

# *'Lectum coniugalem':* What the bed said about a marriage in the sixteenth century (c.1560 -1580)

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## **Introduction**

"People made things – both materially and immaterially – and things, in turn, 'made' people".<sup>1</sup>

Erin K. Lichtenstein's statement describing the interaction between people and their objects is a significant and to the point assessment of the importance of goods in the individual and popular psyche. The choices one makes in acquiring a particular object and not another are a tool through which one can better analyse the individual, and to a larger extent the society in which that individual lives. This is the premise behind this study, namely looking at objects to understand people and in this instance understanding the dynamics within a marriage.

While delving into notarial contracts of marriage it started to dawn on the present author that there was a lot of information about daily life in the lists of dowry goods which are sometimes apparent in contracts. Through these lists the modern student of history could look at which cookware was used in the early modern kitchen, what an early modern Maltese would have deemed proper seating, which jewels were deemed appropriate for a bride, how clothing signified status and much more. Of all the descriptions without a doubt the most detailed, and by connection the greatest treasure trove for any modern historian, are the descriptions of early modern beds. The notarial contracts in themselves provide a lot of information on early modern marriage and so provide ample space for studying marriage from a number of different viewpoints.

## The Sources

The notarial contracts are held within the notarial archives in Valletta which holds over twenty thousand registers, the earliest of which dates from 1467.<sup>2</sup> The volumes at the notarial archives provide information on different aspects of society. Usually a notary's clients hailed from different social classes as well as different areas of the islands. For the study at hand, the data refers to the period between 1560 and 1580 and looks at the acts of notaries Bartholomeus Axisa,<sup>3</sup> Antonius Cassar,<sup>4</sup> Tommaso Gauci<sup>5</sup> and Julianus Muscat.<sup>6</sup>

Whilst notary Bartholomeus Axisa's clients hailed from around Siggiewi, Julianus Muscat's patrons were mostly based in the city of Mdina. On the other hand, notary Antonius Cassar's archives include parties both from Mdina as well as from other parts of Malta. Arguably, this ensued from this notary's practice of visiting a particular village and drawing up contracts for different individuals in the same place. This can be gleaned from the notes which the notary himself added to contracts, mentioning the place in which the contract was being drawn up. Tommaso Gauci was an inhabitant of Gozo and his contracts can be said to represent the approach taken to contracts in this smaller island of the Maltese archipelago.

Notarial documents allow a glimpse into the life of individuals in sixteenth century Malta. The average Maltese was involved in contracts ranging from the formation of a partnership over the ownership of a donkey,<sup>7</sup> to the sale of large tracts of land. In fact, there seems to have been in the Maltese islands what one could call 'a notarial culture' - for any eventuality there was a contract which could make transactions both easier and less risky for all those involved. It comes as no surprise then that for marriage, one of the most radical changes in any person's life, the early modern Maltese men and women found a solution in drawing up a pre-nuptial contract. This, thus, is one of the reasons why marriage contracts are so widely available for the period under study and in turn the situation provides the student of history with ample material through which to learn about the subject.

Even if it was quite a prevalent custom for those who were getting married to stipulate terms in front of the notary prior to the actual ceremony in church, a number of historians have argued that this can only be true to an extent. Carmel Cassar claims that the custom of stipulating a marriage and a dowry in front of the notary was most prevalent among dwellers of urban areas while peasants tended to have arrangements 'colla parola', or through a verbal agreement, in front of witnesses.<sup>8</sup> Although, this might still have been the case in some instances, the number of marriage contracts for peasant brides and grooms shows that at the very least this trend was changing. Most probably those living in the second half of the sixteenth century felt that drawing up a contract in front of a notary was such a necessary part of marriage as it was a measure with which the parties involved could, to some extent, assuage the risks involved in any marriage. If, for example, the bride's family provided her with a dowry, to which she had a right independently of her husband, then that meant that if her husband died, abandoned her or if the marriage was dissolved, then she could claim back the dowry which could guarantee her a measure of independence.

The importance of notarial contracts is also evident in many places around Europe as can be verified by the number of marriage contracts and historical studies based on the study of these contracts.<sup>9</sup> Linked with marriage contracts is usually the dowry itself, and one reason why the family of the bride seems to appear more in the marriage contracts is that for the bride the notarial contract was probably even more important than for the groom as a measure of protecting her assets. A bride's family usually used the notarial contract as a means of securing their daughter's future wellbeing as well as at times a form of inheritance. Most women did not inherit property and other assets after their parents' death but would instead receive their inheritance in the dowry contract.

