

Fel uardiae col sceber raba iesue vquiae:
 Sale of Plots of Land in Valletta, 1569

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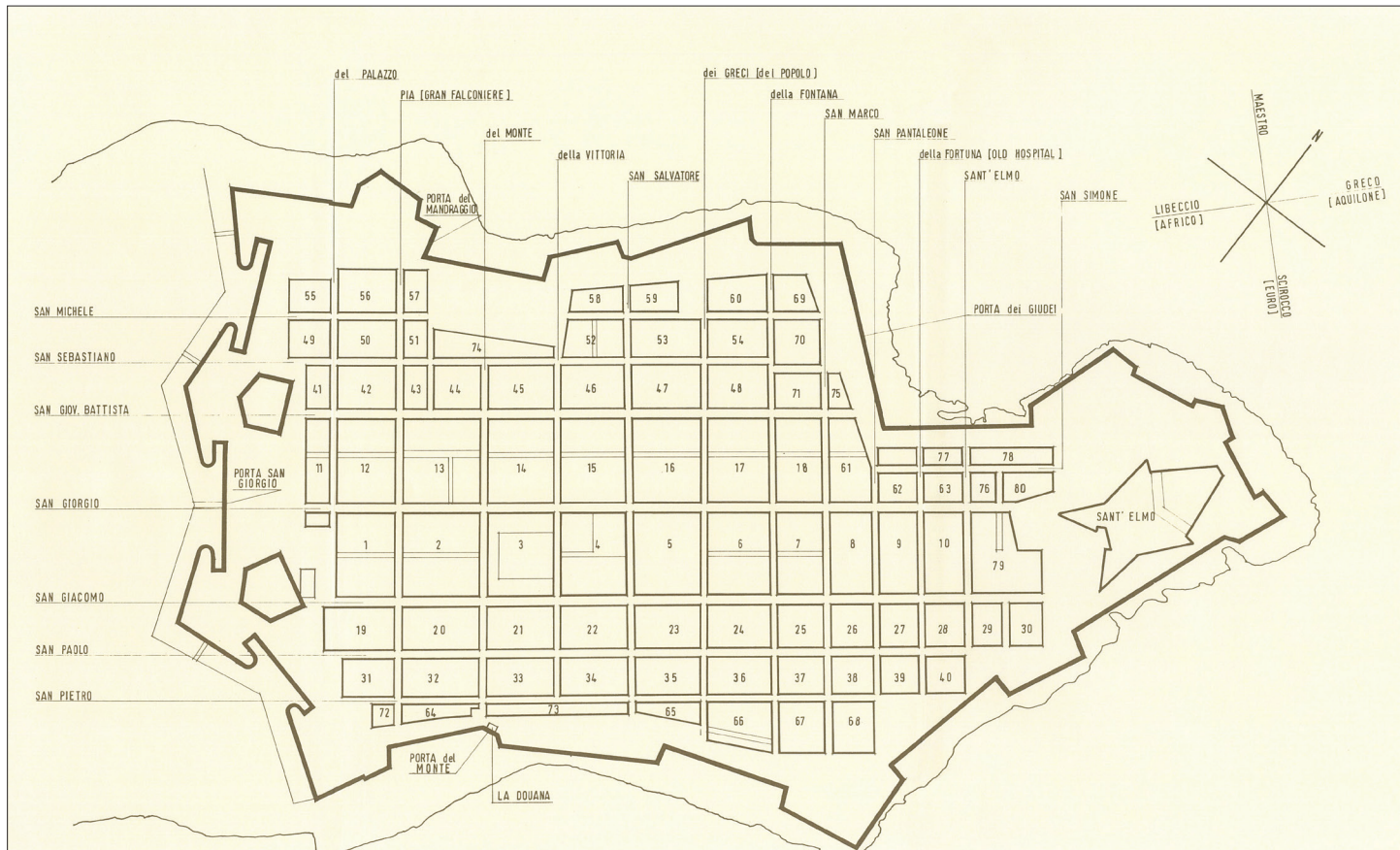


Fig. 1
 Valletta street plan
 showing block numbers,
 from *A City by an Order* by
 Roger de Giorgio (1985).
 (© Courtesy of Roger
 de Giorgio)

Giacomo Bosio so describes the value of land in the New City, citing the old Maltese proverb: *legi zimien en fel uardiaie / Col sceber raba iesue vquiaie*.¹ Following the resolution by the Council of the Order to build an *Urbs ad montem S. Elmi sive vulgo Sceberras construenda cui impositum est nomen Valletta*, and the laying of the foundation stone on the 28th March 1566 by Grand Master Jean de Valette,² various other important mile-stone decisions were taken, starting in September 1566 with the election of Fra Raimondo Fortuin and Fra Pietro Filippo della Cornia as Commissioners for the building of the new city,³ the appointment of Commissioners to discover who had property rights on the Xiberras Peninsula,⁴ and the entrusting of the same Commissioners with the task of determining the value of the land.⁵ In less than four years from the lifting of the Great Siege on the 8th September 1565, work on the Valletta fortifications was sufficiently advanced to permit the start of the construction of edifices within the enceinte according to the plan of Francesco Laparelli.⁶

