ARAB-GERMAN YOUNG ACADEMY
OF SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

MALTA AND THE MEDITERRANEAN 2017

Contributions to the interdisciplinary AGYA conference "Fluid Nature, Fluid Cultures"

Edited by
Julia Hauser and Jens Scheiner

Why a Calendar about Malta by the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities?

Julia Hauser and Jens Scheiner

For centuries, the Maltese islands have served as a platform for cultural exchange between the various peoples of the Mediterranean. Along with Phoenicians and Arabs, crusaders and Englishmen have also occupied the island. Yet Malta was not just of military significance, but also of economic importance, and served all of these groups as a trading post. Hence, Malta has always been a hub of exchange for ideas, goods, practices, and even language. Maltese is the only European language that is, from a linguistic perspective, a dialect of Arabic.

The communicative character of the islands also manifests itself in nature, in as far as it has been influenced by the cultural exchange between humans. Regarding flora and fauna, as well as culture, islands like Malta have time and again served as outposts for one region, as well as stepping stones between neighbouring regions.

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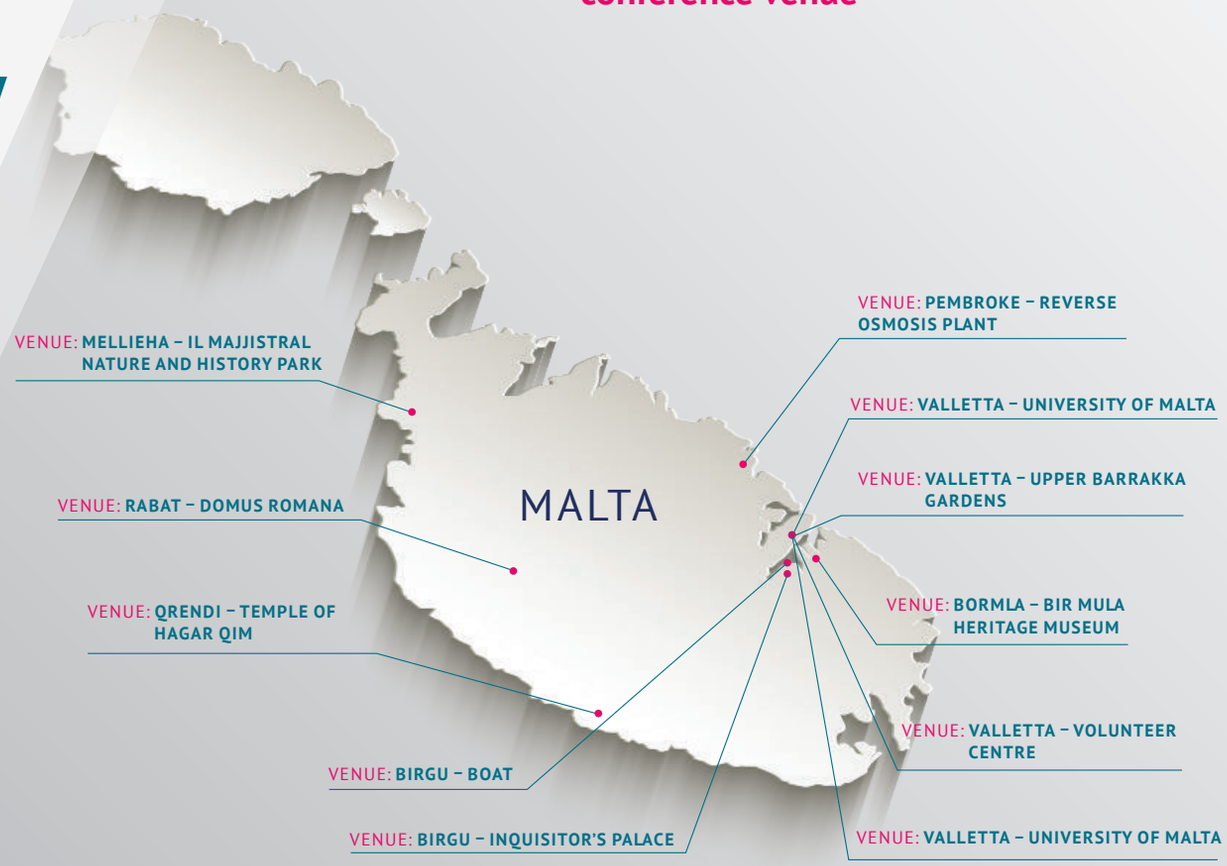
The entire island of Malta as a conference venue



January
2017

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WEEK 52	26	27	28	29	30	31	1
WEEK 01	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

This characteristic is what makes Malta particularly well-suited for the study of the complexity of encounter and exchange, as well as the phenomena of migration, both in a literal and in a figurative sense. A closer look at the processes of exchange, transformation, and rejection allows us to observe the fluidity of cultures and boundaries, and hence challenges tendencies toward cultural essentialism within German and Arab societies, which, in times of increased migration to and from the Mediterranean, are again becoming more and more prominent.

An Entire Island as a Conference Venue

Accordingly, the AGYA Working Group *Common Heritage and Common Challenges* chose the island as both the venue and the topic of its first interdisciplinary conference. The aim of the conference was to provide a novel perspective on the Mediterranean region by bringing together two academic "cultures", specifically, the sciences and the humanities. The objective was to investigate Malta as a physical and cultural space through an on-site approach, replacing a conventional conference venue with locations of relevance, whose significance was then elucidated by experts in the field.

Four Days, Eleven Venues, and Twelve Disciplines

Arab and German members of AGYA from the humanities and sciences, as well as internationally renowned speakers from Malta, Europe, and the United States presented papers analysing the dynamics of change from various angles. The disciplines represented included: Egyptology, Islamic Studies, Archaeology, Ancient History, Philosophy, Arabic Literature, Modern and Contemporary History, Engineering, Physics, Biology, Law, Media Studies, and Social and Political Science. The aim of the conference was to bring these various disciplines into dialogue. During a four-day academic event, papers were presented at sites whose historical, socio-political, cultural, or natural characteristics made these dynamics of change particularly tangible. Sites included the Inquisitor's Palace in Birgù, the Reverse Osmosis Plant in Pembroke, the temples of Hagar Qim, the Il-Majjistral Nature and History Park, the Volunteer Centre in Valletta, the University of Malta, the Domus Romana in Rabat, the Bir Mula Heritage Museum and the Lower Barrakka Gardens.

Malta and the Mediterranean: A 2017 Calendar

In order to present the results of the conference in a concise and enjoyable manner to a wide audience, and to offer a glimpse into not only the hybrid cultural character, but, indeed, the beauty of Malta, we chose a bi-weekly calendar format, in which the conference participants answer 27 diverse questions regarding Malta and the Mediterranean, and present the island from rather exceptional perspectives. Contributions are arranged in such a way as to enable the reader to explore Malta from the coast to the inland, and from the past to the present. A short list of references for each contribution helps readers who would like more information on a given topic.
The conference was organized by Jens Scheiner and Julia Hauser as a project of the AGYA Working Group *Common Heritage and Common Challenges*.

This conference and publication would not have been possible without the financial support of the Volkswagen Stiftung and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). Moreover, our cordial thanks go to our partners in Malta: Heritage Malta, the University of Malta, MedSpring, The People for Change, and the Bir Mula Heritage Museum. Furthermore, we would like to thank all the contributors for their dedicated commitment in times of high working loads, the AGYA team for its untiring support, and Amr El-Geddawy for his creative ideas.

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Were There Muslims in Medieval Malta?

Jens Scheiner

At first glance, the above question seems easy to answer. After the early Muslims had taken control of North Africa in the 680s by fighting and through negotiations, they conquered the Iberian Peninsula from 711 onward and the islands in the western Mediterranean approximately a century later. Sicily, the most important of these islands, was captured in 827. Hence, the Muslims' political and military presence in this area was palpable for the neighbouring empires, such as their major opponent: The Byzantine Empire. Only a few years later (in 835), Muslim troops raided the island of Melite, which was located around 100 kilometres south of Sicily. Presumably, some Muslims settled on this 300 km^2 island, because a Byzantine fleet sent there in 869 was defeated the following year by a Muslim maritime relief force.

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The Turkish Military Cemetery in Marsa (Malta) was commissioned in 1873 by Sultan Abd Al-Aziz, the 32nd Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. The Maltese architect Emmanuele Luigi Galizia (1830-1907) designed and built the new Muslim cemetery to replace an earlier one. The cemetery dates back to the time when the Ottomans tried to invade Malta in 1565, they camped in Marsa because of its harbour facilities and water supplies. Photographer: Daniel Cilia

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	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WEEK **02**	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
WEEK **03**	16	17	18	19	20	21	22

Literature:

David Abulafia:
Das Mittelmeer. Eine Biographie. Frankfurt a.M. 2013.

Jens Scheiner:
Der Islam in Nordafrika. Ausdehnung und islamische Herrschaften bis 1550. In: Martin Hofbauer/ Thorsten Loch (eds.): Wegweiser zur Geschichte. Nordafrika. Paderborn 2011, pp. 61–71.

Jens Scheiner,
Islamic Studies

By that time at the latest, Melite, the name of which was changed to Malita (> Malta), was under Muslim control, until the Normans, who had previously established the Kingdom of Sicily, conquered it some 200 years later. However, Norman overlords and Muslim inhabitants of Malta coexisted peacefully on the island for around two centuries. It was in 1249 that the Roman-German Emperor Frederick II (1149-1250), who was also King of Sicily and King of Jerusalem, expelled the Muslims from Malita and thus brought 400 years of Muslim presence to an end.

At second glance, however, the historian is puzzled, because evidence for this presence is very limited. No contemporary chronicles speak about or describe Muslim activities on the island. No buildings document Muslim political, religious, or everyday life. And no substantial set of coins provides evidence for trading in the Mediterranean, a feature for which Melite was renowned in Antiquity. The strongest indicators for Muslim presence that still exist are toponyms, the Maltese language, and a significant number of tombstones. To mention just a few examples, the location names Marsa, Mdina, and Rabat are derived from Arabic al-marsa (lit. 'anchorage'), madina (lit. 'town') and ribat (lit. 'lodging'). In its structure and vocabulary, the Maltese language resembles Arabic dialects that are known from North Africa and were presumably also spoken in Sicily. Whether classical Arabic was used on Malita cannot be proven. Finally, more than 120 tomb stones that were found in a graveyard close to the old Maltese capital of Mdina, and which can be dated to the 1170s, document a substantial Muslim community on the island, which was able to practise their Islamic rites and rituals.

Combining both perspectives, the following conclusions on Muslim presence in Malita can be drawn. The island offered little space and only limited resources for settlement and agriculture. Having no natural rivers or lakes, water supply on the island was scarce and dependent on wells fed by an underground aquifer and reservoirs filled by rain. Apart from having some natural harbour sites on its eastern and southern shores that could be used for foreign trading ships and local fishing boats, the lack of resources must have made life in Malta very hard. Hence, the Muslim population on the island was presumably very small, i.e. several thousand people. Exploitation through taxes or in kind was complicated, costly, and generated only little revenue. In consideration of all these issues, nearby Sicily was far more attractive than Malta to Byzantine, Muslim, or Norman rulers. Therefore, this small island remained quite unimportant over time. Finally, the efforts that later Catholic authorities and the island's residents undertook to diminish memories of Malta's Muslim inhabitants must be taken into account. This process, however, which still endures, represents another issue that awaits scientific investigation.

What Is Unique About Maltese Fauna and Flora?

Henda Mahmoudi

The Maltese Islands, although small in area (316 km^2), host a large number of endemic species, some of which are unique and unusual. These species are referred to as 'endemic', because they have no relatives elsewhere in the world. These endemic species are important to the Islands, because they constitute a part of the Maltese national heritage, and because they are topics of scientific research.

Of the estimated 10,000 terrestrial and freshwater specimens in the Maltese archipelago, 78 species are endemic: A very high number, considering the country's size. Until now, only 4,500 species have been documented, and others still await accurate taxonomic classification, which means that there may be several more endemic species yet to be discovered. Twenty-three of the endemic species are vascular plants and plants such as bryophytes, while the remaining 55 species are animals.

Maltese plants are numerous and varied.

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The Maltese wall lizard (Maltese: Gremzula ta´ Malta) is endemic to the Maltese islands. Its natural habits are Mediterranean-type shrubby vegetation, rocky areas, and shores, arable and pasturelands, as well as rural gardens.

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WEEK **04**	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
WEEK **05**	30	31	1	2	3	4	5

Literature:

Malta National Park website
(http://mt.majjistral.org)

The Ecology of the Maltese Islands
(http://www.geog.plym.ac.uk/malta/Eco1.htm)

Henda Mahmoudi,
Biology

For example, of the algae found in Maltese waters, approximately 300 are not microscopic. Some plants found on the Maltese Islands are endemic, but there are more endemic animals than plants in the Maltese Islands. Many times, an endemic animal has been confused with a different species from a nearby country, e.g. the Sicilian shrew in Gozo, which has been defined as a subspecies of its own.

Malta has made significant advancements in giving legal protection to endangered species. One assessment indicates that almost 98% of the species of international importance that are found in Malta are protected through Maltese legislation.

The protection of the large variety of species found in Malta entails the protection of both the species and the habitats for the species. It is especially important to protect those habitats and species that are threatened, in order to attempt to safeguard their long-term survival. Consequently, the designation of protected areas is one of the measures to be considered. Indeed, around 20.5% of the land area has been given some form of protection, so that with the aim of protecting trees (nature reserves) and birds (bird sanctuaries), Malta has afforded protection to certain areas. In addition, three islets have been classified as nature reserves, with restricted or limited access. Moreover, since 2003, Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) has selected and designated a number of Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protected Areas, in line with the European Community's Habitats Directive and Birds Directive, respectively. The most recent sites to be designated are four protected marine areas – as published in a Government Gazette in August 2010. MEPA has undertaken a number of conservation measures aimed at the recovery of threatened/endangered species.

Information about the species found on Maltese Islands is an important aspect of conservation. In light of this, MEPA has, over the years, commissioned and taken part in a number of studies to obtain information on biodiversity.

Maltese biodiversity is a part of Malta's invaluable natural heritage. Apart from its intrinsic value, biodiversity provides additional values, such as social, economic, aesthetic, recreational, educational, scientific, and ecological values. The maintenance of national biodiversity is of utmost importance, and it is the responsibility of the Maltese population to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity components. For both present and future generations, it is essential that these be protected.

Has Malta Always Been Part of Europe?

Barbara Winckler

Solely on the basis of its geographical location in the middle of the Mediterranean, the island of Malta occupies an intermediate position. Successively ruled by diverse powers – including the Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, and finally the British – it has always been a site for cultural encounters. Today, Malta is quite naturally thought of as a part of Europe. But has this always been the case? How were Malta and the Maltese characterized in former times? There are a number of descriptions of Malta by European travellers, who usually did not stay long on the island. By contrast, we have the works of a 19th-century Arab intellectual, who lived for about 14 years in Malta: Fāris al-Shidyāq (1805-1887), one of the central figures of the so-called 'Arab Renaissance', who spent some of his formative years in Malta (1834-1848), working as a translator, language teacher, and editor for the Arabic printing press that had only recently been installed in Malta by British missionaries.

