

# Post-Colonial Journeys: Historical Roots of Immigration and Integration

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## ABSTRACT

The effect of Italian colonialism on migration to Italy differed according to the pre-colonial social structure, a factor previously neglected by immigration theories. In Eritrea, pre-colonial Christianity, sharp class distinctions, and a strong state promoted interaction between colonizers and colonized. Eritrean nationalism emerged against Ethiopia; thus, no sharp break between Eritreans and Italians emerged. Two outgrowths of colonialism, the Eritrean national movement and religious ties, facilitate immigration and integration. In contrast, in Somalia, there was no strong state, few class differences, the dominant religion was Islam, and nationalists opposed Italian rule. Consequently, Somali developed few institutional ties to colonial authorities and few institutions provided resources to immigrants. Thus, Somali immigrants are few and are not well integrated into Italian society.

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## Introduction

Italy was a country of emigration; now it is one of immigration (King 1985; Melotti 1985a, 1988). Italians generally classify immigrants as those from outside the European Union (EU) (*extra-communitari*) and those from within (*europei*). The term, *extra-communitari*, however, is not neutral, conveying the idea of an “undesirable” person from Eastern Europe or Africa (Cole 1997; Ginsborg 1998:121; Postiglione 1999). We go beyond these stereotypes to consider differences among non-European immigrants. We argue that Eritreans are more integrated than Somali, despite a variety of similar historical and contemporary conditions (including a hostile social climate). Eritrean communities are visible in Italian cities, especially in Milan around Corso Buenos Aries and Porta Venezia. The same is not true of Somali, who are barely recognized as an immigrant group. To illustrate our point, we use a comparative methodology.

### *Theoretical Context*

Theories explaining immigration focus on a wide variety of micro and macro-level processes, including geographical differences in the supply and demand for labor, wage differentials, the international division of labor, the rise of global capitalism, or economic conditions of advanced capitalist societies (Massey et al. 1993). Other theories draw on network theories, the concept of migration chains, or institutionalist theories to demonstrate how immigration persists beyond initial conditions (Heisler 1992; Massey et al. 1993; Morawska 1990; Rystand 1992; Salt 1992). Other work uses a historical or world-systems perspective that includes the impact of colonialism (Chan 1990:48; Heisler 1992:630; Massey et al. 1993:444-448; Mesthrie 1993:25-27).

We broaden this theoretical literature to consider the effects of pre-colonial social structure on subsequent immigration and integration. Although previous work shows how human capital partially depends on colonialism – knowledge of the language or familiarity with a culture – the effects of colonialism are more fundamental. Individuals are rarely passive actors in social events, even when they are exploited or dominated (Scott 1985). As Comaroff and Comaroff (1991) show, colonialism was an interactional process that altered the very consciousness of both colonizers and colonized. We employ this perspective to consider the possible effects of the interaction between pre-colonial social structure and colonialism on immigration and integration.

### *Case Selection and Methodology*

We employ a loose version of Mill’s method of difference, with two cases, Eritrea and Somalia, that have different outcomes and share all but one antecedent, pre-colonial social structure. We consider the effect

of the antecedent on the outcome, immigration and integration in Italy (Emigh 1997:651; Skocpol and Sommers 1980). Because our two cases had a common Italian colonial past and a common destination, we diminish the effects of differences in colonial administration, as well as other economic differences, like labor supply and demand, on immigration. We consider Eritrean migrants, because they comprise a relatively large component of the migrant population in Italy (Aimi 1985; Brambilla and Favaro 1984; King 1985; Melotti 1988). We use Somali (as opposed to Libyans) because of the comparability of the Eritrean and Somali historical trajectory. Furthermore, as we show below, Somali and Eritrean immigration to Italy had similar origins. We make no strong claims that this method establishes causality. Our methodology and case selection simply “holds constant” – at least temporarily in the analytic sense – all other relevant factors that explain immigration to establish whether pre-colonial structure, a previously neglected factor, has an identifiable effect on immigration and integration.

In Eritrea, three dimensions of pre-colonial social structure were particularly important: the interaction between the pre-colonial state and the colonial administration, the interaction between pre-colonial religion and metropolitan religion, and the interaction between the pre-colonial class structure and the colonial economy. Historical outgrowths of these institutional connections affected decisions to emigrate and provided immigrants to Italy with access to resources. In contrast, these interactions did not exist in Somalia. Consequently, there are fewer Somali immigrants in Italy and their experiences are different.

We explain two dimensions of the outcome, immigration: first, its magnitude, and second, the degree of immigrants’ incorporation. The available population and immigration statistics suggest that the overall magnitude of Eritrean immigration relative to the sending population size is larger than Somali immigration. While the absolute magnitude of Eritrean and Somali immigration varied from year to year in response to war and famine, the absolute magnitude of Somali immigration equaled Eritrean immigration only in the 1990s at the height of the Somali civil war. Even then, given the much larger size of the Somali ethnic group in East Africa relative to the Eritrean one, the relative size of Eritrean immigration was much larger. In comparison to Somali, Eritreans are well integrated into Italian society. Eritreans are more likely to marry Italians than Somali and they are more likely to come to Italy to join their families or practice their religion. Furthermore, Eritreans, unlike Somali, have an organized presence in Italian society and have ties to political movements. Before providing the details of these outcomes, we lay out our historical analysis.