Among the earliest contracts of land concessions on Xiberras - *el guardia te Xiberras*⁷ - one finds an entire register of 890 folios in the acts of Notary Placido Abela (R4/2) dedicated exclusively to this purpose; it contains 573 contracts covering the years 1569-76.⁸ The object of this brief paper is to give the flavour of these concessions by presenting the earliest contracts of 1569, even if these are not the very first purchases.⁹

A summary of these contracts (which are written, as usual, in Latin) is presented in the table in Fig. 3, in which the successive columns indicate: (1) the contract label in the register, (2) the register folio number, (3) the date, (4) the name of the purchaser, (5) the block number of the site according to Laparelli's plan of the city (Fig. 1), (6) the number of square canes of the plot purchased, and (7) the neighbouring sites in clockwise order starting with *euro seu syrocco* (S.E.), followed by *africo seu lybici* (S.W.), *cauro seu maestro* (N.W.) and *aquilone seu greco* (N.E.). This information permits a reconstruction of all neighbourhoods as illustrated for Block 21 (Fig. 2), bound by St Paul's Street (*Strata S. Pauli*) [39.4 canes], St John's Street (*Strata Montis*) [25 canes], Merchants Street (*Strata S. Jacobi*) [41 canes], and St Lucia Street (*Strata Sancte Marie Victorie*) [25 canes]. Most border discrepancies can be explained by the fact that not all sites were purchased at the same time, so that some neighbouring sites appear as unoccupied in the earlier contract.

The Street-names of Valletta: 1569

Along the main axis starting at the S.E.

Strata S. Petri [49]	Triq Sant'Ursula
Str. S. Pauli [2]	Triq San Pawl
Str. S. Jacobi [1]	Triq il-Merkanti
Str. S. Georgii [62]	Triq ir-Republika
Str. S. Joannis [266]	Triq il-Fran
Str. S. Sebastiani [84]	Triq Zekka
Str. S. Michaelis [118]	Triq il-Punent

Transverse streets starting at the S.W.

Str. Palatii [82]	Triq Nofs in-Nhar
Str. Pia [127]	Triq Melita
Str. Montis [2]	Triq San Gwann
Str. S. Mar. Victorie [1]	Triq Santa Lucija
Str. SS. Salvatoris [16]	Triq it-Teatru
Str. Populi [47]	Triq l-Arcisqof
Str. Fontis [35]	Triq San Kristofru
Str. S. Marci [62]	Triq San Duminku
Str. S. Pantaleonis [157]	Triq San Nikola
Str. della Fortuna [316]	Triq l-Isptar

