

Storja 2001



V. Bezzina

D. Borg-Muscat

V. Brincat

S. Cachia

J.A. Consiglio

H. Frendo

C. Savona-Ventura

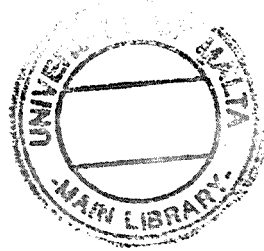
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REGARD FOR HISTORY AND HISTORIANS

The University History Society has continued with its voluntary activities and we are proud to present another edition of our journal-digest *Storja*: this year *Storja 2001*. Initiatives during the past two years have included the Annual Andrew Vella Memorial Lecture at the Istituto Italiano di Cultura in Valletta, research-based lectures by graduates, video discussions, a stand in freshmen's week on campus, and the occasional social outing, in addition to *Storja 98*, which has sold out. We believe that undergraduates and graduates with an interest in history generally, and Maltese History in particular, benefit from this work, and on the whole appreciate it. *Storja* continues to be an important source of reference on unpublished research works undertaken at Malta, as well as an opportunity for graduates presenting any history-related dissertation or thesis to publish, as well as have their topics listed and abstracted for future reference. Other researchers may also contribute articles, as has been the case since *Storja*'s inception way back in 1978, in Professor Vella's time.

Given the prevailing circumstances, we wish to underline a fact, which ought to be self-evident but is not, that the historians at University are intimately interested in history teaching. This is not a monopoly of schoolteachers, as the Department of Education seems to think. We can only look upon with misgiving at any attempt by the said Department or Ministry completely to exclude some of our leading historians, because they work at University, from programmes such as those undertaken by the Council of Europe about historiography, nationalism and related topics in twentieth century European history. For this reason, too, we are publishing in this issue a contribution in this area made at a symposium in Brussels, at the express invitation of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. We also see no reason (and this is a widespread feeling) why the leading professional historians and authors seem never to be consulted by government on anything, perhaps on the mistaken assumption that *education* is a province catered for exclusively by colleagues in the Faculty of Education. This is only one out of ten faculties in our University; it is also one of the most recent. As for pedagogical skills, we firmly believe that you cannot teach what you have not internalized as a discipline.

There is no teaching without learning in the first place, just as there cannot be a University of Studies, worthy of its name in any European context, without original research, academic publications and institutional respect for scholars in their working lives. Who decides on history syllabi in the upper forms of secondary school? What accounts for last June's dismal school-leaving exam results, not only in English, even in Maltese?

We have an abundance of plagiarism and regurgitation around, sometimes from publishers and institutions, who should know better. This is epitomised by the commercialized non-stop photocopying of bits and pieces of books, even on campus. What became of the swipe card which would ensure that students use at least a part of their stipends to actually acquire books they might read as such, from preface and introduction to bibliography and index, and refer to later on in life?

If history is 'the best liberal education in the world', there is no reason why graduates who possess the discipline should limit themselves to the teaching of it, although that may seem like the safest option at first glance. In other countries, graduates with a history background assume all kinds of managerial and executive positions, and we hope to see more of that happening here too. They also gravitate towards the media and if they are worth their salt, and do not become power maniacs, they could give a major contribution there, changing the 'discourse' of lowest common denominator bandwagon mediocrity, which is grossly threatening our mental and spiritual well-being.

Although history textbooks in the upper forms of secondary schools leave much to be desired, if they may be said to exist at all, we are pleased to note that interest in history, even among undergraduates, is on the increase. The spadework and efforts of some colleagues at the Junior College, other Sixth Forms and indeed the upper forms of certain secondary schools, may have something to do with that too. Although a regard for academic-intellectual meritocracy, including merit awards for research achievers, has remained in perpetual hibernation since the deficient 1979 and 1988 education acts, on the positive side we feel that teaching through modules helps to mitigate the disorienting effects of the credit system; that synoptic questions, although perhaps more difficult at first, are better tests of a student's meaningful, coordinated absorption of knowledge and syncretic powers of analysis, or other-

wise; and that faculty trends towards seminar discussions and an ambience for more of these, as opposed to teaching-by-preaching, should continue to be encouraged. Equally, we are sorry that not every student can get an 'A' for every assignment; and even more sorry to hear talk of abolishing closed book exams. We do not mind if this position does not endear us to the marketing agents of Encarta or internet servers.

We are concerned about the state of some of the still available primary sources, which both students and scholars will need to make use of in the course of their studies. There has been progress at the Santo Spirito, where archival materials relating to the last two centuries are being largely conserved, and we are pleased that post-graduate specialisation in this field is slowly becoming possible. In other archives, however, such as the notarial archives in Valletta, the situation is worrying. Why cannot such archives, and others, be microfilmed? This would not cost the earth. There is also a need for more qualified staff in this domain. Professional historians may know something about that. Ever since 1978, the *Storja* school's historiographical vision has never been antiquarian or particularistic; we are interested in the pursuit of understanding and in the discovery of meaning, in case studies which can illuminate what is universal even in the particular.

There is much room for a greater regard for history and historians institutionally and in the country at large. The narrow and fixed view that historians only exist, at best, to write books and teach their classes about them, as if they were hermits, is resource-wasteful nonsense. An occasional sound bite is not it either. In other countries, historians have been given access to senior positions of advice and influence in matters ranging across the spectrum of public life and international affairs, not excluding education. Having an independent mind ought to be an asset, not a liability. Not in Malta, where politicians and their adviser-assistants may think they know it all. Although there are a few genuinely interested *dilettanti*, not a single politician is an historian; the last one probably was Mgr Alfredo Mifsud a century ago, and he was really a librarian. Joining the E.U. without an acquired sense of history, including a consciousness of our own, would be a sure recipe for getting swamped as a nation.

The recurring criticism in the media against intellectuals for not speaking out

should take into account not only the often trivial qualities of public 'discourse' itself, including loads of media hype; it should also consider the systematic emargination of humanistic scholars, scientists and intellectuals from the body politic's mainstream, whether by accident or design. Hence the resounding silence, otherwise known as *ennui* or, to use a post-modern term, estrangement. The problem is not simply individual, it is infrastructural, it is directional. Rank or even specialisation have ceased to matter; academic leadership seems like a relic; the surging tide is: each person to himself: survival to get along. Perhaps academics have always been individualistically inclined but if so, more so now than before. Is it fragmentation? Money talk rarely borders on genius or even inspiration. A 'colonial civil service' mentality in the management of academic affairs will not brighten up any prospects for students, scholars or society's lifestyle, nor act as an incentive to the disillusioned as they try to make ends meet. That does not make a university. Is anyone listening?

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HUSBAND - WIFE RELATIONS IN LATE MEDIEVAL MALTA 1486-1488

Stefan Cachia*

The family was a central institution in medieval society. People were generally born, grew and lived in families. Thus, an understanding of interpersonal relations within the family-structure is essential for understanding late medieval Maltese society.¹ Yet what does the term 'family' mean? It can equally be understood to imply the kin as well as the nuclear family. Given the wide range of relationships encapsulated in the term 'family', a definition of what is understood by the term 'family' is necessary. The following discussion will only look at the nuclear family, primarily focusing on the husband - wife relationship in late medieval Malta.

Nuclear family patterns primarily imply the taking of a husband or a wife. Church doctrine had an important role in this matter. The prohibition of marriage within the seven degrees of consanguinity ruled out endogamous marriage.² This meant integration within the European marriage patterns in general and the Sicilian patterns in particular. It also meant an alienation from the Arab marriage patterns, which should have still existed among the local Jews, at least if what was true for the nearby Sicilian Jews was equally true for the Maltese Jewish community.³

Patterns of marriage easily translate themselves into patterns of ownership within a marriage. An in-marriage is generally associated with the retention of the family patrimony, in order for the latter not to be divided into parts and alienated from the family.⁴ On the other hand, an exogamous marriage implies a division of the original family estate. Indeed this seems to have been the case in late medieval Malta. Thus, the lands originally belonging to Len-

*A history graduate, with first class honours who is now reading for an M.A., Stephan Cachia works for *Il-Gens*.

cius and Catherina Barbara of Tarxien, were divided amongst their children on the marriage of the latter. When their daughter Agnesia married Lucas Casaha, she took in dowry, amongst other things, two fields situated at Mihatab and Muezeb respectively. Her brother Andreas was endowed with three fields and a house, a field and the house in his native village of Tarxien.⁵

Apart from the dowry, a wife also received the *dodarium*. This was very similar to the English dower⁶, but whereas English wives could receive land as dower, their Maltese counterparts tended to receive cash. Thus, Agnesia Barbara received fifteen uncie of Sicily; Paula Saccu received thirteen uncie; Zuna de La Habica received one hundred and one uncie of Sicily.⁷ Together with the dowry, the dower served as insurance for the wife's future. If she was widowed, it could be counted upon either as a means of subsistence or to provide her with a 'new' dowry in a second marriage. Nothing similar seems to have existed in late medieval Southern Europe. Yet, from the way it was given, it resembled the old European *sponsalitium* or morning gift, which the husband gave to his bride after consuming his marriage.⁸ Closer seems to have been the Arab *mahr musamma* which corresponded exactly with the 'Maltese' *dodarium*, thus suggesting a possible remnant from the Muslim past.⁹

Another aspect, which emerges about the husband and wife relationship, is that of the husband's predominance in the household. Given the position as *pater familias*¹⁰, husbands administered their family's estates, selling them, pawning them or leasing them. This was true for all the property forming part of the conjugal fund whether bought, or brought as a dowry by his wife. Not only was he the administrator of his wife's property, but although the dowry was the wife's property, it was given to the husband on the wife's behalf. According to the Maltese custom, for a husband to alienate goods which formed part of the wife's dowry, he needed his wife's consent. At times, the husbands did more than they were allowed. This was the case with Zaccharia Bunnichi and Johannes de Fauczono who sold part of their wife's dowry without the latter's consent. This, together with the fact that the wives reacted against the said sales only after their husband's death, shows the husband's strength within the household as well as with regards to the conjugal fund.¹¹ Male predominance also emerges from the fact that a wife was always *premunita consilio et auctoritate* of her husband (and when the latter was absent either

through death or through being away from Malta she was *premunita* either by her son or by a friend as a *mundualdo*).

Notwithstanding the husband's predominance in the household, the wife had her own sphere of influence. Indeed she could transact in business as well as manage the family's household. In this aspect the Maltese wife fitted well into the general European pattern. Labarge, in her analysis of the treatises of Christine de Pizan and Menagier de Paris, describes the wife at an upper level of the urban society as being "in charge of the household, and took over [the management of her husband's estate] when her husband was away."¹² Clara de Stunica fitted well in this model. She leased money to Johannes de Guyvara in the form of sales *cum gracia* twice in the course of 1487.¹³ She also leased parts of the property at Ghajn Tuffieha on three occasions: to Fra Johannes Zurki on the 11 July 1487; to Arnaldus Galie and Arrigo Burg on the same day; and to Berengarius Mizangar two days later. All this while her husband Ferrandus was absent from Malta.¹⁴ What was true for the upper strata of society was equally true for most people. Thus, one encounters Ysolda Vella managing the household on behalf of her husband Petrus who was not on the island. On the 17 January 1488, she assigned a field and a small house in Mqabba, with some reservations, as payment for the debt of six and a half Maltese uncie which her husband owed Bartholomeus Ferraru.¹⁵

Chicca de Burdino provides an interesting case of women playing an independent role from their husband. With the provision and authority of her husband Nardus, she bought two Sicilian horses and a bale of raw cotton from Johannes de Guyvara for 20 uncie.¹⁶ Notwithstanding the fact that her husband was in Malta, indeed present in the same contract of sales, it was the wife not the husband who bought the two horses and the bales of cotton. Besides, Chicca received an annual salary from the Maltese *Secrezia*.¹⁷ This case suggests that a woman, at least from the higher ranks of society, enjoyed a degree of economic independence, buying on her own behalf as well as receiving a salary herself.

Another consideration on marital relations should look at the ages in which the husband and the wife contracted marriage. Ages in numerical figures are not given, nor can such data be calculated from the available information, yet

general trends can be traced. Comparing the brides with their bridegrooms one notices that whereas the former's parents are always given, the latter's are only given on three occasions, namely for Lucas Casaha, Andreas Barbara and Thomeus Xuereb.¹⁸ Besides, the mother of Salvus Falczono can be arrived at from another document.¹⁹ Those grooms whose parents are given were not yet emancipated, therefore they should have been in their first marriage. Otherwise, the groom being mentioned was possibly in his second marriage.²⁰ Indeed this can be proved on one occasion for one such bridegroom: Antonio Falca was a widower for a few months when he married Zuna de La Habica. Whereas the dowry contract for his marriage with Zuna was celebrated on the 8 August 1487,²¹ his preceding wife Ventura expressed her last will before the notary merely ten months before.²²

Besides all spouses whose parents are given but six, (i.e. eight out of fourteen) had a dead father, and one father of those six was to die within two months.²³ Assuming that their deaths had been natural, and an almost equal life expectancy for men and women one can safely arrive at either of two conclusions (according to the data from Zabbara's documents between 1486 and 1488). Men married at a much later age than women did and they tended to marry twice as Antonius Falca did, the second time marrying a girl much younger than themselves. This seems to have been the case, as Antonius' marriage to Zuna shows. Thus, Maltese marriage patterns fitted neatly into those of nearby Sicily. There, young girls were given in marriage to men much older than them.²⁴

The young marriage age for brides is further attested by the young age at which Paulus de Bunello promised his daughter Margerita to Antonius Rapa. At the time of the contract, she was still too young to be married. Thus at the time of her marriage the bride should have been about twelve.²⁵ The bride's young marriage age points out to at least two forces. The eagerness of the parents to find a suitable match for their daughter. Secondly the importance of virginity in a marriage. As Goody points out the later a woman married, the greater the chance for her to have lost her virginity before that marriage and virginity was essential to guarantee the purity of the lineage.²⁶ A third force could have been the bridegroom's urge to have an issue from that marriage. After all, given the bad medical conditions of the time, there was a greater chance to have a surviving son from a long marriage with a bride as

young as possible. A widowed bride may not have any children from her second marriage and even risk her life in trying to have an issue. Indeed, Catharina de Urso, previously married as de Sillato, seems to have died at childbirth.²⁷

Another factor emerges clearly, at least from the marriage between Antonius Rapa and Margerita.²⁸ Marriage was not a question of love, but rather a contract between two families. Similarly, it is evident that there was no love in the marriage between Stephanus Seykel and his wife Laurencza alias Cueyna. The marriage itself had been contracted on the invitation of Johannes de Guyvara, to whom Laurencza had been a concubine.²⁹ Not only but while Stephanus was away from Malta, she went back to her lover. Eventually, the same Laurencza was guilty of adultery with Petrucius de Mazara.³⁰ Naturally, nothing can be generalised from only two, though clear-cut examples. After all, as Goody claims "agreement, even love, between the partners is not excluded from what are known as arranged, preferred or prescribed marriages."³¹ On the other hand, a number of factors point to the lack of real love between the husband and the wife, at least when the love between them is compared to the love between mother and child. Thus, the main preoccupations of the wife, in her will concerns the property and goods she bequeaths to her children. Secondly, for a society in which the remarriage of a widow or widower was a common occurrence, one could not afford to risk alienating one's property to someone else's children, thus forsaking one's own lineage. However, given the formality expected, and indeed found, in a notarial archive one cannot expect to detect any notion of love, and it is only natural that the contractual nature of marriage predominates.

Having considered how the marriage was contracted a look at how it ended is necessary. Given the prohibition of divorce and the lack of any reference to the annulment of marriage, at least in the Zabbara's acts under review, death was generally the only way a marriage could end. Yet, what happened to the surviving partner? Those partners had to choose between two options, namely remarry or remain a widow/er until one's death. In analysing the general European picture, Bresc saw remarriage as an option only for rich widows (he does not consider widowers). Otherwise, the widow could only hope for a small income and an obscure and lonely old age.³² The paupers cared for by the Santo Spirito hospital might have included some,³³ but the picture as seen

through Zabbara's documents is rather different. A number of widows remarried. Those widows who chose not to remarry, either out of their own free will or because of their old age, made sure of their future subsistence. Ysmiralda Zarb reserved one third of the house she donated to her daughter Johanna for her use. Besides, the fact that she lived in the same house with her daughter could also imply the latter's help in times of necessity. On similar lines, Margarita Salamura donated a field to her children from an earlier marriage with the proviso that if they would not help her by providing the necessary victuals, she could sell or pawn that same field. At times, the husband provided for his wife's possible widowhood, through a contract. Jackinus Caruana stipulated that if he predeceased his wife, as long as she did not remarry (she was already in her second marriage) his heirs should provide an accommodation to his wife.³⁴ In other cases, the wife provided for her husband after her death. Thus, Ventura Falca left the *viridarium* of Ayn Culliye to her husband Antonius for his maintenance after her death, to revert to her niece after his death.

Besides, the widowed partner was heir to one third of the conjugal fund which the Maltese custom allocated to him/her on the spouse's death. According to the Maltese custom, anything acquired once the marriage was contracted belonged to the husband and the wife in conjunction. Whenever either of the two partners died, the surviving one had the right to one-third *de comunj substantia matrimonij*. The remaining two thirds were allocated to the surviving children.

An interesting anecdote concerning widowhood emerges about mourning customs. Catherina de Urso mandated, in an addendum to her will, that her husband Albanus (as well as the other beneficiaries of her will) must wear *veste lugubrij videlicet clamide et capucheo*. The fact that the wearing of mourning vestments had to be imposed, seems to suggest that it was not a common practice.³⁵ Indeed, although the Maltese custom stipulated that mourning clothes had to be worn, at times this was impossible "as not a hand's span of black cloth was available in Malta."³⁶

Once the marriage was contracted, there started a new nuclear family which was the result of a fusion between members of two households. Naturally, it needed a house in which to live. In the available documents, ten marriages

were contracted or had been contracted in the past. Among these, seven were contracted between two inhabitants of Mdina. On another occasion the husband's town of origin is not given. In the remaining two marriages, the contractants were Lucas Casaha of Mdina and Agnesia Barbara of Tarxien on one occasion and Andreas Barbara of Tarxien and Paula Saccu of Gudja on the other.³⁷ In these cases, the wife went to live in her husband's town or village. Thus, Agnesia went to live in Mdina, while Paula went to live in Tarxien. With regards to those couples where both the husband and wife came from Mdina, the future place of habitation is never explicitly stated as in the other two documents. Yet in three occasions the marriage had been contracted in the past. In two of these, the husband acknowledged the payment of the dowry.³⁸ In another, Marciano de Pirera received the second half of the dowry promised by Ventura Falca after the latter's death. Given that at the time of the contract the husbands lived in Mdina, and the nature of the contracts, it is safe to assume that the respective wives lived with their husbands, in Mdina. These examples point clearly at a virilocal place of residence, where the wife leaves her own place of habitation to go to live with her husband. This is further corroborated by the fact that Laurencza alias Cueyna went to live with her husband Stephanus Seykel after having been a concubine of Per Johannes de Mazara.³⁹

An overall view of the husband and wife relationship in late medieval Malta points at two seemingly opposite, yet complimentary forces. Both the husband and the wife had equal rights with regards to the property forming part of the conjugal funds, and even appear to have had, (admittedly only one case shows a woman acting independently in her husband's presence) an independent economic life of their own. Similarly men and women had an equal right to bequeath their property through wills, and both received an endowment on marriage, an endowment which in the acts of notary Zabbara under analysis, included land property for both the husband and wife. Yet, this theoretical equality must not obscure the fact that late medieval Maltese society was a male dominated society. The husband essentially administered the conjugal fund, to which the husband and the wife had an equal claim, often usurping the claims the wives had over their dowry. Besides, in Malta as in the rest of the Sicilian *Regno*, women could not have an independent legal life of their own. Whether they were proceeding in court against a second party, or simply being a party to a notarial act, they had to be represented or

at least assisted by a male, the *mundualdo*. Usually this was the husband, but legally he could have been a son, brother, or even a friend. The *mundualdo* apart from being a legal reality was symbolic of that male dominant society. Not even if the male presence was a mere formality, it had to be there. It was also symbolic of the differences between the Maltese customary law (to which references are continuously met in notarial acts) and the Sicilian legal system that imposed the *mundualdo*, but that is another story.

Notes

¹ The following discussion will look at such family relationships, which emerge from the notarial acts of Notary Giacomo Zabbara published by Fiorini. Hence only a partial view of family relationships in late medieval Malta is possible. S. Fiorini (ed.), *Documentary Sources of Maltese History: Part I Notarial Documents: No 1 Notary Giacomo Zabbara R 494/1 (I): 1486-1488*, Malta, 1996, henceforth Zabbara.

² For the Roman system of the seven degrees of consanguinity see J. Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe*, Cambridge, 1983, p.138.

³ On the Sicilian Jews see H. Bresc, 'La Famille dans la Société Sicilienne Médiévale' in *La Famiglia e la Vita Quotidiana in Europa dal '400 al '600: Fonti e Problemi*, Rome, 1986, 3 pp.187-206, 188. The matter is not discussed by G. Wettinger in *The Jews of Malta*, Malta, 1985.

⁴ J. Goody, 'Bridewealth and Dowry in Africa and Eurasia', in J. Goody and S.J. Tambiah *Bridewealth and Dowry*, Cambridge, 1973, p.19.

⁵ Zabbara nos.11 (13.iv.1486), 23 (27.iv.1486), The relationship between the land and the family is discussed in chapter 4.

⁶ J. Goody, 'Inheritance, property and women: some comparative considerations' in J. Goody, J. Thrisk and E. P. Thompson (ed.), *Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe 1200 - 1800*, Cambridge, 1976, 10-36, p. 16.

⁷ Zabbara nos.11 (13.iv.1486), 23 (27.iv.1486), 234 (8.viii.1487).

⁸ D. Owen Hughes, 'From Brideprice to Dowry in Mediterranean Europe', in M.Kaplan (ed.), *The Marriage Bargain: Women and Dowries in European History*, London, 1985, pp.13-58, 26-7.

⁹ The Arab *mahr musamma* was a sum fixed in the marriage contract. O. Spies, Mahr, C.E. Bosworth et al (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Islam*, New Edition, VI, Leiden, 1991, p.79.

¹⁰ J.L.Flandrin, *Families in Former Times*, Cambridge, 1979, p.118 et seq.

¹¹ Zabbara nos. 64 (6.ix.1486), 274 (1.ix.1487).

¹² M. Labarge, *Women in Medieval Life*, London, 1986, p.147.

¹³ Zabbara nos.112 (1.ii.1487), 187 (12.v.1487).

¹⁴ Zabbara nos. 212 (11.viii.1487), 213 (11.viii.1487), 214 (13.viii.1487).

¹⁵ Zabbara no. 320 (17.i.1488). The reservation was the right of entrance to the kitchen.

¹⁶ Zabbara no. 321 (21.i.1488).

¹⁷ *Salarium Recipiendum a secrecia Melite per eandem dominam Chiccam anno qoulibet*. Zabbara no. 321 (21.i.1488). The act does not specify why she was in receipt of that salary.

¹⁸ Zabbara nos. 11 (13.iv.1486), 23 (27.iv.1486), 302 (15.xi.1487).

¹⁹ Zabbara no. 297 (17.ix.1487).

²⁰ Another possible explanation is that the groom was in his first marriage, but his parents had died. Yet, no such an example is found in the acts under scrutiny.

²¹ Zabbara no. 234 (8.viii.1487).

²² Zabbara no.40 (11.v.1486).

²³ On the 15 September 1487 Johannes de Sillato was confirmed the payment of dowry by his son-in-law Notary Matheus de Vassaldo. On the 15 November of the same year, he is described as *quondam Johanes*

de Sillato. *Zabbara* nos.296 (15.ix. 1487), 302 (15.xi. 1487).

²⁴ H. Bresc, 'Europe: Town and Country (Thirteenth-Fifteenth Century)', in A. Burguière, *et al.* (ed.). *A History of the Family: Vol.1 Distant Worlds, Ancient Worlds*, Cambridge Massachussetts. 1996. pp.430 – 466, 448.

²⁵ According to Brooke, the age of consent was reckoned to be twelve for a woman.' C. Brooke. *The Medieval Idea of Marriage*, p.137.

²⁶ J. Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe*, Cambridge. 1983, p.29, 258.

²⁷ Indeed Catherina seems to have died before childbirth. On the 26 May she instituted as her universal heir, her to-be-born child: *jintituit sibi heredem universalem postumum seu postumam nasciturum vel nascituram ex ventre eiusdem testatricis*. *Zabbara* no. 41 (26.v.1486). A few months later, her brother Don Amatore is described as *heres quondam Catherine sue sororis*. *Zabbara* no. 177 (24.iv.1487); implying both Catherina's death as well of that of her baby, given that on the 26 May 1486, she had made Don Amatore second in line of succession.

²⁸ *Zabbara* no.333 (9.ii.1488).

²⁹ *Dictus Stephanus invito dicto magnifico Perio Johannes contractavisset matrimonium cum jpsa Laurencza*. *Zabbara* no. 206 (27.vi.1487)

³⁰ *Zabbara* no. 284 (11.ix.1487).

³¹ J. Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe*, p.206.

³² H. Bresc, 'Europe: Town and Country (Thirteenth-Fifteenth Century)', p.451.

³³ S. Fiorini, *Santo Spirito Hospital at Rabat, Malta: The Early Years to 1575*, Malta, 1989, pp.27-8.

³⁴ *Zabbara* nos. 128 (1.iii.1487), 298 (17.ix.1487), and 273 (1.ix.1487) respectively.

³⁵ This might be only an impression due to the nature of the document.

³⁶ G. Wettinger, 'The Widow on Gozo Who Remarried Too Soon', in *Melita Historica* XII. 2, Malta, 1997, p.139-150, p.141.

³⁷ The sample is too small for any generalisation.

³⁸ Petrus Axac from Perus de Frendo; and Matheus de Vassaldo from Johannes de Sillato. *Zabbara* nos. 10 (13.iv.1486), 296 (15.ix.1487) respectively.

³⁹ *Stephanus ... contractavisset matrimonium cum jpsa Laurencza cum qua cohabitavisset*. Then, Laurencza re-went to live with PerJohannes de Mazara as the latter's concubine while her husband was away. When Stephanus returned, he promised to *reassumere jn eius cohabitacione dictam Laurencza*. *Zabbara* no. 206 (27.vi.1487).

TAXATION AND TAX EVASION IN 15th CENTURY MALTA 1450 –1499

Vanessa Bezzina*

The records of the town-council meetings of 1450-1499, themselves a product of a privileged group, the Mdina élite, are a clear illustration of the distribution of power and the resources of fifteenth century Malta. With little direct intervention from the Sicilian crown, the local urban patricians directed and controlled the economy of the islands. The farming out of taxes and their collection were of utmost importance for the financial life of the Mdina town-council. As one of the main features of daily administration, it included new arrangements in the *Universitas*' bureaucratic system in which the social strata prevailed. Also taxation and tax farming lifted up new vacancies and more insular municipal organisation.

Le gabelle - sources of income, regulations, payers and payees

Almost a century ago, Mons. Alfredo Mifsud analysed taxation in his article 'L'approvigionamento e l'Università di Malta nelle passate dominazioni' which amongst other topics dealt with communal taxes. Deriving his arguments from archival evidence, he makes special reference to the town-council meetings' minutes found in *NLM Ms Università 11*. Although Mifsud's analysis provides a good insight of all the ways of taxation imposed by the Mdina *Universitas*, the article lacks detail and a comprehensive historical approach. On the other hand it is a very good introduction to tax-collection in Malta in the late fifteenth century. It is an attempt towards professional history, that is with references to archival sources and footnotes. Still some of the data is not in the footnoted. The following discussion seeks to further

*A history graduate, Vanessa Bezzina is reading for an M.A. at Malta. This article is a revised version of the dissertation, 'The Administration of the Maltese Islands, A Study of the *Acta Iuratorum et Consilii Civitatis Insulae Maltae*'

Mifsud's analysis, bringing to light more themes regarding the communal organisation and its sources of income in the Maltese islands between 1450 and 1499.

The State's main source of fiscal revenue was from the excise on domestic and foreign trade, like the 2 per cent on exports¹ and the yearly taxation known as *donativo* or *collecta*. This was a tax which was to be paid by all, to be distributed amongst all the subjects as payment for the crown's service.² Tax collection established an initial growth of a patronage system, which expanded in response of the increasing social differentiation,³ between the élites of the island, members of the Mdina council, and the taxpayers.