## Pre-Colonial Somalia and Eritrea

The pre-colonial social structures of Eritrea and Somalia were fundamentally different. First, in Eritrea, a relatively well-developed quasi-feudal class structure cross cut ethnic distinctions. The Italians exploited these multiple divisions, making numerous alliances. In contrast, Somalia was a relatively egalitarian pastoral society organized into clans. The Italians made only a few, limited alliances with individual clan heads. Second, in Eritrea, the Italians faced the threat of the strong, Ethiopian state across the border. Thus, they were forced to make sweeping alliances to avoid Ethiopian invasion. Third, in Eritrea, there existed an indigenous Christianity. Finally, Eritrean nationalism opposed the Ethiopian, not the Italian state. In contrast, in Somalia, nationalism grew up against Italian and British colonialism. Consequently, there was never a sharp post-colonial political fracture between the colony and the metropole in Eritrea, as there was in Somalia. Because of these four differences, the Eritreans entered into more intensive relations – of both cooperation and resistance – with Italian colonialists than did the Somali. We do not deny that Italian colonialism was exploitative, racist, and violent. We do, however, suggest that the relationship between the indigenous society and the Italian colonizers was more institutionally dense in Eritrea than in Somalia, because of the nature of pre-colonial Eritrea.

### *Political Geography of the Horn of Africa*

Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia (Figure 1) were not always constituted as sovereign states. The name, Abyssinia, was used to designate geographical, ethnic, and social units in the Horn of Africa. Within this region, there was an important distinction between the lowlands and the highland plateau. Because of the numerous rivers on the highland plateau, settled agriculture was possible (Markakis 1987:8; McCann 1990:400-401). Within Abyssinia and the nearby by lowland regions in contemporary Eritrea, there were multiple ethnic, cultural, and linguistic divisions. In modern day Eritrea, Tigrinya is the most common linguistic and ethnic group and they live primarily on the high plateau (Erich 1983:1-14; Longrigg 1945:16-17; Markakis 1987:5-15; Pateman 1990:4-6). Most Tigrinya are Coptic Christians, members of the Abyssinian or Ethiopian, or more recently, Eritrean, Orthodox Church (Pateman 1990:4-5).<sup>1</sup> What is now Somalia was divided along geographical lines. In the north, Samaal-speaking pastoralists predominated (Rinehart 1982:9). In the south, there

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<sup>1</sup> For details, including spellings and definitions of the multiple ethnic and religious groups see: Erlich 1983:2-3; Longrigg 1945:16-17; Pateman 1990:4-6; Nadel 1944; Negash 1987:24; Prouty and Rosenfeld 1981:167-169.



Figure 1. Map of the Horn of Africa

were two rivers, and thus, some settled agriculturists, as well as pastoralists (Cassanelli 1982:14; Laitin and Samatar 1987:27-29; Lewis 1961:7). The settled agriculturists were primarily Bantu and the southern pastoralists were Sab (Cassanelli 1982:14; Lewis 1961:13-14; Markakis 1987:17; Rinehart 1982:9).

#### *Class Relations*

In pre-colonial highland Abyssinia, class stratification was much more pronounced than in Somalia. On the highland plateau, there were several distinct sets of hierarchical, surplus extraction relations in the pre-colonial period. Some were quasi-feudal rights and obligations to land, income, tribute, as well as military, legal, and administrative services (Gilkes 1975:1-7, 101-124; Hiwet 1975:28-29; Markakis 1987:14; Markakis and Ayele 1978:21-29; McCann 1990:402-403; Negash 1986:22-35, 1987:4-6;

Pankhurst 1967; Pateman 1990:157-158). The Abyssinian Church and the Tigrinya aristocracy held feudal rights (Gilkes 1975:1-7, 101-124; Negash 1986:29-34). There also forms of private ownership of land, rental and labor contracts (Negash 1986:26-27).

The Italians capitalized on the divisions created by this class structure. They drew support and labor power from peasants seeking to escape the subsistence economy and their feudal overlords. The Italians developed an industrial infrastructure in Eritrea that included railways, roads, housing, agricultural projects, and urban amenities (Longrigg 1945:123, 134-141; Tseggai 1986, 1987). The Fascists (1932-1941) intensified Italian investment because they planned to establish a colony comprising Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia (Negash 1987:4, 51-53; Tseggai 1987). The Italians used Eritrean troops to invade Ethiopia.

Italian colonial policies increased the number of Tigrinya with respect to the other ethnic groups (Negash 1987:150). This increase may have stemmed from the Tigrinya peasantry's ability to escape the demographic constraints of the subsistence economy through salaried employment, primarily in the Italian army (Negash 1987:47, 150, 153). By 1941, when Italy lost control over Ethiopia and Eritrea, Italian colonialism had changed the demographic and political balance of power in Eritrea. Italian rule created a uniquely Eritrean experience for both lowland pastoralists and highland peasants. The Tigrinya peasantry was now largely incorporated into a market economy as wage-laborers through military service or salaried employment in industry or manufacturing (Pool 1983:178; Sherman 1980:52).

In contrast, the pastoral economy in Somalia had relatively few class differences and was organized instead around clans. To the extent to which these pastoralists engaged in exchange relations (generally only when droughts forced them to sell their herds), it was primarily with Arab traders in coastal towns or with wood and spice traders of the interior, not with their own clan members (Cassanelli 1982:48; Rinehart 1982:12).