The very nature of a woman's legal rights in this period helps to explain this situation. As Thomas Kuehn, in his study of Florentine society, notes:

Florentine laws paralleled those of many other cities in restricting female inheritance, in the presence of direct male heirs, to dowry. Beyond this, Florence notably retained a form of protective guardianship of women, under the Lombard term *mundualdus*, for just about all civil acts, or by an attorney (*procuratore*) for civil litigation.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, not only was the marriage contract involving the dowry essential for protecting the assets for the bride, but it was also a form of protection of the bride's siblings. In this way the dowry was used as a form of inheritance and so the bride would only have a right to that part of the patrimony which was stipulated within the dowry. Parents could in this way guarantee an inheritance which was as unfragmented as possible for their male offspring. However, the dowry itself could in turn take many forms. Though the bulk of land property was usually reserved for the males of a family, there are instances in the Maltese marriage contracts of brides receiving tracts of land as dowry. This is the case for the marriage between Marietta de Biscon and Leonardus Refalo on 4 August 1573. Here the bride's parents Salvus and Imperia de Biscon conceded as part of the dowry several tracts of land.<sup>11</sup> In fact, usually the dowry consisted of a part in which the family gave the new bride either land or a house, and then another section in which the bride's family provided her with the necessary material goods to set up her new household.

Consider the case of Dominica Magro, daughter of the late Salvus and his wife Catherina Magro. For the marriage on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 1558, to Paulo Cusmano from Żurrieq, the bride's mother who in the absence of her husband was present with a *mundualdus*, Leonardus Magro, gave her daughter quite a varied dowry.<sup>12</sup> This included a tract of land surrounded by a wall and called *tal-Migbid l-Għajn* which the family of the bride held in lease form for the sum of ten *grani*. Also part of the dowry was a bed, a mattress, a blanket, a commode made with inlaid wood and two *palmas* of silk. The goods included in this contract seem to have been part of a more prevalent custom in which the family of the bride provided her with furniture, bedding and textile goods with which she would furnish her marital bedroom. The options

and thus decisions involved in creating the marital bed were varied and reflected the meaning given to both the bed and marriage by early modern Maltese society.

## **The Bed**

The marriage contract usually included a section detailing the items included in the dowry and which might also include the trousseau if the family was able to afford the expense. The trousseau was made up of the clothes, linen, and other belongings which the bride would accumulate prior to marriage and which she would take to the household she would set up. The lists of dowry and trousseau goods which appear in marriage contracts provide ample information on not only how early modern people thought about marriage and their houses, but also gives a pretty clear idea of the very way in which early modern houses were set up and how, in essence, they looked. They also point historians in another direction as goods and their availability, or lack of, are pointers to trade patterns and the change of these through time. Ulinka Rublack points out that:

humans create a sense of being not only in relation to other people, work, nature, space, or religion, but through creative exchange with the material world. Objects impart their qualities (say colour, or texture) to us and we relate to them emotionally and think that they represent our tastes, values, wishes, and spirituality, our connection with others and to our past.<sup>13</sup>

What Rublack is referring to here is the ability of goods not only to tell the modern reader of history a lot about past events, but also the ability of these same goods to shape events in the past.

One item which appears particularly frequently in marriage contracts was the bed. The matrimonial bed was an important asset for any new family, so much so that in various parts of Europe it was customary for the priest to bless the bed after the marriage ceremony in church. This

is mentioned in Henrietta Leyser's *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England 450-1500* who writes that the blessing of the bed was the final step in the long ritual that was usually part of marriage.<sup>14</sup> Jean-Baptiste Molin and Protais Mutembe also point out that in France there was the custom of blessing the marital bed.<sup>15</sup> Though there is no mention of this practice occurring locally, the importance of the bed for the new union can be perceived through the fact that many families deemed it necessary to stipulate which items would form part of a new bride's bed.

