

# Hazards at sea: a case-study of two *ex-voto* paintings from the Church of the Karmelitani Skalzi in Bormla, Malta

Simon Mercieca

## Abstract

This article seeks to explore the hazards at sea experienced by seamen in the nineteenth century by interpreting two *ex-voto* paintings, which are currently preserved in a Catholic church situated at the harbour town of Bormla (Cospicua) in Malta. It was customary, in the past, for seafarers to make a vow when faced with life threatening perils at sea. From early modern times onwards, these vows were made only to a religious effigy, usually represented by the Virgin Mary (but not solely), which had miraculous attributes. In return for a safe journey home, the mariner or mariners (a vow could be also collective) donated a painting depicting the ordeals experienced. These iconography are rich in maritime detail. This paper tells the tale of a sailor on a Russian steamship who fell overboard and the perils experienced by the crew of a pilot boat while escorting a ship into Malta's harbour.<sup>1</sup>

**Key words:** *Ex-voto*, painting, steamship, pilot boat, Malta, peril at sea

## Introduction

In this paper, I will discuss the many facets of life at sea depicted in two nineteenth-century Maltese iconographies that are found in a small church belonging to the Karmelitani Skalzi (Discalced Carmelites) in Bormla (Cospicua), Malta (Figs. 1 & 2). These two *ex-voto* paintings represent two different stories both in terms of maritime history and geo-political realities of the Mediterranean as expressed through the works of unsophisticated painters but united by the same ethos: both paintings recount accidents at sea. Both concern the stories of Maltese sailors in danger of drowning with the difference that in the first painting the story unfolds in the open sea while the second recounts the story of a boat on the verge of being engulfed by the fury of the waves just outside the mouth of the local Grand Harbour of Valletta. For this reason, I do not wish to overlook the empirical aspects in these paintings.

These mementoes reveal different typologies of vessels. Yet, these humble paintings are also important for the human-related activity that took place on a ship in danger of foundering. Gelina Harlaftis and Carmelo Vassallo succinctly summarise the main interest of contemporary maritime historians to be the study of 'the millions of anonymous mariners, port-related workers and entrepreneurs on the high seas and ashore'.<sup>2</sup> The offering of maritime *ex-votos* has stopped completely and this church in Bormla no longer receives such gifts, however, this does not preclude that important, dramatic events and

briny exploits on the high seas cease to be of historical interest. On the contrary, from an academic point of view, these human experiences are attracting more and more the interest of the historian. Exploits at sea are still very popular with the general reader.

The main actors of these *ex-voto* paintings are innumerable seafarers. Probably these paintings lost some of their aura. In some cases were even removed from the churches and altars where they used to hang despite the fact that the protagonists of these maritime histories are unsung heroes. Nevertheless, these stories can be divorced from general history.<sup>3</sup>

I shall here discuss both the artistic value of these two paintings as well as their historical importance within the context of Malta's colonial period when Great Britain was at the peak of its imperial glory. Perhaps the stories behind these paintings may appear to some as historical anecdotes of forgotten chronicles of vicissitudes at sea, with interesting images of sail- and steam-powered vessels. I am interested in giving an in-depth study of the salient features of these ships. In Malta, analysis of nineteenth-century vessels is still in its infancy. Furthermore, I shall be examining these images from an anthropological perspective. Each one propounds a case-study about life on board.

These two paintings were not considered to have great artistic value. Without doubt, they were executed by a competent hand. The painter had a good knowledge of maritime affairs but lacked sophistication when it came

<sup>1</sup> Correspondence: Dr. Simon Mercieca, Director, Mediterranean Institute, University of Malta, Msida, Tal-Qroqq, Malta. E-mail: simon.mercieca@um.edu.mt.

<sup>2</sup> Gelina Harlaftis and Carmel Vassallo, 'Maritime history since Braudel', in *New Directions in Mediterranean Maritime History*, eds. Gelina Harlaftis and Carmel Vassallo [Research in Maritime History No. 28] (St. John's, Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, 2004), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ruthy Gertwagen, 'Maritime history in Israel', in *New Directions in Mediterranean Maritime History*, eds. Gelina Harlaftis and Carmel Vassallo [Research in Maritime History No. 28] (St. John's, Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, 2004), p. 188.