Though the Italians attempted to implement the same colonial policies in Somalia as in Eritrea, they were unsuccessful. As in Eritrea, the Italians were primarily interested in the regions of settled agriculture and had the most impact in those locations (Cassanelli 1982:201). In Somalia, however, the possibilities for settled agriculture were limited. Unlike in Eritrea, the Italians did not implement a homesteading policy in Somalia to attract poor Italian peasants (Lewis 1980:92). Instead, the government expropriated land and offered large concessions with tax exemptions to found plantations (Hess 1966:112). In sharp contrast to land expropriation in Eritrea, however, this action had relatively little effect on the Somali pastoralists. The Italians found it very difficult to recruit labor for their new

plantations and were successful only when they incorporated the clan elite into their colonial plans (Cassanelli 1982:202; Hess 1966:111-115). The Italian Fascists increased colonial investment in Somalia by building roads, wells, and schools (Lewis 1980:96-97), but the extent of this infrastructure was much smaller than in Eritrea. As in Eritrea, Somali attempted to form political alliances with Italians to pursue their own political interests, while the Italians tried to implement a divide and rule strategy to control Somali territory (Cassanelli 1982:183-253). In Somalia, however, Italian colonialism had a much weaker impact than in Eritrea and Italians formed fewer ties with Somali than with Eritreans.

### *Political Relations*

In Eritrea, the Italians faced a well-developed Abyssinian state that was capable of militarily defeating them – and which did so, decisively in 1896. Thus, Italian colonial policy was constrained by the necessity of avoiding an alliance between the Tigrinya elites in Eritrea, the Tigrinya peasantry, and the Abyssinian state (Levine 1974:70-86; Markakis 1987:12-15; Markakis and Ayele 1978:30; Negash 1986:44-45, 1987:35-37, 151; Oliver and Atmore 1994:40-43; Woolf 1919:139). Between 1882 and 1896, the Italians tried to resettle Italians as freeholders (Tseggai 1986). They expropriated 400,000 acres of land from the Tigrinya peasants on the highland plateau (Negash 1987:34). This provoked an alliance between the Tigrinya peasantry and aristocracy, resulting in the Bahta uprising of 1894, which was defeated only because of a strategic error on the part of its leader (Negash 1986:44, 1987:34-35). This uprising led the Italians to abandon the settlement policy and they abolished the office of colonial settlement in 1895 (Negash 1986:45). In an attempt to quell the threat of pan-Tigrinya unification inherent in the Bahta uprising, the Italians attempted to expand their colonial power by invading Tigray (currently a province of Ethiopia) in 1896. The Ethiopians, however, defeated the Italian army at Adowa (Negash 1986:44).

After this defeat, the boundaries of the Italian colony were fixed to a narrow strip of the coast, which came to be known as Eritrea (Woolf 1919:172). Thus, resistance to colonialism emerged when the Italians threatened the material interests of the peasantry, creating an alliance between the Abyssinian elite and peasantry. Subsequently, the Italians attempted to pacify and incorporate the Tigrinya peasantry living in Eritrea into colonial policies and were forced to use Eritrean political elites to rule on behalf of the Italian state (Negash 1987:40, 98).

Pre-colonial Somalia, in contrast, was not unified by any overarching political organization similar to the Abyssinian state (Samatar 1992:632). Kinship groups, from the nuclear family to the clan, formed the basis of the pre-colonial Somali political order (Lewis 1961:2, 1978:16; Samatar

1992). *Reer* were the basic political unit of pre-colonial Somali society and were composed of two or more nuclear families and their herds, which migrated together in search of pastures and water (Cassanelli 1982:42-43). At the level of the clan, which was an aggregate of *reer* lineage groups, there was a gerontocratic organization called the *shir*, an egalitarian council that made military or migratory decisions (Lewis 1961:162-167, 1978:30-31, 1980:11; Markakis 1987:17). The *shir* also was the basis of a democratic, social contract, used to resolve disputes in the absence of a centralized state (Samatar 1992:630-631). Thus, in pre-colonial Somalia there existed few class differences for the Italians to exploit; moreover, they had fewer incentives to exploit them, because the *shir* posed no viable military threat.

These political practices affected the interaction between Italians and the colonized. The Italians in Eritrea incorporated large sections of the Tigrinya peasantry into the state through service in the army and in the bureaucracy (Markakis 1987:58; McCann 1986:405-406; Negash 1987:47). Beginning in 1907, the Italians recruited vast numbers of Eritreans into its colonial army for military campaigns in Libya, Somalia, and Ethiopia (McCann 1986:405-406; Negash 1986:48-51, 53-54). Between 1907 and 1932, money was introduced into the Eritrean peasant economy in the form of soldiers' wages. By the early 1930s, 60,000 Eritreans were under arms (Negash 1987:49). In 1935, there were 150,000 economically active males, out of a total Eritrean population of 600,000. Thus, over forty percent of the adult male work force, or ten percent of the population, served in the military in 1935 (Negash 1987:51).

This process of incorporation of the population into the colonial administration did not occur in Somalia. The Somali Colonial Troop Corps in 1910 was only ten percent Somali, and was comprised partly of Eritrean troops (Hess 1966:110), even though the population of Somalia was larger than that of Eritrea (Negash 1987:49, 53, 149-150). Between 1923 and 1941, the Fascists used some Somali troops, but they relied primarily on Eritrean ones (Lewis 1980:99). Somali participation in the Italian colonial army may have been largely elite-based, in contrast to the peasant-based Eritrean colonial army.

