

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MEDITERRANEAN MIGRATIONS ¹

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1. Introduction

This brief study relies on two key words: ‘Mediterranean’ and ‘migration’. As regards the Mediterranean region, reference will be made in general to the countries with access to that sea, but whose borders and zones of influence have frequently changed, also significantly, in the course of history. We shall therefore have to use highly elastic geographical references, considering Europe (or part of it), a Middle-Eastern area of varying dimensions, and northern Africa.

As regards migration, the first distinction will be between historical and modern migrations: in the former case, we shall refer to those which modified the territorial order, and which over the centuries (and the millennia) have assumed very different connotations. Moreover, we shall distinguish invasions from colonizations: in all cases, however, they involved peoples in search of new territories which were already inhabited. With the migrations that we shall call ‘modern’, even if mass migrations, migratory projects have concerned individual families (or persons) in search of a better life.

The analysis conducted in sections 2 to 4 will not necessarily follow a historical sequence. Our objective will be to identify some critical junctures with significant influences on the history of the region, and sometimes on that of humanity as a whole. We shall seek to show their causes by referring to factors of both expulsion and attraction. We will also look for possible similarities with modern migrations, and particularly with those currently changing, once again, the image of the world and the peoples that inhabit it.

¹ Sections 1 and 6 may be attributed to both authors, sections 2, 3 and 4 to Eros Moretti, and section 5 to Eralba Cela.

2. The origins of the Mediterranean region

Between 10,000 and 8,000 years ago, Europe, northern Africa and the Near East were the theatre of events of extreme importance which unequivocally marked out the Mediterranean region. The end of the last ice age around 8,700 years ago led to increasing temperatures and rising sea levels in Europe, with a consequent increase in the surface area covered by forests. Numerous wild animal herds – reindeer in particular – moved towards higher latitudes, and large numbers of hunters followed them northwards. Europe's geography, but also its demography, was profoundly modified as a consequence: between 9,000 and 8,000 years ago, the overall population of the continent slightly diminished, with marked variations in its territorial distribution². Then, around 9,000 years ago a process of desertification began in the Sahara which lasted for some thousands of years, causing the isolation of northern Africa from the rest of the continent, with the exception of the Nile Valley.

During that same period, in the Near East a large demographic increase occurred in the area situated amid Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and Iraq known as the 'Fertile Crescent'. Indeed, it has been estimated that the population grew from 200,000 to 500,000 persons. The ensuing demographic pressure evoked two responses: (i) a search for new technologies to serve the needs of the population (in agriculture and pasturage) with the consequent onset of what is termed the 'Neolithic Revolution'; (ii) a greater propensity to emigrate to adjoining territories: from the Nile Valley to Persia, from Anatolia to Greece.

The Neolithic Revolution was a gradual one. With the spread of agriculture, pasturage, and then trade, the nomadic hunters became settled, the first villages were established, and in some cases they grew into cities³. Agriculture in the Near East was of particularly ancient origin: the first wooden scythes (with flint blades) were made more than 10 thousand years ago. The first pottery was produced 8 thousand years ago on the Mediterranean coast of Anatolia and in the Fertile Crescent, while a thousand years later the use of copper began in Mesopotamia. The Neolithic villages and towns could evolve into great civilizations because of the presence of important communication routes. This role was not performed by the sea, which was an impassable obstacle to trade, but by large rivers. The

² The rising sea levels transformed the Strait of Gibraltar, probably dry during the Ice Age, into an impassable barrier which separated Europe from Africa for some millennia until suitable vessels made the crossing possible.

³ Jericho (in Palestine) is considered the most ancient of cities. The first settlement dates back to more than 8,000 years ago. The site has undergone several urban phases over the millennia. The biblical Jericho, destroyed by Joshua in around 1200 BC, is believed to have been the sixth city on the site.

Sumerians, who probably originated in the East, settled on the lower reaches of two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, in the second half of the fifth millennium BC. Just over 1000 years later, the construction of navigable canals and efficient irrigation systems had transformed mudflats devastated by unpredictable floods into highly fertile land which yielded crops three times a year. When in 3300 the Sumerians made their greatest discovery – cuneiform script – they were already using sailboats, animal-drawn ploughs, and wheeled vehicles⁴. As Braudel wrote (1997, p.60), only ‘at the beginning of the second millennium did two maritime zones emerge, producing ships and sailors: the Lebanese coast and the islands of the Aegean’.

