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procession at Zejtun with the dominating red and white colours of the priests' vestments, is quietistic. We get none of the social and political upheavals of the period, signifying the struggle between constituted ecclesiastical authority and the quest for modernisation. Here we have a depiction of a priest-dominated society typical of places in Southern Europe with a dominant belief system. The depictions of country women tending their sheep are very much in the Caruana Dingli tradition of romanticising these people, shedding little light on their social plight in bygone days, a point raised by Evarist Bartolo in an introduction to a particular edition of Gwann Mamo's Maltese socio-political satire, *Ulited in Nanna Venut fl Amerika* (Grandmother Venut's Children in America). Destitution and the material legacies of Northern colonialism are sanitized in these romantic depictions. They are to be found not only in Malta but elsewhere, in the Mediterranean and beyond. They shed little light on the social ramifications of what Gramsci and other Italian writers would call, using archaic Italian, the 'Quistione Meridionale' (Southern Question) especially for those engaged in subsistence farming. These are Danilo Dolei's 'poveri Cristi' (poor Christs), the term he used with respect to the impoverished in nearby Sicily. The social and cultural climate in Malta has often been seen as constituting an extension to Italy's *meridionale*.

We notice a greater freedom in some of Micallef Grimaud's later works, notably work of the '90s. The watercolour and ink minimalist sketch 'Going home,' characterised by dashing strokes, is executed with a freedom not witnessed in earlier works. The same can be said of his 1995 oil painting, 'Arbre Enchanté' in

which the tree morphs into a female figure at one with nature. This work stands out for its impressive sense of movement, capturing the idea of being 'rooted in' rather than 'apart from' nature, though the human figure still takes centre stage.

What emerges from this book, for which Lino Borg and Joseph Cassar, as well as the artist's daughter Glorian and nephew André (responsible for the photo reproductions), deserve much credit, is an appreciation of the artist's array of technical skills and his powerful design. The book is admirable for its comprehensiveness, even though I felt that one should have been more selective in the choice of works both on display at the exhibition and in the book. Who is to say that the late artist being honoured would have wanted all works gathered from his studio and elsewhere to be shown publicly?

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Mirella Mafriçi e Carmel Vassallo 2012.
Sguardi Mediterranei tra Italia e Levante (XVII-XIX secolo). Malta University Press. ISBN 978-99909-45-69-0.

This new publication focuses on the movement of people involved in maritime trade as it developed in the central Mediterranean particularly in the Kingdom of Naples. The period covered is mainly the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century which is normally viewed as a period of decline in the Mediterranean. There exists a shared view among Mediterranean historians, including those working on the Ottoman world, that during this epoch

the peoples of the Mediterranean had lost control of their sea and that this was taken over by what Ferdinand Braudel and others have termed the 'Northerners'. Yet, while the story is unfolding on Mediterranean shores, including the advent of colonialism, a city emerged—Naples—which seemed set to rival the city of Constantinople. Unfortunately, the ruling elite was afflicted by what psychologists today would term an inferiority complex and Naples' efforts to modernize by embracing the spirit of enlightenment, in the end, also brought about her downfall.

But until that happened, the city of Naples and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies were far more advanced than their Northern Italian counterparts and in certain maritime areas, as shown in this book, they were even ahead of France. For example, Neapolitan ships made use of the *maestro di nautica* before their French counterparts (p. 42).

Naples was one of the first countries in the Mediterranean and Europe to realize Russia's great potential but, unfortunately, she failed to take advantage of the new opportunities. Both the great powers, Britain and France, and even the emerging new power of the United States began to look at Constantinople in different ways. Of all the most important European powers, only Naples looked beyond the Golden Horn, but then failed to capitalize on it as succeeding administrations procrastinated in pursuing this adventurous diplomatic pathway.

The emergence of Russia in Mediterranean politics is the subject of two papers. The first one is by Salvatore Bottari, entitled 'Guerra e Diplomazia nel Mediterraneo: La Spedizione Navale Russa Contro l'Impero Ottomano (1769–1774)'. The second one is by Mirella

Mafrici, 'Diplomazia e Commerci tra il Regno di Napoli e l'Impero Russo nel Secolo XVIII'. While Bottari focuses on Russia's struggle to penetrate into the Mediterranean, and her successful venture, confirmed by the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774), permitting her to trade directly on the other side of the Bosphorus. Mafrici explains the shortcomings of the Neapolitan minister Bernardo Tanucci in not grabbing the golden opportunities that were arising in the Levant and explains how his staunch conservatism (p. 70) and delaying tactics had catastrophic diplomatic and trading consequences for Naples. In the latter years of the eighteenth century, Naples tried to make up by even appointing vice-consuls in Russia and getting favourable terms but, by then, other nations were the maritime protagonists in the Mediterranean.

