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The scientific research on Maltese culture is a task which the Journal has been fulfilling for a considerable number of years. Putting forward an image of Malta as a centre of different cultures is also an underlying character of the contribution given by this publication. Scholars of various fields are here presented together in order to show that such material may lead to at least two fundamental conclusions. The first one is that the island's heritage is old, rich and vast enough as to demand specialization and lifelong dedication. The fact that Malta is a tiny island does not hamper in any way such a challenge; it should only arouse interest of a particular kind, namely the knowledge of a field of study, made up of diverse sectors, which is normally unknown to the outer world.

The second conclusion is that constant reference to the culture of the greater countries is not only important but inevitable and essential. One cannot arrive at a sound interpretation of what Maltese culture is without searching for the contacts which integrate the island with the world, thus establishing which are the roots and what is the real complexity of our identity. The debate goes on, and its need is now felt more than ever before since various scholars are dedicating all their activity to such a worthy enterprise.

The Journal claims to be a significant point of reference to all scholars who are interested in Mediterranean studies, and particularly in the knowledge of minority group cultures. It is only hoped that such endeavours are not only crowned with academic success, but that the necessary environment is created which can make such research flourish both as a source of knowledge and as a contribution towards the discovery of elements common to a whole region. The study of Maltese language, literature, folklore and history should lead to the creation of an awareness which goes much beyond the confines in which one normally puts the patrimony of a small ethnic group.

THE EDITOR