The Nile Valley was the natural continuation of the Fertile Crescent, even if agriculture⁵ began there much later than in the Near East. The first direct contacts between the Nile Valley and southern Mesopotamia probably date to 3400 BC, the period when urbanization began in the Nile Delta, and where the first documents in hieroglyphic script⁶ appeared in around 3100. At the beginning of the next millennium the Kingdom of the North (Lower Egypt) conquered the Kingdom of the South (Upper Egypt) and founded the first dynasty of the archaic period.

The second millennium can be considered the most luminous period of the Bronze Age despite episodes of darkness⁷. The Cretans,⁸ and after the decline of Crete the Mycenaeans, had control of the eastern Mediterranean and trade; the kingdoms and empires of the entire area – often at war with each other – were their clients, and a similar function, albeit with some difficulties due to their problematic independence, was performed by the towns on the Syro-Lebanese coast. This order began to disintegrate in the thirteenth century, and the period was followed by what are known as the ‘Ancient Middle Ages’.

3. From crisis to rebirth

In the mid-thirteenth century, or perhaps a few decades later, Troy was destroyed by the Mycenaeans, and in 1235 the last great pharaoh, Ramses II, died.

⁴ Also significant was the invention of the potter’s wheel; a device which can be considered the first industrial machine.

⁵ The first forms of agricultural economy arose in 5000 BC.

⁶ It is likely that the cuneiform script of the Sumerians, though it was highly abstract, influenced the birth of the hieroglyphic system, whose signs were much more concrete.

⁷ Consider the invasion in around 1750 of Lower Egypt by the Hyksos, who remained there for two centuries; the wars among the Hittites, the Khurrites, the Mitanni, the Assyrians, and the Egyptians; and the instability of the Mesopotamian empires.

⁸ Knossos was constructed in 1900 BC.

In the same period certain endogenous factors and mass invasions⁹ altered the physiognomy of the entire region from Greece to Egypt. The best known invasions were those by the 'Peoples of the Sea' – probably originating from the north – which in around 1200 first devastated Greece and various islands of the Aegean and then invaded Anatolia and the entire coast of the Near East¹⁰: they were halted on their entry into Egypt. A few decades previously, flows of people originating from the Arabian desert had invaded Mesopotamia, Palestine, and the Syro-Lebanese coast¹¹. In the twelfth century, the Dorics from the north invaded Greece and reached some of the Aegean islands¹². The result of these population flows was the destruction of the Mycenaean civilization, of the Hittite Empire, and the towns on the Syro-Lebanese coast, as well as the decadence of the Egyptian Empire. When these events combined with turmoil in Mesopotamia and the endogenous factors outlined above, the result was the collapse of trade in the region. At least three centuries would pass before there was once again a significant presence of ships and trade in the eastern Mediterranean, testifying to a resurgence which would lead to conquest of the western Mediterranean.

After the destruction wrought by the Peoples of the Sea, the Phoenicians were the first to reconstruct the towns along the Syro-Lebanese coast. The collapse of the Hittite Empire, and the decadence of the Egyptian and Mesopotamian ones, had allowed those towns to enjoy an unprecedented level of independence. Moreover, the disappearance of Mycenaean power gave them absolute control over the Mediterranean routes. After the Phoenician towns had resumed trade relations with the Egyptians and established small colonies on some islands of the Aegean, they began to move westwards, following the north-African coastline. The first colonies were established in around 1000, while Carthage was founded towards the end of the ninth century. A second movement, probably more recent, used the main Mediterranean islands (Cyprus, Crete, Malta, Sicily, Sardinia, the Balearics) as its ports, and established large colonies on them. With the rebirth of the eastern

⁹ Archaeologists do not always agree on the causes of so many catastrophes in such a brief period of time. The barbarian hordes (nomadic or semi-nomadic armed peoples) which repeatedly invaded the region certainly played a significant role, but so too did endogenous factors like droughts, earthquakes and tsunamis.

¹⁰ Probably to be included among the Peoples of the Sea are the Philistines, who are believed to have settled in Palestine (in the zone of Gaza) in around 1150.

¹¹ Among these peoples were the Jews, whose arrival in Palestine, at least of some tribes, is dated to around 1220.

