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GIOVANNI FRANCESCO ABELA'S LEGACY
TO THE JESUIT COLLEGE

Introduction

It would have been much more appropriate if this paper had been given in last year's History Week but at the time the idea of it had not yet been conceived. 1982 marked the fourth centenary of the birth of Giovanni Francesco Abela who was born in Valletta in the year 1582, barely 17 years after that most notable and noble event in Maltese history, the Great Siege of Malta by the Turks (1). However, though the latter event was deservedly commemorated, not the slightest commemoration was, to my knowledge, made in celebration of the birth of this distinguished Maltese forebear. No stamp was issued. No publication compiled in his honour, as had been done in 1955, on the occasion of the centenary of his death (2).

Nonetheless, Abela is still revered as one of the greatest personalities that left their mark on the history of the Maltese islands. Given the minute size of this nation, the stature of this great man gains further in monumentality. His achievement as the first Maltese historian has been recognized both locally and abroad. His work is still an important source of first-hand information on a number of subjects of Melitensia, such as folklore, placenames, the Maltese language, history and archaeology. His *Description of the Maltese Islands* (3) was translated into Latin by G.A. Seinerio in 1725, Latin being the universal language of science and culture of that time. This translation was incorporated in Graefe's *Thesaurus antiquitatum et historiarum Italiae* (4).

Abela's personal attainment after his education in Malta and abroad is not a negligible one. He became Auditor of Grand Master de Paula, Chaplain and finally Vice Chancellor of the Order of Saint John, an extremely prominent

1. On the life and career of G. F. Abela see I. S. Mifsud, *Biblioteca Maltese*, Malta 1764, pp.231-265: by any standard the best biography of Abela, compiled by Canon G. F. Agius de Soldanis.
2. E. V. Leopardi *et al.*, *Gian Francesco Abela, Essays in his honour by members of the "Malta Historical Society" on the occasion of the Third Centenary of his death (1655-1955)*, Malta 1961.
3. G. F. Abela, *Della Descrittione di Malta, Isola nel Mare Siciliano con le sue Antichità, ed altre Notizie*, Malta 1647.
4. J. G. Graevius, *Thesaurus antiquitatum et historiarum Italiae, Neapolis, Sardiniae, Corsicae, Melitae atque adjacentium terrarum insularumque*, vol. XXIII, Leiden 1725, pp.1-8, coll. 1-468. Another edition of Abela's work was undertaken by Petrus Vander, who dedicated it to Do Hermannus Boerhave, entitled *Descriptio Melitae atque adjacentium insularum...*, Leiden, n.d., which contains maps of Malta and Valletta by P. Vander and different versions of Abela's illustrations of Maltese antiquities

status in an institution which admitted far too few men of Maltese origin (5). He is also remembered as the promoter of the first Notarial Archives for Malta (6). But it is Abela the antiquarian, the collector of, and commentator on ancient objects that concerns this brief paper. The word 'antiquarian', one must admit, implies negative, outdated attitudes disdained by modern academic insitutions and scientific approach (7). But Abela was an antiquarian in the positive sense. He was a pioneer, a precursor in the study of Maltese antiquties. He was an archaeologist *ante litteram*. He showed interest in field exploration, which was destined to develop into modern field archaeology only following the experience of Heinrich Schliemann in Troy and Mycene and of other 19th century explorers of ancient civilisations. His appreciation and interpretation of ancient 'objects d'art' preceded by more than a century J.J. Winckelmann's establishing of ancient art criticism and history on a solid foundation.

