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**Charles Dalli**

**Godfrey Wettinger**

**Emanuel Buttigieg**

**Carmen Depasquale**

**Charles Savona Ventura**

**Henry Frendo**

**Carmel Vassallo**

**Sandro Debono**

**Pierre Dimech**

Charles Dalli

## 'Greek', 'Arab' and 'Norman' Conquests in the Making of Maltese History<sup>1</sup>

My present contribution does not seek to replace existent works on Malta's history from the fifth century to the eleventh. T. S. Brown's contribution on 'Byzantine Malta', published a quarter-century ago in the seminal collection of essays edited by A. T. Luttrell, stands as an excellent exemplum of historical scholarship. Mario Buhagiar's contributions in the fields of early Christian archaeology, the evaluation of different forms of written and non-written evidence across the whole period are well-known. Godfrey Wettinger's re-evaluation of the 'Arab period' in Maltese history, published around twenty years ago, marked a turning point in the writing of Malta's past. Anthony Luttrell's various contributions help focus the scholar in a context fraught with dead-ends, overshadowed by many an unanswered (and possibly unanswerable) question. The publication by Joseph M. Brincat of the fourteenth/fifteenth century text on Malta compiled by the geographer al-Himyari, is certainly to be credited with creating a new opportunity for reassessing the interpretation of this distant period of Maltese history. Last but not least, Nathaniel Cutajar's research into the early medieval archaeology of Malta promises to provide indispensable new insights on centuries where written records are, at best, slight and fragmentary.<sup>2</sup>

A painstaking reassessment of the available documentary evidence, which forms as central an aspect of history as the laborious unearthing of new facts, lies well beyond the scope of this paper. My present objective is to discuss (and, at times, question) the way medieval Maltese history has been traditionally reconstructed around the concept of conquest. This device has enabled a view of the past through a peculiar 'looking-glass', magnifying the initial (and inevitably violent) contact to epic proportions; by contrast, the long centuries of community-building which follow, lack the same dramatic vibrancy.

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A graduate of the University of Malta and of Cambridge, Charles Dalli is a lecturer at the University of Malta. His publications include the book *Iż-Żmien Nofsani Malti* (2002).

As expected, the mundane fails to attract the chronicler's attention, and pales into insignificance. A look at the first half of Malta's 'Middle Ages' should prove this point; the first five hundred years or so are largely composed of two monolithic and mutually exclusive time-blocs, the 'Byzantine' and 'Muslim' eras. The chronology is punctuated by a handful of dates which record conquests, or would-be conquests; dates such as 870 and 1091 would seem to set the whole tone for the 'foreign dominations' in between.

The whole period extending from the AD 530s to 869/870 is traditionally referred to as the 'Byzantine period' in Maltese history. By contrast with this massive and undifferentiated period of more than three centuries – forming roughly a third of the islands' 'Middle Ages' – each political/dynastic succession from 1091 onwards, covering Malta's long association with 'Latin Christendom', is painstakingly differentiated.

The early modern historians who first reconstructed and classified Malta's Middle Ages, especially G. F. Abela, knew no more about the island's 'Angevin period' (1266/8-1283) than they did about Malta's long centuries as an outpost of the Eastern Roman empire, except for the fact that the short period of 'French domination' in Malta confirmed the island's alignment with Sicily – and, therefore, Christian Europe. This is not to deny that there are plausible reasons which might justify taking the 'Byzantine period' as one whole, including the central factor of uninterrupted imperial rule. Nonetheless, the effort to 'align' Malta's past with the (perceived) paths of 'western Christian European' history was a central historiographical choice, while alternative viewpoints were discarded. An alternative approach could encompass the wider Maltese experience from late Roman Antiquity to the establishment of Muslim rule. Another perspective, wider still, might reassess the 'Roman' and 'Byzantine' (that is, Eastern Roman) periods as two chapters in Malta's 'Roman millennium' stretching from the third century BC to the ninth century AD.

The Muslim period of Maltese history, the other broad 'non-Western' chunk of Maltese medieval history, has remained equally undifferentiated, despite political discontinuity marked by the rise of the Fatimid empire from 909, not to mention the century or so of virtual independence Sicily enjoyed under its Kalbite emirs in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. The identification of 'Muslims' with the 'rulers', neatly closed the chapter of Islam in Malta with the Norman intervention in 1091, thus effectively banishing from history the thousands of

Muslims who remained subjected to Christian rule in Malta and Gozo at least until the mid-thirteenth century.

What follows is a discussion of accounts of conquests, and would-be conquests, of Malta from AD 533/5 to 1091. It is also, in a sense, an effort to 'rehabilitate' the fourteenth century compiler of *Kitab al-Rawd al-Mi<sup>c</sup>tar fi Habar al-Aqtar*, <sup>c</sup>*Abd al-Mun<sup>c</sup>im al-Himyari*, as the earliest historian to structure a coherent account of medieval Maltese history around the concept of conquest.

### 'An Ancient City inhabited by the Byzantines'

What traditionally has been regarded as the 'Byzantine', or Eastern Roman, period in Maltese history, that is, the whole period extending from around AD 533 to 869/70, is unquestionably the longest political time-bracket in the last two millennia of Maltese history. Malta formed part of the Eastern Roman empire for more than three hundred years, much longer than the British, Hospitaller, Catalan-Aragonese, or indeed the Arab periods. The emperor Justinian's conquest of the Vandal kingdom of 'Africa' heralded the beginning of the Byzantine 'reconquest' in the central Mediterranean region. The Byzantines depended on access to Sicilian ports granted them by the Ostrogothic rulers of the island, to replenish their ships with vital provisions and thereafter set out against the Vandal kingdom.<sup>3</sup> The reference to the Maltese islands in Procopius's *Bellum Vandalicum* states that 'the fleet touched at (or 'put in') the islands of Malta and Gozo' on its way to Africa.<sup>4</sup> The Byzantine passage to Africa captured Gibbon's imagination:

'At length the harbour of Caucana, on the southern side of Sicily, afforded a secure and hospitable shelter. The Gothic officers who governed the island in the name of the daughter and grandson of Theodoric, obeyed their imprudent orders, to receive the troops of Justinian like friends and allies: provisions were liberally supplied, the cavalry was remounted, and Procopius soon returned from Syracuse with correct information of the state and designs of the Vandals. His intelligence determined Belisarius to hasten his operations, and his wise impatience was seconded by the winds. The fleet lost sight of Sicily, passed before the Isle of Malta, discovered the capes of Africa, ran along the coast with a strong gale from the north-

east, and finally cast anchor at the promontory of Caput Vada, about five days' journey to the south of Carthage.<sup>5</sup>

Considering that the Vandals were busy subduing a revolt fuelled by the Byzantines themselves in Sardinia, Belisarius gave order for a hasty departure from Sicily southwards to Africa. The fleet anchored at Ras Kaboudia, and the army started its long march north towards Carthage. In a short but intense campaign, marked by the celebrated battles at Ad Decimum and Tricameron, King Gelimer's Vandal forces were resoundingly defeated and his lands integrated into Justinian's domains.

By 535, Justinian was determined to remove the Ostrogothic regime from Italy and Dalmatia, and the remarkably rapid conquest of Sicily that year opened the way for the Byzantine invasion of the Italian peninsula from 536 onwards. The Maltese islands were probably garrisoned and integrated into the Byzantine domains as a result - if not in the wake - of success in Sicily. Evidently the Byzantine expedition had no time, and no need, to carry out any operations in the Maltese islands in 533. Yet Abela characteristically inflated the reference in Procopius into a Byzantine conquest of Malta, underscoring the island's strategic role in any future attack planned against Sicily:

*'sciolte le vele, si conduce con l'armata à Malta, & al Gozo, le quali ritolte dal poter de' Goti e restituite al dominio dell'Imperadore, come luoghi molto importanti à quella spedizione, non meno altresì, che all'acquisto della Sicilia, parte alla volta d'Africa, espugna, e debella Cartagine con Gilmerio allora Re de' Vandali.'*<sup>6</sup>

### **'An Uninhabited Ruin'**

The expansion of Islam across the Mediterranean world placed Byzantine Sicily on the warfront. The island suffered at least ten major Muslim attacks between 720 and 753. This pressure stimulated a coordinated response from the Byzantine military administration, which organized a large-scale regrouping of Sicily's population into strategically-located, well-fortified settlements (what is referred to as the process of *incastellamento*). The virtually unprovenanced seal referring to Nicetas *archon kai droungarios* of Malta, as well as the Gozitan seal

bearing the name of the archon Theophylact, probably date from this period.

Whatever the nature of the political-military set-up in the Maltese islands, it would seem incredible that they were spared from Muslim attack until AD 869-70. Pantelleria was lost, and apparently retaken for a time, by the Byzantines in the same period.<sup>7</sup> The Muslim conquest of Sicily, which was started in earnest under Aghlabid leadership in the summer of 827, was only concluded in 902 with the fall of the Byzantine stronghold of Taormina.

Malta could serve as a naval base for backing up Byzantine defence efforts in Sicily. It lay in the logic of conquest that the Muslims would try to take this island base sixty miles south of the val di Noto and use it to harass Byzantine shipping, as well as to launch attacks against the southern coastline of Sicily. There was nothing in the early phase of the conquest (say, up to 848) to suggest that the Muslim successes in Sicily could not be reversed by a concerted Byzantine effort from their two main strongholds of Enna and Syracuse; the latter fell eight years after Malta, in 878.

The best account of the Arab conquest of Malta (but not Gozo, which does not get a mention) is provided by al-Himyari, who compiled his text from several earlier sources in the early fourteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Al-Himyari dated the Muslim conquest of Malta to 255 (the Muslim year which ran from 20 December 868 to 8 December 869); similarly, Ibn Khaldun placed the conquest of Malta in 869. However, the Cambridge Chronicle dated it at 29 August 870. The chronicler Ibn al-Athir maintained that in 256 the Muslims of Sicily relieved Malta then besieged by a Byzantine force. The Byzantines (or 'Rum'), he claimed, fled at the news of the Muslim arrival. The *Kitab al-Uyun* located the conquest of Malta on 28 August 870.<sup>9</sup>

Al-Himyari's detailed account of the conquest of Malta mentions how Khalaf al-Hidim attacked the island and died whilst besieging it. The Muslim forces in Malta requested their Sicilian commander to send them a new leader (*wali*) to take charge of the siege, and Sawada Ibn Muhammad was duly dispatched to the island. The Muslims 'captured the fortress (*hisn*) of Malta and took its ruler 'Amros (possibly Ambrose<sup>10</sup>) prisoner and they demolished its fortress and they looted and (desecrated) whatever they could not carry'. It is clear from this account that the Arab siege of Malta was a protracted affair, not a rapid conquest. Successes gained by the time of Khalaf al-Hadim's death,

as well as the approach of wintertime, kept the Muslim siege going. It is certainly significant that the loss of leader, which was at any rate a severe blow, was not enough to rob the Muslims of their victory, so to speak.

Both the *Kitab al-Uyun* and al-Himyari highlight the role played by the Muslim naval commander, Ibn al-Aghlab, nicknamed al-Habashi ('the Abyssinian'), mentioning an inscription recording how the sea-castle at Susa was built from stones and marble columns carried all the way from Malta. Although it is virtually impossible to tell what happened in the immediate aftermath of Muslim conquest, if the Muslim victors indeed took the trouble to transport hewn stones and marble away to Africa, it is reasonable to assume that a number of inhabitants were led away into captivity. The contemporary sources are silent on this point, as they are about the fate of those who were possibly allowed to stay on.

Al-Himyari's early fourteenth century text (extensively revised, it would seem, by an erudite relative in the fifteenth century) detailed the Muslim conquest of Malta, which is corroborated by several other sources in its main points. Not so his passage describing what happened to Malta after the Byzantine defeat:

'After 255 (=868-9) the island of Malta remained an uninhabited ruin, and it was visited by shipbuilders, because the wood in it is of the strongest kind, by the fishermen, because of the abundance and tastiness of the fish around its shores, and by those who collect honey, because that is the most common thing there. After 440 (=1048-9) the Muslims peopled it, and they built its city, and then it became even more perfect than it had been'.

What archaeological evidence has, to date, come to light, would seem to rule out a literal reading of al-Himyari's passage that Malta remained uninhabited for more than one hundred and seventy years following the conquest.<sup>11</sup> A literal interpretation would also make necessary to explain what reason the Arabs might have had in abandoning Malta after successfully concluding a prolonged siege and (according to al-Athir) keeping at bay Byzantine relief forces. It seems equally arbitrary, considering the lack of other documentary evidence, to reject outright al-Himyari's statement as simply being an elaboration by a late medieval compiler of a geographical dictionary. Evidently the author used this paragraph to link up two separate pieces, namely, an

article extracted mainly from the eleventh century author al-Bakri, and a narrative text describing a failed eleventh century attack on Malta by a Byzantine fleet derived from the thirteenth century writer al-Qazwini. It makes sense to suggest that al-Himyari exaggerated what was, in essence, a historical fact, namely, a dramatic fall in population levels and living standards; this must have seemed a perfectly logical conclusion, from the author's perspective, for an island locked in decades of warfare, suffering a long siege, the destruction or dismantling of key physical structures, the loss of community leadership, and the harsh treatment presumably meted out on the vanquished inhabitants. Presumably a surviving population nucleus reorganized itself on the island around economic activities which exploited readily available primary resources; al-Himyari listed timber-cutters linked to ship-builders, as well as fishermen and honey-gatherers, all activities which would demand a not inconsiderable level of manpower. The question might prove to be, after all, to what extent? and for how long? An urban community flourished behind the walls of the old Byzantine capital, by the second half of the tenth century; this is a good one hundred years prior to 440/1048-9, the date indicated by the author as marking the resettlement of the island of Malta by the Muslims. The eleventh century expansion might be understood in the form of rural or coastal resettlement and urban renewal, rather than a process of total colonization from scratch.

### **'A Quick Victory or the Triumph of the Hereafter'**

The defence capabilities of this eleventh century community were put to a serious test by the Byzantines (if that is, indeed, the identity of the 'Rum' mentioned by the Arab sources) in a major attack which took place in 440/1048-9 according to al-Qazwini (or 445/1053 according to al-Himyari). The episode has been linked to the large-scale Byzantine invasion of Sicily under the command of George Maniakes, in 1038-40;<sup>12</sup> but a western Christian attack, possibly Pisan or even Norman, cannot be ruled out completely. The *Annales Pisani* recorded a Pisan attack on the North African city of Bona in 1035;<sup>13</sup> Ibn al-Athir claimed 'Normans' were active at Syracuse in 444 (1052) in alliance with the Muslim *qa'id* of Syracuse, Ibn al-Thumna.<sup>14</sup> It might also have been a reprisal against the attacks of the Sicilian *qa'id* al-Akhal on Byzantine possessions in Illyria, Thrace and the Aegean sea. At any rate, the incident revealed the existence of a composite society which would otherwise have escaped documentation. The large Christian naval force assaulted Malta and



drove its population to ask for a peace treaty or *aman*. According to the Arab chronicler this was refused. The Muslims in the *madina* mustered their forces, which included four hundred adult male combatants according to al-Himyari; then they turned to their slave-soldiers or *cabid*, who were more numerous than themselves. The religious or ethnic character of these slave-soldiers remains undefined; however, they were a distinct social group and were an organized community which could negotiate with its Muslim masters a highly attractive deal: promotion to free men, or *ahrar*. 'We shall raise you to our level and we shall give you our daughters in marriage, and we shall make you partners in our riches'. The slave-soldiers were clearly in a position to choose:

'If you hesitate and abandon us, your fate will be the same captivity and bondage which will be ours, nay you will fare even worse because with us one may be redeemed by a dear friend or freed by his ally or saved by the support of his community'.<sup>15</sup>

In the event, the slave-soldiers 'rushed against their enemy more promptly than (the Muslims) themselves'; al-Himyari's account distinguishes throughout between the Muslims and the slave-soldiers as though the latter did not adhere to the Muslim faith, or were deprived by their unfree status from sharing that noble name with the *ahrar*. The barrier between the freemen and their slaves was possibly only social in character, but might also have been underlined by other differences. What is certain is that any such diversity was overcome in the face of adversity. In al-Himyari's account, the battle with the enemy took the form of a *jihad*:

'they asked for the help of Allah the Almighty, and they marched and stormed around them, piercing (the Rum) with spears and striking them with swords, without fearing or faltering, confident of obtaining either of two fine goals: a quick victory or the triumph of the hereafter. And Allah the Exalted provided them with help and gave them patience, and He cast fear into the hearts of their enemies, and they fled defeated without looking back, and the majority of them were massacred. The Muslims took possession of their ships and only one of these slipped away. And their slaves reached the state of their free men, and they were given what had been promised to them.'

A striking feature of al-Himyari's account is the reversal of roles

– the besiegers and defenders of 870 exchange places in 1048/1053. The one crucial detail is that the Muslims were successful in both roles, as God was on their side.

**'The enemy feared them,  
and none of them showed up for some time'**

The Hilali invasions have long marked a watershed in North African history; Ibn Khaldun described the devastating effects of the bedouin invaders, falling like 'swarms of locusts' on the prosperous cities of the Maghrib. Perhaps they were more a symptom of Muslim decline, than a cause of it; nonetheless, the unfair vantage point of hindsight should not obscure the fact that Dar al-Islam had witnessed and overcome many a crisis similar to the civil wars undermining eleventh century society in al-Andalus and Sicily.

Yet what George Maniakes failed to achieve in 1040, Robert Guiscard and Roger of Hauteville proceeded to carry out two decades later. The Norman conquest of Muslim Sicily was not as long drawn-out an affair as the Muslim one had been; a crucial factor was, perhaps, the fall of the capital city, Palermo, in 1072. According to the chronicler of the Norman conquest, Geoffrey Malaterra, soon after Palermo opened its gates to Norman troops, Guiscard descended on Catania and demanded port facilities from its Muslim *qaid* with the pretext that his fleet was on its way to attack Malta. By this ruse Guiscard's forces were allowed in port, and they duly proceeded to take the town. It is of some relevance that Malta was considered significant enough a diversion to misguide the Muslims of Sicily and their Zirid allies in North Africa.

When the Norman conquest of Malta and Gozo did take place, in July 1091, it came at the end of a thirty-year-long conquest of Sicily; the last Muslim stronghold, Noto, was granted a peace treaty in February, 1091.

Against the insistence of his son Jordan, the elderly Roger led the expedition to Malta in person, clearly desiring to underscore his leadership. 'A great multitude of natives' tried to prevent the Norman forces from landing onshore, but they were no match for Roger and his knight-companions, who killed some of the fighters and chased the rest inland. The next day, the Normans besieged the town and pillaged the countryside. At the head of a frightened, unwarlike population, the local *gaytus*, or *qaid*, asked for a peace treaty. Malaterra carefully recorded the terms of Malta's surrender. The 'clever' Roger left them with little

room for negotiation; they were forced to surrender all their Christian slaves, whom they retained in great number within the town, together with their beasts and weapons, and a colossal indemnity. Having pledged their fealty towards Roger and become his *confoederati*, or allies, they agreed to pay him an annual tribute. The Christian slaves were 'welcomed' on board the Count's ship (emphasizing the fact they were his war-prize and booty). That the ship did not founder under their added weight, but rather race across the sea, exclaimed Malaterra, was only due to the miraculous 'hand of God'. The Norman force made stop at Gozo, pillaging the island and annexing it by force to the Count's lands. Upon his return to Sicily, Roger enfranchised the slaves he had fetched from Malta; the Count offered to establish a free town for them, but they preferred to return to their various lands of origin.

### **A post-colonial postscript**

As in the history of Sicily and several other Mediterranean islands, one is struck by the neat categorisation of the past in terms of a series of political age-brackets or eras, which are little more than cultural constructs characterized by the subject 'Maltese people' (or, what is worse, 'nation') versus the 'foreign' overlord. Historians would hardly get away with grouping indiscriminately the whole sequence of dynastic rules in Malta's later medieval centuries ('Norman', 'Swabian', 'Angevin', 'Aragonese', 'Castilian', even 'Spanish') as 'the Latin Christian era'. This contrasts with the way the Byzantine and Arab periods are handled. The reason cannot simply be that the textual basis on which the whole edifice of Maltese history from the fifth century to the twelfth stands is extremely narrow. For how is one to 'discover' the loyal Syrian, trustworthy African or faithful southern Italian servant of Constantinople in the 'Byzantine', the native Berber or sub-Saharan subject of Qayrawan or al-Mahdiya in the 'Muslim'? And did the 'Normans' really exist?<sup>16</sup> It would be nothing less than anachronistic to extend, across the ages, the modern colonial dichotomy of the dominated native versus the foreign dominator. The attempt to refashion whole 'millennia' of the 'Maltese past' in terms of the colonial experience of the past two hundred years or so is not nearly outfashioned four decades into national independence. The labels used to refer to periods or epochs are as arbitrary as any other name; except that, with time, they become part and parcel of the historian's toolbox, to the point that they might easily be mistaken for historical realities.

<sup>1</sup> An early version of this paper was delivered by the author as the

annual Professor Andrew Vella Memorial Lecture, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> T. S. Brown, 'Byzantine Malta: A Discussion of the Sources' in A.T.Luttrell (ed). *Medieval Malta: Studies on Malta before the Knights* (The British School at Rome, London, 1975); Mario Buhagiar, *Late Roman and Byzantine Catacombs and Other Related Burial Sites in the Maltese Islands* (B. A. R., International Series, 302, Oxford, 1986) and 'Early Christian and Byzantine Malta: Some Archaeological and Textual Considerations', in V.Mallia-Milanes (ed.), *Library of Mediterranean History* (I, Malta, 1994); Godfrey Wettinger, 'The Arabs in Malta', in *Malta: Studies of its Heritage and History* (Malta, 1986); A.T.Luttrell, 'Ibn Hauqal and Tenth Century Malta', in *Hyphen* V, 4 (Malta, 1987) and 'Slaves and Captives on Malta: 1053 and 1091', in *Hyphen* VII, 2 (Malta, 1992); Joseph M.Brincat, *Malta 870-1054. Al-Himyarī's Account and its Linguistic Implications* (Malta, 1995); Nathaniel Cutajar and Alessandra Molinari, 'Of Greeks and Arabs and of Feudal Knights', in *Malta Archaeological Review* (Malta, 1999); Nathaniel Cutajar and Brunella Bruno, 'Archeologia bizantina a Malta: primi risultati e prospettive di indagine', in M.Liverani and P.Matthiae (ed.), *Da Pyrgi a Mozia. Studi sull'archeologia del mediterraneo in memoria di Antonia Ciasca ed M.G.Amadasi Guzzo*, (Vicino Oriente – Quaderno 3/1, Rome, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> It has been pointed out that the Byzantine failure to use the excellent Maltese harbour in the campaign against the Vandals, shows that the Maltese islands were certainly not Byzantine up to that point: Brown, 73; Buhagiar, 'Early Christian and Byzantine Malta', 101-2.

<sup>4</sup> Procopius, *Bellum Vandalicum*, I, 14, 15-6.

<sup>5</sup> Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, II, chapter XLI.

<sup>6</sup> G.F.Abela, *Della Descrittione di Malta* (Malta, 1647), 245.

<sup>7</sup> See the edition of the Typikon of John for the Monastery of St John the Forerunner on Pantelleria, in J. Thomas and A. Constantinides Hero (eds.), *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents* (Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, 35, 2000), 59-66.

<sup>8</sup> Arabic text and translation in J.M.Brincat, *Malta 870-1054*.

<sup>9</sup> See the discussion of these dates in Wettinger, 'The Arabs in Malta'.

<sup>10</sup> As suggested by J. Brincat, 'Malta e Pantelleria: affinità e diversità storico-linguistiche' consulted at <http://www.pantelleria-isl.it>.

<sup>11</sup> See the summary of findings in N.Cutajar, 'Arabes et Normands à Malte', in *Dossiers d'Archéologie*, 267 (2001), 76-81.

12 Luttrell, 'Slaves and Captives on Malta'.

13 *The Annales Pisani* K.Pertz (ed.), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptorum*, 19 (1861/1963).

14 However, this date in al-Athir has been dismissed as an error: J. Johns, *Arabic Administration in Norman Sicily* (Cambridge 2002), 32 and note 7.

15 The translated text is quoted from Brincat, *Malta 870-1054*.

16 R. H. C. Davis, *The Normans and their Myth* (1976); Hartmut Hoffmann, "Die Anfänge der Normannen in Süditalien," in *Quellen und Forschungen*, 49 (1969), pp. 95-144; Graham Loud, "How 'Norman' was the Norman Conquest of Southern Italy?," in *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 25 (1981), pp. 13-34 and "The Gens Normannorum, Myth or Reality?" in *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 4 (1981), pp. 104-16; T. S. Brown, "The Political Use of the Past in Norman Sicily," in *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. Paul Magdalino (London, 1992), pp. 191-210.

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Godfrey Wettinger

## The Falzon Family and the *Capomastro* of its House at Mdina

### The Falzon Family

From before 1300 right down to the seventeenth century, but especially after 1399, the family with the surname Falzon, under several different spellings, always took a prominent part in the municipal affairs of the Malta, although its social position could not compare with that of the principal feudal families long settled in Mdina. In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries it shared power in the small municipal administration of Mdina with the Bordinos, the Caxaros, the Falcas, the Vaccaros and one or two others, although none of these could compare in sheer wealth and power with the greater feudal families, like the Desguanes, the Mazaras, the De Navas, the De Guevaras, and, earlier on, the Gattos. This the Falzons persisted in doing for generation after generation, when other families like the Vagnolu, the D'Alaimo, the Calavas, the Vassallos, even the Sillatos, the De Nasis, and the Bonellos were unable to perform for the same length of time and with the same uniform success.

The earliest reference to a member of the Falson family goes back to 8 February 1299 when Guglielmo di Malta left instructions in his will that a black slave he had wrongly taken from Philippo Falzono of Malta should be returned to him.<sup>1</sup> Almost exactly a century later, on 19 July 1399, Anthonius Falzono, a citizen of Malta, obtained the grant of Deyr Chandun, a *tenimentum* (holding) of thirteen salmas, from King Martin in reward for having greatly assisted in the recovery of the Maltese Islands to his rule, but for which Anthonius was expected to pay an annual census of six golden uncie.<sup>2</sup> On 15 October 1457 Notary Anthonius de Falsone was granted a stretch of land at Il-Fiddien extending towards Il-Ħafa carefully described in the grant not to exceed six tuminatas in amount, subject to the annual payment of one tareno per tuminata of

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Professor Emeritus at the University of Malta, Godfrey Wettinger is the author of several works dealing with different aspects of Maltese medieval history.

land.<sup>3</sup> It is referred to as a vineyard but Falzon was allowed to plant any other trees there. In 1506 Luca Berbieri in Palermo was already noting that the annual payment of five golden uncie of Sicily on the fief of Dejr Ħandul had not been paid for years. Yet another century later, another Antonius Fauzuni married Caterina, the daughter of Petrus Vaccaru, from whom he received a dowry amounting to an annual royal grant in the form of a money fief of twelve uncie which she inherited from her father.<sup>4</sup> In 1510 the 'nobleman' Salvus de Falsone received royal approval for the contractual agreement he had reached with Don Paulo de Aragona (*sic*) providing for the continuation of his lease of the land of Għajn Riĥana which he had obtained from the latter for as long as Aragona remained indebted to him. In other words, he had practically taken over the fief and three of its vineyards.<sup>5</sup> However, it is clear that the influence of the Falsone family can hardly be attributed to its possession of feudal property in whatever way it was obtained.

Before 1500 members of the family did their very best to acquire ecclesiastical preferment. This must have contributed to the prominence of the family. Thus, the well-known roll of benefices of 1436 records one attributed to Antonio Falsuni.<sup>6</sup> Donnus Nicolaus de Falsono held the cathedral prebend of Bir iż-Żgħir.<sup>7</sup> The priest Lemus de Falsono held the benefice of Farfar.<sup>8</sup> As for all other Falsone of the first half of the fifteenth century, it is not possible to place either Don Nicolaus or Don Lemus (i.e. Guillelmus) Falsone in the Falsone family tree, but it is known that both names recur within another generation. Of these, Don Nicolaus is known to have been the son of a Petrus Falsone. He eventually became Treasurer of the cathedral and archdeacon. He died in 1505. Don Lemus de Falsone Junior was his brother. Don Michaele de Falsone, the son of Notary Antonius, served as diocesan vicar in the later years of the fifteenth century. There were other closely connected Falsone clerics who achieved less prominence: a Don Paulus et Petrus de Falsone who was Don Michaele's brother and died in 1505, a Don Petrus de Falsone who was 48 years old in 1495 about whom not much is known, and a Dominican friar Nicolaus de Falsone, another brother of Don Michaele and don Paulus et Petrus. He served as representative of the Inquisition in Gozo in 1491. His nephew, another Don Michele de Falsone, a son of the lawyer Andreas, became a cleric early in life and obtained preferment to at least one church benefice, but finally renounced Holy Orders in 1505, got married and eventually had at least three sons and a daughter. His own son Lorenzo was also referred to as Don Lorenzo,



but is otherwise largely unknown. It does seem that with these final efforts the Falsone family avoided Holy Orders for generations afterwards.

They seem instead to have concentrated their ambitions on amassing property by private property deals and obtaining influence by public appointments. For the first fifty years of the fifteenth century, members of the Falzon family were rather modest in their administrative ambitions. Except for Antonius Falcon, possibly standing for Falson, who became a town jurat for 1407-08,<sup>9</sup> and who was possibly the same person who signed the Capitoli of 1410, one does not come over another Falson or Fauzuni jurat before 1452 when Petrus Fauzuni became jurat for the year 1452-53.<sup>10</sup> In 1461 Franciscus Falczuni called Chamsun became jurat of Malta.<sup>11</sup> A Petrus Fauzuni became jurat for the years 1477-78,<sup>12</sup> and 1487-88.<sup>13</sup> The lawyer Andreas de Fauzono became one of the town jurats for the year 1485-86.<sup>14</sup> His brother Laurencius Fanchuni (for Falczuni) was jurat for the year 1493.<sup>15</sup> Their other brother, Notary Jacobus Falczuni, was jurat for 1500-1501.<sup>16</sup> Antonius Angelus Fauzuni was jurat for 1502-03.<sup>17</sup> Salvus Fauzuni was jurat for May 1504 to April 1505.<sup>18</sup> Antonius Jacobus Fauzoni was jurat for 1513-14,<sup>19</sup> Antoni Petri Fauzuni was jurat for 1521-22,<sup>20</sup> and Antonius Jacobi Falsone in 1522-23.<sup>21</sup> A second Laurencius Fauzuni was jurat for 1519-20.<sup>22</sup>

Throughout the period under review, that is the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Falzuni family made its mark mainly in the judicial sphere. Pinus Falsuni became judge for the years 1404-05,<sup>23</sup> 1407-08,<sup>24</sup> 1428-29,<sup>25</sup> 1434-35,<sup>26</sup> and 1438-39.<sup>27</sup> Lemo [i.e. Gugliermo] Fauzuni was judge for 1409-10,<sup>28</sup> 1419-20,<sup>29</sup> 1421-22<sup>30</sup> and 1436-37.<sup>31</sup> Franciscus Fauzuni became judge for the year 1447-48.<sup>32</sup> Neither Pinus nor Franciscus or Lemo probably had any legal training. This certainly could not be said of the lawyer brothers Laurencius Fauzuni and Andreas Fauzuni, or the other brother Jacobus, who was a notary. Laurencius was the assessor or trained judge in the town mayor's court for the years 1479-80, 1483-84 and 1501-02.<sup>33</sup> Andreas filled the same post in 1477-78.<sup>34</sup> Jacobus was assessor or judge for the mayoralty court in 1496-97, and 1512-13,<sup>35</sup> and he served as registrar in the civil court in 1477-78, 1486-87, 1491-92, 1506-07, 1509-10.<sup>36</sup> Subsequently, his son Antonius Jacobus Fauzuni also served as court registrar in 1504-05.<sup>37</sup> The notary Antonius de Falczono, who was the common parent of Laurencius, Andreas and Jacobus, was judge in the mayor's court for the year 1470-71.<sup>38</sup> On his death, he was succeeded by his son Andreas.<sup>39</sup> Andreas served on at least three other occasions: 1472-

73,<sup>40</sup> 1474-75<sup>41</sup> and finally in 1484-85 in the place of Johanni Chantar who was being prosecuted for various misdeeds.<sup>42</sup> Andrea's brother, the lawyer Laurencius, for his part served as judge or assessor of the mayor's court in 1472-73,<sup>43</sup> 1475-76,<sup>44</sup> 1477-78,<sup>45</sup> 1479-80<sup>46</sup> and 1501-02.<sup>47</sup>

The highest municipal post of all, that of Capitan della Verga, or loosely town mayor (in Maltese *Flakem*), was attained by Ambrosius de Falzono, the son of the lawyer Laurencius, on 22 June 1523.<sup>48</sup> His appointment had to run for the year 1523-24, but he died in the latter year and was followed by his *locum tenens*, the jurat Alvarus de Cassares.<sup>49</sup> On 11 May 1523 he presided over a meeting of the town council which among other matters had to decide on the accusation made by the widow of Guterre de Armanino that his three cousins and the in-law of one of them had caused the death of her son during the enforced isolation of Birgu while an outbreak of plague raged within that locality.<sup>50</sup> He also held the post of Vice-admiral of the Maltese Islands, which he had inherited from his uncle Salvus, who had held it on pawn for 300 uncie from the crown. He was also at the time acting as *secreto* during the minority of the incumbent of that post.<sup>51</sup> This was an unheard of concentration of power, the only important post not held by him being that of Castellan Salvus Falzono, a younger brother of Laurencius, had also attained to the post of town mayor in 1512.<sup>52</sup> Michael de Falsone, a son of the lawyer Andreas, was town mayor in 1525-26.<sup>53</sup> Petrus Falson became *Flakem* or town mayor in 1526-27.<sup>54</sup> According to Commendatore Abela, Malta's first historian, Giacomo (i.e. Jacobo) Falsone had served as town mayor in 1513-14.<sup>55</sup>

It is evident that for none of the time during which the family Falzon took a prominent part in the public affairs of Malta did it ever monopolise power in the island, though Ambrosius came quite near to it and even he for barely one year. None of the Falzons ever became castellan, or full *secreto*. To be town mayor and alderman or jurat at the same time was forbidden by law. And it should be noticed that it was mainly the descendants of notary Antonius de Fauzono (died 1470), most of whom had full legal training, who shared in the distribution of power during the last decades of the fifteenth century and the first couple of decades of the sixteenth. The descendants of Petrus Fauzuni (a nephew of Manna, who had married first Manfrido la Chabica and afterwards Guglielmo Desguanes) hardly participated at all. None of these seem to have had legal training. Three of them became clergymen, one of them,

Don Nicolaus, to rise to the ranks of Treasurer and Archdeacon of the cathedral.<sup>56</sup> In post-1530 years, Michael Falsuni was Jurat in 1533-34. Petrus Falsuno in 1540-41 and 1554-55, Antoni Falsoni (which one?) in 1530-31 and 1539-40. On the other hand, another Ambrosio Falson, presumably the grandson of Michael, was jurat in 1567-88 and the lawyer Matteo de Falsone, the son of the heretic of the same name, in 1598-99.

