Proposal for the 3rd MMHN Conference

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From Sicily to the Levant: British views on the Mediterranean during the Napoleonic wars

During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, the Mediterranean became one of the main and, certainly, one of the most special theatres in the struggle between Great Britain and France. Central and Eastern Mediterranean were strategic areas for the British to thwart Napoleon’s expansion in Europe and in the East, which menaced the balance of power in the continent and the British Indian possessions.

After 1806, and the establishment of the Continental Blockade, Sicily, among the few Mediterranean territories not to have fallen under French influence, became a post of extraordinary strategic importance to Great Britain’s trade and military plans. At the same time, while France threatened the declining Ottoman Empire, also Turkey and the Greek islands were central focuses for British interests.

Both Sicily and the Levant were, in those years, two of the major destinations for many British who, for several reasons, decided to make their Grand Tour in the Mediterranean. Some of them, such as the Scottish writer John Galt and the English Captain Edward Blaquiere, were moved by a wider range of motives. As a consequence, the study of their travel writings and correspondence can be a precious tool of researching the economic, political, social, and cultural conditions of those countries, in the very special historical juncture of those years.
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Diletta D’Andrea is PhD in History of Republicanism and Constitutionalism. She is lecturer in Economic History at the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Messina. Her research deals mainly with the political, economic, and cultural relationships between Great Britain and Sicily during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, and on the British presence in the Mediterranean in those same years. She is the author of several works, among which ‘Gould Francis Leckie and the “insular strategy” of Great Britain in the Mediterranean, 1800-1815’ (2006); «If Sicily Should Become a British Island». Sicilia e Gran Bretagna in età rivoluzionaria e napoleonica (2007); Nel «decennio inglese» 1806-1815. La Sicilia nella politica britannica dai «Talenti» a Bentinck (2008).

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