Gian Francesco Abela visited archaeological sites on the islands and made some very valuable observations. He appears to have been the first to note that the ancient temple of Hercules was to be identified with the remains on the hill at Tas-Silg rather than those of Borg in-Nadur (8). At Tas-Silg he observed foundations and courses of stones 'ben lavorate e messe insieme', and in support of his identification he recorded the discovery of 'medaglie, pezzi di statue d'idoletti, e d'altre cose, minimi avanzi di quella vana gentilità e falsa religione, quivi ritrovate sotto il Magistero del Principe Wignacourt, mentre alcuni nell'istesso luogo cavando, scioccamente pensavano far acquisto di ricco tesoro' (9). We cannot help noticing in the same sentence on the one hand Abela's unrestrained prejudice against pagan religions (readily condoned in view of his religious background and that of the readers of his book even though it smacks of unscientific bias) and, on the other, a sure sign of 'antiquarian' maturity in his reproach directed against treasure hunters.

Abela also showed awareness of the potential archaeological connotations in some Maltese placenames, such as: Sciat el Kuabar (10), Hagar Kim (11), Hagira tal Usif (12), Ghajn Hammam (13), Ras el Chnejjes (14), Kibur elihut (15),

5. Mifsud, *Biblioteca*, pp.236-241; Leopardi, *G. F. Abela*, pp.9-11.
6. Mifsud, *Biblioteca*, p.245; Leopardi, *G. F. Abela*, p.11
7. See, for instance, M. Pallottino, *Che Cos'È L'Archeologia*, Firenze 1968, pp.59-70; Glyn. E. Daniel, *A Hundred Years of Archaeology*, London 1950, pp.13-56.
8. See A. Bonanno, "Quintinus and the location of the temple of Hercules at Marsaxlokk", *Melita Historica*, VIII, no .3,p.15.
9. Abela, *Descrittione*, p.108.
10. *Ibid.*, p.16.
11. *Ibid.*, p.99.
12. *Ibid.*, p.23.
13. *Ibid.*, p.33.
14. *Ibid.*, p.69.
15. *Ibid.*, p.82.

Dokiena (16), and rightly interpreted the toponym Misakfa (Imsaqqa) as referring to 'una grande pietra, sollevata da terra, et alloggiata sopra d'altre non men grandi', that is, a dolmen (17).

Perhaps the worst aspects of the antiquarian in Abela come to the fore in such interpretations as those attributing the impressive prehistoric buildings of Malta to a race of giants which, in his view and in that of his contemporaries, had inhabited the Maltese islands (18). Hagar Qim, in fact, is described as nothing less than 'rovine tutte d'un edificio de' Giganti' (19).

We do not know whether Abela ever conducted any excavations himself but he certainly did collect objects which he thought to be ancient. In this respect he is the first Maltese collector of antiquities known to us, even though a century earlier the Frenchman Quintinus declared to have in his possession an ancient Maltese coin with the Greek legend MELITAION (20). We Maltese should be even more gratefully appreciative of Abela's efforts in this field since his personal collection of antiquities was destined to form the nucleus around which our nation's collection of archaeological objects, the National Museum of Archaeology, was to develop (21).

The first step in this direction was taken by Abela in 1637 when, at the age of 55, he bequeathed to the College of the Jesuit Fathers in Valletta the perpetual administration and usufruct of his house and garden on the hill called 'ta' Cortin' in the Marsa harbour (22). This was done by means of a deed of a rather complex nature which today constitutes the core of a group of documents connected with this bequest preserved in the National Library of Malta (23). The manuscript in question is no doubt the original deed for it

16. *Ibid.*, pp.98, 101.

17. Several more placenames of archaeological value have been traced in late Medieval documents by G. Wettinger, "Some Maltese Medieval place-names of archaeological interest", *Atti del Colloquio Internazionale di Archeologia Medievale (Palermo-Erice 20-22 Sett. 1974)*, Palermo 1976, pp.329-365.

18. Abela, *Descrittione*, pp.145-148.

19. *Ibid.*, p.99.

20. J. Quintinus, *Melitae Insulae Descriptio ex commentariis rerum quotidianarum*, Lyons 1536, f.B1v. See also H.C.R. Vella, *The Earliest Description of Malta (Lyons 1536)*, Malta 1980, pp.26-27.

