

1. Description

“...in 1886 Dr. Ernesto Manara stressed that while their language might be Arabic, the Maltese civilization and ethnic complexion remained Graeco-Roman or Graeco-Latin.” (5)

“...the earliest commentaries on Malta’s race: in 1536, Jean Quentin d’Autun (Chaplain of the Order of Saint John) described the Maltese as having “a Sicilian character with a mixture of African” and Malta’s women as “uncivilized” and not able to mix with other people or to go out without a veil “as if to see a woman is her the same as to violate her.” (5)

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:

Maltese also known as Melita (1) Maleth (1), a semetic language with romance language vocabulary part of the “Afro-Asiatic” language family.

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): mlt

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

“between latitude 35° 48’ 28” and 36° 05’ 00” north and longitude 14° 11’ 04” and 14° 34’ 37” ” (1)

1.4 Brief history:

Colonized by Phoenician society around 700 BC (1), “seventy-five percent of its word forms have evolved from spoken Phoenician, with the rest being of Romance origin. Maltese is, however, the only semitic tongue that is written in Latin script.” (1)
“... Malta, which fell to Rome in 218 BC, and remained under Roman administration for over a thousand years.” (1) “In AD 60... Apostle Paul, was caught in a fierce storm and wrecked on the northern shore of the main land... by all accounts his stay was influential for Malta was one of the first Roman colonies to become Christian.” (1)

“... the Arabs took control of Malta in AD 870, adding them to their geographic realm... The Language being spoken in Malta at the time would have sounded familiar to them, but much else in Malta had to be refashioned to their taste.” (1)

“The invading forces of Roger the Norman arrived from Sicily in 1090 and ended Arab rule, but the Moslem influence remained strong. As late as the middle of the thirteenth century Moslems were still in the majority and controlled most of Malta’s wealth but by late in that century... Malta was falling increasingly under the influence of Europe.” (1)

“In 1530, the Maltese Islands were ceded by the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V of Spain, to the Knights Hospitallers of Saint John of Jerusalem.” (1)

“... the Turks made frequent raids on the Maltese Islands in the 1550’ s.” (1)

“The Knights’ long tenure came to an end in 1798... the order surrendered to the forces of Napoleon... the occupation by the French from 1798 to 1800 eventually provoked revolt by the Maltese... quick to seize the advantage, British naval commanders dispatched a fleet of vessels to the island.. so it was that the British ended up in control of Malta.” (1)

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

“In September 1809... Galt had noted ‘In speaking of national peculiarities, my observations chiefly refer to the practices and customs of the common people. There is but little difference between the genteel manners of one Christian nation and those of another, all well-educated Europeans having now a great similarity in their domestic habits.’ 2:407)

1.6 Ecology (natural environment): “... the human inventiveness that has transformed the Maltese landscape over millennia in order to coax sustenance from the poor soils and to make the most of scarce water supplies.” (1)

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density 2,792 people/mile (1) area of 94.9 square miles (1)

“In 1530, when the Order arrived in Malta, the total local population was of about 20,000 souls.” (3:46)

“... During this period (The Modern Period 1530-1880) the inhabitants of Malta settled more inland: 1. The Maltese Islands were frequently threatened by pirate sea raids, and 2. The larger villages offered besides more safety, more employment opportunities.” (3:46)

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

“ In September 1809 the Scottish visitor John Galt ...’ The habit of the Maltese are singularly frugal: a little garlick, or fruit, with a small piece of bread, is their common repast.” (1)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

“Breithaupt adds: ‘There are only a few tame animals such as small cattle, the reason being that there is lack of fodder on this island. Consequently, one cannot keep many animals.’ (2)

“Wrighting in November 1800 Aeneas Anderson ···The Maltese are very expert both with the net and the line, as it appears from the plenty as well as variety of fish with which the markets abound.” (2)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Not Found

2.4 Food storage: Not Found

2.5 Sexual division of production:

“Eighteenth-century records refer to women who worked in fields, or worked as washerwomen, dress-makers, pastizzi-sellers, bakers or coffee vendors or ran retail outlets. Village women sold manure to farmers.” (4)

