

Narrative report

I would like to thank Drexel's Office of International Programs for awarding me a travel grant that enabled my participation at the "2nd Island Dynamics" conference which took place between May 11-15 in Malta. The first day of the conference was devoted to a coach tour and conference dinner, activities that helped us adjust and also socialize with colleagues who work on several islands, such as New Zealand, Hawaii, Shetland, Orkney, Corsica, Sicily, Milos and St. Mauritius. Parallel sessions and keynote speeches were held at Hotel Phoenicia during the days that followed.

This was my second professional visit to the island of Malta --so I gained a better insight to the rich and dynamic history of that island-- but it was the first time I attended an "Island Dynamics" meeting - -a deeply rewarding experience indeed. Though my research is more humanities oriented, due to my professional background and studies in ethnomusicology, folklore and cultural anthropology, the conference provided me with the opportunity to attend interdisciplinary sessions and therefore meet with and listen to scholars who apply a comparative approach and analyze not only the cultural but also economic and environmental dynamics of island communities worldwide, addressing how island identities develop alongside both their cultures and economies.

The afore-mentioned topics are areas I am engaged with in my research and teaching, which focuses mostly on the Greek island of Crete. In particular, my presentation focused on the role of cultural expression in the formation of national and local identities, through music and dance performances that take place both on the mountains and the plains of "my" Mediterranean island. A Maltese music performance we attended as part of the conference but also several other related presentations on Mediterranean music topics broadened my horizons as I was introduced to works of specialists who share similar interests but work and reside in various places. I was particularly glad that there was a strong presence of the American Folklore Society-Mediterranean Studies Section to which I am a member of but had never attended its meetings in the past.

On a personal note, I was particularly excited to meet in person with Professor Baldacchino, who teaches at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) but also holds a visiting position at the University of Malta. More importantly, I was intrigued by his keynote speech under the inspiring title "Visioning the Archipelago: Setting for an Incontinent Meta-geography" where he explained how Odyssey is the first archipelagic narrative. Dr. Baldacchino called for pansilandness, urging us all to re-center the visioning of islands by looking at them from the sea, a perspective that essentially decentralizes them and which emphasizes, once more, the fact that... no island is an... island!

Pictures

1) Members of the AFSMSS: Nadia Inserra, Marcello Sorce Keller, Luisa Del Giudice, Maria Hnaraki, Giovanna Iacovazzi.



2) With Professor Michael Jones (Department of Geography, Trondheim-Norway)



3) With Professor Henry Glassie (College Professor Emeritus of Folklore, Indiana University)



4) With David Bade (University of Auckland in New Zealand) and Konstantina Panagiotaki (University of Crete in Rethymno)



5) Lunch with several conference attendees (from England, New Zealand, Mauritius and Greece)



6) Maltese musicians