¹² As said, in around 1200 the Peoples of the Sea had already sacked and destroyed the Mycenaean towns. But the final blow was the arrival of the Dorics, who in around 1130 utterly destroyed Mycenae. This provoked the dispersion of the Mycenaean throughout peninsular and insular Greece, with the diffusion during the dark centuries of the Mycenaean language, Greek myths, and the Homeric tradition.

empires, the situation began to change: in the eighth century the Assyrian Empire gained control over the Phoenician towns (Byblos, Sidon, and Tyre), which after the collapse of the Assyrian Empire (sixth century) came under Babylonian dominance. The most significant Phoenician town was Carthage, whose ships passed the Pillars of Hercules in the fifth century; whereafter they headed first towards Britain and then southwards as far as the coast of present-day Cameroon.

After the crisis of the Mycenaean civilization, Greece took longer than Phoenicia to reconstruct its towns and to become once again a maritime power. In the ninth century, while the Phoenicians were expanding westwards, the Greeks began to colonize the coasts of Anatolia; only in the eighth century did they set sail for Italy. Diverse factors induced the Greeks to push westwards: in some cases, their main concern was to expand trade; in others, to acquire land to ease excessive demographic growth; while political reasons sometimes induced groups to migrate. The ships followed the European shores: from Greece, via its islands, to Corfu, and then through the Otranto Channel to the coast of Puglia, and thereafter to other destinations in southern Italy and Sicily. To be noted is that the new towns were entirely independent from those of their origin, with which they maintained only cultural affinities and close commercial ties¹³. Also to be stressed is that the colonists occupied lands which were already inhabited. The task of the new arrivals was to construct good relations with the natives, many of whom soon realized that their freedoms would be increasingly curtailed. Nor should one neglect the second-generation colonies: from the end of the seventh century onwards, the towns of western Greece colonized the coasts of the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian seas¹⁴. In the latter case, they reached the French and Spanish coasts, where they clashed with the Phoenician colonies. Further colonies were founded in Sicily, which was divided between areas of Greek and Phoenician influence.

4. History repeats itself

A similar pattern can be discerned in the crisis of the Roman Empire. Already in the third century BC the pressure of the Germanic peoples on its borders had created problems for the legions, but the migratory pressure became irresistible during the fourth century when the Huns, chased out of their territories in central Asia by other peoples from eastern and northern Siberia, invaded eastern Europe. Germanic tribes in search of new territories increased the pressure on the periphery

¹³ The main division among the Greek colonies, based on the towns of origin, is among Doric, Ionic and Achaean.

¹⁴ The main contribution was made by the colonies of Magna Grecia, while Spartan ones moved principally towards the Adriatic.

of the Roman Empire, and frequently crossed its borders. The Empire of the West,¹⁵ poorer and less inhabited than that of the East, suffered several invasions,¹⁶ and new peoples settled in what had been the Roman provinces. After the Vandals settled in Andalusia¹⁷, they created a kingdom in northern Africa which the Byzantines dismantled in the mid-sixth century. The Visigoths conquered Spain, and their kingdom resisted until the Arab conquest at the beginning of the eighth century. The Franks, after they had settled in northern Gaul, extended dominion across broader territory which culminated in the ninth century with the foundation of the Holy Roman Empire. The Saxons (with the Angles and the Jutes) colonized England, where they founded a kingdom that would endure until the Norman Conquest (eleventh century).

The Emperor of the West had left Rome before his definitive ousting in 476, and then a new authority, the Bishop of Rome, imposed itself. The new Western Empire arose around the Pope and the newly settled peoples. The Eastern Empire resisted for some centuries, but in the seventh century, owing to the advance of Islam from the south and the pressure of the Slav peoples from the north, it lost most of its provinces.

The great invasions continued for centuries. The most important concerned the Turkish Seljuks, a nomadic people from central Asia that occupied Persia in around 970, and in the eleventh century invaded Syria and Palestine, and then wrested Anatolia from the Byzantines. This empire began to crumble in the twelfth century and then definitively disintegrated following the Mongol invasion of the thirteenth. In the fourteenth century there arose from its fragments the Ottoman Principality, which moved the capital to Thrace, and in 1453 to Byzantium, after putting an end to the Eastern Roman Empire. The Ottoman Empire achieved its maximum expansion during the sixteenth century: in Europe it extended to the gates of Vienna and to southern Russia; elsewhere it expanded into northern Africa (except for Morocco) and the Near East (including Iraq). The new empire eventually controlled large part of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, as well as gaining an important outlet on the Indian Ocean.

