

Finally, the book examines the reversal of Italian religious policy in Ethiopia under viceroy Amedeo d'Aosta, who aimed at turning the Ethiopian Orthodox Church into a tool of Italian occupation. After Graziani, Italians switched tactic from destroying the Ethiopian Church to pausing Catholic proselytisation, appointing new Orthodox clergymen who were autonomous from the Egyptian Orthodox Church, and even rebuilding churches and monasteries. This change of strategy caused the disappointment of the Catholic Church and Italian missionaries already sent to Ethiopia.

*Holy War* opens up several new perspectives for future research. For example, Campbell asks how many Ethiopian religious artifacts are still in Italy illegally, an important topic at a time when former colonial powers negotiate the return of looted artifacts of artistic and cultural significance. Additionally, the book is bound to stir a debate about the use of the word 'pogrom' to describe Italy's crusade in Ethiopia. The author suggests that the collaboration between Italian clergy and the Fascist state degraded the image of Ethiopians and the Orthodox Church to the point that reluctant Italians were successfully mobilised to volunteer in the campaign in the name of their faith. The vast impunity of Italian soldiers confirmed that their violence served a right and just cause. Still, the question remains as to whether Italy's crusade against the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was a spontaneous religious persecution or a series of actions planned by the state with the support of higher Catholic hierarchies. In short, how pervasive and successful was the message of the crusade in Italian society? In conclusion, *Holy War* stands out as one of the most important recent contributions to the history of Italian colonialism, Fascism, and their relationship with the Catholic Church. The book is an invaluable testament that preserves the voices of Ethiopian survivors of Italian colonial violence in the historical record.

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## **Le conseguenze economiche delle leggi razziali**

**by Ilaria Pavan, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2022, 320 pp., €25 (paperback), ISBN 9788815295002**

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Ilaria Pavan's book is noteworthy for many reasons. First, it gives the most complete and up-to-date insight into the economic consequences of the anti-Jewish persecution by the Fascist regime. The author, drawing on extensive archival and bibliographic sources and an in-depth knowledge of historiography and the public debate, retraces the key steps that led to the exclusion of Italian Jews from all aspects of civil life and the confiscation of their property, beginning with the first laws passed in 1938–9 (when Fascism was at the height of its power) to the tragic conclusion of the Italian Social Republic of 1943–5, with large-scale arrests and expropriations of Jews and their delivery to the Nazis for deportation and extermination in the death camps.

The second reason that makes the book an interesting read is that it continues the story after 1945 and the reintegration by the newly established Italian Republic of the

formerly persecuted Jews, as well as guiding readers through the long postwar period, highlighting many critical aspects of their 'readmission' into Italian society, fraught with problems, up to the most recent developments in property restitution legislation. Compared with her previous contributions (in particular, the books *Tra indifferenza e oblio* (2004) and the extensively revised and updated English edition for the publisher Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, *Beyond the Things Themselves* (2019)), in this new, augmented Italian edition the author extends the timeline to 2020, addressing both the recent legislation and the words of the Italian President Sergio Mattarella on Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Third, Pavan also tackles an important chapter in the contemporary history of Italian institutions, in terms of both their inner workings – by analysing the full involvement of the modern state machinery in the legislative and administrative persecution of a part of its citizens – and the individuals manning the system (civil servants, magistrates, etc.), most of whom transitioned seamlessly from the Fascist regime to the Republic.

The result of this broad-ranging historical reconstruction is both sharp and disturbing. Sharp because it is accurately documented, and disturbing because it brilliantly portrays the deadly mix of bureaucratic technicality, cynicism and indifference that characterised the first stage of persecution and then the devious and inadequate attempts to remedy the harm previously inflicted.

