

Worksheet S6.4.4

To discover the most important buildings of the Knights which characterize the city of Valletta.

IMPORTANT BUILDINGS IN THE CITY OF VALLETTA

(notes by Mario Debono and George Calleja)

The Knights took the responsibility to build and decorate the city of Valletta in the best possible way they could. In Valletta, they built the most important palaces and churches. Among these buildings are the Grandmaster's Palace, the Auberges of the Knights, the Co-Cathedral of St. John and the Sacra Infermeria.

The Grandmaster's Palace



The Grandmaster's Palace can be found in the middle of Valletta. It has a very long façade with two main front doors and the spaces between its windows are not all the same. The corners, similar to the main buildings of Cassar in Valletta, are bulky with very deep horizontal signs on them. The rooms are very luxurious, large, with high ceilings and filled with paintings of battles at sea and of the Great Siege. The two important halls in the Grandmaster's Palace are the Palace Armoury of the Knights and the Tapestry Hall where the walls are covered with the most beautiful tapestries.

The Auberges of the Knights

Since the Knights of St. John came from different countries, with diverse languages and customs, it made more sense to have their own Auberge with their own leader. The auberge was a large palace where the knights of one particular language would be staying. There they would eat, rest and sleep. Every language had its own duties, including defending its part of the bastions. In total



eight auberges have been built in Valletta. Ġormu Cassar designed the plan of seven of them. The picture shows the **Auberge d'Aragon**, which is the only one that is still almost completely the same as the way Cassar designed it. The Auberge de Provence, the Auberge of Italy and the Auberge de Castille have undergone some changes or were constructed again by the same Knights in the following years. Whilst the Auberges of Germany, Auvergne and France have been destroyed during the British period (the last two during the Second World War) and another building was constructed in their place. The eighth auberge is the Auberge de Baviere. This was built after the others and it is still standing today.

The Co-Cathedral of St. John



The Co-Cathedral of St. John was built to serve as the Conventual Church for the Order of St. John. This church was built on a plan in the shape of a cross and on the sides it has chapels for all the languages of the Knights. Although the outside of the church is similar to a fortress, with a smooth façade without a lot of sculpture, on the inside it is like an art museum because it has carved altars, a lot of marble and paintings of many famous people.

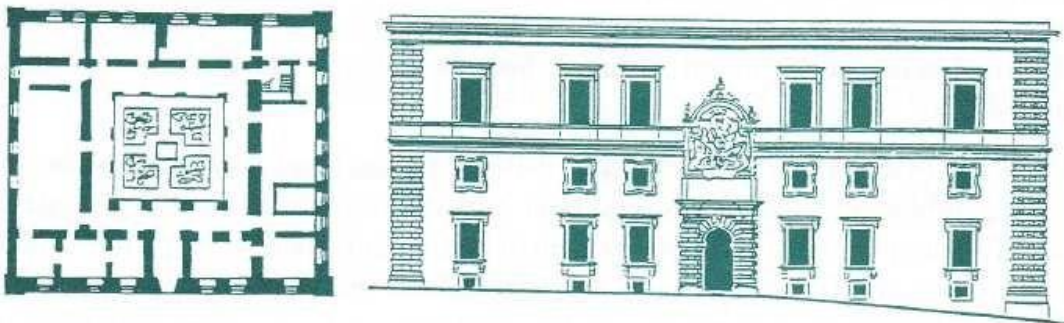
The Sacra Infermeria

Since the main objectives of the Knights were to fight the Muslims and take care of the sick and the injured, it was to be expected that they would build one of the best hospitals for that time. The Sacra Infermeria, as the hospital of the Order in Valletta was called, held several halls, including one of the largest halls in Europe that, in cases of need, could hold up to 2,000 beds. This hospital was for men only and it had some sections for the Knights, for the slaves and for the common people. The façade of this building lacks any kind of decoration.



The façade of this building lacks any kind of decoration. Since the style of this building was loved and used by Ġlormu Cassar, it is believed that the original plan was his, although we are not certain.

A: These pictures show the plan of the Auberge of Italy with the changes made in 1683. Answer by looking at the pictures.



1. What shape does the Auberge of Italy have?

2. Why do you think every language had its own Auberge?

3. What did the Knights do in their Auberge?

4. What do you think there is in the middle of the Auberge?

5. The façade of the auberge is (irregular, disordered, symmetrical).

B: Research

Choose one of the most important buildings which the Knights built in Valletta and search for some information about it. Search for:

- (a) when was the building built
- (b) who was the architect
- (c) who paid for the building
- (d) what does it have of interest
- (e) what was it used for
- (f) what is it used for nowadays.