One of the main effects of the Ottoman expansion was the blockage of trade with the East; an obstacle that induced the recently-formed European nation-states to seek new routes to the East. The first country to do so was Portugal: in 1487

¹⁵ Only with the death of Theodosius, in 395, did the definitive distinction between the Western and Eastern Empire come about, although it had already existed in practice for many years, with the two western prefectures (Gaul and Italy-Africa) on the one hand, and the eastern ones (Illyria and the East) on the other.

¹⁶ Most notable among the invasions of Italy in the fifth century were those by the Huns of Attila (452), the Visigoths of Alaric with the sack of Rome (410), and the Vandals (455).

¹⁷ Originally Vandalusia.

Bartholomeu Dias rounded the Cape of Good Hope¹⁸, and in 1498 Vasco de Gama circumnavigated Africa and landed on the coast of western India. Between these two dates was the more important one of 1492, when Christopher Columbus, seeking a more rapid route to the Indies, set sail from Palos watched by the Spanish royal family. Due to a series of errors, however, he crossed the Atlantic Ocean and reached the islands of the Caribbean¹⁹. This accidental discovery of America definitively shifted the world's centre of gravity away from the Mediterranean.

Besides Portugal and Spain, also Holland, France and England participated in colonization of the East and West Indies. For three centuries, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth, European immigration was extremely modest: the colonization of Latin America by Spaniards and Portuguese brought only pillage and destruction. According to Chesnais (1993), before the arrival of the conquerors (1500), the population of Latin America was approximately 13 million and that of North America one million. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, massacres and diseases decimated the population, with the consequent importing of around 2.5 million slaves from Africa. In 1800, after three centuries, the population of Latin America has been estimated at around 17.5 million and that of North America at 6.5 million²⁰.

The overall situation changed decisively in the nineteenth century, with the beginning of mass immigration. In North America, in the space of one century, the population rose from 6.5 to 81 million. First to arrive, in strict relation to mortality transition in Europe, were Anglo-Saxons, followed by Scandinavians and Germans. This period was characterized in the USA by the conquest of the new frontier which concluded in 1889 with assignment of the last tracts of fertile land in Oklahoma. The period between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw a new kind of immigration. It was still Europeans who migrated, but they now originated from the Mediterranean countries and those of Eastern Europe. In Latin America, where immigrants predominantly originated from Spain, Portugal and Italy, the population rose from 17.5 to 64 million in the course of the nineteenth century. More modest was the role played by Australia and New Zealand, the remaining countries with a European population, where the immigrants were

¹⁸ Previously known as the Cape of Storms.

¹⁹ The distance between the Canary Islands and Japan is 10,600 miles; on the basis of Ptolemaic calculations it would have been 8,500 miles. However, Columbus committed two further errors concerning evaluation of the length of a degree and the extent of the Asian continent, obtaining an estimate of the aforementioned distance of 2,400 miles.

²⁰ The settlement of whites in the New World provoked an enormous decrease in the American population, a substantial reduction of the demographic level in Africa, and scant emigration from Europe (Reinhard et al., 1971). Only in the eighteenth century did it have some limited positive effects.

prevalently of British origin. Overall, around 40 million people left Europe between 1800 and 1930.

5. Modern migrations

The restrictive immigration policies adopted by the American government to curb incoming migratory flows (Immigration Act 1924) and then the Great Depression of the 1930s put an end to mass emigration, which concluded before the beginning of the Second World War.

Between the two wars, Europe was traversed by refugees and entire populations forced into exile by conflicts between different ethnicities and religions. Following the rise of the totalitarian regimes and with the beginning of the Second World War, voluntary exoduses and mass deportations caused population movements to swell even more rapidly until, between 1941 and 1943, they involved around 23 million Europeans.

The second post-war period marked a new shift in European migratory dynamics. The economic and geopolitical scenario had profoundly changed. Although substantial numbers of Europeans continued to emigrate to America and Australia during the 1950s, post-war Western Europe progressively changed from a region of departure to one of the principal destinations of migratory flows. Post-war reconstruction and industrial development required labour that was often in short supply at local level owing to the huge losses of life during the conflict. The solution was provided by the migrations that began in the 1950s and 1960s. In that period of Fordist economic development, the Mediterranean region performed the function of a natural reserve of low-cost labour. The European countries undergoing strong economic expansion opened their labour markets to foreign workers through bilateral agreements. In France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium and Holland, workers came from the countries of the Mediterranean's northern shore (Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Yugoslavia) and southern one (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey).

