida*, 28 May 1950.

newspaper with a nationalist political agenda. However, it continued to maintain the moderate position it had adopted throughout and would not countenance extremist attitudes.

The last three months of 1949 witnessed some changes to the focus of *Barqa Al-Jadida*'s articles. The newspaper became less interested in international news, particularly from the West, and chose instead to focus its attention on local news, with coverage of social issues completely overshadowing the political news. When an article was published to clarify methods of social reform, this was given three columns on the front page, whereas news of world events had once taken precedence.[677] The newspaper also acted as a forum for reader discussion of topics about which they sought clarification. One of the most serious of these related to the introduction of domestic water supplies in urban areas. Since the water reached end users through metallic pipes (*al-mawassir*), its cleanliness, particularly in terms of whether it was fit for ritual ablutions before prayer, was widely debated.[678] Another innovation was the publication of short stories and poems written by readers.[679]

*Barqa Al-Jadida* thus moved from being a newspaper focused on war coverage and news from Europe to a magazine printed by a nationalist government which encouraged readers to express their opinions and to publish their own creative efforts. This meant that it gave a much-needed voice to literary hopefuls at varying stages of their development. However, it was also guilty of focusing narrowly on provincial events either as news or for propaganda purposes, meaning that it became of exclusive interest to a minority audience in the province of Cyrenaica.[680] It is worth mentioning that an English-language newspaper published by the BMA, *The Sentinel* [referred to locally as *Al-Raqeeb*], was also circulated in Cyrenaica from 13 February 1949. This weekly publication was aimed principally at the English community in Cyrenaica, which consisted mainly of British soldiers, and was intended to provide news stories which gave them an insight into Cyrenaica and its people. It deliberately avoided explicit coverage of political issues.[681]

Although the relationship between the British authorities and these kinds of newspapers

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[677] *Barqa Al-Jadida*, 8 August 1950.
[678] *Barqa Al-Jadida*, 16 October 1949.
[679] *Barqa Al-Jadida*, 14 October 1950.
[680] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 2 March 1949.
[681] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 2 March 1949.

was friendly, sometimes both sides did not agree regarding an issue, which limited communication. While such incidences were resolved through negotiations between nationalists and representatives of the BMA, the articles in the newspapers addressed various topics intended to attract the readers' attention, including referring to Britain's support for Libyans in their resistance against the Italian invasion. The articles also referred to the promises made by Britain to improve living conditions in the occupied territory after the war had ended.

## 4.3.2  Nationalist Newspapers in Cyrenaica Province

The nationalist newspapers were not under the direct rule of BMA; however, they were still expected to follow the code of conduct promulgated by the BMA and some were banned when they published articles criticising BMA policies. These newspapers played a major role during and after independence, expressing the resilient attitude of the Libyans and awakening their desire to be united, especially before independence, in spite of the complexity which tribal politics entailed. Some of the groups in Cyrenaica wanted independence for their region first; however, those newspapers that were in favour of independence for Libya attempted to dispel this attitude, fearing it would shatter the dreams of a united nation. The following section focuses on the newspapers in Cyrenaica which were not published under the direction of the BMA.

*Barqa Al-Riyadiyya* [Cyrenaica Sport] was the first nationalist Libyan newspaper published after the end of the conflict in Cyrenaica. It was launched on 27 August 1943 by the Sports Section of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar, and originally focused on sports coverage until 1947. However, when it came under the aegis of the Central Committee of this Association, it became more political and was renamed *Al-Watan* [The homeland].[682] This weekly newspaper was published every Tuesday[683] and had a circulation of about 1,000 copies.[684] Most of its articles were published anonymously and all were edited prior to publication by Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar, ensuring that they represented its political point of view.[685] Following publication of issue 92 (23 September 1947), the BMA ordered suspension of the newspaper and the dismissal of

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[682] M. B. Almagrabe, *Documents of the Omar Al-Mukhtar Association* (Cairo, 1993), p.115.
[683] The printing press was the property of the poet Ahmed Rafiq Mahdoi.
[684] Blackley, 'Annual report by the Chief Administrator of the BMA of Cyrenaica for the period 1 January to 31 December 1948', London, The National Archives, TNA WO 222/215, p.32.
[685] De Candole to Cyrenaica National Assembly, October 27 1951, Benghazi, National Library: Division of Documents and Manuscripts, unclassified document.

many of the members of the editorial committee on the grounds that it had insulted the British authorities. The offending edition included a manifesto for Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar, discussed the BMA's ban on political activities, and described the events which the Association's Central Committee had held to commemorate the death of the *shahid* [jihadi martyr] Omar Al-Mukhtar which had taken place in 1931.[686]

Three weeks later, issue 93 announced 'The return of *Al-Watan'*, asserting its official position on the principles of the struggle for the right to nationhood. However, this return was short-lived, as police raided the newspaper offices at night and arrested anyone selling it. Articles referred to reactions to previous "acts of political repression" in Benghazi, Darnah, Ajdabiya and the Green Mountain district. When Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar Central Committee was dissolved in December 1947 and prevented from engaging in any further political activities, Mustapha Bin Amer became the newspaper's Editor-in-Chief while Muhammad Assabari took over as Head Editor.[687] Despite these changes, the newspaper continued to represent the nationalist views espoused by Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar and coverage of nationalist issues adopted a similarly hard-line approach.

The British authorities closed down the newspaper again in March 1950, following a complaint from the British Administrator in Cyrenaica about its attacks on British policy.[688] Two months later it was back in circulation and more critical than before. In the first issue after restoration, its leading article stated that the reason for its closure was the BMA's objection to its publishing an article entitled 'De Candole[689] assumed personal responsibility'. This article accused the British Administrator in Cyrenaica of being personally responsible for failing to implement a reform policy. The newspaper continued to attack British policy and the Cyrenaican House of Representatives. It criticised the methods by which the elections had been convened, and attacked the Ministry of Education for its negligence by printing the headline, 'We did our duty', implying that it felt obliged to criticise the BMA and the Cyrenaican government in the best interests of the nation, on the grounds that what was happening could not be

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[686] Almagrabe, *Documents of the Omar Al-Mukhtar Association*, pp.40-41.
[687] Almagrabe, *Documents of the Omar Al-Mukhtar Association,* pp.45-47.
[688] Ali Shueib, *The secrets of the British bases in Libya* (Tripoli, 1982), p.88
[689] E. A. V. de Candole was born in Cornwall in 1901. In 1936 he was appointed as Political Resident and Magistrate of Darfur Provence in Western Sudan, and in 1944 as Deputy Governor of the Northern Provence. In 1964 he was transferred to the BMA of the former Italian Colonies in Somalia and Cyrenaica, firstly as Chief Administrator of Cyrenaica. See: E. A. V. de Candole, *The Life and Times of King Idris of Libya* (Manchester, 1990), p.xi.

ignored under any circumstances.[690] The newspaper published an article ironically entitled 'Celebration of the Constitution or celebration of its publication', indicating its opinion that the new Constitution of Cyrenaica was effectively an empty declaration made by the British Administrator, and not worth the paper it was written on.[691]

When the Chief Administrator of the BMA from 1949 to 1951, Mr Blakely, encouraged newly enrolled secondary school students to take military training courses on the grounds it would help them assume leadership positions, *Al-Watan* criticised the secondary school management in Tripoli and Cyrenaica, arguing that students should spend their time studying at school, as they were needed for the future of the country. The newspaper article sarcastically concluded by asking: "If Libyans joined the Army, whose Army would it be—the British Army or the Libyan Army?"[692]

This illustrates the difference between BMA-owned newspapers and the nationalist newspapers privately owned by Libyans. The latter highlighted the importance of freedom for the Libyans, while the former specifically celebrated BMA policies. This further suggests that the private publishers encouraged writers to adopt a pro-nationalist stance, signalling a key difference in policy. The BMA gave freedom to writers and publishers in the occupied territory, and the residents took advantage of this to publish materials which opposed the BMA's policies and supported the nationalists.

The Ministerial Council in Cyrenaica issued an order banning the publication of *Al-Watan* with effect from 1 November 1950. Issue 283 was re-published on 7 December 1950, by the order of Idris Al-Sanusi, after he seized power of the Libyan Constituent Assembly on the same date. The Constituent Assembly decided to make him King of a United Libya following independence.[693] From then on, the newspaper adopted a more moderate stance towards the government. This can be seen in its coverage of discussions about the formation of a united government, since representatives of all three provinces were at loggerheads amongst themselves, especially in Tripolitania, which had a larger population than that of both Cyrenaica and Fezzan combined.[694] *Al-Watan* observed that an agreement must be reached on the method by which this authority was to be formed, and urged all nationalists to put aside their individual

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[690] *Al-Watan*, 27 June 1950.
[691] *Al-Watan*, 9 September 1950.
[692] *Al-Watan*, 12 June 1949.
[693] Almagrabe, *Documents of the Omar Al-Mukhtar Association,* p.218.
[694] Louba, *The Libyan Press,* p.115.

differences and work together for the good of the nation, since continuing opposition to the proposals would only hinder and delay independence for Libya.[695]

At the same time, though, this did not stop *Al-Watan* from criticising the Constituent Assembly for dragging its feet over this issue, for its lack of transparency and also for the suggested distribution of power between the new united government and the three constituent provinces. Furthermore, on behalf of citizens, it asked for clarification of the exact meaning of 'united' in the nation's proposed new title, and assurance that this solution, though far from ideal, was the best alternative. However, it concluded that this was merely internal wrangling and that the most urgent priority was to transfer power from foreign rule to the Libyans.[696]

It is also worth mentioning that *Al-Watan* enjoyed a close relationship with the Council of the Arab League, as evidenced in the telegrams and correspondence exchanged between the General Secretary of the League and the Central Committee of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar. *Al-Watan* acted as a mouthpiece for those who were active participants in the movement for freedom and published all the statements made by the General Secretary of the Arab League, indicating its close interest in developments there. One article, entitled 'Half a million Arabs ready to fight', carried his statement urging the *mujahidin* to fight for Palestine.[697] Tensions arose when Libya appeared hesitant to join the League, as this would have hindered the constitutional process, since the League opposed the methods by which the Constituent Assembly had been formed.[698] *Al-Watan* subsequently published a telegram from Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar to the Council of the Arab League calling for its support of the Libyan Constituent Assembly on the grounds this was the only way to ensure that the country would achieve its goals of independence.[699] This indicates the dilemma which *Al-Watan* faced: on the one hand, it supported the Arab League because of its pan-Arabist principles but on the other, it opposed its attitude towards constitutional developments in Libya.

*Al-Watan* had supported the Palestinian cause since the United Nations Partition Plan had been proposed, and had written many articles on this subject, including one entitled

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[695] *Al-Watan* created the opportunity for all nationalists to work together to obtain freedom.
[696] *Al-Watan*, 12 December 1950.
[697] *Al-Watan,* 26 December 1950.
[698] Khaduri, *Modern Libya,* p.257.
[699] *Al-Watan,* 30 January 1951.

'Our duty', which openly called for support for the Palestinian people; the same article also called on Libyans to intensify their efforts and to reject internal disputes which were causing disunity. The British Mandate in Palestine ended in 1948; *Al-Watan* published two leading articles about the effects of ending this and the withdrawal of Arab forces from the Palestinian territories upon the creation of Israel.[700] In articles such as 'The British policy towards the Arabs', it showed the overlap between British and Zionist policies, and warned how close these were.[701] Interestingly, although *Al-Watan* did publish articles on the Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict, these were relatively small in number in comparison with the importance that this development meant for the region as a whole, and its principal focus continued to be on local issues.[702]

The newspaper published many articles about the problems with health services faced by the inhabitants of the city of Benghazi and this resulted in a demonstration held in the city to protest against an incident involving medical negligence in a hospital. Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya accused the newspaper of insurgency, and its coverage of this story (issue 270, published on 10 July 1953), led to it being temporarily closed by order of the National Government of Cyrenaica.[703] *Al-Watan* was described in British documentation as representing the left-wing of the Omar Al-Mukhtar National Association. It was also the highest-selling newspaper in local markets.[704]

This gives a clear picture of how the newspapers acted and shows the difficult position in which they were placed. On the one hand, they had to follow the code of conduct, while on the other they wanted to keep their readers in touch with the changing political situation in the regions of Libya. The articles published in *Al-Watan* were not only political in nature but also highlighted the social and economic aspects of Libyan life. The most significant role played by *Al-Watan* was its ability to quickly and effectively influence public opinion by influencing readers' opinions on particular topics.

In short, *Al-Watan* was a nationalist newspaper that followed the path previously established by Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar's publications; however, it was also interested

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[700] *Al-Watan,* 18 May 1948, criticised the British approach in Palestine and encouraged Arabs to displace the Jews from Palestine.
[701] *Al-Watan,* 15 February 1949.
[702] Almagrabe, *Documents of the Omar Al-Mukhtar Association,* p.279.
[703] Ibid.
[704] Confidential, from T. S. Russell information Officer to information office British residency, Benghazi, 17th June 1950, FO 953-737;

in broader trends in the Middle East. Thus, whilst demanding unity and full independence for Libya, it also promoted membership of the Arab League. It covered social and economic reforms in Cyrenaica, and was not afraid of upsetting any of the political players at the time. It was often scathingly critical of both the BMA and the Cyrenaican leaders, extending this criticism to political parties in Tripoli and the Constituent Assembly. In broader terms, *Al-Watan* showed its support for a united Libya, openly criticising the approach of both Cyrenaica and Tripolitania. *Al-Watan* did not focus on individual personalities, always writing about a single united country. Although its publication was banned on repeated occasions by the authorities, it achieved one of the largest circulations and had one of the most loyal readership bases of all the Libyan press, because it succeeded in giving a voice to popular aspirations and frustrations during the BMA years.

Here it is important to mention that *Al-Watan* was subjected to harassment by the authorities such as the British administration and the Libyan authorities after independence. The authorities alleged that *Al-Watan* had published articles inciting public disorder in the country, especially after the unrest that had occurred among Arabs, Libyan Jews and some tribes.[705] However, according to Louba the main reasons for this newspaper being banned so frequently was that it was extremely critical of the policies of both the British and Libyan authorities.[706] Although some non-governmental newspapers had sharply criticised the British authorities, others publications were more positive, such as *Al-Akhbar,* that noted:

> We are enjoying in the current era of British rule broad freedom of speech and
> opinion, the right to assemble and engage in political activities in this country,

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[705] On 4th to 8th November 1945 riots broke out in the Old City of Tripoli. It is not possible to determine what exactly started them; some claim it was caused by a fight between Jews and Arabs in a coffeehouse; others state that they started with a brawl involving two drunken Arabs who forced their way into a Jewish wedding; yet others argue that some Jewish youths started it by throwing stones at an Arab working party. The police strength on Monday November 5th, the bloodiest day, was 14 British officers and 260 natives. This was not enough to maintain law and order when the riots reached alarming proportions early in the morning when the situation worsened as groups of both Arabs and Jews started throwing stones at each other. Many Libyans from both sides were killed during these clashes. See: D. C. Cumming, 'Report on the anti-Jewish riots 4th to 8th Nov 1945', 19 November 1945, TNA, WO 230/162, p.3; and B. Temple, 'Interim report on civil disorders in Tripolitania 4-12 Nov 45', 13 November 1945, TNA, WO 230/162/ part I, p.3.
[706] Louba, *The Libyan Press,* p.117.

we even have several political parties intended to provide for this country and to act with sophistication and civility to gain independence.[707]

*Al-Libye* newspaper also praised the BMA officer, Mr. Blackley, highlighting that had supported the Libyans' demonstrations against the Bevin-Sforza Plan. [708]

After a split occurred within Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar, the Central Committee of Rabitat al-Shabab (The Libyan Islamic Youth Association) [709] began publishing a weekly newspaper called *Al-Istiqlal* [Independence] in late 1947, with an average circulation of 750 copies. [710] It was influenced by traditional trends rather than nationalistic principles. Its first Editor-in-Chief, Abdu Raba Ganae, was followed by Awad Zaqhob[711] in 1948, while Munir Elbaaba remained as its director. After briefly renaming itself *Sout Al-Nas* [The Voice of the People] it reverted to its original title.[712] It stated its aims in articles which were published and sent to the United Nations envoy to Libya, one of which was entitled 'The messenger of independence':

> You will see tomorrow, as the Fourth Committee saw before you, that this country is one hundred per cent behind Sanusi (Emir Idris), and it will never accept any alternative.

> If we wish to avoid exaggeration, extremist separatists constitute five per cent at the most, and if you really want to know the truth about the greed of the people and the truth of their ideas, then ask *Al-Mutamar Al-Watani*. It is the representative of the people, just as tribal leaders and sheikhs from all backgrounds and social classes represent their districts to the best of their abilities.[713]

> *Al-Mutamar Al-Watani* is the parliament of this state. Ask it to understand the

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[707] *Al-Akbar*, 25 August 1947.

[708] *Al-Libye*, 13 December 1943.

[709] This body split from the Omar Al-Mukhtar Association in 1945, as a result of a dispute that occurred between members of the Assembly due to differing views on the attitude that should be taken towards the British. Most of those young people who had studied in Egypt held anti-British views, while others took a moderate position on the British administration. As a result, the pro-British supporters formed a separate body called the Libyan Islamic Youth Association.

[710] Blackley, 'Annual report by the Chief Administrator of the BMA for Cyrenaica 1948', TNA WO 222/215 p.32.

[711] Awad Zaqhob (1911-1991) was born in Benghazi and schooled in Zawaya, known as a centre of anti-Italian activism. In 1938, he moved to the south of Libya and went into exile in Sudan, returning to Benghazi in 1942.

[712] Almagrabe, *Documents of the Omar Al-Mukhtar Association,* p.279.

[713] *Al-Istiqlal,* 24 December 1947.

hopes and fears of the people; ask the wise government of this country about its confidence in the legitimacy of the leader and the congress of the state, the young and old of this country.[714]

*Al-Mutamar Al-Watani* backed the Sanusi directive, which prioritized the unity of Libya hand-in-hand with a monarchy headed by Al-Sanusi. This was made clear in one of its articles:

The truth is that Cyrenaica never opposed the unity of Libya; rather it has defended that unity on many occasions, provided that it does not hurt the interests of Cyrenaica. Rabitat al-Shabab called for unity from its foundation, asking for this to be one of the fundamental principles of the independence of Cyrenaica, followed by the unity of Libya under the Sanusi crown.[715]

This newspaper thus took a different direction to that of *Al-Watan*, which had been influenced by the Arab League's anti-British policy and its stance on the Cyrenaica government. However, since *Al-Istiqlal* supported the Sanusiyya movement, then subsequently backed the Cyrenaica government, it was later given a guarantee that it would be allowed to continue publishing.[716]

Articles calling for social reform were also a mainstay of the newspaper and other publications followed its campaigning lead. The following extract, for example, reflects its stance on the consumption of alcohol which is forbidden to Muslims:

It is not our duty to deal solely with political affairs and neglect to take into account other issues that touch our lives. It is impossible for any nation to move forward without taking politics into account and tending to its other issues as well. Some of these are patently obvious to everybody, such as the trend for drinking wine; this social disorder must be tackled by our newspaper. To discuss political issues without considering other issues makes absolutely no sense.[717]

It is clear, then, that *Al-Istiqlal* newspaper viewed social reform as its key target and it dedicated a lot of coverage to addressing social problems, including crime.

On 2 November 1950 *Al-Taj* [The Crown] was launched by Omar Alshahab with the aim of ensuring that an independent Libya would be an Islamic kingdom. Its title and

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[714] *Al-Istiqlal,* 28 January 1950.
[715] *Al-Istiqlal,* 17 December 1949.
[716] *Al-Fajr Al-Libye,* 1 January 1951.
[717] *Al-Istiqlal,* 26 November 1949.

the timing of its launch reflected the fact that it supported Idris al-Sanusi as the head of this state, seeing him as acting as a bridge between the country's colonial past and its future liberation. The Constituent Assembly's resolution on 2 November 1950 positioned Idris Al-Sanusi as the King of Libya. The direction of this newspaper can be clear from some of its pronouncements such as:

> The new Libyan state should be an Islamic state, and all ways of life should be in line with the Islamic jurisprudence and all issues must be resolved accordingly.[718]

In terms of its political leanings, the newspaper also made its views known, stating:

> Some communities have followed the path of extremism with such fervent belief in their leadership that they set them up as though they were gods. From the dawn of mankind, leaders have been worshipped and today we still find many communities that believe the leader is always right and never wrong in this context.[719]

> We don't believe in a true religion that gives leaders unreasonable limits or rather we believe in a true religion that sets reasonable limits for leaders.[720]

The newspaper specifically referred to shariah law, urging leaders to be bound by the laws permitted in an Islamic country where shariah is practised as a means of resolving disputes and conflicts and of providing guidance on social and economic issues. It also urged Libyans to follow such leaders.

This can be seen as a response to the fact that some Libyans had distanced themselves from Islamic religious practices as a result of the attitudes and behaviour of former governments. *Al-Taj* adopted a nationalistic stance and saw its task as being to lobby the future government to formulate a strategy for introducing Islamic law in the new state and also to persuade Libyans to adopt an Islamic way of life. Like *Al-Jablakdar*, it also published poetry composed by popular poets such as Khalil Alarida, Muhammad Mansour Almrimi and Ashrif Assaitte.[721]

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[718] Louba, *The Libyan Press,* p.125.
[719] M. E. Alhashab, *Idris Sanusi*, 2nd edn (Cairo, 1957), pp.81-82.
[720] Alhashab, *Idris Sanusi*, pp.81-82.
[721] *Al-Taj,* 8 December 1950.

### 4.3.3  Government Newspapers in Tripolitania

This section focuses on those newspapers that were published under the direct supervision of the BMA in Tripolitania. These newspapers effectively served as a means of disseminating BMA policies. The best known of these was *Tarablus Al-Gharb* [West Tripoli], which was the first daily Arabic newspaper to be printed in Libya. It had initially been published during the Ottoman era, but was then banned by the Italian authorities.[722] However, the BMA resumed publication of this newspaper in January 1943.[723] Following its restoration, the newspaper eventually became a daily again, as opposed to three times per week, with a circulation of over 2,000 copies.[724]

*Tarablus Al-Gharb* outlined its aims in a statement published on 8 February 1943:

> We are pleased to inform our readers that from today onwards, our newspaper, *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, will be printed in Arabic, covering all the news and events. It does not intend to target anyone for criticism, and it will be small in size but every aspect of the news will be covered, in order to satisfy the readers. We are strongly determined that it will become one of the best, most widely read newspapers, following legal guidelines.

*Tarablus Al-Gharb* focused on public interest and provided its readers with up-to-date information on world events, including editorials about the international situation as well as local issues.[725]

The BMA aimed to earn the support of the Libyan population, when they were still at war with the Axis powers. The BMA had attempted to exploit the influence of religious feelings by publishing a statement in *Tarablus Al-Gharb* by the Mufti[726] of Tripoli about the positive impact of the visit of the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill[727] to the city of Tripoli. This statement helped the BMA, as Libyans became more trusting

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[722] 'Annual Report by the Chief Administrator of the BMA of Tripolitania, 1944', London, The National Archives, TNA p.38.
[723] Control newspaper, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 1015/382.
[724] 'Annual Report by the Chief Administrator of the BMA of Tripolitania, 1944', p.38.
[725] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,*8 February 1943.
[726] A *mufti* is an Islamic religious leader who is entitled to use his authority to resolve issues faced by Muslims.
[727] Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister, 1940-45 and 1951-55. Churchill was well received in Libya during his visit, with the press reminding Libyans about Churchill's statement that people should have the right to choose the form of government they want, and that Great Britain would respect the will of the people in this matter, without any pressure from any Government or people. See: Y. Robert, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (London, 2001), p.180.

of the administration. The newspaper further noted the positive impact this official visit had created on the local people.[728] The newspaper's role became highly significant as ordinary peoples' views were presented in different ways including in the main news, editorials and journalists' columns.

Other issues contained many articles praising the efforts of *Tarablus Al-Gharb* as an Arabic-language newspaper, without referring to the reality that it was being published under the aegis of the British Intelligence Bureau. Journalist Abdul Qadir Alipashta praised the role of *Tarablus Al-Gharb* in disseminating political information and news about world and local events to the public, and as a result, raising their awareness of and enhancing the role of Arabic.[729] Furthermore, by publishing academic and literary articles, *Tarablus Al-Gharb* was simultaneously sharpening the skills of authors and readers, helping to bring new life to Arabic literature, which had nearly vanished during the occupation of Libya for over 25 years.[730] Therefore, it played an important role in a province where no Arabic newspaper had been published for so long, engaging readers and providing them with intellectual stimulus.

However, *Tarablus Al-Gharb* faced many obstacles, such as outdated printing presses and a scarcity of trained staff to pass on their expertise to others.[731] These problems were not due to neglect on the part of the British authorities, but rather a consequence of the previous era.[732] Due to many problems, including the shortage of newsprint used for the production of newspapers, the publication consisted of just two pages until mid-1947.[733] However, it improved significantly after newsprint was imported from Tunisia and Sicily.[734]

Concerning the style of the political, social and cultural content of the articles, the information was succinctly presented and reflected the political views of the newspaper. Material was presented in a similar fashion to that followed by *Benghazi*, and whilst the conflict was still on-going in 1943-1945, it focused on coverage of the war. The purpose was to offer balanced views and also to gain support for the British in their struggle against the Axis powers.

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[728] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 8 February 1943.
[729] Louba, *The Libyan Press,* p.130.
[730] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 20 March 1945.
[731] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 15 June 1943.
[732] Brocin, *The History of Libya*, p.190.
[733] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 5 June 1947
[734] BMA Tripolitania, 'Annual report of the Chief Administration 1944', p.38

Another of the BMA's main priorities in contributing to general reform in Libya was to publish stories about the efforts made by local people to modernize. One article focused on the inhabitants of the villages of Tumzine, Diaae and Sidi Abu Issa, all located in the province of Tripoli, who had constructed school buildings at their own expense. The newspaper explained that local projects of this kind were paving the way for an academic renaissance in a country where there was a dire need for education and learning.[735] An article penned by Abdessalma Bash focused on the role played by the most highly qualified students in civilized nations and their importance within a future independent state.

In addition, the newspaper published items about cultural and political associations, sports clubs, and provided reports on the Tripoli Literary Society, which was established at the same time that *Tarablus Al-Gharb* re-started its publication. This newspaper had reporters in different areas of Tripolitania and journalists used to edit their contributions prior to publication.[736] The BMA's annual report for 1947 described the newspaper as an excellent place for advertising, as it promoted all the pro-BMA campaigns.[737] This does not match the opinion of Captain Simon who was then the British Director of Information and Publishing in Tripoli, and claimed that *Tarablus Al-Gharb* was a national newspaper that served the public interest and acted as a gauge of public opinion.[738]

Like other newspapers which soon grasped the important role they could play in relation to raising standards of cultural knowledge, *Tarablus Al-Gharb* published the text of talks given on various topics, either by speakers at cultural associations or broadcast on the local radio. Their aim was to educate people by different means, helping individuals to enhance their level of understanding to increase knowledge. For example, the newspaper published a talk about Ibn Khaldun, the founder of sociology, by the Headmaster of a Secondary School in Tripoli, Mustapha Fahmi, which was broadcast on local radio.[739]

*Tarablus Al-Gharb* also closely followed developments at the Council of the Arab League, covering the signing of the Arab League Convention by its original six

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[735] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 7 November 1944.
[736] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 27 July 1943.
[737] 'Annual Report by the Chief Administrator of the BMA of Tripolitania, 1947', p.49.
[738] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 27 July 1947.
[739] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 4 January 1949.

members on 22 March 1945 in issue 30. The newspaper also focused on the activities of the Libyan students who were studying in Egypt, organised by the Western Tripoli Cultural Association in Cairo. It published the text of the lectures given to members of the club, and reported on cultural excursions which they undertook.[740] This illustrates the close links between the members of this organization and the editors of *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, the only Libyan newspaper in Libya that showed an interest in reporting on these cultural activities.

