MALTESE HISTORY

D. The Roman Inquisition in Malta
1. Why did the Roman Inquisition come to Malta?
Before the coming of the Order Malta had an old medieval Inquisition tribunal under the authority of the Bishop of Palermo. The Inquisition Tribunal was set up in Malta as a separate court from that of the Bishop in 1574. This came about almost by incident. Grandmaster La Cassière wanted the advice of Pope Gregory XIII over a quarrel between him and Bishop Royas. The Pope sent Pietro Dusina as mediator, apostolic visitor and inquisitor in Malta. He stayed here for only nine months, during which time he visited the parishes and set up the Inquisitor’s Court at Birgu.

2. Who were the Inquisitors?
The Medieval Inquisition was set up in 1184 against heretics. The Spanish Inquisition was set up by the King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella in 1478 to find out Spanish Jews or Muslims who practiced their religion secretly in Spain. The Roman Inquisition (or Holy Office) was set up by Pope Paul III to fight the spread of Protestantism in Catholic countries. The Roman or Papal Inquisition was given power over all aspects of life and government. The Inquisitor acted against heresy, witchcraft, sorcery, blasphemy (swearing), conversion to Protestantism or to Islam, bigamy (having more than one wife or husband) and reading prohibited books. Prohibited books were usually brought to Malta by foreign Protestants. Witchcraft and sorcery was most commonly practiced by the hundreds of Muslim slaves in Malta. When the Inquisition started to decline in the 18th century, the commonest cases dealt with were blasphemy, bigamy and conversion to Islam.

The Inquisitor as Papal Legate (or Papal Ambassador) had great power in Malta. When he had quarrels with the Grandmaster or with the Bishop, it was usually the Inquisitor who came out victorious. Most Inquisitors of Malta were able and ambitious clergymen. Some of them later became Cardinals and two of were even elected Popes (as Alexander VII in 1655 and as Innocent XII in 1687).

3. The Inquisitor’s Palaces at Vittoriosa and Girgenti
The Inquisitor’s Palace at Vittoriosa is one of the very few surviving courts of its kind in Europe and South America. Lately the building was restored and opened for visitors as an Inquisition Museum. Until 1571 the Inquisitor’s Palace had been used as the seat of the Castellania (Law Courts) of the Order. That building was left empty when the Knights moved to Valletta until in 1574 it was handed over to Mgr. Dusina as the first Inquisitor in Malta.

In the 17th and 18th centuries some of the Inquisitors made additions and alterations to the original building of the Vittoriosa Palace in order to make it more comfortable as a residence, a court and a prison of the Inquisition. One other Inquisitor built his summer residence palace at the Girgenti Palace (limits of Siggiewi). Today this same building serves as a summer residence for the Prime Minister.

4. How did the Inquisition in Malta come to an end?
The Inquisition in Malta came to a sudden end when Napoleon Bonaparte took over the islands in June 1798. The Inquisitor was given 48 hours to leave Malta and the Tribunal was closed down. The archives of the Inquisition were taken over by the Bishop’s Curia. Today these archives are kept at the Cathedral Museum at Mdina. These archives contain valuable primary sources for the historian about the workings of the Malta Inquisition Tribunal and what went on inside its prisons.
1. When was the Inquisition officially set up as a separate Court in Malta? ____________ (1)

2. (a) Who was the first Inquisitor for Malta? ___________________________________________ (1)

   (b) Why did he come to Malta in the first place?
   __________________________________________________________________________ (1)

3. By which other name was the Roman Inquisition also known: (Holy Grail, Holy Office, Holy See). (1)

4. In what way was the Spanish Inquisition different from the Roman Inquisition?
   ____________________________________________________________________________  (2)

   ____________________________________________________________________________  (2)

5. The Roman Inquisition was set up in ____________ by Pope ________________ to fight
   Against the spread of ______________________ in Catholic countries? (3)

   ____________________________________________________________________________

6. Mention three examples of misdeeds which were reported to the Inquisitor’s Court.
   ____________________________________________________________________________ (3)

7. ’Most of the Inquisitors were very intelligent and ambitious churchmen.’ Quote evidence from the text to prove this point.
   ____________________________________________________________________________ (2)

   ____________________________________________________________________________ (2)

8. Name the two buildings that were used by the Malta Inquisition. State how these are used today.
   (a) ____________________________________________________________________________ (2)

   (b) ____________________________________________________________________________ (2)

9. When and how did the Malta Inquisition Tribunal come to an end?
   ____________________________________________________________________________ (2)

