

# The Triple Strand of the Liturgical Tradition of the Church in Malta: Byzantine, Roman, Gallican Rites<sup>1</sup>

## The Greek Orthodox Church in Malta: Phase I

To an unprejudiced mind, the mass of evidence produced in the recent publications *Tristia ex Melitogaudio*,<sup>2</sup> and *Tristia Revisited*,<sup>3</sup> ignored by most and claimed to have been ‘successfully snuffed out’ by some, speaks loud of a Greek Church tradition in these islands which took a long time to eradicate. More recently and since these publications, the information has been fully corroborated by the discovery in the *Tetraevangelo* of the Parma *Biblioteca Palatina* – MS. Pal. 5 – of two obituaries, announced in *The Sunday Times* [Malta] of 8 January 2012.<sup>4</sup> By way of recapitulation, these obituaries, written in Greek in a semi-literate hand appear on the last folio of the codex, according to Fiaccadori and others who have studied it, *scritto e miniato a Costantinopoli verso il 1100*.<sup>5</sup> These obituaries relate to *Nicólaos Protopapás*

---

\* Stanley Fiorini B.Phil. (Heythrop), M.A. (Oxon), Ph.D. (Open), former Head of the Mathematics Department, and Professor Emeritus and Senior Fellow of the University of Malta. His interest in Maltese History has led to a number of scholarly publications of sole- or joint-authorship; and he has also edited various publications of the Malta Historical Society, of which he was Honorary President.

<sup>1</sup> “A threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Eccl 4:12 NRSV).

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Busuttil, Stanley Fiorini, and Horatio C.R. Vella, *Tristia ex Melitogaudio: Lament in Greek Verse of a XIIth-century Exile on Gozo* (Malta: Best Print, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Stanley Fiorini, *Tristia ex Melitogaudio Revisited: Objections, Clarifications, Confirmations* (Malta: Best Print, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Stanley Fiorini, “Greek Protopapás of Malta,” *The Sunday Times* [Malta], 8 January 2012: 48.

<sup>5</sup> Gianfranco Fiaccadori, “Umanesimo e grecità d’Occidente”, in *I Greci in Occidente: Catalogo*

## 6 MELITA THEOLOGICA

*Máltes* who died on 4 December 1230 and to his wife, Milo or Milas, who died a year ahead of him on 21 November 1229. The thirteenth century form of the name *Máltes* – of Malta – leaves no doubt as to the identity of this island, confirmed by the fact that the codex's next resting place was Messina, where, by 1457, it came to be deposited in the library of the Monastery of *San Salvatore de Lingua Phari*.<sup>6</sup> Delving deeper into the matter, having consulted the full description of the *Tetraevangelo* by Fiaccadori and Scarola,<sup>7</sup> one learns that this fine, precious liturgical text, beautifully illuminated with full-page illustrations, also bears the notice on the same folio (f. 285<sup>v</sup>) as the obituaries, of the donor, who signs himself Michael Autoreianos, deacon and *chartophylax*, the very high office of Archivist, in the Byzantine Church. This donor turns out to be none other than the future Patriarch Michael IV Autoreianos who held the supreme position in the Byzantine Church between 1208 and 1212. One learns that Autoreianos' career extended from being *protonotarius* who became *chartophylax* of Hagia Sophia in 1199, through occupying the position of patriarchal *sakellarios* before 1204, the year when, on 13 April, Constantinople fell to the Venetians and the Emperors fled to exile in Nicaea. There in 1205, *ex officio*, Autoreianos crowned Theodore I Láscaris, Emperor of Nicaea; hardly surprising but well worth remembering is the fact that the war against the Latins received its sanction from the new patriarch around whom grew a hardened heart of Greeks in exile.<sup>8</sup> These vital statistics show that the donation of the *Tetraeuangelion* was made between 1199 and 1208, at the latest. The codex also bears on fols. 1 and 3, the name of a *Frate Atanasio* in a fifteenth century hand as well as the signature of Notary Antonio Carissimo, who was active in Messina between 1457 and 1470. The researchers' interpretation of all this data is that the manuscript was transferred from Malta to Messina, sometime between 1457 and 1470, where it entered the library of the Monastery of *San Salvatore de Lingua Phari*, whence it moved to Parma in the nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> From

---

*della mostra 16 ott. - 15 nov. 1996*, ed. Gianfranco Fiaccadori e Paulo Eleuteri (Venezia: Il Cardo, 1996), lviii-lvix.