An examination of three wills of members of the family belonging to the first half of the sixteenth century gives much information on their economic activities. The will of Antonius Falsone, son of Antonius and brother of Laurencius, 13 August 1535, reveals that the family connection with Dejr Ħandul still survived.<sup>57</sup> He left a small field situated in that area to found a church benefice. He had already sold with the right of redemption for the sum of 80 uncie, a price which he now claimed was too low to his two nephews two fields at the same locality which he had obtained from his late brother Reverend Nicholas. He therefore now suggested they should surrender one of the fields to his own son Petrus. The main property at Dejr Ħandul consisted of a *viridarium* (orchard) which he left to his son Petrus to be held by him and his heirs in perpetuity. On the whole the estate was of modest proportion. There was no transfer of property to the descendants of notary Anthonius Falsone, except that the two nephew recipients were married to females from that branch of the Falsone family.

The wills of Salvus de Falsone, 1517, and Ambrosius de Falsone, 1524, involved a much greater amount of property as well as, in fact, much other information on the economic activity of the person on behalf of whom the wills were drawn up. Taking the earlier will first, Salvus de Falsone belonged to the 'legal branch' of the family, though there is no evidence that he himself had any legal training. He left to his illegitimate son Antonius, after his return from captivity, a shop in the town square adjoining the monastery of St. Peter in Mdina priced at twenty uncie and the sum of 180 uncie, and immediately on his arrival the sum of 40 uncie in cash in addition to the 200 uncie in immovable property, already mentioned, for him and his descendants to hold for ever. The will mentions three other illegitimate children to whom, to his brother the notary Jacobus, and to his wife Imperia, he left legacies, but the bulk of his goods was distributed among a number of nephews.<sup>58</sup> He left to the chapel he erected in the Dominican church of Our Lady of the Grotto at Rabat all his lands at Il-Qinz. To his nephew Matheum, son of his brother

Jacobus, he left the *viridarium* which once belonged to Johannes de Nava, son of Alvarus, to be held by him and his descendants of the surname Fauzun, and he should also receive the rent money for the past year as well as for the field known as Il-Wilġa and adjoining field in the district of Tarxien. To Matheus's brother Anthonius he left the field called 'Tal-Madliena' to be inherited from male to male among his descendants. Anthonius had to manage the lands 'Tal-Madliena' and 'Ta' Venezja' paying the lease charges due from himself. He also left another field in the area of Tat-Tarġa which used to belong to the daughter of Ta' Chalit. And he finally left Anthonius another field-strip that he had bought from Petrus Spatafora.. To the two brothers Michael and Federicus Fauzuni, his nephews and their cousin Anthonius, just mentioned, Salvus left the lease over the feudal property at Għajn Riġana with all that he had to receive from the lord of that fief, namely Don Paulo de Alagona. To Michael he also left a field-strip named Il-Wilġa at Mgarr which he had bought from Paulo Vitar (=Bitar?) and another called Fabel Għimieni with some small patches of land which he had bought from Michaele Zarb situated in the area of Ta' Buqana as well as the management of the office of vice-admiral for the next eight years during which time he had to render account for up to half of its revenues to the other nephew named Ambrosius who would then take it over completely. The office was held under pawn from the government for the total sum of 350 uncie.

It is also clear from the same will that Salvus had several other commercial interests. Andreas Manduca administered, together with Salvo himself, on his own behalf as well as on behalf of Salvo's nephew Ambrosius, the estates of the bishop of Malta as well as the estates of the Sicilian monastery of St. Nicholas de Arenis and that of St. Mark at Rabat, Malta. He sold wheat and barley on his own account and that of Salvo in his shop, drawing up his accounts, and writing out public and private receipts in Salvo's own name. Salvus also left the sum of 50 uncie to Gabriel de Noto to cover claims for his share of the profits on the import of seven pieces of cloth from Barcelona, profits that had to be divided equally between Salvus and Gabriel and any other claims Gabriel may have on him. Reference is also made to a partnership with Michaele Tonna who still owed him the sum of 24 uncie, fourteen of which were now forgiven.

Several tenants are referred to as '*locati*', 'lessees': Matheus di Nasi, Johanni Dihif Tersana, Augustinus Zirafe, Bartolomeus Zirafe, Michaeli Grima, Laymo, Nicolao Caruana, Andreas Bonello who owed

rent for a shop and had other debts. Other debtors included Leonardo Aczuppardo who had sold wheat on his behalf and performed other services for him. He also forgave Pino Berach for the debt he owed him. Finally he left all his remaining effects to his residuary heir, his nephew the nobleman Ambroxius Fauczuni, son of the lawyer Laurencius. He and his descendants were forbidden to alienate his house where he lay:

'I forbid the alienation of the house in which I lie unwell, which I wish to come into the possession of the said Ambrosii and his male children from first born to first born and if the said Ambrosius dies without male children I wish and order that the said house come to those who were closest to the said Ambrosius being first born and their own first born for ever such that it cannot be sold nor alienated for ever, and if it should happen that the said house be alienated that it should be recalled by those next in succession being male first born such that it thus remain for ever the house of the family of the Fauczuni'.

The other Falzon will that must be analysed is that of Ambroxius de Falsone of 1524, drawn up on his death bed at a time when he was actually *capitano di verga* or *ħakem* of Malta. It is characterized mainly, after a whole series of pious bequests to the religious orders male and female, by a whole series of marriage legacies and waivers in whole or part of debts by various persons. Many concerned mortgages on property. He thus held Deyr Limara from Inguterra de Nava redeemable at the price of 110 uncie within a time limit of nine years. The nobleman Leonardus de Burdino could redeem his previous lands within the same time limit, and was forgiven the rent of ten uncie for the current year. Paulus Skembri was similarly forgiven payment of rent for the current year. The gardener at Pwales was to be allowed an extension of his tenure for another two years at the rate of eighteen uncie per year.

The most important part of the will of Ambroxius Fauzuni is the statement that his wife Margaret was probably pregnant. Ambroxius therefore wished his unborn child to become his residuary heir. It is apparent from all other sources of information that Ambrosius did not have any male or even female heir. His residuary property, especially the house in which he lay dying, which he must have inherited from his uncle Salvus, must therefore have gone to the next male heir, namely his cousin Michael Fauzuni, who also inherited the vice-admiralty.

Subsequently, Michael Fauzuni consulted Jacobu Dimech to

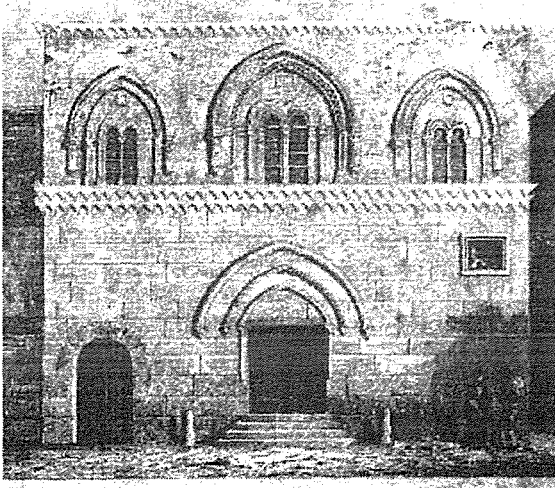
carry out modifications to his house at Mdina.<sup>59</sup> That also explains how it happened that only six years later Michael Fauzuni, the vice-admiral, was able to preside over the reception that was given by the Mdina municipality to Grand Master L'Isle Adam in 1530.<sup>60</sup> Just as significantly, a few months before the arrival of the Turkish army at the commencement of the Great Siege of 1565, Margarita de Falson, almost certainly Michael Fauzuni's daughter-in-law, rented out her house to the municipality to serve as the place of residence of the Capitano d'Armi for the following six months.<sup>61</sup> It therefore became the residence of the knight Don Pedro Mesquita, the commander of the Order's forces at Mdina and in the Maltese countryside during the Great siege of that year.

### **Casa Falson and *capomastro* Jacobus Dimech**

In the study of Malta's architecture before the arrival of the Order of St. John, it has been invariably accepted that although craftsmen themselves might be known by name and surname from the few surviving lists in contemporary payment records, their actual handiwork, the buildings they erected, cannot be identified any longer. The architects or *capo mastri* themselves, as they more usually were known, were apparently doomed to remain wrapped up in an impenetrable cloud of anonymity.

Lately, *capo mastro* Jacobo Dimeg has had the luck of being brought to attention by the praise once showered on him in an ecclesiastical court in Malta by his son the reverend Dominicu, the Treasurer and later archdeacon of the Cathedral. The latter personage was summoned in 1527 before the Church authorities for various alleged acts of harassment of the Reverend Jacobo Vassallo. During the legal proceedings, Don Jacobo alleged that Dominicu's father was a mere stone mason, a day worker, while the latter replied that Jacobo's father was a mere tailor who sewed cotton clothes for slaves and Jews before the expulsion of the latter in 1492.

Don Dominico's glowing description of his father bears retelling in full. In fact, he stated that he was himself the legitimate son of the late master craftsman Jacobus Demec and Agata Vella his wife, who lived throughout their lives as good and virtuous Christians, had a good reputation concerning their way of life and manners, residing honourably within the town of Malta. His father was a master builder and chief of the master builders of this city and island and was on several occasions



◀ Illustration entitled 'Maison des Grands Maitres de Malte' identifiable with the Norman House at Mdina published in some editions of F. Lacroix, *Histoire et description de l'isle de Malte et de Goze*, first published in 1814.

master builder in charge of the town walls and earned his pay more honourably than the other master builders. He had previously lived at Zebbug but had come to the town of Mdina more than forty years before this time, becoming a citizen and living in his own house, the same in which Don Dominicu then stayed, eventually dying in the same town. He was a very good craftsman, one of the very best, making fine things such that the Captains-at-Arms, the town Jurats and all the officials and gentry who desired to erect some pretty building or a nice church all called on him and asked him for his advice and opinion and they did whatever he told them. When he gave advice he always came out with full honour because his advice was given justly and without malice and he was very open and did not meddle in the affairs of others but kept to his own work. His wall was always well erected such that all officials and men of honour gave him honour and regard as if he were their brother.

Generally, of course, the witnesses he produced supported all he said about his father. Federicu Fauzuni stated that Don Dominicu's father was a good builder who had built the house of the nobleman Micheli Falczuni, his own brother. The craftsman Salvus Burg testified that Mastru Jacobu Dimeg was a good master builder and one of the first craftsmen who served his craft well, behaved honourably and was virtuous and a good Christian, and had a good reputation. All who

wanted to make a pretty window or a pretty wall always called on Mastru Jacobu. Don Jacobus Raficano said that when his parishioners wanted to erect a new church for their parish they called on Mastru Jacobu and took his counsel and advice because he was a good craftsman and one of the best in the town and island of Malta.<sup>62</sup>

The worst that the other side said was that Mastru Jacobu Dimeg accepted daily wages. Gilius Casha said that both Don Dominicu's father and his brother were employed by the day and Petrus Fabian explained that Don Dominicu's father was a master builder who accepted payment by the day. That in his early years Jacobu Dimeg, already a skilled builder, was paid by the day can be easily proven by the surviving accounts of the Cathedral at Mdina. Thus on Tuesday, 29 May 1464, and a day later, he was paid 30 grani [= Maltese ħabbiet] a day for two days' work, the same as other master masons.<sup>63</sup> The payment records of the Hospital of Santo Spirito for 1494 show several other entries for work there, where he was paid at the rate of 28 grani a day, the same pay that was given to Mastru Nicolau Muscat and mastru Blasi Attard, presumably as master builders. Other master craftsmen received a progressively smaller pay, presumably as mere stone dressers.<sup>64</sup> On one occasion Mastru Jacobu was paid for half a day's work, and on another for two-thirds.<sup>65</sup> The cathedral accounts also record his father's name as Mastru Andria,<sup>66</sup> most probably therefore also in the building trade. The Angara List shows Mastru Jacobu still living at Hebbu; round about 1485.<sup>67</sup> He is also probably to be identified with the Mastru Jacobu who received payment for a small job on the clock face of the cathedral at Mdina as late as 30 May 1515.<sup>68</sup>

It is not being suggested that the whole of what is now frequently referred to as Norman House was built by capomastro Jacobu Dimech. It is obvious that large parts of the inner structure are much older than his time, and several other portions are relatively modern. What Dimech erected are probably the front parts of the existing building particularly those containing the characteristic windows.

<sup>1</sup> H. Bresc, 'Malta dopo il Vespro Siciliano', *Melita Historica*, VI, No. 3 (1974), 318-9.

<sup>2</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 29, f.141v *et seq.*; S. Fiorini, *Documentary Sources of Maltese History. II Documents in the State Archives of Palermo*, doc. 274.

<sup>3</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 105, f.75rv.

<sup>4</sup> NLM, Univ. 206, f.4v.



- <sup>5</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 230, ff.248v-249, (27 April 1510).
- <sup>6</sup> NLM, Libr. MS 721, f.2.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 44-45, f.75v.
- <sup>10</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 89, f.21.
- <sup>11</sup> G. Wettinger, *Acta Juratorum et Consilii Civitatis et Insulae Maltae*, (Palermo, 1993), Doc.
- <sup>12</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 138, f.292.
- <sup>13</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 165, f.319.
- <sup>14</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 157, f.508v.
- <sup>15</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 191, f.140.
- <sup>16</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 202, f.99.
- <sup>17</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 208, f.284v.
- <sup>18</sup> *Documentary Sources of Maltese History, Part III: Documentsw of the Maltese Universitas, No. 1: Cathedral Museum Mdina, Archivum Cathedralis Melitae*, Miscellanea 33: 1405-1542, ed. Julio del Amo Garcia, et al., Doc. 70.
- <sup>19</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 238, f.810.
- <sup>20</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 269-70, f.621v.
- <sup>21</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 273, f.200v.
- <sup>22</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 259, f.183v.
- <sup>23</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 42, f.179.
- <sup>24</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 46-47, f.75v.
- <sup>25</sup> ASP, P, vol. 30, f.30v.
- <sup>26</sup> ASP, P, vol. 69, f.150v.
- <sup>27</sup> ASP, PRC, vol. 74, f.64v.
- <sup>28</sup> ASP, P, vol. 4, f.252.
- <sup>29</sup> ASP, P, vol. 21, f.27v.
- <sup>30</sup> ASP, P, vol. 24, f.311; ASP, RC, vol. 63, f.54.
- <sup>31</sup> ASP, P, vol. 34, f.24; ASP, RC, vol. 71, f.80rv.
- <sup>32</sup> ASP, P, vol. 39, f.199v.
- <sup>33</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 141, f.575v; ASP, RC, vol. 150, f.109; ASP, RC, vol. 208, f.279v.
- <sup>34</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 138, f.194.
- <sup>35</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 193, f.338; ASP, RC, vol. 236, f.440.
- <sup>36</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 138, fl. 292; ASP, RC, vol. 160, f.568; ASP, RC, vol. 176, f.541; ASP, RC, vol. 219, f.108; ASP, RC, vol. 226, f.80v.
- <sup>37</sup> *Documentary Sources of Maltese History, Part III*, Doc. 70.

<sup>38</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 125, ff.33v-34.

<sup>39</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 126, f.60v.

<sup>40</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 1128, f.294.

<sup>41</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 130, f.163v.

<sup>42</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 154, f.49rv.

<sup>43</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 128, f.334.

<sup>44</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 135, f.95rv.

<sup>45</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 135, f.367rv.

<sup>46</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 141, f.575v; ASP, RC, vol. 142, f.122.

<sup>47</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 208, f.279v.

<sup>48</sup> His cousin Antonius Jacobi Fauzuni represented the town mayor of the previous year, Leonardus de Bordino, in a meeting of the town council on 11 June 1523: NLM, Univ., vol. 12, f.336.

<sup>49</sup> 'Magnificus Alvarus de Casseres Juratus ac locumtenens magniici capitanei', 30 June 1524: NLM, Univ. 12, f.360.

<sup>50</sup> The cousins were Michael de Falsono, Antonius Jacobi de Falsono and Matheus de Falsono; the in-law was Michael Bondi: NLM, Univ. 12, ff.356 *et seq.*

<sup>51</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 240, f.80rv: 'regenti regie secretie ... ob minoritatem magnifici secreti'.

<sup>52</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 236, f.429.

<sup>53</sup> NLM, Univ. 112, f.390: pro magnifico Micaele Fauzuni Capitaneo notabilis civitatis....

<sup>54</sup> ASP, RC, vol. 282, f.566rv.

<sup>55</sup> G. F. Abela, *Della Descrittione di Malta Isola nel Mare Siciliano*, 439.

<sup>56</sup> ACM, MS Misc. 369A, Giuspatronati in Malta e Gozo, f.497rv.

<sup>57</sup> Deeds of Notary Antonius Rapa, NAV, MS. 1035/A1, ff.155-157v.

<sup>58</sup> Will of Salvu Falsone, made on 9 January 1517, opened on 22 January 1517, deeds of Notary Julius Cumbo, official copy in the deeds of Notary Franciscus de Falsone, R 846, ff.176-187, (8 August 1595).

<sup>59</sup> G. Wettinger, 'Priests in Court: A Harassed Schoolmaster and his Traducer', *Melitensium Amor, Festschrift in honour of Dun Ġwann Azzopardi*, eds T. Cortis, L. Bugeja et al, (Malta, 2002), 106.

<sup>60</sup> There is therefore no doubt that we are here dealing with the house known as Palazzo Falzon or Norman House.

<sup>61</sup> NLM, Univ. 85, f.16v, (11 February 1565). Margerita nee Brincat, must at the time have been already a widow. Alternatively, her husband could have been absent from the island. Her grandson Matteo married Scolastica Cumbo Navarra.

<sup>62</sup> Since Raficano was the parish priest of Naxxar he must have been referring to the parish church of that village, but it was rebuilt between 1613 and 1630, and the handiwork of Mastru Jacou Demeg there has not survived: A. Ferres, *Descrizione Satorica delle Chiese di Malta e Gozo* (Malta, 1968), 335, 337.

<sup>63</sup> Cath. Mus., Md., Cath. Arch., Procura, 'C', ff.42v, 45.

<sup>64</sup> Cath. Mus., Md., Cath. Arch., Misc.438, n. 1; 'Santo Spirito book of accounts', edited in S. Fiorini, in *Santo Spirito Hospital at Rabat, Malta. The Early Years to 1575* (Malta, 1989), passim.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 13.

<sup>66</sup> Cath. Mus., Md., Cath. Arch., Procura, 'C', f.54.

<sup>67</sup> Cath. Mus., Md., Angara List, f.8

<sup>68</sup> S. Fiorini, *The 'Mandati' Documents and the Archives of the Mdina Cathedral, Malta 1473-1539*, (Malta 1992), 185.

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Emanuel Buttigieg

## Church Bells and Street Fighting

Birkirkara and Don Joannes Matheo Camilleri (1545-57)<sup>1</sup>

In a country with a deep-rooted Catholicism such as Malta, cases and stories about the 'misbehaviour' of priests and clerics have always attracted the attention of one and all. One of G. Wettinger's most widely read works is in fact a paper on clerical concubinage between 1420 and 1550,<sup>2</sup> not least because of the on-going debate in Catholic countries as to whether or not Catholic priests should be allowed to marry.<sup>3</sup> In late medieval and sixteenth-century Europe the clerical estate extended far beyond those in priestly orders and contained a vast underbelly of men who were technically clerics, but who in effect lived as laymen. The effect of this was severely to blur the line which in theory separated the clerical estate from the rest of society.<sup>4</sup> In this vein, the unfolding of Joannes Matheo Camilleri's life presents a clear-cut example of those practices which the Tridentine Church would be vigourously addressing from the second half of the sixteenth century.

While extensive use has been made of notarial acts for the reconstruction of late medieval aspects of life, their use for the Early Modern period has so far been limited. Preference has usually been accorded to the Inquisitorial Records. In an attempt to depart from the main stream, this case study has taken as its backbone sources from the notarial records of Notaries Juliano Muscat, Giuseppe Deguevara, Antonio Cassar, and Placido Abela. Naturally, this does not mean exclusivity and the information obtained is complemented by a case from the Archbishop's Court, and another case from the Archives of the Inquisition. The cardinal point about notarial acts is that they were essentially private records. Although the notary was a public figure of great weight in society, his records were intimately private. Every act was the result of the coming together of different parties in front of the notary

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The holder of a first class honours degree in History, Emanuel Buttigieg is now a Principal at the Office of the Prime Minister, Valletta; he is reading for an M.A. on aspects of childhood in early modern Malta.

– sometimes because it was stipulated by the law, but often voluntarily – to record some aspect of their daily lives.<sup>5</sup> Among the first duties of all notaries was to listen diligently. The notarial acts, written in Latin, do lose in proximity to the mother tongue, but they gain in proximity to the remembered experience of the individual, with all its specificity.<sup>6</sup> That is why greater attention should be given to notarial records as sources for the reconstruction of social patterns in Early Modern Malta.

### A Contested Accession

On 12 February 1545, the Noble Nicola Camilleri, father and administrator of the Noble Cleric (not yet a priest) Joannes Matheo Camilleri, presented to the Venerable Brandano De Caxaro, Apostolic Notary, an Apostolic Bull to be presented to the Reverend Matheo de Surdo to execute. Through this document Joannes Matheo Camilleri was to obtain the curateship of the parish of St. Helena and St. Mary of Birkirkara. Nicola Camilleri also wanted Brandano to present the Bull to Bishop Cubelles and read it to him (*notificare et legere dictas bullas apostolicas Rev. Don. episcopo melivetano*). In a separate entry of the same day, Brandano said that he would only read the Bull to the Bishop if Nicola Camilleri did not find anyone else willing to do it as he respected the Bishop.

Presumably Brandano must have had an itching of the troublesome career ahead of Joannes Matheo Camilleri and therefore wished not to get too associated with him. In a further separate entry of the same day, Nicola Camilleri ordered Brandano to proceed and read the Bull to the Bishop. He told Brandano that his excuse was frivolous (*responsione cum facta ex quo friviola*), and that, as both Public and Apostolic Notary, it was his duty to read out the Bull to the Bishop.<sup>7</sup>

The following day, 13 February 1545, the Noble Nicola Camilleri filed another protest. This time the protest was addressed to the Reverend Matheo de Surdo, canon and official of the dioceses. Nicola Camilleri reproached Surdo for not executing the Bull in the face of opposition by the Reverend Josepho Manduca, the Vicar-General of the dioceses. The following day, on the 14 February 1545, Matheo de Surdo said that he would obey and execute the Bull.<sup>8</sup>

A few days later, on 18 February 1545, the case got more complicated. A new protest was filed, this time by the Reverend Matheo Surdo against the Reverend Laurentio de Caxaro, because the said

Laurentio, on the orders of the Reverend Josepho Manduca, was stopping him (Matheo) from executing the Bull. Surdo told Laurentio to stop interfering, but apparently, Laurentio kept on defying Matheo because two days later, on 20 February 1545, Matheo filed another protest against Laurentio telling him not to interfere in the choice of the witnesses.<sup>9</sup> Clearly, the lure of such an important office as that of curate of Casal Birchircara was attracting the attention and greed of different officials of the Curia. At this point we also witness the beginning of a life-long enmity between Joannes Matheo Camilleri and the Vicar General of the Diocese, the Reverend Josepho Manduca.

It is to be noted that, while the mother figure was more of a protector, fathers were often older, distant, but powerful figures who could do favours for their sons. Careers in the Church were an intrinsic part of the magnates' and bourgeoisie's search for social status and recognition. Thus the Noble Nicola Camilleri got his son, Joannes Matheo Camilleri, the profitable office of curate of Birkirkara.

Before proceeding with this study a clarification ought to be made. The exact post which was held by Joannes Matheo Camilleri is somewhat enigmatic. In the documentation analysed, Camilleri was alternatively described as curate, rector and chaplain of Birkirkara. On the other hand, Ferris<sup>10</sup> does not list Camilleri as one of Birkirkara's chaplains – in fact he doesn't mention him at all, while Vella<sup>11</sup> describes him as chaplain from 1545 to 1557. For the sake of consistency, and because the Apostolic Bull specified the post of curate, this will be the title adhered to throughout this work.

## **Rape and Scandal at Birkirkara**

At the end of the day, Joannes Matheo Camilleri did manage to become both a priest and rector of the parish of Casal Birchircara. He also had a son by the name of Ascanio.<sup>12</sup> The (now) Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri soon proved to be a fitting successor to his predecessor, Don Joannes Pisano, who had been accused of illicit relations with Agatha Spiteri in 1542 and openly boasted of cuckolding more than ten of his parishioners (*haver facto cornutj ultra diechj personj dicta parrochis*). Don Joannes Pisano was in fact forced to resign from his post.<sup>13</sup>

Between May and August 1553 the people of Birkirkara found themselves caught up in the crossfire between the Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri and *presbiteru* Don Antonio Michalief. Reverend

Joannes Matheo Camilleri approached Notary Giuseppe Deguevara to file a protest against Don Antonio Michallef and his behaviour during two Sunday masses in the months of May and June. According to Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri, Don Antonio Michallef had postponed divine service (*ad missam celebranda ... postponendo divinij cultus*) and from the altar he had accused him (Camilleri) of having raped the daughter of his maternal uncle, that is, his own cousin (*exponentem de stupro ... ipse Reverendus rector stupraverit filiaz sui patruj*) using such diabolical language (*diabolis verbis*) that he scandalised the parishioners (*maximo scandalo ipi populj*) and horrified the Chaplain (*Reverenduz capellanuz ab horribat*). Don Antonio Michallef had therefore accused Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri of the double crime of rape and incest.

The Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri feared that his traditional enemy, Don Josepho Manduca – who was charged with investigating the case – might try to sideline the accusations against Don Antonio Michallef (*temere objectos silentio no pretermitttere tenore querelationis et lamentionis actus contra eusdem presbiteru domum Antoniu Michallef*). Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri felt adamant that Michallef had accused him of rape (*Infamia de stupro*) and that he had exposed his cousin to such infamy (*exponente filiam suj patruj stuprasserit diffament*). The following day, Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri chose the Honourable Nicolo Haxixe to read (*Lecta et declaram*) this protest to Don Antonio Michallef.<sup>14</sup>

As far as the acts of Notary Deguevara are concerned, the story ends there, and we cannot say whether the accusation of rape was true or mere slander. However, this was not the only instance where the Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri had disputes with the ecclesiastical authorities and his parishioners.

## Church Bells and Street Fighting

No sooner had the dust settled over the alleged rape case that the people of Birkirkara once again found themselves the victims of another of Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri's quarrels, this time with Magister Johannes de Arena. Camilleri was ordered by the Maltese Episcopal Court to pay de Arena 10 uncie for the sale of a bell (*unis campane*) together with 1 uncia 1 tareno and 4 grani expenses. Camilleri refused to pay up and through his attorney Magister Luca Vella<sup>15</sup> argued that this court order was null and void, since an appeal had been lodged with the superior Metropolitan Church.<sup>16</sup>

In the meantime, Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri reported that de Arena, with seven armed men (*manu armata*) violently forced the people of Birkirkara indebted towards Camilleri to pay him (de Arena) the Church taxes of first fruits (*premitie*) owed to Camilleri, smashing open doors (*buttandolj li porti*), robbing them of goods including their bedcovers (*il copri di lecti*). These Church taxes gathered by de Arena were however larger than the sum owed (and here we get an insight into the level of some prices in 1555), as in this island grain was sold at 4 tareni per tumino, barley at 2 tareni 8 grani per tumino, and cotton at 1 aquila per pesa.<sup>17</sup>

### **Palermo Intervenens**

The Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri filed a protest against Don Jacobo Calleya who had sued Camilleri in the Episcopal Court causing his imprisonment (the first of a series of imprisonments). Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri argued that he had two sacks containing 2½ cantari of spun cotton in his Birkirkara house which he had sold to someone in Naples (*regno neapolis*) for 50 scudi per cantaro and he now applied for leave to let his attorney fetch the sacks to the buyer, which permission was denied.<sup>18</sup>

The vexations of Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri did not fall on deaf ears. The Archbishop of Palermo, Don Petrus de Arragona (*sic*) issued a decree in favour of Camilleri against the Bishop of Malta, and attacking the unfair behaviour of the Vicar General Josepho Manduca towards Camilleri, who has placed him in prison several times and had him interrogated by several priests on the Mass and his doctrine, thus forcing Camilleri to appeal to his Lordship. For this, he was put in irons (*carcerati in canteni*) and detained like an infamous criminal without any proof against him.

The Metropolitan court ordered Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri to be released and, through its notary Vincenzo Polizzi, agreed to Camilleri's request to have all the material relating to Camilleri's case, including the information on the alleged rape, sent to the Metropolitan court. At first the Maltese Court refused to release Camilleri and even sent its steward to confiscate all the goods found in Cailleri's home, including the sacks of cotton and many other things. Eventually the Maltese Curia had to let Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri go, after five months in jail, but he was still being impeded from leaving Malta.<sup>19</sup>



## Negligence and Protestant Influence?

Notary Antonio Cassar, on behalf of the Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri, after Mass, read out to his parishioners the list of accusations they were hauling at him:

- People were dying without being administered last rites;
- Corpses were left in Church for 2 or 3 days without permitting them to be buried;
- Being late a day or two in administering the sacraments to the sick;
- Causing scandal in the way in which he exposed the host in a wooden box on a frame on the main altar (*una buxula de lingo supra el scambello dilo cono dilo altare*);
- Making Holy Oil himself;
- Telling his congregation that it was not a sin to eat fat, meat, eggs, cheese and cheeselets on the prohibited days citing the gospel which says that not what enters from the mouth pollutes man but what comes out of it.

Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri naturally denied all these accusations and he left the island to pursue his case in Palermo, requesting his parishioners to present proof of their claims in writing within ten days and be willing to appear in the Metropolitan Court to make their accusations.<sup>20</sup>

By the time the Knights of St. John disembarked on the shores of Malta in 1530, the island's population had been streamlined into a community with an overall homogenous character. With the expulsion of the Muslims in 1249 and the expulsion of the Jews in 1492, the remaining community was, to a large extent, native to the island and Christian. Malta had its traditions and way of life as is evidenced by the phrase *juxta usum melite*,<sup>21</sup> however, the presence of the Knights in Malta now exposed it to Protestant influences and the fact that the Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri was questioned about his doctrine and was accused of dismissing the days of prohibition, points to a real concern among the local hierarchy about Protestant infiltrations.<sup>22</sup>

## Murder Most Horrid

The animosity that had been growing between Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri, his parishioners and his fellow priests, finally spilled over in a bloodbath. According to Ascanio Camilleri, his father Reverend

Joannes Matheo Camilleri was murdered by Don Jacobo Calleya and others one August night in 1557. Ascanio found his father's dead body upside-down in a well (*viddi che donno Matheo Camilleri mio padre qua morto dentro lo puzzo co lo capo In giu', et li piedi In su*). Ascanio Camilleri uttered these words as he gave witness in front of the Inquisitor and Apostolic Delegate Mgr. Pietro Dusina on 12 April 1575, 18 years after the murder of his father.<sup>23</sup>

The testimony given by Ascanio Camilleri is fascinating on a number of levels. First of all, it is fascinating as a story, with its details, intrigues and violence. The story of Ascanio is made even more interesting by a number of reported speeches which we are told were uttered in vulgar Maltese (*Udi io tabarni*<sup>24</sup> *ala maltese*) but which were unfortunately written down in Italian. This is Ascanio's description of that faithful night:

My father and I were in bed. I was not yet asleep and I had a little candle. The rooms were at the top of the stairway. I heard noises in the house and Maltese being spoken ... strangers had broken into the house. I heard them say in Maltese, 'Come on let's kill this ass'. Then I heard again in Maltese, 'He has a son, and if he should hear or see us, we have to kill him'. These words frightened and confused me until I was overtaken by sleep ... The next morning I was woken up by knocking on the door. When I went out onto the balcony (*l'apraco* ?) I saw Mastro Agostino Calleya who upon seeing me went away satisfied (*sene ando sodisfatto*). I began calling my father but was answered instead by one Monica, who took care of the lamp in the enclosure within the chapel. She said 'Go to the well (*lo puzzo*) and you will find your father'.<sup>25</sup>

Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri's life came to an end in a well. He was succeeded by Dun Giuseppe Bellia who, according to Mgr. Dusina, had two concubines, one of whom lived at Birgu (Mgr. Dusina described her as *una grassa*; they must have had their liaisons in one of a number of properties which Bellia owned in Birgu).<sup>26</sup> With her he spent four days of the week to the detriment of his parish.<sup>27</sup> The story narrated by Ascanio had a strong dose of sadism in it: thus, Mastro Agostino Calleya was satisfied (*sodisfatto*) to have awoken the young Ascanio and caused him alarm about his father. Then there is Monica's

black-humoured way of announcing to the young boy that his father was in the well. Near the end of the testimony Ascanio also reported how he had been told how pleased (*comi compari piaciuto*) Don Jacobo Calleya was about the death of Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri.<sup>28</sup>

In retelling such an account of bloodshed, which must have left sorrow, terror and regret in its wake, I found I was sometimes laughing.<sup>29</sup> But for the victims in such stories there must have been little to laugh about which leads to the second observation about this testimony which is related to its structure. Turning a terrible action – such as the murder of one's father – into a story is a way to distance oneself from it, at worst a form of self-deception, at best a way to pardon the self.<sup>30</sup> Ascanio must have forever been haunted by a sense of guilt at not having lifted a finger to help his father.

Thirdly, such a case, taken together with what went on before, provides interesting particulars about small-island power setups. On one side one finds the enemies of Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri: Bishop Cubelles and the Vicar General Manduca on a diocese level, Don Antonio Michallef, Don Jacobo Calleya and Dun Giuseppe Bellia on a parish level. On the other, his supporters included his father, his son, and Archbishop Petrus de Arragona of Palermo.

With the local Church hierarchy – from the Bishop downwards – ranged against Ascanio and his dead father, the young man could hope for very little justice and understanding. Ascanio alleged that when the authorities of the Città Vecchia went to Birkirkara, the Bishop ordered that the body of his father be left in the well. Although Mastro Agostino Calleya was imprisoned, the Bishop did not hang him (*non li fece haver corda*) as was expected in such cases. Moreover Ascanio also alleged that the Bishop had promised the rectorship of Birkirkara to the person who first brought him news of the demise of Reverend Joannes Matheo Camilleri.<sup>31</sup> In such circumstances, and probably following his father's example, it seems only natural that Ascanio's last hope for justice – and revenge – lay in the person of an outside authority like Mgr. Dusina, who was not involved in local power setups and networks.

## Conclusion

Social relations were extensive, variable, and constantly changing.<sup>32</sup> Even in a small island like Malta people lived their lives within different social settings which were nonetheless concurrent and overlapping. The people of mid-sixteenth century Malta were not a homogeneous

mass, but individuals whose experience of life was influenced by many factors: their gender, wealth, age, marital and social status and the type of community in which they lived.<sup>33</sup> The essentially private nature of notarial acts helps to highlight all of these aspects in a very intimate way. The lives, actions and interactions analysed in this case-study show the existence of a vibrant popular culture in mid-sixteenth-century Malta, existing outside the limelight of the *histoire evenementielle*. Furet argued that the only way to reintegrate the masses into history was through demography and sociology, through numbers and anonymity. However, as Ginzburg argued, the characteristics of particular social strata within a specific time-frame can be discerned in the typical or atypical behaviour of individuals handpicked from the masses.<sup>34</sup> In this vein, the case study of Joannes Matheo Camilleri encapsulates a whole array of social relationships – father and son, notary and client, lower clergy and higher clergy, and priests and parishioners. These formed the rhythms that determined the pattern of daily life in pre-Tridentine Malta.

This paper does not want to give the impression that clerical squabbling and concubinage were restricted to Birkirkara. Similar patterns existed throughout the island and in other Catholic lands.<sup>35</sup> However, such an example from the clergy as that of Joannes Matheo Camilleri must have caused great annoyance among the laity. With the advent of the Inquisition, Malta was to enter the main currents of the Counter-Reformation.<sup>36</sup> Dun Giuseppe Bellia was to be followed in 1594 by Dun Filippo Borg, described as one of the first great products of the Counter-Reformation in Malta. For the first time in a century Birkirkara had a rector who was celibate.<sup>37</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This paper is an expanded version of the case study about Joannes Matheo Camilleri found in E. Buttigieg, *Fifteen Years Into Hospitaller Rule: A Study of the Acts of Notary Juliano Muscat, 1545*, (B.A. Hons., University of Malta, 2002), 68 – 71.

<sup>2</sup> G. Wettinger, 'Concubinage among the Clergy of Malta and Gozo, ca. 1420 – 1550', in *Journal of the Faculty of Arts*, vol. vi, no. 4, (Malta, 1977), 165 – 88. During a lecture at the University of Malta on 25 April 2002, Wettinger said he believed that his paper on clerical concubinage was the most widely read of his works.

<sup>3</sup> M. Laven, 'Sex And Celibacy in Early Modern Venice', in *The*

*Historical Journal*, vol. 44, no. 4, (Cambridge, 2001), 866.

<sup>4</sup> J. Bergin, 'Between estate and profession: the Catholic parish clergy of early modern western Europe', in M. L. Bush (ed.), *Social Orders and Social Classes in Europe since 1500: Studies in Social Stratification*, (London and New York, 1992), 68 – 9.

<sup>5</sup> C. Violante, *Atti Privati e Storia Medievale, Problemi di Metodo*, [Fonti e Studi del Corpus membranarum italicarum], (Rome 1982). Note Violante's emphasis on the private nature of notarial records in the very title of his work.

<sup>6</sup> N. Zemon-Davis, *Fiction in the Archives – Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth Century France*, (USA, 1987), 22.

<sup>7</sup> N[otarial] A[rchives] V[alletta] [= NAV], Notary Juliano Muscat, R376/11, f.508-509v., (12.ii.1545).

<sup>8</sup> NAV, Notary Juliano Muscat, R376/11., 509v.-510v., (13.ii.1545).

<sup>9</sup> NAV, Notary Juliano Muscat, R376/11, f.517-f.518, (18.ii.1545).

<sup>10</sup> A. Ferris, *Descrizione Storica delle Chiese di Malta e Gozo*, (Malta, 1866), [Facsimile Ed., 1985], 319.

<sup>11</sup> E. B. Vella, *Storja ta' Birkirkara bil-Kollegjata Tagħha*, (Malta, 1934), 500.

<sup>12</sup> Wettinger, 'Concubinage among the Clergy of Malta and Gozo, 169.

<sup>13</sup> C[uriae] E[piscopalis] M[elitansae] [= CEM], A[cta] O[riginalia] [= AO], Ms 22, f.120, (13.xii.1542).

<sup>14</sup> NAV, Notary Giuseppe Deguevara, R778/1, f.39-f.40, (3.viii.1553).

<sup>15</sup> NAV, Notary Antonio Cassar, R160/1, 601v.-f.602, (9.viii.1555).

<sup>16</sup> NAV, Notary Antonio Cassar, R160/1, f.602-f.604, (9.viii.1555).

<sup>17</sup> NAV, Notary Antonio Cassar, R160/2, 172v.-f.174, (4.xi.1555).

<sup>18</sup> NAV, Notary Antonio Cassar, R160/1, f.614-f.615, (12.viii.1555).

<sup>19</sup> NAV, Notary Antonio Cassar, R160/2, f.273-f.278, (14.i.1556).

<sup>20</sup> NAV, Notary Antonio Cassar, R160/2, 381v.-382v., (6.iv.1556).

<sup>21</sup> NAV, Notary Juliano Muscat, R376/11, f.611v., (19.iii.1545).

<sup>22</sup> C. Cassar, 'The Reformation and Sixteenth-Century Malta', in *Melita Historica*, vol. x, no. 1, (Malta, 1988), 52.

<sup>23</sup> A[rchives of the] I[nquisition] M[alta] [= AIM], Processi IA, 'Contra donnum Jacobum Calliam', f.297- f.300, (12.iv.1575).

<sup>24</sup> V. Nicotru, *Dizionario Siciliano-Italiano*, (Catania, 1883), p. 835; Tabarni is an adaptation of the Sicilian adjective Tabariatu. Lingua tabarna means vulgar or heavy language.

<sup>25</sup> AIM, Processi IA, 'Contra donnum Jacobum Calliam', f.297- f.300, (12.iv.1575).

<sup>26</sup> NAV, Notary Placido Abela, R04, 167v.-169v., (23.ix.1558).

<sup>27</sup> G. Aquilina OFM and S. Fiorini, [Eds.], *Documentary Sources of Maltese History*, Part IV Documents at the Vatican, No. 1 Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Congregazione Vescovi e Regolari Malta: Visita Apostolica no. 51 Mgr. Petrus Dusina, 1575, (Malta, 2001), 68.

<sup>28</sup> AIM, Processi IA, 'Contra donnum Jacobum Calliam', f.297- f.300, (12.iv.1575).

<sup>29</sup> Davis, *Fiction in the Archives*, 114. Davis recounts going through these same sensations during her work on the pardon seeking tales.

<sup>30</sup> Davis, *Fiction in the Archives*, 114.

<sup>31</sup> AIM, Processi IA, 'Contra donnum Jacobum Calliam', f.297- f.300, (12.iv.1575).

<sup>32</sup> P. Ariès, 'Introduction', in R. Chartier (ed.) *A History of Private Life, III – Passions of the Renaissance*, (Cambridge Massachusetts, and London England, 1989), 3.

<sup>33</sup> A. Rowlands, 'The Conditions of Life of the Masses', in E. Cameron (ed.) *Early Modern Europe*, (Oxford University Press, 1999), 31.

<sup>34</sup> C. Ginzburg, *Il Formaggio e I Vermi – Il Cosmo di un Mugnaio del'500*, (Torino, 1976), xix.

<sup>35</sup> Laven, 'Sex and Celibacy in Early Modern Venice', 865.

<sup>36</sup> C. Cassar, *Society, Culture and Identity in Early Modern Malta*, (Malta, 2000) 225.

<sup>37</sup> G. Wettinger, 'Early Maltese Popular Attitudes to the Government of the Order of St. John', in *Melita Historica*, vol. vi, no. 3, (Malta, 1974), 258.

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Carmen Depasquale

## French Knights and Maltese Inhabitants in the XVIII Century

As Malta is an epitome of all Europe, and an assemblage of the younger brothers, which are commonly the best of its first families, it is certainly one of the best academies for politeness in this part of the globe ... It is curious to observe the effect it produces upon the various people that compose this little medley.<sup>1</sup>

This is the impression that the Knights of St John, belonging to different European nations but living together in Malta, left on Patrick Brydone who visited Malta in 1770. Throughout the eighteenth century French Knights outnumbered those of other nationalities. A manuscript of the Bibliothèque nationale de France entitled '*Description de l'île de Malte et tout ce qu'elle contient*' states that as of 28 October, 1710, out of a total of 1904 Knights, conventual chaplains and servants-at-arms, 740, that is almost 40% are French.<sup>2</sup> Seventy years later, the French Foreign Minister Vergennes, writing to the ambassador of the Order in Paris, in a letter dated November 25, 1780, states that more than half the members of the Order are French.<sup>3</sup>

In this paper, I intend to restrict as much as possible the term 'Maltese inhabitants' to the native Maltese, rather than to the wider meaning of inhabitants of Malta. I shall therefore leave out all references to the Rule of the Order in so far as it affected Knights in their relationship among themselves, such as when Dolomieu,<sup>4</sup> a Knight of the Langue of Auvergne says that Malta is a country of "intriguers and schemers", (*un pays où on ne s'occupe que d'intrigues et de brigues*),<sup>5</sup> an idea echoed by the diarist Abbé Boyer.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, I shall disregard comments such as the one made by the Comte de Saint-Priest<sup>7</sup> who describes life in

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A Sorbonne graduate with a special interest in the eighteenth century, Dr Depasquale lectures in the Department of French, which she currently heads, at the University of Malta. This is a revised text of her Andrew Vella Annual Memorial lecture delivered at the National Archives, Santo Spirito, Rabat, on 6th December 2001.

Malta as 'lax and lazy' (*molle et oisive*).<sup>8</sup> He was referring to the time when he was on his caravans in 1753 and it is an obvious reference to the behaviour of the Knights. I shall only make brief references to three Maltese who stand out among others: Count Ciantar, Agius de Soldanis and Mikiel Anton Vassalli, as these three literary men figure prominently in another paper entitled "French influence on the literature of Malta in the eighteenth century".

The printed work *Etat curieux et militaire de l'Ordre de Malte pour l'année 1741*, published anonymously in Malta by a French Knight in 1741, gives some interesting facts about Malta. Statistics include the population of Malta "of all ages and of both sexes": 120,000 - 2000 of whom are ecclesiastics, excluding those of the Order - 2500 slaves, 24 convents, eighteen of which are male communities, six towns, 28 smaller towns, and two universities where one can graduate, (où l'on peut passer bachelier). Out of 2242 Knights, 1038 are French, while 290 professed Knights, conventual chaplains<sup>9</sup> and servants-at-arms reside in Malta. Of these, 61 belong to the Langue of Provence, 21 to that of Auvergne and 40 to the Langue of France (just over 42%).

Among the conventual chaplains, some were Maltese, but as there was no Maltese Langue, they could only join the Order in this rank after having obtained the certificate of naturalisation from the country of the Langue they intended to join. Requests from Maltese to be naturalised French came mostly from men whose family was of French origin or whose father was in the service of the Order. Thus, Joseph Grognet registered his French naturalisation in 1739. His father, of French origin, was the Grand Master's customs officer. He was educated in France and was received in the Langue of France on 1 August, 1759.<sup>10</sup> Honoré Audouard was French, he married a Maltese woman, settled in Malta, and was chief surgeon of the Grand Master's galleys for over fifty years. His three sons Joseph-Scipion, Jean-Antoine Melchior and Eustache-Eméric obtained French naturalisation. They were conventual chaplains and could obtain benefices.<sup>11</sup> Other Maltese conventual chaplains who were naturalised French include Pierre-Paul-Carmin Grech, Gaetano Bruno, Edouard Regnaud, Antoine Blaise, Gaëtan-Gesuald and Jean-Mathieu Dou, Barthélemy-Gaëtan Bouchut, Jacques and Antoine Corogne, Henri Petit, Emmanuel-Marie Abbate and François Rocquer.<sup>12</sup> Three members of the Maltese nobility also sought and obtained French naturalisation: Jean-Marie Ciantar, son of Count Giovanantonio was received in the Langue of



France as conventual chaplain,<sup>13</sup> as well as the two brothers Paul and Dominique Barbaro.<sup>14</sup>

Not all Maltese who asked for French naturalisation did so in order to join the Order. Among them one finds Nicolò Isouard's father and his brothers. Their father Jacques Isouard Xuereb was the Order's agent of the *Chambre de Commerce* of Marseilles.<sup>15</sup> Thomas-Gaëtan-Gabriel Galea obtained his French naturalisation on his request "to fix his residence in France and end his days there".<sup>16</sup> The letters patent in the form of an edict given by Louis XV in June 1765 dispensed the Maltese from the need of obtaining letters of naturalisation in order to enjoy the rights of French citizenship if they wanted to trade in France.<sup>17</sup>

Pinto looked favourably upon the Maltese conventual chaplains. He wrote to his ambassador in Paris on 18 August, 1749:

"They serve our Church assiduously, they apply themselves to study and to singing, which our nationals neglect, for on their arrival here, the latter solicit us to go back to France to wait for a commandery to be vacated and thus do not render any service to our Order. We are ashamed of them as almost none of them prepares himself to be a prior on our galleys and vessels... You know that to plead before us and our Venerable Council, one has to wear the habit and speak Italian well; only the Maltese provide us with lawyers,... with auditors, as our nationals disdain these offices and consider them beneath them ..."<sup>18</sup>

The author of Libr. 79 also says of the church services at St John's:

"One can be sure that there is hardly any church in Europe where services are carried out better than here."<sup>19</sup>

Besides judges, lawyers and auditors, other high ranking Maltese officials of the Order included doctors and surgeons. As one would expect of a Hospitaller Order, the school of medicine in Malta was of a high standard, however the Grand Master often sent his doctors to further their studies in Italy and in France. Georges Imbert, Octave-Gaëtan Delicata, Gaetan Azzopardi, Joseph Demarco, Jean-François Maurin, Emmanuel and Michel Grillet and Jean-Baptiste Locano studied medicine at Montpellier. Having obtained his doctorate in 1749, Locano remained in Montpellier to practise medicine and was honoured by the

Académie royale des sciences which appointed him associate-member in 1751.

Other doctors studied in Paris: Saverio Micallef specialized in ophthalmology, in lithotomy and in obstetrics. Joseph Grillet studied surgery between 1704 and 1706. Antoine Grillet studied under the watchful eye of bailli de Laval-Montmorency.<sup>20</sup>

Two other members of the Grillet family, Emmanuel and Michel, studied at Montpellier. Michel Angelo Grima had already made a name for himself in Malta and in Florence when, in 1758, he pursued his studies for two years in Paris. He then joined the French army which was fighting the Seven Years War. He authored two works in French, the first one, published in 1760 is entitled: *Mémoire sur la sensibilité des tendons*; the second, published a year later, is entitled *Réflexions sur la mémoire sur la taille latérale de Bromfield*. He dedicated the first work to the Ambassador of the Order in Paris, the bailli de Froullay, to whom he expressed his love for this beautiful language (French) in which he had translated this work from Italian.<sup>21</sup>

It was a French Knight, the bailli de Rességuier,<sup>22</sup> who in 1775 established a foundation for the teaching of surgery in Malta and appointed Michelangelo Grima as director of studies.<sup>23</sup>

The Grand Master and the Knights constantly came in contact with other Maltese. These included businessmen, tradesmen, craftsmen and artisans as well as servants. A perusal of the wills, *disproprî*, of letters and diaries of some French Knights gives us a very clear insight into how these Maltese were regarded by them.

Let us first consider a few general remarks. A document in the Archives of the National Library of Malta, written in 1761, entitled *Mémoire général sur l'île de Malte*, describes the people as "the best one could find, very attached to the Order and of an excellent constitution [...]. They are good and courageous".<sup>24</sup> What about the Maltese sailor? The anonymous author of the book published in 1797, *Malte, Corse, Minorque et Gibraltar*, says of him:

"In general, one is pleased with the Maltese. He is faithful, intelligent, eager, gives a good service, is docile, generous, he lacks nothing. The traveller finds in him the surest safeguard and the best protection. He is clean, graceful in all his movements and has the agility of a bird".<sup>25</sup>

Were these qualities in the mind of Emperor Charles VI who, writing to

the Grand Master from Vienna on 7 January, 1739, asked for "a few hundred sailors and [...] a certain number of officers" to serve on the Danube? Despuig's answer dated March 11 of the same year informed the Emperor that he was sending three hundred sailors whom he described "d'élite", accompanied by fourteen Knights to command them. A note dated 30 May, 1789 states that an almoner, a doctor and a surgeon would also accompany them. The Order would give double pay to the sailors and the Grand Master paid for their uniform. The Order would also pay the Knights forty scudi per month and one hundred scudi for their uniform.<sup>26</sup>

Likewise, the Order knew that it could rely on the Maltese soldier. If that were not the case, treatises such as the one entitled *Réflexions sur la défense maritime de Malte* by the bailli de Blacas,<sup>27</sup> written in 1761 - the year the Order feared a Turkish attack - would not have been written. In his introduction, the author says:

"A lot of money is necessary for war; the Order does not have it, but it possesses courage as well as faithful subjects".<sup>28</sup>

Two years before, the same author had presented to the Grand Master a *Projet [...] pour introduire la culture des mûriers dans l'île de Malte et y établir conséquemment un commerce considérable de soie*. He suggested the cultivation of mulberry trees for the production of silk and the manufacture of cotton, calico, dimity, muslin.... He thought that agriculture and manufacture could provide the Maltese with a means of living by their own work, thus preventing Maltese men from leaving the country to look elsewhere for work.

Another French Knight, Chevalier Turgot,<sup>29</sup> who had a passion for botany and natural history, was also very keen on the manufacture of cotton, muslin, calico.... In his correspondence with Canon Agius de Soldanis, he updates him with the latest developments in this regard. For example, in his opinion, the machine used in Malta to separate the seed from the cotton was worn out. In another letter, he promised to send him a recipe for extracting oil for burning from cotton seeds. In a letter dated 26 June, 1752, he tells the Canon that he had all that was necessary for the manufacture of cotton and muslin and that "if they want, our island can make great profit out of such manufacture." Six months later, he wrote to the Canon again and insisted on the manufacture of muslin "for the production of very fine cotton stockings that sell well in this country"<sup>30</sup> (France). Besides, he who before his departure from the island had a project for the formation of a botanical garden in Malta, was

continually sending from France to chevalier Quinquaran de Beaujeu all sorts of seeds: coffee, cinnamon, Senegal and Siam cotton seeds, all sorts of bulbs, "some of which can be planted in the marshes of Marsa" and of trees. "You see", he tells the Canon in another letter, "although I am far, I continue to work for our island".<sup>31</sup>

Locally produced cotton stockings must have been very much in demand by the Knights, for Commander Dolomieu writing to his friend Chevalier Fay on 4 December, 1795, asked him to procure him stockings.

"Please, ask her also (Marguerite, his servant in Malta) to make me some stockings for I am in dire need of them; I would like white and yellow ribbed ones. It is not important whether they be fine or thick, provided they are strong".<sup>32</sup>

Visitors to the island such as Count Borch and Roland de la Platière all mention the manufacture of cotton and silk and of stockings. The author of *Malte, Corse, Minorque et Gibraltar* states that "cotton and its weaving are the first elements of the commerce and industry of the Maltese". He singles out "the manufacture of stockings and of bonnets" as well as the manufacture of cotton sails for the Order's navy. He adds: "This unique manufacture belongs to the Order".<sup>33</sup>

The same author, who, in my opinion, is no other than Commander Dolomieu, had this to say of Maltese workmen:

'In Valletta, one finds all the workmen and all the merchandise one needs. Few cities in Europe, with the exception of some big capitals, have such good workmen where labour is so cheap, and where one can find such a great abundance of objects of luxury and of good taste. Filigree works are famous.

'Brass plate is very well worked. Kettles are as light and as well-made as in the Levant. They trade also in clocks [...]. The marble makers are very clever and they work on the pavement of churches.

'They fish for oysters and for sea-dogs. Their skin is sold for up to twenty pence.

'[...] The rubies of Messina are traded by the Greeks in the Levant through the Maltese [...]

'The Maltese take the ashes of the Kalimagnum to Venice, lichen to Sicily and oranges everywhere.

'They trade the catches procured by their privateering against the Barbareques.

'The considerable flow of provisions of all kinds brought into harbour by the great number of ships that visit Malta is of great benefit to merchants whose active intelligence makes profitable use of the slightest needs of foreigners.

'No wonder that such commercial activity necessitated the presence in Malta of companies of speculators who insured against a reasonable rate goods, life and liberty'.<sup>34</sup>

Commercial speculation was also envisaged by Commander Dolomieu. He was in France and he was going through hard times. On 4 December, 1795, he wrote to his friend, Chevalier de Fay who was in Malta, about establishing the export of lemons from Malta to France and this with the help of his servant Marguerite and her brother-in-law Pierre, while Fay in Malta and himself in France would coordinate this trade and share the profits.<sup>35</sup> We know from other letters of his that while he was in Malta, he was not completely alien to commercial activities: he dealt in Maraschino liqueur from Trieste, in wine from Sicily and Cyprus, as well as in coffee, when this commodity formed part of corsairs' seizures from the Turks.

Dolomieu's letters to his friend in Malta reveal his trust and gratitude towards his Maltese acquaintances, especially Marguerite. When he decides to let his house he recommends to Fay that he lets it to the Maltese "who pay better and show more respect." His old uncle is in Malta and he is constantly in his mind. He knows that Marguerite takes good care of him.

'Please tell good Marguerite to be patient with him, I am grateful to her for all she is doing for my uncle, tell her that I shall return to Malta as soon as I can to alleviate her troubles'.<sup>36</sup>

His affection for this devoted servant is present in most of his letters to Fay, although he is not always punctual in his payment for her

services. He sends her his regards, promises he will never forget the services she has rendered him and says that he would have taken her with him to France but for the fact that she would be annoyed there and that she did not speak French.

Marguerite's brother-in-law Pierre had even paid on Dolomieu's behalf 39 louis which he owed as rent. In a letter to Fay, he refers to this favour:

'As soon as I shall arrive in Paris I shall pass on to you the 39 louis Pierre lent me. Please thank this honest man Pierre heartily and assure him that I shall never forget what he has done for me'.<sup>37</sup>

Pierre was in fact paid forty louis and then ten more as interest almost ten months later.

Dolomieu was also indebted to a Maltese clock and watchmaker, Salvatore Micallef, to whom he wrote to say that he had no money with which to pay him and that he could sell all the effects he had left with him and get paid from the proceeds. However, the letter does not stop there. Dolomieu writes to a friend, he exchanges news with him. As a matter of fact, Micallef does get paid – six years later!

Dolomieu's was a small debt entered into with a friend. However, the *disproprî* reveal that many Knights were indebted to locals. Some of these made a living as money-lenders. Besides, the conventual chaplain Boyer makes several references in his diary to debts incurred by Knights and to measures undertaken by Ximenes to control this practice – as well as gambling.

A comedy written by chevalier de Sainte-Jay, though fictitious, is a good portrayal of life in Malta in the eighteenth century. The main character, a Commander, not only has a mistress, clearly Maltese, but is indebted to tailors, shoe-makers, confectioners, inn-keepers and a host of other creditors; he falls prey to usurers and has not paid his valet "since time immemorial". The Commander's situation is not unlike that of servant-at-arms Joseph Genest who declares in his will dated 2 March, 1732, that he is indebted to the Treasury, to his tailor, his confectioner, the musician Sammartin, and other persons who hold credit notes.<sup>38</sup> Chevalier André de Brun de Mougès also declares that he owes his tailor, Maître François Portelli, "about 8 scudi".<sup>39</sup> Knight Amadeo de Cays from Nice owes Anna Maria Aquilina 1052 scudi and 9 tari, and has hypothecated in her favour some furniture and paintings.<sup>40</sup> Knight François de Beaulieu owes his servant Catherine Savona 20 scudi for

unpaid wages,<sup>41</sup> while Commander Pierre Duperou owes his servant Saverio three months' arrears of pay at the rate of 9 scudi per month.<sup>42</sup>

In Sainte-Jay's play, the reader is regaled by the portrait of a certain type of woman, presumably Maltese, who takes advantage of her beauty in order to render a service to those men who would rather think that she is in love with them than know that she is taking them for a ride. She therefore accepts their love, money and presents until she meets a Maltese man who proposes to marry her and she decides to change her life. She is a foundling of uncertain parentage: the daughter of a Knight? Maybe. In his *Mémoires*, Count de Saint-Priest also mentions three Maltese sisters "a little fickle but amiable, who received the youths of the island and organized for them card games."<sup>43</sup>

A project by Chevalier Turgot involving the Maltese did not materialise. In 1763, Chevalier Etienne-François Turgot, brother of Louis XV's Minister of Finance, was appointed Governor of Guyana. It was necessary to populate the colony with the king's subjects and Turgot persuaded Louis XV to make a gratuitous concession of a considerable part of the new colony to the Order of St John. The King had already asked the Grand Master to send some Maltese families there and with this purpose in mind had sent Chevalier Menon to Malta. Turgot's arguments reveal what he thought of the Maltese. He wrote in a *Mémoire*:

"I have always thought that the Maltese were more suited than any other people to establish a colony, especially in a hot climate [...]. They are robust, hard-working, sober, good swimmers, excellent and brave sailors. Their wives are fertile".<sup>44</sup>

In a letter to Minister Choiseul dated 14 June, 1763, he wrote: "I dare assure you that in time of war you can always count on the Maltese, few sailors are as good as them and if you treat them well, they can be very good servants".<sup>45</sup>

Seven months later and a few days after his arrival in Malta, Menon's first impressions of the Maltese are revealed in this letter to Turgot:

"The Maltese travel only for an interest that is actual and easy to calculate. Besides, a few examples of generosity will have a marvellous effect on the workers".<sup>46</sup>

Turgot had already targeted Joseph Farrugia, a surgeon who had studied in Paris under his watchful eye. He thought he would be willing to go to Guyana as "in Malta he was being refused the justice that was due to his talents".<sup>47</sup>

However, Pinto had already written to Turgot on 3 May, 1763 to congratulate him on his appointment and praise him for his project inspired by his zeal and love for the Order, but he also added that his idea of attracting the Maltese to Guyana could not materialise. The reasons given were explained in a *Mémoire* attached to the letter: the Order would not find enough men to send over, as they were being employed in Malta to ensure that the island was safe against a Turkish attack (the threat of such an attack two years before was still fresh).

Moreover, and here we have Pinto's opinion of the islanders, the Maltese were attracted by the sea, not by agriculture, in fact half the island was uncultivated. The Grand Master adds:

"These same Maltese are unable to put up with an absence from their island lasting more than two years and, generally speaking, they are unable to settle anywhere, and particularly in a country unknown to them and so far away that its very distance frightens them".<sup>48</sup>

A search through the list of persons who left from France to Cayenne reveals the name of a certain Giacinte Caussi (Cauchi?) born in Malta on 28 June, 1747. He left for Cayenne on May 3, 1764, having been recommended by Chevalier Menon. The latter stayed in Malta between 3 January and 13 October, 1764, but his mission was far from successful.

### **What relationship did the Grand Master entertain with the locals?**

As a Hospitaller Order, its infirmary was open to the Maltese, which explains why the deputy prior (*sous-prieur*) was a Maltese conventual chaplain.