Amongst the financial burdens which fell upon the Mdina *Universitas* there was the payment of salaries of the crown officials on the island as well as taking care of the daily needs of the island. Needs which included the building of walls and the procurement of wheat. This was made possible by the revenues coming from the imposition of different taxation structures, many of which had to be sanctioned, sometimes imposed by the Viceroy in Sicily. Other ways of acquiring cash revenues was through various levies or fines for decree infringements and the lease of warehouses and other property belonging to the council.⁴ The need for money was generated locally for the importation of essential foodstuffs and other commodities: funds came primarily from the exportation of cotton and cumin.⁵ To a lesser degree, the *corso*⁶ also had its share in bringing cash to the islands. As an industry it was patronized by the local élite, such as the Desgunes family.⁷ Thus in the period of 1442 and 1450, the Desgunes owned the majority of ships used for corsairing. Taxes were imposed both on the exportation of cash crops as well as on corsairing. The only victual exempted from taxation was wheat, that was being imported from all Sicilian ports regularly according to the needs of the time. The release of wheat from taxation, the *tratte* was one of the main privileges granted in 1432 by King Alfonso.⁸ On the other hand taxes were imposed on many goods; from the importation of cheese, to honey, wool and oil that were taxed at a rate of 1 gold *tareni per cantaro*.⁹

Another source of income was the tax imposed by the Maltese authorities on absentee fief-holders who lived in Sicily and did not administer their fiefs themselves. Thus, the Viceroy told the Mdina authorities to impose a tax on

Johannes de Perollo of Xacca in Sicily,¹⁰ an absentee fief-holder. On the other hand, the council refused to pay the taxes of absentee magnates like Rogerius de Landolina and Andreas de Perellu.¹¹

The town-council was obliged to send to the Viceroy the revenues accruing from a number of taxes. Naturally, the *Universitas* at times complained against such payments. Many-a-time the council exaggerated in lamenting against the taxes and the commissioner arriving to gather the *collecta* and other dues, in order to release itself from its tax obligations. The *Universitas* found the slightest excuse to resist or postpone the payments of taxes.¹² Thus in 1473, a year of draught, the council sent a letter to the Viceroy protesting against the sixty four *uncie* of *donativo* that was asked from Malta that year.¹³

The taxes sanctioned by the Viceroy on products included a tax on the sale of wine, and on the imported wine, a tax on the sale of meat.¹⁴ These taxes were all collected by the *gabellotti*.

The Gabellotto and the royal commissioners: the *sindicaturi*

A *gabellotto* was an official chosen from amongst the *homini facultusi* who was responsible for the collection of any given tax for any given year. Each village had one or more *gabellotti* in charge of tax collecting in that village, the number of *gabellotti* depending on the population size of the village.¹⁵ Each *gabella* was farmed by public auction towards the end of the Indiction year, that is in August. The highest bidder became tax farmer for the coming year. The *gabellotto*, given his position as tax collector, was essential for the well functioning of Mdina's *Universitas*. Promising the *Universitas* an agreed sum of money, he proceeded to collect the tax, retaining for himself, as a salary, any extra money gained.¹⁶ Sometimes, there were abuses as some *gabellotti* extracted surplus revenues from peasants to pay for their extra commodities. While the bidding took place, usually a guarantor and a witness had to testify that the *gabellotto* had a good financial backing. This implied that the *gabellotto* had to have a certain amount of wealth, pecuniary or landed property, and that he was not chosen from the undistinguished local population.

Although the *gabellotti* as a group were part of the élite of the island, they rarely were members of the main *familiaries* sitting in the town-council. In-

deed many of them were well-off village inhabitants. Yet, they still had the power to present their own complaints to the King when they lacked agreement with the *Universitas*. A case in point occurred on 19 June 1466, when an embassy from the Maltese parishes went to Palermo to demand fiscal relaxation on behalf of the cotton producers. The latter, it was claimed, were hit by a licence of a two per cent tax on exports by the *Mdina Universitas*.¹⁷

Besides, the *gabellotto* was an officer of the *Universitas* at a local level. He supervised and organised the annual *collecta* or the *donativo* to the crown as well as enforced discipline and saw that everyone paid his contribution to the *Universitas*.¹⁸ In addition, being so near to the taxpayers, the *gabellotto* could also report to the town-council any local grievances he could have met.

The largest share of the tax burden, as expected, fell on the wealthiest citizens of the island; and given their control of the town-council, it is their position which is found expressed in the documents bequeathed to later generations. Indeed, the royal commissioners or *sindicaturi* who came to the island to collect the royal *collecta* are described as a burden or oppression. This position can be seen in the *capitoli*, where the élite through the town-council, presented their grievances before the Viceroy.¹⁹ In April 1461, in a town-council meeting, the municipal officials accused the commissioner of harmful activities and extortion, opting to inform the Viceroy *de omnibus vexacionibus*²⁰ of the commissioner. Later that month the council met again to discuss about the money that the commissioner irresponsibly extorted from the locals, though there is no specification as to whom he abused.²¹ In the same meeting the commissioner was accused, on some rumours, that he was going to leave the island with the *Universitas*' accounts books recording the transactions of the tax *trium quartuchiarum*. Besides, he did not look into those account books that had been forwarded to him for auditing. It is evident that the royal *sindicaturi*, sent here from Sicily, were never welcome since they sought to force upon the local élite a higher contribution to the royal *collecta*. On the other hand, one must not forget that the *sindicaturi*, as Royal officials, were beyond the control of any Sicilian municipality, and so the reports of alleged abuses might not be too far from truth.²²

Not all *commissarii* abused of their power. Indeed some came with the aim of

curbing local abuses,²³ as Renaldus de Ferrario who arrived in Malta in 2 August 1479 to prosecute fiscal abuses. So was Paulo Carcella, *sindicaturi et commissario*, sent by the Viceroy to Malta to investigate abuses of town officials in the fiscal administration of the island.²⁴ However the *sindicaturi*'s main task was the collection of the annual *collecta*.

The royal *collecta*

The royal *collecta* was an annual tax, imposed throughout the *Regno* on town-councils and the population.²⁵ A royal commissioner came to the island to exact it and control local administration.²⁶ Occasionally, the tax went to the maintenance of the town walls.²⁷

Generally, the *Universitas* did not collect the full amount in time, and the commissioner had to lodge official protests over and over again.²⁸ The *collecta*'s collection depended on the revenues of the jurats, who naturally sought to postpone payment as much as possible. Thus, by the 15th November 1473 the commissioner Bartholomeus Xaccaventu had already asked for the *collecta*. Then on the 19th November 1473 he demanded it another time. The captain merely declared that the commissioner had to be patient and wait until the full amount was collected. As a consequence, *ultimata* were imposed on the notables or the *homini facultusi* to pay their share by the specified date. On the 19th November 1482, Johannes de Nava was asked to pay the remaining part of the tax by the day after. So was Georgius de la Habica. Then they were obliged to be punctual in their payment.²⁹

The *collecta* was a tax imposed on the Maltese *Universitas*, yet, who paid it? Some of the élite might have been exempted, but there is no evidence whether the exemption was extended to all town-council members or to some of them only. Antoni Desguanes, a member of the most prominent families in the administrative affairs of the island, was exempted, through a letter read in the town council on the 4 October 1454. The same privilege was granted to Alvarus de Nava on 16 September 1481.³⁰ The poorest too seem to have been exempted. In a 1480 meeting, the town-council discussed that the *collecta* must be collected from those who had three *salme* of land property or more.³¹ Antoni Garaj, Desguanes was told contribute to the *collecta* at the rate of 3

tareni per uncia of his income.³²

The *collecta*, although an annual tax, varied in quantity from year to year because not all the transactions were in cash payment. Bartering predominated, and even object or animal selling provided for paying one's part of the *collecta*. In 1482, Rogeli Caxaru sold an Ethiopian slave *nomine Catherina*³³ to cover part of the payment of the *collecta*. Besides there was no fixed rate, as it increased or decreased regularly. It was only thirty *uncie* on 21 October 1450, increasing to hundred *uncie* by 1462 only to decrease to sixty *uncie* in 1476, re-increasing back to three hundred *uncie* in 1481. However, a year later the amount was only 8 *uncie*.

Other sources of income

The *collecta* was only one of the taxes that burdened the Maltese population, other gabelle existed, their number and nature changing over the centuries. Thus, the *cabella sagati* which taxed various items including medicinal herbs, was documented since 1345. A century later one encounters the tax on the sale of meat, the *mal dinaru*: a tari on every *vitella o majale*, five grano *per montone* and one grano on every *agnello* sold.³⁴ The town-council meeting held on Tuesday 26 June 1481 decreed otherwise. Meat sold between September and Easter had a tax of four *grani* per rotulo, that sold between Easter and August was taxed at 20 *denari* per rotulo.³⁵ On the 29 June 1481, the town-council and all the noble *jurats* issued twenty seven regulations concerning the farming out of the tax on meat.³⁶

The need to repair the city walls was a continuous drain on the *Universitas'* resources. An increasing proportion of the money needed was taken from the *collecta*,³⁷ while two per cent was taken from merchandise dues. Besides, the two *denari per rotolo* of minced meat, were also used for that purpose.

Not all taxes fell under the jurisdiction of the Mdina town-council, some went to the *secrezia*. These included: the *dohana* or customs dues, the obscure *cabella corbinorum*, the *madia* or Gozo Ferry tax, the *gisia* or poll-tax imposed on Jews (and till the mid thirteenth Century on Muslims) and some minor taxes on dyers, musicians, barbers and shopkeepers called *tintoria*, *tube*, *bar-*

baria and *apothece* respectively. There was also the *baiulacio et xurta* as petty fines.³⁸

Wine Taxes

Apart from the tax of a florin charged on all barrels of wine, the municipal town-council farmed out two taxes on the sale of wine,³⁹ taxes from which the Castellan, by virtue of his independent jurisdiction, was exempted.⁴⁰ These were a tax on the sale of wine and a tax on imported wine.

There is no specific pattern suggesting a general rise or decline in the tax's price, but rather price fluctuations. For example there was a gradual decline between 1462 and 1463, and 1472 and 1473. This points at some local happening which influenced the market price of the tax. Indeed those were years of draught and scarcity in wheat. Drought implied fewer sales, hence smaller taxes return. This in turn led to smaller bids as the tax farmers anticipated low returns from their investment. Indeed, by 1476, when the crisis declined and the *Universitas* settled back, the biddings began to increase again from 680 *uncie* to 800 *uncie*.

It seems that the bidders differ but members of the same family like Petrus and Rogerius Caxaro sought to monopolise the position of *gabellotto*. Some tax farmers bought the tax for more than one year like Antonius Callus in 1461 and 1463 and Nicolaus Curmi in 1472, 1476, 1478 and 1479 for the tax *tri quartuchi per quartara*. In some years, there was intense competition for farming a given tax, suggesting an anticipation of high returns hence a good grape harvest. This was the case with the *tri quartuchi per quartara*, in 1450, 1461, and 1476. Similar cases are found for the *tax floreni pro vegete*, for instance in 1462, 1412, 1473-1474, and 1480.

While the *tri quartuchi pro quartara* was farmed out at the very beginning of the Indiction year (in the first week of September) or at the end of the Indiction year (the last week of August), the other tax *floreni pro vegete* was farmed out every six months of every Indiction year. Bidding dates for the latter vary from November to August or from December/ January to September of every year.

Yet, who were the bidders who competed for the farming out of taxes? One may find men from middle strata of society like notaries Ingomes de Brancato, Stephanu de Pirera, Petrus Caxaro and Paulus de Bonello. On the other hand, names suggest that the bulk of the tax bidders came from local élite like Blasius Michola, Jacobus de Peregrino that came from Birgu, Inigos de Cantore, Rogerius Caxaro of Mdina, Nergo de Cantore and the *Universitas* herself. This shows that, since to be a tax farmer one had to be financially stable, the bidders usually were members of the higher ranks within the social hierarchy.

La Baractaria

Bartering was not only used for the collection of the *collecta*. Not all transactions were paid in cash; many items were bartered and a number of payments were made in kind.⁴¹ On this important commercial activity there was a profitable tax called *cabella baractaria*. Town-council officials gathered and confiscated a number of goods every year from individuals who evaded the tax on bartering. A case in point was the gown belonging to Nicolay Burbuzayna which was confiscated by the town-council *jurats* and sold by court order as the former was accused of evading the *baractaria*. The sale was done by Amatore Delia and the gown was sold to Luca Zammit for 3 *carlini*. The *baractaria* tax for the year 1476-77 was farmed out to Pino de Manuele at 6 *tarenì ponderis* and was deputed to the maintenance of the town walls of Mdina.⁴²

The farming out of the *baractaria* in the period in concern was done mainly to rich *gabbellotti* or members of the same town-council. Certain names and the amounts of cash offered in the bidding of that tax show this. Distinguished names like Gulliellmus Desguanes, Pasqualino de Allegricto, Cathaldu Lazaruni and Manfrido Axac are found. The amounts of cash offered for farming out the *baractaria* betray the bidder's position along the social hierarchy. One had to have quite a high position in society to have the necessary financial backing to guarantee the contract as a tax farmer. Indeed, the highest bidders had to be supported by a guarantor who testified the bidder's financial credentials and his suitability to be a tax farmer, like Antoni de Naso, the guarantor of the wine tax farmer for the year 1473.⁴³

Fines

Another source of revenue for the *Universitas* was the imposition of fines for the infringement of any law issued by the Mdina town-council. Fines were imposed on everything, from price-lists to the non-attendance to the obligatory town-council meeting. The amount of fines varied as well: from fifteen *carlini* to even fifty *uncie*.⁴⁴ The former was usually payable by common people or peasants. Fifty *uncie* were imposed on the members of the council or the local élite.

Too high prices also implied that a fine was imposed on the shopkeeper. Thus, for example, prices of footwear for women were ten *grani* per pair, whilst footwear for men cost two *carlini* a pair. If anyone was caught charging more than the price ordered by the *Universitas*, he was fined fifteen *carlini*, which sum went to the upkeep of the city walls.⁴⁵ Similarly, fruit and vegetables vendors outside the city walls were threatened with a fine of fifteen.⁴⁶ On the other hand, on the 15 October 1474, members of the council were notified that if they failed to attend to the following Saturday's morning meeting, they would be fined ten Sicilian *uncie*.⁴⁷

Many-a-time, part of the revenues accruing from fines went to the repairing of the town walls like many taxes already mentioned. Other portions went to the *accatapani* or the captain of the city. Thus, on the 11 September 1473, the *Universitas* decreed that anyone caught selling wool and cotton yarn and other material outside the city, whether in the *Borgo*, or at Rabat, would be fined forty five *carlini*. These were divided thus: fifteen *carlini* each to the captain of the city, for the upkeep of the city walls, and to the *catapans*.⁴⁸

Tax evasion

The Castle-by the sea and its suburb of Birgu, formed an independent political entity falling outside the control of the Mdina *Universitas*. Thus, many Birgu inhabitants, as well as those of neighbouring villages insisted that they made part of the autonomous jurisdiction of the *Castrum Maris* even if they did not, thus evading taxation ordered by the Mdina *Universitas* since the lat-

ter's taxes did not coincide with those imposed by the Castellan. This was the case with the people of Zejtun who refused to pay their taxes to the Mdina town Council.⁴⁹

This was only one clash between the Birgu and Mdina authorities on tax revenues. Another clash occurred in July 1473. The official in charge of the walls of St. Angelo was given in payment part of the *casa terrana cum la cucina coniuncta et lu cortiglu et la intrata antiqua* property of Antoni de Naso. This was in payment for the debt that the *Universitas* owed him out of the revenues of the wine taxes.⁵⁰ Clashes tended to increase when the Castellan acquired the *Secrezia*. Wealthy persons who came under his jurisdiction took the opportunity not to pay royal taxes assigned to the town-council.⁵¹

Conclusion

The élite thus had the means both to impose taxes via their control of the town-council as well as to evade them through their various privileges. Made up of an aristocratic stratum that had a primary role in the economic life of the town and relationships with the 'middle' class (merchants, *gabbellotti*, artisans), it succeeded to govern to its advantage, the fiscal dimension of administration. Exemption from the different *gabelle* (although not so evident in this volume of documents) of individuals, shows how fiscal burden was distributed among the different strata of society, in this case among the upper class only.

The collection of taxes shows to what extent the municipal élite could direct their power. As Epstein states, taxation had a dual character which affected intensely the development of the late medieval state. It was a means of taking away from, and of distributing to, individual and collective interests. The *gabbellotti* were agents of the élite of the island of Malta and the *Universitas* itself, and came from that same élite. By bestowing upon oneself the right to collect taxes, the local élite increased their personal power to the detriment of the state. On the other hand, taxation strengthened the collective power of the élite.⁵² Thus taxation tended both to deteriorate and on the other hand to reinforce the power of the state. Political stability depended to a large degree on finding the correct balance between the two extremes: taxation and to maintain political effectuality.⁵³

Notes

- ¹ R. Valentini, 'Documenti per Servire Per la Storia di Malta 1458-1466', in *Archivio Storico di Malta*, Anno X, Fascicolo I, 1939.
- ² C. Dalli, 'Medieval Communal Organization in an Insular Context: Approaching the Maltese *Universitas*', in *Heritage Supplement*, p.9.
- ³ S.R. Epstein, *An Island for Itself: Economic Development and Social Changes in Late Medieval Sicily*, C.U.P., Cambridge, 1992, p.52.
- ⁴ S. Fiorini, 'Malta Towards the End of the Fifteenth Century', in S. Fiorini and G. Aquilina, (ed.), *The Origin of Franciscanism in Late medieval Malta*, pp.6-7.
- ⁵ S.R. Epstein, *An Island for Itself*, pp.131,139, 178, 186-190 and 303.
- ⁶ G. Wettinger, *Acta Juratorum et Consilii Civitatis et Insulae Maltae*, Palermo, Associazione di studi Malta-Sicilia, Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani, 1993, Henceforth *Acta*. *Acta* no. 593 (17.iii.1475).
- ⁷ H. Besc, 'Sicile, Malte et monde Musulman', in S. Fiorini and V. Mallia-Milanes, *Malta: A Case Study in International Cross-Currents*, (ed.), Tableau 11 University of Malta, Malta, 1991. The dates given in the table are from 1399 to 1450. As from 1442, the Desguanes family had a primacy. Antoni and Ingarao Desguanes seem to be those who sponsored the armaments to the different patrons of the said *corso* expedition. H. Besc, 'The 'Secrezia' and the Royal Patrimony in Malta: 1240-1450', in A. Luttrell, (ed.), *Medieval Malta: Studies on Malta Before the Knights*, The British School at Rome, London, 1975, p.146.
- ⁸ S. Giambruno and L. Genuardi, *Capitoli delle Citta' Demaniali di Sicilia approvati sino al 1458*, i, Palermo, 1918, pp.325-391.
- ⁹ A. Mifsud, 'L'Approvvigionamento e l'Università di Malta nelle Passate Dominazioni', in *Archivum Melitense*, iii, 36-58. (equivalent to 5 tari of silver)
- ¹⁰ Letter by Viceroy *Acta* no. 700 (10.iii.1478).
- ¹¹ *Acta* no. 219 (6.x.1462), 801 (30.x.1480), 971 (15.iv.1499).
- ¹² C.Dalli, 'Medieval Communal Organization', pp.11-12.
- ¹³ *Acta* no. 495 (20.vi.1473).
- ¹⁴ S. Fiorini, 'Malta towards the end of the Fifteenth Century', p.6. *Acta* no. 463 (18.x.1472), 835 (26.vi.1481), p.838 (29.vi.1481).
- ¹⁵ G.Wettinger, 'The Militia List of 1419-1420', *Melita Historica*, V, 2, 1969, pp.80-106.
- ¹⁶ S. Fiorini, 'Malta towards the end of the Fifteenth Century', 6.
- ¹⁷ C. Dalli, 'Capitoli: The Voice of an Élite', *Proceedings of History Week*, 1992, 9, The Malta Historical Society, 1993, p.15.
- ¹⁸ C. Dalli, 'Capitoli: The Voice of an Élite', pp.1-12.
- ¹⁹ C. Dalli, 'Capitoli: The Voice of an Élite', p.11.
- ²⁰ Intimidate and vexing the majority of the population.
- ²¹ *Acta* no. 124 (19.iv.1461).
- ²² C. Dalli, 'Capitoli: The Voice of an Élite', p.11.
- ²³ *Acta* no. 738 (2.ix.1479). C. Dalli, 'In *Frontiera Barbarorum*: Waiting for the Turks in Late medieval Malta', *Proceedings of History Week*, 1994, The Malta Historical Society, 1996, p.119.
- ²⁴ *Acta* no. 623 (12.ix.1475). Letter of appointment by the Viceroy, *Acta* no. 616 (22. viii.1475).
- ²⁵ C. Dalli, 'Medieval Communal Organization', p.9.
- ²⁶ *Acta* no. 725 (11.xii.1478).
- ²⁷ G. Wettinger, 'Honour and Shame in Late Fifteenth Century Malta', *Melita Historica*, viii, 1, 1980, p.70. When in 1484 it was feared that part of the town walls were collapsing, permission was given from Palermo for their repair. These had to be paid either from the *collecta* revenues or from the sale of meat and impositions of levies on Maltese exports.
- ²⁸ *Acta* no. 538 (19.xi.1473).
- ²⁹ *Acta* no. 889 (20.xi.1482), 888 (19.xi.1482).
- ³⁰ *Acta*,no. 56 (4.x.1454), 859 (16.ix.1481).
- ³¹ *Acta* no. 782 (2.viii.1480); 'di la quilli ki anno di tri salmi di terra insusu'.

³² *Acta* no. 873 (9.x.1482).

³³ *Acta* no. 865 (27.ix.1482). 'Called Catherine'.

³⁴ S. Fiorini, 'Malta in 1530', in V. Mallia Milanese, (ed.), *Hospitaller Malta 1530-1798; Studies on Early Modern Malta and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem*, Mireva Publications, Malta, 1993, p.130; R. Valentini, 'Documenti per Servire alla Storia di Malta: 1458-1466', p.66. It amounted to 2 *denari per rotolo*; A. Mifsud, 'L'Approvvigionamento e l'Università di Malta nelle Passate Dominazioni', p.200. This tax is found only twice in the documents under review.

³⁵ *Acta* no. 835 (26.vi.1481).

³⁶ List of Regulations of 29.vi.1481, Univ. 11, f. 488-489, no. 838, *Acta*. 'The castrated meat will be sold at 24 dinari every rotulo on the tax in concern, the ox will be sold at 12 dinari every rotulo according to the tax all the year, pig's meat at a measure will be sold at 18 dinari and will be payed 2 dinari for the tax on meat all the year'.

³⁷ *Acta* no 890 (22.xi.1482). A black slave called 'Abdalla' belonging to Johannes de Nava is seized by the town authorities on account of the seven *uncie* which De Nava still owed for his share of the *collecta* imposed for the defence of the town.

³⁸ S. Fiorini, 'Malta Towards the end of the Fifteenth Century', p.7.

³⁹ C.Dalli, 'Medieval Communal Organization', pp.9-10.

⁴⁰ G. Wettinger, 'The Castrum Maris and its Suburb of Birgu during the Middle Ages', in S. Fiorini, M. Buhagiar, L. Bugeja, (ed.), *Birgu-A Maltese Maritime City*, 2. Vols., Malta, 1993, pp.45-53.

⁴¹ S. Fiorini, 'Malta in 1530', p.172.

⁴² *Acta* no. 916 (11.iv. 1483), and no, 643 (31.vii.1476) respectively.

⁴³ *Acta* no 503 (28.vii.1473).

⁴⁴ E. R. Leopardi, 'Bandi of the XV Century', *Melita Historica*, ii, 2, 1957, 10.ix.1462, f. 164; 11.xi.1471, f. 215; 19.iii.1473, f. 235 and 30.vi.1473, f. 250r.

⁴⁵ E. R. Leopardi, 'Bandi of the XV Century', *Melita Historica*, ii, 2, 1957, 21.vi.1472, f. 250.

⁴⁶ E. R. Leopardi, 'Bandi of the XV Century', *Melita Historica*, ii, 2, 1957, 8.vii.1472, f. 256.

⁴⁷ E. R. Leopardi, 'Bandi of the XV Century', *Melita Historica*, ii, 2, 1957, 14.x.1474, f. 308.

⁴⁸ Bando of 11.ix.1473, Univ. 11, f. 262, no. 525-527, *Acta*.

⁴⁹ C. Dalli, 'Medieval Communal Organization', 10, *Acta* no. 503 (28.vii.1473).

⁵⁰ 'Ground-floor house with combined kitchen, courtyard and the old hall', *Acta* no. 503 (28.vii.1473).

⁵¹ C. Dalli, 'Medieval Communal Organization', p.10.

⁵² H. Bresc, 'The 'Secrezia' and the Royal Patrimony in Malta: 1240-1450', pp.147, 151.

⁵³ S.R. Epstein, *An Island for Itself*, p.387.

TOWARDS A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL UNDERSTANDING THE MALTESE PRINTED PRODUCT 1642-1839

William Zammit*

Within the overall context of a nation's cultural heritage, due importance should be given to the literary patrimony inherited from the past. This has traditionally often been subjected to low priority at the decision-making level as to how to utilise the limited resources assigned to historical preservation in small states. Such an attitude has probably been a direct result of misconceptions as to what constitutes cultural heritage, with the term being reserved for the more monumental or otherwise visually appealing masterpieces from the past.

Written works of the past, whether in printed or manuscript form, are of absolute necessity for the understanding of the society that produced them. They may in fact be considered as the major source for the understanding of past historical societies in a way the more physically tangible works of art, albeit more appealing to the eye and hence more profit-generating, can rarely be. This is especially true with regards to printed matter which reached and influenced directly the beliefs, opinions and general mental disposition of a wide reading audience.

The recording and description of the literary activity of the past necessitates the compilation of calendars of manuscripts and of retrospective bibliographies which are, indeed, indispensable for the tracing of what would otherwise be irretrievably lost or overlooked material. With this realisation, individuals, often backed by institutions, have devoted years of patient research in the production of such bibliographical tools. Names such as A.W. Pollard,

*William Zammit graduated B.Ed.(Hons.) in 1987. He followed the Diploma in Library and Information Studies, graduated M.A. (History) in 1996 and has recently obtained a Ph.D degree in History. He has published a number of papers on Maltese history and retrospective bibliography.

G.R. Redgrave and D. Wing, who have produced bibliographies of British imprints from 1475 to 1700, as well as those of others in various countries, have become synonymous with outstanding works of retrospective bibliography. In the late 1970s the British Library initiated the *Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue* (ESTC), a mammoth computer-based bibliographic project, attempting to describe all eighteenth-century English language imprints. The project has attracted the co-operation of a number of American and European academic institutions and is still going on.¹ Similarly in Italy a project is currently being undertaken for the tracing and bibliographical description of sixteenth-century Italian imprints. As in the case of ESTC, the Italian project involves the co-operation of hundreds of public and private libraries.²

Current state of Maltese bibliography

In Malta, unfortunately, we still lag considerably behind in the field of retrospective national bibliography, there being rather few who have devoted their research to this aspect of cultural heritage. Maltese bibliography has benefited from the Islands' connection with the Order of St. John. Smitmer (1781), Hellwald (1885). Rossi (1924) and Mizzi (1970) have produced outstanding bibliographies of the Order of St. John, comprising a considerable corpus of material relating to Malta.³ These, however, cannot be considered as bibliographies of Melitensia in the strict sense of the word. Padre Pelagio's eighteenth-century manuscript *Cronologia degli Scrittori Maltesi* may be considered as one of the earliest attempts at Maltese retrospective bibliography. This was followed by Ignazio Saverio Mifsud's *Biblioteca Maltese*, printed in Malta in 1764 and a landmark in local bibliography, describing, by contemporary standards of course, the works of authors related in any way to the Maltese Islands down to 1650. Mifsud was a rather prominent priest and lawyer in mid-eighteenth century Malta whose sizeable collection of manuscripts and books has survived in part and still awaits in-depth study. Mifsud's bibliography was inspired by Mongitore's *Biblioteca sicula* published some years earlier. The next important development came nearly a century later with the publication, by Antonio Schembri, of his *Selva di Autori e Traduttori Maltesi* (Malta, 1855), describing works published by Maltese authors in Malta and abroad. Schembri's work was based mostly upon the holdings of what was then known as the Government Library, nowadays known

as the National Library of Malta, the foremost collection of Melitensia in the world. Since Schembri's time, Maltese retrospective bibliography has mainly concentrated on specific subject areas, or else has taken the form of catalogues of collections or of exhibitions of Melitensia – valuable in themselves since they often include material not to be found in public collections. A bibliography of Maltese bibliographies has also been published.⁴ A most important development came with the publication, by the National Library, of an annual national bibliography of Malta, starting from 1983. The publication of the national bibliography has effectively initiated bibliographical control over the literary output concerning Malta whether printed locally or abroad. For pre-1983 works however, bibliographical control leaves much to be desired.

Vicissitudes of Maltese printing : 1642-1839

Prior to discussing the locally printed product and its cultural significance within contemporary society, a brief account of the history of printing in Malta is in order. The first known attempt at the introduction of printing on the Island has been traced back to the 1630s, on the initiative of Grand Master Jean Paul Lascaris Castellar (1636-1657). Failure to reach an agreement with the Holy See over who was to exercise censorship controls led to the attempt being abandoned. In 1642 Pompeo de Fiore, a local entrepreneur of Sicilian origins, petitioned the local secular and ecclesiastical authorities to be allowed to establish printing on the Island. On 8 March 1642, Inquisitor Giovanni Battista Gori Pannellini administered the printers' oath to de Fiore and on 17 June Grand Master Lascaris conceded to de Fiore the required licence to commence printing, together with a twenty year long monopoly within the Order's domain for himself and his successors on condition that his press satisfied local printing demands. Not much is known on this short-lived seventeenth-century press except from what may be deduced from its product. By the late 1650s disputes over censorship procedures brought Maltese printing activity to an end.

Following the cessation of local printing, printing requirements – as prior to 1642 – were met by foreign, mostly Sicilian and southern Italian, presses. Attempts at the re-introduction of printing, necessitated through an increasing bureaucratisation of the Order's government, proved futile until 1756, following Grand Master Emanuel Pinto's (1741-1773) agreement regarding censor-

ship procedures with the Holy See. The new press, a state-owned monopoly, functioned between June 1756 and the end of the Order's rule in June 1798.