The 1973 oil shock and the ensuing worldwide recession induced the adoption of restrictive immigration policies by the labour-importing European countries. The recession irreversibly changed the global and European geography of migratory flows.

The movements of people generated increasing migratory pressure from the developing countries. Migrants were not halted by the closure of frontiers but found ways to adapt and to evade the normative obstacles. Flows from North Africa headed towards the familiar northern shore of the Mediterranean, which changed from a 'land of transit to either a definitive destination or a 'waiting room'

in regard to European closure. These countries were faced by a new phenomenon for which no regulatory legislation was adopted so far, and they bore the entire burden of immigration. At the same time, although the countries of the northern shore of the Mediterranean had been the main sources of labour for the expanding economies of the North, the process of economic development had involved Europe as a whole, albeit at different rates, and it had given the working class access to relative affluence.

Secondly, the end of colonialism in Africa and Asia and the progressive improvement of living standards in numerous former European colonies enabled the citizens of those countries to emigrate, mainly to what had been the motherland during the colonial regime thanks to linguistic-cultural affinities. Primarily north-western Europe, France and England, but also Holland, Belgium and Germany, therefore began to register increasing flows of immigrants from their former colonies.

The European countries with Mediterranean coastlines, except for France, have exhibited a number of shared features with regard their socio-economic development and immigration: indeed, one may speak of a 'Mediterranean migratory model' (King 2000). Various factors have contributed to transforming Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal from destination countries into the recipients of growing flows of immigrants. Firstly, flows in this region have evolved spontaneously. They are no longer organized as they were in the 1960s and 1970s. Spontaneity and the unpreparedness of the receiving countries stimulate entries, producing the widespread irregularity that is the distinctive feature of this model. To remedy the lack of regulation and to cope with increasing numbers of irregular immigrants, the countries concerned make frequent use of amnesties. Initially, this instrument made it possible to regularize illegal immigrants already present in the country, but the lack of serious planning and the reiteration of amnesties continue to attract irregular immigrants hoping for regularization.

Secondly, migrations to southern Europe do not now originate solely from the Mediterranean basin as they did during the post-war period, but rather from a great number of countries. The result is a highly complex phenomenon characterized by strong linguistic, ethnic, cultural and religious heterogeneity. Unlike the migrations of the past, strong gender asymmetries are created, so that male immigrants predominate in some national groups. By contrast, others consist solely of female first migrants. These latter are partly assisted by the support of the Catholic Church, which has played a major role in aiding female migrants in countries like the Philippines, Cape Verde and the Dominican Republic. Moreover, female migratory flows have been facilitated by the collapse of the socialist regimes of the East and by the progressive enlargement of the European Community.

Increasing ageing populations and weak welfare states in Southern Europe have given rise to increasing demand for domestic workers in the elderly care sector.

Also the human capital of migrants has changed in comparison with that of the post-war period – although it perhaps partly resembles that of inter-continental migrants – since migration is undertaken by people of all social classes: migrants from the countryside and from cities, poorer individuals (but not the poorest) and more affluent ones, less educated and more educated (brain drain), persons in search of better lives.

Unlike the migrations of the past, there is no place in the Mediterranean migratory model for migrants if not for those in ‘3-D jobs’ (dangerous, demanding, dirty) where social ascent is a mirage for most of them. This aspect is bound up with the economic development of the southern Europe societies, where immigrants are no longer part of a process of industrial and technological growth (as happened in the years of Europe’s economic boom). Rather, they are more frequently employed in heavy manual jobs, underpaid, with scant protection and social recognition, and in the interstices of the informal economy. This latter is at the basis of the development model of the southern Europe societies, which often exhibit two-speed growth rates. There are marked North-South contrasts within countries whereby the south, on the margins of the industrial revolution, has often based its development on seasonal sectors, like Mediterranean agriculture, services, construction, or fishing, which are characterized by demand for precarious labour and often survive by relying on informality to remain competitive.