### *Religion*

Religion was the third crucial difference between Eritrea and Somalia. In Eritrea, the Italians confronted a Christian church established in the fifth century (Maher 1991:74). This Abyssinian Orthodox Church was an important social actor and a powerful political player. Rather than a clash between Catholicism and a non-Christian religion, there was partial co-optation and resistance. The Abyssinian church threatened Italian colonialism because it encouraged the development of territorial and political unity based on Tigrinya culture, spanning the Eritrean and



Ethiopian border. It did not, however, guarantee unity. Northern Abyssinia had been the site of numerous heresies (Crummey 1972:22). In rural regions, priests gained their means of subsistence directly from their own communities (Crummey 1972:16, 27, 35). As a result, the organization of the Abyssinian church followed the fragmented lines of the Ethiopian polity. The Fascists financially supported the church after their invasion of Ethiopia in 1932 (Negash 1986:63; Shenk 1972:128) and partially co-opted it. The Italian authorities tried to use the Church as a source of ideological support in Ethiopia by supporting its religious holidays and by encouraging Abyssinian priests to recognize Italian political holidays (Buonaiuti 1982:11, 27; Negash 1986:63, 1987:127-131; Shenk 1972:129). As with other Eritrean actors, the Italians tried to capitalize upon the Church's shifting and cross-cutting alliances.

Religious institutions also facilitated relations between Eritreans and Italians. Although the Italians failed to convert many Eritreans to Catholicism (Negash 1987:127-130; Pateman 1990:15), Capuchin missionaries had a lasting impact. The Capuchins first established themselves in Ethiopia among the northwestern pastoralists in 1846 (Crummey 1972:60), predating official Italian colonial rule. They established schools and tried to develop an indigenous clergy (Crummey 1972:148), and their leader, Giuglielmo Massaja, permitted some Abyssinian rites (Crummey 1972:81-82). The common Christian identity of Italian colonizers and Eritrean facilitated mixed-race sexual unions, which were more common in Eritrea than in Somalia (Barrera 1996:10).

Four great Muslim confraternities, in contrast, dominated Somali religion (Fazel 1994). Italian colonial policy supported the pre-existing religion in the interest of political stability, not altering it significantly (Cerulli 1957:148). The formula pronounced by *Kadi* justices in Italian Somaliland is indicative: "In the name of God the merciful the compassionate. I judge according to the law of Islam by appointment of the great King, King of Italy" (Cerulli 1957:151).

### *Nationalism*

Finally, the timing and character of Somali and Eritrean nationalist movements differed. In Eritrea, nationalism took off in the mid-1950s, and was primarily oriented against Ethiopia and secondarily against Britain, not Italy. In Somalia, nationalism emerged in the mid-1940s against Italy and Britain, thus creating a sharper break with Italians than in Eritrea.

The defeat of the Italians during World War II abruptly ended their colonial rule in Eritrea, leaving a political vacuum (Haile 1986:2). The British temporarily ruled Eritrea from 1941 to 1952 (Erlich 1983:4-6; Pool 1983:1980). During this period of time, various political options for Eritrea were debated, including independence, union with Ethiopia, and

the restoration of Italian rule (Markakis 1987:57-69; Pool 1983:180-183). Eventually, a United Nations resolution federated Eritrea to Ethiopia. The resolution allowed Eritrea to maintain its own political institutions, and Ethiopian to conduct foreign policy (Haile 1986; Markakis 1987:68-69; Pool 1983:183). This federation lasted from 1952 to 1962, when Ethiopia annexed Eritrea (Haile 1986:9). Eritrea was an Ethiopian province until independence in 1991.

When Italian colonialism ended in 1941, the target of Eritrean nationalism was first Britain and then Ethiopia, not Italy (Markakis 1987:57-69). Although Italian rule had been resisted, no formal nationalist movements opposed it. Italians and Italian institutions continued to be influential under British rule. Italians held administrative posts and leased land from the British (Markakis 1987:58, 61-62). When the Ethiopian government ruled Eritrea, the Amhara (another Abyssinian linguistic group), not the Tigrinya, controlled the government and Amharic was the official language, creating discontent among Tigrinya in Ethiopia and Eritrea (Haile 1986:15). Eritrean nationalism coalesced around resistance to Ethiopian, not Italian rule. In fact, during the 1940s, Italian colonial designs uneasily allied with Eritrean nationalism (Markakis 1987:65). These conditions preserved links between Italians and Eritreans, since nationalism was never directed principally towards Italian institutions. In the 1970s, various Eritrean nationalist movements split and recombined into different groups, and engaged each other in civil war (Erlich 1983:13-33, 85-96; Markakis 1987:131-145, 1994:229; Pateman 1990:117-148; Pool 1983:183-193; Sherman 1980:40-94; Tegegn 1994:67-76). The eventual rise, however, of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) increased the influence of Christians and Tigrinya, who had the most contact with the Italians.

