

**TOWARDS A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL  
UNDERSTANDING  
THE MALTESE PRINTED PRODUCT  
1642-1839**

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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,

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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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

### **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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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 date<sup>5</sup>, 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.<sup>6</sup>
4. INGENITIS / 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 (untracable).<sup>7</sup>

#### **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. & Esemp. 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> Abela's work certainly appealed to the Maltese cultured class, becoming a standard reference work both locally and abroad,<sup>10</sup> even if actual sales of its first edition lingered on for more than a century.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup>

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*.<sup>13</sup>

### **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.<sup>14</sup> 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'.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup>

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.<sup>18</sup> Criticism of the mediocre quality of some local publications by a learned, if spiteful, foreign observer in the 1780s<sup>19</sup> was grudgingly acknowledged by a Maltese nobleman.<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> Occasionally, literature in Maltese, usually poetry, popular festive rhymes and sermons, was recorded in manu-

script.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup> 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,<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup>

This table provides a detailed breakdown of the subject-matter of the Maltese eighteenth-century press product as elicited from the surviving press registers.<sup>27</sup> 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**

<b>SECULAR LITERATURE</b>		
<b>Subject Category</b>	<b>%Total</b>	<b>Totals</b>
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
<b>Total</b>	<b>32.3</b>	<b>577</b>
<b>RELIGIOUS/ ECCLESIASTICAL LITERATURE</b>		
<b>Subject Category</b>	<b>%Total</b>	<b>Totals</b>
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
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>429</b>

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

**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.<sup>28</sup> 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 illustrado 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.<sup>29</sup>

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.<sup>30</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> 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).

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

<sup>3</sup> F.P. de Smitmer, *Catalogo della Biblioteca del Sagro Militare 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).

<sup>4</sup> P. Xuereb, *A Bibliography of Maltese Bibliographies* (Malta, 1978)

<sup>5</sup> 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.

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

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

<sup>8</sup> *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.

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

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

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> 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.

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

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

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>16</sup> 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).

<sup>17</sup> 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.

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

<sup>19</sup> 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'.

<sup>20</sup> 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'.

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

<sup>22</sup> 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.

<sup>23</sup> NLM Lib. Ms. 1146/2, f. 7v.

<sup>24</sup> AAM *Edicta* 1750-57, ff. 95, pp.98-103.

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

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

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

<sup>28</sup> 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. Schird, S. Sorensen, P. Xuereb, eds.), Malta, 1994, pp.89-98.

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

<sup>30</sup> *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.