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Malta, as part of a 19th century map of southern Italy.

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WEEK **06**	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
WEEK **07**	13	14	15	16	17	18	19

Literature:

Nadia Al-Bagdadi, Barbara Winckler, Fawwaz Traboulsi (eds.):
A Life in Praise of Words: Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq and the Nineteenth Century. Wiesbaden 2016 (forthcoming).

Kamran Rastegar:
Literary Modernity between the Middle East and Europe: Textual Transactions in Nineteenth-Century Arabic, English, and Persian Literatures. London 2007.

Geoffrey Roper:
Arabic Printing in Malta, 1825–1845: Its History and its Place in the Development of Print Culture in the Arab Middle East. PhD diss., University of Durham, 1988. Available online at http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/1550. Available at SSRN: http://ssrn.com/abstract=1874095 .

Barbara Winckler,
Arabic and Islamic Studies

Looking at his checkered life, al-Shidyāq seems to have been predestined for discussing cultural differences: Born in Mount Lebanon into a Maronite family, al-Shidyāq first converted to Protestantism, then to Islam. In his early twenties, he left his home country and lived and worked in several places, from Cairo to Malta, to England, Paris, Tunis, and finally to Istanbul, where he set up an important journal and publishing house.

It is primarily two of al-Shidyāq's works that deal with Malta and the Maltese. While the first, Mediation Concerning Malta (1836), provides a description of Malta, the other work, published in Paris in 1855, presents living conditions in Malta as part of a fictional travel narrative. Leg Over Leg, or: The Turtle in the Tree Concerning The Fāriyāq, What Manner of Creature Might He Be (brilliantly translated into English by Humphrey Davies) is a multifaceted work, bristling with irony and harshly criticizing various social, cultural, and linguistic ills, in both Eastern and Western societies.

Perfectly in line with this general attitude, al-Shidyāq draws a bleak picture of Malta. Depicting various aspects of the island and its inhabitants (history and geography, climate and nature, food, habits, clothes, and language), he contrasts their manners on one hand with those of 'the Europeans', especially the English, and, on the other hand, with those of 'the Orientals' or 'those in our lands', thus implicitly defining Malta as a 'third party'.

Complaining about the unhealthy climate, particularly the high humidity and unpleasant winds, along with the absence of meadows, mountains, or rivers, the author also blames the Maltese for their lack of interest in delicious food and other aspects of savoir vivre he formerly enjoyed in the Levant – an issue he similarly criticizes with regard to England. On the other hand, he points to several aspects in which the Maltese are different from Europeans: The Maltese build high walls between the fields to prevent people from seeing what is behind, whereas in England and France the landscape is open. In addition, they do not know how to preserve fruits in winter time, whereas in Europe, supplies of grapes and apples never run out. The Maltese language, al-Shidyāq states, is corrupted Arabic, 'a branch of the Arabic tree and a rotten fruit of its dates'. What is worse, he opines, is that people do not even aspire to improving it and coming close to a literary level of Arabic; their ultimate insult is 'Arab'. No wonder that the author and philologist, who was almost obsessive with language, refers to Malta as 'the Island of the Foul of Breath' in his fictional work.

If al-Shidyāq depicts the Maltese as a defective blend of East and West, one may ask if the polemical tone is to be considered a way of 'writing back', to counterbalance the Maltese's disdain of Arabs and Arabic culture – a strategy he equally adopts in the face of European chauvinism, particularly that of European Orientalists.

What Story Does the Maltese Gallerija Tell?

Julia Hauser

In contrast to the architecture of other European countries, Maltese residential buildings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries often present themselves as less open – or, at least, open in a different way. They are distinguished by one unique element that combines openness and enclosure: the "gallerija". Gallerijas resemble balconies, in that they protrude from the façade of the building, and hence from the domestic sphere into the street. At the same time, they differ from balconies with regard to their composition, as they are made of timber rather than of stone. Moreover, unlike balconies, they have a roof and a façade of their own. Sometimes they even wind around the corner of a building, forming an actual corridor. While their lower sections are, like balconies, enclosed, their upper sections consist of glass windows.

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These colourful Maltese Galerijas are similar to the Arabic Mashrabiya, which is an element of traditional Arabic architecture.

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WEEK **08**	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
WEEK **09**	27	28	1	2	3	4	5

References:

H. Belting:
Florenz und Bagdad. Eine westöstliche Geschichte des Blicks. München 2008.

J.-P. Greenlaw:
The Coral Buildings of Suakin. Islamic Architecture, Planning, Design and Domestic Arrangements in a Red Sea Port. London; New York 1995.

Derek Lutterbeck:
http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2008-04-09/news/mysteries-of-the-maltese-gallarija-1-206018/
http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2008-04-11/news/mysteries-of-the-maltese-gallarija-2-206100/
(last access 18.08.2016)
I am indebted to David Mellia for the last two references, and to Michael Cooperson for putting us in touch.

Julia Hauser,
History

Gallerijas thus allow individuals to participate in street life from a privileged position, without actually being in the street, and without being seen, as they would be in the street. Thus, they offer far greater privacy and protection than a regular balcony, since the glass panes of the windows, when closed, even protect the observer from the sounds and smells of the street, simultaneously providing protection while giving priority to the visual sense.

Scholars of architecture such as Jean-Pierre Greenlaw have pointed to the similarity between the gallerija and an element in North African and Middle Eastern architecture, the mashrabiyya, a projecting oriel window enclosed with elaborate woodwork, which is sometimes lined with glass. Mashrabiyya fronts are less transparent than those of the gallerija. Often the woodwork, with its geometric patterns, completely covers the window, permitting the gazing individual, unlike in a gallerija, to view the street merely through a grid. Thus, at the same time, they provide even greater protection from heat and sunlight, as well as more privacy. According to art historian Hans Belting, the mashrabiyya is emblematic of the difference in connotation ascribed to the visual sense in Western and Islamic cultures. As Belting argues, it affords the option of seeing without employing a direct gaze, and combines this with the central element of classical Islamic art, the regular geometric pattern. Often, the mashrabiyya is depicted as a gendered space, one which allows upper-class women in particular to gaze beyond the domestic sphere while remaining securely in it.

Yet as mentioned above, the option of seeing without being seen is also made possible, albeit to a lesser extent, by the semi-enclosed nature of the gallerija, a feature that in some ways parallels the mashrabiyya, yet whose origins are hotly debated. While some authors point to the fact that, particularly during the rule of the Order of St John, there were still craftsmen from North Africa in Malta, from whose influence the wooden protruding oriel window might have found its way into local architecture, the nationalist narrative in local art history firmly refutes this argument. Instead of tracing the gallerija back to the mashrabiyya, these scholars emphasize the genuinely Maltese, and hence unique, character of the gallerija, an architectural form that – if a precursor is sought – is sometimes traced back to elements of a ship. Rather than owing its existence to exchanges with the cultural and religious Other, or so this narrative asserts, the gallerija borrows its form from that which contributed the most to Malta's seemingly independently-acquired wealth and fame, i.e. maritime trade. The Maltese gallerija, therefore, represents, in a nutshell, the complex story central to Maltese identity of appropriation and rejection, of remembering and forgetting, and of its ambiguous relations with Arab cultures.

Why Does an Island and Fortress Mentality Exist in Malta?

Norman Domeier

Malta's strategic location has brought about two important sieges of the island. During the Second World War, the German and Italian air forces attempted to destroy Malta with bombing campaigns, but the island held out. However, the first 'Great' Siege occurred back in 1565, when the troops of the Ottoman Sultan attempted to conquer the island. This first siege, in particular, is part of the entangled European-Ottoman/Arab history and still plays a major role in the mentality of contemporary Maltese citizens.

In 1565, Malta was the headquarters of the Knights Hospitallers, who used it as a base for raids against Muslim shipping expeditions. To the Islamic world, the Hospitallers were simply a different kind of pirate, forcing the Ottoman Sultan, Suleiman the Magnificent (1494-1566), to take action. The Turkish Armada, which finally set sail from Constantinople on 22 March 1565, was likely one of the largest assembled navies since Antiquity, consisting of almost 200 ships, including 131 war galleys. The Ottomans were confident that they would easily conquer Malta in less than two weeks. What followed, however, were four long months of battle in a classic 'war of attrition'.

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Malta's Grand Harbour, with its walled city constructions and fortifications, is part of a costal defence system, and is considered to be among the most outstanding examples of military architecture.

March

2017

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WEEK **10**	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
WEEK **11**	13	14	15	16	17	18	19

Literature:

Brian Blouet:
The Story of Malta. London 2007.

Carmel Cassar:
A Concise History of Malta. Msida 2000.

Charles Stephenson:
The Fortifications of Malta 1530–1945. Oxford 2004.

Norman Domeier,
History

The ultimate victory of the Hospitallers, who were supported by the European powers, primarily Spain, became one of the most celebrated events in sixteenth-century Europe. As late as the 18th century, Voltaire still wrote: 'Nothing is better known than the siege of Malta', and it undoubtedly contributed to the eventual erosion of the European perception of Ottoman invincibility.

In 1940, in the early months of the Second World War, Malta had been the centrepiece of Britain's strategic naval position in the Mediterranean for almost one-and-a-half centuries. As the only Allied base between Gibraltar and Alexandria, Egypt, Malta was an important military and naval fortress, and thus a vital way-station along Britain's lifeline, through Egypt and the Suez Canal to India and the Far East. It not only provided a haven for British shipping to and from those places, but it also gave the British an excellent staging platform for offensive thrusts against ships, as well as land and air targets, in the central Mediterranean.

The opening of a new front in North Africa by Nazi Germany in mid-1940 increased Malta's already considerable value. British air and sea forces based on the island could attack Axis ships transporting vital supplies and reinforcements from Europe. General Erwin Rommel, commander of the German forces in North Africa, recognised its importance quickly. In May 1941, he warned that 'without Malta, the Axis will end by losing control of North Africa'.

Today, the rest of the world has almost forgotten that Malta was one of the most intensively bombed areas during the Second World War. Until they finally gave up their attempt to conquer the island by air in Autumn 1942, the Luftwaffe and the Regia Aeronautica, in an effort to destroy Royal Air Force defences and their ports, had, over a period of two years, flown a total of 3,000 bombing raids.

Both sieges have had a lasting impact on Maltese mentality. The first siege in 1565 put Malta at the centre of European and Ottoman politics. Its success fostered a certain pride in having defended Christian Europe against a superior Muslim army.

This prevailing mentality in Malta was symbolically strengthened by the British during the Second World War, with the awarding of the George Cross collectively to the people of Malta in April 1942 (by King George VI), for having held out during the German-Italian attacks. The George Cross can still be seen in the national flag of Malta. Today, however, neither of these historical events is any longer interpreted as a national(istic) endeavour or heroic deed of a very small nation. Instead, they are viewed from a more complex and critical perspective, in a long chain of – international – events and developments, stressing the transnational structure of both attackers and defenders alike.

How Do Ancient Maltese Temples Take On New Religious Meaning?

Sabine Dorpmüller

Francis Xavier Aloisio is a native Maltese, who has lived most of his life abroad: First in Peru, as a missionary priest, and then in England, as a social worker, after resigning from Church. On his website, he explains that while living abroad, he came to appreciate all that was Maltese, and realized that not many people knew about the temples of Malta. Upon his return home, he attempted to find a means of promoting the unique wealth of Maltese pre-historic culture. He began his own research on the temples of Malta, which resulted in three books that take the form of a novelogue: a fictional dialogue between a Maltese couple and a wise stranger, who reveals his deep knowledge of the temples. Furthermore, on his website, Aloisio offers spiritual visits to the temples of Malta.

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The old temple structures of Hagar Qim, dating from 3600-3200 BC are a frequently-visited tourist site, but they also attract another audience: Foreigners who wish to connect to the spiritual powers attributed to Maltese temples.

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	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WEEK 12	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
WEEK 13	27	28	29	30	31	1	2

Literature:

Francis Xavier Aloisio:
An Alternative Handbook to the Maltese Temples: a Cosmic Perspective and Guide. EBook. Published October 23rd 2014 by Smashwords Edition.
Francis Xavier Aloisio: Website Malta Temple Journeys http://www.maltatemplejourneys.com/Index.html

Jan Scholz/Max Stille:
'One ceremony, many readings – Inayat Khan's 'urs and its participants'. In: Christiane Brosius/Yousuf Saeed (ed.): South Asia's Islamic Shrines and Transcultural Visuality. 2014 (online publication).

Sabine Dorpmüller,
Arabic and Islamic Studies

Aloisio's website and his publications are all in English. Although his explicit intention is to raise awareness of the Maltese because of their ancient heritage, he also addresses another audience: Foreigners who would like to visit Malta and to connect to the spirituality of the temples. Therefore, he offers a blend of touristic and spiritual visits to feel, touch and experience the history of Malta for its energetic input.
In 2014, in order to provide all information needed to be able to visit the temples, understand their specific purposes, and perform the rituals connected to the spiritual power of the temples, Mr Aloisio published 'The Alternative Handbook to the Maltese Temples'. The handbook replaces him as a guide and ritual specialist; thus, it does not build on any religious authority, but, rather, transforms the religious experience into a commodity.
In the handbook, the author explains that his insights are based on scientific research as well as on intuitive perceptions from inner knowledge. According to Aloiso, mankind is of both human and extra-terrestrial origin, germinated by many different intergalactic cultures. The Maltese temples were built by Star Beings to generate life-giving energy. For this reason, the temples were positioned on strategic powerful electromagnetic points of the earth: to generate life and to draw the power of the heavens into the womb of the earth, as Malta is at the very centre and is the sacred land of the Divine Feminine.
Who are the visitors that Mr Aloisio attracts to his journeys to the Maltese temples? First of all, it should not come as a surprise that many of them are female visitors: a picture on the website shows a group of about 20 people, mostly women, standing in a circle holding hands. Furthermore, Mr Aloisio refers to several groups who have come from northern Europe: All of the group leaders are women.

In another picture, two women are sitting next to Mr Aloisio on temple stones: one is depicted in a position of Eastern meditation. The other is looking at the temple structures. The picture shows two different ways of perceiving the temples: the first one is more a spiritual mode, the second, a more touristic one. The touristic aspect of visiting the monuments and eventually documenting them by taking pictures is a central element of the journey, since it is geared towards a double way of fulfilling the expectations of the visitors.
The visitors carry out the rituals prescribed in the handbook according to their own dispositions, which form the background to the act of grasping and comprehending. The context of the ritual allows for the combination of both local and transcultural elements: It is a combination of Maltese history with eastern spirituality and meditation, together with New Age elements. The ritual provides a framework for different realisations, according to the religious background of the visitor. The indeterminacy that results from both familiarity and unfamiliarity with individual elements creates an open platform upon which participants from all types of religious backgrounds can connect to the ritual and create meaning in their own ways.
The transcultural rituals show how religious spaces, such as the temples of Malta, can be re-appropriated with new religious meaning. However, whereas Mr Aloisio seems to be successful in attracting foreign visitors, the question remains as to whether he will be able to win followers from the Maltese community.