It appears that in most marriage contracts between 1560 and 1580 the bed was usually provided fully furnished, that is with a mattress or mattresses, pillows, sheets and other bed accessories. This situation seems to have been prevalent elsewhere in the Mediterranean as can be glimpsed through the description provided for some Italian regions by Raffaella Sarti:

When we assess the value of these beds that brides brought to their marriages, it should be remembered that they were generally equipped with all the accessories and ready for use. In some Italian regions, they were referred to as *letti compiti* (complete beds), which meant complete with mattresses, sheets, pillows and blankets.<sup>16</sup>

Another historian who also finds a similar situation is Nathalie Zemon Davis, who while studying the Garonne and Ariège region, claims that all brides brought with them to their marriage; 'a bed with feather pillows, sheets of linen and wool, a bedcover, a coffer with lock and key, and two or three dresses of different hues'.<sup>17</sup> This situation, including the fact that the bed was usually a part of the bride's contribution to the marriage, was replicated in the local marriage contracts as can be exemplified by the instance of marriage between Michele Camilleri and Angela Farruge on 11 February 1561. The parents of the bride not only provided their daughter with a house, presumably the one in which she would live after her marriage was celebrated in church, but they also provided her with quite an extensive list of goods which would form

part of her trousseau. Table 1 (below) gives an idea of which goods formed part of the average bride's trousseau.

A new skirt (to be provided prior to marriage)
A woman's cape
Two beds complete with their sheets
One bed spread
Two curtains
Two wall hangings
A bed hanging made in the Maltese manner
Fabric for sheets and pillow covers
Two pillows
Two pillow covers

Table 1: Goods provided for the dowry of Angela Farruge in the marriage contract of 11 February 1561.<sup>18</sup>

Much importance was given to the furniture and furnishings of the bed chamber. For various societies around Europe, and there is reason to believe this situation was the case for Malta as well, the bed was not only the place for reproduction, birth and death but on a more day to day basis this was probably the place where most of the family would sleep. It is fairly rare to find members of a particular family having their own bed and most families with young children would all sleep in the same bed, a state of affairs which could continue up till the children had grown up enough to form their own families. Sarti discusses the large beds in Tuscan households to point to the fact that most families slept in the one bed within rural Tuscany.<sup>19</sup> When parents gifted their daughters with a bed as part of their trousseau in the period under study within the Maltese islands, most would receive one bed, though there is a good number who like Angela Farruge mentioned above received two beds. Though it seems that for the poorest families the newlyweds and any future offspring would be expected to sleep in the same bed as with Sarti's findings for Florence, a number of Maltese marriages would see a division in sleeping arrangements.

The beds of Maltese brides between 1560 to 1580 seem to have some common characteristics, probably because they were following an older custom. This was so much the case that in certain notarial contracts the notary would point out that the bed, or certain features of it, was made according to Maltese custom. One example where the notary does this is the marriage of Catarina Saura to Andreas Hellul on 23 December 1560.<sup>20</sup> Curiosity as to the physical makeup of the bed can be assuaged through Stanley Fiorini's description of this item:

Beds were made of wood surmounted by a lattice of reeds tied with strings. The contraption was surmounted by a mattress made according to local specifications, as implied by references like *lecta duo de rauba fulcita de uno materacio Juxta usum malte*.<sup>21</sup>

The fact that contracts for this period mention that a bed and bedding were made according to Maltese custom might also be caused by the fact that beds, as with houses, may have been considered part of a woman's domain and in this way the daughter might be inheriting the bed which her mother had originally brought with her as part of her own dowry. However, if the mother of the bride was still alive at her daughter's marriage she might have still needed her bed and did not choose to give it away. These were certainly not considerations for those brides whose mothers had died or were in some way missing from their lives. This was why Costanza Masuni's uncle, for her marriage to Leone Bonavia on 12 October 1577, provided her with a dowry that included half of her late parent's furniture and furnishings including any goods brought by Dionora, her deceased mother, to her marriage.<sup>22</sup>

Whilst some contracts merely mention that a fully furnished bed was to form part of a bride's trousseau other contracts provide detailed descriptions of the trousseau which included in depth descriptions of the bed, the mattress and other bedding. Margerita Torchetto, daughter of Antonio Torchetto and the late Demetria Calamia, married Marius Chutaye on 5 February 1565. Here the bride's trousseau consisted of two mattresses filled with wool, a used *pavagliuni* with its *coppi* of white cloth,<sup>23</sup> two pillows with their covers, two pairs of sheets (one of



three *fardes* and the other of two), a new white *farsara*,<sup>24</sup> and another used red *farsara*, two boxes, six *serviette*, a tablecloth, *pluc di stagno*,<sup>25</sup> a *stamecto* cloth skirt (this was most probably a skirt made of Samite which was a luxurious and heavy silk fabric) and embellished with black silk, as well as a *canna*<sup>26</sup> of used cloth.<sup>27</sup>

Sarti gives a detailed description of a bride's mattress which, as can be seen in the previous examples, especially that of Torchetto, was an essential element to the fully furnished bed mentioned in many contracts.