21. G. A. Ciantar, *Malta Illustrata*, Malta 1772, p. X; Mifsud, *Biblioteca*, p.249; A. A. Caruana, *Ancient Pottery from the Ancient Pagan Tombs and Christian Cemeteries in the Islands of Malta*, Malta 1899, p.1; R. Bonnici Calj, 'The corner-stone of the Malta Museum', in Leopardi, *G. F. Abela*, pp.70-81.

22. Later known as Jesuits Hill, to-day covered to a great extent by the Electricity Generating Station.

23. N.L.M. Treasury A, Ms. 115, ff. xiii-xviii. Transcripts also in Treasury A, Ms. 114, ff.13, 205v-206v. I am very much indebted to Dr. G. Wettinger for his precious help in my search for these documents.

carries Abela's own signature and the seal of the Grand Master (24). The seal bears the effigy of Grand Master Joannes Paulus Lascaris Castellar in three-quarter view (25). The seven page document is written on an extremely fine quality and beautifully preserved parchment which on one side has assumed an attractive golden patina.

Brief Description of Documents

The Jesuit Fathers appear to have been entrusted with the safekeeping of the original document since the group to which it belongs is bound in the first of three volumes constituting the "Acta Collegii Melitensis Soc. Jesu" (26). The group contains, in this order, the following documents all of which were to be found among the deeds of Notary Michele Ralli:-

- 1) Donation, dated 10 July 1627, of a "clausura di terra" on the hill 'tal-Cortin' by Abela to the Conventual Church of the Order of St. John. The deed contains also a copy in Italian of Abela's petition ('supplica') which had been presented to the Council of the Order on 6 November 1626. (27)
- 2) The main document which constitutes the original contract by which Abela donated the perpetual administration and usufruct of the same property to the Jesuits' College. The document consists of:
 - a) a preamble in Italian dated 1 October 1637;
 - b) a copy of the petition in Latin made to the Council of the Order for permission to change the dispositions of the previous (1627) donation so that i. the usufruct be given to the Jesuits; ii. a piece of land be added to the 'viridarium' for the construction of a chapel; and iii. the property should remain in the possession of the Cappella di S. Giacomo in the same Conventual Church;
 - c) the forwarding of the petition by the Grand Master on 10 June 1637;
 - d) a favourable decision taken by the Council of the Order on 19 June 1637;
 - e) the consent given by the Grand Master on 18 September 1637 on the Papal authority given by means an Apostolic Brief;
24. Consequently, this document can be used to compare the autograph manuscripts in the National Library attributed to Abela: see A. Luttrell, "Girolamo Manduca and Gian Francesco Abela: tradition and invention in Maltese historiography" *Melita Historica*, VII, no. 2, 1977, pp.106-107, notes 4-6.
25. Unfortunately the upper part of the head, including the left ear, and the lower part of the chest, showing the eight-pointed cross of the Order, are missing.
26. N.L.M., Treasury A, Mss. 114, 115, 116.
27. N.L.M., Treasury A, Ms. 115, ff. xiiir-xiiiv.

- f) the text of the Apostolic Brief released on 30 July 1637 from Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome;
 - g) a reference back to e);
 - h) the deed itself (in Italian) with the motives, conditions, obligations and signatures;
 - i) the countersignature and seal of Grand Master Lascaris Castellar given in 'Conventu nostro' on 5 January 1638 (uncorrected 1637). (28)
- 3) The contract by which the Venerable College of the Jesuit Fathers took possession of the viridarium at il Cortin on the very day of Abela's death, that is, 4 May 1655. (29)

Motivations, Conditions and Obligations

The motivation behind the original (1627) legacy is given as Abela's desire to express his gratitude towards the Venerable Langue of Castille and Portugal. Its purpose was to keep alight day and night the lamp of the Chapel of San Giacomo in the Conventual Church of St John. The usufruct of the bequeathed property was to be enjoyed by Abela in his lifetime, and after that by only two of his relatives (to be named later) and then by the Vicechancellor or Regent of the Order's Chancellory with the perpetual obligation of paying 10 gold scudi and 14 tari' to the Procurator of the Langue of Castille and Portugal for the upkeep of the same lamp, as well as the rent due to the Grand Master on the property in Paula which was also included in the bequest. The property was to be kept in good state and the three coats of arms and inscriptions, which the deed describes as being affixed above the doors of the buildings, were to be conserved in their place, never to be removed. Not only that, if they were ever to be destroyed by accident or eroded, the administrators were to restore them at their own expense.