The French occupation of the Maltese Islands resulted, at least in theory, in the removal of press censorship though not of the state's monopoly. It moreover witnessed the publication of the first newspaper, the *Journal de Malte*. British occupation and subsequent rule down to 1839 kept the basic characteristics of state ownership and monopoly. Permits for the establishment of other presses were limited to those issued to the Sicilian regiment's press and that of the Commissariat as well as to a number of missionary societies, the latter to produce material exclusively for export. Ordinance IV of 1839 granted freedom of the press as well as the right to establish private presses. This was eagerly taken up and within a short time private presses flourished.

The seventeenth-century printed product

Maltese imprints dated between 1642 and the mid-1660s provide otherwise unavailable information on the seventeenth-century press's output. The sixteen works attesting to have been printed locally, of which copies eleven have been traced to date⁵, are listed below:

In Malta Imprints: 1642 to 1644

A. 1642 to 1646 (Printer Unknown)

1. [Due fogli di certe conclusioni, Malta, 1642] Work printed in December. Reference: NLM Lib. Ms. 1121, f.74

2. I NATALI / DELLE RELIGIOSE / MILITIE / De' Cavalieri Spedalieri, e Templari, e della / Religione del Tempio l'ultima roina. / DEL COMMENDATORE / FRA GERONIMO MARULLI / Da Barletta. / [coat of arms of Order] / IN MALTA, L'ANNO MDCXXXIII. / Con licenza de' Superiori. (Octavo, [4], 50 p. A - E2, F3. Provenance: NLM, ACM)

3. [Le virtu' della pietra di San Paolo, e delle lingue, ed occhi di serpe preziosi, quali si trovano nell'isola di Malta, Malta, 1643] Work printed in Italian and French. Reference: G. Zammit-Maempel (1978), 214.⁶

4. INGENTIS / TURCARUM / MYOPARONIS, / ET ONERARIAE NAVIS, A SEX MELIVETANAE. / Classis Triremibus Expu- / gnati; Narratio. / Melite Superi-

orum permissu. (Octavo, [8] p. Provenance: NLM)

5. RELATIONE / DEL SANGUI- / NOSO COMBAT- / TIMENTO, E PRESA / D'UN GALEONEE, [sic] D'UN / PINCO DE TURCHI / fatta dalle Galere di Malta alle Cro- / ciere di Rodi il dì 28 di 7mbre / 1644. / [coat of arms of Order] / IN MALTA CON LICENTIA DE SUPERIORI. (Quarto, [8] p. On p. [6]: 'Malta li 7 d. Novembre 1644'. Work was reprinted in Rome by Ludovico Grignani. Provenance: AOM 1769, ff. 93 - 96.)

6. [Le virtu' della pietra di San Paolo, e delle lingue, ed occhi di serpe preziosi, quali si trovano nell'isola di Malta, Malta, 1646]. Reference: G. Zammit-Maempel (1978), 221.

7. [Statuti et Ordinationi dell' Eminentissimo Gran Maestro Wignacourt e suo Venerando Consiglio sopra gl'armamenti. Dati in luce per ordine dell' Illustrissimi Signori Presidente e Commissarij del Magistrati di detta armamento. In Malta, 1647. Con licenza de' superiori]. Reprinted in Messina in 1658. Reference: G. Gatt (1946), 73, giving location of work as AOM 210, f.245 (untraceable).⁷

B. 1647 to 1648 (Paolo Bonacota, printer)

8. ELOGIO / AL COMMENDATORE / FRA RINALDO BECH / LA BUISSERE / CAVALLIERO GIEROSOLLIMITANO. / Del Commendatore / Fra FABRITIO CAGLIOLA, /Dottore, e Religioso dell' istesso Ordine / IN MALTA, Per Paolo Bonacota 1647. / Con licenza de' superiori. (Octavo, 31p., A - D2. Dedication dated 13 April 1647. Provenance: NLM)

9. DELLA / DESCRITTIONE / DI / MALTA / ISOLA NEL MARE / SICILIANO / CON LE SUE ANTICHITA', ED ALTRE NOTITIE / Libr Quattro. / DEL COMMENDATORE / FRA GIO: FRANCESCO ABELA / Vicecancelliere della Sacra ed Eminentissima Religione/ Gierosolimitana. / [engraving] / IN MALTA, / PER PAOLO BONACOTA, MDCXLVII/ CON LICENZA DE SUPERIORI. (Folio, [17], 573, [16] p. Introduction dated 10 July 1647. Provenance: NLM)

10. L' ISMERIA / O SIA / L' ALLEGREZZE / DELLA FRANCIA / Nei Stupori dell' Egitto / Del Commendator / F.[ra] CARLO MICHALLEF / [coat of arms of Lascaris] / IN MALTA, / Per Paolo Bonacota 1648. / Con licenza de' superiori. (Dodicesimo, [22], 194 p., A - G6, H7. Introduction dated 24 December 1647. Provenance: NLM)

C. 1649 to ca. 1664 (printer unknown)

11. RELATIONE / DELLA FESTA / Celebrata in Malta / AD HONORE DI

SANTO / FRANCESCO / XAVERIO / APOSTOLO DELL' / INDIE / Drizzata all' Illustrissimo / Conte Xavier. [Vignette] / IN MALTA con licenza de' Superiori. 1649. (Octavo, [4], 21 p. Introduction dated 6 January 1649. Provenance: NLM)

12. REGIO DIPLOMA / DELLA CONCESSIONE / FATTA DAL RE CRISTIANISSIMO / DI FRANCIA HOGGI REGNANTE ALLA SACRA RELIGIONE GIEROSO. / DELL' ISOLA DI S. CHRISTOFARO, E D' ALTRE A' LEI ADIACENTI / NELL' AMERICA / TASPORTATO DAL FRANCESE IN ITALIANO / IN MALTA CON LICEZZA [sic] DE SUPERIORI. (Quarto, [4] p. Letter to Lascaris on p. [4] is dated 19 April 1653. Provenance: NLM Lib. Ms. 647 unpag.)

13. [Vertus admirables de la pierre de St. Paul & les langues & yeux des serpents precieux, qui se trouvent en l'isle de Malte. Malte, 1654] Reference: G. Zammit-Maempel (1978), 214.

14. BREVE RELATIONE / DELLA VITTORIA OTTENUTA ALLI 26 DI / GIUGNO 1565 DALL'ARMATA / CHRISTIANA CONTRA LA TURCHESCA. / IN MALTA (Quarto, [4] p. Printed post 9 August 1656. Provenance: AOM 1769, ff. 304-305.)

15. [Within border cornice] PROBLEMI GEOMETRICI / CAVATI / DAL CAVALLIERO F. D. EMANUELE / ARIAS, E PORRES / CASTIGLIANO / DELLA SACRA RELIGIONE GIEROSOLOMIT. / Dal Trattato della Geometria militare Detato / IN MALTA / DAL P. GIACOMO MASO' / Della Compagnia di Giesù / Professore della Matematica. / [coat of arms of Lascaris] / IN MALTA CON LICENZA DELLI SUP. (Quarto, 40 [i.e. 48] p. The typographical mark of Giovanni Francesco Bianco appears on p. [33]. Masò was a teacher of mathematics at the Jesuit College of Malta during the years 1655 to 1658. Provenance: NLM)

16. L' ANNIBALE / IN CAPUA / MELODRAMA / Posto in Musica / DAL SIGNOR VINCENZO TOZZI / Maestro di Cappella. / DELL' ILLUSTRISS. SENATO / Della Nob. & Esempl. Città / DI MESSINA. / Rappresentato nel Teatro del detto / illustrissimo SENATO / L' Anno 1664. / In Malta con licenza de' Super. / Si vendono per Rocco Mellini Libraro / Nel Piano di S. Maria. (Dodicesimo, [10], 92 p. Dedication to Messinese patrician, dated 10.11.1664. Provenance: Biblioteca Statale di Lucca)

Independently of all other constraints, particularly readership and the imported literature market, the brevity of the Maltese press's functioning in seventeenth-century Malta must understandably have had a decisively limited effect upon the influence of its product and hence of its cultural role. An

analysis of the press's known product does reveal a preponderance of works directly relating to the Order. No less than five out of the total sixteen known works may be described as anonymous official or semi-official publications of the Order, the former comprising the 1647 *Statuti* and the 1653 *Diploma*, the later of the three *Relationi* of 1644 and 1656. Such works, serving administrative or propagandistic requirements of the Order, must have been aimed primarily towards its members and Europeans with an interest in the Order's affairs. Certainly their appeal to the general Maltese reading public must have been limited. Marulli's *I Natali*, Cagliola's *Elogio*, Michallef's *L'Ismeria* and to a lesser extent, Galdiano's *Relatione* also primarily concerned the Order or its individual members, and were of interest to such, though not as exclusively as the previously mentioned works.⁸ Thus rather more than half the works known were mainly, at times exclusively, of interest to the Order or its members, and so to a restricted reading public within an already limited one.

Abela's *magnum opus* of 1647 was, in more ways than one, the outstanding product of the Maltese seventeenth-century press. Culturally, its pioneering emphasis on Malta rather than on the Order deserves a separate in-depth study. The work went far beyond a historical or contemporary account of the Maltese Islands, and the selection of topics and historiographical methodology used were aimed towards providing the Maltese cultured class with a historical basis for national pride and a justification for considerate treatment by its ruling European elite.⁹ Abela's work certainly appealed to the Maltese cultured class, becoming a standard reference work both locally and abroad,¹⁰ even if actual sales of its first edition lingered on for more than a century.¹¹ Arias y Porres' *Problemi geometrici* was a textbook of practical utility, of relevance mostly to those members of the Order and the Maltese attending the Jesuit class of mathematics or those involved in the military.¹²

As is normally the case, literature of a more popular type, albeit understandably having the greatest dissemination, is least known due to its ephemeral nature. Thus no copy of the 1643, 1646 and 1654 editions of the magico-religious *Virtù della Pietra di San Paolo* handbills have been traced. A Magisterial *pragmatica* issued on 25 May 1644 expressly prohibited the importation of specified minor works with the stated intention of having such works

printed locally. Apart from the above mentioned *Virtù* handbills, the *pragmatica* prohibited the importation of a variety of minor works, for the benefit of de Fiore's press. These comprised *libretti di S. Croce, dell'A.B.C., Psalterj, Donati, Dottrine, Luni nuovi, Pronostichi, o Lunarj, Indulgenze che Servono per quest'Isola di Malta, [ed] il Principio cioè l'Evangelio di San Giovanni*.¹³

The eighteenth-century printed product

The eighteenth-century press product – circumscribed within the parameters imposed by the institutions controlling the press and determined by the individuals or institutions who actually commissioned works – certainly contributed, as elsewhere, towards the formation of opinion and the general intellectual disposition of its literate audience.¹⁴ The various constraints of a practical, institutional, economic and at times linguistic nature, hindering the widespread availability of printed matter of foreign origin, definitely augmented the degree of influence enjoyed by the locally printed product. The latter thus provided what has been termed as 'the literary experience of ordinary readers'.¹⁵ The influence of the locally printed product must have permeated down to the illiterate majority of the local population via verbal communication with its literate, read counterpart as well as with the considerable production of printed imagery.

The degree of interaction between the locally printed product and its contemporary audience is difficult to determine. Whereas much is known regarding the product itself in terms of subject-matter, format and size of editions, its actual dissemination is much harder to ascertain. Information regarding book selling practices by itinerant pedlars or established dealers is limited to the names of a couple of known booksellers.¹⁶ Even less is known regarding printed matter stocked and volume of sales. Book auctions are known to have been held, the titles being occasionally listed by their buyers.¹⁷

In view of the paucity of alternative sources of information, the records of the Order's press constitute the most valid source for a study of the relation between the locally printed product and its audience. The contents of the press's records provide information on three different aspects of the printed product.

First and foremost the subject-matter of printing commissions was, in the vast majority of cases, given. Content was determined by those commissioning material as well as by the requirements of the wider audience by whom it was eventually to be acquired. What was available, in turn, certainly influenced choice of reading, especially that of the general public for whom alternative literature was more difficult of come by.

Secondly, knowledge of content is, in many cases, complemented by data regarding the number of copies printed. This information is of paramount importance as it is indicative of demand, since normally print runs would reflect expectations as to the number of copies one expected to sell, distribute or make use of in any way. At times high expectations did prove ill-founded, as evidenced by known instances of both private printing requests and of material published by the press itself for sale to the general public.¹⁸ Criticism of the mediocre quality of some local publications by a learned, if spiteful, foreign observer in the 1780s¹⁹ was grudgingly acknowledged by a Maltese nobleman.²⁰ The relation between size of editions and the actual disposal of copies printed is recorded in the case of the press's own publications. These provide the best evidence regarding the sales pattern of local publications.

A third factor influencing the dissemination of local imprints was language. The vast majority of the Maltese eighteenth-century press product was published in Italian. The few exceptions to this were official ecclesiastical publications and the requirements of the Order's langues for which Latin, French and Spanish were often used. Italian was the *lingua franca* of the Order as an institution, of the administration and of the Maltese literate population and its virtual monopoly over the locally printed product is understandable in that context. The Maltese language, familiar to all classes of Maltese society had still, by the second half of the eighteenth century, remained at the level of a spoken but mostly unwritten language. Maltese was normally precluded from cultured conversation, it being exclusively used by the uneducated majority of Maltese. Foreign rule, cultural prejudice originating from the Maltese language's Semitic roots and the absence of standardised orthography and grammar, were primary reasons for the lack of interest taken in the indigenous language by the Maltese cultured class.²¹ Occasionally, literature in Maltese, usually poetry, popular festive rhymes and sermons, was recorded in manu-

script.²² Isolated instances of patriotic feelings on the part of the Maltese cultured elite towards their native language included the Cathedral canons' insistence for the newly appointed Bishop Pellerano to address them in Maltese during his first official visit to the Chapter, a request with which his Maltese descent enabled him to comply.²³ The widespread knowledge of Italian by the literate population must have dampened any attempt at publishing works in Maltese since those who did not know Italian were, in any case, illiterate and thus unable even to read literature in the vernacular. The few works printed in Maltese tend to confirm this assertion. Thus the 1780, 1786, 1789 and 1795 local reprints of Francesco Wzzini's pioneering catechism *Taghlim Nisrani* (Rome, 1752) followed the original format of providing a Maltese text with a parallel Italian one. This, as well as the fact that copies of the 1752 edition are known to have been specifically intended for the clergy teaching catechism, confirms that such works were aimed towards use by the priesthood for the teaching of standardised vernacular catechism rather than for their independent use by those not competent in Italian.²⁴ While literature in Maltese may still, given illiteracy, not have reached the lower echelons of society, its non-availability certainly did nothing to promote the acquisition of literacy by the uneducated masses. Its gradual availability may have resulted in the establishment of standardised orthography and grammar, as occurred elsewhere,²⁵ this contributing, in turn, to its eventual acceptance. The lack of printed matter in Maltese considerably lessened the incentive for overcoming illiteracy since this required the mastering of both literacy and competence in a foreign language. It was only in 179 and 1796 respectively that the first grammar and vocabulary of the Maltese language were published by M.A. Vassalli. The latter work contained Vassalli's pioneering address to the Maltese nation in defence of the Maltese language.²⁶

This table provides a detailed breakdown of the subject-matter of the Maltese eighteenth-century press product as elicited from the surviving press registers.²⁷ Printing requests have been divided into six major subject headings, covering all types of printed matter. The type of subject-matter commissioned remained fairly constant throughout the press's existence. Thus no appreciable variation has been observed from traced printed material from the years 1782-90, 1794-98 for which the press records are not known to have survived.

**Printing Commissions by Subject:
1756 - 81, 1791 - 93**

SECULAR LITERATURE		
Subject Category	%Total	Totals
Legal Submissions	19	340
Book-Size Publications	3.8	68
Theatre Libretti/Serenades	3	55
Minor Literary Works	2.5	44
Almanacs	1.6	28
Handbills	1.5	27
Exchange Rate/Price Lists	0.6	10
Book Advertisements	0.3	5
Total	32.3	577
RELIGIOUS/ ECCLESIASTICAL LITERATURE		
Subject Category	%Total	Totals
Thesis, Theological & Liturgical Works	3.9	72
Liturgical Calendars		
A) The Order of St. John	1.6	28
B) The Capuchin Order	1.6	28
C) The Maltese Diocese	1.5	27
Devotional Works		
A) Minor	6	107
B) Book-Size	1.5	27
Ecclesiastical Administrative Literature	5.6	100
Crociata Indult, other Indulgences	2.3	40
Total	24	429

SECULAR INSTITUTIONAL LITERATURE		
Subject Category	%Total	Totals
Various Branches of Government	11.3	202
Order of St. John (non-religious works)	5.5	98
Other Local Institutions	0.5	9
Total	17.3	309
PRIVATELY COMMISSIONED EPHEMERA		
Subject Category	%Total	Totals
Visiting Cards and Invitations	6.7	118
Miscellaneous Tickets and Forms	5.2	93
Bills of Exchange and of Lading	2.5	44
Product Labels and Wrappings	1.7	31
Total	16.1	286
OTHER		
Subject Category	%Total	Totals
Unidentified Subject-matter	1.8	32
Miscellaneous Subject-matter	0.2	3
Total	2.0	35
TOTAL PRINTING COMMISSIONS	100	1784

Source: AOM 2038-2065

French and British rule : 1798-1839

The rapid political changes and general stability prevailing in the Maltese Islands between June 1798 and May 1814 were unparalleled in modern Maltese history. The succession of three radically diverse political entities must have resulted in significant social implications for the Maltese, requiring considerable mental adjustment. Each new order resulting from political change was

consciously and effectively passed on to the population through the output of the Government press which retained absolute monopoly. Administratively, French rule brought about two major developments regarding the press in Malta: the end of diocesan, Inquisitorial and – if only in theory – of government press censorship and the publication of the first local gazette, the intensely pro-French *Journal de Malte*. Though brief, the French occupation (June 1798-September 1800) did leave its mark upon the subject-matter of the printed output of the *Imprimerie Nationale* – as the Order's press was renamed. A steady stream of government decrees, often in parallel French and Italian texts, were printed. This contrasted with the situation during the Order's rule when the vast majority of the Grand Master's *Bandi* remained in manuscript. The French occupation was moreover characterised by a marked decrease in the printing of popular devotional literature.

Strict political control over the press was maintained during the British Protectorate, justifiable perhaps by war; not so its perpetuation down to 1839. The few alternative presses allowed were not available for use by the general public. The publication of gazettes mainly for propaganda, initiated during French rule, was continued down to the end of the Napoleonic Wars with the publication of *Foglio d'Avvisi* (1803-1804), *L'Argo* (1804), *Il Cartaginese* (1804-1810) and *Giornale di Malta* (1812-1813) in succession. Eventually these gave way to the *Gazzetta del Governo di Malta* (1813-), containing a selection of government and public news items. A press register covering the years 1804-1805 has survived and provides an insight into printing commissions of the time.²⁸ Apart from the publication of gazettes, there was little difference from the printed output of the Order's press.

The earliest known other-than-government press in Malta was that belonging to the Sicilian regiment. This regiment, in existence between 1808 and 1813, was one of a series created by the British for foreigners. A number of small works were printed at the regiment's press by Gaspare Sevaglios, a sergeant of the regiment. Traced works from this press are described in the following list:

Traced output of the *Stamperia del Regimento Siciliano* (1810-1813)

1. Egloga pastorale per la fausta elezione di sua eccellenza il general

maggiore Hildebrand Oakes nuovo regio civile commissionario delle isole di Malta, Cumino, e Gozo: omaggio spontaneo/dell'impresario Filippo Scovazzo. – La Valletta, à dì 14 maggio 1810: dalla stamperia del reggimento siciliano per G. Sevaglios sergente stampatore. – 10 p. ; 19 cm. (Private collection)

2. Corona di sonetti con egloga per accademia sulla passione di N.S. – In Malta, MDCCCX: dalla stamperia del reggimento siciliano per G. Sevaglios sergente stampatore. – 28 p. ; 20 cm. (NLM)

3. Notizie, proclami, e relazioni autentiche molto interessanti, estratte dalle gazzette e dai fogli di Spagna, tradotte e pubblicate dal suo console in Malta, il cavaliere D. Alberto de Megino. – In Malta, 1810: dalla stamperia del reggimento siciliano per G. Sevaglios sergente stampatore. Title-page reproduced in *Don Alberto de Megino, un Ilustrado Zaragozano de la Epoca de Fernando VII* by Francisco Asin Ramirez de Esparza (Zaragoza, 1979)

4. *Osservazioni sul modo di allevare I bambini in Malta fatta da uno straniero che in quest'isola ha soggiornato per varj anni*: traduzione dall'inglese. – Seconda edizione. – In Malta, MDCCCXI: dalla stamperia del reggimento siciliano per G. Sevaglios sergente stampatore. – 21 p.; 21 cm. (NLM)

5. *Giornale di Malta*. The first 46 issues seem to have been printed at the Sicilian regiment's press; the following issues (47-94) were printed at the government's press.²⁹

6. *Ordini permanenti per il reggimento siciliano di fanteria leggiera nel servizio di Sua Maestà Britannica*. – Seconda edizione. – Malta : dalla stamperia reggimentale, presso G. Sevaglios sergente stampator, 1813. – iv, 146, [11], 16 p.; 19 cm. The first edition was published in 1808. The work contains references to, and facsimilies of, other items regarding the regiment which were also printed by the regiment's press. (NLM)

An important development during the first years of British administration was the slow but steady trickle of publications in the English language. The

characteristics of the printed output for the years 1800 to 1836 may be gleaned from the list of local publications between those years, published in the Royal Commission report of 1836.³⁰ The 1804/05 press accounts, the 1836 list, as well as the actual holdings of the public and private collections provide the basis from which a comprehensive bibliography of Maltese imprints for the period 1798 to 1839 may be compiled.

Notes

¹ R.C. Alston, M.J. Crump, eds., *The Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue* (London, 1983), produced in microfiche and later in CD-ROM format. For information regarding the project see *Factotum: Newsletter of the XVIII Century STC* (1979-1987).

² Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo Unico delle Biblioteche Italiane e per le Informazioni Bibliografiche, *Le Edizioni Italiane del XVI Secolo: Censimento Nazionale* (Vol. 1, 1985; Vol. 2, 1989; Vol. 3, 1993)

³ F.P. de Smitmer, *Catalogo della Biblioteca del Sagro Militar Ordine di S. Giovanni Gerosolimitano oggi detto di Malta* (s.l., 1781); F. de Hellwald, *Bibliographie Méthodique de l'Ordre Souv. de St. Jean de Jérusalem* (Rome, 1885); E. Rossi, *Aggiunta alla Bibliographie Méthodique de l'Ordre Souverain de St. Jean de Jérusalem de Ferdinand de Hellwald* (Rome, 1924); J. Mizzi 'A Bibliography of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem (1925-1969)' in *The Order of St. John in Malta: XIII Council of Europe Exhibition* (Malta, 1970).

⁴ P. Xuereb, *A Bibliography of Maltese Bibliographies* (Malta, 1978)

⁵ Other works which were probably printed locally have been traced. Thus a printed Magisterial Bull, dated 21.7.1645, though lacking a colophon, is typographically very similar to 1643-44 local imprints. This Bull is bound within NLM Lib. Ms. 672, f. 8.

⁶ 'Handbills extolling the virtues of fossil sharks' teeth', *Melita Historica*, viii, 3 (1978), 211 - 224.

⁷ 'L-istampa f' Malta', *Il-Malti* (June 1946), 70 - 76

⁸ *L'Ismeria's* popularity is proved by its later reprinting in Venice and Viterbo; F. De Hellwald (1885), 170; I.S. Mifsud (1764), p.294.

⁹ A.T. Luttrell, 'Girolamo Manduca and Gian Francesco Abela: Tradition and Invention in Maltese Historiography', *Melita Historica*, vii, 2 (1977), pp.105-119.

¹⁰ E.R. Leopardi, 'Abela's Work throughout Three Centuries', in *Gian Francesco Abela* (Malta, 1961), pp.23-29.

¹¹ As late as October 1771, that is on the eve of the publication of Ciantar's edition, the Order's Treasury still held five copies of Abela's work which were available for sale; AOM 704, F. 543.

¹² On the Jesuit school of mathematics see S. Fiorini, 'The Development of Mathematical Education in Malta to 1798: A Case Study of Cross-Cultural Influences', in *Malta: A Case Study in International Cross-Currents*, pp.111-145.

¹³ Copy of *Pragmatica* in NLM Lib. Ms. 23, ff. 293-294, reproduced by A. Gauci (1937), pp.205-206.

¹⁴ R. Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?' in *Books and Society in History*, ed. K.E. Carpenter (London, 1983), pp.3-21.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.4.

¹⁶ A certain Genebri, bookseller and binder active during the 1750s to the 1790s, regularly mentioned in the annual press registers and Matteo Rizzo *Libraro alla Piazza de' Mercanti*, referred to in M.A. Vassalli's *Associazione al Dizionario Maltese-Italo-Latino* (Malta, 1792).

¹⁷ Especially by I.S. Mifsud, eg. NLM Lib. Ms. 14, pp.217, 230-232, listing books bought from auction of books formerly pertaining to deceased *uditore* Raffaele Callus in 1764.

¹⁸ As in the case of I.S. Mifsud's *Biblioteca Maltese* and G.A. Ciantar's *Malta Illustrata* respectively.

¹⁹ G.D. Rogadeo, *Ragionamenti...* (Lucca, 1780), p.18, 'non hanno [I maltesi] cognizione alcuna nè delle belle Lettere, nè delle facoltà, anzi gli stessi nomi degli Autori più celebri, e più rinomati sono loro ignoti'.

²⁰ G. Pisani, *Lettera di una Maltese... su i Cinque Ragionamenti del Cavaliere Gian Donato Rogadeo* (Vercelli, 1783), pp.33-34, 'ed ho, volesse Iddio, che nè da Malta, nè da altre parti... non si vedessero più comporre opere le quali fanno veramente gemere i torchi, e metter in problema se la stampa abbia fatto più male che bene alla letteratura'.

²¹ For a historical analysis of Maltese bilingualism see C. Briffa, *Il-Bilingwizmu f' Malta* (Malta, 1994), pp.6-25.

²² These were mostly recorded by I.S. Mifsud in his *Stromati* collection (NLM Lib. Mss. 1-24); see J. Zammit Ciantar, 'Malti tas-Seklu Tmintax', *Hyphen*, iv, 5 (1985), pp.178-206.

²³ NLM Lib. Ms. 1146/2, f. 7v.

²⁴ AAM *Edicta* 1750-57, ff. 95, pp.98-103.

²⁵ L. Febvre, H.J. Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450-1800* (London, 1976), pp.319-332.

²⁶ O. Friggieri, ed. 'Essays on Mikiel Anton Vassalli', special issue of *Journal of Maltese Studies*, pp.23-24, (1993), *passim*.

²⁷ AOM 2038-2071, *Libri Giornali della Stamperia di Sua Altezza Serenissima, 1756-1781, 1791-1793* and other related material.

²⁸ NLM Lib. Ms. 1207: *Stamperia da Luglio 1804 sino Luglio 1805*; see also W. Zammit, 'Printing in Malta during the British Protectorate', in *Liber Amicorum: Essays on Art, History, Cartography and Bibliography in Honour of Dr. Albert Ganado* (J. Schirò, S. Sorensen, P. Xuereb, eds.), Malta, 1994, pp.89-98.

²⁹ E. Parnis, *Notes on the First Establishment, Development and Actual State of [the] Printing Press in Malta* (Malta, 1916), p.8; no source indicated.

³⁰ *Rapporto dei Regj Commissionarj d'Inchiesta al Principale Segretario di Stato di Sua Maestà per le Colonie, sull'Utilità d'Introdurre la Libertà di Stampare e di Publicare in Malta* (Malta, 1838), pp.23-25.

PRISON LIFE IN MALTA IN THE 18TH CENTURY VALLETTA'S GRAN PRIGIONE

David Borg-Muscat*

Malta's *ancien régime* slaves' prison - *la Prigione dei Schiavi* - which was located in the city of Valletta, has been the victim of historiographical neglect. To date no monograph has ever been published on the subject and a detailed study has yet to be made of prison life in *ancien régime* Malta.¹ The wholesale demolition of this building has contributed in no small part to the fact that its exact location in Valletta is, for many, a matter of conjecture. That no trace of this building remains has reinforced the mystery which shrouds the *Prigione* and which prevents us from understanding its exact role within the structures of power built up in early modern Malta by the Order of St John. Were it not for its obliteration the *Prigione dei Schiavi*, or *bagno*, as it was popularly referred to, would surely rank prominently among Valletta's oldest buildings, having been attributed to the sixteenth-century architect Gerolamo Cassar.² The prison was

a lofty quadrangular building, standing on the brow of a hill fronting the grand harbour. It is isolated, being bound by *Strada* St Ursula in front, the ramparts behind, *Strade* St Christophoro and Pozzi on either side. It consists of three stories, and occupies a nearby equilateral space about 400 paces in circumference.³

Its size was such that it could easily house over 900 inmates.