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FIG. 1: IL-KUNVENT TAL-KARMELETANI SKALZI. THE MONASTERY SUFFERED EXTENSIVE DAMAGE DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR (PHOTO PRIOR OF THE CONVENT, FR. M. BORG OCD).



FIG. 2: THE CHURCH TODAY, LIT UP FOR THE RELIGIOUS FESTIVITIES OF ST. TERESA OF ÁVILA (1515-1582), DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH AND CO-FOUNDER OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITES (PHOTO PRIOR OF THE CONVENT, FR. MARTIN BORG OCD).

to anatomical features. The artists who specialised in this genre of painting were known by the Italian term *madonnaro*.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, these types of paintings generally lacked the finesse and rich colours normally associated with the works of established artists. However, such an ingenious and rather primitive representation does not demean the importance of these works. They still express passion, faith and love with the same force as those works painted by seasoned and professional painters. It remains a labour of love towards those who came face to face with death while at sea.

The maritime representations and designs are extremely good, full of detail about both the vessels as well as life at sea. These two surviving relics of a foregone religious devotion are a historical testimony to life experienced by individuals from Bormla beyond the precincts of their homes. Shipping linked this local community to the outside world. At least one of these two votive images is testimony to long-distance trading. They document the adventures and accidents experienced kilometres away from the men's hometown.

They are an expression of contrast; however, I do not want to imply that they are offering any new historical information on long-distance trade. Abounding information on this subject can be found in archival documents. Yet these visual icons, however rudimentary, had an impact on the public which was unmatched by any other document. At a time when illiteracy was high and paintings were the only visual media available for the public, once these pictures were exhibited in churches, they became a public manifestation of the new horizons that were opening for all the town's inhabitants to see. Ironically, this information about job opportunities at sea was reaching the illiterate masses through images of people in distress.

Although the town of Bormla, together with its neighbouring Isla (Senglea), had a number of sailors working on merchant ships as well as with the Royal Navy, very few votive paintings have survived to tell their tale. Thus, these two paintings provide a vivid testimony of past contacts and experience. They are a pictorial representation, an open book attesting in colour what Eyüp Özveren and Onur Yildirim write about maritime history: 'it is also a social history as it has much to do with people as with the sea'.<sup>5</sup>

When these votive paintings were executed, Malta, for more than 50 years, had been free from its last corsairing and piratical attacks, which had been a continuous threat omnipresent throughout the early modern period and, until 1798, formed part of Malta's seagoing economy. This aspect had permitted a ship to be 'the most globalised and

homogenous workplace in the world' as rightly defined by Harlaftis.<sup>6</sup>

### The Russian ship *Posocchob*

The first votive painting that I shall be analysing in detail shows a Russian ship underway by both sail and steam. It is an oil painting on canvas measuring 64 cm by 47 cm. The combination of steam and sails gave the crew the opportunity to undertake long-distance voyages. The use of dual technology shows that steam was still considered innovative, despite the fact that this incident happened towards the end of the nineteenth century and the first steamship, *London Engineer*, sailed into the Grand Harbour of Valletta in 1825.<sup>7</sup> This visit occurred in the same year of the maiden voyage of the steamship *Enterprise* from Deptford to Calcutta.<sup>8</sup> Soon afterwards, steam-powered ships began to reach the local shores. John Chircop attests that from the 1840s onwards 'steamships gradually began to forge international networks' but it was only during the last quarter of the nineteenth century that they entered in command of the Mediterranean routes 'when technological innovation, increased speed, augmented the carrying capacity and increased the safety of steam vessels'.<sup>9</sup> The two *ex-votos* that are discussed in this paper are a visual attestation of this new Mediterranean reality discussed by Chircop.

The vessel that is being analysed in this section is a brig-rigged steamer by the name of *Posocchob*.<sup>10</sup> A funnel flings up a cloud of black smoke (typical of ships running on steam), which became a hallmark for the representation of this new form of navigation in nineteenth-century votive paintings. This painting evokes another historical fact. It represents the restoration of trading and economic activities between Russia and Great Britain, after they had broken down in 1854, owing to the Crimean War (Fig. 3).