The last condition was that for no reason whatsoever should the property be disposed of otherwise than stated. In the last extreme the administration and usufruct of the property were to fall in the hands of the Prior of the Conventual Church. When, ten years later, Abela wanted to change the dispositions of this legacy he needed special permission not only from the Order, but also from the Pope.

It should be noted that no mention of antiquities is made in the 1627 document.

Abela's reasons for wanting to change these dispositions are described vaguely as 'alcune giuste cause' in his petition of 1637 and were accepted as such by the Papal authorities. They are laid out in detail in the text of the

28. *Ibid.*, ff. xvr-xviii.

29. *Ibid.*, f. xviiiir.

donation proper. In the first place Abela wished to express his gratitude to the Jesuit Fathers for his early education, both moral and intellectual (30). Secondly he wanted to provide for the preservation and maintenance of his Casa di San Giacomo and its adjoining garden. As his third motive he repeats the same 'giuste cause' without further explanation.

The second purpose is further extended in the *Descrittione* to include the safe custody of the antique objects housed in the Casino, and to ensure their accessibility to interested scholars (31). In the donation document this purpose is expressed as one of the conditions of the bequest where Abela specifies that he wishes and orders that these objects should be kept by the Reverend Fathers in the *viridarium in perpetuo ... a beneficio de curiosi antiquarii*, and objects to the removal of any item from the collection. (32)

Abela's main motivation, however, implicit in the 1627 transaction, explicitly declared in that of ten years later, was a spiritual one, namely to assure himself of eternal salvation after death. In exchange for his benefice the donor expected some favours of a spiritual nature (33). He humbly asked the Fathers to pray His Divine Majesty to have mercy on his soul and forgive him his sins; above all to assist him at his death-bed with their presence and devotions until he gave up his spirit to the Creator. He also requested them to dedicate all the Masses they would celebrate in the Oratory of the Guardian Angel he was about to build in the garden, for his soul and for the remission of his sins, and to remember to recite occasionally a Requiem Aeternam for his soul. Which requests Abela left to the discretion and good will of the Jesuit Fathers, being certain that with them a simple request was equivalent to the imposition of obligations with others.

The transfer of the administration and usufruct was due to take effect immediately after the benefactor's death (whereas in the original legacy it had to follow the death of his two relatives). Meanwhile they were to be enjoyed by Abela himself. The 'proprietà' and 'dominio' of the house and garden were to remain forever with the Cappella di San Giacomo, and therefore, with the Order. The two relatives, whom Abela was supposed to designate as heirs to the usufruct of the Casino, are named as being the Chierico Don Eugenio Testaferrata and Trofimo Borgio Habela, but they are plainly excluded from the inheritance in order to enable the Jesuits to take over its administration immediately after Abela's death. In recompense the Fathers were to pay the

30. *Ibid.*, f. xvii: "dai quali essendo minore, ho ricevuto le prime introduzioni e documenti sì alle Virtù com'alle Lettere".

31. Abela, *Descrittione*, p.17: "in honore della veneranda antichità e per soddisfazione de' curiosi amici e professori di essa".

32. N.L.M. Treasury A, Ms. 115, f. xviii: "ne si possino delli detti giardino e casa cavar fuori, ne dar cosa alcuna a persone che sia sotto qualunque pretesto".