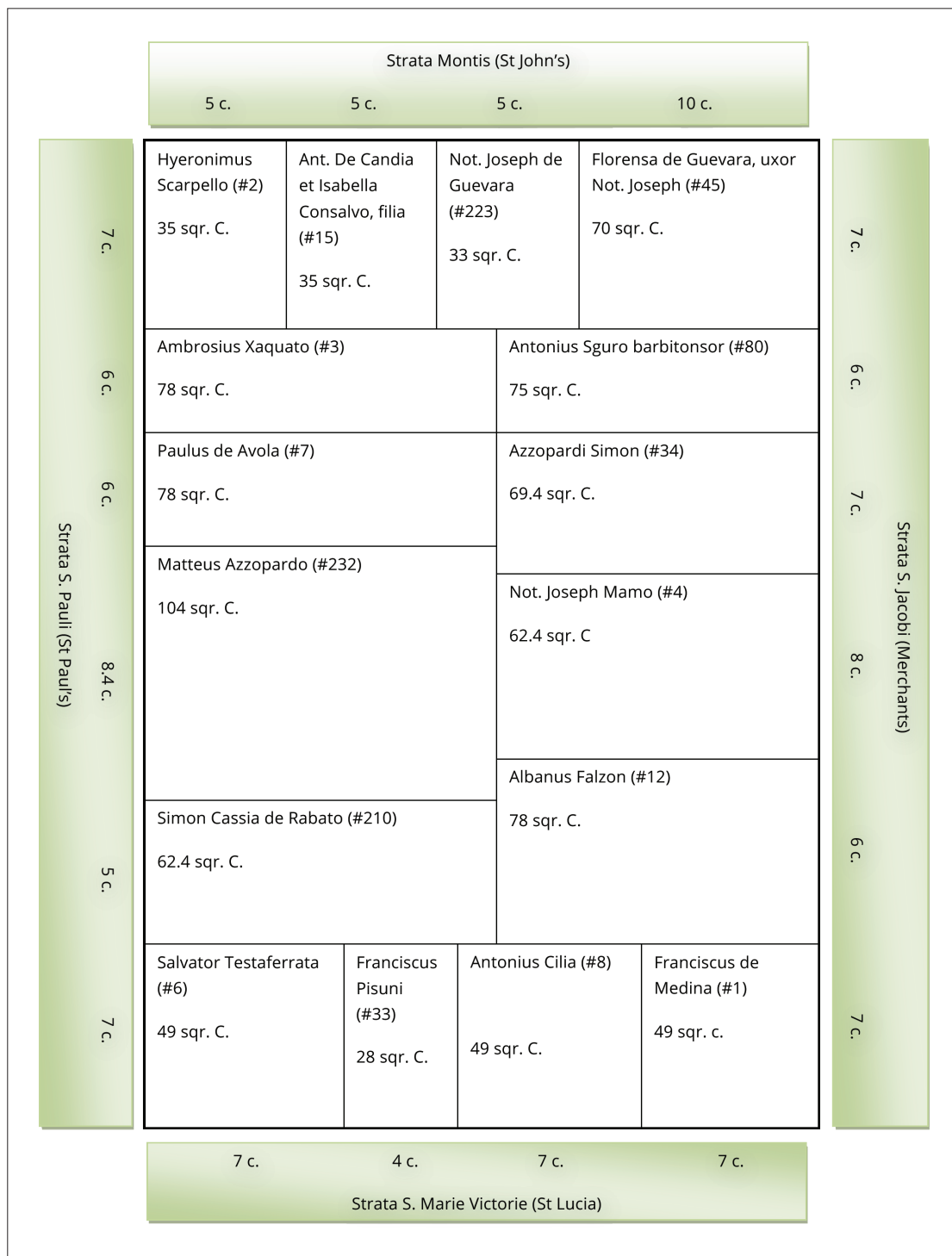


Fig. 2
Block 21.

Fig. 3
Seventy-five Valletta
sites.

Concessions of building sites in Valletta						
No.	fol.	date	Purchaser	Block	sqr. canes	Scirocco
1	1	23.vii.	M. Franciscus de Medina	21	49	Chilia [8]a
2	3	28.vii.	M. Hyeronimus Scarpello	21	35	Str[ata] S. Pauli
3	5		Ambrosius Xaquato	21	78	Str. S. Pauli
4	7		Not. Joseph Mamo (Melit.)	21	62.4	//...// (sic)
5	9		M. Petrus Prat	22	35	Falzon [13]
6	11		Salvator Testaferrata	21	49	Str. S. Pauli
7	13		Paolus De Avola	21	78	Str. S. Pauli
8	15		Antonius Chilia	21	49	Pisuni [33]
9	17		M. Michael Chilia	22	36	Str. S. Pauli
10	19		M. Joannes Sammut (Melit.)	22	36	Str. S. Pauli
11	21		Stammatus Dalli	22	28	Str. S. Pauli
12	23	29.vii.	Albanus Falzon	21	78	//...// (sic)
13	25		Joseph Falzon Casalis Safi	22	15	Xiriha [14]
14	27		Petrus Xiriha	22	15	{Cassar [170]}
15	29		Hysabella de Carlo	21	36	Scarpello [2]
16	31		M. Joannes Coscuso	35	18	//...// (sic)
17	33		M. Petrus Cotardo	35	36	Baldaquino [87]
18	35		M. Ludovicus Bonello	23	27	Testaferrata [40]
19	37		M. Simon Prevost	23	56	Xiclune [60]
20	39	30.vii.	M. Balthassar Miglau (Gallus)	22	91	//...// (sic)
21	41		Aloysietta Famiglomenio, filia Joannis	20	50	Antonia Famigliomeni, soror
22	43		Magdalena Burassana	20	37.4	Str. S. Pauli
23	45		M. Antonius Miglau (Rodius)	20	43.4	Str. S. Pauli
24	47		Cosmas Castillon (Melit.)	20	40	Caravaschino [31]
25	49		M Augustinus Ysore cyurgicus	32	44	S[patium] V[acuum]
26	51		M. Angelus de Parisi cyurgicus	32	55	S.V.
27	53		M. Dimitrius Zorbi	23	28	Bezine / Xiclune [28,60]]
28	55		Lucas Bezina stagni faber	23	27	Bonello [18]
29	57	2.viii.	Antonius Condo	22	70	//...// (sic)
30	59		Dimitrius Berrectari	20	38.6	Str. S. Pauli
31	61		Uguettus Caravaschino (Gallus)	20	25	Str. S. Pauli
32	63		Paula Dalli	6	40	Petraci [126]
33	65		M. Franciscus Pizuni	21	28	Testaferrata [6]
34	67		Simon Azzopardo	21	69.4	//...// (sic)
35	69		Antonia de Amico	18	24	Vasco [86]