In 1950, the newspaper invited new writers to submit their articles on various topics related to the arts, science and politics. Mustapha Alamir, who had previously worked as a pharmacist, contributed articles on health, while Fuaad Kamal Abdul-Aziz, wrote numerous articles about war, the Libyan situation during BMA rule, and other aspects such as the nature of politicians and ethics in politics.[741] By early 1950, *Tarablus Al-Gharb* had begun to abandon its emphasis on Tripolitanian affairs and to show more interest in the citizens of Cyrenaica. It published, for example, an article about repairs and improvements being carried out at Benghazi Airport, whilst another reported the Cyrenaican government's order banning civil servants from involvement in politics.[742]

This change reflected larger political developments, with the United Nations having passed its Resolution regarding Libyan independence, followed by the formation of the Consultative Assembly made up of deputies from all three provinces of Libya. *Tarablus Al-Gharb* highlighted the importance of these developments by publishing the statements of some of the most significant political figures. These included Ali Alharbi, who at that time occupied the post of the Minister of Works and Telecommunications in the Cyrenaica government, and was subsequently appointed as a representative on the Consultative Assembly[743], and Ahmed Baq Soufou, a notable from Fezzan who was appointed administrator of the Murzuq region in southern Libya.[744]

Thus, it can be concluded that *Tarablus Al-Gharb* emerged as a source of news on current affairs, and then shifted its focus towards informing the public about the cultural and political activities of the authorities in Tripolitania. Paying close attention to both literary and intellectual affairs, it promoted creative writing, both prose and poetry, and

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[740] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 11 March 1949.
[741] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 9 November 1950.
[742] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 26 January 1950.
[743] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 21 April 1950.
[744] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 30 April 1950.

disseminated different intellectual trends by republishing articles from other Arabic-language newspapers. Despite the political in-fighting over various issues, it never adopted an overtly critical stance towards any of the Libyan political parties. Nor did it espouse any particular political ideology that led it into direct conflict with any political group. It attempted to report in a balanced manner on the activities of all parties, and did not comment negatively on any other Libyan newspapers.

### 4.3.4 Nationalist Newspapers in Tripolitania

Nationalist newspapers published their articles and news in consultation with their editorial boards. The role of national newspapers in Tripoli was similar to that of their counterparts in Cyrenaica. The nationalist newspapers were published after obtaining permission from the BMA and played a major role in disseminating public interest stories. The Tripoli newspapers and their writers played a pivotal role in bridging the gap between Tripoli and Cyrenaica. The Tripoli-based newspapers played a significant role in raising the consciousness of Libyans and encouraging them to ignore the differences between the people of the regions of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania. This establishes the BMA's explicit policy concerning the press in Tripoli.

*Al-Akbar* [the News] was the first nationalist newspaper to be published in Tripolitania following the cessation of hostilities in the region. Muhammad Almaizzi launched this two-page weekly newspaper in June 1947.[745] *Al-Akbar* condemned the BMA on many occasions in articles such as the one entitled 'How long will this take?'. The newspaper also exposed unacceptable behaviour by the British Director of Education in Tripoli, who was accused of being abusive to teachers of Arabic and ignoring letters sent to him in Arabic, on the grounds that he knew no Arabic and needed them to be translated into English. *Al-Akbar* regarded his attitude as an expression of disdain for Arab culture. It published an article to this effect, entitled 'If you don't respect the rules of our country, then you can leave'.[746] In its sixth issue, the newspaper criticized Italians who showed contempt for Libyans,[747] *Al-Akbar* following a similar attitude to that adopted by *Al-Watan* in Benghazi.

The British authorities banned *Al-Akbar* after its sixth issue because it did not follow the

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[745] *Al-Akbar*, 7 June 1947.
[746] *Al-Akbar*, 9 September 1948.
[747] *Al-Akbar*, 6 June 1948

agreed terms of the Publication Law; however, it was back in circulation by August 1947, using less explicit forms of criticism. However, following publication of issue 19, it was banned once again for strongly criticising the BMA's policies. It later returned due to the fact that the newspaper's management sought help and in line with the BMA's policy of freedom of the press it was allowed to resume publishing the newspaper on 26 July 1948. It explained that its absence had been due to a lack of financial support since it was not subsidised by the BMA.[748]

In subsequent issues, the newspaper focused on the activities of various political groups in the province, in particular the movements of Idris Al-Sanusi and other key political figures, such as Bashir al-Sadawi and Omar Faek Shunaib.[749] This is because these Libyan politicians' movements, especially at the Arab level, were aimed at winning support for the Libyan case for independence through political and diplomatic means with a number of Arab countries. Therefore, the newspapers published the politicians' movements via their pages, to make Libyans aware about these and to get support from local people.

Analysis of articles in *Al-Akbar* suggests that this newspaper did not favour any political party or personality, focusing solely on establishing the cultural unity of those living in Libya to support the cause of national unity. The vast majority of the Libyan population were Muslim Arabs, bound together by the same culture and religion. Therefore, *Al-Akbar* argues that although the people of Libya may represent different tribes, they form part of the same culture. Egypt and the Arab League also influenced *Al-Akbar*'s thinking, as it issued a warning accusing Libya of betraying its Islamic origins if it failed to apply shariah law.

The close geographical and historical links between Egypt and Libya was the reason why the former was keen to sponsor an Islamic state. It can be argued that *Al-Akbar* was backed by either the Libyan Liberation Committee[750] or the Arab League. The newspaper shared a number of similarities with the goals and methods of the Libyan Liberation Committee and was launched in the same year that this organization was

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[748] *Al-Akbar*, 6 June 1948.

[749] Ibid.

[750] The Libyan Liberation Committee was established by Bashir al-Sadawi, its aims being to bring together different nationalist groups from different areas, such as Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. The Committee considered itself to be an intermediary among the parties. See: Civil Affairs Agency (Cairo) to Civil Affairs Branch (Tripoli), 12August 1948, London, The National Archives, TNA, WO 230/206.

formed. Further evidence can be found in its call for unity among the parties of Tripolitania. As with *Tarablus Al-Gharb, Al-Akbar* finally folded not for political reasons, but due to its financial problems. Elmaizzi stated that he had contacted all the political parties in the country in an effort to gain financial backing for the newspaper, but failed to receive any positive responses.[751]

Muhammad Kanaba launched *Al-Morsad* [the observer] on 20 November 1950 with the slogan, 'No more political parties'. An editorial explained the meaning of this slogan in the following manner:

> This newspaper belongs to *al-ummah* [the nation of Islam]. It is ours. We are confident that our generous people will give us their whole-hearted support to go ahead and carry out this project, which is our duty and the duty of every free Arab.

> The slogan 'No more political parties' is not just for general interest, but is the interest of the state. We are committed to being of general interest as our goal is to publish a weekly newspaper dealing with all aspects of social, economic, literary, academic and political life in this part of the world.

> Your newspaper—*Al-Morsad* —promises you that it will challenge any traitor who wants to degrade the dignity of the nation and break apart its sovereignty and independence.[752]

The newspaper represented a remarkable turning point in the history of the Libyan press, as no previous Libyan newspaper had ever expressed this rejection of political expression in such plain speech. However, in reality, like a number of the political parties in Tripolitania, *Al-Morsad* opposed the way in which the Constituent Assembly had been formed. The reason for this was to express its opposition to the existence of foreign companies in Libya, considering this to be a form of economic colonization.

The Tripoli-Egyptian Union Party launched *Liwa Al-Huriya* [banner of freedom] which was originally printed by the Magi printing press. Since the newspaper was hostile towards the BMA, serving as the mouthpiece of the Tripoli-Egyptian Union Party, the owner of the printing press refused to continue printing it, so it moved to another publisher known as the Barbiera brothers in Tripoli. The general ideology adopted by

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[751] *Al-Akbar*, 9 May 1950.
[752] *Al-Morsad*, 20 November 1950.

the newspaper can be judged from a nationalist manifesto which it printed, entitled 'What are your views?'. This spelled out its point of view and its opposition to the undemocratic way that the Libyan government had been formed. It stated the following:

> Fellow citizens, the illegitimate Constituent Assembly formed by the British and the French was made only to steal your dreams and destroy your hopes and the hopes of all Islamic and Arab countries, and of all those who struggle for full independence and true sovereignty, not a mere façade.[753]

This manifesto makes it clear that *Liwa Al-Huriya* opposed the federal government, which had been constituted by the Constituent Assembly, and also clearly connected Libya not only with the *ummah* but also more broadly with all oppressed nations. This aligned the newspaper with the Arab League's policy to place Libya under Egyptian or Arab tutelage. *Liwa Al-Huriya* openly criticized the BMA on several occasions, one of its major criticisms being in relation to it allowing those members of the Jewish community who were migrating to Palestine to take industrial equipment with them from Libya. The newspaper considered this to be robbery from Libya's already disabled industrial facilities.[754] This suggests that there was a conflict between the approach adopted by *Liwa Al-Huriya* and the BMA. When the BMA supported the decision of the Constituent Assembly, this was openly opposed by the newspaper.

In February 1951, Muhammad Zarim launched *Shualat Al-Huriya* [Beacon of Freedom] a nationalist newspaper that was to be published daily and to last for a year. It acted as the official mouthpiece of *Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi* in Tripolitania, representing its views and supporting the processes necessary to assist constitutional development in Libya.[755]

The newspaper was published only for a short period, since its articles were hostile to the government. In issue 22, published on 23 July 1951, it criticised the attitude of the police towards citizens, and the government viewed this as a clear expression of opposition. The Editor-in-Chief was pressed to refute the content of the article; however, he resigned instead, considering that this censure was an insult against him personally

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[753] Salam Aboksham file, Document 47, 1950, Tripoli, Centre for Historical Studies of the Libyan *Jihad*.
[754] *Liwa Al-Huriya*, 12 March 1951.
[755] S. Abdelali, *Libyan Political Groups: Historical Origins, Political Attitudes and Practice interoperability* (Benghazi, 1983), p.194.

and against the newspaper.[756] The most important characteristic of *Shualat Al-Huriya* was that it made passionate pleas for the unity of the country and was opposed to the creation of any form of a federal state in Libya.[757] According to Adrian Plet, representative of the UN in Libya, it was an opposition newspaper.[758]

In August 1951, *Al-Libye* [Libya] appeared, published by Ali Muhammad Addib in Tripoli. This weekly four-page newspaper focused on news concerning international conflicts between the East and the West, which it viewed as opposing blocs; it also took a keen interest in social issues. *Al-Libye* showed pride in the Libyan citizen, its name symbolising the hope of achieving the goal of national unity under the right leadership. Its banner head carried an image of a knight on his horse, referring to the Libyan resistance against Italian colonialism, and this attitude was also adopted in its articles. *Al-Libye* was originally edited by Addib Abdessalam Bash Imam and, most remarkably, it opposed the creation of political parties in Tripoli, claiming that some of these invented conspiracies, exploited the people and worked against the interests of a unified Libya. It considered political gatherings to be a place for plotting and intrigue[759] and argued that having multiple political parties was not in the national interests, as Libya had not yet secured its freedom. In addition, it claimed that some of the political parties were backed by Italian settlers who did not really support the cause of a united Libya. Furthermore, some of the political parties supported Egypt becoming custodian of Libya rather than Britain, an attitude which it judged to be against the spirit of nationalism.

The newspaper also attacked the separatist tendencies adopted by *Al-Istiqlal* and *Shualat Al-Huriya.* Both these newspapers supported independence for Cyrenaica first, followed by independence for the whole of Libya, acting against the aspirations of one united Libya. Some Libyans did support the idea disseminated by the newspapers through news and articles about a united Libya. In addition, both these newspapers openly published articles about the separatist movement which *Al-Libye* denounced:

> What is this friction and war of words, the archaic tribal trends that are devoid of sense, the childish behaviour and the intense competition to break apart the unity of this young country and depict the independence of the country in a negative

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[756] *Shualat Al-Huriya,* 10 September 1951.
[757] *Shualat Al-Huriya,* 11 February 1951.
[758] Plet, *Libyan Independence and the United Nations*, p.416.
[759] *Al-Libye*, 11 October 1951.

light?[760]

*Al-Libye*'s contents include coverage of political, social, economic, and literary issues. According to Louba, this newspaper played an important role during the BMA era and the period of independence, due to the topics that it covered as theses raised citizens' consciousness concerning the need for unity and joint efforts to advance Libyan nation building.[761]

The rise of newspapers numbers in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica suggests that the BMA authorised those who had experience and skills to publish newspapers. Using their respective publications, the Libyan nationalists hammered home their point to the general population about the cause of a united Libya. At the same time, the newspapers brought the different communities closer to each other, in a common struggle for the unity of Libyans. Many of those who had suffered in exile for many years were journalists. They even wrote in violation of the code of conduct established in consultation with the BMA, however, they were determined to urge Libyans to unite behind the cause of independence.

The press was the sole means of publishing intellectual property at that time in Libya. There were not enough means to publish books and that period of time coincided with the emergence of a group of critics and authors. These individuals were able to read Arabic literature and were aware of the different cultural trends as a result of their studies in Egypt or Syria, through their personal reading of books, either from modern or ancient literature, or through literary societies. Newspapers offered them a means to publish their literary efforts in poetry or prose inspired by what they read elsewhere.

Journalism saw an evolution in its development at the level of content, with authors tackling new subject matter on political, social and literary matters. Political articles examined the consequences of the Italian withdrawal and also the nature of the relationship between Libya and Britain. Writers considered the promises made to Libya and what Italy's intentions were towards its former colony, and informed readers about what was being said in diplomatic circles and at the international negotiations concerning Libya's future. These articles also followed constitutional developments from the formation of constitutional council under the aegis of the United Nations until

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[760] *Al-Libye*, 18 October 1951.
[761] Louba, *The Libyan Press*, p.129.

the constitution was drafted, with writers clearly indicating their personal support or opposition to these developments based on their own political background.

Saleh Boussir, for example, supported the efforts made by Idris Al-Sanusi[762] in bringing the Libyan cause to the attention of the Arab League Council:

> The Libyan cause entered a new era when [Al-Sanusi] presented a memorandum to the Arab governments, explaining the requests of the Libyan people and the developments of internal tensions, and asking Arab governments to convene a forum to discuss the cause of Libya.[763]

The writers of these political articles were clearly aware of all the latest developments in Libyan political thinking and they were circulated widely as a result of the efforts made by the national movements that had emerged in the country.

While newspapers in Libya during the period 1943-1951 covered many social concerns, many articles focused on education in both government and non-government newspapers. These reflected the important role that education was seen as playing as the foundation of nation-building , as the examples discussed here show.

*Tarablus Al-Gharb* highlighted the importance of education in nation building in many articles, urging Libyans to send their children to school, especially their daughters, and asking the BMA to send eligible students to attend university in Egypt or elsewhere.[764] *Al-Fajr Al-Libye* also constantly urged the British administration to send more Libyan students to pursue higher education abroad. [765] Writers of articles argued for the establishment of schools in every city and encouraged the population to improve their levels of literacy as the only way to develop the nation. They maintained that this was a more immediate concern than rebuilding the economy, since Western education and learning would fuel Libya's advancement and renaissance. [766] *Al-Libye* encouraged every home to make learning become an activity that was much a part of everyday life as eating and drinking.[767] *Benghazi,* the government newspaper, devoted a full page to

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[762] He independently supported the efforts for Libyan independence.
[763] *Al-Watan,* 8 November 1949.
[764] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 7 November 1944; T. Blackley, 'Annual report of Tripolitania, for the period 1st January to 31st December 1947', TNA, FO 1015/143/, p.9.
[765] *Al-Fajr Al-Libye,* 1 April 1948, p.1.
[766] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 5 March 1944.
[767] *Al-Libye*, 13 October 1945.

educational activities and to highlighting the benefits of knowledge for a nation that possessed little more than its own flag.[768]

## 4.4 Conclusion

The BMA respected the guidelines provided by the Colonial Office in London which allowed for the publication of newspapers, particularly for the purposes of developing communities. The BMA's approach with regard to the press was similar to the approach they adopted towards education in Libya and reveals that the British acknowledged their commitments towards the Libyans and that this would probably take them ultimately to their desired destination of independence.

Those Libyans who had previously contributed articles to the press in neighbouring countries raised the levels of consciousness in their fellow citizens at home and persuaded many exiles from Egypt, Tunisia and Sudan to return to Libya, as well as ensuring that printing machinery was brought in from neighbouring countries to strengthen the press.

The evocative names of the newspapers that were founded during that period such as *Al-Watan* [The homeland], *Al-Istiqlal* [Independence], *Al-Taj* [The Crown], *Liwa Al-Huriya* [Banner of freedom], *Al-Sarih* [the truth], *Al-Libye* and *Shualat Al-Huriya* [Beacon of Freedom] capture the popular sentiments of the time in relation to Libya's future.

Nationalist newspapers such as *Al-Watan* and *Al-Akbar* started to highlight the importance of self-determination for Libya rather than promoting BMA policies. The nationalists were afraid that they would lose their chance of independence and that future generations would never forgive them. Such fears seem reasonable given the trauma that Italian rule still represented for many Libyans, denied opportunities to exercise their talents in so many fields. The BMA was determined to win the general support of the Libyan masses and also to train a Libyan elite to tackle the future challenges and threats that a newly established country would be likely to encounter. Thus when the BMA adopted a dual educational program, the daily papers became a popular mouthpiece speaking for the public interest, making it clear that this divisive policy would be rejected by the Libyans who demanded a single system of education.

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[768] *Benghazi,* 21 January 1945.

Likewise, they petitioned the BMA to open more schools and ensure talented students were sent elsewhere for higher education.

The main reason why the nationalist newspapers in Libya criticized the British administration was because they wanted accelerated reforms in the country prior to independence. It is clear that the press criticized the British administration in the immediate post-war period because they began to fear that the Italian regime had simply been replaced by a British administration. *Al-Watan* and *Al-Akbar* were heavily influenced by the tide of Arab nationalism, reflected in events in Egypt, and the creation of the Arab League. [769] These newspapers called repeatedly for the British administration to help Libyans to obtain their independence and when this was not forthcoming were quick to criticize.

These newspapers provide a good example of the range of roles which the Libyan press played during the BMA years. Although its emphasis shifted over the course of its existence, it kept its readership informed about current affairs and events at the international, regional and local level, in particular the cultural and political activities of the provincial authorities. The press also played a crucial role in fostering increasingly strong nationalist sentiments and consciousness among the Libyans, in developing and consolidating the growing nationalist movement. It helped to mobilize public opinion about national demands for independence and the rule of the country by the Libyans themselves. Its success can be measured by the fact that when the United Nations mission visited Libya, the masses demanded their right to national unity and independence by organising demonstrations across the country to express their demands. It also offered a forum of debate for intellectuals and political commentators and their deliberations and multiple perspectives on constitutional matters.

The press also demonstrated a keen interest in both literary and intellectual affairs, promoting new writing talent, creating national and provincial literature and cultures. It also disseminated new ideas from other Arab countries and helped to forge bonds of fraternity with other peoples in the outside world.

Chapter Four discusses the social and cultural associations and institutions which flourished in Libya under the BMA, focusing on the various roles which they played and the extent to which the policies and attitudes of the British authorities fostered or

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[769] This was also the case for cultural and political organizations, as will be seen in the following chapters.

impeded their growth and sphere of cultural influence.

# 5. CHAPTER FIVE: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ASSOCIATIONS IN LIBYA UNDER THE B M A

## 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined the developments in the press in Libya in terms of quantity and quality in the short period under the BMA. It also explored how the press affected mass political opinion and mobilised public opinion about national demands for independence and the rule of the country by the Libyans themselves. This chapter focuses on the importance of social and cultural associations and other common interest groups[770] during the same period. It explores the role they played in the formation of various types of public non-state activities.[771] It can be argued that the formation of these associations and organisations in Libya was particularly important in terms of the role which they played in helping to create a nation from what had previously been disparate communities focused narrowly on tribal, sectarian or ethnic interests. According to Hann, this type of organisation can only exist when individuals and groups are free to form organisations that function independently of the state.[772]

The main emphasis in this chapter is on the experiences and approaches adopted by the BMA that were intended to bring a degree of stability to Libyan society and that enabled voluntary organisations, associations and clubs to experience a previously unknown rate of popularity and to play an important role in the development of democracy.[773] This analysis of the role of these associations, which were founded with non-political aims, including cultural associations, literary societies and sports clubs, will also explore the extent to which the experiences of the British administration gained elsewhere in the British Empire formed the basis of introducing democracy in the occupied territory. The chapter also explores the BMA's policies towards these non-political organisations and the extent to which these hindered or encouraged their growth within Libya and the degree to which these associations were actually free to act

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[770] The term 'common interest group' is increasingly used to describe associations which bring individuals together on one platform to accomplish a purpose be it political, economic, social or cultural. See V. Perez-Diaz, 'The Possibility of Civil Society', in H. A. Hall (ed.) *Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison.* (Cambridge, 1995), p.81.

[771] This has been argued by N. Kasfir, C*ivil Society and Democracy in Africa*, p.4.

[772] C. Hann, 'Political Society and Civil Anthology', in C. Hann and E. Dunn (eds), *Civil Society Challenging Western Models* (London, 1996), p.1.

[773] C. Tilly, *Democracy* (Cambridge, 2007), p.85.

is also discussed in detail.

The chapter explores the role which different associations played in community development. The growth in interest in voluntary associations, including the aims and activities of several the most influential Libyan organisations which came to the fore during 1943-1951. It will also consider libraries and the role which they played in promoting social and cultural activities.

## 5.2 Factors Affecting the Growth of Voluntary Associations 1943-1951

Following the social, cultural and political repression experienced under the Italian regime there was renewed interest in social and cultural activities under the BMA.[774] The British administration in Libya created an environment in which Libyans could practise the formation of associations and clubs, encouraging them to participate in community development. This shift followed the instructions of the Colonial Office in London and general British mandate policy. Numerous social and cultural associations, organisations and clubs were established in Libya during British rule, and this resulted in more Libyans being educated, establishing a more open cultural climate and developments on a number of social and cultural fronts. The BMA encouraged diverse types of associations and organisations so that increasing numbers of Libyans became involved in a wide range of activities focusing on culture, education and other fields.[775] This approach broadly satisfied the British values of creating voluntary organisations in territories under their administration and indirectly supporting these entities.[776] In general, these voluntary associations attracted local youth and community leaders to engage in social, cultural, and literary activities.

The British strategy of encouraging the creation of associations formed part of the liberal approach which allows people to enter into free association and generates an obligation to respect others. Locke's argument about liberalism has been well recognised, and it highlights the importance of such associations within a society, as this helps to build resistance to tyranny.[777] The Libyans were made aware about associations in keeping with this liberal approach. Furthermore, the BMA offered moral support to

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[774] Interview, Alakecat, 25 September 2015.
[775] Interview, Alakecat, 25 September 2015.
[776] Bradley, *Liberal Britain*, p.136.
[777] D. J. Manning, *Liberalism* (London, 1976), p.14.

these associations which were intended to bring Libyans together so that they participated and interacted among themselves.

A series of factors played a role in encouraging the Libyans to establish social and cultural organisations and engage in different types of cultural activities, since these were viewed by many as a reaffirmation of Libyan identity and by some as a precursor to the formation of political organisations and, ultimately, a tentative step towards independence. Firstly, the victory of the Allies in January 1943 was seen in Libya as the beginning of a new era of independence even though the country remained occupied territory under the BMA. Following the end of the conflict, many Libyans called for the need to establish cultural associations and sporting clubs which would allow them the chance to once more engage in a range of social activities that marked the end of hostilities and the BMA agreed. Consequently, Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar (the Omar Al-Mukhtar Association) was set up in Benghazi in 1943 and the Literary Circle in Tripoli re-established in July of the same year. This decision shows the difference in the approach adopted by BMA and that of their immediate predecessors. This development also encouraged the émigré community of Libyans in Egypt and elsewhere to return to their homeland from exile and take part in establishing these new activities.[778]

At the same time, in the broader regional context, there were increasing demands by various Middle Eastern peoples for independence post-1943. The Syrians and Lebanese were given independence and the British rule in Transjordan also came to an end.[779] This was mainly as result of anti-British liberation movements that had emerged in Egypt and Sudan. The Egyptians called for an end to the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, which had given rise to the British Military presence in Egypt. In addition, the Sudanese demanded the abrogation of the 1899 Anglo-Egyptian condominium, under which the British authorities effectively controlled Sudan. These calls for independence encouraged the Libyans, particularly those émigrés who had witnessed the changes in

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[778] De Candole reported that in 1943 about 20,000 Libyans were returned to Libya. De Candole, *The Life and times of King Idris of Libya* (London, 1988), p.67.

[779] The French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon was a result of the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916), signed between Britain and France during the First World War. Two years after the war the British gained control of most of Ottoman Mesopotamia (Iraq) and the southern part of Ottoman Syria (Palestine and Jordan), while the French controlled the rest of Ottoman Syria (modern Syria, Lebanon, Alexandretta and other portions of southeastern Turkey). The French mandate of Syria lasted until 1943, when two independent countries emerged from the mandate period, Syria and Lebanon, in addition to Hatay which had joined Turkey in 1939. French troops left Syria and Lebanon finally in 1946. See: T. Moussa, نضال الليبيين في بلاد الشام 1925-1950 [*The Libyan Political Struggle in the Levant 1925-1950*] (Tripoli, 1983), p.84.

neighbouring countries to consider creating their own social and political organisation as a first step towards demanding independence.[780]

In addition, the British Prime Minister declared on 18 January 1945 that the governments of free countries or those that had been previously occupied by Axis powers would only be accepted if they were voted into power by their own people. This further encouraged the Libyans to voice their claims for independence,[781] particularly following the Potsdam Conference (17 July-2 August 1945)[782] that raised fears amongst Libyan nationalists about the future role which Italy might play in the country. Thus, requests were sent to the British authorities asking for permission to be granted for the establishment of political parties in Libya but this petition was rejected by then British Military Administrator, Brigadier T. R. Blackley, on the grounds that the war against Japan was still ongoing and that the local political situation could only be addressed once the future of the country had been decided. Hence some Libyans decided to start establishing political parties without waiting for prior permission, forming secret cells until the authorities finally granted them the right to participate openly in political activities.[783]

Like many other colonised countries, Libya was also interested in the resolutions that had been issued by the Dumbarton Oaks Conference in October 1944, which had called for the establishment of a post-war international organisation which would succeed the League of Nations. Government representatives from China, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States met to formulate the foundations and principles upon which this new international body (the United Nations) would be based. It was intended to preserve international peace and security worldwide, develop friendly relationships between nations, achieve international cooperation and resolve international disputes using peaceful means. [784] The Libyans hoped that such an organisation would also address issues of sovereignty and, potentially, their future demands for independence which would be likely to spark a furious debate due to the

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[780] Almagrabe, *Documents of the Omar Al-Mukhtar Association*, 1st edn (Cairo, 1993), p.128.

[781] M. Almatardy, *Libya: Fifty Years of Jihad*, p.23.

[782] The meeting at Potsdam was the third conference involving Stalin, Churchill, and Truman. Clement Attlee also participated pending the outcome of the 1945 general election, and then replaced Churchill as Prime Minister following the Labour Party's defeat of the Conservatives.

[783] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, pp.81-82.

[784] R. C. Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks: The Origins of the United Nations and the Search for Post War Security* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1990).

local, regional, and international implications of such a development.

All these events served to heighten nationalist sentiments among Libyans. This was reflected in the massive growth of interest in creating both political organisations as well as cultural associations of many different types right across the social spectrum. This served the need to re-assert a cultural identity suppressed for many decades. The establishment of these groups was to have a major influence on cultural development in Libyan society under British rule.

An insight into the British government's attitude towards the growth of such organisations in Libya is provided by a report written by Dr A. E. Morgan of the British Council following his visit to Cyrenaica in April 1950. Morgan argued that political and social growth in any society cannot be sustained unless it is managed and disciplined through education, which provides the energy needed to encourage growth. It binds the individuals who together form a community or a society to remain within the boundaries of prescribed rules and laws.[785]

He commented on the growing influence of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar and called for measures to be quickly implemented to develop Libya and reduce social and political instability there. He also expressed concerns about "signs of interest in social issues, tinged with discontent", amongst young male thinkers, and stressed that the growth of such associations should not be ignored. If given the right material, he advised, "they could become a positive asset to the country as a means of channelling the intellectual and moral energies of the keener young men".[786]

Morgan argued that these organisational and associational leaders would presumably emerge as the future leaders of an independent Libya but lacked discipline since they were mostly not well-educated. The discipline required of successful leaders when communicating with one another and representing their national interests, Morgan argued, can only be achieved through education and training. Therefore, and his report strongly advocated the need for adult education in Libya, recommending that British approaches in this field might help the leaders of these groups.[787]

It is evident that the British administration was interested in developing organisations

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[785] Ibid.
[786] A. E. Morgan, 'Report on a visit to Cyrenaica', 7-13 April 1950, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 1015/481.
[787] Ibid.

like the Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar, which offered cultural and intellectual activities and encouraged volunteering, seeing these as a means of assisting the development of Libyan society, both culturally and politically.