33. *Ibid.*, f. xviii.

annual ground rent of 10 gold scudi first to Don Eugenio, and after his death to Trofimo. When both were dead the ground rent was due to the Procuratori of the Langue of Castille and Portugal for the lighting of the lamp inside the Capella di San Giacomo (34). The Council of the Order decided in favour of Abela's second petition on condition that if the obligations set out were not observed by the Collegium the usufruct would revert to the Prior of the Conventual Church (35).

Description of the donated property

In the supplica of the 1627 document the property which was then being donated to the Chapel of San Giacomo was described merely as "una clausura di terra, che (Abela) possiede in quest'Isola di Malta nella collina detta Tal Cortin sopra la Marsa" which cost about 300 scudi and was then leased for 10 scudi a year. In addition to this a stretch of land with buildings on it at Casal Paula was also being donated (36). Later in the same deed, in the Latin text of the Council's decision in favour of the bequest, a similar description is given in that language followed by a description of the confining properties (37). Furthermore, among the obligations of the administration the deed specifies the preservation of the buildings already constructed or about to be constructed in the said "clausura Tal Cortin", on the doors of which were affixed the coats of arms of Grand Master Antonius de Paula, of the Langue of Castille and Portugal, and of the donor himself, together with a marble plaque with a Latin inscription commemorating the event, that is, the bequest of the property (38).

In his petition of 1637 to the Council of the Order Abela requests permission to give the land at Paula, which formed part of the original legacy, to the Chapel of St Trophimus in the Church of St Francis under the title of Santa Maria di Gesù in Valletta, and in exchange to add an equivalent piece of land to the viridarium, on which he intended to build a 'cappelletta ossia oratorio' to be able to say Mass in it whenever the need arose. This oratorio would after his death be administered by the Jesuit Fathers with the obligation of praying perpetually the Divine Majesty for the happiness and prosperity of the Grand Master and of the Order (39). This land adjacent to the viridarium

34. *Ibid.*, ff. xviv-xviir.

35. *Ibid.*, f. xvr.

36. *Ibid.*, f. xiiir.

37. *Ibid.*, f. xiiiv. A topographical feature with a possible archaeological significance was a quarry ('Latomia') which limited the property on the south.

38. *Ibid.*, f. xiiir.

39. *Ibid.*, f. xv.

consisted of two properties, one he had already bought and the other he was about to buy (40).

Besides *viridarium, casino, casa e giardino* and other designations accompanied by the specification 'Ta Cortin', this property at Marsa is often denominated 'of San Giacomo' because it came to belong to the chapel of that saint at St John's Cathedral. In the Papal Brief of 30 July 1637, in fact, it appears as *domum sancti Jacobi nuncupatum et hortum in colle del Cortin in Vici della Marsa* (41).

Objects contained in the Viridarium

The original purpose of my research into the Biblioteca manuscripts, as well as those in other collections, in the National Library of Malta was to establish a detailed list of the antiquities in Abela's possession at the time of his death on 4th May 1655 in order to discover which items can still be traced in the present national collection and which others have been dispersed. In this respect the results of my search have been somewhat disappointing.

The very last item in the group of documents extracted from the acts of Notary Michael Ralli, all connected with Abela's legacy of his villa in Marsa, is a *Memoria delle cose che lasciò nel Gabinetto il Fra J. Francesco Habela nel Cortin* (42). The list in it is, however, far from exhaustive. It is extremely vague and leaves out, among other things, the coins which are documented elsewhere (43). The objects that are listed are the following:-

- The marble statue of Hercules
- 8 gilt glass vases
- 3 small glass vases with lids
- 14 gilt Murcia dishes
- 33 frames (*quadretti*) with different curious figures
- 4 clay vases painted (*lavorati*) in red and black
- 6 small procelain plates
- 20 ordinary table plates in terracotta
- 1 Egyptian mummy head
- 1 branch of unworked coral
- 1 tusk (*dente*) of a small elephant, 2 palmi long
- various small idols, oil-lamps and small ancient perfume bottles (*vasetti lacrimatorii*) found in ancient tombs.

The definite article used with the first item leaves no doubt as to which statue of Hercules meant. This statue had been acquired by Abela before

40. *Ibid.*, ff. xviii-xviiiv.