36	71	M. Sebastianus Balzan	22	75	Str. S. Pauli
37	73	Martinus Jaket	22	35	Guimes [44]
38	75	Antonius et Petrus Testaferrata	22	56	Str. S. Pauli
39	77	Jacobus Testaferrata	22	45	Str. S. Pauli
40	79	Alphonsus Testaferrata	23	27	Cassar
41	81	Antonius de Laude aromatarius	22	42	Jaket [37]
42	83	Antonius de Laudo aromatarius	22	39	Testaferrata [39]
43	85	M. Joannes Xiclune cerdo de Rabato	33	18	//...// (sic)
44	87	3.viii. Petrus Guymes	22	21	Fava [46]
45	89	Not. J. Deguivara pro uxore Flora	21	70	Valerius Micallef
46	91	M. Antonius Fava	22	21	Testaferrata [38]
47	93	Joanna Farrugia	30	24	Laurer [58]
48	95	M. Julianus Felici	34	36	S.V.
49	97	Catarina Francella	66	90.2	S.V.
50	89v	3.viii M. Petrus Chambani	32	49	Salivora [51]
51	100	M. Michael Salivora	32	115	Str. S. Petri
52	101v	M. Jacobus Pulladi	34	55	S.V.
53	103	Hyppolitus Callusio	20	37	Str. S. Pauli
54	104v	Julius Fazi	20	49	Russo [55]
55	106	Camillus Russo	20	38.4	//...// [23]
56	107v	Joannes Pangalo	20	37.4	Str. S. Pauli
57	109	M. Tucius Bonello	6	36	Str. S. Jacobi
58	110v	M. Gregorius Laurer	35	48	Str. S. Petri
59	112	M. Joannes Xicluna	23	36	M. Balthassar Azzopardo
60	113	M. Matteus Xicluna	23	36	Xicluna [59]
61	114	4.viii Donatus Fayenza	23	52.4	Bezina [28]
62	115v	Brandan Bonnici custos Rel. Hyerosol.	18	54	Str. S. Georgii
63	117	Hyeronima Garibo	18	55	Bonnici [62]
64	118v	Michael Niquita (de Rodo)	32	38	Str. S. Petri
65	120	Antonia Famiglomeni pro sua filia	20	50	Str. S. Pauli
66	121	Catarina Galantena	20	50	Str. S. Pauli
67	123	Andriana de Lango	36	55	S.V.
68	124v	M. Joannes de Verdun	20	87.4	//...// (sic)
69	126	8.viii Hector Smiraldi	6	63	Str. S. Jacobi
70	127v	Madonna Burassana (Rodia)	6	55	Smiraldi [69]
71	129	Paulus Bellia	52	44	//...// (sic)
72	130v	Cali de Rodo	66	38	S.V.
73	132	M. Andreas Cassar	23	30	Str. S. Pauli
74	134	11.viii Marietta de Falsono	6	54	Smiraldi [69]
75	135	12.viii Bartolomeus de Brandis	36	80	S.V. {Dingli [185]}

a. Numerals in square brackets are cross-references to corresponding entries.

Fig. 4
Seventy-five Valletta
sites conjugate.

Registrations in the acts of Notary Placido Abela during 1569			
Libeccio	Maestro	Greco	No.
Falzone [12]	Str. S. Jacobi	Str. S. Me Victorie	1
Str. Montis	de Carlo [15]	Xaquato [3]	2
Scarpello [2]	de Guevara [45]	Davola [7]	3
Azzopardo [34]	Str. S. Jacobi	Falzon [12]	4
Str. Victorie	Str. S. Jacobi	Aloysius Mauromati	5
{Paulus Bellia}	Pisuni [33]	Str. S. Me Victorie	6
Xaquato [3]	Sguro [80] / Mamo [4]	S.V.	7
Falzon [12]	de Medina [1]	Str. S. Me Victorie	8
Dalli [11]	//...// (sic)	Testaferrata [39]	9
Babtista Azzopardo	//...// (sic)	Dalli [11]	10
Sammut [10]	//...// (sic)	Chilia [9]	11
Mamo [4]	Str. S. Jacobi	de Medina [1]	12
Str. S. Me Victorie	Prat [5]	M. Aloysius Mauromati	13
Str. S. Me Victorie	Falzone [13]	A. Mauromati & S. Balzan	14
Str. Montis	{Valerius Michallef JUD}	//...// (sic)	15
Str. SS. Salvatoris	Platea et Str. S. Pauli	Xiclune [59]	16
M. Demetrius Bezine	Str. S. Pauli	Str. Populi	17
Platea et forum	de Bizini [28]	Xiclone [60]	18
Fayensa [61]	Str. S. Jacobi	Str. Populi	19
Pulladi [52]	Str. S. Jacobi	Condo [29]	20
Pellegrino [158]	Str. S. Jacobi	M. Petrus Paganello	21
Pangalo [56]	//...// [55]	Miglau [23]	22
Burassana [22]	//...// [55]	Berrectari [30]	23
Russo [55]	Russo [160]	Str. Montis	24
Philippus Bellia	Str. S. Pauli	Ponzella [150]	25
de Candia [116]	Str. S. Pauli	Philippus Bellia	26
Fayenza [61]	Str. S. Jacobi	Prevost [19]	27
platea	Fayenza [61]	Xiclune [60]	28
Miglau [20]	Str. S. Jacobi	M. Antonius de Laude	29
Miglau [23]	//...// (sic)	M. Blasius de Ramundo	30
de Jasmundo [106]	Castillon [24]	Str. Montis	31
Str. S. Pauli	Joannes Calamia	//...// (sic)	32
Paulus Bellia	Antoninus Cilia	Str. S. Me Victorie	33
Sguro [80]	[Str. S. Jacobi]	[Mamo] [4]	34
Str. Fontis	Margaron Obpon	//...// (sic)	35