Reading Michela D'Angelo, one realizes that Tanucci's procrastination, and his focus on the internal situation, resulted in a lost opportunity for Naples. D'Angelo also believes that the future for Naples lay in the strengthening of her commercial ties with Russia. The road was uphill as all commerce and trade had to pass through the Dardanelles which opened up after the peace of Küçük Kaynarca. The flourishing of this trade would have not only affirmed Naples' supremacy as the centre of the Mediterranean but also turned her maritime cities, in particular Naples and Messina, into an important Mediterranean entrepôt. It was only at the turn of the nineteenth century that the Kingdom of Naples made an extra effort to enter into this new trade with Russia. But by then, she had lost the commercial edge on other competitors.

According to Maria Sirago, another

contributor to this book, Tanucci encouraged the development of a 'maritime policy' for Naples but from her explanation it emerges that the Neapolitan minister did not really see the port of Naples as a hub for external trade but rather as a node of contact within the kingdom. Even when it came to foreign policies, he looked towards the Atlantic without realizing the new realities that were developing in the East. Furthermore, Tanucci failed to continue pursuing the avant-garde maritime policy of Carlo di Borbone when in 1751, Charles created the *Real Compagnia*. This was far in advance of other Italian states but Tanucci's short sightedness failed Naples.

This was not the sole instance where reforms in the maritime sector were not pursued to the full. In the second half of the eighteenth century, there were attempts to reform the maritime insurance system by having this business regulated by the state. The story and the effects of these measures are the subject of two papers in this book. The first one is by Paola Avallone 'Navigare Sicuri nel Mediterraneo. Assicurazioni maritime nel Regno di Napoli (XVII-XIX Secolo)'. The second one is by Maria Sirago, 'Gli Studi Nautici del Regno di Napoli'. Maria Sirago looks at these reforms within the wider picture of the development of nautical schools in Naples. The maritime schools are also studied by Raffaella Salvemini, in her article entitled 'Le Scuole Nautiche nell'Italia Pre-Unitaria'.

Salvemini rightly notes that the South was the most advanced in terms of education and maritime teaching compared to the rest of Italy. However, Tanucci saw the reforms in education in terms of a secularization mission, culminating in the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767. In

the short run, the expulsion of the Jesuits brought land and money to the state, thus partly solving its financial problems (p. 42) but in the long run the expulsion created a crisis in education and the maritime sector was the worst hit (p. 40). Naples had to endure an educational vacuum. One needs to remember that unlike the situation in its Northern Italian neighbours, education in Naples was in the hands of the church (p. 43).

Despite all these setbacks, the Kingdom of Naples set about creating professional schools for navigation. Nautical education was seen in an extremely altruistic and enlightened fashion; a means to teach poor children, in particular orphans, a trade. This differed strongly from Northern Italy, where nautical schools were and continued to be structured on the French model, and thus were mostly reserved for children coming from good families (p.38). Unfortunately, these types of vocational schools offering a trade to the disadvantaged got trapped in the internal political reforms wanted by Tanucci with disastrous consequences (p. 37).

As Naples allowed her chance to become a Mediterranean power slip away, the space was increasingly occupied by three powers, Britain, France and America, a process discussed in this book. Diletta d'Andrea rightly perceives in the French Republican expansion a stumbling block for the development of the Mediterranean. The French Republic and eventually Napoleon saw the Mediterranean as an opportunity for economic exploitation in favour of France through military domination. The English worked a different strategy. They applied what D'Andrea defines as a thalassocratic strategy (p. 102), that is the absolute and

unconditional support for a strong maritime policy. This explains its success, a strategy that would also be eventually taken up by the Americans.

The 'American factor' in the Mediterranean is studied in the paper 'Tra Napoli e il Levante nella prima metà dell'Ottocento: uno sguardo Americano' wherein the author, Rosa Maria Delli Quardi, explains the genesis of the American perception of the Mediterranean, through its travellers who offered a particular social and anthropological interpretation of life in the cities of Naples and Constantinople. The Protestantism of the American travellers heavily conditioned their views while already claiming a sort of superiority of American culture over Europe and even more, over the Mediterranean.

The situation for Naples was destined to become even worse with the Napoleonic Wars and the re-establishment of the old

regime. From a maritime point of view the customary changes of government ministers did not help matters. Succeeding ministers and monarchs were even less enthusiastic about the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies' maritime potential, with the result that progress in the area of commerce was hindered and the reforms initiated by Charles III could not be brought to fruition (p. 35). Politically and economically, the destiny of the Kingdom was sealed.

Victors and the successful tend to hog the limelight in historical writing often elbowing out secondary actors. This collection of papers goes some way towards remedying this as regards the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily in the early Modern and Contemporary Periods.

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