41. *Ibid.*, f. xv.

42. *Ibid.*, f. xviii.

43. Abela, *Descrittione*, pp.198, 204-206.

1647 when it was mentioned and illustrated in his *Descrittione* (44). It is also obvious that not all the objects listed were ancient. The Murcian dishes, (45) the 33 frames and the porcelain plates were all of relatively recent workmanship, and very probably the unworked coral had been fished in modern times (46). The glass and terracotta objects, on the other hand, could very well be ancient (47), even the gilt ones (48). It is not easy to decide what is meant by the 'Egyptian mummy head': probably an Egyptian, or Egyptianizing terracotta protome (49). The elephant tusk could possibly have belonged to the same dwarf species as those found in various Maltese caves in the second half of the 19th century and later (50). Perhaps the "ossa di giganti di smisurata grandezza" mentioned in the *Descrittione* were also bones of similar Pleistocene animals (51). A molar tooth "da testa gigantea" was said by Abela to have been discovered at Imriehel, near Birkirkara (52).

Of the antiquities existing then in Abela's collection and overlooked in this list the most noteworthy is probably the anthropoid sacrophagus discovered in Abela's time in a tomb at Ghar Barka, Rabat. The sarcophagus is described in detail and illustrated by an engraving in his book (53). The other noteworthy

44. *Ibid.*, pp.152, 156. See Bonanno, *Quintinus*, pp.197-199.
45. W. B. Honey, *European Ceramic Art from the End of the Middle Ages to about 1815*, London 1952, p.438: "'golden' (lustred) pottery of Murcia is mentioned in a somewhat doubtful text of the Arab traveller Ibn Saïd (1214-1286) and an inventory of 1464 refers to 'Murcian dishes', but these wares have not been identified, presumably being similar to that of Malaga and Valencia".
46. For the use of such branches for holding fossil sharks' teeth pendants see G. Zammit-Maempel, "Fossil sharks' teeth, A Medieval safeguard against poisoning", *Melita Historica*, VI, no 4, 1975, pp.391-410, pls. 2-3.
47. Terracotta and glass containers are also listed in his collection by Abela, *Descrittione*, p.40. Some of them are illustrated on pp.40-41.
48. See, for example, H. Henig (ed.), *A Handbook of Roman Art*, Oxford 1983, p.215, fig.180.
49. This could be anything from a real Egyptian mummy mask like 3 plaster heads in Berlin Museum (W. S. Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt*, Harmondsworth 1958, pls. 132-136) to a Greek or Punic Egyptianizing terracotta protome.
50. A. L. Adams, "Maltese Caves, Report on Mnajdra Cave", *Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (1865) pp.257-263; *Id.*, "On the Dentition and Osteology of the Maltese Fossil Elephants: being a description of remains discovered by the author in Malta between the years 1860 and 1866", *Transactions of the Zoological Society of London*, IX (1873) pp.1-4; *Id.*, "Second report on Maltese fossiliferous caves", *Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science*, (1866) pp.458-462.
51. Abela, *Descrittione*, p.145.
52. *Ibid.*, p.148. At Mriehel more bones of Pleistocene animals were discovered in 1962: *Report on the Working of the Museum Department for 1962*, p5.
53. Abela, *Descrittione*, p.153. The author claimed to have two similar sarcophagi in his possession. Ciantar, p.xi, states that the Ghar Barka sarcophagus had been stolen from Abela's Casino when the latter was under the care of a lay priest after that the Jesuits had moved their country residence to Ghajn Dwieli.

omission is the marble base with sculpture in relief discovered at St Paul's Bay and carried by boat to Abela's Casino at Marsa (54). Still more significant is the absence of the two well-known candelabri with bilingual inscriptions which are thought by some to have found their way into Abela's collection in the years between the publication of the *Descrittione* in 1647 and Abela's death in 1655 (55). Abela himself, in his book, does not specify whether any of the inscriptions documented by him were in his possession (56). Tax evasion or some other ungentlemanly motivation need not necessarily be the reason behind the omission of the coins some of which were gold ones (57).