It is difficult to read the complete inscription as some of the words are very difficult to decipher, whilst the end-part of this cartouche is missing or perhaps has been torn off. What has survived reads as follows:

<sup>6</sup> Gelina Harlaftis, 'Greek maritime history steaming ahead', in *New Directions in Mediterranean Maritime History*, eds. Gelina Harlaftis and Carmel Vassallo [Research in Maritime History No. 28] (St. John's, Newfoundland: St. John's, Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, 2004), p. 160.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Abela, *The Maltese Merchant Fleet of the 19th Century* (Malta: Sacred Island, 2007), p. xxiv.

<sup>8</sup> *Malta Government Gazette*, 760 (Wednesday 12th October 1825): 304.

<sup>9</sup> John Chircop, 'The narrow sea complex: Dimension in Mediterranean maritime history', in *Resources and Infrastructures in the Maritime Economy 1500-2000*, eds. Gordon Buyce and Richard Gorski [Research in Maritime History, No. 22] (St. John's, Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, 2002), p. 57.

<sup>10</sup> In all, only one other representation of a brig-rigged steamer at the Mellicha Sanctuary exists, see A.H.J. Prins, *In Peril on the Sea: Marine Votive Paintings in the Maltese Islands* (Malta: Said International, 1989), p. 90. Furthermore, there is only one more reference to Maltese seamen as crew on board a Russian vessel and this is at the Sanctuary of Tal-Ħerba at Birkirkara. Until the discovery of the Bormla votive painting, the Birkirkara painting was considered as the sole Maltese *ex-voto* representing a Russian ship. Prins, 107.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Muscat, *Il-Kwadri Ex-Voto Marittimi Maltin* (Malta: Publikazzjonijiet Indipendenza, 2003), p. 270.

<sup>5</sup> Eyüp Özveren and Onur Yildirim, 'An outline of Ottoman maritime history', in *New Directions in Mediterranean Maritime History*, eds. Gelina Harlaftis and Carmel Vassallo [Research in Maritime History No. 28] (St. John's, Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, 2004), p. 151.

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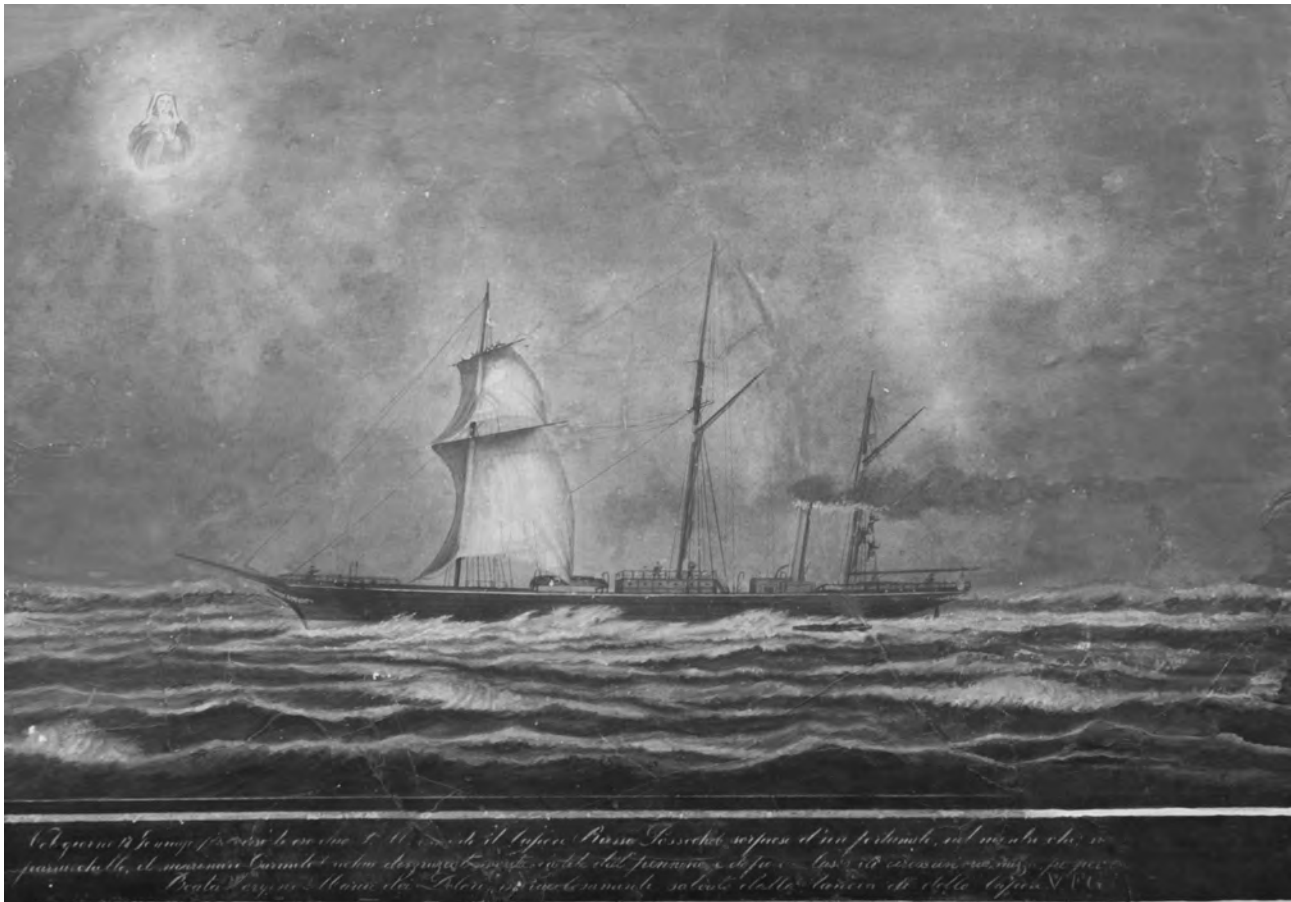