Also the north of the Mediterranean countries, except for some large industrial groups (e.g. Fiat in Italy) is characterized by a network of small and micro family-run firms – as in the case of Italy, where the coexistence of a formal and informal labour market enables immigrants to find employment in those firms. Moreover, the transformation of production processes, as well as the decentralization and sub-contracting of activities, have led to the disappearance of large part of the jobs that once represented stable and protected employment. Activities and sectors subject to scant technological innovation (hotels, catering, construction, personal care services), and in which it has not been possible to eliminate manual work, have attracted immigrant labour very willing to accept jobs in them.

This economic phenomenon is flanked by an important social one: the rise in education levels of natives, also due to their greater affluence. Because the strong inter-generational solidarity typical of the southern European countries has sustained young people’s aspirations for economic and social ascent, it has helped create a shortage of the low-cost labour required by local economies, which have consequently resorted to immigrants. However, the improved living standards of natives and their aspirations to upward social mobility have not been matched by equally high employment levels. This has produced a phenomenon typical of the

Mediterranean migratory model: immigration coexists with high unemployment among natives.

The rapid ageing of the Mediterranean European countries and their weak welfare systems are flanked by a process of female emancipation. The greater labour-market participation of Western women frees them from care work; the vacuum thus created is a strong pull factor for female immigration into those countries.

In the Mediterranean migratory model, most migrants, especially men, find jobs in agriculture, mainly at the beginning of their migratory experience: Albanians in Greece, Moroccans and other Africans in Italy and Spain, are employed in the seasonal harvesting of tomatoes, oranges, grapes, etc. The work is done in the hottest months of the year, often in greenhouses. The living conditions of the immigrants are at the limits of decency, and relationships with the native population are almost non-existent, except when conflicts and protests erupt. Another sector that attracts immigrants is the construction industry, which pulls Cape Verdeans to Lisbon, Moroccans and Poles to Madrid, Albanians, Egyptians and Poles to Athens, Albanians and Romanians to Italy.

The tourism industry is a further source of employment for both male and female immigrants. In this sector too, as in agriculture and construction, the seasonal work available is mostly informal and precarious. Mass immigration from the Third World to southern Europe is most visibly manifest in street hawkers – who are male migrants, for the most part African and Asians.

Immigrants also find employment in industry, where jobs are steadier and better protected, and afford a certain amount of stabilization and integration into the host country.

As said, the domestic services sector is the main source of employment for female immigrants. Their inflows did not begin with the crisis of 1973. Also previously in Europe there had been immigrant women employed in domestic work (Filipinos in Italy, Spain and Greece, Cape Verdeans in Portugal and Italy). But it has been especially since the end of the 1980s that inflows of female first-migrants from Eastern Europe have intensified. This type of work is typically urban, and it concentrates largely in big cities: Madrid, Barcelona, Milan, Rome, and Athens. The labour of immigrant women provides services undelivered by the welfare state and sustains the emancipation of native women in southern Europe. With a constantly growing elderly population and the state's continuing reluctance to provide personal services, the demand for so-called 'badanti' (carers) has consolidated. There has consequently developed an informal welfare system often supported by native families and based on the exploitation of immigrant women, who, especially if co-resident with the care recipient, are deprived of freedom and a personal life-space.

Between the late 1980s and early 1990s, a series of major international events – the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Gulf War, the break-up of the Soviet Union – changed the patterns of migration and opened the way for migratory flows from Eastern Europe.

The dissolution of the communist regimes of Eastern Europe and the Balkans increased the migratory pressure on Western Europe, in some cases generating outright exoduses to neighbouring countries – for example by Albanians to Italy and Greece. In other cases, political changes created instability and provoked forced migrations, as did the conflicts in former Yugoslavia.

Geopolitical changes, the progressive enlargement of the European Union, and increasing migratory pressure on Europe, have heightened awareness among the European countries of the need for a shared policy on immigration. Debate has begun on the European Community's management of immigration, and on the process of convergence that should characterize the immigration policies of the EU member-countries. Nevertheless, the efforts of member-states seem to focus more on the closure and impermeability of their borders than on dialogue and cooperation.

In the Mediterranean context, the incapacity of the receiving societies to view migration within a substantially changed geopolitical world order, and the adoption of largely restrictive legislation, have in no wise helped governance of the phenomenon and abatement of entries by immigrants. On the contrary, policies of closure to immigration have turned the Mediterranean into a cemetery of migrants. Moreover, the failure to adopt or implement integration policies has often impeded the social inclusion of immigrants already present in the European countries, and it has increased the precariousness of their legal status, with a consequent lack of rights and social marginalization.