Chilia [81]	//...// (sic)	Babtista Azzopardo	36
//...// (sic)	de Lauda [42]	platea	37
Testaferrata [39]	Fava [46]	platea	38
Chilia [9]	//...// (sic)	Testaferrata [38]	39
platea	Bonello [18]	Xicluna [59]	40
Laude [42]	Str. S. Jacobi	Platea et Str. Salvatoris	41
Condo [29]	Str. S. Jacobi	Antonius de Laudo	42
Coscuso [16]	Platea et Str. S. Pauli	Not. Jac. de Baldaquino	43
//...// (sic)	Jaket [37]	Platea et Str. Salvatoris	44
Str. Montis	Str. S. Jacobi	Sguro [80]	45
Lauda [42]	Guymes [44]	platea	46
M. Joannes Dingli	Antonius Baldachino	Str. Populi	47
Farrugia [90]	Str. S. Pauli	Str. SS. Salvatoris	48
{M. Sevasto de Lango}	Str. S. Petri	Str. Fontis	49
Ponzella [150]	Str. S. Pauli	Str. Montis	50
Niquita [64]	Chambani [50]	Str. Montis	51
Michael Maniero	Str. S. Pauli	Romadian [234]	52
Galantina [66]	//...// [68]	Pangalo [56]	53
Virdun [68]	Str. S. Jacobi	Camillus Russo	54
Virdun [68]	Fazi [54]	solum eiusdem emptoris	55
Callusio [53]	//...// [68]	Burassana [22]	56
Haxixa [89]	S.V.	Smiraldo [69]	57
M. Joannes Dingli	Joanna Farrugia	Str. Populi	58
//...// (sic)	Xicluna [60]	Str. Populi	59
//...// (sic)	Prevost [19]	Str. Populi	60
platea	Str. S. [Jacobi]	Zorbi [27]	61
M. Ambrogius Mangion	Garibo [63]	Str. S. Marci	62
Vasco [86]	S.V.	Str. S. Marci	63
S.V.	Peralta [125]	S.V.	64
Petrachi [127]	Famiglomeni [21]	Galantina [66]	65
Famigliomeni [65]	//...// (sic)	Callusio [53]	66
M. Guillelmus Farruge	Str. S. Pauli	S.V.	67
M. Pet. Paganello /			
M. Passinus de Joanne	Str. S. Jacobi	Fazi [54]	68
Bonello [57]	Burassana [22]	Str. Fontis	69
//...// (sic)	Falzon [74]	Str. Fontis	70
Parisi [8]	Str. S. Pauli	Ysore [25]	71
Laurer [58]	Str. S. Petri	Marc. Ant. Sandorognino	72
M. Jacobus Cassar	M. Ambrosius Laurer	Str. Populi	73
S.V.	dicta vanella	Str. Fontis	74
Str. S. Pauli	Str. Populi	S.V.	75

The full list of street names gleaned from Placido Abela's contracts, with their corresponding present-day names are as in this table which also gives, in parentheses, the contract number of the first occurrence of the name. An explanation and description of the old street names is given in Abela's *Descrittione* of 1647, which he claims that he unearthed *da un disegno antico perche non se ne perda la memoria affatto*.¹⁰ Abela includes a few street names that do not transpire from the notary's first register. These are (i) *S. Luigi, dalla dogana fino alla prigione degli schiavi (Triq il-Lvant)*, *Di S. Elmo, dal monastero delle Convertite fino al muro delle forfici (Triq it-Tramuntana)*,¹¹ and (iii) *Di S. Simone, che dalla strada sotto S. Elmo conduce ale casette, che sono di contro al muro delle forfici (Triq il-Mediterran ?)*.

Abela's list is essentially the same as that earlier one described by Pietro Parisi, the doctor of the plague of 1591.¹² One can see that most street names have changed. A notable exception is *Strata S. Pauli / Triq San Pawl*, which has remained entirely intact. Folk reference to '*Fuq il-Monti*' may go back to the days before the *Monte di Pietà* and may link with the old name of St John's Street as *Strata Montis*, possibly referring to the saddled ridge or, more likely, was dedicated to the reigning Grand Master Pietro Del Monte (1568-1572). The neighbourhood of the 'old fountain' (below the Archbishop's Palace) is still known locally as *Triq il-Għajn*, whereas *Strata Fontis* used to be the whole of Archbishop's Street itself. Likewise, *Triq San Bastjan*, in the neighbourhood of *Il-Baviera*, must recall the old *Strata S. Sebastiani* which Abela describes as '*da gl'Albergia di Francia, fino alla fontana antica*', that is, present day *Triq il-Fran*, terminating there.