FIG. 3: THE *EX-VOTO* BRIG-RIGGED STEAMER *POSOCCHOB*. SAINT TERESE CHURCH, BORMLA (COURTESY OF THE CHURCH OF SANTA TEREZA, BORMLA, MALTA).

‘Nel giorno 17 Gennaio presso le ore due del mattino il vapore Russo Posocchob sorprese d’un fortunale sul... che... parrucchetto il marinaio Carmelo Cachia disgraziatamente era caduto dal pennone e dopo un lasso di circa un ora, mezza fu per... Beata Vergine Maria Dei Dolori miracolosamente salvato dalla lancia di detto vapore VFGA [*voto fecit gratiam accepit*].’

This *ex-voto* painting vividly depicts these words in minute detail. It reveals information about the mariners’ life at sea and the daily dangers that they had to face. These types of marine paintings express the courage and self-reliance required by any member of the crew to overcome dismal conditions. Developments in ship design made it possible for wooden vessels to sail even in winter. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ships avoided travelling in winter. The sailing season, irrespective of creed or nationality was traditionally from April to November.<sup>11</sup>

Most of the maritime accidents represented in *ex-voto* paintings occurred either in tempestuous seas or in rough weather conditions. In this case, the accident occurred in January, after the upper part of the foremast, known in nautical jargon as the top gallant, broke. In the cartouche,

this is clearly referred to by the Italian term *parrucchetto*. The crew had perceived the arrival of a tempest and the ship’s captain sent members of the crew, shown in the painting on the foretop yard to shorten the sails. Seven men are painted grappling for their lives onto the foremast while standing on the yard horses. In fact, to shorten sails, sailors had to stand on ropes, known as horses, which gave them the ability to rest their stomach against the yard. As a security measure, they tied a noose around their waist. This measure was known in Italian as *lasso* and there is a direct reference to it in the cartouche. In the picture, the *lasso* is also represented flying loosely in the wind. In turn, the *lasso* was secured to a sail yard known in Italian as *il pennone*. Thus, the number of sailors sent aloft on this job totalled eight. However, one fell into the water. As this painting depicts the moment immediately after this accident, the *madonnaro* rightly painted seven men on the yard horses. This was a relatively small number as the big wooden warships could take up to around 30 hands to handle a sail.

Fortunately enough, Carmelo Cachia was standing at the outer portside of the yard. Thus, when he lost his balance, he remained suspended in mid-air for an hour, hanging on to his *lasso*. Once the *lasso* gave way or perhaps he had managed to disentangle himself, he fell into the sea. Had

<sup>11</sup> Özveren and Yildirim, 160.

he been in any other position, he would have risked falling from a height of 15 m onto the deck.