# 5.3 Emergence of Social and Cultural Associations in Cyrenaica

There is some debate about the exact date that the Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar[788] was established, with dates ranging from 1940 to 1942, but all agree it was originally founded in Egypt by the Libyan émigrés. Libyan soldiers who had fought in the British army in Egypt also sympathised with this organisation. However, it is important to recognise that Libyan students who were studying in Egypt played a pivotal role within the association, initially in educational activities and later in Libyan politics.

In 1943, after finishing their studies in Egypt, three young Libyans named Ali Fallag, Mahmoud Mahlouf and Muhammad Al-Mutardi returned to Cyrenaica. [789] They established a voluntary association in Benghazi[790] which would be involved in activities related to culture, sports and other areas.[791] Sheikh Khalil Al-Koafe,[792] the *qadi* [judge] in Benghazi at that time, was elected president by the other members.[793] The elected committee agreed to name the organisation Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar for Sports and Cultural Activities. Its aims were:

> (1) To raise levels of national consciousness among Libyans;(2) To carry out sporting and cultural activities that would enliven the lives of Libyan troops, who were working side-by-side with the British army in World War Two; (3) To support refugees and war victims to gain official

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[788] The Libyans remained committed to the cause of Omar al-Mukhtar, a national resistance hero executed by the Italians in 1930. The choice of his name made it clear that this association did not intend to focus only on cultural activities, but it was also interested in political affairs and ultimately, independence.
[789] Said, *Cultural Life in Libya,* p.155.
[790] The constitution of the Association was approved in January 1942 in Cairo, where it began its work which involved helping Libyan families who had migrated to Egypt during Italian rule in Libya. In addition, the Association was involved in many recreational activities, mainly of a sporting nature.
[791] Said, *Cultural Life in Libya,* p.165.
[792] *Sheikh* Khalil Al-Koafe [1900-1961] was born in Benghazi. After starting his studies in Zawia, he moved to Egypt where he graduated from Al-Azhar. He returned to Libya in 1928 and was appointed as judge in Benghazi in 1956. See: T. Al-Zawi, اعلام من ليبيا [Leaders from Libya] 3rd edn (Beirut, 2004), p.152.
[793] Saad Al-Jihani was appointed General Secretary. Members included *Sheikh* Abdul Hamid Al-Dabani, Hussein Koyri, Khalil Al-Falal, Muhammad Al-Khia, Abdul Jalil Al-Ginizi, Mukhtar Usman, Hussain Berskiri, Salem Bin Ameer, Yousef Lanfi, and Zenato Tchoba.

recognition of their status.[794]

The founding members themselves did not appear to have participated in the Association's activities since most of the work was carried out by young volunteers, supervised by the three committees. This suggests that their election to executive posts was merely a cover for the real purpose of the Association. Al-Sanusi accepted a role as Honorary President, but was not in favour of political activities as he makes clear in a letter which he sent to the Association's Executive Committee:

> I would wish to see branches of this association established throughout our country, but on condition that its activities are limited to fulfilling the previously stated aims including cultural activities, sport, co-operation, economics, financial assistance, sharing of knowledge, moral guidance, improving the lot of common people, lectures, and steering clear of any political activities.[795]

Al-Sanusi was well aware that if political activities were adopted by Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar, this would not be keeping with his own philosophy and might impact on the political stance that he planned to adopt during his exile in Egypt. He considered the Arab countries, including Egypt, to be weak and unable to protect themselves from the threats posed by Western colonisation and he was seeking a strong ally. This was an issue that influenced his relationship with the Association as its founders had strong hopes for the Arab League, which at that time was still in its infancy.[796] Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar was registered as a cultural and sporting club in 1943 under the provisions made by the BMA, its specific objectives being:

- Spreading cultural knowledge through educational classes, carrying out literacy campaigns, and publishing newspapers and magazines.[797]

- Offering sports activities through establishing clubs, sports facilities, and competitions to support Libyan youth fellowship through competitions and sporting activities.[798]

Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar was warned by the BMA about its political activities in 1944

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[794] Al-Zawi, *Leaders from Libya*, p.155.
[795] Shukri, *The Birth of Modern Libya*, p.395.
[796] Said, *Cultural Life in Libya,* p.170.
[797] Putnam observed that organisations of this type often produced their own publications and ran their own facilities. See: Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p.141
[798] Almagrabe, *Documents of the Omar Al-Mukhtar Association*, pp.357-360.

because it began criticising the BMA as a form of colonialism. Furthermore, there was widespread discontent within Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar in 1945 due to the BMA's attitude to introducing reforms as evidence of its support for political action.[799] The resignation of Mustapha Bin Ameer from his post as the BMA's Inspector of Education to become President of the Association in 1946 only served to aggravate the situation.[800] Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar filed a memorandum, dated 22 December 1946, to the Committee of Inquiry tasked by the British Ministry of War with accessing Cyrenaica's state of preparedness for independence.[801] This memorandum, published in the newspaper *Barqa Al-Riyadiyya* [Cyrenaica Sports], criticised the BMA's record of neglect with respect to economic and social conditions in Cyrenaica and made clear Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar's lack of faith in the British regime. Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar concluded by demanding that the BMA address these problems.[802] The members of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar wanted the reforms which had been promised and agreed to be quickly implemented and felt they could not remain silent when in their opinion the BMA had failed to keep its word.

*Barqa Al-Riyadiyya* was originally published in Benghazi by Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar but then changed its name to *Al-Watan* marking the Association's transformation into an openly political organisation, against Al-Sanusi's express wishes. The publication of *Al-Watan* was to be taken over by Mustafa bin Ameer, with Mohammed Alsabry as Editor-in-Chief. In the issue of *Al-Watan* published on 7 January 1947 the Association publicly declared itself to be a political organisation. Following the failure of the unity talks between Tripoli and Cyrenaica in January 1947, the Central Committee issued a statement on 24 January 1947 blaming this on the Cyrenaican delegation, openly accusing it of jeopardising the possibility of a Libyan nation.[803] When Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya (the Cyrenaica National Front), published its manifesto calling for an independent Cyrenaica led by al-Sanusi, the Association declared that this ignored both what the Tripolitanian parties and the Arab people as a whole (*ummah*) had endorsed (specifically mentioning the Arab League), rejecting the manifesto as an

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[799] Almagrabe, *Documents of the Omar Al-Mukhtar Association*, p.105.
[800] De Candole, On the National Assembly of Cyrenaica, p.6.
[801] Said, *Cultural Life in Libya,* p.172.
[802] *Barqa Al-Jadida*, 14 October 1946.
[803] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p.72.

absurd anomaly.[804]

Al-Sanusi sent a memorandum to the Arab League, explaining the principles of Libyan unity and his confidence in the Arab League[805] while the Central Committee of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar continued its efforts to further the cause of a united independent Libya. [806] However, on 21 November 1947, Al-Sanusi ordered the dissolution of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar due to its political activities.[807] The Central Committee of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar duly received a letter signed by Al-Sanusi on 12 December 1947, declaring its dissolution in order to comply with the aforementioned order. The members of the society disagreed with this decision and declared their intention to continue with their social, cultural and sporting activities, to which the BMA agreed on 14 June 1948. Activities including football and boxing were to continue as were some other cultural clubs and night school teaching.[808]

In 1949, members of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar travelled to participate in the wave of demonstrations which swept across Tripolitania in protest at the Bevin-Sforza Plan.[809] When this was rejected, the Association organised a conference of young people at their Cyrenaica headquarters, inviting delegates from Tripolitania to attend. The conference decided to inform the Permanent Secretary of the British Foreign Office on behalf of al-Sanusi that Libya would refuse to abide by any decision made by the United Nations that ran counter to its wishes for independence. At the same time, the conference welcomed the support of any country backing this decision, and was prepared to form an alliance with any of their forces to defend this position.[810]

Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar also opposed the independence of Cyrenaica by mounting a noisy demonstration at which Mustafa bin Ameer declared:

> Here is Cyrenaica which falls under the tutelage of Britain as actually
> stated in the Plan because our acceptance of the independence of
> Cyrenaica means acquiescing to British tutelage under the banner of

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[804] *Al-Watan*, 28 January 1947
[805] *Al-Watan*, 11 February 1947
[806] *Al-Watan*, 22 May 1947
[807] Almatardy, *Libya: Fifty Years of Jihad*, p.53.
[808] These associations supported their members in various social activities and also helped the members' families as a part of community development. See: Putnam, *Making Democracy Work,* p.139.
[809] Almacergi, *Memories of Fifty Years*, p.314.
[810] Interview, Al-Salme, 29 June 2011.

independence; so Tripoli and its sister Fezzan have been left to their inevitable fate; and Libyan unity has been broken by Libyan hands.[811]

Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar saw Cyrenaica's independence as an empty gesture, which effectively played along with the Bevin-Sforza Plan. The Association made its position on Libyan unity clear, but was ready to support Al-Sanusi's idea to become leader of a unified Libya because Cyrenaicans saw him as their leader and thought it was a political necessity. Most Cyrenaican people wanted to avoid the division of the country and this approach eventually brought about independence but only on condition that every political group accepted Al-Sanusi as leader of the whole of Libya.

When the details of devolution were published, the Central Committee of the Association held several meetings to review its position, then wrote a memorandum protesting that this limited the powers of the Cyrenaican government and gave more power to the British, sending copies to the BMA representative, Al-Sanusi and the Council of Ministers of Cyrenaica and Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya.[812]

The BMA administrator responded that the memorandum would be forwarded to the British Cabinet. The response of the Prime Minister of Britain included a promise to reduce the powers of the British after a discussion at the Council of Ministers. In also added that many of the articles of the Constitution would be amended. Moreover, the powers given to the British representative were temporary and would end after the future of Libya had been decided by a declaration of independence.[813] The fact that the Central Committee of the Association received a response signified implicit recognition by the authorities, whether national or British, of the Association's political status, even though Al-Sanusi had repeatedly cautioned it against entering into politics.[814] Both the Cyrenaican government and the BMA were well aware of the status this Association enjoyed, especially in urban areas.[815]

Item 21 of the Associations Law, which was enacted in January 1950, stated that no

[811] Almagrabe, *Documents of the Omar Al-Mukhtar Association*, p.115 .
[812] *Al-Watan*, 1 October 1949.
[813] *Al-Watan*, 18 October 1949.
[814] *Al-Watan*, 3 August 1948.
[815] Almagrabe, D*ocuments of the Omar Al-Mukhtar Association*, p.118.

organisation could adopt the name of any person, living or deceased.[816] Therefore Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar was formally disbanded and divided up into several different sections. In accordance with this Law, the Association was renamed as Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya and concentrated on political activities. The National Sports Association and the National Cultural Association were set up as separate bodies whilst a new organisation which catered for cultural and sporting activities was established called Al-Nadi Alhli [National Club] with Mohammed Bashir Almagrabe as its president.[817]

Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar started its activities in Benghazi by making arrangements to increase its scope by organizing a broader range of activities. A committee was tasked with setting up a club for young men, Nadi al-ummal [Working Men's Association],[818] to provide lectures. All activities were to be carried out by volunteers, whether cultural activities or participation in forums to discuss politics and the importance of creating associations.[819]

With regards to education, the Association took the initiative to improve levels of literacy, feeling this should be their responsibility towards their fellow Libyans and something for which they should not have to be dependent on the BMA. Though the Association had limited scope to develop educational programmes, their long-term aim was to raise educational levels among citizens so that eventually there would be enough skilled local workers to replace foreigners.[820]

Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar commenced its activities by offering classes run by volunteer teachers to students in the summer 1943, and from the original cohort of 25, seven were successful in obtaining certificates to work as clerks and secretaries in administration.[821] These voluntary classes were intended to improve the levels of students who already had elementary education, hoping to create local administrative staff.[822] Another initiative targeting illiteracy led to the opening of the Working Men's

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[816] Mr. D. T. W. Forsyth, Memorandum re National Association (formerly Omar Al-Mukhtar Association), Benghazi, 1951, London, The National Archives, TNA FO1015/813.
[817] Associations Law, 10 January 1950, Classified, Documents and Archives Division, National Library, Benghazi.
[818] Khalifa Bosskiri was General Secretary of the Working Men's Association with Muhammad Murtaza as Secretary. Almagrabe, *Documents of Omar Al-Mukhtar Association*, p.178.
[819] Almagrabe, *Documents of Omar Al-Mukhtar Association*, p.178.
[820] Ahajery, *Literary Life in Libya*, p 131.
[821] These volunteers are identified as: Mustafa Bin Ameer, Alsharif Almagni, Abdul Gowad Afritis, Rajab Othoman, Balah, and Ramadan Gargoum. see: Almagrabe, *Documents of the Omar Mukhtar Association*, p.321
[822] *Omar Al-Mukhtar*, August 1943, p.9.

Institute in 1944, duly approved by the BMA which was in line with the British model of education designed to reduce illiteracy among workers. Two other schools that tried to improve illiteracy also became well-known. Two Benghazi merchants, the brothers Mohammed Alaalem and Saeed Hayo, concerned about the plight of young street cleaners who had never attended school, asked Sheikh Abdul Salam Al-Fatouri if he would accept these young men as students in his small mosque. In addition, Ali Al-Laglag, Director of the Municipality at that time, also introduced two new classes in the Municipality's School. Mustafa Ameer and Ali Algerbi taught classes for the Working Men's Association and supplied books and stationery whilst the philanthropic merchants met all other costs. When student numbers rose to 85, further classes were added.[823]

Labourers joining the Institute were encouraged to attend class daily after working hours, to develop good study habits, and were taught as mature students. This allowed them to complete the usual syllabus in only three months, following which certificates were awarded to those who had passed at a ceremony. Successful candidates were also given a week's leave on condition they re-joined the study group, which all of them did, setting a good example to their fellow students. Student numbers rose to 200 for the second session, financial contributions to the Institute increased, and volunteer teacher numbers also grew.[824]

One of the distinguishing features of the Working Men's Institute is that it had both high level and popular support. Its supervisor occupied a high administrative post in the government, meaning that this Institute and others like it aimed at mature students were integrated into the mainstream system.[825] The fact that they followed the same school curriculum allowed studies to be accredited, thus increasing students' chances of gaining civil service posts, especially after completing secondary-level studies. There is evidence that students from the Working Men's Institute improved their educational standards, in some cases sufficiently to go on to higher education.[826]

Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar also ran a weekly programme of lectures on various topics,

[823] Jhaidar, *Khalifa Muhammad Al Tales*, p.150.
[824] Ali Ahmed Abusina, TalibSherif, Muhammad Ibrahim Falah, Muhammad Al-Zogbia, Muhammad Farag Al-Tunisi, Muhammad Alsanusi Murataza, Abubakar Al-Faki, Muhammad Hami, and Bin Arouz Mohalhal, and Muhammad Mubarik Al-Sherif.
[825] Interview, Alturke, 5 January 2011.
[826] Ibid.

usually culturally related, with many scholars, men of letters and students participating. The inaugural lecture was given by the Association's Treasurer, Khalil Algalal, on the topic of 'Sport and its benefits'.[827] The list of topics delivered in the lectures gives a good indication of popular interests during the period, and suggests that Libyan intellectuals followed contemporary debates, particularly with regard to religious issues.

Following a strategy agreed in consultation with the British government in London, the BMA gave priority to education and reassured the people of the occupied territory that they were developing schools as well as a curriculum suitable for the Libyans. The administration gave workers the opportunity to learn and encouraged them by offering them night school tutorials by the organisations that were responsible for such schools. The ultimate goal of the BMA was community development and to increase Libyans' awareness about democratisation, which would not have been possible without education. The fact that the BMA adopted a community development approach is validated by Mukhtar Alasoud.[828]

These educational programmes provided opportunities for the illiterate, the working class and young people in Cyrenaica and Tripoli who took advantage and increased their knowledge about community development. They also helped to restore their pride in Libyan culture and traditions. The intellectuals availed themselves of the chance to contribute towards community development through this collective approach. These activities succeeded in bringing individuals together to create communities of interest.

The sporting activities were also a mandate of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar. Mahadi Al-Matrady became President of the Sports Association established in 1943 with responsibility for the Football Association and Athletics Referees Association.[829] As noted in the previous chapter, the sports section of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar also published its own sports-orientated newspaper, *Barqa Al-Riyadiyya*, from 1943 to 1947.[830]

In 1945 the Association built a stadium in Al-Barqa district, financed with an interest-free loan from one of the Association's members, which was eventually re-paid in full. This greatly increased sporting activities, providing sporting enthusiasts with practice

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[827] Ibid.
[828] Interview, Alasoud, 15 July 2011.
[829] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p.64.
[830] F. Fakhry, *National Football Competitions* (Benghazi, 1991), p.16.

facilities.[831] The end-of-season report by the Football Association for 1947-48 suggests a full programme:

> (1) Away match at Darnah to build fellowship amongst Libyan youth; (2) Competition for the Omar Al-Mukhtar Memorial Cup between Libyan teams and five German teams; (3) Friendly matches with German Team and the Egyptian team; (4) Eight matches against the British Army Team.[832]

Football was seen as a healthy activity and also allowed young men to meet other groups from the locality, elsewhere in Libya or from abroad, providing valuable opportunities to share experiences and ideas. Given the BMA's enthusiasm for sport and the participation of British Army teams, sporting activities were no doubt viewed as a positive development.[833]

Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar was instrumental in giving rise to or shaping the landscape of political associations in Libya during the BMA era. This section explores these organisations and provides an insight into how they developed in the province of Cyrenaica as a result of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar's influence in the BMA era.

One such organisation was the Al-Kishaf Association (The Libyan Boy Scouts' Association), which was established by Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar's Central Committee under the umbrella of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar in October 1947.[834] On 18 March 1948, some teachers within Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar established a section dealing with cultural activities under the supervision of a Scouts' Cultural Committee, electing Mahmoud Al-Shibani as secretary. Cultural activities had already been taking place, and included a weekly programme of talks on the scouting movement, its responsibilities and form of organisation, together with an English language course.[835] The Cultural Committee was particularly active in promoting the growth of this programme, specifically promoting the involvement of school students.[836] The first talk under the new arrangement was given by committee member, Muhammad Hami, on the subject of 'Scouting as a means to improve your cultural knowledge'. He also announced that the

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[831] Fakhry, *National Football Competitions*, p.18
[832] *Al-Watan,* 22 June 1947.
[833] Ibid.
[834] Founding members included Bashir Al-Magrihi, Ali Bougegise, Salem Maklouf, Mahmoud Sharif, Alsalaman Roarda, Muhammad Hamza, and Khalifa Beskiri.
[835] *Al-Watan,* 16 October 1947.
[836] Belhadj, *Education in the city of Tripoli in Ottoman era*, p.150.

next talk, to be delivered by the Secretary of the Cultural Committee, would be entitled 'Self-discipline in the scouting life'.[837]

The establishment of a number of scout troops facilitated various sporting activities and competitions. The Association also exploited the existence of scout troops to help prepare acts of resistance against British policies and later against the Cyrenaica government. A German scout leader claimed that he accompanied several scout troops to Ajdabiya where they started unarmed military training. He said that Bashir Al-Magrihi had also delivered a talk encouraging townsfolk to prepare themselves for overthrowing the British and fighting for Libyan unity. He estimated the number of scouts on the trip to be 150, 80 of whom were 14-year-olds.[838]

There is documentary evidence that suggests that the British authorities were suspicious about such 'scouting' trips and forms of training, which they believed to be a cover for military exercises, employed as a screen to hide an anti-British movement and Sanusiyyah influence. The Prime Minister of Cyrenaica, Omar Basha Al-Khalid, ordered the prohibition of scouting troops, although they re-surfaced unofficially in 1951.[839] Al-Sanusi justified the disbanding of the Scouts' Association as a preparatory step to legalising this organisation, while the Central Committee of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar took this to be evidence of a dispute between the Scouts' Association and the Prime Minister who wanted to rename the organisation as the Cyrenaican Scouts' Association, a change which the Association's Secretary rejected.[840]

Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar was initially broadly active in Cyrenaica, though much like with the Scout's Association, its off-shoots in the province did not thrive. Although initially a number of branches of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar opened in various parts of the province of Cyrenaica, these were not long-lived and soon only one branch, the Darnah branch, remained active. It was founded in July 1943, and originally was simply a club where young people gathered to share their concerns about their own future and that of the country.[841] In mid-May 1944, the branch decided to start organizing activities,

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[837] *Al-Watan*, 23 March 1948.
[838] Winkel Reinhold, Statement by a German Member of the Omar Al-Mukhtar Association, August 19 1949, Benghazi, the National Library, Division of Records and Archives. Other documents gave the total as 75.
[839] De Candole, 'Memorandum for Cyrenaica National Assembly', October 27 1951, Benghazi, the National Library, Documents and Archives Division, unclassified document, p.3.
[840] Almagrabe, *Documents of the Omar Mukhtar Association*, p.100.
[841] Interview, Al-Salme, 29 June 2011.

and its members formed four committees: the Executive Committee; a Board of Directors, a Committee for Cultural Activities, and a Committee for Sporting Activities.[842]

In mid-December 1945, the youth of Darnah called for the formal establishment of an Association intended to facilitate a range of activities relating to sport, culture and politics.[843] The Board of Directors approved, on condition that it would abide by existing legislation. A small number of members[844] were active regarding literary matters, and they organised and catalogued the Association's book collection, and set up a lending library, together with establishing classes to combat illiteracy.[845]

The main achievement of the Darnah branch was the organisation of a Literary Circle, which began on 9 November 1947. They put together a programme of speakers and organised literary debates, devising guidelines for how the debates were to run and appointing a panel to judge the winner.[846] The lectures at the Circle were mostly on social and political topics. One given by Al-Mabrook Al-Theebany, entitled 'Sin in our Society', argued that both good and evil are natural instincts in man and need to be refined by sound education and knowledge. He also noted that loose morals had evolved in Libya due to colonialism, and therefore needed to be eliminated by a growth in numbers of educational institutions together with advice and guidance.[847] Under the title 'Drinking Water', Al-Mahdi Al-Mirghany, the health inspector for Darnah, delivered a lecture looking at different sources of drinking water and how they become contaminated and the methods of preventing the diseases which they can cause.[848]

The political lectures delivered at the Literary Circle included one by Mubarak Al-Shibani on 'Libyan unity' which argued that there were geographical, historical, racial and religious reasons for maintaining that unity. He concluded that though Libyans were passing through difficult times, "this made it all the more important to unite and ignore those aspects that can divide us, for we all are the sons of this land".[849]

Thus, the Literary Circle served as a means of raising cultural awareness and a forum

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[842] Al-Trabolssi, *Flourishing Darnah*, p 225.
[843] Interview, Al-Salme, 29 June 2011.
[844] Abdel Raziq Shaqil, Abdullah Saknah, Ibrahim Al-Usta Omar and Al-Mabrook Al-Theebany
[845] Almagrabe, *Documents of the Omar al-Mukhtar Association*, p.334.
[846] Al-Trabolssi, *Flourishing Darnah*, p.226.
[847] *Barqa Al-Jadida*, 14 March 1947.
[848] *Barqa Al-Jadida*, 23 September 1947.
[849] *Barqa Al-Jadida*, 2 June 1949.

for public debate on social problems and political issues. It also provided an opportunity for intellectuals to showcase their talents by participating in lectures and literary debates, which required research and in-depth knowledge and helped these scholars to enlarge and enhance their cognitive capacities.[850]

Although its activities were limited, the Committee for Cultural Activities worked hard to raise people's cultural knowledge. In addition to its Literary Circle, the branch put on plays based on the belief that theatre would act as a form of moral education, addressing many of society's ills in the popular style of a comedy or tragedy. During 1944, the Theatre of Darnah presented two plays by the writer Mahmud Timor: *Suhad* and *The Drifting Melody*, and two others by Ahmed Shawki: *Al-Abbassiha* and *The Princess of Andalusia*.[851] Both these playwrights were from Egypt, showing the extent of the cultural communication between the two countries and suggesting that these introduced new literary trends into Libya.[852]

The areas of interests covered by these organisations performed a diverse range of social and educational functions. Literary and debating societies helped to sharpen the intellects of the scholars and literati. Lecture programmes helped to disseminate both useful information as well as radical new ideas including Pan-Arabism. Poetry recitals and musical performances showcased new talent and inspired the audience with pro-independence verse and song. The role of theatre was particularly noteworthy. Zarem has argued that this element clearly reflects the influence of the Syrian Arabs who had used various forms of social mobilisation including theatre as a means of conveying complex ideas from the prevailing intellectual trends in a simple form to a mass public.[853] Pan-Arabist ideas were clearly visible in the plays which those leading the groups chose to be performed. Dramatic productions served to awaken the spirit of patriotism and fuel it in Libyans through the revival of Arab heritage.

Although the interest in literary and dramatic activities was a prominent feature of the Darnah Branch, it did not neglect the political aspect of its work, especially after the Secretary of the Association presented a proposal in May 1946 for the creation of a Committee of Political Activities in the branch, which split the membership. Ahmed

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[850] Interview, Alakecat, 25 September 2015.
[851] M. B. Uraibi, *Art and Theatre in Libya* (Tunisia,1981), p.32
[852] Almacergi, *Fifty years of memories of social and political events*, p.172.
[853] A. Zarem, *The Libyan People's Conflict with the Colonisers 1943-1968, 2ⁿᵈ edn.* (Benghazi, 1986), p.62.

Fouad Shunaib opposed the proposal on the grounds that this would hinder the work of Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya as well as creating too many political bodies and giving foreigners a chance to achieve their goals by exploiting the differences between these organisations.[854] However, vocal support came from Abdu Al-Kareem Elias and Ibrahim Usta Omar, who asserted that:

> The presence of a Political Committee in the branch would serve to support Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya, and help with its nation-building agenda, maintaining that the existence of different groups would not damage public interests as long as they all had the same aim.[855]

Usta Omar illustrated his point by mentioning the number of parties in Egypt, all of which sought national independence and differed only in their means of achieving that goal. He stated:

> If only one organization worked on behalf of the people, that would turn into a dictatorship and that organization or party would be completely authoritarian and would probably, quite unintentionally, cause its own downfall. A range of organisations means different styles and produces different ideas. And when ideas challenge each other, facts emerge. We seek to enter the democratic era based on freedom of assembly, of expression and of opinion. We will not thrive in that era unless we have a diverse range of organisations for, within them, there will be room for ideas and people to develop and struggle to defend the rights of the people.[856]

These two viewpoints clearly represented two opposing philosophies. The first may be referred to as the traditional tendency which rejects diversity of political opinion, on the grounds that this could damage the interests of the country, and so focuses all efforts on one single organisation in order to reach the desired end. This was the tendency followed by Al-Sanusi. The second viewpoint believes that one single party leads to dictatorship and thus considers political action to be a right enjoyed by all.

Following the UN resolution on independence for Libya, Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar organised a celebration to which it invited all the Benghazi city's citizens, taking

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[854] Almagrabe, *Documents of Omar Mukhtar Association*, p.69.
[855] Ibid.
[856] Ibid, p.70.

advantage of this to influence public opinion by delivering enthusiastic speeches about Libyan unity.[857] The branch also leafleted everyone present with a flyer calling for all three territories of Libya to be united under the rule of Al-Sanusi as Emir and declaring that it did not recognise the Cyrenaica government. Thus, Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar was at the forefront of political developments in Darnah, and stepped up its campaigning by delivering speeches in mosques, public squares and theatres.[858] The purpose of opening branch offices under the auspices of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar was to try to gain popular support from Libyans, which was difficult given that the population was scattered over such a large geographical area. Often it was not possible for Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar to arrange lectures in isolated locations due to a lack of resources. Therefore, branches were opened to try to help those interested in cultural and political activism. The BMA neither overly opposed nor promoted the activities of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar in Darnah, but did want it to be legally constituted.

## 5.4 The Emergence of Social and Cultural Associations in Tripolitania

This section investigates the emergence of social and cultural associations in the province of Tripolitania under the BMA and how these voluntary organisations came to influence the nature of the unified Libyan state that emerged after independence.