How Do Migrants Negotiate Politics?

Tamirace Fakhoury

Debates on the nexus between post-2011 migrant crises and security have taken the limelight in Europe. Yet, when it comes to negotiating politics and influencing public discourses in immigrant-receiving European contexts, such as in Malta, Germany, Italy, or Sweden, the role of Arab immigrants has remained underexplored.

I carried out research in the cities of Hamburg and Berlin in Germany, with a view to illuminating Arab immigrant narratives and their methods of political engagement. My questions focused on their role during and in the wake of the 2011 Arab uprisings. One focal area of interest was whether, and if so how, they were able to challenge certain claims and influence policy narratives on the upheavals in the Arab and the refugee question.

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Asylum seekers demonstrate for their right to asylum.

April 2017

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WEEK 14	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
WEEK 15	10	11	12	13	14	15	16

Literature:

Laurie Brand:
State, Citizenship, and Diaspora: The cases of Jordan and Lebanon. Working Paper, School of International Relations USC, 2007.

Tamirace Fakhoury:
Transnational Immigrant Narratives on Arab Democracy: The Case of Student Associations at UC Berkeley. In International Migration 53/3 (2015), pp. 8-21.

Tamirace Fakhoury:
The Arab Uprisings and their External Dimensions: Bringing Migration in. In Harvard Journal of Middle Eastern Politics and Policy 2015, pp. 37-43, Annual Print Issue.

Tamirace Fakhoury,
Political Science

My research has drawn on theoretical frameworks that conceptualise the immigrant as an important actor in urban settings. According to Saskia Sassen, for instance, immigrants acquire more agency in cityscapes, where they can connect with globalised cities worldwide, while harnessing local resources and networks.

The findings of my research have various implications for local and transnational politics. Arab communities have been involved in crafting dialogue and awareness-raising initiatives, in the hope of conveying a better understanding of Arab world complexities and politics in their host communities. Against the backdrop of Islamist radicalisation in Libya, Iraq, and Syria, they have sought to portray themselves as trustworthy civic and policy interlocutors, who can paint a more accurate image of Islam and of the Middle East in a polarised setting. Many have additionally set up informal platforms in both Hamburg and Berlin to help incoming refugees from Syria. They have used such means as art, culture, poetry, and storytelling to make refugees feel welcome and to engage wider German and European audiences.

In Berlin, Arab-led civic initiatives have organised debates on cultural diplomacy and intercultural exchange between the Arab world and Germany. An important part of the repertoire that some Arab groups use to bridge gaps of understanding is to spur discussions around political concepts that resonate in both Germany and the Arab world. One of these concepts is 'participation'.

Still, the extent to which their activities acquire visibility remains disputed. Many argue that they dissipate energy by positioning themselves as authoritative actors in the debate on migration, ethnic communities, and Islam in Germany and Europe. Their efforts to 'prove themselves' undermine their potential to rise as autonomous and effective political actors.

While my research has tracked immigrant narratives in the two German cities, its strategy is not restricted to these settings. An arising question that researchers could transpose to the Malta context is how immigrant communities have negotiated their role and contributions in the context of recent revolts and upheavals. Though there is much research on Malta as a crossroads for migratory flows and routes, little do we know about the socio-political practices and narratives of its immigrant communities. How have for instance Lebanese, Libyan or Iraqis disseminated their narratives of the so-called Arab Spring in Maltese localities? Which areas of concern have they sought to highlight?

In broader perspective, to what extent does the small island of Malta offer spatial and cultural opportunities for migrants' visibility? Conversely, does its political geography facilitate the emergence of friction zones where contending agendas and debates clash?

Migration of Energy – A Short Summary of its Nature

Andreas Fischer

'πάντα ῥεῖ', 'everything flows' – this statement by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus in principle summarises the nature of energy. Energy can neither be created nor annihilated, but only transported through space or converted into different forms. Examples are the kinetic energy of a moving body, the electrical energy of electrons in an electric field, the chemical energy found in gasoline or sugar, the nuclear energy of instable atomic cores, e.g. uranium, or the photon, carrying the energy of light, just to name a few. These examples also indicate another fundamental property of energy: It cannot exist on its own, but is always bound to a more or less obvious carrier. Thus, transporting energy actually means transporting its carrier, and converting energy into another form means reloading it onto a different carrier.

Continued on back of page

Since Malta possesses neither domestic resources for fossil fuels nor a gas distribution network, the island's primary energy supply is almost exclusively based on imported oil. The renewable energy market is at an early stage of development. Wind turbines, such as the one depicted here, have been built privately.

April
2017

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WEEK **16**	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
WEEK **17**	24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Literature:

Robert N. Farrugia/Tonio Sant (2013)
Mediterranean Inshore wind Resources: Combining MCPs and CFD for Marine Resources Quantification. In Wind Engineering Volume 37/3 (2013), pp. 243-256.

Andreas Fischer,
Physics

As an example from real life, let's consider the conversion and transport of energy from a wind turbine – as found here and there in Malta – to a burning light bulb. We start with wind blowing against the turbine, thus losing some of its speed while making the blades rotate. This rotation is then transmitted to an electrical generator by the flow of angular momentum. The generator in turn converts its rotational motion into electricity, which is then transported by power lines to be further used, as in a lamp, which converts the electricity into light.
Even though the general principles of energy migration and conversion are location-independent, the availibility of primary energy sources and the feasibility of transport routes are strongly location dependent. In this regard, islands surrounded by the sea are subject to very special conditions in terms of energy distribution. Malta shares with many other islands characteristics such as scarce natural resources and limited range of conventional energy resources, a dense population, strong dependence on imported fossil fuels for energy needs, high energy infrastructure costs with electricity prices among the highest in the world. Consequently, island energy systems are very rigid and costly.
The primary energy supply was exclusively based on oil, until the Malta-Sicily interconnector, a 120km subsea cable, went operational in 2015. Since then, Malta is connected to the European power grid and can import up to 200 MW from Italy, about 35% of the islands electricity consumption. Supplying the remaining 65% from renewable energies is desireable but difficult. Hydropower and geothermal power are unavailable in Malta and offshore wind power is extremely limited for both technical and environmental reasons. The remaining options, solar power and onshore wind power have some potential but are limited due to the restricted land area.
Getting back to the basics we, unfortunately, have to note that there is a price to be paid for both the conversion and the transport of energy (and its carriers). A portion of the energy undergoing such a process is always converted into an undesirable form – usually heat. Whether for technological or fundamental reasons (depending on the energy carriers concerned and the method applied), this virtually unavoidable, but undesirable conversion is dubbed energy 'loss', although the energy is not actually lost but just unavailable for further use.
Heat – although extremely common – is a very special form of energy. Its carrier, called entropy, has the rare property that it can actually be created, but can never be annihilated. One implication of this property is that heat can never be fully converted into a different form of energy.
To track all portions of the energy entering and leaving conversion or transport processes, it is reasonable to apply a balance principle. Let's illustrate this concept with a simple example. Imagine one cup (90ml) of coffee and another cup with the same amount of milk. We now take one spoonful (10ml) of the milk and pour it into the coffee. After stirring carefully, we take one spoonful of this mixture and pour it back into the cup of milk, and stir once again. After thorough consideration, it is clear that there must be as much milk in the coffee as there is coffee in the milk (9ml of each).
Ultimately, combining all of the concepts above leads to a rather simple formula, which sums up all the contributions of the different energy forms. As it allows us to account for all energy content, as well as the exchange of any system or transport process involved, it provides an exhaustive description of the respective system or process. Even though this is not the theory of everything – as finding proper terms for several different energy forms can become hopelessly complicated – it yields its real value as a handy tool in practical and engineering physics for constructing appraisal models of complicated systems, as well as for creating links between all energy related sciences.
To summarise the entire concept with a comparison once used by Feynman in his 'Lectures on Physics': Energy is like a set of (indestructible) children's building blocks. They can be shaped in various forms and be reshaped over and over again. If you search carefully enough, you can recover all of the blocks, though some may be behind the cupboard or under the carpet. However, it may become incredibly difficult to find those that went astray in the back yard. And sometimes, you end up with even more blocks than you started with, but then you notice that a friend has popped by, leaving some of his own blocks behind.

How Was the Inquisition Rooted in Early Modern Malta?

Javier Francisco Vallejo

When Charles V, king of Spain and emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, granted the Maltese Islands as fief to the Knights Hospitaller of St John in 1530, the knights settled in Birgu (known today as Vittoriosa) on an eastern peninsula in the 'Grand Harbour'. Hence, the capital was transferred from the inland town of Mdina to the natural bay area at the eastern shore of Malta. As part of their settlement in Birgu, the knights requisitioned a fifteenth century house, which they transformed into their civil court of law. It was this building that they handed over to the first Papal legate and inquisitor (literally "investigator"), Pietro Dusina, upon his arrival in 1574.

Continued on back of page

The Inquisitor and Apostolic Delegate had a specific role to play in society – he was expected to appear holy, righteous, cultured and powerful. The Inquisitor's Palace served as a place to stage him in that way. A significant portion of the ground floor and some rooms at first floor level served as Tribunal and associated torture chambers. Photographer: Daniel Cilia

May
2017

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WEEK **18**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
WEEK **19**	8	9	10	11	12	13	14

Literature:

Kenneth Cassar (ed.):
The Inquisitor's Palace. An Architectural Gem Spanning Centuries and Styles. [Valetta] 2013.

Kenneth Gambin:
The Inquisitor's Palace, Vittoriosa. Sta Venera 2003.

Javier Francisco Vallejo,
Latin-American Studies

Pietro Dusina was part of a system of tribunals that was established by Pope Paul III in 1542 with the aim of combating Protestantism. According to this system, which was called the Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Roman and Universal Inquisition or, briefly, the Roman Inquisition, individuals were prosecuted and put to trial when accused of committing heresy, blasphemy, and other crimes. To enforce this judicial system, Paul III established a board of six 'general inquisitors' who sent deputy inquisitors to most regions of the Italian peninsula, as well as to Malta. The first deputy inquisitor to be sent there was Pietro Dusina, who stayed in Birgu for only nine months (1574-1575). He was dispatched by Pope Gregory XIII to mediate a quarrel between the Order's grandmaster, Jean de la Cassière, and the local Catholic bishop, Martín Rojas. During his stay, he set up the inquisition as a separate ecclesiastical institution. In addition, the unused house that Pietro Dusina had been given for his office has today become one of the few still extant inquisitors' palaces in Europe. This house was expanded and rebuilt over the centuries, including public reception rooms, private apartments for the inquisitors, and detention cells for the accused and convicted. A garden was even created in the inner courtyard. Hence, during the 224 years in which inquisitors were present on Malta (1574-1798), the building served as a representative palace, an official court, and an austere prison.
Fifty years after the establishment of the Inquisitor's Palace in Birgu, a second palace was built by the inquisitor Onorato Visconti, who held office for three years (1624-1627). This palace, which is located some 13 kilometres west of Birgu in Girgenti, included a library and served as a summer residence for the inquisitors. It was renovated and enlarged in 1763, and functions today as the Prime Minister's country residence.
While the inquisitors used the Girgenti Palace for their pastimes, the Birgu Palace is where they pursued their missions. As indicated in the documents preserved in the Archives of the Roman Inquisition in Malta, the sixty inquisitors delegated to the island dealt mostly with heretical ideas and publications, with Christian slaves who had converted to Islam, with popular magical practices, and with cases of blasphemy and bigamy. Along with pursuing offenses against Canon Law, some inquisitors engaged in power struggles with the Grandmaster of the Order of St. John and the local bishop by offering the Maltese the opportunity to make appeals against the decisions of the former. As they were supported by the Holy See in Rome, many of the inquisitors won these struggles and succeeded in fostering their power. This also served to advance their personal careers, which led many of them to the position of cardinal, while two inquisitors from Malta even became Popes, i.e. Alexander VII and Innocent XII.
The judicial system of interrogation, torture and conviction came to end when Napoleon Bonaparte conquered Malta in 1798. The last inquisitor, Giulio Carpegna, as well as the Order's Grandmaster, were given 48 hours to leave the island, and the tribunals were closed one month later. The former Inquisitor's Palace, which later became the residence of the French commander of Malta, has stood the test of time and, for the Maltese and the tourist alike, is worth a visit still today.

Where Are Malta's Water Resources?

Jan Friesen

As an island, Malta is surrounded by abundant water. However, due to its high salinity, this water is not suitable for domestic or even industrial water use. Traditionally, Malta has used groundwater resources that are stored in aquifers, which are recharged through rainfall. Malta receives only a limited amount of rainfall and, consequently, experiences little groundwater recharge, yet at the same time, the demand for water for agricultural and domestic use, especially in the tourism industry, is high, and is constantly increasing. The question of how freshwater (such as the potable groundwater stored in aquifers) interacts with the saline seawater is therefore of high relevance in managing water resources on Malta.

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The Island of Malta is surrounded by sea water, which is partially desalinated using reverse osmoses techniques.

May
2017

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WEEK **20**	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
WEEK **21**	22	23	24	25	26	27	28

Literature:

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations:
Malta Water Resources Review. Rome 2006.

Tom Freyberg:
Reverse osmosis desalination energy reduced by a third in Malta. WaterWorld. Retrieved from: http://www.waterworld.com/articles/2014/03/reverse-osmosis-desalination-energy-reduced-by-a-third-in-malta.html (visited: Feb 25, 2016).

Annette Vella:
Groundwater discharge: A solution to Malta's water problem? In: Maltatoday, Issue 158. Retrieved from: http://archive.maltatoday.com.mt/2010/04/07/l1.html (visited: Feb 25, 2016).

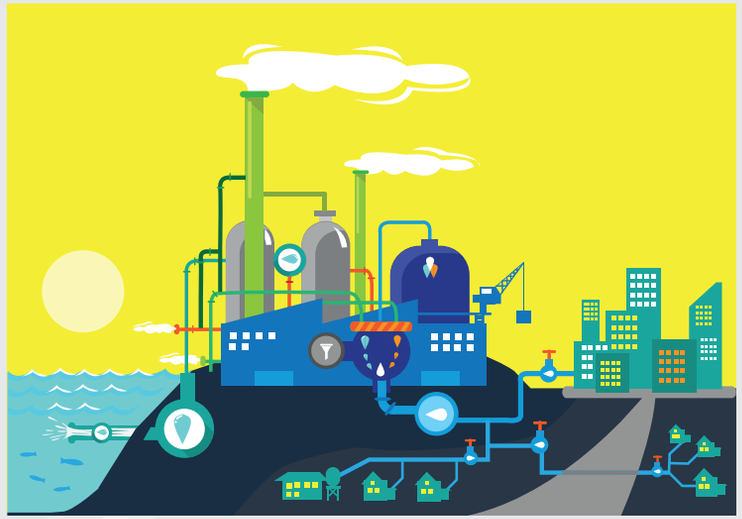
Jan Friesen,
Environmental Studies

The movement of freshwater and seawater is in opposition to each other: As discharge to the sea or as saltwater intrusion into groundwater aquifers. Freshwater flows naturally to the sea, both from rivers as well as from groundwater aquifers. This is obvious when rivers discharge water into the sea, and also occurs when groundwater aquifers discharge water in the form of springs below the sea surface. Nowadays, an opposing, human-induced movement is often experienced, with seawater flowing into onshore groundwater aquifers. Coastal regions are heavily populated, which coincides with high water demand. To cope with the high water demand, groundwater is increasingly being pumped, and aquifers are even sometimes over-pumped. When they are close to the sea, this results in saltwater intrusion. When wells are excessively pumped, not only the freshwater from groundwater aquifers is accessed, but, eventually, saltwater from the sea is also pumped.