<sup>6</sup> Paulo Eleuteri, *I manoscritti greci della Biblioteca Palatina di Parma* (Milano: Polifilo, 1993), 3-13; Gianfranco Fiaccadori, "Byzantina Melitensia," *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università degli Studi di Milano* 63, no. 3 (2010): 337-348.

<sup>7</sup> Gianfranco Fiaccadori and Giustina Scarola, [Article #57] "Tetraevangelo MS. Pal. 5" in *Cum picturis ystoriatum: codici devozionali e liturgici della Biblioteca Palatina*, ed. Paulo Eleuteri (Modena: Il Bulino, 2001), 268-270.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni: 1081-1261* (Cambridge: University Press, 1995), 193, 505 *et seq.*, esp. 516, 518-519.

<sup>9</sup> Fiaccadori and Scarola, *Tetraevangelo*, 268.

the Maltese perspective, this is solid evidence of an active Greek Church in twelfth-thirteenth century Malta. Nicolaos' title of *Protopapás* implies the existence of a Greek hierarchy, Greek Christian community and parochial structure. He would have been the equivalent of a Greek Bishop as, in the eleventh-thirteenth centuries Constantinople was appointing a *Protopapás* or *Archipresbyter* instead of a Bishop in some of the dioceses, such as at Oppido in Calabria, where one encounters another Nicolaos *Protopapás Sikelías* active in around 1050;<sup>10</sup> several others are recorded in Calabria during this period.<sup>11</sup>

The fact that Nicolaos, *Protopapás Máltes*, was married shows that he was no celibate Basilian monk. The fact that he died in 1230 places him at the head of the Maltese Christian community (then, still a minority of the population) decades before the first ever mention of a Latin cleric (except for the non-resident Latin bishop). This information corroborates fully the thesis in *Tristia* where it is shown that the Maltese Church continued to be Greek, as it had been before the Arab conquest. It tallies with data presented earlier: (i) the existence of persons signing their name in Greek in the 1270s and in 1299, and (ii) the very significant fact that the four witnesses authenticating the copy of the poem *Tristia* at the turn of the fourteenth century were two Latin priests, a Greek deacon and a Greek notary, the son of a Greek priest,<sup>12</sup> showing that existing links were with the Patriarchate of Constantinople, a Church which, under the pressure of Latinization, especially after the Angevin interlude, succumbed almost completely to Rome. Thus, by the mid-fifteenth century the precious liturgical book, no longer needed here, was handed over to the nearby Basilian Monastery in Messina. This situation is exactly paralleled not only by what happened in Sicily,<sup>13</sup> but, more significantly, by what happened in Pantelleria at the time

---

<sup>10</sup> Jean-Marie Martin, "La contea di Sicilia e l'Africa", in *Ruggero I Gran Conte di Sicilia: 1101-2001*, ed. Guglielmo de' Giovanni-Centelles (Rome: Istituto Italiano dei Castelli 2007), 105-123, esp. 113.

<sup>11</sup> For several occurrences of a *Protopapás* in Calabria during the eleventh-thirteenth centuries, cf. André Guillou, "Inchiesta sulla popolazione greca della Sicilia e della Calabria nel medio evo," in *Studies on Byzantine Italy* (London: Variorum, 1970), chap. 9 passim. Grateful thanks to Prof. E. A. Mallia for indicating this reference. At Palermo, following the replacement, by a Latin Archbishop, of the Greek Bishop Nicodemus (found in the city by the Normans in 1072), several *Protopapás* are encountered in the twelfth century, including *Basileios Protopapás póleos Panórmou* in 1138-1146; cf. *Tristia*, lxxix fn. 156 for details.

<sup>12</sup> Busuttill, Fiorini, Vella, *Tristia*, xvi, xxvii-xviii.

<sup>13</sup> Mario Scaduto, *Il Monachismo Basiliano nella Sicilia Medievale; Rinascita e Decadenza: sec. XI-XIV* (Roma: Edizioni di 'Storia e Letteratura,' 1947).