The origins of the first Libyan cultural association lie in the territory of Tripolitania, going back to 1920, when the Al-Nadi Al-Adabi (Tripoli Literary Circle) was founded by Ahmed al-Faqih Hassan whose programme included presentations on Arabic literature and Islamic culture.[859] However, in 1922, the Italian government closed it down when the new Fascist authorities introduced strict new legislation. After Italian rule, the nationalists began demanding the re-opening of this club, especially since large numbers of the émigrés who had been living in self-imposed exile in Egypt were returning home and insisted on being allowed to participate in cultural activities.[860] Faced with such insistent demand, the BMA could not see any reason to prevent the re-opening of the club and agreed to this on 29 June 1943, on condition that its activities

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[857] *Al-Watan*, 3 August 1943.
[858] 'Message from the Secretary of the Association of Youth League to Vice President of the National Congress', 26 December 1949, Tripoli, Centre for Historical Studies of the Libyan *Jihad*.
[859] M. Jubran, *Ahmed al-Faqih Hassan, His life and literature* (Tripoli, 1976), p.39
[860] Khadduri, *Modern Libya,* p.81.

should be restricted to ones of a cultural nature.[861] The club was restored under the presidency of Ahmed al-Faqih Hassan[862] and its first five members.[863]

Given that the BMA had specified the areas in which the organisation could be involved it was named Al-Nadi Al-Adabi to make it clear that its activities were to be restricted to literary affairs and that its members should not be concerned with politics. Such a description also precluded discussion of social or economic issues in Libya, since these areas were considered to be the remit solely of the BMA, pending a decision on the future of Tripolitania. Despite the restrictions that this imposed on their activities, the nationalists saw this as the first step on the way to asserting their Libyan identity. Therefore, to mark the occasion, they arranged a celebration, described by the newspaper *Tarablus Al-Gharb* as impressive, with many speeches about the Libyan homeland and in praise of the struggle against fascism and in support of Britain which called for democracy.[864]

This demonstrated the fact that the Libyans felt reassured following the Italians' exit from their country. They were filled with excitement and felt that they had been liberated from Italian colonialism, considering this the first step towards full independence. The Society appealed to local citizens, asking them to support their cause, since under the new era of democracy and justice for all they would be allowed to take part in the Society's activities. It was stressed that the Society was a legally constituted Libyan organisation, which sought to provide a forum for public discussion and encourage charitable giving to the poor and the needy. The Society's appeal can be interpreted as being intended to remind Libyans to give their support to the demands for a free country. The nationalists were pinning their hopes on the BMA, and the initially positive tenor of their discourse suggests that relations between the Society and the government administration were originally cordial.

The Society had two distinct goals, the first of which was bringing culture to the local population, and the second, performing charitable works to help those in need. This gave the Society a means of circumventing the restrictions that the BMA had tried to impose on it, declaring itself to be a centre of cultural enlightenment, as well as acting

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[861] Ibid.
[862] Almatardy, *Libya: Fifty Years of Jihad,* p.82.
[863] Muhammad Al-Mahrook, Abdulrahman Al-Kalhood, Abdul Aziz Al-Riqlay and Mustafa Al-Sarraj.
[864] *Tarablus El-Gharb,* 3 August 1943.

as a charitable organisation. Some members [865] took part in charitable work and collected donations. [866] In order to convince the British Intelligence Service that it was indeed a Literary Circle, it offered a library containing a large number of books in subjects of literary, scientific and social interest, as well as a range of Arabic manuscripts concerning literature and Islamic teachings. [867]

Al-Nadi Al-Adabi started its cultural activities with a series of lectures calling for the need to raise the cultural knowledge of ordinary people. In October 1943, Abdullah Shareef gave a lecture on the importance of education, arguing that human beings were naturally inquisitive and curious, and that ignorance was therefore the result of corrupt societies. To ward off its dangers, more schools needed to be established and organised on modern principles. [868] The Literary Circle was also interested in the question of women's education and called on educated men and writers to give their views on this. Discussion on this issue also reflected two opposing tendencies, with the progressives supporting women's education and the conservatives opposing this. [869] In his lecture delivered at Al-Nadi Al-Adabi Hall on December 27 1946, Khalifa Al-Zintanee stressed the urgent need for educational volunteers to help usher in a new era in the country, by bringing education to ordinary people, and for the authorities to back this initiative. [870]

Many of the lectures addressed the history of Tripoli before the Italian Occupation, such as the one by Sheikh Muhammad Al-Misrati entitled 'Tripoli Before and After the Occupation'. He lectured on social and literary developments in Tripoli in the pre-Occupation era, quoting from poetry depicting Tripoli's struggle against Italy. [871]

These lectures were the key cultural activity of the Tripoli Al-Nadi Al-Adabi and were reported in *Tarablus El-Gharb* from the very outset. There are two clear themes amongst the lectures: firstly, to emphasise Tripoli's glorious history and, secondly, to call for efforts to improve educational standards in the country, with speakers highlighting the current shortcomings in knowledge and calling for schools to be

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[865] Bashir Al-Zakalay, Al-Hadi Al-Mashearki, Salim Nadeer, Muhammad Al-Mayit, Fadel Benzekri, Muhammad Al-Mahjoob, Ali Bin Othman, Abdul-Hameed bin Al-Ameen, Muhammad Al-Najjar and Muhammad Mahfooz.
[866] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 6 July 1943.
[867] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 3 August 1943.
[868] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 21 October 1943.
[869] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 8 January 1945.
[870] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 3 January 1947.
[871] M. S. Ibn Musa, 'The Literary Press in Libya from 1869 to 1 September 1969', unpublished Masters Dissertation, Tripoli University (1982), p.223.

opened, volunteers to help with the task of educating the masses and education for women. Members of Al-Nadi Al-Adabi particularly enjoyed this lecture programme.[872]

The lecture programme created a focus where Libyan intellectuals, of diverse tendencies and interests, could meet to exchange views and make plans for charitable work. Not surprisingly, the secret nucleus of the first political party in Tripolitania was formed in this Literary Circle. As a result of these meetings, the Committee for Cultural Activities at Al-Nadi Al-Adabi decided to establish a night school to combat illiteracy and improve the educational standards of those who had already obtained some elementary schooling. Students at this school, which began on 20 December 1943, were divided into two groups. For those who had never received any previous education, lessons included basic reading and writing, arithmetic, and religious instruction.[873] When the Libyan Youth Association was later established under the aegis of the Literary Circle with Milad Al-Zakalay as President, it opened another night school to teach those who were illiterate in October 1948.[874]

The Literary Circle's activities expanded to include scouting, sports and theatre, in addition to its established literary and educational activities. It also engaged in political activities, as demonstrated when the troop of Tripoli Scouts joined Al-Nadi Al-Adabi in August 23 1943. This organisation had been formed spontaneously in Tripoli by a group of boys who imitated military tactics in their play until a group of them decided to meet every evening to train together.[875] The Literary Circle also encouraged nationalist organisations to take part in physical activity and to compete seriously with foreign opponents. For that purpose, it organised a sports event at its headquarters on 19 September 1943, when the Literary Circle's Secretary, Ahmed Al-Hadairi, gave a talk about the importance of sport in communities. The gathering also included bouts of wrestling and boxing.[876] Thanks to the support for local footballers, several succeeded in playing for teams outside Libya.[877]

With regards to drama, the Literary Circle did not have its own theatre group until 1946,

[872] 'Report from *Al-Nadi Al-Adabi'*, 1943, Tripoli, Centre for Historical Studies of the Libyan Jihad, Documents from the library of Ahmad Al-Nab Ansari, p.15.
[873] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 15 December 1943.
[874] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 2 October 1948.
[875] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 17 April 1949.
[876] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 21 September 1943.
[877] Fakhry, *National Football Competitions*, p.19.

and all the plays performed in its theatre were productions by existing drama groups, such as Nadi al-Ummal [the Working Men's Association] Theatre Group and the Osman Taheem Theatre Group. When Ahmed Qaniah became President of the Literary Circle on 16 January 1946, he formed a theatre group that presented its first work entitled: *Blessed but ungrateful*. Later that year, it performed *You are the reason for everything* in late June 1946, and then put on a production every month until 1948, when the Youth League revived its weekly gatherings alongside the other activities which included plays, performances of local songs and literary debates.[878]

Al-Nadi Al-Adabi became the centre of activities for Tripoli's youth who took full advantage of the activities which it offered, and through its volunteer efforts, the Literary Circle became involved in community development in the region. Its activities were thus in accordance with the British policy of community development. Hence it is argued that Al-Nadi Al-Adabi took part fully in developing links between different groups of people, helping them to understand the needs and necessities of a nation. It also shows that the creation of such associations and clubs can help in developing communities.

The political activities of Al-Nadi Al-Adabi were restricted to organizing occasional gatherings. These were usually held to commemorate noteworthy events, such as the one held on 22 March 1949 on the fourth anniversary of the formation of the Arab League,[879] or to honour a national figure, such as the celebration held in honour of Bashir al-Sadawi on 7 February 1949.[880] In addition, their hall was used by all the political bodies in Tripoli as a meeting place to discuss new developments in the struggle for independence. When the Tripolitanian delegation was sent to the United Nations, the leaders of all political organisations and the Presidents of all nationalist Associations and institutions met in Al-Nadi Al-Adabi's hall, together with intellectuals, dignitaries and important merchants, and drafted a telegram to the Secretary General of the United Nations in support of this delegation.[881]

As with so many of the cultural organisations at that time, Al-Nadi Al-Adabi had a clear mandate from the BMA to facilitate only social and cultural activities, but some of its members were political activists and many of its activities indirectly supported the

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[878] Uraibi, *Art and Theatre in Libya*, pp.249-250.
[879] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 9 February 1949
[880] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 21 April 1949.
[881] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 2 April 1949

nationalist cause. Its main focus, however, was on social/cultural activities and on helping to educate Tripoli's society at all levels, providing basic literacy training to those who had never had the opportunity to experience education, whilst at the same time helping to form an intellectual elite.

The labour force in Libya would be at the centre of another organisation that emerged in the BMA era. The Nadi al-Ummal (Tripoli Working Men's Association) was founded in 1944 by Mustafa Al-Ijailee along with three others who went on to become its board members; its aim being to revive theatrical activity in Tripoli.[882] The first production prepared by the Association's theatre group after the conflict in Libya had ended was a play entitled Back to School, which encouraged young people to think about returning to study after what had been a difficult time. The group also put on *The Betrayal of Mates*, a morality play which ended with a local song performed by Ahmed Gunnabah. The British authorities carefully monitored the activities of this club to ensure it had no opportunities to engage in activities that might generate a resistance movement.

The Nadi al-Ummal also announced a forthcoming performance entitled *The Burden of Wealth* by Sheikh Abd Al-Raziq Al-Basheeti.[883] However, the British authorities banned the show on the grounds that it was intended to expose the workings of the capitalist system and was viewed as a call to Islamic socialism.[884]

In 1944, Nadi al-Ummal organised a memorial service marking four years after the death of those who had fought against the Italian occupation.[885] The Association also held several events to welcome back those refugees who had played a role in the national movement in exile; one of these being in honour of Bashir al-Sadawi. Although there is little information concerning the sporting activities of this club, there is an indication that these also formed part of its general programme. An invitation card from the President of the Working Men's Association to Ahmed Gunnabah indicates that Nadi al-Ummal also used to organise boxing matches.[886]

The plays put on by Nadi al-Ummal were seen not only by Association members but

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[882] Ahmed Gunnabah was President, Mustafa Al-Ijailee Vice President and Muhammad Gunnaba elected as Treasurer.
[883] Uraibi, *Art and Theatre in Libya*, pp.162-175.
[884] Uraibi, *Art and Theatre in Libya*, pp.176-177.
[885] According to Mukhtar Alasoud, Interview, 1 August 2011 the men being honoured were Suleiman Al-Baroon. Al-Sadiq bin Zaraa, Ahmed Al-Hadairi and Muhammad bin Massoud.
[886] 'A Card Invitation from *Nadi al-ummal* to Ahmad Gunabbah to Watch a Boxing Competition', April 6 1945, Tripoli, Centre for Historical Studies of the Libyan *Jihad*, Documents from the library of Ahmad Al-Nab Ansari.

also a wider audience since the theatre group performed at the venues of other organisations whenever it had the opportunity. *The Betrayal of Mates*, for example, was also performed at the Literary Circle on 22 April 1945.[887] In 1946-1947, Nadi al-Ummal organised a theatre season that included performances of several historical dramas, including *The New Day of Judgement*, *The People of the Cave, Saladin* and *Rustum's Nights*.[888] In general, the Association encouraged individuals to work together through these drama activities. This again suggests that the BMA motivated Libyans to take part in such activities as a means of community development in the occupied territory.

Although Al-Nadi al-Ummal was originally established as an organisation for sports, theatre and music, it became more interested in other cultural activities, when Ahmed Al-Hadairi assumed the Presidency in January 1946. The Committee organised a weekly programme of lectures, which dealt with topics of interest to working men including the importance of industry, training, and education for nations and individuals. Some of these lectures also touched on current social problems and proposed ways of tackling these. Sheikh Ahmed Rasim Bakir was one of those who showed interest in contributing to these talks at the club.[889]

Al-Nadi al-Ummal contributed on a wider scale to reducing illiteracy in the region by starting a basic course in writing skills for all those wishing to be involved in April 1945.[890] In June 1947, a volunteer-run evening school was started, which included several courses including basic literacy classes and more advanced literary studies for teachers.[891] The courses to combat illiteracy and to raise the educational standards of workers continued as long as the Association remained. Along with these activities, it also demonstrated its loyalty to the nationalist cause in celebrations that were used to deliver pro-independence speeches.

Al-Nadi al-Ummal provided a broad range of leisure time activities including sports, music and theatre, but it used these recreational activities to achieve its goal. Its particular focus on dramatic productions stemmed from its belief that theatre was the easiest and fastest means of educating large numbers of mostly illiterate workers about

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[887] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, April 22, 1945.
[888] Uraibi, *Art and Theatre in Libya*, p.180.
[889] M. Y. Alazzaby and M.A. Mir, *The Labour Movement in Libya*: *Origins and Growth* (Tripoli, 1980), p.138
[890] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 3 April 1945.
[891] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 23 May 1947.

key social and political issues in terms which they could easily grasp. However, due to a combination of factors the Association was forced to abandon these activities in 1947. Firstly, an outbreak of political unrest led the BMA to clamp down on its activities. Secondly, as increasing numbers of younger members of the Association found full-time employment, they no longer had sufficient free time for participating in theatrical rehearsals. Thirdly, the growing diversity of groups within the Association encompassing political, sporting, literary and dramatic activities led to constant wrangling among their members and eventually led to it being disbanded.[892]

In addition to theatrical activities, sport provided a key framework in which political ideas and organisation spread in BMA era Libya. Al-Nadi al-Etihad (Tripoli United Football Club)[893] was founded in 1944 under the aegis of Al-Nadi al-Naza [Renaissance Club], which had been founded on 15 November 1943 in Tripoli and focused its activities around football.[894] Initially, they played many friendly matches against other teams, including, for instance, one composed of soldiers and officers from the BMA, several from the local Italian community and others made up of German prisoners of war.[895]

Al-Nadi al-Etihad was the first Libyan team to play abroad, travelling to Tunisia in 1948 to play against Espérance and Hammam Al-Aanif. The first Libyan player to turn professional, Ali Al-Zakoozee, was also from Al-Nadi al-Etihad, and joined a Tunisian club; the first Libyan player to play professionally in the European stadiums was Mahmood Bizaio who joined the French team AS Cannes in 1960.[896] Al-Nadi al-Etihad followed a similar path to other organisations at the time, and in addition to football, it also set up a drama group and a programme of educational talks. The former became very popular and performed a number of different plays during the period 1944 to 1950, some by Arab writers, others translations from foreign writers.[897]

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[892] Almacergi, *Memories of fifty years of social and political events,* p.134.
[893] This club still exists and is one of the largest of its type in Libya, and still combines cultural and sporting activities.
[894] The original members were Masood Al-Zantote, Muhammad and Ali Al-Zantote, Muhammad Al-Kiraio, Mahmood Al-Khojah, Salim Chermeet, Al-Tahir Gunnabah, Mansoor Kabaar, Muhammad Al-Zaqaar, Ali Al-Mushairaki, Muzaffar Fawzee and Muhammad Al-Krikshiyu.
[895] Document number 64, Division of documents and manuscripts
[896] According to Mukhtar Alasoud, interviewed on 1 August 2011, two plays focused on famous Muslim warriors *Conquest of Andalusia* (Tariq ibn Ziyad) and *Saladin*. In addition, there was a morality play *The Perils of Gambling* and *Haroon Al-Rasheed*. Foreign-inspired works included Dumas' *The Three Muskeeters* and *The Government Inspector* by Nikolai Gogol.
[897] Interview, Alasoud, 1 August 2011.

On 10 November 1950, Al-Nadi al-Etihad organised a reception for Bashir al-Sadawi and the theatre group put on two plays: *Libya in 1950* and *One Hour with Omar Al-Mukhtar, Martyr.* Pro-independence songs written by Ahmad Gunnabah and Ali Siddiqui Abdul-Qadir were also performed.[898] Like other organisations, the Club organised a programme of cultural talks. Two talks from the 1947 programme were 'Islam', by Abdul Rahman Dukduk[899] and Suleiman Tomeeah's lecture entitled 'The Special Status of Women'. Tomeeah called for women to be emancipated and educated so that they could play their role in building a better community. He explained the progress being made in the Levant concerning women's education and the obstacles to be faced despite the fact that Islamic teachings stipulate that women should be educated.[900]

Although Al-Nadi al-Etihad worked indirectly on political mobilisation through its activities, it also announced its political activity explicitly before the Commission of Inquiry by the Allied powers, and worked on influencing Libyan public opinion to welcome this Commission. It also welcomed the members of the Libyan Liberation Committee, sent for the same purpose, and organised a reception in their honour. It opened its doors to the local people so that they could listen to the directives from the political leaders regarding the views which were to be voiced to the Commission.[901] In addition, the Club received a delegation from Fezzan who wanted to reveal the underhand dealings of the French Administration before the Commission of Inquiry without fear of reprisals from that administration.[902]

Thus, the various aspects of Al-Nadi al-Etihad, including its recreational activities and political lectures, helped it to fulfil its role in serving the Libyan cause by helping to influence public opinion.[903] Sports activities encouraged school boys to organise a friendly football match against Al-Nadi al-Etihad in order to collect funds for a three-week training camp on the coast. Some 230 boys went on to participate during the summer holidays.[904]

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[898] Uraibi, *Art and Theatre in Libya*, pp.247 - 248.
[899] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 3 January 1947.
[900] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 31 July 1947.
[901] S. Bills, *The Libyan Arena: The U.S., Britain and the Council of Foreign Ministers, 1945-1948* (London, 1995), p.88.
[902] Zarem, *The Libyan People's Conflict with the Colonisers 1943-1968,* p.64.
[903] Interview, Alasoud, 1 August 2011.
[904] Blackley, 'Annual Report Tripolitania 1949', TNA FO 371/80846.

These young boys were motivated through their involvement in sports activities. Others were attracted to the social activities in addition to the healthy environment. The sports clubs were the centres of positive activities that encouraged physical and mental exercises, and above all, self-discipline and behaviour management. This was viewed as the first step on the path which might take the youth towards democratic attitudes and moral growth.[905]

The activities of the larger organisations discussed above are well-documented through surviving documents and press coverage. However, there were many other smaller clubs, such as Al-Nadi al-Arabi [The Arab Club] whose members met officially at the Friday market hall for the first time in 1945. The leading newspaper *Tarablus El-Gharb* reported the existence of this organisation and its activities before 1945.[906] It organised courses for learning English[907] and encouraged celebrations to mark religious festivals to help strengthen Arab-Islamic identity. It also established a theatre group in October 1948, which performed its first play, entitled *The Spirit of Jihad in Andalusia*, on the stage provided by Al-Nadi al-Arabi.[908]

Some other organisations were also founded in Misrata in early 1945,[909] in Gharyan in January 1949,[910] in Al-Zawiah[911] and other parts of Tripolitania. However, these were somewhat different since they did not only involve Libyans. Notably, a member of the BMA in the Gharyan area, contributed to founding the Staff Club there. A Major Dayton was also in charge of the Social Club in Misrata.[912] Their recreational activities still played a role in raising awareness of the need to improve educational standards in Libya and allowed for locals to meet individuals from elsewhere.[913] Mukhtar Alasoud illustrated the vital and prominent role played by the many different kinds of associations during the BMA era in Libya when he stated:

> They were just as important as the Press, and they matched each other, step for step, in the march of progress of cultural life in Libya. With their lectures and poetry recitals, cultural activities and sporting events, they

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[905] A.E. Morgan, 'Report on visit to Cyrenaica', TNA, FO 1015/481.
[906] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 28 February 1945.
[907] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 3 April 1945.
[908] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 17 October 1948.
[909] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 9 February 1949.
[910] *Tarablus Al-Gharb*, 18 January 1949.
[911] Salah al-Din, *The portal in the management and organization of education,* p.89.
[912] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 2 March 1949.
[913] Zarem, *The Libyan People's Conflict with the Colonisers 1943-1968,* p.82.

helped in the difficult process of bringing to birth a generation of writers from that period.[914]

Those Libyans who were already aware of their rights became involved in the associations with the aim of assisting others and many other Libyans who lacked this knowledge and ability made the most of the opportunities on offer. One of the BMA's key aims in supporting the creation of these organisations was to develop relationships with the Libyans, reflected in the fact that some BMA representatives also took part in these organisations. This indicates that the BMA was sincere and honest in implementing its agenda in the occupied territory to train Libyans in different capacities, preparing them for independence.

Some of the public libraries in Tripoli were new, such as the Library of the British Information Bureau and the governmental library, known as Bayt Al-Marfa [House of Knowledge], whilst others were older such as Al-Awqaf [Library of Endowments] which housed items and collections donated by individuals. The BMA took sincere, practical steps to provide opportunities for all the people in Benghazi and Tripoli to access written materials.[915] This was partly related to their policy of community development. A collection of English books on different topics was added to Al-Awqaf's existing collections of Arabic and Italian stock in August 1950.[916] Furthermore, at the same time, an attempt was also made to encourage more teachers and students to become members of the library by reducing the annual subscription from 400 to 100[917] Military Authority Lira.[918] The BMA took these measures, especially the fee reduction, to encourage the dissemination of knowledge to the Libyans so that in future they would be able to play a major role in running their own country.

## 5.5 Libraries and Bookshops

The BMA strengthened Libya's libraries, by importing books from the nearest countries such as Egypt, Tunisia and Sudan. This was part of the British policy implemented on Libyan soil to help communities to develop their reading and writing skills. More

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[914] Interview, Alasoud, 1 August 2011.
[915] Ibid.
[916] Ibid.
[917] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 11 August 1950.
[918] The Military Authority Lira (MAL) was used by the BMA in Tripoli, having been designed by the United Nations. J.N.D. Anderson to B. A. B Burrows, British Embassy, Cairo, 8 May 1944, TNA, FO 141/944/11483/243/CA.

broadly, libraries provided opportunities for the residents of the occupied territory who took advantage of the opportunity to increase their knowledge. Whilst the various cultural organisations formed a means of improving cultural standards in Libya, the role played by libraries in disseminating culture and learning should not be ignored, even though their direct benefits were restricted to the educated classes. During the period under study, there were two types of facilities in Tripoli and Benghazi, namely public libraries and private bookshops.[919]

On 23 October 1947, the archive of historical documents was transferred from the Assaria al-Hamra [Red Castle] Museum Library in Tripoli[920] to new premises, and the BMA instituted a system which required anyone wishing to consult historical documents to submit a request to the Department of Antiquities at the BMA, which authorised access to the archives.[921] The library of Mustafa Qadri Maroof, founded in 1917, was also relocated. It contained Italian reference material and all the books from the other libraries in Tripoli were added to its holdings.[922] In early May 1947, the BMA opened a new public library in Tripoli which contained books and manuscripts on many different subjects, especially law, economics, history and literature. These books, in addition to 25,000 manuscripts,[923] had been amassed from many different sources including the State Library. This library also included light reading such as daily newspapers, magazines, reports and bulletins.[924]

Similar to the facilities in Tripoli, Cyrenaica's Al-Awqaf library included a large part of the collection which had been housed in the *zawiya* at Jaghbub, and in 1949, this library was estimated to have some 3,000 manuscripts, mostly related to jurisprudence and subjects of historical interest.[925] The British Reference Library was also opened in Benghazi and was staffed by John Ride and two Libyans. The British authorities hoped

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[919] Interview, Alasoud, 17 June 2011

[920] This library in Tripoli contained all the documentation relating to European consuls in Libya for the period 1911-1925, the documents of the State Administrative Council and intelligence reports by administrators for various districts of Tripolitania, Department of State Accounts, and other documents relating to assets and land, dating back to Ottoman times. For more information, see: *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 23 October 1947.

[921] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 13 November 1947.

[922] Abdulllah Alsharrif and Mohammad Ettawir, *Studies in the History of Libyan Libraries, Documents and Manuscripts.* (Misrata, 1987), p.21.

[923] The Annual report of Tripolitania, referred to some 30,000 books. See Blackley, 'Annual report of Tripolitania, for the period 1 January to 31 December 1947', 1947, TNA, FO 1015/143, p.46.

[924] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 30 July 1947.

[925] AlSharrif and Ettawir, *A study in the history of libraries, p.25.*

it would become a competitor to the library run by Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar.[926]

There were also two private bookshops in Tripoli. Al-Fenadiqh was situated in the old city in Tripoli and had been established during the Italian era by Sheikh Muhammad Mukhtar Sharif Al-Deen who imported newspapers, art magazines and books from Egypt.[927] This bookshop continued to serve scholars, elementary and secondary school students throughout the era of the BMA, providing them with literature, text books and modern science books. It also used to send books elsewhere in Libya when requests were received from patrons.[928] The second bookshop was located in Al-Mosheer Market in front of the Ahmed Pasha College.[929]

Bookshops, owned by Al-Boukiaisis in Benghazi, continued to provide books to the people while there were three bookshops in Ajdabiya, Al-Marj and Misrata, all three having opened during the BMA era. The BMA encouraged and motivated Libyans to import books from Egypt. Most of the publications on offer came from Egyptian publishers, such as Bayt Al-Marfa Al-Arabi [The Arab House of Knowledge], Dar Al-Hilal [Crescent Publishing House], Dar Al-Rissalah [The Message Publishing House], Al-Bayt Al-Masr [The Egyptian Publishing House] and Dar Akbar Al-Youm [Today's News Publishing House]. This bookshop was able to supply books on customer request from most of the publishing houses throughout the Arab world.[930]

## 5.6 Conclusion

The British were very clear to develop communities through various activities. The BMA helped the Libyans to establish many types of social organisations. Although many Libyans had not been given the opportunity to learn to read and write by previous regimes, they were able to engage in educational activities as were working men, thanks to the involvement of volunteers from a range of organisations established during the BMA era. This alternative form of provision in the form of community development did not threaten normal education in the occupied territory.

The BMA helped Libyans to get involved in various recreational and educational activities, partly to dispel the idea that this would be simply another form of occupation,

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[926] Ibid.
[927] Ali Muhammad Alasfar, *History of Satiric Drawing in Libya*, Tunisia - Libya, 1981, p 49.
[928] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 21 January 1950.
[929] M. Bin Masoud, *Tripoli and Tunis* (Tripoli, 1953), p.120.
[930] *Libya*, July 1951.

partly to offer entertainment to a population emerging from conflict and in dire need of distraction. It also realised that in order to create civil society in the regions, there was a need to develop associations run by citizens themselves. However, the BMA was surely also under no illusions about the potential which such associations might have for developing into political organisations, as reflected in its attempts to regulate and maintain strict surveillance of the activities that were permitted.

It is clear that citizen volunteer organisations were at the heart of both cultural and political activism in Libya. In the case of an organisation such as Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar, the thin line between cultural and political activism was quite clearly crossed on multiple occasions. Eventually it disappeared altogether. The Association's political aspirations became clear following its active interventions in the run-up to Libya's eventual independence, when it became the anti-separatist mouthpiece for Libyans in Tripoli and elsewhere in favour of the unification of an independent Libya. This scenario eventually transformed the Association into the Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya Party, the political party which many of its leading members had undoubtedly been working towards since its inception, as discussed in the following chapter.