The recent political conflicts in the Mediterranean region and the obstacles to entry into the European countries have increased the number of people seeking to reach Europe on makeshift boats across the Mediterranean. The tragedy off the island of Lampedusa on 3 October 2013, which caused the deaths of around 350 people (mainly Eritreans), returned trans-Mediterranean migration to a place high on the political agenda.

The European Commission's response to the Lampedusa tragedy has been the creation of a Mediterranean task force (October 2013) which has suggested the following ways to prevent further deaths in the Mediterranean: closer cooperation with third countries; the development of regional protection schemes; an increase in legal ways to enter Europe; a fight against human trafficking, smuggling and organized crime; stronger surveillance of maritime borders; cooperation between the Frontex and Eurosur agencies; and assistance to EU member-states subject to

significant migratory pressures. Again, the focus seems to be on security, and Europe continues to hide behind the scenes of its enchanted fortress.

The 1995 Barcelona Conference, whose purpose was to enhance the role of the Mediterranean as an opportunity for dialogue with the Arab countries, gave rise to hopes which have not been fulfilled because of the EU's Eurocentric policies. Since September 11, the shift of interest to issues such as security, anti-terrorism, and the fight against illegal immigration has demonstrated that Europe considers the Mediterranean to be a sea barrier between two worlds, one of which perceives the other as a threat to its identity. Consequently, relationships with the southern Mediterranean countries are based, not on reciprocity and inclusive policies, but on unilateral impositions and policies.

6. Conclusions

In our brief excursus through the history (and prehistory) of Mediterranean migrations we have concentrated on two main types: invasions and colonizations. Invasions are by definition migrations of peoples bearing arms, and they are defined such by the peoples attacked. The cases that we have considered (thirteenth-twelfth centuries BC, and since the fourth century AD) concern great civilizations overrun, and sometimes destroyed, by nomadic or semi-nomadic people; they are cases, we may say, in which a more advanced technological level has been of no help in repelling the invasion. It is very difficult to find general explanations as to the causes of these flows, which should instead be sought case by case. Movements of nomadic (armed) peoples have existed for millennia, and the most likely reason for them is excessive demographic pressure²¹. The problem consists in correctly interpreting the aims of the invaders: most evolved civilizations are wealthy, and they are attractive prey. Therefore, the richer the prey, the greater the risks that the invader is willing to take to capture it. Only in a few cases do we have historical information on the peoples that destroyed the bronze-age civilizations: the Dorics in Greece, the Jews and Philistines in Palestine. In regard to the more recent invasions (since the fourth century BC.), some peoples have contributed to creating the present-day Mediterranean region and Europe: the Franks, the Longobards, the Saxons, the Normans, the Slavs, the Bulgars, the Arabs, and the Ottomans, to mention only some.

In regard to the term 'colonization', although it generally has a positive connotation, it may cover very different patterns with some elements in common:

²¹ For hunter peoples, excessive demographic pressure may also come about with low levels of density, especially in the presence of significant climate changes.

for instance, it may refer to a civilized people which sends a few ships to more or less distant lands. Also in this case we have men bearing weapons, but it is the higher technological level of the colonizers that ensures their success despite their numerical inferiority. The Greek and Phoenician colonies were such only in name; in reality, they were autonomous towns that maintained cultural and commercial ties with the motherland. Those of the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries were indeed colonies: their task was to procure wealth for their countries through trade, but also through piracy, the exploitation of the native population, or the slave trade. This was certainly the case of Latin America, Africa, and the East Indies, while it was less so in North America, where the colonists – though they were initially very few in number – constructed a new country. In all cases and in all historical periods, however, largely the same treatment has been reserved for the native population, and which in some cases – for instance the North American Indians and the Australian aborigines – has led to their almost total extinction²².