In the 1780s, John Howard, who was at the forefront of a prison reform movement then gathering momentum in England, visited Malta and left a brief description of the internal organisation of the *Prigione dei Schiavi*.⁴ Howard restricted himself to stating that the inmates 'have many rooms and each sect their chapels or mosques and the sick rooms apart'.⁵ He saw no

*A history graduate, David Borg-Muscat obtained an M.A. in history in 1999 with a dissertation on 'Absolutism and the Power of Social Control in Malta: 1775-1825'.

apparent reason to criticise the conditions within the prison. The interesting element in his description is the observation of different religious denominations within the same building. In fact, the *Prigione dei Schiavi* was not just a compound into which slaves were herded at night for the safety of Maltese citizens, but was actually the government's principal jail. Official documents refer to it as *la Gran Prigione*. Its principal function was the punishment of all malefactors, whether Christian or Muslim. Despite Howard's observations there are indications that conditions within the prison were rather execrable. In November 1778, Father Peter Carolus, describing himself as *Catecumenorum in Ergostolo Vall(etta) Civitis*, appeared before the Tribunal of the Holy Inquisition to report a case of heretical behaviour by the Christian inmates.⁶ Carolus stated:

As the Missionary of the Slave Prison I sleep close to the Christian Chapel that is to be found in that prison, and each morning the caretaker in charge of the prisoners' sleeping quarters comes to me and relates to me the disorders that would have happened the previous night. This morning the aforementioned caretaker ... came to me at an early hour, bringing with him these [damaged] holy artefacts of the *Beata Vergine del Consiglio* and this gesso Crucifix which both hung on the wall of the loft in the big room where the old prisoners sleep.⁷

Carolus described the big room as a dormitory which housed eighteen soldiers from the Magistral Regiment, incarcerated there for various misdemeanours. However, the prisoner charged with damaging the holy images put the number of men sleeping and living in the dormitory at thirty-four.⁸ Each inmate had his own little patch for personal items and rough bedding, either in the lower part or in the upper part of the dormitory - a loft - which was reserved for the older inmates. Sacred images were provided for the edification of the prisoners.⁹ The *Gran Prigione* also had single-prisoner cells which were used as lock-ups for recalcitrant prisoners, without segregating these totally from the other inmates. In *Discipline and Punish* Michel Foucault emphasised the development of the concept of isolation as an integral element of the nineteenth-century penitentiary.¹⁰ But in fact punishment by physical isolation was not at all unknown to the *ancien régime*, although it did not then carry the same meaning that it was later to assume - when isolation was used as a means of inducing introspective self-examination.¹¹

The *ancien régime* prison was not a penitentiary. It did not aim at rehabilitat-

ing the criminal nor did it aspire to be a 'total institution' which, through disciplinary measures, would seize control of the soul, the seat of human emotions.¹² The concept that detention was in itself enough to expiate the offence caused to society by a crime was only just beginning to gain currency in the late eighteenth century. The rationale behind *ancien régime* punishment operated entirely on the basis of inflicting a degree of suffering on the miscreant. Terror would serve to announce the fact that sovereign power was thereby extracting its due amount of justice from the criminal. *Ancien régime* punishment, more often than not, had a physical dimension to it; branding, whipping and the infliction of blows with a cudgel are just a few of the methods employed. Sovereign power, in gaining control of the criminal, could also put the malefactor at the service of the state by inflicting harsh labour punishments, which often included a measure of physical suffering. Hard labour on the Order's galleys for a period of three years - even a lifetime sentence - was a frequently-employed punishment in *ancien régime* Malta.¹³ The *Gran Prigione* therefore served to house all the prisoners at the government's disposal, whether slaves or freemen. In effect the prison was a massive workhouse. The majority of its inmates comprised the muscle power used to drive the galleys. But there were also other types of labour punishments. In the *Bilancio Settennale* Bosredon de Ransijat points out that the slaves within the prison were employed in making cotton canvas for the sails of the Order's galleys.¹⁴ Other slaves housed in the *Gran Prigione* made up the 'gangs of the galleys ... [or are] employed on the lands of the [Hospitaller] Religion'.¹⁵ Unfortunately Ransijat says nothing about the employment of the Christian prisoners, but the government tended not to differentiate between its slaves and Christian prisoners and often put these to work side by side. In this manner the *Gran Prigione* inmates provided the government with a considerable workforce with which to operate its extensive war industries. The prison was also accessible to the public and it became notorious for a range of ancillary services: the slaves' love potions and spells were greatly demanded by any person suffering the pangs of unrequited love. The building also housed a men's hairdressing and shaving establishment. Priests 'gave rise to scandal when they went to be shaved by a Muslim barber in order to save some money. They even went to the slaves' prison to have their hair cut'.¹⁶ The prisoners were also frequently allowed to gather at the main gate to beg for alms.¹⁷ Even though labour was a form of punishment the government took pains to ensure that this sizeable amount of muscle power was not decimated

by disease. To this end an infirmary was established within the *Gran Prigione*. This provided medical services for both public- and privately-owned slaves. The owners of private slaves had to pay four *tari* per day.¹⁸ The state did not provide for female slaves, presumably because these could only be employed as domestics and therefore were of no value to the government. To a certain extent the medical services lavished on the government's prisoners were in keeping with the rationale behind the *ancien régime* mercantilist scheme of things, by which, labour power augmented the wealth of the state. It must be pointed out that since the galleys were also employed in incursions against the Ottoman Infidel such expeditions often reaped booty for the Order's coffers.

The easy accessibility to the public of the *Gran Prigione* should not be taken as an indication that justice was mild. Punishment was exacting and rigorous and prisoners who had sought sanctuary went to extraordinary lengths to prevent being denied ecclesiastical immunity. Archival evidence corroborates this view and indicates that a prisoner under Episcopal authority was materially better off than a prisoner in the *Gran Prigione*. Joannis di Giorgio appeared before the Tribunal of the Holy Inquisition, in April 1778, denouncing a person for blasphemy. He stated that:

In the Episcopal prisons here in the City of Valletta ... there is imprisoned Franciscus ... of Zabbar ... who has been in these prisons for eighteen months ... but as from three months ago he has become desperate, and continuously blasphemes ... I must add that the cause of this person is so criminal that the Government demands [the power] to proceed with the case in the Lay Court, and this has made [Franciscus] even more desperate.¹⁹

Unlike the communal sleeping quarters of the *Gran Prigione* the Episcopal prison had separate cells for its inmates; yet prisoners were also allowed a gregarious lifestyle. In 1771, Ignatius of Casal Zebbug went to the Episcopal prisons to visit his son, who had been imprisoned there together with four of his friends. These had all been 'put each one in his own lockup'. When Ignatius arrived at the prison:

having taken with me some comestibles for my son I found all of that gang of five prisoners had brought their own meal, and therefore I re-

mained there to lunch with them Out in the street there was a certain person called Benigno, I don't know from which *Casal* he hails, who lunched with us from outside the window ... while all six of us were inside eating next to the window to enjoy the company of this Benigno.²⁰

These are isolated cases and practically nothing else is known about the operation of punishment within the Episcopal prisons. In contrast, it might be worth stating that the atmosphere among the *Gran Prigione* prisoners was described in no uncertain terms as one in which 'nobody could claim to have a friend, on the contrary, all are enemies of each other, and traitors each and every one'.²¹

The ability to control the fractious inmates of the *Gran Prigione* did of course depend very much on the operation of an internal structure of disciplinary measures. In the Christian quarters the prisoners themselves were roped into this disciplinary structure, thereby resulting in a loosely-organised hierarchy among the inmates. The sixty-six-year-old Antonius Sacco was *servus pene in ergastulo Civ. Valletta* yet also described himself as a guard [*un guardiano*].²² It was his duty to discipline recalcitrant prisoners by clapping these in the stocks. The older inmates of the prison took on the task of tending the holy images in the dormitories. These were frequently the butt of obscene jokes by the younger prisoners resulting in rancour between the older and younger prisoners.²³ Voluntary damage to the religious artefacts constituted an act of protest - heretical behaviour - for which all the prisoners could be held liable. When, in the case mentioned above, the religious artefacts were discovered to be damaged, the older prisoners closed ranks. The *guardiano* stated that 'they came to me, and they unanimously told me to put in the stocks the prisoner whose surname is Caiazzo' as the one most likely to have inflicted the damage.²⁴ When the *guardiano* tried to arrest this Caiazzo and found resistance, all the other prisoners raised their voices together and accused Caiazzo of being a 'Godless soul'. 'And together they all took him to the stocks, and put him in them and continued to hurl insults at him'.²⁵ This indicates that among the prison inmates there operated a considerable amount of peer pressure tending towards internal discipline, obviously to prevent the dread hand of official punishment falling upon all the inmates.

The official structure of discipline within the *Gran Prigione* rested on the *Prodomo*, the *Agozzini* and the *carcerieri*. The *Prodomo* assumed the role of governor of the prison and would have been a Knight of the Order of St John. Ranking below him, were the *Agozzini* and *carcerieri*. The former were responsible for distributing the prisoners as work gangs among the Order's galleys and, having direct control of the prisoners, could grant these limited permission to leave the prison, pocketing a payment of six *tari* per month for this privilege.²⁶ The *carcerieri* maintained a register of prisoners and possibly also acted as guards.

Within the *Gran Prigione* the *Prodomo* was allowed sweeping powers over the inmates, enabling him to arbitrarily decide upon the punishment to be meted out to recalcitrant prisoners. Display was an integral element of *ancien régime* punishment, which had to have its spectators to ensure that the power to punish and control was being observed.²⁷ In public punishment the spectacle of display occupied a prominent role. Even in segregated communities, such as the *Gran Prigione*, an example had to be made of a fractious inmate by engaging in a ceremony of display which inflicted both humiliation and physical suffering on the prisoner. In this ceremony the prisoner was:

taken round the prison with a paper mitre covering his head, a tongue brace in his mouth, held by his arms by two Turkish Slaves, who guided him on his way, and the Executioner, who dealt blows [on his back]. After this punishment he was handcuffed in irons, and locked up in a cell, and in the evening was sent to the Holy Inquisition.²⁸

A worse fate was in store for those whose misdeed involved a great degree of violence. On 31 July 1779, a Turkish slave was executed for the murder of another slave and his severed head was displayed in the courtyard of the *Gran Prigione*.²⁹ This type of display served as a grisly reminder that even in the prison the power to punish was a sovereign prerogative not to be taken lightly. In the event that the perpetrator of a criminal misdeed could not be discovered all the prisoners suffered. At one point the *Gran Prigione* inmates stated that:

injustice, is being inflicted on us, whereas previously we carried a small chain attached to our feet, ever since the French Soldier escaped

they have put the big chain on our feet, making us pay unjustly for someone else's crime.³⁰

The subject of *ancien régime* punishment in Malta would not be complete without mention of the *corda* and the *cavaletto*. In the *corda* the criminal's hands were tied behind the back, attached to a rope which was thrown over a beam in the ceiling and hauled into the air, hanging there for a period of time, then let down, then raised again. The *cavaletto* was a wooden horse with a sharp back on which the prisoner was seated, with weights tied to the legs.³¹ It would be worth clarifying the use to which the *corda* and *cavaletto* were put. These did not constitute modes of punishment but were employed as instruments of torture in the inquisitorial process, to extract a confession - a statement which contained details that none but the criminal could possibly know. By its very nature the inquisitorial process was secretive and the *corda* and *cavaletto* could not therefore constitute public display. *Ancien régime* jurists, in the implicit belief that the inquisitorial process was the most equitable form of criminal investigation, had raised the *corda* to the status of *regina probationum*, the queen of proofs.³² But throughout the eighteenth century this almost total reliance on the inquisitorial process and on physical punishment began to draw vociferous attacks from philosophes and prison reformers. In *De l'Esprit des Lois* Montesquieu stated that the infliction of terror by physical punishment implied despotic government. Following the publication of Cesare Beccaria's *Dei Delitti e Delle Pene* (Livorno 1764) the European debate on the mitigation of physical punishment reached a crescendo. Calls for reform attained a strident note and, even though counter-arguments favouring the retention of torture were still put forward, a degree of humanitarianism did infiltrate the judiciary via the legal codes which were then being commissioned by the Enlightened absolutist rulers of Europe.³³ In many cases these late eighteenth century codes were a compromise between the old and the new. The Habsburg Nemesis Theresianus is a case in point.³⁴ In Malta, a degree of humanitarianism in the treatment of prisoners can be observed in the legal code - *Del Dritto Municipale di Malta* - commissioned by the Prince Grand Master Emanuel de Rohan Polduc, published in 1784. Before torture was to be applied, for example, the criminal's robustness and general ability to endure torture had to be ascertained.³⁵ The *corda* could not be applied for more than one hour at a stretch. If the situation was such that a prisoner would immediately succumb to the strain of the *corda*, the 'milder' torture on

the *cavaletto* was to be employed and this the criminal would have to suffer for a length of time not exceeding twelve hours.³⁶ The officials of the courts and prisons were also enjoined to treat the inmates in a more humane manner. The *Avvocato Fiscale* was given the responsibility of maintaining a list of prisoners held by the government, ensuring that this official was aware of the amount of time it took for the Courts to settle a criminal's case. As with the lists kept by the *carcerieri* this had an important function since the *ancien régime* prison was quite frequently a place in which people were left to rot, forgotten by society and authority. This official was also instructed to 'ensure in a most diligent manner that these cases should be hastened and terminated'.³⁷ The prisoners had their own official in-house protector, the *Protettore de' Carcerati*, a position which, having a charitable dimension to it was to be assumed only by a Knight of the Order of St John. The *Protettore de Carcerati* was to ensure that:

the welfare, and protection of the prisoners [would be seen to], such that these should lack nothing within the extent that falls within the required amount composing human laws, and justice.³⁸

To maintain this principle the *Protettore de Carcerati* was to visit the prisons, see to the prisoners' needs, and even follow up the proceedings of the *Avvocato de' Poveri*. The latter official catered for the legal requirements of the more needy prisoners at the government's expense. *Del Dritto Municipale* also instructed the *carcerieri* not to be inhumane towards their prisoners:

The *carcerieri* are obliged to practise every possible act of humanity with the prisoners, and for every single one of their [the prisoners'] needs must inform the *Protettore de Carcerati* ... of these same [prisoners].³⁹

Some of the legal preoccupations with torture and the treatment meted out to prisoners, mentioned above, had already put in an appearance in the 1720s legal code, *Leggi e Costituzioni Prammaticali*, issued during the reign of Grand Master Manuel de Vilhena.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, the 1780s' changes to the legal code do exhibit a greater humanitarian concern for the prisoners. Humanitarianism should not be confused with leniency. Until the end of Hospitaller rule in Malta the *Gran Prigione* remained an important factor in the government's structures of power, playing its part in ensuring greater social

control and discipline. This was achieved by placing the prison population at the service of the state, primarily on its galleys but even in other industries. The ability to control this enclosed community was itself dependent on a regime of internal discipline. All in all, the *Gran Prigione* played an integral role in the control of the various social groups making up the population within the walls of the city of Valletta and the Grand Harbour area.

Notes

¹ See J.F. Grima, *The Galley-Squadron of the Order of St John, its Organisation between 1596 and 1645*, unpubliished M.A. Thesis, University of Malta 1975 and J.F. Grima, 'Gente di Capo on the Galleys of the Order in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century', *Hyphen*, II, 2, 1979. See also J. Muscat and J. Cassar, 'The Gozo Prisons Graffiti', *Melita Historica*, XI, 3, 1994.

² L. Mahoney, *5000 Years of Architecture in Malta* (Malta 1996), p.313.

³ *Appendix V to the Second Report on Quarantine: Report of Dr. W. H. Burrell on the Plague of Malta in 1813*, London, 1854, p.45.

⁴ P. Cassar, 'A Medical Service for Slaves during the Rule of the Order of St John of Jerusalem', *Medical History*, XIII, 3, 1968, p.276. John Howard was touring Europe, collecting material for his forthcoming publication: *An Account of the Principal Lazarettos in Europe*. See also M. Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain: the Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850*, London 1978. In 1773 John Howard, fired by the belief that prisons should not merely be institutions of abusive administration but rather battle-grounds in which the state was involved in a fight between good and evil, set out on a prolonged tour of England examining every prison that existed. He published his conclusions on prison reform in 1777 in the best-selling *The State of the Prisons*.

⁵ *Ibid*, p.276.

⁶ AIM Criminal Proceedings Vol. 133 C, Case 380, 24 November 1778, f. 978.

⁷ *Ibid*, f. 979.

⁸ *Ibid*, f. 997 r.

⁹ *Ibid*, f. 978 r.

¹⁰ M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, London 1977, pp.236-239.

¹¹ H. Gross, *Rome in the Age of Enlightenment - the Post-Tridentine Syndrome and the Ancien Régime*, Cambridge 1990, pp.224-225.

¹² Foucault, pp.236-239.

¹³ See D. Borg-Muscat, *Absolutism and the Power of Social Control in Malta: 1775-1825*, unpublished M. A. dissertation, University of Malta 1999, *passim*.

¹⁴ *Bilancio Settennale del Venerando Commun Tesoro, Dal primo Maggio 1778 a tutt'Aprile 1785*, Malta 1786, p.67.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁶ A. Bonnici, 'Maltese Society under the Hospitallers in the Light of Inquisition Documents', in *Hospitaller Malta 1530-1798, Studies on Early Modern Malta and the Order of St John of Jerusalem*, ed. V. Mallia-Milanes, Malta 1993, p.319.

¹⁷ Libr. 431 Bandi della Gran Corte della Valletta, Vol. 1: 1800-1803, 15 April 1801, f. 61.

¹⁸ Cassar, p.272.

¹⁹ AIM Criminal Proceedings, Vol. 132A, Case 49, 24 April 1778, f. 233r-235r.

²⁰ *Ibid*, Vol. 130, Case 32, 28 November 1771, f. 171.

²¹ *Ibid*, Vol. 133C, Case 380, 8 December 1779, f. 998 v.

²² *Ibid*, 25 November 1779, f. 979v.

²³ *Ibid*, 2 December 1779, f.993 r.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 25 November 1779, f. 979 v.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 130, Case 25, 18 September 1772, f. 133v.

²⁷ Foucault, pp.32-69.

²⁸ AIM Criminal Proceedings Volume 133C, Case 380, 24 November 1778, f. 978.

²⁹ NAM Libro di Carcerati 1773-1781, 29 June 1779, f. 169.

³⁰ AIM Criminal Proceedings Volume 133C Case 380, 24 November 1778 f. 981r.

³¹ P. Cassar, *The Castellania Palace: From Law Courts to Guardian of the Nation's Health*, Malta 1988 pp. 31-32.

³² E. Peters, *Torture*, London 1985, p.48.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp.89-98.

³⁴ H.M. Scott, 'Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy: 1740-90', in *Enlightened Absolutism: Reform and Reformers in Later Eighteenth-Century Europe*, ed. H.M. Scott (Macmillan 1990), p.159.

³⁵ *Del Dritto Municipale di Malta, Nuova Compilazione con diverse altre Costituzioni*, Malta 1784, Libro Secondo: De Giudizj, Article XXXI, p.84.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Articles XXXVII and XL, p.85.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Libro Primo, Capo Quarto, Article X, p.12.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Capo Quinto, Article I, p.14.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Capo Sesto, Article XIX, p.18.

⁴⁰ See Cassar, *The Castellania Palace*, passim.

GIVING BIRTH IN 19th CENTURY GOZO 1876-1893

C. Savona-Ventura*

In the first half of the sixteenth century, the Maltese Islands were given to the Order of St John of Jerusalem, who had been ousted from Rhodes by the Turks. The Knights of St John brought with them their hospitaller traditions maintaining a high standard of medical practice influenced markedly by Continental medicine. At the turn of the nineteenth century the power struggle in the Mediterranean resulted in the Islands eventually falling under British dominion, with medical developments being influenced more and more by British standards.

Until the mid-twentieth century, the majority of confinements were domiciliary under the supervision of a midwife, the presence of a male doctor in the delivery room being tolerated only in cases of extreme danger. The specific midwifery staff in the Government medical service in 1896 included only an Accoucheur and Teacher of Practical Midwifery and a midwife, both with duties at the Central Hospital at Floriana in Malta. Routine obstetric work was performed by the resident medical officers in the hospitals. At Victoria Hospital in Gozo, no provision appears to have been made in the 1896 Colonial Estimates for specific midwifery staff, though provisions for a midwife appear in the 1879 estimates. It is probable that a midwife was employed under the terms of a female nurse.

The island of Gozo is the second smaller island of the Maltese archipelago situated in the Central Mediterranean with an overall area of 26.974 sq miles and a total population in 1864 of 16038 individuals. The first woman hospital in Gozo dedicated to St. Julian dates to 1454. In 1783 a new women hospital accommodating fifty patients and receiving also unmarried pregnant women

*A medical doctor, C. Savona Ventura is the author of a number of publications mainly on medical history. This article is based on records of the Maternity Unit at the Gozo Hospital.

who sought refuge at the approach of labour was built. These facilities were transferred in 1838 to the Hospital of St John the Baptist situated at Rabat. This hospital changed its name to Victoria Hospital on the occasion of Her Majesty's Queen Victoria Jubilee in 1887.

From the foregoing description of maternity care practiced in Malta and Gozo in the late nineteenth century, it appears that mothers delivering at the various hospitals constituted a selected group of the population with specific sociobiological characteristics. The Register of Admissions and Discharges for Lying-in Women at Victoria Hospital for the period 29 March 1876 to 30 April 1893 (2 vols) were reviewed. There were a total of 396 admissions to the maternity unit, of which 358 (90.4%) delivered their infant/s. The registers included information pertaining to patient identification (name, surname, nickname, birthplace, and residence), to the patient's sociobiological characteristics (age, marital status, profession, spouses occupation, parity, religion, economic status), and information about the medical and obstetric history of the patient together with notes on the present pregnancy. The latter data has been dealt with elsewhere.

The Colonial Estimates for 1896 suggest that the staff at the Gozo Hospital included only a visiting Physician-Surgeon-Superintendent, a Resident Assistant Physician-Surgeon, a Matron Sister of Charity, a female nurse and two male nurses (one provisional and temporary), and a Chaplain, a Porter, a Cook, and a Mattress Maker-Tailor (provisional and temporary). Allowance was made for the occasional employment of Extra Medical officers and other staff. The District Medical Service in Gozo employed a further three medical officers.

During the period under review the post of Medical Superintendent was occupied by Dr. B. Mercieca, a post he held until 13 May 1903 when he was replaced by Dr. N. Tabone. In 1896 the post carried a remuneration of £130 per annum. The post was not a residential one. The Resident Medical Officer received £70 per annum, and was required to reside in the Hospital at all times. The post of Resident Medical Officer was during the 16 year period occupied by four doctors in subsequent order, each of whom occupied the post for 5 - 6 years: Dr. L. Portelli (10/03/76 - 14/05/81); Dr. P. Zammit

(02/07/81 - 15/04/86); Dr. N. Tabone (13/10/86 - 15/11/92) and Dr. G. Gulia (24/11/92 - 20/03/93). Dr. G. Gulia apparently filled this post at least until 21 October 1902. The interim period between Dr. P. Zammit and Dr. N. Tabone who was apparently appointed around the 1 October 1886 was solely covered by Dr. Mercieca, who on the 9 September 1886 asked the assistant Government Secretary for Gozo Mr. R. Micallef to allow the hospital to be covered by Dr. G. Debono who was the District Medical Officer for the Rabat area. There were two District Medical Officers at any one time who were referring patients to the Lying-in Unit of the Hospital. The longest referring doctor was Dr. G. Debono who referred 235 patients (59.3%) during the period 16/04/77 - 20/03/93. Other referring doctors included Dr. P. Sammut (36 patients), Dr. G. Vassallo (65 patients), Dr. N. Tabone (7 patients), Dr. B. Mercieca (4 patients), and Dr. G. Zammit (1 patient). Dr. P. Sammut who referred patients during the period 29/03/76 - 12/07/81 was eventually appointed a Resident Medical Officer for the period 02/07/81 - 15/04/86, after which he entered into private practice during which time he had no referrals to the hospital. The District Medical officers in Gozo received £90 - 150 per annum depending on seniority.

The only midwife mentioned specifically by name for any period of time was Maria Cremona who is registered as conducting 101 deliveries during the period 11/08/81 - 15/04/86. Maria Cremona also appeared on a number of occasions as the child's godmother being registered so in 56 cases over a period ranging from 16/01/80 - 01/04/87 when there were a total of 169 deliveries (3.1%). Other midwives/nurses are mentioned by name in connection with single cases of delivery: Carmela Cordina (25/08/81), Maria Cordina (27/08/81) and Maria Camilleri (12/02/82). The latter was a hospital nurse who delivered a case of precipitate delivery. Another name which appears prior and after Maria Cremona frequently as godmother was that of Theresa Buhagiar who during the periods 07/02/77 - 28/04/79 and 11/11/87 - 28/01/93 was registered as godmother to the child on 22 occasions when there were a total of 152 deliveries (14.5%). The midwife conducting the deliveries is not named. Theresa Buhagiar was the midwife employed at the hospital prior to Maria Cremona who was appointed to the post on 16 December 1879. There did not seem to be any provision for the regular appointment of midwifery staff at the Gozo Hospital in 1896. The regularly employed midwife in the Central Hospital in Malta received £36

per annum. A female nurse in the Gozo Hospital received £22, while a male nurse received £36 per annum.

The majority of admitted patients (90%) eventually delivered their infants at the hospital. The mean annual number of admissions amounted to 23.5, with a minimum number of 13 admissions in 1876 and a maximum number of 33 in 1881. Thirty-eight admissions discharged themselves prior to delivery, so that there were a total of 358 deliveries during the period under review. The mean annual number of deliveries amounted to 21.1, with a minimum number of 11 in 1889 and a maximum of 29 in 1883. These deliveries accounted for approximately 4.4% of all the deliveries which occurred in Gozo during the period under review.

A large proportion of patients resided at Rabat/Victoria ($n = 174$, 43.9%), while patients from Xewkija accounted for 14.9% ($n = 59$). Other catchment areas included Caccia ($n = 28$), Qala (16), Zebug (17), Gharb (15), Kercem (17), Sannat (12), Nadur (12) and Ghajnsielem (11). The illegitimate pregnancies came from Rabat (10), Nadur (5), Caccia (4), Ghajnsielem (4), Sannat (2), Xewkija (1), Qala (1) and Gharb (1). Six mothers came from Malta (Valletta 2, Qormi 1, Mosta 1, Notabile 1, Sliema 1).

Marriages between couples from the same village were frequent accounting for 262 admissions (66.2%). All except ten resided in the village where they were born (Table 1). This observation is similar to that made for the late eighteenth century when in Xewkija and Gharb, marriage between couples from the same village accounted for 53.1 and 70.2% respectively, in contrast to the trends in many villages in Malta. Couples marrying from different villages often resided in either the wife's (26: 19.4%) or the spouse's (71: 53.0%) birthplace. Ten husbands were registered as residing in a separate place to their wives, either in Malta (4 cases) or abroad (6 cases). Married couples living separately without permission was considered a reserved sin without special penalties, so that it is likely that the separate residence of these couples reflected the high migration rate to Malta or elsewhere forced on by economic difficulties.

Village	No. of Marriages
Rabat	129
Nadur	8
Xewkija	42
Sannat	9
Qala	13
Zebbug	12
Gharb	12
Ghajnsielem	5
Kercem	10
Caccia	22
TOTAL	263

TABLE 1: Marriages between couples from same village

The mean maternal age of the women admitted to the hospital during the period under review was 32.26 sd 6.9 years with the youngest mother being aged 15 years and the oldest three patients aged 46 years (Table 2). Eleven women (2.8%) were aged less than twenty years, five of whom were unmarried. Age at marriage is an important demographic parameter about the past since the number of children born is particularly dependant on the age of the bride. A number of sporadic literary non-statistical references are responsible for the commonly held opinion that the Maltese in past times married young. However statistical analysis of age at marriage in the late eighteenth century in a town in Malta have shown the mean age at marriage was 22.6 years. In Gozo during the first half of the nineteenth century, the trend appears to be marriage at the age of twenty for the bride, and twenty-two for the bridegroom. The mean age of mothers having their first child in this present series (n = 59) accounting for 15.2% of the study population was 23.9 years, while if only legitimate pregnancies (n = 38) are considered then the mean age of primigravid married mothers was 24.9 years. The mean paternal age was 36.32 sd 10.1 years with the youngest father being 18 years and the oldest 83 years. There were six spouses (1.7%) aged under 20 years, while eleven were aged more than sixty - four were under 65 years, a further four were under 70 years, while three were aged more than 70 years. The paternal-maternal age difference was very variable with a mean of 3.8 sd 8.7 years with a marked tendency towards an older husband (59.7%). In only 27.6% was the woman

older than her spouse. The maximum age difference was of 53 years in two delivery instances: husband aged 80 years wife 27 years, and husband 83 years wife 30 years - these two deliveries referred to the same couple. A reversed difference with an older wife only reached a maximum of 16 years with the husband aged 24 years and the wife 40 years. The mean paternal age of cases having their first pregnancy was 27.5 years. Similar observations were made in various towns and villages in Malta for the late 18th century. Thus in Balzan bridegrooms were noted to be about three years older than their brides with a mean age of 25.8 years. An older woman than her spouse accounted for 20.9 - 27.1% of all marriages in various towns and villages in Malta.

Age no.	Maternal		Paternal	
	%	no.	%	no.
Under 20 years	11	2.8	6	1.7
20-24 years	55	13.9	34	9.4
25-29 years	58	14.7	45	12.4
30-34 years	105	26.5	74	20.4
35-39 years	83	21	60	16.6
40-44 years	78	19.7	78	21.5
45-49 years	6	1.5	25	6.9
50-54 years	-	-	22	6.1
55-59 years	-	-	7	1.9
Over 60 years	-	-	11	3
TOTAL			396	364

TABLE 2: Age distribution - maternal & paternal*

Grand multiparity appeared to have been a common feature in the late nineteenth century so that 35.9% of patients had had 5 - 9 previous pregnancies, while a further 8.9% had had ten or more previous pregnancies (Table 3). The mean previous gravidity excluding the index pregnancy was 4.4 pregnancies including abortions.