Volunteers were either politically inspired or were simply bored bourgeois young, seeking distraction in the association activities. However, educational initiatives, such as the Working Men's Institute, seem to reflect the levels of solidarity and desire for self-improvement in Libyan society. Different sectors of society participated to achieve the goal of educating working men, merchants and the wealthy providing financial backing, whilst volunteer teachers and administrators used their time and abilities to raise the low levels of literacy that existed in the country after decades of neglect.[931]

With their rich associational life, voluntary organisations contributed to the formation and practice of democratic attitudes among citizens. People learned to develop tolerance, mutual trust and the ability to find compromise through democratic procedures. Libyans took advantage of this opportunity to create numerous organisations, some short-lived, some still in existence to this day. The level of cultural renaissance that followed could be considered extraordinary, by any standards. On the one hand, this led to the creation of civil society within Libya, with individuals coming together not to make money or purely to gain political power, but because they cared passionately about their own

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[931] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p.64.

future and that of their fellow Libyans. On another level, these associations succeeded in raising the consciousness of nationhood amongst previously disparate individuals and groups in Libya. They also helped to plant and disseminate the seeds of new political and ideological ideas which were to lead to the development of parties in Libya during the period under study. It is worth mentioning that, some of these voluntary socio-cultural groups transformed into political parties, as will be examined in the following chapter. The next chapter will explore the formation of political parties in Libya under the BMA, to see how these parties were created and their reaction to the BMA and their role in uniting Libya as an independent country.

# 6. CHAPTER SIX: POLITICAL PARTIES IN LIBYA DURING BRITISH RULE

## 6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the cultural and voluntary organisations which emerged in Libya during the British Military Administration (BMA), and detailed how these associations, clubs and societies helped to create a thriving cultural scene during that era. Since political life and its different philosophies, theories and systems of governance are intrinsically connected with culture,[932] including its spiritual dimension, it is perhaps not surprising that the same period also witnessed an equally important development in political associations that were concerned with raising the profile of the nationalist agenda. [933] Moreover, since cultural organisations have always been associated with the formation of a particular type of political authority as part of civil society it was perhaps to be expected that such groups would also go on to demand political and administrative reforms. As noted in the previous chapter, in time, many cultural associations went on to become political parties.[934]

During this period of Libyan history, it is very difficult to distinguish between civil and political organisations because the same or related organisations were active in both sectors. Most of the younger members of these groups had originally met like-minded individuals through recreational activities, such as literary circles and sports clubs, and there, they had also developed their new social and political views. It could be argued that the distinguishing feature of the political associations was that they considered their primary concern to be the issue of achieving Libyan independence.

The war and its aftermath did not affect the moral strength of Libyans; on the contrary, the conflict revitalised their activities, opened their minds and increased their awareness of important realities that provided the basis for voluntary associations that became political organisations. Soon they began demanding the right to establish political

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[932] R. Abbinnett, *Culture and Identity: Critical Theories* (London, 2003), p.74.
[933] Alshaibane, *Culture and Education in Libya*, p.226.
[934] Kaldor, *Global Civil Society,* p.17.

parties.[935] However, over the course of time, differences emerged between the leaders of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, leading to the formation of two distinct lines of thought. The Cyrenaica group backed the idea of becoming an Emirate under the rule of Idris Al-Sanusi, while the Tripolitania group, which ultimately wanted independence, sought unity amongst all Libyans before dealing with the question of the form of governance of the country.

This chapter begins by examining the development of the key political parties during British rule, a crucial period which ended when the struggle for independence finally bore fruit. It will consider developments in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania separately as, prior to the creation of a united independent Libya, political parties with distinctive identities and agendas emerged in both these provinces, although some went on to gain support beyond their original regional territory. It details how newly formed political parties, which had originally emphasised their differences by appealing to issues such as tribal and regional loyalties, class consciousness and pan-Arabist sentiments, then attempted to work together for the sake of a greater cause: a united independent Libya. During this period of concerted effort to focus on this common goal these disparate groups helped to forge a nation; as defined by Alter, that is: "a cultural-political community that has become conscious of its coherence, unity, and particular interests".[936]

## 6.2   Political Organisations under the BMA (1943-1951)

Once the Italians had been defeated in Libya in 1943, the political consciousness of the Libyans started to become evident again as they began to demand the right to participate in the administration of the country and to form their own political parties. In 1943, a meeting was convened in which all those recognised as community leaders in Tripoli participated and they agreed to put forward to the BMA the demand to establish political parties. Initially, the BMA responded that such activities needed to be deferred until all conflict considered part of the on-going Second World War was successfully concluded.[937] However, the British military administrator, Brigadier George Davy, gave hope to the Tripoli leaders that their demands to form political parties and their aspirations to be an independent nation would be addressed in due course. In the five

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[935] Al-Zawi, *The Libyans' Jihad in Exile*, p.99.
[936] P.Alter, *Nationalism* (London, 1989), p.17.
[937] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p.81.

years of occupation until 1946, the administrative arrangement in Cyrenaica remained of a provisional nature, due to The Hague Convention which "tied our [i.e. British] hands"[938], and partly because of the substantial capital expenditure involved as the future of the territory remained undecided. The prolonged lack of progress evident in the administration gave the more politically minded Arabs reason to criticise the British and they hoped to extract an advance commitment from the authorities in relation to achieving independence. [939] Some political parties already existed, having been established either by groups formed during the Italian occupation or by Libyan émigrés in other countries during their years in exile. The Libyan émigrés in Egypt took the advantage whilst there to learn about organising political parties and raise their political consciousness under the patronage of British rule. This was possible as the British government policy allowed them free reign to pursue their political aspirations. The return of these exiled leaders who had taken an active part in the political activities of neighbouring Arab countries together with the greater freedom they enjoyed under British administration, prompted them to resume their political activities.[940] A spirit of nationalism had been partly awakened by the events of the Second World War, whilst a new desire for self-determination formed part of a larger wave of political consciousness that swept North Africa following the conflict. Those Libyans with aspirations for independence saw the creation of political organisations together with the use of different modes of communication[941] as a means to motivate the masses and lobby for the transfer of political authority from foreign rulers, allowing them to control their own destiny as a nation.[942]

The Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, General H.R. Alexander informed the War Office in London about these demands by telegram and was reminded that Tripolitania and Cyrenaica should be treated equally. Despite this, the BMA dealt with the two regions differently. [943] Since the people of Cyrenaica were allowed to establish organisations, unlike those of Tripolitania, this differential treatment prompted the Libyans to send petitions to remind the BMA that under Italian rule, the two regions had

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[938] Foreign Office, 'Note on Policy in Libya', 14 September 1946, TNA, FO 371/53525/J8997/1008/866.
[939] Ibid.
[940] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, p.51.
[941] Almacergi, *Memories of fifty years of social and political events*, p.211.
[942] Almacergi, *Memories of fifty years of social and political events*, p.211.
[943] Commander-in-Chief Middle East to War Office, 25 June 1943, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 371/ 35661/ 2886/73/66.

been considered as a single entity.[944] Community leaders demonstrated in Tripoli 1943 against what they saw as a form of discrimination which pressurised the BMA into allowing Al-Nadi al-Adabi to re-open.[945]

This forced the BMA to visit Cyrenaica and accept Idris al-Sanusi as the only leader who could unify the two provinces. However, there was still some opposition in Tripolitania to his leadership.[946] Those who agreed with his leadership made their feelings known in writing to the BMA, demanding that Libya should be under British tutelage not that of the Italians. However, the nationalists also protested that those who had asked for British tutelage did not represent the majority opinion of the people of Tripoli.[947] The British were aware that differences among the Tripoli leaders were not new, dating back to the 1920s, and that a well-known figure in Tripolitania, Ramadan Al-Swahili, had been killed as a result of tribal disputes in 1930.[948] They also thought that it was unlikely that one leader would emerge in Tripolitania as was the case for Cyrenaica where Idris Al-Sanusi was already being recognised as the key political figure in late 1942.[949] The separation of Libya into three provinces (Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Fezzan) after WW2, the latter administered by the French, had significant effects on the political unity of the country.

Unlike the case in Cyrenaica, there were disagreements amongst the Tripolitanian leaders.[950] The British government was aware that it needed to make a declaration on its policy concerning the future of Libya; otherwise, it was expected that the BMA administration would have to deal with local trouble, which was not anti-British as such, but rather sought to put pressure on Britain to clarify the future of the territory.[951] The people of Cyrenaica wanted Idris al-Sanusi as their Emir[952] and in order to satisfy his people, al-Sanusi pushed the British government into granting Cyrenaica

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[944] Private Secretary to Foreign Office, 16 October 1943, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 371/ 35661/J4424/73/66.
[945] Khadduri, *Modern Libya,* p.81.
[946] Wright, *Libya*, p. 50.
[947] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*, pp.82-83.
[948] Khadduri. *Modern Libya*, p.85.
[949] Lord Glenconner to G. Davey, 18 November 1942, London, The National Archives, TNA, WO 201/428/G/TR/199.
[950] Ibid, p.53.
[951] D.C. Cumming to War Office, 21 March 1946, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 371/53517/J1345/640/66.
[952] Foreign Office, 'Memorandum of conversation between Sayyid Idris and the Minister of State', 3 September 1943, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 371/35661/J3865/73/66.

independence.[953] He later accused the BMA of relying on ex-Fascists and taking insufficient steps to prepare the country for self-government.[954] Moreover, in a report dated 2 July 1945, on future policy in Cyrenaica, it was recommended that the British government should take the decision to recognise Al-Sanusi as Emir of Cyrenaica[955] and an advisory council was established in the province.[956]

However, when the Arab League was being formed Al-Sanusi sent to the British Resident Minister of State and on February 20 1945 he requested the British Government to "determine the future of our (i.e. the Libyans') country and that this should be complete independence."[957] Al-Sanusi believed that this action lay within the power of the British government and its power alone. He also asked the British government to help the Libyans join the League of Arab Unity.[958] However, the British government was not able to determine the future of Libya in accordance with the wishes of its leaders, as expressed in the letters of Al-Sanusi to Mr R.G. Casey, and grant then independence because of the 'juridical status'[959] of the occupied enemy territory, its future could only be decided by the allied powers at the Peace Conference. In addition, the British government could not agree whether any delegation purporting to represent Tripolitania or Cyrenaica should take part in the discussions on Arab unity. Thus, it was not possible for Libya (or even only Cyrenaica) to join the League of the Arab States.[960]

On September 6, 1946, Cumming and Anderson met in Paris with the foreign secretary and high-ranking policymakers, including Pierson J. Dixon, the private secretary to Bevin, and Oliver C. Harvey, Deputy Undersecretary of State. The agenda for the meeting on general policy was set by Bevin and included the need to incorporate more Arabs into the Libyan BMA and the importance of maintaining separate administration for the two territories in Libya. Bevin's view was that establishing an advisory council

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[953] Ibid.

[954] R. Campbell to E. Bevin, 12 August 1946, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 371/57186/U6748/106/79.

[955] P. H. Gore-Booth to the Western Department, Foreign Office, 26 July 1945, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 371/50791/U5904/51/40.

[956] Secretary of State's Office, 'Notes on meeting held in Paris', 6 September 1946, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 371/57187/U7083/106/79.

[957] M.I. El-Mahdi Sanusi to the British Resident Minister of State, Cairo, 20 February 1945, TNA FO 371/ 50850/ U 2067/2067/70.

[958] Ibid.

[959] Ibid.

[960] Office of the Minister Resident, Cairo, to His Eminence, Sayyid Idris Sanusi, 19 March 1945, TNA, FO 371/50850/ 31 (2).

in Cyrenaica was not contrary to international law, and a tight budget should not dictate policy in such an important area. For Bevin, the methods that were used at that time appeared to be a treasury rather than a political concern. Security and strategy were also relevant factors.[961]

In August 1946, Al-Sanusi declared that if Libya had to be placed under trusteeship, Britain would not be a suitable country to undertake this task. The BMA was anxious to postpone any major decisions concerning Libya's future for a year and during that time, it planned to prepare the Libyans for self-government. This would allow Britain to present this as a fait accompli to the other members of the Council of Foreign Ministers. Al-Sanusi, however, suggested that this length of time would only serve to aggravate the situation and would not benefit British interests.[962]

The British government unilaterally decided the future of the Libyans by offering their official support for Al-Sanusi becoming Emir of Cyrenaica and potentially the Libyan national leader, but failed to take into consideration the views of those representing the other political parties in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. This attitude created doubts about the motives of the British, particularly among the Tripolitanian political parties, and hence they organised a demonstration, demanding the right to establish political parties. It is also important to note that the BMA had not only accepted Al-Sanusi but had failed to bring the Tripolitanian organisations which already existed into the main stream of national politics. It is possible that they saw the differences in aims of the political parties of Tripoli as a potential problem. Nonetheless, representatives of the major parties visited Cyrenaica and started negotiations which later paved the way for the development of political parties in both regions, and resulted in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica eventually agreeing to unification.

## 6.3 The Formation of Political activities in Cyrenaica

This section begins by examining the key political organisations which emerged during this period in the Cyrenaica region, the origins of most of which can be traced to cultural associations, literary circles and sports clubs.

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[961] Secretary of State's Office, 'Notes on meeting held in Paris', 6 September 1946, TNA, FO 371/57187/U7083/106/79.
[962] Foreign Office, 'Italian colonies and Trieste', 26 August 1946, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 371/57187/U695/106/79.

Some members of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar were vehemently opposed to the BMA and to its supporters among the older politicians.[963] Others took a more moderate position vis-à-vis the BMA, on the grounds that Libya still faced a period of uncertainty and was not in a position to adopt a hostile attitude towards the British. Since these positions were judged to be irreconcilable, in July 1945 those who felt that Britain still had a valuable role to play decided to form a splinter group which was dubbed the Rabitat al-Shabab and was led initially by Munir Babaa with Saad Jihani as General Secretary.[964]

In the same month, another organisation, Etihad Al-Ummal [the Union of Workers] joined the Rabitat al-Shabab, and they jointly founded the Workers' Union Club. The club's president was Rajab Al-Nayhoum, whilst Abd Rabbo Al-Ghannay acted as his deputy; the post of Secretary was assigned to Abdul-Hafez Ibn Saod.[965] The working men's section of the Association was mainly made up of Benghazi labourers, together with some young people belonging to other sectors, as well as some former Libyan army officers.[966] Another branch of Rabitat al-Shabab was founded in 1946 in Al-Marj. Its committee was formed by Muhammad Sharif as President and Abdul-Hamid Bin Halim as his deputy. Al-Salihin Qamati took on the role of Treasurer, whilst Tahir Al-Megrisi agreed to act as Secretary.[967]

The Al-Marj branch of the Rabitat al-Shabab was viewed as a rival organisation to Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar and published the *Al-Istiqlal* [Independence] newspaper with Editor-in-Chief Awad Zagbub. This branch of the Association also organised Arabic classes and put on didactic plays. Anyone wishing to become a member was allowed to do so, there being no conditions regarding age limits.[968]

A further split occurred in Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar on 14 July 1946, when a group of sports enthusiasts left to establish a sports club under the aegis of the Rabitat al-Shabab,

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[963] Most of these members were young men who had studied in Egypt and had been influenced by Abdul-Rahman Azzam, who had voiced his opposition to the BMA in Libya.

[964] Miloud, *Cultural activity in Libya in the era of independence,* p.57.

[965] 'Letter from the Secretary of the Workers' Union Club affiliated with Rabitat al-shabab Association to Muhammad Idris Al-Sanusi on the status of workers in Benghazi', 14 December 1947, Benghazi, National Library, Division of documents and manuscripts, unclassified document.

[966] The Libyan army had been established in 1940 in Egypt and was disbanded some three years later when the campaign in North Africa came to an end. 'Note on the visit to Cyrenaica by members of the United Nations to Libya from May 26 to June 9 1950', Benghazi, National Library, Division of documents and manuscripts, unclassified document.

[967] All those listed as members were Libyan Muslims except Khalaf Bouktoos, who was a Libyan Jew.

[968] Ibid, pp.41-43.

headed by Muhammad al-Sanusi Al-Bijoo. They were involved in activities such as a Football Club and a Boxing Association.[969] This club organised educational, literary and recreational activities, but internal differences among its members led to problems. As a result, the Workers' Union Club which had been affiliated to the Rabitat al-Shabab since 1948 began to lose members and was forced to ask the workers to join the Working Men's Institute if they were interested in literacy classes.[970] In the same year, the original members of Rabitat al-Shabab established a Veterans' Association based in Al-Marj city which was intended to collate information about and remember fallen comrades, both resistance fighters and those who had fought in the Second World War.[971] This association adopted the same stance as the Rabitat al-Shabab, maintaining friendly relations with the British.[972]

Due to disagreements amongst the founder members, its activities and role gradually declined until June 1949, when it re-appeared on the political stage as being pro-Cyrenaica government.[973] By 1949 it constituted itself legally as a political party and delivered a memorandum to the Cyrenaica Advisory Board on 30 May 1950, containing three demands. Firstly, it called for the unity of Libya based on the natural borders of its federated territories, and on condition that this union would be hereditary under the Al-Sanusi emirate. Secondly, it insisted on the declaration of a united and fully independent Libya in early 1952. Thirdly, it demanded indemnity reparations for Cyrenaica, as a result of what had occurred during the military operations which had taken place on its soil.[974]

The Rabitat al-Shabab in Darnah, which had formerly been part of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar there, produced a virtually identical memorandum which was signed by its

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[969] 'Message from Muhammad Al-Sanusi Albiju to Idris on the approval of his appointment representing athletes in Cyrenaica', 13 December 1947, Benghazi, National Library, Division of documents and manuscripts, unclassified document.

[970] M. Y. Almagrabe and M. Abu Mir, *The Emergence and Development of the Working Class in Libya* (Damascus, 1981), p.39.

[971] Al-Siddiq Al-Rida Al-Sanusi as Honorary President, Hamad Mustafa Al-Esseilyas Secretary, and Said Aseriwahas Treasurer. Members included Issa Suleiman, Nagy Hamad Lahmar, Abdullah Al-Fil, Said Jarbou, Al-Imari Al-Jali, Idris Bohashim, AqliahBil Hamad, AlabdJaballah, Saad Al-Khashabi Al-Mismari, Eroaifi Al-Okab, Abdul-Karim Musairnit, Salem Miftaah, Khalil Abu Jadallah, Muhammad Ashoikh, SakoolBouosman, Abdul-Salam Dahahat, Abdullah Al-Shafi, and Muhammad Boutayeb. See: Almagrabe and Abu Mir, *The Emergence and Development of the Working Class in Libya*, p.39.

[972] 'Request from a group of veterans on granting them a license to open a club', 19 February 1948, Benghazi, National Library, Division of documents and manuscripts, unclassified document.

[973] S. A. Alhadra, *Libyan political groups, their Historical Assets and Political Attitudes*, unpublished MA dissertation, University of Garyounis/Benghazi, 1983, p.41.

[974] 'Memorandum concerning the visit of members of the Advisory Council of Cyrenaica, Benghazi', 30 May 1950, Benghazi, National Library, Division of documents and manuscripts, unclassified document.

President, Muhammad Al-Fayed, and its Secretary Fawzi Bader, along with 75 other members. The level of animosity between the Rabitat al-Shabab and Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar can be seen in the description by the former Association's Secretary of the celebration held in Darnah in December 1949, organised by their rival association for the members of the Cyrenaica delegation who were carrying the United Nations' resolution regarding Libyan independence. He described the occasion thus:

> The Association organized a big celebration to which it invited most of the residents of this city who are angry about this situation and mistaken in their views. It is very clear that we are at the forefront of those.

> It is a pity that, in general, those who gave speeches[975] so badly exploited this opportunity and the presence of the public. They did not organize the gathering solely for the delegation, but to be able to openly challenge the government in the capital and to indirectly challenge those who support it.[976]

The Rabitat al-Shabab's declaration of its principles in the memorandum submitted to the Advisory Board and its opposition to the political activities of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar illustrate that it was greatly influenced by the political positions adopted by both Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya and Al-Mutamar Al-Watani (National Congress) in the territory of Cyrenaica.

Another organisation, Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya (The Cyrenaica National Front) was formed in June 1946 following the imposition of a ban on the Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs[977] for discussing the Libya issue and as a result of the sudden return of Idris Al-Sanusi to Egypt, after claiming he had decided to settle in Cyrenaica. These events raised suspicions among the leaders of the Saady tribe[978] who met to elect members to form a Cyrenaica Defence Committee. The Committee issued a statement which made three key demands. Firstly, it asked for the right to independence and the establishment of a constitutional government to be acknowledged by the British;

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[975] Members of the Assembly and of the delegation both delivered speeches at the ceremony.
[976] 'Letter from the secretary of the Youth Association in Darnah to the Deputy Head of the General National Congress', 26 December 1949, Benghazi, National Library, Division of documents and manuscripts, unclassified document.
[977] Salah al-Akkad, *The Arab East 1945-1958*(Cairo, 1967), p.64.
[978] Most of the population of Cyrenaica were Bedouin tribes, the Saady tribe being one of the largest.

secondly, it demanded that the Sanusi Emirate to be headed by Al-Sanusi should be recognised; and finally, it insisted that Libyans should be involved in the administration of their own country.[979]

On 9 August 1946, Idris Al-Sanusi ordered that the Committee membership was to be expanded beyond the Saady tribes and was to include elected members of the Mrabten and other tribes. [980] Eventually the Committee membership, made up of elected representatives from various tribes, reached 75 and it was dubbed Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya.[981] In the same month, Al-Rida Al-Sanusi (the nephew of Al-Sanusi) was elected as President of Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya. It was also decided at a meeting of this association held on 17 September 1946 that membership would be withdrawn from anyone in the organisation if it was proved that he had connections to any political body outside Libya. The members were committed to providing full reports to the President concerning their districts and their areas. It was also decided that the leader of Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya should demand that the administrator of the BMA pay close attention to the current state of the country, especially with regards to the impact of unemployment.[982]

When Britain decided in September 1946 to appoint a Committee of Inquiry[983] to visit Cyrenaica as a prelude to independence,[984] Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya submitted a memorandum to the British Commander-in-Chief (Middle East) on 30 November 1946, calling for the recognition of the Sanusi Emirate and allowing the establishment of a national government to administer the country as a prelude to independence.[985] At the same time, the Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya issued a statement to the Cyrenaican people that said:

> Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya finally called men from
> Benghazi to a meeting during which they decided unanimously to alert
> the Administration to the need to deal with the aftermath of the war.

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[979] Plet, *Libyan Independence and the United Nations*, p.42

[980] For more information on the Mrabten tribes, see: Henrico de Augustine, *The Population of Cyrenaica*, pp.68-75.

[981] Ziadah, *Cyrenaica, the Eighth Arab State*, p.129.

[982] Alhadra, *Libyan political groups, their Historical Assets and Political Attitudes*, pp.44-45.

[983] This delegation included J. A. de Candole Hamilton, F. C. Newton, and J. S. Crum. This mission was sent for the introduction of certain administrative measures in Cyrenaica.

[984] The Cabinet, 'Tripolitania', 8 March 1949, London, The National Archives, TNA CAB 129/33/ CP (49) 55.

[985] M. Abu Shaewa, *The Political System in Libya in the period from 1951-1969*, unpublished Masters dissertation, Cairo, 1977, pp.30-31.

They delegated the Cyrenaica Front to work on the major issues of the country politically and administratively under the auspices of Prince Muhammad Idris and the formation of a national constitutional government to manage the affairs of the country.[986]

Thus, Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya, which styled itself as the representative of the Cyrenaican people, officially announced its policy on the independence of Cyrenaica before joining the unity movement with Tripolitania.[987] It considered that Tripolitania was still threatened by Italian influence because of colonial conflicts of interest.[988] Meanwhile, some members of Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya started to show separatist tendencies formed as a result of the events surrounding Libya's entry in the Second World War on the side of Britain and the Allies.[989] The signs of that policy were evident in the negotiations on unity held between delegations from Tripolitania[990] and Cyrenaica on 18 January 1947, at which the Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya accepted the demands made by the Tripolitanian delegation.

The demands were, firstly, that the entity to be known as Libya should follow the natural borders that were in place before WW2, and that any attempt to divide this territory should be rejected. Secondly, there was to be full independence for all Libyan territories. Thirdly, Idris Al-Sanusi was to be supported as King of Libya by a parliamentary democratic constitutional government. It also asked for the establishment of a joint body to unify the efforts related to the interests of the homeland under his supervision. Its final demand was that both sides should demonstrate their commitment to working together to achieve these principles and to defend them, including by rejecting any situation that was not in accordance with them. The Cyrenaica delegation

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[986] Bills, *The Libyan Arena: The U.S., Britain and the Council of Foreign Ministers, 1945-1948*, p.103.

[987] See: Reilly, 'Report by the War Office Working Party on Cyrenaica', London, The National Archives, TNA, WO 230/222, p.10.

[988] Britain exploited Italy's claim to its previous colonies and supported its return to Tripoli, especially because the British demand for Annexation of Cyrenaica and Tripoli under its supervision had been refused at the Conference of Foreign Ministers. In return for supporting Italy's claims, Britain wanted a concession of Libyan land to build an Anglo-American Military base. See: Brocin, *The History of Libya,* pp.256-257.

[989] Some of the Libyan groups in Cairo did not agree to entering the war to support the UK, as they had been influenced by the nationalist groups in Egypt, where some political parties were opposed to Egypt becoming involved in the war. There was widespread hatred of the British, whose soldiers were accused of taking food from the mouths of Egyptian people. See: J. O. Sagay and D. A. Wilson, *Africa A Modern History 1800-1975* (London, 1978), p.320.

[990] The Tripolitanian delegation was headed by the *Mufti* of Tripoli, Muhammad al Muntaser, and included Awn Alsof, Abdul-MajedKabar, and Muftah al-Mutayyardi. See: Shukri, *The Birth of Modern Libya*, p.344.

insisted on the addition of the word 'unconditionally' to the third demand. It also added a further clause: "If this is not possible, what can be salvaged should be salvaged and means sought to solve outstanding issues".[991] Thus, Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya did not object to these basic principles regarding the unity of Libya, its independence and accession to the Arab League, but it placed the independence of Cyrenaica and al-Sanusi's leadership claim above all else.[992]

Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya reflected this policy in the conditions for unity with Tripoli by stipulating unconditional recognition of the Sanusi Emirate and the unanimous support for this from all the people of Tripolitania. It also wanted that support demonstrated in front of those foreign states which were entitled under international law to decide on the fate of the country. Unity would not be prejudiced in any way by the promises given to Cyrenaica that the Italians would not return to Tripoli.[993]

Crucially, then, as far as Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya was concerned, unity with Tripolitania was conditional on following the agreed principles. Its attitude was influenced by Britain's desire to realise its ambitions in Cyrenaica, and since the Tripolitanian leaders refused to agree to those conditions, it maintained its separatist stance.[994]

Following the disagreement between Cyrenaica and the delegation from Tripoli regarding Libyan unity, on 11 January 1948 Al-Sanusi created Al-Mutamar Al-Watani. This body had the same structure and objectives as its predecessor, Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya. It consisted of some 75 community leaders, who together represented all the different areas of Cyrenaica. An elected Executive Committee comprising eighteen members[995] was also created in order to examine the issues of establishing Cyrenaica as an Emirate, independence, Libyan unity under the leadership

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[991] M. Alshintie, *The Case of Libya* (Cairo, 1951), pp.163-165.
[992] Research Department (Foreign Office), 'The political parties in Cyrenaica', 2 November 1948, London, The National Archives, TNA FO 1015/271.
[993] Shukri, *The Birth of the Modern Libya*, p.212
[994]'Minutes of the National Congress session, Benghazi', 10 January 1948, Benghazi, National Library, Division of documents and manuscripts, Appendix 19.
[995] Omar Pasha Al-Kikhia, *Sheikh* Yassin Almiri, Mahmoud Abu Hidmah, Hamid Almahjoub, Ali Pasha Alobeidi, Ali Hamouda, Mustafa Alasfar, Hussein Pasha Bsekry, Abdul-Hamid Al-Dibyany, Daoud Mubarak Almahshar, Abdul-Jawad Alfretis, Muhammad Abdullah Dalaf, Yoosof Lanqui, Salim bin Amir, Bakkar Abu Aqilah, Muhammad Sergaiwah and Renato Tashoobahasa, representative of the Jewish community.
 'General National Congress Session', 11 January 1948, Benghazi, National Library, documents and archives division.

of Al-Sanusi's brother, Mohammed Al-Rida, and two deputies, namely Al-Siddiq Al-Rida (Idris Al-Sanusi's nephew) and Abu Al-Qasim Al-Sanusi.[996] This committee reached a consensus on the following points:

- The need to emphasise the hereditary nature of Idris Al-Sanusi's position as emir.

