Numerous episodes of colonization characterize the history of the territory now included in the modern nation-state of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (State of the Masses), from the establishment of Phoenician trading emporia early in the first millennium B.C.E. to the most recent period of Italian domination at the beginning of the 20th century. Although colonies in Libya have been of many different types, Gil Stein’s definition of a colony as “an implanted settlement established by one society in either uninhabited territory or the territory of another society . . . [that is] both spatially and socially distinguishable from the communities of the indigenous polity or peoples among whom it is established” is broad enough to encompass them all.

A. HISTORY OF COLONIZATION IN LIBYA

1. Garamantes, Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans

Early in the first millennium B.C.E., the Garamantes, one of the tribal groups that eventually settled in Libya, came into Fezzan, the southwestern region of Libya (see Figure 1), and took control of the caravan routes that cross the desert there. A short time later, the first Carthaginian colonists arrived in Tripolitania, establishing settlements at coastal sites to facilitate their seaborne trade in the western Mediterranean. After the total destruction of Carthage by the Romans at the end of the Third Punic War in 146 B.C.E., control of Tripolitania was handed over to the Numidians, a tribal group that occupied much of modern Tunisia. One hundred years later, in 46 B.C.E., Tripolitania

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3 Tripolitania is named after the three major ancient cities in the region: Sabratha, Oea (modern Tripoli), and Lepcis Magna. Lepcis is an exact transliteration of the Punic Lpqy, which is found on coins and inscriptions from the site until the fourth century C.E. The adjective Magna was added in the middle of the first century C.E. to distinguish the city from Lepti Minus on the Tunisian coast. Most Italian scholars continue to use the Latinized form Lepcis Magna. Ginette Di Vita-Evrard, *Lepcis, in Libya. The Lost Cities of the Roman Empire* 46 (Antonino Di Vita et al. eds., 1999).
was annexed to Rome as part of the Roman province of Africa Nova following upon Julius Caesar’s defeat of his rival, Pompey, in the battle of Thapsus and the subsequent death of the Numidian king, Juba I.\(^4\)

Cyrenaica (see Figure 1), on the other hand, was more closely allied with Greece, since the first colony there was founded in 631 B.C.E. by settlers from the Aegean island of Thera, today’s Santorini.\(^5\) In time, five major Greek cities arose in Cyrenaica, hence the name Pentapolis by which the area also was known. After the death of Alexander the Great, Cyrenaica came under the rule of the Ptolemies, where it remained until 74 B.C.E., when Ptolemy Apion bequeathed Cyrene to Rome, and the region became a part of the Roman province that also included the island of Crete.

2. **Arabs and Ottomans**

Throughout the period of Roman control, the cities of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania maintained much of their original Greek and Roman character, but this situation was to change with the Arab conquests of Cyrenaica (642 C.E.), Tripolitania (647 C.E), and Fezzan (663 C.E.) (see Figure 1). For the Arabs as well as their successors, the Normans and the Ottomans, control of Cyrenaica and especially Fezzan was difficult. Except for the period from 1711–1835 when the Karamanlis held power in Tripolitania, the Ottomans were able to maintain control over at least portions of Libya until 1911.

3. **Italian Conquest and Colonization**

Shortly after the unification of Italy in the 1860s, the Italians began to contemplate the colonial conquest of Libya. Their first move was to undertake a policy of “spontaneous colonization,” that is, colonization based on individual or group initiative rather than government planning, as well as “pacific economic penetration.”\(^6\) In 1910, however, the Italians followed in the footsteps of the other major European powers—England, France, and Germany—and decided that their reputation and influence would be greatly enhanced if they acquired an empire. Some even argued that Italy, as the heir to the Roman Empire, had an historical right, even a divine right, to dominance in the Mediterranean and in particular to the possession of Libya.

Consequently, on September 30, 1911, Italy declared war on the Ottoman Empire, and on November 5, 1911, it formally annexed the territories of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. Nearly a year later, Italy and Turkey signed the Treaty of Ouchy, which granted Cyrenaica and Tripolitania “independence” under Italian sovereignty. The Italians met unexpected resistance to their rule, however, and in 1922, they were forced to initiate the “reconquest” of Libya. Shortly thereafter, when the Fascists came into power, the pace and brutality of the campaign accelerated. Not until 1932 did all of Libya come under Italian


\(^5\) Herodotus, *The Histories*, bk. 4, 150–59, provides an account of the founding of Cyrene. *See also SEG ix 3* for the so-called Foundation Decree of Cyrene.