Malta's groundwater resources can be described as a freshwater lens floating on top of the saline seawater. The more water is pumped, the smaller this freshwater lens becomes. Wells located close to the boundary of this freshwater lens then begin to pump seawater instead of freshwater. As Malta is experiencing increasing water demand, but, at the same time, its water resources are dwindling, water must be used more efficiently, and different sources of water must be tapped. Common measures are rainwater harvesting, wastewater treatment and reuse, as well as desalination.

Desalination plants extract salt from seawater to produce drinking water. Whereas in its early days, the technology was very cost intensive and not very efficient, these days, desalination is a commonly-used technology. Due to Malta's limited water resources, a desalination plant that uses thermal distillation was installed as early as 1881. Larger plants followed in the 1960s and 1980s, and today, reverse osmosis technology is used for desalination.

As water availability will most likely decline and water demand is constantly rising, alternative water sources, such as desalination and water reuse will need to be tapped in the future.



The process of reverse osmoses, which is carried out at a reverse osmoses plant such as the one in Pembroke (Malta).

ARAB-GERMAN YOUNG ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

Was Malta a Vital Link between Europe and Africa in Antiquity?

Christian Fron

During a visit to modern Malta, varying cultural influences, as well as the impact of its colourful past, can be seen everywhere. Extremely illustrative of this constant cultural exchange are the different languages used by its inhabitants: English and Maltese, which is derived from an Arabic dialect originating in northern Africa. This proves that Malta is a link between Europe and Africa. But what is the origin of the island's vital role, and in what way can this meaning be traced back into Antiquity?

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The Statue of Claudia Antonia, daughter of Claudius, exhibited in the Domus Romana in Rabat (Malta). This small museum, in which the presentation on Ancient Malta took place, was built around the remains of a rich, aristocratic Roman town house (domus) which was discovered by chance in 1881.

June
2017

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WEEK 22	29	30	31	1	2	3	4
WEEK 23	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

Literature:

Anthony Bonanno:
Malta. Phoenician, Punic and Roman. Valetta 2005

Claudia Sagona:
The Archaeology of Punic Malta. Melbourne 2002.

Thomas Freller:
Die Geschichte Maltas. Eine Insel zwischen Orient und Okzident. Ostfildern 2008.

Christian Fron,
History

In order to answer this question, then, as today, the geography and topography of the island are of great importance. Although, due to the heavy deforestation during Roman times, a detailed reconstruction of the ancient vegetation is almost impossible, nonetheless, the ancient Maltese soil is not regarded as being particularly fertile. Moreover, the land was never endowed with rich water resources or mineral deposits (except for salt and natural stone). This means that for any luxury (the desire for which is one of the great constants in human culture), the inhabitants of this island continually had to establish contact and trade with others. This is where the topography becomes of great importance, and where Malta's advantage, as a Mediterranean bridgehead between Sicily (Europe) and Africa lies. It is primarily its position in the Mediterranean that granted the island a degree of extra importance for ancient inter-Mediterranean trade, as well as for the military control of parts of this sea.

It is not surprising that the first settlement on this island in ancient times was established by one of the great archaic trading nations, the Phoenicians, who founded a trading post (or settlement) and a place of safe retreat on Malta about 700 B.C.E., at what is today known as Mdina/Rabat (at the very centre of the island). At its beginning, the post was part of the great Phoenician east-west trading network.

At the end of the sixth century B.C.E., the great influence of the Phoenician cities on the western Mediterranean came to an end, when they were conquered by the Persian Empire. This permitted the largest Phoenician colony in the west, Carthago (Tunisia), to arise and gain influence over the other western Phoenician settlements, including Malta. The change of the primary direction of the Maltese trading routes from east-west to south (Carthage)-north (Sicily, Italy and perhaps Greece) was induced by these circumstances, although the importance of Malta as a trading post may not be overestimated. Thanks to these trading connections, e.g. with Sicily, Malta also became a part of the Greek world and its culture, as part of the Carthaginian empire. The influence of Hellenistic culture can be seen to some extent in the architecture of this time. Furthermore, it is thanks to Greek appellation of the island as Melite that we today call it Malta. In addition, the Phoenician language, as well as the way of living, have generally stayed the same.

During the course of the Second Punic War (218-202 B.C.E.), Malta became a part of the Roman dominion. Nevertheless, this did not cause much of a change to the composition of Malta's inhabitants or to everyday life on the island. The Maltese merchants continued to trade with other communities in the Roman empire, and increased their wealth. Malta was famous for its linen clothes and for its little 'Maltese' dogs. It became a part of the Roman province of Sicilia. From that point on, the fate of Malta has been more closely linked not to northern Africa, but to Sicily. Nevertheless, while Latin was the official language and became more and more predominant within the Maltese elite, the Phoenician-Punic-Hellenised culture and language maintained their existence, with little Roman intervention.

In this way, a tendency toward continuity and a central position between Africa and Europa seem to have remained the general keystones of Maltese society from Antiquity until the present.

Arabic Poetry From Malta and Sicily: A Voice of Alienation?

Kirill Dmitriev

yuʾannanu fī Mālṭa - يؤنّن في مالطة
'to call/cry on Malta',
an Arabic equivalent of the Biblical
'a voice [crying] in the wilderness' (Matt 3:3).

The history of Arab-Muslim Malta is closely related to the Arab history of neighbouring Sicily. The Maltese archipelago belonged to the political and cultural orbit of Sicily during both Arab and Norman rule of the islands (9th-13th centuries). Arabic literary works from Malta during this time remain virtually unknown: Only a few fragments of poetic works attributed to Arab Maltese authors have survived. Nonetheless, the Arabic literary culture of the period is well documented in the large corpus of texts by Arab poets in Sicily.

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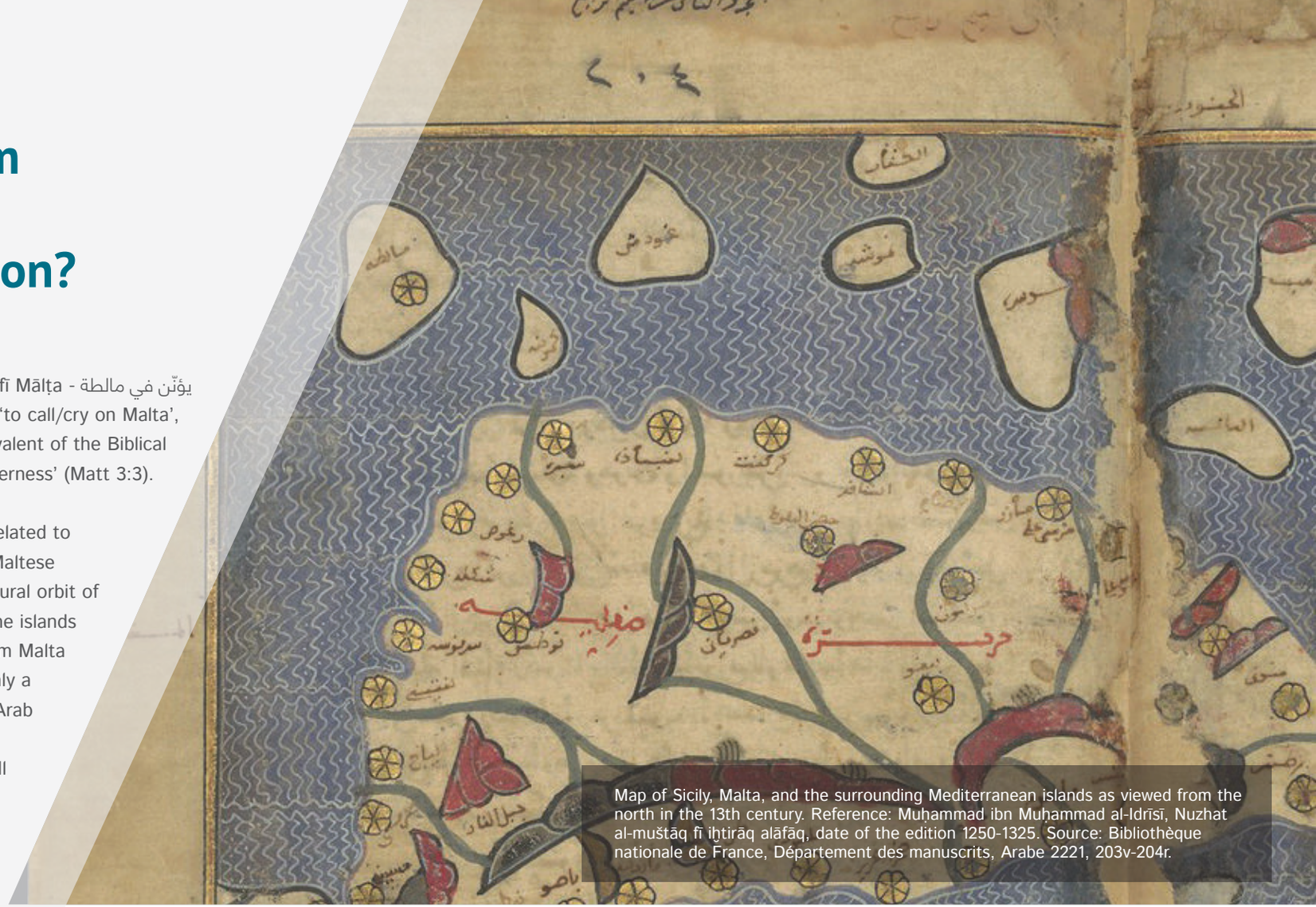

Map of Sicily, Malta, and the surrounding Mediterranean islands as viewed from the north in the 13th century. Reference: Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Idrīsī, Nuzhat al-muštāq fī iḫtirāq alāfāq, date of the edition 1250-1325. Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, Arabe 2221, 203v-204r.

June
2017

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WEEK 24	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
WEEK 25	19	20	21	22	23	24	25

Literature:

K. Mallette:
The Kingdom of Sicily, 1100-1250. A Literary History. Philadelphia 2005.

M. R. Zammit:
Il-versi Għarbin tal-poeti Medjevali Għarab-Maltin: ħarsa mill-ġdid, in: ħarġa 86 (2014), pp. 74-99.

Kirill Dmitriev,
Arabic Studies

Shortly after the Arab conquest in 827, Sicily became a vibrant centre of Arab culture. The geographic remoteness of Sicily from the rest of the Arabic speaking world stimulated conditions of alienation, which, according to Joseph Brodsky, have an essential impact on creative writing and are a prerequisite for the development of literature as such. As a result, Arabic literature in Sicily flourished, in an experimental spirit evidenced in the emergence of the Siculo-Arabic school of poetry.

The Arabic literary tradition in Sicily excelled through its continuity, stretching over two major periods of Sicilian and Maltese history: The Arab-Muslim and the Norman-Christian. At the end of the eleventh century, Arab domination of Sicily came to its end, with the establishment of the Norman kingdom on the island. Arabic language and literature, however, were not abandoned under the Norman rulers. On the contrary, Arabic continued to enjoy popularity among the new political elites, who adopted Arabic panegyric poetry as one of the major mediums of political representation.

In the multicultural and multilinguistic environment of Norman Sicily, Arabic poetry experienced further original developments. It most probably had also a fruitful impact on the origins of Italian poetry, since the Norman court was frequented by Ciullo d'Alcamo (d. c. 1231-1250) and Giacomo da Lentini (d. c. 1249), the first poets of the Italian language.

On the other hand, significant poetic works were also created by Arab-Muslim authors who left Norman Sicily. An outstanding figure among the Siculo-Arabic poets in exile was Ibn Ḥamdīs (1056-1133). A native son of Syracuse, Ibn Ḥamdīs left Sicily at the age of 22 for what would be a life of constant exile: First in Muslim Spain, then in North Africa. In exile, Ibn Ḥamdīs became one of the greatest Arab poets of his time. Again, it was the decisive element of alienation that exalted his poetic genius with the powerful voice of resistance, as well as the eloquent lyricism of nostalgia.

Sicily, recollected as paradise and mourned over as the paradise lost, is a leitmotif in Ibn Ḥamdīs' poetry, in particular, in his wine songs. This genre provided the literary dimension for expression of imaginary happiness and offered expressive motifs to contrast the joyful past with the painful present, the sweet memory of the homeland with the bitterness of exile. As one of the central genres of classical Arabic poetry, wine song fully corresponded to Ibn Ḥamdīs' efforts to promote the cultural heritage of Arabs as a living and inspiring tradition. His verses on wine such as:

وصفراءَ كالشمس تبدو لنا من الكأسِ في هالةٍ مستديرهْ
يلاعبها الماءُ في مَزْجِهَا فيضحكها عن نُجُومٍ منيرهْ

Oh that golden like the sun [wine]! It appears to us from the cup in the round lunar corona.
Water plays with it in its blending, so that it laughs at it to uncover the bright stars [of bubbles],

contain, along with an aesthetic value, a consciously political meaning as well. They must be interpreted within the broader context of poet's agenda to negotiate the cultural identity of Arabs of his time - one of the most dramatic periods in the history of Arab-European relations in the Mediterranean borderlands that include Sicily and Malta.

Why Do States in Transition Implement Transitional Justice Tools to Pursue Past Human Rights Violations?

Fatima Kastner

When in 2001 the newspaper Times of Malta congratulates magistrate Carmel Agius on his election as president of an international criminal tribunal, the news was quite remarkable for at least two reasons: First it was indeed a very prestigious appointment for a local jurist and second it was the very first time in the history of Malta, that a Maltese citizen has been elected by the General Assembly of the United Nations as judge of an international criminal tribunal. But the acclamation was not the first step for judge Carmel Agius in the field of international law and transitional justice.

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The 'Lady of Justice' statue serves as a symbol of Righteousness; the statue also can be found in historic Maltese court houses.

June/July 2017

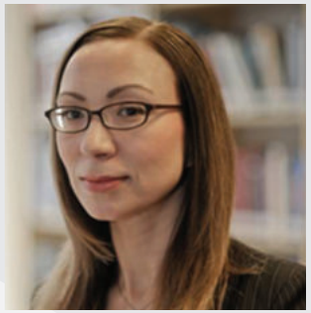
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WEEK 26	26	27	28	29	30	1	2
WEEK 27	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Literature:

F. Kastner:
Transitional Justice in der Weltgesellschaft. Hamburg 2015.

F. Kastner, B. Holzer & T. Werron:
From Globalization to World Society: Neo-Institutional and Systems-Theoretical Perspectives. New York 2014.