"He must be Maltese because of the language that is not ordinarily understood by the Priors",<sup>49</sup> says the author of *Libr. 79*.

The same author describes the ceremony of bleeding performed at the Infirmary on Maundy Thursday in the presence of all the Grand Crosses of the Langue of France:



'They wash the feet of the poor and give to each some alms. The Infirmier... pays for the meal that is given to these poor people: it can cost up to twenty scudi; the treasury distributes fifty scudi to the poor of Bormla. There is a foundation for this purpose'.<sup>50</sup>

As a monastic Order, religious functions at the Conventual Church (as well as in other churches, for instance St Paul's) were conducted with pomp. Music played an important part. The same author writes:

'There are actually two courses in music kept at the expense of the Treasury. The Treasury pays sixty scudi per month. On the feast of St John the Grand Master gives twenty-five scudi to the *maestro di cappella* so that he will distribute them among the musicians that come from the Old City'.<sup>51</sup>

Other customs were attached to various feasts. On the feast of Our Lady of Victories on September 8, after the celebration of solemn Mass at St John's, the Grand Master, Grand Crosses and all the Knights walked in procession to the Church of Our Lady of Victories. After public prayers of thanksgiving for the victory over the Turks, the Grand Master's almoner presents the Grand Master with a bowl containing nine purses which he gives to nine girls about to be married chosen by himself. They kiss his hands after receiving the purse.<sup>52</sup>

A similar custom was entertained by the Confraternity of St Barbara. Sixty scudi were collected from the pay of the Bombardiers and from other charities. They served to endow a poor girl who was chosen by ballot by the bombardiers.

On the feast-day of St Barbara the bride and bridegroom go to the church dedicated to this saint, both kneel before the High Altar and Mass is celebrated. After Holy Communion, the marriage contract is read out and the Commander of the artillery throws the sixty scudi in a bowl in the presence of the Grand Master. These are given as dowry to the bride.<sup>53</sup>

Similar events are recorded by Boyer in his diary. In celebrating Rohan's election, the three French Auberges organise a dinner for three hundred poor people at the Auberge de France:

"They give each of them soup, a pound of boiled beef, a pound of roasted meat, a loaf of bread, a bottle of wine and four tari".<sup>54</sup>

Boyer gives a long and vivid description of the joy and enthusiasm of the Maltese during the celebration of Rohan's election. He emphasises the "prodigious" attendance of the population that goes to Valletta to acclaim its new ruler. There were fireworks, and illuminations in the auberges, in St Paul's church and in all the houses in which there was a member of the clergy. The poor had easy access to the Grand Master who listened to their requests, comforted them and was generous with them.

For the year 1776, Boyer records Rohan's visit to Balzan on the occasion of the feast of the Annunciation on 25 March. On 12 May, feast of St Philip, patron saint of Zebbug, Rohan paid a visit to Casal Zebbug. It was a year later that Rohan elevated the village to the status of town and called it Città Rohan: that was on 21 July, 1777.

The same diarist quotes from the diary of another Knight, Chevalier de Viguier who records how the feast of St Peter and St Paul was celebrated at Città Notabile in 1738. At Mdina, the Grand Master was presented with a bouquet by the chief Magistrate, then he heard Mass in the company of the bishop and the Cathedral Chapter. Afterwards, he visited the collegiate Church of St. Paul and the grotto where a Te Deum was sung. This was followed by another Te Deum when he then visited the Benedictine nuns. After dinner, at about five in the afternoon, the Grand Master served the poor sick women of the hospital to whom he distributed generous alms. On his way there he threw money to the crowd. His Eminence then went to the lodge from where he could see the horse-races.<sup>55</sup>

Other feasts in which the Grand Master took part were those of St Lawrence in Bourg (Birgu) and of St. Gregory which started with a procession from Casal Neuf (Raħal Ġdid).

Boyer regales us with a number of scenes regarding Maltese life between November 1744 and December 1776, and again between 14 and 27 April, 1777. Events, such as the assassination of a Dominican monk; an earthquake lasting just over a minute '*sans aucun accident*' that took place in 28 February, 1775; a fire; a clandestine marriage; the Maltese passion for hunting; the pique between the collegiate of St. Paul and the parish of St Dominic; feasts; celebrations; theatrical representations by a troupe of Maltese; literary compositions by Maltese authors; the behaviour at table of the *giurati*; the Canons of the Cathedral and the Maltese nobility invited by Ximenes on the occasion of his entry into the Old City; all make interesting reading even if one has to take

certain opinions with a pinch of salt. Two important historical events are also covered: the rising of the priests on 9 September, 1775 and the Order's last General Chapter the following year.

Besides the annual feasts and celebrations in honour of a new Grand Master, the Knights feted royal births and marriages, the accession of Kings and Popes to the throne and other events. Among the latter, one can mention the feast organised by the Bailli de Tencin in honour of his uncle who was made a Cardinal. On these occasions, besides the usual illuminations and fireworks, a serenade was composed and a maypole was erected for the amusement of the people. The feast of Calendimaggio, celebrated annually on April 30 in front of the Palace in Valletta, also included a *cantata* or a *componimento drammatico*. The verses in Italian were written by local and Italian poets, many were written by Count Giovanantonio Ciantar. The music was generally, though not always, composed by the local *maestro di cappella*, such as Anfossi or Sammartin. The maypole was also erected on Carnival Monday. The author of Libr. 291 says that:

"Grand Master Vilhena had introduced the habit of abandoning to the people on Carnival Monday a maypole, thereby rendering Carnival more interesting for the people".<sup>56</sup>

In *Malte par un voyageur français*, we find a detailed description of the maypole, the Maltese *kukkanja*:

"A mast 96 feet in height, on top of which are suspended several kinds of provisions: this mast is coated in grease from its foot up to a third of its height. At a signal given by the Grand Master [...] everybody rushes towards the mast, groups are formed, the more agile climb on the shoulder of their friends... and whoever grabs first the flag on top of the mast receives a reward in silver and secures the provisions".<sup>57</sup>

The maypole was sometimes erected at sea, as happened on 12 July, 1770, on the third day of the celebrations in honour of the royal wedding of the future Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette. An interesting detail regarding this feast is found in the account of it that Chevalier des Pennes, the French King's ambassador to Malta (*l'homme du roi*, as he was called), gives to the duc de Choiseul in his letter dated 14 July, 1770:

"Fifty thousand people [were present] without counting those who preferred to enjoy the spectacle from the roofs of the buildings or in the boats, the people came in great numbers, most of them came from the countryside and many came from the island of Gozo".<sup>58</sup>

Many French Knights living in Malta spoke and wrote in Italian. Were there any of them interested in Maltese? The answer is found in Canon Agius de Soldanis' introduction to his work *Della Lingua punica presentemente usata dai Maltesi*. He mentions seven Knights by their names, five of them are French. He says that they spoke the language like native Maltese and that their pronunciation and accent did not distinguish them from Maltese nationals. He mentions five other French Knights whom he describes as "literary men", who were all eager to see his Grammar published.<sup>59</sup> Among these Knights stands out chevalier Turgot whose letters to Agius de Soldanis were always full of encouragement. Another regular correspondent of the canon was bailli Dericard, who had appointed him as his attorney in Malta. Dericard not only complimented Agius de Soldanis on his work but asked him for an extra copy to pass on to M. Bonamy, *ancien pensionnaire de l'Académie des belles-lettres*.

The anonymous Libr. 70 is a *Vocabulaire français-italien-maltais*. Ignazio Saverio Mifsud mentions in his *Biblioteca Maltese* the French Knight Thezan's *Grammatica Maltese e il suo dizionario* dated 1600, and a grammar cum a Maltese-Italian-French dictionary by a French Knight, François Bardon.<sup>60</sup>

In his guide on Malta, Saint-Priest dedicates a chapter to the Maltese language and even translates into French under the title 'Poésie' three four-line Maltese songs. He reproduces them in Maltese at the end of his book, according to the transcription by the librarian Joachim Navarro.

In conclusion, I would like to make a passing mention of Charles-Antoine Barbaro whom Rohan created Marquis of San Giorgio on 6 September, 1778, author of *Degli avanzi d'alcuni antichissimi edifizii scoperti in Malta l'anno 1768*, dedicated to Rohan and published posthumously by his son in 1794. His museum impressed the visitors who came to Malta, such as Count de Borch, Count de Saint-Priest, Dominique-Vivant Denon and C.S. Sonnini, all of whom recommend that their readers should pay it a visit.

This paper is by no means exhaustive. I have made no mention of Mannarino nor indeed of Nicolò Isouard, to mention but two very well-known Maltese who lived in the eighteenth-century. I have not dwelt on the relationship between the Maltese nobility and the Order nor with the continual conflict concerning the jurisdiction of the Order, the Bishop and the Inquisitor. I have tried to leave politics out. I am not a historian. I have only tried to give as wide a picture as possible of life in Malta in the eighteenth century from writings by French Knights and other documentary sources found in different libraries in Malta and in Paris. All my quotations are a free translation from the original in French, and in rare cases, in Italian.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> P. Brydone, *A Tour through Sicily and Malta*, Vol. 1, 338.

<sup>2</sup> B[ibliothèque] n[ationale de] F[rance], n[ouvelles] a[cquisitions] f[rançaises] 3669, f.579.

<sup>3</sup> AOM, 273, f.236 r.: "[...] un Ordre dont la nation française compose la plus nombreuse partie". Cf. M[inistère des] A[ffaires] E[trangères] (Paris), C[orrespondance] P[olitique] Malte, supplement 4, f. 37 v.: "la Religion, dont plus de la moitié des membres sont Français".

<sup>4</sup> Déodat de Gratet Dolomieu, born on 23 June, 1750, was a Commander of the Langue of Auvergne. He had a turbulent life and died at the age of 51.

<sup>5</sup> A. Lacroix, *Déodat Dolomieu*, Paris, 1921, t.1, 175.

<sup>6</sup> NLM Lib. 137, f.92v.: "L'esprit de brigue a autant d'influence ici qu'en avaient les jolies femmes dans les affaires de France sous le règne de Louis XV". Claude-François Boyer, born on 11 July, 1733, was a conventual chaplain of the Langue of Auvergne. He died in Malta on 30 August, 1790.

<sup>7</sup> François-Emmanuel de Guignard de Saint-Priest was born at Grenoble on March 12, 1735. He was received in the Langue of Auvergne, but married Countess Constance de Ludolf in 1744 to continue the family lineage as his brother had no male heir. He was ambassador of the King of France in Constantinople for 20 years. He died at Saint-Priest, near Lyons, on February 26, 1821.

<sup>8</sup> Comte de Saint-Priest, *Mémoires, Règnes de Louis XV et de Louis XVI*, Paris, 1929, 17.

<sup>9</sup> See A. Blondy, 'La France et Malte au XVIIIe siècle: le problème de la double nationalité' in S. Fiorini and V. Mallia-Milanes (eds.) *Malta*,

*A case-study in international cross-currents*, Malta, 1991, 177. The author states that in 1749 there was a total of 152 conventual chaplains and servants-at-arms in the three French Langues. Of these, 19 were Maltese and 3 of them were Commanders.

<sup>10</sup> AOM,2095, f.186. See also MAE, CP Malte, supplément 1, no 8, f.55 and *ibid.*, no 66, f.211 v. See also A[rchives] N[ationales] P[rivées] (Paris)], M 902, no 326.

<sup>11</sup> MAE, CP Malte, supplément 1, no 11, f.61 and *ibid.*, no 66, f.211r. See also ANP, M 902, no 326.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* f.211r-v.

<sup>13</sup> ANP,M 902, no 328.

<sup>14</sup> MAE, CP Malte, supplément 1, no 66, f.211r.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*: see also MAE, CP Malte, 11, no 84, f. 119r. and *ibid.*, no 88, f.123.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* no 15, f.67r.

<sup>17</sup> On the limitations imposed by this edict see A. Blondy, 'La France et Malte', 175-186; ANP,M 902, no 407 and Arch. 1643, ff.81r-82r.

<sup>18</sup> ANP M 902, no 342, quoted by A. Blondy, 'La France et Malte', 177-178.

<sup>19</sup> NLM Lib. 79, f.471.

<sup>20</sup> See AOM 1232, f.510 v. and ff.638r-v.

<sup>21</sup> See P. Cassar, *Medical History of Malta*, London, 1964 for information contained in this paragraph.

<sup>22</sup> Clément-Jérôme-Ignace de Rességuier, born in Toulouse on 23 November, 1724, was a bailli of the Langue of Provence and died in Malta on 22 October, 1797.

<sup>23</sup> NLM Lib. 1146, vol. 2, f.350 and NLM Lib. 137, f.40r.

<sup>24</sup> AOM 6519, f.3r. and f.6 v.

<sup>25</sup> Anonymous, *Malte, Corse, Minorque et Gibraltar, Malta*, 1797, 146.

<sup>26</sup> NLM Misc, 276, no 10.

<sup>27</sup> Antoine de Blacas d'Aups, born on 23 April, 1700, was a bailli of the Langue of Provence and died in Malta on 16 May, 1777.

<sup>28</sup> NLM Lib. 140, f.200.

<sup>29</sup> Etienne-François Turgot was a non-professed Knight of the Langue of France. He was born in Paris on 16 June, 1721 and died in his château near Falaise, on 25 December, 1788.

<sup>30</sup> NLM Lib. 146, t. III, f.7v.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, f.2.

<sup>32</sup> A. Lacroix, t. II, p. 97.

- 33 Anonyme, *Malte, Corse, Minorque et Gibraltar*, 69.
- 34 Ibid., 61-71 and Comte de Saint-Priest, *Malte par un voyageur français*, 46, Malta, 1791.
- 35 A. Lacroix, t. II, 97.
- 36 Ibid., 44.
- 37 Ibid., 97.
- 38 AOM. 931, Pkt. 19, f.39.
- 39 Ibid., Pkt. 18, f.84, (25 May 1724).
- 40 Ibid., Pkt. 19, f.16, (15 March 1729).
- 41 Ibid., Pkt. 17, f.3, (19 October 1702).
- 42 Ibid., Pkt. 21, f.45, (30 August 1752).
- 43 Comte de Saint-Priest, *Mémoires, Règnes*, 47.
- 44 BnF, n.a.f. 5398, f.157.
- 45 Ibid., f.193.
- 46 Ibid. f.144.
- 47 Ibid., f.144.
- 48 AOM 1578, ff.60r-64 r.
- 49 NLM Libr. 79, f.404.
- 50 Ibid., ff.423-424.
- 51 Ibid., f.465.
- 52 Ibid., ff.102-104.
- 53 Ibid., ff.239-240.
- 54 NLM Lib. 137, f.150r.
- 55 Ibid., f.13v.
- 56 NLM Lib. 291, f.266.
- 57 Comte de Saint-Priest, *Mémoires, Règnes*, 57-58.
- 58 MAE, CP Malte, supplément 1, no 118, f.354.
- 59 Agius de Soldanis, *Della Lingua punica presentemente usata dai Maltesi*, 61-62.
- 60 I.S. Mifsud, *Biblioteca Maltese*, Malta, 1764, 324-325.

Henry Frendo

## Czars, Knights and Republicans: The Malta Question in Paul I's time<sup>1</sup>

When Paul I came to the throne in 1796, Malta and Russia had long had a common enemy. It was the Ottoman Empire, its Muslim Turks, and its Barbary corsairs. Unlike Malta, a central Mediterranean archipelago with well-protected, deep-water harbours, Russia had been a largely landlocked country whose territorial expansion historically had tended to be across internal frontiers, from Kiev to Muscovy to Kazan. With the advent of Peter I, however, and especially after his declaration of war against Turkey and the acquisition of the Black Sea port of Azov in 1696, Russia began to nurture a naval and maritime policy. This policy was two-pronged: to the North in the struggle with Sweden for access to the Baltic; to the South in the long drawn out confrontations with the Turks in their extensive domains, hemming Russia in from the Mediterranean, and indeed from the Black Sea.

Paul I's keen interest in Malta and its Catholic, aristocratic order of chivalry, must be seen in the light of a string of earlier acquaintances, overtures and schemes of mutual interest between the Czars of Russia, on one hand, and the Knights of Malta, on the other. Two of his best known predecessors, Peter I (1672-1725) and Catherine II (1729-1796), already had set their sights on Malta, its knights and, not least, its famous fleet. Given the new-found commitment to naval and maritime undertakings, Petrine Russia now had an ideological as well as a strategic shared interest with the Mediterranean headquarters of the anti-Turkish, anti-Muslim crusaders.

From Russia's point of view, this interest was also technical and professional, in so far as the successful equipment, organization and the leadership of its own Russian fleet was concerned. This made sense, too, in the context of the Western expertise and support which both Peter and Catherine sought, coveted and to an extent emulated,

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The founding editor of *Storja* in 1978, Henry Frendo has taught in various universities and is the author of several books; since 1992 he has been Professor of History at the University of Malta.



as a matter of policy. Apart from their own intrinsic merits, development and advancement were needed for Russia if she was to compete meaningfully and to restrain any adversaries, be these Swedes, Turks or Poles.

The Grand Masters, no less than the Czars, had an interest in furthering this growing relationship, constrained though they were by an imposed Western European policy of 'neutrality' in foreign affairs (except for fighting the Infidel), and generally by a statutory adherence to Roman Catholicism, the Pope being the Order of St John's spiritual head. But Russia was, of course, a Christian country, and an anti-Turkish one at that. Moreover it became increasingly, from Peter's time onwards, one of the 'Great Powers' on the continental chess-board, a position further assured to it by Catherine II.

When the victorious boyar general Boris Scheremetyev, who had planned the Azov campaign, arrived in Valletta's Grand Harbour from Rome, as Peter I's emissary, in 1698, the Spanish Grand Master Ramon Perellos had him met by a high-level caravan at sea and had a gilded carriage awaiting him ashore, together with a procession of pine torches and a platoon of guards. In the Order's magnificent conventual church during the feast of Pentecost on 18th May, Scheremetyev sat below the Grand Master under his baldacchin at High Mass and, much moved, he prostrated himself before the sacred relic of St John the Baptist, the Order's protector. On the following day, Grand Master Perellos reciprocated gifts in style when, in the Great Hall of the Council in Valletta, he awarded Scheremetyev the accolade and Gold Cross of Devotion, with permission to wear it upon his shield or banner when fighting against the Turks. This (so far, very rare) Russian visitor thus became "the first Russian Grand Cross of the Knights Hospitaller".<sup>2</sup> He would hardly be the last.

Czar Peter I's interests were not that chivalrous, as Czar Paul I's may have largely been later. His instructions to Scheremetyev were to check out Malta's fleet and fortifications, and indeed formally to suggest to Perellos a combined Russo-Maltese operation against the Turks (as he duly did). But pomp, pageantry and ceremony mattered no less than the great cause at hand; the more so since France had mended its fences with the Porte.

France was a lingering background factor in Russo-Maltese relations for three main reasons: first, its eastern Mediterranean diplomacy and the growing commerce with it, which influenced Peter I;

second, its Enlightenment and subsequent revolution, which influenced Catherine II; and third, its revolutionary and territorial wars, supposedly following from the new 'egalitarian' philosophy of liberation, anti-aristocratic, anti-monarchical and anticlerical, which largely influenced Paul I in an opposite direction, although perhaps not altogether, given his bad treatment of the Russian nobility.

The French presence and policy put the Knights of Malta in a cleft stick situation: most of the Knights were French and many of the Order's estates were in France, but the French Revolution had seen their confiscation, thereby impoverishing the Order, while the ideas it promoted went smack against what the Order was and had traditionally stood for since its foundation by the Blessed Gerard in the early 12th century to protect Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land. Not unlike the Templars, the Teutonic Knights and some other religiously-inspired Christian orders of chivalry, the Knights Hospitallers took vows of poverty, celibacy and obedience in the monastic tradition, but they were not estranged from the ways of the world. Although it seems Muslims and Jews were not excluded from treatment in their hospitals, they had strict codes of ethics and were brothers-in-arms in the crusade against the Muslim menace.<sup>3</sup>

After the fall of Jerusalem to Saladin, the Muslim sultan, in 1187, the Knights repaired to Acre, from where they eventually moved to Rhodes, until driven out by the Ottomans in 1522. For nearly three centuries, they made of Malta in the central Mediterranean their main fort and bastion, stopping the Muslim advance westwards, most spectacularly in the Great Siege of Malta of 1565, and solely or jointly they repeatedly participated in forays against the Ottoman Empire, such as at the Battle of Lepanto, against the Moors and Barbary corsairs, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. They were less poor and pious by then in their courtly swagger and swashbuckling attire, moving around their splendid baroque buildings decorated with the finest painting, marble sculpture and gilded treasure; but they had held their ground until the cataclysm unleashed by the French revolution and the outstanding general which this eventually threw up, with his sights set on a domination extending from Paris to Cairo, to London, to Moscow, and still further beyond. Several French knights felt, foremost among them the well-connected Bosredon de Ransijat, that they had joined the Order to fight the infidel, not their countrymen: their deeds showed it well enough when they reneged in 1798, as Bonaparte's fleet surrounded Malta's harbours.<sup>4</sup>

Czarina Catherine II, Paul I's mother, was, like Peter I, much interested in Malta and the Order of St John. In 1770, during the first Russo-Turkish War, Catherine tried and failed to persuade the Portuguese Grand Master, Pinto, to allow the Russian fleet to use Maltese ports. In 1788, during another Russo-Turkish conflict, the French Grand Master de Rohan refused to allow Maltese galleys to cooperate with the Russian navy in its attacks on the Turkish fleets. Clearly, the Knights of Malta would not be drawn into an alliance with a non-Catholic power in a war against the decaying Ottoman Empire, when French commerce with the Near East was prospering, and the old Catholic-Muslim battle-lines certainly were not as drawn as they had used to be in the previous two centuries.

The Order was ready and willing to assist the Czarina in the technical business of training and organizing her fleets, however. Both Grand Master Pinto, in 1770, and Grand Master de Rohan, in 1789 (the year of the French Revolution) agreed to help Russia out in this. To train a squadron of Russian galleys, as requested by Catherine, de Rohan sent one of his rising stars, Count Giulio Litta. A handsome 25 year old Milanese who was Captain of the Magistral galley, the young knight dazzled Catherine, who went out of her way to compliment him. He was received, too, by the Czarevich Paul. Litta, the youngest general in the Russian service, immediately distinguished himself, particularly by his determining attack on the Swedish flagship at the Battle of Svenskund in 1790. Giulio Litta had a brother, Lorenzo, then a monsignore but, like him, on the up and up. Both would figure prominently on the Russian scene, especially after 1796, during Paul I's reign.

Catherine's interest in Malta went further than Peter's. She wanted a full diplomatic rapport, with an accredited ambassador in Valletta. She hoped, according to one British historian, "to turn Malta into a Russian satellite", employing agents and spies to establish a pro-Russian party. Those in Russian employ, under Russian influence of one kind or another or sympathetic to it, in the last quarter of the 18th century, would have included the likes of Cavalcabo, Psaro, Zahra, Lorenzi, and some others. Although the Order refrained from granting Russia full diplomatic status, a consular presence was established effectively nonetheless. A charmer when she wanted, Catherine was not easily deterred. With the Marquis Cavalcabo in 1770, she sent the vain Grand Master Pinto a flamboyant full-length portrait of herself, executed in oils by the Russian artist Dmitri Levitzki (1735-1822), and accompanied by a poem lauding the

Grand Master. Pinto acceded to Admiral Sergius Babinkoff's proposition that Russian naval officers should complete their training on the Order's ships, and loaned him two of his knights, one of them being the Count Michele Sagramoso, to assist in the Russian fleet's reorganisation. Sagramoso, who attracted Catherine's attention, was involved in the Warsaw negotiations between 1773 and 1776 for the return of the Ostrog estates, which had been willed to the Order by a Polish nobleman in 1609, and their transformation into a Polish Priory with several commanderies and a very considerable annual revenue for the Order.<sup>5</sup> Although Valletta could not be allowed to become a Russian naval base or a warehouse for her provisions, Russian ships were graciously permitted to victual at Malta from time to time. A Russian naval hospital was dedicated to the Knights, and the eight-pointed cross raised above it.<sup>6</sup>

During the years he spent in Malta, the Czarina's envoy Cavalcabo received his instructions directly from Count Panin, who headed the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs in St Petersburg, and who also acted as a tutor to the future Czar Paul I. To this day, Levitzki's attractive and imposing Czarina, conveyed to Malta by Cavalcabo, hangs on display in the 'state rooms' of the President's Palace in Valletta.<sup>7</sup>

The plot thickens during the reign of Paul I, which lasted from 1796 to 1801. Paul became Czar at the age of 42 after a traumatic childhood: his father had been murdered; his mother was not conspicuous for her maternal instincts. In the aftermath of the French revolution, the guillotine and regicide, Europe was in the grip of the Napoleonic wars on land and at sea, shifting alliances and counter-alliances, new ideas and uncertain futures.

In his own way, Paul was a romantic, even an idealist, although power apparently soon went to his head, as it usually does. A fixed point in the compass was, for him, the Order of St John. The Knights of Malta epitomized a good old-fashioned ethos, chivalry, refinement, gentlemanly manners, which he felt deserved to have a sobering effect on the fast changing world around him, a world seemingly gone mad. Now the Knights had been evicted unceremoniously from Malta by General Bonaparte on his way to Egypt, with a huge fleet, in June 1798, bypassing Nelson's fleet off Sardinia. Under an uninspiring Austrian Grand Master, von Hompesch, abandoned by several of his own knights, they had surrendered without much of a fight, and left, with Hompesch repairing to Trieste. Three months after their arrival in Malta, however, the French troops were

themselves besieged and sheltering behind the walls, as a result of a popular armed insurrection by the Maltese inhabitants, who on the whole had not taken kindly to their newly-arrived, demanding, demeaning and generally lawless republican masters.

Czar Paul I was concerned. He was interested. He was adamant. How could such a noble, Christian, age-old European institution be allowed to come to grief like that? What would become of it? Who would lead it? What would happen to its remaining properties, its revenues? Where would it be based? Why should the Island of the Knights, which *stricti juris* belonged to Naples, fall to France? Or go to Britain? Why not Russia? What was the world coming to?

Paul had long been a fan of the Knights. Giulio Litta, who became a confidante and adviser of his, wrote to Cardinal Doria saying that the Knights of St John had been an object of palpitating interest to Paul "dalla sua piu' tenera infanzia".<sup>8</sup> In his youth he had been much impressed by a voluminous work about the history of the Order of St John by the Abbe' Rene' Aubert de Vertot, published in French in 1726 and translated into English two years later.<sup>9</sup> His tutor Panin saw nothing but a boy's innocuous foolishness in Paul's gesture when, having read this book, he decided to be a Grand Master, or pretended to have become one, "a purple bed curtain answering for a cloak".<sup>10</sup>

On becoming czar, Paul went out of his way to endear himself to the Order, lavishly endowing it with proceeds from the captured Polish Priory, which in January 1797 he officially transformed, and soon reinforced, as the Grand Priory of Russia, with a special uniform designed for Russian knights. As a result of the partitions of Poland in the mid-1790s, the Order's Grand Priory on Polish territory, and all its revenues, had become Russian property, just when the Order's dignity and income had been suffering one blow after another due to the confiscation of its estates on the continent by republican France. Proceeds from this to the Order's Casa del Comun Tesoro in Valletta amounted to 300,000 crowns. The Pope, if only as the Order's spiritual head, was not less interested. Lorenzo Litta, Giulio's brother, was summoned from Warsaw to be the Apostolic Nuncio at St Petersburg. Both the Grand Master and the Pope wooed the Czar, who was led to believe that his chance to shine had come. It was agreed that Czar Paul I would become the 'Protector' of the Order of St John conjointly with the Holy Roman Emperor and the King of the Two Sicilies.

Received in audience by the Czar on 29th November 1797, Giulio

De Litta, in his capacity as the Order's 'Ambassador Extraordinary', acquainted His Imperial Majesty "with the universal wish of the whole Order that you would deign to become chief of this establishment, and accept a title so dear, and so encouraging to us all", the title being that of "Protector of the Order of Malta". As a token of gratitude and recognition, the Grand Master and Supreme Council of the Order sent Paul, through De Litta, "the Ancient Cross of the celebrated La Vallette, that invincible defender of our Island who bequeathed his name to a city which he alone has rendered impregnable". "This cross", De Litta added, "has hitherto been religiously preserved in the treasury of our Cathedral Church, as a precious monument, which constantly recalled to our remembrance the glorious military exploits performed by a Grand Master of Malta, who might properly be termed the Hero of Christianity; and now we feel a pleasure in offering it to your Imperial Majesty, as a proof of our gratitude, as a mark worthy of his piety, and as a happy presage of the renewal of our prosperity".<sup>11</sup> Nine months later (26th August 1798), in a protest against the same but by now humiliated Hompesch and his knightly entourage, we find the Grand Priory of Russia describing Bonaparte's invading republicans as "banditti a hundred times more infidel than those against whom the duties of their profession armed them".<sup>12</sup>

Much had changed within the space of a year. Unfortunately the text of a treaty being carried to Valletta from St Petersburg by a Polish knight, in connection with Paul's patronage, fell into Napoleon's hands at Ancona. When the French took over Malta in June 1798 the first person to be booted out was Russia's resident ambassador, Antoine O'Hara: "in an hour!", he was told.<sup>13</sup>

Russia joined the coalition against France. In the summer of 1797, while Malta's republican takeover was being planned in Paris and Toulon, following upon the French occupation of Corfu' and the other Ionian Islands, Russia dispatched a fleet to the Mediterranean under Admiral F. F. Uschakov to check and counter French expansionism eastwards, to protect the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles.<sup>14</sup> Various exchanges, understandings and treaties now ensued between Russia, Naples, Britain and other powers uniting against the seemingly unstoppable French advances, with Russia formally joining the second anti-French 'Coalition' formed by Britain, Naples, Portugal and Turkey in January 1799, which Austria also joined. Russia's resentment of France had the better even of its traditional adversity towards Turkey.

While the allies generally recognized that strategically Malta had to be wrenched out of French hands, what Paul I was more bent upon actually was, as it turned out, himself becoming the Grand Master of the Order. This prospect presented itself more clearly once Grand Master Hompesch was being held to have betrayed the Order, by giving in to the French Republic too readily and scurrying away to Trieste under Austria's wing. Ironically, the inertia blamed on Malta's first and last Austrian Grand Master, Hompesch, had been induced partly by his gratuitous belief that Russia, among others, would come to his aid and thus prevent the Order's expulsion. In fact, a number of knights had sought asylum in St Petersburg. In August 1798 the knights of what was now the Russian Grand Priory, who were by no means fully or legitimately representative of the Order as such, denounced his alleged betrayal and announced that they regarded him as "deposed from the rank to which we raised him". No longer obliged to obey him, they threw themselves into arms of their "august and sovereign Protector, Paul I, Emperor of all the Russias". Dependent as he was on Austrian asylum, Hompesch was nudged into an abdication in July 1799 by Emperor Francis II, to whom it was far more important that the Russian army in Italy be not withdrawn. The relic of St John the Baptist, before which a century earlier a Russian boyar had bowed at St John's cathedral in Valletta, was despatched to St Petersburg, where it arrived in October, and it was an exultant czar who now bowed before it - in the chapel of the imperial palace at Gatchina.<sup>15</sup>

Paul I's declaration of 13th November 1798 began thus:

"We, by the Grace of God, Paul I, Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russias, in consideration of the wish expressed to us by the Bailiffs, Grand-Crosses, Commanders, Knights of the Illustrious Order of St John of Jerusalem, of the Grand Priory of Russia, and other members assembled together in our capital, in the name of all the well-intentioned part of their Confraternity, we accept the title of Grand Master of this Order, and renew on this occasion the solemn promises we have already made in quality of Protector, not only to preserve all the institutions and privileges of this Illustrious Order for ever unchanged in regard to the free exercise of its Religion, with everything relating to the Knights of the Roman Catholic faith, and the jurisdiction of the Order, the seat of which we have fixed in our Imperial residence; but

we also declare that we will unceasingly employ for the future all our care and attention for the augmentation of the Order, for its re-establishment in the respectable situation which is due to the salutary end of its institution for assuring its solidity, and continuing its utility... ”<sup>16</sup>

Unfortunately for the Czar, who had himself elected Grand Master of the Order during an extraordinary meeting of the Russian Grand Priory on 7th November 1798, and a few weeks later crowned by the Archbishop of Thebes, Pope Pius VI was prepared to accept him as the Order's protector but not as its Grand Master. In Roderick Cavaliero's words: "the Knights of St Petersburg elected a Greek schismatic as head of a Roman Catholic order, an honorary Grand Cross who had never been a Knight, a married man who had taken none of the vows of poverty, chastity".<sup>17</sup> Married, and with mistresses, he might have added; but that would not have scandalized some who had indeed taken such vows. Among the first to taste Paul's anger at this papal non-compliance were the Litta brothers, who quickly fell from grace.