2.6 Land tenure:

“Vivant Denon in 1778··· Malta the farmer can only force from the soil a little corn and cotton.” (2)

“Breithaupt summed up in 1624··· ‘the inhabitants and farmers of the island use this kind of rocky soil and stony landscape and try to make it fertile and productive everywhere; they first collect the soil from the streets or from various other places rich in this soil or transport it from neighbouring areas, then they spread it on the rock at a height of a quarter of a yardstick. The soil underneath this rock is rather light and the rock gets somewhat softened. Later, roots start to spring out comfortably and out of the sown seeds there spring out 15 or 16 different types of beautiful fruits. All the fields are sown twice a year.’ (2:456).

2.7 Ceramics: Not Found

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: Not Found

2.9 Food taboos: Not Found

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? Not Found

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

1-4 Births: 36.31 months, 5-8 Births: 31.45 months, 9+ Births 24.76 months (5)

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Female, 22 (1)

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: Dowry consisting of money or household goods (4).

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

“Whereas mothers are continually involved with rearing of their children fatherhood gets its validation largely in connection with providing material needs or a family... Fathers are not much involved in rearing children before they are 4 or so, and even then, they are more likely to be involved with sons than with daughters.” (6)

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

“As homosexuality is a taboo subject in Maltese culture, it receives little public discussion... the Maltese are significantly more condemnatory of homosexuality than Europeans generally. “ (6)

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

“Marriage is viewed as an opportunity for two groups of related people to establish ties between each other, and there are many status considerations that come into play with each side interested in obtaining prestige.” (6)

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized? Not Found

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows") Not Found

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? Not Found

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

Prostitution was high (though outlawed) "the illegitimacy rate in the countryside was negligible but in Valletta it rose to a towering 29 percent." (4:114)

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin) Not Found

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

"Wignacourt observed ... described Maltese women as naïve, unsophisticated, simple, and inexperienced, and found that the treatment of women in Malta demonstrated a "Semitic influence, with its jealousy, repression, and notions of proprietorship" which he ascribed to "an Asiatic and perhaps Mongolian origin" (5)

"... a belief in the inherent weakness of females and their innate tendency to bring shame onto men. That it is the duty of society to protect status and reputations by holding females to higher levels of propriety than males..." (6)

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring
Not Found

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? Not Found

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females .62 (7)

4.22 Evidence for couvades Not Found

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older) Not Found

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? Not Found

4.24 Joking relationships? Not Found

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations

“Embedded in the Malese kinship system are no lineages, no patrilineages, no matrilineages, no ambilineages... Malta’s lack of lineages helps to explain its absence of blood feuds such as occur in some societies in the region.” (6)

“... in Malta, the stress is matrilateral. In other words, most Maltese have more frequent interactions and stronger affective bonding with relatives through their mothers than through their fathers.” (6)

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

“...cousin marriages are not socially preferred; in fact, there is a taboo against maltese marrying cousins closer than the third degree.” (6)

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

“Even a significant proportion of couples who are wed in a civil ceremony eventually choose to have a religious wedding.” (6)

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

“By religious tradition and by civil code until 1993, a wife was obliged to obey her husband, change her surname to his upon marriage, and follow him where he wished to reside.” (6)

“... Maltese children, they inherit their fathers’ surnames. They also often inherit their fathers’ nicknames, a practice with parallels in many other parts of the Mediterranean... These nicknames in some parts of Malta are used as widely as surnames.” (6)

“ Maltese parents typically select the names for their own children. It often happens that a first boy is named after his father and father’s father.” (6)

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: Not Found

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: Not Found

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: Not Found

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

Because of trading patterns were in constant contact with Sicily, Spain, Italy and the Islamic Nations. (6)

4.18 Cannibalism? Not Found

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): Not Found

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): wealth and status based classes (4)