It is interesting to note that in the Valletta *Status Animarum* of 1687 the descriptions of the city's streets practically ignore the street names as given in Placido Abela / Pietro Parisi / Gian Francesco Abela, except for the oblique references to *forbici* and to the *fontana*.¹³ In both, however, there are references to various *vanelle* (minor thoroughfares, lanes, alley-ways, *culs-de-sac*)¹⁴ possibly accounting for *Triq id-Dejqa*, *Triq San Żakkarija* and others. These would have been still in the process of formation in 1569. Thus, for instance, entry #74, referring to Block 6 bounded by *Str. S. Georgii*, *Str. Populi*, *Str. S. Jacobi* and *Str. Fontis*, describes the plot purchased by Marietta de Falsono as being bounded on its N.W. side by a *vanella* and by *Str. Fontis* on its N.E. side. This *vanella* would, therefore, correspond to present-day *Triq San Federiku*. Other thoroughfares are sometimes referred to by the Spanish term *calle* (## 79, 98), and there was also a *plaza / platea* related to *Str. S. Pauli* (## 100, 166). References to the *Platea S. Pauli* occur on Blocks 23 and 35, both of which are laterally bounded by *Str. SS. Salvatoris* and *Str. Populi*. The plaza, therefore stood on the site of the present covered market.

A published transcription *in extenso* of one of these contracts appears in Lorenzo Schiavone's work on the Auberge d'Italie.¹⁵ It refers to entry #121 which describes the purchase of the original site for the Italian *auberge*, being situated in *Quarto 5*, bounded on two of its sides by *Strata S. Georgii* and *Strata Populi*, standing, therefore, on the corner facing *Pjazza San Ġorġ* on what is today part of the Presidential Palace. From this transcript one can see how these contracts contain much more information than what is being presented here for brevity's

sake. Details that emerge from these contracts, for instance, include (i) in the case of female buyers,¹⁶ the names of male procurators (*mundualdi*) appearing for them; (ii) the trade or profession and/or the provenance of the buyer is often indicated; and (iii) further to the size in square canes (indicated),¹⁷ the linear measurement (in *canne* and *palmi*, of 8 *palmi* to the *canna* [= 2.064 m.]) parallel to the thoroughfares is also given; this is indicated for the plots described in the plan of Block (*Quatra*) 21.

Each contract obviously includes the price (in scudi, tarì and grani) paid for the plot. This last important piece of information is omitted from the table because it can be deduced from the size of the plot. Land was selling at the very uniform flat rate of 2 *tareni ad cannam*,¹⁸ irrespective of the site, whether on *Triq ir-Repubblika (Strata S. Georgi)* or *L-Arcipielgu (Strata Fontis)*. Thus, the price paid for the whole of Block 19 (the site of the Auberge de Castille and León and Portugal, contract #122), covering 1025 sq. canes was a measly 102.10 scudi. This ridiculously low price was far below that envisaged by the medieval prophecy of an '*uqija kull xiber*' in the title of this paper. The *qasba* (square cane) of 64 (square *palmi*, *xbar*) would have fetched 64 *uqijat*, each worth 30 tarì, or 1,920 tarì (*irbieghi*), 960 times as much! This amounts to £120 stg. in pre-war currency (recall: 1 *rbieghi* = 1s. 3d., stg.). The Middle Ages prophecy was far-sighted indeed and must have been looking forward to the twentieth century!

These contracts constitute the earliest history of the various Valletta edifices. Further to the Auberge de Castille facing *plateam ad menia*, noted, and the purchase of land for the original *auberge* of Italy, the acquisition of various sites for the other *auberges* is also to be found in this register. Thus, for instance, one can cite *Fratres Ven. Lingue Aragonie, Cathalonie et Navarre pro eorum albergia* (#118), Fra Maturinus Lescaut *dictus Romegas pro Ven. Lingua Provincie* (#357), *Ven. Lingua Alemanie* (ff.212, 374-5v.), *Fratres Ven. Lingue Francie* (ff.332v.-4), and others. Likewise, most religious orders are encountered purchasing sites for their residences: (1) The Carmelites in July 1570 (#196, ff.336-7v.); (2) The Dominicans in April 1571 (#314, ff.492-3); (3) The Augustinians in May 1571 (#327, ff.509v.-10) and, in the same month, (4) the Franciscans Observant (#339, ff.520v.-8); (5) On the 9th March 1579, Bishop Gargallo offered Fr Emanuel Ximenes S.J. the house he had built for himself in which to found the intended Jesuit College. It is described as *in quarterio Palatii Magistralis in quatro XV^o confinatum ab euro secus Stratam S. Georgii ... ab aquilone secus domos Della Cornia* (ff.878-90).