10. (a) Where can one still find most of the documents of the Malta Inquisition?
    ____________________________________________________________________________ (1)

    (b) Why are these documents very important for the social historian?
    ____________________________________________________________________________ (1)

(Total marks = 20)
Unit D.2 - Life in the Inquisition Prisons

1. Who was the prison warden of the Inquisitor?
The prison warden had to do the following jobs:

- visit the prisoners every morning and evening, to take them food and water rations.
- buy things with money they gave him.
- take them to their sentence or to hear Mass.
- open and close the main door of the Palace.
- take care of the torture instruments (*corda* and *cavalletto*)
- keep the keys of the cells in a safe place.
- make sure prisoners did not escape.

As an officer of the Holy Office the prison warden had to lead an exemplary life and carry out his job dutifully. Those who did so were given a pension on their retirement. Warden were fired when caught quarreling, gambling, drinking, practicing magic, stealing money from prisoners or for having sex with the female prisoners.

2. How was life in the Inquisitor’s prison?
There were two prison sections: one for detention (*ad custodiam*) before a trial and one for punishment (*ad poenam*) after a sentence. In both cases prisoners were kept in separate cells.

Prison sentences were mostly of short duration – from a few days to a few years. In the 1630s Inquisitor Fabio Chigi had to slow down the sentencing process because the cells were so full that they could not host other prisoners. Life in the prisons was not as desperate as in most civil prisons of the time. In civil prisons, women and children were put together with adult criminals in cells with no beds or sewers. In the Inquisitor’s prisons, prisoners could receive presents and food from relatives and friends. There was no fixed schedules for eating. They could make use of a candle at night and have beds with straw mattresses and blankets. Some had toilet facilities in their cell, others were taken by the warden to the toilet pit. Prisoners were kept in good health by regular visits by a doctor. Sick prisoners or taking to hospital. The Inquisitor took care also of the spiritual needs of the prisoners - they could confess in their own cell, were taught catechism and attend Mass.

Prisoners usually used their free time to decorate the walls of their cells with all sorts of graffiti (e.g. ships, religious motifs, symbols, dates, initials. Gambling, singing and playing music were other common pastimes.

Attempts at escape were most common at night. One prisoner Pietro Licini escaped eight times in 1697-98, once by removing a stone from the wall of his cell that led to one of the streets. Others tried to commit suicide by poison o hanging. On leaving the prison, prisoners had to take an oath not to reveal anything they had seen or heard in the prisons.

3. Conclusion
The contribution of the Inquisition Tribunal was to introduce the concept of the prisoners’ reform whereby prisoners were made to ‘pay’ for their misdeeds. The emphasis of most Inquisitors was for the ‘reformation’ of the prisoner not on his ‘elimination’ (execution) as was usually the case in the civil prisons of the time.
1. List **three** important responsibilities of the prison warden of the Inquisition Tribunal in Malta.

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

(3)

2. Which were the **two** main torture instruments used by the Malta Inquisition?

___________________________________________________________________________

(2)

3. How was the prison quarter divided into two sections?

(a) ______________________________________________________________

(b) ____________________________________________________________

(2)

4. Give **three** examples to show how prisoners were better treated by the Malta Inquisition than by other government prisons of the time.

(a) ____________________________________________________________

(b) ____________________________________________________________

(2)

5. How did the prisoners spend their ample free time? Mention **four** examples.

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

(2)

6. ‘The upkeep of the prisons was a costly business for the Malta Inquisitors.’ Quote one instance from the text to prove this point.

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

(1)

7. Mention **one** good contribution of the Inquisition Tribunal on the development of justice in Europe.

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

(1)

8. From the case studies described in Unit 5.3, mention **one** major and **two** minor sentences given by the Malta Inquisitors to the Maltese.

(a) major sentence: _________________________________________________

(1)

(b) minor sentence: ________________________________________________

(1)

9. Underline **four** misdeeds were punished by the Inquisition Tribunal from the following: (witchcraft, reading prohibited books, false testimony, bank robbery, taking part in a revolt, murder, carrying weapons).
Some case studies of sentences given by the Malta Inquisition Tribunal