Although Paul's attachment to the Order certainly preceded the French takeover and the Maltese insurrection in 1798, which lasted two years, it came to coincide with an unsettled state of affairs in Malta, when sovereign title to the country itself was in question. Russia thus became more than ever embroiled in the 'Malta Question', one that mostly interested France, Britain, Naples, the Order of St John, and of course Russia. Russia's naval presence in the Mediterranean and the capture of Corfu' in March 1799 by Ushankov made the plot thicken further, especially in the eyes of some leading British admirals and captains, including Nelson, who strongly suspected that Russia was planning to take Malta. London was more cautious and more diplomatic, since Russian cooperation in the wars against France was appreciated, but what happened in the periphery did not always correspond to what was decreed in the metropolis. Having been duly warned accordingly, Nelson actually wrote to the Russian Admiral Ushakov on 25th September 1799, who had dropped anchor at Palermo earlier that month, saying that he would "rejoice most cordially when we go against Malta" for he was satisfied that it was not to be taken (from France) "without more force against it". Admiral Nelson also wrote a long letter to Czar Paul I saying that Britain had no designs on Malta: she supported the Sicilian claim over it. This was in line with an understanding that



the Order should return and with a convention signed in St Petersburg on 29th December 1798 by the British Ambassador Whitworth and the Russian Chancellor Woronzow. Upon its surrender Malta would be given a garrison supplied by Britain, Naples and Russia, who would hold the Island on behalf of the Order. Orders were in the pipeline for a Russian contingent of some 3,000 troops to be sent to Malta to assist the Maltese in reducing Valletta under the command of Prince Dimitri Volkonski.<sup>18</sup>

In December 1799 the Czar's minister at Palermo, Chevalier Italinsky, arrived in order to coordinate allied measures after Malta had been restored to the Order. He met with Maltese representatives of the towns and villages, explaining the position. Russia would be sending troops to help the Maltese and a Russian commandant or governor. In advising about the allocation of quarters, Italinsky would have the Russian contingent stationed in the fortified capital city, a proposition to which the anti-Russian British officer-in-charge, Sir Alexander Ball, strongly objected. Ball, who dearly wished to be the governor himself, did everything in his power to discourage Russian interest and a Russian presence in Malta, realising no doubt that if the Order returned, there was a pretender in waiting as its leader, one who was also the ruler of Russia, whatever the Pope might say. In January 1799 a bold but unsuccessful attempt to assault the French garrison from within the walls of Valletta had been masterminded by a former corsair and colonel in the Russian service, Lorenzi, together with a Catholic priest and some others, who had been arrested and executed by the French.<sup>19</sup> Had Lorenzi planned to raise the Russian flag on the ramparts? Suspicions of this kind were not wanting, as each power sought pretexts, real or imagined, whereby to strengthen its hand in the eventual power-sharing arrangement over Malta. Anglo-Russian relations deteriorated to such an extent that in February 1800 the British ambassador was asked to leave St Petersburg. In July 1800, disappointed by rewards for his exertions, Paul would be prompted to abandon the Second Coalition at least partly because Napoleon had tactfully offered him Malta, together with the release of 6,000 Russian prisoners in Holland, who could form Malta's garrison.<sup>20</sup> In December of the same year, by which time Britain had taken hold of Malta (excluding Naples, Russia and indeed the Maltese representatives from the capitulation), Russia joined Denmark, Sweden and Russia in a treaty of 'armed neutrality'. Paul I was hardly 'neutral' towards Britain. In reaction to his and the Order's exclusion from Britain's

new acquisition in the Mediterranean, Grand Master, garrison and all, he placed an embargo on all British ships in Russian ports, practically closing the Baltic to British commerce. In the British press, the Russian czar was denigrated as 'Crazy Paul' and caricatured as a bear; but the British would not give in easily to his demands or his blackmail.<sup>21</sup>

If Paul I really wanted to take Malta, not simply to be the Order's Grand Master, he probably lost his best chance when Admiral Ushakov's fleet, with 2,000 troops aboard, never set foot on the island, and never sailed there, deployed instead in Sicilian and subsequently in Aegean waters. It was expected, even awaited, and its would-be arrival used by Ball to try and force the French to surrender; but it never arrived, perhaps fearing a double deal, or regarding the Aegean presence as more vital. It has been suggested that Ushakov's Black Sea fleet did not go because it was in disrepair but, as Gregory has noted, why it never set sail for Malta in any weather remains something of a mystery. Circumstances – political and personal – prevented the blockading British fleet from being omni-present in Maltese waters, but whenever the blockade slackened some French supply vessel was likely to reach the besieged French garrison under General Vaubois. By the time one of the czar's generals, Baron Sprengporten, could go out with the intention of becoming its Russian governor, Malta had been occupied by the British. No Russians would be allowed to land; nor indeed had any Russians assisted in the insurrection; their assistance in Malta was no longer needed, least of all by the British. Russia's absence from Maltese shores at a time when its presence was being solicited by Admiral Nelson, at least formally, brings to mind a later notable passivity or hesitancy: that's when Mussolini's well-equipped Italian navy did not sail to take a largely undefended Malta in June 1940. By the time an Italo-German invasion plan was hatched, circumstances had changed remarkably.<sup>22</sup>

Twists and turns in policy, for which Paul I's reign is known, clearly were not a monopoly of the Russian throne. Whether Paul really wanted Malta at all or not, his burning desire to see her restituted to the Order of St John did become a distinct possibility shortly after his own macabre assassination. More than anyone else, he surely had prepared the path for it. Article X of the Treaty of Amiens in 1802 prescribed that Malta would return to the Order under the protection of the Great Powers, including Russia, subject to certain conditions. The British held they would rather see Russia present there than France, if peace could thus

be achieved and assured.

By 1803, however, Napoleon's behaviour and their second thoughts made them change their mind again. Instead of evacuating their forces, they decided that they would stay in Malta themselves, alone, indefinitely - an occupation that was not internationally consented to before the Treaty of Paris in 1814 and ratified at Vienna in the following year. By that same dispensation, the Ionian Islands also went to Britain, mistress of the seas. Paul's son and successor, Alexander I, renounced to the grand mastership of the Order on assuming the throne in 1801, and the Pope had by then named a successor to Hompesch.<sup>23</sup>

The Order may have been granted a reprieve through Czar Paul I's protection when it most needed support, but it still ended up wandering from place to place, sometimes haltingly, until it eventually quartered and settled on a site in Rome, where it thrives to this day, responsible for many philanthropic activities throughout the world. More recently it has revived some of its historic associations with Malta, a sovereign state in her own right since 1964, when the British flag was finally lowered.

Paul I's reign has been the subject of various studies, old and new. His Malta focus was a rather central one, but it needs to be seen in a broader context. The two overriding factors would seem to have been the growing Russian naval and mercantile interests in the Mediterranean region, about which Norman Saul has written,<sup>24</sup> mingled with the fascination exerted by an order of chivalry epitomizing Christendom which over the centuries confronted the spread of Ottoman power and of Islam.<sup>25</sup> At the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th, a third underlying factor was the threatening revolutionary republican upsurge, leading to widespread warfare and continental upheaval, a perfect antithesis to what the Knights of Malta had represented in their quaint citadels, where they too were elitist and despotic after all.

One biographer has seen Paul I as the first of a series of Russian rulers attempting "to cope with a radically modernizing world through an essentially conservative ideology".<sup>26</sup> Others, in search of coherence or rationality, have been more inclined to be dismissive.<sup>27</sup>

In so far as Maltese-Russian relations are concerned, these were never so close as they were during his reign but, certainly, without being limited to it, before or after (as could be seen from an excellent exhibition mounted some years ago by the Valletta-based Russian cultural centre at the President's palace). Two of the Order of St John's most precious icons brought to Malta from Rhodes - that of Our Lady of Philermos,

which used to be housed in the chapel of the conventual church; and the baptizing hand of St John the Baptist, which was placed in that church's oratory - were sent to Russia after the fall of Malta to Napoleon.

Writing in 1999, the Cambridge historian Riley-Smith noted that these were later transferred to Belgrade and are now in Montenegro.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps in time - without being disparaging to Islam - they might be regarded as a reconciliatory offering to Catholic-Orthodox exchanges over the years.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Commissioned for a congress on art, history and architecture in St. Petersburg, this paper by Professor Henry Frendo first appeared in the Russian history journal *Ruskii Vopros* (Brno, Czech republic), 2002, n.3.

<sup>2</sup> R. Cavaliero, *The Last of the Crusaders* (London, 1960), 104. On this visit see also G. Schembri, *The Malta and Russia Connection* (Malta 1990), 5.

<sup>3</sup> For a short illustrated account see J.Riley-Smith, *Hospitallers: The History of the Order of St John* (London 1999).

<sup>4</sup> See for example C.Testa, *The French in Malta, 1798-1800*, (Malta 1997).

<sup>5</sup> R. Cavaliero, *The Last of the Crusaders*, 160.

<sup>6</sup> E. W.Schermerhorn, *Malta of the Knights* (London 1929), 283-284.

<sup>7</sup> On all this see i.a. A. Vella, *Malta and the Czars* (Malta 1965), 17-20, and D. Gregory, *Malta, Britain and the European Powers, 1793-1815* (London 1996), 104-105. An unpublished dissertation by a former student, E. Micallef Valenzia, *Aspects of Russo-Maltese Relations, 1770-1994* (Univ. of Malta, 1995) contains a reproduction of the portrait, f.2.

<sup>8</sup> M. J. Rouet de Journel, *Nonciatures de Russie d'apres les documents authentiques* (viii), q.a. A. Vella, *Malta and the Czars*, 23, fn.1.

<sup>9</sup> See *Histoire des Chevaliers Hospitaliers de Saint Jean de Jerusalem, appelle' depuis Chevaliers de Rhodes et aujourd'hui Chevaliers de Malta* (Amsterdam, 1772, 5 vols).

<sup>10</sup> E. M. Almedingen, *So Dark a Stream* (London 1959), 23, fn.2.

<sup>11</sup> See the text (English translation) in G.Schembri, *The Malta and Russia Connection*, 86-87.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 88.

<sup>13</sup> F.W.Ryan, *The House of the Temple : A Study of Malta and its*

*Knights in the French Revolution* (London 1930), 321.

<sup>14</sup> See i.a. D.Gregory, *Malta, Britain and the European Powers*, 106, R.Cavaliero, *The Last of the Crusaders*, 211-212, 242.

<sup>15</sup> See the text (in English translation) in G.Schembri, *he Malta and Russia Connection*, 79

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>17</sup> See i. a. D.Gregory, *Malta, Britain and the European Powers*, 77.

<sup>18</sup> For details about this aborted uprising see C.Testa, *op.cit.*, *passim*.

<sup>19</sup> D.Gregory, *Malta, Britain and the European Powers*, 15.

<sup>20</sup> See A.Ganado and J.C.Sammut, *Malta in British and French Caricature, 1798-1815* (Malta 1989).

<sup>21</sup> For a bibliographical appreciation see H.Frendo, 'The Second World War : A Short Introduction to The Epic of Malta', in the facsimile edition (Malta 1990) of *The Epic of Malta* (first published London c.1943), i-v. See also his contribution to the book *From Yalta to Malta, 1945-1989*, (ed.) Valentina Tereschkova (Malta 1995).

<sup>22</sup> The way in which Britain acquired possession of Malta from Naples continued to be debated in Maltese and indeed in Italian historiography, in the latter case especially during the Fascist period. For an earlier academic Maltese version see for example Mgr Alfredo Mifsud's *Origine della sovranità inglese su Malta* (Malta 1907).

<sup>23</sup> See i.a. N.Saul, *Russia and the Mediterranean, 1797-1807* (Chicago, 1970)

<sup>24</sup> See a volume published in Rome in 1969, *The Order of Malta and the Russian Empire* by Olga de Sherbowitz-Witzor and Cyril Toumanoff.

<sup>25</sup> R.McGrew, *Paul I of Russia, 1754-1801* (Oxford 1992), 258.

<sup>26</sup> See i.a. H.Ragsdale, *Tsar Paul I and the Question of Madness : An Essay in History and Psychology* (New York 1988). Among the earlier studies, Vella, *Malta and the Czars*, *passim*, used i.a. K.Waliszewski, *Le Fils de la grande Catherine* (4th ed., Paris 1912), F.Golovkine, *La Cour et Le Regne de Paul Ier* (Paris 1905), Michel de Pierredon, *Histoire Politique de l'Ordre Souverain de Saint Jean de Jerusalem (Ordre de Malte) de 1789 a 1955* (Paris 1956) and V.O'Hara, Anthony O'Hara, *Knight of Malta* (London 1938), the latter being Paul I's ambassador in Valletta, a Genoese-born Irishman, who later served under Czarina Elizabeth.

<sup>27</sup> J.Riley-Smith, *Hospitallers*, 55.

Carmel Vassallo

# Maltese Entrepreneurs in Spain 1750s-1850s

## Some Lessons for the Present<sup>1</sup>

The transfer of technology is often cited as an important component of economic development and Cipolla has pointed out that through the ages migrants have been the principal agents for the transfer of technology.<sup>2</sup> But migrants were, and are, responsible not just for the transfer of technology but for the transfer of commercial know-how, financial capital, entrepreneurial spirit and a great deal more besides. The role of foreign craftsmen, sailors, merchants, financiers and professionals in the rise of classical examples of economic development, such as the Northern Netherlands and later of England, has been amply demonstrated.

Early Modern Spain was reliant for much of its entrepreneurial and technical skills on foreigners who staffed its standing army and much of its navy, and manned the munitions, shipbuilding, luxury goods and other large enterprises promoted by the state. They were also largely responsible for its financial and commercial networks. In the eighteenth century and earlier, Genoese, Dutch, French, English and other foreign merchants dominated Spain's external trade. But much of domestic commerce was also in the hands of foreigners, particularly in the prosperous Kingdoms of Valencia and Murcia, and Andalusia.<sup>3</sup> This was especially the case for retailing which in the eighteenth century underwent a veritable explosion. In Malaga and Valencia, two of the most prosperous cities on Spain's Mediterranean littoral, the number of textile retail outlets underwent a three-fold increase in the space of a few decades.<sup>4</sup>

As I have shown elsewhere eighteenth-century Maltese traders made a contribution totally out of proportion to their numbers to the development of Spain's domestic market, but like most of the foreign merchants in Spain most eventually retired to their country.<sup>5</sup> But there were exceptions.

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The author of two books on commercial history, Dr Carmel Vassallo directs the Hispanic Studies course at the University of Malta.

Typically starting from very modest levels some eighteenth-century Maltese merchants in fact laid the foundations for veritable fortunes in the nineteenth century. Far from the overwhelming influence of the trade with the Americas present in Southern Andalusia some of the sons and grandsons of lowly Maltese pedlars and shop-keepers became prominent actors in the economic life of nineteenth-century Murcia and Valencia.

In the former kingdom we encounter the Cachia, Seiquer, Sicluna, Cadorna and Camilleri in the city of Murcia,<sup>6</sup> the Butigieg in Cartagena<sup>7</sup> and the Borja and Casha in Lorca.<sup>8</sup>

In the Kingdom of Valencia, on the other hand, we find the Cutajar in Alicante<sup>9</sup> and the Attard, Mifsud, Piscopo, Busutil, Formosa and Caruana in Valencia.<sup>10</sup>

By far the most prominent of these fifteen or so families were the Caruanas of Valencia and it is their saga which we shall be looking at here.

## The Caruanas

The founder of the dynasty, Antonio Caruana y Brignone, was born in 1753,<sup>11</sup> in Senglea, a harbour town in Malta and long a breeding ground of sailors and merchants. His mother's family, the Brignone, had been associated with the Spanish trade for several generations.<sup>12</sup>

A maternal great-grandfather, Pablo Escarfonti, had in fact been a brigantine captain to Spain, while his maternal grandfather, Pedro, also a merchant, had died in Valencia. Two uncles, Joseph and Juan Brignone, were both members of the Cloth Retailers Guild in Valencia and it was to the former, that is Joseph, that Antonio was apprenticed in 1768 together with an elder brother, Pedro Pablo, who had been operating in Spain since 1751, even before Antonio's birth.

Though Pedro Pablo and his brother Antonio were both apprenticed in the Gremio de Mercaderes de Vara, or Cloth Retailers Guild, of Valencia on the same day, their career paths subsequently diverged. Pedro Pablo, the elder brother, continued in the cloth retailing line and appears as a fully-fledged member in 1793<sup>13</sup> and 1805.<sup>14</sup> In the latter year he contributed four times as much as his brother Antonio to the Compulsory War Contribution levied in Valencia. In 1805, he decided to retire to Malta and after winding up his company took up an 80% stake in a new company run by his son Juan Maria and a relative, Luis Ciappino.<sup>15</sup> This company eventually went bankrupt as

a consequence of the general debacle of the Napoleonic invasion of Spain.

Coming back to Antonio, Pedro Pablo's younger brother and the "hero" of our story, we find that he moved away from cloth retailing very early on, because after his acceptance as an apprentice to his uncle he never appears as a fully-fledged member of the guild. In fact he seems to have opted for an altogether different career path because in 1778, ten years after he was apprenticed to his uncle, he leased a house in Calle de la Bolseria, in the parish of San Juan del Mercado, for 75 Valencian libras per annum for four years and described himself as a "*fabricante de medias de telar*".<sup>16</sup>

But it must have taken a while for him to get established in manufacturing because his 1,360 reales contribution to the 1799/1800 war levy was only around a fourth of what his elder brother Pedro Pablo paid for his two textile shops.<sup>17</sup>

Prospects must, nevertheless, have started looking brighter quite soon after, because on the 4 September 1803 he was appointed "Inspector del Colegio de Fabricantes de Medias de Seda de Valencia."<sup>18</sup>

In 1806 we have information that he was exporting his products to Malta and an 1807 report mentions that he was employing many people. He had made considerable advances in the quality of his products after securing foreign technical assistance and investing more than 15,000 reales.<sup>19</sup>

The report further pointed out that Don Antonio's products were equal to and even superior to foreign, imported ones while other factories were having to cheat their customers to survive. In recognition of his achievement Don Antonio was allowed to place the royal coat-of-arms over his *casa fabrica* and it was recommended that he be given half the salary of a vocal of the Junta Particular de Comercio de Valencia and a special prize.

In 1818, one year before his death, Don Antonio Caruana is described as "*un noble maltes*" living at Calle Cabezas No. 8, in the parish of Santos Juanes.<sup>20</sup> The social aspirations of the family were already becoming evident even though it was to be several generations before they would become a reality.

Don Antonio's sons - Peregri, Antonio and Josep - continued building on their father's success. In the period 1855 - 1867 they were amongst the principal beneficiaries of disentanglement, acquiring sixteen



agricultural properties and five urban ones for a total sum of 1,341,650 reales, a huge amount. They in fact bought the largest number of urban properties, although in terms of value they spent marginally less than Vicent Chapa, the most important buyer of urban property from disentanglement in the city of Valencia.<sup>21</sup>

The eldest of the three brothers, Peregrí, who had been involved in his father's manufacturing concern, became a particularly active figure in the economy of nineteenth-century Valencia. Apart from property speculation he was also the driving force behind the project to establish Valencia's first issuing bank and was heavily involved in railway and potable water development.<sup>22</sup> He also found time to become a militia captain and prominent in local politics.

Thus were the economic foundations laid for the social ascent which would culminate in the acquisition by Don Antonio's great great grandson, José Caruana y Reig, of the Barony of San Petrillo, by marriage to Vincenta Gomez y Salvador, tenth Baroness of San Petrillo. Don Antonio's dream had finally come true.<sup>23</sup>

The Caruana, Formosa, Busuttill, Piscopo, Mifsud, Attard, Cutajar, Casha, Borja, Butigieg, Camilleri, Cadorna, Sicluna, Seiquer and Cachia families are clear vindication of Eva Morowska's claim that first generation migrants often accumulate economic and human capital which, once released by the relaxation of the attitudes of the host society, is used by following generations to move into the mainstream society in a spectacular display of accomplishment.<sup>24</sup>

In the case of these families of Maltese origin the display of accomplishment was so spectacular that the sons and grandsons of men who had been described as living in huts rather than houses and whose dress and diet had been labelled as miserable were within decades prominent members of the elites of Spanish cities like Valencia, Murcia, Alicante, Lorca and Cartagena. But what was happening back in Malta in the meantime?

### **Nineteenth-Century Malta**

In contrast to the picture drawn by Boisgelin and others of a dynamic business class in eighteenth-century Malta<sup>25</sup> and the situation we have just described for nineteenth-century Maltese entrepreneurs abroad, British officials and visitors in early nineteenth-century Malta frequently accused local businessmen of lacking enterprise.<sup>26</sup> Other Englishmen in fact countered that the depression in the island's

commerce had much more to do with the colonial government's own policies concerning duties, quarantine charges and regulations, etc.<sup>27</sup>

The fact of the matter is that the entrepreneurial spirit is not a phenomenon that can easily be conjured up by government decree. It is like a delicate flower which will only bloom given the right conditions. Entrepreneurs tend to be relatively footloose. They are willing to pursue profit opportunities wherever they may lead. This was true in the past and has become more so today: politicians and administrators disregard this basic fact only at their own peril.

### **Some lessons for the present**

The Caruanas of Valencia, who originated within the merchant milieu of Senglea, established themselves as retailers in Spain and subsequently responded to new opportunities and moved into manufacturing, property, utilities and banking. They and dozens of other Maltese established in nineteenth-century Spain, are fine examples of our tiny nation's entrepreneurial spirit and offer us a picture which contrasts sharply with the image projected by those who, like the British before them, have more recently criticized our entrepreneurs for failing to fit into some pre-conceived notion of what entrepreneurs should be.

Lino Spiteri, for example, has spoken of the Maltese entrepreneur as being "an almost unknown breed".<sup>28</sup> John Chircop, on the other hand, castigated the Maltese middle classes of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for failing to become "a national bourgeoisie with industrial objectives as had been the case in north western Europe"<sup>29</sup> while Mario Vella has referred to "a proverbial lack of entrepreneurship"<sup>30</sup> and an inability to promote what he refers to as "genuine development",<sup>31</sup> although the latter term is never quite defined. Although criticism has been most vociferous from those "on the left" similar comments have also come from centre-right critics as well.

It has become common to equate industrialization with economic growth, and developing countries and their leaders have generally assumed that they will have to industrialize. Regrettably, those who slavishly adopt a crude development-by-stages model often risk losing sight of the special characteristics of individual cases which do not easily fit into their models, but as Kemp has pointed out, "It is doubtful whether the experience of the early industrializing countries is of much relevance to today's developing countries."<sup>32</sup>

Eighteenth-century England modernized by using accumulated commercial wealth while Germany had to recur to banks to finance its modernization.<sup>33</sup> Russia, on the other hand, initiated its industrialization process at the end of the nineteenth century with the help of state fiscal resources. The roads to modernization are clearly many but much depends on the size of the economy.

In Europe, large countries such as France, Germany or Italy have been able to afford industrial policies which had clearly non-economic goals, such as national security or glory, or economic objectives but with ineffective but expensive policy instruments.

Small countries could not afford the indulgence of the industrial policies of the large, though this was not always recognized. Greece, Portugal, Spain and Ireland all crippled themselves at some time or other by adopting policies that ignored the fact that they had to be internationally competitive in order to survive and instead attempted import-substituting industrialization using tariffs, licensing and subsidies.

In Malta, both major political parties, perhaps inevitably, succumbed to the same temptation of promoting and protecting enterprises which had no chance of surviving and have frittered away precious resources and time which could have been better used de-industrializing.

Because post-independence governments were weak and inexperienced and excessively pre-occupied with mimicking former colonial masters, they also put the cart before the horse and constructed a comprehensive and modern social welfare system, which although laudable in itself paid little heed to what our antiquated micro-economy could afford.

The fact of the matter is that once in power even those who espoused 'genuine development', whatever that may be, and criticized our entrepreneurs for failing to metamorphose into the desired bourgeoisie, merely continued where their predecessors-in-office had left off. i.e. nurturing a foreign-owned manufacturing base which centered essentially on attractive fiscal conditions and a docile, malleable and inexpensive (albeit increasingly less so) workforce. The key question is, of course, is there any other way? Autarchy perhaps? I doubt it. With the passage of time, the scope for "independent" national economic policies has become more and more circumscribed, even for large countries. In the case of our own micro-economy, options have always been limited anyway.

**Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> This paper was originally read at the 'Maltese Elites and Economic Development in Historical Perspectives' conference held in Malta on 26-28 November 1998 organized by the Malta Development Corporation in association with the Department of History of the University of Malta.
- <sup>2</sup> Carlo M. Cipolla, *Before the Industrial Revolution, European Society and Economy 1000-1700*, (London 1993), 156.
- <sup>3</sup> Carmel Vassallo, *Corsairing to Commerce: Maltese Merchants in Eighteenth Century Spain*, (Malta 1997), 131-132.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 175.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid. passim.*
- <sup>6</sup> Juan Bautista Vilar, *Bases sociales y economicas del Cantón Murciano*, (Madrid 1973), 106.
- <sup>7</sup> Maria Teresa Pérez Picazo and Guy Lemeunier, *El proceso de modernización de la región Murciana (Siglos XVI - XIX)*, (Murcia 1984), 283.
- <sup>8</sup> Maria Teresa Pérez Picazo, 'El comercio Lorquino en la transición del Antiguo al Nuevo Regimen (1780-1850)' in *Areas No 2 Year 1982*. pp 44-69, (Murcia 1982), 45-69.
- <sup>9</sup> Juan Bautista Vilar, Orihuela. *Una ciudad valenciana en la España Moderna*, (Murcia 1981), 222.
- <sup>10</sup> Pere Molas i Ribalta, *Comerç i Estructura Social a Catalunya i València als Segles XVII i XVIII*. (Barcelona 1977), 374 and Vassallo *Corsairing to Commerce*, 287.
- <sup>11</sup> Jose Caruana y Reig, *Temas de antaño*, (Cmpl.) Francisco Almela y Vives, Valencia 1956, *passim* and Alberto y Arturo Garcia Carraffa, *Enciclopedia Heraldica y Geneologica Hispano Americana*, (Madrid 1976), Tomo 24, 263-268.
- <sup>12</sup> Archivo Municipal de Valencia (AMV), Tribunal de Comercio (TC), Gremios, Caja 56, Año 1768 *passim*.
- <sup>13</sup> Archivo Reino de Valencia (ARV) Protocolo 6106 Notario Fernandez Gonzalez, Año 1793 *passim*.
- <sup>14</sup> AMV, Lonja, Caja 116 No. 13.
- <sup>15</sup> Archivo Historico Municipal de Barcelona, Fondo Comercial B-166, Libro Mayor Caruana, Ciappino y Compania f.1v .
- <sup>16</sup> ARV Protocolo 8165 Ximenez, Jose Años 1778-1779, ff.115v-116v.
- <sup>17</sup> AMV, Lonja, Caja 79 Doc. 4 f.36.

- <sup>18</sup> Archivo General de Simancas, Consejo Supremo de Hacienda, Legajo 368, Expediente de Antonio Caruana y Brinioni... unpaginated.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> AMV, Censos, Parte Moderna, Seccion Primera-A Clase 1a SB 1812-1818.
- <sup>21</sup> Anaclet Pons Pons, *La Desamortització i els seus beneficiaris: un procés de canvi de propietat a les comarques centrals dels Països Valencians (1855-1867)*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, (Universitat de València, 1987), 324-349.
- <sup>22</sup> Clementina Rodenas, *Banca i Industrialització. El Cas Valencià* (València 1978), 240 and Clementina Rodenas, *La Banca Valenciana. Una aproximación histórica*, (València 1982), 16-22.
- <sup>23</sup> Garcia Carraffa, *Enciclopedia Heraldica*, 263-268.
- <sup>24</sup> Eva Morawska, 'The Sociology and Historiography of Immigration.' in *Immigration Reconsidered. History, Sociology and Politics*, (ed.) Virginia Yans McLaughlin, (New York and Oxford 1990), 203-206.
- <sup>25</sup> L. de Boisgelin, *Ancient and Modern Malta*, (Malta 1805), 115 and for a more recent assessment Vassallo, *Corsairing to Commerce*, (Malta 1997), 131-1 *passim*.
- <sup>26</sup> Charles Price, *Malta and the Maltese. A Study in Nineteenth Century Migration* (Melbourne 1954) pp. 22-26.
- <sup>27</sup> Michela D'Angelo, *Mercanti inglesi a Malta 1800-1825*, (Milano 1990), 264-270.
- <sup>28</sup> Lino Spiteri, *The Development of Industry in Malta*, (Malta 1969), 11.
- <sup>29</sup> John Chircop, *Underdevelopment. The Maltese Experience 1880-1914*. Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, (University of Malta 1993), 197-198.
- <sup>30</sup> Mario Vella, 'That Favourite Dream of the Colonies: Industrialization, Dependence and the Limits of Development Discourse in Malta' in *Maltese Society: A Sociological Inquiry*, (ed.) Ronald G. Sultana and Godfrey Baldacchino, (Malta 1994), 74.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid., 75.
- <sup>32</sup> Tom Kemp, *Historical Patterns of Industrialization* (London and New York 1995), 22.
- <sup>33</sup> Richard Sylla, 'Finance and Economic Growth: Three decades post-Cameron.' in *Finance and the Making of the Modern Capitalist World, 1750-1931*, (ed.) Clara Eugenia Núñez. Proceedings Twelfth International Economic History Congress. Session B9. (Madrid 1998), 11.

Sandro Debono

## Parish Clockworks in XIX Century Għaxaq

Time stands still in the small picturesque village of Għaxaq due to a mechanical problem in its church clock. The belfry which houses it was completed by the latter half of the 1750s, when the construction of the new church to the design of architect Sebastian Saliba (1709 – 1782) was in full swing.<sup>1</sup>

The middle years of the eighteenth century bear witness to the construction of two important clocks. The Pinto turret clock at the Grandmaster's Palace was inaugurated earlier in 1745 whilst the still functioning church clock of the Conventual Church of St. John's dates to the late 1760's.<sup>2</sup> No records revealing the author of the Għaxaq parish church clock have been traced to date, although technical data points to eighteenth century methodology of construction.<sup>3</sup>

The earliest known references date to 1814 when Maestro Carlo Balzan was paid 7 scudi and 6 grani "per tre corde per l'orologio."<sup>4</sup> More important however is an interesting document dated 1865, which testifies to an intervention in this parish clock by the well-known clock maker, Michelangelo Sapiano (1826-1912). This noteworthy horologist had by then achieved widespread recognition for his skills. His genius had been confirmed by a certificate and a gold medal awarded by the Malta Society of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce in 1857.<sup>5</sup> Sapiano was also awarded the Silver Medal in the Maltese Industry Exhibition in the year preceding the Għaxaq commission.<sup>6</sup> All these achievements seem to put the procurator's choice for the repair of his church clock as an obvious one.

The entry in the Veneranda Lampada<sup>7</sup> records, forming part of the Għaxaq parish archives, describes the payment as affected by the procurator Don Giuseppe Demicoli in favor of a 'restoration' exercise undertaken by Sapiano.<sup>8</sup> Yet, in his receipt, Sapiano justifies a total sum of 165 scudi paid '*per lavori fatti in una riparazione e rinovazione*'.