*husband unknown - 34



	No. of Children	Previous Pregnancies		Total Living Children
	no.	%	no.	%
Nil	59	15.2	69	17.4
1-4	159	40.2	241	60.9
5-9	142	35.9	84	21.2
10-14	32	8.1	1	0.3
Over 15	3	0.9	1	0.3
Unknown (4+)	1	0.3	-	-
TOTAL	396		396	
MEAN	4.4		2.7	

TABLE 3: Previous parity of all admissions

The perinatal outcome for the child born in the hospital was generally good, there being only a total of 16 infants born dead (stillbirth rate 44.0 per 1000 total births) and 23 infants who died soon after birth (neonatal death rate 66.1 per 1000 livebirths). The overall fetal-child wastage in the population as assessed from the previous parity of the admitted mothers appeared to be very high reaching 39.3%, so that the mean number of living children at the time of admission was 2.7 children, a figure suggesting a household size of 4.7 individuals. This figure is in excess to that quoted for four villages in Gozo during the previous century when mean household size was estimated at 3.7 - 3.9 individuals. A typical Gozitan household during the early nineteenth century has been reported to have consisted of six persons: two-three adults and three-four children. The actual average, excluding individuals living singly, was four per family in 1842 and 1851, but rose to almost five by 1861. A married couple produced an average of seven to ten children, half of whom normally survived infancy. In 1837, 48% of the annual deaths were of children under five years. The patient with the highest gravidity in the present series was a 40 year old married woman from Nadur who was in her 19th pregnancy at admission. All previous pregnancies were normal and she had 16 living children. Her husband was a 46 year old laborer. The mean parity by maternal age shows a gradual increase of parity with increasing age suggesting that no general method of birth control was in use (Table 4). Methods of avoiding conception in the late nineteenth century were known to the female population in Malta, though they were discouraged by the medical profession since the methods were considered to lead to congestion of the womb and subsequent invalidism. Some women practiced abortion; while *coitus interruptus* and other forms of *coitus ultra naturam* could have been the

form of contraception used.

Maternal Age	Mean Parity	Range
Under 20 years	0.09	0-1
20-24 years	1	0-6
25-29 years	2.7	0-8
30-34 years	3.6	0-10
35-39 years	5.9	0-11
40-44 years	7.1	0-18
45-49 years	10.8	5-14

TABLE 4: Mean previous pregnancies by maternal age

Mortality was apparently high even after childhood. Thus of the 747 known patient and spouses fathers, 339 (44.7%) were registered as dead at the time of hospital admission. This high mortality is in line with the known youthfulness of past society. In the late 18th century more than half the brides (51.3%) in Malta had one or both of their parents dead at the time of first marriage. The average age of the population in two villages in Malta was 28.7 - 30.3 years. The life expectancy in Gozo averaged 30.5 years before 1837. This low average life time was due to the fact that 48% of the annual deaths before 1837 were of children under five. By 1851, life expectancy fell further to 29.8 years, but after their twentieth birthday it rose to 42 years, lower than the overall rate of 44.1 years. It slightly improved by 1861 so that while in 1842 82 per 1000 of the population were over sixty, in 1861 the rate rose to 96 per 1000. There were a total of seven maternal deaths in the series (2.0%). A number of these were associated with pre-existing maternal conditions while the remainder resulted from intra or postpartum complications. The causes of maternal deaths included tuberculosis (2 cases), pneumonia, heart disease, enteritis, prolonged labour and puerperal infection.

The larger percentage (99.2%) of admissions were registered as paupers with only two cases being registered as paying patients. One unmarried woman of British parentage was admitted with the Comptroller's authority and registered to be normally resident at Sliema (Malta). She was aged 18 years and her occupation was that of a 'domestic'. She resided in the hospital for 52 days. The second case was similarly an 18 year old unmarried mother from

Valletta (Malta) admitted on the recommendation of the Assistant Secretary of Government. Her occupation was similarly that of a 'domestic'. She resided in the hospital for 94 days. A third case had no note regarding her paying status. She was a 36 year old widow from Notabile (Malta) whose occupation was that of a 'servant'. She resided in the hospital for 14 days. The infant was illegitimate. The low socio-economic status of the patients delivering in the Government hospital in the late 19th century is not surprising, since hospital confinements were usually limited to necessitous women or difficult cases, besides unmarried pregnant women who sought refuge at the time of their confinement.

The majority of women registered their occupation as laceworkers (362 women: 91.4%), while the remainder registered occupations such as spinners (19), servants (4), domestics (2), laborer (1), housewife (4) and beggar (3). One entry was illegible. The very high proportion of gainfully occupied women reflects the low socio-economic status of these families since the female found it necessary to supplement her spouses earnings. The lace industry was introduced in Gozo from Genoa in 1846 and developed fantastically by 1861. Women working lace earned over £0.013 a day. A woman spinning cotton from four in the morning till nine at night gained £0.014 after deducting costs. A woman agricultural laborer earned from about £0.017 to £0.037. The spouses occupation showed a wider diversity with the majority being registered as laborers (225 husbands: 62.2%). The next common employments were fishermen (43: 11.9%) and carters (28: 7.7%). The occupation profile (Table 5) reflects in part the social strata of the Gozo population in the late 19th century. In 1861, 66% of the population were gainfully employed. Of these 60.3% were artificers and laborers, 26.8% were employed in agriculture, 6.4% were mariners and fishermen, 3.5% were employed with commerce, 0.8% were government employees, while 2.2% were priests, land proprietors and in the professions. Members of the Regiment earned from £0.035 a day for privates to £0.204 for lieutenants. Artificers earned about £0.15 daily while masons earned £0.083 daily in 1864. Agricultural laborers earned about £0.125 daily, while fishermen earned about £0.009 a day after deducting expenses.

Occupation of Father									
	Artificers and Labourers	No.	Agriculture	No.	Mariners and Fishermen	No.	Commerce	No.	Government Employees
	Labourer	225	Farmer	5	Fishermen	43	Baker	5	Nurse
	Carter	28			Sailor/ Seaman	13	Carpenter	5	Gunner
	Driver/ Cabman	8					Dyer	2	Porter
	Grave-Digger	3					Fishmonger	4	
	Stonecutter	2					Shoemaker	3	
	Servant	1					Tradesman/ Dealer	2	
							Butcher	1	
							Barber	1	
							Lacemaker	1	
TOTAL		267		5		56		24	9
%		73.8		1.4		15.5		6.6	2.5

TABLE 5: Spouse Occupation

Five of the total admissions referred to obstetric history of the spouses of two hospital employees, employed respectively at the Civil Hospital and at the Ospizio. Paolo Busuttill was employed as an extra-nurse at the Civil Hospital. His birthplace and residence was at Rabat (Gozo). In 1885 he was aged 35 years. His wife was aged 31 years and had had already eight previous normal pregnancies of which six children were still living. She delivered her ninth child on the 9 September 1885. A subsequent admission in 1890 showed that the couple had had another pregnancy. They had their eleventh child on 27 March 1890. A subsequent admission in 1892 showed that out of eleven pregnancies only eight children remained alive. They had their twelfth child on the 11 July 1892.

Giuseppe Cefai was employed as a nurse at the Ospizio in Gozo. In 1890 he was aged 29 years. His birthplace and residence was Rabat (Gozo). His wife, aged 27 years, had had already four previous normal pregnancies with two living children. They had their fifth child on the 17 March 1890. In July 1892, she was admitted with her seventh pregnancy, when she was registered to have three living children. She discharged herself at request prior to delivery.

In 34 of the admissions the father was unknown (illegitimacy rate 8.6%). Of this group 27 women were unmarried, 4 were widowed, while 3 were married. An illegitimacy rate of 8.6% is high when compared to rates of 2.1% with a maximum of 4.3% at Rabat (Gozo) reported for the late 18th century. There were 11 maternal/paternal fathers in this study who were registered as unknown computing an overall illegitimacy rate of 1.7%. Prostitution was not foreign in Gozo, but after 1851 no prostitutes were officially registered. There was no brothel on the island. Amorous adventures were perhaps not uncommon, but any mischief arising was many times remedied by a hasty marriage. Unmarried girls sometimes even sought a pregnancy to force a marriage unwanted by parents. Pre-marital intercourse or cohabitation, like abortion, was a reserved sin with the penalty of excommunication. All the women delivering at the hospital were Roman Catholics.

The mean age of the unmarried women was 25.6 years with the youngest being 15 years and the oldest 40 years. The occupation of the unmarried was

generally given as 'laceworkers', while two were listed as 'domestics'. Five women came from Malta, three of whom were admitted by the Comptroller's or the Assistant Secretary to Government's authority. Two were paying patients. The mean duration of stay in the hospital was 22.6 days antenatally and 16.7 days postpartum, the longest staying patients being the ones from Malta - 117, 60, 107, 51 and 84 days. Only seven gozitan women stayed a prolonged duration - 69, 48, 58, 55, 44, 75, and 63 days, the first being detained 61 days in the puerperium to act as a nurse in the hospital. The other women stayed for a period of 1 - 27 days (mean 16 days). Two unmarried women discharged themselves at request prior to delivery. The majority of these women were primigravida (21: 77.8%), three were secondgravida, while three were having their fourth or fifth child.

The five widowed patients were generally older (mean age 39.0 years; range 28 - 46 years) and multiparous (mean parity 4; range 1 - 9). Three were registered as laceworkers, one a servant and one a beggar. All were non-paying patients except one whose status was not registered. She was a servant who normally resided at Notabile (Malta).

The mean duration of stay in the hospital was 17.6 days (range 1 - 49 days). The beggar was aged 46 years, a grand multipara with nine previous pregnancies, was admitted in labour and stayed only one day of the puerperium. The servant from Malta was aged 36 years, was having her fifth child and was admitted one day prior to delivery staying 12 days of the puerperium. The three married women having illegitimate children were aged 28 - 30 years, and were having their 2 - 5 child. Their occupations were registered as laceworkers (2 women) or spinner (1). All resided in Gozo. The duration of hospital stay ranged from 8 - 61 days antenatally and 7 - 14 days postpartum.

All but two illegitimate infants who survived the puerperium ($n = 32$) were all cared for by their mother. One was given to a nurse, while another was assigned to its grandmother's care. The church-run St Julian Hospital had a special ruota for the deposit of illegitimate babies. The hospital continued to receive illegitimate children, but not unwed pregnant mothers after the establishment of St John the Baptist Hospital. St Julian Hospital closed its doors in 1866 to become the Gozo Seminary. Fathers, from motives of conscience,

generally maintained their unwanted or illegitimate children.

Five women in the study had been previously widowed and had remarried. Their mean age was 35 years (range 28 - 40 years) and they had a mean of five previous pregnancies (range 1 - 9) with a mean of 2.5 living children (range 1 - 4). Their new husband's age ranged from 19 - 46 years (mean 35.8 years). The husband's occupations were registered as laborers (3 husbands), a farmer (1) and a porter (1). One woman may have been widowed during her current pregnancy. She was aged 29 years with 2 living children (3 previous pregnancies with one abortion). Her husband had been a gunman with the RMFA aged 47 years. The child was registered as legitimate. The average age of females applying to remarry in the late 18th century in Malta was 34.2 years, these remarrying after a mean of 3.1 years after the death of their original spouse.

The medical services in Malta and Gozo had been very well developed by the end of the 18th century as a legacy of the efforts and interests of the Knights of St. John. The majority of deliveries in the Islands were conducted in the home, generally under the supervision of a midwife or a birth attendant usually the mother of the mother-to-be. Midwifery practice was state and church controlled. The earliest evidence of state control of midwifery goes back to the first quarter of the 17th century. According to the regulations no woman was allowed to practice midwifery unless examined and approved by the Protomedicus and granted the requisite licence. The midwives required also a licence from the Episcopal Curia to enable them to practice. Formal training of midwives was entertained in 1772 when Dr GA Cren proposed a course of instruction consisting of monthly lectures and practical demonstrations to women intending to take up midwifery. These plans never materialized. The first classes held for the instruction of midwives were organised in 1802. This contrasts with the situation in the United Kingdom, where in spite of a number of individuals who pressed for the training and control of midwives, it was only after 1870 that a voluntary examination of proficiency in midwifery was introduced. The situation was different on the continent particularly France, Austria and Prussia.

The mean annual deliveries at Victoria Hospital in Gozo was 21.1, a number strikingly similar to that reported from Malta in the late 18th century. Hospi-

tal confinements in Malta were rare so that during the period 1750 - 1800 there were only 891 deliveries (17.8 annually) reported at Santo Spirito Hospital at Mdina, Malta. These women were usually necessitous women or unmarried mothers. The concept of midwifery care in the hospitals followed closely the concepts practiced on the continent particularly in France. The leading training school for midwives in France during the seventeenth century was the Hotel-Dieu in Paris. The hospital, in the tradition of its religious foundation, was a charity; anyone was accepted as a patient, and in the maternity wards no questions were asked. Many of the children were illegitimate. In 1678 some 1500 children were born. Women were admitted in the last two weeks of pregnancy. Puerperal fever was rife, even though visitors to the maternity wards were not allowed in without a pass. The Knights of St. John maintained a close relationship with French medicine, and the Professor of midwifery at the turn of the 18th century had trained in Paris. In his lecture notes of 1804, Dr. Butigiec refers to a large selection of authors ranging from the time of Hippocrates in the fourth century to contemporary obstetricians on the continent. On the latter group he refers to obstetricians from not only France, but also Austria, Italy, Holland, Germany and United Kingdom. In the United Kingdom, the first Lying-in institution for the relief of poor married women was only opened in 1739 by Sir R Manningham in Westminster. Permanent institutions were subsequently founded in the principal cities. The number of deliveries in these institutions remained low, so that in 1875 there were 394 deliveries in Queen Charlotte's Hospital, 400 in the City of London Hospital, 264 in York Road Hospital, and 155 in British Lying-in Hospital. At the beginning of the 19th century on the continent, the number of annual births in the *Maison d'Accouchements* (Paris) approximated 1842, while in the Hospital of St. Catherine (Milan) the number was 296.

In the 19th century, under British rule, conditions in medical care deteriorated. By 1836 the Colonial Government was spending only £6701 annually on hospitalization, just 67% of the amount spent in the preceding century by the Knights. Of this amount, only 7% was spent in Gozo, though the Gozitans formed 14% of the archipelago. By 1896 the situation had improved so that a total of £42370 were voted for the Charitable Institutions, with however only £640 being voted for the Gozo institutions.

With the policies of hospital admissions for maternity cases it is not in the

least surprising that the women delivering there came from the lower socio-economic groups of the community. This selection accounts for the discrepancies in the hospital statistics compared to the overall statistics for the Island. The stillbirth rate for the Gozo hospital stood at 44.0 per 1000 total births, a figure approximately 3.1 times the overall rate reported for Gozo in 1895 which stood at 14.2 per 1000 total births. The figure for Gozo was lower than that reported for Malta during the same year which was reported at 27.2 per 1000 total births. The infant mortality rate for the Maltese Islands stood at 224.9 per 1000 live births, while the death rate for neonatal 'affections consequent on parturition' stood at 32.95 per 1000 livebirths. The neonatal death rate in the Gozo hospital stood at 66.1 per 1000 livebirths. The rate of affections consequent on parturition was higher in Gozo at 60.5 per 1000 livebirths than in Malta at 25.9 per 1000 livebirths. These figures compare favorably with figures reported for England during 1838-39, when the neonatal death rate was 44 per 100 live births and the infantile death rate was 159 per 1000 live births.

When addressing the Royal College of Physicians in London in 1944, Sir Winston Churchill remarked that "The longer you look back the further you can look forward". No branch in medicine can claim a longer history than the art of midwifery. Until fifty years ago pregnancy and labour carried a significant risk of death for the mother, while the socio-economic status of the population was generally poor. The primary concern for all health professionals was the high maternal mortality. This was brought down before and after the second world war with the introduction of antimicrobials and freer access to blood transfusion. Prior to this a high fetal/neonatal wastage was acceptable. After the risks to the mother from pregnancy were minimised, then attention shifted to the perinatal mortality until this too was significantly reduced. *Pari passu* with developments in medical care, general improvements in the social conditions of the population have contributed towards the decline in obstetric mortality and morbidity.

HEALTH POLICY UNDER SELF-GOVERNMENT 1921-1934

Violet Brincat*

'Owing perhaps to Malta's role as a fortress in the Mediterranean very little attention seems to have been given to its Medical and Health History'.¹ By the First World War, Malta was again to play the role of nurse in the Mediterranean. This was certainly not the first time. At the time of the Hospitallers, Malta was not only used to fight the infidel but, with the Knights' *Sacra Infermeria* also to provide comfort and shelter for the sick and wounded. As a result of the Crimean war when Turkey joined the Central-Powers and it became necessary for the Allies to attack the Gallipoli Peninsula and the Dardanelles,² Malta was also called upon to house the sick and the wounded. The Maltese rose to the occasion and housed and gave assistance to hundreds of men. Even schools were turned into hospitals.

The main hospital was the Valletta Military Hospital, previously the Holy Infirmary of the Knights of St. John, easily reached because of its vicinity to the harbour. There were other hospitals, amongst which were the Cottonera Hospital, Bighi Hospital, Floriana Hospital, Hamrun Hospital.

A general hospital had existed since the mid-fourteenth century. This was called the Santo Spirito in Rabat (1347 - 1967). This building is still standing and is presently being used as the National Archives. The Holy Infirmary of the Order of St. John (1532 - 1575) was at first in Birgu before it was moved to Valletta. Besides, there was the Central Civil Hospital (1850 - 1954) at Floriana, now housing the police headquarters after refurbishment.

Already by 1878 the Central Civil Hospital had become inadequate to cater

*A history graduate, Violet Brincat's thesis, from which this article is taken, was: 'Malta under Self-Government 1921-1933: an Evaluation of how the Maltese used Self-Government during the Interwar Period'.

for the needs of the country. The suggestion that a new hospital for 354 beds be planned went unheeded at the time and many years passed before serious steps were taken for the building of a new hospital.

Actually it was under the premiership of Sir Ugo Mifsud (September 1924 - August 1927), under Act No. XXVIII, that provision was made for the construction of a general hospital for 450 beds.³ The promontory of Gwardamangia was chosen as a site.⁴ The sum voted amounted to £75,000. Here it is interesting to note that by coincidence a map of 1803 showing Valletta and its environs shows the word Hospital on almost the same site'.⁵ It was on 5 April 1930, that His Excellency the British Governor Sir John Du Cane together with the Prime Minister, Sir Gerald Strickland, and other distinguished persons, laid the foundation stone of the new hospital. Mr. Adams of the firm Adams, Holden & Pearson Architects was put in charge of the Hospital building and Mr. Frederick Charles Bonavia A&CE was Superintendent of Works. Stoppage of work was caused on two occasions, i.e. when Italy declared war on Abyssinia and again when Italy joined Germany in the last war. Eventually the new hospital became a most efficient one catering for the needs of the population on the entire spectrum of health.⁶

The money votes for the funding of St. Luke's came from Ordinance No IV of 1931 from the General Hospital Fund Account, and £270,000 were voted initially. Besides St. Luke's, the Government from 1925 to 1931 initiated a number of improvements such as clinics at the Central Hospital for Venereal Diseases at the cost of £1,000, the Hospital for Tubercular cases in Gozo at a cost of £3,300, and others.⁷

Hospitals were not the only projects which the Government then took in hand. Early in the century Malta was actually in the throes of two very serious and debilitating diseases. These were Undulant Fever or Brucellosis, and Trachoma, which were considered to be a scourge in the early part of the century. Both the Undulant Fever, which sometimes was called Mediterranean fever, and Trachoma were endemic in the Mediterranean region and frequent conferences used to be held in Palermo and other areas. The names of Sir David Bruce and Sir Temi Zammit are familiar names. It was through the effort of these two that Undulant Fever was defeated. Before going any further it is pertinent to claim here that in no field other than health did the British

authorities give their full co-operation, partly of course from self interest and also for humanitarian reasons. It is a fact that Undulant fever effected many civilian and military personnel, so much so that a Commission between the Maltese and the British authorities was set up to investigate the cause. This investigation was carried out in the early years of the century. Luckily for the Maltese and the English as well, it was first David Bruce who identified the germ in the spleen of the affected soldiers who had drunk goats' milk. Immediate measures were taken to switch to tinned milk. Sir Temi Zammit succeeded in isolating the germ in the goat. Whereas the British authorities took firm measures, a polemic rose among the Maltese.

In spite of this confirmation, no preventive measures were taken on behalf of the Maltese authorities. On the contrary, they adopted a *laissez-faire* attitude 'for fear of harming the farmers'. The only recommendation was to boil the milk as it was found that the germs died with boiling. The population was informed about this through all possible means, via the press and even with announcements by the clergy in churches, but these measures brought no results.

Things moved rather slowly as it was only by 1922/23 that the idea of pasteurised milk for sale was put forward and not before 1932 did an Undulant Fever Committee recommend the setting up of a Milk Pasteurisation Station under Government Supervision. Milk used to be delivered by itinerant peasants in the streets right up to the door of the customers. Moreover the Committee was convinced that the expense of the Station would offset in the long run the expense of the Government's need to cure the Undulant Fever patients. In just one year between 1930-1931 this expense amounted to £4,500.⁸ The Milk Pasteurisation Plant was finally set up by 11 May 1938,⁹ and the sale of raw milk was forbidden by 1938. Hundreds of goats were slaughtered. Brucellosis or Undulant Fever was finally eradicated when pasteurisation was established.

As fate would have it, it was 'during the Second World War that the government resorted to the slaughtering of the goats to feed the hungry population',¹⁰ but another reason was that there was not even food enough for the animals themselves. The so-called Victory Kitchens in different districts were used as outlets, but that is another story. After pasteurisation was introduced

the incidence of the disease fell by half in Sliema but other areas such as Hamrun, Vittoriosa, Senglea, Zebbug, Tarxien, registered comparatively higher statistics. Perhaps less co-operation was forthcoming from these places in the use of pasteurised milk.

Undulant Fever was not the only disease that troubled the local Health Authorities. An eye disease called Trachoma was endemic. Trachoma was a disease, which apparently attacked the eyes through infected flies. In severe cases it could lead to blindness. It was also highly contagious. By the first quarter of the century the full significance of the disease was brought home when:

The social and economic handicaps of the disease were first experienced on a large scale during the First World War when many otherwise healthy young men were rejected from military service in the Maltese contingent raised for the Salonika campaign.¹¹

With regard to emigration, trachoma proved to be a 'serious bar' to this migratory movement. Several countries such as England, the USA and Canada turned back the emigrants suffering from this disease.

In 1928 a Trachoma Committee pinpointed the causes of poverty, underfeeding, overcrowding and deficient personal and domestic uncleanness as transmitters of the infection. It looks as though the sustained efforts of the authorities managed to stem the disease as by 1929 the incidence stood at 0.05 percent in Malta and 1 percent in Gozo, the infection attacking mainly children from five to fifteen years. Fortunately suggestions for cleaner water and better housing did not go unheeded as the Government had by this time embarked on a social programme of workmen's dwellings and extension of water into household units. By 1957 it was reported that: 'Trachoma has now ceased to be the serious problem that it was in the past; but although the disease is well under control, (it being endemic), the fight against it is still on.'¹²

Whooping Cough, Tuberculosis, Enterite and Diphtheria were also diseases that had to be overcome. Children were mostly affected. Certain diseases such as Enteric Fever and Diphtheria were the cause of most of the mortality rates.

The Government tried to step up its efforts and extend health services where they were most needed. Hence between the years 1920 - 1923, the appearance of district nursing with the intention of paying home visits to outlying districts was indeed a blessing. Nurses were appointed for duty at Zejtun, Axiaq, Hamrun and Qormi.¹³ Mostly these were the districts where overcrowding in bad housing conditions was the cause of the endemic diseases of those years.

These districts had a population of 38,460 of whom 5,622 were children under five years, and a registered natality of 1,528 births during the year. District nurses, including a medical officer who was always in attendance, also attended government dispensaries (*Il-Berga tal-Gvern*, as they were called). Women and children were the main patients. The nursing service was extended to home visits. Many mothers in their first months of confinement were visited and offered advice on feeding and caring for their babies. Regular visits to elementary schools ascertained why children were kept away, and as a follow up, if medical advice was being heeded. Illiteracy vis-à-vis health was as present as illiteracy vis-à-vis the 'three R's' (reading, writing, arithmetic). In this atmosphere the task of the authorities should have been indeed difficult. But things had to go forward. That is what responsible self-government was all about after all. Primitive conditions hindered progress and the next project the Government embarked on, was the Drainage System.

The installation of the drainage system was a continual bone of contention between the British authorities and the Maltese side. The question was: who was going to pay for what? Drainage extended to the defence areas meant extension to barracks or housing areas for British personnel and their families. It is true the Maltese living in those areas stood to benefit but the Maltese representatives insisted that expenses should be paid by the Imperial side. This was always one of the reasons when legislation would not pass on a *quid pro quo* basis. Then important projects mainly regarding education would be stalled.

Drainage was only one, if the most serious problem. The lack of street hygiene not only presented eyesores but also a health problem. Not much awareness existed with regard to cleanliness in the streets. As early as the beginning of the nineteenth century, the British authorities, whose standards

were higher than those of the indigenous population started a campaign in street cleaning with repeated warnings not to litter the streets 'with deteriorated fruits and vegetables while stress was made for need in domestic cleanliness.'¹⁴ As traffic became heavier, 'the unsuitability of macadamised thoroughfares became obvious' as this led to the dust theory of disease.¹⁵ By 1930 the surfacing of streets and roads with asphalt and bituminous compounds greatly reduced the amount of dust in the air. Yet, goats were still roaming the streets as door to door raw milk delivery was still a long-standing practice.

A number of years were to pass before the Government Pasteurisation Centre was inaugurated in May 1938 and the sale of raw goats' milk was prohibited in Valletta.¹⁶ Later this prohibition was extended to other towns and villages.

The Government's efforts to control disease would have come to nought however, if Housing was not improved:

Poor housing conditions were largely the result of overpopulation. The worst cases of overcrowding were found in urban and sub-urban areas. In 1891 the greatest overcrowding was registered in Floriana, where 1,249 persons lived in 241 rooms, an average of 5.18 persons per room. Valletta came second in that year 4,571 persons lived in 885 rooms, an average of 5.17 persons per room.¹⁷

In 1905, it was found 'that 27 per cent of the total number of persons in the island were living in overcrowded conditions compared to 12 percent in England and Wales in 1901.'¹⁸ Things did not change much up to the period under review, although 'there was progress in housing standards in the new houses that were being erected on modern sanitary principles in the suburban districts!'¹⁹ The early years of the twentieth century, however, saw some real efforts being made to improve housing conditions; and between the wars there was a period of great building activity benefiting all strata of the population.²⁰

Between 1924 and 1927 large blocks of flats were erected at Rahal il-Gdid (Paola) and similar blocks were put up in the Cottonera areas, at Blata-il-Bajda and near Birkirkara.²¹ This was in response to a scheme submitted to

Parliament on the 17 November 1924 and approved by both houses.²²

The picture can never be complete. The problems were formidable. Among them there was illiteracy and the lack of emancipation of that section of the population, which was most affected by the terrible, endemic diseases hindering progress.

Notes

¹ P. Cassar, *Medical History of Malta*, (Malta 1964), p.ix.

² A. V. Laferla, *British Malta*, (Malta 1947) Vol 2, p.200.

³ *Malta Government Gazette Supplement*, 1 July 1927, p.925.

⁴ *Debates of the Legislative Assembly 1932*, Vol 21, p.175.

⁵ P. Cassar, *Medical History of Malta*, (London, 1964), p.88.

⁶ P. Cassar, *St. Luke's Hospital - Foundation and Progress 1930 - 1990*, (Malta, 1990), p.13.

⁷ *Blue Books 1925, 1931, 1934*.

⁸ *Report on the Health of the Maltese Islands during 1932, App R, Malta 1933*.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ L. Preziosi, *La Profilassi del Trachoma*, (Malta 1928), p.8.

¹¹ P. Cassar, *Medical History of Malta*, (London, 1964), p.26.

¹² *Report on the Health Conditions of the Maltese Islands for the year 1953*, p.30. *Report on the Health Conditions of the Maltese Islands for the Year 1957*, p.34. See also P. Cassar, *Medical History of Malta*, p.239.

¹³ *Census 1921 - 1931*. op.cit.

¹⁴ P. Cassar, *Medical History of Malta*, (London, 1964), p.312.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Government Notices Nos. 501 and 504 of 1938, Nos 314, 315 and 323 of 1939. Malta Government Gazette 14 July 1939, 917,983, 23 December 1930, 1434,1436.*

¹⁷ C. Cassar, 'Everyday Life in Malta', in *The British Colonial Experience 1800 - 1964*, ed. V. Mallia Milanes (Malta, 1988). See also H. Frendo, *Dimechianism*, B.A (Hons) Thesis, 1970, p.43.

¹⁸ P. Cassar, op.cit., p.335.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.336.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Malta Government Gazette Supplement 21 August 1925, 243; 22 December 1933, 1663*. See also P. Cassar, p.336.