F. Kastner, R. Nobles, D. Schiff & R. Ziegert:
Law as a Social System. Oxford 2008.



Fatima Kastner,
Law & Sociology

Prior to being elected to the international tribunal for the former Yugoslavia he was adviser of the Government of Malta at the United Nations Plenipotentiary Conference on the International Criminal Court (ICC) held in Rome in 1998 where he was actively involved in the difficult and time-consuming negotiations that finally led to the Statute of the ICC and signed the Final Document on behalf of Malta. However not at least these extraordinary developments have paved the way for the unprecedented design of the contemporary international legal system and its transitional justice instruments.

In fact, at present international law calls on formerly repressive states to confront and deal with their history of violence. Moreover, post-conflict societies are obligated to ensure that the victims of serious human rights violations are offered compensation. A growing number of post-conflict states in transition within central and eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America, and now, with Morocco and Tunisia, even from the Mediterranean region close to Malta, have aimed to meet these obligations and to bring about transitional justice. In view of the fact that effective mechanisms to force sovereign states to implement processes of transitional justice are lacking in international politics, this is a rather astonishing observation. How can this rapid globalisation of transitional justice be explained?

The normative concept of transitional justice emerged historically in the period after the geopolitical caesura of 1945. Its first appearance results from the exceptional context of the institutionalisation of the international criminal tribunals at Nuremberg and Tokyo following the Second World War. Both tribunals dealt with war crimes that had been committed before and during the war by the former leaders of the warring parties, Germany and Japan. From the very beginning, the trials were tainted by the desire to punish and replace former members of the Nazi regime and the Japanese empire who were considered the most culpable for systematic or widespread human rights violations, and to establish international law as a new tool for accountability of individual actions, as well as of international aggression. Notably, the latter, with the invention of a new legal principle called 'crimes against humanity', set a novel precedent that had never before been used in international human and humanitarian law, and therewith initiated an extraordinary dynamism of legal and institutional developments in the post-war era that radically modified the very nature of the international legal system. In fact, since that time, numerous international criminal courts have been installed on a global level to deal with massive human rights violations, including the international extraordinary tribunals for the former Yugoslavia (which will be headed by judge Carmel Agius until November 2017), as well as Rwanda, Cambodia, East Timor, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. These bodies were institutionalised to seek recognition for victims by bringing perpetrators to justice, in order to promote peace, democratic institutions, and the rule of law. Other post-conflict, post-authoritarian, and post-dictatorial countries, such as Morocco after the end of the 'leaden years', Argentina after the end of the military dictatorship, and South Africa after the end of the Apartheid regime, used truth and reconciliation commissions to deal with their respective violent pasts. Such commissions have also been established in states in transition that are facing a history of repressive rule, such as South Korea, the Solomon Islands, El Salvador, Ghana and the Fiji Islands. The general goal of transitional justice tools, be it criminal tribunals or truth and reconciliation commissions, is to overcome the former suppressive state system by contributing to politics of democratisation and national reconciliation.

Since the end of the Cold War, international organisations such as the United Nations, the European Union, and the World Bank have increasingly been acknowledging the politics of dealing with past human rights violations, for example, by granting public sector loans and making support for economic development contingent on specific transitional justice policies. Of no less importance than these redefined lending conditions and standards of development aid of international donors, confronting past human rights violations has become a global model for action in world society, which has taken the transitional justice model from its beginnings, as a normative exception, to its present status as a global political rule. An unexpected evolution of international law and world politics, which even Malta's famous judge Carmel Agius in his tireless service for justice could not have foreseen.

The Island of Malta as a Harbour for a Mediterranean Research Agenda in Higher Education?

Florian Kohstall

Malta looks back on a long history of higher education and knowledge transfer. The University of Malta was founded in 1592 as a Jesuit school, only 100 years after the city of Granada, the last bastion of Al Andalus, had been conquered by Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. The university's initial aim was to train Catholic missionaries to be sent to North Africa. Today, the university's links to the southern shores of the Mediterranean remain rather limited. Like most other European universities, when it comes to exchange students, it looks first and foremost to the North and to the West. Most of the university's joint programs have been established with institutions in the United States. Of its 11,500 students, only 1000 are international students. Nevertheless, the university aims to develop its relations with the South. In the 1980s, it made the decision to integrate the 'hub' concept into its strategy, and to provide goods and services to the surrounding countries, including Arab countries.

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Inside the Old University Building at Campus Valletta in the Valletta city centre. The university was established in 1769. Copyright: University of Malta

July
2017

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WEEK 28	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
WEEK 29	17	18	19	20	21	22	23

Literature:

Florian Kohstall:
Free transfer, limited mobility: Ten years of higher education reform in Egypt and Morocco. In Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée (REMMM) 131 (2012), pp. 93-112. Also available at https://remmm.revues.org/7624

Ronald Sultana:
The Euro Mediterranean Region and its universities: An overview of trends, challenges and prospects. In Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies 4/2 (1999), pp. 7-49.

Ronald Sultana:
Looking back before moving forward: Building on 15 years of comparative educational research in the Mediterranean. In Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies 13/2 (2008), pp. 9-25.

Florian Kohstall,
Political Studies

One of the outstanding examples of serving as a bridge between the North and South is the Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research (EMCER), established in 1994 by Professor Ronald Sultana. In what he often calls a battle against windmills, the head of the Centre, Ronald Sultana, along with his colleagues, attempts to identify common trends and challenges in higher education in the Mediterranean. This view very much contrasts with the representation that, when it comes to knowledge transfer, the Mediterranean constitutes a divide rather than a bridge. Europe is often seen as a major actor in research and technology development, while universities in North Africa and the Middle East are often framed in terms of deficits; they are depicted as struggling with structural problems, such as overcrowding, a constant decrease in quality, and poor governance. Today, as internationalisation has become the great matrix of reform in higher education, Sultana's analysis of the trends, challenges, and prospects of universities in the Euro-Mediterranean region still appears to be pioneering work. It shows that, despite political and socio-economic differences, universities in Europe and the Arab region share common trends and problems, from the expansion of access to the increasing privatisation of higher education, from interactive learning to the question of autonomous management.

Of course, 'a Mediterranean approach to higher education research' should not blur the divisions and contrasts of different higher education institutions. Nevertheless, it might be very helpful to move beyond the logic of numbers and rankings and the rather general assessment of experts' reports. Our understanding of knowledge transfer in the Mediterranean still remains limited. We often refer to the Arab region as the birthplace of knowledge production, especially with reference to the three oldest universities: al-Azhar in Cairo, Zeituna in Tunis and Qaraouiyine in Fes. We celebrate the time of al-Anadalus as a time of cosmopolitan learning. But when it comes to sharing the more recent history of higher education, our awareness is dominated by discourses on development and market-oriented reform. Today, few people remember that Cairo University was once established in 1908 as a project of national renaissance, embracing autonomy and academic freedom as founding principles. The current situation, in which Cairo University has become an ungovernable giant with over 250,000 students, resistant to any reform, dominates our vision of the failure of higher education in the Arab region. It is true that university reforms are elite projects, which often ignore those seeking access and those frequenting and animating those institutions. These reforms are, however, often inspired by the same international organisations that reiterate the gap by calling for comprehensive reform, instead of focusing on the many small steps that might be as effective in remedying the problem.

As long as visa restrictions remain in place, one can dwell long upon the lack of internationalisation of students and professors in the South. Establishing a Mediterranean agenda for research in higher education may help us to identify these small steps. The Euro-Mediterranean Centre for Educational Research at the University of Malta may act as a harbour for developing and putting such an agenda into practice.

Was There Ancient Egyptian Influence on Malta?

Verena M. Lepper

In 1647, G.F. Abela, the Vice-Chancellor of the Order of St John, stated that the Phoenicians were descendants of the Ancient Egyptians. This assumption followed the findings of several Egyptian artefacts, including an Egyptian sarcophagus, on the island of Malta. This assumption was made long before the hieroglyphs were deciphered and detailed insights into the Egyptian society were provided. By now, a large number of additional findings of Egyptian descent have been found on Malta. Their interpretation, however, is viewed differently today.

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The Egyptian influence on Malta is still very much alive: This picture of an Egyptian seated statue placed decoratively on a wall in Birgu was taken during the conference. This replica of an Egyptian statue represents the Pharaoh seated on his throne, wearing the characteristic nemes headdress with uraeus.

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	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WEEK 30	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
WEEK 31	31	1	2	3	4	5	6

Literature:

J.L. van Sister:
Cultural exchange on Malta and Gozo. A study of the Aegyptiaca on Malta and Gozo from the Phoenician and Punic periods. Leiden 2012.

Günther Hölbl:
Ägyptisches Kulturgut auf den Inseln Malta und Gozo in phönikischer Zeit. Wien 1989.

Verena M. Lepper,
Egyptology

In Phoenician M-L-T and, later, in Greek Melite, the island of Malta served as a trading hub in the Mediterranean, and one important trading partner was Ancient Egypt. Hence, Egyptian artefacts from both the Phoenician and Punic periods have been found on the island. It is not only on Malta that they have been found, but also on the small neighbouring island of Gozo (ancient Gaulos). More than 50 Aegyptiaca have been identified: Sarcophagi, amulets, coins, architectural elements, and other miscellaneous Aegyptiaca.
In Rabat (in Tal Virtu), a spectacular find was made, dating back to the 5th century B.C.E. In 1968, in a destroyed tomb, an Egyptian-style amulet was found. Inside this amulet was, moreover, a papyrus fragment. Both the container and the papyrus can today be seen in Valetta, at the National Museum of Archaeology.
The container itself is in the shape of the Egyptian god Horus, a small anthropomorphic bronze figurine with a hawk head and a solar disc, along with the typical uraeus snake. This clearly represents the solar god, Horus (re-Harachte). The amulet is 4.9 cm long. Objects similar to this, in an Egyptianizing style – imitating Egyptian prototype amulets – were found throughout the Phoenician colonies and cities.
The papyrus fragment that was kept inside this container measures 7.0 by 4.8 cm. The text on the papyrus is particularly interesting, as it is written in Phoenician, the local Semitic language and script of Malta and the Phoenician colonies – and not in Egyptian! However, the additional depiction of a goddess is in Egyptian style – the goddess Isis: A standing female figure, in a long dress and with an Egyptian Ankh-sign, the symbol of life, in her hand. On her head, she wears a wig, which is crowned by the hieroglyph of Isis, the seat.
The Phoenician inscription reads as follows:

'Laugh at your enemy, o valiant ones,
Scorn, assail and crush your adversary
... disdain (him), trample (him) on the waters;
... Moreover, prostate him ... on the sea, bind (him), hang (him).'

As the text is written in Phoenician, with a clear intent of protection, there is no direct link to Egyptian religious beliefs, rather, it is more likely that it was part of a Phoenician or local tradition. However, both gods, Horus and Isis, are certainly of Egyptian origin, and were also worshiped on Malta and in the Phoenician world at large. They simply were incorporated into that religious world.
The papyrus material, however, although no scientific analysis has yet been made of the material, was very likely imported from Egypt, as the material is typically Egyptian and the papyrus plant grows there.
In conclusion, since the container and amulet were found in a tomb on Malta, it is clear that this is an example of Egyptianizing magic within the cults of a local Maltese community.

In What Ways Has Malta Been Linked to Syria?

Nuha al-Shaar

The Maltese Islands are located at the centre of the Mediterranean Sea. Due to this location, the Maltese people have historically had a broad exchange with the rest of the Mediterranean region. This interaction is indicated by two factors: The similarities of the names of certain areas in Malta and Syria, and the travel accounts of some Maltese travellers to Syria and Lebanon.

With regard to the first point, there are certain coastal villages in Syria that have the same names as some villages in Malta. For example, in the coastal area of Latakia, there is a town called Sinjwan, located 5 kilometres to the north of Latakia city. Nearby localities to the north include Sqoubin, Baska and al-Qanjarah, another town to the northeast is called Sit-markho, and to the northwest is the town of Burj al-Qasab. The inhabitants of this town are predominantly Alawites and Christians.

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Malta's location at the centre of the Mediterranean Sea has meant that there has always been a strong cultural exchange between Malta and the Arab coastal regions. For example, lemons were introduced to Malta by the Arabs and became an important part of Maltese food culture.

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WEEK 32	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
WEEK 33	14	15	16	17	18	19	20

Literature:

Muhamad Hattab:
The Dictionary of the Names of Villages and Cities in Latakia Province [In Arabic: Mu'jam Asma' al-Qura wa al-Mudun fi Muhafazat al-Ladhiqiyya]. Latakiya 2003.

Domenico Magri:
Travels to Mount Libanon. Tr. Kamil Ifram. Beirut 1985.

Nuha al-Shaar,
Arabic and Islamic Studies

The modern town of Sinjwan extends over a flat hill which is 80 metres above sea level. The local residents believe that the current town was built on the remains of ancient Sinjwan, which disappeared among the trees and the streets of the village.
One of the stories that the villagers tell about the origin of this town concerns a certain saint who came from Malta long ago. The town is named Sinjwan after him: "the town of the old olive and the migrant saint." The elderly people of the town tell that there was a saint who came from Malta, and who decided to reside in one of the churches of the town. They say that the name is a compound made up of Sin and Juwan (Saint John). The villagers say that the ruins of this church still can be found in the town, and that people still visit this site to celebrate the memory of the Maltese saint. The town is famous for its olive trees, which are believed to have been blessed and protected by the Maltese saint. The story is interesting, because there are places and villages in Malta that have the same name and also are named after the same saint. However, there is still work to be done in evaluating this tradition about John, in terms of its age, exact content, and historicity.
The other element of encounter can be found in a book, translated into Arabic with the title "Rihla ila Jabal Lubnan" (a Journey to the Mount of Lebanon) by Domenico Magri, who is known by the nickname Melitensi (someone from Malta). The book is based on his travels to Syria and Lebanon in 1655 and describes the different cities there. Domenico Magri was born in 1604 in La Valletta in Malta, and died in 1672. In order to study for a priestly career, he studied philosophy and theology in Rome, where he focused particularly on oriental languages. He was recognized for his dedication and talent, and, at the age of nineteen, was sent on official assignment to the Patriarch of Antioch. He was also involved, along with others, in the Arabic translation of the Bible. For a number of years, he taught theology, philosophy, oriental languages and Greek in Rome.

In 1655, Domenico Magri Melitensi was sent by the Pope in Rome to win over the Eastern Christians in Syria and Lebanon. He describes Aleppo during his visit as a very famous city in the Ottoman Empire, and one of the most important trade cities in the whole of Asia. It was used for the storage of many different goods. There were many Europeans there: the French, Italians, Dutch, and English, especially merchants. They came in large caravans and stayed more than six months. These caravans carried precious stones, bay leaves, herbs, different types of perfumes, and various types of fabrics and silk from Persia.
He also describes the religious tolerance and freedom in Aleppo, where people practiced their religions freely: 'each Christian community in Aleppo has its own church, its own monks and bishops. They all practice their ceremonies and religious activities freely. It also has about 300 hundred mosques, which are all covered with bronze and golden copper, and there are golden crosses in these mosques'. He also mentions the fascinating architecture of Aleppo, the large buildings, and the public baths.
Domenico Magri Melitensi also described his visit to Tripoli. He was impressed by this port city and its abundant wealth. He speaks about the landscape of the city and how it extends over the mount of Lebanon. He also speaks about the high castle in the city, the olive tree fields, the spring, with its pure, sweet water, and the palm trees. He describes Beirut and other cities in Lebanon. He mentions the beautiful architecture and religious tolerance and freedom in these places. The olive trees, the forest of almond trees, and the moderate Mediterranean weather were very familiar to Domenico Magri Melitensi.
In conclusion, there has historically been strong cultural interaction between Malta and Syria, which is a sign of a strong Mediterranean culture.