Furthermore, he lists '*trenta centri di bronzo*', a pendulum and '*quattro assi*', as well as three '*rucchelli*', two '*ruote della sfera*' and a '*ruota dello scappamento e lo scappamento*'.<sup>9</sup> All these parts are listed as having been changed or radically modified by Sapiano himself. These replacements as well as the total sum quoted for the intervention seem to weigh more in favor of a renovation exercise than mere repair works. In this context, the said sum is, on the other hand, surprisingly high when compared to the cost of church clocks produced by Sapiano during the same period. The one for Casal Chircop constructed in 1862 had cost 27 scudi whilst an earlier version for Gudia (1860) had cost 30 scudi.<sup>10</sup> A later example constructed by Sapiano for a private client in 1871 amounted to 42 scudi.<sup>11</sup> It is difficult at this point to justify this exorbitant expense. If the figures quoted by Castagna are correct, a commission for a new clock could have been more feasible. On the other hand, there could well exist the possibility that the reasons behind this greater expense outweighed the installation of a new clock. Technical data about the clock does confirm that eighteenth century birdcage type models keep time rather precisely.<sup>12</sup> This latter proposal is further supported by a concern for correct time keeping which is sensed in particular entries in the parish records. In 1851 the procurator agreed to pay the church sexton 18 scudi for three years in advance '*per dar cura all'orologio mentre negli antecedenti anni li davano erroneamente dalla fondazione Caterina Mallia Gauci*'.<sup>13</sup>

Sapiano's intervention is recorded after a series of seemingly regular '*accomodate*' to the parish clock which seem to betray an inherent mechanical problem. In 1824, Agostino Calleja and a blacksmith were paid 6 scudi and 2 grani '*per accomodata del battente*'.<sup>14</sup> Expenses in respect of '*catene dell'orologio*' are also recorded in the same entry.<sup>15</sup> A mere five years later, a payment of six scudi is recorded '*per porto e riporto delle ruote dell'istesso orologio*' and '*per due rocchelli dell'orologio*'.<sup>16</sup> A seemingly important intervention occurred a few years later in 1833 when the procurator of the Veneranda Lampada paid 81 scudi '*per accomodata dell'orologio*'.<sup>17</sup> In 1837, Maestro Paolo Sapiano was paid the sum of 7 scudi by the procurator once again in favor of restoring the church clock.<sup>18</sup> Further payments are noted in 1840 in favor of Maestro Pietro Tanti,<sup>19</sup> and later in 1843.<sup>20</sup> Mro. Pietro was called a second time during the same year '*per l'accomodata dell'orologio*'.<sup>21</sup> These successive payments betray a recurrent concern for the regular functioning of the church clock. Sapiano's intervention appears to have

been decisively successful since no entries in respect of 'accomodature' or other related works are recorded after his intervention. Payments for repair works in the church clock are only noted as late as 1899 when Pasquale Sapiano was paid a mere 4 grani for works in the same clock.<sup>22</sup>

An unhappy occurrence seems to have given a helping hand in making good for the necessary expenses. During the same year the island was hit by a severe outbreak of cholera between the 20th June and the 20th of November. In the micro context of a small village, this event is reflected in the record of expenses related to the titular feast of the village. External festivities were kept to a minimum and collections money was thus saved.<sup>23</sup> Don Giuseppe Demicoli was thus left with a balance of 99 scudi, which he willingly defrayed '*per il compimento dell'orologio*.'<sup>24</sup> At face value this appears to be a mere accountancy exercise. But a deeper analysis of parish revenue, as far as the titular feast is concerned, hints at noteworthy aspects which although typical of an agricultural society, tell us much about the inhabitants of this village in the mid nineteenth century.

The collection of monies for the celebration of the titular feast in 1865 can be distinguished as deriving from two sources; collection of money from the parishioners and collection of wheat and cereals from the local farmers. This division does reflect the social stratification of this small community although a degree of overlapping cannot be excluded. Besides, this method of income is not only pertinent to 1865 but is current practice throughout the nineteenth century. The published table sums up the situation over a ten year period between 1863 and 1873 with the collection divided into three categories. These can be defined as collections of wheat and cereals, monies collected on a door to door basis (*raccolte per giro del casale*), and monies collected from individual parishioners which parish records define as elites.<sup>25</sup> It is immediately evident that monies collected were far less when the intake of grain and cereals by the parish priest is taken on record as low, perhaps due to bad harvests. This is the case in 1867 when due to the small amount of produce collected for this purpose, the revenue for the feast dropped from the 236 scudi of the previous year to 186 scudi. The same happened in 1864, when revenue had dropped from 321 to 244 scudi and were it not for a separate collection by two '*deputati in giro per il casale*,' the total sum collected would have been a mere 198 scudi. On the other hand, a good intake of agricultural produce meant



a substantial increase in the sum collected. This seems to have been the case in 1873 when the produce collected fetched 107 scudi. The year 1868 registered the greatest amount in so far as value of produce collected; 137 scudi worth of wheat (*grano duro e mischiato*), as well as cereals, were collected out of a total of 261 scudi.

The agricultural component is thus an important source of revenue for the parish church. It eventually supported the important events of the community as well the embellishment of the same parish church symbolically completed in 1784.<sup>26</sup> Parish records often betray a concern of identifying this collection of agricultural produce with a specific purpose. This is also applicable in the context of cotton cultivation, which had nonetheless decreased drastically on a national scale by the middle years of the nineteenth century. Parish records refer to 'raccolte del cotone' recorded as directed towards particular needs and projects. In 1857, monies collected 'rimase in sussidio delle spese della cupola' whilst in 1862 and 1863, monies acquired from the same 'raccolta' were diverted to Don M.A. Farrugia who was collecting money for a new bell.<sup>27</sup> In the context of the 1865 intervention on the village church clock, it is understandable that the agricultural strata of the community could have possibly exercised greater emphasis leading to its overhaul. Incidentally, Giuseppe's financial troubles were eased during the same year thanks to a good collection of agricultural produce. From its sale he managed to collect the sum of 106 scudi. On the other hand, he refrained from requesting the usual contribution from the village elites due to the unforeseen sanitary circumstances. It is however curious to note that Michelangelo Sapiano had nonetheless already been paid in full well before the titular feast, before the outbreak of the cholera epidemic and perhaps even before the collection of money for the titular feast had even started.<sup>28</sup> In this context, the procurator seems to have had a try at catching two birds with one stone. By diverting the surplus money from the feast collection to pay for Sapiano's toils, he not only sought to ease pressure on Veneranda Lampada funds but could have also come up with a justification to 'spend' this excess income in favor of a desired necessity. This could have possibly been the very reason which was given to the contributors for the village feast amongst whom those donating agricultural produce were as usual the most noteworthy.

Michelangelo Sapiano's services were once again requested in 1874 to repair a clock in the sacristy of the parish church.<sup>29</sup> Earlier in 1868, a mere two years after his successful intervention in the village

clock, he was also commissioned a winch to be used for hoisting the canopy of the parish church.<sup>30</sup> Sapiano's generosity was furthermore acknowledged by Don Giuseppe Demicoli when in 1865, the former donated a clock to the newly constructed filial church of the 'Redeemer' known as 'Santu Kristu'.<sup>31</sup> Don Giuseppe remunerated him with a donation, in the same year that Sapiano performed his necessary intervention in the parish church clock. Incidentally, Don Giuseppe also happened to be the person responsible for this rural church. Demicoli was to be symbolically complimented for his toils and troubles later in 1895, when the procurators of this filial church commissioned the renowned Maltese painter Lazzaro Pisani (1854 – 1932) to paint a portrait of this generous and hard working personality.<sup>32</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> C. Mizzi & A. Mangion, *Il-Knisja ta' Hal Għaxaq: 200 Sena Kkonsagrata*, (Malta 1984), 25.

<sup>2</sup> G. Bonello, *Histories of Malta – Figments and Fragments*, Vol.2, (Malta 2001), 80.

<sup>3</sup> S. Zammit, *The Għaxaq Parish Church Clock*, Unpublished technical report, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> A. P.GH., *Veneranda Lampada 1798-1820*, f. 21.

<sup>5</sup> "Michelangelo Sapiano" in *Heritage*, Vol. 2, 409.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Veneranda Lampada records are computations of revenue and general expenses of the church in question as against revenue and expenditure belonging to confraternities.

<sup>8</sup> A. P.GH., *Libro Esito della Veneranda Lampada – Liber R 1848*, f.75v. The payment is recorded as 'pagati in tre volte.'

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> P. P. Castagna, *L-Istorja ta' Malta bil-Gzejjer Tagħha*, 251. Castagna, further adds that the Kirkop church clock was constructed to operate on two faces whilst the Gudja version and the one at Dragonara only operated on one face (*quadrante*).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Verbal Communication with Mr. Stephen Zammit (20 September 2002).

<sup>13</sup> A.P.Gh., *Libro Esito Veneranda Lampada – Liber R, 1848*, f.66. The full entry reads thus – "Al medesimo serviente per tre anni fino tutto il corrente anno per un assegnamento di scudi 6 annui a ragione

*di dar cura dell'orologio mentre negli antecedenti anni li davano erroneamente dalla fondazione Caterina Mallia Gauci."*

<sup>14</sup> A.P.Gh., *Veneranda Lampada – Esito B*, f.116.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, f.126.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, f.133. (24 March 1833).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, f.142. (30 October 1837).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, f.145. (5 April 1840). "A Mro. Pietro Tanti per accomodatura dell'orologio: 22 scudi".

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, f.149. (13 March 1843). "A Mro. Bronzaro per due dentature nella ruota dell' orologio - 9 scudi".

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, f.150. (17 November 1843). A payment of 8 scudi is noted.

<sup>22</sup> A.P.Gh., *Libro Esito Veneranda Lampada – Libro R*, f.107.

<sup>23</sup> A.P.Gh., *Spese per la Festa Titolare*, unnumbered folios. *Introito per la sollennita del titolare -1865: "in questo anno non si fece la luminazione causante il morbo colera."*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> The collections frequently list the usual number of elites who generally donate between 2 scudi, 6 grani and 5 scudi each. In respect of 1866 reference is made to a Console Lorenzo Farrugia as well as to a second Console by the name of Slajt (Sleigh). Various members of the Naudi family are listed as contributors throughout the years under review. Foremost amongst the Naudis one finds enlisted a Signor Illustrisimo Giudice Naudi who was also a leading member of the confraternity of the blessed sacrament within the same casale.

<sup>26</sup> C. Mizzi & R. Mangion, *Il-Knisja ta' Hal Ghaxaq*, 27.

<sup>27</sup> A.P.Gh, *Introito – Veneranda Lampada*, f.57.

<sup>28</sup> Sapiano's receipt is dated 24 May 1865.

<sup>29</sup> A.P.Gh., *Libro Esito – Veneranda Lampada – Libro R*, f.85.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, f.78. The cost of this winch amounted to 46 scudi and is once again comparable to expenditure by other parishes in the construction of a new clock.

<sup>31</sup> A.P.Gh., *Libro Introito ed Esito della Fabbrica della Chiesa del Ssmo. Redentore – Casal Ascjak*, f.100.

<sup>32</sup> A.P.Gh., *Registro dell'introito ed Esito della Ven. Chiesa filiale*, f. 129. Entry dated 18 August 1895. The painting cost £7 and is an excellent portrait executed in oils which compares favorably to the best works of the artist. This painting has been discovered by the author during his research and is being published for the first time in this article.

Charles Savona Ventura

## Early Medical Literature in Maltese during the XIX and XX Century

The first decades of the twentieth century found the Maltese enjoying a very low cultural maturity particularly in health matters. The reasons for this were multifactorial and were partly related to the generally low level of education and limited availability of educational material in the vernacular language. At the turn of the twentieth century, the working class population was reported to be seemingly aware of the value of education and suitable facilities for the pursuit of a comprehensive education had been made available. However because of the overpowering circumstances that the majority of the working class population had to yield to, illiteracy was still much more widely prevalent than supposed. During 1911-12, the average daily attendance in the Government Elementary and Infant Schools amounted to 15,657 students. The average daily attendance in the Secondary Schools and Lyceum amounted to only 616 students while the average daily attendance to University courses amounted to 138 students.<sup>1</sup> The figures suggest that only about 4-5% of children attending primary education completed their studies and progressed to a Secondary level. The Maltese language was taught in the primary classes, but English and Italian reading was only commenced at Standard III, when many of the children would have already been withdrawn from the educational system.<sup>2</sup>

In 1921 the Hon. W. Bruce studied the prevalent system of education and pointed out the need for a radical revision and expansion of the primary school curriculum.<sup>3</sup> Political instability in the second decade of the twentieth century postponed a 1924 Education Bill set to reform elementary instruction. Instead of the Education Bill, a Compulsory Attendance Act was passed enforcing school attendance until the age of 12 years.<sup>4</sup> Further efforts to reform and update elementary education

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\*A consultant obstetrician-gynaecologist, Dr Charles Savona Ventura has authored several contributions relating to medical history in the Maltese Islands; he has also been much interested in prehistory.

were made in the subsequent years, however the educational standards remained generally low. By 1948, 32 per cent of males aged 10 years and over, and 35 per cent of females were completely illiterate. Furthermore, half of the population had only a primary standard of education and over a quarter had only completed or left school at pre-primary level.<sup>5</sup>

The poor standard of education was further complimented by a general dearth of suitable practical literature in the vernacular language resulting from the fossilisation of the development of Maltese orthography engendered in part by the Language Question. In 1887, the Director of Education Dr. A.A. Caruana prompted the return to an Italo-Maltese alphabet and orthography for the Maltese language first proposed by the *Società Filologica Maltese* in 1843. This set the stage to overcome the political bigotry and academic stagnation that had mitigated strongly against the growth of a Maltese written language, that in turn led to a lack of a reading public and consequently a shortage of suitable Maltese literature.<sup>6</sup>

The establishment of a definitive alphabet and orthography in the late nineteenth century encouraged a number of Maltese publishers to attempt provide publications in the vernacular intended mainly for popular readership. A number of publications in Maltese had predated 1887, but many of these were limited to grammatical, religious or political works. Newspapers in the vernacular similarly restricted their contents to political, religious, and news-event journalism. Little attention had been given to using the printed medium to educate the non-Italian/English literate working-class population, particularly in health matters; though some medical items written in Maltese had appeared in the local newspapers such as *Habbar Malti*, *Is-Sebħ* and *Is-Salib*. In the former journal, Fabrizio Borg published a series entitled *Is-Saħħa u d-dar* (1879)<sup>7</sup> and *Għajnuna fil-mard għal Għarrieda - Fuk l' Epidemji* (1880).<sup>8</sup> Borg also published the latter series in *Is-Salib* (1902) and a series entitled *Is-Saħħa ta' l-ulied* in *Is-Sebħ* (1884).<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Fabrizio Borg can be considered as the first Maltese medical journalist who undertook the initiative to educate the working-class population in health matters using the vernacular language. He was also co-editor with Themistocles Zammit of the medical journal *La Rivista Medica* published in the period 1890-1892.<sup>10</sup> He republished on his own initiative two of the above-mentioned series as booklets entitled *Għajnuna fil-mard għal Għarrieda - Fuk l' Epidemji* (1880)<sup>11</sup> and *Kelmtejn fuq is-saħħa ta' l-ulied* (1884)<sup>12</sup>. These works and his previous series entitled *Is-Saħħa u d-dar* were subsequently republished in

the series *Cotba tal-Moghħdija taż-Żmien* (1906-1911). The theme of these publications reflects the particular needs and the main concerns of medical personnel in Malta dealing with child and infant care, environmental health and hygiene, epidemic disease, and emergency treatment.

The publication of suitable Maltese literature material including publications pertaining to health matters received a significant impetus by the initiative taken at the turn of the century by Alfons Maria Galea. During the period 1899 to 1915, Galea published 150 books in the Maltese language in the series *Cotba tal-Moghħdija taż-Żmien* dealing with various aspects of literature and instruction. Before Galea's publishing enterprise, authors had to publish their own books when they had the means, so that publications were few and far between. The Government Press had also contributed towards popular medical education, through publications issued from the Department of Health.

The Government Press had contributed towards popular medical education, through publications issued from the Department of Health. These included a number of pamphlets or books in the vernacular addressing various aspects of public health including *Twissijiet fuk il-Mard tal-Kolera meħruġin mill-Gvern biex jixxerdu fost in-nies* (1885)<sup>13</sup>; *Fuq il-mard tat-tfal u kif nilqulu* (1885)<sup>14</sup>; *Chielmtejn fuk il-Pesta u chif yekrida* by G. Caruana Scicluna (1901)<sup>15</sup>; *Id-dubbien u n-nemus u chif nilkghu ruhna mill-ħsarat tagħhom* by A. Critien (1929)<sup>16</sup>; and "*Il-Grieden*" (1936)<sup>17</sup>. The titles reflect the preoccupations of the Public Health Officials at the turn of the century. With the exclusion of the one publication dealing with child-care, the publications dealt mainly with infective disease and its vectors. Another publication dealing with the endemic infection - Brucellosis - written by the epidemiologist Amadeo Fava and entitled *Il-Falib tal-Moghħza - Industrija Maltija* was published by the Empire Press in 1931.<sup>18</sup> In addition the Government Press also published lecture notes aimed at training paramedical personnel including *Ktieb il Qabla* by S.L. Pisani (1883);<sup>19</sup> *Tagħlim għall-istudenti ta' l-Iskola tal-Kwiebel ta' l-Isptar Centrali* by G.B. Schembri (1897);<sup>20</sup> and *Il-Ctieb ta' l'Infermier* by J.S. Galizia (1904).<sup>21</sup>

Alfons Maria Galea's initiative injected new blood into Maltese publishing, while it made books more easily accessible to popular demand. Galea (b.1861 d.1941), a member of the most notable bourgeois families in the nineteenth century, rose to prominence mainly through his philanthropic activities.<sup>22</sup> An analysis of the collection

shows titles dealing with travel, geography, history, archaeology, natural history, folklore, and technical education. Fiction appears to have been less popular with 7 novels, 12 plays, 4 works of poetry, and 18 works dealing with religious themes.<sup>23</sup> Four issues - nos. 22, 54, 61, and 110 - dealt with medical subjects in an attempt at educating the population in child-care, health matters and general hygiene. Many of the medical publications in the series *Cotba tal-Mogh'dija taż-Żmien* were republications of medical works written in Maltese previously published either in limited number by the authors themselves or in the vernacular newspapers. The first publication published in 1902 [Issue No.22] was entitled *Nibżgħu għal saħħitna: Tagħlim għat-Tfal*. This was a self-care booklet aimed at children written by A. Preca.<sup>24</sup> The second medically-related publication [Issue No.54] of the series published in 1906 included two sections: *Tagħlim għall-Ommijiet fuq it-Trobbija ta' Uliedhom* by E.B. Vella published for the *Pro Infantia* Association<sup>25</sup> and *Għajnuna fil-mard għal Għarrieda - Fuk l' Epidemji* by F. Borg.<sup>26</sup> The third publication by F. Borg published in 1907 [Issue No. 61] was entitled *Is-Saħħa u d-dar*, and dealt with home and environmental hygiene.<sup>27</sup> The last issue [Issue No. 110] to deal with medical matters was published in 1911. Written by F. Borg and entitled *Is-Saħħa ta' l-ulied*, it incorporated a series of 13 chapters dealing with child-care.<sup>28</sup> It also included a section entitled *Mard l-Għajnejn f'it-Trabi* written by L. Manche,<sup>29</sup> and *Fuk il-Mard ta' n-Nies ta' s-Snajja* by G. Busuttil. The latter, written originally in 1885, dealt with industrial disease and injuries of various trades.<sup>30</sup>

It appears that a significant proportion of the early vernacular medical literature dealt with infant care. The high infant mortality had long preoccupied the medical profession and the attempt at educating the population in aspects of child-care is not surprising. The infant mortality at the time was excessively high averaging 250 per 1000 live births. The rate came down only after the Second World War.<sup>31</sup> At the turn of the twentieth century sometime before 1905, the *Pro Infantia* Association was founded in an effort at reducing the high infant mortality. With the object of spreading practical hygienic measures, the Association in 1907 published an informative booklet about child care entitled *It-Trobbija tat-Tfal jeu Tuissijet għall ommijiet* written by Dr. L. Manche and translated into Maltese by Lawyer E.L. Vella. The booklet dealt with marital/pregnancy problems, and infant/child care.<sup>32</sup> Other medically-related publications were published by the St. John's Ambulance Brigade. First established in Malta in 1882, it was not until 1909 that the Brigade came

into being thanks to the enthusiasm of Lieutenant William R. Gatt and his committee. The aim of the Brigade was to provide volunteers for Public duty primarily in First Aid and Rescue. It also set out to train individuals, generally through courses, in First Aid matters.<sup>33</sup> In 1916, the Brigade published a book in Maltese entitled *L' Ewwel Għajnuna lil mim ikorri*. This dealt with first aid instruction and was a translation by R.J. Sammut of the standard Brigade's handbook by J. Cautlie published in England. The original British edition of this work was prepared by Peter Shepherd in 1878. The Maltese version went through four editions, the second published in 1934 was translated by T. Zammit, while the third and fourth editions (1938-1943) were translated by R.L. Casolani.<sup>34</sup> In anticipation of the advent of the Second World War, G. Galea in 1938 published a first-aid book for use during wartime *L-ewwel għajnuna lil min ikorri fi żmien ta' gwerra*. This ran in two editions and discussed the first aid management of possible injuries from gas chemical warfare, physical injuries, and burns.<sup>35</sup>

Another significant contributor to the dissemination of health matters to the working-class population was Agostino Levanzin (b.1872, d.1955). Levanzin joined University to read medicine but became an apothecary after obtaining his BA. He subsequently joined the course of law and qualified a solicitor. He started his journalistic career in 1891 editing *Lo Studente Maltese* (1891-92) and *Il-Habib tal-Poplu* (1898-99).<sup>36</sup> In September 1908 he started publishing the newspaper *In-Naħla*. While primarily a general newspaper, Levanzin included frequent items of medical interest written in Maltese suitable for the general population. In the series of 179 issues (September 1908 - February 1912), the newspaper carried informative items dealing with several forms of infectious disease including brucellosis,<sup>37</sup> cholera,<sup>38</sup> influenza,<sup>39</sup> typhoid,<sup>40</sup> and plague.<sup>41</sup> In July 1909, he started the publication of a series of articles entitled *Għomja Famusi* wherein the experiences of several famous blind individuals including some Maltese personalities were outlined and furthermore wrote a leader entitled *Għal Għomja*.<sup>42</sup> He further summarised the work by Paolo Mantagazza *Arte di Campar Vecchi* with the title *Chif tghix mitt sena*,<sup>43</sup> and propagated a dietary regimen by a serial entitled *Il Cura ta' s-Saum* based on the articles written by Upton Sinclair in the February-March 1911 issues of the *London Magazine*.<sup>44</sup> Other published titles included *X'għandu uiehed jagħmel biex naħarbu mill-mard tal-corla*; *Snien Dras u Njeb*; and *Is-Saħħa*.<sup>45</sup> His wife Lucija Levanzin Inglott similarly occasionally



wrote about health matters in her serial column entitled *Għan-Nisa*. Levanzin became a very strong proponent of the 40-day dietary regimen for health, publishing in 1911 his series of articles in a booklet entitled *Il-Cura ta' s-Sawm*.<sup>46</sup> His interest in dietary measures stimulated his activities after his emigration to America in 1912. There he underwent a fast of 31 days for physiological studies and lectured on total fasting and gave a personal demonstration under strict medical supervision.<sup>47</sup> After returning to Malta from America in 1928, he issued *In-Naħla* again [Issues 180-192] and included items of medical interest such as dieting, vaccination against smallpox, brucellosis and its transmission by goats, and enteritis.<sup>48</sup> He further published a series of articles criticising Prof. J. E. Debono's work on diabetes published in 1927.<sup>49</sup> Unlike the educational articles that appeared in *In-Naħla*, other turn of the century newspapers in the vernacular such as *Malta Tagħna* generally dealt only with medical matters that had news value.<sup>50</sup>

The medical cultural propagation using the Maltese language was taken up by Dr. Guze Bonnici in 1938 as editor of *Ġabra ta' Kitba Maltija*. Guze Bonnici (b.1907 d.1940) graduated as a doctor from the University of Malta in 1931. His University years were crowned in 1931 by the founding of the *Għaqda tal-Malti (Università)* by Bonnici and Ruzar Briffa. The *Ġabra ta' Kitba Maltija* series saw the publication of a number of novels written by Maltese authors including *Il-Qawwa ta' l-Imħabba* (1938) and *Helsien* (1940) by Guze Bonnici himself. The series was also planned to include plays and poetry.<sup>51</sup> While being primarily a reformatory novel, *Il-Qawwa tal-Imħabba* deals also with the medical and social problems of tuberculosis before the availability of adequate therapy.<sup>52</sup> In the preface of the book, Bonnici wrote that:

'Il-marda tas-sider hu ġerħa kerha fil-laħam ħaj tal-bniedem u jmiss u jherri għadd ta' ħlejjaq bla qies. Hu aktar ħafif biex jintrikeyb milli biex jingħaleb u jitfejjaq. U l-aqwa għorrief, b'hegga u b'sabar qaddisa, ininu u jeħdlu taħt it-toqol ta' l-istarrig biex jikxfu xi duwa li twaqqaf din il-ħerba u tniessel xaqq ta' tama f'qalb il-mittiefsa u fi qrabathom. Sa issa l-għerf mexa 'l quddiem ħafna, iżda għadu ma wasalx biex iqis ruħu rebbieħ fuq dan il-mard. U hi ħasra tassew kbira tara quddiemek mijiet ta' zgħażaġħ, fl-aħħjar ta' ħajjithom, imejlu rashom għajjiena u jroddu ruħhom lill-Hallieq, milquta għal mewt mit-tuberkolozi. Iżda f'jum fil-qrib, għad tinkxef xi duwa li xxejjen il-qawwa qattliela ta' dan il-mard u tnaqqas il-ħerba li jizra' fil-familji.'

During the 1930s the incidence of pulmonary tuberculosis averaged 0.64 per 1000 population with a case fatality rate of about 60%. The sick were nursed at the Connaught Hospital at Mdina that was adapted for pulmonary tuberculosis cases in 1909. The management at this time was mainly supportive or surgical, besides undertaking preventive measures to control spread of infection. Effective therapy was only made available in 1944 after Waksman extracted the antibiotic streptomycin from *Streptomyces griseus*. Streptomycin was being used in Malta by 1947.<sup>53</sup>

Ġuże Bonnici also embarked on attempting popular instruction in the medical field. In 1932 he published a book about child-care entitled *It-Trobbija tat-Tfal*. This was divided into three main sections dealing with the pregnant woman and delivery, with infant care, and the final section with child-care.<sup>54</sup> This publication was followed by a series of articles *Tagħlim fuq is-Saħħa* in the vernacular newspaper *Il-Berqa* published during November 1937 and May 1938. These articles were subsequently in 1939 collected in one publication entitled *Il-Ġmiel ta' Ġisimna* which was the first of the series *Ġabra ta' Tagħlim* which was to include various aspects of knowledge and trades. *Il-Ġmiel ta' Ġisimna* is an anatomical and physiological description of the human body utilising 55 illustrations mostly copied from a standard anatomical book published in Italy [L. Calori: *Tavole Anatomiche rappresentanti la struttura del corpo umano*, Sassi. Bologna, 1850].<sup>55</sup>

A contemporary to Ġuże Bonnici was Juan Mamo (b.1886 d.1941). Born at Luqa, Mamo was well aware with the social inequalities of the rural population. This awareness promoted his wish to initiate a progressive change in Maltese mentality through cultural propagation. Because of his beliefs, Mamo became a staunch follower of Manwel Dimech and contributed regularly to *Il-Bandiera tal-Maltin*. He also initiated two newspapers - *Il-Ljun* (1922) and *Il-Fqir Malti* (1923) - to promote Dimech's teachings. The central theme of Mamo writings was that the Maltese population should realise its backwardness, and should embark on the road of knowledge. To enable the propagation of knowledge, Mamo established a publishing house *Dar Hruġ il-Kotba Meħtiġin*". His first publication in 1930 was the popular socio-political novel *Uljed in-Nanna Venut fl-Amerca*. The novel combines an educational intention with a secure literary ability, and is based on emigration as a social traditional necessity.<sup>56</sup>

Mamo's subsequent publication in 1934 was an informative semi-scientific booklet entitled *Giabra ta' Sigrieti: ta' Xebħ-is-sħarijiet, ta' Misteri, ta' Curzita, ta' Arti u Industria, u riċetti - formoli ta' l' Acbar Htieġa*. This book included a number of tricks and remedies for every day problems. The final sections of this book deal with popular medical [remedies no. 143-170] and veterinary [no. 173-181] medications.<sup>57</sup> Mamo's herbal knowledge can be gleaned from an episode in his novel *Uljed in-Nanna Venut fl' Amerca*, wherein he describes the purgative effects of the fruit of the Squirring Cucumber.<sup>58</sup>

In 1939 Mamo published an informative book on midwifery practice *Obstetricia Illustrata: Tgħarrif fuq it-Twelid bil-Qabla w it-Tabib*. This compendium of 64 plates contained more than 172 selected figures of modern and ancient engravers with notes in English and Maltese. The book is divided into two main sections showing illustrations from modern and ancient midwifery. Other sections include an explanation of medical terms and a translation from the Cow & Gate publication *Motherhood*. The reproductions were taken from a number of 16th to early twentieth century midwifery books. Seven illustrations are labelled as Lithograph Stephani - ex-librix Dr. Nicoloi Gulia. These have been identified as copied from an Italian midwifery book [F. Capuron: *Corso teorico-pratico di ostetricia*. Della Speranza, Firenze, 1838].<sup>59</sup> Contemporary to Mamo's obstetric book was a booklet issued by Nestle' & Anglo Swiss Milk Products Ltd in 1939 *Twissijiet lill-Ommijiet Żgħażaġħ* which dealt with child and infant care.<sup>60</sup> The Nestle Group started commercial activities in Cottonera around 1900 through ship chandlers and in 1905 a sales office of the newly created Nestle' & Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Co. was opened in Valletta. In 1913 a Nestle' subsidiary company was established in Valletta-Marina as Nestle' Milk Co. Ltd.

Further planned midwifery related publications by J. Mamo included: *Illustrated Curious Offspring* which was to be a book of plates showing 100 curiosities; and *Midwifery seen through Illustrations: Eghlim žmien It-Tqala. Is-Sinjali tat-Tqala* containing 30 selected fine plates and clear advice to the pregnant woman (64 pages). Other medically related planned publications included *It-Tabib tad-Dar, Kif Tfejjaq Tnax-il Marda, and Ktieb il-Fxejjex li Jfejqu*. These publications listed in *Obstetricia Illustrata* were never issued because of the unexpected demise of Juan Mamo in 1941. Mamo was found dead with broken ribs in the limits of Wied Babu, presumably following a fall of the cliffs while searching for medicinal plants.<sup>61</sup>

The Second World War brought about a tremendous upheaval in the social circumstances of the population with a general improvement in education. The improvements in socio-economic conditions and improvements in medical care resulted in a significant change in the disease spectrum of the population. The pioneering medical publications of the late 19th and early 20th century had brought forward a greater awareness for the need of educating the populace in basic health measures. In addition the increasing educational status of the population increased the potential readership thus creating a greater demand for vernacular medical education. This gave the impetus for the steady publication of popular medical literature in the Maltese language in the form of book, pamphlets, leaflets and journals published by individuals, associations and the Department of Health. The importance of making available simple vernacular educational material is still recognised today and this activity remains an important tool of the Department of Health Promotion.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> E. Magro, *Office of Public Instruction. Reports on the workings of Government Departments during the financial year 1911-12*. Government Printing Office, Malta, 1912, Section. N +25p.
- <sup>2</sup> J. Reynolds, *Education: Malta and Gibraltar illustrated*, (ed.) A. Macmillan, (London), 292-300.
- <sup>3</sup> W. Bruce, *Report on the Educational System of Malta*, Government Printing Press, Malta, 1921.
- <sup>4</sup> Bill to make provision for the management, diffusion and control of education in these Islands. *Malta Government Gazette 1924*, No. 6642:p.313; Act XXII of 1924. *Malta Government Gazette 6th September 1924*.
- <sup>5</sup> *Census '85. Vol. 1 - A demographic Profile of Malta and Gozo*, Central Office of Statistics, (Malta 1986), 77.
- <sup>6</sup> D. Marshall, *History of the Maltese language in local education*, (Malta 1971), 66.
- <sup>7</sup> F. Borg, *Is-Saħħa u d-Dar*. This included ten sections: I. *Id-Dar*, II. *Arja-Ventilituri*; III. *L' arja u 'n-nifs*; IV. *Taħsir ieħor ta l' arja*; V. *Ventilazioni*; VI. *Id-Dawl*; VII. *Ilma, Bjut u Diar*, VIII. *Cauha u Šhana*; IX. *Umdità*; X. *Iż-żina tad-diar*.
- <sup>8</sup> F. Borg: *Għajnuna fil-mard għal għarrieda - Fuk l'Epidemji*. Included 15 sections: I. *Contusioni*; II. *Liui, Kliħ u cosor*, III. *Feriti*; IV. *Il-Ħruk u*

's-samta; V. *Dhul ta xi Haġia*; VI. *Il Għaxua*; VII. *L' Apuplexia*; VIII. *Il Convulsioni*; IX. *Telf tan-nifs*; X. *Telf tad-demm*; XI. *Veleni*; XII. *Rabia tal Clieb*; XIII. *L' Edpidemja*; XIV. *It-Tifu*; XV. *Fl-Marsuttin*.