## 8 MELITA THEOLOGICA

where Bresc notes evidence for a Greek monastery that survived from before the Arab conquest and was restored by Roger II in 1115 and where the Greek rite was still in evidence in the fifteenth century.<sup>14</sup>

It bears noting here that this Greek Gospel originating in Constantinople which was a liturgical text – it included liturgical indications relative to the canons of Eusebius (fols. 14-89<sup>v</sup>), *synaxarium* (fols. 270<sup>v</sup>-278) and *menologium* (fols. 279-285<sup>v</sup>) [hagiographical eulogies and calendar, respectively] – was the exact counterpart of the twelfth century Latin *Evangelistarium*, now in the Mdina Cathedral Museum, popularly referred to in late-medieval local documentation as *lu libru di Santu Paulu*, that originated in Messina and was probably brought over for use by the Latin Bishop of Malta.<sup>15</sup> Its very likely inclusion, in the company of two *vetera antifonaria*, in the inventory of 1274 of the Church of *Sancta Maria in Castro interiori* (now Fort St Angelo)<sup>16</sup> underscores the composition of the Maltese Church at the time.

By way of summing up, a reasonable working hypothesis for the revamping of the Church in sub-Islamic times, in the twelfth-thirteenth centuries, is taken to be that the Christians in these islands belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church headed by its *Protopapás* and organized in one or more parishes. The Mdina Cathedral was as yet nonexistent, judging by the document of 1299 which speaks of it as if under construction – *Item, mandavit dari ... operi ecclesie Sancti Pauli ...*<sup>17</sup>, but the Cathedral Chapter at the head of a small nucleus of other priests was being formed, serving especially the Latin enclave that was the *Castrum Maris* with its two churches and its garrison of some 200 soldiers and their families as described in Giliberto's report of 1241.<sup>18</sup> The four witnesses authenticating the copy of *Tristia* at the turn of the fourteenth century – two Latin priests and two Greeks – is indicative of the transition taking place at the time, as already noted.

---

<sup>14</sup> Henri Bresc, "Pantelleria entre l'islam et la chrétienté," *Cahiers de Tunisie* 19 (1971): 105-127, esp. 109.

<sup>15</sup> Mario Buhagiar and Stanley Fiorini, *Mdina: The Cathedral City of Malta* (Malta: Gutenberg, 1996), 1: 129-140; Martina Caruana, "The Codex Evangeliorum Melitensis," (Ph.D. diss, Université de la Sorbonne, Paris IV, 1999).

<sup>16</sup> Vincenzo Laurenza, "Malta nei documenti angioini nel R. Archivio di Napoli," *Archivio Storico di Malta*, v, nos. 1-4 (1934): 3-71, esp. 34 Doc. XL (29.vii.1274).

<sup>17</sup> Henri Bresc, "Malta dopo il Vespro Siciliano," *Melita Historica*, vi, no. 3 (1974): 307-312, esp. 318.

<sup>18</sup> Anthony Luttrell, "Giliberto Abbate's Report on Malta: Circa 1241," in *The Making of Christian Malta* (Aldershot: Variorum, 2002), chap. 9.

**TWO CONTEMPORARY LITURGICAL  
TEXTS IN MALTA**

<b>GREEK</b>	<i>Language</i>	<b>LATIN</b>
Biblioteca Palatina, Parma	<i>Present location</i>	Cathedral Museum, Mdina
<i>Tetraevangelo</i>	<i>Popularly known as</i>	<i>Lu libru di Santu Paulu</i>
Constantinople	<i>Scriptorium</i>	Messina
c. 1100	<i>Origin</i>	c. 1160
c. 1200 – c. 1450	<i>In Malta</i>	pre-1270 to present
√	<i>Canon Tables</i>	√
√	<i>Menologium</i>	
√	<i>Synaxarium</i>	
√	<i>Commentaries on Gospels</i>	√
√	<i>The Four Gospels</i>	√
Full-page and Capitals	<i>Illuminations</i>	Historiated Capitals
Protopapás	<i>Used by</i>	Latin Bishop Latin garrison of the <i>Castrum Maris</i>
Fiaccadori, Eleuteri, Scarola	<i>Bibliography</i>	Caruana, Grech, Buhagiar, Laurenza

### An Aside

As an aside, I should like to report that, heartened by the discovery in Madrid of the important Byzantine poem *Tristia ex Melitogaudo*, whose manuscript, having originated here, found itself in Spain via Messina, coupled with the more recent discovery of the *Tetraevangelo* of Parma which, likewise, travelled from Malta via Messina, I have been on the lookout for the possible existence of other manuscripts with a similar history, spurred by the suspicion that Messina was an important repository of Greek manuscripts some of which did originate in Malta.