Was Malta Inhabited in Arab Times?

Simon Mercieca

The Arab, or Muslim, domination of Malta is associated with the years 870 to 1091. In 870, following a series of invasions and battles against the Byzantines, the island was conquered by the Aghlabids. The Normans seized the island in 1091.

What happened in between those dates is the source of great historical controversy. The local historical narrative revolves round whether Malta remained Christian or became Muslim, and whether Malta was inhabited or remained uninhabited for a long period of time. Ibn Hawqal, who visited Sicily around 970 C.E., suggested that the island was uninhabited. This idea finds confirmation in al-Himyari's text, written 500 years later, in which he says that Malta began to be repopulated only after 1048.

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Wherever they went, the Arabs brought with them their tradition of intensive farming, and Malta was no exception. Terraced fields (here: Munxar Reef, Malta) are still used today to farm on hilly or mountainous terrain. This system of agriculture was originally introduced to Malta by the Arabs. Photographer Daniel Cilia

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	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WEEK 34	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
WEEK 35	28	29	30	31	1	2	3

Literature:

Ester Boserup:
The Conditions of Agricultural Growth: The Economics of Agrarian Change und Population Pressure. London 1965.

Simon Mercieca:
The Failed Siege of 868 and the Conquest of Malta by the Aghlabid Princedom in 870. In 60th Anniversary of the Malta Historical Society. A Commemoration. Valetta 2010, pp. 87-102.

Simon Mercieca:
Christians in Arab Malta (3): The Reconquest of Malta by the Byzantines in 982. In: The Malta Independent on Sunday, 3 January 2016, pp. 22-23.

Simon Mercieca,
History

To be sure, Arab documentation is scarce and was written several centuries after the events. Moreover, there are at least three Arab chroniclers who contradict al-Himyari, and affirm that Malta fell back into the hands of the Byzantine Empire in 981 and that the island remained in Christian hands until 1052. Western historians wrongly argue that these references to 'Malta' by Ibn al-Athir, Abu al-Fida and al-Dhahabi, are related to 'Mileto' in Calabria. Another scholar, al-Marrakeshi, states that Malta had a navy, with which, in 1039, it attacked Djerba.

Modern demographic thought is useful in providing an answer to at least the demographic question. The Danish economist Ester Boserup (1910–1999) studied the relationship between population growth and agricultural conditions, and presented her results in her well-known book, *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth*. Through her studies, Boserup challenged the Malthusian theory that food supply determines population growth. Instead, Boserup argued that it is the population that determines what type of agricultural methods a society uses. She insisted that women are an important and indispensable asset for the agricultural workforce, but that their contribution has often been ignored in earlier economic models. This has become known as the 'Boserup theory'. If one were to apply this theory to the linguistic evidence, a totally different conclusion would be reached.

Wherever they went, the Arabs introduced intensive farming. Malta was no exception. It is difficult to conceive that such a rich agrarian terminology, as is found today in the Maltese language and which implies intense cultivation, could have been introduced in a short span of time, i.e. between 1040 and 1091, by a handful of families.

This terminology implies advanced methods of farming, which could only have taken place on an island that had had a long period of demographic presence. Even if one were to extend the period of Arab presence until 1127, when the Normans reaffirmed their authority over the island, the period is still too short for such a development. The Maltese language is primarily Arabic, and any introduction of new Semitic words ceased completely after the Arabs lost control of the island in 1127. Therefore, agrarian terms in Maltese point to an increase in the level of per capita production. This could only have come about through intensive cultivation, which in turn was the result of an increasing population. Such growth, over a short period of time, could not have taken place without the intensive support of women. Men alone, in a small community, could not produce such a huge agrarian output. This population density allowed for the creation of surplus resources, which, in turn, explains how the Arabs had the means to build the former capital, Mdina.

Thus, while the Malthusian checks may well have been at work in Malta in the 10th century, from the beginning of the 11th century, the island must have experienced rapid demographic growth that led to the formation of a society that enjoyed a high standard of living, which is confirmed by references of Muslim chroniclers to Maltese poets and engineers. To put it succinctly, during the first phase of Norman rule (1091-1127), the island had reached the cultural zenith of its Muslim heritage.

What Is Traditional Maltese Food?

Maria Röder-Tzellos

Malta's history has, for many centuries, been characterised by the domination of heterogeneous civilizations who left their mark not only on the territory and culture, but also on the culinary traditions of the Maltese islands. Malta is known for its excellent cuisine, which is enriched with home-grown herbs and spices. The entire island, with its rocky coastline, can be considered a natural herb garden. The herbal plants produce finest oils and bitter substances, which are very tasty to humans, but which originally evolved to prevent natural enemies from eating them. Since the choice of food on an island is limited, animals must not be picky to survive on the basis of whatever vegetation they can find. This is why Maltese herbs contain a very high concentration of aromatic ingredients as a natural defence mechanism.

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This famous Maltese snack is made from goat cheese, fresh and dried tomatoes, olives, capers, and onions. It is very popular among families who are spending their day at the beach.

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WEEK 36	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
WEEK 37	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

Literature:

Pippa Mattei:
25 Years in a Maltese Kitchen. Sliema 2003.

Joseph C. Camilleri:
A Taste of Maltese Folklore. Tradition and Heritage. Hal Tarxien 2015.

Elise Billiard:
When Tradition becomes trendy. Social Distinction in Maltese Food Culture. In Anthropological Notebooks 12/1 (2006), p 113-126.

Maria Röder-Tzellos,
Media and Communication Studies

The island is not only known for its excellent herbs, but also for its aromatic honey. As far back as the time of the ancient Greeks, Malta was associated with the production of honey. It is said, Malta derives from the ancient Greek word melitos, which refers to land of honey.
Maltese culture is also known for its rituals around food. Since the time of the Hospitaliter Knights, different types of food have been strongly associated with rituals performed during religious festivities. Bread, especially, is often used in ritual acts of charity. The local bread recipe has never changed over the years. It has a crunchy crust and a soft inner part. The best way to taste the bread is by combining a few drops of olive oil together with fresh tomatoes, capers and tuna, which creates a famous Maltese snack.
For centuries, the island has served as a gateway to both the southern and northern Mediterranean. Therefore, Maltese cuisine is clearly marked by Mediterranean references. Along with Arabic dishes, Italian influences are visible in many kinds of soups and pasta. At the same time, the British, with their preference for stews and strong black tea, have left their trace on Maltese food and eating habits. One dish that is considered very traditional is rabbit stew. Usually, this dish is cooked very slowly and is served with spaghetti as a first course.
On Malta, as elsewhere, food not only serves as nutrition, but also as a marker of local identity. Food and consumption practices are an inherent part of the actively-constructed Self: You are what you eat. But since identity is both a matter of consent and opposition, food and consumption practices can also indicate cultural differences, e.g. they eat grasshoppers, we don't.
In the light of the political and economic developments experienced by the island in recent decades, the Maltese people have been urged to find their place in the global village. Gaining independence from Great Britain in 1964 and obtaining membership in the European Union have raised the question of Maltese singularity and common identity. At the same time, a revival of so-called traditional Maltese food, which is tied to the wider Mediterranean cuisine, can be observed. Restaurants for traditional food have popped up, commercial olive oil production and wine-making have increased, and both products are sold at souvenir shops as genuine Maltese commodities. However, the wine being sold does not represent the traditional Maltese house wine culture, and the growing wine industry is only a recent phenomenon. Therefore, original and exclusive Maltese dishes are difficult to find. Even if special types of food have been deeply integrated into Maltese eating habits over decades, the particular importance of Maltese food is, in fact, a combination of culinary influences and the way in which dishes and ingredients have been blended.
The phenomenon of celebrating Mediterranean food as part of the Maltese heritage must be understood as an element of collective identity-building in the 20th century. Maltese people narrate themselves as an authentic Mediterranean community by highlighting olive oil, wine, vegetables, fish, and cheese as inherent parts of Maltese food culture. But Maltese cuisine cannot be reduced to an exclusively Mediterranean diet. It constitutes a rather eccentric mixture of different food cultures - from English ham to Arabic pastry pastizz.

Is Concentrated Solar Power the Technical Solution for Malta's Water Problems?

Olfa Khelifi, Ahmad Sakhrieh

Water scarcity in the Mediterranean region (e.g. in Malta, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the occupied Palestinian territory, Syria and Tunisia) is among the highest in the world. Malta receives only around 550mm of rainfall annually, the greater part of which falls over a period of a few months from October to February, with the rest of the year being dry to very dry. Malta has no rivers or lakes; 68% of Malta's water comes from groundwater. This rate exceeds sustainable extraction levels by almost 50%. Droughts and desertification are expected to exert pressure on current water resources and affect local communities. Seawater desalination, which is responsible for 7% of all electricity consumption in the country, comes from the burning of fossil fuels in power stations, and is used to overcome the insufficiency of water sources in Malta.

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In Malta, solar energy can be used for thermal distillation processes. In this way, water and solar resources can be combined extremely efficiently to combat water scarcity.

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	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WEEK 38	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
WEEK 39	25	26	27	28	29	30	1

Literature:

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations:
Malta Water Resources Review. Rome 2006.

International Energy Agency:
Technology Roadmap: Concentrating Solar Power. Vienna 2010.

Swiss Federal Institute for Environmental Science and Technology:
Solar Water Disinfection – A Guide for the Application of SODIS. Dübendorf 2002.

Olfa Khelifi,
Environmental Engineering

Ahmad Sakhrieh,
Engineering

The potential of nonconventional water resources has not been fully explored by Malta and the other countries mentioned, although within an integrated water resources management framework, it can assist in bridging the gap between supply and demand. To compensate for the lack of water resources in such countries, the potential of nonconventional water resources for sustaining life and ensuring agricultural production can be considered of high importance. As a means of enhancing the use of nonconventional water resources, adaptable technologies for treated wastewater reuse are also of great importance, including Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) and the recharge of aquifers. The CSP technology and studies on the recharge of aquifers reveal a sustainable solution to the threatening water crisis in the Mediterranean region, and describe a way in which to achieve a balanced, affordable, and secure water supply structure for the next generation. CSP water treatment is a water process that involves extremely low initial expense and virtually no running cost. The essential appeal of solar water treatment is that it uses irradiation from direct sunlight to kill the waterborne pathogens in contaminated drinking water.

Desalination systems are of two broad types, based upon either thermal distillation or membrane separation. Thermal desalination uses heat to vaporise fresh water, and membrane desalination (reverse osmosis) uses high pressure from electrically-powered pumps to separate fresh water from seawater or brackish water, using a membrane. Of the above-mentioned technologies, solar energy is considered more cost-effective. This technology is clean, quiet, and visually unobtrusive in nature. It does not generate pollution or noise.

Therefore, CSP will be more effective than traditional methods of desalination, and will help to solve the water problems in Malta and other Mediterranean countries.

ARAB-GERMAN YOUNG ACADEMY
OF SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

Where Do the Etruscans Come From?

Ammar Abdulrahman

There are varying theories about the origin of the Etruscans. However, there is no single commonly-accepted view. Firstly, they are thought to be of Oriental origin, because of the Oriental artefacts that have been found in large quantities in the tombs. Secondly, some scholars emphasise the Phoenician and Greek influences on Etruscan origin, which are also visible in Malta.

The primary stimulus for the development of Phoenician and Greek trade with the Etruscans was the Etruria's mineral wealth. In addition, the patterns of cultural change in Etruria between 1000-700 B.C.E. have many parallels with those of Greece and the Phoenician lands during the same period. Hence, the formation of the Etruscan city-states needs to be understood as a parallel trajectory of state formation in Greece and not as an event that only took place in the aftermath of the Greek experience. Additional archaeological evidence from the Hawran regions presented here supports this hypothesis.

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Contemporary witnesses of the Etruscan civilisation, such as the Etruscan statue from Italy depicted here, have been found all over the world. Although theories about the exact origin of the Etruscans are still being debated, some scholars emphasise the Phoenician and Greek influences on the Etruscan origin, which are also visible on Malta.

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	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WEEK **40**	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
WEEK **41**	9	10	11	12	13	14	15

Literature:

Graeme Backer/Tom Rasmussen:
The Etruscans. Oxford 1998.

Mario Torelli:
The Etruscans. London 2001.

Thomas Weber:
Etruscan bronzes from the Hauran. In AAAS 41 (1993), pp. 21-29.

Ammar Abdulrahman,
Archaeology

Etruscan bronze metalwork was highly appreciated in the ancient world. It has been found, for example, as dedications in famous sanctuaries, such as Delphi, Olympia and Samos. However, until now, Etruscan finds, such as bronze jugs in Cyprus, Rhodos and Egypt, or fragmented Bucchero Sherds in al-Mina and Ras al-Bassit, have only rarely been reported in the Levant. Our rudimentary knowledge of mercantile relations between Syria and the Italian peninsula stands in remarkable contrast to the strong Oriental influence in art and technology in Etruria from the early Archaic period onwards. However, one bronze pinochle was discovered in the Hawran and is now preserved in the National Museum of Damascus. It has a bi-conical belly and truncated neck, slightly flaring in the upper part. The mouth is elongated to make a pouring spout. The bottom terminates at the lower end in a mask of a bearded man. This specimen is typical for an Etruscan workshop of the 5th century B.C.E. Bronze jugs of this type were also used widely in the tombs of central and north-eastern Italy.

In addition, there are other relationships between Etruria and the East. For example, the terracotta sarcophagus of Seianti Hanunia Tlesnasa, which dates back to the second century B.C.E., and was inspired by the art of Palmyra (Tadmur) in the Syrian desert, where similar sarcophagi were discovered.

This view of Oriental influence on Etruscan origin is also supported by other features, such as writing on live animals to predict the future – a practice that is well-known in the ancient Levant and in Etruria – or writing on livers made of clay for the same purpose. Near Piacenza in Etruria, an inscribed bronze sheep's liver was discovered. This led A. Piganiol to conclude: "If one were seeking a simple phrase to sum up the Etruscan manner, one could say that it is a piece of Babylon transported to Italy."

In summary, it is not a simple task to confirm the origin of the Etruscans, but it is very useful to understand the common roots and similarities between the peoples of the eastern and western Mediterranean, especially with archaeological evidence that could lead to reasonable conclusions about the Etruscan and their strong relationship with the East.

How Did Cultural Encounters Shape the Development of Judicial Systems in Malta and in Palestine?

Khalid al-Talahmeh

Both Palestine and Malta have undergone several eras and legal systems during which hybrid judicial models were developed that cannot in any way be associated with the Latin or the Anglo-Saxon punitive systems.