Somali nationalism, however, developed between 1935 and 1960 in direct opposition to Italian and British colonialism (Hess 1966; Laitin and Samatar 1987:48-68; Lewis 1961:266-295, 1978, 1980; Markakis 1987; Oliver and Atmore 1994; Samatar 1992). As in Eritrea, there were rival and ever changing nationalist movements. In Somalia, these groups were, in general, explicitly anti-Italian (Lewis 1980:114, 121-123; Markakis 1987:53). In the late 1940s, Italian expansionist plans in Somalia and agitation by the local Italian community triggered sharp and violent Somali reactions (Lewis 1980:126). Nationalist movements were often comprised of young educated officials, the Gendarmarie, merchants, and traders (Lewis 1980:122; Markakis 1987:53). Unlike the Eritrean colonial peasant army, the Somali Gendarmarie was comprised of the highly educated (Lewis 1980:122). In Somalia, the lower level of militarization and popular participation concentrated nationalist sentiments among the elite. State

employees and merchants demanded independence, not the peasantry as in Eritrea (Samatar 1992:633). In contrast to Eritrean nationalism, Somali nationalism was socially restricted and explicitly hostile to Italians.

In sum, in Eritrea, a stratified society, a well-developed state, and an indigenous Christianity led to dense interaction between the colonizing Italian state and the indigenous population. These ties were left largely intact during nationalist struggles, because they were never directed primarily against the Italian state. In Somalia, a relatively undifferentiated social hierarchy based on pastoral agriculture and Islam combined with a decentralized polity. Few Somali were incorporated into the Italian colonial administration, the church, or the colonial economy. Furthermore, Somali nationalism developed against Italian colonialism leading to a sharper political break between former colony and metropole and few permanent institutional ties. As we argue below, these differences affected immigration and incorporation in Italy.

### **Immigration to Italy**

Italy is not a hospitable destination for immigrants, either socially or economically (Melotti, Aimi, and Ziglio 1985:56-63; Veugelers 1994). The Italian unemployment rate is relatively high (Ginsborg 1998:588; Melotti 1985a:28, 1988:6). In addition, the Italian government rarely recognizes political refugees (Hornziel 1986:75; Sironi 1988:51). Reaction to the 1990 “Martelli law” that tried to normalize the status of foreigners already in Italy shifted the immigration debate from the center-left to the right where it has remained (Campani 1993:522; Cole 1997:10-11). Immigration generally occurs from less developed countries (King 1985:173; Melotti 1985a:28-29, 1988:14-22; Melotti and Valtorta 1985; Sironi 1988:50). Many of the migrants work in the tertiary or informal sector doing manual labor in service, agricultural, or industrial settings (King 1985:173; Venturi 1991:42-43). Not surprisingly, much of the work is unpleasant, difficult and dangerous, and the conditions of employment are uncertain (Melotti 1985a:15, 1985b:37, 43; Melotti, Aimi, and Ziglio 1985:53-54; Sironi 1988:49-50).

Migrants from Eritrea and Somalia do not comprise the largest numerical group of foreigners in Italy (King 1985:173; Melotti 1985a:28-29, 1988:14-22; Melotti and Valtorta 1985; Sironi 1988:50). Furthermore, we recognize that many social, political, and economic factors influence migration (Heisler 1992; Massey et al. 1993; Morawska 1990; Rystand 1992; Salt 1992). We choose the Eritrean and Somali cases, not because of the absolute size of the migration flow, but because all of these other factors are as similar as possible, thus drawing attention to the impact of pre-

colonial social structure on colonial ties and later patterns of migration and integration.

We present two kinds of evidence on Somali and Eritrean immigrants to Italy. First, we argue that evidence shows that Eritrean/Ethiopians in Italy clearly outnumbered Somali immigrants in absolute magnitude up until the 1990s. After the 1990s, during the height of the civil war in Somalia, the groups were about equal, but given the overall larger size of the Somali sending population, the proportional size of the Eritrean immigrant population was still much larger. We then present evidence on immigrant incorporation and community life, showing that Eritreans are much more incorporated into Italian society than Somali are.

### *Magnitude of Immigration*

Most sources suggest that the overall magnitude of Eritrean emigration to Italy was larger than that of Somali up to the early 1990s when the trend apparently began to reverse. In 1970, the number of Somali immigrants in Italy with residential permits (*permessi di soggiorno*) was 472 and the number of Ethiopians, the majority of whom were probably Eritrean, was 376 (Hornziel 1986:29). By 1976, 2,345 Eritrean/Ethiopians had residential permits, compared to 739 Somali (Hornziel 1986:29). In 1981, 5,471 Eritrean/Ethiopians had permits, in comparison to 1,412 Somali (Hornziel 1986:29). The figures for residential permits for Eritreans and Somali within Milan are similar. In Milan in 1979, 490 Eritrean/Ethiopians and 71 Somali had residential permits (Aimi 1985:143, 145; Bonora 1983:76). In 1984, 1,276 Eritrean/Ethiopians and 166 Somali had residential permits (Aimi 1985:143, 145). Thus, the absolute number of Eritrean/Ethiopians was greater than Somali. The increase in the number of residential permits to Eritrean/Ethiopians was also larger (Aimi 1985:143, 145; Hornziel 1986:29). Official statistics greatly underenumerate the number of migrants, because many are undocumented. In 1979, 71 Somali and 490 Eritreans had residential permits, but one estimate suggests that there were between 200 and 500 undocumented Somali and around 1,500 undocumented Eritreans (Bonora 1983:76). Thus, the rise in the number of documented Eritreans probably indicates an increase in the size of Eritrean immigration, and especially with respect to Somali, during this period.<sup>2</sup>

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (1997:228) data also suggest that Ethiopian migrants (who were mostly Eritrean) outnumbered Somali up to the early nineties: In 1985, there were 1,800 Somali and 7,200 Ethiopian immigrants; in 1986, 2,000 Somali and 7,500 Ethiopian immigrants; in 1987, 3,400 Somali and 10,500 Ethiopians;