The last three items in the *memoria* are given without any specific details. However, some of the small idols are further identified by the name of the divinity they represented in the *Descrittione* (58) which illustrates also some oil-lamps and small ointment vases found in tombs (59).

The deed of the bequest itself identifies which objects contained in the *gabinetto* should be kept by the Jesuit Fathers and which other objects Abela reserved the right to dispose of in his lifetime (60). Abela's wish was that the administration and usufruct of the house and garden at Marsa by the Jesuits should include "all the pieces of ancient statues, stones and burials that are now and in the future will be in the same garden, the terracottas and glass vessels and other ancient objects now kept in the *gabinetto* of the same house, together with all the *medaglie* of different metals also in the *gabinetto*." The paintings (*quadri*), furniture and utensils present in the house then and at the time of his death should not be considered part of the legacy, as if they did not belong to the house, except for those objects which would be attached to the Chapel that Abela had already decided to build in the garden.

Possessio

The Jesuit Fathers took up the perpetual administration and usufruct of Abela's *viridarium* and its contents by means of a public deed drawn up by the same notary, Michele Ralli (61). By the same deed the 'proprietas et dominium' was

54. Abela, *Descrittione*, p.210.

55. V. Borg, "Tradizioni e documenti storici", *Missione* 1963, p.49. Cfr. Bonanno, *Quintinus* (in the press): between 1647 and 1687.

56. See, for instance, Abela, *Descrittione*, pp.16-17. 186-187, 207-208. On the other hand, Canon Giovanni Francesco Agius de Soldanis in his biography of Abela published in Mifsud, *Biblioteca*, p.252, declares that Greek and Latin inscriptions were conserved in Abela's *Gabinetto* in his time.

57. E.g. Abela, *Descrittione*, pp.204 and 248.

58. *Ibid.*, pp.191-193: a small bronze idol of Harpocrates; p.193: a metallic statuette of Mercury.

59. *Ibid.*, pp.40-41.

60. N.L.M., Treasury A, Ms. 115, f. xviii.

assigned to the Langue of Castille and Portugal. The 'possessio' includes specifically, besides the house and garden, the church under the title of the Holy Guardian Angel which had been built on the site in the meantime.