<sup>9</sup> F. Borg, *Kelmtejn fuq is-saħħa ta' l-ulied*. Included 13 sections: I. *Il-Hasil*; II. *Il-Lbies*; III. *Ir-Rdiġ*; IV. *Il Ftama*; V. *Il Fruj*; VI. *Ir-Rqad*; VII. *Ix-Xaħxiħa*; VIII. *Is-Snien*; IX. *It-Tilqin tal-Jidri*; X. *Il-Logħob u ix-Xogħol*; XI. *Is-Swat u il Biża'*; XII. *It-Tagħlim*; XIII. *It-Tfal fil-Mard*.

<sup>10</sup> P. Cassar, *Medical History of Malta*, (London 1965), 542.

<sup>11</sup> F Borg, *Għajnuna fil-mard għal-għarrieda*, (Malta 1880).

<sup>12</sup> F. Borg, *Kelmtejn fuq is-saħħa ta' l-ulied*, (Malta 1884).

<sup>13</sup> Anonymous, *Twissiet fuk il-Mard tal-Kollra meħruġin mill-Gvern biex jixxerdu fost in-nies*, (Malta 1885).

<sup>14</sup> Anonymous, *Fuq il-mard tat-tfal u kif nilqulu*, (Malta 1885).

<sup>15</sup> G. Caruana Scicluna, *Chielmtejn fuk il-Pesta u chif yekrida*, (Malta 1901).

<sup>16</sup> A. Critien, *Id-dubbien u n-nemus u cghif nilkghu ruħna mill-ħsarat tagħhom*, (Malta 1929).

<sup>17</sup> Anonymous, *Il-Ġrieden*, (Malta 1936).

<sup>18</sup> A. Fava, *Il-Ħalib tal-Mogħħa - Industrija Maltija*, (Malta 1931). Included 8 sections: *Ix-Xeuka tagħna*; *Id-Deni 'rkiek*; *L'importanza tal-Problema*; *Il-Ħalib*; *Immunizzazioni tal-Mogħħa jeu tal-Bniedem*; *Tgħollija tal-Ħalib - Sterilizzazioni*; *Pasterizzazioni tal-Ħalib*; *Distribuzioni tal-Ħalib Pasterizzat*.

<sup>19</sup> S.L. Pisani, *Ktieb il Qabla*, (Malta 1883). Included 16 sections: I. *Fuq il-Ġisem u t-Tnissil*; II. *Fuq il-Baida*; IIIA *Il-Pelvi*; III. *X'ijjib il-Ħbiela*; IV. *Fuq it-Tarbia*; V. *Igiene tal-Ħbiela*; VI. *Fuq il-Ħlas*; VII. *Presentazzioni tal-Wiċċ*; VIII. *Presentazzioni tat-tarf tal-Warrani*; IX. *Igiene tal-Ħlas*; X. *Wara il-Ħlas*; XI. *Igiene ta wara il-Ħlas*; XII. *X'għanda tagħmel il-qabla meta iseyyħulha għal-mara b'ujigh tal-ħlas*; XIII *Ħlas teumi*; XIV. *Rimi*; XV *Moli*; XVI. *Qasma tas-Sultan*.

<sup>20</sup> G.B. Schembri, *Tagħlim għall-istudenti ta' l-Iskola tal-Kwiebel ta' l-Isptar Ċentrali*, (Malta, 1897). Subdivided into five subsections: I. *Il-Ġisem tal-Bniedem*; II. *Ħbiela bis-sinjali tagħha*; III. *Ħlas*; IV. *Emorraġija*; V. *Is-Sinjali tat-tarbija mejta ġewwa l-utru - Pariri li tista' tati l-kabla u xi tagħlim li din jaħtieġ tcun taf fis-sengħa tagħha*.

<sup>21</sup> J.S. Galizia, *Il-Ctieb ta' l-Infermier*, (Malta 1904). Had a total of 15 chapters: i: *Il-ġisem*; I. *L-Infermier*, II. *Il-Camra tal-Marid*; III. *Ventilazzioni*; IV. *L-indafa tal-marid*; V. *L-ichel tal-marid*; VI. *Banji*; VII. *X-għandu josserva l-infermier fil-marid*; VIII. *Faxxaturi*; IX. *Sodod u*

*cmamar speciali*; X. *Antisepsi*; XI. *Operazzionijet*; XII. *Massage*; XIII. *Emergenzi*, jew *mard għal għarrieda*; XIV. *Dieta tal-morda*.

<sup>22</sup> J.C. Camilleri, 'Galea, Alfons M.' in *Maltese Biographies of the Twentieth Century*, (eds). M. J. Schiavone, L. J. Scerri, (Malta 1997), 285-286.

<sup>23</sup> A. Aquilina, 'History of Maltese Publishing: Cotba tal-Mogħdija taż-Żmien', in *Heritage: An encyclopedia of Maltese culture and civilization*, (1993), 68, 1353-1356.

<sup>24</sup> A. Preca, 'Nibżgħu għal Saħħitna: Tagħlim għat-Tfal', in *Mogħdija taż-Żmien*, No.22, (Malta 1902), 45-56.

<sup>25</sup> E.L. Vella, 'Tagħlim għall-Ommijiet fuk it-Trobbija ta' Uliedhom', in *Mogħdija taż-Żmien*, No.54, (Malta 1906), 1-30.

<sup>26</sup> F. Borg, 'Għajnuna fil-mard għal-għarrieda - Fuk l'Epidemji', in *Mogħdija taż-Żmien*, No. 54, (Malta 1906), 33-82.

<sup>27</sup> F. Borg, 'Is-Saħħa u d-Dar', in *Mogħdija taż-Żmien*, No.61, (Malta 1907).

<sup>28</sup> F. Borg, 'Is-Saħħa ta' l-ulied', in *Mogħdija taż-Żmien*, No.110, (Malta 1911), 1-36.

<sup>29</sup> L. Manche, 'Mard l-Għajnejn fit-Trabi', in *Mogħdija taż-Żmien*, No. 110, (Malta 1911), 37-40.

<sup>30</sup> G. Busuttill, 'Fuk il Mard ta' n-nies ta' s-snajja', in *Mogħdija taż-Żmien*, No.110, (Malta 1911), 41-80. Included: I. *Iż-Zebbiegħa*; II. *Il-Bajjada*; III. *Il-Ħajjata*; IV. *Lis-Scarpan*; V. *Il-Cunjaturi*; VI. *Il-Mastrudaxxi*; VII. *Il-Ħassiela u tal-Mogħdija*; VIII. *Il-Furnari u l-Għaġġiena*; IX. *Il-Ħaddedin*; X. *Ta' t-Tabacc*; XI. *Is-Sulfarini u il Giġifogu*; XII. *In-Nissiegħa*; XIII. *Tal-Mtierah*; XIV. *Is-Sahra*.

<sup>31</sup> C. Savoņa-Ventura, 'Reproductive performance on the Maltese islands during the Second World War', in *Medical History*, (1990), 151-177.

<sup>32</sup> L. Manche, 'It-Trobbija tat-Tfal jew Tuissijiet għall-ommijiet', (trans.) Dr. E. L. Vella, in *Pro Infantia*, (Malta 1907). Contained: I. *Chelmtein għal min jakra*; II. *Żuieg u reguli li għandom icunu osservati*; III. *It-tkala*; IV. *Il-Ħlas*; V. *Uara il-Ħlas*; VI. *Irdieħ naturali jew ta' l-omm ta' l-imreddgħa*; VII. *Irdieħ artifiċjali jew mill-flixcun mill-animat*; VIII. *Ichel imħallat*; IX. *Ftama*; X. *Ilbies tat-tarbija u tat-tfal*; XI. *Aria, Daul u Ilma*; XII. *Irkad u Eserċizju*; XIII. *Educazioni tal Moħ u tal Kalb*; XIV. *Chelmtein fuk il cura fid-dar*.

<sup>33</sup> C. M. Gaffiero, 'Ninetyeth Anniversary of St John Ambulance Brigade'. *The Sunday Times of Malta*, 19 September 1999, 38-39.

- <sup>34</sup> J. Cautlei, 'L' ewwel għajnuna lil min ikorri', in *St. John's Ambulance Brigade*, (Malta, 4 editions, 1916/1934/1938/1943).
- <sup>35</sup> G. Galea, *L-ewwel għajnuna lil min ikorri fi żmien ta' Gwerra*, (Malta 1983).
- <sup>36</sup> M. J. Schiavone, 'Levanzin, Agostino', in *Maltese Biographies of the twentieth century*, (eds.) M. J. Schiavone, and L. J. Scerri, (Malta, 1997), 366-367.
- <sup>37</sup> *In-Naħla*, (17.07.1909) 46, 361-362; (02.04.1910) 83, 657-658; (07.05.1910) 88, 697-699; (09.07.1910) 97, 771-773; (01.10.1910) 109, 868-869; (21.01.1911) 125, 996-997.
- <sup>38</sup> *In-Naħla*, (08.07.1911) 147, 1169-1170; (11.11.1911) 165, 1313-1315; (02.12.1912) 168, 1337-1338.
- <sup>39</sup> *In-Naħla*, (15.05.1911) 148, 1178-1179.
- <sup>40</sup> *In-Naħla*, (05.03.1910) 79, 625.
- <sup>41</sup> *In-Naħla*, (11.03.1911) 12, 1049-1050.
- <sup>42</sup> 'Għomja Famusi', in *In-Naħla*, (17.07.1909 - 04.03.1911) nos.46-131; 'Għal Għomja', in *In-Naħla*, (08.01.1909) 71, 561-562.
- <sup>43</sup> 'Chif tgħix mitt sena', in *In-Naħla*, (23.10.1909) 60, 477-478; 'Ix-Xjuħija', in *In-Naħla*, (05.08.1911) 151, 1201-1202.
- <sup>44</sup> 'Il Cura ta' s-Sawm', in *In-Naħla*, (18.03.1911-17.02.1912) nos.133-179.
- <sup>45</sup> *In-Naħla* (12.11.1910) 115, 915; (13.05.1911) 139, 1107; (26.08.1911) 154, 1228-1229.
- <sup>46</sup> A. Levanzin, *Il-Cura ta' s-Sawm*, (Malta 1911) [as reported in *In-Naħla*]
- <sup>47</sup> M. J. Schiavone, 'Levanzin, Agostino', 366-367.
- <sup>48</sup> *In-Naħla*, n.d. (1928), nos. 180-192.
- <sup>49</sup> J.E. Debono, *What every diabetic should know*, (Malta 1927); *In-Naħla*, n.d. (1928) 188, 1-3; 190, 1-2; 191, 4; 192, 2-3.
- <sup>50</sup> *Malta Tagħna*, issues 27.6.1896 - 14.11.1901.
- <sup>51</sup> A. Galea, *Ġuże Bonnici b.1907 d.1940, Heritage: An encyclopedia of Maltese culture and civilization*. 1980, 33 [Portrait Gallery].
- <sup>52</sup> G. Bonnici, *Il-Qawwa tal-Imħabba*, (Malta 1938), preface.
- <sup>53</sup> *Report on the Health Conditions of the Maltese Islands and on the work of the Medical and Health Department including the Emergency Medical Services for the year 1947*, (Malta 1949).
- <sup>54</sup> G. Bonnici, *It-Trobbija tat-Tfal*, (Malta 1932). Divided into three main sections dealing with maternal, infant and child care -- I. *Il Cura ta l'Omm*; II. *It-Tarbija*; III. *Tfulija - A. L'Euuel Żmien*, B. *It-Tieni Żmien*.

- <sup>55</sup> G. Bonnici, *Il-Ġmiel ta' Ġisimna*, (Malta 1939). Divided into 23 chapters, each with various subsections: 1. *Ġisem il-Bniedem*, 2. *Il-Bini wit-Taqsam tal-Ġisem*, 3. *Il-Moħħ wis-Sistema Nervuż*, 4. *Il-Għajnejn wil-Wiri*, 5. *Il-Widnejn wis-Smiġħ*, 6. *L-Imnieħer wix-Xamm*, 7. *L-Ilsien wit-Toġħma*, 8. *Il-Ġilda wil-Mess*, 9. *Il-Ġilda*, 10. *Id-Demm*, 11. *Il-Qalb*, 12. *Il-Katusi tad-Demm*, 13. *Iċ-Ċirkolazzjoni tad-Demm*, 14. *Il-Limfa wil-Katusi Limfatiċi*, 15. *Il-Moġħdija tan-Nifs*, 16. *In-Nifs*, 17. *It-Triq ta' l-Ikel*, 18. *Is-Sajran ta' l-Ikel*, 19. *Il-Fwied wil-Frixa*, 20. *Il-Moġħdija ta' l-Awrina*, 21. *Il-Glandli Endokrini*, 22. *Il-Metabolismu*, 23. *Il-Flajja*.
- <sup>56</sup> O. Friggieri, *Ġwann Mamo: Il-Kittieb tar-Riforma Soċjali*, (Malta, 1984).
- <sup>57</sup> Ġ. Mamo, *Ġiabra ta Sigrieti: ta' Xebħ-is-sħarijiet, ta Misteri, ta Curzità, ta Arti u Industria, u riċetti-formoli ta l' Acbar Ftieġa*, (Malta, 1934).
- <sup>58</sup> Ġ. Mamo, *Ulied in-Nanna Vennut fl-Amerika*, (Malta 1993), 29.
- <sup>59</sup> Ġ. Mamo, *Obstetricia Illustrata: Tgħarrif fuq it-Twelid bil-qabla w it-tabib*, (Malta 1939). Illustrations of Modern Midwifery - *Xbiehat tat-tqala w it-twelid tal-lum u l-bieraħ*; Illustrations of Antique Midwifery - *Xbiehat tat-tqala w it-twelid tal-qedem*; Explanation of Medical Words - *Tfissir il-Kliem Tekniku li miegħu tiltaqa' f'dan il-Ktieb Werrej*; and Don'ts copied from "Motherhood", published by Cow & Gate for the Benefit of our people - *Tagħmelxijiet meħudin mill-ktieb Motherhood tal-Cow & Gate għall-ġid saħħet il-poplu*.
- <sup>60</sup> G. G. R., *Twissijiet lill-Ommijiet Żgħażaġħ*, (Malta 1939), +46p.
- <sup>61</sup> G. Mamo, *Obstetricia Illustrata*; O. Friggieri, *Ġwann Mamo*.



Pierre Dimech

## La Fin de l'Émigration Maltaise en Algérie: Circonstances et Causes<sup>‡</sup>

L'histoire de l'émigration maltaise en Algérie est maintenant sortie de l'oubli. On sait que les Maltais furent parmi les premiers à s'installer à Alger dans les semaines qui suivirent la prise de cette ville par la France, le 5 juillet 1830. Pour l'anecdote, le premier hôtel qui ouvrit alors, s'appela "hôtel de Malte". On sait aussi que les maltais d'Algérie comptèrent jusqu'à plus de 15 000 ressortissants, constituant la plus importante communauté maltaise au monde après Malte.<sup>1</sup> On sait enfin que cette émigration ne fut pratiquement plus alimentée par de nouvelles arrivées, à la charnière des XIXème et XXème siècle, et ce, au moment où venait d'entrer en vigueur la loi de 1889, attribuant automatiquement la citoyenneté française aux enfants d'étrangers, à laquelle les Maltais adhèrent en masse, alors que la voie du refus leur était ouverte. Il convient de rechercher dans quelles circonstances, et pour quelles raisons, ce tarissement du flux migratoire vers l'Algérie est intervenu.

Il apparaît rapidement que la fin du XIXème et le tout début du XXème siècle ont été marqués, en Algérie, par une crise antijuive, suivie d'une crise anticléricale visant l'Eglise catholique, alors même que, sur le plan économique, l'Algérie, après avoir subi une période récession, connaissait un brillant essor.

### La crise antijuive

Pour comprendre la portée de ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler "la crise anti-juive", il faudrait revenir à l'époque de la Conquête de l'Algérie, puis suivre l'évolution des différentes composantes des communautés dites "indigènes", parmi lesquelles figurent les israélites locaux, mais cela nous entraînerait hors du cadre de notre étude.

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\* Pierre Dimech, a lawyer and author of Maltese descent who, with thousands of others like him, was born and raised in Algeria - but had to leave it forcibly in the early 1960s - has been editor of the journal *l'algerianiste*, and, together with a group of *pieds-noir*, he has participated in the University of Malta's migration studies course at the Gozo Centre in Xewkja.

‡ An English synopsis of Piereer Dimech's article, together with the Editor's comments on it, are found on page 112.

On se bornera donc à rappeler qu'en 1870, un Décret, universellement connu sous le nom de "Décret Crémieux", du nom de son inspirateur, accorda en bloc la citoyenneté française aux 34 000 indigènes de religion juive que comptait alors l'Algérie, mesure qui souleva sur place l'opposition des musulmans comme celle des européens.

Une période de troubles s'en suivit, notamment dans les villes, favorisée par une forte récession économique frappant notamment le secteur agricole. Cette agitation connut son paroxysme en 1898. Elle mit en vedette un étudiant d'Alger, Maximilien Milano, dit Max Régis, né à Sétif, dans la région de Constantine, fils d'émigrés italiens, ayant bénéficié de la loi de naturalisation de 1889. Max Régis prit la tête du mouvement, tint la rue, fit de la prison, et finalement fut triomphalement élu Maire d'Alger. Sa popularité fut aussi fameuse qu'éphémère, mais il reste encore aujourd'hui une figure marquante de l'Algérie de l'époque. Il eut le concours enthousiaste de la population d'origine méditerranéenne, dans cette atmosphère surchauffée.

Xavier Yacono, note que "une fraction notable de "néo-français" d'origine surtout espagnole ou italienne, très catholiques, n'ayant pas accepté le décret Crémieux... avaient tendance, plus que les autres, à rendre les israélites responsables des difficultés économiques".<sup>2</sup>

Claude Martin, lui, se risque à affirmer que "l'application de la loi de naturalisation automatique des fils d'étrangers nés en Algérie avait fait entrer dans la population française une masse de néo-français plus sensibles aux vieilles malédictions qui depuis saint Vincent Ferrier et les Rois catholiques pesaient sur les juifs qu'aux doctrines égalitaires de la démocratie française", tout en expliquant cette réaction par une impulsivité naturelle, instinctive et étrangère aux idéologies.<sup>3</sup>

A ce stade, on remarquera l'absence de toute mention des maltais dans ce panorama. Il n'en reste pas moins que l'élément maltais doit être purement et simplement intégré dans le descriptif des réactions de ces "néo-français". Les Maltais pourraient même occuper la première place à ce titre ! Si le moindre doute subsistait sur la question, il conviendrait de se référer à la littérature française d'Algérie, notamment à "l'Homme de Mer" de Paul Achard.<sup>4</sup> Les héros du livre sont l'illustration même de ces agitateurs algérois qui portèrent Max Régis à la tête de la Mairie d'Alger...

## **Les Maltais d'Algérie face à la Crise Religieuse du début du Vingtième Siècle**

Les Maltais constituèrent, dès le courant du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle, incontestablement la communauté la plus catholique d'Algérie. Il est d'autre part établi que les maltais se trouvèrent confrontés à un climat globalement hostile à la religion, et plus encore à ses rites extérieurs, allant de l'indifférence narquoise aux diatribes virulentes, émanant de certains milieux français. L'attitude dominante fut toutefois l'indifférence. Les maltais, comme à l'habitude, "firent le gros dos", protégés en quelque sorte par leur statut d'étrangers, et leur cohésion communautaire. Ils eurent le secours de leurs prêtres présents en Algérie, même s'il ne fut pas, aux dires d'un évêque de Constantine interrogé par Marc Donato, fait appel systématique au Clergé maltais. Ils soutinrent l'Eglise locale, et lui apportèrent rapidement l'appui significatif de leurs vocations, dont la trace visible est encore manifeste de nos jours, à travers les patronymes des prêtres originaires d'Algérie. Ils connurent leur heure de gloire, récompense de leur fidélité sans faille, au service du Cardinal Lavigerie. On connaît l'épisode célèbre du voyage triomphal, tel un "triomphe" consulaire de la Rome Antique, que le Prélat fit à Malte en juillet 1882. L'évènement eut bien entendu un immense retentissement en Algérie, comme en Tunisie. Lavigerie était entouré, parmi d'autres, par deux prélats d'origine maltaise, Mgr Buhagiar, évêque auxiliaire de Carthage en 1885, et Mgr Brincat, qui le fut également en 1889.

Il n'est pas douteux que des relations et échanges furent assurés de façon régulière par l'intermédiaire du clergé, organisé et instruit, ainsi que, de façon plus épisodique, par les particuliers, trop pris dans leur quotidien. Tout-à-fait naturellement, le clergé d'origine maltaise, et ceux des Maltais qui avaient gardé des relations avec leurs familles insulaires, jouèrent un rôle non négligeable dans le maintien des liens avec Malte, tout en observant ce qui se passait sur place.

Ce point est capital. Si, particulièrement à travers leur clergé, les Maltais d'Algérie furent à même d'exercer cette double fonction vers Malte comme aussi vers la Tunisie voisine, a fortiori, furent-ils au coeur des soubressauts de la politique locale en Algérie, surtout pour tout ce qui concerne les questions liées à la religion.

Un exemple caractéristique de cette conjonction entre le clergé d'Afrique Française du Nord et Malte peut être trouvé en la personne de Mgr Buhagiar, qu'on a vu plus haut accompagner à Malte le cardinal Lavigerie en 1882, avant d'être nommé administrateur diocésain de

Malte en 1885. Le professeur H.Frendo nous dit qu'il fut, sur place, suspecté d'être francophile, voire même de favoriser l'agitation politique à Malte.<sup>5</sup> L'antagonisme franco-britannique est bien sûr là, omniprésent, y compris au sein même de la hiérarchie ecclésiastique maltaise de l'époque., en pleine interférence avec les luttes internes entre les nationalistes de Fortunato Mizzi et les partisans de l'extension de l'influence anglaise.<sup>6</sup>

### **Les Mesures Anticlericales**

Les ressortissants étrangers de l'Algérie, et autres "néo-français" avaient été au premier plan lors des troubles antijuifs. Ils le furent tout autant dans les combats que le Cardinal Lavigerie fut amené à soutenir à la tête de l'Eglise locale. Celle-ci eut à faire face à des séries de mesures, notamment d'ordre budgétaire, restreignant les possibilités d'action des écoles religieuses, en premier lieu celles, très actives, tenues par les frères de la Doctrine Chrétienne, qui jouissaient d'une immense réputation jusqu'au Moyen-Orient, en particulier auprès des Maltais essaimés autour du bassin méditerranéen. Mêmes restrictions pour la formation des séminaristes, souvent issus de familles pauvres d'origine espagnole, italienne et maltaise. Ce furent aussi des mesures visant cette fois les religieux.

Mgr A.Pons, dans son ouvrage sur "La nouvelle Eglise d'Afrique" passe en revue les douloureuses péripéties de ces années de turbulences pour l'Eglise d'Afrique. " Les Frères de la Doctrine Chrétienne que nous avons vu débarquant en Tunisie en 1855, à l'appel de Mgr Sutter, gratifiés de terrains et d'immeubles par les beys, soutenus officiellement par nos consuls, chargés par le consul anglais de l'éducation des Maltais, furent poursuivis par la Ligue de l'Enseignement avec une haine sans merci "Il évoque aussi, entre autres, "les Soeurs de Saint-Joseph": " Les parents italiens et maltais n'ont encore compris ni admis que la France leur enlevât les maîtresses qui leur avaient appris sa langue et son culte..."<sup>7</sup>

Ces événements se déroulèrent en Tunisie dans une période comprise entre 1900 et 1914. Mais en Algérie, ce fut dès 1880 que la situation empira de façon notable. Si jusqu'à sa mort, Mgr Lavigerie fit face, entrava ou retarda certaines mesures, et assura, par sa stature, la protection de l'Eglise et de ses fidèles, après 1892, avec la dégradation de la paix publique dans les villes, notamment dans Alger, la capitale, plus rien ne s'opposa à la confrontation décisive.

L'année 1998, au paroxysme de la crise antijuive, fut également celle de secousses violentes visant le Clergé. En tout état de cause, le début du XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle allait être particulièrement éprouvant pour l'Eglise en Algérie, au point qu'elle parut vaciller sur ses bases. On a pu parler de "persécutions".<sup>8</sup>

Les lois de proscription religieuse qui venaient d'être votées par le Gouvernement, l'approche de la Séparation des Eglises et de l'Etat, les dernières violences de l'antisémitisme avaient donné un regain à l'anticléricalisme. Au cours de l'année 1903, il fut procédé à l'expulsion de religieux notamment les Trappistes de Staouéli, à la laïcisation d'hôpitaux, aux fermetures précipitées d'écoles libres. Des "conférences contre Dieu" furent même données dans les principales salles de spectacles d'Alger !

La Presse ne fut pas en reste. Dans "Les Nouvelles" du 11 juin 1908, on trouvait cette prévision : " C'est dans le gouffre sans fond de l'indifférence générale que sombrent peu à peu les derniers vestiges de la superstition romaine. Dans quelques années on n'en parlera plus qu'à titre historique."

Mais ce journal de grande diffusion était lui même dépassé par un certain nombre de feuilles "satiriques" ou extrémistes : "L'Education Sociale", "La Raison", "L'Action", "Le Libertaire", "La Révolte", "Le Socialiste de l'Afrique du Nord"....Et le plus virulent de tous : " La Pensée Libre ".

D'Alger, cette frénésie s'était répandue à travers tout le pays, notamment le département de Constantine qui, à l'époque, englobait toute la partie Est de l'Algérie, depuis la Grande Kabylie jusqu'à la frontière tunisienne. C'est dans cette région que se trouvaient le plus grand nombre de Maltais. Ainsi, à Bône, rappelons-le, "capitale des Maltais d'Afrique du Nord", le journal "Le Réveil Bônois" avait mené en 1908 une campagne très dure contre le Vatican, accusé de "vouloir livrer l'Eglise d'Afrique aux étrangers".<sup>9</sup>

L'allusion au clergé maltais et d'origine maltaise paraît ici particulièrement transparente. Elle est lourde de signification ! Toujours en 1903, réunies en congrès à Tizi-Ouzou, les Loges d'Afrique du Nord avaient voté le voeu que soit fait "Défense aux parents de donner aux enfants l'enseignement religieux sous peine de déchéance paternelle et de puissance légale".

Une "recommandation" de cet ordre nous amène à fixer notre attention sur ce qu'on appelle aujourd'hui, en les banalisant, des

"problèmes de Société", et qui gouvernent en réalité la vie de la cellule de base : la Famille. Comment ne pas en deviner l'impact sur les familles maltaises?

Or, on pourra relever que dans la période qui nous occupe, deux textes ont été votés au Parlement français, applicables bien entendu à l'Algérie : ce fut ainsi une Loi du 27 juillet 1884, libéralisant le divorce, complétée rapidement en 1886, puis en 1893. Ce fut ensuite une Loi du 15 novembre 1887, sur la "liberté des funérailles", en clair, autorisant les obsèques civiles, et prévoyant des sanctions pénales pour qui tenterait de ne pas suivre la volonté du défunt en ce sens. Ces textes, plus que tout discours, établissent la volonté de détruire le fondement chrétien, et plus précisément catholique, de la société française. Comment ce "message" allait-il être reçu par les Maltais d'Algérie, et, à travers eux, par les Maltais de Malte?

### **La Situation Economique de l'Algérie au debut Du Xxème Siecle**

Les premières années du XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle furent celles d'une prospérité retrouvée, et plus encore, celles d'un dynamisme généralisé, particulièrement spectaculaire au niveau des travaux publics, tels que l'observateur objectif ne peut que faire la comparaison avec le développement des Etats-Unis de l'époque, toutes proportions gardées, évidemment.....

L'Algérie française, dotée depuis peu de structures administratives et financières lui faisant bénéficier d'une certaine autonomie, entreprit avec hardiesse un programme de construction et de modernisation sans précédent dans son histoire, et ce, alors même que se rétablissait sa santé sur ce qui était sa vocation de base millénaire: l'agriculture.

Claude Martin note: "Les difficultés de la crise vinicole avaient été surmontées. Le blé gagnait les hautes plaines méridionales. Les agrumes se cultivaient sur le littoral ou dans les plaines irriguées de l'intérieur. Les plantations d'olivier et de tabac s'étendaient. Le coton, qu'on avait délaissé après la reprise de l'exportation du coton américain qui avait suivi la guerre de Sécession, redevenait une source de richesse pour l'Algérie. Les produits forestiers comme le liège, l'alfa des hauts plateaux, le bétail et les peaux s'exportaient vers la métropole. Enfin, les produits miniers, comme le fer de Mokta el-Hadid et de Béni-Saf et le phosphate de Tebessa augmentaient considérablement la valeur des ventes à la métropole et à l'étranger...."<sup>10</sup>

De son côté, Xavier Yacono énumère les grands travaux lancés

à cette époque, tels le renforcement des mesures destinées à assurer la salubrité publique hôpitaux, infirmeries, tant dans les campagnes que dans les villes, la transformation et l'extension des voies ferrées, l'aménagement et l'agrandissement des principaux ports....<sup>11</sup>

Toutefois, il convient de remarquer que l'organisation qui assurait la marche de l'ensemble faisait prévaloir les intérêts du grand capitalisme métropolitain. Claude Martin confirme l'analyse de Xavier Yacono : "Cette colonisation était conçue pour accentuer la francisation. Depuis la crise antijuive on s'inquiétait à Paris du haut pourcentage d'étrangers dans la population européenne et d'éléments naturalisés parmi les citoyens français d'Algérie".<sup>12</sup>

### **Malte et les Maltais face à l'Évolution de la Situation en Algérie**

En 1904, René Pinon, manifestement enthousiaste, écrit : "La France, dans ses domaines africains, est, après la Grande-Bretagne, la puissance qui compte le plus grand nombre de sujets maltais; ils constituent un des éléments importants de la population de l'Afrique du Nord et entrèrent, pour une part notable, dans la formation de cette race nouvelle qui s'élabore dans nos possessions barbaresques".<sup>13</sup>

Or, comme nous l'avons vu de façon indubitable, c'est précisément au moment où l'émigration maltaise se tarissait que l'Algérie connaissait un essor sans précédent, Comment ce nouvel Eldorado n'avait-il pas pu attirer de nouveaux arrivants de l'Archipel?

Alors, il nous faut bien revenir au revers de la médaille, à cette situation troublée sur le plan religieux, prenant des aspects de véritable "chasse aux sorcières....catholiques" !. prises de position véritablement extrémistes de ceux qui proclamaient "la guerre contre Dieu" Edouard Cat, ou "éteindre les lumières dans le Ciel" René Viviani, hommes politiques algériens fort connus. Pas plus contestables furent les expulsions de religieux, les fermetures d'écoles, les interdictions de manifester publiquement sa Foi, comme notamment les Processions....Pas plus, enfin, que les enquêtes à propos de la pratique religieuse éventuelle de ceux qui souhaitaient faire une carrière dans un Service public, et qui aboutissaient à éconduire tout pratiquant catholique. Enfin, et par-dessus tout, les rafales de textes législatifs et réglementaires d'inspiration anti-catholique qui parlèrent d'eux-mêmes, sont bien là, dans les Codes. Est-il besoin de s'interroger sur l'effet que ces mesures, ce climat, produisit sur l'élément maltais?

A cet égard, il nous paraît primordial de nous référer à ce qui se passe à Malte à la même époque, en nous limitant bien entendu au contexte religieux des débats politiques.

Ce qui retient le plus l'attention de l'observateur, ce fut l'affaire des Mariages Mixtes.<sup>14</sup> Nous nous garderons de toute appréciation portant sur l'histoire de Malte même, mais, cette exaltation, cette implication de ce qui était alors la structure sociale de la société maltaise, s'articulant au demeurant sur celle constituée par la famille : la Paroisse, et tout ce qu'elle anime, nous laisse entrevoir comment devaient être perçues les nouvelles venant d'Algérie, par les familles des émigrés, ou mieux, directement par les paroisses et institutions religieuses...