BANCO DI ROMA's MEDITERRANEAN THRUST 1900-1952

J. A. Consiglio*

The years between 1911 and 1945 constitute a period when, given the concurrent presence on the island of banks of French, Italian, British, and Maltese origin, Malta already contained elements that could have been the foundation for an internationalisation process of the financial sector in the country. In subsequent years this would certainly have been for the benefit of the island's economy, the hopes for which started getting closer to reality after the 1988 Malta International Business Act (Cap.330), subsequently further amended in 1994.¹

In this study I propose a close look at the Maltese, and more specifically Mediterranean, link with one of the major banks to be located in Malta during the first years of the twentieth century, i.e. the *Banco di Roma*.²

Up to our own times *Banca di Roma* is still one of Italy's major financial institutions. The bank's history - a major study in three extensive volumes by Luigi and Gabriele de Rosa, published between December of 1981 and November of 1983 - provides ample evidence that Malta was the *third* territory which the bank's strategists had earmarked wherein to commence the bank's expansion outside Italy, the previous two being Paris and Alexandria.

The early 1900s were a period of dynamic progress for *Banco di Roma*. Public approval and support for the sense of entrepreneurship which the bank's leadership was showing was shown through keen subscription to share issues which carried a high purchase premium. Nevertheless the bank's Board Minutes of the 7th of May 1906 records comment which suggests that domestic

*J.A Consiglio is a qualified banker and has been interested in researching Maltese banking history.

economic altruism on a national scale was not in fact guiding the bank because the bank was 'limiting its activities to those Italian provinces where commercial and industrial activity was at its height.'³

During this period *Banco di Roma* held back from investing in Southern Italy. It ignored, for example, Italy's 1904 Act to promote industrialisation in the Neapolitan region, as well as those enacted between 1904 and 1906 for agricultural expansion in the Calabria and Basilicata regions.⁴

It therefore appears that the directors of *Banco di Roma* were predominantly guided by the belief that, consistent with limiting itself to the more active commercial centres, the bank was recording extraordinary progress. At the end of 1895, for example, the bank's total assets had been less than five million Lire (including a loss of Lit 631,653 sustained in that year): but in a period of less than eleven years, i.e. by end 1906, these assets had climbed to around 229 million Lire.

Inauguration of the Branch in Malta

Around halfway through that extremely profitable year, 1906, the decision to open a branch in Malta was taken. In truth well before that year various requests, promptings, and suggestions had been made in this direction by several Italian citizens working or living in Malta. What is worth noting is the fact that even a number of French or Francophile individuals - (and it must not be forgotten that a French bank, the *Credit Foncier d'Algerie et de Tunisie*, already had a presence here) - showed interest in Banco di Roma opening up in Malta. On 18th July 1906 the French Consul in Malta wrote to his Minister for Foreign Affairs⁵ that the island had 'a substantially high level of trade with the continent' and that, apart from *Anglo Egyptian Bank Ltd* (which already had important business dealings with the *bourse* in Paris, and with those in London and Cairo), in his opinion the island did not have 'a bank worthy of that name.'

Banco di Roma's president during that period was Giulio Pacelli. He was however much more than that. He was undoubtedly the bank's major business getter and, it appears, also the bank's major researcher. Pacelli carried out a quiet but efficient study on Malta's economic situation, which led him

to various conclusions. In the first instance it resulted to him that the few banks and bankers present on the island were not enough to satisfy the needs of local business. Secondly, in terms of size, population, and related savings patterns, the Maltese Islands were not, in his view, to be considered as poor. Finally, and above all, there were various religious orders, and a substantial commercial traffic generated by the presence of the British fleet and army.

On the basis of these deductions, on 7th May 1906 the Board of *Banco di Roma* discussed the possibility of opening a branch in Malta.⁶ And only five months later, on the 4th October 1906 this branch was opened at No.11, Archbishop Street, in Valletta, in a building which (ironically) years later would also come to house the *Malta Government Savings Bank* (an even older bank established in Malta in 1825 under the governorship of the Marquis of Hastings).

The Malta branch of *Banco di Roma* was placed under the supervision of a committee composed of six members nominated by the Bank from amongst Maltese personalities of the time. This committee had control and audit powers of a very wide extent, and its first members were Massimiliano De Bono, Arturo Mercieca, Architect Emanuele Galizia, the Baron of Gomerino Ugo Testaferrata, and Alfons Maria Micallef.

Management of the branch was in the hands of a certain Signor Cantoni (no relationship to the famous impresario Luigi Cantoni who later was opera's major promoter in the island). Cantoni was called to serve in Malta from Tivoli, and assisting him was Signor Bornaccini who, though being an Italian citizen, had been living in Malta for many years. It appears that the latter's choice for the post had prompted some general criticism as 'he [was] is not held to have the qualities required for an enterprise of this nature.'⁷

Other employees in the supervisory grade were brought over from Italy, and a number of other workers were recruited in Malta. It appears that a determining factor (one does not exclude political considerations) in such employment was the ability to speak Italian *as well as* English and Maltese. Amongst the bank's local employees I owe mention of this researcher's uncle, Giuseppe Sidoli, who was married to Olga Sidoli (my aunt) who was then a well-known pianist in Malta. Sidoli was still enjoying his *Banco di Roma* pension

up to the years when this study was being researched, living in Palermo in Via Isidoro Carini (later to become the street where the atrocious murder of Carlo Alberto dalla Chiesa took place). During the 1940s *Banco di Roma* also had on their managerial staff in Malta Antonio Bavai who was from Ancona. He married Maria Hyzler and they later went to Palestine, and subsequently to Turkey, in the bank's service.

The opening of *Banco di Roma's* branch in Malta was a big event. The French Vice-Consul described it as a *vera premiere alla quale il Tout Malta era stato invitato*.⁸

The factor of religion

In preliminary studies, and leading up to the immediate opening, of this branch in Malta it is very evident that the presence of a number of religious orders in Malta was an important factor. In Italy *Banco di Roma* was nicknamed as the *banca dei preti*, and all religious in Malta at the time, eminently papist, approved and welcomed the bank's advent here. When Count Soderino, and all the leading lights of the bank who came to Malta for the opening arrived from Rome, they immediately paid a courtesy visit to Bishop Monsignor Salvatore Gaffiero. And they came duly equipped with very nice letters of introduction addressed to the reverend superiors of all the leading religious orders then present in Malta.

On their part the Bishop, various members of the *Camera Pontificia*, and canons of the Cathedral Chapters and basilicas in Malta and Gozo, all attended the bank's inauguration. The obvious idea was that this new bank would be given all encouragement, and this it seems was something that was not at all welcomed by certain French diplomatic sources, judging by some reports that found their way to Rome from the local Consul.⁹

Hardly had the Malta branch of *Banco di Roma* started to function that the local management increasingly started being faced with the question of whether the bank actually needed a different, or additional, branch, but this time located in Tripoli, Libya.

Actually the bank as a whole was going through a very positive growth

phase. At the end of 1906, despite expansion costs, profits were good and exceeded previous years,¹⁰ and an unchanged dividend of 7% was again distributed to shareholders. No doubt the overseas operations of the bank were a major contributing factor. In Egypt for example the bank had two branches, and in 1909 the crisis in production of cotton had pushed up prices with the bank making good profits from the thus ensuing heavy lending. Profits in the bank's Paris operations were also good.¹¹

In June of 1909 *Banco di Roma* again decided on an increase in its Capital - from 50 to 70 million Italian Lire - through the issue of 200,000 new shares at a price of Lit 102.50 per share, and these shares were reserved for existing shareholders on the basis of a two-for-one rights issue.¹² Luigi de Rosa, the bank's leading historian, holds that this capital increase was more intended to serve as a basis for territorial expansion in line with a long term plan, than to provide the bank with increased resources for its day to day business. It also appears that some pressure may have been brought to bear upon the bank - by the *Banca d'Italia* (the national central bank) on the one hand, and by *Banco di Napoli* on the other - to absorb the *Società di Assicurazioni Diverse*, an old Neapolitan financial institution established in 1895.

The thrust towards the South

It was only very gradually that *Banco di Roma* became slightly more amenable to expansion towards the South. This is understandable given that equally slow was the change in that part of the country's economy, with possibly part of the reason for such change being attributable to legislation specifically intended to boost industrialisation there. Apart from very substantial investment being made in steel plants in Bagnoli, many other new enterprises were set up, in engineering, in chemicals, and in textile activity.

In the negotiations between *Banco di Roma* and the Neapolitan *Società di Assicurazioni Diverse* a number of intermediary banks carried out independent valuations. An agreement was eventually hammered out and that company, which despite its name was in fact a bank, ceased to operate on the 3rd of December 1908. Then on the 30th of June 1909 both its shareholders and those of *Banco di Roma* voted for its absorption into *Banco di Roma*.

On 18th of December 1909 *Banco di Roma* opened a new Mediterranean branch, this time in Naples.¹³ But this operation cannot be held to have been a total success. Soon after initial celebration it became apparent that the positive elements which the *Societa' di Assicurazioni Diverse* had had in its industrial support operations in its Torre Annunziata branch (later reduced to agency status), and a turnover calculated in October 1909 at around 50 million Lire, were more than offset by property financing operations that were not performing.

The next country in *Banco di Roma's* Mediterranean strategy was Spain. Just as certain indigenous elements had stimulated the bank's interest in Malta, so did certain individuals in pushing the bank towards opening a branch in Barcelona. At that time the provinces of Catalonia were in an economically expansionist juncture, with many old and new industries and other activity of a commercial nature.¹⁴

So for *Banco di Roma* - which now had branches in Genova, Naples, Malta, Benghazi, Alexandria, and Paris - a branch in Barcelona meant much in pure business expansion terms, besides that of obvious prestige. We again find the same Pacelli who, encouraged and fully supported by his fellow directors, went to Barcellona to set the scenario and evaluate the possibilities for opening a branch. There he established contact with the owners of an old indigenous bank. This was a small but very solid bank - the *Catalana General de Credito* - and its owners offered *Banco di Roma* a sale not only of the business and goodwill but also of the bank's buildings, all at favourable terms.

Pacelli was authorised to negotiate an agreement, and the bank purchased furniture, fittings, a safe, and all that was in the Barcelona, Tarragona, and Montblanch offices at an agreed price of 400,000 pesetas which represented 50 per cent of the total price for this Catalonian bank.

Catalana General de Credito, which had been founded in 1856, was predominantly an investment bank. Its portfolio was of some two-and-a-half million Lire, and it held the guarantees of its own directors, some of whom were of very substantial means.

The Board of *Banco di Roma* found no problems in ratifying the agreement

hammered out by Pacelli, and the opening of a branch at Barcellona, with an agency at Tarragona, for an indefinite period and with a capital of one million pesetas, was authorised. All activities at the previous agency at Montblanch were however for the moment suspended.¹⁵

For the management of the new branch at Barcellona the Board decided to transfer the manager of the branch in Genoa, and until the move was made temporary running of the place was left in the hands of the Alexandria branch manager, Manuel Guerra. The inauguration of the branch, and that of the agency at Tarragona (this being an important centre for agricultural produce and export towards Northern Europe), was held on the 15th of January 1910, and good banking business started being done right from day one. Eventually, increase in business in Barcellona led the management to realise that reopening of the Montblanch agency was a necessity.

The years 1907 and 1908 were critical ones for the Italian economy. Despite some signs of improvement in the external industrial environment in the following year, the domestic scene remained unchanged, and both the banking and industrial sectors faced many problems of bankruptcies. Although *Banco di Roma*'s main investments had a prudent spread over a variety of sectors, with agricultural financing luckily being prevalent, the Bank still suffered some losses from the failures of several industrial companies.¹⁶

Amortising, or even outright writing off, of losses ensuing from such credits made 1909 a very difficult year. Since 1898 *Banco di Roma* had been paying its shareholders a dividend of 7 per cent, something which only a few other Italian banks were in a situation to do. And 7 per cent had also been the amount paid in years when perhaps even more was available for disbursing. Now however, in 1909, seven per cent was certainly appearing as an exaggeration.

Three of the directors were in favour of a six per cent dividend. One of them, the Marquis Theodoli, maintained that this was a figure consonant with prudent practice, was in any case a decent return, and above all would not compromise the programme which the bank had for further expansion. Theodoli held that it was only the small shareholders who were interested in large divi-

dends, but these were hardly in a situation to help in the bank's plans for further growth. Despite these arguments however at the end of the discussions a dividend of 7 per cent was still paid.

In Libya

At this juncture *Banco di Roma's* Mediterranean history it becomes easy to venture into the account of how the Bank - which at this point was the only Italian bank with branches outside Italy - became involved in what some commentators have euphemistically described as the 'peaceful penetration' of Libya. This is in itself a long story, and perhaps it suffices here to state that Tommaso Tittoni - who had previously been a director of the bank but was now Minister for Foreign Affairs - had been totally in favour of there being a branch in Tripoli to serve as yet another link in the Italy-Paris-Malta-Egypt commercial and financial chain that was being built.

Banco di Roma's presence in Tripoli had its start on the 15th of April 1907, when Enrico Bresciani as Manager, and Henry J. Cotugno as his assistant, opened up for business. And it leads up to the 28th of September 1911 when, after uncontrollable protests and public rioting, many foreigners started leaving the country. On the previous day some 300 of these left Tripoli aboard the French ship *Rhone*, and approximately another 150 left on other ships bound for Malta.

By the end of 1925, from what had been built up as a sizeable framework of foreign branches, *Banco di Roma* now held under its control only the branches it had in Switzerland (in Chiasso and Lugano), in Turkey, Syria, Palestine, and the one in Malta which was obviously predominantly looked upon as a source of deposit funding.

By the end of 1926 *Banco di Roma* was employing a total of 2756 employees in its branches in Italy, and 316 in those overseas. In Malta the number in that year read 20, which exceeded those employed in its representative offices in London (where 10 people worked) and in New York (two), but less than in Turkey (145), in Syria (77), Palestine (40) and Switzerland (20), i.e. for a to-

tal of 3072 employees.

The Abyssinian conflict

But fortunes soon changed again. Early in 1930 most accounts from *Banco di Roma*'s overseas branches were again looking bullish. All offices in Turkey, Syria, Palestine, France, and Egypt were finding no problem in conforming to plans, targets, and directives coming from Head Office, mainly to the effect that 'lending totals agree to the level of deposits that the group of branches in a territory would have raised, whilst remaining constantly available for surplus funds to be moved from one group of branches to another in case of need.' And Malta - despite the fact that all the other local banks, Maltese or English owned, were hostile towards *Banco di Roma* - still remained a primary foreign currency source for the bank.

But Giuseppe Pietro Veroi, the bank's managing director, was already counseling caution as to what could happen to the bank's branches in the Mediterranean should there be further deterioration in the already threatening crisis between Italy and Abyssinia. Views in the British press on Mussolini's claims were already raising doubts about the future. To Felice Guarneri, who was the bank's economist and foreign currency supervisor, Veroi wrote: 'The Bank must keep a wary eye open on the delicate situations in Malta, in Palestine, and in Egypt [...]'

And he added: 'If confidence in our institution were to drop in London we would then have to expect a widening of unfavourable consequences also in Malta, and what is today a regular, controlled, but hopefully pluggable drip, can easily transform itself into a river of withdrawals that would take away from us those deposits placed with Head Office, with later similar consequences in Palestine and Egypt.'¹⁷ Veroi, as we shall see, was a good prophet: the worsening of Italian relations with London had serious consequences on all the foreign branches of *Banco di Roma*, and especially so in Malta.

The international community's reply to Italy's interventionist policy in Abyssinia was that of economic sanctions. The strained relationship between Italy and the United Kingdom left its effects on banking business, and commercial and banking credits in favour of Italy were revoked. British banks were the

first to reduce, and eventually completely stop, all acceptance credits in favour of Italian banks. Then followed American and Dutch banks.

Mussolini, acutely worried about (amongst other concerns) adequate supplies of coal and steel for his war machine, imposed a total national monopoly on overseas purchases of these resources. He simultaneously introduced a number of financial measures: a total stop to payment of any dividends by all commercial companies; a total stop to the granting of any external credit; obligatory conversion of all shareholdings in foreign or Italian companies into Italian Treasury Bonds with a coupon rate of 5 per cent; a tax of 10 per cent on all bearer shares not issued by the state; no doubt a very formidable array of measures.

Despite everything however these measures still did not put a stop to a certain regular rate of increase in domestic banking activity which had evolved with the early signs of war. On the eve of Italian military operations in Abyssinia, Veroi reported an increase in all sectors of the nation's economic and social life 'as a consequence of the bigger needs in the organisation of the nation's defence.'

A "run" on the Bank

By contrast the bank's overseas business was certainly feeling the effects of the tension with the United Kingdom, particularly in Malta and in the Middle East. In Malta especially the bank's clients showed total and real panic, with many withdrawals of deposits, which in the first days of August 1935 were at a daily rate of between thirty-five and forty thousand Sterling. Naturally this raised a lot of worry in Rome because Malta was the main source of foreign exchange for the Bank: *un vero forziere di divise estere* (a veritable stronghold of foreign currency), according to Veroi.

The Malta branch of *Banco di Roma* had established for itself all the classic characteristics of a savings bank. But one questions to what extent were customers of this bank drawn to it by its particular characteristics, rather than by favourable treatment in terms of interest. In correspondence dated 2nd February 1935 with Vincenzo Azzolini, Governor of the *Banca d'Italia* (the central bank), regarding an ABI (*Associazione Bancaria Italia*) report on the ac-

tivities abroad of Italian banks, Veroi said:

Our institution, because of its origins, because of its support by Catholics, and because of the name it bears, now exercises on the island an influence and impact which neither the keen competition of other banking institutions (in the front line *Barclays* and *Credit Foncier d'Algerie et de Tunisie*, as well as other banks), nor the repeated slanted and hostile press campaigns, sometimes based on political grounds, sometimes on financial grounds, have managed to dent.

In his letter to Azzolini, Veroi requested that all the deposits which the Malta branch held with the *Istituto Nazionale per i Cambi con l'Estero* (also known as *Cambital*, the Italian state's collating and control body for all foreign exchange holdings) be given interest not at the then current market rate for external deposits of 2 per cent, but at 4 per cent, to make good for the price of attracting such deposits in Malta. As an exceptional measure Azzolini conceded a rate of 3 per cent.

Nevertheless what had come to be considered as a pillar of the Italian banking system in a British territory was severely shaken when economic sanctions started to have their effect. The truth is - and this is amply confirmed in the writings by historians of other banking institutions - that it was not only *Banco di Roma's* client base that panicked and resorted to large withdrawals.¹⁸

The following is the extent of how deposits decreased between December 1934 and September 1935 in *Banco di Roma's* overseas branches:

	Pounds Sterling
Malta	33,087
Palestine	31,630
Syria	13,512
Switzerland	2,572
Turkey	9,564
TOTAL	£90,365

A substantial part of this decrease was by way of withdrawals that took place between June and August of 1935. In percentage terms *Banco di Roma's* deposits fell by 55 per cent in Malta during 1935, with larger drops taking place in Palestine (80%), in Syria (70%), and in Switzerland (60%), and a lower

drop (35%) in Turkey.

The major problem for the bank during this period was obviously that of sufficient bank notes to satisfy demand. Supplies from London for banks in Malta had now become very irregular, and the banks started to impose maximum limits for withdrawals, also often resorting to police assistance to help control queues at their doors. In just one day, on the 27th of September 1938, the Malta branch of *Banco di Roma* paid out 40,000 in Sterling notes. In Beirut, on the same day, seven million French Francs were paid out, these being substantial amounts for those times.

The effects of Mussolini's Mediterranean ambitions were never far from the bank's suffering employees. In October of 1935, soon after the start of hostilities in Abyssinia, Nicola Parodi, manager of the branch in Malta, was arrested by the British authorities and accused of 'activities prejudicial to the interests and salvation of Malta.' He was sent back to his country and later placed in charge of the bank's branch in Lugano up to March of 1946.

Banco di Roma's branches outside Italy, and particularly so those in Malta and Beirut, received absolutely no help or support from the branches of competing banks from other countries. Giuseppe Veroi had foreseen this and wrote about it to his superiors in 1935. There was in fact a sort of mini-war between the banks. The *Banque de Syrie et du Liban*, which in its country had the right of note issue, removed all credit lines hitherto given to Banco di Roma. And *Barclays Bank*, perennially a competitor of Banco di Roma in the Mediterranean, refused even the slightest temporary overdraft, even choosing to ignore documentary evidence of remittances in transit in favour of the bank from London.

On the 27th of September Veroi wrote to Guarneri, now a Minister, that up to then the bank had coped with the situation using its own resources, but now it had reached the stage of having to draw on its deposits with the *Istituto Nazionale per i Cambi con l'Esterio*. And, he added, the situation was now worsening as a result of the fact that telegraphic transfers could not be sent to Malta. 'If this branch's tills are kept without funds', wrote Veroi, 'we would be moving towards an irretrievable situation, one which would effect not only the branch in Malta, but which would extend to the whole group of our

branches in the Mediterranean and which, given the particular legal situation, would involve the whole bank.'¹⁹

Such problems of *Banco di Roma*, as also was the case of other banks, had their reflection in the total *national* problem of insufficient foreign currency. Because even were the state to fully honour its foreign currency commitments with the local banks, the problem of defending its creditworthiness with other countries still remained. In Italy *Cambital* (the *Istituto Nazionale per i Cambi con l'Estero*) was faced with the choice of either abandoning every Italian bank abroad to its own fate, or helping them right up to the bitter end. The choice was eventually the latter, and *Banco di Roma* even resorted to hiring a private plane from London to fly the needed notes to Malta.

The situation continued to worsen, and by 1939 the position of *Banco di Roma*'s branches in the Mediterranean and in the East (bar those in Africa which appear to have remained unaffected) in terms of deposits was very unencouraging. But Veroi, and Guarneri - now again with the Bank as its new President - had unfortunately both come to be tainted with that brand of grandiose visions of national fascism which Mussolini had worked so hard to implant in the majority of those who occupied vital positions in national institutions. In the bank's Board Meeting of the 18th September 1940 Veroi went so far as to present new plans for expansion of the bank's operations in Tunisia, Sudan, Cyprus, Algeria, Morocco, and later in Nizza and Monaco.

The War

But reality was vastly different. In almost all the branches which the bank had in the Mediterranean events full of problems were reaching their apex, and the end came soon after. During the night between the 10th and 11th of June 1940 the manager of the branch in Malta, Corradino Jannaccio, was arrested, the bank's keys taken from him, and then interned.

He had only been sent to Malta twenty-one days before 'to help in the difficult task of calming the many requests being made for withdrawals of deposits.'²⁰ Some of the bank's other Italian employees in Malta were also interned to San Giovanni d'Acri in Palestine.

In all the bank's branches in Palestine, in Haifa (where furniture and equipment was taken away and auctioned), in Baghdad, in Syria, everywhere the war now suddenly led to a crash of all the extraordinary progress which the bank had made in less than half a century. In eighteen months *Banco di Roma* lost sixteen offices in Eastern Africa, the branch in Malta, four in Palestine, six in Syria, and one in Iraq, for a total loss of 28 offices. These branches had been making an annual contribution of some 100 million Italian Lire to the bank's total turnover, and so were a great setback.

But back home in Italy *Banco di Roma* was still in a very healthy liquid position. And it made up for these losses through intensifying its domestic activity, to a point where for the first eleven months of 1941 Veroi could report a turnover of 1005 million Lire, compared with 814 millions in the previous year.

The whole of Italian banking history between the two world wars is rich in examples of personalities with great vision; individuals who, precisely at moments when clouds were gathering, were already thinking in terms of what would need to be done after the conflict. Valerio Castronovo, for example, in his history of *Banca Nazionale del Lavoro*²¹ mentions Arturo Osio, Imbriani Longo, and Giuseppe Corridori as examples. *Banca Commerciale Italiana* and *Credito Italiano* who, like *Banco di Roma* and BNL, were the other two leading financial institutions having state participation, these too had their great names.

The situation in various *Banco di Roma* overseas branches became even more complicated as the war drew towards its end. In some of them the provision of services to the public had ceased, and the assets of the bank had been sequestered by the victorious Allies as indemnification for the conflict. Later, the problems related to payments for war damages, those of repayment of deposits to account holders, and the returning back to their homeland of some of the Italian employees who had been kept here as prisoners of war, also came to be faced. Specifically insofar as the repayment of deposits to Maltese persons and entities is concerned however, this writer, having been personally involved in the end-part of such exercise even up to as late as the 1970's, can vouch that *Banco di Roma* carried out its obligations to the full

and with precision.

After the War

Article 69 of the peace treaty, which authorised the nations victorious in the conflict to assume ownership of private property pertaining to citizens of the defeated countries as reimbursement for war damages, left the Bank in a practically hopeless situation. All the efforts of Guglielmo Di Consiglio and Montanucci Manlio in Banco di Roma's branches in France, by Vittorino Veronese in Beirut, by Noya, Cambieri, Ribecco, and several others in various branches, aimed at reducing as much as possible the bank's losses, only produced very limited results. But, as I said, above all depositors were refunded, and no doubt this was attributable not only to great sacrifices made in Rome, but also to the high sense of integrity and decorum of the bank's leaders, aided and abetted no doubt by the new postwar sense of determination to rebuild *la nuova Italia del miracolo economico*.

At the end of the war the whole question of *Banco di Roma's* activities outside Italy - both in terms of branches as well as of representative offices - was again discussed. In certain cases it was a question of liquidation methodology; in others that of reopening branches in locations which had been involved in the conflict. So the obvious key question was: what best to do, reopen or liquidate certain old branches? In some cases the decision was decidedly simple: the situation absolutely did not justify reopening.

But in certain other locations - places like Tripoli, Asmara, as well as Malta, where the business had been well established and had had a certain aura of tradition - the problem was a more complicated one. Questions which needed to be answered included: what had exactly happened in these places? Was it possible to conceive reattracting former clients? Or acquiring new and promising customer segments? What were the overall business prospects for the bank? Inevitably the bank had to send leading executives to attempt answers to these questions.

In its efforts for a reawakening in the Mediterranean of its fortunes *Banco di Roma* once again started to face the open resistance of its competitors, and of individuals who, it must be said, clearly bared on their sleeves interests that

were often political or ideological, besides purely commercial. Despite this *Banco di Roma* again opened up in Beirut, with the former manager of *Banco di Roma* (France), Guglielmo di Consiglio, as its new manager.

The return to Tripoli was also interesting. It appears that resistance by *Barclays Bank* was somewhere behind the scenes. Up to late July 1948 representations with the British authorities by both Arab as well as Jewish interests for reopening there of the bank's branches were still under way. But in Libya too, as in Lebanon, the link was again reestablished because on the 13th of August 1951 the Tripoli branch of *Banco di Roma* was reopened.

Similar efforts were made for the reopening of the branch in Benghazi, and repeated requests were made to the Libyan authorities. The final answer came on 17th of October 1952, and it was a negative one with the reason given being: 'for serving the needs of the Benghazi market we feel that the institutions presently functioning, viz. Barclays Bank and Arab Bank, are sufficient.'²² With the more cruel salt in the wound being probably the fact that *Barclays* moved into operation precisely in the same building that had previously served as *Banco di Roma*'s branch!

The *Banco di Roma* branch in Rhodes remained similarly closed. The Turkish ones in Izmir and Istanbul however continued to function and there, as stated, the branch manager for some time was Antonio Bavai. He hailed from Ancona and had married the former Maria Hyzler in Malta. Other branches which reopened after the war were those at Asmara in Eritrea (on the 5th of July 1948), and in Mogadishu in the Sudan (on the 15th May 1950).

The branch in Malta

It was evident therefore that *Banco di Roma* had again solidly taken up the road of asserting its formerly important status in the Mediterranean and in certain parts of Africa and the Middle East. But the last developments in the history of the branch which it had had in Malta are, as elsewhere, sufficient reflection of the colonial interests that were involved.

We have already referred to the fact that before the war this branch was an important source of deposits. These funds used to be sent to Head Office in

Rome, and the bank then either lent them to the Italian government, or reinvested them with its leading correspondents in London: and this in view of the reality that at that time Malta could by no means have been considered as an investment centre with capacity for profitable absorption or refund of such capitals. Luigi de Rosa²³ also holds that at some time part of these funds had also been invested as capital in a new bank bearing the name *Banco Italo-Egiziano*.

Some documentation in *Banco di Roma*'s archives suggests that the British authorities showed reticence and total aversion to the bank's efforts to reopen its Malta branch. One could consider this as somewhat strange when one sees that *Barclays Bank* had already been given permission to reopen their branches in Italy. Even the conditions which were being made by the British authorities for the reopening of the bank's branch in Malta had been accepted. In essence these were to the effect that, firstly, the Italian Treasury Minister had to give a guarantee that when *Banco di Roma* reopens its Malta branch all deposits raised locally would be used *only in Malta*. The second condition was that the bank would bind itself to employ 'only Maltese or British citizens as staff.'

But negotiations dragged on endlessly. At the heart of these discussions was Ugo Foscolo, the bank's managing director, and at the Board Meeting of the 5th of October 1950 he reported as follows:

Since that date (i.e. since the previous meeting with the British authorities held on the 4th of April 1949) these negotiations have continued, but notwithstanding that the Bank has accepted all the conditions imposed by the British authorities as long as the Branch (in Malta) is reopened, these same British authorities have continued to beat around the bush (*tergiversare* - dillydallying - is the word he used!) to the point where, in virtue of the April 1947 Treaty between Italy and the United Kingdom, the refund of deposits has been imposed irrespective of whether the branch is reopened or not.