In Renaissance Italy, for instance, a bed made up as it should have been had a canvas straw mattress over the boards, and over that a mattress, or rather mattresses, given that those who could afford it had more than one and often as many as three or four. Mattresses were usually stuffed with tufts of wool or feathers of low quality. Then came the sheets, generally made of linen, but of coarse canvas in the case of servants and the less well-off. The bedcover was a quilt and a woollen blanket or both. *Sargie* and *celoni* were types of bedding that were also used as bedspreads. The bedspread, bolster and pillows were the final touches, which could occasionally be so lavish that governments imposed wealth taxes on them.<sup>28</sup>

From this description it is evident that the beds in the Maltese islands were very similar to those studied by Sarti. Certain elements such as the mattress or at times mattresses can also be used as pointers to a bride's social status. Notice how Margerita Torchetto has two mattresses, both of which filled with wool rather than the cheaper variety mentioned above. Other contracts go into further detail and provide information on what material was used in making the mattress itself. In a contract of consignment of goods on 7 January 1574, there is mention of four mattresses made of fustian and filled with wool which were estimated at fourteen *uncia* and twelve *tareni*.<sup>29</sup> The bride involved in the initial dowry contract was obviously from a well off family and it was deemed necessary for her comfort to receive four mattresses, putting her on a

par with those from the highest echelons in Renaissance Italy mentioned above by Sarti.

Another essential aspect for a bed to be furnished in the expected manner were the sheets and pillows. The very variety available to Maltese brides is certainly witness to the trade links of the Maltese islands, but more significantly this attests to the time and energy dedicated by the bride's family for assembling the trousseau. The reason behind this was probably because the bride's family knew very well that their daughter's trousseau would be used by the groom and his family as a measure through which to assess the bride's, and by connection their own, status. In the same contract of 7 January 1574 mentioned above, the groom had received as part of his wife's dowry four pairs of sheets, with each pair being distinct, so much so that they warranted a physical description within the contract. For example, one pair of these sheets were made of three pieces of finely woven linen joined together, with white lace as a border and fringes of white silk thread and were valued at three *uncia* and six *tarenì*. Another pair of sheets were made from the same fabric but with a border of white silk lace estimated at 3 *uncia* 18 *tarenì*. The very detail into which marriage contracts delve in the descriptions of items, such as these sheets, are testimony to the importance given to items as a means of portraying wealth.

An evaluation of the bed, mattresses and bedding of Laurea Chappara, to whom these luxurious goods belonged, gives the modern reader an interesting insight into the marriage itself. Just one pair of this bride's sheets cost more than the entire dowries of some brides appearing in the notarial contracts. This agrees with Cassar's statement that 'Linen and better quality cloth appears to have been a particularly valuable and highly prized asset which marked out the family standing.'<sup>30</sup> This was certainly a bride from the highest levels of Maltese society and one who expected to receive material goods that were on a par with her social status. The comparison between this trousseau and what other authors have found for European brides also points to the fact that the Maltese nobility was on a similar level to those found elsewhere, at least when it came to the expectations for marriage and the dowry.

In fact, other noble brides and their families also seem to have given a lot of thought and invested their resources in preparing and buying sheets. In a contract on 4 November 1573 as part of Perna Rogiles' trousseau, apart from two mattresses filled with wool which were valued at three *uncia* eighteen *tarenì*, she also had several different sheets. A pair of sheets were made from thick woven cloth, another pair was of finely woven Alexandrian linen and a further sheet was made from finely woven linen and worked with *intaglio* around the edges.<sup>31</sup> Another contract in which the trousseau features the use of Alexandrian linen is that involving Augustino Cumbo, who was consigning the goods to his daughter Caterina and her husband Antonius Casha.<sup>32</sup> Here the bride received four mattresses filled with white cotton and wool and four pairs of Alexandrian linen sheets.

Alexandrian linen seems to have been highly esteemed in the Maltese Islands and it was the linen preferred for bedding by the nobility. Linen had been an important export for Alexandria since late antiquity,<sup>33</sup> and though linen imported from other countries was starting to appear locally during this period, the vast majority of notarial contracts still mention this linen when it comes to bedding.<sup>34</sup> Linen was also produced locally and together with cotton was 'known to have been regularly exported to Cagliari in Sardinia and to Syracuse in Sicily before 1375.'<sup>35</sup>

The bed was also furnished with blankets, pillows, cushions and bed throw overs as well as, for those more fortunate, the curtains and other accessories associated with a canopy bed. Usually blankets tended to be white as is the case for the trousseau of Perna Rogiles, where there were two white blankets.<sup>36</sup> Caterina Montagnes also had a white blanket worked with lace around the edge and lined on the inside as part of her trousseau, and a similar blanket, though this was embroidered, was provided for Caterina Casha. Even if the custom was for white blankets, this does not seem to have been a hard and fast rule as evidenced by the number of beds with blankets in other colours.

