





Under Napoleon, the nobility was abolished, lock stock, and barrel and most patents of the nobility were burned.

Along came the British, who discovered they possessed a colony with its indigenous European nobility, which perplexed them. The British set up a Royal Commission to investigate this conundrum, which led to a report in 1878 institutionalizing the Maltese Nobility.

Later titles were created by reigning Popes and foreign monarchs, both reigning and ex-regnant, who legally held a *fons honorum*- the right to create titles.

These later titles do not form part of the Maltese nobility which was set up by the 1878 commission, but they certainly form part of the Nobility in Malta. The difference is very subtle.



Two Maltese nobles are currently on their way to sainthood -the blessed Adeodata Pisani, who was in her own right Baroness of Frigenuini, and the reverend Monsignor Giuseppe De Piro.



Noble titles can be inherited in different ways. There is no Salic law in Malta, which insists on male transmission. Indeed, some titles can be inherited by nomination. Maltese titles never seem to become extinct. Being an intrepid nation, the Maltese have always invented some new manner in which a title can be inherited. A spinoff of this, is that the nobility has been a very strong source of heraldry. Therefore, we find coats of arms on buildings, in churches, on monuments, and in documents.

The Maltese nobility was certainly a very important part of our history, and it has contributed immensely to our culture. Maltese nobles led the popular uprising against the French, they were prominent in medicine, law, politics, and the Church, and they were at the forefront in the fight for the rights of the Maltese people.

The *Ġieħ ir-Repubblika* Act of 1975 removed the official state recognition of titles. The titles can still be freely used in Malta, but they are not recognized by the state. They also sometimes appear in official notices published in the Malta Government Gazette.