After the carrying out by its senior managers of certain confirmatory exercises of deposits effectively due refundable to Maltese account holders, the Bank announced that it was prepared to make the payments, and an initial remittance of 84,000 Pounds Sterling was made. Insofar as the accruing of in-

terests was concerned for the period after the 16th of June 1940, i.e. five days after the arrest of the Malta branch manager Corradino Jannaccio, the Bank made it known that it would be favourably inclined towards - *purely on a moral basis* - paying these should the reopening of its branch be authorised. But because this authorisation never came the Bank refused to pay the requests which it continued to receive for such interests.

On and off these negotiations dragged for a further two years. On the 16th of September 1952 the Government of Malta - the British Governor at the time was Sir Gerald Hallen Creasy and the Prime Minister was Doctor Giorgio Borg Olivier - informed the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs that the Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Malta 'no longer had any further objections to the reopening of *Banco di Roma*'s branch in Malta.'

But this time it was *Banco di Roma* who simply chose not to do anything about the issue. And it would appear as if this was a choice consciously made on the basis of an analysis of 'the problems of a monetary nature which are currently being debated in the Sterling Area.'²⁴

By the end of 1952 virtually the whole of *Banco di Roma*'s Mediterranean presence had ended. On the one hand the war had rendered difficult, if not impossible, that the Bank would return to the former colonies or occupied territories. On the other hand the reasons were the inevitable rivalry remaining between the Bank and the British authorities, and the simple fact that certain locations were no longer of any interest to the Bank in pure commercial terms.

But the bank's losses in the Mediterranean and in North Africa were more than made up for by a very active presence in the Middle East and, above all, in the countries which later were to form the European Community. *Banco di Roma* (France) with Guglielmo Di Consiglio once again at its helm after his service in Beirut, *Banco di Roma* (Belgium), and *Banco di Roma per la Svizzera*, became efficient spearheads which since then have led a continuous presence in international banking.

There is general agreement that the inspiratory start of this new period, around August of 1947, was the appointment of Bresciani Turrone as the

bank's new managing director. He was given responsibility for the bank's international reconstruction and development, working from an office located very far away from all that has been described in this account, i.e. in Washington. The historical orientation of *Banco di Roma* had indeed changed.

Notes

¹ See J. Consiglio, *Breve Storia Bancaria di Malta*, ATAM, Torino, 1983, 'The History of Banking in Malta', *Heritage*, Malta, 1978-1980.

² With effect from the 1st August 1992 the bank's name became *Banca di Roma*, concurrently with the merger with Banco di Santo Spirito spa.

³ Board of Directors, (CA), *Minutes of Meeting, May 7th 1906*, Archives, Banco di Roma, (ABR).

⁴ L. de Rosa, *Momenti e Problemi dell'Unificazione Economica Italiana*, Istituto Editoriale del Mezzogiorno, Napoli, 1947, pp.109-110.

⁵ *Ministre des Affaires Etrangères*, MAEF, N. S. Italie, Vol 27.

⁶ ABR, CA, *Minutes*, May 7, 1906.

⁷ The French Vice-Consul in Malta to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MAEF, N.S. Italie, 5th October 1906, Vol 27.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Console Barrere, *Archivi Ministero degli Affari Esteri Francese*, Roma; and ABR, N.S., Italia, Vol 27, October, 11, 1906.

¹⁰ Annual Reports show the following data: 1905: Lit. 1,736,673; 1906: Lit. 2,941,783; 1907: Lit. 3,132,030

¹¹ Annual General Meeting, *Report of the Board of Directors*, March, 31, 1910, pp.11-12.

¹² ABR, CA, *Board Minutes*, March, 14, 1909.

¹³ ABR, CA, *Board Minutes*, December, 23, 1909.

¹⁴ F. Cabana, *Historia del Banc de Barcellona 1844-1920*, Edicions 62 S/A, Barcellona, 178, pp.106-123.

¹⁵ ABR, CA, *Board Minutes*, April, 15, 1910.

¹⁶ Annual General Meeting, *Chairman's Report*, March, 31, 1910, pp.9-11.

¹⁷ Guarneri Felice, *Report to the Currency Supervisor on External Business Developments and on the External Organisation of Banco di Roma*, June, 27, 1935.

¹⁸ See J. Crossley and J. Blandford, *The DCO Story*, Perivan, Williams Lea Group, London, 1975, pp.91-92.

¹⁹ G.P. Veroi to F. Guarneri, *op cit.*

²⁰ Letter sent by Jannaccio to the Bank's Board, dated 25th January 1954, from the branch in Bergamo where he was then serving.

²¹ V. Castronovo, *Storia di Una Banca - La BNL e lo Sviluppo Economico Italiano 1913-1983*, Giulio Einaudi, Roma, 1983.

²² ABR, CA, *Board Minutes*, October, 28, 1952, Vol.78, p.49.

²³ *op. cit.*

²⁴ ABR, CA, *Board Meetings*, April, 4, 1949 Vol.68 p.41; 5th October 1950 Vol.72, p.32; October, 28, 1952 Vol.78, p.51.

CAN A NEW HISTORY SAVE EUROPE FROM ITS PAST?

Henry Frendo*

'Today Europe is trying to achieve self-definition on the basis of its own history', wrote Michel Oriol and Francis Affergan in their study on *Otherness and cultural differences*, a few years ago. Has the time not come, they asked, to look beyond inward-looking conceptions of culture and to build up a universalism that would include cultural differences and not deny them? But the question of 'the other' was posited against the sense of ourselves. Whereas the former question might be put in the context of a timeless quest for a definition of human nature, most modern authors – and not least historians – expected that otherness be seen within specific historical and geographical contexts.¹

The difficulties that have traditionally permeated such attempts are underlined with vengeance in the instance mentioned by Joseph Roth in his *Radetsky March*, which is based on the theme of commending error for history's sake. The protagonist of this work is a Slovene who was ennobled for rescuing the Emperor Franz Joseph at the battle of Solferino. When, years later, in his son's first primer, he read a grotesquely inflated version of that episode, he exclaimed that it was 'a pack of lies'. 'It's for children', his wife replies. 'Captain, you're taking it too seriously', says a friend, 'all historical events are modified for consumption in schools. And quite right, too. Children need examples which they can understand, that impress them. They can learn later what actually occurred.'²

David Lowenthal referred to this episode, exaggerating for emphasis, in his 1994 lecture in Paris on 'historical literacy'. Hyperbole is to one culture what understatement may be to another, but, for the purpose of understanding, the end result need not be different at all.

*This general report by Professor Frendo was published in the Council of Europe's book *Towards a Pluralist and Tolerant Approach to Teaching History: a Range of Sources and New Didactics* (Strasbourg, 1999), pp.27-44.

In the Brussels symposium, held from 10 to 12 December 1998, entitled 'Towards a pluralist and tolerant approach to teaching history: a range of sources and new didactics', both our distinguished keynote speakers, Hervé Hasquin, history professor and Minister of the Regional Government of Brussels and the historian Marc Ferro, pointed their fingers at such problems. They drew on cases in Belgian and French historiography, namely cases with which they themselves, as a Belgian and a Frenchman respectively, were understandably more familiar.

Noting, after Raymond Aron, that 'history is a human science, not an exact science', Hasquin warned against the nation-state cult, and equally against the identification of religion with nationhood. The former approach he qualified as a 'Jacobin vision of the state and nation-state...[that] often considered differences as suspect', the latter as a trade-mark.

Hasquin took and advocated what might be called a 'revisionist' position, describing the nation-state as 'an intellectual and political invention'. Hasquin was suggesting that the past could be unscrambled and rethought, strongly hinting at a federalist solution.' While defining democracy as the complex over the uniform, he sought to reverse perceptions of Charles V as the 'goodie' and of his son Philip II as the 'baddie', in so far as the son was only implementing what had been set in motion by the father. Invoking a lay, indeed a neutral conception of statehood, he rebuked what he called the satanisation of Joseph II, a 'Belgian' king who in the late 18th century had proclaimed religious tolerance.

But of course history is not and should not be one composed of heroes and villains. One might add that Joseph II was no liberal, but how many liberal monarchs were there then? If we had to identify a 'liberal' it would rather be one of his main critics, a Brussels lawyer, Vonck. If we wanted a conservative critic, upholding custom and privilege, that would probably be another Brussels lawyer, Van der Noot. The crux of the matter was that these two opposition leaders formed an alliance of convenience, which did not last long, to oust Joseph II.³ The context was more complicated still, but stereotyping historical personages, by whatever label, clearly will not help our understanding of history then or now.

The other profound question raised here, one about which there clearly was a divergence of opinion in the shades of discourse during the symposium, concerned the nature not so much of the state as of the nation. To what extent, if at all, could nationhood be universalized or globalised, relativised or neutralized? Were there no longer any identifiable core characteristics, no lowest common denominators, by means of which a particular people or nation cohered in a mainstream sense of belonging, borne in part of shared experiences, with all due respect for minorities and human rights? Were territorial allegiances about to be overtaken by transfrontier spatial planning? In the absence of self-conscious national or communal entities in the general 'mosaic', who would federate with whom?

Hasquin's critical, almost negative position towards the nation state has been taken by other post-war historians, for example Elie Kedourie in his work on nationalism. This, he starts by saying, is a doctrine invented in Europe in the 19th century.⁴ That is a position which contrasts with an earlier, more romantic stance taken by, for example, Ernest Rénan, who saw the nation as 'a soul, a spiritual principle.'⁵

This troubling question, underlying much of the discourse in the symposium, was put in another way by Jean-Pierre Titz, Secretary of the Education Committee of the Council of Europe, when he said that in recent times 'change had upset Europe's notion of itself.' Well may that be so, indeed. Hence the urgency of investigating in what ways, and by what means, an inspiring and credible vision, at once common and diverse, can be secured for the future through past and present. That is tall order.

In the introductory words of Henri Ingberg, Secretary General of the Ministry of Education of the French community of Belgium, 'connections must be established between the various sources to endow them with meaning.' In support, he quoted Fernand Braudel: 'History is the study of the origins of the problems of our times.' Although comprehending the genesis might guide us to the promised land, striking water out of the rock – or more realistically, building steady bridges over running streams – here we may have to go a little beyond that, pointing a finger, several fingers, towards the continent's shared future, as an unfolding pluralist, diverse and democratic reality.

Marc Ferro's address was another cannonade, highlighting problems and pitfalls, without illusion of any easy answers. It was a little bit like trench warfare, advancing and retreating, but then prevention is better than cure, and forewarned is forearmed.

A man of the book as well as of the screen, Ferro is essentially pleading for relevance, authenticity and meaning. He is scorning superficiality, sensationalism and trivialization. This concern is epitomized in his critique of the media man's pretension that there is such a thing as 'history online.' War, as Ferro put it, is not a football match. So, how do you go about writing a European history now, he asked – a question all of us have been asking ourselves as well.

One who tried his hand at that recently, incidentally, is Norman Davies. He also pondered long and deep upon that question and grappled with it. The really viscious quality shared by almost all accounts of 'Western civilization', he wrote, lay in the fact that they presented idealized, and hence essentially false, pictures of past reality. One got the distinct impression that Europe was a world 'inhabited exclusively by Platos and Marie Curies...' But he also stressed that 'historians must tell their tale convincingly, or be ignored.'⁶

Judging by Marc Ferro's classification of historiographical typologies, and by the questions posed in answer to the question of approach we may be constrained to have to try doing it by elimination.

First 'diplomatic' history does not work. Bilateral committees are too preoccupied lest one country take offence at what is said of it in relation to another. All controversial topics would have to be left out leading to a 'history without history.'

Secondly, the one-chapter-each approach was not on either. A century for each of the great powers- the most favourable one to each one of these, naturally – or one historian from each country – the one most sympathetic to it, naturally. That would give 'an impression of objectivity', but of course it was no history, let alone a European one.

Third, you had the attempt to 'denationalize' history. This was a synthetic

history, a parody without passions, without peoples: 'no more passions, no more Frenchmen.' It would pretend that the Great War was not really limited to 1914-18, so presumably, you would not have to signal who had declared it, or who had won it, and so on. The index to the book would leave out the more painful episodes characterizing it.

A fourth suggestion would be to take a frontal approach to taboos and to have those who felt most troubled by aspects or epochs of their own history to tackle them themselves, but one would still have to take all viewpoints into account. Neutral histories that tried not to step on anybody's toes, such as UNESCO's fifteen-volume history of the world, were a waste of time and would not be read.

Fifthly, one could have general histories such as a history of colonization (or, one might usefully add, of Europe). Or histories could be memory-linked, of families, of towns, but these would remain 'closed... sanctified'.

There was then an 'experimental' history, on the model. This is an influential school of thought going back to Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, best epitomized by Fernand Braudel's massive study of Europe and the Mediterranean – a school of thought Ferro himself is close. By means of this approach, as he put it, different findings could be deduced from the same sources, focusing on aspects or problems across time. An approach known best for its insistence on inter-disciplinarity and *la long durée*, the slowly evolving maturation of mentalities and courses of human behaviour in geophysical and socio-economic contexts at least as much as in politico-étatist ones, but probably more so. Hence the tension between ordinary people and society at large, and those 'on top': those who wield power and direct matters, including the 'mass production oriented', opinion-forming peddlers and publicists of 'historical facts'.

Historical novels were another genre of history making not to be discounted, Ferro insisted. These influenced people's knowledge of history or, at any rate, their impressions and perceptions of it. 'Thanks to Alexander Dumas, one goes back to Louis XIII.'

Last but not least, there was the audiovisual. As much of the shooting prac-

tice during the symposium was directed at this target and its various rings, displacing even archives by the overriding importance accorded to it, let me first briefly summarise Marc Ferro's position. I shall then return to elaborate on this leitmotiv in my sizing up of the panel discussions, including interventions from the floor, and of the conclusions of the three workshops held on 11 December 1998.

Essentially, Ferro was critical of the mentalities underpinning the organisation of information and even of education-related systems. At school, subjects were treated separately, and this malaise was carried forward to disciplines at university level, as if one discipline did not relate to/or overlap with another. He calls this the 'imperialism of disciplines'. This, and no less the various mass media, he saw as dented, fractured, discounted.

The press was interested in the news, not in the actual story itself. A newspaper might have a 'history page', but this would not relate to whatever else would be printed in the paper. 'The newspaper destroys history ... it cuts up the past and the present'. The idea of the world portrayed by radio and TV was similarly faulted. What mattered was the scoop as the journalist imagined it, usually some bit of news relating to those who are perceived to wield the power. There was thus 'a hierarchy of sources'. While newspaper pages tended to reproduce the organisation of the state, TV sliced up its programmes by genre: thus, for example the documentary, fiction, cartoons, newsreels, and – separate from these, perhaps once a week – the current affairs programmes, a disconnection between reportage and analysis. One loses one's bearings.

In the West, there tended to be a counterbalance between one interpretation and another – a nationalist versus a socialist or an imperialist one. But in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe there was a monolith. Hence the sudden resurgence of oral history. The oral sources became a counter-history to written history, which was suspect. Therefore, everyone wanted to 'tell his own story' – truth via the microphone. For the media such outpourings were often mistaken for history, but in reality these accounts were more a view of the self than a representation of the past. The opening up of the new archives, especially the Russian ones, has once again induced the media to focus on what they saw as most sensational and 'actual', typically enough in bits and

pieces.

All of the issues raised in the introductory addresses and the speeches by Hervé Hasquin and Marc Ferro were taken up, to a greater or lesser extent by the symposium participants, more specifically in the framework of their own tasks in the project at hand, 'Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20th century', as outlined by its chairman, Claude-Alain Clerc. Students, he said, had little if any clear notion of time, other than post-1989. Teachers were becoming mere co-ordinators. They had to make the best possible use of technological and electronic tools, as well as to engage in more team work. It was to assist in all this, he added, that the project had a five-pronged agenda. Its themes ranged from nationalism and population movements to women, human rights and minorities. There would also be a general European history handbook on 20th century European history to include a section on sources and bibliographies, which would serve both as a teaching aid in the upper forms of secondary school and for a general public as well.

Case studies from various countries had been prepared to help guide and substantiate discussion in the working groups, where specialists on different historical sources were among the participants. In addition, these specialists formed part of a panel or round table in plenary sessions, in the course of which they delivered their respective addresses and parried questions that were put to them. The round table was chaired by Ms Marcella Colle-Michel, vice-chair of the project group, and the sources discussed in this way were mainly these: (1) archives (Mr Kecskemeti and Mr Woloszynski); (2) information technology law (Joseph Cannataci); (3) museums (J. Patrick Greene); (4) oral history (Philip Ingram); (5) cinema (Dominique Chansel); and (6) TV (Bernard Balteau).

For the purposes of the general report, points made by members of the round table panel will be incorporated into the conclusions reached by the working groups, source by source, with reference to case studies by way of example where applicable.

The case studies examined by the three working groups in their deliberations, emanated from historian-practitioners in various European countries, including Albania, Armenia, Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Lithuania,

Malta, Poland, Romania, Scotland, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain and Switzerland.

In the absence of precise guidelines as to what genre of case study was to be submitted, there was a wide variety in responses, with only the Swiss entry consisting of a detailed and systematic appraisal of a case study about a school history project as such. This successful project consisted in a fully-fledged investigation into the building of a dam at Rossens in Fribourg, and all that went into that. Others, such as the Czech and Maltese ones, highlighted topics relating to historic events mainly in national history, which were earmarked in teaching exercises and field trips. Another approach, as in the case of Scotland and Spain, detailed the education and school system in so far as history subjects were concerned at different levels. Some, especially the Austrian one, were rather more on the theoretical side, while still others, as in the case of Slovakia, a personal view as to how European history is best taught was offered. Countries such as Armenia and Albania, the Czech and the Slovak republics and Lithuania, noted the significance of 1989 as a watershed. Efforts were being made to address the historiographical and methodological concerns arising from that. In general this meant a rewriting of history, but the speed and efficiency at which that could be done, for example through the provision of new textbooks, depended on many factors, not least the human and economic resources available.

In at least one eastern European country, many older teachers who had lived through communism and were moulded by it were reluctant to teach post-1989 or even post-1945 European history. In at least two others, problems existed with transport facilities for making the best use of museum visits whereas in another teachers had such low wages that they felt rather unenthusiastic about experimenting with novelty. The same applied for technology and exposure to the Internet or media resources, which in a country such as Spain, for example, were developing on all fronts at a fast pace. In all the European case studies submitted, however, of whatever genre, we find a compulsion to use history as a tool in understanding the fast changing world around us, and at seeking improved means for imparting historical knowledge to the young as an integral part of their education for life. Just to give an idea of this commitment, I have selected a few quotations from the case studies submitted for the Brussels symposium from different parts of Europe which

can be quite diverse:

... I prefer to give lectures in museums, where archives are housed, at historical sites, even in cemeteries. For example, about 80 kilometres north of Prague there is the town and baroque fortress of Terezin. During the Second World War, a Jewish ghetto and a Gestapo prison were there. After the war this fortress served as an internment camp for the Sudeten Germans... Every year I ask my students to attend the Remembrance Day ceremony at the British war cemetery in Prague. After the ceremony, I collect them for a visit to the graves of the Czech legionaries that served in the First World War...(Czech Republic)

There is no statutory national curriculum... There are no nationally defined areas of content. A very high degree of choice is devolved to schools ... Key features of historical understanding should underpin all topics chosen, for example awareness of the nature of evidence, a sense of chronology and historical sequence, awareness of cause and effect, change and continuity, a sense of heritage ... There is a balance between the Scottish, British and European dimensions. (Scotland)

History teaching in Greece is currently undergoing profound changes: new syllabuses, new textbooks, new methods ... There is one textbook per subject per class and they are produced and distributed by the state, which has a monopoly. The authors are selected by the Ministry of Education through competitive examination. As well as relating events, history books contain source texts and pictures which can help the teacher to make the lesson more interesting. Teachers also use maps, slides and so forth. History teachers do not receive any special training. (Greece)

Students also benefit when they are taken to visit various places of interest that are directly connected with the war, such as monuments, the war rooms and the War Museum, where they find a wealth of primary source material. Students learn how the Maltese must have felt towards the Axis powers, who were causing so much distress to the population. But students realise that things have changed. With few exceptions the countries of Europe have now learned to live in peace as one big family... Teachers stress the importance of democracy and tolerance. Students are made aware that divergence of opinion is not something wrong; in fact it could be very healthy once we know how to respect each other's opinion and agree that we are different. (Malta)

Lutz Niethammer, a German historian, wrote as a motto to his introduction on oral history: "A democratic future needs a past where the silent majority in history is audible." At the Department of Social and Economic History at the University of Vienna, we have been working for more than fifteen years now at developing didactic-methodological concepts of teaching history... that try to combine structural approaches – such as the history of family structures, the history of industrialisation, the history of labour – with methods of everyday life history, such as oral history... When [students] return to their school, they learn to analyse the interviews critically and write a short account of the topic or the person they have interviewed. (Austria)

... I have to deal with several changes of borders, nationalities, currencies and laws ... [S]tudents want to observe things from the point of view of the ordinary person ... I think that in teaching any historical topic emotional identification with the situation and survival of the ordinary person stimulates the student's awareness of historical events and a reflection on prejudice that is based on tolerance ... History allows us to show students that if the victories and losses of the nation and the state and the meaning of the historical person is not measured by a respect for life, freedom, humility before order, justice and respect for the weak, the result can be tragic. In my history lessons ... I emphasise the three pillars on which European civilisation was established. These three pillars are Greek wisdom, Roman law and Christian morality. (Slovak Republic)

These case studies thus range from the general to the particular, the profound humanistic posture to a camouflaged nationalistic one, the technical, the methodological and pedagogical, to respect for history as a discipline concerned with truth, being and understanding. To a greater or a lesser extent, these submissions contributed to the formulation of the reflections and recommendations made by the working groups, which were then further debated in plenary sessions.

I shall now deal with the source themes used above, incorporating ideas, suggestions and counter-suggestions generally with reference to each category. It is clear however that there is scope for cross-referencing and cross-fertilisation in the uses that can be made of these sources, both in the writing and in the teaching of European history, as well in relation to other disciplines.

Archives

In the first place the archives themselves, *qua* sources, had to be contextualised and seen for what they generally were: records of the various organs and departments of the state, created largely in the process of public administration, often having political overtones. Authenticity was not the equivalent of veracity. One had to look at archives organically, not piecemeal. Although not intended as a means for informing posterity, archives helped organise the collective memory of the state and of the nation.

Archives could be deceitful as in the case of Soviet tribunals. Sources therefore still have to be confronted with empirical evidence, possibly from ar-

chives other than state ones. Information can be missing or eliminated from archives. It was important that the public be alerted to such things. Polish archives showed that evidence could be planted in order to incriminate the innocent and exculpate the guilty. This manipulation was discovered, for example, in matters relating to collaboration with the secret services.

As for *les années noires*, some wondered whether such events were better recorded or better forgotten. For research and pedagogical purposes, it would be advisable if archivists, librarians and curators could facilitate access to documents and activities in specialised institutions. It was important that the history teacher be involved in and abreast of specialised research. Original sources, such as newspapers, photographs, post cards and letters, impressed students and it would be helpful if these could be used even in class.

An educational service could be established to act as an intermediary between the teachers and the archival source. Documentation on European themes, such as freedom of the press and censorship, could be put together with a view to fostering a European conscience.

Sources which are neither in manuscript nor in printed form should be sought and brought to light because these may also be said to become in their own way archival. Among such sources could be included memories in stone such as epitaphs in cemeteries or inscriptions in palaces, what one architect has called 'history on marble.' This is a novel archaeology of modernity which, like local and oral history, would have the advantage of presence and visibility, invoking as much a sense of time as of place. Another source which could be better cultivated and accessed is print journalism in its various expressions from editorial content to setting styles and photographs to cartoons. That would include letters sent to newspapers or reviews of letters about which stories are then written. These could be significant enough to change history and have sometimes done so - whether they be forgeries such as the Zinoviev letter in the British electoral campaign of 1924, or an appeal for justice as called for by Emile Zola in the Dreyfus Affair in France, spanning the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Print journalism has thus been shown as a means of exercising a tremendous influence on public opinion, increasingly so in the 20th century because of greater literacy and improved technology. Such sources too could be seen as archival, with care-

fully selected specimen of 'history in the making' as useful tools for history teaching, and indeed for case studies.

Information Technology

While information technology (IT) opened new and exciting venues for the transmission of communications and data of all kinds, there were laws and conventions on intellectual property rights which needed to be respected, and which preferably should be harmonised throughout Europe. IT would mean that traditional sources of knowledge may disappear in the near future. Data protection laws, in place in twenty-two European countries, held that personal data must be stored only for a limited period - in accordance with European Convention No. 108 (1981) and EU Directive 96 (1995) with effect from October 1998. Could such data perhaps be locked up and preserved? CD-Roms and online networks meant that sources, for example museums, could be accessed from home, not limiting 'the public' to those physically visiting a site. E-mail meant that many transactions would increasingly leave no trace for a future historian to record and to consult.

Although national legislation sometimes permitted material to be used for educational purposes this was not always the case when permission was required from rights holders. There existed an international Federation of Reproduction Rights Associations which was quite active in some countries such as Norway. As the Berne and the Universal copyright conventions protected information for up to seventy-five years after the author's death, rights for 20th century often had to be negotiated in advance and were quite costly. Video and even tape-recorded materials would cease to be oral or private the moment they were recorded or in any way publicised for commercial or even educational use.

Clearly while IT did open up a world of possibilities, excessive controls or fees even in the educational domain could be exorbitant or stultifying, rendering legal safeguards a hindrance as much as a help for the diffusion of knowledge. On the other hand, authors' works were often abused, as in the ongoing photocopying of books, without the slightest compensation to the author. From a educational point of view this could mean that students

would never really buy or read a book as such, limiting themselves to photocopies of a chapter or to a push button mechanism for ready made answers.

Museums

Museums contained the raw materials of history, and increasingly, were explaining and organising contents more didactically. Through exhibitions and other activities, museums could reach out to the general public, not just schoolchildren. The range of themes and exhibits had expanded widely from art and natural history to rock concerts and football clubs, thus democratising various aspects and angles of history in the 20th century. Industry museums had cropped up in Britain, Germany and elsewhere. Environment was increasingly important in so-called eco-museums dealing with the culture of people and places. Museums focusing on the story of a nation, such as the House of History Museum in Germany were still few in number. In Britain so far there were no such museums. Many small museums helped foster a sense of rediscovery, awareness and identity in the locality or region, although local pride sometimes took over. Migration history could also feature as the subject of a museum, not only in Europe. Participants felt that visits to museums should be more frequent and better structured, evoking inter-disciplinarity and providing feedback from students.

To be effective as historical sources, museums had to be integrated into the teaching and learning process. These were multi-sensory and activity-based, giving students authentic experience that could strengthen other learning methodologies. Preparation for such visits was necessary, in consultation with the curators, as these would then give pupils a holistic appreciation of the topic under study, developing cognitive and effective skills in ways not really available through other source-media. They were ideal for the imaginative reconstruction of the past, for work related to subjects such as drama and technology, and as a motivational factor conducive to individual learning, for instance through the application of modern technology. Museums should be 'partners' in education, especially history: a place for resources and experiences. They should be more school-friendly, or schools could have their own museums.

Oral History

Oral history may be a vital source of information through a wide variety of possibilities ranging from the recollections of grandparents to those of returned migrants or repatriated refugees, through folk legends and lullabies, proverbs and idioms or songs and dance customs, prayers or rituals, food recipes and drinking habits. It has been described as a voice for those who may not have had one in traditional history. They can also serve as a social function in educating young people and developing social skills, such as awareness of others, exploring and discussing, listening and responding. Interviewing for oral history can break down barriers through empathy and it can dismantle stereotypes. The observation of body language and tone of voice in interviews can be instructive.

Being accessible does not make it easy, however. It exposes the practitioner to the full range of problems encountered by a detective or a historian. Some issues and recollections are better avoided. There has to be respect for the witness in what and how questions are asked. Leading questions and preconceptions must be avoided. Before embarking on an oral history exercise, students should be given a broad background; they should have the big picture of events painted to them so that they may be able to contextualise evidence, and to identify what is not plausible. They would need help in knowing what evidence to accept or reject, and in formulating a coherent, structured and meaningful narrative.

The relevance of oral history is generally limited to a time span of some sixty years and one had to be aware of the falsification of memory. It was a good source for social history - such as how people lived - and for uncovering 'hidden', non-documented history. Students would have to familiarise themselves with the period or area in order to be able to ask supplementary questions, but there could be some logistical problems relating to age or safety about which parents should be informed.

Learning outcomes should include the ability to evaluate, interpret, compare and draw valid conclusions, while in the affective domain the skills of social communication, empathy and the appreciation of values rank highly. Within clearly defined limits and with adequate preparation, oral history as a source

has significant potential.

Not altogether unrelated to oral history was local history, which also attracted some interest, although it was not catered for specifically in the panel discussion. Interviews can also be helpful in local history, which can be a microcosm encapsulating the larger world. Local and regional histories were mentioned by a number of participants as potentially ideal starters for historical investigation and understanding, not only at the primary school level.

Local history could offer a wide range of sources at close and even intimate quarters in one's surroundings. In particular, places of remembrance could induce an appreciation of heritage and patrimony in a local or even a national sphere. However, students should try not to be inward-looking but to see the links beyond the locality's frontiers.