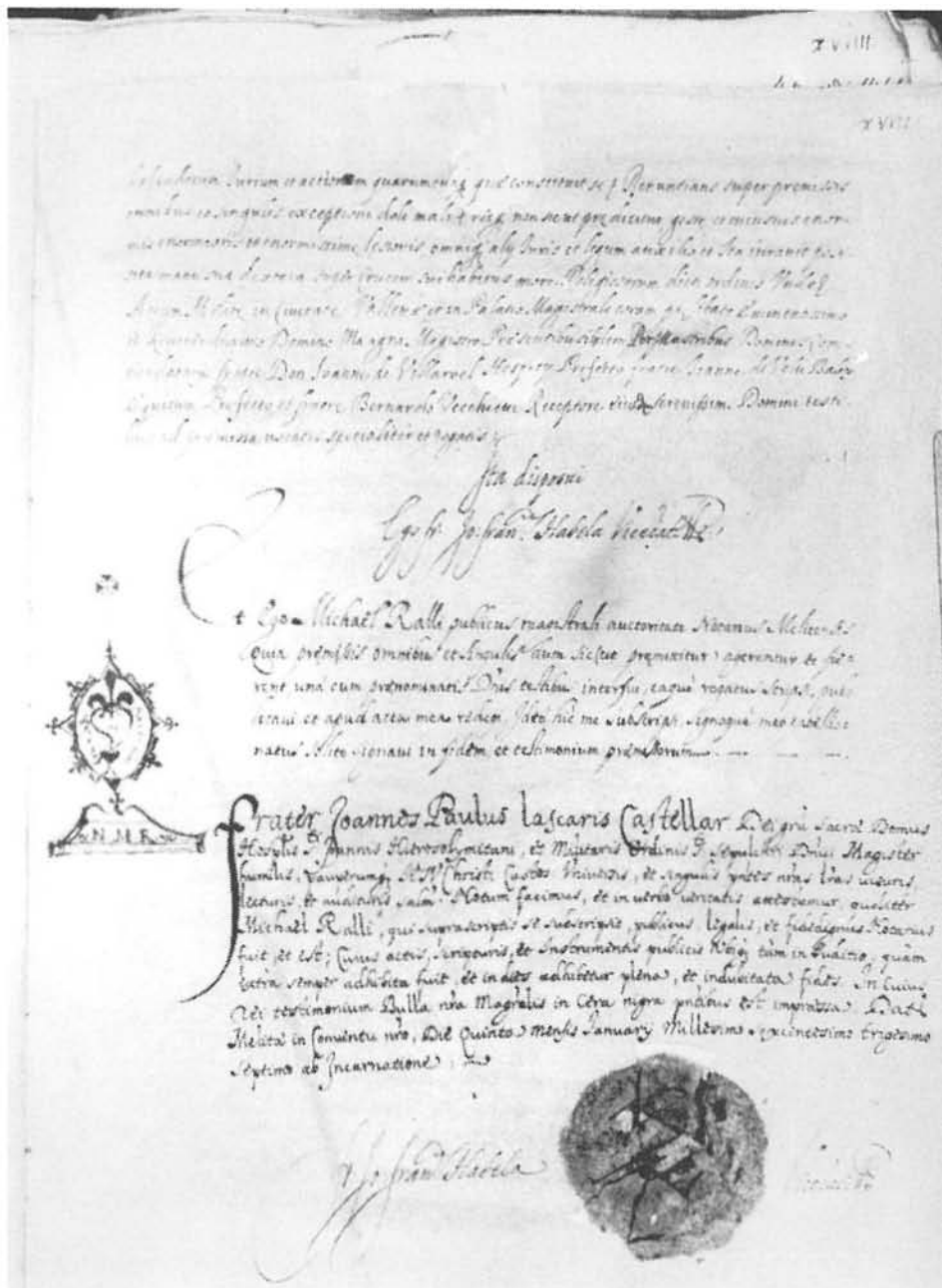
The deed was signed in the house of the viridarium at the Cortin at 2 o'clock in the afternoon of the same day on which Abela died, namely, 4 May 1655. (*Cunque*) *Donator hoc mane vitam cum morte commutaverit*, wrote the Notary with copious tears in his eyes (*profusis lacrymis scribens*): "this morning has the donor life with death exchanged".

1666
1667
Nel nome di nro sig: Gesu xpo amen.

[The following text is a dense Latin document in a cursive script, likely a legal or ecclesiastical instrument. It begins with the title 'Nel nome di nro sig: Gesu xpo amen.' and contains several paragraphs of text, including names and dates. The text is written in a dark ink on aged paper. The handwriting is highly stylized and difficult to read in detail. The document appears to be a formal declaration or a legal act, given the context of the caption. The text is written in a cursive script, likely a historical form of Italian or Latin. The document is dated 1666 and 1667. The text is written in a dark ink on aged paper. The handwriting is highly stylized and difficult to read in detail. The document appears to be a formal declaration or a legal act, given the context of the caption. The text is written in a cursive script, likely a historical form of Italian or Latin. The document is dated 1666 and 1667. The text is written in a dark ink on aged paper. The handwriting is highly stylized and difficult to read in detail. The document appears to be a formal declaration or a legal act, given the context of the caption.]

1666

First page of the original 1637 document of Giovanni Francesco Abela's legacy to the Valletta College of the Jesuit Fathers (See pp. 27-35)



Final page of the original 1637 document of Giovanni Francesco Abela's legacy to the Valletta College of the Jesuit Fathers (See pp. 27-35)