The later development of these and other important buildings has been discussed by various authors including Mgr Alfredo Mifsud¹⁹ and, notably, by Victor F. Denaro.²⁰ Thus, for instance, in the example just cited of Block 19, purchased by the Langue of Castille, there is no hint of a later important subdivision of the site which, by 1608, Denaro notes had come to include Palazzo Parisio.²¹ Staying on Merchants Street, it is also clear, from contracts ##55, 160, how the land on which the imposing Castellania Palace now stands had been originally bought by Camillo Russo,²² and next door to it, Palazzo Dorell stands on land bought by Giulio Fazi (#54). Likewise, the corner house of Sir Oliver Starkey stands on land originally purchased by

Francisco de Medina (#1). On *Strata S. Pauli*, then, the Church of St Paul Shipwrecked stands on lands purchased originally by Gio. Batista Azzopardi (#138), Giovanni Sammut (#10), Stamati Dalli (#11) and Michael Cilia (#9).

The chronological listing of the contracts is highly suggestive of the order in which the various plots of land were made available for building. The initial terms of the sequence of first occurrences of block numbers - <21, 22, 35, 23, 20, 32, 6, 18, 30, 34, 66, 36, 52, 66, 61, 17, 43, 42, 15, 2 ...> - shows that the vast majority of plots sold in July and August 1569 lay in blocks to the S.E. of *Strata S. Georgii*, that is, on the Grand Harbour side of the principal axis of the city. The very few exceptions, lying on the N.W. side, tended to belong to members of the Order (##82-85, in blocks 15, 42, 43). If one scans the list for residences of knights one soon learns that they, practically all, were to be found in plots facing on *Strata S. Georgii* or in blocks to the N.W. of it (## 109, 112, 113, 117, 119, 121, 139, 149, 181, 186, in Blocks 4, 5, 15, 46, 59, 71).

The same can be said for all of the *auberges*, with the exception of Castille and the second (present-day) site of the Auberge d'Italie which, anyway, occupy prime sites near the entrance of the city. Thus, Aragon (Block 54), Provence (Block 13), Allemagne (Block 47), France (Block 42), Auvergne (Block 14) and Italy (original site, Block 5), all lie either on *Strata S. Georgii* or to the N.W. of it. This seems to have been reckoned as the more prestigious side of the new city, a fact which is confirmed by the occupations and provenance of the occupants of the other side - *tan-naħa l-oħra*.

By way of illustration, one notes several working-class people from the villages obtaining sites on the Grand Harbour side: *Lucas Bezine stagni faber* (#28), *Joannes Xiclune cerdo de Rabato* (#43), *Joseph Falzon Casalis Safi* (#13), *Joannes Tunne murator* (#77), *Antonius Carletto sartor* (#78), *Julianus Bigeni fornarius Casalis Curmi* (#129), *Joannes Barbara miles stipendiarius arcis S. Angeli* (#157), *Guillelmo Farruge bombarderi* (#142), *Leonardo Fiteni cerdo* (#147), *Theramo Haxixe Casalis Luca* (#407), *Geronimo Mallia Casalis Luca* (#155), *Franciscus Attard ligni faber* (#304), *Dimitrius berrectari incola Melitensis* (#30), *Nicolaus Xiberras carpinteri* (#368), *Simon Cassia de Rabato* (#210) etc., as well as some Maltese professionals such as *Notarius Joseph Mamo* (#4), *Notarius Joseph de Guevara* (## 45, 223), *Antonius Sguro barbitonsor* (#80), and Notary Placido Abela himself (#101). Many are simply designated as *Magister/Mastro*, abbreviated to *M./M^o*. There were also several Rhodiots who had come with the Order and had settled in Birgu²³ - Rhodius/Rhodia/de Rhodo (## 23, 64, 70, 107), *cirurgici* (## 25, 26), *aromatarii* (## 41, 42), *aurifex Rhodius* (#88), *cerdo Rhodius* (#93), *bombarderii Rhodii* (## 145, 146) - as well as several other foreigners in the employ of the Order: *Galli* (## 20, 31), *de Cipro* (#141), *Piemontese* (#148), *custos S.R.H.* (#62), *pylota triremis S. Johannis S.R.H.* (#93), *bombarderi Anglus* (#99), *scutifer* (#150), *guardiano del Porto della Valletta* (#156) and so on. Of interest also is the clustering of affined groups in the same locality, such as five *bombarderi* in quick succession (## 142-146), and four Rhodiots in the same Block 20 (## 21-3, 65).

By way of conclusion, some notable entries can be highlighted:

- (i) The signing of some of the contracts was effected *cum interventu* of various important personalities. Among these (1) *Magnificus Dominus Capitaneus Franciscus Laparelli uti commissarius ad distribuenda loca Civitatis Vallette deputatus* (f.13), and (2) *Magnificus architector Hieronymus Cassar* (f. 674v.).
- (ii) Contract #93 describes the site as *in quatro secundo et intus collachium*, showing that the Order's intention at that time was to have, in Valletta, a *collachium* (quarter reserved for the Order's exclusive use, as existed in Rhodes) even if this never materialized.
- (iii) A set of rules to be followed by all constructing sites in Valletta appears on the unlabelled folios after the initial index of the register.