“... status and social standing have long been defined less in individualistic ways than in terms of families. Notions of shame, saving face, and family honor began to take root in the Maltese islands from an early time and doubtlessly were already in place during Muslim domination.” (6)

5.4 Post marital residence:

“Newly wed Maltese couples typically prefer to establish households of their own. Considering that distances are short in Malta... it tends more often to be located near the family of the wife than that of the husband, although it is sometimes near the homes in which both were reared.” (6)

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

“Malta is characterized by bilateral kindreds rather than a lineage system; and in lieu of engaging in kinship feuds, Maltese tend to retaliate against their enemies and competitors in other ways, including gossip. Gossip is an important means of social control that can affect both individual reputations and family honor.” (6)

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex): Not Found

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: Not Found

5.8 Village and house organization:

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): Not Found

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? "All house members slept in one communal bed... farmers slept on straw with sacks over it." (4)

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

"Persons who were rich, well-connected, and, most importantly, deferent to the Order could apply for and obtain noble titles." (4:39)

"Slaves were treated like animals with female slaves being the lowliest beings in Malta. Slaves were considered as non-persons: "The incapacities of slaves were very numerous they could not gather in crowds; they could not wear clother in the manner of Chrisitans; ... they could not acquire ships, sell wine, keep shops, buy or sell." (4:67)

5.12 Trade:

"The cotton trade created important trading networks and subsidiary markets. In 1771 the Maltese were selling cloth, paper, and other products at the market in El Puerto de Santa Maria in Spain." (4:37)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

"A person's smell was a sign of his social standing. If he smelt of expensive perfumes , it was a sign he was privlidged." (4:13)

"Clothes tended to enhance social distinction." (4:13)

"Poverty was rife and the Maltese were slaves in their own country. " (4:34)

" Nobles lived in palatial dwellings, most often in towns, though occasionally in fortified palaces located away from settlements. The size and sophistication of homes were related to the status of their inhabitants." (6)

"At one extreme, nobles were buried in marble tombs bearing their coats of honor in chapels whose construction their families had commissioned. Mdina's residents of somewhat lower status were buried in chambered graces under the floor pavement of the Cathedral, while the poorest of her residents were simply laid to rest in common graves." (6)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR: Not Found

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Not Found

6.2 Stimulants: Not Found

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

"... as Cockburn put it in May 1811, large vaulted cemetery with 365 graves, all numbered and flagged over in the church of S. Publius; in Floriana. Each grave contains ten bodies; they are arranged for the reception of the poorer classes. One is

opened every day in succession, and all the middle and lower are buried here. They are not allowed coffins, but dressed in their best clothes, and are thus deposited bodies, whether somewhat perfect or all bones, are then taken up and thrown into a large vault; there I saw millions of bones.’ (2:410)

“It sometimes happens that when a child is 1 year old, he or she is given a little party. Occasionally at such a party, adults may humor themselves by placing a few objects associated with different occupations within a child’s reach – maybe six or eight – while encouraging the child to choose one. Although for fun, this is considered symbolic of the type of occupation the child is likely to choose in life.” (6)

“Confirmation is usually considered a little more important to children than the first Holy Communion... a child typically gets an additional godparent... a party is usually held.” (6)

“Many Maltese consider it almost taboo to discuss death with a person on the verge of dying. Some people are even reluctant to bring in a priest under these circumstances because they fear the effect that it may have on a person close to death. Eventually, however, the priest is likely to be summoned because virtually all Maltese believe that if people die without final confession, this may deprive them of a chance to rid themselves of sin and eventually get to heaven.” (6)

6.4 Other rituals:

“... Aeneas Anderson in December 1800 wrote ‘to relate the proceedings of their religious solemnities: the processions by day and the illuminations by night, with the splendid fire-works that enlivened the pious joy of their sacred anniversaries’ to describe their fastings and acts of penitence, and represent the groups of devotees, who, at certain seasons, were seen dragging their voluntary chains, and inflicting voluntary punishments, in order to obtain remission of their sins, would be little more than an history of those superstitions which Popery, in its present enlightened state has ceased to encourage.” (2:411)