Furthermore, since Cachia had remained attached to the *lasso* for some time, this gave the captain time to apply a manoeuvre to slow down the ship. It was practically impossible to bring a ship to a standstill position in high waters and it became even more difficult in open waters as anchors were useless in very deep sea. In fact, in this painting the anchors are shown in their place on the bow. Therefore, the ship could only be brought to a partial stop through sailing manoeuvres, by turning the ship against the wind and thus causing an inversion in the sails' position. In fact, the sails on the foremast are correctly shown blowing inward. This was a position used to lessen the rhythm of the ship, possibly bringing it to a standstill to allow a lifeboat to be sent out to pick up a distraught sailor.

Immediately after falling overboard, the members of the crew threw a hatch grating to their mate. This is vividly portrayed in this painting. Usually in votive paintings, survivors are represented grappling to a grating. In this case, Carmelo Cachia preferred to be depicted in another moment. In fact, after the grating was thrown, one of the launches was lowered into the turbulent sea to pick him up. Two sailors manned it. This painting illustrates the moment when Carmelo Cachia was picked up and sculled back to the ship.

The painter demonstrated particular ability in executing this piece. The rigging is perfectly represented, including the different sizes explained by the minute differences in the thickness of the cordage. More importantly, the painter paid attention to the details of the position of the crew. As already stated, a group of sailors is illustrated working on the foremast, probably assisting the captain to bring the ship to a standstill whilst preparing for the oncoming storm. Another sailor is on the forecastle signalling with an outstretched arm. On the midship bridge, the captain is represented standing with a telescope or spyglass to his eye, following the rescue operation. Two members of the crew assist him. Similarly, on the mizzen shrouds, there are three crew-members shown with outstretched arms indicating the exact position of the hatch grating. Finally, at the stern, the helmsman is represented at the wheel.

Another interesting detail regards the launches. The painter represented the ship from its port side. This means that this was the left-hand side of the ship looking from the direction of the stern. Probably this ship had four life boats, two on each side. The painter was definitely well versed in maritime techniques. He is not only correct where rigging is concerned but shows his know-how when it comes to illustrate the boats' davits, or the hooks that kept the life boats suspended at deck level. The davits are shown overlooking the water, with their ropes hanging loose since a boat had been launched into the water.

Other interesting details concern the sails' configuration. The ship was rigged with square sails on the foremast. The

cotton sails are also illustrated in detail to the extent of making the cloth lines visible. A jib is displayed lowered and furled to the bowsprit. The main and mizzen masts are provided with gaff sails; the painted one was the fore-and-aft type of sail. The fact that the crew was expecting the approaching storm can also be noted from other details. In fact, both the main and mizzen gaffs are doubly secured to their masts with a chain represented by a broken line in this painting. Furthermore, the mizzen top mast is exhibited lowered through the crosstrees. This was an emergency measure due to the fact that this was a fragile mast which could easily break in a storm. Looking attentively, the rigging of this lowered top mast can be seen hanging loose. The main top mast is represented in place fastened and fully rigged. On the other hand, the top mast on the foremast had broken causing the depicted accident.

This incident also brings to the fore a legal aspect in vigour at the time and which was considered in Britain as part of Common Law. When a member of a crew fell overboard, the law conceded to a mercantile ship to stop and undertake rescue operations. The law stipulated that should, as a result of rescue operations, there be a delay in the delivery of her cargo or the ship failed to arrive at her destination within the stipulated time as indicated in the contract, the ship's captain or company concerned was not liable to pay any indemnities.<sup>12</sup>

The actual size of *Posoccob* was considerable for the times and calculated at about 62 m in length. She was manned by 18 crew members, which was normal for such ship-types. This calculation is based on the apparent number of sailors shown in this painting. However, down in the engine room, there must have been at least one engineer and one or two stokers. The profile of this ship is that of a clipper. The rudder is markedly shown and could be an indication that this merchant ship was not fully loaded when the accident occurred. In fully loaded ships, the rudder would be completely submerged. It had side decorations, fore and aft, and these were gilded. Possibly the hull was made of wood as the planking is visible. The water level of the hull was painted with some type of oxide or anti-fouling paint.

Unfortunately, the artist of this painting remains unknown. However, the chosen *madonnaro*, as the painters of the *ex-voto* were known in Malta,<sup>13</sup> was well versed in maritime iconography. The *sigla* of V.F.G.A. (meaning *voto fecit gratiam accepit*) can still be seen at the end of the inscription. The use of this acronym means that the painting was commissioned after a vow was made to the Blessed Virgin Mary before being rescued rather than the opposite. In this context, one should consider that a vow is incomplete unless it is fulfilled.