An example of a blanket which was not the typical white, was that provided for Laurea Casha's trousseau. This blanket or throw over was

of red silk with a border of linen. This combined well with the rest of the bedding which included; a red *farsata*, a curtain of Alexandrian cloth decorated with white lace with *gruppo* (probably some form of tie-backs) to each side and with its *cappello* decorated with white lace and bordered by fringes, a *sponsera* of the same cloth with eight different parts of lace and bordered with lace and a fringe and another curtain worked with fine woven Alexandrian linen and *carmasina* silk worked in strips next to which there were fringes of red and white *carmasina* silk with its *spirneli* (?) worked in lace. All of these were probably the furnishings which were necessary for a four-poster bed. Moreover, the bedding also included eight pillow covers made of finely-woven Alexandrian linen mostly in red and embellished with *carmasina* silk and lace in colours such as red, blue and green for the silk, and white for the lace.

It is true that the bed and necessary bedding and furnishings are a good indicator of the status of the natal family of the bride. This would also change the way that her marital family perceived the bride herself and might even influence her status within her new family. However, another aspect has to be taken into account when looking at the importance of the bed for the early modern household. The modern day reader has to appreciate that early modern houses varied in configuration from what we would consider the norm. The corridor had not yet developed and instead most houses had rooms leading one into another.<sup>37</sup> This meant that most bed chambers were located in a space which was used by those going from one room to the next, which would explain the need felt by early modern people to surround their beds with fabrics in such a manner as to be able to enclose themselves within. The bed mentioned above for Laurea was surely of this sort, providing as it were a room within a room. In fact, Sarti discusses the sense of safety which was provided by the bed saying that:

It seems reasonable to suppose that the sense of protection, warmth and comfort derived not only from the fact that it was 'closed', but also from the presence of mattresses, blankets and other bedclothes, which were as varied as the structure of the bed, given

that they ranged from straw alone and miserable straw mattresses to an abundance of mattresses and expensive bedspreads.<sup>38</sup>

The bed's ability to provide privacy was also essential because the bedroom was usually the room in which guests were received. This would explain the need for all the splendour displayed in the bedroom, as unlike their modern day counterparts beds could be seen by those visiting a household. Sarti draws attention to early modern France where a bed was 'a luxury item that had to be put on display'. In fact, French women received visitors in what was known as the *Ruelle* in French and the *corsello* in Italian, which was the space between the bed and the bedroom wall.<sup>39</sup> This was also most likely the practice in the Maltese Islands until much later as Antoine de Favray's painting of 1763, *The Visitors*, seems to suggest. Of particular notice here are the bed hangings (*kurtinaġġ*) and what seems to be a head-board behind the wet nurse and the black domestic servant. In this situation it appears that the norm was that when visiting, guests were escorted into the bedroom.

Thus, in reality the bed was a room unto itself. With the aid of bed linen, curtains, cushions and accessories it provided the early modern family a place within which not only to sleep, but also one in which to feel safe and protected, as well as a place able to welcome guests. This was the place in which a good portion of a family's most important events took place. It was in the bed that the act of reproduction occurred, the bed was also the location for childbirth and for lying-in after childbirth. Any children born to the family would spend their first years sleeping with their parents on the matrimonial bed, and in poorer households might only leave it when starting their own families. The bed was also the place where death was most likely to visit the family, both from natural causes and old age but also through the perils of childbirth.

## Conclusion

Early modern bedrooms provide an important insight into the daily lives of individuals during this period. Ranging from rich canopy beds

adorned with luxurious fabrics and embellishments to more simple beds made up of a single mattress filled with straw. A person's bed in the sixteenth century, therefore, was as good an indicator as any of social status and economic situation. Beds were rooms within a room. This at a time when due to the layout of houses one had to go through the bedroom to reach other rooms. This was especially the case in larger households. On the other hand the bed and sleeping area might even be within the same room as other activities such as cooking in relatively humbler houses.

