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The Italian geological expeditions to Tripolitania and Cyrenaic regions (Libya N-Africa) between 1911 and 1914

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A number of scientific expeditions were organized by Italian geoscientists in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica between 1911 and 1914 [1]. The first expedition to Libya, led by M. Sforza and I. Sanfilippo, dates back to 1911, before the Italian declaration of war on Turkey. The research-team investigated the possible

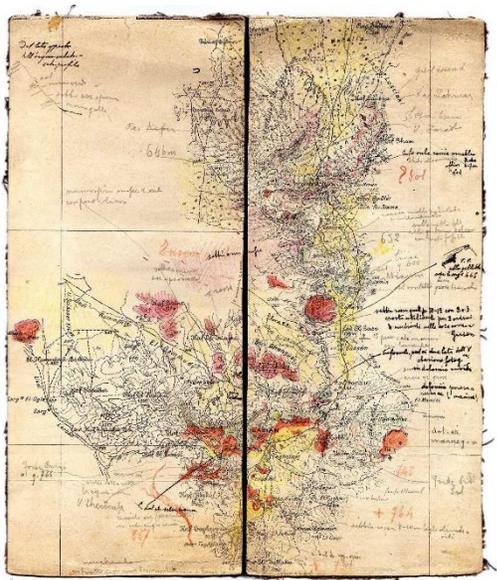


Figure 1: Original manuscript field map of Tripolitania made by Domenico Zaccagna.

occurrence of phosphatic and sulphur-bearing deposits, and other mineral resources in Tripolitania and Fezzan regions. A rich Maastrichtian fossil fauna was collected and studied by paleontologists as Di Stefano and Checchia Rispoli.

In 1912 a second expedition, led by Secondo Franchi, geologist of the R. Geological Survey of Italy, was carried out to examine the geological and hydrological aspects of Libya. In 1913 new geologists, as F. Parona and C. Crema, joined the research-group contributing to knowledge increasing and verifying the occurrence of a well-developed and fossil-rich Maastrichtian phosphatic horizon.

In 1913 a new expedition, led by L. Franchetti, collected several geotechnical, mineralogical and hydrographical data of the Gebel plateau. In 1914 S. Franchi and P. Zuffardi, a professor of geology at the University of Turin, explored the central sector of Tripolitania, confirming the absolute lack of phosphate deposits in the examined territories. In the same year D. Zaccagna, a gifted geologist of the R. Geological Survey of Italy, made thorough stratigraphical analyses in the area between Garian and Ghadames, recognizing the “Wealdian strata” (Lower Cretaceous) and a fossil-bearing Maastrichtian limestone.

The material collected in these scientific missions is nowadays scrupulously preserved at the Geological Survey of Italy in Rome and consists of the geological maps, documentary evidences. The

palaeontological collection, studied by famous paleontologists as Principi, Checchia Rispoli, Fucini and Vinassa De Regny, was split and preserved in separate institutions. The aim of this research is there fore to analyse all the documents, including geological maps, paleontological and rock samples to reconstruct all the field activities carried out by the Italian geologists, emphasizing their huge and extremely detailed contribution to the geological knowledge of these regions.

References:

[1] Zucco G (1928) In: Rassegna delle colonie fasc. 9/10, Prov. Gen. dello Stato 32p.