1. **Carlo Vella**, prison warden, in 1670 was dismissed from his job for having stabbed Antonio Ravè to whom Vella was in debt.
2. **Antonio Bellia**, prison warden, in 1622 asked a Muslim slave to keep his money, which he later stolen.
3. **Lazzaro Seichel**, prison warden, in 1705 was found guilty of having had sexual relations with a female prisoner and was condemned for 5 years on the Order’s galleys.
4. **Giovanni Maria Zammit**, in 1725 escaped from his cell while the warden was fetching water from the well in the courtyard. He disguised himself as a beggar but was caught one month later.
5. **Salvatore Cauchi** from Zebbug was imprisoned for 1 day for insulting some Church dignitaries.
6. Two Greeks (**Gioanne** and **Costantino**) were found guilty of converting to Islam. They were not sent to the galleys because they were ‘disabled’ and were imprisoned for 3 and 1½ years respectively instead.
7. **Sulpita de Lango**, in 1618 was imprisoned for 8 years because of sorcery.
8. **Blasio Visei**, a Genoese buonavoglia, was accused of false testimony and sentenced to row on the galleys for 2 years.
9. **Minichella Pulis** was confined to Valletta and the Three Cities.
10. **Giacomo di Matteo** could not leave Malta for 3 years.
11. **Pietro Critodolus** was confined to the Capuchin’s Convent in Rabat, Gozo.
12. **Margarita Curt** could not leave her house.
13. The slave **Mahometto** was confined to the Slaves’ Prison.

In 1609 the Inquisition ordered the burning of a number of prohibited books at a bonfire set in Vittoriosa Square.

10. (a) Why were these books burnt?

    ________________________________________________________________

    ________________________________________________________________ (1)

10. (b) Why were they burned in a public square?

    ________________________________________________________________

    ________________________________________________________________ (1)

10. (c) How did these books end up in Malta?

    ________________________________________________________________

    ________________________________________________________________ (1)

(Total marks 20)
Unit D.5 - Source Question on the Roman Inquisition in Malta

Source 3. Rakkomandazzjoni mibgħuta lill-Inkwiziżtur Antonio Ortensio (1598-1600) mis-Santu Uffiċċju f’Ruma, fit-28 t’April, 1600.


Mill-Arkivji tal-Ikwizizzjoni ta’ Malta, Arkivji tal-Katidral, Mdina.


Sentenza mogħtija mit-Tribunal tal-Ikwizizzjoni, il-Birgu, fl-20 ta’ Lulju 1607.

Inkwizittur Leonetto della Corbara (1608-1608)

1. Who is the recipient of source 3? How do you know? ____________________________________________ (2)
2. Who is the recipient of source 4? How do you know? ____________________________________________ (2)
3. Use source 3 as your evidence to find how is the Inquisitor to deal with the Knights. ____________________________________________ (2)
4. What were the buonavoglia mentioned in line 2 of source 3? ____________________________________________ (2)
5. How is the Inquisitor instructed to deal with the buonavoglia? ____________________________________________ (2)
6. What impression do you get about the Malta Inquisition after reading source 3? ____________________________________________ (2)
7. Who was Ġakbu Bosio, mentioned in source 4? ____________________________________________ (2)
8. What corporal and spiritual punishment was he given for breaking the rules of the Inquisition? ____________________________________________ (2)
9. What impression do you get about the Malta Inquisition after reading source 4? ____________________________________________ (2)

(Total: 20 marks)
Unit D.4 - Source Question on the Spanish Inquisition

Source 1

Source 2. Every aspect of life under the Spanish Inquisition:

"The said Inquisitors should order that [heretics and apostates] cannot hold public offices, nor benefices, that they cannot be attorneys, not landlords, nor druggists, nor spice merchants, nor doctors, nor surgeons, nor bloodletters, nor brokers. And they cannot wear gold or silver or coral or pearls or any such thing, nor precious stones, nor wear any sort of silk or camlet… and that they cannot ride horses or bear arms for the whole of their lives on penalty of being guilty of relapsing [into their heresy]."

Source: Instructions issued for the operation of the Inquisition by the first Inquisitor-General Tomas de Torquemada, Seville, 1484

Source 3. On the use of judicial torture by the Spanish Inquisition:

"God give me strength to burst rather than tell a lie. And with this he ordered was ordered to enter the torture chamber and he went in with the torture who was ordered to strip him. And standing naked in the flesh… he was again urged to take steps so that the torture did not proceed. And he said: That he had told the truth and that God would not desire him to bear witness against anyone. At this his arms were tied loosely and he was urged to tell the truth. And he replied: seeing that he was in this state, he wanted to tell the truth… And urged to tell the truth, he said: that he had nothing more to say. And with that he was ordered back into the potro and entered with the torturer, and was urged to tell the truth. He was given one turn of the rope and he said: 'Ay!, forgive me Lord, let this be a payment for my abominations.' Urged to say the truth he was given another turn of the rope, and he gave a huge shout: 'Ay! Ay! Ay! And he said: that it was true that his little sister Anica kept the law that God gave to Moses, and that he had told the truth, and that the Inquisitors should not revenge themselves on him. And he said all this crying, and was urged to tell the truth, and was given a third turn of the rope, and he shouted again: God, Lord of Israel I am being forced to lie. Lord the One God take pity on me! Woe is me! How said to have to lie. And then he said that he had already told the truth and he filled the air with his complaints"