To return to the USA, as we have seen, the symbolic date marking conclusion of its colonization is 1889. Subsequent immigrants – Europeans from the Mediterranean countries and from Eastern Europe (mainly Italians, Spaniards and Poles)– were no longer colonizers; rather, they were migrants who found employment in the large cities, mainly on the Eastern seaboard: blue-collar workers in manufacturing industry, bricklayers and labourers in the construction industry, dockers in the harbours, and workers in services. This type of immigration diminished after the First World War, also because of the immigration policies adopted in the 1920s (the Immigration Act was passed in 1924) and the Great Depression of the 1930s. These migrations do not seem to differ from those of the present day, although at that time illegal immigration was not a problem. Despite the policies enacted by the various US governments to discourage such immigration, the construction of walls, and tight controls on the Mexico border, the Hispanics who have entered during the last half century and are mainly present in the states of the South, and who continue to enter with a certain intensity, constitute a social reality that has attracted considerable political attention in recent years. In the USA the new immigrants are assuming a positive role in both economic and demographic terms. In many states fertility is above the generation replacement

²² On the other hand, the same thing has happened since the first colonizations, even if the process has sometimes taken thousands of years, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, our direct progenitor, appeared on earth around 100,000 years ago in East Africa, and only 30,000 years later do we have evidence (fossils) of his overcoming of the African continent. We find *homo sapiens sapiens* 70,000 years ago in Palestine, and 50,000 years ago in Afghanistan and Russia, on the one hand, and in Morocco on the other. In the Mediterranean area, 5 thousand years later we find him in Spain and around 40 thousand years ago in Eastern Europe. In this process, the previous hominids (*homo sapiens arcaico* in Africa and Asia and the Neanderthal man in Europe) were confined to increasingly small areas, until they definitively disappeared between 35 and 30 thousand years ago.

level; and the national average TFR – uniquely among the developed countries – stands at around 2.1²³.

The current European situation is very different, and especially so that of the Mediterranean countries, where the demographic, economic and social crisis is profound and apparently irreversible²⁴. The migratory pressure from Africa and the Near East is certainly very high, and the migrants wanting to enter Europe, passing through Italy, probably exceed the European countries' capacity to absorb them. However, many of them are asylum seekers, and in other cases migrants with individual or family projects of immigration and integration seeking to improve their lives. The situation as regards migratory pressure it is not very different from the American one. The differences are in the immigration countries: the USA, on the one hand, and in the European Union on the other.

The USA is a great country born in recent centuries from migrations, and which, despite the numerous difficulties and political problems caused by irregular and unlawful immigration, knows how absorb migrations and prosper. The European Union is no more than an unfulfilled project. It should have become a federation but perhaps will never realize this dream of its founding fathers. At the same time, the strong demographic, economic and social crisis, which is particularly severe in the Mediterranean area but also affects the majority of the other countries, makes insurmountable problems that in a different context could be dealt with; and all this has been exacerbated by an economic crisis from which there seems to be no way out.

Therefore, urgently needed at EU level is coherent and non-sporadic legislation that makes it possible to govern the phenomenon of immigrant entries for reasons of both work and asylum. We know that bilateral political agreements can yield good results, even if the current political situations in some North African countries do not facilitate them. The 1995 Barcelona Conference, as said, raised hopes that have not been fulfilled, also because of the EU's Eurocentric policies. On the other hand, the Arabic springs have too often turned into late autumns, and this has complicated matters further.

In Mediterranean Europe, and in Italy in particular, the situation seems irremediable. After the regularization campaigns, and despite restrictive immigration policies, until 2008 immigrants' labour integration, even in the

²³ The TFR is the total fertility rate, and 2.1 children per woman is the value that ensures, in countries with very low mortality rates, a number of children able to replace the previous generation. The current demographic increase is to a large extent due to immigration. But because the population is quite young, also because of immigration, the natural balance (births minus deaths) is still positive.

²⁴ This situation recalls that of Italy and other European urbanized areas in the fourth-fifth century BC. which led to the crisis and then disappearance of the Western Roman Empire. Fortunately, today there are no armed peoples in search of territory on which to settle.

residual spaces of a dual labour market, produced interesting results in relation to their integration into the host society. The stabilization of immigrants even in small municipalities, housing opportunities, the formation of new families with positive effects on the birth rate, were slowing the ageing process. The prolonged economic crisis has reversed the integration of immigrants: at present, the lack of jobs affects immigrants, but without immigrants' integration demographic ageing may become explosive.

We need immigrants, but we should integrate them; and the prime means of integration is work entry.

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SUMMARY

A brief history of Mediterranean migrations

This brief study relies on two key words: 'Mediterranean' and 'migration'. Our objective is to identify some critical junctures with significant influences on the history of the region, and sometimes on that of humanity as a whole. We show their causes by referring to factors of both expulsion and attraction. We also look for possible similarities with modern migrations, and particularly with those currently changing, once again, the image of the world and the peoples that inhabit it.

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