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<sup>2</sup> Some Ethiopians and Eritreans had Somali passports (Aimi 1985:116), and so may have been counted as Somali.

in 1988, 4,200 Somali and 12,200 Ethiopians; in 1989, 3,700 Somali and 7,900 Ethiopians; in 1990, 9,400 Somali and 11,900 Ethiopians; and in 1991, 11,900 Somali and 12,500 Ethiopians (cf. King 1985:173). Somali immigration increased after 1991, exacerbated by famine and civil war. In 1992, there were 14,900 Somali immigrants, in 1993, 19,600; in 1994, 16,300; and in 1995, 17,400. The corresponding figures for Ethiopians increase from 12,249 in 1990 to 14,016 in 1993 (Caritas di Roma 1995:90). Data from the Ministry of the Interior report a drop in the number of Ethiopians to 10,145 in 1994 (Caritas di Roma 1995:90). The National Statistical Institute (*Istituto Nazionale di Statistica*, ISTAT 1998:157) reported a larger number of residential permits in the years 1991-1995 and in 1997 to Somali than Eritrean/Ethiopians. Though the data after 1991 are difficult to interpret because Eritrean independence changed the political units, and therefore the enumeration of migrants, it is clear that Somali immigration increased dramatically in the 1990s.

Survey data cannot estimate the magnitude of immigration, but they provide information about the relative numbers of Eritreans and Somali and are more likely than official statistics to include undocumented migrants. They suggest that there were more Eritreans than Somali in Italy up until the early 1990s. For example, a study in Milan in the mid-1980s found 99 Ethiopians (who are likely to be Eritreans) and only five Somali (Melotti, Aimi, and Ziglio 1985:50). Another study of Milanese migrants estimated that in 1982, there were 1,600 to 2,000 Eritreans and about 30 Somali (Brambilla and Favaro 1984:114, 148). Another survey in Milan found 567 Ethiopian foreign residents in 1979, 816 in 1980, 1,481 in 1983, and 1596 in 1984 (Aimi 1985:134), indicating an overall increase in the numbers of Eritreans during this time.

Thus, up to the 1990s, the absolute size of Eritrean immigration surpassed Somali immigration. In the 1990s, Somali immigration increased as a result of civil war, while the Eritrean flow decreased, probably because of independence. Nevertheless, in proportional terms, the Somali immigration flow never reached the size of the Eritrean one, given that Somalia has about twice the population of Eritrea (CIA 2000). The comparison is even more dramatic if the size of the Tigrinya ethnic group, the group most likely to immigrate to Italy, is compared to the Somali one, as the size of the former is about 1/3 the size of the latter. Thus, even in the 1990s, a much larger proportion of Eritreans immigrated relative to the sending population. Thus, in both countries, war, civil unrest, and famine sparked emigration, but fewer Somali went to Italy.

#### *Incorporation of Immigrants*

We now turn to evidence concerning immigrant incorporation. We suggest that individuals who are moving to a country either to be with their family

or for religious reasons have more contact with host society than those who are coming to work. In 1991, 68% of residential permits issued to holders of Ethiopian passports were for work. For Somali, the figure was 81%. (In 1992, these figures were 67% and 90%; in 1993, 68% and 91%; in 1994, 68% and 90%; in 1995, 68% and 86%.) In contrast, in the 1990s, 9% of Ethiopian passport holders requested residential permits for their family and 3% for reasons of religion. Only 4% of Somali requested residential permits for family and only 1/7000 for religion. Throughout the 1990s, more Somali than Ethiopians came to Italy for economic reasons, while more Ethiopians than Somali came to join their families or religious communities (ISTAT 1998:181, 183, 185, 187, 189). This evidence suggests that the Ethiopian/Eritrean community was more established than the Somali one.

A 1985 survey found that only 17% of Ethiopians (most of whom were probably Eritreans), as opposed to 50% of Somali, had recently changed their residence (Aimi 1985:109-110, 127-128). The rate of residential relocation of Ethiopians was one of the lowest among Milanese immigrants (Aimi 1985:109-110, 127-128). Eritreans were more likely to use formal, institutional channels for immigration than other immigrant groups (Metere 1983:109, 130-155). Eritreans often used agencies in the process of immigration, sometimes to find lodging (Metere 1983:130-155). Eritreans were less likely to participate in organized crimes than other immigrant groups (Ambroso 1988:41). Another indication that Eritreans are relatively well integrated into Italian society is that the local Milanese labor union supported Eritreans and Eritrean nationalism (Sironi 1988:55). Furthermore, Eritreans have links to the major left-center political party. Ainom Maricos, an Eritrean, and a member of the *Democratici di sinistra* (Democrats of the Left), was a major spokesman for immigrant rights (Foschini and Cremonese 2001). In Milan, the *Associazione amicizia Italia Eritrea* (Italian Eritrean Friendship Association) organized a concert to celebrate Eritrean liberation from Ethiopia (*Corriere della sera* 1993).

Another indicator of incorporation is intermarriage. The overall numbers of marriages between East Africans of any nationality and Italians are miniscule (about 300 such marriages in all of 1995), but more Ethiopians than Somali married Italians in every major geographical region of Italy, except in Sicily and Sardinia, where the numbers were equal. Furthermore, the higher intermarriage rates do not simply reflect that more Ethiopian/Eritreans live in Italy than Somali. Provincial data indicate that even in areas where the number of Somali receiving residential permits outnumbered Ethiopian/Eritreans, they did not marry more Italians in 1995 (though of course the number of marriages is small) (ISTAT 1999:164-188). Furthermore, survey data show that Eritrean women are interested

in marrying Italians and demonstrate a higher intermarriage rate for Eritreans than for other foreign women (Ziglio 1985:91-92, 94; cf. Brambilla and Favaro 1984:116).