Source: From the records of the Inquisitorial Trial of Luis de Carvajal, Mexico City, 1596
1. Is Source 1 primary or secondary? Explain your answer.
________________________________________________________________________ (2)

2. Are sources 2 and 3 primary or secondary? State why?
________________________________________________________________________ (2)

3. What is the subject matter of source 1?
________________________________________________________________________ (2)

4. What does source 1 say about Inquisition procedures?
________________________________________________________________________ (2)

5. Why do you think Inquisitors ordered heretics to follow the orders mentioned in source 2?
________________________________________________________________________ (3)

6. How reliable do you find source 2, when studying about the Inquisition? Explain your answer.
________________________________________________________________________ (1,2)

7. Read carefully source 3. Why did the trial of Luis de Caravajal took place in Mexico?
________________________________________________________________________ (2)

8. Name two other sources you would refer to when studying about the Inquisition?
________________________________________________________________________ (2)

9. Tick under the appropriate column:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source 2</th>
<th>Source 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a  Some of the accused would prefer to suffer torture than lie.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b  Heretics and apostates should follow the orders of the Inquisition.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c  Heretics and apostates had to lead a poor life.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d  The Inquisition gave multiple chances to the accused to reveal the truth.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In-Set Working Group, September 2009

(Total Marks 20)
Source 5. *Itra tal-Kongregazzjoni tas-Sant’Uffizzju (Ruma) ill-Inkwizitur Fabio della Lagonessa, 14 ta’ Diċembru 1618.*

‘Waqt li qed naraw il-kopji tas-sentenzi li jintbaghtu lil din il-Kongregazzjoni tas-Sant’Uffizzju, 


Minkejja dan, Salvu raġa’ ntafa’ fuq xini tal-furbani, u nqabad mit-Torok innifishom f’iżawi ta’ Barberija. Hemm, għal darb’oħra, kif stqarr hu nnifsu, halla minn nisranija, u raġa qaleb mawmettan. Hu libes ta’ mawmettan, kiel dejjem dak li sab mingħajr ma ħaseb x’ġurnata kienet, u ghex ta’ furban kontra l-insara.

Salvu Prat baqa’ seijer hekk sakemm inqabad mix-xwieni tal-Ordni Ġerosolmitani. Mgħobbi b’din il-ħtija u b’oħrajn kbar u żgħar, li l-ġudizzju tagħhom jaqa’ f’idejn is-Sant’Uffizzju, qiegħed jiġi mogħti f’idejn l-Ikwizitur.

Għalhekk, il-prokuratur fiskali, li qed iwassal din id-denunzja, jitlob biex dan Salvu jiġi kkastigat skont il-liġijiet tal-Knisja.

Jekk dan li ntaqal ma jinħass biżżejjed biex jipprova l-ħtija, jew jekk hu jċiċħad il-fatt, l-imsemmi Salvu għandu jiġi mistħarreġ dwar l-intenzjoni, u jekk ikun hemm bżonn jingħata t-tortura ħallli l-verità toħroġ iżjed minn fommu stess.’

**L-awtur tal-ktieb Patri Alessandru Bonni jikkonkludi dan fuq il-każ:**


(Arkivju tal-Inkwizizzjoni ta’ Malta, Mdina, *Processi*, 41A, ff 51r-52r.)
Unit D.6 - The Roman Inquisition in Malta

Read carefully the following essay titles and answer any ONE in about 200 to 300 words. Essays carry 20 marks each.

PAPER 2A

On the Inquisition Tribunal in Malta

1. Was the establishment of the Inquisition really necessary? How did such establishment come about?

2. What was the Inquisition and what was its role in Malta under the Knights? (Annual Paper, 2008)

PAPER 2B

On the Inquisition Tribunal in Malta

1. Discuss the Tribunal of the Inquisition in Malta under these headings:
   (a) its introduction
   (b) its organisation
   (c) the cases it usually dealt with
   (d) its benefits (if any) to the Maltese

(SEC 1997) (Marks: 5,5,5,5)