- The need to uphold the unity of Libya by forming two administrations, one in Cyrenaica and the other in Tripoli, operating on a federal basis to prevent Italy's return to Cyrenaica in any shape or form.[997]

- The need to declare the independence of the Libyan territories before the arrival of the Commission of Inquiry regardless of local conditions and international circumstances, because no one wanted to run the risk of falling foul of the international ambitions and political bargaining that might surface when the issue of the country's independence was raised.[998]

Consequently, the members of Al-Mutamar Al-Watani signed and sent a memorandum to Idris Al-Sanusi stating that, since the Peace Conference, the country had considered itself to be independent, and that the relevant international powers should recognise this independence and hand over administration of the country to Libyans. Al-Mutamar Al-Watani members also called on the Arab States to help Libya ensure that its demands were recognised.[999] They also sent the summary of the committee's resolutions to all parties and political organisations in Tripolitania and Fezzan, demanding that a delegation be formed including Omar Bek Shinaib, Khalil Bek Alkallal and Abdul-Razik Shaqloof.[1000] The formation of the delegation did not face any real opposition from Al-Mutamar Al-Watani.[1001] However, Cyrenaica appeared unified and any disagreement regarding differences in political views was not stressed. This was not the case for Tripolitania since two separate delegations represented through their own

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[996] 'The political parties in Cyrenaica', London, The National Archives, TNA FO 1015/271.
[997] 'Minutes of the National Congress session', 10 January 1948, Benghazi, National Library, Division of documents and manuscripts, Appendix 19.
[998] Ibid.
[999] 'Memorandum from the National Congress to Idris Al-Sanusi', 7 February 1948, Benghazi, National Library, Division of documents and manuscripts.
[1000] 'Minutes of the National Congress Session', 14 February 1948, Benghazi, National Library, Division of documents and manuscripts.
[1001] 'Report from the Cyrenaica delegation to Idris Al-Sanusi concerning its representation of Cyrenaica at the United Nations General Assembly', Benghazi, National Library, Division of documents and manuscripts.

identity, such as the Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Muttahida, and Hizb Al-Istiqlal [Independence Party].[1002]

Al-Mutamar Al-Watani was opposed to any interference in the internal affairs of the country. This position was evident in its explicit stand against Abdul-Rahman Azzam's intervention in Libyan affairs, accusing him of having caused a rift amongst Libyans since the establishment of the Libyan Army in Egypt.[1003] Their opposition was made clear in a complaint which Al-Mutamar Al-Watani addressed to the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs regarding the publication of criticism of Idris Al-Sanusi in the Egyptian Press.[1004] The Administrative Authority of the Congress also protested about the Articles of the Constitution of Cyrenaica when it saw the version published by the British Representative in Cyrenaica. The representative noted that according to that Constitution, people did not consider themselves in an era of independence but of tutelage; therefore, the Administrative Authority of the Congress disassociated itself from this publication by calling an assembly of Al-Mutamar Al-Watani to determine exactly what had happened.[1005]

The Congress sent several telegrams over the course of two years to the Secretary General of the United Nations protesting about it having not sent a representative and an Advisory Council[1006] to Libya from Iraq, Syria and Turkey did not form part of the membership of the Council since these countries did not have any ambitions or vested interest in Libya.[1007] Thus, it became clear that Al-Mutamar Al-Watani rejected any intervention in Libyan affairs. However, its opposition to issues relating to constitutional development in the country fell on deaf ears as the United Nations paid no attention to the opposition and continued with the process of Libya's independence.

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[1002] More will be said about this later in the section focusing on Tripoli.

[1003] Abdul-Rahman Azzam, (1893–1976), also known as Azzam Pasha, was an Egyptian diplomat and politician. He served as the first Secretary General of the Arab League from 22 March 1945 to September 1952. See Alsabke, *Independence in Libya among the Arab countries and the Arab league*, p.43.

[1004] General National Congress, 'Protest submitted to the Egyptian Foreign Minister concerning criticism of Prince Idris published in the Egyptian newspapers', Benghazi, 27 November 1948, Benghazi, National Library, Division of documents and manuscripts, Appendix 21.

[1005] 'Minutes of the General National Congress Session', 13 October 1949, Benghazi, National Library, Division of documents and manuscripts.

[1006] The Advisory Council was a preparatory committee approved by the United Nations at the request of the U.S. delegation which was tasked with writing the Constitution aided by the people of Libya. The Council was composed of delegates from Pakistan, Egypt, and Britain, France and the US along with the representatives of the three Libyan regions (Tripoli, Cyrenaica and Fezzan) and nine representatives of Libya's minority communities.

[1007] 'Minutes of the General National Congress Session', 17 October 1949, Benghazi, National Library, Division of documents and manuscripts.

With regards to cultural activities, Al-Mutamar Al-Watani contributed to the advancement of Libyan culture by participating in a conference organised by the Khaldunian Society in Tunisia held on 20 September 1949. Their contribution took the form of financial assistance to Congress member Abdul-Hamid Al-Dibyani, a judge in Benghazi, to enable him to attend the conference after being deputised by the judges of Cyrenaica.[1008] Moreover, Al-Mutamar Al-Watani provided material and moral support to some of the cultural organisations such as Rabitat al-Shabab, and national newspapers including *Sout Al-Nas* and *Al-Jablakdar*.[1009]

Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya was an extension of the political activity of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar because, following the implementation of the Associations Law of January 1950, this organisation was renamed.[1010] The sports, culture and scouting organisations which had previously been under the aegis of the Association formally became independent entities. Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya made a formal request to the Ministry of Interior of Cyrenaica on 11 February 1950 to register as a political body managed by the Committee of Ten[1011] (so-called because of the number of members who represented the Benghazi and Darnah groups).[1012] The founding principles of Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya were:

> (1) To work for the unity of Libya and its independence under the Sanusi crown; (2) To defend the rights of the people and preserve the nation as one entity; (3) To work for the development of patriotic and national consciousness; (4) To support Arab unity and to strengthen the principles of Islam through cooperation with other Arab and Islamic nations.[1013]

These principles clearly show that Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya retained the principles of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar except with respect to its relationship with the Arab League. It is not clear why this was the case but there are two possible scenarios.

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[1008] 'Minutes of the General National Congress Session', 25 August 1949, Benghazi, National Library, Division of documents and manuscripts.
[1009] Ibid.
[1010] 'The political parties in Cyrenaica', The National Archives, TNA FO 1015/271.
[1011] Mustafa bin Amir as President, Mahmoud Makhloufas Secretary and Muhammad Bashir as Treasurer, in addition to the membership of Ali Fallaq, Miftah Abuhararah, Ahmad Rafik Almahdawi, Faraj Algahwagy, Muhammad Alsabiri, Muhammad Alsadawiah and Abdulhamid Bin Halim.
[1012] de Candole, 'Memorandum on the Cyrenaica National Assembly',27 October 1951, Benghazi, National Library, Division of documents and manuscripts, p.7.
[1013] Almagrabe, *Documents of the Omar Al-Mukhtar Association,* p.178.

The first concerns what the Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya actually intended by the reference to cooperation with other Arab and Islamic nations and whether this is a veiled reference to the Arab League. Possibly this wording was chosen so as not to provoke the wrath of the national government, which did not see the League as being suitable for Arab leadership. The second possibility is that Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya had begun distancing itself from any links with the League as this was consistent with the policy of the national government. Given their general policy, the second possibility appears to be more likely since Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya would appear less threatening if it was seen to be complying with the principles of the Constituent Assembly.

The rest of the principles outlined by Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya follow the same approach that had been previously adopted by Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar in relation to national matters, in so far as it retained the right to influence public opinion and to work for the benefit of the nation and defend its interests. Britain wanted to create a Cyrenaica army in consultation with the Cyrenaica government, but Libyans were divided on this issue. In addition, some of the members of Cyrenaica openly criticised the idea of a Cyrenaica army and the name itself proved confusing for Libyans. This did not appear to be in the interests of the whole of Libya, but rather highlighted divisions amongst them. Hence the role played by the members of Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya was a positive one since it urged Libyans to unite for the main cause: a unified Libya. Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya sent two memoranda to Idris Al-Sanusi and to the British Representative explaining that the creation of a Cyrenaica army would be against the wishes of the Libyans.[1014]

However, the members of Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya supported the creation of a Libyan army. This could have been disastrous politically and morally.[1015] Politically, Libya's situation was still fluctuating and the United Nations' decision to grant independence had not yet been implemented. In moral terms, cooperation on military matters in this way with the British would have given them an excuse to maintain an interest in Libya's internal affairs.[1016]

When the Advisory Board was established, Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya sent a memorandum to the United Nations mission in Libya and to Council members providing a clear picture of the situation in Cyrenaica. According to the Assembly's viewpoint, Cyrenaica

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[1014] Khadduri, *Modern Libya*. pp.95-96.
[1015] Ibid.
[1016] *Al-Watan,*14 March 1950.

would not make a suitable capital for the anticipated Libyan state because it would be established in a separatist stronghold and under the management of a foreign administration. The memorandum also pointed out the shortcomings of the BMA and its plans to keep possession of Cyrenaica. Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya concluded the memorandum by demanding that the Advisory Board take the necessary steps to limit the political influence of Britain in Cyrenaica, so that plans could be drawn up that would apply to all three regions of Libya at the same time.[1017]

Thus, the leadership of Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya authorised the Advisory Board to choose the political system of the Libyan state, believing that it should be a unified state with regards to its internal and foreign affairs; however, at the same time, it did not object to the federal system approved by the Advisory Board. This did lead to a dispute between the leadership of Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya and the Darnah branch as the latter held tenaciously to the core principle originally established by the Assembly, namely, that federalism should be rejected as a form of colonialism. This rejection of federalism was in accordance with the stance of the Tripolitanian parties and Egypt. As for the leadership, it abandoned its commitment to the principle of unconditional Libyan unity and prioritised the need to transfer power from the BMA to the Libyans at once. The leadership realised that the dispute about the legitimacy of the Constituent Assembly[1018] would impede independence and believed it was better to establish the federal system as a first step to achieving Libyan unity and a truly national government.[1019]

Thus, the Benghazi leadership took a more moderate stance in relation to Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya than that of the Darnah branch because of its evaluation of the situation in light of the circumstances then pertaining in the country; namely, it believed that Libya was still caught between opposing forces with different political goals. As a result, it abandoned its original principles in order to avoid creating obstacles that would hamper the country's constitutional development and block the path towards independence. However, the Assembly was far from actively supporting the federal system, on the grounds that this would be costly, especially for a poor country such as Libya. The

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[1017] Almagrabe, *Documents of the Omar Al-Mukhtar Association,* p.194.

[1018] The Constituent Assembly, the National Assembly and the Committee of Sixty all refer to the same organisation. It was a body approved by the Committee of Twenty-One on 7 August 1950, and consisted of sixty members, twenty members for each territory. Its task was to work on forming an interim Libyan government and assumed the burdens of management and governance and wrote a Constitution for the country before 1 April 1951.

[1019] DeCandole, 'Memorandum on the National Assembly of Cyrenaica', p.8.

members of the Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya met with Adrian Plet [1020] at the Egyptian Consulate trying to convince him not to implement the federal system on the grounds that Cyrenaica favoured full Libyan unity and the elimination of all British and French influence in Libya.[1021]

Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya was influenced by nationalist principles which called for the entire territory of Libya to form the building blocks for the construction of national unity. However, it realised that despite any objections it might raise, Cyrenaica would not be the valid location for its opposition as long as Idris Al-Sanusi was still in charge. On that basis, Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya viewed Al-Sanusi as a political necessity to bring about the unity of the country. That being the case, Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya thought it was important for it to prevent him from falling under any influence that would force him to establish a politically retroactive system—hence its opposition to the BMA.[1022]

Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya continuously criticised the BMA and the Cyrenaica government. The Assembly Building was attacked in July 1951 following a mass demonstration concerning an act of medical negligence in a hospital.[1023] The national government then accused the Assembly of inciting the demonstrators. As a result, on 23 July 1951, Prime Minister Muhammad Alsaqazly issued a decree dissolving the Assembly and any organisations affiliated to it, such as the Libyan Scouts and Al-Nadi Alhli. The newspaper *Al-Watan* was also closed down.[1024] However, it should be noted that these demonstrations were not a sign of awareness of the objectives of Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya. It is more probable that they simply wished to make their opinions known to the Libyan community in response to the Assembly showing its opposition to the BMA and the National Government, especially in those matters that were directly related to the everyday life of citizens.

Although Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya tried to exploit popular feelings of resentment towards the government in order to expand its sphere of influence in the cities and rural areas to the detriment of Al-Sanusi, they made few inroads due to the strength of tribal loyalty towards him. Not everyone who supported Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya was fully aware of its

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[1020] On 10 December 1949, he was appointed High Commissioner for Libya by the UN
[1021] De Candole, 'Memorandum on the National Assembly of Cyrenaica', p.15.
[1022] Brocin, *The History of Libya*, p.220
[1023] The incident concerned a corpse that had been left unburied for several days until it began to decompose.
[1024] DeCandole, 'Memorandum on the National Assembly of Cyrenaica', p.14.

principles. Moreover, the extent of Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya's impact was limited, even on those who were prominent elements in it, due to that same tribal loyalty, which overrode personal political convictions and feelings of patriotism. That became evident in the elections for the Cyrenaican Representative Council in June 1950, when two members of Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya—Ali Zowarwah and Abdul-Hamid Najm—relied on the support of their tribes rather than contesting the electoral battle on the basis that they were members of the organisation. As a result, they were both elected while Ahmad Rafiq Almahdawi, who had relied purely on the influence of Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya, failed to win.[1025]

It appears that the BMA gave the Libyans political freedom, even though this ultimately led to dividing the people as they favoured different political parties. However, Al-Sanusi banned some political parties in Cyrenaica on 7 December 1947.[1026]

## 6.4  The Formation of Political activities in Tripolitania

A number of political parties and organisations were created in Tripoli during 1946-1949, with each having fairly similar political agendas. This clearly demonstrates that the BMA provided opportunities for the Libyans to establish political parties. It could also be argued that the BMA gave backing to each of these political parties in order to win their support. Some grew out of organisations which had originally been established as cultural and sporting organisations, such as Al-Nadi Al-Adabi, Nadi Al-Ummal, sports clubs, and Nadi Al-Eslah (the Reform Club).[1027]

For instance, Al-Hizb Al-Watani was the first political party to be formed in Tripolitania in 1945, and had its origins in the revival of Al-Nadi Al-Adabi, the Tripoli-based Literary Circle in 1943, when the numbers of citizens increased due to the return of émigrés following the war. Many of the Circle's members joined Al-Hizb Al-Watani under the leadership of Ahmad Alfaqih Hassan, and other prominent members.[1028] The party also included members from Misrata.[1029] It operated as an underground

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[1025] Almagrabe, *Documents of the Omar Al-Mukhtar Association*, p.188.
[1026] M. Almatardy, *Fifty Years of Libyan Jihad.*, p.53.
[1027] S. M. Hassan, *Libya between Past and Present* (Cairo, 1962), p.255.
[1028] The members of the organisation were Ahmad Alfaqih Hassan, Abd Al-Rahman Dukduk, Mustafa Mazran, Abd Razzaq Albashti, Aoun Muhammad Yousef, Muhammad Alaraby, Yousef Alsaadi, Alhadi Almoshairifi, Abdul-Salam Almarid, Tawfiq Borkhis and Salim Almontassir.
[1029] The party members from Misrata included *Sheikh* Khalifa Alwaldah, Alhadi Hakik, Mustafa Mahmoud Badi and Mahmoud Abdul-Latif.

organisation until it was formally recognised by the BMA on 8 April 1946. It espoused the following principles:

1.  Preserving the unity of Libya (including the territories of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan), and opposing partition and division.[1030]

2.  Improving the general socioeconomic level of the Libyan people in order for them to be able to run their own affairs.

3.  Working to link Libya politically and economically with the Arab League.

4.  Making the Libyan case for independence by contacting all international conferences focusing on matters of interest to Libya.[1031]

Al-Hizb Al-Watani also issued a statement which clarified the reasons for its establishment and its objectives:

> Al-Hizb Al-Watani in Tripoli was established to work hard and courageously to achieve the hopes of the Libyan people and champion these; the hopes of independence and sovereignty on the basis of unity and bonds between the various parts of the country: from the Egyptian border in the east to the Tunisian border in the west, and from the border with Sudan in the south to the Mediterranean Sea in the north. It was also established with the aim of joining the Arab League, as per the Charter of the League, and cooperation with all democratic peoples on the basis of the international coalition and respect for sovereignty and independence.[1032]

On this basis, Al-Hizb Al-Watani aspired to represent all Libyans, whether they lived in Tripolitania, Cyrenaica or Fezzan. However, it had never previously stated that it intended to work within a regional framework. This reflected the influence on its founders of the political current prevailing in the Levant, which called for all Arabs to form one single united political entity. Evidence for this opinion comes from the fact that there was a close relationship between those on the fringes of this party and the

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[1030] Alhadra, *Libyan political groups, their Historical Assets and Political Attitudes*, p.41.
[1031] 'Memorandum of the National Party in Tripoli', 1945, Committees and Parties File, Document 50, Appendix 22, Tripoli, Centre for Historical Studies of the Libyan *Jihad.*
[1032] 'Memorandum of the National Party in Tripoli', 1945, Committees and Parties File, Document 50, Appendix 22, Tripoli, Centre for Historical Studies of the Libyan *Jihad.*

Libyan political and cultural bodies outside the country. As soon as it won recognition from the BMA, the President of Al-Hizb Al-Watani sent the aforementioned list of principles to the Tripoli Cultural Club in Cairo with a letter attached which read as follows:

> Our hope is that you will make every effort to make Al-Hizb Al-Watani acceptable, in the hearts of your brothers and neighbours in Egypt. To facilitate this task, you will find herewith a set of print copies of the party's manifesto extracted from its constitution and a statement directed to the people that you can show to your brothers to make them aware of the principles of this party and its objectives.[1033]

Thus, in general terms, Al-Hizb Al-Watani had purely nationalist tendencies because it was keen to find channels of contact with other Arab countries to be able to explain the Libyan issue to them and enlist their support for the full independence of a unified Libya, so it could join the Arab League.[1034] It therefore refused all other proposed solutions, including a protectorate, mandate or trusteeship, whether this was to involve a single state or a multinational agreement. In addition, Al-Hizb Al-Watani would not discuss the form that the state should take on the grounds it was too early to address this issue.

This meant that initially, at least, it did not oppose the Al-Sanusi administration, though some of its elements were not happy about the Emirate.[1035] This failure to oppose Al-Sanusi's rule later became a source of concern for other Libyan parties. Due to the party's position on independence, national unity and joining the Arab League, most of its supporters were young intellectuals and tribal representatives. The party had nearly 15,000 members[1036] and pursued its political activities in accordance with the principles it had laid out. It also tried to strengthen its influence at the expense of the other parties and to gain the majority of the political clout in the territory of Tripoli. It demanded that the representatives of Tripoli at the Advisory Board be from among Al-Hizb Al-Watani members.[1037] Its President, Mustafa Mirzan, also opposed the federal system and the

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[1033] Al-Zawi, *The Libyans' Jihad in Exile*, p.99.
[1034] Ibid.
[1035] Ziadah, *Cyrenaica, the Eighth Arab State*, p.60.
[1036] M. Penney, 'Report on the political parties in Tripoli', Cairo, 26 December 1946, London, The National Archives, TNA FO 371/63176.
[1037] M. Abu Shaewa, *The Political System in Libya in the period 1951-1969*. p.18.

legitimacy of the Constituent Assembly, giving his reasons for this in a statement published in the press.[1038]

In a notable example of continued British influence, another organisation, Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Muttahida (The United National Front) was established on 10 May 1946, a month after the recognition of Al-Hizb Al-Watani by the BMA. It appeared as a result of a split between the members of Al-Hizb Al-Watani regarding the principle of trusteeship, which was raised at the Peace Conference held in Paris on 29 July 1946 to discuss the former Italian colonies.[1039] At the conference, the British indicated the possible return of Tripoli to Italy under Britain's tutelage. Although Al-Hizb Al-Watani rejected the tutelage of any country, a group emerged which had been influenced by British propaganda and demanded the trusteeship of Britain, believing this to be the best option if there were to be any tutelage of Tripoli. The aim of the group was to prevent the return of Italy to Tripoli under the guise of this principle.

As already mentioned, the result of that dispute was the split of this pro-British tutelage group from Al-Hizb Al-Watani and the establishment of Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Muttahida which included conservative elements.[1040] The latter enjoyed the support of the BMA who wanted it to run against Al-Hizb Al-Watani which was opposed to the British. Consequently, it was not a political party in the true sense of the word, but more of a body representing nearly seventy percent of the population of Tripoli.[1041] Membership included Arabs, Berbers and Jewish people, and representatives of almost all political opinions.[1042]

In June 1946, Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Muttahida sent a memorandum to the heads of the main powers with an interest in the future of Libya, outlining the demands of the Libyan people which were:

> (1) to maintain the unity of the country; (2) to guarantee independence under a constitutional democratic rule headed by Emir Idris Al-Sanusi;

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[1038] Alhadra, *Libyan political groups*, p.54.
[1039] M. Penney, 'Report on the political parties in Tripoli', Cairo, 26 December 1946, London, The National Archives, TNA FO 371/63176.
[1040] Salim Al-Montaser chaired the Commission, *Sheikh* Mohammed Abu Alasad Alalam (Mufti of Tripoli), Aoun Muhammad Souf, Tahir Al-Marez and Ibrahim bin Saban. BMA: Tripolitania, 'Note on effects in Tripolitania of the return of an Italian government', 24 June 1948, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 1015/5.
[1041] Ziadah, *Cyrenaica, the Eighth Arab State*, p.66.
[1042] 'Note on effects in Tripolitania of the return of an Italian government', TNA, FO 1015/5.

(3) to ensure that an independent Libya would be able to join the Arab League.[1043]

The Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Muttahida entered into negotiations with the Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya for recognition of the Al-Sanusi Emirate. The aim of the Tripoli Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Muttahida was to obtain the support of Al-Sanusi for the unification of Tripoli and Cyrenaica in order to fend off Italy's claims to Tripoli.[1044] The evidence shows that if Cyrenaica had gained independence, Tripoli could have gone to Italy. This urged Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Muttahida to begin negotiations with Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya, wherein the issue of Tripoli and national unity was raised and discussed. Eventually, the Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Muttahida accepted Al-Sanusi as the future leader of the country.

After the failure of the negotiations regarding unification between these two parties—those of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania— Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Muttahida became less enthusiastic about supporting the Al-Sanusi Emirate. This was evident from the appeals and statements it issued in preparation for receiving the Four Powers Commission of Inquiry on 25 October 1947. At the meeting, Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Muttahida emphasised its position regarding the need to maintain its demands for the independence of a Libyan state, consisting of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and Fezzan, and its accession to the Arab League.[1045] It also issued a statement in which it confirmed the need to maintain this call for independence and unity, pointing to its attempts at unification in talks with the Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya and the causes that had led to their failure, concluding that the decision on the form of government should be deferred until Libya was an independent state.

Al-Kutla Al-Wataniyya Al-Hurra (The Free National Bloc), was founded on 30 May 1946,[1046] with Ali Alfaqih Hassan as President. This was another political association that supported the unity of Libya but not the Al-Sanusi Emirate. Members[1047] included

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[1043] Abu Shaewa, *The Political System in Libya in the period 1951-1969*, p.19.
[1044] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 7 November 1947.
[1045] Ibid.
[1046] Hadi Ibrahim Al Masheargy, *Memories of fifty years of social and political events*, Centre for Historical Studies of the Libyan *Jihad* (Tripoli, 1988), p.138
[1047] Ahmad Alfaqih Hassan, Bashir Bin Hamza, Muhammad Tawfik Almabrook, Ali Alokab, Altahir Boosarwil, Yosef Almoshairife, Muhammad Kanayah, Ali Rajab and Jahan Sedky Alfortiah

Zachino Arbib and other Libyan Jews who supported the party financially.[1048] In terms of its three fundamental principles, firstly it considered Libya to be an indivisible unit with borders extending as far as Egypt to the east, Tunisia to the west, Sudan to the south and Mediterranean Sea to the north.[1049] Secondly, it demanded Libya's full independence and its accession to the Arab League. Thirdly, it called for the Libyan people to be given the right to choose the form of their constitutional government.[1050]

These principles were formulated in a memorandum submitted by the party to the Paris Peace Conference.[1051] A copy was also sent to the Secretary General of the Arab League in Cairo.[1052] Al-Kutla Al-Wataniyya Al-Hurra thus demonstrated its opposition to the Al-Sanusi Emirate. Moreover, it called for the establishment of a Constituent Assembly to decide on the future form of the government, which it thought should be a modern republic.[1053] To achieve its objectives, Al-Kutla Al-Wataniyya Al-Hurra started to hold open meetings as a means of influencing public opinion. These meetings usually focused on the rejection of the Al-Sanusi Emirate and of any form of tutelage, the need to establish a republican regime and to protest against British policy, particularly with regards to the migration of Italians to Libya and the creation of an Anglo-American naval base on Libyan territory. Al-Kutla Al-Wataniyya Al-Hurra organised a strike on May 15, 1946, against Italian return which proceeded without incident.[1054] The party also issued publications as a means to clarify its views and deny accusations, for example, a publication issued on 3 October 1946 protested against the actions of the BMA regarding the flow of Italian migrants into Libya.[1055]

Following a meeting held by Al-Kutla Al-Wataniyya Al-Hurra on 15 February 1948, in which speeches were delivered that stirred up public opinion against the BMA, the

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[1048] Few details are known about the role of Libyan Jews in political activities during this period in Libya but Zachino Arbib is mentioned in the 'Monthly Political Intelligence Report', Tripoli, February 1947, London, The National Archives, TNA WO 230/206.
[1049] 'Libyan leaders to the Secretary of the Foreign Ministers Council in London', undated, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 1015/4.
[1050] 'Memorandum from *Al-Kutla Al-Wataniyya Al-Hurra*', undated, Tripoli, Centre for Historical Studies of the Libyan Jihad, Salim Abu Qasim File, Document 24.
[1051] BMA: Tripolitania, 'Note on effects in Tripolitania of the return of an Italian government', TNA, FO 1015/5.
[1052] 'Memorandum from *Al-Kutla Al-Wataniyya Al-Hurra* of Tripoli to the Respectful Libyan Arab People', undated, Tripoli, Centre for Historical Studies of the Libyan Jihad, Salim Abu Qasim File, Document 4.
[1053] Penney, 'Report on the political parties in Tripoli', TNA FO 371/63176
[1054] BMA: Tripolitania, 'Note on effects in Tripolitania of the return of an Italian government', TNA, FO 1015/5.
[1055] 'Memorandum from *Al-Kutla Al-Wataniyya Al-Hurra*', undated, Tripoli, Centre for Historical Studies of the Libyan Jihad, Ali Faqih Hassan File, Document 16.

party's president was arrested on 18 February 1948 and released two months later. The police also raided the party's headquarters and arrested some forty of its members.[1056] The BMA believed this was a reprisal for Al-Kutla Al-Wataniyya Al-Hurra's harassment of Italians and the elements loyal to them.[1057] In response, a crowd of locals set off from the Al-Sanusi Mosque led by Ali Alokab, one of the main supporters of the Bloc, and clashed with the BMA police force.[1058]

Before the arrival of the Four Powers Commission of Inquiry, the Bloc issued an appeal to the Libyan people, informing them of the demands that they believed should be raised to the International Committee of Referendum; namely, full independence for a unified Libya and joining the Arab League. It also reminded Libyans that they should defend their right to govern themselves. It confirmed in its statement that the monarchs and the heads of Arab countries and the Arab League supported their demands and that their voice must be one and present a united front before the Committee.[1059]

Although the President of the Bloc denied that a meeting had taken place between his party and the International Committee, the report by the Commission of Inquiry records that the delegates from the party did appear before the Commission and expressed their hostility towards the Italians. However, they indicated their willingness to allow the Italian community to continue to live in Libya after independence and to grant them their full rights under the law.[1060]

The Bloc opposed the constitutional developments, and their opposition was evident in an article written by their party leader and published in the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* [the pyramids] on 15 January 1950:

> In short, not all the nation recognises those individual nominations to
> take over the presidency of the Libyan state in the name of 'Prince' or
> 'King'; rather, our nation wants free elections resulting in the selection

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[1056] Ibid.

