

## Migrations / The life of European immigrant communities: Egypt and Tunisia

Before the establishment of French and British protectorates over Tunisia and Egypt respectively, some European countries had negotiated with the local governments the right to run their own state institutions, such as schools and hospitals. Many of these institutions survived even under the protectorates. In part, thus, immigrants associated with their compatriots in the context of institutions that were extensions of their home countries. At the same time, immigrants generated a variety of organisations that developed from the bottom up, such as workers' friendly societies, trade unions or cultural associations. Moreover, immigrants also gave life to a vibrant press, enriching the cultural life of Tunisia and Egypt. Religious institutions and organisations also contributed in shaping the collective life of immigrants.



**Working Number:** IT1 093  
**Name:** The Court Martial at the Palace of Justice  
**Holding Museum:** Vallicelliana Library  
**Date:** 1882  
**Materials:** -  
**Curator Justification:** Following anti-foreigner rioting, the British fleet bombed Alexandria on 11 July 1882, and two days later British troops occupied the city. Fearing for the security of the Suez Canal, the British government sent 30,000 soldiers and 40 warships to Egypt. Although formally independent, Egypt effectively became a British protectorate.

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**Working Number:** GR 029  
**Name:** Lesson at the Benaki Orphanage in Alexandria Egypt  
**Holding Museum:** Benaki Museum  
**Date:** 1888–1921  
**Materials:** Photograph  
**Curator Justification:** Among the foreign communities resident in Egypt, the Greeks formed the largest contingent. First attracted by the employment opportunities arising during the days of Muhammad 'Ali Pasha and his immediate successors in the early 19th century, their number rose to around 100,000 by the late 1920s.

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**Working Number:** GR 028  
**Name:** Antonis Benakis at the Sporting Club in Alexandria  
**Holding Museum:** Benaki Museum  
**Date:** 1888–1920  
**Materials:** Photograph  
**Curator Justification:** The Alexandria Sporting Club was founded in 1890 and was one of the oldest clubs in Egypt. Established as a horse racing and social club, from around 1920 it also included a golf course. In colonial times, Egyptians were not admitted. The club still exists today.

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**Working Number:** TN 085  
**Name:** Treaty of the French Protectorate, 12 May 1881

**Holding Museum:** Institut Supérieur d'Histoire Contemporaine de la Tunisie  
**Date:** 1881  
**Materials:** Paper  
**Curator Justification:** In 1881, French military intervention in Tunisia forced the local ruler, the Bey of Tunis, to sign the Treaty of Bardo, granting France a protectorate over the country. Nominally, the Tunisian government remained in place, but it operated under French supervision. The Bey's decrees required the approval of the French authorities. The Treaty also gave France the power to run foreign policy on behalf of Tunisia.

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**Working Number:** IT1 118  
**Name:** The female surgery division of the Italian hospital in Tunis  
**Holding Museum:** Italian Geographical Society (SGI)  
**Date:** First years of the 20th century  
**Materials:** -  
**Curator Justification:** In 1890, the Italian community in Tunisia set up the first Italian hospital initially in a rented building. In 1900, the hospital moved to a new facility and in 1907 took the name Ospedale Giuseppe Garibaldi.

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**Working Number:** IT1 116  
**Name:** The Students' Benevolent Fund of the Società Dante Alighieri  
**Holding Museum:** Italian Geographical Society (SGI)  
**Date:** First years of the 20th century  
**Materials:** -  
**Curator Justification:** The Italian community in Tunisia included not only wealthy entrepreneurs, professionals and merchants, but also impoverished labourers, the unemployed and other destitute individuals. Some of the wealthy immigrants set up benevolent organisations to care for the poor members of their community.

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**Working Number:** IT1 120  
**Name:** Italian Workers Friendly Society (Tunis)  
**Holding Museum:** Italian Geographical Society (SGI)  
**Date:** First years of the 20th century  
**Materials:** -  
**Curator Justification:** Common in Italy since the mid-19th century, workers' friendly societies soon also flourished in Tunisia and other countries of immigration. In the absence of public welfare, friendly societies helped members to cope with hardship due to illness, accident, unemployment or death. Members regularly paid a fee and received help in case of need.

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**Working Number:** IT2 074  
**Name:** L.A. Balboni, The Italians in the Egyptian Civilization of the XIX Century, Alexandria, Egypt, 1906; title page  
**Holding Museum:** Private collection  
**Date:**

**Materials:** 1906

**Curator Justification:** -

This book, intended to celebrate the role played by the Italian community in Egypt, was published on the occasion of the 1906 Milan International Exhibition, when the Italian government encouraged Italian communities abroad to make their activities known to the Italian and international public.

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**Working Number:** IT1 108

**Name:** Gold to the country from the [Italian] colony in Tunisia

**Holding Museum:** State Archives of Livorno

**Date:** Tunis, 1917

**Materials:** -

**Curator Justification:** Italians in Tunisia supported Italy's war effort during World War I in different ways, including donating their items of gold. Most dramatically, they supported it by serving as soldiers; over 1,200 of them lost their lives while fighting in Europe.

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**Working Number:** FR 153

**Name:** Le Petit Tunisien. Voice for French interests and communities in Tunisia.

**Holding Museum:**

**Date:** National Library of France

**Materials:** 21 July 1889

**Curator Justification:** -

With the increasing influx of European migrants into the southern Mediterranean, their cultural and political traditions travelled with them and soon made themselves felt in their adopted countries. This French newspaper was aimed at the different European communities living in Tunisia under the French Protectorate.

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**Working Number:** TN 032

**Name:** Municipal theatre

**Holding Museum:** -

**Date:** 1902

**Materials:** -

**Curator Justification:** The Art Nouveau Municipal Theatre in Tunis was built by the French architect Resplandy and inaugurated in 1902. It hosted performances of dramas, tragedies, comedies and operas. Meanwhile, the city's Casino Municipal (1902) specialised in operetta and variety and the Casino du Belvédère (1901) was dedicated to music hall performances.

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**Working Number:** IT1 119

**Name:** The Italian Politeama Rossini theatre in Tunis, inaugurated in 1903

**Holding Museum:**

**Date:** Italian Geographical Society (SGI)

**Materials:** 1903–06

**Curator Justification:** -

The Italian community in Tunisia established its first theatre in Tunis as early as 1826 and several others in the following decades. The Politeama Rossini, inaugurated in 1903, was famous for its grand performances of the great classic operas.

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**Working Number:** TN 025  
**Name:** Carthage Cathedral  
**Holding Museum:** -  
**Date:** 19th century  
**Materials:** -

**Curator Justification:** Christian communities had been present in Tunisia since the early Christian era, with Carthage the seat of their archbishop. In 1884, Carthage was re-established as an archdiocese, and work started on building a new cathedral. The archdiocese comprised all the parish churches of Tunisia, amounting to 50 in 1912.

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**Working Number:** TN 042  
**Name:** Greek Orthodox church in Tunisia, on Rue de Rome  
**Holding Museum:** -  
**Date:** 1901  
**Materials:** -

**Curator Justification:** The Greek Orthodox Christians had long had a place of worship in Tunis. In 1901, they built a new church, dedicated to Saint George, in the European neighbourhood. It was designed by the Italian architect Giuseppe Abita.

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