The *ex-voto* was originally made in honour of the Madonna tad-Duluri (Our Lady of Sorrows) who was venerated in the Church of the Karmelitani Skalzi (Disalced Carmelite

<sup>12</sup> Steven F. Friedell, 'Compensation and Reward for Saving Life at Sea', *Michigan Law Review*, 77. 5 (1979): 1228-1229, 1232.

<sup>13</sup> Prins, 27.

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FIG. 4: THE *EX-VOTO* SHOWING MEMBERS OF THE CREW OF THE PILOT BOAT IN PERIL  
(COURTESY OF THE CHURCH OF SANTA TEREŽA, BORMLA).

Friars) at Bormla. The artist shows an overcast sky with the image of Our Lady of Sorrows with a golden radiance surrounding her body and with rays of light emitting through the inky sky and into the sea. The position of the icon is on the left top-hand corner. This demonstrates that this church attracted *ex-votos* but most have now been lost.

#### ***Ex-voto* painting dedicated to the Madonna tal-Karmnu (Our Lady of Mount Carmel)**

The second painting, oil on canvas, recounts the tale of sailors in distress. It measures 47 cm by 77 cm. Unfortunately the painting lacks the normal cartouche or inscription recounting in words the story behind this *ex-voto*. Therefore, we can only give our own interpretation of this surviving picture. No doubt this painting is to be linked to Malta's colonial past, when local men found employment in the numerous services offered by the colonial masters. In this case, these are Maltese seamen employed with the local port authority, which, during the British period came under the superintendent of ports. This office was run from 5th December, 1856, by an English captain, W.R.M. Hoseason. According to the Blue Book for the year 1870, he still held this office 12 years later.<sup>14</sup> One of the port authorities' duties was to offer pilotage service to any civil ship entering harbour. The Blue Book gives the names of the authorised boatmen operating in Malta. Unfortunately, as this *ex-voto* is undated and lacks

the usual inscription, the protagonists of this tale cannot be traced in the Blue Book.

Probably the story behind this painting is that of a civil pilot boat which was called out to offer assistance to a commercial steamship. The latter began to make frequent calls at Maltese harbours after the 1850s. The boat in the foreground, no doubt, represents the pilot boat used to guide steamers into the Grand Harbour of Valletta. Thus, the story behind this scene happened in our local sea, outside the main port. This can be deduced from the fact that there is no landscape scenery in this *ex-voto* (Fig. 4).

The boat in the foreground is shown totally painted in green. These colours correspond to the specimen pilot boat exhibited in the Malta Maritime Museum at Birgu (Vittoriosa). The pilot boat was handled by five seamen, four were oarsmen and the fifth, who always stayed at the stern, was the pilot. All of them wore uniforms but the pilot was the only one to wear a bowler hat.

The painter, or *madonnaro*, was attentive to detail. He succeeded in vividly describing the story behind this *ex-voto*. The water was quite rough and choppy. The pilot boat was hit by a huge wave from abreast and three seamen were washed into the sea. The forth rower, who was at the bow survived the onrush of the huge wave. These sailors employed on this type of boats were expected to be good swimmers. These three seamen must have experienced great difficulties to keep their heads out of the water. The artist goes into great detail to show the peril the three

<sup>14</sup> *Malta Blue Book for the Year 1870* (Malta: Valletta Government Printing Office, 1871), p. M. 42.

sailors faced when washed overboard. The first sailor to the left is painted swimming using a front crawl (also known as freestyle) struggling to keep his head out of the water. The second sailor beneath him is shown hanging for his dear life onto an oar which was washed away from the boat. The destiny of the third is not clear. He is shown beneath the bow of the boat, floating on the waves, with his face upwards. It is not clear whether he survived the onslaught or not.

In this painting, the pilot boat is shown with all the washboards missing, which in these circumstances means that they must have been washed away by the huge wave. The poppets, because they were fixed on the bow and the stern and could not be washed away by water, are shown in place. This is an indication that the wash boards were lost.

