

Improved Accessibility to Historical Notarial Documents in Malta

Author: **Gabrielle Cachia**

A lot of literature has been written about the historical and legislative significance of notarial records in Malta. However, research about its archival history still needs to be fully rediscovered. What are the archival relations between the two repositories of the Notarial Archives in Valletta, one located in Mikiel Anton Vassalli Street, the other in St Paul and St Christopher Street? Also, how can accessibility to all the documents preserved at these two repositories be improved?

Throughout my dissertation, supervised by Dr Valeria Vanesio, I focused on the Notarial Archives' most crucial legislative and administrative changes, from the Hospitaller to the British period, and also through recent times. Some of the most significant developments include the transferring of the archives to alternative premises, which took place in different centuries. This includes the migration of the documents to another building for better protection from the damages of WWII.

Unfortunately, however, a number of documents have either been destroyed or lost throughout the years, not only due to bombardments. Another relocation of the archives was done in view of the extensive rehabilitation projects taking place at the repository in St Paul and St

Christopher Street, now under the responsibility of the National Archives of Malta and managed by the Notarial Archives Foundation. In fact, my study was conducted during a transitional period in the history of the Notarial Registers Archive of Malta, which meant that the documents which I had access to were limited.

Despite this challenge, I tried to create a first archival guide to these notarial records. This will help improve accessibility and foster new research. The gathered information was organised in line with standards set out by the International Council on Archives. Furthermore, the guide lays the foundations for tracing the archival connections among different kinds of notarial documents, some of which are not preserved in the same building but have been drafted or prepared by the same notary. This will make it easier for all users – whether researchers or lay persons – to consult this guide, which could even serve as a template for similar archival tools in the future. 

This research was carried out as part of the Master of Arts in Archives and Records Management, Department of Library, Information and Archive Sciences, Faculty of Media and Knowledge Sciences at the University of Malta.