From 634 to 1917, Palestine was under Islamic rule, and Malta was under Islamic rule between 870 and 1090. During those times, the litigation system was Islamic and based on the common system, even before the Ottoman reforms (Tanzimat Era) began in 1839. However, the composition of the judicial system in both countries underwent changes, and was later affected by the introduction of Western, specifically, French, laws and regulations, forcing the legal and judicial system, which had been based on the principles of the Islamic 'Shari'ah', to adapt to the Latin system used in Europe.

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The Palazzo Castellania is a former courthouse and prison in Valletta (Malta). It was built by the Order of St John between 1757 and 1760, on the site of an earlier courthouse that had been erected in 1572.

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	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WEEK **42**	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
WEEK **43**	23	24	25	26	27	28	29

Literature:

Giovanni Bonello:
Notes for a History of the Judiciary at the time of the Order. Available at: http://www.judiciarymalta.gov.mt/history

Anthony Zarb Dimech:
The Maltese Judiciary during wartime. Malta 2010. Available at : http://www.judiciarymalta.gov.mt/history

Seán Patrick Donlan:
The Mediterranean Hybridity Project: At the Boundaries of Law and Culture (February 26, 2011). Available at SSRN: http://ssrn.com/abstract=1874095 .

Khalid al-Talahmeh,
Law

The United Kingdom occupied Palestine between 1917 and 1948, and Malta was occupied between 1800 and 1964: During this time period, new laws were issued. In light of these laws and the restructuring of the judicial system in both countries, Anglo-Saxon principles (Common Law) were added, which are based on judicial precedents. From what had been regular courts, multiple types of courts were established and set up to look into criminal matters and human rights (Courts of Magistrates, Courts of First Instance, Courts of Appeal, the Supreme Court, and other special courts for specific purposes). The Maltese judicial system is a two-tier system, comprised of Courts of First Instance (superior jurisdiction), presided over by a judge or magistrate, and Courts of Appeal (inferior jurisdiction). Courts of First Instance include the Court of Magistrates and the specialised courts; the latter include the Court of Administrative Review Tribunal and the Court of Partition of Inheritances Tribunal. Courts of Second Instance include the Court of Appeal, the Court of Criminal Appeal, and the Civil Court.

In 1948, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, came under the rule of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Jordanian judicial system, which is influenced by the Latin system; the Gaza Strip, however, came under Egyptian administration, whereby the Anglo-Saxon system continued to be used. Malta became a republic in 1974, and joined the European Union in 2004. Today, the Maltese judiciary system is similar to the judiciary system used by the Courts of the European Union, such as the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights.

In conclusion, the judicial system in both Palestine and Malta is similar, because they both take from the judicial system on two levels. In addition to the presence of administrative courts, and Constitutional Courts in both Palestine and Malta, neither of which took completely any of the two systems, Latin system or common law system, therefore the system used in both countries is a mixture of both.

First class courts consist primarily of a Magistrate and of First Instance Courts, with each one of them specialized in different cases dictated by laws, while second class courts include Courts of Appeal. In Palestine, the Supreme Court includes the Court of Cassation and the Supreme Court of Justice. In Palestine, the Shari'ah Courts include Courts of First Instance, Courts of Appeal, and the Supreme Court of legitimacy. In addition, the Ecclesiastical Courts are formed of Courts of First Instance and Courts of Appeal. In Malta, in addition, there are specialized courts, such as the Court of the Administrative Review and the Court of Division of Inheritance.

This stems from the importance of Maltese jurisdiction, which is adopted from both the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon systems, just as is the case in Palestine.

This hybrid system was expanded and deepened through the laws of the Maltese Parliament, especially after independence in 1964, which established the Constitutional Court, the highest court in Malta. In 1987, Malta incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights into its laws. Since that time, Maltese citizens have had the right to access the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. This court is composed of judges from Council of Europe member states, including Malta.

During the performance of their duties, the judges in Malta are bound by the rules of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Judiciary. This is to ensure the correct ethical and moral behaviour of judges in the exercise of their work and thereby enhance public confidence in the judiciary as a constitutional body entrusted with ensuring justice.

What Role Do Grassroots Initiatives in Maltese History Play in the Current Cultural Life of the Island?

John Vella

Bir Mula Heritage (BMH) is a small independent museum, founded in 1997 and located in Bormla, Malta. In comparison to other museums, the objects on display are quite unusual. Narratives and displays are linked to the social history of the area. BMH staff engage in cultural and pedagogical activities to raise awareness about the local cultural heritage, to empower the community, and to change the perceived stigma of the region. BMH provides space to stigmatised groups and budding artists living in Bormla. The museum is also a space devoted to social and political initiatives. It participates actively in community issues and debates. It is a place where pressure groups form and grow until they became autonomous.

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The Bir Mula Heritage Museum is a historical house in Bormla (Malta). As a unique architectural jewel, it shows the development of Maltese houses throughout the ages. Excavations at the site have revealed a large number of artefacts that are currently exhibited in an extensive 'curiosities' collection. Copyright: John Vella (Curator of the Bir Mula Heritage Museum)

November

2017

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WEEK **44**	30	31	1	2	3	4	5
WEEK **45**	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

John Vella,
Director of the Bir Mula Heritage Museum

In 2000, BMH published the first-ever tourist map of Bormla, highlighting a number of heritage sites. It collaborated with the Malta Tourism Authority to draw up and promote local heritage trails. The museum has organised a number of outdoor tourism festivals, which have helped attract tourists to this stigmatised area. For years, festivals were organised on behalf of the local council. BMH believes that touristic activities contribute to cooperation and collaboration among diverse peoples and cultures.

Another attempt to promote tourism in the area was through the creation of courses on local heritage, aimed at tourism service providers. Museum staff designed and delivered a course intended to create a pool of specialised locality-focused tourist guides. BMH also ran a number of heritage awareness programmes with local and regional schools.

BMH is organized on the ethos that diverse Mediterranean cultures were significant in enriching and enhancing the local culture. Cultural artefacts from the museum are used to discuss the ways in which diversity can help build bridges and enhance cooperation in the Mediterranean region. As some items exhibited at BMH date back to the Arabic period, the curator is able to demonstrate how the medieval Arabic culture was an advanced culture, from which the Mediterranean region as a whole benefitted when it came to such aspects as architecture, medicine, agriculture, and culinary skills.

In spite of their political and religious creeds, the Arabs were not all similar. Under Arab influence (870-1223), Malta experienced both the fundamentalist Aghlabids and the tolerant Fatimids, who cooperated and coexisted with Maltese Christians, Jews, and others. Political interests and institutions, internal conflicts, exclusion, and persecution brought about the Arab downfall in the Mediterranean. The Ottoman Empire attempted to emulate the Arab domination of the Mediterranean, but with the arrival of the Knights of St John in 1530, Malta became the front line of a battle between two faiths and two continents.

The museum boasts architectural features dating back to the Arab era. The house was originally built according to an Arab house plan, common along the Maghreb and along the eastern Mediterranean coasts. Older communities like Bormla still retain some of the characteristics of this period, such as narrow streets and alleys. The Arab cultural influence is still evident in Malta in the local language, especially in the major religious feasts, such as Għid (Easter), which derive from Arabic.

Small but dynamic museums, such as BMH, play an important role. The presentation of artefacts in BMH can be used to challenge preconceptions about other cultures. BMH has shown that a museum can build bridges and spaces for intercultural dialogue, and therefore provide a dynamic cultural contact zone.

Is Malta a Starting Point for the Debate About Tolerance and Intolerance in Arab Modernity?

Sarhan Dhouib

Malta has a role to play in the debate on the freedom of conscience and belief on the eastern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. During the nineteenth century, Malta was known as a site of Protestant missions. It was from here that Protestant missions to Lebanon and Syria were launched. In 1830, with the death of Asʿad al-Shidyāq, a convert from Mount Lebanon, the question of conversion reached a first tragic apogee. After converting from the Maronite to the Protestant faith, al-Shidyāq was ultimately incarcerated, tortured and murdered.

In terms of philosophy, the question arises as to whether we may speak of a specific 'philosophy of the Mediterranean', as does Fathi Triki, a contemporary Tunisian philosopher. On one hand, the Mediterranean is a principal site of philosophical references.

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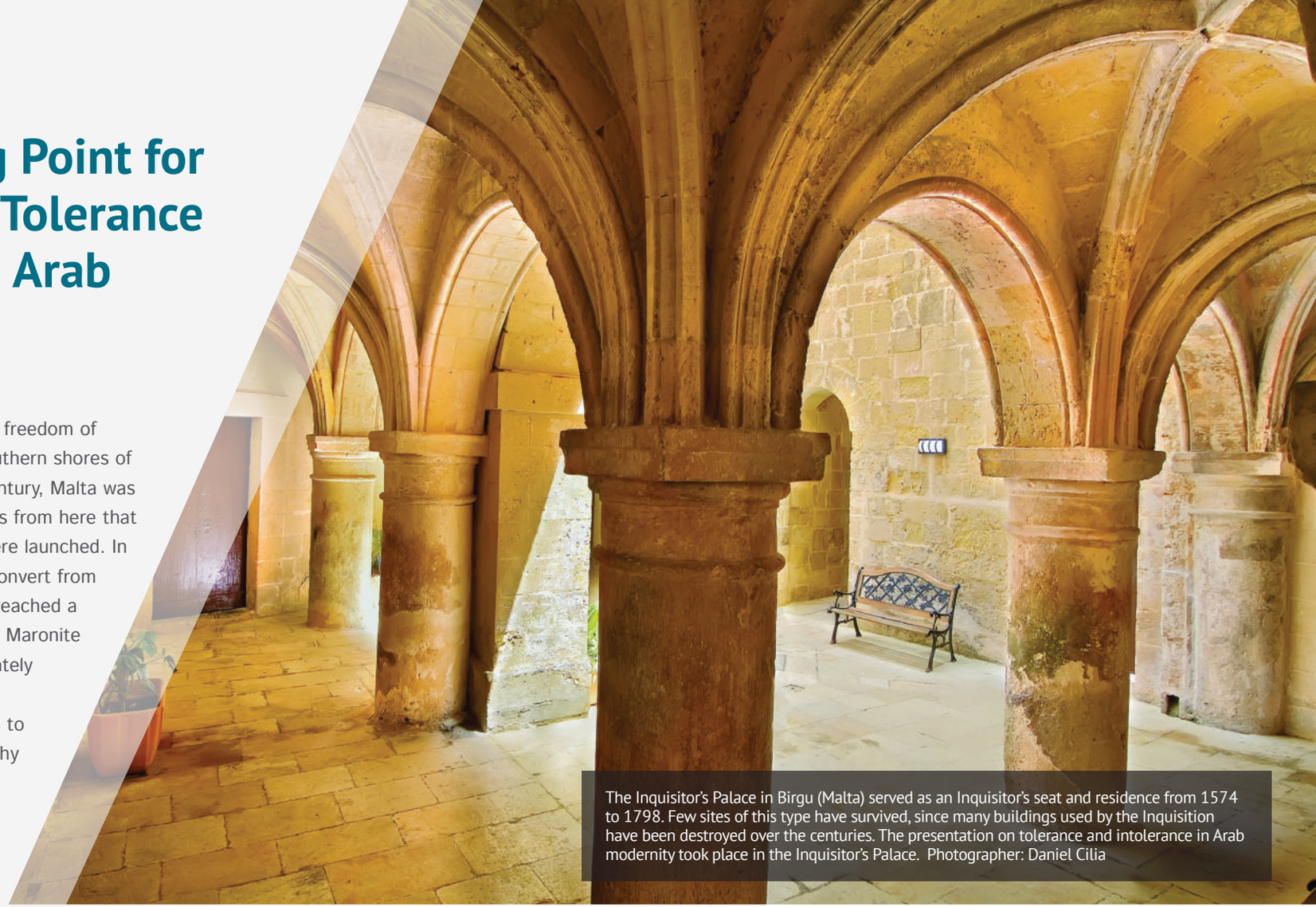

The Inquisitor's Palace in Birgu (Malta) served as an Inquisitor's seat and residence from 1574 to 1798. Few sites of this type have survived, since many buildings used by the Inquisition have been destroyed over the centuries. The presentation on tolerance and intolerance in Arab modernity took place in the Inquisitor's Palace. Photographer: Daniel Cilia

November

2017

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WEEK **46**	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
WEEK **47**	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

Literature:

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M.K. Al-Khaṭīb (ed.):
Ḥuriyyat al-iʿtiqād ad-dīnī. Dār Batrā 2005.

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Annäherung an Toleranz: Ausgangspunkte, Kontexte und zeitgenössische Interpretationen des Toleranzbegriffs aus dem schiitischen Islam. Ergon 2014.

Sarhan Dhouib,
Philosophy

On the other hand, it is a metaphor par excellence of a cultural contact zone and thus of something new: A creative synthesis, enriching philosophy as hitherto practiced in the Mediterranean. A 'philosophy of the Mediterranean' may be understood as an intercultural and transcultural space, enabling reflection on how individuals, shaped by different cultural influences, can live together in an age of increasing violence.

The enrichment occurs by way of transfer between 'Europe' and the 'Arab world'. The European notion of 'tolerance' has been interpreted and appropriated in various ways in Arab modernity. With regard to the first interpretation, Adīb Isḥāq (1856-1885) was the first Arab author to translate the French word tolérance as tasāhul. In a decisive speech given before the Zahrat al-adāb society in Beirut in 1874, he reflected on the relationship between taʿaṣṣub (intolerance) and tasāhul (tolerance). By the turn of the twentieth century, the term at-tasāhul, as a synonym for 'tolerance', had been used by Arab authors in various texts. Amīn ar-Riḥanī's (1876-1940) paper on religious tolerance (at-tasāhul ad-dīnī), published in 1900 in New York, and the debate between Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1849-1905) and Faraḥ Anṭūn (1874-1922) in 1903 are other prominent examples.

In the second interpretation, tolerance is consistently translated as tasāmuḥ, a term that had already been used in earlier texts by Arab authors, Christians as well as Muslims. However, these terms were not considered to be sufficient in themselves, but were merely a semantic addition. As far as I can see, an explicit argument for the translation of tolerance as tasāmuḥ was given only by the Tunisian theologian Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn ʿAshur (1879-1973) in his article in the Egyptian Journal al-hidāya (1936). The author emphasizes that tasāmuḥ may be appropriated more conveniently in an Islamic word than the word tasāhul, for the latter neutralizes the theological aspect of tolerance from an Islamic perspective. According to Ibn ʿAshur, tasāhul does not mirror Islam's samāḥa towards other believers. Indeed, tasāmuḥ derives from the root samuḥa, which in classical Arabic means 'generous', 'benevolent' etc. In modern Arabic, this term is most often used for 'tolerance'.

To take another short glance at concepts of intolerance: The Arabic word taʿaṣṣub is not necessarily a negation of tolerance (in-tolerance), but possesses a semantic field of its own. In the writings of al-Afghānī (1838-1898) and ʿAbduh, the term is not used in a pejorative way throughout. Instead, both authors, known as great reformers in modern Islam, even argue for a form of intolerance. Both derive taʿaṣṣub from ʿusba (federation), interpreting it as a synonym of ʿaṣabiyya, i.e. a sense of belonging, as in the writings of al-Farabi (872-950) and as in the Muqaddimah of Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406). In this view of solidarity, intolerance advances to a key term in conflicts with colonial rule, for it is on this term that the unity of the umma is founded.