In view of this, interest was, naturally, aroused by the private archives in Spain of the *Duque de Medinaceli* held partly in Sevilla and partly in Toledo as these are known to contain medieval material that came specifically from Messina in the section *Fondo Mesina*. After prolonged negotiations with the administration of the archives, it was finally possible to have the go-ahead to visit the Toledo section of the archives where the *Fondo Mesina* parchments are housed. Unfortunately, this proved a relatively futile exercise as has been reported in full elsewhere.<sup>19</sup>

Returning to the original topic, it appears that the mid-fifteenth century wraps up what can be termed as Phase I of the Greek Orthodox Church in Malta that had started in the mid-eighth century, if not before. But now there occurs:

### Phase II,

a second phase of the intimate relationship between this island and Greek Orthodoxy. In 1530 the Greek Church received an important boost. The arrival of the Rhodiots in Malta represented yet another wave of Christian migration to the Central Mediterranean region under Turkish pressure on the Levant. This phenomenon had been apparent for a century and especially since the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 followed by the Albanian influx into the South of Italy and Sicily after the collapse of their valiant hero and leader, Scanderbeg.<sup>20</sup> These migrants' predominant religious affiliation was to the Orthodox Church of Constantinople although, in the case of the Rhodiots who had been living under the regime of the Order of St John for two centuries, many, if not all, had acknowledged allegiance to Rome. Further to the Greeks there were several Latins in the Knights' entourage who had to leave Rhodes. In fact, it

---

<sup>19</sup> Stanley Fiorini and Horatio C.R. Vella, "The *Fondo Mesina* in the *Archivo Ducal de Medinaceli*," *Melita Historica* 16, no. 1 (2012): 109-129.

<sup>20</sup> George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 565-567.

was only all the Latins that were expelled by the Sultan; the Greeks were free to stay if they so wished.<sup>21</sup>

Against this background one can understand how the colony that followed the Knights out of Rhodes in 1522 and as far as Birgu in 1530 was representative of all these religious elements: Latin Roman Catholics, Greek Uniates subject to Rome and Greek Orthodox Schismatics.<sup>22</sup> It also explains the interest the Byzantine Church took in this community as will be shown in a future publication. That the influence of the Byzantine Church persisted well into the eighteenth century and that relics of it survive to this day has already been discussed elsewhere.<sup>23</sup>

### The Gallican Rite

How does the Gallican Rite fit into all this? It is a commonplace of Maltese Church History that the Apostolic Visitor Dusina found here vestiges of the Gallican Rite which he “successfully snuffed out,” or so it is claimed. We need to look at this Gallican phenomenon a bit more closely by placing it in its proper historical perspective.

Due to Sicily’s traditional long association with the Greek world, the Sicilian Church, and especially Syracuse, during the first eight centuries of the Christian era, although theoretically subject to Rome and the Papacy, from very early times exhibited an attraction to the Greek Church and the Patriarchate of Constantinople. In support of this, one notes:

- the several bishops of Byzantium originating in Syracuse, foremost among whom Methodius of Syracuse, later Patriarch of Constantinople [843-847], and Theophanes of Syracuse, Bishop of Antioch [681-687];
- important Byzantine liturgical texts, including the Canon of the *Akathistos* hymn, written by Joseph the Hymnographer [810-886], who came from Syracuse;
- certain papal epistles addressed to Sicilian bishops, including: (i) the harsh reproof of Pope Leo the Great in his letter of 21 October 447 to all the Bishops of Sicily to cease following the Byzantine tradition

---

<sup>21</sup> Giacomo Bosio, *Dell’Istoria della Sacra Religione et Illustrissima Militia di San Giovanni Gerosolimitano*, 3 (Roma: Facciotto, 1602), 1-4.