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Notes

- 1 Giacomo Bosio, *Dell'Istoria della Sacra Religione ed Illustrissima Militia di S. Giovanni Gerosolimitano* (Roma, 1602) 745-746. A translation of the proverb would be: 'There will come a day when every span of land at the look-out will be worth an ounce'; 'span' can be either taken metaphorically or as an actual measurement equal to an eighth of a cane; '*uardiae*'/*Wardija*/*guardia* meant the place of the look-out, that is, on the Xiberras heights, later Valletta; '*vquiae*'/*ounce*/*uncia*/*uqija* was a medieval unit of currency worth five florins of Aragon or two and a half scudi of the Order's currency.
- 2 N[ational] L[ibrary of] M[alta], A[rchivum] O[r]dinis M[altae] 91, ff.163v.-164 (28.iii.1566).
- 3 NLM, AOM 91, f.174v. (18. ix. 1566).
- 4 NLM, AOM 91, f.179v. (30.xii.1566); published in R. De Giorgio, *A City by an Order* (Malta: Progress Press, 1985) 230, Doc. IX.
- 5 NLM, AOM 91, f.181 (5.ii.1567); published in De Giorgio, op. cit. (1985), 231, Doc. X.
- 6 A. Hoppen, *The fortification of Malta by the Order of St John* (Edinburgh, 1979), Chapter 4. Laparelli's plan is reproduced in Plate 2 (facing page 35).
- 7 G. Wettinger, *Place-names of the Maltese Islands: ca.1300-1800* (Malta, 2000), 565.
- 8 The continuation of these contracts is found in the following register R4/3 (1576-1595). The contracts are sequentially labelled in the register, a labelling that is adopted here.
- 9 De Giorgio, op. cit. (1985), 121.
- 10 G.F. Abela, *Della descrizione di Malta* (Malta: Paolo Bonacota, 1647) 10-11. Judging by the wording, it may well be that his source was precisely the plan used by Not. Placido Abela, also of Birgu.
- 11 The Italian word *forfici/forbici* has several meanings including the military term *opera alta di fortificazione, fatta innanzi ala cortina, con due gran punti somiglianti a quelle di una forbice aperta* (Tommaseo-Bellini), that is, a *tenaille*. Here it is, perhaps, referring to the S.E. spur of Fort St Elmo.
- 12 G. Bonello, 'The Voice of Valletta's Streets', *Histories of Malta: Deceptions and Perceptions*, Vol. I (Malta: Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti, 2000), 33-42, especially Table, page 38. Bonello cites P. Parisi, *Aggiunti agli avvertimenti sopra la peste* (Palermo: Gio. Ant. de Franceschi, 1603) 29-31.
- 13 S. Fiorini, 'Status Animarum: A census of 1687', *Proceedings of History Week 1984* (Malta: Historical Society, 1986), 41-100, especially page 49.
- 14 Cf. contracts ##74, 96, 151 *et passim*; #114 refers to a *vanella transversalis*.
- 15 L. Schiavone, 'Il primo albergo d'Italia a Valletta e i primi contributi per la sua costruzione', *Melita Historica*, X/1 (1988), 89-108, especially pages 91-93.
- 16 In this small sample one is struck by the appreciable number of land purchases by women: ##15, 21-2, 32, 35, 45, 47, 49, 63, 65-67, 70.
- 17 These range widely in size from a mere 15 *canne quadrate* (#159) to 1025 (#122), the site for the Auberge de Castille.
- 18 Exactly two exceptions have been noted in which the buyers paid at the rate of 3 *tari per canna* (##16, 18).
- 19 A. Mifsud, 'Le residenze dei cavalieri di S. Giovanni in Malta', in G. Muscat, *Guida di Malta e Gozo* (Malta: Tip. The Malta Herald', 1916) 1-16.
- 20 A series of six articles in *Melita Historica* (1958-1963) – II/3, 158-171; II/4, 201-215; III/1, 1-4; III/2, 1-8; III/3, 42-58; III/4, 15-32 - subsequently collected in the publication by Victor F. Denaro, *The Houses of Valletta* (Malta: Progress Press, 1967).
- 21 Victor F. Denaro, 'Houses in Merchants Street, Valletta', *Melita Historica*, II/3 (1958), 158-159.
- 22 Ibid, 159-161. Denaro traces its subsequent development from the time of La Cassière to the present.
- 23 For this community, cf. S. Fiorini, 'The Rhodiot Community of Birgu, a Maltese City: 1530-c.1550', *Library of Mediterranean History*, I (1994), 183-241. Several of the Rhodiots taking up residence in Valletta can be traced to the Birgu community, such as the Famigliomeni (#21), Condo (#29), Calamia (#244), de Verra (#456), and the two brothers Papás Angelino and Papás Manoli Metaxí (#140).