Though neither group can be considered “assimilated” or “well-integrated”, Eritreans are better integrated than are Somali. Melotti (1989:51) argues Eritreans “... now constitute a rather numerous community, that has also become an important reference point for their co-nationals who have emigrated to other European countries and America.” Somali immigrants have no comparable organized presence in Italian society though their numbers may be increasing. Eritrean organizations assist immigrants and facilitate their integration (Melotti 1985b:42-43).

Much of the existing research discusses the Eritrean community in Milan (Melotti 1985c), though there are also Eritreans in Rome (Hornziel 1986:75-80). Eritrean immigration to Milan and integration into Italian society is facilitated by Capuchin-Eritrean relations and the EPLF<sup>3</sup> (Ambroso 1988:32-35, 38-40; Favaro 1988:82-83; Melotti 1985b:42-43). In the 1980s, the Eritrean community in Milan was organized around the “Ethiopian-Eritrean Center” (*il Centro etiopico-eritreo*), located near the Church of San Francesco and the offices of EPLF (Melotti 1985b:43; Melotti and Valtorta 1985:15).

The Church of San Francesco provided access to resources, jobs, education, and housing, which influenced the decision to immigrate and possibilities for incorporation (Ambroso 1988:38-40; Favaro 1988:82-83). An Eritrean Capuchin brother, Marino Haile, ran the Ethiopian-Eritrean Center (Melotti 1985b:43; Melotti and Valtorta 1985:15; Sironi 1988:52). He conducted mass according to Abyssinian rites, in Eritrean languages, though he was a Catholic priest. The church celebrated religious festivals of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (Ambroso 1988:34). These mixed practices were rooted in the colonial interaction between Italian Catholicism and Abyssinian Christianity. Missionary activities during the Italian occupation also influenced the eventual creation of the Church of San Francesco (Ambroso 1988:34).

The EPLF also provided access to resources, jobs, education, and housing and facilitated political activism (Ambroso 1988:38-40; Favaro 1988:82-83; Sironi 1988). The EPLF helped to preserve and develop national consciousness among Eritreans living abroad. It collected money for these purposes and for disaster and famine relief in Eritrea (Sironi 1988:58). Partly as a result of EPLF activities, legislation was passed that

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<sup>3</sup> After Eritrean independence, the name was changed to The People’s Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ). We use the name EPLF, following the academic literature we cite.

protects foreign workers in Italy (Sironi 1988:57). The EPLF advocated for the rights of Eritrean workers in Milan and developed relations with Italian labor movements. Because of the EPLF organizational activities, about 10% of the Eritrean population was affiliated with the National Union of Workers, Students, and Women (*Unioni nazionali dei lavoratori, degli studenti e delle donne*) (Sironi 1988:53). The EPLF was particularly vocal about women's roles in Eritrean nationalism and its organization. Its position was important, because many immigrants were female domestic laborers (Ziglio 1988:72, 76). Ziglio (1985:91-92) argued that Eritreans, and in particular, domestic workers, had more direct contact with Italian society and were more integrated into Italian society than other immigrants precisely because of these organizations and because of the relatively long immigration history. The EPLF linked the conditions of Eritrean migrants in Milan to the resolution of the Eritrean-Ethiopian conflict in Africa (Sironi 1988:57-58). The EPLF also organized language classes in Eritrean languages for children and adults (Brambilla and Favaro 1984:121). EPLF leaders encouraged migrants, especially Eritrean women, to attend literacy classes (Melotti 1988:18; Sironi 1988:53-54). Eritreans were more likely to attend literacy classes than other foreigners (Ziglio 1985:99). These organizations facilitated integration into Italian society while maintaining Eritrean public and private customs, holidays, identity, and a highly developed sense of community (Ambrosio 1988:34; Sironi 1988:52; Ziglio 1985:91-92).<sup>4</sup>

The EPLF is also a partial outgrowth of the interaction between colonizer and colonized. The first Eritrean nationalist movements were affected by Italian militarism and by demographic and political shifts induced by Italian colonialism. Moreover, the EPLF, did not arise in opposition to Italian rule, and thus, Italian and Eritrean ties were not destroyed by its triumph.

Somali are less integrated into Italian society in comparison to Eritreans. For example, Somali apparently used social services relatively less frequently than Eritreans (Favaro 1988:82-83; Ziglio 1988:67) and fewer Somali than Eritreans were enrolled in language classes (Favaro 1988:82-83; Ziglio 1988:67). Accounts of Somali living in Italy suggest that there was no organized community comparable to the Eritrean one (Brambilla and Favaro 1984:148-151; Fazel 1994). For example, a recent story in the *Corriere della sera* discussing a protest of some Somali

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<sup>4</sup> Eritreans, like all immigrants, face many obstacles, difficulties, and Italian hostility (Melotti, Aimi, and Ziglio 1985:58-59). When housing shortages increased in the late 1980s, relations between the EPLF and Milanese unions became strained (Sironi 1988:57). Eritreans also had difficulty finding employment (Brambilla and Favaro 1984:118).



immigrants at the train station in Florence made no mention of any Somali immigrant organization (Catani 2000). The Somali apparently do not have any institutionalized relationship with the pro-immigrant political party, the Democrats of the Left, in contrast to the Eritreans. Somali migrants feel isolated in Italy, which is compounded by religious differences because most Somali are Muslim (Fazel 1994), not Christian like the Eritreans. Fazel (1994:21-25, 56), a Somali immigrant to northern Italy, argued that familiarity with the Italian language and culture did little to ease her entry to Italian society and stressed the relatively superficial impact of Italian colonialism on Somali society. Finally, there is simply much less information about Somali in Italy than Eritreans, despite their growing numbers, which must reflect their relatively clandestine living conditions.