<sup>22</sup> Anthony T. Luttrell, “The Greeks of Rhodes under Hospitaller Rule: 1306-1421,” *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neellenici* n.s. 29 (1992):193-223, esp. 207-208; Zacharias N. Tsirpanlis, “Cenni sulla storia religiosa di Cipro, Rodi e isole minori durante il periodo latino,” in *Storia Religiosa della Grecia*, ed. L. Vaccaro (Milano: ITL, 2002), 141-165.

<sup>23</sup> Busuttil, Fiorini, Vella, *Tristia*, lxx-xcv.

## 12 MELITA THEOLOGICA

of baptizing during Epiphany and Easter at the expense of the Roman tradition of baptizing at Easter and Pentecost;<sup>24</sup> (ii) the letter of Pope Gregory the Great to Joannes Bishop of Syracuse reminding him of the Roman customs he is to follow, particularly, those concerning the liturgical vestments of subdeacons, the proper place in the Mass for the *Kyrie* and the *Pater Noster*, and that the *Alleluia* is not to be chanted during Lent;<sup>25</sup>

- the fact that between 663 and 668, under Emperor Constans II [642-668], Syracuse was, actually, promoted to be the capital city of Byzantium.

At the height of the Iconoclast controversy all links with Rome were severed by the unilateral action of Emperor Leo III, the Isaurian [717-741], and the Sicilian Church (including Malta), together with the Calabrian and the Illyrian, came to belong, overnight, formally and practically, to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Thus, from the mid-eighth century right through to the Norman conquest of Sicily in the eleventh century, whatever had survived of the Sicilian Church under the Arab domination was Greek! Typically, Nicodemus, Archbishop of Palermo was found by the Guiscard in very poor straits in 1072 serving the remnants of his community from the small Church of St Cyril in suburban Palermo. Authors like Enrica Follieri and Angelo Plumari, who studied this period extensively, concur in presenting the following synthesis of the situation:

*Dall' VIII all'XI secolo [in Sicilia] furono greci la corrispondenza, le omelie e i sermoni liturgici. i trattati dogmatici e ascetici, gli inni e le altre composizioni liturgiche;*<sup>26</sup>

*[e] in un arco di tempo compreso fra il X e il XVI secolo emerge una fondamentale considerazione [che] i santi venerati nell'Italia greca sono ... quelli stessi dell' Oriente bizantino.*<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> J.-P. Migne et al., eds., *Patrologiae cursus completus omnium ss. patrum, doctorum scriptorumque ecclesiasticorum: series latina* (Paris: Siron, Migne et al., 1865-1974), 54: 695-704, Ep. 16 *Ad universos episcopos per Siciliam constitutos*.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 77: 955-958, Ep. 12, ind. II (=598-599).

<sup>26</sup> Angelo Plumari, "Indagine sulla presenza del rito gallicano in Sicilia" in Giovanni-Centelles, *Ruggero I*, 309-332, esp. 319.

<sup>27</sup> Enrica Follieri, "Il culto dei santi nell'Italia greca," in *Italia sacra: studi e documenti di storia ecclesiastica*, ed. M. Maccarrone, 3 vols. (Padova: Antinori, 1973), 553-577, esp.556.



In the meantime in Gaul,<sup>28</sup> there appeared a local liturgy, known as *gallicana* between the sixth and eighth centuries. It soon, however, became adulterated, especially during the reign of Pepin the Short [751-768], under the influence of the *Sacramentaria Gelasiana* and various Gregorian materials from which, notably, it adopted the *cantus romanus*. Finally, Charlemagne, son of Pepin, first Holy Roman Emperor [800-814], following in his father's footsteps of reform, out of personal devotion towards the See of Peter, but neither excluding political convenience, decided to put an end to liturgical anarchy and adopt the Roman Rite. Thus, theoretically, but not in practice, the Gallican Rite had been extinguished by the ninth century. By this time, however, the Roman Rite had already assimilated various elements of the Gallican, and it was this admixture of mutually infiltrated liturgies that the Normans (originating in Normandy, Gaul) imported into Sicily by way of a so-called 'Gallican' liturgical tradition. It would, therefore, be more accurate to speak not of a typical Gallican Rite in Sicily but rather of a Roman liturgy infused with an admixture of prayers and customs in use in Gaul, or perhaps, a Gallican Rite with strong Roman peculiarities. Furthermore, on arrival in Sicily, this 'mixed' liturgy found itself juxtaposed to the Greek Rite from which it absorbed several elements and by which it did not hesitate to be influenced.