[1057] A memorandum from C.A. Abbey to unknown, 24 June 1948, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 1015/5/033/4996/CA2 refers to the Monthly Political Intelligence Report for Tripolitania May 1948 and mentions Italian success in attracting some Arab notables and leaders 'who seek to attain personal ambitions to assist in the return of an Italian administration'.

[1058] Ziadah, *Cyrenaica, the Eighth Arab State* p.91.

[1059] 'Memorandum from *Al-Kutla Al-Wataniyya Al-Hurra* of Tripoli to the Respectful Libyan Arab People', undated, Tripoli, Centre for Historical Studies of the Libyan Jihad, Salim Abu Qasim File, Document 4.

[1060] Ziadah, *Cyrenaica, the Eighth Arab State,* p.63.

of whoever is eligible for presidency and leadership in all respects: legal, legitimate and national.[1061]

The party leader's rejection of the manner in which the Advisory Board had been formed was clearly expressed in his article. The party rejected the idea of federalism on the grounds that this would preordain the division of the country, and therefore its members refused to participate in the Commission of Twenty-One and the Constituent Assembly.[1062] On 11 November 1951, the flag of the party was raised at its headquarters and five slogans spelling out its position also appeared on its banners as follows: "The eyes of the citizens are watching the traitors", "Right will overcome", "The penalty for pride is severe, but the penalty for violence is worse", "Libya will not be separated from the Arab League" and "Colonial rule must end".[1063]

Thus, the party openly voiced its policies opposing the newly formed Libyan government. Moreover, it described this as another kind of colonialism and, as a result, one of its members sent a threatening message to Bashir al-Sadawi. Another exploded a bomb in front of the car of Idris Al-Sanusi on the road known locally as Independence Street. Although the President of the Bloc dismissed these incidents as actions carried out by individuals acting on their own initiative,[1064] the fact that they were members of Al-Kutla Al-Wataniyya Al-Hurra created a backlash in public opinion against that party because it was viewed as being extremist in its demands and in how it achieved its objectives. That opinion impacted on the nature of its membership which was by then restricted to those holding extremist views, but it still attracted some 800 members.[1065]

Regardless of whether the Bloc succeeded in achieving its goals or not, its main importance lay in that its demands reflected a political awareness in the community that supported it, especially with regards to the question of the rights of the citizens which was not found in the other Tripoli parties. While the Bloc demanded the formation of a constitutional government, the rest of the parties either opted to defer the question of the form of government to a post-independence period or recognised Al-Sanusi as Emir.

[1061] S. Ibrahim, 'Ahmed al-Faqih Hassan, Poetry and Literature', unpublished Master Thesis, Ain Shams University, 1982, p.72.

[1062] 'Memorandum from *Al-Kutla Al-Wataniyya Al-Hurra*, Tripoli, to Libyan Arab citizens", undated, Tripoli, Centre for Historical Studies of the Libyan Jihad, Salim Abu Qasim File, Document 15.

[1063] 'Bulletin of Criminal Investigation No. 132', Tripoli, 26 November 1951, Benghazi, National Library, Division of documents and manuscripts, unclassified document.

[1064] 'Bulletin of Criminal Investigation', unclassified document.

[1065] Alhadra, *Libyan political groups*, p.56.

With regards to its principles, Al-Kutla Al-Wataniyya Al-Hurra was clearly influenced by contemporary nationalist and republican systems. In this respect, it was—to some extent—in agreement with Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar. The difference was that Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar did not explicitly state its opposition to the Sanusiyyah movement because it was based within a tribal community which supported Al-Sanusi.

In November 1946 Hizb Al-Ittihad Al-Misri Al-Tarablusi (The Egypto-Tripolitanian Union Party) was formed in Tripoli under the leadership of Ali Rajab[1066] and Yusuf Al-Mushayriqi as result of a split from Al-Kutla Al-Wataniyya Al-Hurra.[1067] The main reason for founding this party was the decision taken by the four major powers to send the International Commission of Referendum to the former Italian colonies, and the founding members of the Hizb Al-Ittihad Al-Misri Al-Tarablusi party feared that the outcome of this Committee might lead them to recommend referring the Libyan case to the United Nations Trusteeship Council. The Libyans' thoughts were clear that after the war, Libya would be independent, but the convening referendum in Libya would delay the independence, meaning that the Libyans would lose all legal basis to state their dissatisfaction with tutelage and find this imposed upon them.[1068]

These demands related to the call for administrative and legislative independence on the basis of a union between Egypt and Libya under the Egyptian crown. Egypt had been chosen from among the other Arab states for several reasons. The United Nations Charter specifically highlighted the need to create regional units made up of similar peoples who shared cultural and historical bonds. Hizb Al-Ittihad Al-Misri Al-Tarablusi was in favour of forming such a unit, which would build on the strength of the existing links between the people of Libya and Egypt. Knowing that the Four Powers Commission of Inquiry would present Libyans with the opportunity to express their opinion regarding the possibility of joining one of their neighbours, Hizb Al-Ittihad Al-Misri Al-Tarablusi wished to encourage people to seize that opportunity and join Egypt.[1069] On this basis, the goals of Hizb Al-Ittihad Al-Misri Al-Tarablusi were:

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[1066] Ali Rajab was born in the old city in Tripoli, where he got his first education at a *zawaya*, and later attended Italian school. See: M. Penney to C. Ravensdale, Cairo, 6 January 1947, London, The National Archives, TNA FO 371/63187.
[1067] 'Political parties in Tripoli', TNA FO 1015/1014.
[1068] Ibid.
[1069] Ibid.

1. To achieve the union of Libya with Egypt under the Egyptian crown on the basis of shared sovereignty and a unified defence and foreign policy, with Libya enjoying autonomous status regarding legislative and administrative authorities.[1070]

2. To form one single Libyan nation from the three regions (Tripoli, Cyrenaica and Fezzan) based on their common historical and geographical bonds.

3. To resist all ideas or efforts intended to separate any of these territories from the body of the nation.[1071]

Hizb Al-Ittihad Al-Misri Al-Tarablusi sent memoranda in which it explained its objectives and demands to the King of Egypt, Egyptian politicians and the Secretary General of the Arab League. It also sent similar documents to other parties in Tripoli.[1072]

From this information, it is clear that the founders of Hizb Al-Ittihad Al-Misri Al-Tarablusi built their demands on the basis of their data relating to the failure of the Tripoli parties to reach an agreement; therefore, they expected that the imposition of trusteeship on the country would be judged the most appropriate solution by the United Nations Commission of Inquiry. Their suspicions proved to be correct as the Committee of Inquiry concluded that Libya was not yet eligible for independence. However, the party erroneously gave the greatest weight to the views of foreign states and neglected domestic public opinion. This was due to its wish to avoid foreign dominance in the affairs of Libyan unity[1073] and to get rid of the morass of conflicting political opinions. If Tripoli accepted the trusteeship of Egypt because most of Tripoli's political parties had connections to Egyptian nationalistic groups, these parties would not have been satisfied with Al-Sanusi's Emirate, which was simply considered a political necessity for the unity of the country. Joining with Egypt would have removed any justification to approve the emirate. Equally, Idris Al-Sanusi would not have allowed Cyrenaica to be affiliated to Egypt, as his policy was to form an independent emirate.[1074] Nor would he have been satisfied with Egypt as trustee, since he himself had declared on more than

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[1070] Ibid.

[1071] 'The Objectives of the Egypto-Tripolitanian Union Party', undated, Tripoli, Centre for Historical Studies of the Libyan Jihad, Salim Abu Qasim file, Document 22.

[1072] 'Political parties in Tripoli', TNA FO 1015/1014,

[1073] Monthly political intelligence report Tripoli, December, 1947, London, The National Archives, TNA. WO 230/206

[1074] 'Monthly political intelligence report', TNA WO 230/206

one occasion that the country needed a strong ally but Egypt could not even defend itself, let alone Libya. So Hizb Al-Ittihad Al-Misri Al-Tarablusi failed to secure sufficient support in either Libya or Egypt, its membership eventually sinking to less than 300.[1075] However, there is evidence that suggests it continued to exist until the Declaration of Libyan Independence.[1076]

With regards to the party's position vis-à-vis the Al-Sanusi Emirate, despite the negotiations conducted by the party's executive body with Cyrenaica before the arrival of the Four Powers Commission of Inquiry, the head of the party considered these contacts to be a complement to his talks with Idris Al-Sanusi in Egypt aimed at convincing him that a unified Libya, consisting of all three of its territories, would create a union with Egypt; his acceptance of the Al-Sanusi Emirate was intended to improve relationships with Cyrenaica. Ali Rageb, President of Hizb Al-Ittihad Al-Misri Al-Tarablusi sent a personal invitation to the Emir to visit Tripolitania.[1077]

Thus, Hizb Al-Ittihad Al-Misri Al-Tarablusi was not truly supportive of the Al-Sanusi Emirate nor did it advocate this; however, it was prepared to accept this due to the difficulties of the circumstances that the country was going through.

A further example of the BMA's continuing influence is that of the Hizb Al-Ummal party (Libyan Labour Party). The party's founder was Bashir Bin Hamza, who had been Al-Kutla Al-Wataniyya Al-Hurra treasurer until July 1947. [1078] The party was recognised by the BMA at the beginning of September 1947 on the grounds that it was a labour organisation that had the support of dock workers, transport workers, Italian factory workers and public civil servants.[1079] The party's main objective was to improve conditions for workers, protect their interests and consider their importance in public affairs, but in terms of its more general political outlook, it called for the total independence of a unified Libya and accession to the Arab League. In addition, in

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[1075] 'Political parties in Tripoli', TNA FO 1015/1014,

[1076] Reference is made to the party in the Criminal Investigation Department bulletin issued 26 November 1951, noting it had not been involved in any problematic behaviour, suggesting it was still in existence. See: 'Bulletin of Criminal Investigation, No. 132', unclassified document, p.5.

[1077] C-in-C MELF to War Office, 24 January 1948, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 1015/5/ 49647/OET.

[1078] M.T. Karfa, الحركة العمالية في ليبيا [The Labour Movement in Libya 1943-1969] (Tripoli, 2000).

[1079] Abu Shaewa, *The Political System in Libya in the period 1951-1969*, p.22.

keeping with its socialist leanings, it espoused the philosophy that the power of the people is greater than the power of the individual.[1080]

The political objectives of Hizb Al-Ummal were similar to those adopted by Al-Kutla Al-Wataniyya Al-Hurra, but in spite of its clear political stance, it did not strive to make its voice heard and always remained outside of political talks. It did not contact the Four Powers Committee of Inquiry to clarify its demands, as there is no mention of it in the reports. Alhadra points out in her study that the reason for this was the party's dependence on the labour movement, which was still developing, meaning that it lacked cohesion and political awareness.[1081]

Hizb Al-Ummal lacked support due to its president's connection with some sectors of the Italian community.[1082] Muhammad Alfarjani, one of the members of the Workers' Trade Union, which was formed later, indicated that the trade union movement began when Arab workers joined forces with Italian workers, who were allowed to form unions, which enabled both groups to gain some concessions.[1083] Thus, it could be argued that the head of Hizb Al-Ummal was not loyal to Italian elements but rather using them as a tool to achieve rights for Arab workers.[1084] Nevertheless, this party's low level of support strongly suggests that feelings towards the Italian community in Tripoli were overwhelmingly negative with increasing calls for it to leave. Ultimately, in January 1949, the BMA in Tripoli issued a decision to dissolve Hizb Al-Ummal and no longer recognise it as a political party because it did not have the necessary quorum to retain this status.[1085]

The BMA was also involved in eventually recognising and to some degree helping legitimise the Hizb Al-Ahrar (The Liberal Party). This party consisted of a group of intellectuals working in the field of education under the leadership of a former member of Al-Hizb Al-Watani, Alsadik Bin Zarra. Hizb Al-Ahrar's main objective was to work towards overcoming the difficulties that stood in the way of Libyan unity and to make this a reality which could be demanded by all Libyan parties once they had the means

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[1080] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 17September 1947.
[1081] Alhadra, *Libyan political groups*, p.85
[1082] Alhadra, *Libyan political groups*, p.86
[1083] Miloud, *Cultural activity in Libya in the era of independence*, p.79.
[1084] 'Monthly political intelligence report' Tripoli, December 1947, London, The National Archives, TNA WO 230/206.
[1085] Plet, *Libyan Independence and the United Nations*, p.313.

by which to achieve this purpose.[1086] Therefore, this party took the initiative to contact all the influential players in the fight for Libyan policy, including the leader of Fezzan, Ahmad Saif Al-Nasr. It also made contact with Al-Mutamar Al-Watani in Cyrenaica.[1087]

Although the BMA did not recognise this party officially until 11 March 1948, its activities had actually begun before that, as it had had contacts with Al-Mutamar Al-Watani in Cyrenaica since it had been founded in January 1948. Hizb Al-Ahrar received a message from Al-Mutamar Al-Watani on 29 January 1948 on the issue of identifying political bodies in Cyrenaica and integrating these into Al-Mutamar Al-Watani.[1088] This cleared the way for Idris Al-Sanusi to become the emir of a united Libya. This was because Libya's unification, independence and formation of a national government had been agreed.[1089]

Hizb Al-Ahrar endorsed its decisions of how to support Libyan unity and its future ruler and its President met with Idris Al-Sanusi at the end of February 1948. Alsadik Bin Zarra assured Al-Sanusi that the critical circumstances in which the country found itself demanded cooperation and a joint effort since acting in a way which lacked cohesion would be against Libyan interests and the enemy would be the only beneficiary from that.[1090] Thus, Hizb Al-Ahrar focused its efforts on realising Libya's aspirations to nationhood by liaising between leaders and key organisations in the political arena.[1091]

Adding to the breadth of the emerging organised political landscape in Libya, Hizb Al-Istiqlal (The Independence Party) was founded on 6 September 1949, under the leadership of Salim Al-Muntasir following his resignation from the presidency of Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Muttahida in Tripoli. This split was caused by a dispute between Al-Muntasir and Bashir al-Sadawi, each of whom proposed different initiatives to ensure acceptance of the Al-Sanusi Emirate. Al-Muntasir wanted the Egyptian authorities to negotiate with Al-Sanusi as the key player in matters of national interest, but Al-Sadawi discussed this with the Prime Minister of Egypt without consulting Al-Muntasir. To heal the rift between the two, the Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Muttahida

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[1086] A. Al-Subki, استقلال ليبيا بين هيئة الامم المتحدة وجامعة الدول العربية 1943-1952 [Libya's independence between the UN and the Arab League 1943-1952] (Cairo, 1991), p.16.

[1087] Brocin, *The History of Libya,* p.129.

[1088] Ziadah, *Cyrenaica, the Eighth Arab State,* p.64.

[1089] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 17 February 1948.

[1090] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 29 February 1948.

[1091] Ziadah, *Cyrenaica, the Eighth Arab State,* pp.69-70.

Secretary, Abdul-Rahman Alkalhood, held a meeting to discuss the dispute and pronounced in favour of Bashir al-Sadawi. Taking this as a personal insult, Al-Muntasir resigned to create Hizb Al-Istiqlal[1092] with a group of other members.[1093]

In terms of general principles, the party supported the people's right to choose the form of political system that best satisfied them, whether this be monarchist or republican. This was to be achieved by a Jam'iya Al-Wataniyya to be configured by a preparatory committee headed by Al-Sanusi, which represented the various Libyan political parties. Should the people opt for a monarchy, Idris Al-Sanusi was judged to be the best man for uniting the Libyan territories by the Libyans.[1094] It also advocated cooperation with Italy in order to guarantee Libya's independence. Hizb Al-Istiqlal therefore won broad support amongst the Italian community in Tripoli although anti-Italian feelings continued to run high amongst the Libyan Arabs.[1095]

It is clear that personal ambitions and feuds had an impact on the formation of this party and its tendencies, suggesting that loyalty to the clan and the tribe was stronger than loyalty to the government during that period. Foreign influences had the upper hand in the direction of this party and in the setting of its goals, as evidenced in its refusal to support the Arab League. Although the party claimed to support the Al-Sanusi Emirate, this can be viewed, in fact, as simply a way for Al-Muntasir to steal a march on the other parties that deferred the question of government to the post-independence period.

The final political organisation to emerge in the BMA era in Libya was Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi (The National Congress of Tripoli). The presentation of the draft of the Bevin-Sforza plan affected the composition of Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi because the crisis created a kind of rapprochement between all the political parties in Tripoli, especially the Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Muttahida and Al-Hizb Al-Watani. Therefore, the members of both these parties called a meeting on 14 May 1949 and formed a new body, Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi under the leadership of Bashir al-Sadawi, which then invited all the other political bodies to join it.[1096]

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[1092] Khaduri, *Modern Libya*, p.119.
[1093] Ali bin Shaban, Rasim Kabar, Kamil Alhamali, Abullah Al-Sharif, Ahmad Karzah, Khalil Nasoof, Alisawi Abu Khanjar, Abdul-Hamid Kabar, Muhammad bin Hussein Al-Muntasir, Muhammad Abdul-Samad Alna'ass, Abdul-Aziz Ma'took, Abdullah bin Humaid, Ali Sassy Khouzam, Abdullah Al-Ijaili and Obaidah Almahjoob
[1094] Shaewa, *The Political System in Libya*, p.23.
[1095] Ibid.
[1096] 'Annual report of Tripolitania, 1950', TNA FO 1015/800.

On 15 May 1949, the Executive Committee of Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi decided to organise a display of civil disobedience in Tripoli and the neighbouring provinces. Following this, a demonstration was organised with the participation of some of the members of Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar. The demonstrators called for an end to the rule of both Italy and Britain and demanded the independence of a unified Libya under the crown of Idris Al-Sanusi. When the Bevin-Sforza Plan failed, the Conference announced this decision on 18 May 1949, which put an end to the civil disobedience.[1097] Al-Sadawi outlined the principles of Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi in one of his statements:

> The consensus of the Libyan nation to obtain its unity and independence has been manifested in all the decisions taken by Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi. These have relied on the sons of this tenaciously brave people throughout all the phases of its long national resistance with a strong resolve to see that the Libyan nation alone has the right to self-determination and to liberate itself from this protracted interregnum. Today, it is taking effective steps to achieve the legitimate aspirations of the country and its national and patriotic objectives. Those national and patriotic aspirations are simply to support the unity of Libya and its independence under the crown of the Al-Sanusi emirate.[1098]

Thus, Al-Mutamar Al-Tarablusi supported Al-Sanusi's Emirate, and it was supposed that the Tripolitania parties, especially Al-Hizb Al-Watani, the Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Muttahida and Al-Kutla Al-Wataniyya Al-Hurra, would agree to accept the emirate as the core of a new entity, but that did not happen. Moreover, those parties that united to fight the Bevin-Sforza Plan soon divided once again when the project failed and challenged Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi's right to act as the political body representing all the parties of Tripolitania. The split was caused by the fact that most of the people and political parties of Cyrenaica had placed their loyalty and confidence in Al-Sanusi, wishing to see him as the leader of the unified Libya. The Tripolitanians, on

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[1097] Alhadra, *The Libyan political groups,* p.138
[1098] 'Statement of the Leader to the Citizens of Tripolitania', Tripoli, Centre for Historical Studies of the Libyan Jihad, Salim Abu Qasimfile, document 14.

the other hand, were mostly against him, believing he had let them down when he fled to Egypt in 1922.[1099]

These parties rejected the appointment by Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi of the representatives of Tripolitania in the Committee of Twenty-One,[1100] prompting Al-Sadawi to ask Al-Sanusi himself to appoint these members. However, he refused on the grounds that he did not have the authority to do that. Thus, Al-Sadawi remained the most prominent figure in Tripolitania for the purposes of negotiation. Al-Sanusi agreed with him on most of the points concerning the form that the state should take (it was to be a federal model) but they disagreed on two points. The first related to the presence of an Italian member in the Preparatory Committee, as Al-Sanusi did not want any Italian representation. He finally accepted this on the basis of a recommendation from the United Nations representative. The second point related to the presence of foreign troops in Libya. Al-Sadawi demanded a specific date be given for the withdrawal of these forces since he regarded them as interfering in the country's internal affairs, whereas Al-Sanusi insisted on their staying.[1101]

When the Commission authorised the written constitution to be approved, on 9 December 1950, a Sub-Commission was charged with choosing the type of government for Libya, and stipulated that this should be a federal one. Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi and the Tripoli parties opposed that decision, and Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi called an emergency session on 5 January 1951, which resolved:

> Libya must be unified under the crown of Idris Al-Sanusi; with its own
> government and parliament that should be freely elected by the people.
> There is no objection to the formation of local administrations in each
> region of Libya, on the condition that there should be a local parliament
> and ministries in each of these.[1102]

A delegation from Tripoli was formed to bring these demands to Al-Sanusi, but it was prevented from travelling to Cyrenaica. Therefore, the delegation sent him a telegram

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[1099] Al-Zawi, *Jihad of heroes in West Tripoli*, pp.460-2; also British Information Services, Middle East to Foreign Office, 2 September 1946, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 371/57187, U6953/106/79.
[1100] The Commission of Twenty-One or the Preparatory Committee was the next step in the constitutional evolution in Libya. The Commission was made up of representatives from the three regions of Libya, seven members from each, and its mission was to decide how to configure the National Assembly which would in turn form a provisional Libyan government.
[1101] Shaewa, *The Political System in Libya*, p.25.
[1102] BMA Cyrenaica to War Office, 12 August 1948, London, The National Archives, TNA, FO 1015/6/033/4996.

on 15 January, expressing their unhappiness at this decision since the delegation represented the people. Moreover, on 24 January, the youth of the Congress led protests against federalism, leading to their arrest and imprisonment.[1103] It paid no heed to this opposition and issued a decision concerning the configuration of the three Libyan provinces on 21 February 1951. Following that, Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi held a meeting on 6 March at which it resolved firstly, to uphold the unity of Libya and the position of Idris Al-Sanusi as monarch and to insist on the full implementation of the resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations issued on 21 November 1949. Secondly, it was resolved that it would not recognise the legitimacy of the Constituent Assembly since it had violated the United Nations' decision which stipulated representation for the people not regions. Furthermore, the Constituent Assembly was judged to have committed an even more serious violation of this decision by creating temporary governments in both Tripoli and Fezzan in addition to that of Cyrenaica, and thus effectively establishing three governments in Libya and imposing a federal system on the country.

On this basis, Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi took the following decisions: by resolving to withdraw its members from the Constituent Assembly and to dismiss anyone who did not agree with that decision from membership of Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi. It also called for the other members from Tripoli to withdraw from the Constituent Assembly.[1104]

At the same time, the opposition parties, including Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi presented a memorandum to the Advisory Board, and the representative of all parties denounced the establishment of the separate governments. Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi in Cyrenaica also sent a telegram to the Secretary General of the Arab League appealing for a discussion of the issue of Libya in the Political Committee of the Arab League so that they might take whatever action they deemed appropriate. Despite Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi's opposition to the federal system and its non-recognition of the National Constituent Assembly, it was ready to stand in the elections for the House of Representatives. Muhammad Wahib, a member of Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi stated:

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[1103] *Shualat Al-Huriya*, 4 February 1951.
[1104] Alhadra, *The Libyan political groups*, p.197.

Any force in the world, no matter how powerful it is, will not be able to rob us of our right approved by the United Nations to form a genuinely untarnished independent state under the crown of the holy King of Libya, Idris I [...] And the day will come when the independence which we are so eagerly awaiting will be declared. We protest vigorously against those who wish to delay it or those who accuse Al-Mutamar Al-Watani of causing the delay of Independence Day, which your Congress, led by its great leader, fought to win until it succeeded, thanks be to Allah. Your Congress will run in the election battle and is confident by Allah that it will be the winner.[1105]

Thus, there was no clearly designed policy for Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi, meaning it was difficult to determine its political direction, as it initially claimed to be in favour of federalism as a political system in the country and later opposed it. It also agreed on the way in which the Constituent Assembly had been formed and then accused it of having no legitimacy and called on its members to withdraw. Finally, it participated in the elections. Its decision to participate was an implicit recognition of the constitutional evolution that had occurred in the country, which had previously been rejected by Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi. It did not always appear to have a clear strategy and its policies were governed by personal interests.

The Tripolitanian parties had different political opinions, for instance, Al-Kutla Al-Wataniyya Al-Hurra was nationalist in orientation, and wanted a unified independent nation and accession to the Arab League. It demanded a republican system, and thus unequivocally opposed the Al-Sanusi Emirate. Other parties also sought a unified independent nation and accession to the Arab League, but supported the establishment of an emirate under Al-Sanusi. These were Al-Mutamar Al-Watani Al-Tarablusi, Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Muttahida, and Hizb Al-Ahrar.[1106]

However, the support for the emirate by these parties was not absolute, as their views on this issue were usually ambivalent and lacked consistency, and depended on their perception of the degree of danger threatening Tripoli due to the possibility of the return of foreign influence. Thus, for these parties, backing the Al-Sanusi Emirate was nothing more than a political manoeuvre designed to gain support for autonomy in the

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[1105] 'Bulletin of Criminal Investigation, No. 132', unclassified document, p.4.
[1106] A. Baldinetti, *Origins of the Libyan Nation* (London, 2010), p.110.

international arena, particularly since Cyrenaica had received a promise from the British government that the Italians would not return to Libya. Many belonging to these parties realised that a unified Libya could not be achieved unless the people of Tripolitania recognised the leadership of Idris Al-Sanusi. He was seen as a key figure in the international arena as a result of his contact and agreements with his allies.[1107]

## 6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has considered how the key political parties in Libya developed during the period of British Rule in Libya. Voluntary associations and cultural activism paved the way, step by step, for the formation of political parties with distinctive identities and agendas which reflected many of the prevalent intellectual and ideological tendencies of the era including class consciousness and socialism, anti-colonialism and pan-Arabist sentiments.

The BMA's role shaped the way in which these political parties emerged because of the laws they established that gave the Libyans (Arabs and Jews) the right to express their wishes. This freedom paved the way for the members of such associations and political parties to talk about various aspects of politics. After the BMA introduced reforms and promulgated new laws in Libya, those who had been oppressed under the Italian regime in the regions of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania formed political parties.

This marked the real beginning of the emergence of its ambitions of nationhood, being aware of the extent of the country's strategic importance. Libyans joined political parties demanding their right to nationhood, building consensus around core principles including complete independence, self-determination, a unified Libya and rejection of any foreign intervention against the wishes of the people. Although the new legislation granting permission to form political parties was positive in itself, it also led to the creation of factions and divisions amongst the Libyans as these groups began to multiply in both regions of Libya, and, furthermore, pursued different agendas. In addition, some political parties of Cyrenaica held a different view, as their agenda was Cyrenaica as an independent country first, then unification with Tripoli. Contrary to this, the political parties of Tripoli focused solely upon unification. This led both sides

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[1107] Al-Zawi, *Jihad of heroes in West Tripoli*, pp.452-3.

(Tripoli and Cyrenaica) to initially fail in negotiations. Eventually, both sides agreed to one independent Libya.

In addition, the BMA promoted different activities designed to improve the civic education and community development including membership of associations and political parties. Initially, intellectuals were motivated and encouraged to take part in such activities, but the BMA was also committed to allowing different classes of Libyans to voice their demands more forcefully. The BMA agenda was to ensure Libyans understood the theory and practice of democracy so that they would be empowered to develop their own institutions and a strong democratic framework in the future built on associations and political parties.

The émigrés in Egypt and the students at Al-Azhar University were the pioneers, firstly in creating social and cultural associations and then in re-forming these as political parties. Just as their cultural activism had been one of the most prominent features of life in Libya during that period, so their pro-nationalist political activism was to come to the fore in the run-up to independence. Some of these individuals and parties would play a decisive role in carving out the future path for Libya while others would fail to exert widespread influence because they lacked the support of the masses. The BMA privileged those who were educated and had worked in different cultural associations in Egypt under the auspices of the British rulers there.