For any bride the significance of decorating her new bed or bed chamber stemmed not only from a need to impress the groom and her in-laws but also from the fact that in the sixteenth century most visitors were received in the bedroom and might even have a seat on the bed itself, especially in poorer households. The bedroom, as the domain of the female of the house represented a woman's ability to be a good mother and wife and could also be used as a means to influence the opinion of visitors about the same family. An even more thorough study of the bed chambers of early modern women can help us better understand the dynamics within the early modern family and add further sources through which to study this somewhat elusive subject.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Erin K Lichtenstein, 'Identities Through Things: A comment', in *Early Modern Things: Objects and their Histories, 1500-1800*, ed., Paula Findlen (Oxford, 2013), 379.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Times of Malta*, 19 August 2013.
- <sup>3</sup> Notarial Archives, Valletta [NAV], R32/ 4-13.
- <sup>4</sup> NAV, R160/ 7-17.
- <sup>5</sup> NAV, R287/1-10.
- <sup>6</sup> NAV, R376/41.
- <sup>7</sup> NAV, R287/1, f.7v.
- <sup>8</sup> Carmel Cassar, 'Popular Perceptions and Values in Hospitaller Malta', in *Hospitaller Malta 1530-1798: Studies on Early Modern Malta and the Order of St John of Jerusalem*, ed., V. Mallia Milanes (Malta, 1993), 466.
- <sup>9</sup> An example see Samuel Kline Cohn Jr, 'Marriage in the mountains: the Florentine territorial state, 1348-1500', in *Marriage in Italy 1300-1650*, ed, Trevor Dean and K.J.P. Lowe (Cambridge, 1998), 174-96.
- <sup>10</sup> Thomas Kuehn, 'Daughters, Mothers, Wives, and Widows: Women as Legal Persons', in *Time, Space and Women's Lives in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anne Jackson Schutte, Thomas Kuehn, Silvana Seidel Menchi (Kirkville, 2001), 100.
- <sup>11</sup> NAV, R287/7 part 1, f.633r.
- <sup>12</sup> NAV, R287/1 part 2, f.123 v.
- <sup>13</sup> Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford, 2010), 3.
- <sup>14</sup> Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England 450-1500*, (London, 1996), 108.
- <sup>15</sup> Jean-Baptiste Molin and Protails Mutembe, *Le Rituel du Mariage en France* (Paris, 1974), 28.
- <sup>16</sup> Raffaella Sarti, *Europe at Home: Family and Material Culture 1500-1800* (London, 2002), 46.
- <sup>17</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, 1983), 17.
- <sup>18</sup> NAV, R32/6, f.299r.
- <sup>19</sup> Sarti, *Europe at Home*, 121.
- <sup>20</sup> NAV, R32/5, f.148r.
- <sup>21</sup> Stanley Fiorini, 'Malta in 1530', in Mallia-Milanes, *Hospitaller Malta*, 158-159.
- <sup>22</sup> NAV, R160/17, f.87r.
- <sup>23</sup> These were references to the curtains surrounding a bed.
- <sup>24</sup> This was probably some form of blanket or bed cover.
- <sup>25</sup> Dr Simon Mercieca pointed out that this is a 'hasira' which is a form of curtain made of reeds still used to cover Maltese front doors.
- <sup>26</sup> Canna was a unit of measurement equal to the modern equivalent of 2.064metres.
- <sup>27</sup> NAV, R160/11, part 2, f.209v.
- <sup>28</sup> Sarti, *Europe at Home*, 120-121.
- <sup>29</sup> NAV, R287/7, f.250v.

- <sup>30</sup> Carmel Cassar, 'Clothes, Status and Class: Symbols and Reality', in *Costume in Malta: An History of Fabric Form and Fashion*, ed., Nicholas de Piro, Vicki Ann Cremona (Malta, 1998), 54.
- <sup>31</sup> NAV R287/7, part 2, f.170v.
- <sup>32</sup> NAV R32/6, f.63v.
- <sup>33</sup> Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore, 1996), 35.
- <sup>34</sup> Malta had been involved in the linen trade since Roman times, and Alexandrian linen was at time transshipped from Malta to Roma. A.J. Warden, *The Linen Trade, Ancient and Modern* (Oxford, 1967), 206.
- <sup>35</sup> Joseph C Sammut, 'Historical Notes on Costume in 15th and early 16th century Malta', in De Piro and Cremona, *Costume in Malta*, 22.
- <sup>36</sup> NAV, R287/7, part 2, f.170v.
- <sup>37</sup> Sarti, *Europe at Home*, 139-140.
- <sup>38</sup> Sarti, *Europe at Home*, 120.
- <sup>39</sup> Sarti, *Europe at Home*, 122.