Apart from this positive connotation, there is also a negative connotation of taʿaṣṣub that corresponds to the European notion of intolerance. It is often understood as "excess" and fanaticism, and is interpreted by Isḥāq and ar-Riḥanī in a religious, political, and nationalist sense.

The Maltese language, which is based on an Arabic-Maghrebian dialect, has also appropriated the words Tolleranza and Intoleranza, in the context of modern European culture. Against the backdrop of the interdependence of Mediterranean cultures, a local and global debate on tolerance from the perspective of commemorative culture and human rights is to be recommended.

Which Attitudes Towards Refugees Have Prevailed in Maltese Politics?

Carola Richter

As a small archipelago situated in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, Malta has always been a destination for conquerors, travelers, and those seeking refuge. At the same time, many Maltese have left the islands to seek their fortunes elsewhere, often due to the scarcity of natural resources and the difficulties of finding suitable work. Malta has always been a hub of migration, and those who have left and those who have come have left their footprints, and made Malta the characteristic country it is today. Thus, Malta could be expected to have a specific approach to migration – presumably, a kind of "welcome culture", due to its own experience of benefitting from migration.

Apart from these cultural considerations, the demographic situation in Malta also seems to demand a positive approach to migration: the fertility rate is one of the lowest in Europe, the population is ageing, and is even projected to decline over the next couple of decades. So, are refugees welcome in Malta?

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While the rocky coasts of Malta and Gozo are a desired yet difficult to reach destination for refugees passing the Mediterranean on their vessels, the same places are heavily frequented tourist destinations. The Azure Window on Gozo Island – a giant limestone natural arch – is the main tourist attraction on the island.

November/ December 2017

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WEEK **48**	27	28	29	30	1	2	3
WEEK **49**	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

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Nathalie Bernardie-Tahir/Camille Schmoll:
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Small frontier island: Malta and the challenge of irregular migration. In Mediterranean Quarterly 20/1 (2009), pp. 119-144.

Carola Richter,
Communication and Media Studies

In fact, for the so-called "irregular migrants", Malta is one of the most unwelcoming outposts of "Fortress Europe", which started to fortify its ramparts in the early 1990s. These migrants, who, longing for Europe, try to cross the Mediterranean Sea on rickety vessels, often barely reach those outposts that are geographically closest to the southern shore of the sea, such as the rocks of Lampedusa, Lesbos or Malta. Arriving in Malta, irregular migrants find themselves trapped in a detention camp on the former British military base in Hal Far – a policy that is apparently unique among EU countries. Only about 2.5 per cent of those arriving in Malta are given refugee status. The government also carries out forced returns to countries of origin and provides a major port for the EU's Frontex mission. For most irregular migrants arriving in Malta, the country is a barrier, rather than a gateway to Europe. At the same time, since 1974, Malta has experienced positive net immigration, because several thousands of working permits have been provided to EU and non-EU citizens who primarily come from Russia, Asian countries, and Serbia.
Obviously, Malta reflects the same discoursive and political patterns as revealed so clearly in most European countries during the current refugee crisis: although immigration is a necessity for survival (demographically) and is a long-established cultural tradition throughout Europe, and in particular in Malta, most countries repel those that do not come through regulated paths. In 2009, the Maltese Minister of Foreign Affairs argued that: "The message needs to … be received by everyone, that entering Malta illegally will not go unpunished." Another government official explained that detention serves to persuade migrants "that they have to go back home. … It's good that they contact their relatives and say, listen, don't come to Malta because it's terrible here". Why does Malta take this approach? In 2002, the massive influx of those arriving illegally by sea began. In the decade that followed, about 14,000 people arrived to the Maltese coasts, until a sharp drop from 1,508 arrivals in 2009 to only 47 in 2010 was documented. This was the result of a multi-million euro arrangement with late Libyan dictator, Qaddafi, allowing him to guard the nearby Libyan coast and prevent boats from leaving for Europe. However, after Libya fell into turmoil following Qaddafi's fall, and the so-called "Arab Spring" blossomed in nearby Tunisia, the number of arrivals increased again. According to UNHCR figures that measure the proportion of refugees to the resident population, Malta ranks eighth in the world and has the highest rate among European countries.
The Maltese government has elected a policy of refusal towards migrants from nearby Africa, and has been strongly supported in doing so by the EU. This can be explained by the strains and burdens that are caused by the comparatively high proportion of refugees reaching the Maltese coasts. On the other hand, this unwelcoming approach neglects the history of migration flows that have always brought new ideas and possibilities to Malta.

Is Malta the Hollywood of the Mediterranean Region?

Jens Scheiner

Holding a sword in his right and a shield in the left hand the gladiator Maximus Decimus Meridius, whom the people only call "Spaniard", stands in a dark vaulted hallway and prepares for his next fight in the Colosseum. At the same time a formation of Roman soldiers head for the emperor's palace in Rome while passing by a huge wall with two round arches. These two scenes are part of Ridley Scott's academy awards-winning film Gladiator (2000) in which the just mentioned gladiator and former general Maximus Decimus Meridius (Russel Crowe) seeks revenge from the new Roman emperor Commodus (Joaquin Phoenix) who in his lust for power had killed his father, the emperor Marcus Aurelius (Richard Harris), and Maximus' family. As member of Antonius Proximus' (Oliver Reed) group of gladiators Maximus comes to Rome where he excells in several fights in the Colosseum and becomes the favourite gladiator of the masses. In the end Maximus duels Commodus publicly in the arena, but does not succeed in re-establishing the Roman republic as envisaged by his mentor Marcus Aurelius.

Continued on back of page

The Blue Lagoon on the Maltese island Comino where parts of the movie Troy were filmed.

December

2017

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WEEK **50**	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
WEEK **51**	18	19	20	21	22	23	24

Literature:

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Gladiator. Film and History.
Malden 2004.

J.-P. Borg/C. Cauchi:
World Film Locations. Malta.
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Jens Scheiner,
Islamic Studies

Gladiator was the first movie of the sword-and-sandal genre after the 1960s blockbusters Spartacus (1960, directed by Stanley Kubrick) and The Fall of the Roman Empire (1963, directed by Anthony Mann) making use of computer-generated imigary and visual effects and a moving score composed by the German Hans Zimmer. Due to its huge artistic and financial success – Gladiator won more than 40 film prizes and earned almost half a billion dollars worldwide – several other movies of this genre were produced in subsequent years, such as Troy (2004) by Wolfgang Petersen, Alexander (2004) by Oliver Stone or Agora (2009) by Alejandro Amenábar.

What all these movies have in common is not only their focus on antique events and characters, but also their place of origin, since all of them were (at least partly) recorded on various places on the Maltese islands. Troy, for example, was shot at the wide sandy beach of Mellieha Bay and in the Blue Lagoon of the small Maltese island Comino. For other scenes the Mediterranean Film Studios' equipped water tanks were used. One of the two water tanks is as big as a soccer pitch, the other is up to 11m meters deep. Located at Rinella on the eastern coast of Malta's Great Harbour these tanks can be used with the natural sea horizon as backdrop.

Next to this location lie Fort Rinella and Fort Ricasoli where most of the scenes of Gladiator were recorded (others were taken in Ouarzazate in south-central Morocco, the UK and Italy). With the help of the Malta unit, i.e. more than 80 persons directed by the production manager Dragan Josipovic, Rome and in particular, the Colosseum, were rebuilt at Fort Ricasoli in order to serve as setting for Maximus' adventures. While Fort Rinella was erected by the British in 1878, Fort Ricasoli was built by the Order of Saint John between 1670 and 1698 in order to command the entrance to the Grand Harbour along with Fort Saint Elmo. Earlier the place had been used by the Ottomans in 1565 for their attacks on the Order's fortresses. Today, Fort Ricasoli is managed by the Malta Film Commission, a governmental institution that promotes film productions on the islands. This 70.000m^2 fortress contains huge walls, bastions, ravelins, corridors and hallways that served as the background of the two scenes described in the beginning. In addition, a fixed set dubbed as "Roman Road" built for Julius Caesar (2002, directed by Uli Edel and also featuring Richard Harris) attracked many more film producers.

Thus, due to its good infrastructure and short distances for commuting, Malta has become a centre for international film productions with a yearly output of several movies and TV series, such as Games of Thrones (produced by David Benioff and D. Weiss since 2011). One wonders when the island will be commonly known as "Hollywood of the Mediterranean".

Why Did Malta Become the Point of Departure for Travel in Disguise to the Middle East?

Julia Hauser

Even though the Muslim presence in Malta had largely been wiped out under the Knights Hospitallers, Malta was still perceived as a contact zone between Europe and Muslim countries during the early nineteenth century. A curious indicator of this is the importance of Malta in a largely forgotten – and in itself highly ambivalent – epistemological practice: scientific travel in disguise; a practice that connected Malta (which was then considered the Muslim world), the British Empire, and, in this case, Switzerland.

Continued on back of page

Johann Ludwig Burckhardt (*1784 in Lausanne; †1817, Cairo) travelled in disguise to Egypt via Malta. Artist: Sebastian Gutzwiller, around 1830, Historisches Museum Basel. Source:https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/82/Bildnis_Johann_Ludwig_Burckhardt_HMB_1947-221.jpg

December

2017

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
WEEK **52**	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
WEEK **01**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Literature:

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Julia Hauser:
"Dressing native" als Praktik Auftragsreisender außerhalb Europas. Das Beispiel Johann Ludwig Burckhardts (1784-1817). MA thesis, Göttingen 2005.

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Die Reisen des Johann Ludwig Burckhardt 1784-1817. Basel 2002

Julia Hauser,
History

In May 1809, a young man checked out of the lodgings of the British harbour-master in Valletta, ready to embark on a long journey. His dress was 'somewhat Syrian', or so he stated in a letter to his superiors, 'yet sufficiently different from the real Syrian costume to show that I have no wish of passing for a native'. At the same time, his rare social contacts in Valletta were confined to a British merchant whose brother served as consul in Aleppo, and the British civil commissioner of Malta, Sir Alexander Ball. For the most part, however, he spent his time indoors, reading and observing the harbour, and particularly the foreign merchants, from his window – strange demeanour indeed for someone professing to be one of them. Some weeks later, he embarked on a ship to Syria, introducing himself as an Indian Muslim merchant on a mission to the British consul in Aleppo.

Jean Louis Burckhardt, scion of an affluent Swiss family, would become one of the most renowned 'explorers' of the early nineteenth century. Employed by the London-based 'Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa', he had been commissioned to reach the source of the Niger, the object of much geopolitical speculation, via caravan travel from Syria through North and Central Africa. In order to gather information about the geography, economy, history, and culture of the regions he passed through as inconspicuously as possible, he had been instructed to spend enough time in Syria to acquire fluency in Arabic, a language he had begun to study at the University of Cambridge before his departure.

Burckhardt's commission was by no means a singular case. Since the Age of Enlightenment, and throughout the nineteenth century, a number of European travellers had claimed to have travelled to North Africa and the heartlands of Islam in guise of the Other. Many of them, including Burckhardt, wrote amply about their travels. A close reading of their texts, however, reveals the tension between Enlightenment curiosity, a distinct sense of superiority, and yet also a certain insecurity, and a sense of defeat, that makes these travelogues a fascinating testimony of the transition from Enlightenment to Imperialism, and the hubris and apprehension that were involved in the process.

Why did Burckhardt choose Malta as a place of cultural transition? Although the island had not been at the centre of Muslim rule in the Mediterranean during the Middle Ages, Muslim presence had left its traces in toponymy and the language. While relations with North African polities and the Ottoman Empire had been tense well into the early modern era, these regions had always been connected to Malta through trade and mutually-induced human trafficking. Towards the end of Hospitaller rule, relations between Malta and the Maghreb became more amicable, and economic ties intensified.

Yet, Malta did not merely represent a contact zone between the Mediterranean and the cultures influenced by Islam. It was also a place of strategic importance to the British as they sought to acquire influence in Africa and South Asia. At the time of Burckhardt's visit, it was the cusp of British rule. His sojourn in 1809, therefore, highlights both Malta's hybridity and its strategic importance. In a sense, it amounts to an appropriation of the contact zone represented by Malta.

ayya ARAB-GERMAN YOUNG ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

About AGYA

The acronym AGYA stands for the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities. The logo was designed by a team of designers from Egypt and Germany. The Arabic letter on top of the g brings verve into AGYA corporate identity: It can be read as both the Arabic letter ʻayn (stands for ʻarabi = Arabic) and the letter alif with hamza (stands for almani = German). Thus the dynamic Arabic element of the logo symbolizes the two partners in cooperation of this first bilateral young academy worldwide: the Arab world and Germany.

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Migration and transnational cooperation, the internationalization of education, innovation, finite resources, as well as the protection of cultural heritage— these are issues of mutual interest for the Arab world and Germany. The AGYA brings together outstanding scholars from the Arab world and Germany, who develop and implement joint interdisciplinary research projects and initiatives at the interface of science and society. AGYA members use their competence and creativity to transcend the borders of science and learn from each other.

AGYA was established in 2013 as the first bilateral young academy worldwide. AGYA promotes Arab-German research cooperation based on the idea of scientific excellence and social commitment of early career scholars (3-10 years post-PhD). AGYA currently has more than 50 members who are distinguished researchers from various fields of the Natural Sciences, Life Sciences, Humanities, Social Sciences and Technical Sciences; half of whom are based in the Arab world and half in Germany. The current AGYA members are affiliated with over 40 different renowned institutions in Algeria, Egypt, Germany, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. They have established five Working Groups that address the following topics: Arab and German Education; Common Heritage and Common Challenges; Energy, Water, and Environment; Innovation and Transformation. AGYA supports the interdisciplinary projects of its members in different areas of research, education and science policy. With regard to the content of its activities, AGYA is independent, and organizes itself autonomously and democratically. It fosters the intercultural experiences of its members and promotes them as ambassadors of science and culture.

The AGYA Working Group Common Heritage and Common Challenges focuses on the shared cultural heritage of the Arab world and Germany, as well as on processes of exchange across the Mediterranean. In various research projects, the members work on issues such as the preservation of endangered historical sites, food as a cultural signifier, and oral narrative traditions. Next to the Conference “Malta and the Mediterranean”, processes of exchange were also tackled at the transdisciplinary workshop “Hot Encounters: Glass Art and Glass Blowing in the Middle East and Europe” in January 2016. In May 2016, the AGYA conference “Food as a Cultural Signifier”, at the American University of Beirut (AUB), Lebanon, addressed food as bridge builder as well ass potent marker of social, religious, gendered, and ethnic differences. Along with the academic lecture program, the participants discussed regional research questions of agriculture and food-making processes on the food trail in the Lebanese Beqaa Valley. The conference dinner offered another opportunity for a multi-sensual experience of the conference topic: Food prepared according to historical recipes from the Abbasid time was served, with commentary from an expert in Islamic history.

For further information please refer to www.agya.info and follow us on twitter @AGYA_events

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