It can also be noted that the political parties were more numerous in Tripoli than Cyrenaica. This was due in part to the larger population in Tripoli and the lesser influence of the tribal system there in this urban centre. In addition, Libyan émigrés returning from Egypt were attracted to Tripoli, which also strengthened its political base since they were educated and had a good understanding of political activities based on their experiences in Egypt.

In Cyrenaica, the situation was different. The Cyrenaica population was more rural and included Bedouins who were under the influence of tribal Sheikhs who were often unwilling to cooperate with others. In addition, the influence of the Sanusiyyah remained strong. One of the key characteristics which distinguished the Cyrenaican political parties, especially Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya, was their opposition to a unified Libya. Whilst some parties strongly supported the idea of a unified Libya, comprising all three of its territories, other separatist groups were in favour of the independence of Cyrenaica. Al-Jabha Al-Wataniyya Al-Barqawiyya gave

its backing to the creation of an emirate under Idris Al-Sanusi, whilst the Tripolitanian parties did not initially support this, fearing that problems might arise in the future in relation to hereditary issues. Some Cyrenaican and Tripolitanian political parties blamed the BMA for dividing the country because it had initially supported the idea of giving independence to Cyrenaica instead of the whole of Libya.

As the examination of this period has shown, these parties spent considerable energy on wrangling over the exact form that the future Libya was to take, with numerous models being proposed, debated and discarded. However, all those who were involved did share the same belief: that the Libyan people had the right to self-determination. It was their passionate resolve and sense of purpose that would keep the issue of Libyan independence alive through endless rounds of negotiations and interminable campaigning and lobbying. Therefore, the BMA's role remained central in uniting the Libyans behind one cause.

When independence finally appeared to be within the grasp of the Libyans, the various warring factions and numerous splinter groups, all with their own viewpoints, worked together to achieve their vision. This meant shifting the focus from what it was that had divided them to what it was that could bind them together for a common cause. At least temporarily, ideals were compromised and personal, tribal and regional rivalries put to one side. Finally, on 24 December 1951, the United Kingdom of Libya became the first country to achieve independence through the United Nations, a single, unified, independent Libya.

# 7. CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

## 7.1 Overview of This Thesis

This concluding chapter summarises the key findings of this thesis regarding the social, cultural and political developments that took place in Libyan society under the British Military Administration (BMA). It also evaluates the success of BMA policies and considers their legacy in Libya. It also discusses the contribution that this research has made.

This thesis examined the BMA (1943-51), a crucial eight-year period in the history of Libya, that began as the conflict between the Axis and the Allied forces in the North African campaign of the Second World War was drawing to a close and then continued throughout the immediate post-war years until the birth of an independent state. As this thesis has demonstrated, although the BMA lasted less than a decade, the impact that it had on post-war independent Libya was to be profound in social, cultural and political terms.

## 7.2 Contribution of This Research

Few studies have focused on the end of the Italian colonial era.[1108] Very few Arab scholars have written about Libyan history, especially during the period 1943-51. They were deeply critical of the BMA, viewing this as simply another period of occupation. This study aimed to address these gaps in current research by using material that for various reasons was not previously available to researchers in this area or accessible only to those who were able to read Arabic.

In Libya, archival material at the National Centre for Historical Studies based in Tripoli and the National Library in Benghazi (the majority in Arabic) offered an invaluable resource for gaining an understanding of the quite remarkable quantity and diversity of activities that cultural, social and political associations encompassed during the BMA period and on the state of day-to-day Anglo-Libyan relations during that time. Although

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[1108] N. Lemselaty, *Political Orientalism in Libya in the First Half of the Twentieth Century* (Tripoli, 1982)., S. Kelly, 'Britain, the United States, and the End of Italian Empire in Africa 1940–52', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 28 (2000), p.51; see also S. Kelly, 'Desert Conquests: Early British Planning on the Future of the Italian Colonies, June 1940–September 1943'. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 1006-1026.

the available archival material brought many new facts to light, unfortunately, for a range of reasons, including lack of resources and political concerns, this remains somewhat limited and fails to paint the whole picture about the impact of BMA policy, especially in educational terms.

It should be remembered that for a good part of the Gaddafi regime, access to resources such as historical archives were strictly controlled for Libyan researchers while relations between Gaddafi's government and Western countries often prevented historians from outside Libya from gaining any access to archival material. Sadly, more recent events in Libya mean limited resources are now available for cataloguing and curating archival material and it is likely that some of valuable resources used for this research will once again cease to be available.

One significant contribution of this research is the fact that it was able to draw on material from interviews conducted with Libyan citizens who had actually participated in the events described in this thesis, allowing the researcher to benefit from hearing their personal recollections of lived experiences. Incorporating this dimension of oral history into the research helped to provide the researcher with an understanding of the impact that BMA policy had at the grass roots level and also how this was perceived and interpreted by Libyans at the time.

In addition, this thesis used archive material helped to shed light on the impact of the occupying forces in Libya during the period 1943-51. Useful material on policies and decision-making was found in the National Archives (London), with reports produced by the BMA for the War Office and Foreign Office providing richly detailed information that helped to build up a picture of activities on the ground during the period. This material also offered revealing insights into the British agenda underpinning such activities given that Britain was not without its own interests in Libya as a foreign occupying force.

This study of the impact of the BMA in Libya highlights the importance of studying the small everyday details of the social and cultural life of a particular historical period, as this provides valuable insights into broader processes such as the factors that can shape the political consciousness of individuals, that serve to build social cohesion and ultimately help to create a national identity. Studies of this kind act as valuable case

studies illustrating how an 'imagined community'[1109] becomes a nation: how education imparts knowledge within a particular ideological frame; how printed materials and the media not only disseminate ideas about nationalism but also the idea of a nation itself in various ways, and how the minutiae of everyday existence, what Billig[1110] refers to as banal nationalism, create cultural bonds that can tie together disparate individuals and groups into a nation.

It also shows that the process of cultural development is not a random one, achieved by purely informal activity but is also dependent on pinpointing existing weaknesses, often meticulous planning, and the enactment of cultural policies as part of a broader development process. The BMA's revitalisation of Libyan culture and modernisation of its educational and cultural organisations was seen as the best means of enabling the population to maintain the community development process they initiated and to continue to facilitate both social and cultural development for the foreseeable future, ensuring that Libya would not only survive but also thrive as an independent state. It was also intended to underpin these processes with the liberal values of the British government, as it was believed that these would play a key role in ensuring good governance in a future independent Libya.

Furthermore, this research provides new insights into a short but crucially important period of Libyan history that remains largely unstudied. It also sheds light on Britain's post-war involvement in the region whilst also providing material for a useful comparison with Britain's policies both elsewhere in the Middle East and also in its other colonies. Furthermore, this research also provides evidence about the BMA's role in empowering Libyans to reclaim their rights after decades of oppression by foreign powers. Prior to the BMA, the human rights of the local population were suppressed and the approach adopted in this research illustrates how these rights can be restored. This research also sheds light on the attitudes and behaviour of ordinary Libyans during this transition to independence and on the personal commitment that led them to act responsibly, sacrificing individual preferences for a greater national cause.

Anderson notes that the spread of literacy, mass communication and mass migration are all significant factors in generating cultural discourse about nationalism and ethnic

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[1109] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, 2006).
[1110] M. Billig, *Banal nationalism* (London, 1995).

identity.[1111] The call for a united Libyan nation was nurtured externally by more modern-minded political activists who had gone into exile with the waning of local colonial resistance in the late 1920s, especially following the public execution of the resistance leader Omar Al-Mukhtar in 1931 by the Italians.[1112] They became involved with pan-Arab nationalist activities in Cairo and Damascus and formed Libyan associations and literary circles, and printed booklets during the 1930s and 1940s.

In Cyrenaica, returning émigrés such as Mustafa bin Amer,[1113] Saleh Abobasir,[1114] and Ibrahim Usta Omer played a crucial role in strengthening socio-cultural and political activities. Those who had studied abroad also returned to Libya with the knowledge and aspirations that inspired them to work for the Libyan cause. Above all, the role of the Arab League[1115] was of key importance in offering support and guidance to returning intellectuals. This research concludes that the political awareness in among the Libyans established nationalistic approach. The educated Libyans were united behind one main cause: an independent Libyan nation.

## 7.2.1 Educational Policy and Development

The first finding of major concern in this study is in relation to the impact of the BMA on the development of education in Libya. In contrast to the neglect of education that had taken place under both the Ottoman and Italian regimes, the educational policies enacted by the BMA and its large-scale coordinated action on education actively contributed to social, cultural and political developments that helped to revive and revitalize Libyan society. These policies focused on building and strengthening Libya's

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[1111] Anderson, 1992, p.7

[1112] See: C. H. Kraeling, 'Now and Then in Libya', *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* 80, (1960), p.106 http://www.jstor.org/stable/595585, Accessed: 11/12/2014

[1113] Mustafa bin Amer (1908-1999) was born in Benghazi and received his first education in a *zawaya*. In 1920, he emigrated to Egypt with his family where he continued his education and gained degree in arts in July 1941. In 1943, he returned to Libya and worked as a school inspector in Cyrenaica under the BMA. He was the editor of *Barqa Al-Readia* [Cyrenaica sport] and *Al-Watan* [The Homeland] newspaper. He also contributed to the establishment of a night school volunteer programme during the BMA. See: Libya home. Al-Shouraffa.http://www.alshouraffa.com/?p=7122, accessed 12/12/2014.

[1114] Saleh Abobasir (1925-1973) was born in Benghazi, and after studying in Italian schools, moved to Egypt to study at Al-Azhar. In 1944 he returned home to Benghazi, worked as Editor-in-Chief of *Barqa Al-Jadida* and wrote for many Libyan newspapers. He went on to become a member of the House of Representatives in 1953-1955 and was a Minister till 1973.

[1115] The idea of creating such a body emerged during World War Two. In a conference held in Alexandria (25 September 25-7 October 1947), an agreement was reached amongst the Arab countries concerning cooperation and solidarity under the auspices of this body. On 22 March 1945 seven independent Arab countries signed the original Charter of the Arab League: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq, East Jordan, Lebanon, and Yemen.

badly neglected education system, capacity building and empowerment in order to make Libya self-sufficient in the future. Their success was reflected in the fact that the system remained fit for purpose after the BMA ended. A well-organised education system was established, accompanied by meticulous planning which covered every aspect of education including administration, institutions, staff and curricula. This had a long-lasting effect, spreading right across the territories of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, and covering both urban and rural areas. Using indicators adopted by international organisations in recent times to assess the success of educational initiatives, including literacy levels, pupil numbers and class sizes, the analysis of the achievements of the BMA clearly shows that Libya's educational base was significantly enlarged. Moreover, concerted attempts were made to bring all segments of society into mainstream education, rather than this being restricted to the privileged few, as had been the case under previous regimes.

The BMA policy of providing equal educational opportunities for all Libyan children meant that for the first-time girls and pupils living in isolated rural areas also had the chance to participate in the educational system. The fact that the BMA also succeeded in convincing some hinterland tribal peoples to allow their daughters to be educated can be considered to be a major social achievement. A mass literacy campaign also made concerted efforts to reach out to those adults who had never previously had access to education.

The British also attempted to create a meritocracy in which access to education and to social success was not based solely on class or ethnicity but depended on talent, ability and a desire to learn. They did not force Libyans to learn English, but created opportunities for citizens to participate, using tried and tested models based on their previous experiences in Pakistan and India. Their educational policy quite clearly also aimed to produce an academic elite and only a tiny proportion of Libyans were rewarded with the coveted prize of secondary and higher education. However, this education was not intended to merely produce civil servants who would perpetuate British rule but rather to develop a class of educated people who would function as leaders and high-level administrators in a post-BMA independent Libya.

The BMA used its educational policies to develop Libyan institutions and those who graduated enjoyed social capital. In later years, they played a range of roles in supporting and helping their fellow citizens by working in administrative and teaching

jobs. This illustrates the strong relationship between the BMA's educational policy and its outcomes in the form of developing social capital.

Those who were expected to form the country's intellectual elite were sent to follow programmes of higher studies either in the UK or at prestigious institutions elsewhere in the Arab world. Libyan school teachers were sent abroad for specialised courses or received further training at home. The BMA also supported the *zawiyas* whilst ensuring that these were strictly supervised, understanding that they had a vital role to play in teaching children in the remote areas. It further strengthened the education system by establishing libraries in different areas with books imported from Egypt.

Possibly the most important consequence of the BMA's intense efforts at social and cultural development was the formation of a cultural elite that could function at the required intellectual, political and administrative level, during that crucial period of Libyan independence and beyond. The existence of such an elite serves to foster, promote and guide social change and is considered a key factor in developing human societies.

The BMA's attempts to encourage vocational and technical education and offer training opportunities, particularly in rural areas, led to the engagement of many citizens in different trades and professions, thereby encouraging economic development that was not limited to Libya's major centres of population. This was especially important given that Libya was also experiencing a transformation from a largely rural society to a modern, urban one. Many of its smaller cities were beginning to struggle to cope with rapid expansion, and rural employment initiatives were also intended to stem this mass exodus to urban areas.

Educational developments also supported the modernisation of Libya by disseminating not only advances in scientific knowledge and technology but also a particular set of values. This also impacted significantly on other cultural activities, including the development of the press, literary societies and intellectual debate. Indirectly, education also had an important influence on the development of a new type of political consciousness within Libyan society, the spread of which was facilitated by the teachers from neighbouring Arab countries who brought with them the latest ideological tendencies.

One of the reasons for the continued support of the Libyan people for the BMA's educational policy was its reaction to their early criticism of its attempts to adopt a dual education system, adopting the Palestinian model in Tripolitania and the Egyptian one in Cyrenaica. Rather than attempting to impose this universally unpopular idea, the BMA revisited its policy and ultimately bowed to the will of the Libyan people by adopting the Egyptian system. This course of action guaranteed that the Libyan people would support the BMA since this helped to convince them that the British did not intend to force their agenda on the people of Libya, unlike the previous foreign rulers.

Perhaps it can be concluded that the strength of the British educational policy was that it did not make overt attempts to impose a British identity or culture on the curriculum itself in mainstream schools, and allowed faith-based educational activities to continued in *zawiyas* or mosques, in stark contrast to what had occurred under the Italians and in colonial regimes in other parts of North Africa. While the BMA generally showed respect for the Islamic beliefs of the local population, it also challenged those aspects of Libyan culture that it believed were at odds with the liberal values of the British government and the creation of a modern state, such as the failure to educate girls and women. This confirms the pragmatism of the British policy, as it responded to the administrative and economic needs of Libya, but did not try to push a particular agenda that narrowly focused on religious and ideological indoctrination.

The great efforts that the British administration invested in improving the education system in Libya were underpinned by the idea that education has the power to change the ways in which individuals think about values, state, authority, identity, and about knowledge itself.[1116] It plays an important role in expanding their capabilities and intellectual capacity, in building confidence and social capital. In addition, it should also help to form good citizens who care for their homeland and are also concerned about its role in the affairs of the outside world.

## 7.2.2  The Press: Giving Voice to National Identity

Moving onto the second major focus of this thesis, it was argued that the BMA also made a concerted attempt to improve both the quantity and the quality of the press in Libya during the period under study. It allowed the local population to publish their own

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[1116] W. Feinberg, *Common schools/uncommon identities, national and cultural difference*. (New York, 1998), p.49.

newspapers, increasing the diversity of what was available with most of the press being concentrated in Tripoli and Benghazi. This press policy led to the creation of many jobs in this newly established industry, which further boosted national morale. For the first time, Libyans had their own voice and were able to write about those issues that concerned them. The launch of publications such as *Al-Watan* [Homeland], *Al-Istiqlal* [Independence], *Al-Fajr Al-Libye* [Libyan Dawn] and *Shualat Al-Huria* [Torch of Freedom) reflected the impact of growing liberalisation.

There was evidence that some of the nationalist journalists criticised the BMA and its policies, particularly those regarding education, the economy, and health services, demanding accelerated reforms in the country. This criticism increased when Libya's independence failed to materialise and it was feared that they had exchanged one colonial regime for another, while the BMA's priority remained to create and develop the much needed political and educational institutions that would form the basis for change.

Although the BMA occasionally responded to criticism by temporary or permanent closure of offending publications, in general, the administration preferred to use the power of positive propaganda rather than rigidly imposing press censorship. As with education, the BMA attempted to improve the professional capabilities of Libyan journalists by sending them to Britain to develop their knowledge and skills about the publishing industry.

Analysis of a selection of both BMA-backed and non-governmental newspapers in Libya during the period 1943-1951 showed that these largely focused on issues relating to education, reflecting the key importance that this was seen to have in building a modern nation. Press articles and editorials repeatedly linked Libya's future success as an independent nation with education and learning, highlighting the need for schools in every city and for Libyans to improve their literacy, in order to advance the country.

Repeated links were made in press articles between education and learning and the future success of an independent Libya.[1117]

In addition to serving as a forum for discussing the major cultural and social issues of the day, most newspapers also openly addressed the question of Libya's independence,

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[1117] *Tarablus Al-Gharb,* 5 March 1944; *Benghazi,* 21 January 1945; *Al-Libye*, 13 October 1945

and the press played a crucial role in detailing the latest national and international developments and providing copious political analysis of these.

One of the notable achievements of the press at that time was that despite the very difficult circumstances, it succeeded in awakening interest in cultural issues of all kinds, from popular sporting events to high-brow intellectual debates concerning reformist views. It also provided an outlet for publishing literary works. Poetry, in particular, proved to be a powerful means of building Libyan cultural identity, with works by the leading poets focusing on national unity appearing in the press. As such, the renaissance of the press had a positive influence more generally on standards of Libyan culture.

Coverage by the new Libyan press of news and events relating to the social, cultural, and economic life of the nation and citizens, helped to bring individuals together and to shape their sense of belonging to a community united by common interests. In short, it could be argued that during the BMA the press played an important role in helping to shape people's consciousness of national identity. As Bechhofer and McCrone note: "Newspapers reproduce 'national' culture, reporting 'home' events to a 'domestic' audience. The media help to frame what it means to be 'national' by reporting, or not, events in a particular way and using key descriptors.**[1118]**

## 7.2.3 Social, Cultural and Political Associations: The Shaping of Citizens

The third major area of concern in this research has been to explore the role played by the host of voluntary associations or single-interest groups that focused on social, cultural and recreational activities and to assess their contribution to the development of Libyan civil society, and to enabling Libyan society to make the difficult transition towards modernisation.

It has been argued that strong civil society is a crucial condition for strong democracy[1119] and BMA policy was to introduce the concept of democracy by first developing and then strengthening civil society in Libya by encouraging the

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[1118] F. Bechhofer and D. McCrone, *National Identity, Nationalism and Constitutional Change*. Available at: http://www.institute-of-governance.ed.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/35939/ chap1_intro.pdf Accessed on 14/04/2016

[1119] Flyybjerg, 'Habermas and Foucault: Thinkers for Civil Society?', 210-233.

establishment of and commitment to a wide range of cultural and social voluntary organisations. As Putnam[1120] notes:

> The norms and networks born out of systematic face-to-face association enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives. They generate the trust, reciprocity and capacity for civic engagement which are essential to the functioning of modem democracy.

The growth of civil society was clearly also seen as paving the way to independence, since BMA policy also made provisions for the formation of political parties which had never previously existed. The BMA's arrival saw a shift in policies regarding the degree of intellectual and political freedom allowed in Libya, that helped to foster a viable, sustainable framework for fomenting the growth of voluntary organisations which were also intended to bring social cohesion to a country on the verge of collapse after decades of neglect and its more recent involvement in major conflict. This led to renewed interest in reviving cultural institutions that had survived previous regimes and citizens began channelling their energies into a range of different voluntary activities.

Libyan émigrés returning from Egypt were the first to establish cultural organisations in Tripoli and Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar in Benghazi, and many others followed. Social-cultural associations covered a broad range of activities including lecture programmes, debating societies, theatre groups and literary circles, providing an education in aesthetics and intellectual stimulation for all who were interested.

The development of these single-interest groups also brought a new dimension to Libyan society, providing citizens with opportunities to work together to achieve collective goals or to fight for common causes. On a practical level, they allowed Libyans to gain planning and organisational experience. All those new skills, experiences and ideas combined to enact powerful cultural change in Libyan life. New cultural tendencies and other products of modern civilization were integrated into Libyan society, allowing it to absorb these whilst at the same time maintaining its specific national characteristics without abandoning its inherited values of customs and culture.

The period under study also witnessed the formation of many labour organisations, evincing the considerable weight of Libya's labour force. Consciousness of the labour

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[1120] R. Putnam; *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, p.45

movement took shape, helped by factors such as educational talks, labour strikes and the establishment of relations with workers' organisations in neighbouring countries. New laws and regulations issued by the BMA largely supported the labour movement.

This research has demonstrated that associational life in Libya flourished during the British regime. It is unlikely that the social and cultural institutions would have developed so quickly and in such numbers in Libya if it had not been for the support of the BMA, and this period of cultural revitalisation had major consequences for the whole of Libyan society, as it moved towards a more advanced stage of social, political and eventually economic development. As the intellectual horizons of Libyan citizens were broadened, they became more conscious of the world beyond their borders, of their neighbouring states and of the wider international community. This was in sharp contrast to their recent past that had been marked by complete isolation from the influence of the intellectual and scientific advancements that the rest of the world enjoyed.

These associations were headed by individuals with highly developed feelings of nationalism and they helped to provide a platform which enabled many Libyans to understand their own role in nation building. Although they initially focused on social and cultural activities, many quickly became politicised, with Jam'iyat Omar al-Mukhtar being one of the first to focus overtly on political issues and form the basis of a political party.

The BMA thus contributed to raising political awareness among Libyan leaders. After becoming registered political parties, these organizations were permitted to carry on campaigning for independence. Despite taking different approaches, the political parties were initially united behind the idea of national unification. Although all the political party leaders were acknowledged and invited to discuss the issues of transition with the BMA-nominated personnel it became apparent that the political parties of Cyrenaica were more experienced and skilled than those of Tripoli. The BMA recommended handing over rule to Idris al Sanusi who had the support of all the political parties representing both Cyrenaica and Tripoli and on 24 December 1951, Libya finally became an independent state, with King Idris as its head of state.

As this thesis has shown, during the BMA period, changes of a political, cultural and social nature took place in Libyan society and contributed to forming new aspects of Libyan identity. The growth of cultural and social institutions and new political

organisations was the first indication of a move to modernisation. These groups played an integral role in creating and shaping the civil and political consciousness of Libyans, and made a major contribution to promoting the Libyan national movement which coincided with the rising tide of Arab nationalism in the Middle East and anti-colonial agitation in neighbouring North African states.[1121] Such organisations and institutions represented the best features of social and cultural life in Libya at that time, and as the number of well-educated citizens increased, they made efforts to spread Libyan culture to different classes and sectors of society. Initiatives such as literacy campaigns, educational enrichment programmes and evening classes for working men all formed part of the cultural activism that was so prevalent at the time.

## 7.2.4  Longer Term Influence of BMA Policies

The BMA started its agenda of community development by permitting the Libyans to create social and cultural associations which later emerged as political parties. The BMA adopted a two-pronged approach. Educated Libyan émigrés who had attended schools or universities in Egypt and Tunisia were encouraged to take part in cultural and educational activities whilst at the same time ensuring local schools were suitably equipped to provide education for Libyan children. The British government in London and the BMA in Libya were also adamant that no other foreign powers, especially Italy, would intervene in the Libyans' affairs in the future. To ensure this was the case, the BMA introduced policies that could teach Libyans to be ready to obtain independence and then to consolidate this by continuing educational activities.

This thesis has argued that the policies put in place by the British administration in Libya relating to improving education, establishing a free press and encouraging civic engagement by means of creating various types of cultural associations were successful. However, they were much less successful in their attempts to involve girls and women in such activities. Although they made concerted efforts in this regard, especially in education, it proved immensely difficult in the space of just eight years to persuade the local population, particularly those outside the more developed urban areas, to change a

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[1121] F. Al-Salem, 'The Issue of Identity in Selected Arab Gulf States'. *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies,* 4.4  (Summer 1981), p.5.

worldview on gender roles in society that had existed for centuries as part of the country's tribal system.[1122]

Perhaps an indication of the impact of some of the policies put in place during the BMA can be seen in the influence they have continued to exert on Libyan state policies, long after the British left. Emphasis continued to be placed on education as a vital tool for development. The first Libyan university was established just four years into independence in 1955, four decades later there were 11, and by 2009 this number had reached 29, with experienced teaching staff from Libya and all over the globe teaching over a quarter of a million students. Colleges of higher education offering provision up to Masters level now exist in every Libyan city. When the oil boom brought dramatic increases to Libya's Gross National Product, the government spent its highest sums on health and education.[1123] State education in Libya has remained free until the present day.

The Libyan administration remained committed to continuing the British education policy concerning compulsory education for all children, both girls and boys, and female school attendance rose from just 3.3% in 1960 to 43.2% in 1990. However, outside the large urban centres, progress remained slow and in the early 1980s, estimates showed literacy rates of 70 percent for men and 35 percent for women. [1124] However, this gender gap has continued to narrow. According to 2015 US government estimates, 96.7 percent of males and 85.6 percent of females aged 15 or older are literate.[1125]

From the 1950s, Libyan regimes have also sought to encourage women to have the same role as men in the society. Originally, only male citizens over 21 were entitled to vote until a constitutional amendment in 1963 gave women the vote and also allowed them to stand as candidates in the 1964 and 1965 elections.[1126] Females were also offered equal chances to gain a university education, allowing them to compete not only

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[1122] Al-Salem, The Issue of Identity in Selected Arab Gulf States. *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 4.4 (Summer 1981), 5.
[1123] Library of Congress: Federal Research Division, Country Profile: Libya April 2015. Available at: http://web.archive.org/web/20050530021143/http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Libya.pdf. Accessed on 14/04/2016
[1124] For more information, see the Ministry of Education. Available at: http://www.higheredu.gov.ly/EXAM/2012.pdf accessed on 5/4/2016.
[1125] Library of Congress, ibid.
[1126] D. Nohlen., M. Krennerich, B. Thibaut, *Elections in Africa* (Oxford, 1999), p.525

for jobs in the education sector but also for positions as bank managers, engineers and army officers.

The free press continued to be active in newly independent Libya, playing a key role in reporting on the government's plans for improving education and health services for the people. It also continued to play an important role in the process of state building, by encouraging Libyans to work together to achieve national unity.

However, following the 1969 revolution, Colonel Gaddafi and 12 army officers, known as the Revolutionary Command Council, began a complete overhaul of Libya's political system, its society, and economy. In 1973, Gaddafi's government nationalised the press and mass media and all journalists became employees of the state-owned Al-Jamahiriya News Agency. In 1977, Gaddafi dismantled all political institutions.

## 7.3 Conclusion

Kawczynski has remarked that "History has traditionally been something that happened to Libyans"[1127] and as this thesis has explained, for much of their history, those peoples who inhabited the territory now known as Libyan were indeed seemingly at the mercy of their conquerors and colonisers. However, during the brief period of the BMA, there was a tangible sense for Libyans that they were at long last able to begin to write a historical narrative in which, for once, they played a leading role as active participants, even though, this was, ironically, to be facilitated by yet another foreign power, the British.

In concluding this thesis on Libya's past, it is impossible as a Libyan not to reflect on Libya's more recent history post-2011 and the current move towards national disunity and conflict. It is also particularly tempting to re-evaluate the role that Muammar Gaddafi played in Libya's unfolding historical narrative, since he considered himself to be the ultimate shaper of Libya's destiny for over four decades. According to Kawczynski:

> A ruler like Gaddafi would not have been possible anywhere else in the world. […] a product of the Libya into which he was born – poor, bereft of educational infrastructure, deeply scarred by the traumas of colonisation, devoid of talented and skilled leaders […] yet at the same time it was a nation poised on the edge

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[1127] D. Kawczynski, *Seeking Gaddafi: Libya, the West and the Arab Spring.* (London, 2010) p.14.

of freedom, a nation that had clung onto some of its proud tribal, Bedouin heritage, a nation seized by the excitement of an Arab world that was reasserting its pride and influence.[1128]

This was, of course, the Libya of the BMA period. Perhaps, then, rather than being himself a maker of history, Gaddafi was simply made by history.

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[1128] Ibid.

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