“on 3 May 1811 Cockburn ... ‘ the bells never cease ringing here, night nor day; the deep full sound of St John’s is very fine. There are more saint days observed here than any where in Europe.” (2:412)

“The Protestant Joseph Beldam was especially critical in late 1845 of the effects of Catholicism: ‘There is, probably, no community under the sun more completely priest-ridden than the Maltese.’ (2:413)

“The first sure evidence of a Pauline Cult in Malta dates from 1299 when the dedication of the cathedral in Mdina to St Paul is recorded.” existence of the medieval cult of Pauline is still discussed but “Although it had existed before its

specific revival in the first decades of the seventeenth century, the Pauline Cult in Malta had a direct connection with the counter-reformation programme of the Catholic Church...” (2416)

6.5 Myths (Creation): Catholic

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

“Court proceedings refer to the playing of bowls (*bocci*) in public spaces. There was a bowling pitch under the bastions near windmills in Valletta. Bowling eventually lost favour as a pastime and, by 1764, bowling pitches were abandoned in a derelict state.” (4)

“Violence had always been a source of entertainment for the crowds and public executions were major crowd-pullers. The execution and torture of the slaves who had taken in the great conspiracy of 1749 attracted huge masses.” (4)

“The knights used to give theatrical performances. They were fond of musical plays in the Neapolitan style. Before the Manoel Theatre was built, the knights staged theatrical representations in the squares of the principal cities, including many in Valetta.” (4)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: Not Found

6.8 Missionary effect: None

6.9 RCR revival: None

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Not Found

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? Not Found

6.12 Is there teknonymy? Not Found

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) Catholicism “Visitors also observed how the government of the Order ... played an important factor in establishing deeper roots for Christianity.” (2:409)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: Not Found

7.2 Piercings: Not Found

7.3 Haircut:

“Denon in 1778... ‘They have the custom of shaving themselves (upper lips) like the men.’ (2:552)

“The law bound slaves to keep a ridiculous hairstyle. They had to shave their hair off, save for a mandarin-stye lock of hair, known as a bisbusa.” (4:67)

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

“Johann Friedrich Breithaupt, who spent some weeks in Malta in the spring of 1624, noted that... ‘In general, when these women or girls leave their houses and go out into the open streets, they cover their faces. They wear long, black and finely pleated cloaks under which they gracefully cover their well-shaped bodies with specially charming colourful clothes. Otherwise, during the warm season and on account of the strong heat, they like to wear a long linen shirt which they tie up under their breasts over which shirt they then wear a woolen mantle: this is called *Barnuco* in the African language.’ (2:522)

“In the summer of 1675 the young Prussian adventurer Friedrich von der Groben ... In private the younger ladies and girls wore small waistcoats which left the breasts uncovered and over which they wore a more or less transparent piece of cloth. This meant that one could see the breast and half the body.” (2:522)

“In 1678... German Patrician Adam Ebert conversed ... It was east, he was told to recognize Maltese ladies abroad as they had a tendency to over-perfume themselves with all types of strange spices, herbs, and perfumes.” (2:526)

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Not Found

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: Yes see 7.5

7.8 Missionary effect: None

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: Not Found

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system: Not Found

8.2 Sororate, levirate: Not Found

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): Not Found

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

“Dishes where one could place a pot to stew for a long period are especially common and they readily lend themselves to preparation in the traditional Maltese kitchen equipped with a *fuklar* or the older open clay hearth called a *kenur*, ventilated through a smoke hole. While many of these kitchens are located in garages or back yards, some are tiny indoor cubicles with running water and perhaps some type of refrigeration. Still others are large enough for complete preparations and dining. Since families relying solely on such traditional kitchens lack an oven, dishes requiring baking are delivered to local commercial bakers. Even many families with both types of kitchens reserve their modern kitchens largely as places to be of and do most of their cooking in their traditional kitchen.” (6)

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