As far as Malta is concerned, although in Sicily the introduction of this so-called Gallican Rite was the natural outcome of the Norman invasion, its dissemination, in practice, was in the hands of the Latin clergy that gradually reasserted their presence over the South of Italy at the expense of the Greek Church. Their presence in Malta, however, does not appear to have transpired before the end of the thirteenth century, so that the Gallican Rite in Malta is more probably ascribable to the brief Angevin interlude [1268-1283] that coincided with the first documented thrust, by the French iron-fisted regime, at Latinizing the Maltese Church. It is probably here that one finds the appropriate niche for the two *antifonaria vetera*, noted earlier at the *Castrum Maris*, written in Aquitanian notation, now housed at the Cathedral Museum, together with the Messina *Evangelistarium*. Thus, it is seen that Malta's Ecclesiastical History draws on three main intertwined traditional strands: the Greek, the Roman and the Gallican, this last being the catalyst which permitted the remnants of the Greek tradition to infiltrate the Roman liturgy and survive well after Dusina's times and, in some instances, even till the present.

---

<sup>28</sup> Plumari, "Indagine", citing primary sources like the *Expositio brevis antiquae liturgiae gallicanae* by Pseudo-Germanus of Paris (Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 72, 83-98) and other later texts.

This brings us to the third liturgical text referred to. This is the Gallican Missal from Messina of 1499.<sup>29</sup> Although, unfortunately, a number of local Gallican texts, which certainly existed,<sup>30</sup> do not seem to have survived here, a precious reference establishes the important fact that local Maltese Gallican liturgical texts were actually being copied from Messina exemplars in 1547,<sup>31</sup> so that the Gallican Missal of 1499 from Messina is seen to be particularly relevant for the Maltese situation.

By way of conclusion, I want to use this text to clarify a number of hazy patches raised by references to the Gallican Rite in Dusina and elsewhere:

### (a) San Amator

In several fifteenth-sixteenth century wills many bequests are made subject to the obligation that a number of Masses, so-called of St Amator, are to be celebrated by the legatee. Thus, in Dusina's visitation report itself reference is made to such a legacy by Don Marianus Briffa, Parish Priest of St George's, Qormi (fol. 466<sup>v</sup>). The same is found in the will of Antonius Desgunes, son of Archdeacon Lanza in 1512,<sup>32</sup> and, in her will of 1486, Catherina d'Urso orders the celebration of Masses *pro remedio suorum peccatorum, videlicet, trentale et Sancti Gregorii et Sancti Amatoris*.<sup>33</sup> This saint has always intrigued me as no mention of him is encountered in the Latin Rite. He turns out to belong to the Gallican Liturgy as appears from the Messina Missal (fol. cclvii verso; p. 504) where a votive Mass of St Amator is said on behalf of devotees.

### (b) Baptism by immersion

In *Tristia ex Melitogaudio* (p. lxxvii) the argument was put forward that the administration of various sacraments exhibited traces of the Greek Rite, including Communion under both species and the marriage ceremony with the crowning

---

<sup>29</sup> Pietro Sorci and Gaetano Zito, eds., *Il Messale Gallicano di Messina* (Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2009).

<sup>30</sup> The 1575 inventory of the Cathedral in the Dusina report [George Aquilina and Stanley Fiorini, eds., *Documentary Sources of Maltese History*, Part 4 no. 1 (Malta: University Press, 2001), fol. 412] lists no less than 20 *graduali et antifonari alla Gallicana in pergamena* and Missals are mentioned at Żejtun (fol. 72<sup>v</sup>), Siggiewi (fol. 218), Birgu (fol. 245) and Gozo (fol. 419<sup>v</sup>).

<sup>31</sup> Notarial Archives Valletta, *Notary Brandan Caxaro R175/20*, fols. 91-92; grateful thanks to the late Fr Michael Fsadni OP for kindly pointing out this reference.