### **Conclusions**

Part of the explanation for East African post-colonial immigration, as in other countries, lies in the degree to which immigrants are familiar with, and have knowledge of, the language, customs, and religion of host countries (Massey et al. 1993:446-447). In particular, Eritreans often know the Italian language and are familiar with Italian culture (Brambilla and Favaro 1984:115; Galeazzo 1994:369; Melotti 1985a:29). This familiarity and knowledge itself is partly a result of institutional ties developed during colonialism. In turn, these institutional ties are a partly a result of the pre-colonial social structure as our Eritrean/Somali comparison shows. Push factors often compel individuals to leave their country of origin (Heisler 1992; Massey et al. 1993; Morawska 1990; Rystand 1992; Salt 1992). In both Eritrea and Somalia, there were local changes in political power, famine, natural disasters, war, low levels of per capita income, wage differentials between sending and receiving countries, instability created by colonial rule, and shifts in colonial administration, all of which provided individuals with reasons to emigrate (Ambroso 1988:29; Brambilla and Favaro 1984:114-115, 148; McCann 1986, 1990; Melotti 1985b:42-43, 1988:18; Sironi 1988:49). These reasons probably caused the rise of Eritrean immigration in the 1980s and Somali immigration in the 1990s. However, these factors cannot explain differences in the incorporation of Eritreans and Somali in Italy.

In fact, though both migration flows are relatively long term, providing time for both groups to establish an organized presence in Italy, only the Eritreans have done so. Italian families were repatriated from Somalia at the end of Italian fiduciary control in 1960 and left Eritrea in 1962 when it was annexed by Ethiopia (Melotti 1985b:40). These families often brought their Eritrean and Somali domestic workers with them (Brambilla and

Favaro 1984:114; Melotti 1985b:40, 1988:18; Sironi 1988:49). The size of the Somali domestic labor flow, however, was smaller, because there were fewer Italian settlers in colonial Somalia, and thus, less domestic labor (Melotti 1988:18; Ziglio 1985:86, 88; see also Brambilla and Favaro 1984:149). Domestic workers of Eritrean origin continue to form a sizable proportion of the migrant population in Italy, particularly in Milan (Aimi 1985:121; Melotti 1985b:43; Ziglio 1985:86, 88).

We argued that theories of international immigration and integration need to be expanded to include the effects of the interaction between pre-colonial social structure and colonialism. We suggested that institutions shaped by colonialism facilitate immigration and integration where organizations have institutional ties between post-colonial countries and former colonial powers, but also sufficient autonomy to retain legitimacy among immigrants. The comparison between Eritrean and Somali immigration to Italy illustrates our point. By examining two post-colonial immigrant groups whose countries were colonized by the same country, that had a relatively similar historical and migratory trajectory, and by examining a single migrant destination, we attempt analytically to control for these factors (though of course we do not deny their importance). This comparison isolates the independent effect of pre-colonial social structure, the previously neglected factor, which we claim explains some differences in immigrant experience.

We focused on three pre-colonial differences between Eritrean and Somalia – class structure, the state, and religion. In Eritrea, relatively well-developed class differences, combined with a strong state and an indigenous Christianity, led to dense institutional interaction between the colonized and the colonizers. Nationalist movements oriented primarily against Ethiopia rather than Italy did not seriously damage these relations. In contrast, Somali society was Islamic, relatively egalitarian, and had a weak state. Somali nationalism developed against Italian rule. Thus the institutional ties between Italians and Somali were superficial.

These post-colonial links facilitate Eritrean immigration to Italy. Eritrean immigrants are relatively plentiful in Italy and form a well-organized community. The large presence of Eritrean domestic laborers in Italy is a result of Italian settlements in Eritrea. In addition, the two centers of the Eritrean community in Milan, the church run by the Capuchins and the EPLF, were shaped by colonialism. In contrast, there are relatively fewer Somali immigrants in Italy and they are relatively less well integrated into Italian society than Eritreans.

Thus, we argue that immigration and integration are shaped by the interaction between pre-colonial social structure and colonial rule. Although some work on immigration and integration considers how human

capital partially depends on the colonial experience – knowledge of the language or familiarity with a culture – the effects of colonialism are more fundamental. Individuals are rarely passive actors, even when they are exploited or dominated (Scott 1985). Colonialism was an interactional process of resistance and accommodation that altered the consciousness and institutions of both colonizers and colonized (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991). As Tilly (1990:84) argued, “networks migrate”: effective units of migration are sets of people linked by acquaintance, kinship, or work. As we showed, the interaction between pre-colonial social structure and colonialism affected the constitution of these networks. Future work could explore these interactions in other cases of colonialism, where there were European or non-European colonial powers or where European were both colonists and colonized (Chan 1990:48).

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