In some cases historic sites in a locality, the Menin Gate in Ypres for instance, could evoke a meaning that well transcends the local and even the national. It might be worth noting here that the motto of the International Union of Local Authorities is precisely 'think globally, act locally.' That would not be a bad starting point for local history enthusiasts, inducing comparative insights for a broader understanding of human experience in time - by means of what is immediately visible, tangible and intelligible from their own daily surroundings.

Cinema

All the working groups discussed audiovisuals, especially cinema, in some depth. To a lesser extent they also discussed television. This discussion was prompted by the excerpts from films shown and analysed briefly during the round table discussion - the fiction film vis-à-vis the historical documentary, the use or abuse of music or images and the messages seen in context, as in the case of Franco-German fraternising scenes shot in 1930 or so.

The panel expert invited contributions for a project in which he was involved to select and document 100 fiction films of this century relating to themes being covered by this project. Such a film catalogue however would have to be

accompanied by specific explanations and commentaries. These would be indispensable as teaching aids. There were categories of film which had to be identified and defined - informative, historical fiction, documentaries including newsreels.

One had to be able to detect bias or prejudice, for which a degree of 'visual literacy' was necessary. Some participants felt that excerpts from films, rather than entire films, would be more useful for teaching purposes, although that would also depend on the type of film. Students might be attentive to details, missing out on the more crucial aspects. Moreover film was only one source among others, which could be used to complement teaching.

Reading the image was a quality that needed cultivating and training. Montage, even if based on historical footage, could be just as misleading as in a fiction film, if not more, depending on how well and how truthfully the image was done.

A number of films were brought up in the discussion as useful sources for history teaching. These included *Heimat*, a film on German public opinion during the Nazi period; the recent BBC film made with the help of a consultant historian, *The Nazis* and the film *Shoah*; and Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's list*. There was *Bread and chocolate*, an Italian film about migrant workers in Switzerland; the pacifist film *La Grande Illusion*, made in 1937; and a pro-Franco film to contrast with Spanish films in the 1980s about the same period. You had the strong Wajda films about Poland under Soviet communism, particularly *Man of Marble*, or indeed about France, such as *Danton*. There was *The Battleship Potemkin* on Russia; *Platoon* on Vietnam; or even recently *Saving Private Ryan*, on appreciation of war suffering and how to deal with it. *Braveheart*, starring Mel Gibson, was a shot in the arm for Scottish nationalism. And there are several others of this kind usually dating as far back as the 1920s and 1930s.

In some cases, students made their own films. In some of the larger upper secondary schools in France, for example, film clubs were very active. A survey conducted at a Rome university found that documentaries were preferred, but ultimately the teachers would use whatever they could lay their hands on.

Television

The series *Jours de Guerre* on Belgian TV, which used 500 witnesses, cost 1.5 million Belgian francs and had an audience of some 200 000 people for over five years, was discussed by its director, Bernard Balteau of *Radio télévision belge francophone* (RTBF). Most of the viewers were over forty-five years old. Another series, *Les Années Belges*, meant to attract a younger (and in fact, it turned out, a rather smaller) audience, has been running for three years, similarly based on first hand evidence accounts.

One problem is the cost, because of the high payment for rights to archives such as Movietone News. People were interested in a history which they themselves had lived or recalled. An Austrian series on Europe between the wars was so well received that some teachers were using it instead of textbooks.

The problem with films, as opposed to books, was that whereas in the former you had run-on, non-stop images, in the latter you had to construct your own images. The mental processes involved were different. Nor was the scope the same because for a book one asked if it was good history, whereas for a film one asked if it was a good production. Here again, the values involved were different.

Although we had some discussion on textbooks, there was only very slight and passing reference to the possible role of theatre. This was a very European source, however. Perhaps it was not yet caught in the grip of technology and the electronic media. Theatre retains a direct human contact and appeal.

Conclusions

Summing up, this symposium showed how different and innovative sources, or traditional sources used in an innovative way, could sustain and enrich our historical understanding and the portrayal of Europe. These sources can serve as props and aids, but beyond that we have to 'paint the big picture' - credibly, convincingly, tolerantly, steering carefully between Scylla and Charybdis.

Can a new history save Europe from its past? The real issue historians face, said Lowenthal, 'is how objective truth can be produced by deeply subjective people.'⁷

Supported however by a rich and increasingly accessible plurality of information and learning sources from across this continent; with insight, diligence, perseverance, tolerance and team work as European countries move ever closer to each other not just economically and politically but also culturally and as a new millennium dawns upon us, we trust and believe that the Council of Europe can rise to the challenge of wearing a multi-coloured coat proudly, consensually, thereby liberating European history from old-time national prerogatives and *raisons d'État*.

Notes

¹ Michel Oriol and Francis Affergan, 'Otherness and Differences' in Carmel Camilleri (ed.), *Difference and Culture in Europe* (Council Of Europe Press, 1995), pp.16-17.

² David Lowenthal, 'Towards Historical Literacy' in Sophie Jeleff (ed.), *History and its Interpretations* (Council of Europe Publishing, 1997), p.48.

³ For an outline history, see Franz Hayt and Denise Galloy, *La Belgique des Tribus Gauloises a l' état Federale*, (De Boeck, Brussels, 1997) pp.84-87.

⁴ See, for example, Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London, 1971).

⁵ Ernest Rénan, 'Qu'est-ce qu'une Nation?', written in 1882, in H.Psichari (ed.) *Ceuvres Completes de Ernest Rénan*, (Paris, 1947-1961), i. p.903.

⁶ See Norman Davies, *Europe: a History* (Oxford, 1996). See also the review of it by Neal Ascherson, *London Review of Books*, vol.19, No. 4, 20 February 1997, pp.7-8.

⁷ David Lowenthal, *op.cit.*, p.45.

THE ANDREW P. VELLA MEMORIAL LECTURE 1999

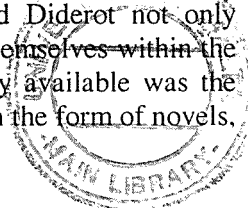
ENLIGHTENMENT AND PROPAGANDA: PROHIBITED LITERATURE IN MALTA BETWEEN 1700 AND 1798

William Zammit

The lecture, based upon on-going doctoral research, focused upon the presence in Malta of literature prohibited on religious or political grounds during the period 1700 to 1798. The local dissemination of such material was by no means an eighteenth-century innovation. The availability of Lutheran works is documented during the early decades of the sixteenth century, while prohibited classics, comprising the works of Nostradamus and Galileo are known to have reached the Island during the following one.

During the first decades of the eighteenth century, that is even prior to the full flourishing of the Enlightenment, a steady growth in the amount and variety of illicit literature available in Malta may be discerned. The publication, in 1726, of Vertot's celebrated *Histoire des Chevaliers Hospitaliers de S. Jean de Jérusalem* ... constituted a landmark of fundamental importance due to its scathing attacks on past Catholic sovereigns in general and on popes in particular. Notwithstanding its condemnation by both the Order and the Congregation of the Holy Office, copies of Vertot's *magnum opus* still circulated in eighteenth-century Malta.

During the second half of the century, members of the Order as well as Maltese of different social backgrounds became increasingly familiar with prohibited literature of different genres. Works by the most notable exponents of Enlightenment philosophy, particularly by Voltaire and Diderot not only formed part of private collections but eventually found themselves within the Order's own *Biblioteca Pubblica*. Even more commonly available was the ever-increasing tide of popular Enlightenment literature in the form of novels.



pseudo-biographies, satires and sexually explicit works by such authors as Boyer d'Argens, Mercier and Mairobert amongst others. Enlightenment scientific literature in the form of Diderot's *Encyclopédie* and of works discussing Mesmer's theories of animal magnetism also reached the Island.

The identification and analysis of the availability of prohibited literature in eighteenth-century Malta leads naturally to the question as to what extent did such literature influence the local population's religious and political perceptions and the formation of Maltese public opinion in general. In Robert Darnton's words, 'By discovering what books reached readers throughout an entire society and (at least to a certain extent) how readers made sense of them, one can study literature as part of a general cultural system [...] the history of books opens onto the larger field of the history of communication.'¹

¹R. Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (London, 1996).

BOOK REVIEWS

Henry Frendo, *The Origins of Maltese Statehood. A Case Study of Decolonization in the Mediterranean*. Malta: BDL Ltd., 1999; second ed. 2000.

Professor Frendo is perhaps now the leading Maltese historian of modern Malta. This book follows his *Party Politics in a Fortress Colony: The Maltese Experience* (1979), *Malta's Quest for Independence. Reflections on the course of Maltese History* (1989), *Maltese Political Development, 1798-1964: a Documentary History* (1993) and many other related books and articles. The present book is exceptional, both in his work and in the wider field of publications on European decolonization, in the detail of its treatment. It covers a mere two years, 1962-64, and relates to an island whose population was then under 400,000, about that of a middle-sized British town. On what grounds can one justify a book of this length on so small a place over so short a period? What exceptional features did Malta have?

It must be said at once that some of the space is taken up with pictures of people and events and photographs of relevant documents in the official collections whose function is, presumably, to add a sense of direct contact with primary sources for the benefit of student readers who will never enter the Public Record Office (the most widely quoted and reproduced) or the many other archives used. But there are other special reasons why Maltese independence justifies such detailed treatment. Probably the most important is that it was very rare for a British colony as it approached independence to be split over the terms of its liberation to the extent that Malta was in these years. Virtually all African dependencies were united, if only briefly, behind a single dominant party whose views on the process of decolonization therefore carried great weight with the British: this greatly facilitated agreement on the technicalities of the transfer of power. Possibly only India, deeply split between Congress and League, was as difficult to deal with, and this led to the tragic division of 1947. Although there were huge differences between the two places, they had one thing in common, which largely explains the diffi-

culties Britain faced in decolonizing them. Both had a long experience of representative politics and deeply entrenched political parties which, moreover, were divided not along racial lines but on issues connected with religion. In India it was Islam versus Hinduism (though Congress claimed to be non-denominational); in Malta it was Catholicism versus the secularism of Dom Mintoff's Labour Party. This combination of sophistication in the skills of parliamentary self-government, which in Malta went back to 1887, with recurrent suspensions of the representative constitutions, and a virtually dogmatic division between the two main parties, meant that it would be exceptionally difficult for the British to achieve an agreed basis for decolonization.

The fact that they wished to do so after 1962 was largely the result of a projected run-down of British Defence costs and the decision to cut back on expenditure on the Malta dock facilities. This in turn reflected the view that under changed strategic conditions it was no longer so important to maintain a large naval dockyard and Air Force base in Malta. So for the first time since 1802 there was some chance that the Maltese would achieve their long-stated aim of regaining the largely mythical independence they claimed they had once possessed. On the other hand running down the naval use of the docks over a period of six or so years was likely to cause acute unemployment and economic distress in a community whose balance of payments depended very largely on British defence expenditure. Thus Dr. Borg Olivier, Prime Minister since the reincarnation of something approaching 'responsible government' in 1961 and leader of the badly organised pro-Catholic Nationalist party, had the double opportunity and problem of negotiating full independence coupled with a satisfactory economic deal. The course of these negotiations forms the core of this book. Part one, chapters four to ten, examines the course of the negotiations with Britain and the domestic debate to June 1964, when it still seemed impossible to sort out the vexed question of the entrenched privileges of the Catholic Church, a major target for Mintoff and the Labour Party. Part Two, chapters eleven to fifteen, then goes back over the various factors influencing all protagonists: the prospects for an American base, the possibility of close relations with Italy, economic diversification, the threat of a Labour Party coup, and the fact that in 1964 the British were having second thoughts about giving up Malta as a military and naval base. Part Three, chapters sixteen and seventeen, then winds up the story to the

transfer of power in September 1964.

There Frendo stops: there are no after thoughts and no assessment of the longer-term outcomes: that will presumably have to wait for his later books, though unfortunately he will not for many years have the same access to most of the relevant primary sources that makes this book so compelling. The remarkable fact is that, despite its great length, and some reiteration, it is never boring. The story is skilfully crafted and highly professional. It will be extremely valuable to all students of British history and the wider processes of Decolonization as well as for the Maltese. Since it is bound to go into later editions it is perhaps worth mentioning that there a number of typographical errors to be corrected and at least one misunderstanding of the peculiarities of the British administrative system. Lord Carrington was not, in 1963, as is stated on pp.504 and 522, 'First Sea Lord' (who is always the senior naval serving officer) but First Lord of the Admiralty, a political office. But these are of little significance in a book of this importance based on so much fundamental research.

D. K. Fieldhouse

Jesus College, Cambridge

Carmelo Vassallo, *The Malta Chamber of Commerce 1848-1979. An Outline History of Maltese Trade*. Malta: The Malta Chamber of Commerce, 1998.

The declared purpose of Carmelo Vassallo's book is to provide us with an account of the foundation and development of Malta's Chamber of Commerce on its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary. This work is a pictorial and well-compiled historical chronicle, with the finest pieces to be found in the second part of the work, notably chapter IX which deals with 'Transport and Communications.'

Overall, this work is a fine example of what could be described as commemorative historical literature. However, one must ask to what extent will this, smoothly running, well compiled, yet intellectually unprovocative narrative, help us to comprehend the Chamber's important role in Malta's economic development. This question is posed with the understanding that the historical reconstruction of such an outstanding institution as the Chamber of Commerce, requires the employment of the most advanced theories and analytical techniques available.

In the first part of this work, Vassallo has utilised many of the sources, gathered from the well-kept archives of the Chamber to corroborate already made theses on Malta's economic history: 'in the main, periods of armed peace were more beneficial to Malta's trade than outright war' (p.64) or that 'imperial spending had the effect of conditioning local investment habits' (p.65). The author also contributes to the chronicles of Maltese trade by indicating that, during the eighteenth century, commerce with the East and with North Africa was more extensive than previously held.

The book opens with a descriptive account of the development of Malta's 'Trade before the Establishment of the Chamber', taking us from the Phoenicians up to British rule. This first chapter illustrates the whole work, as a traditional historical narrative, which in Vassallo's own words, 'contains occasional flashbacks and peeps into the future not unlike a film script replete with plots within plots' (p.xv). Indeed, this work is characterised by the continuous stitching together of vivid facts and events in a roughly chronological sequence.

More poignantly, this narrative furnishes us with a 'great personalities' type of history. *Dramatis personae* dominate and direct the major events. For instance, the 1946 split of 'budding industrialists' from the Chamber, to form their own Federation of Industries, is accounted for from this voluntaristic perspective. No real investigation, of the conflicting economic interests producing this breakaway, is provided. Repeatedly, all other great political frictions (such as that between the Labour administration and the Chamber during the 1970s and early 1980s), are explained in terms of personal and institutional clashes, rather than through an in-depth analysis of the complex socio-economic processes generating them.

In one or two instances, Vassallo does assert that the Council of the Chamber of Commerce was traditionally 'oligarchic' and that this would seem to indicate that 'it sometimes was out of touch with its membership.' However, this is where his argument stops. Those of us, expecting to find a profound investigation of the more important issues relating, for instance, to the family connections within the Chamber; the genealogy and the reproduction of native merchant capital; the Maltese merchants' cultural orientation; their group identity and level of class and 'national' consciousness, are very much let down.

Moreover, the historical discourse prevailing in this work is elitist. The employment of contrasting, politically loaded imagery, which depicts in a positive light the protagonist merchants but portrays the Crowd (the 'common people') as the feared Other, sustains this elitist approach. A classy romanticised image of the Golden Age of the Chamber, when the member merchants indulged in respectable forms of leisure, is minutely reconstructed. The author gives a colourful depiction of the parties organised at the Borsa, but without any concern for serious analysis. He stops at the descriptive level, as the account of one of these 'magnificent and brilliant parties ever to be held in Valletta and which lasted until three in the morning' shows:

In a magnificent setting of gaslight playing on mirrors and chandeliers, which can be appreciated to this very day [...] 800 guests present were treated to a superb supper washed down with iced champagne and select French and Spanish wines. It must have been a night to remember. (p.167)

This celebrative vein is encountered now and again throughout this work and eventually culminates in a nostalgic expression:

The magnificent ballroom is now silent and swathed in darkness and only rarely does it resurrect to the sound of music, tinkling champagne glasses, swishing evening gowns and the glitter of light mirrors and chandeliers, but it only takes a bit of imagination to visualise what has been and could be again. (p.171).

However, what I really find irritating, throughout this narrative, is the prejudiced depiction of the crowds in acts of protest. When describing the June 1919 riots, rather than attempting to investigate the social composition and the psychology of the crowds, the author rashly concludes that these people had been manipulated. Both in the June 1919 riots as well as in the militant political protests of the late 1970s and early 1980s (during a Labour government which the author impulsively describes time and again as a 'paranoid administration'), the crowd is represented as a non-intelligent entity with no historical agency of its own (see pp.75-83). This is a typical example of history written from above.

One last comment regarding the use of oral history. The employment of this technique can provide important insights on numerous issues, such as the daily activities and worries of the small traders or the public perceptions of the Chamber of Commerce. However, no direct quotes from oral testimonies and no details on the recordings and the persons interviewed are found in any bibliographical part of the text, contrary to normal practice. Therefore, I find Vassallo's claim that 'this work has involved [...] a second method, less common in Maltese historiography, namely oral history' (p.xv) rather puzzling. Besides, the history from above approach taken by this work, contrasts with the fundamental philosophy inherent in the practice of oral history.

John Chircop

University of Malta

ABSTRACTS OF HISTORY-RELATED THESIS

Vanessa Bezzina, 'The Administration of the Maltese Islands, 1450-1499: A Study of the *Acta Iuratorum et Consilii Civitatis et Insulae Maltae*.' B.A. Hons. History, 1999.

This dissertation looks at the administration, the importation of wheat and tax collection in late medieval Malta, as evident in the acts of the jurats and the town-council of Mdina between 1450 to 1499. The records of the town-council meetings, themselves a product of a privileged group, namely the Mdina élite are a clear illustration of the distribution of power and the resources of the island in fifteenth century Malta. The introduction gives an insight on the historiography of medieval Malta, looking at several historians who have used the *NLM MS Università 11* in their studies of Maltese medieval history. The second chapter looks at the administration of the Maltese islands under the jurisdiction of the Mdina town-council as part of the *Universitas*. The town-council is seen as a body within the Sicilian *Regno* in terms of its work and political structure. Since the municipal government was responsible for the application of authority in different sectors of society, the council had to have good communication with the Viceroy and other royal officials in the *Regno* by appointing representatives and consuls to go abroad. This leads to the study of the existing relationship between the Mdina élite and other royal officials such as the Viceroy and the royal commissioner. It also focuses on the interaction within the Maltese upper strata against the background of the local administrative set-up as well as the clashes with the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the authorities of the Castle-by-the-Sea. As a town-council, the municipal government was responsible for the issuing of regulations and appointing offices, the keeping of law and order. Above all, they saw to the defence of the islands and maintenance of the fortifications. The coastal-guards and the *Militia* saw to safety. It is clear that the position of power enjoyed by the municipal élite was considerable. Wheat is the subject of the third chapter, which is analysed in terms of the wealthy few who had the necessary resources to get wheat from Sicily. Thus the chapter looks at price fluctuations, as well as patterns of importing wheat since the main pre-

occupation of the paternalistic town-council was the importation and storing of the islands' annual supply of wheat from the Sicilian Kingdom. Thus, a complete annual organisation for the importation of wheat was necessary. Every now and then, the town-council met to discuss the amounts and prices of wheat needed. The availability of wheat under storage relieved the town-council from the threat of famine and scarcity. To undertake all these responsibilities the local authorities needed considerable amounts of money and thus had to levy taxes. Chapter four deals with the collection of taxes as the major source of income of the Mdina municipal government and the clashes of the latter with the hated royal commissioners. This chapter looks at the different taxes and fines imposed on the Maltese as well as the role played by various *gabbellotti* in collecting the taxes on behalf of the *Universitas*. The privilege of the imposition of taxes was one of the many jealously guarded privileges and concessions enjoyed by the selected few. As it was clearly depicted various sections of society enjoyed exemption from this tax, but from the source under study only the participation of the élite resulted in the collection of taxation, since the rest of the population is not mentioned. In the general conclusion these different aspects are linked together to provide a picture of Maltese administration in the late middle ages. While the era of municipal government of the Maltese population made the upper social; stratum as indispensable for the daily needs and sources of income it acted as a mediator between the local inhabitants and the Crown. However, the Mdina *Universitas* saw a decline rivalled by a new regime, after 1530. Although it lost its power, the fifteenth century remained embedded in the town-council identity, an identity of a socially privileged group that dominated public and political life and was concerned with the well-being of the remaining part of the Maltese population.

Stefan Cachia, 'The Family and the Land in Late Medieval Malta: A Study of the Acts of Notary J. Zabbara, 1486-1488.' B.A. Hons. History, 1999.

This dissertation looks at family structures and land ownership in late medieval Malta as well as the relationship between the two, as these can be inferred from the acts of notary Zabbara for the years 1486 to 1488. The introduction looks at their role in Maltese historiography, as well as the use historians have made of notarial archives in studying Maltese medieval history. Chapter 1 contains an analysis of family life. There such concepts as the male-female theoretical equality vis-à-vis the property owned, the husband's predominance in the household, the age of marriage and the nuclear dimension of the family are discussed. It also studies the relationship between the parents and the children: the importance of begetting children for strengthening marital relations, filial help to the parents and the age when children emerged from their parent's tutelage.

Chapter 3 analyses patterns of land ownership, looking in turn at co-ownership, especially on a family level, and the relationship between land ownership and the different strata of society. The latter is analysed both in terms of the number of holdings owned per stratum as well as in terms of the average holding size. The strong attachment to the land, which was characteristic of late medieval Maltese society is also discussed. The analysis of the sales of lands with the right of redemption leads to Chapter 4, a study of the ties between the family and the land. The relationship between the lineage and the land is analysed through such concepts as the rights of repurchase, the conjugal fund, and land fragmentation. The focus is on the land as part of dotal endowments and the husband-wife relationship vis-à-vis the land. Finally, the same chapter traces the role played by men, women and children as individuals who own land within the family context.

Shirley Mifsud, 'The Commandery of Sacile and Pordenone.' B.A.Hons. History, 1999.

The purpose of this dissertation is to study, in as much detail as the surviving documentation in Malta allowed, one of the Order of St. John's commanderies. This is the Hospitaller commandery of Sacile and Pordenone, which was part of the Grand Priory of Venice.

The introductory chapter deals with the way in which the Order was divided into Langues, Priors and Commanderies. Special attention is given to the way in which this division allowed the Order to extract the greater part of its finances from its lands in Europe, thus showing the importance which the commanderies had for this institution.

The society and administration within the commandery of Sacile and Pordenone was also discussed. Whenever it was possible, a description of the lands and buildings within the commandery was given. A study of the tenants who rented out land within the commandery was also attempted. This yielded some very interesting information which had to do with these people, including information about their wealth and status when compared to that of other members of their own family or within the local community in general. A study was also made of the rents paid by these tenants, particularly those paid in kind, which were the large majority. In order to understand better the relationship between the income and the expenses within the commandery, the year 1733 was taken as a case-study.

The documents consulted show that the one of the main aspects within the commandery of Sacile and Pordenone was the Church, thus a chapter was dedicated to this subject. A detailed description is given of both the parish church and the three country chapels which were found within the commandery, together with as much information as possible about the items found in them. Importance was also given to the clergy, particularly to Reverend Giovanni de Pol who in 1685, was the parish priest of the commandery. Special attention was given to de Pol. This was because his parishioners had a lot of complaints about him, particularly about the way he administered the sacraments of confession and the extreme unction and about his neglect in the teaching of the Catholic doctrine. He was also formally accused of embez-

zling the church's funds. The information given by de Pol's accusers also gives some indirect information about the extent to which the Council of Trent influenced small communities such as that of Sacile and Pordenone.

William Zammit, 'Printing and its Cultural Role in Malta during the Rule of the Order of St. John.' M.A. History, 1995.

This thesis attempts to identify and analyse the characteristics of printing in Malta at its inception during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. An examination of the two printing presses in existence during both centuries respectively is undertaken. This is a necessary pre-requisite for the subsequent discussion of their printed product and of the latter's role within local contemporary society.

The fundamental features of the two Maltese presses consisted primarily of their limited production, monopolistic nature and of the rigid system of control exercised over them by the secular and ecclesiastical power structure which also controlled most other aspects of life on the Island.

Following a study of the presses and of the social context in which they functioned, an analysis of their printed product is undertaken. The type and subject-matter of the locally printed product were determined by the requirements of the institutions and of the social classes making use of the press, by the demands of the reading and non-reading public as well as by the prevailing social and institutional controls.

David Borg-Muscat, 'Absolutism and the Power of Social Control in Malta: 1775-1825.' M.A. History, 1999.

In early modern Europe the punishment of crime, and of social disorder, incorporated within it the ability to inflict a degree of suffering on the condemned criminal. In itself, this served as a defining element of sovereign power, of absolutism. This dissertation sets out to study absolutism, vis-à-vis social control, in Malta during a period which, on a European level was marked by rapid changes in the methodology of punishment. Through such changes physical modes of punishment were abandoned in favour of a non-

physical approach, which tended to operate on the soul and human will. But these affected the exercise of absolutist sovereign power and the manner in which this manifested itself over society.

Within Maltese history the period 1775-1825 provides an opportunity for comparing two equal time spans, fortuitously marked by a change in government. The British administration 'inherited' a highly developed administrative system from the Hospitaller government, including concomitant structures of social control. A sense of continuity can be detected in the ideology underlying government and social control. On these were imposed new concepts, specific to British rule. Thus, while the general trend of change in the exercise of sovereign power, social control and punishment, in Malta, was in line with other European countries, it had its own specific nuances brought about by political and social factors intrinsic to the Maltese archipelago.

A SELECT LIST OF HISTORY-RELATED DISSERTATIONS

1998:

Bachelor of Arts (Hons)

Violet Brincat B.A. Hons. (History):

‘Malta under Self-Government 1921-1933: an Evaluation of how the Maltese used Self-Government during the Interwar Period’

Bernard J. Cauchi B.A. Hons. (History):

‘Aspects of Rural Life in Mid-Eighteenth Century Malta: a Glance at Peasant Mentality in the Light of the Inquisition Proceedings of Mgr. G. Salviati (1754-1759)’

Joanne Dalli B.A. Hons. (History):

‘Aspects of the Relationship between Sicily and Malta during the Grandmastership of Alof de Wignacourt (1601-1622)’

Jasper de Trafford B.A. Hons. (History):

‘Elizabeth Schermerhorn: a Short Study in Historiography’

Isabelle Fenech B.A. Hons. (History):

‘The Correspondence of the Grand Master Martin Garzes with Representatives of the Order and Dignitaries in Italy (1595-1601)’

Sergio Grech B.A. Hons. (History):

‘The Church and the Catholic Press in Malta (1830-1914)’

David Rossi B.A. Hons. (History):

‘The Monte di Pietà in Hospitaller Malta’

Sebastian Vella B.A. Hons. (History):

‘The Consolato del Mare of Malta: a Study of an Institution (1697-1725)’

Frank Theuma B.A. Hons. (History):

‘Aspects of Maltese History under Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena (1722-

1736)'

Claire Zammit B.A. Hons. (History):

'Dutch Merchants and Sailors in Malta in the 17th and the 18th Century'

Mario Xuereb B.A. Hons. (History):

'Apostasy and the Inquisition in Malta (1720-1730)'

Joseph Agius B.A. Hons. (International Relations)

'Russia's Post: Communist Foreign Policy with its 'near abroad' between Cooperation and Domination'

Daniela Bisazza B.A. Hons. (History of Art):

'The Plague of 1676 in the Art of Malta'

Gretchen Serracino Inglott B.A. Hons. (History of Art):

'The Private Chapels of the Stately and Patrician Houses of Malta: a Representative Sample (1600-1800)'

Lewis Spiteri B.A. Hons. (History of Art):

'The Development of Maltese Church Doorways from the Late Medieval to the Early Modern'

Karl Chircop B.A. Hons. (Italian):

'Testi del Cinquecento e del Seicento nell' Archivio e nella Biblioteca dei Carmelitani a Mdina'

Mark J. Xerri B.A. Hons. (Italian):

'L'italiano dei Religiosi a Malta: Analizi di Testi del Settecento nel Convento dei Carmelitani di Malta'

Joanna Bugeja B.A. Hons. (Communications Studies):

'Changes in Maltese Print Journalism since the Eighties'

Melanie Camilleri B.A. Hons. (Communications Studies):

'The Role of the Independent Press in Malta'

Pierre Ellul B.A. Hons. (Communications Studies):
 'Who am I? A Study in Cultural Identity'

Master of Arts

Charles Farrugia M.A. (History):
 'Socio-Political and Economic Aspects in the History of Religious 'Festa' Groups in Malta (1890-1940)'

Elizabeth Claire Bartolo M.A. (Diplomatic Studies):
 'Maltese Identity and the Development of Maltese Foreign Policy'

Bachelor in Education (Hons)

Stephen Briffa:
 'Empathy in the Teaching of History with Special Reference to Maltese Adolescents'

Katya Ann Degabriele:
 'Women: the Missing Component in History Teaching'

Abigail Grixti, Charlotte Ann Debono:
 'Primary Education in Malta during the Second World War (1940-1943): a Social History'

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'Introduction to Literacy in Maltese'

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Vanessa Bezzina B.A. Hons. (History):

'The Administration of the Maltese Islands, 1450-1499: a Study of the *Acta Juratatorum et Consilii Civitatis et Insulae Maltae*'

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