<sup>32</sup> Archbishop's Archives Floriana, *Scritture del '500*, vol. 44, no. 1, fol. 82<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> Stanley Fiorini, ed., *Documentary Sources of Maltese History*, Part I no. 1 (Malta: University Press 1996), Doc. 41.

with a wreath, rather than the veiling, of the bride. When it came to baptism by triple immersion, doubt was raised that there could have been confusion with the Gallican Rite, as this latter rite also once used triple immersion. The Gallican Missal of 1499, which had wide influence all over Sicily, however, reassures us that by the end of the fifteenth century in Messina, at least, but one could presume that Malta should not have been any different, the practice of triple immersion had been discontinued as appears from the rubric on fol. cclxxxiii (p. 555, col. b, at the bottom): “*Et ego te baptizo in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti / [followed by the rubrica] Et mergat eum ter in fonte, vel ut hodie sit, effundat aquam in capite pueri, et postea ungat eum in vertice cum sacro chrismate ...*”

### (c) Pesare bambini

Dusina, in a clutch of localities clustered around Rabat, Malta, namely at Siggiewi (fol. 218), at Rabat itself (fol. 221)], at Żebbuġ (fol. 235) and at Qormi (fol. 238), but we are informed that the same happened all over the island, refers to the rather intriguing practice of ‘weighing of infants’, a custom which is elaborately described for Rabat:

*Pesare [li piccioli] in chiesa per devotione loro dal prete secondo lo rito Gallicano, ciò è, che uno se pone alla grada dell'altare ingenochoni con la candela in mano accesa et tanto che dura la benedittione appendono tre tortoni o vero tre pani grandi, uno pollastro et un quartuccio di vino ad una canna o legno li quali cose poi restano al prete, et questo s'usa per tutta l'isola.*

Cassar-Pullicino opined that this custom was a superstitious practice to ward off disease.<sup>34</sup> The Gallican Missal, however, shows that the ritual was associated with the blessing of infants and their presentation at the altar soon after birth with the ‘weighing’ related to what the mother offered the officiating priest, this donation being computed, so to speak, in correspondence with the weight of the baby: the heavier the child, the heftier the offering.

One final point,

### (d) The Sicilian Gallican calendar

It has been noted before how, in Dusina’s list, of the 419 dedications of chapels and churches a mere 19 (or 5%) belonged to post-Islamic times. The calendar in the

---

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Cassar-Pullicino, “Malta in 1575: Social Aspects of an Apostolic Visit,” *Melita Historica* 2, no. 1 (1956): 19-41, esp. 39.

Gallican Missal reveals that the array of saints venerated there can be partitioned under three main headings: (1) Saints from the Roman Martyrology especially those of Northern European, and especially Gallic, origin, (2) Byzantine Saints, and especially (3) several Saints of local Sicilian origin. Of particular relevance to Malta, illustrating how certain dedications came to belong to the Latin Rite in our islands, we find:

(1) Among the North European and, especially, Gallic saints in the Roman Martyrology:

- St Julian the Confessor<sup>35</sup> venerated to this day here on 27 January (the same as in the Gallican Missal [Mass ## 2096-2105]; Dusina, fols. 85<sup>v</sup>-6, 141<sup>v</sup>, 164<sup>rv</sup>, 436);
- St Amator, Bishop of Auxerre [1 May; Votive Mass ## 4108-4111];
- St Cataldus [10 May; Mass ## 2433-5]; (Dusina, fol. 28);
- St Leonard (6 November);
- St Martin of Tours (12 November); as well as
- St Ursula, virgin and martyr, patroness of Cologne [#3369] but very popular in Sicily [Comm. 21 October; Mass ## 3361-3370], whose cult in Malta is already recorded in the mid-fifteenth century.<sup>36</sup>

(2) Among the universal Byzantine saints, although none of the Old Testament Prophets (very popular in Byzantine Liturgy) are mentioned, except for St Elias and St Zacharias,<sup>37</sup> the Gallican Missal includes:

- St Basil the Father of Eastern monasticism, venerated in the West on 14 June but in the East, as in the Gallican Missal, on 1 January, a feast also celebrated on this day at *Mqabba* till the seventeenth century;<sup>38</sup>
- St Helena, mother of Constantine, patroness of Birkirkara whose feast at *Il-Għargħar* was, likewise, still celebrated on 21 May till 1635 [Votive Mass ## 4464-4466], whereas in the Latin Rite the feast occurs on 18 August;<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> The cult of St Julian was clearly introduced into Sicily by the Normans at the end of the eleventh century. Legend has it that Roger I changed the name of Erice into *Mons S. Juliani* because he claimed that he managed to break down the resistance of the besieged through the intervention of St Julian, appearing at the head of a pack of fierce hounds; cf. John Julius Norwich, *The Normans in the South: 1016-1130* (London: Longman, 1967), 253.