Une question se pose alors : comment se fait-il que l'on ait pas, à ce jour, connaissance d'une quelconque réaction des Maltais? Pour ceux d'Algérie, il est aisé de répondre : ce serait mal connaître les Maltais, qui déjà chez eux, dans leur île, furent longtemps dans la soumission à l'Autorité, même étrangère, que de les imaginer brandir l'étendard de la Révolte. Qui plus est, leur situation d'étrangers, immigrés ou fils d'immigrés, voire déjà pour certains, petit-fils d'immigrés !, les incitait à la prudence. Enfin, à partir de la mise en application des textes sur la naturalisation, les Maltais firent partie de ces "néo-français" qui, désormais devaient parachever leur évolution en se faisant admettre dans la société française d'Algérie. Ils venaient de franchir une limite qui leur interdisait tout retour en arrière. Ils firent, durant la tourmente, ce qu'ils avaient toujours fait : ils laissèrent passer l'orage. Ils continuèrent leur pratique religieuse dans les limites permises, en attendant des jours meilleurs. Ils continuèrent à donner des prêtres à l'Eglise d'Algérie...

En revanche, la fin du siècle n'avait pas pu ne pas être vécue douloureusement depuis Malte, et suivie au jour le jour. A la lumière de ce que nous savons de la vie publique maltaise, comment ne pas voir que, pour ceux qui, à Malte, avaient une influence immense sur les décisions qui pouvaient s'élaborer chez les candidats à l'émigration, recommander le départ pour l'Algérie à cette époque, représentait un risque majeur, à tous égards? A tous égards, parce que, dans un premier temps, c'était envoyer des fidèles peu ou pas armés pour la controverse, en pays étranger, au risque d'y être persécutés pour leur Foi, et en tous cas, d'être privés des possibilités normalement offertes à l'exercice de leur culte? Et, dans un second temps, plus dangereux encore, se profilait le risque de voir ces éléments, partis catholiques pratiquants de leur Terre ancestrale, aller se corrompre en



Algérie, sous l'empire de ces français dont au demeurant on n'avait jamais oublié l'action néfaste qui avait été la leur après le passage du Général Bonaparte? Cette hypothèse, qu'on baptiserait aujourd'hui de "scénario-catastrophe", dut prendre d'autant plus de consistance qu'elle pouvait s'appuyer, depuis la loi de 1889, sur la législation en vigueur en Algérie décidant de la naturalisation collective des émigrants, sauf cas d'espèces.... Et, une fois devenus citoyens français, les Maltais d'Algérie coupaient le cordon ombilical qu'ils auraient gardé avec Malte s'ils étaient restés des étrangers en Algérie.

Ajoutons enfin, que dans le climat de compétition latent à Malte entre influences britanniques et italiennes, dans un jeu à finalité politique mais à base culturelle, dont, depuis son installation en Algérie ayant ouvert les vannes d'une importante émigration maltaise vers ce territoire sous sa souveraineté, la France avait tiré les avantages incontestables, les "conseils" et autres suggestions orientées par les uns et par les autres, ne durent pas manquer, répercutés au clergé maltais, pour noircir le tableau et décourager les Maltais de l'aventure algérienne, devenue une aventure française. La raison en était trop évidente, et l'occasion trop belle !

## **Conclusion**

Ainsi, semble-t-il, peut s'expliquer, au moins dans une notable part, le très rapide, et apparemment surprenant, tarissement de l'émigration maltaise vers l'Algérie, au moment même où cette émigration avait atteint son apogée, et où elle venait d'aboutir au couronnement des efforts des Maltais. Voilà que ces Maltais, descendants de Maltais, ayant "creusé leur trou" par leur génie propre, par la somme de leurs efforts, avec leurs qualités comme avec leurs défauts, qui accédaient en quelques décennies - au statut de citoyens de la République Française, se trouvaient soudain comme piégés par une résurgence inattendue de l'Ennemi de la Religion, religion qu'ils portaient en eux comme une partie de leur être même.

Cette découverte, vécue par eux, mais transmise à ceux qui étaient restés au Pays, aux conséquences suggérées par diverses sources d'information, avait de quoi stopper net toute velléité d'aller sur cette terre d'Afrique, dont on constatait que l'ancestrale intolérance islamique esclavage, ou, au mieux, dhimmitude pour les "infidèles" n'avait été jugulée que pour laisser place à l'intolérance athée de ceux-là mêmes qui auraient être des défenseurs de la Foi. Ce raisonnement

est plausible. Il dut être tenu par l'Eglise maltaise, qui ne pouvait pas se désintéresser des émigrés en Algérie.

Lui fut agrégé un sentiment d'altérité, favorisé à la fois par la puissance assimilatrice de la France et par l'écart grandissant, séparant d'anciens compatriotes devenus citoyens étrangers et partie intégrante d'une autre culture, véhiculée par une autre langue, creusant pour longtemps, très longtemps, un abîme entre l'univers français et celui de Malte.

Et c'est un cataclysme historique qu'il a fallu, sous forme du bouleversement intervenu en Algérie en 1962, doublé de l'ouverture progressive de Malte sur l'Extérieur, pour qu'une passerelle, encore fragile mais qui a désormais le mérite d'exister, puisse être jetée sur cet abîme.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **English Synopsis with Editorial Comments**

In this penetrating and provocative article for *Storja*, Dr Dimech asks why Maltese emigration to Algeria declined so much, and rather abruptly, in the late 19th and early 20th century. He suggests that one main reason for that certainly was the increasingly, unabashedly laicist and anticlerical mentality of many French settlers, and indeed of France in Algeria, by the turn of the century. Born in Algiers in 1935 of Algerian-born parents who were themselves of Maltese descent, the author had occasion to learn about earlier goings-on, to see for himself and to emphasize with the lot of other Maltese, Spaniards and Italians, who were practicing Catholics attached to their religious beliefs and fond of their open-air rituals, but whose open-hearted practice of the faith clashed with the cynical, even contemptuous attitudes of so-called *evolués* among the secular-minded and agnostic if not militantly atheistic French ruling class.

After Jews were naturalized as French citizens by a controversial and discriminatory 1870 law, there followed another law in 1889, whereby all children of foreign residents could become French nationals, one to which most Maltese conformed (partly no doubt with an eye on the would-be job prospects of their offspring). But soon after this radically assimilationist turn, especially from 1892 onwards, there was unleashed a corpus of legislation which took no account of Catholic tradition or preference whatsoever, leading to a veritable hindrance and harassment of religious practice, of Catholic schooling, family values, and of the clergy's very presence. A long-time opponent of such tendencies had been Cardinal Lavigerie, two of whose closest collaborators were themselves Maltese, Mgr Buhagiar and Mgr Brincat.

Ironically, Maltese settlement in Algeria declined just as the country recovered from a crisis in agricultural production, so that the cultivation of wheat, vegetables, olives, tobacco and cotton flourished once again. The questions raised by this article, therefore, should instigate further research to unearth how the Maltese-driven opposition to and fear of laicisation in Algeria was conducted and canvassed, not least by the clergy in Malta (as the mixed marriages question raged), given that, to quote Dimech: the Maltese carried religion within them as part of their very being ("qu'ils portaient en eux comme une partie de leur être même").

Another question, just mentioned here en passant, would be how far Tunisia may have become more attractive to Maltese settlers after 1882, given that this was a more recent French acquisition, where naturalization and secularization only came to be enforced in the first quarter of the 20th century. And a further question would be how far a decline in Maltese emigration to North Africa was not caused, at least to some extent, by the opening up of other avenues within the British empire, of which Malta by now had been a member for a century, or elsewhere in the English-speaking world, or indeed elsewhere on the continent, including France. Even so, the religious factor as a deterrent in going to - or staying in Algeria - at the turn of the century poses a truly riveting question; and it is one which so far our scholarship has not much addressed.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Marc Donato, *L'émigration des Maltais en Algérie au XIXème siècle* 1985, 215.
- <sup>2</sup> Xavier Yacondo, *Histoire de l'Algérie* 1993, 249-250.
- <sup>3</sup> Claude Martin, *Histoire de l'Algérie Française*, 1963, 232-233.
- <sup>4</sup> Paul Achard, *L'homme de mer* 1931.
- <sup>5</sup> Henri Frenco, *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony*, 1979, 243.
- <sup>6</sup> Henri Frenco, *Party Politics*, 47.
- <sup>7</sup> Mgr A.Pons, *La nouvelle Eglise d'Afrique*, 1930 271-272.
- <sup>8</sup> Pierre Goinard, *Algérie, oeuvre française* 1984, 304.
- <sup>9</sup> Paul Rimbault, *Mgr Bollon* 1942, 36-48.
- <sup>10</sup> Claude Martin, *Histoire de l'Algérie Française*, 253.
- <sup>11</sup> Xavier Yacondo *Histoire de l'Algérie*, 254-257.
- <sup>12</sup> Claude Martin *Histoire de l'Algérie Française*, 253.
- <sup>13</sup> René Pinon, *L'empire de la Méditerranée*, 1904, 436, 437.
- <sup>14</sup> Henri Frenco, *Party Politics*, 76-83.

## Abstracts of History Related Theses

**Emanuel Buttigieg, *Fifteen Years Into Hospitaller Rule: A Study of the Acts of Notary Juliano Muscat, 1545*, B.A. Hons. History, 2002.**

The aim of this dissertation was to provide a snapshot into aspects of daily life in mid-sixteenth-century Malta. The themes discussed transpire from the notarial deeds of Notary Juliano Muscat for the year 1545, and also from a substantial number of later entries during 1546.

The first chapter outlines and discusses the merits and limits of notarial acts for historical research, while providing a short biographical sketch of the notary himself. The second chapter aims at providing a working framework within which to place the lives and actions of the people who appear in the acts of Notary Juliano Muscat. It is a broad chapter covering the relationship between Hospitallers and Maltese and analysing perceptions about space, time and death as they emerge in the acts under review. The third chapter discusses a number of economic ventures including the vital trade in cereals, the exportation of cumin and corsairing activities. It also delineates aspects of material life as revealed in these notarial documents. The fourth chapter discusses social relationships first by highlighting the impact of public officials on private life and secondly by looking at the dichotomous relationship which Employers and Masters had with their Employees and Slaves, respectively. It also takes the character of Joannes Matheo Camilleri as a case-study of pre-Tridentine practices in Malta. The final chapter is concerned with gender issues. It focuses on four major cycles which most sixteenth-century women would have expected to go through in their lives, namely marriage, childbirth, widowhood and life as a single, and remarriage, while also exploring the role of men as carers of their families.

As this dissertation shows the people of mid-sixteenth century Malta were not a homogeneous mass, but individuals whose experience of life was influenced by many factors: their gender, wealth, age, marital

and social status and the type of community in which they lived. The essentially private nature of notarial acts helps to highlight all of these aspects in a very intimate way. The 1540s and the whole era from 1530 to 1565 are generally marked by a strong sense of continuity. Malta's links with Sicily were as strong as ever.

In line with current social research, this dissertation is a work in micro-history rather than macro-history, allowing the concrete experience of faces in the crowd to re-enter social history. It is a study which has focused in upon a specific society, in particular specific segments of that society such as women, in a specific place (Malta) and at a specific time (1545), taking account of both changes and continuities in its developing character. Ultimately the guiding motive underlining this work has been the belief that in understanding the lives of some people, it is hoped that one will eventually arrive at a more reliable understanding of the mid-sixteenth-century Maltese and Gozitans, their experiences, and their reactions to those experiences.

**Catherine Tabone, *Tales from the Grave: Funerary Ritual and Attitudes towards Death in Eighteenth-Century Malta*, B.A. Hons. History, 2003.**

Employing a multileveled analysis to discern various attitudes towards death present in the different social classes of eighteenth-century Malta, this dissertation builds on various documents available at the National Library of Malta and the Notarial Archives, both in Valletta, together with the Cathedral Archives in Mdina. Dealing with a variety of themes from the diverse perspectives of different institutions and classes in society, death in eighteenth-century Malta was not perceived as just the ultimate horizon of life but a passage to eternity on various levels. Indeed, death created a breach; it was an occasion for mourning, it imbued life with a one, strong, unwavering, though somewhat hazy and uncanny, certainty, but it also strengthened and embedded social hierarchy, allowing stability and continuity.

Through ritual and its inherent symbolism, the powerful classes moulded death into a show of power and social standing which most of the time also served as entertainment. Indeed, the whole ritual was one of the most complex anthropological expressions of the age. Funerals of the powerful classes, such as the Order and the Higher Clergy, were of great social complexity because they expressed aspiration, not merely commemoration; they looked forward as well as backward. The splendour which accompanied members of the Order and the Higher Clergy to their graves did not sink with them beneath the earth; it remained on the surface as a tribute to the greatness of an individual and institution. Complex funerary ritual was retained up to the very last of the Order's rule perhaps because such old, traditional and somewhat chivalric rites were also an appeal to the imagination; to order and rationalise the traumatic and dislocated political context of the time by an act of relocation in the past; in bygone, romanticised, heroic ages.

This show of authority initiated by church ritual and continued through public manifestations in the form of funerary processions, was kept unwavering in time through the correct use and application of art and its symbolism in funerary monuments and ledger stones. Tombs contributed to the splendour of what was established and gave authority to change. They bound the new to the old, suggesting the vigour of the ruling class. Indeed, eighteenth-century Hospitaller

funerary monuments and memorials in Malta served as a more tangible rendering of the messages mortuary rituals aimed to convey.

Where the lower classes were concerned, death took a somewhat different shade, for it further brought to the fore social inequality. Ritual here lacked the pompous manifestations and performances were deficient in impressive theatricality. The poor died for themselves only, society was not disturbed and their memory was lost after the death of their closest friends and next of kin. Consequently, awe in which the dead were held transformed itself from one related to authority and continuity to one of intercession and aid, whether by prayer or by magic.

Finally, it can be claimed that eighteenth-century Maltese society as a whole, integrated death into its mental universe and institutional practices. It maintained a living memory of its deceased, which having disappeared from the world of the living, detached from the fabric of social relations into which they were bound when still present, continued to exist on another level, namely as spirits whose existence was transferred to another dimension and who were commemorated in various ways, both abstractly through prayers, and tangibly, through graves and monuments.

**Ramona-Marie Cini, *The Peasant, The Lady and The Noble: A Study of the Acts of Notary Brandano de Caxaro 1538-1539*, B.A. Hons. History, 2003.**

This dissertation aims at providing an observation at ground level of the society of Mdina during the early years of the Hospitaller's stay on Malta. This study is based on Notary Brandano de Caxaro's Volume 4 compiled between 1538 and 1539. The situation in Malta in the 1530s was like that of most Mediterranean islands, a self-contained world with an archaic economy depending heavily on agriculture. However, with the settlement of the Order of St. John, progress was enhanced and economic growth transformed Malta from this isolated, sparsely settled rural society with a population of around 20,000 inhabitants, into one marked by densely populated urban centres. Since the Order settled in Birgu, the harbour area became a cosmopolitan centre. This created a drastic contrast with Mdina, which remained very insular.

Although the Order of St. John had been residing on the island for nine years (the time during which the Volume was compiled), the social and economic life of Mdina and the casali surrounding it remained much as it was prior to the Order's settling. Notary Brandano de Caxaro lived in Mdina and the transactions analysed in Volume 4 deal mainly with agrarian-connected business such as selling, buying and leasing of land, cotton, grain, wine, and animals.

On the other hand Mdina was not 'a sleepy town'. Its nobility, although deriving their major source of income from the gabelle from their fiefs or other properties, did engage themselves in other economic activities. Even if the privileged position of the Notables of Mdina was altered by the Order of St. John's acquisition of Malta, they retained an important role in the social and economic life of Maltese society. In short, since much of the lands belonged to the wealthy Mdina landowners, they used to rent these enclosures to the peasants to cultivate them. Malta's economy in the 1530s depended much on the production of cotton and cumin, as it was more profitable for the peasants to cultivate such agricultural products than to cultivate grain. Besides the fact that grain profits were poor, the islands did not produce enough grain to feed the whole population, thus Malta had the privilege to import tax-free grain from nearby Sicily.

Women also constituted an important part of society and in economic ventures they often played an equal part with men. A woman



had to take the place of her husband in his activities when he was absent and she also carried on with her husband's activities after his death. Of course, their daily domestic role within the household remained crucial.

Thus through the analysis of such documents, one can attempt to understand the daily life and routines of the privileged and the common, those men and women whose everyday activities were too often ignored or simply taken for granted but through which, a more deeper understanding of life in the 1530s can be achieved.

**Keith Buhagiar, *Medieval and Early Modern Cave-Settlements and Water Galleries in North-West Malta South of the Great Fault – A Field Survey and Gazetteer*, M.A. Archaeology, 2003.**

This dissertation presented to the department of Classics and Archaeology in the University of Malta for the degree of Master of Arts in Archaeology is the result of personal research undertaken between the years 1999 and 2002. The study attempts to identify cave-settlements utilised for human and animal habitation and water resources and management techniques adopted in the late Middle Ages in north-western Malta, south of the Great Fault. The parameters for the survey were dictated by the land surface area included in the Malta West 1:25,000 survey sheet. The undocumented nature of most of the identified cave-settlements and water systems made it necessary for the survey to be presented in a gazetteer format.

The thesis is divided into five sections. A sound geological knowledge of the island of Malta and a good understanding of the geography of settlement and location proved indispensable in the carrying out of the field survey. This is discussed in Chapter 1 and provides the necessary background and information against which the data gathered in the survey are placed in succeeding chapters. Chapter 2 presents the historical evidence to show that from the ninth century A.D. onwards, socio-historical conditions in Malta resulted in an influx of population moving out into the countryside where caves would have served as dwellings. Chapter 3 discusses the troglodytic phenomenon in Malta. It was realised at an early stage of the field-research that most cliff-face settlements tend to be restricted to areas containing exposed Upper Coralline rock deposits of the Mtarfa Member type, and that the perched aquifer which was often present close by, was frequently tapped by man-made rock-cut galleries. The usage and dating of water galleries is discussed in detail in Chapter 4, whilst the gazetteer section provides a detailed description and scale drawings of all the caves included in the survey.

**Neville John Cardona, *The Saracenic Cemetery on the site of the Roman Domus, Rabat (Malta): An Analysis of the Archaeological Evidence*, B.A. Hons. Archaeology, 2002.**

The Saracenic period in Malta is very obscure. This is mainly due to the lack of archaeological discoveries, as no prominent buildings, no mosques or any other structures have been discovered so far. The only noteworthy archaeological evidence for the long Saracenic period in the Maltese islands is the Saracenic cemetery, which was established on the remains of the Roman domus, Rabat (Malta). Even though this cemetery is considered to be of significant importance by many scholars, no proper study of this mortuary data has as yet been carried out. The information that can be deduced from the study of cemeteries/burials is immense because it is one of the best-preserved deposits that archaeologists encounter.

The author attempts to build a coherent picture from the archaeological and mortuary evidence discovered and recorded by A. A. Caruana and Themistocles Zammit on the site of the Roman Domus, Rabat (Malta). He then proceeds with an analysis and interpretation of this.

A chapter on Muslim belief systems in death and the afterlife and another one on the Muslim funerary rites as outlined in the Qur'an and the Hadith are also considered. These two written sources are important because they help us interpret the symbolism and to understand its content, meaning and its relevance to evidence that had been poorly understood.

Also addressed is the possible reasons why such an excavation was never fully published by Themistocles Zammit. This cannot be attributed to just one single reason but to a various number of factors namely, time-constraints and the political scenario of the time. Furthermore, this dissertation explores how much data collection and recording techniques used not only influence the writing of a good archaeological cemetery report but also affects the interpretation of the data.

Finally, in order, to understand the data better, and to get a holistic view, the author makes a comparative study of the Rabat cemetery with other medieval (Islamic) burial sites. Since there is no secure evidence of any other Islamic burial sites dating to the Saracenic period on the Maltese Islands, a look at contemporary sites in nearby Sicily is considered. Of interest in both cases is the use of coffins, the absence of grave goods and personal possessions with the deceased.

Extensively illustrated with a number of unpublished plans, sections, sketches and old photographs taken during the excavation of the site.

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## Book Reviews

**Kenneth Gambin & Noel Buttigieg, *Storja tal-Kultura ta' l-Ikel f'Malta*, (Pin, Valletta, 2003, pp.x + 326)**

This book may be hailed as the first general attempt to look at the impact of food on Maltese society through the ages. It starts by trying to explain the ethnographic value of the study of food and then goes on to analyse the chronological development of the history of food in the Maltese islands from prehistoric times to the present.

By and large the authors tell the story of an island society and its struggle for survival. They provide ample evidence on the heavy dependence of Malta on agricultural produce and show how a few changes in temperature and a shortage of rainfall were enough to endanger human existence. Gambin and Buttigieg tell the story of an island which depended heavily on the importation of grain from abroad, particularly Sicily, so much so that from the late Middle Ages to the end of the eighteenth century the grain trade became the *raison d'être* of the Università of Malta and Gozo.

In short they tell the story of what the Italian historian Piero Camporesi calls 'a land of hunger' – a state of affairs, which was not very different from most lands of the Mediterranean where the majority of people lived on a subsistence diet mainly, including only a small amount of protein and complex carbohydrates. Like most European and Mediterranean societies of the time, Malta was marked by a culture in which all dreamt of eating meat, essentially because diet primarily consisted of vegetable foods. Meat meant nourishment, taste, and status. It emerges from the book that meat was a staple mainly of the affluent, especially mutton, pork and chicken. The poor had to be content with eggs and offal, and perhaps in times of plenty sausages, salami and game (particularly, rabbits, hares and partridges) besides, of course, maslin bread, vegetables, lentils, and fish.

The book suggests that current differences in Maltese food are largely the result of environmental and historical factors, mostly due to the presence of the British, the Second World and its aftermath when recent variations in food availability, as well as changes in economic, sanitary and hygiene conditions left their mark on Maltese society.

Finally the book looks at the impact of Mediterranean dietary ethnocentrism, the globalisation of food production and consumption; and the on-going rediscovery and re-evaluation of myths associated with traditional food products. In this concluding section the authors invite their readers to reflect upon the role played by food in the creation of food images. They also discuss our modern need to experiment with food largely to serve our economic interests particularly directed towards the tourist industry. Indeed the rediscovery of traditional products has become an important element of the ethnocentric paradigm of most Mediterranean societies, not least in Malta. The authors could perhaps have narrowed down the impact of modernism on the Mediterranean, rather than discuss the issue in general terms. A similar discussion is vital for a proper understanding of the need to preserve the originality of traditional products rather than to allow indiscriminate changes simply to please the tourist industry. By creating new 'traditional' products of a mythical origin Mediterranean communities, like Malta, will simply be making a great disservice not only to high quality tourism but worse still to their own reputation. In short what is being suggested is that rather than inventing or reinventing a bogus cuisine, Mediterranean societies should perhaps research their own specific culinary histories within their own cultural framework, and re-evaluate what they find.

A very original topic touched by Gambin and Buttigieg is associated with the sacred and the symbolic meaning of food. They show how the cultural and religious manifestations often played a decisive role in the orientation of dietary behaviour of Malta. It follows that as a Christian society, the hierarchy of food and manners had its religious as well as its secular side. Religion surrounded food with rules, rituals, and prohibitions and the Inquisition archives have been singled out as the best source of information in this sense. The authors show how food itself was consumed partly on the order of the Church in question so that the people ate lean or fat depending on the dictates of the Church. The Inquisition cases on the breaking of fasting rules imposed by the Catholic church like for example the prohibition of meat, eggs, poultry, and dairy products, led to a great demand for fresh, smoked and salted

fish. Thanks to the painstaking archival research by Gambin and Buttigieg, we learn of the many Maltese people who fashioned their own lifestyles irrespective of the narrow clerical orthodoxies of the time.

One of the most positive aspects of the book is use made by the authors of a wide range of sources, ranging from travel descriptions and literary texts to archival records besides a large number of modern historical and anthropological studies on Mediterranean food. Unfortunately the authors hardly ever distinguish between writings by culinary historians without any formal training in historical research, and the writings of traditional professional historians whose interest in food is mostly based on agriculture rather than on the actual preparation of food at a given time. But Gambin and Buttigieg have learned a lot from the writings of the emerging multi-disciplinary historians although they often fail to detach themselves completely from traditional historical analysis based as it is on pure historical and documentary research. But it would be churlish to end on a negative note. This is a highly informative book. Kenneth Gambin and Noel Buttigieg are to be congratulated on their clear and convincing account of this historical evolution of food.

**Carmel Cassar**



**Carmel Cassar, *Society, Culture and Identity in Early Modern Malta* (Mireva Publications, Valletta, 2000, xlix + pp.36, Lm8.95c)**

This is an ambitious work attempting to offer as holistic an interpretation as possible of early modern Malta. Based on Dr Cassar's doctoral thesis at Cambridge University in the UK, it mixes and matches the author's dual formation in history and anthropology. His main training is empirical rather than theoretical, based on researching the facts and deducing meaning deriving therefrom, but his anthropological interests show mainly in the choice and to some extent the treatment of various themes. Such aspects as kinship patterns, literacy, ethnicity or symbols normally might not have attracted such focussed attention from a conventional historian. Chronology certainly is not a priority in this book, which need not be a bad thing at all. On the contrary, it facilitates the exploration of themes wherever possible cutting across pigeon-holed time frames.

Sicilian-Maltese trade connections (as with the port of Licata, for example) are particularly interesting, embracing produce from grain to wine; but we also get references to such data as passenger lists and baptisms, useful sources in themselves. There are also the occupations: surgeon barbers, tailors, glove-makers, comedians - all in all refreshing topics singled out from the archives. Cassar also looks at aspects of language, culture and ethnicity and is naturally at his most original and authoritative in dealing with the early modern period, including the Hospitallers (no diplomatic history, commanderies and suchlike here). There are also some sociological *cum* anthropological approaches to Maltese religion, even the Pauline tradition, which an English anthropologist, Jon Mitchell, recently got into for a study of Valletta, largely based on oral sources.

When Cassar ventures into the 19th century and beyond, he can risk being less original, even less precise. One mistake I would point out, if only for correction and proper crediting in any subsequent edition, is that on page 271, where he quotes from an 1811 appeal to the British rulers by the Maltese nobility, giving as his source the *Dichiarazione dei diritti* of 1802 (ftn. 27).

All told, Carmel Cassar's *Society, Culture and Identity in Early Modern Malta* is a very welcome and a very useful work, informative, instructive and in many respects innovative in its approach and in its outlook, certainly by Maltese historiographical standards to date. That is what one ought to expect from a scholar who has given us short but singular studies ranging from a 'revolutionary' rabbit meal to a 'high-class' bewitched prostitute. Cassar was also a help and an inspiration to Kenneth Gambin and Noel Buttigieg in their recently-published history of food, a topic which figured as the University History Society's Andrew Vella Annual Memorial Lecture at the Istituto Italiano di Cultura in 2004.

**Henry Frendo**

Charles Dalli, *Iż-Żmien Nofsani Malti* (Pin, Valletta, 2002, pp. xii + 244)

The only attempt at a readable organic description of Medieval times in Malta was produced by Andrew Vella in his *Storja ta' Malta* (pages 55-181 of volume I), published by KKM in 1974. This work was immediately followed and superseded by Luttrell's seminal collection of articles on Medieval Malta (1975), which focussed on various aspects with a deeply scientific approach. After almost thirty years the time was ripe for a reconsideration, in the light of the abundant research that was carried out since then. Charles Dalli's bibliography proves that he has taken into account all the recent contributions. His text shows that he has taken careful consideration of both the classical and the recent materials as well as of the large amount of primary sources available in local and foreign archives. Unfortunately the latter only go back as far as the 13th century but Charles is poking his fingers into the dusty manuscripts of the archives in Sicily and Catalunya, and we wish him all the necessary luck to unearth new facts.

The Mediaeval period spans over a thousand years and while the period is conveniently brought to a close by the arrival of the Knights, who rapidly revolutionized Maltese society, the starting point is less easy to define. Dalli starts off with the effects of the Roman Empire, generally, and zooms gradually on to the Mediterranean and then focuses on Malta, faithful to his approach which never loses sight of the general context. This is obviously the right approach in every field of research, and constitutes the only hope of beating the traditional, unscholarly, isolationist view. In this light, on page 19 I would have liked at least a short reference to any existing texts which delve into what happened in Syracuse after Paul stopped there, and later. An interesting perception on Malta's long-term historical perspective is

Dalli's view of a Greco-Roman millennium divided into two parts by the Germanic intrusion of one century (although one should keep in mind that the Germanic peoples did not introduce their language and culture, but actually adapted themselves to the language and religion of their subjects, through Latinization and Christianization). The Muslim period is certainly one of the most intriguing in the islands' history and Dalli delves into its darker aspects perceptively, especially by discussing the meaning of al-Himyari's "hirba 'ayr ah!". However I don't share his conclusion that the slaves of the 1053-54 community were not Christian. If Christian pockets survived both in Sicily and in North Africa one should not rule out the same thing happening in Malta (see Varvaro 1981 and Metcalfe 2003). Cases of Christians fighting alongside Muslims against Byzantine or Norman invaders are not unknown either, especially if they were well treated by the former.

Chapters 3 to 12 are very informative and fully substantiated by references to documents, although Dalli is well aware of certain black spots. I see this as the first step towards their solution.

**Joseph M. Brincat**

Joseph M. Brincat, *Il-Malti: Elf Sena ta' Storja* (Pin, Valletta, 2000, pp. xii + 236 pages)

The comprehensive history of the evolution of the Maltese language based on a painstaking research of all the surviving documentary attestations has yet to be composed; yet this book by Joseph M. Brincat is a major contribution towards achieving that goal.

Brincat's *Il-Malti: Elf Sena ta' Storja* discusses the origin and development of Maltese particularly in relation to Sicilian and Italian, and the manner by which the semitic dialect gradually evolved its own distinct characteristics under the growing influence of Romance language and culture. In his Introduction (1-11), the author establishes the scientific criteria underlining the history of languages and the science of linguistics; the relationship between languages and history is discussed, while a 'stratigraphy' of the Maltese language is proposed (Table 2, 11).

Chapter 1, entitled 'Before Maltese' (15-24) covers the whole period from prehistory to AD 870. Adopting a strictly literal interpretation of al-Himyarī's text, which he first introduced in a Maltese context in 1990, the author traces back the establishment of Arabic in Malta to 1048, the year indicated by al-Himyarī as the foundation date of a colony of Muslim settlers which repopulated the island; Chapter 2 (27-38), which covers the period 1048-1054, raises the issue of the relationship between Maltese and the Arabic of medieval Sicily. Chapter 3 (41-52) discusses the earliest contacts with Romance, in the form of Sicilian dialect/s, over the period 1091-1530. Chapter 4 (55-74) discusses the evolution 'from Sicilian (Romance) to Maltese'. Chapter 5 (77-95) discusses further the Sicilian component of Maltese, identifying unresolved problems and proposing solutions, including the manner in which elements from

Sicilian dialect/s infiltrated into Maltese, the complex dialectal map of Sicily in relation to Maltese, and a comparison of the latter to the dialect of Lampedusa. The language of Peter Caxaro's *Cantilena* is also discussed (90-3). Chapter 6 (97-121) discusses the transition 'from Sicilian to Italian' and its relevance to the history of Maltese. The switch to Tuscan Italian was particularly felt during the centuries of Hospitaller government with the emergence of the new conurbation around the Grand Harbour. Chapter 7 (123-35) outlines early recorded interests and hypotheses on the origins and character of the Maltese language, culminating in M.A.Vassalli's scholarly works. Chapter 8 (139-67) studies the impact of the British period; the emergence of a Maltese literature was connected to the elaboration of a standard Maltese variety, while the language was inevitably drawn into the political arena through the 'Language Question'. Chapter 9 (169-218) studies the development of Maltese in the twentieth century, including code-switching and the rise of 'Maltese-English'. The volume contains a detailed bibliography (219-26) as well as glossary of technical terms (227-30) and index. This excellent contribution, covering eminently the non-semitic dimensions of Maltese, makes a parallel work on the semitic foundations, structures and elements of Maltese all the more a major desideratum for Maltese studies.

**Charles Dalli**