The sources from which the author draws deserve a special mention. Pavan worked as a consultant to the government commission established in 1998, chaired by Tina Anselmi, tasked with reconstructing the events surrounding the spoliation of Jews during the Fascist period. Besides the documents preserved in major Italian archives – first and foremost, the central and local state archives, the archives of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities and the Bank of Italy archives – Pavan has also used many secondary bibliographical sources of the time, such as the *Gazzetta Ufficiale d'Italia* (*Official Gazette of Italy*, Italian Social Republic), containing the decrees authorising the confiscation of property and goods from the Jews, as well as ordinary everyday objects.

The author also makes use of a number of witness accounts (one by Enrica Basevi stands out as emblematic of the opaque workings of the ARAR (Azienda Rilievo Alienazione Residuati: Company for the Acquisition of Residual War Materials), which was responsible for the acquisition of residual war materials, notwithstanding that it was chaired by the antifascist Ernesto Rossi), in order to illustrate not only the purely financial aspects of the persecution but also the psychological and emotional impact on the victims, heightened by the subsequent botched handling of the restitution process.

The book comprises five chapters. The first gives an overview of the presence and role of Jews in the Italian economy on the eve of the persecution, with a wealth of data. Among other things, it demonstrates the untruthfulness of the claim that they dominated the country's economy, a conspiracy theory widely circulated at the time by antisemitic propaganda in the Fascist press, presenting them as a sort of 'cancer' that had spread throughout the Italian society and economy, the expression of an elusive 'international Jewish plutocracy'. The data collected by the census of August 1938, in fact, proves quite the opposite: that the Jews were a small minority (accounting for one per thousand of the total population) and that the majority of Italian Jews were members of the low and middle classes, mainly traders (over 40 per cent), civil servants and professionals. Of course, there was also a 'Jewish elite', but this was a tiny fraction of an already very small percentage of the population and, moreover, in many cases had chosen to shed its Jewish identity by either converting to Catholicism or becoming fully secularised.

Chapter 2 tackles the first phase of the persecution, in 1938–43. The author emphasises the zeal with which the central and local governments pursued the goals of preventing Jews from engaging in any economic activity whatsoever (by dismissing them from their positions, barring them from all professions, withdrawing their licences, etc.) and of expropriating much of their property (land, buildings and businesses), through an agency overseen by the Finance Ministry established in February 1939, the EGELI (Ente di gestione e liquidazione immobiliare: Real Estate Management and Liquidation Agency). This obviously led to the impoverishment of the Jewish population, hindering their attempts to leave the country, or even survive, especially during the Italian Social Republic.

Chapter 3 covers the 20 months of Nazi occupation and the Social Republic, with the German raids and arrests and expropriations by the Italian authorities. One of the most odious aspects of this tragic period mentioned by the author was the public auctioning of confiscated property, even as the Jews were being deported, with many of their former neighbours bidding for or occupying the hastily vacated houses. Chapters 4 and 5 address the ‘difficult postwar period’, when the new democratic governments implemented partial measures for reintegrating the Jews into the country’s social and political life. In the last section, the author describes the limited impact of the *General Report* of the Commission to Reconstruct Events in Italy Related to the Acquisition by Public and Private Concerns of Property Belonging to Jewish Citizens i.e. the Anselmi Commission, in 2001, and the disputes arising from the application of the 1955 ‘Terracini Law’, which granted a life annuity to former victims of racial persecution. Incredibly, it took until December 2020 to remedy several essential shortcomings of this law, and other critical issues still await resolution.

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## **Matilde Serao: International Profile, Reception and Networks**

**edited by Gabriella Romani, Ursula Fanning and Katharine Mitchell, Paris, Classiques Garnier, 2022, 264 pp., €29.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-2-406-12851-9.**

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This volume examines the critical and popular reception of the writings of Matilde Serao (1856–1927) in chapters devoted to Bulgaria, Russia, Finland, Anglophone contexts, and Spain. The collection sketches an illuminating portrait of a widely recognised Italian journalist and fiction writer, acclaimed by her European contemporaries in both the popular press and in books. An array of diverse methodologies and tools informs the book, which also provides valuable insights about translation practices in the years of Serao’s greatest popularity.