<sup>36</sup> On the early cult of St Ursula in Malta, cf. Gian Francesco Abela, *Della descrizione di Malta, isola nel Mare Siciliano* (Malta: Paolo Bonacota, 1647), 407-408; Giorgio Aquilina, *Le Monache Gerosolimitane* (Malta: PEG, 2005), 142-143.

<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, these two saints occur together in Greek Calabria in the monastery that bears their names: Guillou, "Sulle sponde del Lao nell'XI secolo," in *Studies*, 11: 484.

<sup>38</sup> Busuttill, Fiorini, Vella, *Tristia*, lxxxvii-lxxxviii.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxv-lxxxvi.

- St Margaret (alias Marina) of Antioch, commemorated on 17 July; and
- St Dominica (alias Kyriaki), variously remembered on 6/7/8 July.

(3) Among the several local Sicilian saints in the Greek tradition from the first millennium, important for Malta (because encountered here) we find:

- St Philip of Agira, born in Thrace towards the end of the fourth century, evangelized Sicily [Comm. 12 May; Mass ## 2453-2456]; [Dusina, fols. 62<sup>v</sup>, 233<sup>v</sup>];
- St Calogeros / Caloceros / Caloyro / Coleiro, who came from the East and was particularly venerated in Agrigento, Messina, Sciacca and Naro [Comm. 18 June; Mass ## 2578-2580]; [Dusina, fol. 167<sup>v</sup>];
- St Marcianus, Bishop of Syracuse [Comm. 14 June; Mass ## 2556-2558]; [Dusina, fol. 92];
- St Pancratius, Bishop of Taormina and martyr [Comm. 9 July; Mass ## 2695-2704]; [Dusina, fol. 186]
- St Venera / *Hagia Paraskeue* [Comm. 26 July; Mass ## 2794-2796]; [Dusina, fols. 172, 185<sup>v</sup>, 325] whose feast occurs on 26 July, as still celebrated in Malta.<sup>40</sup>

Apparently no trace is encountered in Malta of other Sicilian Byzantine saints, likewise found in the Missal, such as St Eleutherius Bishop of Messina, St Gregory Bishop of Agrigento, and St Leo Bishop of Catania. But if this Missal was ever in use in Malta, then here we have evidence of cults which have not been otherwise recorded.

(4) More importantly, noticeable by their absence from the Gallican Missal, are certain elements of Byzantine tradition which are evident in Malta, including:

- St Cyriacus (San Ċir) who appears as *Sanctus Michael in Monte Gargano* on 29 September in the Gallican Missal (following the Roman Liturgy);
- St Demetrius of Thessalonica [comm. 26 October];
- the Epiphany of the Lord commemorated by the Baptism of Christ, according to the Byzantine Rite and as still commemorated in Malta in 1768; this coincides with the Magi's visit in the Gallican Missal, as in the Roman Liturgy;<sup>41</sup>
- the Byzantine liturgy for the Eve of Palm Sunday, called *Sábbaton toú Lazárou*, as in Maltese *Sibt Lazzru*, because the gospel read on that day is John 11:1-45 - the Raising of Lazarus - whereas this gospel is read

---

<sup>40</sup> Busuttil, Fiorini, Vella, *Tristia*, lxxxvi-lxxxvii.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxiv-lxxv.

## 18 MELITA THEOLOGICA

on Friday of Fourth Week of Lent in the Roman Liturgy and in the Gallican Missal;<sup>42</sup> as well as

- the funeral Greek ritual of *Quccija*, already recorded in Malta in 1436.<sup>43</sup>

If these elements are found here in Malta and are not attributable to the Gallican transmission, then they must hark back to the original Orthodox presence in the early thirteenth century.

Stanley Fiorini  
Institute of Maltese Studies  
University of Malta,  
Msida MSD 2080  
Malta

stanley.fiorini@um.edu.mt

---

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxiv.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxvi-lxxvii.