

FIELD NOTES

A particular silo pit at il-Qolla

Appreciation of the preoccupation with security prevalent in the Mediterranean in the middle of the second millennium has led to the identification of Borg in-Nadur settlements through the description of a five features.

The remains of these communities are found on easily defensible topographical areas. In-Nuffara and the site today occupied by the citadel (Gozo) are example of hilltop settlements, their higher altitude with respect to the surrounding area providing advantage in case of hostilities. Triangular promontories also presented inaccessible cliffs to any invaders and were safe once their connection to the rest of the land was secured. In such cases massive cyclopean walls were constructed to defend the site in its most vulnerable area. The best examples of such a transformations may still be observed at il-Wardija ta' San Gorg and Borg in-Nadur.

Beyond the geographical location and the presence of megalithic walls, pottery and hut structures reveal the settlement purposes of these sites and their Bronze Age dating.

A final feature characteristic of these villages is the presence of bell shaped silo pits. In the absence of conclusive evidence grain or water storage has been proposed for their function, presumably to provide for the eventuality of prolonged aggression on the settlements themselves.

Il-Qolla (GR 457767) is a promontory formed by the trisection of the eastern Wardija uplands by the Wied Qanotta tributaries. The geographical setting, six silo pits and the typical sherds collected from this site (MAR 1946-47) reveal that this is another Borg in-Nadur settlement site.

Three interconnected silo pits turned out to be of particular interest because of an unusual access into their chambers, provided through a rectangular chamber opening into the southern pit. This silo pit has what appears to be the covering slab still in situ (Plate 1), closing a circular opening 0.45 m. in

diameter. The walls of the pit slope downwards to the flat circular base 2.30 m. in diameter, at 2.40 m. below the lower surface of the closing slab. The silo's wall does not reveal any trace of covering, and is considerably flaky, typical of the Mtarfa member of upper coralline limestone formation found in the area. East and opposite the present access into this silo pit, are connections to two other silo pits.

These remains are described because:-

- a) this is an unusual find containing an example of a silo pit with the covering slab still in situ. This may provide a possibility to investigate the techniques of closure of such underground cavities.
- b) the silo pits at il-Qolla are another group of interconnected silo pits similar to those at Bir Miftuh and it-Tumbata (Evans 1971).
- c) about 0.3m of soil are still covering the surrounding area and this may still conserve intact deposits.

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References

Evans, J.D. 1971. *The Prehistoric Antiquities of the Maltese Islands*. Athlone Press, University of London

Museum Archaeological Reports. Annual Report on the working of the Museum Department (1946-47). Malta, Government Printing Office 1947

The silo pits were first noted and investigated by the author on 19/09/98, during field walking in the area with Mr. Keith Buhagiar. The plans were prepared by Mr. Joseph Cilia.

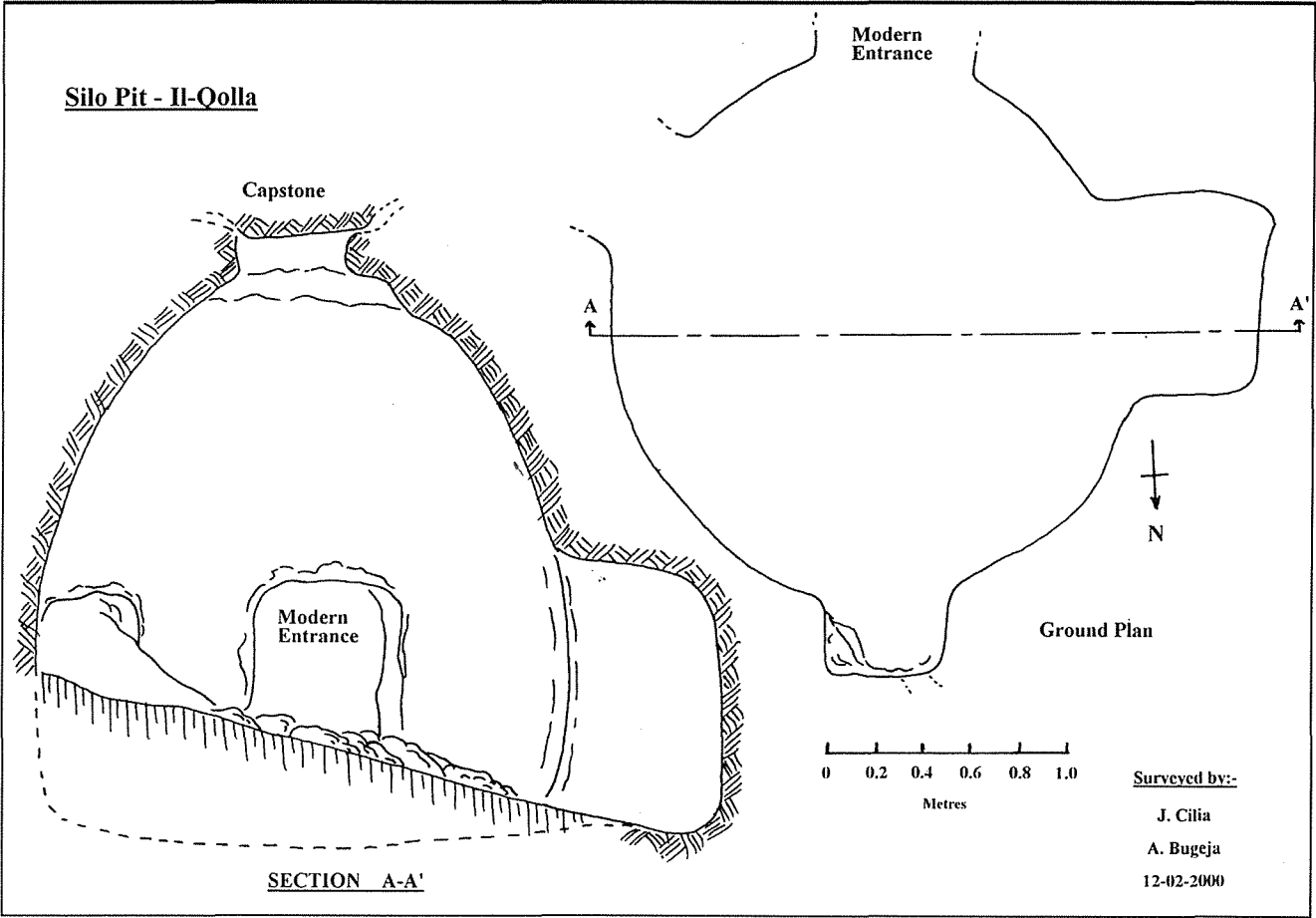


Figure 1: Sections of the silo pit with the covering slab still in situ



Plate 1: Capstone seen from interior of silo pit at il-Qolla (Photo: A. Bugeja)