When the captain of the steamship saw that the pilot boat was in distress, he ordered his men to lower the ship's lifeboat, here shown with the hull painted white with a dark brown sheer streak from bow to stern, which was the normal colour used on all tenders. The captain himself joined in the rescue operation as the boat is shown in this *ex-voto*, rowed by two oarsmen at each side, while the captain is at the tiller of the rudder. He is distinctively shown wearing a naval peaked cap.

The steamship is shown at a standstill with all sails furled. The artist painted the hull of the ship in dark colours, as it would be seen by the naked eye but taking care to show that it was made out of iron. This was represented through gentle brush strokes to recreate vividly the metal plates. This type of iron construction was typical of mid-nineteenth-century steamships.

As was typical at the time, painters loved to show the black smoke emanating from the steamer's funnel. In this case, the smoke is represented as coming from the left-hand side of the painting. As the steamer is only shown in part, from mid-ship to bow, the funnel could not be represented as normally it was positioned in front of the main mast. Even the main mast is not shown in this painting. However the painter still wanted to include the black smoke. Moreover, he included the foremast, indeed in great detail showing all the rigging.

The confirmation that this is an *ex-voto* painting can be deduced from the presence of the sacred iconography at the top right-hand corner. In this case, the painter did not resolve to paint a sacred image, but preferred to use a polychrome picture. This is a holy picture in full colour representing the Madonna holding the infant Jesus in her arms. This *ex-voto* was executed in honour of the Madonna tal-Karmnu (Our Lady of Mount Carmel) who is venerated at the Church of the Discalced Carmelite Friars at Bormla. The altar of the Madonna tal-Karmnu is situated on the left-hand side of the main altar. The painter could not find a holy image of Our Lady under this particular title, and therefore he used this polychrome image, adding a scapular to the hand of Our Lady and another one to the hand of

the infant Jesus. In adding this detail, the *madonnaro* went beyond the cut polychrome picture and painted it directly on the canvas. The scapular is a *sine qua non* symbol of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

## Conclusion

This rather detailed study of a two votive images dating back to the nineteenth century shows that such types of vernacular works are an indispensable tool for any scholar who wants to write about the history of maritime culture during British rule in Malta. A.H.J. Prins observes that whilst 'Britannia rules where once the Knights held sway',<sup>15</sup> the 'Maltese culture under the sovereignty of the Grand Masters is not identical with life in the Islands under British rule'.<sup>16</sup>

A semiotic study of the Maltese votive paintings shows that such cultural change even transcended this popular form of religious manifestation. Nineteenth-century ships were less vulnerable to storms than older ones. Besides, advancement in technological innovations such as the introduction of steam vessels brought a change to seafaring experiences. According to Prins, these innovations lessened the risks at sea with the result that there was a general decrease in the donation of *ex-votos* in the nineteenth century compared to the previous centuries.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the fear of shipwreck remained omnipresent in the mind of those earning a living through seafaring.

This is an aspect of local history still lacking a comprehensive analysis. What has been observed by Maria Alfonso Mola and Carlos Martinez Shaw for Spain's maritime historiography holds good for Malta: 'The history of *mentalités*, with regards to life at sea or in communities dependent on the sea, is still in an early phase'.<sup>18</sup> These two authors anticipated that the study of votive paintings would soon attract adherents; these two examples discussed here are an indispensable tool for the history of *mentalités*.

In other words, these paintings, as most of other maritime votive pictures, are a visual attestation and proof of bygone histories. *Ex-voto* paintings, Chircop insists, are historical sources recording and preserving the detailed local knowledge existing among past seafaring communities, such as prevalent winds and sea currents, the locations of creeks and anchorages, maritime practices and other aspects of seafaring intelligence that have since disappeared.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Prins, 66.

<sup>16</sup> Prins, 129.

<sup>17</sup> Prins, 129.

<sup>18</sup> Marina Alfonso Mola and Carlos Martinez Shaw, 'Maritime historiography *Ancien Régime* Mediterranean Spain', in *New Directions in Mediterranean Maritime History*, eds. Gelina Harlaftis and Carmel Vassallo [Research in Maritime History No. 28] (St. John's, Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, 2004), p. 43.

<sup>19</sup> Chircop, 43.

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I hope that this study opens a small window on the world of the *ex-votos*, and perhaps helps to overcome the current perception that the study of this form of popular religious piety is limited to the early modern period. Maritime

votive offerings continued to linger on under British rule and perhaps some of the most important and brilliant examples were produced in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.